

Revisiting Tsuda Sōkichi in Postwar Japan: “Misunderstandings” and the Historical Facts of the *Kiki*

ISSE Yōko

In his later years, Tsuda Sōkichi (1873–1961) confronted his readers’ “misunderstanding” of his work on the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* (the *Kiki*), which had concerned him since before the war. After the war, his *Kiki* studies were newly recognized as “historical science.” Tsuda denounced the postwar appropriation and misinterpretation of his work, as he became renowned as a “denier of historical facts and of the earliest emperors.” This was far from what he intended, however. He was always reluctant to deal head-on with the issue of the historical existence of the early emperors. Postwar scholars formed a collective perception of Tsuda as a “denier,” and overlooked his important remark regarding the notion of “historical facts.” He loathed the postwar tendency to label him a Marxist, and he criticized new interpretations of the *Kiki*. Postwar scholars relied upon the “imagined Tsuda” and upon archaeological discoveries too to reconstruct a new national history minus its imperial tradition. Postwar scholars, who regarded Tsuda as a Marxist, were taken aback by his declaration of “love” for the imperial family, and struggled to understand his work in its entirety. As a result, they were guilty of oversimplifying his achievements.

Keywords: *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, historical science, interpretive community, banned books, academic freedom, postwar historiography, Marxist history, philological studies, historical imagination, imperial family

Introduction

Tsuda Sōkichi’s 津田左右吉 (1873–1961) research into the *Kojiki* 古事記 and the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (the *Kiki* 記紀) has been referred to as a “historiography of denial” (*hitei no shigaku* 否定の史学).¹ In 1947, Izu Kimio 伊豆公夫 (1907–1989), a founding member of Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai 歴史学研究会 (Rekiken 歴研), noted that “Tsuda’s historical accounts were like peeling a pickled scallion,” by which Izu meant that Tsuda had set out to obliterate

* This paper is based on the author’s PhD dissertation (Isse 2007a). The author would like to thank the two anonymous referees for their comments.

1 Kawamura 1987, p. 270. According to Kawamura, Tsuda frequently used the Japanese negative form *nai* ない in a hasty attempt to deny the myths of the *Kiki*.

the historical facts of the *Kiki* through close examination.² Since then, many scholars have claimed that Tsuda failed to acknowledge the historicity of the *Kiki*. The criticism is still made to this day.³ However, in a short essay titled “Watakushi no *Kiki* no kenkyū no shushi” わたくしの記紀の研究の主旨, published in 1958, Tsuda insisted that his previous books on the *Kiki* had been “misunderstood” by many of his readers.

In this essay, I set out to reflect on the reception of Tsuda’s work on the *Kiki* in postwar Japan.⁴ First, I focus on how his theory was “misunderstood” or appropriated by other scholars. Previous studies have illustrated that the problems of readers’ interpretations of his books lie within postwar historiography.⁵ In recent years, his works have begun to receive international recognition. Joel Joos, for example, discusses the “imagined Tsuda” and his active stance as an “old liberal” intellectual in postwar Japan, insisting that the presuppositions and perceptions of his readers shaped the reception of his work after the war.⁶ The questions I address here are why and how Tsuda became renowned as the “denier of historical facts,” when this was far from what he intended.

Second, I discuss the historical interpretation that Tsuda inspired. Although Tsuda was charged with *lèse-majesté* during the war, he earned the admiration of many postwar historians and greatly influenced the thought of Marxist and left-wing nationalists.⁷ I consider how postwar historians—Tsuda’s “interpretive community” in Stanley Fish’s terms—imagined Tsuda, and collectively constructed the past based on public memory.⁸ By discussing how Tsuda’s “interpretive community” shaped his postwar image, I revisit a critical moment when a national history free of its imperial tradition was desired.

Finally, I investigate the cause of what Tsuda termed the “misunderstandings” of his work in postwar Japan. Tsuda’s readers often cited him as an intellectual who agreed with Marxists. After Japan was defeated in World War II, postwar Marxists sought to demystify the imperial institutions and reinterpreted the *Kiki* using a Marxist perspective and Tsuda’s accounts, focusing on class conflict. However, Tsuda had opposed Marxist history since before the war. Moreover, Tsuda’s work was also influential among archaeology-oriented postwar historians. Incorrect perceptions of his work on the *Kiki* and trends in archaeology forced Tsuda to explain his prewar publications.

