

*Shimaumi: Aquapelagic imagery and poetics of
'island-laying' in Kojiki*

Juni'chiro Suwa
Hirosaki University
suwa@cc.hirosaki-u.ac.jp

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Abstract: *Kojiki*, one of the oldest surviving records of Japanese history and mythology compiled in 712 CE, tells of the origin of the Japanese archipelago and nation. The initial chapter is known as *shimaumi*, or 'island-laying', where the birth of gods also gives rise to the formation of Japanese islands. This paper considers two aspects of *shimaumi*, firstly the spatiality of the myth and how aquapelagic imagery occurs both within *shima* (a locus of livelihood) and within the choice of kanji. Secondly, this paper considers how the aquapelagic imagery of *shimaumi* can be characterised as territorializing the sacred through 'island-naming as a god'. Additionally, while *Kojiki* is mostly written in classical Chinese, some Japanese words and phrases are used for island names, onomatopoeia, mystical words and transliterated poetry within Chinese syntax. Performance, particularly of these Japanese elements, means that *Kojiki* can be viewed as an act of *totohogi*; a rejuvenation of the world in Japanese cosmology that is as individual as each re-telling.

Keywords: shima, *Kojiki*, performance, aquapelago, *shimaumi*

Introduction

Kojiki is widely considered as the oldest surviving record of Japanese history and myths, dating to approximately 712 CE. The introduction, written entirely in classical Chinese, was probably added decades later anonymously, although it attributes authorship to court official Ōno Yasumaro (Suzuki, 1967). Most of the historical accounts in *Kojiki* are laden with incredible tales, if not fantasy, and hard to make reference to without extensive criticism and contextualisation. Nonetheless, the first section consists of creation myths known as the legend of *shimaumi* (island-laying). These myths provide an example of how imagination interacts with the epistemology of island formation and location to create 'aquapelagic imagery' that is recreated uniquely each time it is performed with different actors and audiences. This paper will elaborate how cosmological story-telling

interacts with aquapelagic imagery within the socio-spatial context of *shima* to produce a multi-layered experience that blends the temporality of creation with the here-and-now of the performance.

Aquapelagic imagery 'manifested itself as an aggregation of beliefs and imagined figures' (Hayward, 2018: 2) in order to grasp and expand on Philip Hayward's key ideas of 'aquapelago' and 'aquapelagic assemblage' (2012a&b), that conceptualises an island and its surrounding waters as a rhizomatic assemblage rather than a stereotype of a lone and deserted piece of land. The aquapelago explicitly integrates living and non-living actants within their terrestrial and aquatic environments, including any inland waters and waterways. Aquapelagoes wax and wane with human inhabitation and movement, therefore they are not fixed but performed, elastic entities (Hayward, 2015). Aquapelagic imagery can also be performative. One example of this are the legends of *ningyo*, the Japanese version of the mermaid, where tourist-pilgrims visit the mummified and enshrined 'bodies' of *ningyo* (see Suwa, 2018). In this regard, aquapelagic imagery is not simply imagination *per se*, instead it is a multi-layered act of dreaming: the dream itself, and the act of seeing a dream cannot be separated. The reading of island-laying re-enacts the very moment of creation to be witnessed and participated. Aquapelagic imagery is therefore a phenomenon which assembles the image with the process of performance.

The *shimaumi* myth tells that the first Japanese island was created from primeval chaos, whereupon a god and goddess descended to reside. Subsequent islands were born from the womb of the goddess. The myth gives each island a pair of names, one as an island and the other as a god. The assemblage of landmasses as deities generates a multiplicity of images wherein non-living objects and phenomena lose distinction from the living. This has implications for our conceptualization of the 'aquapelago' that distinguishes between the living and non-living actants. The Japanese islands are simultaneously animate and inanimate. The *shimaumi* myth of *Kojiki* in this regard is an aquapelagic tale within the socio-spatial construct of *shima* (Suwa, 2005). In Japanese and particularly the Okinawan lexicon, *shima*, are not merely geographical features but generators of cosmological order since the word connotes a locus of livelihood, foundation, base, home and territoriality (*ibid.*). The space of *shima* does not necessarily comprise a political entity but a territory, or site, of human activity.

