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Tennō (天皇):

The Central Asian Origin of Japan's Solar Kingship

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By Mark A. Riddle

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Introduction

Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354), a court noble whose political-historical work *Jinnou Shoutouki* (神皇正統記, Chronicle of the Legitimate Succession of the Divine Emperors) was the classic expression of the imperial ideology that provided an official state dogma for Japan from the Meiji Restoration (1868) until well into the twentieth century, wrote:

Japan is the land of the gods. The divine ancestor Kuni-no-tokotachi-no-mikoto laid its initial foundation, and the sun goddess Amaterasu-oo-mi-kami bestowed eternal sovereignty. This is unique to Japan; there is nothing like it in other countries. Thus Japan is the land of the gods.¹

Actually, divine kingship was ubiquitous in the ancient world. But even without accepting Kitabatake's claims, we can recognize in Japan's imperial institution a veritable museum of antiquity, preserving into the twenty-first century many very ancient principles and practices. In this paper, we describe many of the ancient features of Japanese kingship, with the intent to identify a specific origin for Japan's early imperial institution in Central Asia. We begin with an outline of the elements of divine kingship in the ancient Near East.

¹ The author's translation, from Matsumura Takeo's translation to modern Japanese (Tokyo: Kyouikusha, 1980) p. 38; H. Paul Varley has edited and translated Kitabatake's classic into English (Columbia Univ., 1980).

A. Sacral Kingship in Antiquity

The Goddess

Divine authority was a *sine qua non* of kingship in antiquity — the king derived his status from special powers bestowed upon him by the gods, or, more specifically, by a goddess. As Henri Frankfort expressed it, “only those kings were deified who had been commanded by a goddess to share her couch.”² According to Frankfort, divine kingship began when the king began to play the role of the bridegroom in the annual rites of spring, the divine union — the marriage of a god and goddess, which brought about the renewal of nature, ritually enacted in the city temples of Mesopotamia. In several Sumerian texts the king is described as “the beloved of Inanna.” Sargon of Akkad wrote of his love for Ishtar and of the powers she furnished him. The divine right of kingship through a special relationship with the goddess of the land was ritualized in a *hieros gamos*, a sacred marriage between the king and a priestess who represented the goddess. The Hittite sun goddess Arinna was described as “she who controls kingship in heaven and on earth.”³

The king, both in ancient Mesopotamia and India, was regarded as the guarantor of the fertility of the land and its people, and in general of the prosperity and well-being of the realm, as the result of the transference to the king of the fertile power of the goddess — the king had to receive this power from a woman. The earliest written accounts of the *hieros gamos* come from Sumer in the early third millennium B.C.; sexual intercourse between the king and a temple priestess provided assurance of prosperity and of the king’s ability to rule. The coronation ritual of Indian emperors in the holy city Puri, through the late sixteenth century A.D., was “symbolically infused with female generative powers,” the fertile powers of the goddess

² Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (1948), p. 297.

³ Mircea Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (NY: Collier Macmillan, 1987), VI:48 and 318–320; hereafter cited as ‘ER.’ We have elsewhere described other parallels between the Hittites and the Japanese; see “[Japan and Inner Asia: Some Connections](#),” *Sino-Platonic Papers* no. 209 (April 2011).

Laksmi.⁴ As we will see below, Japan’s emperor receives his investiture of power and authority from a mystical union with the sun goddess.

Between Sun and Moon

The emperors of late antiquity, as Norwegian scholar H. P. L’Orange pointed out, are represented between the Sun and the Moon, as on the Roman arch of Constantine. The Sassanian kings officially called themselves ‘*frater Solis et Lunae*,’ and kings of Achaemenid Persia appear on seals and coins between Sun and Moon, which also appear on the king’s tiara and on the head ornament of the royal horse.⁵ The moon rules the night as the sun rules the day, and the Sassanian king, his head crowned with rays, appears in the guise of the Sun, but by putting on lunar horns, changes into a female moon.⁶ Pharaoh was proclaimed “son of the Sun” by the priests of Heliopolis, and the Inca emperor was also “son of the Sun.”⁷

The courtyard of the inner sanctum (*shishinden*) of the emperor’s Kyoto palace has a Sun Gate (日華門) on its east side and a Moon Gate (月華門) to the west, and the Sun and Moon appear prominently in association with Japan’s emperor. For example, a mirror found in the Fuji-no-ki tumulus, believed to be the tomb of Emperor Suushun (r. 587–592), is inscribed ‘天王日月,’ ‘Heaven’s King, Sun and Moon.’⁸

Sun and Moon appear as symbols of the emperor in the poems of Kaki-no-moto no Hitomaro (fl. late seventh century), poet laureate of Japan’s then-fledgling imperial institution.⁹ In one such poem believed to have special significance for the imperial ideology, a young Prince

⁴ *ER*, VI:310–311; see also III:161–162.

⁵ H. P. L’Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (1982), p. 36.

⁶ L’Orange, *op.cit.*, pp. 38,41,65, citing Petrus Chrysologus.

⁷ *ER*, XIV:135 and 142, respectively.

⁸ J. Edward Kidder, Jr., “The Fujinoki Sarcophagus,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Winter, 1989):415–460, p. 427.

⁹ Ian Hideo Levy, *Hitomaro and the Birth of Japanese Lyricism* (Princeton Univ., 1984), pp. 80–81.

Karu, hunting in the fields of Aki (‘*Aki-no-no*’), remembers his late father while encountering a rising sun in the east and a simultaneously setting moon in the west.¹⁰

But, faced with the seeming universality of these ideas and symbols, how can it be possible to suggest a specific origin for Japan’s imperial institution? Would not a pan-psychism such as Jung’s universal archetypes be a more parsimonious explanation? We will see that in addition to similarity there are two keys to solving this puzzle: proximity and opportunity.

B. Solar Kingship in Japan

Japan’s ideology and institutions of divine kingship took the form eventually expressed by Kitabatake in the last quarter of the seventh century, and found approval in the court’s first official histories — the *Kojiki* (712) and the *Nihon Shoki* (720).¹¹ The sovereign was explicitly called the *akitsumikami* (現御神, ‘the god who manifests himself in the phenomenal world’).¹²

Of the Egyptian pharaoh, Henri Frankfort wrote, “A succession of individuals embodies the same divine being,”¹³ and in that same way, each Japanese emperor embodies, in succession, the divine spirit of his ancestors. It is in the series of rites called the *Daijousai* (大嘗祭) that the emperor is infused with the spirit of the sun goddess and becomes a divine king.¹⁴ German scholar Nicola Liscutin has written on the *Daijousai*.¹⁵

¹⁰ This poem is no. 1–48 at <http://home.earthlink.net/~khaitani1/mysx1.htm>; see also Levy, op.cit., p. 107. The conjunction of a rising sun and setting moon is said by Henri Maspero to be an important formula in Taoism (*Taoism*, 1981, p. 490, n. 97, citing the Taoist canon). Note the role of red sun and white moon on the famous silk painting from China’s Mawangdui tomb:

http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/scholarship.php?searchterm=002_review.inc&issue=002. The Mawangdui painting is dated ca. 186–168 B.C.