2 Izu 1947, p. 129. On *Rekiken*, see Gayle 2003, pp. 22–23, and 166. The Tokyo Imperial University students’ circle named *Kōgokai* 庚午会 later became the Historical Science Society of Japan in 1932. See *Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai* 2012 for details.

3 Hagino 2005.

4 Imai Osamu 今井修 makes a list of Japanese scholars’ references to Tsuda’s work in postwar Japan. See Imai 1988 and find more in *Dainiji Tsuda Sōkichi zenshū geppō* 第二次津田左右吉全集月報.

5 Hayakawa 2005, pp. 137–38; Ueda 1974, p. 187, 189–90, 212–16. Hayakawa suggests that Tsuda’s books on the *Kiki* were frequently referenced and utilized without due regard to his intention.

6 Joos 2008, p. 38.

7 Gayle 2003, pp. 85–105. Curtis Anderson Gayle focuses on postwar Japanese nationalists such as Ishimoda Shō 石母田正 (1912–1986) and Tōma Seita 藤間生大 (1913–2018), who were members of *Rekiken* and *Minshushugi Kagakusha Kyōkai* 民主主義科学者協会 (Democratic Scientists Association) though he did not mention Tsuda, who greatly influenced the development of their thought. Gayle refers to them as the “*minzoku* faction,” which consisted of Ishimoda, Tōma, and Matsumoto Shinpachirō 松本新八郎 (1913–2005). While these men treated his books with respect, Tsuda turned down a request to be the president of *Rekiken*.

8 Fish 1980, p. 14. Fish argued that interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies for writing texts or constituting their properties.

1. Misunderstandings

Tsuda ended his article “Kenkoku no jijō to bansei ikkei no shisō” 建国の事情と万世一系の思想 (1946) with a declaration of his “love” for the imperial family. His views on the imperial institution stirred controversy everywhere.⁹ In November 1948, he published a book titled *Nihonjin no shisōteki taido* ニホン人の思想的態度, in which he touched upon the Comintern theses of 1932, and criticized left-wing intellectuals’ “distortion” of history as a class struggle, which situated the imperial family as an enemy of the Japanese people and the emperor as a despotic ruler. In Tsuda’s view, “such scholars of the left are equivalent to right-wing wartime intellectuals” in that “they ignore the historical facts and regarded the imperial family as despotic and powerful.”¹⁰ Such, in brief, was Tsuda’s position on the imperial institution.

This book deserves attention since it delivered a stinging rebuke to Marxists such as Tōyama Shigeki 遠山茂樹 (1914–2011) in the late 1940s.¹¹ Postwar intellectuals who called for the emperor’s abdication regarded this and other writings by Tsuda as uncomfortable commentaries on current affairs. However, they still saw Tsuda as an outstanding scholar because of his prewar publications. Indeed, Tōyama showered praise on Tsuda’s *Bungaku ni arawaretaru waga kokumin shisō no kenkyū* 文学に現はれたる我が国民思想の研究 (1916–1918) for its “historical science,” even as he expressed his disappointment with Tsuda.¹² In 1951, Tsuda confirmed his opposition to postwar Marxist historians and questioned what they called “historical science.”¹³ Interestingly, many postwar historians drew on Tsuda’s work to achieve their goal of developing “historical science,” despite their awareness that Tsuda supported the imperial institution.¹⁴

Of all his many prewar publications, Tsuda’s critical analysis of the *Kiki* was most highly regarded for its “historical science.”¹⁵ For example, the renowned historian Ienaga Saburō 家永三郎 (1913–2002), the author of a national history book titled *Kuni no ayumi* くにのあゆみ in 1946, noted that Tsuda’s denial of the early emperors’ historical existence was an epoch-making achievement that elevated Japanese historiography to a new height of “historical science.”¹⁶

Tsuda’s intention in writing books on the *Kiki*, however, was entirely at odds with Ienaga’s interpretation. In his essay “Watakushi no *Kiki* no kenkyū no shushi” (1958), Tsuda

9 See Tsuda 1946, p. 54; Yoshino 1946. He expressed his love for the imperial family not only in the article but also in his postwar speeches at universities; for example, he referred to nothing but the imperial family during his talk about Japan’s future. Also see Tsuda 1965a.

10 See Tsuda 1948a, pp. 170–74. According to Tsuda, the responsibility for the war lay with the Japanese military authorities, not Emperor Shōwa. Tsuda published his book *Nihonjin no shisōteki taido* after the end of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East on 20 November 1948.