Most of *Kojiki* is written in modified classical Chinese, but in some instances Japanese words are inserted fragmentarily. The part which appears in Japanese (with transliteration in Chinese letters) mainly records names, speech and lyrics by the protagonist. In terms of aquapelagic imagery, preservation of Japanese phrases is crucial in making the island-laying a reality for the Japanese nation. The act of speech, whether narrating, reciting or singing is therefore a performance of aquapelagic imagery and island-laying. This paper employs one of the most accessible and popular editions of *Kojiki* by Kurano Kenji (Kurano, 1963), and for an alternative interpretation in contemporary Japanese it also refers to the edition by Tsugita Masaki (1977). For convenience, old spellings that appear in the text are transformed to contemporary ones; for instance, *Awaji* instead of *Ahaji*. The only exception is the old onomatopoeia *koworo koworo*, instead of contemporary *kōro kōro*, because of the significance of the original sound in the thesis of this paper. As the scope of this paper is aquapelagic imagery, its objective is neither the scholarship of Asian history or classical Japanese literature, nor does it attempt to interpret facts about *Kojiki* and decode historical events from the text.

The *Shimaumi* myth

The drama of *shimaumi* is depicted in the first part of *Kojiki*. The following is an abridged summary (translation and interpretation mine, for an alternative and full translation see Philippi, 1969).

Izanami and Izanami, along with other gods, come out of the primeval chaos as if shoots of reeds sprout. The gods give a sacred spear to Izanagi and tell him: With goddess Izanami he consolidates the floating land to create a country. The couple stands up on the Bridge of Heaven. As Izanagi stirs the spear gently and then pulls it out, salt dripping from the blade accumulates to form an island. This is Onokoro Island.

Izanagi and Izanami descend on Onokoro. They raise posts to build a large palace. Izanagi says to Izanami, 'How is your body made like?' Izanami replies: 'I am almost perfect but there is just one part short.' Izanagi says, 'Mine is one part sticking out. Why do we not put them together to form a country? Can you bear it?' Izanami replies: 'That's fine!'

Izanagi continues: 'Then, make a turn around this sacred post. When we meet again, we have mito no maguwai (intercourse). You turn from the right. I come from the left.' As the couple walk around the post, Izanami calls: 'O what a lovely boy he is!' Izanagi responds: 'O what a lovely girl she is!' As they meet again, however, Izanagi complains: 'It is not good for a woman to initiate the speech' However, they sleep together and Izanami gives birth to Hiruko, the Leech Child. The two put their invalid infant on a straw boat to desert it. Izanami bares an island Awashima then, but this island too, is not counted as their heir.

The couple is perplexed and make a visit to Heaven for guidance. A divination is consulted: The pattern of cracked burnt deer's bone dictates that changing turn of the call is the solution. They come back home; this time Izanagi initiates the address and Awajinohonosawakenoshima is born. And then, there is the island of Iyonofutanoshima. This island has one body but four faces: Iyo Province is named Ehime, Sanuki Province is named Ōyori-hiko, Awa Province is Ōgetsuhime, and Tosa Province is named Tayoriwake. Next are the triple islands of Okinoshima known as Amenookoshirowake. The next is Tsukushi Island: He, too, has four faces... [A lengthy list of islands with their god names follows.] When all parts of the country were born, other gods are given birth. [A list of natural elements and so forth with god names follows.] At last, when Izanami gives birth to the fire god, she divinely passes away. During her last moment her vomit, urine and faeces turn into gods as well. Izanagi becomes angry and cuts the fire god with a sword. The dismembered parts of his body become gods of swords, water and mountains.