¹¹ The main political forces behind this development are believed to have been Emperor Temmu (r.672–686) and his consort, who reigned (686–697) as Empress Jitō.

¹² WAIDA Manabu, s.v. “Kingship: Kingship in East Asia,” *ER*.

¹³ H. Frankfort, op.cit., p. 200.

¹⁴ These rituals were last performed November 22–23, 1990; see <http://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-about/kyuchu/sokui-01.html> for a brief description of each of the complete series of accession ceremonies, in English. The best short

Scholarly consensus holds that the symbolic action of the Daijousai’s central rite represents the transformation of the sovereign from a human condition to a divine one....

By far the most influential theory on the subject [interpretation of the Daijousai ceremonies] is [that of] Orikuchi Shinobu, published in 1928 when State Shinto was at its height. He argued that an immortal, unchangeable imperial soul, which had left the body of the deceased emperor, is reinvigorated and directed by ritual means into the body of the new emperor lying on the *shinza* [divine couch-throne], wrapped ... in the coverlet *madoko no fusuma*, where it is duly incorporated. In other words, while the ‘mortal frame’ changes, the imperial *tama* [spirit] remains forever the same — a special type of reincarnation....

Only by receiving the imperial soul does the emperor become fully empowered and qualified as a *tennou* [divine emperor].¹⁶

That this imperial *tama* was believed to be *solar* is shown by the *Chinkonsai* ritual performed by the emperor annually on the eve of the *Niinamesai*, the late fall harvest festival. Like the sun, the emperor’s soul was believed to weaken as winter approached, and it was feared that his soul was about to leave his body. This ‘soul appeasement’ (*chinkon*, 鎮魂, means

introduction to the *Daijousai* is that of Felicia G. Bock, “The Great Feast of Enthronement,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 45:1 (1990):27–38. There are two book-length, illustrated studies — those of D. C. Holtom (*The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies* 1928, repr. *Monumenta Nipponica Monograph* 47, 1972) and Robert S. Ellwood (*The Feast of Kingship: Accession Ceremonies in Ancient Japan*, MN Monograph 50, 1973). The *Daijousai* has a structural complexity hinted at by Bock but far beyond what has been revealed in any English-language study, for which see YOSHINO Hiroko, *Daijousai: Tennou Sokui-shiki no Kouzou* (Tokyo: Koubundou, 1987).

¹⁵ Nicola Liscutin, “Daijousai,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 4th Series, Vol. 5 (1990):25–52, pp. 37–9; for more on the interpretations of Orikuchi and others, see Carmen Blacker, “The *Shinza* in the *Daijousai*,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 17/2–3 (1990):179–197. Blacker opines (p. 197) that in the *Daijousai* “we have, marvelously preserved like a kind of spiritual fossil, one of the most complex and mysterious rituals for the consecration of a king to survive from the ancient world.”

¹⁶ For an example of a Japanese scholar following and elaborating on Orikuchi’s explanation of the *Daijousai*, see Sasaki Koukan, “Priest, Shaman, King,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 17:2–3 (June-Sept 1990):105–128.

‘soul-calming’) is performed to maintain political order and prevent the world from falling into chaos.¹⁷ According to the Japanese-Canadian scholar Waida Manabu, “the meaning of the mythico-ritual complex of the *Chinkon-sai* lies in the emperor’s repetition or reenactment of the rebirth of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu at the critical time of the winter solstice. The sovereign is homologized with Amaterasu.”¹⁸

Waida went even further, interpreting the entire *Daijousai* in terms borrowed from Dumézil’s analysis of Indo-European kingship. Waida identified, from among the series of rituals performed as parts of the *Daijousai* three ceremonies in which the emperor reenacts “what was done in the two cosmic zones of heaven and earth in the beginning of mythical time” by three mythical figures — the sun goddess Amaterasu; her grandson Ninigi, who first descended from Heaven to Japan; and Jimmu, the legendary first *tennou*, or divine emperor, and conqueror of Japan.

The emperor is linked with these divine beings in the course of the Enthronement Festival [*Daijousai*]. By repeating or reenacting what they did *in illo tempore* [in mythical time, before history], the sovereign comes to assume the magico-

¹⁷ Liscutin, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁸ WAIDA Manabu, “Sacred Kingship in Japan,” *History of Religions* 15:4 (May 1976):319–342, p. 337; other interpretations emphasize the possibility that sexual union is implied by the couch symbolism of the *Daijousai*. For an interesting comparison, see Suzanne E. Cahill, *Transcendance and the Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford Univ., 1993) for the way in which immortality was achieved by divine-human coupling in the Shang-ching Taoism of Mt. Mao — the secret of immortality was transmitted heterosexually from a divine male to Xi Wang Mu (Queen Mother of the West), then to male emperors and Taoist adepts. According to Gary L. Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton Univ., 1989), heterosexual transmission of the imperial soul (*tama*) by means of an “incestuous” union of a crown prince with the priestess of the Ise imperial shrine was once an important aspect of imperial succession in Japan. For the view that a process of “incest, sacred birth, death and rebirth” is central to Japanese mythology and the imperial divine genealogy, see Murakami, Fuminobu, “Incest and Rebirth in *Kojiki*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 43:4 (Winter 1988):455–463.

religious [Amaterasu], economic [Ninigi] and military [Jimmu] functions of kingship.¹⁹

Alan L. Miller’s interpretation of the *Daijousai* rituals coincides with Waida’s. Miller observes that in it the new emperor-to-be “takes on the roles” of Amaterasu, of Ninigi, and of the previous emperor. In particular, it is when in the course of the observances the future emperor first wears the sacred vestments called ‘*Ama no hagoromo*,’ that he “takes on the power of the goddess.” In the *Daijousai*, Amaterasu’s (the sun’s) “death” and resurrection at the winter solstice ritually coincide with the death of one emperor and the birth of another.²⁰ Also, Miller’s interpretation of the *Chinkonsai* coincides with that of Liscutin — because the emperor’s powers are linked with the sun, before the winter solstice the coming winter is a threat to the emperor’s health, as the sun’s power is at its nadir.²¹

In an important interpretive essay, Gary L. Ebersole linked the *Daijousai* with the previously-mentioned “between sun and moon” symbolism of Hitomaro’s *Aki-no-no* (‘fields of Aki’) passage, from the *Manyōshū*, showing evidence suggesting that the temporal setting of the poem is the winter solstice, and that the sequence of events mentioned in the poem, the overnight stop in the fields, took place in order to make possible an encounter between young Prince Karu and his deceased father, the late Crown Prince, at a symbolically meaningful time, the crack of dawn coincident with a setting moon. Ebersole notes that the core of the *Daijousai* ritual takes place during the hour of the hare (5:00–7:00 a.m.). In both cases, the poem and the *Daijousai* ritual, the critical point at which the successor and predecessor commune is a time neither night nor day, with the simultaneous appearance of both sun and moon, at the liminal period of the winter solstice, where end and beginning meet. This is the symbolically perfect

¹⁹ Waida (1976), p. 340.

