

From Shojo Manga to Ancient Myth: Intervention and Reappropriation in Satonaka Machiko's

Kojiki (2013)

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
Table of Figures.....	5
Introduction.....	6
1. Situating Satonaka in Shojo: Year 24 or Something “More?”.....	15
Shojo Manga: More than “Something for Girls”.....	16
Year 24: More than What Meets the Eye.....	23
2. Politics and Women: Centering the Sun.....	28
Amaterasu: Sun (and/or) Goddess.....	34
What About Uzume?.....	41
Conclusion: Center of the Flag.....	46
3. Descending From the Heavens: Close Reading Through Satonaka’s Eyes.....	50
The Narration of Creation.....	51
Illustrating Dualistic Femininities.....	57
Conclusion: Heavenly Boulders and Rock Princesses.....	66
Conclusion: Manga, Histories, and Manga Histories.....	70
Bibliography.....	75

Abstract

“From Shojo Manga to Ancient Myth” explores how the ancient text of the *Kojiki* (712) is reappropriated as a shojo manga (girls’ comic), focusing expressly on Satonaka Machiko’s 2013 adaptation of the *Kojiki*. Using an approach embedded in visual and gender studies, this thesis seeks to interpret how Satonaka’s adaptation engages with the *Kojiki*’s cultural history as Japan’s oldest extant written text. It also determines how this intervention adheres to or deviates from feminist praxis, nationalist praxis, or an overlap of the two through the Farris’s conceptual framework of femonationalism. As a manga project first and foremost, the project remains entrenched in close reading of Satonaka’s *Kojiki* as it evaluates how the work reappropriates and disrupts the *Kojiki*’s history and gendered tropes. Such is done through amplifying Satonaka’s voice within her craft in an effort to view how she situates her own intervention with the source text. This analysis uncovers dualistic representations of the *Kojiki*’s female characters in addition to an intervention neither divorced nor immune from femonationalist inclinations. At the same time, Satonaka disrupts anglocentric views of what is considered “historical” and challenges preconceived notions of who “gets” to do history, conveying this message to young female audiences who may not otherwise be inspired by ancient history in a national or educational context. These overlapping interventions are nuanced and intertwined, but are crucial to unpacking how ancient texts and their cultural histories are rearticulated through contemporary Japanese popular culture.

Keywords: Manga, Comics, History, Gender, Nationalism

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Table of Figures

- 2.1 Satonaka bowing to Motoori Norinaga, Volume one, p. 4.
- 2.2 Satonaka's debrief of the "Ama-no-Iwayado" chapter, Volume one, p. 60.
- 2.3 Parallels between Amaterasu and Demeter, Volume one, p. 62.
- 2.4 Uzume's legacy, Volume one, p. 176, panel 1.
- 2.5 Ninigi bowing to Amaterasu, Volume one, p. 175.
- 3.1 Drawing O-Usu/Yamato Takeru, Volume two, p. 85.
- 3.2 Satonaka's Structure Building Grid.
- 3.3 Table of Contents, Volume one, pp. 6–7.
- 3.4 Konohana no Sakuya Hime and Iwanaga Hime, Volume one, p. 181.
- 3.5 Ninigi Meets Iwanaga-hime, Volume one, p. 185.
- 3.6 Ōyama-tsumi confronts Ninigi, Volume one, p. 188.
- 3.7. Table of Contents, Volume two, pp. 4–5.

Introduction

“When I was in middle school, I read all the history books in the school library and made the great mistake of thinking that I knew all about history. I was young, and it is an embarrassing memory. [...] However, when I became a high school student and went to the school’s library, which was larger than that of junior high school, I found a number of books on the same subject. Moreover, each author had a slightly different viewpoint. At first, I was perplexed, wondering, ‘which one is right?’ I guess ‘youth’ means to be convinced that there is only one right answer. I was still too young to know “one truth” only exists in the world of mathematics.”¹

—Satonaka Machiko, *The Shape of “Japan” as Deciphered from Ancient History*

The quote above demonstrates a reflexive and critical command of historical sources. The self-awareness and acute understanding of history resemble the words of a historian, but this quote comes from a preface written by award-winning Japanese manga author Satonaka Machiko (1948–). Satonaka’s intervention with manga, however, is inseparable from how she intervenes with history, as historical narratives comprise a significant portion of her over 500-work repertoire.² The topic of this master’s thesis, Satonaka’s 2013 adaptation of the *Kojiki*, also demonstrates a reckoning with getting older and becoming more critical towards history, as it engages with its source text compiled over 1300 years ago. How should we understand this award-winning female mangaka’s aesthetic engagement with premodern mythology? And what does manga as a medium allow to narrate the history of “Japan?”

¹Kuramoto Kazuhiro and Satonaka Machiko. *The Shape of “Japan” as Deciphered from Ancient History [Kodaishi Kara Yomitoku ‘Nihon’ No Katachi]*, (Tōkyō: Shōdensha, 2018), 17.

²Toku, Masami. “Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka (b. 1/24/1948, Osaka).” In *International Perspectives on Shōjo and Shōjo Manga* (Routledge, 2015), 176.

Mythological narratives can be used for fascist and nationalist purposes when trying to insist on an unbroken line from ancient times to the present. The *Kojiki* (712), Japan's oldest extant written text that narrates the creation of "Japan" and the reigns of its rulers from its inception, has been no exception to this.³ The mythology of the *Kojiki*, which was taken up by scholars in the Edo period *kokugaku* (national literature) movement, was later deployed as a part of state Shinto during the Meiji period (1868–1912) through the end of World War II.⁴ Consequently, the *Kojiki* and its mythology have been associated with the atrocities that occurred during colonization and the wartime period.⁵ Given its importance during this era, Helen Hardacre refers to the *Kojiki* as the "most 'Shinto' of all texts."⁶ This history led the US government to issue the "Shinto directive" during its occupation of Japan (1945–1952), which, according to Ichijo Atsuko, dissolved state Shinto and rendered the *kokugaku* literary movement that propelled it "almost taboo."⁷

Yet, in the wake of this fraught history, there has been a contemporary resurgence of interest in the *Kojiki*. In a way, the dissolving of state Shinto enabled this to occur, as Hirafuji Kikuko reminds us that the Shinto directive enforced that Shinto "be treated like any other religion" and thus destigmatized making depictions of its mythology, particularly of purported imperial ancestor and prominent *Kojiki* figure Amaterasu (天照).⁸ That is not to mitigate the harm done to colonized and minority populations under the guise of "state Shinto" and "Japanisation policies" from the Meiji period onward, as Oguma Eiji explains that "Koreans and

³Heldt, Gustav. *The Kojiki: An Account of Ancient Matters* (New York: Columbia Press, 2014), xiii.

⁴Ibid, xxii.

⁵Iwicka, Renata. "Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism." *The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture* 15, no. 3 (2015): 28.

⁶Hardacre, Helen. "Creating State Shinto: The Great Promulgation Campaign and the New Religions." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12, no. 1 (1986): 36.

⁷Ichijo Atsuko. "Kokugaku and an Alternative Account of the Emergence of Nationalism of Japan." *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (2020): 271.

⁸Hirafuji Kikuko. "Deities in Japanese Popular Culture." in *Sources of Mythology* (2014): 78.

Taiwanese were forced to pray” at Shinto shrines and thus submit themselves to the emperor (and, by extension, Amaterasu).⁹ This history has been woven into many fabrics of postwar state Shinto criticism.¹⁰ Yet, in spite of this, Heldt explains that the myths of the *Kojiki* “have continued to pervade Japanese postwar culture, where they have provided a source of inspiration for the names of characters and plot elements in popular media—including film, manga, and anime—that have become an intrinsic part of contemporary global culture.”¹¹

Evidently, the *Kojiki* has crossed various media boundaries and has been represented in a wide array of formats, from Amaterasu’s appearance in the “Sun Goddess Banquet” chapter of Takahashi Rumiko’s prolific manga series *Urusei Yatsura* to the retelling of the *Kojiki*’s infamous cave dance scene through the popular Vocaloid song “At God’s Mercy” (神のまにまに).¹² Some ambitious manga authors have even opted to retell and reappropriate the narrative in its entirety, including “king of manga” and *Kamen Rider* creator Ishinomori Shotaro.¹³ Renewed interest was especially sparked following the *Kojiki*’s 1300th anniversary in 2012, culminating in the prefectural government of Nara, Japan awarding the “Grand Prize of *Kojiki* Publications” to seven works that faithfully adapted and facilitated interest in the ancient text.¹⁴ Winning the Ō no Yasumaro award—named after the *Kojiki*’s compiler and second only to the Grand Prize—was a

⁹Oguma, Eiji. *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images*, trans. David Askew. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002. 304.

¹⁰Ibid, 304.

¹¹Heldt, *The Kojiki*, xiii.

¹²Rerulili (れるりり). “神のまにまに - れるりり feat. ミク&リン&GUMI / At God's Mercy - Rerulili feat. Vocaloids.” Published February 7, 2014. YouTube Video, 4:14. <https://youtu.be/b2GJeYBoVyg?si=D0xkncW4F7NaOf7n>

¹³Ibid, xxii; Rosenbaum, Roman. “Redacting Japanese History: Ishinomori Shōtarō’s Graphic Narratives.” In *Rewriting History in Manga: Stories for the Nation*, 2016. 97.

¹⁴Hirafuji, “Deities in Japanese Popular Culture,” 71; The Sankei Shinbun. “The *Kojiki* Publishing Grand Prize Award Will Also Be Selected This Year [kotoshi mo kojiki shuppan taisho wo senkou].” Published September 30, 2023. Retrieved March 2, 2023.

<https://www.sankei.com/article/20130930-UBKV4JIVKBOS5MCBCR2WMBP3LM/>

shojo manga (girls' comics) adaptation of the *Kojiki*, written by prolific manga author and history buff Satonaka Machiko.¹⁵

Although the use of the *Kojiki*'s canon to invent traditions and inspire nationalism throughout history can be highly problematic, other, more generative adaptations engage with its history in ways that may broaden the perspectives of readers. Particularly, I ask about the aesthetic and political implications of how the contemporary retelling of the *Kojiki* through Satonaka's eyes might expand or complicate our readings of shojo manga and its interactions with ancient texts. How does Satonaka engage with the *Kojiki* and its cultural history in her retelling, and how should we understand the political implications of this intervention?

This master's thesis aims to interrogate how the *Kojiki* is reappropriated through Satonaka's adaptation, as well as the extent to which it can narrate mythological phenomena in ways that may impact young female audiences otherwise unmoved by these stories in a nationalist or educational context. In the wake of the *Kojiki*'s tumultuous cultural history, it is important to consider how its contemporary adaptations engage with this past and communicate it to audiences that may be less familiar with it. Thus, I consider how Satonaka works within the visual-textual medium of manga to reinterpret and reinspire interest in the *Kojiki*, balancing tensions between remaining faithful to the source material and engaging contemporary audiences. These tensions are something Satonaka calls attention to in numerous sections of her adaptation, stating that she intends to interpret the *Kojiki* "as a story" rather than purely based on scholarly interpretation.¹⁶ I seek to investigate how this approach informs her adaptation of key

¹⁵“About the 2013 ‘Grand Prize for Kojiki Publications’ Award Winners [平成25年度「古事記出版大賞」受賞作品について].”*Nara Kiki Manyo Project Official Website*. Accessed March 13, 2023. https://www3.pref.nara.jp/miryoku/narakikimanyo/images/prize/25_award.pdf

¹⁶Satonaka Machiko. *Kojiki: Manga Koten Bungaku*, (Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, 2013), Vol. 1, 6.

scenes, evaluate what might stand to be gained (or lost) from such a decision, and heighten Satonaka's voice within her craft as we use it to inform our reading of her work.¹⁷

In this intervention, I situate myself as a feminist critic studying the visual and textual craft of Satonaka's *Kojiki*, interested in how the premodern text and other influences have shaped this contemporary retelling. The overlap of visual and textual elements in shojo manga makes an interdisciplinary approach embedded in visual studies and gender studies the best lens of analysis for this task. I aim to add to the scholarly conversations on shojo manga's visual narration facilitated by scholars including Masafumi Monden, Toku Masami, and Fujimoto Yukari. Additionally, I hope to contribute to the extant literature published on historical manga by authors including Gergana Ivanova and Roman Rosenbaum as I dip further into the past, investigating the adaptation of the *Kojiki*'s ancient narrative 1300 years later in a contemporary manga format.

Why focus on Satonaka in particular? Satonaka Machiko began her half-century-long career as a manga artist in 1964 at age 16 but has since explored many different themes and creative mediums.¹⁸ Satonaka was informed from a young age of the alleged "dangers" of manga, insofar as her teacher burning manga in front of her. Nevertheless, she remained drawn to the medium all the more, culminating in her debut during a time in which female manga authorship remained uncommon.¹⁹ *Portrait of Pia*, her debut work, won the first-place Shinjin Manga Award in 1964, with her crediting the "god of manga" Tezuka Osamu and fellow *Kojiki* manga adapter Ishinomori Shotaro as major influences on her career at the time.²⁰ She has since

¹⁷Ibid, 4, 6.

¹⁸Toku, "Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka," 175.

¹⁹Ibid, 178.

²⁰Ibid, 176, 178.

authored over five hundred works, receiving the Person of Cultural Merit award for her efforts in 2023.²¹

While Satonaka’s repertoire contains a variety of manga sub-genres, her enthusiasm for history flows into her craft, exemplified by her self-described “lifework” *Tenjō no Niji*.²² Beginning serialization in 1983, *Tenjō no Niji* narrates the story of Japanese ruler Empress Jito (持統天皇) (c. 645–703). Born out of Satonaka’s love for the *Man’yōshū*, the oldest extant compilation of Japanese *waka* poetry, Satonaka wanted to illustrate the story of one of its female contributors not commonly represented in Japanese media.²³ She decided on Jito as she saw her as a “wise person with rational reasoning” and “a calm queen not to be drowned in emotion.”²⁴ Satonaka chronicles her experience creating the manga in a comic at the end of Volume One. Despite experiencing pushback from her (faceless) male editor-in-chief on the basis that readers would not be interested in the history of the Asuka period Jito was from, Satonaka was even more inspired to adapt it in an effort to prove him wrong.²⁵ Not only does she do so in the comic, as he requests her to write more, but this narrative’s impact of this is evident outside of this: *Tenjō no Niji* ended in 2015, culminating in 23 volumes of manga over the course of over 30 years.²⁶

²¹Asahi Shinbun. “Manga Artist Satonaka Machiko and Artist Yokoo Tadanori This Year’s Cultural Merit Awardees [マンガ家・里中満智子さん 現代美術家・横尾忠則さん 今年の文化功労者].” Published October 12, 2023. Accessed March 16, 2024. <https://xsearch-asahi-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/kiji/detail/?1710624334681>

²²Kuramoto Kazuhiro and Satonaka Machiko, *The Shape of “Japan,”* 60.