Izanagi is grief-stricken, yet he still craves for his dead wife. He decides to go to dark Yominokuni, the realm of the dead, to bring her back. There he meets Izanami. He pleads to her: 'My dear, our country is still unfinished.

Please come home with me! Izanami tells him that because she has eaten otherworldly food, she is unable to come back. She can still ask the god of Yomi, though, but during their talk Izanagi should not peep. To the dismay of Izanami, however, Izanagi cannot resist looking in the window and finds out that she is a rotten corpse covered with maggots and angry thunder goblins. Izanagi runs away as he casts magic to ward off his furious wife and an army of her darkly daemons chasing after him. At last, the dead Izanami and her company are held at the border. Unable to capture her man, she casts a curse at him over the rock of Chibikinoiwa [literally, 'the rock to be hauled by a thousand]: 'I will strangle to death a thousand of your populace a day, my sweetheart!' Izanagi replies: 'So do you, my dear, but I build one thousand and five hundred delivery rooms a day!' The Chibikinoiwa rock, which separated the couple, becomes a god named Chigaeshinokami [literally 'the god of turned-away road]. This tells how the Japanese populace multiplies.

The gods Izanagi and Izanami are married and give birth to god-islands and many other cosmic elements follow. Legendary emperors are described as the descendants of the original couple, which acts as a bridge between the *Kojiki* myth and the Japanese chronicle. The creation myth personifies the islands as gods as well as the constituents of Japanese native lands. The islanders are the siblings of these god-islands upon which their livelihood depends. In the *shimaumi* tales an island takes a pair of names: a geographical one by which the island is called, and another name as a god (the *kami* are deities in the Shinto belief system). Provinces may be entitled to a paired name as well, not just whole islands. For instance, Iyonofutanoshima (today's Shikoku), literally 'island of Iyo with double names', has four provinces with a god name for each. The first two islands in the myth, Onokoro and Awashima, take no god names. These islands were created not from copulation but drips of muddy water from the spear of Izanagi (Kishine, 2018). The lack of a godly name for Sado Island remains as an enigma.

Although *Kojiki* does not state who gives the *kami*-islands their names, it is said that when an island is given a godly name it acquires a body (the physical manifestation) of a god. This resonates with some folk beliefs in contemporary practice. Okinoshima, an island off the coast of Fukuoka, enshrines the island goddess Tagorihime, a god who is mentioned in *Kojiki*. Simultaneously, the whole island is believed as the *goshintai*, the body of god. Tagorihime is invisible and her figure can never be iconified but she is embodied as the island. The entire island, therefore, is a forbidden territory: no one is allowed to visit Okinoshima, even the priest is only allowed to set foot ashore for rituals. It is strictly taboo to remove anything from the island, even a pebble or twig of a tree. The whole Okinoshima is an assemblage of Tagorihime as far as it is considered to be a space of life. Similarly, a number of small islands and rocks in mainland Japan are also known to be worshipped as *goshintai*, and the rituals conducted for and on them generate sacred territoriality as in the case of Shimokita Peninsula of northern Japan (Suwa, 2016). To name an island is to name a god, and the entire space becomes a *shima*, a here-and-now space of activity.

The names Izanagi and Izanami probably derive from the verb *izanau*, 'to invite', with suffixes to designate masculine *ki* (or *gi*) and feminine *mi*. They invite each other for marriage but the incestual marriage of siblings is biologically unsound. The 'proper' procedure for invitation with divinatory guidance suggests that only such a ritual process

can lead to legitimate marriage and fecundity. Thereafter, the relationship is no longer incestual and the brother and sister are transformed into husband and wife and this is truly celebrated with pregnancy.¹ The couple give birth to the islands west of mainland Japan. Later chronicles indicate that eastern Honshu and Hokkaido were the home to non-Japanese groups in the ancient era, namely they are Emishi (reputedly Ainu) and Ashihase or Mishihase (feasibly a branch of Tungus). Wakatsuki (1999) makes a fine analysis that to decipher the group's name as Mishihase, which is more common, is equivocal.