²⁰ Alan L. Miller, “The Garments of the Gods in Japanese Ritual,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 5.2 (1991):33–55, pp. 42–5; for the coincidence of the winter solstice and the *Daijousai*, see Bock (1990), p. 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–2; for the historical origin of the *Daijousai* and solar kingship in Japan, see Matsumae Takeshi, “The Evolution of Shinto,” in *Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 1, *Ancient Japan* (1993), pp. 342ff.

natural setting for a ritual of renewal, a calling back of the deceased to return and participate in the accession ritual of a successor to the throne.²²

Having demonstrated the *solar* nature of kingship in Japan, we turn now to the Indo-European and other nomads of the European and Asian steppes, to identify points of similarity between the institutions of kingship in Japan and Central Asia.

C. Some Points of Comparison: Solar Kingship in Central Asia

1. Scythians: Nomads of the European Steppe

The Scythians were nomadic, Iranian-speaking peoples who flourished in the steppes north of the Black Sea from the seventh to the third centuries B.C. What we know of their religion and their sacral, solar kingship comes largely from the Greek historian Herodotus (fl. fifth century B.C.). According to Herodotus, first among the Scythian pantheon was a goddess, Tabiti, whom he equated with Hestia, Greek goddess of the hearth fire. Russian scholar D. S. Raevskii derives ‘Tabiti’ from Iranian ‘Tarayati,’ *the flaming or burning one*, and says her predominance “corresponds to the Indo-Iranian concept of fire as the primeval substance and the basis of the universe.”²³ Raevskii notes that Herodotus’ account of the Scythians “allows us to reconstruct the existence among the Scythians of the concept of the solar nature of the king,” and he follows Russian Iranologist V. I. Abaev in deriving the name of the first king of the Scythians, Herodotus’ ‘Colaxais,’ from the Iranian *hvar-xsaya*, ‘sun king.’

Japanese ethnologist Yoshida Atsuhiko identified the sun goddess Amaterasu with the

²² Gary L. Ebersole, “The Religio-Aesthetic Complexes in Manyoushuu Poetry, with Special Reference to Hitomaro’s Aki-no-no Sequence,” *History of Religions*, 23:1 (August 1983):18–36, pp. 28–33; Ebersole (p. 34) notes that far from being mere “nature poetry,” Manyoushuu poetry is often “ritual poetry.” For more on the ritual and religious symbolism of the Manyoushuu, see Matsumi, Masanori, *Shinsen to Manyoushuu* (Tokyo: Kindaibungeisha, 1985).

²³ D. S. Raevskii, s.v. “Scythian Religion,” *ER*.

Scythian Great Goddess.²⁴ Other parallels of the Scythian solar kingship with that of Japan include the cult of the horse — horses were included in royal burials and sacrificed in important rituals, with the king “an important, if not the chief, performer of cultic practices,” just as in Japan. And the Scythian god of war was venerated in the form of an ancient iron sword, comparable to the sacred sword of the Isonokami Shrine. Furthermore, the Scythians had a trio of sacred golden objects — a yoked plow, an ax, and a cup — that had fallen from the sky, and symbolized the tripartite cosmic and social order.²⁵ Like Japan’s three imperial regalia, these cult objects readily lend themselves to being interpreted in terms of Dumézil’s trifunctional system, as follows.

Agriculturalists — Warriors — Priests
Japan *magatama* (jewel)²⁶ sword mirror
Scythians yoked plow axe²⁷ cup
Saka²⁸ yoke and plow spear and arrow chalice

Other Japanese scholars, in addition to Yoshida, have suggested the possibility of actual links between Scythian culture and Japan; linguist Oono Susumu, for example, attributed similarities between Greek and Japanese mythology (for example, the parallels between the Japanese pair Izanagi and Izanami and the Greek pair Orpheus and Eurydice) to a Scythian connection with Japan.²⁹

²⁴ In *Nihon Shinwa to In-Ou Shinwa* (Tokyo: Koubundou, 1974).

²⁵ Raevskii, *op.cit.*

²⁶ A symbol of fecundity.

²⁷ According to Herodotus (I:215), the battle-axe was the weapon favored by steppe nomads.

²⁸ The Saka, ethnic Iranian nomads of the Asian steppe, received these from the gods, according to the account of Quintus Curtius Rufus, a Latin biographer of Alexander the Great (cited in B. A. Litvinskii, “Prehistoric Religions: The Eurasian Steppes and Inner Asia,” *ER*). See below for more on the ‘Saka,’ the name by which the nomads of the Asian steppe were known to the Persians.

²⁹ OONO Susumu, *Nihongo no Seiritsu* (Tokyo, 1980), pp. 47ff. Oono (pp. 55, 60, 64) also cites the myth of the

2. Massagetae, or Saka: Nomads of the Asian Steppe

A confederation of Iranian nomads roamed the steppe east of the Caspian Sea, beyond the Jaxartes River (the Syr Darya), and, according to Herodotus (I:216), “The only god they worship is the sun, and to him they offer the horse in sacrifice; under the notion of giving to the swiftest of the gods the swiftest of all mortal creatures.” Both the *Avesta* and the *Rgveda* attest to the association of sun and horse among the Indo-Iranians; in the latter, the sun repeatedly appears in the form of a horse.³⁰ The Arzhan *kurgan*, a royal burial mound of Tuva, Siberia, clearly embodies the cult linking king, sun and horse. The king was interred in the center of a gigantic “wheel,” symbolizing the sun. Lines of logs, like spokes, came radially out of the center structure, and horses were buried in the compartments thus formed.³¹

Herodotus’ *Histories* (I.212) has Queen Tomyris of the Massagetae pronouncing the formula “I swear by the sun, the lord of the Massagetae.” Oaths by the sun and by fire were widespread in antiquity among the Iranians, who perceived the sun as an anthropomorphic being — to them, the sun was the visible form of the supreme deity.³² The Saka king functioned as a priest; it was believed he personified the cosmological structure of the world. And the Saka king also acquired his divine status in a divine wedding to a feminine deity. This divine wedding is depicted, for example, on a felt rug from Pazyryk *kurgan* V of the Altai; the goddess is seated on a throne, wears a crown, and holds in her right hand the sacred tree.³³ As we have seen, Japan’s emperor receives his investiture from a mystical union with the sun goddess.

The Saka engaged in long-distance trade, as shown by finds of large ornamented shells imported from India found in Saka burials of the eighth to sixth centuries B.C., in alpine Pamir

creation of the land from a spear (similar to that of the Mongols), the idea of a mountain central to the land (Yamato’s *Ame no Kaguyama*), and the three cosmic levels (as among the Yakut) as examples of Central Asian or Altaic themes in Japanese mythology.

