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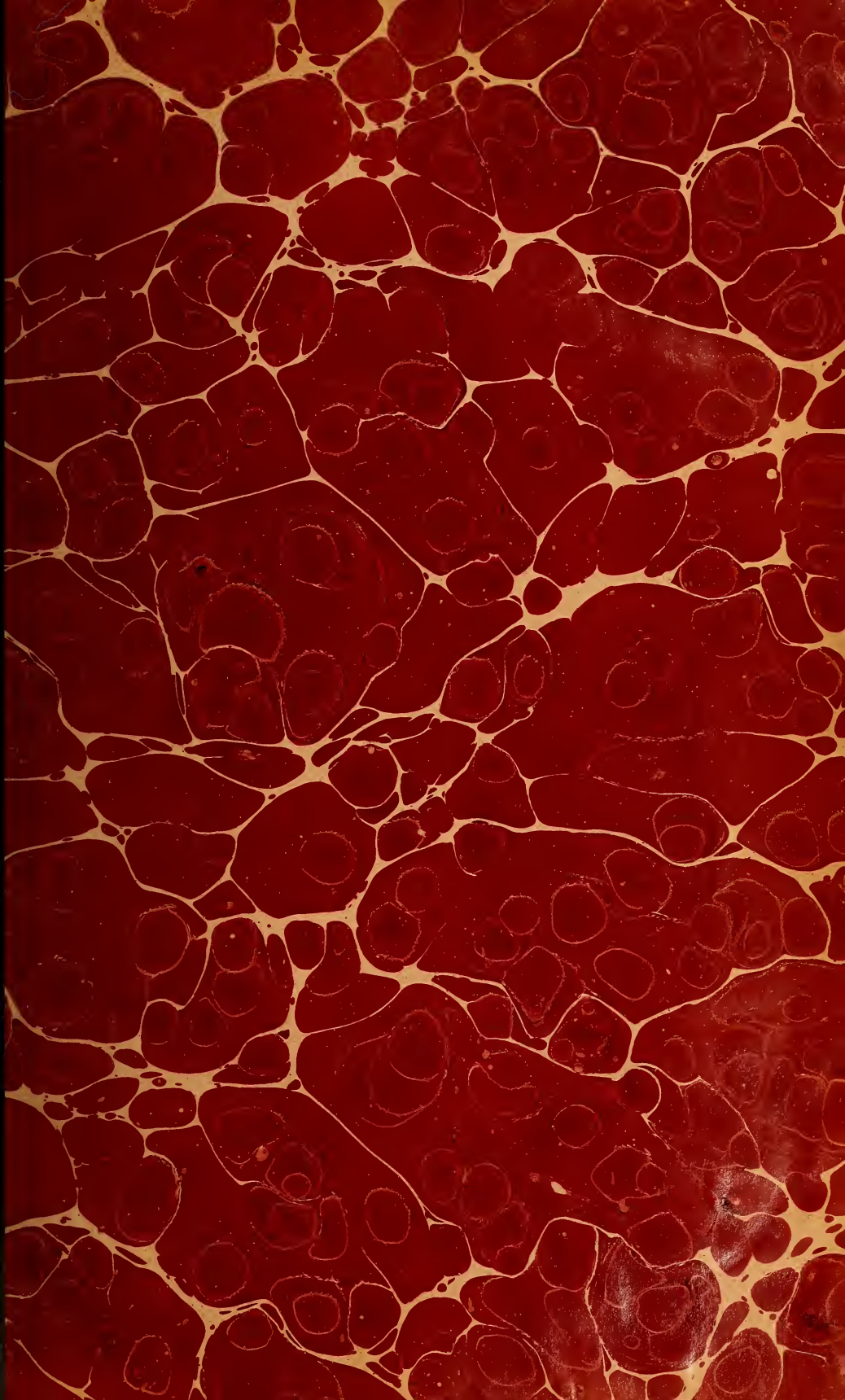
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SHINTO, OR THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE JAPANESE.

BY

ROMYN HITCHCOCK.

From the Report of the U. S. National Museum, 1891.

WASHINGTON:
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SHINTO, OR THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE JAPANESE.

By ROMYN HITCHCOCK.

Old records—Kami—Heaven—Generation of Kami—Creation of the world—The legend of hades—Birth of the Sun-Goddess and of Susano—Myth of the Sun-Goddess—The Susano myth—The sacred sword of Ise—Heavenly princes sent to subdue Terrestrial deities—The Mikado's divine ancestors—The first Mikado—Shinto as a religion—Influence of Shinto upon the national character—Liturgies and form of worship—Tendency of religious thought in Japan.

Authentic history in Japan begins only in the fifth century. Whatever is earlier than that belongs to the age of tradition, which is supposed to maintain an unbroken record for ten thousand years. Intercourse with Korea is said to date from the middle of the second century B. C. The Emperor Sujin (97–30 B. C.) is reputed to have received tribute from several Korean states; but the art of writing was not introduced until about the fifth century, and it is scarcely credible that a progressive and imitative people like the Japanese would have neglected such a useful accomplishment for five centuries after having seen it practiced in Korea. These dates are therefore doubtful. We may infer that the earliest intercourse between China and Japan was about the time when Chinese writing was introduced.

Previous to that time the national religion of the Japanese was a very simple form of ancestral worship combined with nature-worship, founded upon a most remarkable and complex mythology which ascribed to the people divine origin and descent. It is this faith which is now known by the name Shinto. The word is of Chinese origin, but it is obvious that the cult which it designates must have developed many centuries before any trace of Chinese influence was felt in Japan. Since then, however, Shinto has changed so much in its ceremonials and external character that it is now scarcely to be found in its original simplicity in any part of Japan. Indeed, it is only by the study of the oldest books that we have come to know fairly well what pure Shinto was. First came the teachings of Confucius, which spread rapidly and were received with the greatest favor throughout Japan. At the present day they still constitute an essential part of a Japanese education. Then came a few Buddhist images and sutras from Korea, in the year 552 A. D.;* but it was not until the famous priest, Kobo Daishi, in the

* As related in the Nihon-gi.

ninth century, ingeniously identified the various Buddhist saints with the Shinto deities, that the new faith became popular and finally almost supplanted the other. Then arose different schools of Shinto, and now we find the two religions borrowing from each other, until it is sometimes confusing to decide whether a certain temple is Buddhistic or Shinto, or both.

The popular mythology of Japan suggests to the mind fabulous beasts and dragons, rishi and sennin—old men of the mountain solitudes having magic powers—imps, and innumerable spirits of earth and air. But most of these have come from China or distant India. They have no place in the primitive worship of the people. Even so it is with the ancient books, for they too were compiled at a time when Chinese ideas had begun to influence the imagination of the writers, and all of them require the most critical study to eliminate foreign elements. To learn what the native beliefs were, it is necessary to adhere strictly to purely Japanese accounts, industriously comparing different texts in order to discover what was originally a part of the records. This the Japanese scholars have faithfully done. The difficulties have been very great. Although writing was originally introduced from China or Korea, there is a style of composition which from the beginning has been distinctively Japanese. But the old language is very different from that now in use. It is difficult to understand, the sense is often obscure, and there are many words handed down from very ancient time, the meanings of which were already forgotten by the old transcribers, who wrote them down phonetically.

The oldest Japanese book known is the *Ko-ji-ki*, Record of Ancient Matters, a translation of which, by Prof. Basil Hall Chamberlain, was published in the year 1882. The original work dates from 711 A. D. The Emperor Temmu (673–686 A. D.), desiring to preserve the ancient traditions in a pure form, had the records of the chief families examined and compared. A member of his household committed the whole to memory. After the death of the emperor, the Empress Gemmio (708–714 A. D.) had the record written down as it was recited.

The authenticity of this book as a true record of the ancient lore of Japan is too strong to be questioned. It relates a mythology remarkably complex and fantastic, but withal consistent and connected. Its age can not be estimated. It must have grown through many centuries, for when the *Ko-ji-ki* was written, it was a completed system and the origin and meaning of its rich symbolism had been already forgotten. Some of the language is certainly older than the sixth century and some dates from before the fourth.

