

Goddess Politics: Analytical Psychology and Japanese Myth

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ABSTRACT *Myth always plays an important role in establishing people's core identities; and the interpretation of myths is central in Jungian studies, which focus on archetypal images. In this context, this paper examines Hayao Kawai's 1976 work on the Japanese goddess Amaterasu-oh-kami (Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity), who has been referred to as the main deity in Shintoism. Kawai argued that Japan is a maternal society, and that, in general, Japanese have a more feminine psyche than Westerners. The purpose of this paper is critically to rethink Kawai's argument and ideas. In doing so, first, I examine the concept of kami in relation to shamanism and animism in Shintoism. Second, I focus on the formulation of state Shintoism, and on how those who edited Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters) and Nihongi (Chronicles of Japan reconstructed Japanese myths for political reasons in the fifth and eighth centuries (Common Era), and how, in the process, the image of Amaterasu-oh-kami was distorted by patriarchal codes. More recently, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the idea of Amaterasu-oh-kami as the highest deity in Kojiki was widespread, a view promulgated by the Japanese government. I identify certain problems in Kawai's interpretations of the myth – his choice of texts, his characterization of Amaterasu-oh-kami, his projection of men's needs onto the goddess – and offer a rethinking of his interpretation in terms of recent Jungian, historical, mythological, and feminist viewpoints. I argue that Kawai's discourse about the goddess's image is a kind of conservative renewal of the myth – for covert political reasons. Finally, I advocate the importance of careful examination of the patriarchal codes in the myth, with the hope that this might bring a new potency to the Jungian approach more suited to a new century. Copyright © 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

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The interpretation of myths is central in Jungian studies, which focus on archetypal images. For example, Jung used mythological motifs to interpret the so-called Miller Fantasies, to try to understand a poet's pathology in his own epoch-making work *Symbols of Transformation* (Jung, 1956). As Jung put it: “the essential thing, psychologically, is that in dreams, fantasies,

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and other exceptional states of mind the most far-fetched mythological motifs exist” (Jung, 1929, para. 229). Myth always plays an important role in establishing the core of people’s identities because myth is a central element in all cultures, religions, social systems and politics. Thus it was natural for Hayao Kawai (1928–2007), the first Japanese Jungian analyst, to deal with Japanese myths, to focus on a significant mythological figure: that of the goddess, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* (Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity).

SHINTOISM

Regarding a central myth in Japan, Masaharu Anesaki wrote:

The whole complex of beliefs and worship is known by the name of *Shinto*, which means the “Way of the Gods (or Spirits),” and it may be called the national popular religion of the Japanese, as it was their ancient and indigenous religion. (Anesaki, 1963, p. 20)

Daniel Holtom, the first westerner to deal with Shinto, published in 1938 an academic work: *The National Faith of Japan*. In this book, quoting works by Motoori Norinaga, he explained the word *kami* as follows:

It may be said that *kami* is essentially an expression used by the early Japanese people to classify experiences that evoked sentiments of caution and mystery in the presence of the manifestation of the strange and marvelous ... Often the best translation is simply by the word “sacred.” ...The conviction of the reality of the world that it registered was supported by the experience of extraordinary events, such as the frenzy of religious dances, or by outstanding objects that threw the attention into special activity, such as large, or old, or strangely formed trees, high mountains, thunder, lightning, storms and clouds, or implement magic, or by uncanny animals, such as foxes, badgers, and manifestations of albinism. (Holtom, 1938/1995, p. 24)

Anesaki (1963) also commented on *kami*, noting that “the deity is called *Kami*, which, though of disputed etymology, means “superior” or “sacred” or “miraculous” (p. 21), though we have to recognize that the original Japanese gods (*Kami*) differ in meaning from Western concepts of deity. Anesaki continued: “Shinto as a religion was the unorganized worship of spirits.” (p. 22) Its origin is a kind of primitive animism, and everything in the world is *kami*. In other words, for ancient Japanese people, nature itself is *kami*, which is merciful as well as awful, with its spirit invisible.

Shuichi Takezawa, an architect, considering ancient Japanese religion and culture from the viewpoint of shrine architecture, has noted that people associated worship only in relation to special, sacred places marked by *torii* (a kind of gateway often made of wood) or *shimenawa* (a rope made of rice straw), and not shrines (Takezawa, 2011). People believed *kami* could bring plentiful harvests, game, production, peace and comfort, and could help prevent disasters. Each community had its own clan deity (*uji-gami*) (Anesaki, 1963), and, therefore, Japan had myriad gods, which were not personified and which harmonized with nature according to area, a polytheistic outlook which is significant to this day.

According to Nobuzane Tsukushi, a Japanese folklorist, a primitive form of worship called *matsuri* (festival) was held once a year. People believed that *kami* came to rivers at night and

so they built temporary houses by rivers as sacred places (Tsukushi, 2005). Later, some of these temporary houses became permanent shrines. *Matsuri* are still held in various ways in local areas; Esben Anderson (1993) has focused on these *matsuri* as major religious celebrations in Japan:

There are no weekly religious services in Japanese religions, but there are numerous special festival days throughout the year at shrine and temples, such as spring and harvest *matsuri*, New Year, *bon* festival for the dead, in addition to a number of rites of passage for the individual. (p. 41)

People expend energy on *matsuri* because it ties them to *kami*, to the sacred, and confirms their spiritual background and strengthens community bonds and, thus, *matsuri* function as politics, too. In old Japanese, *matsuri-goto* (things regarding *matsuri*) means politics; even now, *matsuri* are fused with Japanese daily life.