³⁰ Litvinskii, op.cit.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ For a reproduction of this scene, see T. T. Rice, *Ancient Arts of Central Asia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 39. For interpretation, see Litvinskii, op.cit.

and Altai sites, and the finds of white agate beads with soda-lime decorative design, also from India, in early Saka sites in Khorezem.³⁴ And contacts with Greek and Achaemenid Persian civilizations influenced Saka culture. Saka funerary rites (of the fifth century B.C. and later) included secondary burial — the practice of burying previously cleaned bones in ossuaries,³⁵ which may have been influenced by Zoroastrian Persian ossuaries (*astudan*), and which may correspond to the *mogari-no-miya* (殯宮) secondary burial practices of Japanese nobles some centuries later.³⁶

3. Turks and Mongols

In a study of divine kingship in Central Asia,³⁷ Waida Manabu focused on the Turks and Mongols and related nomadic, northern pastoral peoples, whose customs are known primarily from accounts in Chinese histories. Waida found important parallels between the initiation ceremony of the shaman and the enthronement ceremony of the king: (1) a ceremonial rebirth; (2) a sun-worshipping ritual; and (3) the rite of the felt carpet.³⁸ Of the sun ritual, Waida cites the interpretation of Japanese scholars Mishina Shou’ei and Mori Masao that the new Khan is by this means “symbolically united with the sun to be born anew as the child of the sun.” Waida finds the Chinese description of the sun ceremony puzzling, particularly the reference to “turning

³⁴ Jeannine Davis-Kimball, et al., eds., *Nomads of the Eurasian Steppe in the Early Iron Age* (Berkeley: Zinat Press, 1995), pp. 218, 237.

³⁵ Leonid T. Yablonsky, in Davis-Kimball (1995), pp. 244, 251.

³⁶ For which see <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/殯>, in Japanese; Gary L. Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton Univ., 1989) is an important work that interprets the *mogari no miya* custom in terms of some themes mentioned here — the regenerative power of the female, the *Chinkonsai*, and revival of the imperial *tama*, etc.

³⁷ WAIDA Manabu, “Notes on Sacred Kingship in Central Asia,” *Numen* Vol. XXIII, Fasc. 3 (1976):179–190.

³⁸ The elevation of the Central Asian king on a carpet corresponds to the elevation of the kings of late Classical antiquity on a *clipeus* — both serve to establish the king as a solar power; see H. P. L’Orange, “Expressions of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World,” in VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religion, *The Sacral Kingship* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959):481–492, pp. 488ff.

round after the sun nine times,” but he cites Mori’s view that the Khan, facing east, on the felt carpet, turned round clockwise from east to south, then from south to west, in the direction of the sun’s movement. Actually, there is a counterpart to this rite in Japan called *Hi-no-tomo* (日の供, ‘the sun’s attendant’), performed in several places in Japan, especially at the equinoxes, involving a ritual procession, walking the path of the sun — east, then south, then west.³⁹

As for the felt carpet, Waida finds a Japanese counterpart in the *o-fusuma* of the *Daijousai*, described above. Waida interprets both the felt carpet and the *o-fusuma* as symbols of aspects of the ritual re-birth of the king.⁴⁰ Waida concluded: “I am inclined to hold that the foundation myths of Tibet, Japan and Korea might belong essentially to the mythological tradition of the pastoral peoples of Central and North Asia.” But as noted above, in order to make our case for a Central Asian origin of Japan’s solar kingship, we need more than similarities. We also need proximity and opportunity — a demonstrable link between Japan and Central Asia. Below we will find this link in Korea’s Dragon King of the first centuries A.D., but first we must visit the Yuezhi, who will provide the needed link between Central Asia and Korea.

4. The Yuezhi of Gansu, the Tarim Basin and Bactria

‘*Yuezhi*’ (月支 or 月氏) was the name by which the easternmost of the Central Asian Indo-European nomads were known to the Chinese. The 月支 had lived since time immemorial on the periphery of China proper, astride the Gansu Corridor and in the Tarim Basin. They were for centuries the source of Chinese jade⁴¹ and were very likely involved in the transmission to China from Central and West Asia of metallurgy,⁴² the horse-drawn chariot, wheat and barley

³⁹ Nishitsunoi, Masayoshi, *Nenjuu Gyouji Jiten* (1965), pp. 688, 674–675.

⁴⁰ WAIDA Manabu, “Symbolism of ‘Descent’ in Tibetan Sacred Kingship and Some East Asian Parallels,” *Numen* Vol. XX, Fasc. 1 (April 1973):60–78.

⁴¹ Mineralogical research shows most Shang-era (ca.1500–1050 B.C.) jade came to China from Hetian (Hotan or Khotan), Xinjiang, in the southwest of the Tarim Basin, indicating that by the Shang period there was already a well-trodden Jade Route between Central Asia and the Chinese heartland (see Jessica Rawson, *Mysteries of Ancient China* [London: British Museum, 1996], p. 228).

⁴² Chinese metallurgy began in the far west of China proper, in the Gansu-Qinghai area. The earliest discoveries of

cultivation,⁴³ etc., while trading Chinese silk to the West.⁴⁴ When the Chinese reluctantly abandoned the war chariot and adopted cavalry tactics, in 307 B.C., they also adopted the 月支 costume: trousers with leather belt, buckle and hook, and a scabbard slide. The famous art of the Ordos area of north China has been ascribed to the 月支.⁴⁵

The Huns arose on China’s northern frontier in the late third century B.C. and in response the First Emperor of China began the construction of the Great Wall. The Huns then turned on the 月支 and about 177 or 176, drove them out of western Gansu. The 月支 split into two parts, a smaller group going south among the Tibetan peoples of what is now Qinghai while the larger group fled west and attempted to settle in the Ili Valley and the Issyk Kul Basin, from which they were soon driven by the blue-eyed, red-haired people known to the Chinese as the Wusun (probably those known in the West as Asioi or Alans). The 月支 then continued westward to the upper Syr Darya (known to Herodotus as the Jaxartes). According to Chinese sources they arrived on the borders of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, Alexander’s successors, about 160 B.C. and occupied the region north of the Oxus. About 126 they crossed the Oxus and seized Bactria, becoming known in the West as the Tokharoi (Tokhari in Persian, Tukhara in Sanskrit) or Indo-Scythians. Today they are often referred to as Tocharians (when found in the Tarim Basin) or by

copper and bronze objects in China occur at Neolithic Ma-jia-yao Culture sites (3100–2700 B.C.) in Gansu (see YU Wei-chao, ed., *A Journey Into China’s Antiquity*, 3 vols. [Beijing: Morning Glory, 1997], I:266; or, see Wikipedia, s.v. ‘Majiayao Culture’).

⁴³ Barley and wheat were introduced to China from the West during early or middle Shang times; see Donn Bayard, “East Asia in the Bronze Age,” *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Archaeology* (1980), p. 169.

⁴⁴ In 1993, archaeologists in Egypt found a fragment of Chinese silk cloth dating to the tenth century B.C. (see G. Lubec, et al., “Use of Silk in Ancient Egypt,” *Nature* 362 [March 4, 1993], p. 25). For other sources revealing evidence of a very early beginning of the Silk Road, see Adam T. Kessler, *Empires Beyond the Great Wall* (Los Angeles: Natural History Museum of L.A. County, 1994), p. 19.