Next to the *Ko-ji-ki* there is a larger but less reliable work, the *Nihon-gi*, or *Chronicles of Japan*, dated 720 A. D., which is more affected by Chinese influences. There are also numerous commentaries by Japanese scholars. The *Nihon-gi* has not been translated, but in the *Annales des Empereurs du Japon* (*Nippon o dai itsi ran*), by Klapproth, 1834, a portion is translated with suggestive notes.

Next in value to the translation of the *Ko-ji-ki* we have the extended review of the writings of Japanese scholars, with quotations from their works, by Mr. E. M. Satow. There are other disconnected sources of information, but most of our knowledge of the native literature of Shinto is due to the patient and thorough work of Chamberlain and Satow.

KAMI.

The Shinto mythology is an account of the divine ancestry of the Mikado and his people. It is traced back to the creation of the world. These divine ancestors, the spirits which inhabit their heaven or still reside in temples and wayside shrines controlling the affairs of mortals, are known as "kami." The word is usually translated "deity" or "god," but our language has no proper equivalent. Kami are only superior beings. They may be either heaven-born, celestial deities, or the departed spirits of emperors, wise men or heroes. It is doubtful if immortality is one of their attributes. Some of them, we are told, die or disappear. They are by no means always good or virtuous, but they possess many human characteristics.

The Mikado joins the innumerable company of kami after death. Departed ancestors are the kami of the family and these dwell around the household shrine. There are kami to be worshiped by all the people, others of only local importance; some are near and others so distant that it is not worth while to think of them.

Whatever object, animate or inanimate, is supposed to possess mysterious or supernatural powers may be called kami. "The fox and the dragon and goblins are eminently miraculous and dreadful creatures." The fox has a very prominent place in the folk-lore of Japan, and his influence upon men is greatly feared. Hence there are many shrines to the fox kami in the land.

The phenomena of nature, such as thunder and lightning, inanimate objects, rocks, seas, mountains, rivers, plants and trees, may be designated kami. Often there seems to be no thought of impersonation. The kami may be the thing itself, or at other times a mysterious power that dwells or moves therein.

In certain other respects a kami is a remarkable conception. By a peculiar partitive process, not easily understood, the powers or qualities associated with an individual kami may be divided and exercised by several distinct personalities, which are, at the same time, integral parts of the original conception. In other words, a single deity may be worshiped under different names, which designate specific attributes or functions of that deity, and each of these names may be applied to a separate personality. As an example, the Goddess of Food, *Toyo-uke-bime* (Abundant-Food-Lady), also known as *Uke-mochi-no-kami*, or Food Possessor, is worshiped as *Kuku-nochi-no-kami*, Producer of Trees, and as *Kayami-hime*, the Parent of Grasses. This deity is perhaps, as Satow suggests, a personification of the earth. As a more

curious and striking illustration of the exercise of different functions under changed personality, we may refer to O-kuni-nushi, who was once the great ruler of the world. He was overcome and deposed, as we shall learn further on, and became the chief deity of Hades. In this capacity he is worshiped also in two other characters—as a Gentle Spirit which pardons and as a Rough Spirit which punishes. These two spirits have separate existences. At one time, while the deity was engaged in the task of civilizing the world, and was in need of assistance, another deity came to him from the sea and proffered aid. O-kuni-nushi did not recognize him and asked who he was. The deity answered, “I am thy saki-tama,” meaning thy spirit that confers blessings.

HEAVEN.

Like many other peoples, the Japanese believe that heaven was once very near the earth, but they have no account of how it became separated from and raised above the world. Formerly it was connected with the earth by means of a “floating bridge” or a “rock boat,” or a “pillar of earth,” whereby the kami could pass from one place to the other at will. The nature of this connection is very vaguely expressed in the records. Satow conceives that the “floating bridge of heaven” was the wind.

Heaven itself was the abode of the celestial kami, but it was freely visited by the kami who lived on earth. It was not boundless space, for its area was limited. Susano made the circuit of its boundary. It was a counterpart of what was known on earth—a country like Japan in the blue sky, having a great river with a stony bed, such as the traveler in Japan knows very well, a mine from which iron was taken for the sacred mirror and fertile fields which furnished seed for the terrestrial harvest. It was not regarded as a bourne where the souls of the dead would find a resting place. It was only the particular abode of those kami of the early generations who are distinguished as the celestial kami.

GENERATION OF KAMI—THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

The preface to the Kojiki begins thus: “Now when chaos had begun to condense, but form and force were not yet manifest and there was nought named, nought done, who could know its shape? Nevertheless, heaven and earth first parted, and the three deities performed the commencement of creation; the passive and active essences* then developed and the Two Spirits became the ancestors of all things.” To learn the origin of the first three deities we must turn to the Kojiki

* The preface is not a part of the original work, but a sort of introduction or general review by the author of the written copy. It embodies some ideas of his own, which, as this allusion to the “passive and active essences,” are foreign to the book itself.

itself. They were born, as it were, spontaneously, "in the Plain of High Heaven." They were the Deity-Master-of-the-August-Center-of-Heaven, the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity, and the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity. These three kami were "born alone and hid their persons"—in other words, they disappeared or died immediately, and we hear of them no more. So with many links in the strange story before us, they are formed and disappear before we know their purpose or design, leaving gaps so blank that no effort of the imagination can complete the chain. The reader will be surprised at the long and curious names of the ancient kami. These names also are a puzzle; but the time may come when they will possess more significance.

In the passage above quoted there is a reference to the active and passive essences. This is not a Japanese idea, but essentially Chinese. To illustrate how great are the difficulties in the way of eliminating the influences of Chinese thought from the old books, as well as to afford an idea of the style of the works themselves, the following quotation from the Nihongi will suffice. Before the earth and heaven had separated, "chaos, having the form of an egg, tossed its waves like an agitated sea. It contained, however, the germs of all things; those which were pure and transparent rose and formed heaven, while those which were gross and opaque precipitated and formed the earth . . . A divine being or kami was born in the midst. An island of soft earth floated on the waters. Then appeared a thing like the stalk of a plant which transformed into a kami . . . the first of seven celestial spirits."* The story in the Nihongi is far more attractive than the bare record in the Kojiki.

The growing plant is a strange conception, more fully recorded in the Kojiki. The latter work tells us that two deities were born from "a thing that sprouted up like unto a reed shoot when the earth, young and like unto floating oil, drifted about medusa-like." This strange thing was suspended in space like a cloud. We are told that it became the sun, but immediately after we read that as it grew upwards it spread out infinitely as a cloud from a mountain top and formed heaven. A part grew downward and formed the moon. This is very confusing, but it is interesting in connection with the myth of the Sun-goddess, indicating that the sun existed long before the birth of Amaterasu, who, by some authorities, is regarded as the sun itself, and not as a deity personifying or dwelling in the sun.

A great number of kami were born in succession for various more or less obvious purposes, but to enumerate them would serve no useful purpose. There was a course of spontaneous generation whereby five "heavenly deities" and seven "divine generations" were produced, all of whom, except the last two born, "hid their persons," disappeared or died, for all kami are not immortal. These two were named respectively Izanagi, "The Male-who-invites," and Izanami, "The Female-who-in-

* Translated from Klaproth, *Annales des Empereurs du Japon*.

vites." They were commanded by the heavenly deities, who gave them a jeweled spear, to create the drifting land. They created the world, which was then only Japan. Standing on the floating bridge of heaven they thrust the end of the jeweled spear into the waste of waters and stirred the brine until it went curdle-curdle, and the drops that fell from the spear piled up and became the island Onogoro, now unknown.

The expression "bridge of heaven" is variously interpreted by authors. Some take it literally as meaning an actual bridge between heaven and earth. The word *hashi* signifies not only a bridge, but it may apply to anything which fills or bridges over space. The Sun-goddess, as will be seen, traveled from earth to heaven on the *Ame-no-mi-hashira*, which may be the wind. But most native authorities regard it as a more substantial structure, for we read of the heavenly rock-boat, *Ame-no-ihafune*, and also of stairs, reminding one of Jacob's ladder, while a later conception is a pillar of earth which afterwards fell and formed a range of high mounds in Harima, near Miyadzu, in Tango. The length of this range is 22,290 feet—presumably the distance from earth to heaven in the olden time.

