

"Mika"-Jar Deities in Japanese Mythology

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1. Introduction

In the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* there are deities which are called "Mika"—"Jar". It seems that most scholars have the opinion that the Chinese character 甕—jar—is not to be taken in its literal sense, but is to be considered a borrowed character, used in place of 嚴—Ika—which means awful, stern, wondrous.¹ However, the author believes that this paper shows that the

(1) The list is long and includes many authorities. Among recent publications are the following: Numazawa, *Die Weltanfänge in der japanischen Mythologie*, Librairie du Recueil Sirey, Paris—Verlag Josef Stocker, Luzern, 1946, p. 272; KN, p. 62, note 5.

term "Mika" makes perfectly good sense when given the meaning jar, and that there is no reason to search for some hidden meaning or to construct some linguistic theory to explain the meaning. To arrive at this conclusion, the author traces the lineage of the jar in Japanese mythology.

2. Mythology Related to the Jar Deities

a. The Birth of the Fire God.

(1) *Kojiki*. Izanami, the first mother, gave birth to the Fire God. She was burned and began to die. She became very sick. Her vomit turned into male and female metal deities; her faeces became male and female clay deities; her urine became a water goddess; and then she gave birth to the goddess of vegetation. This last goddess had a daughter, a food goddess. Then the Ur-Mother died.²

(2) *Nihon Shoki*. The main text says that after being burned by the Fire God, the Ur-Mother gave birth to a clay deity and a water deity. The Fire God married the Clay Goddess and they had a child, the Goddess of Vegetation, on whose head were produced the silkworm and the mulberry tree, and in whose navel were the five kinds of grains.³

Version #1 says that the Ur-Mother gave birth to the Water Goddess, the Clay Goddess and the Gourd of Heaven.⁴

Version #2 says that the Ur-Mother's vomit became a Metal Deity, and her excrement a Clay Deity.⁵

(3) Names of the Deities Produced by Izanami.

(a) The Fire God's Names.

HI NO ya gi HAYA WO NO KAMI (K)⁶

火 之 夜 藝 速 男 神

Fire Burning Fast Male Deity

(2) KN, p. 59 f; KT, p. 37 f, and page 34.

(3) NS, Vol. 1, pp. 173, 174, 178, 180, 182, 183.

(4) NS, Vo. 1, pp. 173, 174, 180.

(5) Ibid, p. 182 f.

(6) Capital letters in the names of deities indicate that the Chinese characters are to be given a literal meaning. Small letters indicate that the Chinese characters are for sound only as stated in the *Kojiki*. (K) means *Kojiki*. (NS) means *Nihon Shoki*.

HI NO ka gu TSUCHI NO KAMI (K)

火 之 迦 具 土 神
Fire Odor Earth Deity

HI NO KAGA bi ko KAMI (K)

火 之 眩 昆 古 神
Fire Bright Prince Deity

KA GU TSU CHI (NS)

軻 遇 突 智
Axle Sudden-meeting Sudden-Knowledge

(b) The Metal Deities' Names.

KANA YAMA bi ko NO KAMI (K)

金 山 昆 古 神
Metal Mountain Prince Deity

KANA YAMA HIKO (NS)

金 山 彦
Metal Mountain Prince

KANA YAMA bi me NO KAMI (K)

金 山 昆 賣 神
Metal Mountain Princess

(c) The Clay Deities' Names

ha ni ya su bi ko NO KAMI (K)

波 邇 夜 須 昆 古 神
Clay for Pottery Making Prince Deity

ha ni ya su bi me NO KAMI (K)

波 邇 夜 須 昆 賣 神
Clay for Pottery Making Princess Deity

HANI YAMA HIME (NS)

埴 山 姫
Pottery-Clay Mountain Princess

HANI YASU NO KAMI (NS)

埴 安 神
Pottery-Clay Easy Deity

(d) The Water Deities' Names.

MI TSU HA NO me NO KAMI (K)

彌 都 波 能 賣 神

Arrow-shooting Spirit Wave Capable Female
Deity

MITSU HA NO ME (NS)

罾 象 女

Trap Pattern (Elephant) Female

(e) The Vegetation Deities' Names.

WA KU MU SU HI NO KAMI (K)

和 久 産 巢 日 神

Peace Forever Birth Nest Sun Deity

WAKA MUSU HI (NS)

稚 産 靈

Pasania Birth Spirit

(f) Gourd of Heaven.

AMA NO YOSA TSURA (NS)

天 吉 葛

Heaven Good Arrowroot-Plant⁷

Note: The gourd is not called a deity in the text.