⁴⁵ *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959–1968), s.v. ‘Ordos’; see pp. 776, 781; Ordos art has “unmistakable affinities” to the Scytho-Sarmatian art of the steppes. For very recent support of this see, for example, YU Taishan, “[The Earliest Tocharians in China](#),” *Sino-Platonic Papers* No. 204 (June 2010), who suggests (p. 32) that the 月支 were in China as far east as Jin (晉, in present-day Shaanxi, just south of the Ordos) at a very early date, prior to their move to Gansu.

the name ‘Kushan’ (in Bactria) and their land ‘Tokharistan.’ Under their great king, Kanishka (r. 144–172), they ruled from the Aral Sea to the Punjab and beyond, to Mathura, India.

The empire fragmented in the third century, and it was no match for first the Sassanians and then the Hephtalites. Numismatic evidence shows that the Kushan Empire fell 360–380 A.D.⁴⁶ The last bastions of 月支/ Kushan language and culture were in the petty independent city-states of the Tarim Basin in the seventh century A.D., Turfan, Kucha, Kashgar, Khotan, Yarkand, etc. The Silk Road passed through these oases, and it became the route by which Buddhism, Asian (“Nestorian”) Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Persian culture, spread to China.⁴⁷ The southern Tarim oasis city-state of Kucha rebelled against Tang China in 640 and was crushed by a Chinese army; Grousset laments “The brilliant Indo-European society of Kucha and Kizil never recovered from this disaster,”⁴⁸ and the Tarim was eventually taken over by the Uighur Turks.⁴⁹

This history is relevant to our topic because while (1) we have identified similarities between Japanese and Indo-European solar kingship, and (2) the 月支 were the Indo-Europeans

⁴⁶ B. Gafurov, et al., eds., *Kushan Studies in the USSR* (1970), p. 164.

⁴⁷ This account is from Rene Grousset, *Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford (Rutgers Univ., 1970), pp. 26–41; for the Tarim city-states at the beginning of the Middle Ages, see pp. 48–53 and 95–101.

⁴⁸ Grousset (1970), p. 100; the story of the 月支, the Kushan and the Tocharians and other Indo-European peoples of Central Asia may be complicated far beyond the simplified narrative presented here; see, for example, YU Taishan, “[The Earliest Tocharians in China](#),” *Sino-Platonic Papers* No. 204 (June 2010), who maintains (pp. 32–3, 44–5ff.) that Guti and Tukri, early Indo-European peoples of Western Iran, appeared in China about 2000 B.C., first in Shu (蜀, in present-day Sichuan) before moving to Jin (晉, in present-day Shaanxi) and then west to Gansu, where they were known as the 月支. In identifying Tocharians with the Guti and Tukri, Yu follows German-American scholar W. B. Henning. Compare ‘Guti’ with ‘Gatchi-shi’ and ‘Getsu-shi,’ early Japanese pronunciations of ‘月氏’ (mod. J. ‘Gesshi’), derived, respectively, from *Wu* and *Han* Chinese.

⁴⁹ The last Tocharians mentioned in Chinese chronicles, noted as they fled toward China from the Tarim Basin down the Gansu Corridor to escape the Uighur Turks in the early tenth century, used the surname ‘Dragon’ (see note 75, below). We will see the significance of this name later.

who lived closest to Japan, what we know about the solar kingship of the 月支 comes mainly from its manifestation in the Kushan Kingdom of Bactria.⁵⁰

Mummies of Xinjiang

Mummified ancient human remains were discovered in the Tarim Basin by the early-twentieth century explorers, but more recently Prof. Victor H. Mair of the University of Pennsylvania brought to light additional mummies and has been the main force behind the publicizing of the old and new finds and the interpretation of their meaning. The most important find for our purposes is the discovery at Zaghunluq, near Qärqän, of a male mummy dated 1000 B.C. with a solar sun ray design tattooed on his temple, a symbol that has been linked with Mitra, the sun god of the Indo-Iranians.⁵¹ A bowl found at Niya bears an incised solar swastika symbol also believed to be evidence of the worship of Mitra.⁵²

Solar Kingship of the Kushan Empire

The great Kushan king Kanishka and his predecessor Vima (fl. 96–99 A.D.) both used the title ‘*Devaputra*,’ ‘son of a divine being,’⁵³ and damaged remains of Kushan-era sculptures found in

⁵⁰ In addition to the Classical, Persian and Indian *written sources* and the *archaeological evidence* discovered by the Silk Road expeditions of the early twentieth century (those of Aurel Stein, Sven Hedin, Paul Pelliot, Nikolai Przevalsky, and Albert von LeCoq), both available to Grousset, recent archaeological finds (including especially the Tarim Basin mummies and the treasures of Shibarghan, Afghanistan), have added to our knowledge of the 月支 and the Kushan.

⁵¹ Victor H. Mair, “Mummies of the Tarim Basin,” *Archaeology* 48:2 (Mar/Apr 1995):28–35, p. 34; or, see Thomas B. Allen, “The Silk Road’s Lost World,” *National Geographic* 189:2 (March 1996), with illustrations.

⁵² Like Japan’s Amaterasu, the Iranian sun god solemnized the investiture of Iranian kings; for a photo of an ancient bas relief depicting Mithra sanctifying the investiture of a Sassanian king, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithra>; Mithra is portrayed with solar rays emanating from his head.

⁵³ A. K. Narain, “Indo-Europeans in Inner Asia,” in Denis Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (1990):151–176, pp. 164–165; from inscriptions on stelae memorializing Kanishka, we learn that he styled himself ‘Shahi [an old Yue-zhi word for ‘king’], Muroda [a Saka chieftain], Maharaja [Sanskrit ‘Great King’], Rajatirajah [Sanskrit for ‘King of Kings,’ an old Iranian royal title], Devaputra, Kaisara [< L. ‘Caesar’].’ See: <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/クシヤーナ朝>

the dynastic temple at Mathura are believed to have represented the investiture of the king by a god, a theme of Iranian tradition. Each of the Mathura figures wears a long tunic, long trousers and heavy felt boots — the costume worn by Scythian horsemen, the mummies of the Tarim Basin, the Kushans and the later Parthians, and Central Asian horsemen today, showing a remarkable continuity of culture.⁵⁴ The Kushan, “like all the Iranian races, had a particular devotion to the sun.” The Indian image of Ravi (*‘fire bird’*), Hindu sun god, is dressed in northern costume, wearing Kushan boots; his attribute is a horse with seven heads.⁵⁵ Art historian John Rosenfield found that this and other evidence suggests a connection between the kings and a solar deity in Kushan royal mythology and ritual.⁵⁶ Rosenfield concluded that “The evidence for the assumption of a superhuman status by Kushan kings is conclusive....”⁵⁷ In the Kushan concept of kingship, Rosenfield writes, the hub of the empire was “the divine monarch, the vital point which connected the realm of the gods with that of men” and they “justified their power in terms of divine influence rather than brute force.” Rosenfield’s observations on “the extraordinary political usefulness of royal cults” like those of the Kushan may usefully be applied to understanding early Japan, as well.

