

# The Topology of Boundaries

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## Introduction

When two different territories exist, a boundary comes into being. We are always on one side of two territories, while the other side of the boundary is the territory of those who differ from us, a world which differs from this side. Let us call the former “the present world” and the latter “the other world.” This contrast between the present world and other world sometimes overlaps with the contrast between one’s own land and a foreign land, and may also overlap with the contrast between the living and the dead, the ordinary and the extraordinary. Based on how distinctions are drawn, the boundary’s position shifts, and even if one of the sides exists at a particular level, based on the era and the perspective of the one who perceives the boundary, various types of boundaries may exist simultaneously. Thus, what is important is not just the specification and mapping of where the boundaries exist—that is, the topography of boundaries—but the illumination of the relationship between the various elements that form boundaries, which are preserved though their positions might change—in other words, the topology of boundaries.

What then is it that supersedes time and genre and characterizes the topology of boundaries? To consider this question, let us start by going back in time to the ancient myths in *Kojiki* 古事記 (*Record of Ancient Matters*, 712).

## 1. Boundaries in Myth and Legend

The myths in *Kojiki* tell of how this earthly world originated from a state of incompleteness to arrive at a state of completion. During this process, there emerges for the first time an other world that is separate from the sky and earth, which exist from the very beginning. This other world is known as Yomi 黄泉, the Land of Death. Under the order of the heavenly deity, the husband and wife deities Izanaki 伊耶那岐 and Izanami 伊耶那美 give birth to the islands that form the nation, along with the earth’s various elements such as the seas, rivers, mountains, and plains. The female god Izanami is burned upon giving birth to the fire god, and she departs from the earth. Pursuing her, the male god Izanaki reaches Yomi. There, he looks upon his wife, whose appearance has utterly

changed. He then flees back to earth and uses a boulder to block off Yomotsu Hirasaka 黄泉ひら坂, the slope leading to Yomi which forms a boundary between the two worlds. When Izanami, who has run after him, vows to kill a thousand people a day, Izanaki responds by saying that he will bring to life 1,500 people a day, and thus completes their separation.

Upon reaching Yomotsu Hirasaka, Izanaki repels his pursuers by hurling peaches at them. Consider what he then says to the peaches: “In the same way that you have helped me, please help all the people of this world, those who dwell in the Central Land of Reed Plains (*ashihara no nakatsukuni* 葦原中国), when they encounter difficulty and are suffering and troubled.” This myth-like name for the earthly world—“The Central Land of Reed Plains”—appears here for the first time. Prior, the earthly world was called only *kuni* 国, or “the land,” and was an incomplete world “that drifted about like a jellyfish.” The fact that the earthly world now possesses a name means that its nature as a world has been determined. At this juncture, with its border blocked and being cut off from Yomi—the fringe world on the other side of the slope, the antithetical world of death—the earthly world takes on the contours of a central world (“Central Land”) covered by an expanse (“Plain”) of vitality symbolized by reeds (“Reed”).<sup>1</sup>

This myth reveals that while the other world is portrayed as a world that is the reverse of the present world, the present world is stipulated as a world that is precisely *not* that sort of other world. It is here that the relationship between the two worlds exists—as mirror images separated by a boundary, and as inverse, inverted images. The myth also tells of the world of death at the heart of the image of such an other world. “Weeping Blood in Lamentation” is a late 7<sup>th</sup> century poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂, which was collected in *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (*A Collection of Myriad Leaves*), a poetry anthology completed after 759. In the manner of the male god Izanaki in *Kojiki*, this poem speaks of the sorrows of a man who wails upon losing his wife. One of the two envoys appended to the end of the *chōka* 長歌 (*Man'yōshū* 2: 207) reads:

The autumn mountains are thick with red leaves,  
Concealing the mountain path that leads to my lost beloved.

The poet is aware that his wife has died and already no longer exists in this world. However, the thought that she might be living in a world of which he has no knowledge compels him to search for her. This intuition lays at the heart of the image of the other world, and serves as a primordial trigger for imagining a world other than this one.

The next other world to make an appearance in *Kojiki* is Nenokatasu-kuni 根之堅州国, “Land of the Roots,” to which the deity Ōnamuchi 大穴牟遲 flees to

<sup>1</sup> Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光, *Kojiki no sekaikan* 古事記の世界観. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986.

escape the persecution of his fellow deity brothers. Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 has read the meaning of source/foundation in the word “root,”<sup>2</sup> and Nenokatasu-kuni is indeed a land controlled by the deity Susanoo 須佐之男, who is a “root,” or ancestor, of Ōnamuchi. In this world, Ōnamuchi is tasked by Susanoo with such trials as being sent into rooms with poisonous snakes or insects, and getting attacked by fire in a field. However, with the aid of Suseri-bime 須勢理毘売, Susanoo’s daughter, Ōnamuchi overcomes these trials, so his marriage to Susanoo’s daughter is recognized, and he receives Susanoo’s bow and arrows and the title “Great Land Master” (Ōkuninushi 大国主, that is, great lord of the earth). Ōnamuchi, or the Great Land Master, returns to the earth’s surface, uses the bow and arrow he received in the other world to drive away his hostile brothers, and then brings the earthly world to completion.