The first island, Onokoro where Izanagi and Izanami marry, is spelled in Chinese characters, or *kanji*, as 淤能碁呂. The first letter 淤 contains an idiographic indicator for various states of water (e.g. 海 'sea'; 湖 'lake'; 河 'river'; 潮 'tide', 池 'pond', 沢 'brook, gorge, narrows', 流 'current, flow' 滴 'drops' 液 'fluid, liquid' 酒 'sake' etc.). Similarly, a stone (石) is hidden in 碁. Onokoro is therefore an aquapelagic assemblage: the *kanji* are selected for visual effect to show the island as a rock coming out of the primordial murky waters. Whereas it may appear as simple idiographic wordplay, the spelling of Onokoro in *kanji* textually visualises the drama of creation. This form of aquapelagic imagery, through the choice of *kanji*, is a desire to narrate the performance of the island creation myth.

After the failed attempt to recover his wife from the realm of the dead, Izanagi continues to generate numerous gods *sui generis* during purification rituals. As he washes his left eye the solar goddess Amaterasu is born. Amaterasu is destined to become the ruler of heavenly land Takamagahara as well as the ancestor to the imperial family. Her younger brother Susanowo was born when Izanagi washed his nose. Izanami's death marks the end of the couple's role as the creator of Japanese land, as they are taken over by the drama of conflict between Amaterasu and Susanowo, which explains the origin of the ancient dual states of Yamato and Izumo. At this point, the gods appear as rulers of the land, not personified as islands, suggesting that the two tales may have different origins.

Today, there are three places that are thought of as the location of Onokoro: Nushima, Eshima and a Shinto shrine named after Onokoro, all of which are located on or near Awajishima (Map; Photos 1, 2 and 3). Awajishima appears to be a composite of particles *Awa* (province named after finger millet) – *ji* (road) – *shima* (island). *Awa*, synonymous with the millet and the oldest known crop in Japanese archipelago, is a province in Shikoku. Only the narrow Naruto Strait separates Awajishima and Tokushima Prefecture (then *Awa*) of Shikoku, and from the ancient capital of Nara, the island is located between Honshu and Shikoku. The name Awajishima therefore indicates that fertility is a key element of the *shimaumi*, and that the islands are the space associated with producing, growing and harvesting of life. For example, in Tokushima, the finger millet, the traditional *awa* crop, is still grown by slash-and-burn cultivation as a way of preserving cultural heritage that existed before rice (See *Sekai Nogyo Isan*, website). In folk beliefs, it is not uncommon to enshrine a rock as a *shima*, and regard it as a sacred territory (Suwa, 2016). The fact that Onokoro appears as a rock (as in Eshima) or an isolated landmark (as in Onokorojima Shrine) further indicates that territoriality, rather than proportion or even aquapelagity, is important for the space of *shima*.

The rock that separated the living Izanagi and the dead Izanami is given the name Chigaeshinokami, literally meaning 'the god of turned-away road', because of its significance. The naming of gods, *kami*, takes place when an animating power generates

an assemblage of space-event. In this regard, *kami* are transcendental supernatural beings; actants which interact as agents of events to happen. The rock Chibikinoiwa is a *shima* and simultaneously a god, therefore, it becomes the site of territorialisation on which the drama of light versus darkness and life against death takes place (Suwa 2012). Whether it is an island or a rock, *shima* is a lively space of being, and the *shimaumi* myth is the narrative of such a reality. The events in *shimaumi* are an assemblage of the simultaneous placing/making of islands and naming of gods, a mystical, even sacred, process where gods become the agent of the assemblage. Therefore, the process of 'island-laying' does not necessarily mean that a *shima* is an island in a geographical sense, but the relationship between the sacred and the fertility of earth invites discussions of gender. For instance, does Izanami make herself a *shima* in a larger sense because her womb is a space-event of island-laying? What of Izanagi's spear?



