

Appendix Two

The Japanese Court Chronicles

This section is designed to introduce briefly the 8th-century documents of Japan. Information on the two chronicles given here is mainly derived from the translators' prefaces: by Philippi (1969) for the *Kojiki*, and by Aston (1972) for the *Nihon Shoki*. In contrast to these official court histories, local documents survive for several provinces. Also compiled in the 8th century, these 'Records of Local Customs' (*fudoki* 風土記) provide information on outlying regions that are not fully represented in the court chronicles. All these documents were originally written in *kanbun* 漢文, a method of writing in Chinese with Japanese grammatical transformations indicated by annotation.

Kojiki 古事記

The *Kojiki*, submitted to the Nara Court in 712, was the first official history of Japan (Philippi 1969). It was compiled from two earlier sets of documents: clan genealogies and anecdotal histories. The sovereign Keitai (r. 507–531) is reported to have commanded the noble families to begin keeping genealogical records in the early 6th century, and the 'now' of the *Kojiki* is thought to refer to the reign of Keitai (ibid.: 5). The text was written in a hybrid style of *kanbun* and *manyōgana* 万葉仮名, the latter being a script using Chinese characters for their phonetic value only to transcribe native Japanese words.

Three 'books' comprise the *Kojiki*. Book One is almost entirely mythological in character, describing the activities of the gods and their colonization of the Japanese Islands. Book Two begins with the tale of Jinmu, the first legendary sovereign of Japan, describing his eastward advance from Kyūshū to establish himself in Yamato; it finishes with Ōjin, the 15th sovereign who allegedly died in AD 395 (see Kidder 1959 for adjusted dates). Book Three then proceeds to describe the reigns of the 16th sovereign Nintoku to the 33rd sovereign Suikō ending in 641. All anecdotal history, however, finishes around 487, and only genealogical information is

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offered for the remaining reigns (Philippi 1969). Philippi's translation is the standard work to consult in English, and the standard presentation of the *Kojiki* original text in Chinese, its translation into modern Japanese, and its scholarly annotations are published by Iwanami in the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 日本古典文学大系 series (Kurano and Takeda 1958).

Nihon Shoki 日本書紀

The *Nihon Shoki* (alternatively known as the *Nihongi*), was submitted to the Nara Court in 720. It was apparently based on more documents than the *Kojiki* and covers a longer timespan, from time immemorial to AD 697. Only the contents referring to events from AD 500 onwards, that is, from Keitai's reign, are considered to be completely reliable history; earlier material has been much distorted, both chronologically and genealogically, for political purposes. As presented in Aston's translation (1972), the work is divided into two Volumes (I, II) and thirty Books (i–xxx), with Books i–xvi in Volume 1 and Books xvii–xxx in Volume II; in the standard Japanese edition, it is divided into two volumes (*jō* 上, *ge* 下) with Books i–xv in the former and Books xvi–xxx in the latter (Sakamoto *et al.* 1965, 1967). Books i–ii comprises the 'Age of the Gods', presenting the ancient Japanese cosmology and creation myths. Each of the earthly imperial chronicles (Books iii–xxx), which provide the basis for the traditional Japanese list of sovereigns (Table 1.3), details the reign of an individual ruler, except for Temmu who is allocated two books. The first sixteen books (Volume I) cover almost as much as the entire *Kojiki*, and the rest (Volume II) is devoted to the period between the 26th sovereign Keitai and the 41st sovereign Jitō (see Table 1.3). The content of the *Nihon Shoki* ends in the year AD 697, 23 years before it was submitted to the Nara Court as the official history of Japan.

As in the cases of the founding dates of the early Korean states [SFK, ch. 1: 3], the succession date of Jinmu was fixed intentionally by later scholars. In assigning it to 660 BC (see Chapter 4), approximately 1,000 years were added to the imperial history of Japan; most scholars agree that the 3rd century AD is a more likely starting date for whatever imperial line can be reconstructed. To fill this extra time period, the existing historical documents and anecdotal evidence of the early kings was telescoped to pad out these reigns, including the possible partitioning of domestic and international information, and the arbitrary parcelling out of information into the various kingly chronicles. This is one of the many reasons why the *Nihon Shoki* is considered chronologically unreliable before AD 461, when outside sources attest accuracy.

The standard presentation of the *Nihon Shoki* original text in *kanbun*, its translation into modern Japanese, and its scholarly annotations are published by Iwanami in the *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 日本古典文学大系 series (Sakamoto *et al.* 1965, 1967). The *Nihon Shoki* is the first of the

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so-called Six National Histories (see Sakamoto 1991), none of the others of which have been translated into English. Aston's work (1896) is the standard English translation for the *Nihon Shoki* though it is now over a century old. Five successive publishers have reprinted his two-volume 1896 original in a single volume (Aston 1924, 1956, 1972, 1997 and 2005); since these are all photographic reproductions, they all have the same page numbering and chapter divisions, so any one of them can be used to find the citations in this volume. The archaic typography, moreover, helps take one back in time.

Fudoki 風土記

After the establishment of the new capital at Heijō in the northern Nara Basin, the Ritsuryō government promulgated an edict in AD 713 for provinces to collect information on their climate, geography, customs, legends, beliefs, lifestyles and placenames and submit it to the Nara Court. Aoki (1997: 2) notes that some of this material was probably used for the compilation of the *Nihon Shoki*, but materials which were kept by the provincial offices were never subjected to chroniclers' heavy-handed editing for political purposes. The extant materials in the provinces were collected by the Heian Court in 925 as *Fudoki* (Records of Local Customs). Of those submitted at that time, five remain extant; named after their provinces, these records were all compiled in the 8th century: *Hitachi Fudoki* (713–26), *Izumo Fudoki* (733), *Harima Fudoki* (715) and the *Bungo Fudoki* and *Hizen Fudoki* (both thought to have been compiled between 729 and 739) (Aoki 1997: 2–4). Postdating the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* by just a few decades if that, the *fudoki* collectively provide interesting local material for comparison with the court chronicles. All five have been translated into English (Aoki 1971, 1997). The original texts in *kanbun*, their modern Japanese translations, and annotations are available in the Iwanami *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 日本古典文学大系 series (Akimoto 1958), with material from other provinces included as appendices to round out the geographical resources for entire archipelago.