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## NIBUKAWAKAMI-JINJA

by

**Richard Ponsonby Faue**

**Life Member of the Meiji Japan Society**

This paper deals with the curious history of the Nibukawakami Shrine, i.e. the shrine at the head of the Nibu river in Yoshino. It is an isolated spot, a place called Ogawamura, at the foot of the mountain Takamiyama, on the upper reaches of the river Nibu, and though in Yoshino it is almost on the borders of Ise.

The site is mentioned in the earliest chronicles, for in the Nihon-shoki we find that:

“Kamu-yamato iware hiko no mikoto (i.e. the Emperor Jimmu) taking 80 platters and jars went to the upper waters of the river Nibu and . . . . . sacrificed to the Gods of Heaven and Earth.”

Though the date of the foundation of a shrine here is not known, it is clear that the place was one with ancient, sacred and auspicious associations, and it is to be presumed that the shrine is of very old standing. Prof. Nishida Naojiro of Kyoto University is even of opinion that Nibukawakami was the place where the original inhabitants invoked their rain maker before the arrival of Jimmu Tenno, and that it was for this reason that it was selected as a place of worship.

Coming to early documentary references to the shrine, we find it mentioned in the Engishiki with other important shrines in the district (Kori) of Yoshino. All authorities are agreed that the deity worshipped was a rain deity, and most of them hold that this deity was the goddess Mizuhanome-no-Mikoto, also styled Amashi-no-Kami, which

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signified a rain deity.

Some accounts refer to the deity as Kurao-Kami, and here we have a confusion, or perhaps an identification, of rain deities bearing different names, since as well as Mizuhanome the deities Takaokami and Kuraokami are regarded as rain deities. As the etymology of their names shows, Taka is a god of high places, and Kura a god of valleys; and both were, or came to be, associated with rain.

In any case, there can be no doubt that the deity of Nibukawakami was from the beginning a rain deity.

The date of the foundation of the shrine is given by one authority as A.D. 676, but there is no proof. We can however be sure that it was of long standing importance by about 750.

From references in early chronicles the following points emerge.

1. Official offerings were sent by Imperial messengers to this shrine from time to time, when rain was prayed for, a black horse was sent. When fine weather was prayed for, a white horse.

During the 9th century the rank of the shrine was raised several times. It was given the lower fifth rank in 818, and had reached the lower second by 897. The fact that the shrine possessed a tablet inscribed "Upper First Rank" is recorded, but the date of the grant is not known.

An important reference to the shrine is found in the Engikyaku, under the date 895. It consists of an edict by the Dajo-kwan (i.e. the Chancellors Office) granting an application from the Department of Religion (Jingi-kwan), asking that the boundaries of the shrine be strictly enforced. The following is a quotation from the petition:

"In 'Myojin Honki' it says that an oracle of the deity said, if you will build my shrine deep in the moun-

tains of Nibu Kawakami in Yoshino, far from the voice of man, the earth shall have refreshing rain and violent rains shall cease, and therefore this shrine was built. From old until now, *hei* and horses have been offered, and within the four boundaries, the horses have been pastured and hunting forbidden. But the primitive inhabitants of Kuzu, and wanderers, on the pretext of bringing offerings, have often desecrated and polluted the divine territory, in such a manner as to incur the divine wrath, and we, Hafuri and Negi, believing that they were bringing offerings, have not interfered, and the divine boundaries have been defiled. How can we leave this sinful people longer unpunished. Therefore we appeal to you to bring the matter before the authorities, and beg them to issue a ban regarding the divine boundaries, and cause it to be strictly enforced.”

This petition, having been approved by the Department of Religion, was transmitted to the Chancellor's Office for the necessary administrative action.

The document is interesting as an example of administrative practice in those days; it is first class evidence, but the curious thing is that, despite such an official record, the history of the shrine should have been lost sight of, and actually mistaken in a later period.

It can be shown that the dispatch of offerings by Imperial Messenger continued without interruption to as late as 1450. There are records of Imperial messages sent on such occasions. One of these may be cited—sent by the Emperor Mommu in 850.

“The Emperor with the deepest respect and profound awe addresses the august deity of Nibukawakami.

“Since last spring rain has fallen and we anticipated an abundant harvest and were filled with joy, but, of

late, the rain has been grievous, and the farmers are sore distressed. Now it will become fine and the crop abundant only by the gracious intervention of the great deity, and, therefore, having chosen an auspicious morning, we are despatching.....of.....rank with a thank offering of *hei* and a red haired horse.

“May Thine Augustness graciously incline Thy ear to our prayer, and grant that the autumn harvest and winter storage may be protected from all hurt by wind and rain, by drought and by insects, and further vouchsafe to guard the Emperor and the Imperial Throne, making them as firm as a rock, and protecting them by day and by night, and safeguard Our person and have pity on Our people. Spoken with awe and reverence.”