Map: Locations of Onokoro showing Eshima絵島, Nushima沼島 and Onokorojima Shrineおのころ島神社. (Source: <https://note.com/lightwind/n/n30d5baf48068> n.d.)



Photo 1: Eshima (Source: Japan Line Website, n.d)



Photo 2: Nushima (Source: Nushima website, n.d.)



Photo 3: Onokorojima Shrine on Awajishima (Source: http://s1nakagiri.blogspot.com/2015/12/blog-post_57.html n.d.)

Enunciation, Performativity and Aquapelagic Imagery

Kotohogi is the ancient Japanese term meaning ‘to celebrate words’, it is an enactment of rejuvenating the world in Japanese cosmology. The concept persists in a number of traditional rituals and performative arts across Buddhist, Shinto and folk beliefs. This section explores how performing *Kojiki*, particularly *shimaumi*, highlights the importance of musicality in a broad sense; or what might be called ‘epi-music’, dramatic narrative, tone of words, diction, syllabic rhythm, choice of song or line of theatrical speech together generate a mythical reality that is located in the space of *shima*. As such these performances are a form of *kotohogi*.

In *Kojiki*, Japanese sound is retained in transliteration with instructions such as ‘Read the following seven letters as they sound’. Fujii Sadakazu, in his distinguished insights of ancient chronicles, elaborates how bilingualism in *Kojiki* took place (1978, 1987). He theorized that the original oral pretext of *Kojiki* was filled with too many fixed expressions to be properly interpreted and reproduced by the formality of classical Chinese. In his detailed analysis Fujii categorises the cases of transliteration into two approximate categories: those which retain distinct grammatical elements, such as particles, and those that are presumably intended to be pronounced in a performative mode (Fujii, 1987: 207-322). Therefore performance can be seen as central to the *shimaumi* myth and ‘island-laying’ is not a passive textual event that has happened in the past but an interactive re-creation that takes place in the here-and-now and shaped by the creative choices of the performers. The retention of particles seems to strongly suggest that the words preceding them are to be read in *kun'yomi* (the reading of a kanji by the native Japanese equivalent). Examples of latter are abundantly observed in today’s folk and modern orality: *kudoki* (aka *saimon*), *naniwabushi* (aka *rōkyoku*), various styles in

mandan (aka *mangei*), and casual conversation dialect. Therefore, retention of Japanese phrases in Chinese syntax, however fragmentally, can indicate that parts of myth were originally written as a piece of music or a theatrical speech. As such, *shimaumi* is performative, and the time-space of performance is always the present whenever imagined and recited.

The list below shows four cases of transliteration that appear in the *shimaumi* myth (in order of appearance).

- A 布斗麻邇爾
Futomani ni
[Futomani (type of divination)/(particle)]
- B (鹽) *許々袁々呂々邇畫鳴
(*Shiho*) *koworo koworo ni kakinashi te*
[(Salt water)/ (onomatopoeia)/(particle)/Stir up/(particle)]
*Whether this letter is transliteration is uncertain but likely.
- C 美斗能麻具波比
Mito no maguwai
[Genitals / (particle) /sexual intercourse]
- D 「阿那邇夜志愛上袁登古袁」 「阿那邇夜志愛上袁登賣袁」
'*Ananiyashi, e otoko wo.*' '*Ananiyashi e onna wo.*'
['(Exclamation)/Nice/Man /(particle).'] '(Exclamation)/Nice/Woman/(particle)']

The syllables of *futomani* (A) retain the Japanese word for a form of divination; to receive an oracle by reading patterns of a burned shoulder bone of deer. The closest equivalent to this divination in China uses turtle shells instead. It was perhaps possible to insert a more general term to suggest divination instead of continuing to use the word *futomani*; however, the sound of language was regarded as even more important in order to vividly preserve the momentum, performativity and dramaturgy of the crucial moment of *shimaumi*. In addition, the fact that the particle *ni* is retained here further indicates the importance of the sound and rhythm produced by Japanese phrasing for preserving the sense of orality.