Shinto also involved shamanism. Originally, when people held *matsuri*, they made a virgin stay in the temporary house to treat *kami*. So the *matsuri* were held with a mystical and erotic atmosphere at night (Tsukushi, 2002). The virgin, called *miko*, was seen as a wife of *kami* and a kind of shaman who mediated a *kami*'s words to people. According to an old Chinese text, *The Wei Chronicle*, there was a land called Yamatai in Japan at the end of the second century Common Era (CE), governed by a queen named *Himiko*. Takezawa (2011) has noted that there is no doubt that this virgin queen was a shaman. We can also see a long history of female shamanism in a Ryukyu (Okinawa Prefecture) dynasty. These *Chifijin* were virgins from the royal family and worshipped the Sun and the Moon to protect the king (Tsukushi, 2005); and this tradition is preserved to this day.

To summarize: *Shinto* is basically a primitive animism which harmonizes with nature in each area, functions as politics for a community, and is characterized by shamanism, especially by female shamans, which implies that women had spiritual and political power.

THE NATIONAL GOD IN EARLY STATE SHINTO

As we have seen, Shinto functioned politically in a community. In the fifth century CE, Japan was an absolute monarchy, but with many powerful clans. Because *Wakoku* (Japan) was defeated by Koguryo in 404 CE on the Korean peninsula, the *Yamato* imperial court needed rapidly to rearrange its political, military and religious systems (Takezawa, 2011). Actually, an idea from Koguryo was used to support the imperial system: that of a national god with emperors as descendants.

Mutsuko Mizoguchi, a Japanese historian, has pointed out that there are many similarities between the foundational myths of Koguryo and Japan (Mizoguchi, 2009). For people in fifth-century Japan, the highest deity was *Taka-mi-musubi no Kami* (High-August-Producing-Wondrous Deity), a male sun god, not *Amaterasu-oh-kami*. Mizoguchi noted: "People have for a long time believed that the Japanese national god, the ancestor of the emperor, is *Ama-terasu* [*Amaterasu-oh-kami*]" (p. 4), but she questioned the idea of the goddess as the highest of deities. Before the seventh century CE, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* was addressed as *Oho-hiru-me no muchi*, which simply means a lady of the sun or the local sun goddess in Ise; she was neither the highest deity, the ancestor of the Japanese imperial line, nor the national

god. Thus in *Nihongi* (Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to AD [CE] 697) we find: “They (creative gods) [*Izanagi-no-Mikoto* (His Augustness the Male-Who-Invites) and *Izanami-no-Mikoto* (Her Augustness the Female-Who-Invites)] then produced the Sun-Goddess called *Oho-hiru-me no muchi* (Great-noon-female-possessor).” (p. 18) *Taka-mi-musubi no Kami* was introduced from Korea in the fifth century CE to support the imperial system and combined with the Japanese foundational myth of *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* and *Izanami-no-Mikoto* (Mizoguchi, 2009).

Takezawa (2011) also maintained that the highest deity in Japan in the fifth century was *Taka-mi-musubi*. The two most important texts of Japanese myths are *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihongi*. In the *Kojiki* version of the beginning of heaven and earth, “the names of the Deities that were born in the Plain of High Heaven when the Heaven and Earth began were the Deity Master-of-the-August-Centre-of Heaven, next the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity (*Taka-mi-musubi no Kami*), next the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity” (p. 17). In the *Nihongi* version of the same event, it is represented thus: “The names of the Gods which were produced in the Plain of High Heaven were *Ama no mi-naka-nushi no Mikoto*, next *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto*, next *Kami-mi-musubi no Mikoto*” (p. 5).

Regarding the divine ancestry of emperors, in *Nihongi*, the first emperor, *Jimmu*, says, “Of old, our Heavenly Deities *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto*, and *Oho-hiru-me no Mikoto*, pointing to this land of fair rice-ears of the fertile reed-plain, gave it to our Heavenly ancestor, *Hiko-ho no ninigi no Mikoto*” (p. 110). *Jimmu* also says:

The spirits of our Imperial ancestors reflecting their radiance down from Heaven, illuminate and assist us. All our enemies have now been subdued, and there is peace within the seas. We ought to take advantage of this perform sacrifice to the Heavenly Deities, and there with develop filial duty. (p. 134)

However, in the most recent translation of *Nihongi* into present-day Japanese, *Jimmu* worships *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto* alone (Ujiya, 1988). Evidently, the rulers in the fifth century drastically revised local Japanese myths and inserted a foreign male sun god into them as their national god, leaving out naïve animism and shamanism.