(4) Meaning of the Myth. Izanami is Mother Earth. Her husband, Izanagi, is Father Heaven. Out of Mother Earth come all things necessary for man's existence on earth, including metal for metal working, clay for pottery, and vegetation and food when watered by heavenly rain. The death of the Ur-Mother signifies the dividing of the heaven and earth in the early stage of creation.⁸

Killing in order to produce is the theme of the myth. Before man could advance from one cultural level to another there had to be a killing. Natural fire is the killer, but from the killing come metal for tools and weapons, clay for pottery, abundant vegetation and food, and control of fire (gourd).⁹ In the myth, man has not yet advanced to making tools, making pottery, cultivating the soil, and perhaps not even making fire. It is a

(7) For the meanings of the names of the deities see KN, p. 60, notes 1 and 3 through 12. KT, p. 34 f and NT, Part 1, p. 21.

(8) Numazawa, *Die Weltanfänge in der japanischen Mythologie*, p. 286 ff.

(9) NT, Part 1, p. 21, note 8.

picture of a culture like that found among the African Congo Pygmies and South American Fuegians, pure food gathering with fire always kept burning.

The myth also tells us that the story tellers projected their present conditions into myths of older times. For instance, metal working is much later than pottery making in Japan. Actually, it appears that both of these ideas were introduced into the myth to fit later facts into the concept of “killing is necessary for production, life and advancement to a higher stage of culture.” The gourd clearly shows that pottery was not yet in use as water containers.

b. The Slaying of the Fire God.

(1) The Myth. Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* tell essentially the same story, although the *Nihon Shoki* contains several versions. The myth says that when Izanami died because she was burned by the Fire God, the Ur-Father drew his sword, a deity, and cut off the Fire God’s head. Deities were formed out of the blood that stuck to the blade, the tip and the hilt of the sword. Deities were also formed from the various parts of the dissected body.¹⁰

(2) Names of Deities in the Myth.

(a) Sword.

AME NO WO HA BARI (K)
 天 之 尾 羽 張
 Heaven Tail Feather Stretch

i tsu NO WO HA BARI (K)
 伊 都 之 尾 羽 張
 Power (Spirit) Tail Feather Stretch

(b) Lightning Deities.

IKATSUCHI NO KAMI (NS)
 雷 神
 Lightning Deity

(10) KN, p. 61 f; NS, Vol. 1, pp. 205, 207, 210, 212, 213, 259, 261, 262, 264.

TAKE fu tsu NO KAMI (K)

建 布 都 神
Stand Snap Deity

TOYO fu tsu NO KAMI (K)

豐 布 都 神
Rich Snap Deity

fu tsu NUSHI NO KAMI (NS)

經 津 主 神
Snap Ruler Deity

*TAKE MIKA TSUCHI NO KAMI (NS)

武 甕 槌 神
Brave Jar Mallet Deity

TAKE MI KAZUCHI NO WO NO KAMI (K)

建 御 雷 之 男 神
Stand Venerable Lightning Male Deity

*MIKA HAYA HI NO KAMI (K) (NS)

甕 速 日 神
Jar Fast Sun Deity

HI HAYA HI NO KAMI (K)

樋 速 日 神
Guided Fast Sun Deity

HI HAYA HI NO KAMI (NS)

熯 速 日 神
Surging-Fire Fast Sun Deity

NE SAKU NO KAMI (K)

根 折 神
Root Splitting Deity

NE SAKU NO KAMI (NS)

根 裂 神
Root Splitting Deity

IWA SAKU NO KAMI (K)

石 折 神
Rock Splitting Deity

IWA SAKU NO KAMI (NS)

磐 裂 神
Rock Splitting Deity

IWA SAKU NE SAKU NO KAMI (NS)

磐 裂 根 裂 神
Rock Splitting Root Splitting Deity

IWA TSUTSU NO WO NO KAMI (K)

石 筒 之 男 神
Rock Pass-Through Male Deity

IWA TSUTSU NO WO KAMI (NS)

磐 筒 之 男 神
Rock Pass-Through Male Deity

IWA TSUTSU NO ME NO MIKOTO (NS)

磐 筒 之 女 之 命
Rock Pass-Through Female Deity

(c) Rock Deities. 500 rocks at Heaven Easy River were spattered with blood and became the ancestor of Lightning Deities.

(d) Water Deities.

