

1. 天菩比神 “Ame-no-ho-hi-no-kami”

Ama-terasu-ō-mi-kami, with her great command, announcing, “Toyo-asi-hara-no-chi-aki-no-naga-io-aki-no-mizu-ho-no-kuni is the land to be ruled by my child Masa-katsu-a-katsu-kachi-haya-hi-Ame-no-oshi-ho-mimi-no-mikoto,” entrusted the mission to him and made him descend from Heaven.^{1,2} At this Ame-no-oshi-ho-mimi-no-mikoto stood looking down from the Floating Bridge in Heaven and became afraid saying, “Toyo-asi-hara-no-chi-aki-no-naga-io-aki-no-mizu-ho-no-kuni seems to be in a threatening situation,” and ascended at once to Ama-terasu-ō-mi-kami and complained anxiously about it. Here, Takami-musubi-no-kami and Ama-terasu-ō-mi-kami, with their great command, summoned every deity of the eighty hundred thousand deities in heaven to Ame-no-yasu-no-kawara, the river bank of the Heavenly River, called Omoi-kane-no-kami into consultation and announced through him, “This Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni is the land which her majesty ordered her child to rule. And yet her majesty finds that that land is now filled with too many violent and rebellious deities. So now I ask you who should be sent to subjugate that land.” To answer this, Omoi-kane-no-kami and the eighty hundred thousand deities in heaven discussed the matter together and said, “Ame-no-ho-hi-no-kami should be sent.” So they sent to that land Ame-no-ho-hi-no-kami, who soon tried to endear himself to Ō-kuni-nushi-no-kami and neglected reporting to Amatsu-kuni for three years on his mission.³

Notes | 注釈

#1 Toyo-asi-hara-no-chi-aki-no-naga-io-aki-no-mizu-ho-no-kuni is, in a shorter form, Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni. Where is Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni? It can be safely said that Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni might be said to be the Izumo World. That is a unified world whose center is Izumo. It might be suggested that the people who edited the Kojiki thought of the San-in-do (the ancient San-in area) as the Izumo World, that district which had been famous for its cultural and technological achievements using iron and bronze, that district which had once found itself most prosperous in Japan the days long before the Kojiki, the once most advanced area in Japan, the San-in area, San-in-do; in fact the location is quite vague but we can say that Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni might be there.

#2 Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni means that Central Land of Reed-Plains. We may imagine an unreclaimed marsh or a waste field without any human maintenance with overgrown reeds. The imagery of reeds, however, is not so bad. Their thick growth can symbolize their vital force, the power of growing. Ashi-kabi is a shoot of reed and its growing force is like that of asparagus, whose energetic force enables itself to grow about 15 cm a night. Ashi (reed) has the same growing power as asparagus has, full of vital force. So going back to Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni, we can expect a vigorously developing young country from the name, full of vital potentiality to extend itself. In the Kojiki, the Izumo World is a world that is given a good name, which is to be subjugated by Ama-tsu-kami, the Heavenly Deities.

葦原中国平定 “The Subjugation of Ashi-hara-no-naka-tsu-kuni”

#3 Ame-no-hohi-no-kami is said to have been the ancestor of Izumo-kokusou-ke, the family of the priests who have long continued to preside over the Shinto rituals for Ō-kuni-nushi-no-kami at Izumo Taisha since it was established to the present day.