During the wars and political chaos of the 15th century the system of despatching offerings from the Court broke down, and knowledge of the shrine, partly no doubt because of its remote situation, seems to have disappeared. It was not until after the firm establishment of peace by the Tokugawa Shoguns that an effort was made to resume the old customs. But meanwhile wrong information had been spread, and there was confusion between various shrines.

In 1863 the Emperor Komei sent a messenger with offerings to Nibu village in Yoshino,—the wrong place. The local shrine was raised to the first class; and though all the old authorities give the deity as Midzuhanome, the deity was now declared to be Okami no Kami, a name which does not appear in the Kojiki or the Nihonshoki.

The priests appointed soon discovered that a mistake had been made, and they tried to discover which was the real shrine. Enquiries and discussions went on for years, and a temporary solution was reached by appointing two shrines, an upper and a lower, one to Takaokami and one to



Kuraokami.

Neither was the true shrine, and it was not until 1922 that the final solution was reached. The story is too long and detailed to recount here, but it may be summarized by stating that in the Keian period (1648-52) the Nibu Kawakami Shrine had become the Aritōshi Shrine because (it is conjectured), for want of funds, the wardens wished to conciliate the powerful Koya San, and agreed to making the pure Shinto establishment into a Jinguji, a combination of Shinto and Buddhism. Anyhow, there are records to show that a ceremony of transfer took place in 1650, in which a number of Buddhist priests participated. The principal deity was transferred to a newly constructed shrine on the other side of the river, and the main shrine was now dedicated to Aritōshi Myōjin.

A remarkable sequence of events, some of which are very obscure, thus produced the result that this famous old shrine was lost sight of and the goddess Mizuhanome was not reinstated in her ancient shrine until 1922, after many years of doubt and discussion.

The credit for eliciting the truth is due to the enthusiasm and the industrious research of a "parishioner" of Aritōshi named Moriguchi-Narakichi, now chief priest of Futara in Utsunomiya. As a young student he commenced enquiries in the year 1900 and, after protracted researches and arguments, petitions and memorials, he succeeded in inducing the Naimushō to accept his view. He even went so far as to resign a good official position and take a subordinate post in the Kasuga shrine in order to be in close relations with authorities dealing with Shinto matters. Thanks to his efforts, in 1922 the main shrine was dedicated to Midzuhanome, with Izanagi on the East, and Izanami on the West.

## Critique sur Le Shinto par Dr. G. Kato

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Ce livre publié en anglais par le savant professeur à l'Université impériale de Tokyo, le Dr. Genchi Kato, et traduit récemment en français par les soins de la Maison Franco-Japonaise de Tokyo, est assurément le meilleur ouvrage de vulgarisation qui ait paru sur le Shinto, redevenu depuis 1868, comme on le sait, la religion nationale et officielle au Japon.

Le Shinto qui, à son premier stade, en des temps très anciens, était une religion de la nature, le culte simple et primitif des grandes forces naturelles, a depuis lors, singulièrement évolué. Passant par des phases diverses, il est devenu actuellement, au moins en tant que religion d'Etat, une sorte de code de morale nationale "broché, nous dit l'auteur, dans le tissu même des croyances originelles et de l'organisation nationale du peuple japonais." Sincérité et pureté, tels en sont les deux grands principes. Faire le bien, c'est être pur; celui qui fait le mal est impur.

Toutefois à côté du Shinto officiel, religion morale, religion d'Etat, dont les hauts fonctionnaires sont les prêtres, il y a le Shinto populaire, Shinto des vieilles croyances et des superstitions, qui se partage en de nombreuses sectes, dont treize sont officiellement reconnues comme religions, sur le même pied que le Bouddhisme et le Christianisme.

Considérant le Shintoïsme à sa lointaine origine, puis le suivant à travers ses évolutions successives jusqu'à l'époque actuelle, en marquant chaque fois ses caractéristiques dominantes, l'auteur nous trace ainsi, d'une façon claire, sa très curieuse histoire. Et comme c'est un savant qui l'écrit, un savant très versé dans l'étude de l'histoire du monde et des religions, qui ne manque pas de noter, partout où il les rencontre, les rapprochements et les rapports, il se trouve que son livre est à la fois une histoire du Shintoïsme et une très intéressante étude des religions comparées.

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Et c'est par ce dernier côté peut-être que sa lecture apparaîtra plus captivante aux lecteurs occidentaux et retiendra davantage leur attention (Publiée dans le Bulletin de l'Agence Économique de l'Indo-Chine).



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