KURA o ka mi NO KAMI (K)

闇 淤 加 美 神
Dark Valley Control Water Deity

KURA O KAMI (NS)

闇 龍
Dark Dragon Deity

KURA MI tsu ha NO KAMI (K)

闇 御 津 羽 神
Dark Hill (Water) Pattern

KURA MITSU HA (NS)

闇 岡 象
Dark (Elephant) Water Pattern

(e) Mountain & Vegetation Deities.

YAMA NO KAMI (NS)

山 神
Mountain Deity

YAMA TSUMI (NS)

山 祇
Mountain Land-Deity

MASA KA YAMA TSUMI (NS)

正 勝 山 祇

Proper Victory Mountain Land-Deity

MASA KA YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

正 鹿 山 津 見 神

True Deer Mountain Spirit See Deity¹¹

NAKA YAMA (NS)

中 山

Inner Mountain

OKU YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

奥 山 津 見 神

Inner Mountain Spirit See Deity

KURA YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

闇 山 津 見 神

Dark Mountain Spirit See Deity

KURA YAMA TSUMI (NS)

闇 山 祇

Dark Mountain Land-Deity

TAKA WO KAMI (NS)

高 龍

High Dragon Deity

HA YAMA TSUMI (NS)

麓 山 祇

Foot-of Mountain Land-Deity

HA YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

羽 山 津 見 神

Feather Mountain Spirit See Deity

shi gi YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

志 藝 山 津 見 神

Flourish Mountain Spirit See Deity

(11) Tsu Mi is translated as possessor by Chamberlain, but because the *Kojiki* makes not note that the characters for Tsu Mi are for sound only, the author uses the literal meaning. Tsu is used throughout the *Kojiki* with a meaning of spirit. It also means port. 'Port See' in the deities names doesn't seem to make much sense. Tsumi in the *Nihon Shoki* has the meaning of land deity.

SHIKI YAMA TSUMI (NS)

巖 山 祇
Base-of Mountain Land-Deity

TO YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

戸 山 津 見 神
Door Mountain Spirit See Deity

o do YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

淤勝 山 津 見 神
(o do?) Mountain Spirit See Deity

HARA YAMA TSU MI NO KAMI (K)

原 山 津 見 神
Field Mountain Spirit See Deity¹²

(3) The Meaning of the Myth. This myth contains elements of the P'an-Ku myth of China and is a myth common to south east Asian peoples. Killing is again the theme of the myth and the killing brings an advance in culture, the jar or making of pottery.

The JAR DEITIES first appear in this myth, and they are brought into relationship with the sword, lightning, flourishing vegetation in mountain land and fire. It is at this point that there is difficulty explaining the use of the Chinese character for jar, and the opinion is brought forth that the authors of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* didn't really mean "JAR" when they wrote jar.¹³

However, the author believes that the myth tells us that pottery making existed in Japan before agriculture. There is nothing in the myth of the birth of the Fire God and the slaying of the Fire God that points to true agriculture, whereas the JAR is specifically mentioned. It appears that in Japan, the agriculture myth of killing in order to produce was transferred back to the origin of pottery. The origin of agriculture is contained in the myth of the slaying of the Food Goddess.

c. The Slaying of the Food Goddess.

(1) *Kojiki*. Susano-wo, the Wind God, was punished and had to obtain food as offerings to the gods. He went to the Food

(12) For the meanings of the names, see the notes of (10) above. Also KT, p. 37 ff; NT, Part 1, pp. 23, 29.

(13) KN, p. 62, note 5; KT, p. 38, note 5; NS, Vol. 1, p. 210; NT, Part 1, p. 23, note 5.

Goddess, who produced food from her nose, mouth and fundament. Susano-wo became angry and said that the food was filthy. Therefore he killed her. From her body came the silkworm, rice seeds, millet, small and large beans and barley. The high god, Kami Mu Su Bi Mi Oya no Mikoto—神産巢日御祖命 then caused the seeds to be used for planting.¹⁴

(2) *Nihon Shoki*. This myth says that the Moon God killed the Food Goddess. The Sun Goddess became very angry and said that she did not want to see the face of the moon. For this reason, the sun and moon became separated by one day and one night and dwelt apart. However, out of the body of the slain Food Goddess came the ox, the horse, silk worm, panic, rice, wheat, large and small beans. The Sun Goddess planted the seeds and began reeling thread.¹⁵

(3) The Meaning of the Myth. Killing continues to be the theme in this myth. Killing is necessary to advance to the agriculture stage, the breeding of animals and silk production. This is the basic agriculture myth widely spread among primitive agriculture people, and is found in cultures in which head hunting, cannibalism, human sacrifice, blood fertility rites, etc. are highly developed. It belongs in the concept of identification of man with the plant or fruit.