²³Ibid, 18, 60; Yamamoto Kenshou. “The Beauty of the Man’yōshū: A Conversation with Manga Artist, Machiko Satonaka.” Translated by Judy Evans. Meguri Japan. Accessed March 11, 2024. https://meguri-japan.com/en/conversations/20210830_6158/

²⁴Kuramoto Kazuhiro and Satonaka Machiko, *The Shape of “Japan,”* 64. Original Japanese: 冷静で情に溺れるような女王ではないことが見て取れたので、「よし、この人を主人公にしよう」と決めました。

²⁵Satonaka, Machiko. *Tenjō No Niji: Jitō Tennō Monogatari*, (Kōdansha, 2000) Vol. 1, 372.

²⁶Asahi Shinbun. “(Book Review) ‘*Tenjō no Niji*’ All 23 Volumes Author: Satonaka Machiko [(書評)『天上の虹』全23巻 里中満智子(作)].” Published May 3, 2015. Accessed March 16, 2024. <https://xsearch-asahi-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/kiji/detail/?1710626152393>

Consequently, Satonaka is a self-proclaimed “fan of the classics,” with the *Man’yōshū* being the “trigger” (*kikkake*) for her interest.²⁷ However, her interest in history has not always coalesced with the mainstream. She writes that “when [she] was a teenager, there were many stories that focused on the Warring States and Bakumatsu periods, which many people came to know and love, but few people seemed interested in ancient Japan and its people. The situation remained unchanged after [she] became a mangaka, and still only a few people had an interest in ancient history.”²⁸ Thus, Satonaka sought to illustrate this history herself through works including *Tenjō no Niji* and the *Kojiki* adaptation this thesis focuses on, in addition to adapting ancient texts from other cultures through works including *Greek Mythology* and *The Old Testament*. This quote from Satonaka also aligns with Fujimoto Yukari’s observation that shonen (young boys) manga works tend to focus on the Warring States and Bakumatsu periods, whereas in shojo manga, historical works “are very rich in terms of time periods and countries.”²⁹ Fujimoto cites Satonaka’s *Tenjō no Niji* to support that argument, heralding it as a shojo manga that “follows historical facts” (史実) quite faithfully.³⁰ Consequently, Satonaka’s “impressive skill” at organizing and depicting historical events and contexts remains a widely celebrated facet of her work.³¹

However, Satonaka’s zeal for history transcends manga, as she has also worked on a number of books pertaining to the history of Japan. Among these include *The Shape of “Japan” As Deciphered from Ancient History* (古代史から読み解く「日本」のかたち) and *Manga Reflects the Times* (マンガは時代を映す).³² In both of these books, her interest in history and expertise as

²⁷Kuramoto and Satonaka, *The Shape of “Japan,”* 18.

²⁸Ibid, 18.

²⁹Fujimoto Yukari. “Is It True that Women Don’t Like Studying History from Shojo Manga?” *Gakujutsu No Doukou*. Japan Science Support Foundation, 2010. 82.

³⁰Ibid, 81.

³¹Toku, “Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka,” 176.

³²Yaguchi, Takao, Satonaka, Machiko, Nagai, Gō, and Tanikawa, Akihide. *Manga Reflects the Times [Manga Wa Jidai o Utsusu]*, (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Shoseki), 1995.

a mangaka speak to one another, as she frequently draws on her experience adapting historical narrative through *Tenjō no Niji* and her other works. As such, while she claims that she has chosen to adapt the *Kojiki* “as a story,” her stakes as a long-time consumer and now producer of writing on history inevitably inform her work. This interaction motivates further analysis as I call into question how her works reify and re-narrate their source materials.

While other prolific female manga artists who rose to popularity during the 1970’s “golden age” of manga, such as Ikeda Riyoko and Hagio Moto, have received scholarly attention both in Japanese and English, the works of Satonaka remain relatively undiscussed in English-language scholarly research. This is most likely due to the fact that, at the time of writing, I have yet to find an official English-language translation of Satonaka’s work, either in physical circulation or accessible over the Internet. Nonetheless, her work remains salient in how it incorporates aspects of gendered rewriting, history education, and fashion and costuming into narratives often embedded in historical contexts that transport the reader to underexplored time periods and settings. Her historical works have especially proliferated popular Japanese culture, with many going on to be adapted into live-action TV series, films, and stage productions.³³ The popularity of her narratives in both their original manga format and other interpreted mediums motivates further scholarship and interrogation into Satonaka’s intervention with the *Kojiki* through comic-specific visual and textual mechanics. As such, I aim to advance English-language discussion on Satonaka’s work by analyzing her adaptation of the *Kojiki* and its situation in broader political and mediatic contexts, with the hopes that this intervention may inspire further interest in Satonaka’s work and the reappropriation of ancient history through manga and contemporary media more broadly.

³³Toku, “Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka,” 176.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In Chapter 1, I situate Satonaka's rise as a manga author within broader spheres of shojo manga production and the broader political circumstances that have influenced it. I also draw attention to Satonaka's liminality within the Year 24 Group and aim to complicate definitions of who (or what) is "subversive" enough to be counted as such. I then turn to analyze how Satonaka's *Kojiki* sits within greater contexts of its source's reappropriations in Chapter 2, evaluating how premodern motifs are reappropriated and the extent to which these adhere to or deviate from nationalist portrayals. Finally, I focus expressly on a close reading of key scenes from Satonaka's *Kojiki*, paying particular attention to the technical aspects of her artistic craft (e.g. panel layout, costume design, panel borders, etc.) as I elucidate how she aims to engage with the history of the *Kojiki* on her own terms, 1300 years after its initial compilation.

1. Situating Satonaka in Shojo: Year 24 or Something “More?”

Before turning to a close reading analysis of Satonaka’s work, I first wish to locate her status as a mangaka within broader political and cultural contexts. What are the stakes for Satonaka to take on the *Kojiki* as a shojo manga work? To answer this question, I situate Satonaka’s stakes as an artist, in addition to the influences on her craft, within two broader historical tracks. Not only must consideration be made for the gender relations and feminist movements that inform Satonaka’s time, but it is also imperative to locate her emergence as a mangaka within larger scopes of postwar shojo manga production. I also call attention to the scholarly discourse around the Year 24 Group of female manga authors that rose to fame concurrently with Satonaka and aim to make sense of conflicting accounts of Satonaka’s inclusion/exclusion. Through a synthesized cultural history of shojo manga production and its broader political landscapes, I argue that while Satonaka’s role in the “subversive” Year 24 Group is disputed due to the thematic content of her work, its subversiveness in the shojo manga genre is precisely through this “traditionally ‘feminine’” style and thematic content. In sum, Satonaka’s work appears to follow traditional conventions of “girlish” shojo manga identified by Monden Masafumi, but is simultaneously not “girlish” enough to be Year 24 due to its thematic content.³⁴ However, this liminal position, compounded with Satonaka’s historical inclinations, is what makes her work so compelling.

³⁴Monden Masafumi. “Shōjo Manga Research: The Legacy of Women Critics and Their Gender-Based Approach.” (2015). 4.

Shojo Manga: More than “Something for Girls”

The immediate years of the postwar period were fraught with social change and restructuring for Japanese citizens. Food shortages, poverty, and the immediate fallout of the war (particularly during the US occupation) compounded to create an environment of uncertainty and unrest. Monden explains that these circumstances caused many individuals to turn to cost-saving forms of entertainment to distract from the difficulties of post-war life.³⁵ It is in this climate that serial manga (Japanese comics) emerged as a powerful force of entertainment, revolutionizing and changing the entertainment industry and remaining a powerful force within it to the present day. This is largely credited to Tezuka Osamu (1928–1989), the “father of modern Japanese manga” who, as Toku Masami highlights, authored countless series and went on to inspire innumerable manga artists in turn.³⁶ Comics carried with them the gendered distinction magazines for children developed during the Meiji period (1868–1912), with the term shonen describing works tailored to adolescent male readership and shojo being used for works aimed toward female readers of the same age group.³⁷ Nonetheless, Tezuka did not remain confined to one genre in his works, appealing to both adults and children through his negotiations with complex themes through his newly innovated “story manga.”³⁸

While the gendered division between shonen and shojo was carried from the Meiji period, the same gender dynamics did not exist in the authorship of these works in the 1950s. Toku points out how the manga industry largely remained confined to male authors, who often

³⁵Monden Masafumi. “Layers of the ethereal: A cultural investigation of beauty, girlhood, and ballet in Japanese shōjo manga.” *Fashion Theory* 18, no. 3 (2014) 258.

³⁶Toku Masami. “Shojo Manga! Girls' Comics! A Mirror of Girls' Dreams.” *Mechademia* 2, no. 1 (2007): 22.

³⁷Masuda Nozomi. “Shojo Manga and its acceptance: What is the power of Shojo Manga?.” In *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga*. Routledge, 2015. 23.

³⁸Bouissou, Jean-Marie. “Manga: A Historical Overview.” *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* (2010): 25.

began their careers working in shojo manga before transitioning to writing shonen series once they became more “established.”³⁹

Shojo manga was built on the foundations of Meiji-period girl’s magazines, but went on to captivate young female readers in the poverty-stricken postwar period.⁴⁰ Tezuka Osamu’s series *Ribon No Kishi* or *Princess Knight* has defined the genre and is celebrated in shojo manga scholarship for its capacity to capture the hearts of its young female target audience.⁴¹ *Princess Knight*, credited by Toku and Tezuka himself as the “first shojo manga,” follows the cross-dressing protagonist and Princess Sapphire. Sapphire is born with the blue heart of a boy and the pink heart of a girl but is brought up as a boy as women are unable to ascend the throne in her country.⁴² Tezuka has stated that his inspiration for this work came from the Takarazuka Revue, an all-female theater troupe founded in 1913 in which female actors perform both male (*otokoyaku*) and female (*musumeyaku*) roles.⁴³ Fujimoto Yukari argues that *Princess Knight* pioneered the shojo genre and the recurring theme of gender transgression within it, claiming that “since then, shojo manga have charted this strange evolution in which experiments that transgress sex-identity or gender roles are continually repeated in the ‘genderless world’ of girls’ inner lives.”⁴⁴ While this narrative has since been replicated in a wealth of shojo manga scholarship, Hikari Hori has pushed against this, positing that gender in *Princess Knight* is presented as “straightforward and categorical, rather than subversive and volatile” as in the case of Takarazuka.⁴⁵ Gendered portrayals notwithstanding, *Princess Knight*’s influence has pervaded

³⁹Toku, “Shojo Manga!” 22.

⁴⁰Ibid, 24.

⁴¹Ibid, 22; Nakamura, Karen, and Hisako Matsuo. “Female Masculinity and Fantasy Spaces: Transcending Genders in the Takarazuka Theatre and Japanese Popular Culture.” In *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan*, Routledge, 2005: 72.

⁴²Fujimoto Yukari, Linda Flores, Nagaike Kazumi, and Sharalyn Orbaugh. “Transgender: Female Hermaphrodites and Male Androgynes.” *US-Japan Women's Journal* (2004): 77.

⁴³Nakamura and Matsuo, “Female Masculinity and Fantasy Spaces,” 61.

⁴⁴Fujimoto et al. “Transgender: Female Hermaphrodites and Male Androgynes,” 78.

⁴⁵Hori Hikari. “Tezuka, Shōjo Manga, and Hagio Moto.” *Mechademia* 8 (2013): 302.

shojo manga and broader Japanese popular culture, with many manga artists, including Satonaka, crediting Tezuka as a major influence on their work.⁴⁶

Fujimoto also highlights how the shojo manga style—marked by starry-eyed protagonists and intricately detailed imagery, among other visual motifs—originated in the works of Takahashi Macoto around the time of Tezuka, with his signature full-body illustrations becoming a recurring feature of many shojo manga through the present day.⁴⁷ However, as Toku explains, this manga publishing sphere in the immediate postwar period was dominated by male manga authors. These authors often used shojo manga creation as a “stepping stone” for a more “established” career in shonen manga, which was dominated by senior male artists.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the shojo manga of this time period dealt with themes of overcoming struggle and poverty, resonating with post-war readership. Ballet manga also rose in thematic popularity at this time, as these narratives enabled readers “to transcend from harsh reality to the imaginative space of a romantic past.”⁴⁹

The “golden era” of shojo manga came in the 1970s, as female authors (including Satonaka) rose to popularity. These authors—particularly those falling into the Year 24 group, as I will discuss later—rose to fame as they began to explore more “taboo” topics in their works while simultaneously expanding conventions and themes popularized in the past.⁵⁰ Scholarly attention to shojo manga also began at this time, as male scholars of manga shifted away from primarily discussing shonen manga.⁵¹ Rebecca Suter explains that these male critics “challenged what they saw as a limited vision of the medium by expanding their focus to other genres,

⁴⁶Toku, “Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka,” 177.

⁴⁷Fujimoto, Yukari, and Rachel Thorn. “Takahashi Macoto: The origin of shōjo manga style.” *Mechademia* 7, no. 1 (2012): 25.

⁴⁸Toku, “Shojo Manga!”, 23.

⁴⁹Monden, Masafumi. “Layers of the ethereal,” 268.

⁵⁰Toku, “Shojo Manga!”, 25.