THE REDACTION OF KOJIKI AND NIHONGI AND THE BIRTH OF AMATERASU-OH-KAMI AS THE NATIONAL GOD AND THE ANCESTOR OF EMPERORS

Shinto has another and more controversial side as well, connected to Japanese nationalism, political control and the relationship between religion and politics. The Japanese myths dealing with the Japanese people and their kami focus in particular on the descent of the Japanese Imperial family from the kami and especially of the Emperor coming directly from Amaterasu, the powerful Sun Goddess. This myth confers a special status on the Emperor. (Reader, 1993b, p. 65)

On this basis, we have to examine the redaction of our two mythic foundational texts. Regarding this, Anesaki (1963):

The compilations are the “Records of Ancient Matters” (*Kojiki*, finished in 712), said to have been collected from oral tradition, and the “Chronicle of Japan” (*Nihon Shoki* or *Nihongi*, finished in 720). These legendary histories contain stories of the gods and their descendants down to certain historical

periods. The aim of these compilations was primarily to preserve the memories of ancestral times, but another motive, perhaps more important than the former, was to demonstrate the divine origin of the ruling family and other aristocrats, and also the remote antiquity of the foundation of the State. (p. 87)

The two texts were finished in the eighth century CE, but their editing started in the seventh century, the *Temmu* and *Jito* era (Tsukushi, 2005), when Emperor *Temmu* ordered *Hiyeda no Are* to record his memories in order to leave a genuine tradition, including the language of former ages. Some scholars assert that this was actually the bidding of a woman, a kind of shaman (ibid.). What is clear, however, is that the texts were edited to serve political expediency. Now, many scholars acknowledge that this involved replacing *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto* as the highest god with *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as the state god (Takezawa, 2011). The question is: why?

In order to answer this question, Takezawa focused on two national crises: the first, the defeat of *Yamato* by the union of the Tang and Silla clans in Korea in 663 CE; the second, the coup by *Temmu* and his wife *Jito* in 672 CE, in which *Temmu* kills his nephew, Prince *Otomo*, the son of former Emperor *Tenchi*, and, thereby, *Temmu* and his brother usurp the throne. They needed a new deity to promote nationalism against the Tang clan, and a national god as the ancestor of emperors to confirm the legitimacy of their royal authority. For this purpose, it seems that *Amaterasu-oh-kami* was better suited than *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto*, who had been introduced from Koguryo. Editors thus gathered local myths, reconstructed them, and even created new ones (Tsukushi, 2005). In the editing process, *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto* was gradually replaced as the national god by *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, and the Goddess filled the role of the ancestor of the emperors. According to Takezawa (2011), the permanent shrine at Ise to worship *Amaterasu-oh-kami* was probably built at this same time.

Tsukushi (2005) noted that the redaction of *Nihongi* is more important to study than that of *Kojiki*, which deals with matters in the sixth and seventh centuries in detail, since *Nihongi* chronicles only up to the sixth century. The editors of *Nihongi* acknowledge the power of *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto*, and even *Kojiki* cannot completely ignore the former national god. Mizoguchi (2009) also asserted that the versions in *Nihongi* are older and more reliable than those in *Kojiki*; this, however, misses the key point, namely that both texts were clearly redacted in order to support imperial political prerogatives. For example, in *Nihongi*, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* is addressed by several names; in *Kojiki*, she is referred to by only one name, a change which implies the process of changing her character. Originally, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* was simply a local goddess in Ise, or the wife of a male sun god, but then she herself becomes the highest deity and the ancestor of the emperors. These different characters are integrated only in *Kojiki*, and, consequently, this also includes many inconsistencies with regard to her character. Following this line, I now examine the descriptions of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* in both texts.

THE MYTH OF AMATERASU-OH-KAMI

The birth of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*

In *Nihongi*, there are differing versions of the birth of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, but the main story is that the goddess is born as the daughter of *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* and *Izanami-no-Mikoto*, who deliberate about her creation, saying: “We have now produced the Great-eight-island country

[Japan] with the mountains, rivers, herbs, and trees. Why should we not produce someone who shall be lord of the universe?" (*Nihongi*, 1972, p. 18) They then produce the Sun-Goddess, who is called *Oho-hiru-me no muchi*, and who, in another version, is called *Amaterasu-oh-kami*. The resplendent lustre of this child shines throughout all six quarters: North, South, East, West, Above, and Below. The two Deities rejoice and send her to heaven, following which two other gods, the Moon-God and *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* (His Impetuous-Male-Augustness), are produced as her brothers. The latter, however, has a fierce temper and is given to cruel acts; his parents, therefore, say: "Thou art exceedingly wicked, and it is not meet that thou should reign over the world" (*ibid.*, p. 20), and so they expel him.

In the *Kojiki* Record, on the other hand, *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* produces *Amaterasu-oh-kami* and her two brother gods by parthenogenesis after the death of his wife. *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* misses his wife and visits her in the underworld, but, finding the decayed body of his wife, he flees; returning to this world, he purifies himself in a river. When he washes his left eye, right eye and nose, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* is born from his left eye, His-Augustness-Moon-Night-Possessor (the Moon-god) from his right eye and, finally, *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* from his nose. *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* assigns *Amaterasu-oh-kami* to rule Heaven, and assigns the Moon-god to rule the night, but *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto*, who is ordered to rule the Sea Plain, misses his mother and does not submit to his father, who gets angry and expels him from the world. Before leaving *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* wants to take his farewell of his sister, *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, in Heaven.