The myth suggests that when Japan imported agriculture, she also imported the myths of the agricultural peoples. Evidence points to the fact that, since Japan did not develop agriculture independently to any degree, she did not go through highly developed stages of head hunting and cannibalism. Neither did she develop human sacrifice on a large scale such as other people who went through long stages of agricultural development. It appears that agriculture came to Japan by way of people who had already gone through the stages of head hunting, cannibalism and human sacrifice but who still told the stories of killing. Japan seems to have taken over the stories without ever having gone through the stages of development of agriculture. In addition, Japan added the animal and the silkworm to the agriculture myth.

Although nothing is said in this myth about JARS, it is the central myth in the killing for production concept, of which the jar myths form a part.

(14) KN, p. 85; KT, p. 71.

(15) NS, Vol. 1, pp. 293, 298, 300; NT, Part 1, p. 32 f.

d. The Slaying of the Eight-Headed Serpent. Susano-wo, the Wind God, was the first farmer in Japan. He killed the Food Goddess to obtain seeds for planting. He also killed the eight-headed serpent who came from the mountains every year to eat the daughters of an old man and woman. As a reward for killing the serpent, Susano-wo was given Kushi Na Da Hime—櫛名田姫—Comb¹⁶ Name Rice-Field Princess as his wife. The couple had many descendents, and the meanings of their names clearly depict the development of agriculture. Their most famous descendent was Oho Kuni Nushi, the agriculture champion of Japan.

By another marriage, the Wind God had two children, Oho Toshi—大年—Big Year or Big Crops and U Ka no Mi Tama no Kami 宇迦之御魂神, a Food Goddess. Big Year then had descendents whose names clearly show the further development of agriculture, such as calendar, farm houses, wells, hearth fire, storehouse, etc. Thus another killing resulted in a further advance in culture.

e. The Symbolic Killing of the Agriculture Champion.

(1) The Myths. There are many myths about the great deity, Oho Kuni Nushi no Kami, which point to the development of agriculture and to virility. His various names tell us that he was the great fertilizer of women and the soil. His descendents include various deities of agriculture, divination, jars, etc. However, before he could succeed in building the country he had to be initiated. His brothers killed him, but his mother went to heaven and obtained the help of the high god. She was given two Princess Shells who restored her son to life.¹⁷

(2) Oho Kuni Nushi and Jar Deities. Although Oho Kuni Nushi had many descents, from the viewpoint of jars, the following lineage is significant.

OHO KUNI NUSHI NO KAMI Great Land Ruler Deity

大 國 主 神

TORI MIMI NO KAMI (Wife) Bird Ear Deity (Divination)

鳥 耳 神

TORI NARU MI NO KAMI (Child) Bird Crying Sea Deity

鳥 鳴 海 神
(Divination?)

(16) KN, p. 85 ff; KT, pp. 74, 79, 106.

(17) KN, pp. 91, 95, 106; KT, p. 84.

HI NA TERI NUKA TA BI CHI WO i ko ji ni NO KAMI
 日 名 照 額 田 毘 道 男 伊 許 知 邇 神
 (Wife) Sun Name Shine Rice-Field Road Male Deity
 (*ikoji* meaning not clear)

KUNI OSHI TOMI NO KAMI (Child) Land Valiant Rich
 國 忍 富 神
 Deity (Crops)

ASHI na da ka NO KAMI (Wife) Reed Deity
 葦 那 陀 迦 神
 (*nadaka* meaning not clear)

Also called: YA GAWA E hime Eight River Inlet Princess
 八 河 江 比 賣
 (Irrigation)

*HAYA MIKA NO ta ke sa ha ya ji nu mi NO KAMI (Child)
 速 甕 之 多 氣 佐 波 夜 遲 奴 美 神
 Fast Jar? Deity¹⁸

SAKI TAMA hi me (Wife) Before Bead Princess. Daughter
 前 玉 比 賣
 of:

*AME NO MIKA NUSHI NO KAMI Heaven Jar Ruler
 天 之 甕 主 神
 Deity (From Fire God)

*MIKA NUSHI HI KO NO KAMI (Child) Jar Ruler Sun
 甕 主 日 子 神
 Child Deity

hi na ra shi bi me (Wife)? Princess. Daughter of:
 比 那 良 志 毘 賣

o ka mi NO KAMI Water Deity from blood of Fire God.
 淤 加 美 神
 (The lineage continues with names signifying trees,
 flowers, swamps, mountains, crops, etc.)