⁵¹Takeuchi, Kayo. “The Genealogy of Japanese Shōjo Manga (Girls' Comics) Studies.” *US-Japan Women's Journal* (2010): 81.

particularly shōjo manga.”⁵² Takeuchi Kayo elaborates that, to these male critics, “shōjo manga, which had previously only portrayed shōjo, [were] finally beginning to depict humans.”⁵³ Thus, the origin of *shōjo* manga scholarship mimics that of the medium itself, beginning as a largely male-dominated sphere before integrating more female perspectives. The scope of *shōjo* manga scholarship, however, has been greatly expanded into the present day, with numerous female scholars publishing on the medium.⁵⁴

One of the most prominent works to emerge from this time period, which took inspiration from Tezuka’s *Princess Knight*, was the 1972 series *The Rose Of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu No Bara*) by Ikeda Riyoko. Ikeda is one of the most prolific and successful manga authors of the 1970s and a (disputed) Year 24 Group member, as I will discuss later.⁵⁵ Nobuko Anan highlights how the series, set during the French Revolution, reshaped shōjo manga as it brought epic historical narrative to the genre. It also expanded upon pre-existing tropes of androgyny, as Brau explains the main protagonist Oscar Francois de Jarjayes is also a “cross-dressing prince who is really a princess” akin to *Princess Knight*’s Sapphire.⁵⁶ The series has also seen tremendous success as an adaptation into a Takarazuka Revue performance, with it propelling the Takarazuka “boom” of the mid-70s and remaining the Revue’s most popular adaptation of all time.⁵⁷

⁵²Suter, Rebecca. “Reassessing Manga History, Resituating Manga in History.” in *Rewriting History in Manga: Stories for the Nation* (2016): 178.

⁵³Takeuchi, Kayo, “The Genealogy of Japanese Shōjo Manga (Girls' Comics) Studies,” 83.

⁵⁴Monden, “Shōjo Manga Research,” 1.

⁵⁵Nakamura and Matsuo, “Female Masculinity and Fantasy Spaces,” 72; Toku, “Shōjo Manga!”, 25.

⁵⁶Anan, Nobuko. “The Rose of Versailles: Women and Revolution in Girls' Manga and the Socialist Movement in Japan.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 47, no. 1 (2014): 41–42; Nakamura and Matsuo, “Female Masculinity and Fantasy Spaces,” 72.

⁵⁷Brau, Lorie. “The Women's Theatre of Takarazuka.” *TDR* (1988-) 34, no. 4 (1990): 80; Ueda Shinji. “The Rose of Versailles: A Takarazuka Grand Romantic Play.” In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Drama*, Columbia University Press, 2014. 663.

Similarly to the ballet manga of this period, the *Rose of Versailles*'s themes of class struggle, poverty, and revolution resonated with the broader social climate given the rise of the socialist movement in Japan. The contradictory versions of femininity shared between the characterization of the fictional, androgynous Oscar and the real-life, highly feminized Marie Antionette resonated with audiences, as both remain embedded in feminist consciousness and spoke to how women with contradictory desires collaborated to participate in the Japanese Socialist movement of the 1970s, which Ikeda was a part of.⁵⁸

The push towards socialism during this time was partly in response to the expanding capitalist economy in Japan. This economic expansion, however, also led to economic prosperity. The rise of girls' culture has coincided with the rise of capitalism, drawing criticism from scholars who question how the consumption of girls' culture is situated within greater capitalistic consumption.⁵⁹ Grace En-Yi Ting raises the point that sweets have been portrayed in shojo manga not only as an object of desire and aspiration but also as a form of visual excess, not unlike excessive capitalist consumption.⁶⁰ Some series have worked to call out the connection between capitalism and femininity—Alwyn Spies discusses how Kyoko Okazaki's *pink* uses gender conventions prevalent in the story's setting of 1980s Japan to bring some of its sexist elements to light.⁶¹ Through this example, Spies demonstrates how shojo manga does not always assume complacency in its role within capitalist society, as, in the example of *pink*, they can subvert the conventions of the genre and highlight contradictions and paradoxes through its relation to capitalism and femininity.⁶² Monden Masafumi describes how ballet manga also uses the feminized nature of its shojo sub-genre to accomplish this, using “motifs of light, floating

⁵⁸Anan, “The Rose of Versailles,” 60.

⁵⁹Ibid, 46.

⁶⁰Ting, Grace En-Yi. “The Desire and Disgust of Sweets: Consuming Femininities through Shōjo Manga.” *US-Japan Women's Journal* 54, no. 1 (2018): 54.

⁶¹Spies, Alwyn. “pink-ness.” *US-Japan Women's Journal* (2003): 30.

⁶²Spies, “pink-ness,” 48.

costumes, and flowers to depict the negotiation between the girlish imagination of liberty and social issues.”⁶³ As such, shojo manga authors are aware of how their works interact with prescriptions of “femininity” entrenched in societal expectations of what it “looks” like, and hence can make particular use of feminized symbols to highlight the contradictions and paradoxes around them.

Nonetheless, the impact of capitalism and globalization on shojo manga cannot be ignored. The rise of the bubble economy in the 1980s saw an even greater expansion of girl’s culture and shojo manga, but it also marked the emergence of the medium into the global sphere through international exchange.⁶⁴ Wendi Siuyu Wong explains that Japanese manga was successfully reproduced regionally, seeing major success in Southeast Asia, but this was largely through counterfeit media as many countries had banned Japanese goods following the atrocities of World War II.⁶⁵ Many series also went on to have success in Europe, though manga had yet to fully be integrated into the popular culture of the United States.⁶⁶

Fujimoto highlights this through the widespread phenomenon of *Sailor Moon*, a shojo manga series that saw great success in Japan and Europe but did not have the same reception in the United States due to it being heavily edited and perceived as “too different.”⁶⁷ Marta Fanasca also discusses how *Sailor Moon* expands on the trope of *danso* popularized by Ikeda’s Oscar and Tezuka’s Sapphire through Tenou Haruka, who, contrary to her predecessors, wears “male clothes and perform masculinity in order to express [her] inner identity.”⁶⁸ Thus, her portrayal,

⁶³Monden, “Layers of the ethereal,” 267.

⁶⁴Wong, Wendy Siuyu. “Globalizing Manga: From Japan to Hong Kong and Beyond.” *Mechademia* 1, no. 1 (2006): 23.

⁶⁵Ibid, 29–30.

⁶⁶Ibid, 6–7.

⁶⁷Fujimoto Yukari. “Sailor-Moon! The treasure box all the girls want.” In *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga*, 54.

⁶⁸Fanasca, Marta. “When girls draw the sword: Dansō, cross-dressing and gender subversion in Japanese shōjo manga.” *Queer Studies in Media & Popular Culture* 6, no. 1 (2021): 10.

along with Tenjou Utena's in *Revolutionary Girl Utena* are uniquely gender subversive when compared to their forerunners, though Fanasca explains that this trope has since been largely “domesticated” by heteropatriarchal standards in that they position cross-dressing as a “means” to the “end” of heterosexual romance.⁶⁹ While *Sailor Moon* struggled to succeed with American audiences, numerous shojo manga series have broken transcultural barriers since then.⁷⁰

In terms of what topics are discussed most frequently in shojo manga scholarship, Monden points out that “most critical examinations of shojo manga place emphasis on the role of narrative structure and representation of gender” and evaluate the gendered portrayals of shojo manga.⁷¹ However, Monden writes in his evaluation of the field that this fixation on gender has resulted in scholarship gravitating towards works that are deemed as more “subversive,” and consequently, this leads to a “lack of scholarly interest in ‘typical’ or ‘conventional’ shōjo manga, typified by flowers, ribbons, and innocent girls with large, staring eyes.”⁷² Moreover, this fixation on gender has resulted in the evaluation of visual qualities losing its scholarly attention. Yet visual qualities are often used and mobilized by manga artists, particularly through costuming, to convey underlying themes to the reader in a comfortable and palatable manner. As such, Monden writes that the “highly ‘girlish’ visual qualities materialized in the use of dresses, flowers, and romantic narratives should not be missed” and are in need of more scholarly attention and discussion.⁷³

Through his analysis, Monden concludes that shojo manga is in need of more consideration of its visual and fashion aspects, as well as analysis of more particular sub-genres and lesser-known works.⁷⁴ Due to the recent nature of Monden's work (being published in 2021),

⁶⁹Ibid, 14–15.

⁷⁰Toku, “Shojo Manga!”, 32.

⁷¹Monden, “The Legacy of Shojo Manga,” 1.

⁷²Ibid, 1.

⁷³Ibid, 4.

⁷⁴Ibid, 4.

there has yet to be substantive criticism of his analysis of the field, but his points remain significant when considered among the broader scope of aforementioned gender-focused shōjo manga literature. As much of the predating literature on shōjo manga relies heavily on gender as a point of analysis, the following sections will not overlook its role while extending beyond focusing solely on gender. The following analysis will take particular consideration of the visual elements utilized in shōjo manga, as the artistic qualities used in costume design and panel layout can highlight unique themes and portrayals through close analysis. A visual and textual analytical approach will be used to ensure this research is embedded in close reading, ensuring the “girlish” elements of the narrative being communicated visually will not be overlooked.

Additionally, in English-language shōjo manga scholarship, it is nearly impossible to avoid discussion of the Year 24 Group. However, there appears to be a lack of explicit consensus on who or what constitutes Year 24, with the term being used in a largely notational context. All that is seemingly agreed on is that the Year 24 Group consisted of female manga authors who revolutionized the genre, but the exact criteria for how to measure or distinguish this is at odds. Ergo, Satonaka’s status in the group is left vague as well, with her name often going unmentioned in English scholarship, but why? And is it necessary to distinguish Year 24 status to interpret Satonaka’s work in the first place?

Year 24: More than What Meets the Eye

The 1970s “Golden Age” of female-authored shōjo manga saw the rise of the Year 24 Group (24年組), named for the female shōjo manga artists born around the year of Showa 24 (1949) that revolutionized the genre.⁷⁵ Who exactly can be classified as a member of “Year 24” is left up for debate, but three commonly accepted members are Hagio Moto, Oshima Yumiko, and

⁷⁵Takeuchi, “The Genealogy of Japanese” *Shōjo Manga (Girls' Comics) Studies*,” 82.

Takemiya Keiko (occasionally referred to by their group acronym, HOT).⁷⁶ Meiji University shojo manga scholar Tomoko Yamada, whose research focuses on the Year 24 group, acknowledges the difficulty of determining who is included, deferring to Japanese Wikipedia for this information. This Wikipedia list includes “Yasuko Aoike, Moto Hagio, Takemiya Keiko, Yumiko Oshima, Toshie Kihara, Ryoko Yamagishi, Minori Kimura, Nanaeko Sasaya, Mineko Yamada, and Norie Masuyama.”⁷⁷ Ikeda Riyoko, of *Rose of Versailles* fame, is sometimes also included in these categories—though Ikeda’s inclusion is contested by manga critics and scholars.⁷⁸ The reasoning for this is at odds: some scholars point to her age, Ikeda being born 2 years before 1949, while others claim her focus on epic historical dramas is incongruent with the Year 24 group’s “self-introspective” narratives.

While Ikeda’s status as Year 24 is disputed, Satonaka’s appears even more in flux despite her being born in 1948.⁷⁹ Yamada Tomoko writes that Takeuchi Osamu argues in his book “50 Years of Postwar Manga History” that the Year 24 Group label was originally labeled the “Blossoming Year 24 Group,” referring to artists including Moto Hagio, Kimura Minori, Yamaganishi Ryoko, and others. He emphasized that the aforementioned Ikeda, Satonaka, and Miuchi Suzue constitute a different group of manga authorship.⁸⁰ What exactly makes these artists different from one another in Takeuchi’s eyes is left up to interpretation. Toku Masami elaborates on this indirectly in her piece on shojo manga, where she attributes the names listed in Takeuchi’s “Blossoming Year 24 Group” to the “Magnificent 24s.”⁸¹ With reference to Satonaka

⁷⁶ Yamada Tomoko. “Who Does the Manga Term the ‘24Nen-Gumi(Group of ‘49)’ Refer To? [manga yougo “nijuyonen-gumi”wa dare o sasu no ka?].” 2016.

⁷⁷Toku, Masami. “Profile and Interview with Tomoko Yamada.” In *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga*, Routledge, 2015. 140.

⁷⁸Suzuki Shige (CJ). “Autism and Manga: Comics for Women, Disability, and Tobe Keiko's *With the Light*.” In *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga*, Routledge, 2015. 51; Toku, “Shojo Manga!,”25.

⁷⁹Yamada, “Who Does the Manga Term the ‘24Nen-Gumi(Group of ‘49)’ Refer To? [manga yougo “nijuyonen-gumi”wa dare o sasu no ka?].”

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Toku, “Shojo Manga!,” 26.

and Ikeda, she writes, “Satonaka Machiko, Ikeda Riyoko, Miuchi Suzue, and Ichijō Yukari are the most successful and greatest contributors to shojo manga in this era. Each artist has a different character, but they all share their high quality and skill as storytellers regardless of the genre, such as drama, horror, suspense, history, comedy, and adventure.”⁸² However, Toku ascribes a similar genre-bending to Year 24 creators as well.⁸³ While there is a clear difference between the Year 24s and non-24s articulated, *why* this difference exists is, again, left up to interpretation.

Why this distinction in the first place, and should we consider Satonaka and Ikeda’s works along with or against the works of the Year 24 group? Tomoko Yamada offers a definition for classification, albeit in vague terms: in an interview with Masami Toku, she explains that she “believe[s] that a good definition would include those who played an active part in the 70s era of shojo manga and are also innovators in girls’ comics in that period.”⁸⁴ Anne Duggan provides another potential lens through which to interpret Year 24 in her consideration of Ikeda Riyoko’s status within it, arguing for her inclusion: “Although questions regarding sexuality were central to the Year 24 group, I would like to emphasize here the group’s engagement in political and gender issues through a revolutionized shojo manga tradition, which is clearly articulated in Ikeda’s *Rose of Versailles*.”⁸⁵ Following this criteria, would Satonaka be included as well?