Ukehi

Learning of his visit, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* thinks that he may rob her of her kingdom, and she dresses herself up like a man, with weapons to fight him. *Nihongi* chronicles that:

She [*Amaterasu-oh-kami*] said (to herself): "Is my younger brother coming with good intentions? I think it must be his purpose to rob me of my kingdom." Having thus put forth her dread manly valour, she uttered a mighty cry of defiance, and questioned him in a straightforward manner. *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* answers: "From the beginning my heart has not been black." And he suggests: "Let us, I pray thee, make an oath [*Ukehi*] together. While bound by this oath, we shall surely produce children. If the children which I produce are females, then it may be taken that I have an impure heart. But if the children are males, then it must be considered that my heart is pure." (*ibid.*, pp. 34–35)

An *Ukehi* is a kind of oath in which two deities produce children from their possessions (in this case a sword and jewels); it is also a kind of competition, depending on the sex of the children they produce. Here, according to the *Nihongi*, "the Children produced by *Sosa no wo no Mikoto* were all male children. Therefore *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto*'s intentions had been from the first honest" (p. 40), and he is allowed to stay in Heaven. Although, due to the different versions, there are complications regarding the parentage of the children, in *Nihongi*, *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* with his male children wins the *Ukehi*.

In *Kojiki*, *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* also undergoes an *Ukehi* as proof of his sincerity. However, the conditions and result are quite different:

Hereupon the Heaven Shining-Great-August-Deity [*Amaterasu-oh-kami*] said to His-Swift-Impetuous-Male-Augustness [*Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto*]: "As for the seed of the five male Deities born last, their birth was from

things of mine; so undoubtedly they are my children. As for the seed of the three female Deities born first; their birth was a thing of thine; so doubtless they are thy children.” (p. 59)

Then, *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* says to *Amaterasu-oh-kami*: “Owing to the sincerity of my intentions, I have, in begetting children, gotten delicate females. Judging from this, I have undoubtedly gained the victory” (ibid., p. 62). In short, *Kojiki* says that, though *Amaterasu-oh-kami* produces female children, *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* wins because he claims parentage of them through a process of formal exchanges.

The violence of *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto*

After his victory *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* starts to behave violently: he damages rice fields and soils the sacred dining room of the goddess. At first, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* neither blames nor punishes him. *Nihongi* continues:

Moreover, when he saw that Ama-terasu no Oho-kami was in her sacred weaving hall, engaged in weaving the garments of the Gods, he flayed a piebald colt of Heaven, and breaking a hole in the roof-tiles of the hall, flung it in. Then Ama-terasu no Oho-kami started with alarm, and wounded herself with the shuttle. Indignant at this, she straightway entered the Rock-door, and dwelt there in seclusion. (p. 41)

Again, in *Kojiki*, the story differs significantly:

As the Heaven-Shining-Great- August- Deity sat in her awful-hall seeing to the weaving of the august Garment of the Deities, he broke a hole in the top of the weaving-hall, and through it let fall a heavenly piebald horse which he had flayed with a backward flaying, at whose sight the women weaving the heavenly garments were so much alarmed that “impegerunt private partes adversis radiis et obierunt” (one of them hurts her genitals by a shuttle and dies). So, thereupon, the Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity terrified at the sight, closed (behind her) the door of the Heavenly Rock-Dwelling, made it fast, and retired. (pp. 63–64)

In *Nihongi*, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* herself is wounded and she hides herself in anger, but in *Kojiki* another woman dies from sexual violence and *Amaterasu-oh-kami* retires in terror.

The withdrawal of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*

In both texts, with the withdrawal of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* to the cave (*Ama-no-iwato*), heaven and earth completely lose sunlight and become dark. All the gods are troubled by this loss of sunshine, and they talk about a way to get the sun goddess out of the cave. They decide to put a mirror in front of the cave and hold a party. Then *Ame-no-uzume-no mikoto* (Her Augustness Heavenly-Alarming-Female) dances in front of the cave:

She made it resound and doing as if possessed by a Deity, and pulling out the nipples of her breast, pushing down her skirt, striking “usque ad private partes” [as far as to show her genitals]. Then the Plain of high Heaven shook, and the eight hundred myriad Deities laughed together. (*Kojiki*, 1981, pp. 69–70)

Amaterasu-oh-kami wonders what is happening outside the cave and she opens the rock door a crack and peeps out. Finding another sun goddess in the mirror, she opens the rock

door more. A strong male god then quickly pulls her outside, and people get sunlight again. In short, she is tricked into returning to the world. After that, the gods severely punish *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* and banish him from heaven.

What we can find in the different descriptions of the two texts is that the editors of *Kojiki* eliminated some features of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, her shamanism as the wife of a god, and her eroticism, sexuality, and vulnerability, which various original myths probably bore. In their place, they asserted her virginity and her role as the ancestor of male emperors to confirm the patriarchal imperial lineage. It can thus be concluded that *Kojiki* was edited to suit even clearer political prerogatives than was the *Nihongi*.