(3) The Meaning of the Myths and Jar Lineage. The symbolic killings and restorations to life of Oho Kuni Nushi as part of his initiation are themes found spread around the world, but again it is one which is highly developed in agricultural societies and often connected with secret societies. It is part of

(18) KN, p. 106, notes 6, 7, 9; KT, p. 100.

the killing, head hunting, cannibalism and human sacrifice complex, but now advanced to a symbolic killing. Killing is still necessary for life, not only for fertilization of the soil but for fertilization of women as well. Without killing man cannot have children, but now the killing is symbolic.

The Jar Deities' lineage shows that without science to assist in fertilization of the soil, and to determine just when and what to plant, etc., divination was resorted to. Divination is brought into connection with the jar deities, and when Fast Jar married the daughter of Heaven Jar Ruler, a child named Jar Ruler Sun Child was born. Thus it appears that this Jar Deity became the controller of agriculture, being both a child of the sun and pottery.

It is in this myth that scholars who took the view that the original "MIKA" deity's name did not signify jar find themselves in difficulty. They really cannot explain the "Jar" deities in this myth by the meaning stern, awful, etc. They must pass on without an explanation, or merely say the deities have some kind of a connection with jars.¹⁹

However, the connection of the jar deities in this myth clearly goes back to the myth of the slaying of the Fire God, since two of the wives are daughters of deities who came from the Fire God's blood, and one is actually the daughter of a jar deity born from the Fire God's blood.

Here the meaning is jar, the controller of fertility, used together with divining for agriculture.

f. Killings When the Heaven Deities Subdue the Land Deities.

(1) The Myth. When the heaven deities decided to rule the land, they sent an envoy, Ame no Ho Hi—天稻日—, Heaven Rice Sun, down to earth to negotiate with Oho Kuni Nushi. The envoy, however, never reported back to heaven. Then Ame no Waka Hi Ko—天若日子—Heaven Young Sun Child was sent to earth. He married the daughter of Oho Kuni Nushi and did not report back to the heaven deities. Next, a pheasant was sent down to spy on Ame no Waka Hi Ko. A woman, Ame no Sagu Me—天之探女—Heaven Search Woman, listened to the voice of the bird and said it was a bad omen. Ame no Waka Hi Ko killed the bird with an arrow. The arrow went up to heaven

(19) KN, p. 105 f; KT, p. 98 ff.

and the high god threw it back to earth. It pierced Ame no Waka Hi Ko and killed him. After this killing, the land was ready to be taken over by the heaven deities. The deity sent down had two names: Take Mika Tsuchi—武甕槌—Brave Jar Cutting-Tool (NS) and Take Mi Katsuchi—建御雷—Stand Venerable Lightning (K).²⁰ In one version of the *Nihon Shoki*, this Jar Deity had to kill the Star Deity, Ama Tsu Mika Hoshi—天津甕星—Heaven Spirit Jar Star, before he descended to earth.²¹

(2) The Meaning of the Myth. The killing theme continues. This time there are three killings, the pheasant, the heaven envoy and the star. These killings pave the way for the subjugation of the land deities by the heaven deities. This is paramount to an advancement in culture, because the heaven deities were considered to be higher than earth deities. The result was a more unified agricultural state. The power to produce such a state rested in the hands of the Lightning Jar Deity.

The killing of the Star Jar Deity may symbolize the end of the rule by the land deities, since both the land deities and the star deity were considered evil deities. Also it contains the idea of like producing like. Thus the killing of natural fire produced fire making by man; the killing of the natural food deity produced agriculture; and the killing of the jar-star produced a more perfect jar. This could be the move up to glazed pottery.

At any rate, the Jar-Lightning Deity was the controller. Ame no Sagu Me, 天之探女 points to both divining by bird sounds and to shamanism, since the name means heaven searching woman and she divined by the sounds of the bird. This gives a clue to the meaning of the names of deities with bird and singing components in them, which were met in the lineage of Oho Kuni Nushi. (See p. 91).

g. The Jar Deity Assists Emperor Jimmu.

(1) The Myth. Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* contain the story of the descent of the Lightning God's sword to assist Emperor Jimmu. When Jimmu met powerful enemies and victory was impossible, Take Mi Kazuchi—Brave Venerable Light-

(20) KN, pp. 113 to 125; KT, pp. 113 ff, 120, 126; NS, Vol. 2, pp. 677, 686, 693, 700, 725, 825 f; NT, Part 1, p. 64 ff.