While Satonaka herself has not addressed her inclusion or exclusion, her interviews highlight how her approach to manga is different from that of what she was raised on. Talking about the legacy of shojo manga before her, she writes that “there had been a lot of shōjo manga that begged for your tears, full of girls who happened to be born into pitiable circumstances and

⁸²Ibid, 25.

⁸³Ibid, 26.

⁸⁴Toku, “Profile and Interview with Tomoko Yamada,” 140.

⁸⁵Duggan, Anne E. “The Revolutionary Undoing of the Maiden Warrior in Riyoko Ikeda’s *Rose of Versailles* and Jacques Demy’s *Lady Oscar*.” *Marvels & Tales* 27, no. 1 (2013): 40.

who did nothing but cry and wait for a prince on a white horse.”⁸⁶ She found these stories “ridiculous,” reiterating this in an interview with Masami Toku: “most heroines in shojo manga magazines were of the irritating type. Whenever something happens, they cry (laughs). [...] But I want to tell those heroines, ‘Why don’t you do something if you have the time to cry?’ (laughs).”⁸⁷ In response to this, Satonaka was determined to give women agency in her comics: “I deliberately determined to make sure my heroines decided on their own how to move forward when their lives reached a turning point. I hate it when girls are coddled just because they are girls. Aren’t girls cooler if they have responsibility for their own actions? That’s what I wanted to draw and I told myself I would.”⁸⁸

This rhetoric of pushing against gendered tropes established in the time of Tezuka’s shojo manga demonstrates Satonaka’s intervention as both political and self-motivated. Thus, echoing the rhetoric surrounding the works of Year 24 creators, including Hagio and Ikeda, I suggest that Satonaka’s intervention aligns with that of Year 24 in that, as Suter highlights, both bodies of work aimed to go beyond “shojo manga, which had previously only portrayed shojo” and in tandem began “to depict humans.”⁸⁹ However, these categories are not mutually exclusive in Satonaka’s eyes, as to her, it is precisely through being shojo that humanity can be attained.

Despite alleged differences from the Year 24 group in the narrative conventions of Satonaka’s works, her motivations for creating manga and intervention in the field align with similar sentiments attributed to the group. In lieu of arguing for or against Satonaka’s inclusion, I want to emphasize that, in spite of continual pushback, Satonaka founded a 50-year career in the industry that challenged dominant norms of the postwar shojo manga genre and inspired young

⁸⁶Satonaka Machiko. “We are Now United by the Common Language Called ‘Manga.’” In *Manga!: Visual Pop-Culture in ARTS Education*. InSEA Publications (2020): 104.

⁸⁷Toku, “Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka,” 179.

⁸⁸Satonaka, “The Common Language Called ‘Manga,’” 104.

⁸⁹Suter, “Reassessing Manga History,” 178.

female readership in the process. Her characters demonstrate agency and responsibility, but femininity does not necessarily need to be sacrificed. In fact, in Satonaka's work, it is this femininity and how it can operate in historical contexts that remains all the more compelling.

With these gendered considerations in mind, I apply the political landscape of shojo manga creation and Satonaka's stakes within it to consideration of the *Kojiki* as a continually rearticulated historical document. Whether approaching her through her work or her interviews, it is evident that Satonaka, in Toku's words, "loves manga and its possibilities as a great communicative tool."⁹⁰ However, the extent to which Satonaka's adaptation recomunicates the *Kojiki*'s nationalist history in manga narrative format requires key focus. I move this discussion of the cultural landscape of postwar shojo manga to that of a text authored over a millennium before manga's inception to determine how Satonaka sits at the intersection of both histories, and consider the implications this convergence has on contemporary readership.

⁹⁰Toku, "Profile and Interview with Machiko Satonaka," 176.

2. Politics and Women: Centering the Sun

In this chapter, I focus on the political implications of Satonaka's re-narration of *Kojiki* through a feminist lens. I supplement a close reading of key scenes where Satonaka explains her political and artistic motivations with broader considerations of her adaptation's place in the *Kojiki*'s continually reappropriated history. Throughout this reading, I demonstrate how the *Kojiki*'s intellectual history proves not only intertwined with strands of nationalist thinking but also discourses that perpetuate Japanese femonationalist ideologies. Femonationalism was first described by sociologist Sara Farris in her exploration of “convergences” in far-right and feminist EU politics, where she uses it to “provide a theoretical concept to capture the political-economic agenda informing the invocation of women's rights by a range of different actors.”⁹¹ Explained succinctly by Möser, femonationalism “promote[s] cultural superiority of societies that claim to defend women's rights over those that do not.”⁹² The Japanese state has engaged in practices that appear akin to femonationalist praxis, as Ayako Kano explains that there is a “history of women's mobilization by the state, going back to the years before 1945 but continuing to the present day.”⁹³ This rhetoric has also emerged in scholarly discussions of the *Kojiki* particularly facilitated by feminist critics, and thus exists as part of a longer lineage of the text's cultural history. Thus, in my consideration of Satonaka's adaptation, I ask: to what extent do these reappropriations adhere to or oppose a (femo)nationalist praxis, and what political factors underlie Satonaka's re-reading of the *Kojiki* at this particular historical moment?

⁹¹Farris, Sara R. *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*. Duke University Press, 2017. 5.

⁹²Möser, Cornelia. “The Scandal of Women's Emancipation. Femonationalism, Right-Wing Sexual Politics, and Anti-Feminism.” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, no. 4 (2022): 1544.

⁹³Kano, Ayako. *Japanese Feminist Debates: A Century of Contention on Sex, Love, and Labor*. University of Hawaii Press, 2017. 152.

In order to study the *Kojiki* text through Satonaka's adaptation, it is important first to dislodge the notion that the source text is "static," or the idea that because the text was written 1300 years ago, it does not yield ever-changing political implications in the present day. As Klaus Antoni explains, it is impossible "to regard the *Kojiki* exclusively as a document of antiquity. There is evidence to understand the *Kojiki* as a text of modernity too, which has gained its present form, meaning and function only through *kokugaku* nativism and nationalism."⁹⁴ While the Shinto directive explained by Hirafuji denounced state support for these nationalist ideologies, these ideologies sustained their influence in postwar discourses on Japan's ethnic superiority, or *nihonjinron* (日本人論).⁹⁵ Additionally, as Okuyama Michiaki points out in an analysis of Shimazono Susumu's scholarship on State Shinto, "one thing that the Shinto Directive did not pay much attention to was Imperial House Shinto, though its elements 'had often been considered as essential components of State Shinto.'"⁹⁶ Thus, it is important to consider where Satonaka's intervention lies in the wake of this continually unfolding history and the extent to which her reappropriation opens up the opportunity to ignite nationalist sentiments in young audiences that may be unaware of the *Kojiki*'s past and present.

Satonaka's adaptation of the *Kojiki* challenges the spelling of its own title right off the bat. On the manga's inaugural panel, she writes that the three kanji characters of its title, 古事記, are most commonly interpreted to be spelled out as *Kojiki*. However, she instead wishes to read the characters as *Furukotofumi*.⁹⁷ Satonaka explains this in the manga's first panel, where she attributes her decision to her self-described "sensei," prominent *kokugaku* (national literature) author Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801).

⁹⁴Antoni, Klaus. "Creating a Sacred Narrative: *Kojiki* Studies and Shintō Nationalism." *Japanese Religions* 36, no. 1&2 (2011): 3.

⁹⁵Ichijo, "Kokugaku and an Alternative Account," 271.

⁹⁶Okuyama Michiaki. "Rethinking 'State Shinto' in the Past and the Present." *Numen* 66, no. 2–3 (2019): 169.

⁹⁷Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 4–5.

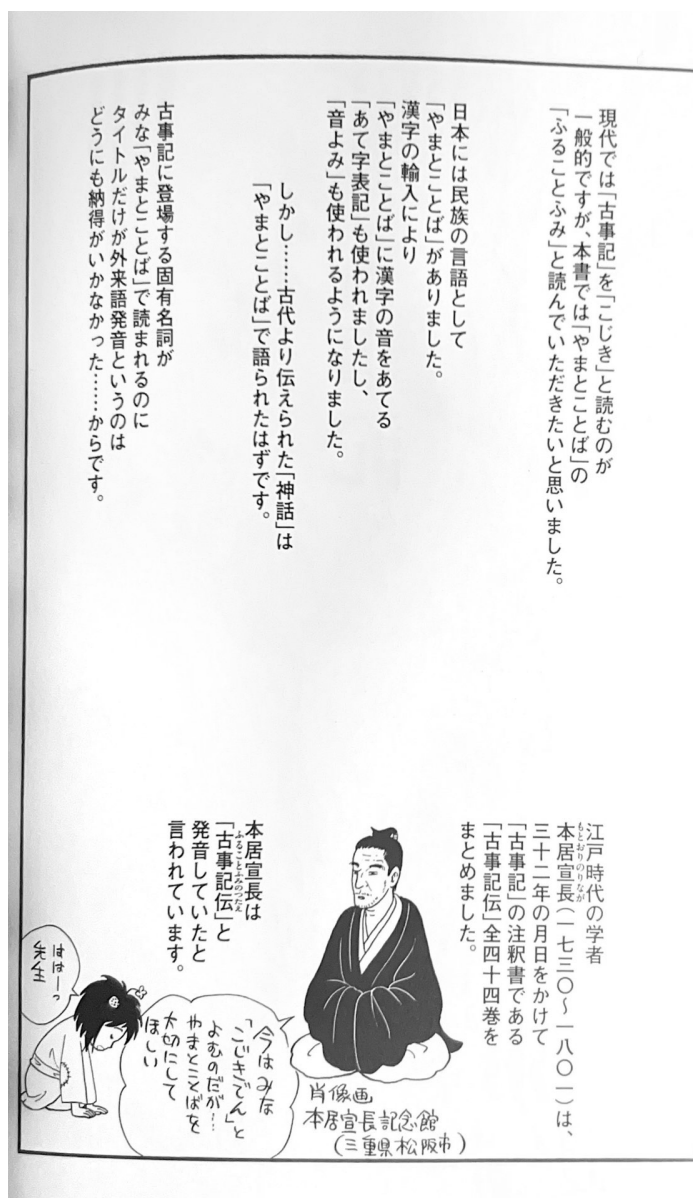


Figure 2.1. Satonaka bowing to Motoori Norinaga, Volume One, p. 4.

Satonaka illustrates herself bowing in reverence to Motoori, her skewed hair and patchwork robe a stark contrast to his orderly, smoothed illustration. She prefaces this with the explanation that she is choosing to read the *Kojiki* using “*yamato-kotoba*,” resulting in the title’s spelling of *Furukotofumi*. She explains that while *yamato-kotoba* is used for individual names in the narrative, the continued use of “borrowed language” (*gairaigo*) to describe the *Kojiki* was not

something she could accept. Thus, in doing so, she is following Motoori's spoken wish to her: "value *yamato-kotoba*."

But what is *yamato-kotoba*, and what role does Motoori have in it? And how does this intervention by Satonaka address the *Kojiki*'s broader history? Before I unpack this, I wish to clarify the connections between "Yamato," Motoori, and the *Kojiki*. First, Yamato: in an ancient context, Yamato refers to the precursor of a nation that would go on to become "Japan," ascribed to have been founded by Empress Jimmu in 660 BCE despite historical investigation by Russell Kirkland pointing to this being impossible.⁹⁸ Consequently, *yamato-kotoba*'s emergence—and by extension, Yamato as a term used to describe "Japan" more broadly—dates back to before the *Kojiki*'s inception. Written texts allowed for the "distinctness" of Yamato to be transcribed: Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu writes that

When written records replaced oral transmission, the commonality of origin with mainland people was denied and a legend of a single, unmixed Yamato people of unique, indigenous origin was developed. The people were said to be of divine ancestry and the imperial line directly traced to the sun goddess. From its inception, Yamato identity implied uniqueness from the rest of mankind.⁹⁹

Yamato has also been used to drive difference between "pure Japanese" and other races that have been absorbed into modern Japan, including Ainu and Ryukyu, despite the fact that Yamato lacks "purity" in itself and is heterogeneous in origin.¹⁰⁰ Oguma Eiji posits that the "transitions in the discourse" "constituted a movement to use the theory of ethnic homogeneity for protection when Japan was weak, and to use the mixed nation theory to interact with the outside world when she was strong."¹⁰¹ Accordingly, the notion of Yamato and its "distinctness" from other races was

⁹⁸Iwicka, "Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism," 27; Kirkland, Russell. "The Sun and the Throne. The Origins of the Royal Descent Myth in Ancient Japan." *Numen*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997. 140.

⁹⁹Murphy-Shigematsu, Stephen. "Multiethnic Japan and the Monoethnic Myth." *Melus* 18, no. 4 (1993): 66.

¹⁰⁰Sugimoto, Yoshio. "Making sense of Nihonjinron." *Thesis Eleven* 57, no. 1 (1999): 82; Murphy-Shigematsu, "Multiethnic Japan," 63.

¹⁰¹Oguma, *A Genealogy of 'Japanese' Self-Images*, 322.

mobilized as a pillar of the Edo-period *kokugaku* literary movement, which included Motoori Norinaga's focal writings on the *Kojiki*.¹⁰²

In terms of what ancient texts were “widely read,” Heldt explains that the *Kojiki* remained second to the *Nihon Shoki* (720), another prominent mythological text, up until the Edo period (1600–1868).¹⁰³ The *Kojiki*'s foray as one of the most widely read and interpreted texts is largely credited to Norinaga Motoori.¹⁰⁴ Motoori argued for the linguistic and historical value of the *Kojiki* over the *Nihon Shoki*, inspiring the “affinity” people have with the text in the present day.¹⁰⁵ According to Renata Iwicka, Norinaga's rereading of the text through the *Kojiki-Den* propelled “the later development of the “State Shintō” (kokka shintō) in the Meiji period” (1868–1912).¹⁰⁶ While Motoori did not directly spur the development of State Shinto, many of the ideas he articulated in the *Kojiki-Den* serve as the lifeblood for both prewar and postwar nationalism. One example of this manifests in *yamato-damashii* (大和魂), which Michael Carr defines as the concept of the “Japanese spirit” that “became a talisman for ultra-nationalists” beginning in the Meiji period.¹⁰⁷ On its relation to Motoori, Iwicka writes: “*Yamato-damashii* represents the pure Japaneseness that Motoori Norinaga had dreamed of. It stands against foreign influence such as Chinese thought, and nationalists use it in their rhetoric targeting the Western culture in Japan.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, *Yamato-damashii* carries with it the same implicit and explicit notion of difference Yamato holds when used in isolation.