THE MYTH OF *AMATERASU-OH-KAMI* IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES (COMMON ERA)

While *Nihongi*, an academic and official record, was written in old Chinese, *Kojiki* was written in *Yamatokotoba* (the ancient Japanese language); thus, for a long time, scholars could understand the contents of *Nihongi* but could neither read nor understand *Kojiki* (Mizoguchi, 2009). Also, for centuries, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism remained important traditions in Japan, and *Amaterasu-oh-kami* was not respected in anything like her original form as recorded in *Kojiki*. As Reader (1993a) has noted:

Although the myth of Imperial and Japanese descent from the kami was written into texts such as the *Kojiki*, it was not until the Tokugawa era, when a group of Japanese intellectuals and nationalists began to study again these ancient texts, that the idea of Japan as the chosen country of the gods became widely promoted (p. 161)

He continued:

The roots of nineteenth and twentieth-century Japanese nationalism can be traced back to this period and to writers such as Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801). In this [Kojiki-Den] Motoori not only affirms the relationship on the Imperial lineage to the Sun Goddess but states clearly the notion that Japan is itself special, not just the source of all other countries but superior to them in every respect. (ibid., p. 165)

There is no doubt that Motoori was one of the greatest scholars of ancient Japanese literature. Regarding Motoori's works, Ono Susumu, one of the greatest modern scholars of Japanese literature, commented:

Motoori thinks that the way of Japan is a very natural way, different from Confucianism, and that Izanagi and Izanami begin by the spirit of Takamimusubi-no-Kami, she is succeeded by Amaterasu-Oh-Mikami. Amaterasu-Oh-Mikami states that Japan is a country governed by her children, and that there is no country that does not submit to the state. The emperors are her descendants, and this government by the emperors is the Japanese way, and the evidence that the Japanese way is superior to that of other countries. Motoori reaches this conclusion from his belief that the words in the text are literal. Motoori is an excellent but apolitical scholar of ancient Japanese literature and overlooks the fact that *Kojiki* was written in the eighth

century to legitimize government by the imperial family. Consequently, his enthusiastic reading of the text leads him to confirm a political assertion in *Kojiki* as a true fact. (Ono, 1968, pp. 25–26)

In the Meiji era in the nineteenth century, Japan drastically modified its feudal traditions, as the government rushed to build up a strong centralized nation, introducing Western technology. The first step taken by the new government in regard to religion was an attempt to establish *Shinto* as the religion of the State. According to Mizoguchi (2009), only then did *Amaterasu-oh-kami* come to be referred to as the highest of deities, intentionally linked to the authority of the Japanese emperor.

Here, we can see the same political intent as in the eighth century. After this, the notion of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as the highest deity became widespread among Japanese through the public education system instituted by the Meiji Government (1868–1912), which more or less forced people to worship her as well as the emperors as gods. Thus national identity became strongly connected to an imperialistic and militaristic system; as Anesaki (1963) noted: “the history of *Shinto* is a series of reactions influenced by the development of the national life in its social and political organization (p. 21). *What we have to learn from this history is that when myths are reconstructed there is inevitably a strong political agenda involved.* In this light, I offer some rethinking of Kawai’s (2009) interpretations of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*.

CERTAIN PROBLEMS IN KAWAI’S INTERPRETATION OF AMATERASU-OH-KAMI

Choice of text

Kawai well understood that Japanese myths have been shaped by political expediencies. He acknowledged that: “Both books [*Kojiki* and *Nihongi*] were written with some political purpose (p. 116); he did not, however, distinguish the redaction of *Kojiki* from that of *Nihongi*. Kawai preferred *Kojiki* to *Nihongi* because he thought “the *Nihonshoki* [*Nihongi*] is very much based on Chinese philosophy and is written in a ‘rational minded’ way as the official chronicle of Japan”, while he saw *Kojiki* as “the nearest to the original Japanese” (ibid., p. 116). He therefore mainly developed his interpretations from *Kojiki*. Regarding this, Kikuko Hirafuji, a comparative mythologist, raised important questions about Kawai’s Jungian approach, because it largely ignores the process of the myth’s formulation and its historical and cultural background (Hirafuji, 2004). From this, it may be seen that Kawai misunderstood the figure of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, specifically regarding how she was distorted by a patriarchal agenda.

Overlooking the power of male gods

Shin-ichi Ankei, a Japanese Jungian analyst, has said: “we should not forget that it was the World Father *Izanagi* who assigned *Amaterasu* to rule the plain of High Heaven” (Ankei, 1985, p. 46). Regarding *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto*, Kawai somewhat acknowledged the god’s importance. For example, he wrote, “the High-Producing-God [*Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto*] always stands with her. In the *Nihongi*, it is the High-Producing-God who gives orders and assembles councils; the Sun Goddess seems to stand behind him” (Kawai, 2009, p. 188). Kawai, however, referred to *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto* as a sophisticated animus image of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, brought about by

her “transformation”, and he claims that sunshine became “mild” in this way. This is typical “psychologizing of myth”, such as that engaged in by Jung (Segal, 2008). There is no reference to making sunshine milder in either *Kojiki* or *Nihongi*; thus one can say that Kawai failed to grasp the power of the male gods in Japanese myth.