(21) NS, Vol. 2, p. 865; NT, Part 1, p. 69. Note Hirata's explanation in NT, p. 68, note 1.

ning—(K), but called Mika Tsuchi no Kami—Jar Cutting-Tool Deity—in the Nihon Shoki, sent down his sword to the MIDDLE OF A STOREHOUSE. This sword was called MIKA fu tsu NO KAMI—甕布都神—Jar Powerful Deity, fu tsu MI TAMA—布都御魂—Powerful Venerable Spirit, and SA SHI fu tsu NO KAMI—佐土布都神—Left Soldier Powerful Deity. With this Sword-Jar Emperor Jimmu was able to defeat his enemies.²²

(2) The Meaning of the Myth. In this myth it appears that the Jar Deity departs from his primary function of fertilization and agriculture and becomes a deity of war. However, it must be noted that the Jar-Sword descended to the center of a storehouse, and that this battle was between agriculturists and food gatherers, especially hunters. Agriculture won the battle because of the assistance of the Jar-Sword. The dual nature of lightning is clearly seen in this myth, with the lightning deity residing in two different god seats, the sword and the jar.

h. Emperor Jimmu's Jar Making Festival. The Emperor commanded, saying, “We are now in person about to celebrate a public festival”. Then he granted Michi no Omi no Mikoto—道臣命—Road Minister, the title Itsu Hime—嚴媛—Powerful Spirit Princess.²³ Then the Emperor said, “The earthen jars which are set up shall be called Itsu Be—嚴盆—Powerful Spirit Jars; the fire shall be called Itsu no Kagu Tsuchi—嚴香來雷—Powerful Spirit Lightning; the water shall be called Itsu no Mizu Ha no Me—嚴罔象女—Powerful Spirit Water Female; the firewood shall be called Itsu no Yama Tsuchi—嚴山雷—Powerful Spirit Mountain Lightning; and the grass shall be called Itsu no Tsuchi—嚴野雷—Powerful Spirit Field Lightning.” Then the Emperor tasted the food—Itsu U Ka no Me—嚴稻魂女—of the sacred jars, and arraying his troops, he set forth upon his task.²⁴

In this festival, there is an imitation of the death of the Ur-Mother, Izanami, and so the names of the fire and water are the names of the Fire God who caused Izanami's death, and the Water Deity who was given birth by Izanami. The festival then continues the theme of the killing of the Fire God by Izanagi, and

(22) KN, p. 153; KT, p. 163 f. Neither author connects lightning and jar in their notes, but continue to consider the meaning of jar as stern or awful. KN, p. 152, note 4; KT, p. 164, note 14.

(23) NT, p. 122, note 4. The guide was given the female title for the festival. Usually women performed the rites but evidently no women were available.

(24) NS, Vol. 2, p. 1158; NT, Part 1, p. 122.

so the fire wood and grass are given the names of deities who came from the body of the slain Fire God. The festival then moves to the myth of the killing of the Food Goddess, and so the food is given the name of the deity who may be identified with the Food Goddess slain by the Moon Deity. The making of jars was, in fact, the story of the origin of pottery and the advance to agriculture. This myth also clearly indicates that the Chinese character 甕—jar which is used in the myth of the slaying of the Fire God should be taken in its literal sense.

i. Jimmu's Jar Festival for Divination. When Jimmu was conquering Japan, he met strong enemies and could not advance. He prayed and had a dream in which the Heaven Deity said, "Take earth from the shrine of the Heavenly Kagu Yama, and make of it 80 heavenly platters—天平瓮八十枚—Ame no Hira Ka Ya So Ki, and sacred jars—嚴瓮—Itsu He, and therewith sacrifice to the gods of heaven and earth. Secretly he sent two men to the shrine and obtained the clay. The Emperor made 80 platters and 80 heavenly small jars and sacred jars, with which he went to the upper waters of the Nifu River and sacrificed to the gods of heaven and earth. Immediately on the Asa Hara Plain by the River of Uda, it became as it were like foam on the water, the result of the curse cleaving to them. Then the Emperor made a vow, saying, "I will now make *ame*²⁵ in the 80 platters without using water and if the *ame* is formed, then shall I assuredly without effort and without recourse to arms reduce the empire to peace. So he made the *ame*, which forthwith became formed of itself.