In this myth, the other world is portrayed as a world that grants power to those who visit it from the present world. The trials that Ōnamuchi experiences serve as an initiation for him. The guide Susanoo is a “root,” or ancestor, of Ōnamuchi, yet ancestral spirits are also the dead. This is the origin of the special qualities and ambiguity of the other world, which is simultaneously frightening yet benevolent, and which yields special value precisely because it differs from the present world.

At the end of *Kojiki*, another other world is described: the world of the sea deity which lies beyond Unasaka 海坂, the Sea Slope. The tale of Hohodemi-no-Mikoto’s 穂々手見命 visit to the palace of the sea deity takes on a form that is extremely like that of the tale of Ōnamuchi’s visit to Nenokatasu-kuni. However, Hohodemi, who becomes the ancestor of future emperors, is not made to undergo any trials. Instead, he is welcomed by the sea deity, and he marries Toyotama-bime 豊玉毘売, the daughter of a sea deity. After a three-year stay, Hohodemi receives two jewels that can raise or lower the tide. He returns to land, subjugates his brother, who had opposed him, and then inherits the earthly world. In such a situation as this, in which there is an absence of trial, the other world takes on utopian hues as a place one must visit only to obtain value not found in this world.

It is a stone’s throw away from here to the legend of Shimako of Mizunoe no Ura 水江の浦の嶋子, which is included in *Man’yōshū* and *Tango no kuni fudoki* 丹後国風土記, a lost text that was completed around the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and cited in Urabe no Kanekata’s 卜部兼方 *Shaku Nihongi* 釈日本紀, itself completed sometime before 1301. According to the version of the tale included in *Man’yōshū* (9: 1940; the poem was written around the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century), while fishing, Shimako crosses the border called Unasaka, the Sea Slope, and reaches Tokoyo 常世, the Eternal World. There, he marries and settles down with the daughter of a sea deity. However, after three years pass, he is driven by

<sup>2</sup> Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男, “Watatsumi no miya kō” 海神宮考, in *Kaijō no michi* 海上の道. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1961.

longing for his hometown and so returns to the surface. There, he finds that many years have passed. Thanks to the power of the other world, Shimako has remained young. However, he opens a box that the sea deity's daughter gave him upon their separation and forbade him to open, and thereby loses the power of eternal youth and perishes. This ending speaks of the failure to acquire the power of the other world and thus, in a sense, parodies the tale of Hohodemi's visit to the palace of the sea deity.

The location of other worlds is not limited to the other side of horizontal boundaries such as Yomotsu Hirasaka or Unasaka. In another legend transmitted by the no longer extant *Tango no kuni fudoki*, referenced in Kitabatake Chikafusa's 北畠親房 *Gengenshū* 元元集 (ca. 1337–1338), the other world comprises the vertical plane of the heavens. Moreover, in this legend, the one who crosses the boundary is not a human of this present world, but rather one from heaven—a heavenly maiden. She descends to earth and is bathing when her clothing is hidden. Unable to return, she becomes the daughter of an elderly human couple. The heavenly maiden states, “The intentions of the people of heaven are founded on sincerity,” to which the old man responds, “An abundance of doubt and lack of trust are the way of this world.” This conversation straightforwardly presents the state of the other world as the antipode of the present world.

The heavenly maiden remains on earth, but she is ultimately driven from the elderly couple's home. As the story is told, she wanders the land until she finally reaches a place where she is worshiped as a deity. If becoming a deity is regarded as returning to the other world from this present world, then we have a being from an other world coming to the present world and then going off to the other world, which is the opposite of the examples we have seen until now.<sup>3</sup> Though the form reverses, the topological elements do not change. Thanks to the saké made by the heavenly maiden, which can cure all manner of diseases, the elderly couple acquires tremendous wealth. Here, too, the difference between the present world and the other world yields value for the former.