11 Hirota 2006, pp. 11–12. Tōyama’s book *Shōwa shi* 昭和史, an account of modern history through the lens of class struggle, was harshly criticized in 1955.

12 Tōyama 1948. Many others called Tsuda “the greatest historical scientist.” See Isse 2005.

13 Tsuda 1951, pp. 10–12.

14 Gayle 2003, p. 41.

15 Tsuda’s early publications were already well known among Marxists scholars. Since he covered a broad range of topics, he was also well-regarded among those who majored in different areas of ancient Japanese history. For example, one of Tsuda’s students at Waseda University, Matsushima Eiichi 松島栄一 (1917–2002), who saw himself as a Marxist, admired Tsuda for his radical and critical attitude. Matsushima, a historian who explored Tokugawa Japan, affirmed that the ultimate purpose of Tsuda’s study was to analyze the Meiji Restoration. See Matsushima 1950, pp. 46–47.

16 Ienaga 1972, pp. 250, 404; Brownlee 1997, p. 198.

explained that he was concerned with four issues: (1) the character of the tales of the *Kiki* in light of their lack of authenticity; (2) the nature of the materials used by the authors of the *Kiki*; (3) the authors' identities and the timing of their composition of the tales; and (4) the substance of continuity and change in the tradition of the *Kiki*.

Tsuda's own position on these several issues was as follows: (1) *jindaishi* 神代史, the history of the Age of Gods that occupies the first half of the *Kiki*, was created for the political purpose of explaining the origins of the imperial family; (2) the *Kiki* authors employed a combination of fanciful tales, popular ideas about the imperial family, religious and ceremonial accounts, and Chinese thought and folktales; (3) the earliest authors were intellectuals who enjoyed some rank and position in the Yamato court during the mid–sixth century; and (4) many sections of the *Kiki* were altered by authors who rewrote the narratives from the mid sixth through the early eighth centuries.

In “Watakushi no *Kiki* no kenkyū no shushi,” Tsuda also voiced his criticism of postwar historians and intellectuals for misinterpreting his intentions. Their misunderstanding was that Tsuda portrayed every story of the *Kiki* as a myth or fabrication. He tried to explain that his denial of factuality was, in fact, a technique for revealing the truth, namely that the myths were expressions of devotion for the imperial family narrated by ancient aristocrats from the earliest period of recorded history. Tsuda repeatedly affirmed the importance of these myths as invaluable historical sources that reflected ancient political beliefs, and insisted he was more concerned with revealing the truth than denying the facts.¹⁷

In 1972, Ienaga published a book titled *Tsuda Sōkichi no shisōshiteki kenkyū* 津田左右吉の思想史的研究, in which he demonstrated a dedication and commitment to understanding Tsuda's work, even as he placed great value in Marxist history.¹⁸ Ienaga rated Tsuda's prewar study, *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no kenkyū* 古事記及日本書紀の研究 (1924) highly, but attached less importance to the revised postwar edition, *Nihon koten no kenkyū, jō* 日本古典の研究 上 (1948). However, in the opinion of the present author, neither edition was “scientific” or rational because Tsuda was careless in his use of the term *rekishiteki jijitsu* 歴史的事実, or “historical facts.”¹⁹ The following excerpt from Tsuda's conclusion to both editions reveals his lack of coherence regarding the notion of “historical facts”:

I cannot acknowledge the tales and accounts of the *Kiki* as a part of history that describes historical facts (*rekishiteki jijitsu*), but the spirit and the thought that appear in them should be recognized as uncompromising historical facts (*rekishiteki jijitsu*) of the eras when those tales were created.... The *Kiki* are invaluable sacred texts, and their value is not harmed by the fact that their narratives do not contain historical facts about the progress of affairs.²⁰

According to Inoue Mitsusada 井上光貞, postwar (and later) historiography did not pay sufficient attention to the sentences cited above.²¹ In other words, many historians

17 Tsuda 1958, pp. 1–4.

18 Kimura 1973, p. 37.

19 Umehara 1981, p. 27.

20 Tsuda 1924a, p. 503. Also see the revised edition, Tsuda 1948b, p. 315.

21 Inoue 1972, pp. 263–64.

appreciated Tsuda's denial of the *Kiki* and ignored his favorable comments on the *Kiki* as "sacred texts." Moreover, it is noteworthy that Tsuda used the term *rekishiteki jijitsu* with both positive and negative connotations. He rejected the idea that the tales of the *Kiki* could be recognized as objective historical facts, and yet he acknowledged those imaginary tales as history in the positive sense of reflecting ancient thought, political ideology, and the zeitgeist.