The creation of Onokoro Island is described by the very unique onomatopoeia *koworo koworo* (B). The first character 鹽 *shio* (salt) and last two 畫鳴 *kakinashi* (to stir up) are instructed to be read in Japanese native reading, or *kun'yomi* (as opposed to *on'yomi* which is a reading style derived from the Chinese pronunciations). Since the rest of Izanagi's action is in Chinese, the author of the text considers the onomatopoeia indispensable for dramatic effect to re-enact in the very moment of creation. The whole world of *shimaumi* is in the rhythmic mood of six syllables. In Japanese onomatopoeia, the duration of enunciation is produced by *mora* (a unit of sound used in phonology that determines syllable weight), and it can actually express velocity of action by changing the number of syllables. If the primeval sea was light, smooth and fluid, Izanagi would only stir it easily, briskly or softly. In such a case, it can make it shorter such as *koro koro*. However, the myth tells that the primitive sea is murky and the magical spear is long as well as heavy. Izanagi has to stir his spear from the top of the bridge while other gods are

watching. As a consequence, he starts to stir hesitantly, awkwardly and carefully, but with a great force. It was not an easy business to create an island from the chaos, even to a god. This moment makes a dramatic highlight of *Kojiki*, as all gods in heaven watch anxiously waiting for the creation of an island forming. The best onomatopoeia to convey such nuance would be adding another syllable, *wo*. The syllables *koworo koworo* is an impeccable solution to reproduce vivid image of the birth of Onokoro, as the first island of archipelago gradually taking shape: *koworo koworo koworo...* as Izanagi participates in this painstakingly slow accumulation of consolidating landmass. In any dramatic reconstruction, the enunciation of *koworo koworo* can even direct the acting protagonist to comically exaggerate his stirring action. It cannot be verified that the section of Onokoro was originally a part of theatre performance or a piece of oral poetry, but the case of *koworo koworo* suggests that it may have been so. Izanagi's action of stirring is the first climax in the tale of *shimaumi*; therefore, the selected onomatopoeia was not only popular but an expression of what the origin of the universe is all about.

The phrase *mito no maguwai* (C) further exemplifies that the nuance of words and rhythm produced by syllabic meter are equally important. This rather graphic reference to sexual intercourse finds no equivalents among the sacred language of Confucian scripture or Buddhist sutra. The text narrates about the erotic contents of oral tradition for the sake of depicting the *shimaumi* myth as a sympathetic magic of fecundity. The phrase *mito no maguwai* counts seven syllables, which suggests that the words are originally part of a legend to be narrated or sung as part of a drama. As in this case, sensuality plays a key role in earlier chapters of *Kojiki* to generate the world. In the chapter following *shimaumi*, when the upset solar goddess Amaterasu hides in the cave and the whole world is lost in the darkness. The rainmaking goddess Amenouzume is called upon for her intense entrancing dance. As she wiggles her waist strip of cloth hangs down in front of her genitals to make all gods laugh. Amaterasu hears the noise over the rock and slightly opens it to see. The gods remove the rock and the world is full of light once again.