The two creator gods descended from their place upon the island they had made, and after a short courtship, the details of which are too objectionable for translation, they gave birth to a child without bones, cartilagenous and unable to walk. This child, well known to the Japanese as Hirugo, also named Ebisu, one of the household gods, they placed in a basket of reeds and let him float away like a Japanese Moses. He did not die, but his story is too special for consideration here. They then gave birth to the eight* islands of Japan, beginning with Awaji at the eastern entrance to the Inland Sea.

The first island born to this couple was named Aha, but for some reason this, like the child Hirugo, was not perfect. The parents inquired of the Heavenly Deities why this was so. The latter resorted to divination and they soon discovered the reason. When the creator gods descended upon the mythical Onogoro, they walked around it in opposite directions, and when they met the woman was the first to speak. This was apparently contrary to the etiquette of even those early days, and it was impossible to make a good world if the deities were so careless of proper ceremonies. They then went around again as before, when the man spoke first, with subsequent satisfactory results.

After giving birth to the eight islands, they begot a long series of deities to govern them, and for a long time, as we may infer from sub-

*The number eight frequently occurs in the Shinto mythology and seems to be the most perfect and fortunate number. Japan was known as "the land of the eight great islands." Yezo was then unknown. There was a serpent with eight heads and eight tails; there were eight thunder deities, and in the myth of Anaterasu there is described a string of jewels eight feet long; there were eight hundred myriad deities, etc.

sequent allusions in the records, Japan was inhabited by deities, good and bad, who only gave up their authority in the land to make way for the ancestors of the Mikado and his people. But it would be tedious and unprofitable to even repeat the names of the immediate family of Izanami and Izanagi. It is rather a large one and few of its members are still known to fame. But as an illustration of the manner of naming the ancient deities, which, although I am informed it is not strictly peculiar to Japanese mythology, is certainly one of its extraordinary characteristics, several names will be given with Prof. Chamberlain's translations. Such are *Oho-koto-oshi-wo-no-kami*, Deity-great-male-of-the-great-thing; *Iha-tsuchi-biko-no-kami*, Deity-rock-earth-prince; *Kaza-ge-tsu-waka-no-oshi-wo-no-kami*, Deity-youth-of-the-wind-breath-the-great-male; *Tori-no-iha-kusa-bune-no-kami*, Deity-bird's-rock-camphor-tree-boat.* (See also pp. 498 and 502).

Izanami gave birth to thirty-three deities, the last of whom were the Deity-princess-of-great-food and the Fire-burning-swift-male-deity, which, because of his fiery nature, caused the death of Izanami when she bore him. Izanagi was so grieved at the death of his wife that he forthwith drew his sword and cut off the head of the child. From the drops of blood on the sword and from various parts of the body of the child, arose sixteen more kami, but we must pass them by. The Fire-deity, the last born of Izanami, who was so cruelly treated by his father, became immediately the ruler of the under world. Presumably it was his spirit which descended there.

THE LEGEND OF HADES.

When Izanami died she descended to the under world—Hades. The Chinese characters literally mean the "Yellow Stream," the Chinese designation of the under world. It is the habitation of the souls of the dead, for the shintoist has neither a paradise nor a hell. It is a land of gloom and darkness.

To this region Izanagi followed, wishing to see his wife once more. He broke off a large tooth from his comb, and, lighting it as a torch, entered the gloomy portals. His wife sent messengers to prevent his approach, but he persisted in his search until he found her. But her body was a mass of corruption. In her head dwelt the Great-Thunder, in her breast the Fire-Thunder, in other parts of her body the Black-Thunder, Cleaving-Thunder, Earth-Thunder, Rumbling-Thunder, and the Couchant-Thunder, in all the eight thunder deities. Izanami was

*This deity is an example of an inanimate object, a boat, raised to the rank of a kami for important service. This boat is variously described by authors. It is said to be the boat in which the boneless child, Hirugo, was set adrift, already described as a boat made of reeds. The reader must be prepared for some inconsistencies as well as startling conceptions in this narrative. The most the writer can hope for is to give a reasonably intelligible account of the Shinto mythology as a whole, leaving the details to be filled in by future researches.

angry and ashamed to be thus seen by her husband, and ordered the Ugly Female of Hades, the eight thunder deities and a host of warriors to pursue him. He escaped from these, but when Izanami herself took up the chase she overtook him. But he blocked up the Pass of Hades with a great stone, and they stood on opposite sides of it and took leave of each other, or, according to some authors, divorced each other. Izanami could not join her husband because she had eaten food from the fire of Hades. How like this is to the story of Persephone and the pomegranate. We must omit the details of this story.

Dr. J. Edkins is disposed to regard the Japanese conception of the under world as derived from China, in which country it can be traced back to 721 B. C. The divinity Tai-shan was the Taoist ruler of the souls of the dead. Fire worship, which Dr. Edkins refers to in this connection, although not unknown in Japan, does not appear to have been much practiced. When Izanagi descended to Hades she assumed supreme authority. As she undertook the pursuit of Izanagi, she feared to leave the fire deity to his own devices, lest he should do harm to the world. So she created the deities of clay and of water to restrain him. This fire deity plays but a very small part in the mythology; even his period of rule in Hades was very short. The most we can say regarding fire worship is, that a peculiar form of fire-drill is known in Japan, which was used once a year until quite recently at one of the Idzumo temples for producing fire. This apparatus has already been described by the writer.* Another similar drill is in the museum at Tokio. The hypothesis of Dr. Edkins,† that the origin of the Japanese cosmogony is to be found in the fire worship of Persia and the worship of Ormuzd in India, China and Mongolia, about the sixth century B. C., is plausible at first sight; but it is founded upon a presumption of early intercourse between the countries, which, as we have seen, is not borne out by research. Even should it prove true, the development of the Shinto mythology has certainly been in lines peculiarly independent and characteristic. I can not bring myself to admit for it such a comparatively late origin as the sixth century B. C.

The under world of the ancient Japanese may have been quite like the Chinese and Persian idea, but the Japanese of the present day are a progressive people, and with them there is advancement in the under world as upon earth. The Ise pilgrims have many more or less untuneful songs which they chant as they slowly tramp along, and here is one which I heard in the evening at a native hostelry, where I stopped one rainy night, on my pilgrimage to the ancient shrines. It was written down for me by the pretty daughter of the house, and afterwards translated by a student, Mr. K. Nagai.

* See Hough, Walter, "Fire-making apparatus," Report U. S. National Museum, 1888, p. 552.

† Persian Elements in Japanese Legends. Trans. Asiatic Society of Japan, XVI, 1-9.

AN ISE MAIRI.

Now that Hades is enlightened by the knowledge of the present age, the souls of the dead cross the river Sandzu* on steamers, while all places in the realm are connected by a network of telegraph lines. The Jizo (idol of the Buddhists) who reigns in Sai no kawara (where the souls of children go), disguised as a man of the fashionable world, stands among the children in the dress of a modern school-master.

The last line is a sly cut at the village schoolmaster in his foreign clothes.

BIRTH OF THE SUN GODDESS AND OF SUSANO.

Izanagi was defiled by his visit to Hades, and went to a river to cleanse himself. Among the many kami which arose from each article of clothing as he disrobed, and as he bathed, three only deserve extended notice. These are named Amaterasu, the Sun-goddess; Tsukiyomi-no-kami, the Moon-god, and Susano-no-mikoto, one of the most remarkable personages in this strange mythology.

Amaterasu was born from the right eye of Izanagi. She was bright, splendid, and was appointed to rule the Plain of High Heaven. She received a necklace of precious stones, which reminds one of the *megatama* and *kudatama* found in ancient Japanese tombs, and ascended to heaven by the *ame-no-mi-hashira*, where she rules as the Sun-goddess. From her, as we shall see, the Mikado traces his ancestry.