¹⁰²Sugimoto, “Making sense of Nihonjinron,” 86.

¹⁰³Heldt, *Kojiki*, xxi.

¹⁰⁴Isomae Jun'ichi and Sarah E. Thal. “Reappropriating the Japanese Myths: Motoori Norinaga and the Creation Myths of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (2000): 15.

¹⁰⁵Motoori Norinaga. *Kojiki-den: Book 1*. Translated by Ann Wehmeyer. Cornell University Asian Program, 1997. 3; Isomae and Thal, “Reappropriating the Japanese Myths,” 16.

¹⁰⁶Iwicka, “Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism,” 28.

¹⁰⁷Carr, Michael. “Yamato-Damashii ‘Japanese Spirit’ Definitions.” *International Journal of Lexicography* 7, no. 4 (1994): 279.

¹⁰⁸Iwicka, “Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism,” 31.

Yamato-damashii has also been used to fuel *nihonjinron* theories of Japanese “superiority” in the prewar and postwar period, as Sugimoto points out.¹⁰⁹ *Nihonjinron* posits the Japanese “race” as “distinct” from other races and was used to justify the colonization and occupation of and military aggression toward Korea, Taiwan, China, and Southeast Asia.¹¹⁰ Befu Harumi writes that “what is common to the wartime *Nihonjinron* and the postwar neo-*Nihonjinron* is that both rely heavily on primordial sentiments inherent in the presumed ‘ethnic essence’ of the Japanese—blood, purity of race, language, mystique— which are the basic ‘stuff’ of *Nihonjinron*, pre-and post-war.”¹¹¹ This has also extended to language: Sugimoto points out that “for some *Nihonjinron* writers, the Yamato language uncontaminated by foreign languages is as old as ‘our blood’ and ‘directly rooted in the original soul of the Yamato race.’”¹¹² Thus, the aforementioned *yamato-kotoba* which Satonaka aims to “value” through her reappropriation have been used to justify nationalist thinking and thought, but to what extent do these nationalist purposings align with Satonaka’s adaptation?

The *Kojiki* and modern-day nationalism are intertwined inextricably, but, for the rest of the chapter, I aim to make sense of how Satonaka reappropriates symbols and rhetoric of Japanese nationalism in her adaptation. Iwicka highlights that mythological motifs in Japanese culture—including “sun rays, torii gate, yamato notion, [and] ritual purity”—appear in the present as “daily props” but can also be used as the lifeblood for contemporary nationalism and extremist right-wing beliefs.¹¹³ Thus, I aim to extend these considerations to the ways in which these props are deployed in Satonaka’s work.

¹⁰⁹Sugimoto, “Making sense of *Nihonjinron*,” 94.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 83.

¹¹¹Befu Harumi. “Symbols of nationalism and *Nihonjinron*.” In *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*, Routledge, 2002. 43.

¹¹²Sugimoto, “Making sense of *Nihonjinron*,” 94.

¹¹³Iwicka, “Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism,” 33–34.

One of the most prolific symbols of Japanese nationalism comes in the form of sun goddess Amaterasu, whose inception is narrated in the *Kojiki*.¹¹⁴ As mentioned in the introduction, Amaterasu has appeared as a prolific figure in popular Japanese culture; however, she has also been used as a symbol of nationalism, perhaps most expressly through the “sun ray” imagery of the “rising sun” Japanese flag.¹¹⁵ Additionally, the notion that Amaterasu has been widely worshiped and revered since time immemorial is fallacious, as Kirkland finds that Emperor Tenmu was the one to elevate Amaterasu’s status and perpetuate narratives about the connection between her and Ise shrine in 673.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, she is often the centerpiece of nationalistic arguments of monoethnic identity, which traces a direct lineage between Amaterasu and the emperor that then extends to the “Yamato” people.¹¹⁷ Thus, Amaterasu’s reappropriations, whether implicit or explicit, are used to articulate constructions of “ethnic superiority.” But how does Satonaka’s deployment of Amaterasu in her *Kojiki* narrative adhere to or deviate from the tropes and discourses of the past? The following section will focus explicitly on this to determine its intersections with feminist and nationalist discourses in an effort to determine how Satonaka characterizes Amaterasu and gives agency to female deities in the *Kojiki* through her craft.

Amaterasu: Sun (and/or) Goddess

Amaterasu first appears in the *Izanagi and Izanami* chapter of the *Kojiki*, in which the two eponymous deities form the “Self-Shaped Isle” that would later go on to become Japan and birth her and numerous other deities along the way.¹¹⁸ Amaterasu is born out of Izanagi’s left eye as he purifies himself in the river after going to the underworld to see his wife and sister,

¹¹⁴Ibid, 27.

¹¹⁵Ibid, 30.

¹¹⁶Kirkland, Russell. “The Sun and the Throne. The Origins of the Royal Descent Myth in Ancient Japan.” *Numen*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997. 140.

¹¹⁷Oguma, *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images*,

¹¹⁸Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 8, 18.

Izanami, who is sent there after dying from being burned during the birth of the fire spirit.¹¹⁹ Perhaps the most infamous scene with Amaterasu in the *Kojiki* comes in the following chapter that revolves around her and her brother, Susanoo-o: *Ama-no-Iwato* (or *Ame-no-Iwayado* in Satonaka's terms). Following a cruel prank by Susanoo-o that causes the death of one of her servants, Amaterasu hides in a cave, plunging the world into darkness.¹²⁰ It's up to Ame-no-Uzume to save the deities, so she becomes "possessed" and performs a dance, exposed breasts covered only by evergreen garland in Satonaka's illustration.¹²¹ This causes the gods to create a commotion; curiosity piqued, Amaterasu moves the boulder blocking the cave to see what the commotion is about, and light is restored to the earth once again.¹²²

¹¹⁹Ibid, 13, 18.

¹²⁰Ibid, 23.

¹²¹Ibid, 24.

¹²²Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 24.



Figure 2.2. Satonaka’s debrief of the “Ama-no-Iwayado” chapter, Volume one, p. 60.

After illustrating the Ama-no-Iwayado section of the *Kojiki*, Satonaka provides a short debrief on the events of the chapter, her cartooned self initially pictured bowing to Motoori on the first page making a reappearance. In the first few panels, Satonaka quickly connects the events of the chapter to the current state of affairs, explaining that the event has been used in some theories to explain solar eclipses. A white-haired male scholar chimes in on the third panel,

explaining that this is wrong: if it were a solar eclipse, it would not have plunged the earth into such severe darkness. Satonaka relents, replying: “Now that you mention it, it was pretty bright during the eclipse the other day.” On the fourth panel, while her character (now with covered hair and in a different robe) warms herself under the sun, the topic changes focus from science to history. She states: “Ah, I am grateful. The sun is important to farming people. Myths where the sun deity is a woman are rare. Women in Japan have been strong since the old days...?”¹²³

The subject material that Satonaka discusses jumps around from panel to panel, connecting the events of the *Kojiki* to real-world phenomena and other contexts. Such narration fulfills the duty of “education” manga twofold: not only is Satonaka re-narrating the myth of the *Kojiki*, but she is also explaining how it connects to broader historical events and phenomena readers may encounter in their everyday lives. Towards the end, however, we get a glimpse of Satonaka’s perspective on the myth. This language of “being strong since the old days” is reminiscent of nationalist sentiments that positioned Amaterasu as the source of imperial strength since ancient times. It also echoes wartime discourses on nationhood ushered in by thinkers such as anarchist and feminist historian Takamure Itsue (1894–1964), who, as Oguma explains, believed that “the oppression of women in modern Japan was due to the influence of foreign ideologies, beginning with Chinese thought, and that these ideologies could be overcome through a return to ancient Japan.”¹²⁴ Inspired by feminist thinker Hiratsuka Raiteu’s (1886–1971) writings on how “women were the sun,” Oguma explains that Takamure celebrated how the imperial lineage articulated in the *Kojiki* “dissolved alien nations through a fusion of blood under the lineage of the Sun Goddess.”¹²⁵ Thus, the language being used by Satonaka echoes

¹²³Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 59.

¹²⁴Oguma, *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images*, 178–179.

¹²⁵Ibid, 188.

that used in wartime Japanese feminist rhetoric, where the war meant a return to the “ancient values” of gender equality.¹²⁶ But to what extent does it reintroduce it?

Satonaka elaborates on her views of gender in the *Kojiki* in an interview with Yamamoto Kenshō, where she explains:

In the *Kojiki*, women were really strong. The *Kojiki* repeatedly shows women getting frustrated with men, who seem to lose courage just when it matters most. The sun deity, the most level-headed of the Japanese gods, is a woman. This is unusual, as it’s usually the moon that’s given female attributes, not the sun. But even this most powerful of all gods ruled not by decree, but by consultation.¹²⁷

Satonaka draws on her prior knowledge of myths and experience adapting them to highlight what she finds interesting about the *Kojiki*’s canon; not only does a female sun deity hold the power, but it is how she uses it Satonaka finds compelling. Rather than declaring, Amaterasu rules by question, and Satonaka is mobilized to advance this feminine power in her retelling of the *Kojiki*. On the same topic of ancient female leadership, Satonaka points out her intervention with the dominant trends in the literature she had access to: “the knowledge I’d gained from my reading was limited to explanations that were filtered through the eyes of men.”¹²⁸ While this passage by Satonaka is used to describe her intervention with the *Man’yōshū*, it concludes with the same sentiment that women had “always been strong” in Japan as “there were plenty of cases where the regnant empresses ruled even though there were numerous suitable men. There are even cases where women overthrew men to take the throne themselves.”¹²⁹ Satonaka’s intervention is not overtly privy to lean towards one type of power over the other. Through her work, female strength is constructed through agency in itself, regardless if this is demonstrated by overthrowing the throne or questioning and consultation.

¹²⁶Ibid, 190.

¹²⁷Yamamoto, “The Beauty of the Man’yōshū.”

¹²⁸Satonaka, “The Common Language Called ‘Manga,’” 106.

¹²⁹Ibid, 106.

Connections with other mythological traditions reappear throughout Satonaka's self-narrated afterword sections, and this one is no exception, as Satonaka spends the rest of the afterword explaining parallels between the mythologies of Amaterasu and the Greek goddess Demeter.¹³⁰ After she highlights how the myth of Persephone also shares similarities with Izanami's banishment to the underworld, she asks: "Do human ideas align with each other by nature? Or is it common roots?"¹³¹ This idea parallels the findings of a study on the myths of Amaterasu and Demeter by János Kárpáti, where he suggests that "different peoples realize the cycles of the solar year and of agriculture. In order to influence these cycles, they create rites in which primitive magic, shamanism, and more developed human communication, i.e. chant, music, and dance, are superimposed upon one another."¹³² Isabel Barroso also explains in her comparative study of these two myths that, while there are similarities in the stories, differences in ideologies are also revealed: from these myths, "the concept of 'justice' in Greek mythology and the concept of 'group power' of Japanese mythology can be counterposed against each other."¹³³ Barroso explains that while the tales overlap, they also convey key "ideological" differences.¹³⁴ But how does this tie back to Satonaka's supposition of "common roots?"

While Satonaka's hypotheticals are deliberately ambiguous, they demonstrate a command of mythological material in addition to proposing connections that may implore the reader to investigate further on their own accord. Satonaka overtly encourages this with her cartoon persona holding a copy of her manga adaptation of *Greek Mythology* and telling the reader to read it (よんでね).¹³⁵ In doing so, she accomplishes the goal of "educational" (*kyoiku*) manga to

¹³⁰Satonaka, *Kojiki*, 62.

¹³¹Ibid, 62.

¹³²Kárpáti, János. "Amaterasu and Demeter: About a Japanese–Greek Mythological Analogy." *International Journal of Musicology* (1993): 9–21.

¹³³Barroso, Isabel. "The Angry Goddess: On the Rebel Goddesses [女神の怒り: 反抗する女神についての一考察]." *Shobi University Combined Political Research Bulletin*, 20 (2011): 38.

¹³⁴Ibid, 38.

¹³⁵Ibid, 45, 61.

broaden the appeal of its subject matter—in this case, by establishing parallels to Greek mythology)—but she also demonstrates that the ideas and themes the *Kojiki* perpetuates do not necessarily exist in a vacuum.

In the parallels Satonaka draws between the two myths, she does not valorize one myth over the other. One could argue this is done to entice the reader to pick up her other work, but not without at least establishing a rationale through the connections she traces. Regardless, in establishing this parallel and questioning the commonality of human ideas and roots, Satonaka's supposition appears to distance herself from the nationalist discussions of “Yamato” ethnic superiority that her “teacher” Motoori Norinaga's works played a part in. However, in order to fully understand how Satonaka's intervention of the *Kojiki* interacts with its source text's past, I ask: how does the time and space Satonaka's portrayal of Amaterasu holds compare to the *Kojiki*'s other significant female deities?



Figure 2.3. Parallels between Amaterasu and Demeter, Volume one, p. 62.

What About Uzume?