In 2001, Ienaga reflected on the consequences of writing his 1946 book, *Kuni no ayumi*, and, as an archaeology-oriented scholar, declared his own "scientific" standpoint, explaining that Tsuda's work had inspired him to eliminate all the stories that could not be regarded as objective facts, such as the episodes from the Age of Gods, other accounts of Japanese deities, and the mythical legends of the early emperors.²² Certainly, Tsuda himself had never intended to "eliminate" these tales. Indeed, he placed more emphasis on uncovering the ideas and beliefs behind them than on ascertaining the degree of their historical veracity.²³ Ienaga ignored Tsuda's ambivalent use of the phrase "historical facts," choosing rather to admire his critical stance, acknowledging the significance of his repudiation of literal historicity regarding the first half of the *Kiki*.²⁴ Moreover, Ienaga was obsessed with the issue of the emperors' existence, and believed that the lack of original records signified an absence of both historical facts and historical persons. Tsuda, however, made a clear distinction between historical records on the one hand and historical facts on the other.²⁵ Ienaga used Tsuda to break away from prewar nationalist orthodoxy and ideology, and appears to have projected his purposes onto Tsuda.²⁶ Regardless of Tsuda's declared intention to analyze the changes in the tales over time, Ienaga regarded his work as a shattering of the imperial tradition.

2. Tsuda's Interpretive Community and Historical Imagination

Ienaga was not the only admirer of Tsuda's critical thinking and repudiation of literal historicity. Indeed, Ienaga was a member of what we might call—using Stanley Fish's term—Tsuda's "interpretive community." Repudiation of the "facts" of the *Kiki* was not allowed during the prewar period, but postwar scholars were at liberty to interpret the *Kiki* as they wished, and it was in this context that Tsuda's work became accepted as orthodox. The scholarly world collectively formed a consensus regarding Tsuda's work at a time when a new national history was urgently needed: namely, that his work was a "historiography of denial" (*hitei no shigaku*). Relying on Tsuda's critical analysis, scholars came to agree that the mythical accounts included in the first half of the *Kiki* were of no value to postwar Japan.

As is well known, in 1965, Ienaga filed lawsuits against the government, seeking compensation for persecution on account of the government's screening of his history textbook, *Shin Nihonshi* 新日本史. The records of Ienaga's trial highlight the existence of a notable interpretive community centered on Tsuda's books. The postwar historian Naoki Kōjirō 直木孝次郎 (1919–2019), who consented to serve as a witness during Ienaga's trial in

22 Ienaga 2001, pp. 58, 69. Ienaga asked for Tsuda's advice on writing his own history textbook. However, he did not mention there Tsuda's authorized textbook written in the Meiji period. See Tsuda 1965b.

23 Tam 1983, p. 169.

24 Ienaga 1972, p. 280.

25 Tsuda 1946, p. 29.

26 Imai 1988, p. 12.

1968, provided the following answer to a question in court about the theory of the existence of Emperor Jinmu 神武:

Of course there are, based on a thesis predating Dr. Tsuda's, scholars who still insist on the historical existence of Emperor Jinmu, but this idea is not confirmed to be a scientific fact.... I know of contemporary scholars who are likely to take the same view as Dr. Tsuda.²⁷

Naoki specifically mentioned several scholars affiliated with universities in the Kansai district: Ueda Masaaki 上田正昭 (1927–2016), Kishi Toshio 岸俊男 (1920–1987), Inoue Kaoru 井上薫 (1917–2009), Kitayama Shigeo 北山茂夫 (1909–1984), Yokota Ken'ichi 横田健一 (1916–2012), and Kadowaki Teiji 門脇禎二 (1925–2007), among others. This postwar consensus clearly demonstrates that many historians shared with Naoki an image of Tsuda as an outstanding historian who denied not only the authenticity of the *Kiki* but also the existence of the early emperors. These scholars (including Naoki and Ienaga) did not profess themselves to be Marxists, but they were more or less Marxist-informed.