In conquests, they could make the new rulers palatable to the subject people by leaving local religious institutions untouched and adding a [coordinating] demigod. The conqueror, in the process, lost some of the restrictive sheath of his national origins, assumed a higher nature, and could thus comprehend the many ethnic or political units within an empire.⁵⁸

The Kushan pantheon, like that of Japan, expressed concern with material abundance and prosperity, with military triumph, with legitimacy of rule, and with divine sanction for and

⁵⁴ *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959–1968; hereafter cited as ‘*EWA*’), XIII:8.

⁵⁵ *EWA* II:74.

⁵⁶ John M. Rosenfield, *Dynastic Art of the Kushans* (Univ. of California, 1967), pp. 190–191.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

support of the ruling house.⁵⁹ Religious syncretism prevailed in the Kushan Empire, as it later did in Japan.

Three specific features of the Kushan pantheon parallel that of Japan — first, the lunar deity, Mao, is clearly masculine, in contrast with other Western Asian lunar deities, who are most often female. Second, in what is clearly parallel with Japan, solar and lunar emblems are shown flanking Kanishka on some of his coins.⁶⁰ (Helmets worn by Kushan princes, as shown on their coins, are curiously similar to “samurai helmets” seen in museums in Japan.⁶¹) And third, Ardochsho of the Kushan pantheon parallels Anahita, a great goddess of the Scythians, and Japan’s Amaterasu.⁶²

月支 Horses and Long-range Trade

Fittingly, for a people with a steppe origin, the 月支 Kushan were known for their horses. According to the Grand Historian Sima Qian, while still in Gansu and the Tarim, the 月支 were important to the Chinese as suppliers of horses for their wars with the Huns.⁶³ The “Tocharian” horses were “of ancient Celtic breeding,” and in the Kushan era these “Tocharian” horses formed the root stock of the Marwari, Kathiawari and other related “Indian” horses. Kushan horses were known as far away as Rome.⁶⁴ We learn from contemporary Chinese sources that Kushan horses were regularly traded as far away as Southeast Asia, or presented as gifts to visiting embassies from far-away lands.⁶⁵ A Tang-era Chinese annotation to Sima Qian’s *Shiji* preserves the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67, Fig 6; note especially the lunar ‘horns.’

⁶² O. M. Dalton, *The Treasure of the Oxus* (London: Oxford, 1905), p. xxviii.

⁶³ LIU Xinru, “The Cosmopolitanism of the Kushan Regime,” (欧亚学研究, 2005), on-line at http://www.eurasianhistory.com/data/articles/m3/1277.html#_ftnref5, citing the relevant passages from Sima’s *Shiji*.

⁶⁴ Beverly Davis, “[Timeline of the Development of the Horse](#),” *Sino-Platonic Papers* No. 177 (August 2007), pp. 29, 38, 44.

⁶⁵ Rosenfield, *op.cit.*, p. 52; G. L. Adhya, *Early Indian Economics* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 172–174, citing Paul Pelliot and O. W. Wolters. Eminent Asian art historian and Southeast Asian ethnologist Robert

observation attributed to a third-century Sogdian geographer that as China was known for its many people and Rome for its many treasures, so the Kushan were famous for their many horses.⁶⁶

Kushan coins have been found near Kiev, in Ethiopia, in Scandinavia, in many Roman sites, and as far north as Kama, west of the Urals. While the Kushan controlled much of Central Asia, the Chinese borrowed a number of plants from the West, including alfalfa, the grapevine, and possibly cotton.⁶⁷ In Kushan times inter- and trans-continental trade flourished, maritime trade between India and China began, and traders from 大秦 (Roman Syria) reached China after passing through Kushan territory. The Kushan imported gold from the Altai.⁶⁸ The Kushan city of Begram was “the crossroads of many civilizations”; artifacts found there include Greek bronzeware, Alexandrian pottery, Roman glass, Indian ivory, and Chinese lacquerware. The Tillya Tepe site near Sheberghan/Shibarghan in Afghanistan, excavated by Russian archaeologist Victor I. Sarianidi beginning in 1978, yielded Chinese mirrors; Roman, Indian and Parthian coins; Siberian daggers; and Roman glass intaglio. Sarianidi claimed “Nowhere in antiquity have so many different objects from so many different cultures been found together.”⁶⁹

In view of these facts, and extrapolating backwards in time from the Kushan of Bactria to the 月支 of the Tarim and Gansu, is it not likely that they were *always* “the crossroads of many cultures,” the “melting-pot of Central Asia”? Certainly the Kushan knew of, and may even have traded with, the early Korean states and peoples of the Japanese archipelago. Is it possible that

Heine-Geldern (1885–1968) believed that the Kushan had trading colonies as far away as Indonesia; see O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce* (Cornell Univ., 1967), p. 279 n.3. Wolters agrees, saying the Yue-zhi of Kushan times used a port in northwest India known in Chinese as ‘Ku-nu’ (op.cit., p. 59, citing a third-century Chinese source).

⁶⁶ Liu (2005).

⁶⁷ B. Gafurov, et al., eds., *Kushan Studies in the USSR* (1970), p. 11.

⁶⁸ Adhya (1966) pp. 163, 165, 167, 169, 175–176.

⁶⁹ Viktor I. Sarianidi, “The Golden Hoard of Bactria,” *National Geographic* 177:3 (March 1990):50–75, or Sarianidi, “Ancient Gold from the Melting Pot of Central Asia,” *UNESCO Courier* (December 1979):29–32.

the 月支 of Gansu knew of Korea and Japan? We shall next view evidence of an actual 月支 *presence* in Korea.⁷⁰

D. On the Trail of the Dragon King

1. The Korean Connection

According to the third century A.D. Chinese history *Wei shu* (魏書), part of the *Sanguo zhi* (三國志), there was in Korea at that time a unique, enigmatic ruler we will refer to as “the Dragon King,” one of the literal meanings of the term, 辰王 (Chinese *Chen-wang*). The Dragon King ruled over a “country” called “Yuezhi”:

辰王治月支國。⁷¹

(The Dragon King rules the state of Yuezhi.)

“Yuezhi” refers here to one of the political subdivisions of the nation of *Mahan*, in the southwest part of the Korean peninsula. But the characters used to write the name (月支) are the same as those used for centuries by the Chinese (who also used ‘月氏’)⁷² to refer to the Indo-European inhabitants of western Gansu and the Tarim Basin, discussed at some length above. Now, the author of the *Wei shu* and the Koreans who lived in the state of ‘月支’ can hardly have been unaware of this identicalness of the two names — that leaves us with the question of what it means. The present author has concluded, for reasons summarized below, that the use of the

⁷⁰ Based on linguistic evidence (loanwords attested for Proto-Iranian in both Chinese and Korean), some scholars speculate about an “early penetration of proto-Iranian people to China and Korea,” or even “prehistoric settlement of Aryans in Korea.” See Jahanshah Derakhshani, “Some Earliest Traces of the Aryans,” on-line at http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/pdfs/traces_of_aryan.pdf, pp. 2, 16.