The character of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*

Since Kawai mainly developed his interpretations from *Kojiki*, he failed to pick up archetypal images of mythological motifs. For example, regarding the *Ukehi*, Kawai (2009) asked:

Why the ancient authors did not talk about the marriage between the Sun Goddess and the Storm God, which is obviously suggested here? Their parents are a brother–sister couple and they are also brother–sister; a father’s daughter and a mother’s son. This is a typical divine marriage, if they really marry. (p. 178)

However, he does not discuss the issue further. Also, regarding the complicated descriptions of *Ukehi* in both texts, he concluded:

It seems to me that all this confusion comes from different viewpoints about male and female. The precedence of left over right was clearly seen in all stories. However, it is a difficult thing to know which precedes: male or female. (ibid., p. 126)

Without significant discussion about why the confusion occurs, Kawai combined different episodes to focus on a story of the “transformation” of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as the highest deity and as a symbol of women’s spiritual development, depending on what Neumann (1971) called “feminine psychology”. According to Kawai, *Amaterasu-oh-kami* is, in the first instance, a father’s daughter, like the great virgin Greek goddess Pallas Athena, because (in the *Kojiki* version) her father produced her parthenogenically. However, unlike Athena, *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, “the Sun Goddess, like the male Zeus, came to stand topmost in the Japanese pantheon” (ibid., p. 158). She could assume this role, because, when she first meets *Sosa no wo no Mikoto*, she displays a courage that shows that “masculinity is part of her inborn nature, since she was born from her father” (ibid., p. 177). However, the “Sun Goddess, who played too much [of a] male role, was compelled to realize her [lack] of femininity by losing the fight” (ibid., p. 178). After her defeat, she dramatically changed, and “became passive, to endure her brother’s terrible violence” (ibid., 180). “She became much more feminine than before, but it was not enough. To become fully a woman, she must endure, so to speak, a perfect touch, a fatal blow” (ibid., 181). At last, she is hurt by a shuttle and dies symbolically, as a result of the intrusion of the male. In other words, this is the symbolic death of a virgin goddess. Comparing female suns in other cultures, Kawai stressed: “the Sun Goddess remains a goddess and does not follow the same fate as that of the Sun’s daughters in Greek myth” (ibid., p. 187), admiring her “transformation”, and concluding: “One can say that the Sun Goddess has established her ‘passive superiority’ in Heaven” (ibid., p. 188).

These interpretations have certainly not gone unquestioned. Mizoguchi (2009), for instance, mentioned other salient details about the character of the goddess:

She did nothing except withdraw to the cave, upset with the violence of *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto*. She came out of the cave not of her own will but tricked by a lot of other gods. She took no commanding role in respond to the catastrophe. The conviction, punishment and banishment from heaven of *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* is carried out by other gods. The goddess is not at all involved in that. (p. 120)

Ankei (1985), too, commented: “These myths show that the character of the Sun Goddess is quite diverse and contains many elementary factors which are not brought together enough to form an integrated personality” (p. 48). This being so, it is impossible to perceive different aspects of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as chronological changes in a personality. Michiyochi Hayashi (1990), a Jungian scholar, pointed out: “Japanese myth is a collection of mythological motives stemming from different cultural backgrounds, and this collective character influenced Japanese culture later” (pp. 93–94). He also perceived faults in Kawai’s chronological and causal analyses. In addition, from recent post-Jungian viewpoints, the notion of an “animus possessed woman” is completely antiquated. Consequently, it is difficult for me to agree with Kawai’s interpretation of “the beautiful transformation” of women’s spiritual development, because it suggests a linear development which ignores the potency of many aspects in women’s psyches.

Japan is not a maternal society

As we have seen, it is difficult to refer to *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as the highest deity by dint of her “beautiful transformation”; nevertheless, Kawai grounded his theory on this idea. He said: “this is in strong contrast with the West, where the sun is almost always male and the moon female. Moreover, the female sun shines highest in Japan, which many people think of as ‘a country of men’” (ibid., pp. 112–123) He concluded:

The Sun Goddess is raised to a higher level by retiring and even declining. There is a paradox in the process. Under the light of this mild sun, one cannot, sometimes, differentiate clearly high and low, good and bad, Heaven and Earth, or gods and human beings. This is a very important characteristic of Japanese mythology, or, one can say, of the Japanese psyche. (ibid., p. 195)

He developed his other thoughts along this line. His approaches to Japanese myths became a landmark in Japanese mythology (Kawai, 1976, 1982; Kawai, Yuasa, & Yoshida, 1983). In these works, Kawai asserted that Japanese culture is matriarchal. He does not, however, directly refer to the figure of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as the symbol of maternity; rather, he claimed that she has opposite aspects: one as a brave soldier, and the other as a generous mother. This, he maintained, showed that “Japanese myths create a subtle balance of femininity and masculinity” (Kawai, 1982, p. 32), which he offered as proof that the “Japanese ego stands on a subtle balance of femininity and masculinity” (ibid., p. 30). A year later, he took this even further, saying, “Since, in Japan, we Japanese have *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, the [Japanese] consciousness is represented by a female and the unconsciousness by a male, and Japanese

myths pretty much remain feminine. On the other hand, Christian myth is mostly masculine” (Kawai et al., 1983, p. 198), adding that: “In Japan, men are central socially but the feminine remains psychologically dominant” (ibid., p. 199).