Amaterasu is worshiped as the deity of the sun. The sun is itself regarded as the goddess visible, and yet there is some inconsistency of views in this connection. Light and darkness were known before her birth, for Izanagi required a torch in the under world. When we come to the great myth of the Sun-goddess hiding in a cave, we shall be told that darkness prevailed in heaven and earth until she again appeared.

The Moon-god was born from Izanagi's right eye,† and from his august nose was born Susano, who became ruler of the land. He was a very impetuous and troublesome deity. Not being quite satisfied with his position he began to weep, "and the fashion of his weeping was such as by his weeping to wither the green mountains into withered mountains, and to dry up all the rivers and seas," and the sound of bad deities "was like unto flies in the fifth moon." So Izanagi expelled him from the land, and he forthwith ascended to heaven, whereupon all the mountains and all the country quaked, and the Sun-goddess was alarmed by the great noise. But he said to her, "I have no evil intent. It is only that when the Great-august-deity, our father, spoke, deigning to inquire the cause of my weeping, I said:

* The Buddhist Styx.

† Some Japanese authors maintain that Susano was the Moon-god, born of Izanagi's right eye. According to Chinese lore, the sun and moon were born from the eyes of PuanKu.

'I wail because I wish to go to my deceased mother's land' (Hades); whereupon the Great-august-deity said: 'Thou shalt not dwell in this land,' and deigned to expel me with a divine expulsion. It is, therefore, solely with the thought of taking leave of thee that I have ascended hither." Then they swore to each other from opposite banks of the tranquil river of heaven, and from the mist of the breath of each various new deities were born. Two of these are remarkable for their names, which were, His-augustness-truly-conqueror-I-conquer-conquering-swift-heavenly-great-great-ears, and Her-augustness-princess-of-the-island-of-the-offing.

MYTH OF THE SUN-GODDESS.

We now come to the great and most interesting myth of the Sun-goddess. From it may be traced the origin and significance of many customs still followed in Japan, and the meaning of the myth itself is a subject worthy of speculation and research. Susano performed many wicked acts and caused much destruction to fields and watercourses.* In heaven he broke a hole in the roof of the weaving room where the Sun-goddess and other goddesses were at work weaving the garments of the deities. He let fall into their midst a heavenly horse which he had flayed. This caused a great commotion among them and Amaterasu retired into a cave and closed the entrance with a stone. The plain of high heaven was obscured and darkness reigned over the earth. Then the eight hundred myriad† deities assembled in the dry, stony bed of the tranquil river of heaven to devise a means to entice the goddess from the cave. Various plans were proposed, but Omokikane-no-kami was a great thinker, and his plan was followed. So they made a mirror of iron from the mine of heaven, in shape like the sun, and a string of five hundred curved jewels eight feet in length, and pulled up by its roots a *Cleyera Japonica* with five hundred branches, upon which they hung the mirror and the string of beads and offerings of white and blue cloth. They then resorted to divination by means of a foreleg of a buck placed in a fire of cherry bark, and examined the crack produced. Then the deity Ama-no-futo-dama-no-mikoto took the tree with its offering in his hands and recited liturgies, while another played on a bamboo flute and another on a kind of harp made by placing six bows with their strings upward,‡ and others kept time by striking two pieces of wood together. Bonfires were lighted, and a deity known as Usume, the Heavenly-alarms-female, placed a circular box or sounding board before the cave and danced upon it as though

* From the narrative one would suppose that Japan was inhabited at this mythical period by people who cultivated the soil, marked out fields, etc. The story of the eight-headed serpent and the old couple with eight children (page 500) and many other allusions lead to the same conclusion.

† The number means a great many.

‡ Doubtless the origin of the *koto*.

possessed, and allowed her clothing to fall, whereat all the assembled deities laughed until the plain of heaven shook.

Hearing the noise and laughter the goddess within the cave was astonished and fain would know the cause of mirth so unseemly during her seclusion. She cautiously peeped out and said: "Methought that owing to my retirement the plain of heaven would be dark; how is it, then, that the Heavenly-alarmed-female makes merry and that the deities all laugh?" Usume replied, "We rejoice and are glad because there is a deity more illustrious than thine Augustness." By this was meant the iron mirror, which we therefore infer was a new invention, never before seen by the goddess. At the same moment the mirror was thrust before the face of Amaterasu, whereat she was so astonished that she stepped forth to gaze in it. Then a deity who stood beside the door seized her hand and pulled her forward, when another drew a straw rope behind her and said, "Thou must not go back farther than this." Thus heaven and the Central Land of Reed Plains (Japan) became light once more.

The retirement of Amaterasu may signify an eclipse of the sun, which the Japanese still regard with terror. They light candles, recite prayers, and make a fearful din by beating gongs and kettles to dispel the darkness. Perhaps it symbolizes the change of seasons, Amaterasu representing summer and Susano winter. The meaning is still obscure.

The myth has given origin to many practices which are familiar to persons who have traveled observantly in the country. The cut paper *gohei*, which hang on every temple and every household shrine, often attached to short wands of wood, represent the offerings of cloth on the bush with five hundred branches. The dance of Usume before the cave is undoubtedly represented by the pantomimic *kagura*, danced by young girls at the temples of Ise and elsewhere. The mask of Usume is frequently seen in Japanese homes. The music to be heard at Shinto shrines on any *matsuri* or festival day is of very ancient character, while the bamboo flute and the two pieces of wood are but too conspicuous on all occasions.

The straw rope is to be seen everywhere: on temple gateways, in festoons around shrines, along the fronts of houses, over doorways, usually having *gohei* entwined with it. This is particularly true at the New Year time. The *gohei* are commonly regarded as emblems of purity, while the straw rope protects against the entrance of evil. When on certain occasions the emblems of a shrine are removed from their places they are protected from evil influences by a straw rope around them. The custom of suspending a straw rope over doorways may be attributed to Susano. It is related that he was once overtaken by a storm and found shelter with a poor villager. In return for his kindness Susano told the villager how to protect himself and his family from a plague which was coming, by wearing a belt of twisted grass. He also taught him to guard against further visits of the plague god by stretching a straw rope across the entrance to his house.

The original sacred mirror made in heaven now rests in a box, wrapped in many folds of silk, in the principal shrine at Ise, a most precious emblem of the deity. The silk wrappings are never removed, but as they become worn new ones are added outside. This mirror has a flaw which was caused by striking it against a rock when it was held before the goddess. How it came to its present place we shall learn further on.

Counterparts of this mirror are to be found in nearly every Shinto shrine; but, contrary to the usual belief of travelers, the mirror is not always visible in Shinto temples. The sacred emblem, whether it be a mirror or something else, is always hidden from sight in the purest Shinto shrines.

THE SUSANO MYTH—THE SACRED SWORD OF ISE.

We must now follow the adventures of Susano. He was subsequently sent by Amaterasu to visit the goddess of Food.* She set before him some food, but he deemed it unclean, and, with his usual inconsiderate impetuosity, he forthwith cut off her head and reported the occurrence to Amaterasu. From the body of the deity grew various grains and seeds of every kind, mulberry-trees, and silkworms, and all these things were afterwards grown in the field of heaven, and from thence, in due time, transmitted to Japan.

Finally Susano was banished from heaven and took up his abode in Idzumo,† in the west of Japan. His adventure there with the great eight-headed serpent is known to every Japanese child. There was an old couple who had eight daughters, seven of whom had been devoured in succession by a serpent which had eight heads and eight tails, and whose body covered seven hills. They besought Susano to kill the monster lest it should take the last daughter, and he agreed to do so if he might afterwards make the daughter his wife. The parents consented, and he immediately transformed the daughter into a fine-tooth comb, which he stuck in his hair. He then directed them to prepare eight vats of liquor. When the serpent came it plunged a head into each vat and drank, then all the heads laid down and slept. Then Susano killed it, but when he tried to cut the middle tail his sword broke, and he found within the tail a great sword, which he carried to the Sun-goddess. This is the sacred sword of the Ise shrines. It was

*She is known as O-getsu-hime, Uke-mochi-no-kami, and Toyo-uke-hime. Her shrine is at Ise.