⁷¹ This is a sentence from 三國志卷三十魏書三十東夷傳馬韓; the entire Chinese text may be read at <http://www.geocities.jp/intelljp/cn-history/sangoku/bakan.htm>. The translations here are all by the present author. For ‘Dragon,’ see notes 76–78 below.

⁷² For the use of both ways of writing the name, see TOUDOU Akiyasu. ed., *Kanwa Daijiten* (Gakken, 1978), p. 615.

same name for both, 月支, indicates a connection between them. My conclusion is that the 月支 of Gansu and the Tarim either had a colony, a trade entrepot outpost, in Korea; or, that some of the 月支 who were defeated by the Huns in 177 B.C. fled eastward and ended up in Korea, where they maintained enough of a unique identity to preserve their name. Here are some points to consider:

- (1) The Korean “Yue zhi” state (月支國) was unique; of the many *Mahan* states mentioned in the *Wei shu*, it was the only one ruled by the Dragon King, for which it was singled out for special mention.
- (2) There is some confusion evident in the *Wei shu* account,⁷³ but evidently the Dragon King ruled not only the “Yue zhi” state of *Mahan* but also played a role, perhaps as a ceremonial priest-king, in the smaller, neighboring “nations” of *Qinhan* (in the southeast part of the peninsula) and *Bianhan* (at the southern tip of the peninsula), a unique and enigmatic phenomenon. The passage in question reads as follows.

其十二國屬辰王。辰王常用馬韓人作之，世世相繼。辰王不得自立為王。

(The twelve statelets [of Qinhan] belong to the Dragon King, who is always a person of Mahan, and the position is hereditary. The Dragon King cannot make himself king.)

魏略曰：明其為流移之人，故為馬韓所制。

⁷³ Gina Lee Barnes (“Early Korean States: A Review of Historical Interpretation,” in Gina Barnes, ed., *Early Korean States: Bibliographic Reviews of Far Eastern Archaeology 1990*, pp. 123–124) said the identity and role of the 辰王 “has not yet been thoroughly dealt with.” Here I follow mainstream Japanese academic historian Hirano Kunio — his 『邪馬台国の原像』 (学生社, 2002) says: 『辰王が、弁辰十二国の上に、馬韓の月支国から立てられた』; see the detailed discussion of all these issues (in Japanese) at <http://www.geocities.jp/thirdcenturyjapan/zatu/zatu02.html>. The standard interpretation of Japanese historians is at <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/辰韓>.

(The *Wei lue* [a Chinese commentary on the *Wei shu*] says it clearly is because they [the residents of Qinhan] are refugees/displaced persons [and] that they are under the control of Mahan.)⁷⁴

(3) Thus the Dragon King was associated with immigrants from outside of the peninsula. *Qinhan* (秦韓) was so named because (at least some of) its inhabitants claimed to be descendants of refugees who had fled wartime or forced labor conscription by Qin China, migrating first to Han China’s Lelang and Taifang “Commanderies” on the Korean peninsula (Chinese colonies established in 108 B.C.), then further south and east to the area where the Korean Kingdom of Silla later arose. According to the *Wei shu*, the *Qinhan* people spoke a language different from that of *Mahan*, similar to that of the Qin Chinese. *Qinhan* was also known as *Chenhan* (辰韓).⁷⁵

(4) In Chinese, 辰 *chen*, means (i) ‘dragon,’ J. *tatsu*, fifth of the twelve horary signs of Chinese cosmology;⁷⁶ (ii) a general term for ‘sun, moon and stars.’⁷⁷ In combination with other characters, it comes to mean (iii) the planet Mercury (水星); (iv) cinnabar (HgS), the natural source of the metal mercury and of vermilion pigment; (v) one of the twenty-

⁷⁴ The Chinese text is at <http://www.geocities.jp/intelljp/cn-history/sangoku/benkan.htm>.

⁷⁵ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jinhan_confederacy. Immigrants from northern Korea played a key role in the development of southern Korea from at least the time of the fall of Wiman Joseon (Choson) in 108 B.C., when 2000 families fled to the southern state of 辰 (LEE Ki-Baik, *A New History of Korea*, trans. E. W. Wagner and E. J. Schultz [Harvard Univ., 1984], pp. 24–6). (The relationship between the early southern Korean state of 辰 and the later (‘Three Han’-era) 辰王 and 辰韓 of the *Wei shu* is uncertain.)

⁷⁶ Another Chinese word for ‘dragon’ is *long* (龍, 龙). The last Tocharians mentioned in Chinese chronicles, noted as they fled from the Tarim Basin down the Gansu Corridor to escape the Uighur Turks in the early tenth century, used the surname ‘Dragon.’ See RONG Xinjiang, “Longjia Kao 龙家考 (‘A Study on the Long Clan’), *Zhongya Xuekan* 《中亚学刊》 (*Journal of Central Asian Studies*), vol. 4, (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1995), pp. 144–160. The author is indebted to Prof. Victor Mair for this reference; Mair observes “It is remarkable that they [the Tocharians] still called themselves LONG (‘dragon’) to the very end of their existence.” The word ‘*long*’ (dragon) appears prominently in Gansu toponyms (Longxi, Longshou-shan, Lenglong-ling).

⁷⁷ Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan, *Jianming Han-er Cidian* (1990), p. 69.

eight lunar mansions; (vi) the stars, in general.⁷⁸ In short, the word is important in Chinese cosmology and also in Taoist alchemy (in both Chinese and Western alchemy, mercury is used to turn ordinary metals into silver and gold). Cinnabar is an essential ingredient of the elixir of immortality, and its color (朱, vermilion) was used in burials as a symbol of rebirth. Cosmologically, cinnabar combines the *yin* (lunar, mercury) and the *yang* (solar, sulphur).⁷⁹ Interpreting these symbols, we can see that the very name of our “Dragon King” combines solar and lunar meanings, a theme we have emphasized repeatedly above. In other words, the Korean “Dragon Kings” were fitting colleagues for their contemporaries the Sassanian kings (the *frater Solis et Lunae*) and the Kushan kings, and later Japanese emperors.⁸⁰

2. The Japanese Connection

Japanese archaeologist-historian Egami Namio (1906–2002) became famous for his thesis that the Japanese emperors beginning with Suujin (r.219–249, revised chronology) were transplanted Korean “Dragon Kings,”⁸¹ but I hold that it was the Emperor Oujin (r. 346–395, revised

⁷⁸ TOUDOU Akiyasu, ed., *Kanwa Daijiten* (Gakken, 1978), p. 1305.

⁷⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_alchemy. The use of the same name for mercury the element and Mercury the planet in both traditions is another indication that Western and Chinese alchemy have a single source in antiquity.

⁸⁰ The dragon motif continued to be important in subsequent Korean kingship; the dragon theme plays a role, along with Central Asian themes (the white horse, sun worship), in the founding legend of Silla, whose legendary first king, Bak Hyeokgeose, took as his queen a woman said to have been born from a dragon. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bak_Hyeokgeose_of_Silla. The earliest redaction of Silla’s founding legend now extant is Ilyon’s *Samguk Yusa* (late thirteenth century); but the legend probably accurately reflects the kingship customs of mid-fifth century Korea (the era of Silla’s actual founding).