Then the Emperor made a vow saying, "I will now take the sacred jars and sink them in the Nifu River. If the fishes, whether great or small, become every one drunken and are carried down the stream, like as it were to floating tree leaves, then shall I assuredly succeed in establishing this land. But if this be not so, there will never be any result." Thereupon he sank the jars in the river with their mouths downward. After a while the fish all came to the surface, gaping and gasping as they floated down the stream.²⁶

This myth is self explanatory as far as showing the sacredness of jars and their use for divination.

(25) *Ame* is usually made of millet, malted, and is nearly identical in composition to "malt extract". NT, p. 121, note 3.

(26) NS, Vol. 2, pp. 1146, 1149, 1150, 1152, 1155; NT, Part 1, p. 121.

j. Other Jar Festivals.

(1) In Emperor Korei's Reign. There is a short remark in the *Kojiki* which says that sacred jars—忌瓮—Iwai Be, were set up the jars, the land was pacified.²⁷

(2) *Manyôshu* and *Engi Shiki*. Both *Manyôshu* and the *Engi Shiki* make reference to ceremonies of setting up jars. In these ceremonies, the jars were called Iwai Be—齋戸—which means taboo—sacred, and festival door. The jars were put in holes dug in the ground. Because of the character "door"—戸—which appears in the term and because of the nature of the festivals, the jars should be considered the abodes of the gods.²⁸

k. The Shaman, Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko and Jars.

(1) *Kojiki*. In the reign of Sujin there was a pestilence. In a dream Oho Mono Nushi (Oho Kuni Nushi), the Agriculture Champion, told the Emperor that Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko could stop the pestilence. Runners were sent to find this man. When they found him, they asked him who he was. He answered that he was the child of the venerable Take Mika Tsuchi—建甕槌—Stand Jar Cutting-Tool, and said he was the descendent of Oho Mono Nushi. The Emperor made him Kannushi—神主—Head of the Shrine, and after he did worship to the great deity of Miwa, Oho Kuni Nushi, by making 80 heavenly platters, Ya So Bi Ra Ka—八十毘羅訶—, and establishing the shrines of heaven and earth, the pestilence stopped.²⁹

(2) *Nihon Shoki*. The myth says that Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko was the child of Iku Tama Yori Bime—活玉依媛—Life Bead Possessed Princess, who was the daughter of Sue Tsu Mimi—陶津耳—Unglazed-Pottery Spirit Ears, who was also called Kushi Hi Kata Ame Hi Kata—奇日方天日方—Wondrous Sun Person Heaven Sun Person. The mother of Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko was made pregnant by Oho Kuni Nushi. After Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko worshipped the agriculture deity the pestilence stopped; there was peace; and the FIVE GRAINS WERE PRODUCED IN ABUNDANCE.³⁰

(27) KN, p. 171; KT, p. 193 f.

(28) KN, p. 170, note 21.

(29) KN, p. 179 f; KT, p. 211 ff.

(30) NS, Vol. 2, p. 1353 f, 1357; NT, Part 1, p. 152 f.

(3) Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko's Lineage.

(a) *Kojiki*.

SUE TSU MIMI NO MIKOTO (Mother) Unglazed-
 陶 津 耳 命
 Pottery Spirit Ears Deity (Jars-Crops)
 (Her husband's name is not given)

IKU TAMA YORI hi me (Child of Above) Life
 活 玉 依 毘 賣
 Bead Possessed Princess (Shaman)

OHO MONO NUSHI NO KAMI (Husband) Great
 大 物 主 神
 Thing Ruler (Agriculture Deity)

KUSHI MI KATA NO MIKOTO (Child) Comb
 櫛 御 方 命
 Venerable Person Deity (Food)

IHI KATA SU MI NO MIKOTO (Child of Above)
 飯 肩 巢 見 命
 Boiled-Rice Shoulder Nest See Deity (Prepared
 Food)

TAKE MIKA TSUCHI NO MIKOTO (Child of
 建 甕 槌 命
 Above) Stand Jar Cutting-Tool Deity (Jar-
 Fertilization)

O HO TA TA NE KO (Child of Above) Thought
 意 富 多 多 泥 古
 Rich Many Many Swamp Old (Rich Rice Fields)

(b) *Nihon Shoki*.