Satonaka’s afterword focuses on the strength of Amaterasu but fails to mention the “strength” of the other characters—in particular, Ame-no-Uzume, who resolves the central conflict of the episode. She is mentioned briefly in the third panel above, but only with respect to the fact her dance resembles the “striptease” in Demeter’s story.¹³⁶ The afterword remains mostly

¹³⁶Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 62.

focused on Amaterasu. In her book on Asian American taiko, Deborah Wong offers an “alternative” narration of the cave dance sequence, paying particular attention to the role of Uzume:

She’s clever—a problem solver. She’s not young and beautiful. The other woman is young, beautiful, and important, and she’s hiding in a cave; she’s pouting or despondent or terrified, depending on who’s telling the story. The world is in peril without her: Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun, who despaired and cast the world into darkness by hiding in a cave. [...] Taiko players almost always call this ‘The Legend of Amaterasu,’ but to me it’s clearly about Uzume. She’s the one who danced on the taiko and saved everyone. But she’s old and inappropriate, while Amaterasu is beautiful and needed.¹³⁷

This retelling drives home the contrast between Amaterasu and Uzume, raising a key criticism: in this afterword, Amaterasu is the focus and is constructed as the main character of the episode (even through its name, *Amaterasu and Susanoo-o*), when it is actually Uzume who exercises agency to resolve the conflict and save the day. Additionally, this scene is attributed to the origin of a number of rituals and performing arts in Japan, Wong’s above-mentioned taiko only one of many examples.¹³⁸ Benito Ortolani describes Uzume’s dance as a primitive form of *kagura*, a term that has gone on to describe a variety of performance traditions in modern Japan.¹³⁹ And, yet, Uzume’s mention in Satonaka’s immediate breakdown gets only one panel of attention. While this could be seen as an immediate consequence of Uzume being “old and inappropriate” against Amaterasu being “beautiful and needed,” Satonaka does address Uzume’s legacy a few chapters later in *Tenson Kōrin*.

¹³⁷Wong, Deborah. 2019. *Louder and Faster: Pain, Joy, and the Body Politic in Asian American Taiko*. University of California Press. 73–74.

¹³⁸Ibid, 74.

¹³⁹Ortolani, Benito. *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*. Princeton University Press, 1995. 13–14.



Figure 2.4. Uzume's legacy, Volume One, p. 176, panel 1.

While never visibly “old” in Satonaka’s depiction, Uzume’s previous “inappropriateness” lingers in the background as Satonaka explains her lineage.¹⁴⁰ As Uzume faces forward toward the text, Satonaka describes how she went on to be the ancestor of the Sarume lineage, which went on to perform *bugaku* (court dance) at religious festivals. This genealogy is hinted at by the female dancers to the left of Uzume, a glimpse of the future generations of performance traditions her dance would later go on to inspire. Thus, while Uzume’s reappearance in the *Kojiki* is minimal, that does not extend to her impact in the current day. This single panel leaves implications open that Uzume’s dance has gone on to inspire numerous performing arts traditions, and while not fully spelled out, the implication stands that her dance has inspired a legacy for generations to come.

¹⁴⁰Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 176.

It is also worth mentioning that Satonaka has actually expressed receiving criticism for the “unattractiveness” of her female portrayals in the past. On the reception of her debut work, *Portrait of Pia*, Satonaka writes that “I was often told if I didn’t draw a more appealing girl, the readers wouldn’t follow me, and I was asked why I had to give my story such an unhappy ending.”¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, Satonaka has not taken this criticism to heart. While Uzume may appear conventionally attractive, or, at least, not noticeably different in illustrative style from Amaterasu, Satonaka does not stray away from illustrating “unattractive” girls and giving them agency as well in subsequent chapters, particularly Iwanaga-hime (岩長ひめ), which I unpack in Chapter 3.

Amaterasu is given a lot of direct attention in this scene, but this is not explicitly sustained in the source material nor Satonaka’s rendition. Her illustration is interspersed throughout the subsequent chapters, most notably in the scene where she has her grandson Ninigi-no-mikoto descend to earth and rule over in the *Tenson Kōrin* chapter. This full panel spread of Amaterasu passing on the pendants, mirror, and sword to Ninigi is reminiscent of the “visual domination” Fujitani describes state Shinto symbols taking up in the Meiji period.¹⁴² However, after this episode, her physical depiction remains largely off-panel. She is instead evoked indirectly through the use of sun ray imagery, the succession to which is illustrated when she bestows the mirror from the Ama-no-Iwayado scene to Ninigi. Thus, she is able to permeate through the rest of the narrative in the form of sun rays to inform the characters on earth of her presence, demonstrating how she alone is able to exert her agency even when not physically around.

¹⁴¹Satonaka, “The Common Language Called ‘Manga,’” 105.

¹⁴²Fujitani, Takashi. *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. Vol. 6. University of California Press, 1996. 101.



Figure 2.5. Ninigi bowing to Amaterasu, Volume one, p. 175.

Conclusion: Center of the Flag

Satonaka does not directly address the nationalist history of the *Kojiki* in her adaptation, and one could argue that she is reifying it through the reverence paid to Motoori Norinaga at the beginning of the text. Amaterasu's sun rays permeate the narrative even in her absence, a constant reminder of her presence and power. As Iwicka explains:

[Amaterasu's] figure, adorned with sun rays, as she steps out of the cave, is one of the most iconic images in Japan. Those sun rays emanating from the goddess were incorporated in the Meiji period into the official flag of the Japanese Imperial Army and as a naval ensign in 1870 and 1889 respectively. This flag, a red circle with red sun rays around (called *kyokujitsuki*), symbolised Japan as the Land of the Rising Sun. It still remains a symbol of the atrocities committed by the Japanese Army during WWII against neighbouring countries, especially South Korea and China.¹⁴³

While this version of the Japanese flag was replaced by the current *hinomaru* version, the *kyokujitsuki* version with the rays is still used by the Japan Self Defense Force.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, that does not mean that nationalist symbology has remained in the military sector, nor that the *hinomaru* design is even divorced from it: McCormack points out that "In 1999 the central symbols of the pre-war state, its flag [*hinomaru*] and anthem [*kimigayo*], were restored as officially sanctioned national symbols."¹⁴⁵ He explains that this drew protest and criticism both outside of Japan and within, particularly in Okinawa and Hiroshima, which were most impacted by the wartime atrocities.¹⁴⁶ While Powell explains the anthem has evoked stronger imperial associations (and subsequent opposition) than the flag, he concedes that, given their convergent histories, "to some extent the ideological trajectories of the two should be considered in

¹⁴³Iwicka, "Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism," 30.

¹⁴⁴Ibid, 30.

¹⁴⁵McCormack, Gavan. "Nationalism and Identity in Post-Cold War Japan." *Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change* 12, no. 3 (2000): 257.

¹⁴⁶Ibid, 258.

tandem.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, with or without its rays, the Japanese flag carries with it nationalist implications and reminders of the harm done by Japanese imperialism.

Akin to the Japanese flag, I argue that the visual representation of Amaterasu in Satonaka’s *Kojiki* functions in a similar way. Whether it be the *hinomaru* of Amaterasu herself, her rays, or some combination of the two, they still contribute to a legacy of State Shinto and repeat harm that it has caused. This becomes particularly complicated when, in Satonaka’s case, the nationalist symbol of Amaterasu is being used to rewrite some of the gendered harm it has caused. While, in Satonaka’s eyes, “women have always been strong,” how should we interpret manifestations of female empowerment in her narrative when it has been previously used to propel femonationalist rhetorics?

As a product of continual reappropriation, it is nigh impossible to distinguish the identity of the *Kojiki* in the present day from its fraught past. Satonaka may have prefaced her work by stating she is reading *Kojiki* as a story rather than based on scholarly interpretation, but that does not exempt her work from criticism given how political any contemporary intervention with the *Kojiki* and its symbology can be. Iwicka does remind us that nationalist symbols, including sun rays, Yamato, can be used as everyday symbology, but they also function as “indispensable paraphernalia” for right-wing individuals and groups.¹⁴⁸ However, I concur with Powell’s statement that “the flag may have become a part of normal Japanese life, but many of the narratives attached to it are too divisive to be considered normative,” and aim to extend this argument to the nationalist props used in Satonaka’s adaptation at large.¹⁴⁹ While Satonaka’s portrayal of Amaterasu may depict her expressing agency and connects it to other mythological

¹⁴⁷Powell, Richard. “The Sun Also Rises: Flying the Japanese Flag Amid Contested National Narratives.” In *Flags, Color, and the Legal Narrative: Public Memory, Identity, and Critique*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021. 356–357.

¹⁴⁸Iwicka, “Japanese Myths in Modern Nationalism,” 32.

¹⁴⁹Powell, “The Sun Also Rises,” 378.

traditions under the guise of “common roots,” she is still a figure of exceptionality illustrated by Satonaka’s pen, a “rare” sun goddess distinct from a mythological landscape of predominantly male sun deities.¹⁵⁰ Amaterasu is not the only female character to express agency and legacy, as in the example of Uzume’s foreshadowed future lineage. However, no women are able to figuratively and visually permeate through the entire narrative like Amaterasu’s sun rays. Consequently, regardless of whether these sun rays intentionally carry the same nationalist sentiments of the *kyokujitsuki* flag, Amaterasu’s strength is exceptional and superior to the other deities represented. In turn, it echoes the way Amaterasu is revered through the flag and in (femo)nationalist discourses.

When I first encountered Satonaka’s work, I was immediately captivated by her visual style. I was particularly drawn to her character design style, finding her illustrations decidedly mature while still retaining the sparkling eyes and painstaking detail that makes it distinctly shōjo. As I researched her, I also became interested in the feminist politics that inform her craft. After reevaluating her situation within the tumultuous history of the *Kojiki*, I concede that this interest in her visual style may have overshadowed some of the cultural nationalism at play in her work. Just because Satonaka is engaging with gods and deities does not mean she is not human; however much she may or may not slip into nationalist pitfalls does not negate the impact of her work on shōjo manga, nor does it mean we can not still appreciate and learn from her work. Moreover, her work constitutes an interruption in the male-dominated and anglocentric field of history that is not bound to nor inhibited by its presentation through manga. It turns out, as I have learned through the considerations I have made in this chapter, that sometimes nationalism can be illustrated quite skillfully.

¹⁵⁰Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 61–62.

It would simply be too reductive, however, to write off Satonaka's work at just that, particularly given how her work elucidates the ways in which feminist ideologies, nationalism, and artistic sensibilities can intertwine. Furthermore, just because her intervention with the *Kojiki* draws upon nationalist imagery does not mean that they cannot actually be used to push back against their very origins. Returning to figure 2.5 and the sun rays, it is important to point out that the kaleidoscopic, fractal-like sun rays melded by the layering of screentone in the spread are a far cry from the blocky sunrays of the *kyokujitsuki* flag. Thus, it is important to decisively zoom in on the visual mechanisms through which Satonaka illustrates these continually reappropriated histories—in other words, to analyze how the aesthetic and the political in Satonaka's work converge. Keeping the political contexts and stakes of Satonaka's work discussed in this chapter in mind, I now turn to a close reading of key scenes in Satonaka's narration to evaluate how Satonaka employs political and aesthetic agency to rewrite the *Kojiki*'s tropes and expand on its ever-changing cultural history.

3. Descending From the Heavens: Close Reading Through Satonaka's Eyes

“That is precisely what makes ancient history so interesting. It stimulates not only our curiosity, but also our imagination.”

–Satonaka Machiko, *The Shape of “Japan” as Deciphered from Ancient History*

Before the *Kojiki*'s preface, Satonaka leads with the fact that she has decided to interpret the *Kojiki* “as a story” (物語) rather than strictly aligning with scholarly interpretation.¹⁵¹ In this chapter, I look at what the reinterpretation of the *Kojiki* visualized through Satonaka's eyes and illustrated by her hand might stand to gain through this “literary” approach. Expanding on the previous chapter's situation of the *Kojiki* as a literary work continually retooled and repurposed, I look specifically at the visual mechanics Satonaka uses to retool the *Kojiki* for a shojo audience. In what ways might Satonaka's reappropriation of the *Kojiki* impact audiences that may be otherwise unmoved by these tales in a national or educational context? And how does it rewrite or reiterate the *Kojiki*'s gendered tropes?

This chapter aims to tie the aforementioned political stakes of Satonaka adapting the *Kojiki* to the aesthetic storytelling of her craft. The aesthetics at play in Satonaka's adaptation will be considered not only within larger scopes of shojo manga depiction and style, but also broader art historical contexts. Thus, while I aim to investigate where pleasure is located for both Satonaka and viewers of her craft, I remain firmly cemented in earlier discourses on nationalism and the *Kojiki*'s politics explored in Chapter 2. It is impossible to divest any contemporary appropriation of the *Kojiki* from the text's cultural and historical past. However, Satonaka's

¹⁵¹Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 8.

intervention has resonated with its readership, and she has won an award for her efforts, so it is imperative to investigate the visual and textual elements Satonaka uses to engage readership that may not become interested in the *Kojiki* or come into contact with it in a meaningful form of entertainment otherwise.¹⁵²

Among online reviews, Satonaka's *Kojiki* is praised for being “easy to read” (*yomiyasui*). I believe this is in part due to the fact that she simplifies the prose of the story and presents it through short dialogue bursts. Moreover, while Satonaka does employ the *yamato-kotoba* discussed in the previous chapter to narrate her work, she consistently provides *furigana* to inform the reader of the spellings regardless of the commonality of the word. This aligns with Ivanova's perception that presenting historical adaptation through manga in an easy-to-read format is done in an attempt to widen the audience of classical literature.¹⁵³ Satonaka's *Kojiki* also aligns with Ivanova's definition of “educational” (教育) manga, an “understudied” genre of manga that can relate to content taught at Japanese schools or, more broadly, works that offer “all kinds of knowledge to both children and adults.”¹⁵⁴ Thus, in Satonaka's case, the question of how this “knowledge” is represented to her target young female audience and is situated within a longer lineage of *Kojiki* history become important points of investigation. By considering how the *Kojiki*'s gendered tropes are reillustrated, we can determine how Satonaka's intervention situates itself as both a political and aesthetic intervention with the source text.

The Narration of Creation

Before I provide a close reading of a key sequence of gendered scenes in Satonaka's *Kojiki*, it is imperative to first call attention to what we can readily glean about the creative

¹⁵²“About the 2013 ‘Grand Prize for *Kojiki* Publications.’”