Eighth century Japanese poetry is structured by grouping phrases of five and/or seven syllables, as in *tanka* (5-7-5-7-7) and epic *chōka* (a desired sequence of several phrases of 5-7 syllables with a final phrase of 5-7-7). As a result, specific or coincidental phrasing of five or seven syllables can produce a rhythmic effect, even in contemporary Japanese. The phrase *koworo koworo ni kakinashi te* (B) is a syntax formed by a group of seven and five syllables. By the same token, the exchange between Izanagi and Izanami, 'Ananiyashi, e otoko o!' and 'Ananiyashi, e onna o!' consists of groups of five syllables (D) (Onna' has three syllables since in this case the 'n' /N/ takes one *mora* or syllabic count). As an actor addresses 'Ananiyashi, e onna o!' the marriage of gods becomes re-enacted here-and-now so that the whole cosmology becomes rejuvenated and all those present rejoice, as happens in many traditional theatrical performances in Japan. The word *ananiyashi* is an ancient form of address, and it also highlights the emphatic value of the first marriage of the world between Izanagi and Izanami. The retaining of Japanese words is effective as it produces syllabic meter. The islands having been born in the mythical drama are felt in the actual enunciation of the text. These islands are individuated by means of naming, mythical reality and the musicality of syllabic organisation. The grouping of five and seven syllables survives and is widely popular in Japanese poetry today, particularly as in the fixed form of *tanka* and *haiku*. This might facilitate aquapelagic imagery of *shimaumi* to generate in contemporary contexts.

Returning again to *kotohogi*, the performing of *shimaumi* utilizes Japanese phrases, syllabic meter and diction to create a musicality. This musicality is reflected in the Japanese language itself. Shima Miho, the novelist from Amami describes how troublesome it is to transliterate her dialect in Japanese orthography: 'It is extremely difficult to write the words of the island... Especially the accent cannot be reproduced at all, so when I read what I wrote I feel like: 'Oh, where are these the words come from?''', she goes on to say, 'The words of southern islands have got rich enunciation of song' (Shimao & Ishimure, 2003: 45-47). This musicality is not fixed but is as individual as the performers. As such, the space of *shima* generates only when language and performance are seamlessly assembled into the territoriality of a live experience. The space of *shima* is the time of *shima*. As the words in *Kojiki* are recited, it becomes the act of generating the ancient island in the here-and-now of performative space. The islands in *shimaumi* are performative, and the time-space of performance is always the present whenever imagined and recited. This resonates with words of E.E. Cummings commenting on his poetry: "We can never be born enough" (1972:461).

Conclusion

In the chapters after *shimaumi*, *Kojiki* proceeds to tell of another creation myth; the beginning of the ancient state of Wa (which becomes known as Yamato and then Nippon). However, reading *Kojiki* is indeed a difficult task as not only are the multiple interests of the editors woven into it but also any interpretation is influenced by the reader's particular socio-cultural context. It is widely known that things described as 'Japanese' in *Kojiki* cannot be taken as evidence of the essentialism of Japanese culture. Ever since the ground-breaking, but Shinto-nationalist, scholarship of Motōri Norinaga from the 18th Century, *Kojiki's* contexts as well as division between Chinese and Japanese syntax has made essentialism easy to overlay.

This paper has highlighted that *shimaumi* is a narrative of aquapelagic imagery territorialized within *shima*. Japanese islands are born of *kami* and named as their descendants, therefore 'island-laying' is a sacred process. Further, it has been shown that performance of this aquapelagic imagery ensures that *Kojiki* does not stand alone as an autonomous literary episteme but finds a place in the continuum of performance and ritual that is continually re-created and re-imaged through each performance. As such, any performance of *Kojiki* acts as '*kotohogi*', rejuvenating and reimagining the world in Japanese cosmology.

Endnotes:

1. This episode of male initiative in adjusting the 'right' marriage proposal is reminiscent of patriarchy in ancient China (Tsugita 1977: 44). The practices of calling and song exchange are known as *utagaki*, in which either man or woman can initiate the address. *Utagaki* develops into an important genre in medieval court poetry.

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Jun'ichiro Suwa specialises in cultural anthropology with particular interest in performance and music. He has conducted research in Papua New Guinea, Romania, Tuva and Japanese localities. He has authored a monograph about PNG power band music and epistemology of sound (both in Japanese). His recent interest includes island studies with Japanese indigenous perspectives.