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that Japanese had *Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto* before *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, and the idea of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as the highest deity has now fallen under suspicion, and there are those who challenge the notion that Japan is a maternal society, such as Hayashi (1990), who saw a serious conflict between patriarchal and matriarchal ideas in the myths, rather than a subtle combination of the feminine and the masculine. Ankei (1985) also acknowledges the obverse view:

Many well-known Japanese authors have insisted that Japanese society is strongly tinged with a matriarchal atmosphere and principles. This assertion leads readers to conclude that the authority and influence of the father is weaker than that of the mother. (p. 38)

He went on to assert, however, that:

Japanese society is extremely masculine oriented. One can agree without difficulty to the statement that this country is virtually ruled one-sidedly by men ... [and] In spite of the “dominance of the maternal principle,” femininity seems to have been strictly repressed and disregarded in Japanese society. (ibid., pp. 41–42)

With reference to the myth, he argued that:

From the viewpoint of mythological studies, it is fairly exceptional that the Chief Divinity, the Deity of the Sun, is a Goddess. This peculiar fact offers one of the most relevant bases to authors who assert that Japanese society is on the whole matriarchal. First of all, however, we should not forget that it was the World Father *Izanagi* who assigned *Amaterasu* to rule the plain of High Heaven. Then we must ask if she is really so dominant and powerful as to deserve to be called the Chief Deity. (ibid., p. 46)

According to him, the goddess thus represents not the feminine or the maternal but the patriarchal collective. Kazuo Matsumura, a Japanese mythologist who explores virgin goddesses around the world, wrote that: “Only men, who were in positions to be able to form social power systems and to operate them, needed systematic myths” (Matsumura, 1998, p. 96), and continued:

the fact that *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* placed *Amaterasu-oh-kami* as an ancestor of the first emperor does not reflect that there was a time when women had more power than men, but rather that men created a special symbolic goddess, called *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, and made her central to the myth to justify their power system. (ibid., p. 96)

In short, the goddess image’s existence is solid proof that the society is very patriarchal.

The arguments of Hayashi, Ankei, and Matsumura are persuasive, and it is clear that there are significant problems with Kawai’s interpretations of *Amaterasu-oh-kami*. The reality is that

Japanese society has always been very patriarchal. From these viewpoints, it is impossible to accept the notions that Japan is a maternal society and that the Japanese psyche has a subtle combination of the feminine and the masculine that is unlike anything in the West.

GODDESS POLITICS: ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND JAPANESE MYTHS

Jung famously said that: “most of what men say about ... the emotional life of women is derived from their own anima projection and distorted accordingly” (Jung, 1982, p. 50). Both *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* were written by men, and we can say that men’s anima images were projected onto the goddess figure. Hayashi (1990) also mentioned that: “In the case of Japanese myths, it was clear that both writers and readers were men of the ruling class. Consequently, female figures were images which reflected men’s psyches” (p. 172).

The goddess is put on a pedestal as the highest deity in Japan because she did *nothing*; she is a cipher for the projections by the patriarchal and collective consciousness of the times. Thus one could say that Kawai’s Jungian approach to the myth of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* fails because it does not account for the patriarchal consciousness in the image of the goddess. What we can essentially see in the myth is a way to control the feminine in a patriarchal society, a way in which patriarchal consciousness takes away real power from women. Jung (1956) wrote:

Psychological investigators have hitherto turned their attention mainly to the analysis of individual problems. But, as things are at present, it seems to me imperative that they should broaden the basis of this analysis by a comparative study of the historical material ... For, just as psychological knowledge further our understanding of the historical material, so, conversely, the historical material can throw new light on individual psychological problem. (p. 5)

I agree, and consider Jung’s notions to be very helpful in terms of understanding a client and considering his/her treatment from various viewpoints, not only in terms of archetypal images. On the other hand, Jung (1946) also said:

As he [a doctor] has responsibility towards his patients, he cannot afford to withdraw to the peaceful island of undisturbed scientific work, but must constantly descend into the area of world events ... For this reason the psychologist cannot avoid coming to grips with contemporary history, even if his very soul shrinks from the political uproar, the lying propaganda, and the jarring speeches of the demagogues. We need not mention his duties as a citizen, which confront him with similar task. As a physician, he has a higher obligation to humanity in this respect. (pp. 177–178)

For Jung, as Andrew Samuels (2001) has pointed out, psychologists “had in their hand a tool of social criticism and a possible agent of social change for the better, just as much as something that would help individuals in emotional difficulties” (p. 6). In the 1970s, while Japan was recovering from its defeat in the war, at least economically, it introduced a Western democratic system. The traditional Japanese psychic identity, supported by conservative Buddhist or Confucian notions, became unstable. For Kawai, conditions in Japan in the 1970s loomed as a serious spiritual crisis, and, consciously or

unconsciously, his protective instincts were awakened. Kawai's view of Japan as a maternal society and as a subtle balance of feminine and masculine was connected with an insular concept of the uniqueness and superiority of Japan, just as in the past. These notions influenced not only academics but also ordinary people. The theory became amazingly popular, marking a significant new trend. Of such a dynamic, Susan Rowland (2008) wrote:

In effect, Jung's writing becomes myth itself, offering a healing narrative, or healing fiction, to the reader. To put it another way, Jung's writing is a deliberate intervention into cultural discourses: it is an attempt to improve the health of cultural consciousness by repositioning what is marginal to modernity. (p. 70)

Kawai's Jungian approaches to Japanese myths and discussions of Japanese society and psyche clearly follow this pattern.