¹⁵³Ivanova, “Reading the Literary Canon through Manga,” 163.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 165.

process Satonaka uses to illustrate her manga narratives. Satonaka has spearheaded her own manga creation team, with Tomoko Yamada highlighting the fact that Satonaka has had five assistants working alongside her at the peak of her career.¹⁵⁵ While Satonaka does not explicitly make clear how many assistants worked with her on the *Kojiki*, she illustrates herself interacting with what appears to be an assistant in the second volume. This scene, pictured below, also provides a sense of Satonaka's rationale for the character design of O-Uzu (later referred to as Yamato Takeru), who becomes a sort of "protagonist" for a portion of the second volume.

¹⁵⁵Yamada, "Who Does the Manga Term the '24 Nen-Gumi(Group of '49)' Refer To?"



Figure 3.1. Drawing O-Usu/Yamato Takeru, Volume two, p. 85.

In the second panel of this sequence, she explains that the original text of the *Kojiki* described the hair of O-Usu as being “gourd flower-shaped.” Things become self-referential when Satonaka draws herself trying to illustrate this hairstyle, question marks freely hand drawn around her as she wonders, “like this?” In the text that follows, Satonaka admits, “try as I might, I do not understand it very well…” This leads her to the conclusion she makes as she hunches

over her drawing board in the third panel below: “Something is off... I don’t care! I’ll use a hairstyle I like.” This panel is where we get a glimpse of the tools behind Satonaka’s craft, as her illustrated self appears to be using a fountain pen to craft her thin, precise character linework. It is also at this moment we see Satonaka’s earlier mentioned assistant, who, concerned about her hairstyle choice, asks, “is it really alright?” To this, Satonaka replies, “Of course it’s fine! Take a look at movies and dramas.” Into the fourth panel, over a portrait reminiscent of a female Heian period (794–1192) aristocrat, she uses a sequence of speech bubbles to call attention to the historical inaccuracies: “Pearl-finish lipstick!” “Perfect mascara!” “There is even eyeliner applied...” In the speech bubble at the bottom, she elaborates further: “the eyebrows are not shaved and teeth are not blackened either. Most importantly, modern standards of speech are used! That is why you have to allow me this much... sorry, it’s an excuse.”¹⁵⁶

This scene provides a window not only into Satonaka's working environment, but also the thought process and rationale behind her creative decisions: in this example, O-Usu’s hairstyle. Satonaka’s decision to give him a hairstyle she likes is presented as a comedic resolution, but when her eyeless female assistant calls her out on this, she retaliates with a wealth of evidence justifying her decision. She also deflects the issue at hand by pointing to the historical inaccuracies of other historical portrayals. Everything she mentions is historically sound, but it is effectively a red herring to the issue at hand; Satonaka even admits this by calling it an “excuse,” but she still includes it nonetheless. The example Satonaka selects to prove her point is even dubiously related to the issue of O-Usu’s hair, as the “inaccurate” historical portrayal she fixates on most likely comes from the Heian period, which came after the *Kojiki*’s compilation.

Just because Satonaka ends this sequence by calling her analysis an “excuse” does not mean there are not important takeaways from this scene. Not only does it point out inaccuracies

¹⁵⁶Satonaka Machiko. *Kojiki: Manga Koten Bungaku, Volume Two*. Tōkyō: Shōgakusan, 2013. 85.

in the historical media the reader may encounter, but it provides insight into how Satonaka looks at these portrayals as well. She stipulates that the “most important” criticism is the inaccurate use of language, and it is evident from this instance and from the rationale Satonaka provides for using *yamato-kotoba* discussed in Chapter two that paying attention to how language is used is of utmost importance to her. Except for this, however, most of the inaccuracies she points out are physical, primarily centered on the face. This focus on faces aligns with other glimpses into Satonaka’s creative process: Kawamata discusses how she invented “Satonaka’s structure-building grid,” a method she recommends to beginners to create and maintain narrative balance and structural connectedness.¹⁵⁷ This grid, pictured below, heavily focuses on the faces of characters to accomplish this.

¹⁵⁷Kawamata, “Analysis of the new product development process,” 12–13.



Figure 3.2. Satonaka’s Structure Building Grid.¹⁵⁸

While the character designs in the above grid are decisively modern, they fact these depictions are distinguished by their faces and hairstyles demonstrates how Satonaka works specifically in these areas to illustrate her characterization. In this example, Satonaka’s deflection to other historical adapter’s incongruencies in facial features speaks not only to her personal preferences but also the importance of these characteristics in her storytelling, insofar as using the above grid to base her narrative structure around them. However, that does not mean she does

¹⁵⁸Ibid, 13.

not take creative liberties at times with the “accuracy” of her facial features as well. Perhaps the most germane example actually appears in the chapter, where O-Usu is depicted with long fluttering eyelashes and sparkling eyes not unlike Satonaka’s illustrations of more traditionally “feminine” characters. This visual style may be in part used to accentuate his “boyishness,” which he weaponizes in the preceding narrative to crossdress as a woman and assassinate the elder of the Kumaso tribe at the request of his father.¹⁵⁹ Thus, while it could simply be written off as Satonaka changing O-Usu’s visual depiction to fit what she “likes” again, regardless of how much she is enjoying drawing O-Usu’s distinctly stylized expression, it subtly serves the purpose of foreshadowing the events of the narrative.

Thus, this example provides a window through which we can look into Satonaka’s creative process. There is reason to believe that, in her historical adaptations, she remains faithful to the time period, but will sacrifice accuracy to implement visual storytelling devices. In this instance, foreshadowing and exaggerated style are strategically deployed to build up to O-Usu’s gender “transgression.” But while this moment constitutes a male character’s brief flirtation with performing femininity, it is also important to consider how visual style is used to rewrite the tropes of female characters in Satonaka’s narrative. Thus, the following section moves to consider how Satonaka depicts dualistic femininities through the *Kojiki* episode entitled “Konohana-no-Sakuya-hime and Iwanaga-hime.”

Illustrating Dualistic Femininities

In order to analyze how gender is performed on Satonaka’s page, I first wish to evaluate it based on how a reader picking up the *Kojiki* manga for the first time will likely encounter it. I

¹⁵⁹Heldt, *Kojiki*, 99.

wish to draw attention to how it is illustrated through the table of contents that readers opening Satonaka's *Kojiki* are immediately confronted with.

Chapter Title	Page Number
その玖(九) 天孫降臨	173
その拾(十) 木花之佐久夜毘売と石長比売	181
その拾壹(十一) 山幸彦と海幸彦	199
その拾貳(十二) 豊玉毘売と玉依毘売	215
中巻 (なかまき)	229
その壹(一) 神武東征	231
その貳(二) 天皇誕生	249
その参(三) 欠史八代	261
神々の系図	273
地 図	279
巻末に寄せて	281
参考文献	288
竹田恒泰	

Chapter Title	Page Number
その捌(八) 国譲り	143
その漆(七) 少名毘古那	135
その陸(六) 大国主神	115
その伍(五) 根之堅州国	95
その肆(四) 大穴牟遲	77
その参(三) 八俣大蛇	63
その貳(二) 天の石屋戸	47
その壹(一) この世の始まり	15
上巻 (かみまき)	9

Figure 3.3. Table of Contents, Volume one, pp. 6–7.

While Tables of Contents—even in a highly illustrative medium like manga—can often be left simply as text, Satonaka borders hers with a rounded yet blocky cloud design and two paralleling character portraits. The two female character designs parallel one another with their similarly structured robes and the intricate linework done to accentuate the folds of their clothing. These full-bodied designs are reminiscent of the archetypal shōjo manga character panels popularized by Takahashi Macoto.¹⁶⁰ As both of these illustrations appear again at later parts of Satonaka's *Kojiki*, one could (reductively) argue this is a resourceful reuse of assets that

¹⁶⁰Fujimoto and Thorn, "Takahashi Macoto: The Origin of Shōjo Manga Style," 25.

Satonaka simply thought would look well together. However, there are other similar character portraits—primarily those of male characters—that go unused. The rightmost illustration of the previously discussed Amaterasu appears mature and composed, and it later appears again on the title page for the *Ama-no-Iwayado* chapter discussed in chapter two. This positioning is also congruent to her narrative positioning, as her character arc begins in the second chapter and flows into the *Tenson Kōrin* chapter listed first on the next page.

Flanking Amaterasu to her left is Konohana-no-Sakuya-hime (here on referred to as Konohana), whose narrative, contrary to Amaterasu's, remains largely confined to the 18-page chapter from which she emerges. While the two figures sport similarly designed robes and sleek, inked black hair, that is about where the similarities end. Amaterasu's face is angled, poised hands covered as her gaze is downturned; Konohana's sparkling eyes, on the other hand, look straight at the reader, intricately detailed flowers in hair and in hand. One would think that a figure as unabashedly "strong" in Satonaka's eyes as Amaterasu would confront the reader face on, but in fact it is Konohana who looks at us straight on and remains unabashedly feminine. These character portraits and their respective designs speak to the character arcs of these female deities. Amaterasu gains a sense of maturity and poise through the course of her character arc, becoming secure in her strength, and, thus, does not need to face the reader head on. It could also reference how Amaterasu is looking down from the heavens to watch the deities on earth. By placing Amaterasu parallel to Konohana, neither is valorized over the other, and it implies a sense of equality that speaks to how both deities' respective femininities can coexist. But how does Konohana's portrait relate to her broader characterization?

Konohana's character portrait makes a reappearance at the beginning of her chapter, though this time, it is supplemented by an additional character behind her. However, this figure

does not face the reader at all, and we are only able to infer their characterization off of their clothing and hair. The kanji in the chapter title “Konohana-no-Sakuya-hime and Iwanaga-hime” gives a glimpse into who these characters might be: though Konohana is not introduced to us by name yet, one could infer that she is represented by the figure on the left holding the flowers, as the kanji in her name uses the character 花 (flower). Thus, it is possible to deduce that the other figure is Iwanaga-hime. Although we are not able to see her from the front yet, one could infer that the visual detail given to it would be even more conventionally appealing than that of Konohana’s, as the back-facing figure wears a more intricately designed robe with patterned sleeves and an additional patterned sash.



Figure 3.4. Konohana no Sakuya Hime and Iwanaga Hime. p. 181.

In the original sequence of the events in the *Kojiki*, Amaterasu's grandson Ninigi is completely enraptured by Konohana when they first meet, wishing to marry her on the spot. She tells him it is up to her father to decide, so Ninigi sends a messenger to ask for his blessing. Her father agrees and is so excited that he sends “hundreds of tables piled high with wedding gifts,” including Iwanaga-hime. However, she is “so hideous that the sight of her horrifie[s]” Ninigi, and he sends her back.¹⁶¹ This scene plays out mostly the same in Satonaka's rendition, though

¹⁶¹Heldt, *Kojiki*, 52.

instead of Iwanaga simply appearing like in the original text, it is Konohana who introduces Ninigi to her older sister. Iwanaga-hime bows to him, but when her appearance is revealed, Ninigi is stunned into silence.



Figure 3.5. Ninigi Meets Iwanaga-hime, Volume one, p. 185.

This reveal is intended for comedic effect, subverting any potential “expectations” about Iwanaga-hime’s appearance one could glean from her back profile on the title page. The reveal

leaves Ninigi's mouth hanging open, the dark shadow cast over the background and screen tone on his face illustrating the shock he feels that jolts him out of the earlier excitement he felt about marrying Konohana. Konohana is blissfully unaware of how Ninigi perceives her sister's ugliness, remaining as enthusiastic and sparkly-eyed as she did when she first met Ninigi. It is worthwhile to mention that Konohana and Iwanaga-hime's interactions or relationship is not elaborated on at all in the original source of the *Kojiki*, and Ninigi simply sends Iwanaga-hime away and spends the night with Konohana without Konohana or Ninigi bringing her up again. Instead, the night the two spend together is described by a single sentence.¹⁶² In Satonaka's rendition, the night Ninigi spends with Konohana takes up two pages, and Konohana asks Ninigi about her sister's whereabouts twice before he tells Konohana he sent her away. Konohana grows tearful at this revelation, clearly upset by Ninigi's blatant dismissal of her sister's feelings.¹⁶³

The consequences of Ninigi's refusal appear on the following page, when he is confronted by Konohana's and Iwanaga-hime's father Ōyama-tsumi. It is worth noting that, in the original text of the *Kojiki*, Ōyama-tsumi sends a messenger to call Ninigi out on his transgression, but, in Satonaka's rendition, he instead confronts him himself.

¹⁶²Ibid, 52.

¹⁶³Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 186–187.



Figure 3.6. Ōyama-tsumi confronts Ninigi, Volume one, p. 188.

In this scene, Ōyama-tsumi reveals that, if Ninigi was to accept Iwanaga-hime as his wife, his children would be given “eternal life like a rock;” thus, by refusing her, he has refused the gift of eternal life. Consequently, since he has taken only Konohana as his wife, their childrens’ lives will instead become fleeting like flower petals. This story serves as an explanation in the *Kojiki* for why “ever since that time, the royal life spans of heaven’s sovereigns have not been long in length.”¹⁶⁴ The two sisters are illustrated behind their father as he chews Ninigi out, their illustrations paralleling one another as their matching side profiles face away from each other. While Konohana’s flowers take up a significant portion of the panel, Iwanaga’s rocks remain steadfast in their corner as well, presumably also partially covered by her father’s protruding speech bubble. Perhaps Konohana’s flowers constitute an example of feminine excess, but they remain unapologetically feminine and do not encroach on Iwanaga’s illustration. Aside from their background designs, the two sisters are depicted in the same manner, the relative “attractiveness” of their facial features irrelevant to the issue at hand. In fact, Ninigi judging Iwanaga on her appearance is what kicked this dispute off in the first place, with Ōyama-tsumi exclaiming that this rash decision of judging Iwanaga “only by a glance” was him effectively “rejecting ‘eternal life.’”¹⁶⁵

By playing Iwanaga’s looks for laughs, Satonaka appears to be capitulating to sexist standards of attractiveness and beauty. We are supposed to relate to Ninigi’s shock and find it humorous, and the art and narrative give spatial preference to Konohana’s perceived beauty. However, the rash judgment of Ninigi to effectively judge a book by its cover creates serious consequence, and Satonaka works within the pre-existing narrative to build a relationship between Konohana, Iwanaga, and their father Ōyama-tsumi, which we get glimpses of through

¹⁶⁴Heldt, *Kojiki*, 53.