⁸¹ The problems in Egami’s chronology of Japanese emperors and the incoherence of his account of a supposed origin of the Dragon King in Puyo, a northern Korean kingdom, have been misused to discredit Egami’s main thesis of an invasion of Japan by mounted warriors from the continent and the origin of Japan’s imperial institution in the Korean Dragon King, which misuse is a kind of logical fallacy. See Gari Ledyard, “Gallop Along with the Horseriders: Looking for the Founders of Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring, 1975):217–254,

chronology) and his mother, the Empress Jinguu, who embodied in Japan the many legends and traditions associated with superhuman kingship in Korea.⁸² According to Japanese legends, Emperor Oujin was fathered by a sea god and born with a dragon’s tail. His consort was also a she-dragon.⁸³

p. 222 for a succinct statement of Egami’s eminently defensible central theses. See also HONG Wontack, *Paekche of Korea and the Origin of Yamato Japan* (Seoul: Kudara Int’l., 1994), especially pp. 61–2, 237, for discussion of these issues.

Many Japanese scholars resist the notion that Japan was ever invaded from the continent. But Egami was a specialist in the history of Central Asia rather than that of Japan or Korea, and from the standpoint of Central Asia, if the northern nomads who overran so much of China in the fourth century failed also to invade Korea and Japan, the question must be — ‘why not?’ The burden of need for explanation seems, from this viewpoint, to fall upon those who deny any incursion into Japan by ‘horseriders’ from the continent.

⁸² Compare themes of the legends of Korean kingship found in Ilyon’s *Samguk Yusa* with those of Oujin and Jinguu compiled by AKIMA Toshio, in “The Myth of the Goddess of the Undersea World and the Tale of Empress Jinguu’s Subjugation of Silla,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 20:2–3 (1993), available on-line at <http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/jjrs/pdf/394.pdf>. In order to make the comparison relevant to the present analysis, it is not necessary to assume that the 辰王 of Korea’s 月支國 is behind *all* of Ilyon’s legends, only that the Oujin narrative is their embodiment in Japan. The legendary and semi-historical official accounts of Oujin are interpreted by many Japanese historians to indicate the beginning of a new dynasty. UEDA Masaaki, for examples, sees Oujin as the first of the ‘Kawachi dynasty’ Great Kings. (See, in Japanese: <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/応神天皇#.E7.B3.BB.E8.AD.9C>.) On the other hand, the continuity of the imperial lineage since Oujin is more credible; see Hong (1994) for a Korean view of Oujin as the founder of the ‘Yamato dynasty,’ the lineage now officially proclaimed to have reigned in Japan for over two millennia.

⁸³ Emperor Oujin had a dragon tail that made it necessary for him to have his coat specially designed to conceal it (source: The *Jinten Ainoushou*; see *Koujien*, s.v. ‘Ainoushou.’ Akima, op.cit., p. 112).

In “The Sumiyoshi Shrine and Jinguu Kougou,” Royall Tyler relates the account recorded in the *Jindaiki* (an early source, internally dated 731 A.D.) of the Sumiyoshi Shrine explicitly stating that Oujin was fathered by the Sea God (accessible on-line at http://epress.anu.edu.au/third_princess/mobile_devices/ch04s05.html). Even the ultra-orthodox Kitabatake seems to have given credence to legends claiming that Oujin was fathered by the three deities of the Sumiyoshi Shrine, as his account has (Matsumura, 1980, p. 102; see endnote 1 above) Oujin conceived after the death of his imperial predecessor, at a time when his mother was possessed by those deities. In North Asia and Korea, the founders of royal lineages are, as a rule, credited with a miraculous, divine birth.

The *himegami* (princess deity) worshiped at Usa Jingū and Iwashimizu Hachimangū, two shrines

E. Skull Deformation — the Definitive Link

Finally, there is in the Chinese chronicle mention of the unusual custom of 褊頭 (Japanese ‘hentou’), which constitutes conclusive evidence for the linking of Central Asia, Korea, and Japan in the way herein proposed. The *Wei shu* account reads:

兒生，便以石厭其頭，欲其褊。今辰韓人皆褊頭。

(When a male child is born, they pressure his head with stones, wanting it to become narrow. Now, all the [men] of *Chen-han* are narrow-headed.)

Called by Russian scholars an “annular artificial deformation (macrocephalia),” this custom appears in Central Asia beginning in the Bronze Age in a minority of the population. V.Y. Zenzenkova was of the opinion that the purpose of the custom was to “show the power of the conqueror, to stand out in some way, or else it was a symbol of the ruler, of his nobility and greatness.”⁸⁴ This interpretation is supported by the prominence of the “coneshaped (tower-formed) deformation of the heads of Hephtalite [and Kushan] rulers, depicted on coins.” Other Russian scholars concur, noting that:

[A] distinguishing ethno-cultural characteristic of the peoples of the Central Asian Interfluvial Area is their tradition of burying the dead in tombs of catacomb or cutting (*podboi*) types. Another distinguishing characteristic of these tribes was their practice of artificial deformation of the head with a view to impart to the skull a more high, elongated shape.⁸⁵ The distribution of tombs of the *podboi*

historically prominently connected with the imperial institution, does not appear as half of a usual matched pair (*hiko/hime*, prince/princess) of deities. The legendary shrine history *Jisha-engi Hachimanguu-dōkun* calls her the “dragon woman” and identifies her as the consort of Emperor Ōjin (see <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=9>).

⁸⁴ V. Y. Zenzenkova, “Some Craniological Materials of the Kushan Times in Central Asia,” in Gafurov (1970):150ff., p. 151.

⁸⁵ V. V. Ginzburg, in Gafurov (1970), p. 143.

tombs in Central Asia reflects the main stages of the movement of the Yue-zhi tribes.⁸⁶

Evidence of 禰頭 in Japan is, like that of Korea, found in written source materials. It was a custom of the Heian era (794–1185), its origin evidently contemporaneous with the establishment of the institutions of Japanese solar kingship, late in the seventh and early in the eighth centuries.⁸⁷

Conclusion

The stated purpose of this essay was to identify a specific origin, in Central Asia, for the Japanese institution of the divine emperor, the *tennou* (天皇). We found that origin in the solar kingship of an Indo-European people of Central Asia, the *Yuezhi*, first by noting similarities between ancient forms of solar kingship in West and Central Asia with those of Japan. Then, we joined the Yuezhi (月支) with Korea, and with Japan, by means of three important links: (1) the unique Korean ‘Dragon King,’ (辰王), the ‘dragon king’ theme in Japan and the known use of the name ‘Dragon’ (龍) by Tocharians of Central Asia; (2) the name ‘月支’ itself, used in both Central Asia and Korea; and (3) the peculiar custom of head-shaping, common to the Yuezhi of Central Asia, Korea, and Japan.

⁸⁶ A. Z. Zadneprovsky, in Gafurov (1970), p. 148.

⁸⁷ SHIBA Ryoutarou, *Rekishi o Kikou Suru* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjuu, 1969), pp. 120–121.

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