The origin of this interpretive community dates back to 1940, when the government imposed a ban on four of Tsuda's books: *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no kenkyū* (1924), *Jindaishi no kenkyū* 神代史の研究 (1924), *Nihon jōdaishi kenkyū* 日本上代史研究 (1930), and *Jōdai Nihon no shakai oyobi shisō* 上代日本の社会及び思想 (1933). Facing a severe backlash from his readers, Tsuda was forced to resign from Waseda University. On 8 March 1940, Tsuda was indicted on charges of violating publishing law. He stood before the Tokyo Municipal Court as a criminal "for having declared that the chapters of the *Kiki* from Emperor Jinmu to Chūai 仲哀 were completely fictitious stories."²⁸ It was a closed-door trial, with only a few spectators admitted. The judges were sympathetic to Tsuda from the beginning of the trial. Although today we regard the trial as an infringement on academic freedom, it is notable that Tsuda never considered himself a victim.²⁹

As for his research on the *Kiki*, Tsuda first published *Jindaishi no atarashii kenkyū* 神代史の新しい研究 in 1913, then issued enlarged editions, namely *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no shinkenkyū* 古事記及び日本書紀の新研究 (1919), *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no kenkyū* (1924), and *Jindaishi no kenkyū* (1924). After deep deliberation, his writing style became increasingly complicated and his standpoint correspondingly less clear. Tsuda's students at Waseda University recognized that examining the historical reality of the early emperors was not the purpose of his research in the banned books.³⁰ Moreover, in Tsuda's view, refuting the tales' authenticity did not amount to repudiating the existence of the emperors. Tsuda duly appeared in court every week, most frequently from November to December 1941, and calmly repeated that he had not denied the existence of the emperors from Jinmu

27 "Naoki Kōjirō shōgen" in *Kyōkasho Kentei Soshō o Shien Suru Zenkoku Renrakukai* 1969, p. 353.

28 Kakegawa 1976.

29 Sakisaka 1952, pp. 63–78.

30 According to Tsuda's student Kurita Naomi 栗田直躬, who was admitted as one of a few spectators during the trial, Tsuda did not set out to critique the existence of the emperors in his banned books. See Kurita 1976, p. 2. Tsuda's disciple Kimura Tokio 木村時夫 also pointed out that Tsuda's prewar work did not constitute a strong denial of the existence of the early emperors. See Kimura 1973, pp. 38–39.

to Chūai.³¹ Tsuda's statements during the trial clarify that he neither questioned nor denied the existence of the early emperors, nor did he completely deny the historical reality of the tales mentioned above.³²

During the trial, Tsuda had at least fifty supporters, but no members of Rekiken came to his aid.³³ Tsuda was bitterly criticized by a number of intellectuals until his eventual conviction for violating publishing law in 1942.³⁴ For example, Minoda Muneki 蓑田胸喜, leader of the fanatical right-wing group Genri Nihonsha 原理日本社, proposed the following:

Look! Tsuda used the term “authors” of the *Kiki* to make the tendentious remark that they “must have been important persons at the Imperial Court who had been involved in politics, or had come to power.” He used the terms “monarchy,” “imperial court,” and “imperial household” to declare without reservation that the history of ancient matters and imperial rescripts included in the preface of the *Kojiki* was “a work of fiction, fabricated for political purposes.”³⁵

Minoda's harsh condemnation of Tsuda's publications was triggered by Tsuda's lectures at Tokyo Imperial University in late 1939.³⁶ Minoda branded Tsuda's view as “a theory that obliterated the Age of Gods and Japan's earliest history” (*jindaishi jōdaishi massatsu ron* 神代史上代史抹殺論). He and his colleague Mitsui Kōshi 三井甲之 formed an organization called Teidai Shukusei Kisei Dōmei 帝大肅正期成同盟, which published a statement in the magazine *Genri Nihon* 原理日本 in December 1939 titled “Seimeisho: Waseda Daigaku kyōju Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku kōshi bungaku hakase Tsuda Sōkichi shi no jindai oyobi jōdai massatsu ron ni tsuite” 声明書: 早稲田大学教授東京帝国大学講師文学博士津田左右吉氏の神代及び上代抹殺論に就て.³⁷ They sent this statement to approximately five thousand intellectuals with a questionnaire regarding their views on Tsuda and the current state of academia in Japan. More than three hundred replied. One stated, “Dr. Tsuda has exposed his materialistic dogmatism,” and another responded, “He ridiculed the commemoration of the 2600th anniversary of the imperial household and rejected the credibility of authorized history. Western science has corrupted his writings. He carelessly examined our national records and committed an outrage against the vital facts.” Yet another said, “Needless to say, because of his blind and unscientific belief, Dr. Tsuda's opinion must be rejected. His repudiation of our authorized history is intolerable.” The majority of intellectuals agreed

31 “Kōhan sokkiroku,” pp. 713–14. The trial record (on 27 November 1941) suggests Tsuda's interest in the early emperors' names and titles.