## 2. Boundaries in Vernacular Tales (*monogatari*)

*Taketori monogatari* 竹取物語 (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), which is regarded as the “first ancestor of the *monogatari*” (see *The Tale of Genji* 源氏物語 [Ch. 17, “The Picture Contest”], early 11<sup>th</sup> century), was created by imagining this sort of boundary. Kaguya-hime かぐや姫 leaves the other world of the moon, where “wonderfully beautiful, ageless and carefree” beings dwell, and comes to this world, which by comparison is a “polluted place.” She brings wealth in the form of gold to the elderly couple who raised her, and then

<sup>3</sup> Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨, “Monogatari-gaku ni mukete” 物語学に向けて, in *Monogatari no hōbō* 物語の方法, ed. Itoi Michihiro 糸井通浩 and Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨. Kyoto: Sekaishisōsha, 1992.

returns to the world of the moon. The main story of *Taketori monogatari* concerns the coming and going between this world and a vertical other world. Into the middle of this framework is inserted a courtship tale involving five noblemen. The courtship tale involves attempts at acquiring treasures from China and India, all of which end in failure. With such an ending, the courtship tale becomes a bald parody of tales involving visits to horizontally oriented other worlds. However, when the story closes, Kaguya-hime confesses that she would rather stay with the elderly couple on this polluted world than return to the pure capital of the moon. The emperor, who has become Kaguya-hime's final suitor, voluntarily relinquishes the elixir of immortality—that is, the spiritual power of the other world—which Kaguya-hime has left behind for him, and thus points to the existence of a higher value; namely, his love for Kaguya-hime. A move from myth and legend to *monogatari* is expressed by such a break from the models of the past.

With regard to the courtship tale of the noblemen, the locations of the precious treasures, such as the Buddha's stone pot, the jeweled branch from the island of Penglai 蓬萊, and the fire-rat's robe, are represented not as the imaginary other worlds seen in prior works, but rather as the real foreign lands of China and India. In "Toshikage 俊蔭," the first chapter of *Utsubo monogatari* 宇津保物語 (*The Tale of the Hollow Tree*, latter half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century), the protagonist, who is searching for a treasured *koto*, bypasses China and ends up traveling even farther west to Persia. In a similar manner, the real foreign lands in *monogatari* from the 10<sup>th</sup> century on start to take on the likeness of imaginary other worlds. Such a shift is perhaps related to the expansion of the notion of distinguishing between that which is inside and outside a nation's imagined boundaries due to Japan's awakening to its own territory as a closed region, and the outside as a place to which the unclean are banished, at a time when official diplomatic relations with other nations were not being conducted after Japanese missions to China were halted in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

The story of Kibi no Makibi's 吉備真備 visit to China, which is included in *Gōdānsbō* 江談抄, is one of the stories that was born of such a notion. *Gōdānsbō* was completed at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the story of Kibi no Makibi's visit to China perhaps came into being in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. At a time when the Japanese missions to China were flourishing, Kibi no Makibi was dispatched to China to study. However, his excellence earned him the envy of the Chinese and he was confined to a tower. Attempting to create a pretext to kill him, the Chinese court charged Kibi no Makibi with such difficult demands as reciting the *Wenxuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*) and playing the game of *go*. However, with the aid of an *oni* who had taken up residence in the tower (the ghost of a Japanese diplomat to China who had also been confined and

<sup>4</sup> Murai Shōsuke 村井章介, "Ōdo ōmin shisō to kyūseiki no tenkan" 王土王民思想と九世紀の転換, *Shisō*, no. 847 (January 1995), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

thereupon perished), Kibi no Makibi managed to overcome all of these trials. Finally, he was commanded to decipher the esoteric poem “Yamataishi” 野馬台詩; he prayed to the gods and buddhas, whereupon a spider on the ceiling spun down a web and alighted on the text. By tracing the web, Kibi no Makibi worked through the poem without a problem. Afterward, the confinement continued, but he employed his magic to make the sun and the moon disappear, thereby throwing the Chinese into a state of confusion. In exchange for resolving the situation, he was allowed to return to Japan.

As a poem that existed and was transmitted prior to the creation of the story of Kibi no Makibi’s visit to China, and that symbolically prophesied Japan’s future, this “Yamataishi” which Kibi no Makibi brought back to Japan became one of the pillars that supported later historical accounts.<sup>5</sup> For example, the poem is included at the opening of the *Oninki* 応仁記 (*Record of the Onin War*, ca. 16<sup>th</sup> century). One must not overlook the point that the poem’s value and significance are heightened because it was regarded as a prophetic poem of the other world which was brought over a border to Japan.

