

ON THE HISTORICAL BOOK KOGOSHUI

BY

Dr. Genchi Kato,

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF THE IMPERIAL
UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

According to a time-honoured tradition, when our Imperial ancestors were still in the Plain of High Heaven, there were certain families in whose special care the rites of Shinto were preserved. Namely, the Nakatomi, the Imbe and also the Sarume, of whom we may reasonably believe that the Nakatomi and the Imbe were equally entrusted with the Imperial religious functions. The Imbe Family is lineally descended from Takami-Musubi-no-Kami through Futotama-no-Mikoto and Ame-no-Tomi-no-Mikoto, while the Nakatomi Family is descended from Kami-Musubi-no-Kami through Ame-no-Koyane-no-Mikoto and Ame-no-Taneko-no-Mikoto, and, together with these two Musubi-no-Kami, stands Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-Kami, thus forming a divine triad in the Japanese Pantheon at the opening of *the Kojiki* or *Records of Ancient Matters*.

According to our Japanese mythology, the "eternal night of darkness" prevailed after the withdrawal of the Sun-Goddess into the Heavenly Rock-Cave, and then Futotama-no-Mikoto (whom

the Imbe Family claim as their ancestor), and Ame-no-Koyane-no-Mikoto (the ancestor of the Nakatomi Family), aided by Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto (the ancestress of the Sarume Family), were summoned to perform due ceremonies essential to draw forth the Sun-Goddess from her retreat. On this momentous occasion, the chief role was not played by either the Nakatomi or the Imbe to the disparagement of the other, but both were equally important and essential in the right performance of the religious rites in the Plain of High Heaven.

When the Divine Grandson descended to earth, and the Emperor Jimmu established the Imperial Court in Yamato after his triumphant entrance into that province, both the above families enjoyed equal privileges in the religious ceremonies observed at the Court.

Kamatari, the renowned ancestor of the Fujiwara Family (which sprang from the same root as the Nakatomi), gained supremacy in the political arena, after the Soga Family was annihilated in A.D. 645 during the reign of the Empress Kogyoku and later on through its marital relations with the Imperial House, the Fujiwara Family practically governed Japan *de facto* and the authority of the Nakatomi gradually superseded that of the rival Imbe Family in the religious rites observed at the Imperial Court; thus, for example, in the reign of the Emperor Temmu (A.D. 673-686), the Asomi, *i.e.*, the newly established Second Court Rank, was conferred on the Nakatomi, whilst only the Sukune, *i.e.*, Third Court Rank was bestowed on the Imbe. This incident clearly proves that the Imbe then ranked below the Naka-

tomi, quite contrary to our time-honoured tradition that the Nakatomi and the Imbe wre originally treated on exactly the same level at the Imperial Court, both in the Plain of High Heaven and in this Land of Luxuriant Reed Plains in ancient times.

Only those shrines which were closely related to the Nakatomi Family enjoyed special prerogative regarding the official offerings, whilst, according to the sacred traditions of ancient Japan, no matter how superior the other shrines were, they were neglected for the receipt of the Imperial offerings, if they had no relationship with the Nakatomi House. The prejudices and partiality of the Nakatomi naturally aroused the righteous indignation of Imbe-no-Hironari and forced him when replying to the Emperor's gracious message to call His Majesty's attention to the "Eleven Things" neglected by the Imperial Government, as told in the book *Kogoshui*, which under these circumstances and with such a purpose was inscribed by Imbe-no-Hironari at the beginning of the 9th century in the reign of the Emperor Heijo (A.D. 806-809).