¹⁶⁵Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 188.

the dialogue and visual framing of the narrative. Satonaka could have easily left Iwanaga's narrative alone after she is sent away, but she appears even when not present, and her sister and father are both shown to deeply care for her. Thus, Satonaka's depiction simultaneously reinforces the "ugly" trope of Iwanaga's character while also subverting it by rewriting the scene to be longer and giving her more agency than the actual narrative.

Conclusion: Heavenly Boulders and Rock Princesses

Satonaka is surely caught between many different appropriations and tensions in her illustration of the *Kojiki*. She actively chooses to avoid a strictly creative take on its adaptation, for that would sacrifice her historical proclivities. Such is evidenced by the intricately detailed maps Satonaka creates for the real-world locations of the *Kojiki*'s events and the intricate familial lineages she maps out at the end of both volumes.¹⁶⁶ At the same time, however, she intentionally prefaces her interpretation by stipulating that she is not remaining tethered to scholarly interpretation.¹⁶⁷ One could argue that this is done to hedge any criticism into the changes she makes from the source text in her interpretation, as they could easily be written off as "literary" choices. But it is interesting that Satonaka uses the Japanese word for "story" (物語) rather than as a "manga," as "story" does not designate which medium the interpretation will take place in. How does this concept of a "story" apply to Satonaka's renarration of gendered tropes, both explicitly and implicitly narrated?

Satonaka is evidently captivated by classical tales such as the *Kojiki*, as she appreciates the strength and agency women exhibit within their narratives. As she succinctly describes her view of gender relations in the *Kojiki* in an interview, "The *Kojiki* deals with women's true

¹⁶⁶Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume Two*, 276–280; Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 268–270, 273–280.

¹⁶⁷Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 8.

strengths and men's true weaknesses."¹⁶⁸ The scene focused on in this chapter aligns with this appraisal, as it is Ninigi's superficiality that costs him the eternal life Iwanaga possesses. Thus, women's strength in the *Kojiki* is not tethered to perceptions based on physical appearance, and appearance can even subvert the expectations a reader may put onto a specific character.

The resulting intervention appears to be reparative within the context of broader gender relations in Japanese history, as it aims to heighten the "true strengths" of women that go largely overlooked. This is particularly relevant when considering how the Sengoku and Bakumatsu period-focused media popular during Satonaka's childhood was largely created with male audiences in mind.¹⁶⁹ Thus, her interpretation of the earlier-written *Kojiki* narrative squarely focuses on the feminine strength of its characters, representing a diverse spectrum of femininity. Beauty, also, does not always correlate to value or agency. It is true that Satonaka tends to gravitate towards conventionally "attractive portrayals," but one could interpret this as being partly in response to the backlash she has received from illustrating unattractive females.¹⁷⁰ Either way, she must delicately balance between making Iwanaga fit her narrative description and purpose while avoiding an over exaggeration of her "unattractiveness." There will always be potential aspects of these portrayals that may not fully resonate with audiences, but the fact that Satonaka pays extra attention to this scene and gives it more attention than it gets in the original source text demonstrates how Satonaka aims to challenge us on our pre-expectations of the narrative and our expectations of "attractiveness" established thus far.

Satonaka uses her intricate and expressive illustrative style to exhibit a wide spectrum of femininities while remaining faithful to the *Kojiki*'s source text. Her capitalization on women's

¹⁶⁸Yamamoto Kenshou. "The Beauty of the Man'yōshū."

¹⁶⁹Fujimoto, "Is It True that Women Don't Like Studying History from Shojo Manga?" 82; Kuramoto and Satonaka, *The Shape of "Japan,"* 18.

¹⁷⁰Satonaka, "The Common Language Called 'Manga,'" 104.

strength is further solidified in the illustrations on the Table of Contents in Volume Two, where, once again, two female characters from the narrative are positioned parallel to each other on either page.

下 卷 (しもむまき)		中 卷 (なかつまき)	
その拾貳 (十二)	倭建命の帰還	その肆 (四)	三輪山の大神主神
141		その伍 (五)	沙本毘売
その拾參 (十三)	息長帯比売	その陸 (六)	本牟智和氣御子
163		その漆 (七)	小碓命
その拾肆 (十四)	大雀命	その捌 (八)	出雲建
189		その玖 (九)	倭建命
		その拾 (十)	草薙劍
		その拾壹 (十一)	弟橘比売
			9
			21
			43
			63
			87
			95
			107
			129
その參 (三)	歴史への道		
235			
その貳 (二)	皇位継承		
217			
その壹 (一)	皇后石之日売		
276			
歴代天皇系図			
279			
地 図			
281			
古事記あれこれ	阿刀田高		
286			
参考文献			

Figure 3.7. Table of Contents, Volume Two, pp. 4–5.

Numerous male characters make their debut in the *Kojiki*, arguably receiving more fleshed out character arcs than these female characters. For example, the above Volume two illustration features Oto-tachibana-hime (right) and Empress Jinmu (left), who each have character arcs largely confined to their respective singular chapters. Again, dualistic femininities are at play. Oto-tachibana-hime looks down, the fabric of her robe tapering into a subtle inward curve, whereas Empress Jinmu stands straight and angular in her warrior-style clothes, her bow creating a protruding arc. Additionally, both women are included over O-Utsu/Yamato Takeru,

who arguably holds a more “central” place in the overarching narrative, or any other emergent male characters.¹⁷¹

In the Volume One example introduced at the beginning, Konohana is chosen for the spread over Ninigi despite him receiving more attention in the narrative. This could simply be done to appeal to the audiences with their eye-catching designs, but the male characters are illustrated on their respective chapter title pages in the same way as the female characters, so the decision to highlight only women on the table of contents has to be political to some degree. Thus, while it may appear in this instance (and more broadly in Satonaka’s work) that these creative liberties are taken to appeal to Satonaka’s personal tastes, that does not mean these proclivities cannot have broader political motivations or effects. If anything, in Satonaka’s case, that can make them even more political, as it rejects the mainstream or masculinized “scholarly” interpretation or even the most “logical” choice following the narrative to allow us to visualize the *Kojiki* how she wishes for us to see it.

¹⁷¹Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume Two*, 4–5.

Conclusion: Manga, Histories, and Manga Histories

“I want to offer this advice to everyone determined to become a manga artist: You don’t need to draw well. Set your sights on expressing yourself in a way that empathizes with your characters. I want you to face the future without forgetting your willingness to take on challenges, because you can’t tell the author’s background from a manga, and manga is something you can create no matter your age.”¹⁷²

—Satonaka Machiko, *We are Now United by the Common Language Called “Manga.”*

This quote speaks to the transformative nature of manga, something which Satonaka evidently finds appealing about the medium. That it comes at the end of her piece surveying Japanese manga is evocative of how she wishes the reader to come away from her work—inspired and ready to create. Nonetheless, this quote is undoubtedly shaped by her identity as an older female manga artist, one who rose to fame in her childhood and has persisted in the field of manga ever since. There is something about the notion of a challenge that is attractive to her; Satonaka spent over 30 years telling Empress Jito’s story in *Tenjō no Niji*, and has painstakingly mapped real-world locations of the *Kojiki*’s events in her adaptation. Thus, while this quote appears to be an encouragement for the reader to follow in her footsteps and take on similar challenges of their own accord, after looking through the wider lens of Satonaka’s career, I propose that this quote is instead referring to herself. By highlighting tensions between manga’s perceived aesthetic value and the identity of its author, this quote serves as an allegory for the entirety of her intervention with the *Kojiki*.

¹⁷²Satonaka, “The Common Language Called ‘Manga,’” 110.

On one hand, this advice Satonaka gives is akin to a feminist approach to manga, as it aims to weaken barriers to creating. Satonaka remains a trailblazer in shojo manga: Keiko Kawamata explains that “Yasuko Aoike, in the same generation as Satonaka, commented that Satonaka is probably the first female manga author who established her own studio in order to streamline the manga producing system and to realize mass production.”¹⁷³ Thus, her empowering of readers to pursue manga of their own accord, regardless of age and background, can be quite radical given the landscape of manga creation Satonaka dealt with. At the same time, however, the quote makes no mention of any structural barriers to creating manga prospective authors may deal with, simply making mention of ambiguous “challenges” that the reader must “take on” without explaining why. This is most likely left in vague terms to allow the reader to project their own experiences onto it. However, given the quote’s fixation on age and broader considerations of Satonaka’s stakes as a manga author, it is likely this quote also addresses how Satonaka herself views her intervention in manga as well.

Additionally, Satonaka’s encouraging words do not preclude her from capitulating to the sexist notions she wishes to break free from. Satonaka is not oblivious to the fact that her narration of the *Kojiki* may draw criticism, and she incorporates her commentary on anticipated pushback in the afterword sections of the text. Satonaka is not afraid to acknowledge what her critics have to say. On one hand, these sequences demonstrate how Satonaka is cognizant of the potential criticism her stylistic and narrative choices may draw, and consequently they can function as a space for her to cover all her bases. Additionally, Satonaka does not always rebuke the claims of her dissenters, sometimes even agreeing with them, as in the example of the theory that the Ama-no-Iwayado scene explains solar eclipses in Chapter two.¹⁷⁴ At the same time,

¹⁷³Kawamata, Keiko. “Analysis of the new product development process,” 12.

¹⁷⁴Satonaka, *Kojiki Volume One*, 60.

however, Satonaka dismisses these criticisms on her own terms. Whether it be from one or more male scholars or a nagging female assistant, Satonaka does not ignore these potential criticisms. She does sometimes play them out as a joke, quite literally depicting them as “background noise” to her overall discussion. Thus, there is acknowledgment of them, but the degree to which Satonaka takes their claims seriously is ultimately decided by her.

Satonaka’s depiction of the *Kojiki* aims to renarrate ancient myth through shojo manga; by virtue of this alone, it concerns not only both of these ends but also everything in between. It is nearly impossible to account for the entire nexus of cultural history Satonaka’s *Kojiki* is woven into, and that will only continue to expand as the *Kojiki* grows older and its reinterpretations grow more abundant. I hope this thesis has made clear that, as Satonaka’s stakes as a mangaka adapting the *Kojiki* can bring forth numerous contradictions in her work, an interdisciplinary approach informed by considerations of the overlaps between artistic and cultural histories is critical for developing a nuanced understanding of her intervention. Simply focusing on her role in a longer legacy of shojo manga or a legacy of *Kojiki* cultural history would ignore how her stakes as a mangaka and historian inform her craft, let alone would it allow us to consider how Satonaka’s adaptation sits in the larger nexus of cultural history.

The approach I have implemented in this thesis has aimed to subvert this primarily by taking extensive considerations of how Satonaka articulates her stakes as a mangaka both on and off the page. From this consideration, I have found this methodology to be helpful in understanding the full breadth of Satonaka’s media mix, but also to understand how mangaka and artists at large sit at the crossroads of multiple histories that overlap and intersect. Though I have structured my arguments into three sections based on shojo manga history, *Kojiki* cultural history, and the synthesis of the two through close reading methodology, it is also evident that

they cannot be neatly contained into finite disciplines, with key interdisciplinary considerations flowing into each approach, no matter the angle.

Additionally, while Satonaka's *Kojiki* and historical manga at large may open up a Pandora's box of historical lenses, non-historical works should not be precluded from receiving similar treatments. Satonaka loves history and aims to remain faithful to her sources in her work, but she sometimes incorporates her own personal proclivities in her aesthetics as well. Manga does not exist in a vacuum, and analyzing where their creators are adopting their artistic and literary styles from can aid in painting a fuller picture of their intervention. Satonaka's *Kojiki* makes its inspiration clear by virtue of its name, but to say that her adaptation interacts only with the source text would be too reductive. Not only does it interact with the *Kojiki*'s cultural history but its earlier visual depictions as well. I visualize a similar approach of contextualization being beneficial to the analysis of other genres of manga, as considering the mangaka's individual stakes and influences can open avenues for discussing how they sustain or interrupt larger realms of manga's cultural history.

Satonaka's adaptation is rich in content, stated through dialogue explicitly and iterated implicitly through subtext and visual imagery. At the same time, it is true that it is impossible to divorce her adaptation from the *Kojiki*'s nationalist, continually reappropriated and repoliticized past and present. Satonaka, by extension, is rendered a complicated figure in this intervention. However, just because she is engaging with this fraught cultural history does not negate the scholarly value and discursive potential of her work. Satonaka positions her intervention as radical compared to the media she had growing up, and it would be unjust to ignore this in the broader scheme of her intervention. Moreover, Toku explains how her work has gone on to inspire mangaka including Ichijo Yukari, so one cannot overlook the value of Satonaka's

emergence as a groundbreaking female mangaka and her intervention's impact on the medium as a whole.¹⁷⁵ Her disruption in anglocentric views of what is considered "historical" also offers a radical opposition to preconceived notions of *who* "gets" to do history and *how* they "get" to do it. That this disruption is being packaged for young female audiences who may be striving to find their place in the world cannot be taken for granted, and its popularity speaks to how impactful such an intervention can be.

Thus, hearkening back to the quote at the beginning of this section, it is clear that while Satonaka is referring to her past experiences in her statement, one cannot ignore the fact that it has been published in English with the intent for it to be read by audiences familiar and unfamiliar with Satonaka's work alike. When I first read that quote, I came away feeling inspired and compelled to create; however, after conducting further analysis into Satonaka's stakes as an author, I became more skeptical of the meaning of her words. However, just like the contradictions in Satonaka's work, I now look at the quote and realize both feelings can exist together at the same time. Satonaka, like the characters in the works she creates, is human, neither perfect nor solely defined by her contradictions. And it is this duality that makes her work more than worthy of direct focus in English scholarly discussion and makes her intervention all the more thought-provoking and compelling.

¹⁷⁵Toku, Masami. "Profile and Interview with Yukari Ichijo." In *International Perspectives on Shojo and Shojo Manga*, Routledge, 2015. 182.

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