Borders exist not only outside a nation’s territory, but also within it. *The Tale of Genji* is a saga that portrays the protagonist Hikaru Genji’s 光源氏 flourishing in and then withdrawal from the court. The first half is about how Genji, who was born the child of an emperor, falls to the status of a subject and then rises to the highest rank attainable as a subject. The turning point is the incident portrayed in chapters twelve and thirteen, “Suma 須磨” and “Akashi 明石.” Genji loses his position in the court after his secret love affair with a woman in the service of Emperor Suzaku 朱雀天皇, his half-brother, is discovered. He is exiled to Suma, which is far from the capital. While passing a dreary existence in the desolate land, Genji has a dream one stormy night in which the spirit of his deceased father, the emperor, appears and exhorts him to quickly sail to Akashi. As revealed by the dream, the next day, a messenger from Akashi arrives, after which Genji visits the mansion of the Akashi Novice (a kind of semi-monastic), who was once a governor but is now living in seclusion in Akashi. Genji is welcomed by the Akashi Novice and takes his daughter as his wife. Three years after leaving the capital, Genji is pardoned and returns to the court. The daughter born to Genji and the Novice’s daughter is eventually married to the crown prince, and she gives birth to a boy who becomes the next crown prince. The birth of the crown prince—that is, Genji’s grandson—serves as the foundation for Genji’s later glory.

Since the time of the medieval commentary *Kakaishō* 河海抄 (ca. mid-14<sup>th</sup> century), it has been pointed out that the aforementioned myth of visiting the palace of the sea deity, which is included in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), also exists at the conceptual heart of this section, which serves as the tale’s

<sup>5</sup> Komine Kazuaki 小峯和明, *Yamataishi no nazo* 『野馬台詩』の謎. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003.



turning point. When Genji returns to the capital and reunites with Emperor Suzaku, he recites the following poem:

Like the forlorn Leech Child, who, feebly languishing in disgrace beside the sea  
year after year, unable to stand on his own feet—so it was with me.<sup>6</sup>

Within this poem, Genji's own three years of obscurity are likened to the tale of Hiruko 蛭児, the "Leech Child," as recounted in the myth in *Nihon shoki* in which Hiruko is set adrift in a boat because he still cannot stand up, though three years have passed since he was born to the two deities Izanaki and Izanami. Such a comparison assumes an association with the myth, which circulated even as it underwent variation.<sup>7</sup> Akashi, then, is the other world for Genji, while the Akashi Novice is the equivalent of the sea deity, as the lord of the other world. The child whom Genji receives through his marriage to the monk's daughter corresponds to the treasure from the other world that brings the protagonist power and glory.<sup>8</sup> Finally, between Suma and Akashi there is a literal boundary that separates the *kinai* 畿内, or the territory of the capital—that is, the world to which Genji belongs—and the *kigai* 畿外, or the exterior.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the mythic structure that is fixed at the foundation of *The Tale of Genji*, which at first glance appears to be centered on relationships and romance in the court, bestows upon this *monogatari* a narrative force. However, the individual here who crosses a boundary and acquires the power of the other world is not, as in myths, the sovereign, for whom legitimacy is assured, but rather Genji, who by no means ascends to the rank of the emperor. The strain born of this topological distortion operates as the tension that draws together this *monogatari*.

### 3. Boundaries in vernacular anecdotal literature (*setsuwa*)

As the ancient state declined, the great temples and shrines which had received the state's protection faced the need for economic independence, so vigorous *kanjin* 勧進, or fundraising activities, were developed. From these activities sprouted origin tales which expounded on the benefits bestowed by the buddhas and deities worshipped at various temples and shrines, as well as the written stories, public entertainments, and other types of art and literature that derived from these origin tales.

Amid such circumstances, ancient myths and legends were dissected and reorganized, and they began to take on new forms. The deity who achieved the

<sup>6</sup> This translation is a modified version based on Royall Tyler, trans., *The Tale of Genji* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 276.

<sup>7</sup> Yoshimori Kanako 吉森加奈子, *Kakaishō no Genji monogatari* 『河海抄』の『源氏物語』. Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Ishikawa Tōru 石川徹, *Heian jidai monogatari bungakuron* 平安時代物語文学論. Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Fujii Sadakazu 藤井貞和, *Genji monogatari nyūmon* 源氏物語入門. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996.

greatest transformation was perhaps the previously mentioned Hiruko. As suggested by his name, which means “Leech Child,” Hiruko does not have a solid body. In ancient myth, no mention is made of what becomes of him after he is cast away at birth. However, in the medieval era, works telling of Hiruko’s outcome appeared in great number. For example, according to “Shintō yurai no koto” 神道由来之事 (“On the Origins of Shinto”), the first volume of *Shintōshū* 神道集 (*A Shintō Collection*, ca. mid-14<sup>th</sup> century), the castaway Hiruko reaches the Dragon Palace. After being raised by the Dragon King 龍王, he is bestowed with the “Eighth Outer Sea” (*daihachi no gekai* 第八の外海) and returns to the surface, where he becomes Ebisu 恵比須, the deity of Nishinomiya 西宮 Shrine. Just as the deformed child Hiruko matures into the deity Ebisu, in whom the people of the sea place their faith, so does the myth of Hiruko itself develop and mature within the domain of this *monogatari* about boundaries.