† There are families in Japan who trace their ancestry to Susano in Idzumo. This province is the part of Japan which seems to have been the earliest home of the Japanese. It is the scene of their ancient traditions and was perhaps their home until the famous Jimmu Tenno, in the seventh century B. C., began his march to Yamato, subduing savage deities and people on his way. The antiquarian would doubtless find many interesting relics in the ancient province, which offers an almost unopened field for exploration. My friend Mr. Gowland found there some of the finest and most remarkable tombs, quite different from any elsewhere known in Japan, but his time was too limited for extended observations.

conferred upon Ninigi when he came from heaven to govern the country, as we shall see further on.

The names "Grass cutter" and "Herb-quelling sword," which are often applied to this weapon, come from a later time when, in the reign of Keiko (A. D. 71-130), Yamato-take took the blade from Ise to use in subduing the savage tribes in the east and north. He was drawn into an ambush and his enemies set fire to the herbage on all sides of him. He mowed away the grass—or, it is said, the blade leaped from the scabbard and itself cut the grass around—and started a counter fire which saved his life.

HEAVENLY PRINCES SENT TO SUBDUE TERRESTRIAL DEITIES.

The record now tells of a great number of deities who were necessary to care for the world and make it fruitful, but most of them can be passed without mention.

After a time there began to be trouble in Japan because of the numerous savage terrestrial deities, and a consultation was held in heaven to determine who should be sent down to govern the world. O-kuni-nushi was then the Deity-master-of-the-great-land, and a very powerful ruler he was. A prince was sent down to control him, but he made friends instead and failed to make any report. A second was sent, but he married one of the princesses and strove to gain possession of the land himself. A third came down in the form of a pheasant and perched in a cassia tree, where he began to talk. The princess hearing the words, besought her husband to kill the bird, which he did with his heavenly arrow. But the arrow ascended to heaven where it was recognized as belonging to the faithless prince. Then one of the deities thrust it back through the hole by which it entered heaven, saying: "If this arrow be shot by the prince in obedience to our commands, let it not hit him. If he has a foul heart let him perish by this arrow." So the arrow struck the prince and killed him.

Finally the powerful O-kuni-nushi was subdued, but as a condition of his submission he required a temple to be built for him in Idzumo, where he might receive proper services of worship, the pillars of which should reach from the nethermost rock bottom to the cross-beams in the plain of high heaven. O-kuni-nushi became the ruler of Hades, and as such is worshiped and propitiated. The temple built for him in Idzumo is the famous O-yashiro, well known to pilgrims in that land.

THE MIKADO'S DIVINE ANCESTORS.

The grandson of the Sun-goddess then descended to rule in Japan. His name was Ninigi-no-mikoto. With him descended a numerous company, and from him and his train the imperial family and the Japanese people trace their ancestry and base their claim to a divine origin. Ninigi bore, as the insignia of heavenly authority, the mirror which had

allured the Sun-goddess from her cave, the string of sacred jewels, and the sword found by Susano in the serpent's tail. The Sun-goddess charged him thus: "Regard this mirror exactly as if it were our august spirit, and reverence it as if reverencing us." Transubstantiation is an older idea among Japanese than among our own priests.

THE FIRST MIKADO.

A pleasing story follows about the beautiful Princess-blossoming-brilliantly-like-the-flowers-of-the-trees, who bore three sons named Fire-shine, Fire-climax and Fire-subside. The first lost his brother's fishhook in the sea and though he made five hundred others to replace it, his brother would not be satisfied. So Fire-subside sailed in a boat to a palace built of fish scales, the abode of an ocean deity, and there fell in love with the Sea-god's daughter. After three years he told the story of the fishhook. The Sea-god called together all the fishes of the sea and the hook was found in the throat of a *tai*. The Prince was sent home on the back of a crocodile, and gave the hook to his brother. The Princess, his wife, bore him a son named His-Augustness-Heaven's-sure-height-prince-wave-limit-brave-cormorant-thatch-meeting-incompletely. This son with an unusual name married his maternal aunt and begot children, one of whom was His-Augustness-Divine-Yamato-Prince, who is the recognized first Mikado, better known by his posthumous title Jimmu Tenno, whose reign is reputed to have been from B. C. 660 to B. C. 585, when he died at the age of 127 years.

From this point on the Kojiki is a record of the emperors down to the time of Suiko (A. D. 593 to 628). For a thousand years, to the time of Richiu (A. D. 400), the chronology is quite as uncertain as the events recorded. In the earliest times numerous terrestrial deities ruled the country, who either freely submitted to the emperors or were compelled to do so. We read that as Jimmu Tenno advanced to subdue the barbarian tribes in the north and east, the Earth-spiders, with tails, and the savages called Ebisu,* supposed to be the Ainos, he was guided across the waters of the Inland Sea (?) by a friendly deity riding on a tortoise, and, as the bad deities were still numerous on the land, a great crow was sent from heaven to lead him.

SHINTO AS A RELIGION.

I have thus endeavored to present in an intelligible and connected form the salient features of the mythology of Shinto. It has been no light task to worry through the details of it as found in the Kojiki and other books and make a readable story. Fantastic as it all is, there is still a thread of connection from the beginning which enforces the

* For a résumé of our knowledge of these people, see the author's memoirs on The Ainos of Yezo and on The Pit-Dwellers of Yezo. Report of U. S. National Museum, 1890.

conviction that it is not an idle invention of the fancy, but rather a product of slow development. We can not go far enough back in time to discover its origin. From the very first we find a long line of specialized kami. There is very little in it that can be traced to other lands, and that little not very confidently. It is Japanese in its inception and has remained so. We may imagine that it is an outgrowth of some primitive form of sun worship, for the sun is still adored as the source of light and life—the great ancestor of the emperor and people. Afterwards the phenomena of nature came to be represented by kami, and the original functions and attributes of these have become changed and forgotten.

Ancestral worship is one of its great features. The spirits of the dead are believed to live about their tombs or in temples built for them. They are Kami, dwelling in the unseen world around us, with power to influence the fortunes and destiny of the living. The object of all worship is to insure protection from evil and success in the affairs of the present. Future rewards and punishments are not offered to make men good. The ruler of the under world has it in his power to make the entering spirits more or less uncomfortable, and he should therefore be propitiated by prayers and offerings, to secure his favor.

But there certainly is a future life, although it has been denied by some, who think that because there is no dread torture chamber for the wicked or land of eternal happiness for the good, there can be no thought of a future. But the Shintoist has no fear of death. To him "Life has no more consistency than a dream, and no trace of it remains." The future life is totally distinct from the present and a Japanese is not good because he fears eternal fire and torment. Evil and good are both clearly recognized. One of the great annual ceremonies is that of purification. If there is no written code of morals, a Japanese writer defends his faith by saying that "only immoral people like the Chinese require a system of moral teaching." Every event is attributed to an act of the gods. If anything goes wrong in the world, if the wicked prosper and the good suffer misfortune, it is because the evil gods are sometimes too strong for Amaterasu to restrain them. "The Chinese were ignorant of this fact and were driven to invent the theory of heaven's decrees."

The Japanese child learns the Irova as our own children do the alphabet, and these are the thoughts instilled by their earliest teaching and which are ever before them in after life:

Color and odor alike pass away.

In our world nothing is permanent.

The present day has disappeared in the profound abyss of nothingness.

It was but the pale image of a dream; it causes us not the least regret.

The traveler in Japan is often astonished to find houses of pleasure lining the principal thoroughfares leading to the great temples. It is scandalous to observe how carnal pleasures are associated with religious worship. But as there are bad deities to be propitiated, these houses

and theaters and dancing stages entertain them well and, moreover, the good deities are pleased when the people are happy.