In substance *the Kogoshui* is chiefly a protest written by Imbe-no-Hironari against a rival family. Hence, one naturally presumes that the work breathes a spirit of rivalry and jealousy. In some respects this is an undeniable fact, for example, the part taken by Takami-Musubi-no-Kami is fairly prominent in the issue of Divine Commands in High Heaven together with Amaterasu-O-Mikami in *the Kogoshui* which differs from *the Nihongi* which attributes those commands to Amaterasu-O-Mikami alone. Why

is this? Because Takami-Musubi-no-Kami being regarded as the divine ancestor of the Imbe Family, it is reasonable to suppose that Imbe-no-Hironari desired to claim the same high position for his own divine ancestor Takami-Musubi-no-Kami as that of the Divine Imperial Ancestress Amaterasu-O-Mikami herself. Therefore, K. Nasa or Kusakabe published his contradiction of *the Kogoshui* account styling his book *Gisai* or *My Inability to Agree with Imbe-no-Hironari* (or, shortly Kusakabe's *Critique on Imbe-no-Hironari's Kogoshui*). At the same time one must remember that *the Kogoshui* records a tradition specially transmitted to and preserved by the House of Imbe, just as *the Nihongi* preserves various traditions as different versions of one and the same event and so, one may reasonably conclude that the value of *the Kogoshui* is equal to that of the family records preserved by the Takahashi Family, the Hata Family, and so forth. From this standpoint, it appears that Moto-ori and Hirata greatly sympathize with Imbe-no-Hironari's attitude against the author K. Kusakabe (*Vide* Moto-ori, *The Gisai Ben.* Moto-ori, Collected Works, Japanese edition, Vol. V, pp. 1445-1447).

At the opening of the ninth century was a time when Chinese culture was gaining great influence in Japan. The mother of the Emperor Kammu was descended from a certain royal family of Kudara (*i.e.*, Pèkché), and the two celebrated Japanese Buddhist monks Dengyo Daishi, Kobo Daishi, and others were more or less affected by Chinese thought and civilization after visiting China. The Emperor Kammu in A.D. 785 and 787 gave orders that worship be paid to a heavenly god, or rather Heaven

Itself, at Katano (交野) in Kawachi Province, which Chinese religious custom is entirely alien to the original Shinto cult of old Japan (*The Shoku Nihongi*, Vol. XXXVIII, Vol. XXXIX. *The Kokushi Taikei*, Japanese edition, Vol. II, pp. 720, 735). There was another trend of thought, however, running counter to the spirit of the times which blindly accepted Chinese civilization then overpowering the country with irresistible force.—Nationalism *versus* foreign influence! Conservatism *versus* liberalism! So, according to *the Nihonkoki*, an historical book compiled under Government auspices, an Imperial Edict was issued in A.D. 809, which forbade the circulation of a spurious work, written from the standpoint of the Chinese and Korean immigrants, entitled "Wakan-Sorekitei-Fuzu" or *the Book on the Genealogies of All the Sovereigns Both at Home and Abroad*, it being injurious to social order in Japan, because it falsely asserts that the royal families of China and Korea as well as the Japanese are all sprung from one and the same God, Ame-no-Minakanushi-no-Kami, one of the greatest deities worshipped by the ancient Japanese, and thus blasphemes the highest heavenly ancestral God of the Imperial family of Japan (*Vide the Nihonkoki*, Vol. XVII. *The Kokushi Taikei*, Japanese edition, Vol. III, p. 95). Moreover, the appearance of *the Shinsen-Shojiroku* or *Register of Family or Clan Names* compiled in A.D. 815 by the Imperial Prince Manta and *the Daido Ruijuho* or *Work on the Japanese Medical Prescriptions Classified in the Daido Era* compiled in A.D. 808 by Abe-no-Sanenaō, Izumo-no-Hirosada etc., and *the Daido Hongi* (大同本紀) compiled in the Daido Era (the beginning of the 9th century),

whose fragments—a description of some Shinto rites performed at the Ise Shrine—are still extant in the books entitled “Jigu Zatsureishu” and “Koji Satabumi”; *vide the Gunsho Ruiju*, Japanese edition, Vol. IV, and *the Zoku Gunsho Ruiju*, Japanese edition, Vol. IV) is the surest evidence of the activity of counter-currents of the conservative nationalism to which Imbe-no-Hironari belonged. Hence his book *Kogoshui* was written in antagonism to and conflict with the “new tendency to ostentation and frivolity *versus* the ancient simplicity,” as stated in his preface.