What is the “Eighth Outer Sea” that Hiruko acquires at the other world of the Dragon Palace? Let us consider the Buddhist image of the world that was dominant in the medieval era (**Figure 1**). As explained by Buddhist sutras such as *Abhidharma-kośa* 俱舍論, the giant Shumisen 須弥山 (Mount Sumeru) towers at the center of the world, surrounded by a sevenfold mountain range, while the world itself is surrounded by a mountain range called Tecchisen 鉄围山, the “Ring of Iron Mountains.” The eight gaps between the total ninefold mountain range, which spans from Shumisen to Tecchisen, form seas, and the continent on which humans live (Jambudvīpa, or, in Japanese, Enbudai 閼浮提) floats on the furthestmost sea. The “Eighth Outer Sea,” then, refers to the sea that surrounds this land on which humans live.

In this way, the reorganization of ancient myths and legends according to Buddhist cosmological thought is one of the special features of medieval *setsuna* 説話. The Dragon Palace that Hiruko visits is also an other world that derives from the Buddhist sutras, and in the *otogizōshi* 御伽草子 *Urashimatarō* 浦嶋太郎, which is a retelling of the ancient tale of Shimako of Mizunoe no Ura, the alteration of the main character’s destination from Tokoyo, the Eternal World, to the Dragon Palace is also a manifestation of such a feature. In the late-Muromachi-period picture scroll *Urashima* (in the collection of the Japan Folk Crafts Association), the world in which Princess Otohime 乙姫 lives has already become the Dragon Palace.

Meanwhile, the twin invasions of Japan by Yuan 元 (Mongolian) and Goryeo 高麗 forces at the close of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, during the Bun’ei 文永 and Kōan 弘安 eras (specifically the years 1274 and 1281), enhanced the view that territories outside of one’s own country were foreign lands where frightening, demon-like creatures dwelled. This view took the form of temple and shrine origin tales and joined with the ancient legend of Empress Jingū’s 神功皇后 invasion of Silla 新羅 to become *Hachiman gudōkun* 八幡愚童訓 (early 14<sup>th</sup> century); it also joined with the *setsuna* about Prince Zen’yū 善友太子 found in the Buddhist sutras, and developed from Buddhist sermon to entertainment to become the *kōwakamai* 幸



若舞 *Yurivaka daijin* 百合若大臣 (ca. 16<sup>th</sup> century). In the former, the west, which lies beyond “Chikuragaoki ちくらが沖, the border where the Chinese and Japanese currents converge,” is portrayed as a foreign land inhabited by the Mukuri むくり (the non-human likeness of Mongolia as depicted within *setsuma*). At the same time, as trade with the northern regions expanded after the medieval era, there was a focusing on Ezogashima 蝦夷ヶ島 (Hokkaido), which lay beyond Japan’s northern extremity of Tsugaru Strait 津軽海峡, as a northern (or north-eastern) foreign land.

The *otogizōshi Onzōshi shimawatari* 御曹子島渡 (*Yoshitsune’s Island-Hopping*) portrays the period when the later Minamoto hero Yoshitsune 源義経 laid low at Hiraizumi 平泉, the capital of Ōshū 奥州, on the eve of the Genpei War 源平の戦い (1180-1185). As the tale is told, Yoshitsune is advised by Fujiwara no Hidehira 藤原秀衡, the leader of Hiraizumi, to procure a scroll about martial tactics from Ezogashima, located at the other end of the northern sea, as a clever means of defeating the Heike 平家. Yoshitsune passes many mysterious islands before arriving at Ezogashima, a land inhabited by *oni* 鬼 and with a capital that is controlled by a giant *oni* who bears the title “Great King Kanehira かねひら大王.” Yoshitsune hopes to receive instruction in the art of warfare, but the Great King refuses to grant him permission. However, Yoshitsune receives help from the Great King’s daughter, with whom he has fallen in love, and he acquires the scroll, flees the land of the *oni*, and returns to Japan. The daughter, who stays behind, becomes a victim of her father’s wrath, but Yoshitsune defeats the Heike through the power of his martial tactics and paves the way for the age of the samurai.

A variant edition includes *shōgi* 将棋, sumo, and other matches with *oni* that take place during Yoshitsune’s acquisition of the scroll on martial skills. Here, one may perhaps detect the transmigrated form of a tale about an other-world visit which is accompanied by trials, such as that seen in the ancient myth of the deity Ōnamuchi. However much the Great King may possess an otherworldly appearance, there flickers in his visage the shadow of an ancestral spirit that is fearsome yet benevolent, and which, following an initiation process, bestows value and treasures that do not exist in this world.