In the early days of foreign intercourse, when the Dutch were confined at Nagasaki, and every means was taken to prevent them from learning about the people and the country, the indefatigable Kämpfer was able to gain some insight into their religious beliefs. His account is as follows: "The more immediate end which the followers of this religion propose to themselves is a state of happiness in this world. They have indeed some, though but obscure and imperfect, notions of the immortality of our souls, and a future state of bliss or misery; and yet as little mindful they are of what will become of them in that future state, so great is their care and attention to worship those gods, whom they believe to have a peculiar share in the government and management of this world, with a more immediate influence, each according to his functions, over the occurrences and necessities of human life—and although they acknowledge a Supreme Being, which, as they believe, dwells in the highest of Heaven, and though they likewise admit of some inferior gods whom they place among the stars, yet they do not worship and adore them, nor have they any festival days sacred to them, thinking that beings which are so much above us will little concern themselves about our affairs."

This is a remarkably correct summary by a man who could not have known anything about the mythology itself. The "Supreme Being" is the Sun-goddess, but it is strange that in a system dealing so largely with the sun and moon the stars should not be conspicuously mentioned.

The department of religion thus summed up the requirements of the Shinto faith in 1872:*

1. Thou shalt honor the gods and love thy country.
2. Thou shalt clearly understand the principles of heaven and the duty of man.
3. Thou shalt revere the Mikadot as thy sovereign and obey the will of his court.

INFLUENCE OF SHINTO UPON THE NATIONAL CHARACTER.

The religion of a people dominates their thoughts. This fact too frequently leads to a totally erroneous interpretation. It is the thoughts, fears, beliefs and dreams of a people which have made their religion. This, when formed into a system, either by natural growth or by the labor of an organized priesthood, becomes an expression of the religious thoughts and feelings at the time—otherwise a system so formed would be rejected by the people. Once accepted it becomes the dominating

* Griffis: *The Mikado's Empire*.

† Implicit obedience to the Mikado is required. It is admitted that he may not always be good, but as his real character is that of a god, his authority is never to be disputed. It is a remarkable fact that never during the history of Japan have the people knowingly rebelled against or opposed the will of the Mikado. They have been misled at times by designing leaders, but in intent they have ever been faithful. The possession of the Mikado's person has always been a source of strength to either of the contending forces.

influence and because religious thought is always narrow and conservative, it is usually much behind the intelligence of its adherents, although retaining its influence and authority.

With this understanding clearly before us it may be asked if the Japanese people believe this wonderful record of the origin of themselves and their country and how much it has influenced their character as a nation. Do our own people believe the book of Genesis, or the text of their own scriptures? How long does it take for a faith that has grown during centuries to die away? The idea that the Japanese are a people who have so assimilated and digested foreign knowledge as to be able to think as we do is most erroneous. There are many educated Japanese who believe, or still pretend to believe, in the divine descent of the Mikado, and who accept the national chronology from Jimmu Tenno down. But after all, this is no more absurd than many beliefs of our own good people, and we must not forget that we too have houses of glass. It is scarcely a quarter of a century since the following words were published by the Mikado; "I am concerned standing as I do, between Tensho-Daijin (Amaterasu) and my people." "My house, that from Jimmu Tenno on to the present day has ruled over Dai Nippon (Great Japan), according to the will of the gods." His is thus the oldest dynasty on earth, his family having ruled Japan for 2,550 years, tracing its ancestry for still 10,000 years back, to the creation of the world.

It is an old notion of the Japanese that they are superior to all other nations and a strange chapter might be written upon the consequences past and present of that belief. It is so essentially a part of Japanese character that it cannot be immediately outgrown. At the basis of it lies the Shinto faith. How true this is, and how firmly grounded the conceit is may be learned from the native writings in defence of Shinto. The subject is of interest as showing to what an extent the Japanese character conforms to the spirit of the ancient teachings, and it becomes of the greatest importance that we should understand it well in our political and social intercourse with the Japanese. They have a well-known story of Wasaubivauwe, which points a moral they would do well to heed.

The utmost efforts of the Shinto writers have been put forth to belittle Japan's indebtedness to China for letters and philosophy. The following quotations are given without regard to authority or chronological order, but the latest date from early in this century. A doubtful critic asserts that there must have been total darkness before the sun was born, a fact inconsistent with the statement that plants already existed at the time. The answer is worthy of certain logicians of our own time and country: "Although she (the sun) will continue to shine as long as heaven and earth endure, she was born in Japan, and her descendants rule over the empire to this day. The difficulty of reconciling the statements that the world was plunged into darkness

when she retired into a cavern and that darkness did not exist before she was born, is one that would strike a child's intelligence. The critic need not make so much fuss about this point, as if it were an entirely new discovery of his own. The very inconsistency is the proof of the authenticity of the record, for who would have gone out of his way to invent a story apparently so ridiculous and incredible. The acts of the gods are not explained by ordinary principles." (Translation of E. Satow.)

China suffers rather severely at the hands of the Japanese critics. One of them thus disposes of a very ancient tradition: "There is a tradition in China that the left and right eyes of Puan-ku became the sun and the moon, which is, however, usually discredited, because the natives of that country, being admirers of false knowledge, assign the origin of these two luminaries to the positive and negative essences. The real truth is, that the sun and the moon were produced when Izanagi washed his eyes after returning from his search after Izanami in the nether world. The tradition has evidently traveled to China and assumed the perverted form in which we find it there." (Satow.) What infinite assurance! The story was current in China before the Japanese began to exist as a nation. But this is only an introduction. We add more quotations without further remarks.

"People who have been misled by their foreign studies are wont to say that Japan is a little country, as if extent of territory were any criterion of the importance or rank of a state."

"From the fact of the divine descent of the Japanese people proceeds their immeasurable superiority to the natives of other countries in courage and intelligence."

"It was not out of vainglory that the inhabitants of this country called it the land of the gods. The gods who created all countries belonged to the Divine Age and were all born in Japan, so that Japan is their native country and all the world acknowledges the appropriateness of the title. The Koreans were the first to become acquainted with this truth," etc.

"As it was Japan which lay directly opposite the sun when it separated from the earth, it is quite clear that Japan lies on the summit of the globe."

"Foreign countries were of course produced by the power of the creator gods, but they were not begotten by Izanagi and Izanami, nor did they give birth to the goddess of the sun, which is the cause of their inferiority. The traditions about the origin of the world which are presented in foreign countries are naturally incorrect, just as the accounts of an event which has happened at the capital become distorted when they travel to a province and it comes to be believed that the province was the scene of the event." (Satow.)

LITURGIES AND FORM OF WORSHIP.

The services at the temples consist in the repetition of prayers and rituals of prescribed form, with prostrations and presentation of offerings. The pure Shinto ceremonial is now but rarely seen, and only at two or three famous shrines. In the old time there was no priesthood, but the principal duty of the Mikado was the celebration of the rites. In the seventh century the Emperor Kotoku said to his minister, "First serve the gods, afterwards consider matters of government." The Mikado was the chief priest, and the person who at a later date read the liturgies at the capital was a descendant of one of the deities who came from heaven with Ninigi. The priestly office is still hereditary in the same family or tribe named Nakatomi.*

The officers in charge of Shinto shrines wear ordinary clothing, over which when they officiate they throw a priestly robe of white.

Shinto seems to have been a well-organized religious system at an early day. The book of ceremonial law, published in the year 927, contains much relating to the Shinto worship, including the ceremonies for special occasions, organization of the priesthood, services at the Ise temples, a list of temples entitled to government support, and the chief *norito* or rituals. This book was several times reprinted—the last time in 1723—by order of the Government. Among the liturgies it contains Mr. Satow enumerates the following:

Service of the praying for harvest.

Service of the goddess of food.

Service of the goddess of wind.

Service of the temple of Inaki.

General purification on the last day of the sixth month.

Harvest festival.

Service of the temples of Ise.

The offerings to be made at the shrines are also prescribed. In the old time the praying for harvest was celebrated on the fourth day of the second month. The ministers of state, officers of the Shinto religion, the priests and priestesses of the temples maintained by the Mikado, assembled at the office for the worship of the Shinto gods, while throughout the country the chiefs of the local administrations and governors of provinces led the worship at other shrines. The articles offered included silk and hemp cloth, models of swords, a spear-head, a shield, bow and quiver, edible seaweed, salt, saké, and to each of the temples at Ise a horse for the god to ride, a cock to tell the time and a domesticated boar for food. In ancient times curved jewels or beads (*magatama*) were offered.