Jung gave warnings about linking mythological images with nationalism. In 1946 he wrote: "the impressive thing about the German phenomenon is that one man, who is obviously "possessed", has infected a whole nation to such an extent that everything is set in motion and has started rolling on its course towards perdition" (p. 185). Certainly we always have to be aware of the dangers of the utilization of myths to explain society, culture and the psyche of a nation in general. As we have seen, the image of *Amaterasu-oh-kami* has been used by ruling-class men to support the authority of a patriarchal social system for centuries. This is in line with a fundamental aspect of Jung's approach. Comparing Bakhtin's works, Rowland (2008) commented: "Jung values the centralizing power of the archetype. His politics of discourse are revolutionary conservatism" (p. 72). Midori Igeta, a Japanese sociologist, analysed Jungian approaches and has referred to them as "a cultural fashion" (Igeta, 1998, p. 351) serving a renewal myth. Images and notions brought about by "the new cultural fashion" function as a prop for those who want to reconstruct Japan and the Japanese. From these viewpoints, we can say that Kawai's theories and the trends in the 1970s functioned as conservative politics.

Regarding the Japanese ego, if *Amaterasu-oh-kami* represents not the feminine or the maternal but the patriarchal collective, we cannot say that the Japanese ego is more feminine than the Western. Ankei and Shoji Yabuki, a Jungian scholar, has written that: "they often say that Japanese do not have a firm ego, but people have a very strong ego in Japan. However, it is hard to find their ego due to their collectivity and similarity" (Ankei & Yabuki, 1989, p. 206).

Rowland (2002) has noted that:

Despite well-documented misogyny, Jung had some valuable thoughts about gender and the feminine ... These ideas include the exploration of "the feminine" symbols and myths, proclaiming the presence of the feminine and masculine in each gender, protesting at the harm done to psyche and culture through repression of the feminine. (p. 67)

Kawai's works, unfortunately, did not attain this much value. Jung (1982) said: "there is no problem of 'women in Europe' without man and his world" (p. 58). In the same way, there is no problem of women in Japan without men, because Japan in *not* a maternal society.

CONCLUSION

Regarding Japanese myths, as Anesaki (1963) put it: “We must not forget that attempts have repeatedly been made to organize these primitive beliefs into a national or State religion” (p. 20). Demaris Wehr noted that: “Many feminists have criticized this use of myths and legends as a base for psychology and symbolism, claiming that the myths and legends we have inherited present patriarchal consciousness” (Wehr, 1987, p. 115). If so, what can we do now with regard to Jungian approaches to goddesses in order for them to be a more fruitful way to help women and men? Carol Christ has said:

The simplest and most basic meaning of the symbol of the Goddess is the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of female power as a beneficent and independent power ... [and] A second important implication of the Goddess symbol for women is the affirmation of the female body and the life cycle expressed in it. (Christ, 1979, pp. 277–279)

Regarding *Amaterasu-oh-kami*, Mizoguchi (2009) noted that “the scene of the *Ukehi* was rewritten many times” (p. 154), and that the origin of the myth simply means that a brother–sister couple make love by a river and produce many gods, in which we can see admiration of the magnanimous sexuality of both sexes. If the goddess is a natural sun deity called *Oho-hiru-me no muchi*, we can understand her as generous: a natural benefit to us; if she is a wife of the male sun god who weaves sacred clothes for him (Takezawa, 2011), we can find her mystical power as a shaman. Her powerlessness against the violence of *Sosa-no-wo-no-Mikoto* teaches us that we should be modest in the face of natural menaces such as the events on 11 March 2011 – the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. Her withdrawal and return, as Tsukushi (2005) observed, show that a declining male sun power can be cheered up by female shaman’s eroticism, as suggested by and in the dance of *Ame-no-uzume-no-mikoto*.

If we can succeed in releasing *Amaterasu-oh-kami* from the patriarchal codes, political intents and nationalism in *Kojiki*, Motoori and Kawai’s “*beautiful stories*”, we may find plenty of useful archetypal images in her character. As Michael Adams put it:

I would say that myth is not absent but present, although it is present in a way functionally different from the way it was previously present, and that Jungians study myth in order to demonstrate how contemporary people continue to live myth. (Adams, 2008, p. 83)

I believe that various images of goddesses can be useful sources of healing in the spiritual life of modern Japanese, and that Jungian psychology can lead this process, but not along Kawai’s lines. The Japanese Jungian approaches of the 1970s have had the effect of promoting a certain enchantment regarding the feminine and the masculine, which has supported a deeply conservative politics. In response to this, there is a need for a thorough disenchantment, a process represented in part by this article. With such disenchantment, there is a possibility of new Jungian approaches to myths suited to a modern – even post-modern and 21st-century Japan.

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