#### 4. Receding Boundaries

As we have seen, various boundary-related elements maintain a certain constant relationality even while they take on different forms and change in appearance with the times. Transformation is brought about through a change in one’s understanding of the world, whose contours are set according to boundaries.

With the end of the medieval era and the start of the early modern period, due to new contact with the Western world and the accompanying expansion of scientific, geographic, and other knowledge and information, the Japanese understanding of reality transformed greatly. *Onzōshi shimawatari* was published in the

middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and then reprinted and distributed as the Shibukawa edition 渋川版 at the outset of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the illustrations included in the Shibukawa edition, the denizens of the location in Ezogashima where Yoshitsune lands are portrayed as humans, as seen in the upper portion of **Figure 2**, while the *oni* capital is postulated as being located farther beyond the outermost sea. However, in a manuscript from the same period, Ezogashima is portrayed as a world completely inhabited by *oni* from the start (see the lower portion of Figure 2). The movement at that time of the other world boundary that lies between “this side” and the hinterland of Ezogashima can be seen in the difference between the two depictions.<sup>10</sup>

Following the medieval period, a certain region within the real Ezogashima served as a settlement for Japanese who lived in the southeast region, near Honshu; it then became the Matsumae 松前 domain in the early modern period. Most of its expansive area was called Ezochi 蝦夷地, and it was a land inhabited by the Ainu, who belonged to no nation. However, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the Russians landed on the eastern end of Ezochi and sought to conduct commerce with the Matsumae domain, the Tokugawa Shogunate conducted surveys of Ezochi and carried out direct, methodical territorialization of the area. In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1807, the Shogunate took control over the whole of Ezogashima and formally incorporated it into the nation.

It goes without saying that in the ancient myths, Ezogashima is not included as part of the nation born by the deities Izanaki and Izanami. However, Hirata Atsutane’s 平田篤胤 *Koshiden* 古史伝 (1812–1825), written toward the end of the early modern period, proposes the possibility that the castaway Hiruko may have become some sort of national territory, and Suzuki Shigetane 鈴木重胤 in *Nihon shokiden* 日本書紀伝 (1853–1862) accepts this proposal and claims that this land is none other than Ezogashima. He explains that the phrase “for three years the legs [*ashi* 脚] did not stand” is a mistransmission of “for three years the reeds [*ashi* 葦] did not grow,” which indicates that Ezogashima is a wasteland where rice does not grow. That the characters for both Ezo 蝦夷 and Hiruko 蛭子 can be read as Ebisu is also taken as evidence. In this way, as the real world expands, Ezogashima is brought into the interior of the native country—though mythically so—and the boundary shifts further out.

However, boundaries cannot continue to recede infinitely. Early on, Fukansai Fabian 不干斎ハビアン in *Myōtei mondo* 妙貞問答 (1605) had already rejected the Buddhist Shumisen image of the earth that had dominated in the medieval era, based on theories of the earth that had come from the West. As seen in the Kokugaku 国学 scholar Motoori Norinaga’s 本居宣長 refutation of Buddhist critiques of theories of the earth in *Shamon Mon’nō ga kusen bakukai kaichōron no ben* 沙門文雄が九山八海解嘲論の弁 (1790), a new image of the world steadily

<sup>10</sup> Kanazawa Hideyuki 金沢英之, *Yoshitsune no boken: eiyū to ikai wo meguru monogatari no bunkashi* 義経の冒険—英雄と異界をめぐる物語の文化史. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2012.

infiltrated Japan during the early modern period. On the surface of the earth, boats that headed west eventually made their way from the east to their point of departure. In the same way that the reality called Russia had revealed itself from the other side of Ezogashima, a world was arriving whose boundaries, which contacted the other world, were not allowed to exist.