* Up to the year 1868 the nominal prime minister of the Mikado belonged to this family, which in the seventh century changed its name to Fujiwara, famous in Japanese history.

An abstract from one of the rituals, taken from Mr. Satow's translations, will sufficiently indicate their style and character:

"I declare in the presence of the sovran gods of the harvest. If the sovran gods will bestow in many bundled ears and in luxuriant ears the late ripening harvest which they will bestow, the late ripening harvest which will be produced by the dripping of foam from the arms,* . . . then I will fulfill their praises by setting up the first fruits in a thousand ears, . . . raising high the beer-jars, filling and ranging in rows the bellies of the beer-jars, I will present them† in juice and in ear."

Following this come further declarations and promises of offerings to numerous Kami, whose names are recited as Divine Producer, Fulfilling Producer, Lofty Producer, Vivifying Producer, Great Goddess of Food and others, because these grant a "luxuriant age." The ritual is of universal application and is used when the Mikado makes his offerings to the great shrines of the national Kami.

Besides the liturgies we find prayers, as this: "I say with awe, deign to bless me by correcting the unwitting faults which, seen and heard by you, I have committed, by blowing off and clearing away the calamities which evil gods might inflict, by causing me to live long like the hard and lasting rock, and by repeating to the gods of heavenly origin and the gods of earthly origin the petitions which I present every day, along with your breath, that they may hear with the sharp-earedness of the forth-galloping colt." (Satow.)

This prayer is addressed to the gods of wind at Tatsuta, in Yamato. There is in it a confession of sinfulness and the idea of divine intercession, the petition being at least borne on the winds, the breath of the deities, to more distant Kami.

Home worship is conducted before a simple household shrine known as the *kami-dana*. The deities are too numerous to be all mentioned. It is only necessary to name the principal ones and to address the others in a general prayer; or one may simply adore the residence of the Mikado, the *kami-dana*, the spirits of ancestors, the local patron god and the deity presiding over one's calling in life.

The ancient sun worship can be witnessed at the hour of sunrise throughout Japan in the streets, in the doorways, on bridges and in the fields. Once I was at Ise and I walked, with a thousand pilgrims, to witness a glorious sunrise over the sea and the famous rocks at Futaga-ura. There they gather every morning and greet the nation's god, at a spot famed in native art and story and there they find an inspiration in the scene, which appeals to the Japanese innate sense of the beautiful in nature, if not to a deep religious sentiment, which perhaps they do not possess.

* Referring to the dripping from the arms of the laborers in setting out the rice plants in flooded fields.

† The first fruits.

TENDENCY OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN JAPAN.

If the forms and ceremonies of worship among heathen peoples, and among the illiterate in our own land, are not an exaggerated indication of the reverence and religious sentiment of the worshipers, we can well understand how religions have ever exercised a controlling influence upon mankind. But in Japan the religious sentiment has not been strong. The people may believe in the efficacy of prayer and they are quite as devout in the formal observances of their religion as need be to insure prosperity and long life. They make long pilgrimages to famous shrines and offer daily prayers before ancestral tablets. But there is not much feeling or sentiment about such worship.

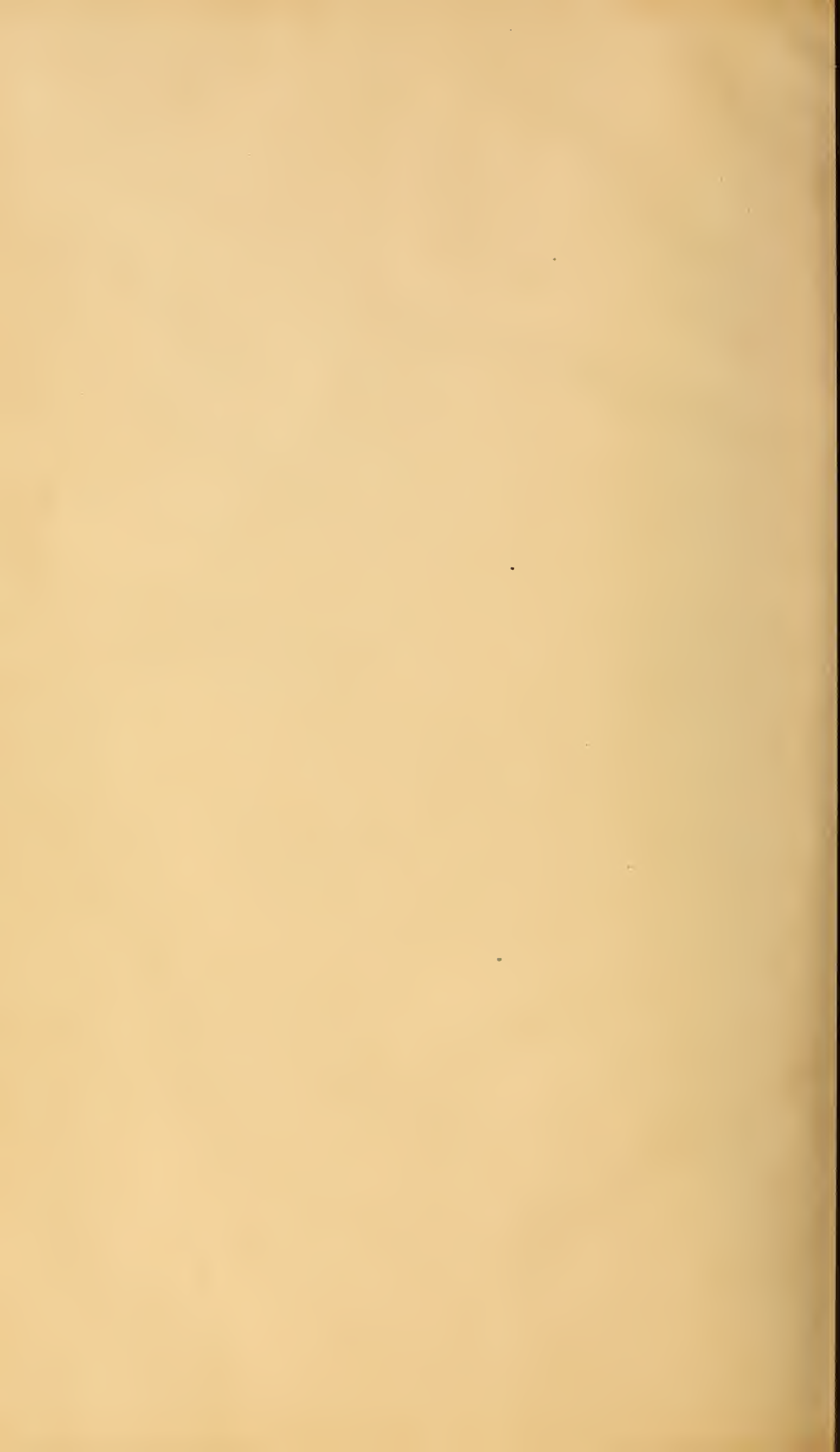
Christianity is supposed to be making its way, but it can never gain a strong footing in either Japan or China. The statistics of converts given by the missionaries are entirely misleading. Christianity is not adapted to the Japanese character. Its gruesome teachings of a jealous God ruling supreme over the destinies of man, whose justice is without mercy, involving a hell and eternal torment, will never be received by them. The new teaching is having some influence, although not what is intended by its ministers. It is destroying the last vestiges of faith in the religion of the country and offering nothing acceptable in return. The consequence is, that the Japanese are becoming, through the misdirected zeal of Christian missionaries, sustained by the widow's mites and children's pennies from home Sunday schools, a nation of independent, liberal thinkers on religious subjects. It is the nature of man, however, to have some form of religion; therefore, it is not improbable that eventually the Japanese will evolve, out of the elements of their own mythology, the teachings of Confucius, Buddha and Christ, a new faith which will prove acceptable to the people. They may go even further than this and by adopting the teachings of Christ, shorn of the theological travesties of modern Christianity, give to the world a new religion worthy of the age. I believe them capable of accomplishing such a work.