32 Brownlee 1997, pp. 191–92.

33 Brownlee 1997, p. 196; *Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai* 2012, p. 180. For example, Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 became a witness. Nanbara Shigeru 南原繁 and Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 took up a petition.

34 Sakisaka 1952, p. 74.

35 Minoda 1939, p. 23.

36 Genri Nihonsha 原理日本社 had published the magazine *Genri Nihon* 原理日本 and was preoccupied with Tsuda from before 1939. For instance, Matsuda Fukumatsu 松田福松 labeled Tsuda's book *Shina shisō to Nihon* 支那思想と日本 as “Tōyō bunka massatsu ron” 東洋文化抹殺論 (Annihilation of Oriental Culture). See Sakisaka 1952 for details.

37 Teidai Shukusei Kisei Dōmei 1939a. (This translates as “Statement: Regarding the Theory of the Annihilation of the Age of the Gods and Ancient History according to Tsuda Sōkichi PhD, Professor at Waseda University and Lecturer at Tokyo University.”)

with the Teidai Shukusei Kisei Dōmei's statement.³⁸ They condemned Tsuda for denying the *Kiki*, which was authorized and sacred history during the war. Indeed, Minoda referred to Tsuda as “the Imperial University's red communist professor.”³⁹

After the war, in 1948, Marxist scholars Watanabe Yoshimichi 渡部義通, Matsushima Eiichi 松島栄一, Tōma Seita 藤間生大 and Tōyama Shigeki—all members of Rekiken—held a roundtable discussion in which they confirmed their belief that Tsuda had endorsed a materialistic view of history.⁴⁰ Indeed, during the war, Tsuda was widely condemned as an “unscientific” Marxist historian, and, consequently, postwar Marxists were strongly encouraged by his critical analysis of the *Kiki*.⁴¹ Japan's defeat made them reevaluate Tsuda's work to the point where Marxism became acceptable in postwar academia. Thus, on discovering in the postwar period that Tsuda both supported the imperial institution and also dismissed Marxists' “distortion” of history, some Marxist scholars, such as Ishimoda Shō 石母田正, were disappointed.⁴² Nevertheless, many other Marxists continued to admire Tsuda as a great “scientific” historian for undermining the alleged authenticity of the *Kiki*, thus shattering the imperial tradition.

Tsuda's image was thus reversed. Naoki, along with the scholars cited above, transformed what had been “unscientific” into “scientific,” based on his incorrect belief that Tsuda intended to “annihilate” Emperor Jinmu. In sum, despite Tsuda's adamant protests, he was misinterpreted; he became an academic hero and a source of inspiration to postwar historians who sought to overthrow the imperial institution.

3. Tsuda's Hypothesis on the Early Emperors and the New Trends of Postwar Academia

In his *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no kenkyū* (1924), Tsuda had argued that the *Kiki* authors had written the early emperors' sections without credible sources. In his view, the tales in the *Kiki* conflicted with each other because they were rewritten over the centuries by a multiplicity of authors. He understood that there must have been a complex “development of narratives” over time, and that the chronicles of the emperors from Suizei 綏靖 (r. 581 BC?–549 BC?) to Kaika 開化 (r. 158 BC?–98 BC?), and indeed those of Jinmu (r. 660 BC?–585 BC?) and Sujin 崇神 (r. 97 BC?–30 BC?), were probably written at different times.⁴³ In other words, Tsuda was implying that the imperial genealogy had been manipulated.

Tsuda realized that some of his explanations invited misunderstanding. In 1948, he reorganized and considerably revised his 1924 publication, *Kojiki oyobi Nihon shoki no kenkyū*. Among the changes he made, the following addition was noteworthy, in that Tsuda acknowledged the existence of the “eight undocumented sovereigns” (*kesshi hachidai* 欠史八代):

38 Teidai Shukusei Kisei Dōmei 1939b.

39 Minoda 1940, p. 53.

40 Watanabe et al. 1948, p. 15.

41 Watanabe et al. 1948, p. 19.

42 Oguma 2002, p. 317.

43 Tsuda 1924a, pp. 445, 472–73. Opinions differ regarding the year of reign regarding the earliest emperors. Inoue Mitsusada, for instance, presumed that Sujin's dynasty had been 270 AD–290 AD. These reign dates do not imply that the emperors actually lived; they are the dates derived from the *Nihon shoki*. See Fujishima and Nogami 1955, pp. 1–32; Inoue 1965, p. 283.