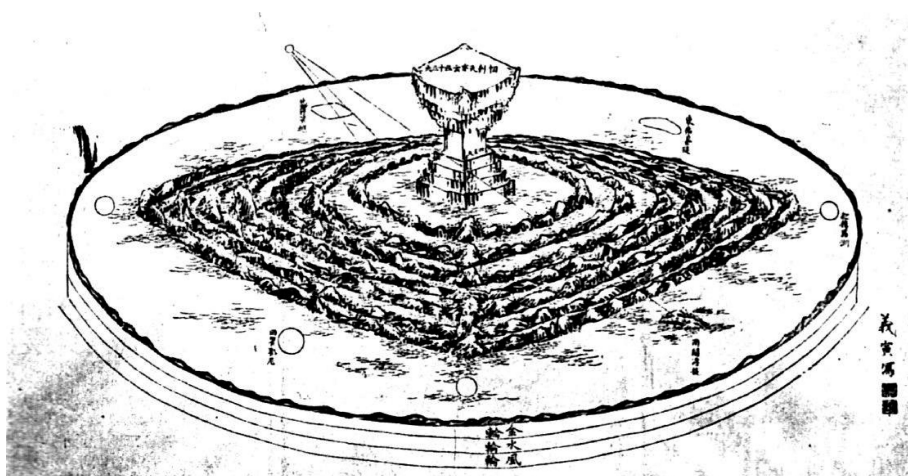
Such a situation is also evident in Atsutane's *Tamano mibashira* 霊能真柱 (1812). In this work, which discusses the destination of souls after death, Atsutane makes the claim that the pollution of death, and souls after death, have different destinations. The destination of the pollution is Yomi, the Land of Death, which is identified as the moon (see **Figure 3**), while souls are said to remain on the earth. Atsutane holds that the world to which souls go "exists everywhere in this world of reality, but as a place that is faint and cannot be perceived, it is removed from this present world and cannot be seen." It may be perceived here that while the other world can no longer exist as a zone on this earth, it is, on the other hand, becoming invisible and internalized as something that must be believed in the heart.

## Conclusion

I would like to conclude this article by touching on the location of the other worlds and boundaries that became invisible and internalized during Japan's transition to the modern era. In modern Japan, the author who most consciously uses and manipulates the mythological images surrounding other world borders is Murakami Haruki 村上春樹. That tendency is pronounced in Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* 羊をめぐる冒険 (Kōdansha Bunko, 1983), which was first published in 1982 and is the representative title of Murakami's early period.

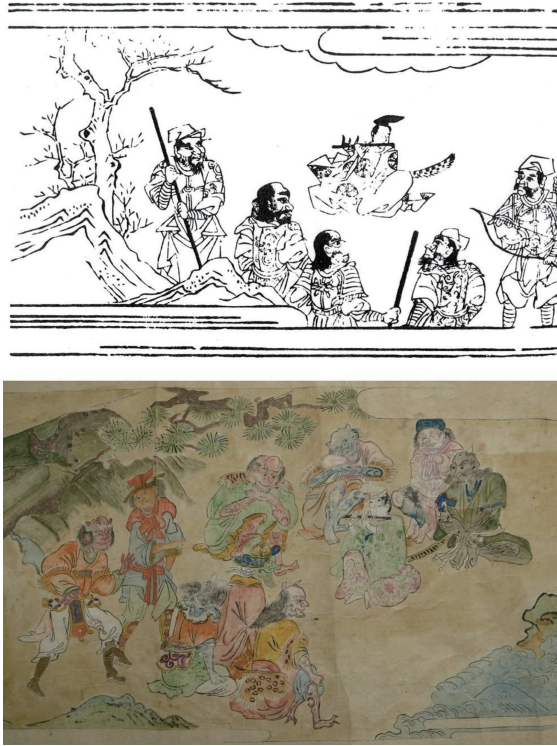
The stage is the late 1970s. The protagonist passed his college years in the 60s, which brimmed with a countercultural enthusiasm represented by politics and rock music, and then lived through the next decade with the sense that "the world continues to spin without regard for me." *A Wild Sheep Chase* is a tale about how such a protagonist comes to decide to search again for a connection with a world that must have existed in the past. He experiences a change of heart when he is requested to take on an investigation of a mysterious sheep. Pursuing the mystery, the protagonist unwittingly steps out of the hitherto ordinary world and ultimately reaches a desolate pasture in a town in the wilds of Hokkaido (again!). From the time when he alights from the plane in Sapporo to when he reaches the pasture, he must experience a transition to the abnormal, as when the North Star looks like a fake, or when a clock at the hotel goes mad. The protagonist, who has finally reached the hinterland town that "looks like a town that has died," crosses a boundary that is described as an "ominous" and "extremely unpleasant curve" that leads to the top of a hill. He then chances upon an uninhabited cabin located in the middle of the pasture. Here, without any apparent reason, his young lover, the woman who had accompanied him thus far, suddenly

disappears. It is shortly after this turn of events that the work's most splendid, symbolically imbued scene arrives. The now solitary protagonist wipes a dirty mirror, and then, as though the final door has been opened, a dead person—the protagonist's close friend and an alter ego-like being—appears. After conversing with and bidding farewell to the dead person, the protagonist gains the will to live and returns to the present world of the ordinary. Here too, the topology of boundaries hides its form even as it continues to live.



**Figure 1.** In the middle, an hourglass-like Mount Shumi is depicted, and in the lower right, Jambudvīpa, where humans dwell, may be seen. “A View of the Domain of Mount Shumi,” published in Genji 元治 2 (1865), from *Mount Shumi Atlas*, Ryūkoku University Publishing Bureau, 1925.