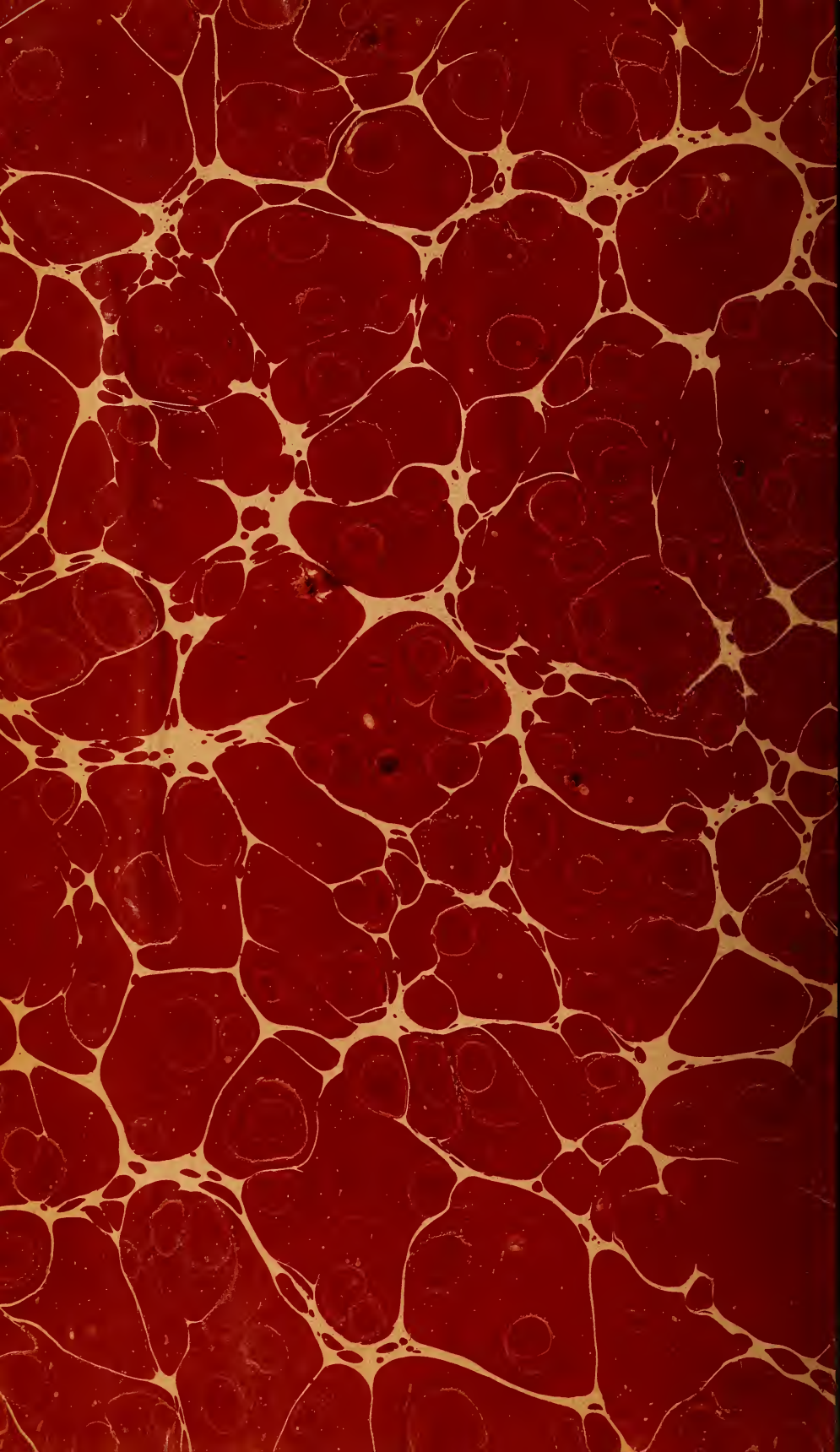
No account of the religion of Japan can be complete without a description of the temples which are scattered in great numbers over the land, but owing to the length of this article already and also to the fact that the author is too far from home to select and arrange the illustrations necessary to a proper understanding of temple architecture, it is deemed best to defer this part of the subject until his return home.

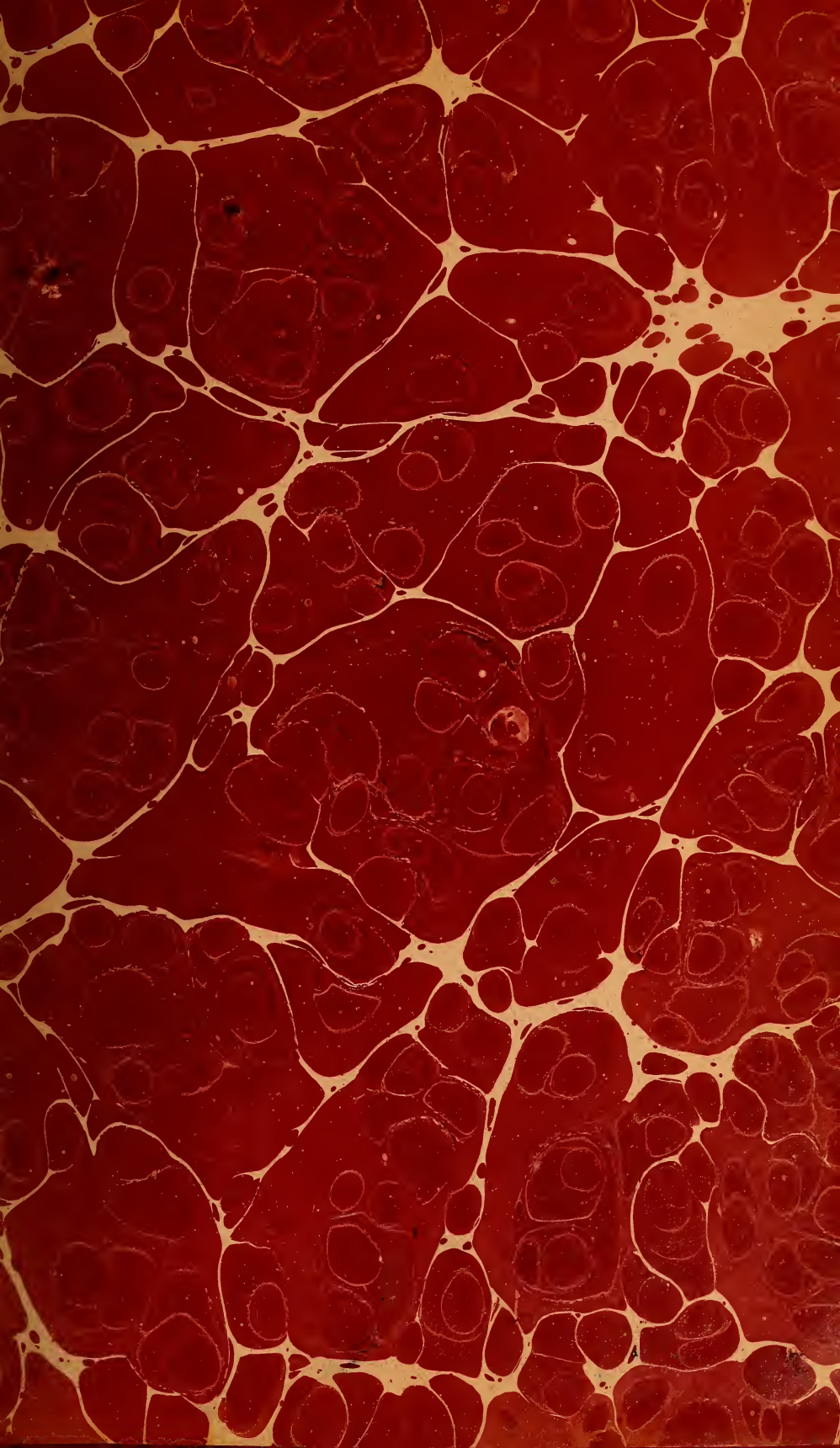
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