TAKE CHI NU TSUMI Brave Bud Blocked-Water
 武 茅 淳 祇
 Land-Deity (Irrigation)

SUE TSU MIMI (Child of Above) Unglazed-Pottery
 陶 津 耳
 Spirit Ears (Pottery and Crops). Also called:

KUSHI HI KATA AME HI KATA Wondrous Sun
 奇 日 方 天 日 方
 Person Heaven Sun Person

IKU TAMA YORI BIME (Child of Above) Life

活 玉 依 媛

Bead Possessed Princess (Shaman)

OHO MONO NUSHI NO OHO KAMI (Husband of

大 物 主 大 神

Above) Great Thing Ruler Great Deity (Agriculture Deity)

OHO TA TA NE KO (Child of Above Marriage)

大 田 田 根 子

Great Rice-Field Rice-Field Root Child
(Shaman-Crops)

(4) The Meaning of the Myth. Both the myth and the names of the deities in the lineage show the close relationship between jars, shamanism, agriculture and prepared food. The agriculture deity, also a mountain deity, had to be worshipped by one of his descendents in order to stop the pestilence and ensure abundant crops. This descendent is a CHILD of a JAR DEITY in the *Kojiki*. In both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* the JAR IS PROMINENT in the lineage. The last descendent, whose name means Rice Field, became the head of a shrine. This appointment as Kannushi—神主—implies ecstasy and divining.³¹ In addition, Iku Tama Yori Bime actually means Spirit Possessed Shaman according to Japanese authorities,³² adding to the relationship between shamanism, jars and agriculture. Also, the term *kushi*, comb, in deities' names and in various myths, is closely connected with food. For instance, Izanagi threw his comb away and it became food. Ina Da Hime—Rice-Shoot Rice-Field Princess, the wife of Susano-wo, was turned into a comb and put in the Wind God's hair when he killed the eight-headed serpent.³³

Clearly, this myth shows the use of the jar as a means of controlling agriculture, and the use of the jar in the worship of the agriculture deity.

(31) *Nihon Shakai Minzoku Jiten*, Vol. 1, p. 231, (1952).

(32) Nakayama, *Nihon Miko Shi*, p. 103.

(33) KN, pp. 65, 87; KT, pp. 43, 74.

3. Summary

The Jar Deities and Jar Festivals are part of the larger "Killing for Production" complex. Jar Deities first appeared when the Fire God was killed, and were brought into relationship with fire, lightning, sword and abundant vegetation. The names of the descendents of the Wind God and Oho Kuni Nushi, the Agriculture Champion, clearly relate the connection between jars, shamanism, divination and crops. Jars became the rulers of the land when the heaven deities took over the rule of the land. This is again verified when the Jar-Lightning Deity descended to negotiate with the land deities, and when the Jar-Lightning-Sword was sent down to the center of a storehouse to assist Jimmu. Jimmu used the jars for divination and established the Jar Making Festival which was a reenactment of the killing of the Ur-Mother by the Fire God and the killing of the Fire God by Izanagi, the Ur-Father. Jars were set up in the reign of Korei and these jars are seen to be the god seats of deities from *Manyôshu* and the *Engi Shiki*. Finally, Oho Kuni Nushi, the Agriculture Champion, was worshipped by a descendent, who was also a descendent of a Jar Deity and who was a shaman.

4. Conclusions

- a. According to mythology, jars were important in food production even before agriculture.
- b. Jars became integrated with fertility rites and shamanism to a greater degree after the introduction of agriculture, and the term *sue*—unglazed pottery, in the lineage of Oho Ta Ta Ne Ko indicates Korean influence and perhaps points to agriculture coming into Japan from Korea.
- c. Jars were identified with the sword, and both jars and swords were the god seats of the Lightning Deity.
- d. There is a strong suggestion that both jars and swords were phallus symbols. Fire married clay and produced a food deity. Fire became lightning and as a jar and sword descended to the center of the storehouse.
- e. Jars were buried in river beds and in the ground to divine and fertilize the soil.

- f. The burying of jars in the ground tells us that much of the pottery found in the ground throughout Japan was not buried by accident.
- f. The Chinese character 甕—*mika*—meaning Jar, can be clearly understood with its literal meaning and needs no explanation based on linguistics.
- g. There is a need to examine once more the meanings of the deities' names found in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, especially in those cases where linguistic manipulations are used to explain the meanings of the names even though the *Kojiki* has no remark that the Chinese characters are only used for pronunciation.

Notes

*KN—*Kojiki Norito*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 2nd. Ed., 1960.

NS—*Nihon Shoki Tsûshaku*, Iida.

KT—*Kojiki Translation*, Chamberlain, J. L. Thompson & Co., Kobe, 1932.

NT—*Nihongi (Nihon Shoki Translation)*, Aston, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1956.