<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/967364>



**Figure 2 (Top).** Illustration from *Onzōshi shimawatari* (Shibukawa edition), in the collection of the Ukai bunko 鵜飼文庫 archive of the National Institute of Japanese Literature.

<https://doi.org/10.20730/200019871>

**Figure 2 (Bottom).** Illustration from *Onzōshi shimawatari* (year of transcription, uncertain), in the collection of the Kuchinashi bunko 支子文庫 archive of the Kyushu University Library.

<https://doi.org/10.20730/100076634>



**Note:** Yoshitsune (center), now in the capital of demons, performs upon a flute before Great King Kanehira (right). Illustration from the Ikenoya bunko MS of *Onzōshi shimawatari* (seventeenth century).

<https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100257436/viewer>



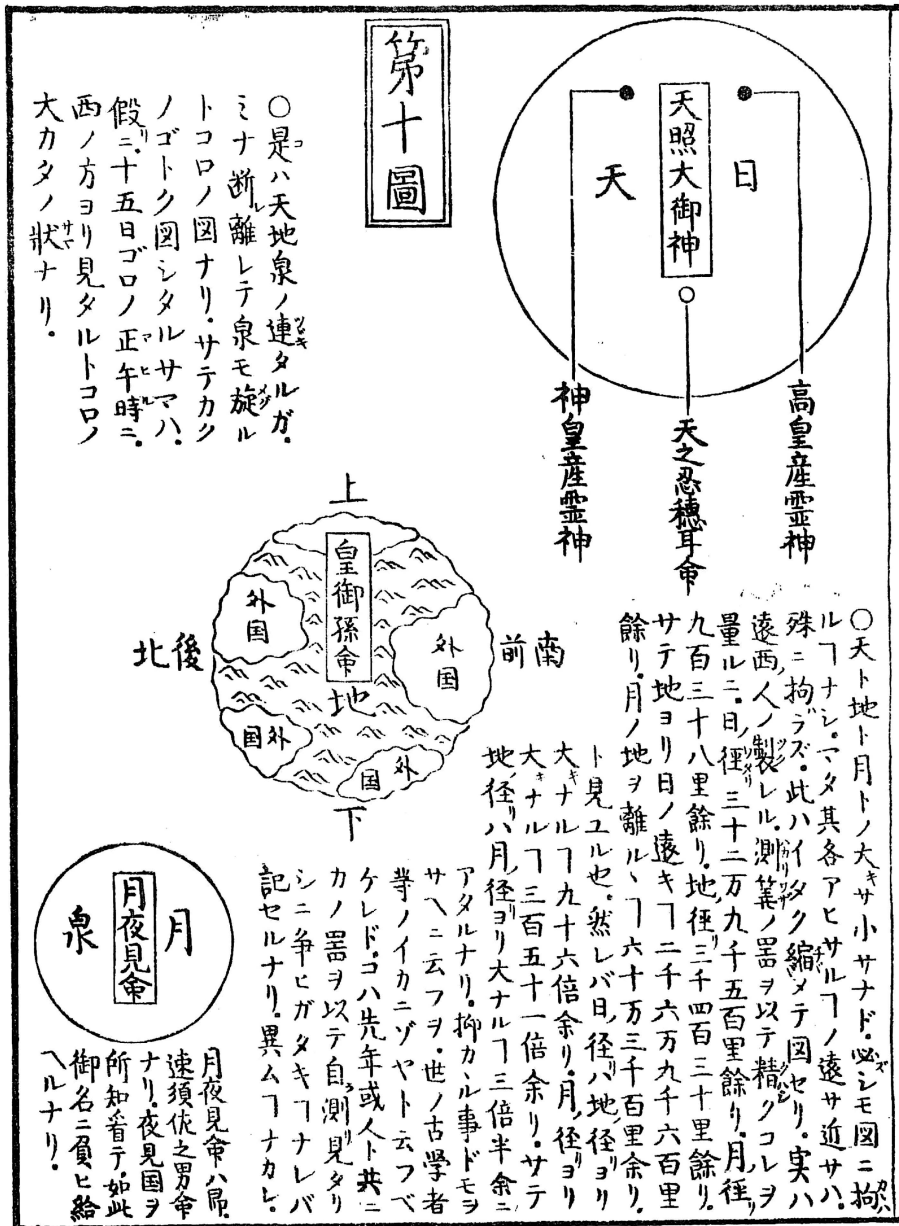


Figure 3. The three worlds of the heavens, earth, and underworld are portrayed as the sun, globe, and moon. An illustration from Hirata Atsutane's *Tamano mibashira*, published in Bunka 文化10 (1813); author's private collection.