We find in the *Kiki* that the emperors from Jinmu to Kōan 孝安 (r. 392 BC?–291 BC?) had only sons, and did not have daughters. This may lead to the conclusion that the lineage account is false.... Despite my conclusion that the accounts of the *Kiki* do not include historical facts, the hypothesis that these emperors did exist is not groundless. The absence of stories from emperors Suizei to Kaika is not a strong reason to question their existence.⁴⁴

In this 1948 edition, Tsuda also positioned Emperor Sujin as a historical figure and questioned the existence of earlier emperors.⁴⁵ Tsuda's newly revised text caused confusion among postwar scholars. Inoue Mitsusada, for example, understood from the sentences added to the 1948 edition that while “Tsuda had refused to acknowledge these emperors as actual historical persons” in the prewar edition, he had shifted his opinion for the postwar revision.⁴⁶ I argue that Tsuda changed far less in the postwar period than Ienaga believed, but Tsuda did undergo a change in attitude after the trial in the early 1940s, which gave him an opportunity to consider whether certain emperors had or had not existed. Indeed, he was ambivalent about the existence of the early emperors in the 1948 edition.

In neither edition was he clear in his assertions regarding their existence. In the excerpt from the postwar edition cited above, it appears that Tsuda did not abandon his hypothesis that the authors of the *Kiki* had manipulated the lineage accounts of the earliest emperors. Instead, he was asserting that this manipulation did not in itself mean that they had not existed. It might be argued that Tsuda's work on the *Kiki* should have earned him recognition as a textual critic in the field of Japanese literature, rather than the field of historiography, since he sought to treat the *Nihon shoki* as Japanese literature.⁴⁷ He consistently focused on the “development of narratives” over time and the creation of the tales; he avoided becoming involved in the problems of the earliest history.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, many historians were inspired by the “imagined Tsuda,” and availed themselves of his scholarship to construct a common past without the imperial tradition.

For example, in 1952, historian Mizuno Yū 水野祐 published *Nihon kodai ōchō shiron josetsu* 日本古代王朝史論序説, in which he argued persuasively that the early emperors were fabrications of the *Kiki* authors.⁴⁹ Scholars such as Naoki, Okada Seiji 岡田精司 and Ueda Masaaki later developed Mizuno's argument, and put forward a new theory of dynastic change.⁵⁰ Interestingly, Mizuno understood that Tsuda did not question the historical reality of Emperor Jinmu.⁵¹

Tsuda himself could not resist justifying his publications. Why did he criticize his readers? He did so not only because he hated being labeled a Marxist, but also because his readers misinterpreted his work. There was also a new trend within postwar historiography, a demand for “historical science” and the demystification of the imperial tradition. A

44 Tsuda 1948b, p. 303.

45 Tsuda 1948b, p. 304.

46 Inoue 1965, p. 275.

47 Tsuda 1966, p. 34.

48 Tsuda 1958, p. 7.

49 Mizuno 1954, pp. 45, 136–40. Mizuno assumed the post of professor at Waseda University in 1961.

50 For the development of the changes in dynasties theory, see Maenosono 1986.

51 Isse 2006a, pp. 50–51.

feature of this new trend was that scholars (especially Marxists) presupposed Tsuda to be in denial of historical facts, especially as they related to the earliest emperors. Scholars had different understandings of Tsuda's work on the *Kiki*, but those who sought to undermine the imperial tradition misunderstood his work without examining his position on historical veracity.

Their misunderstandings of Tsuda's work emerged from their belief and methodology. First, for instance, their investigation of the range of "myth" (*shinwa* 神話) and its definition produced a popular misconception. The use of the term "myth" depended on the scholars, which made for a lack of clarity, but Naoki Kōjirō conceded that, in general, it referred to what Tsuda called *jindaishi*, the tales of Japanese deities included in the first half of the *Kiki*.⁵² Despite Tsuda's refusal to term this part of the *Kiki* "myth," Saigō Nobutsuna 西郷信綱 (1916–2008), a Marxist scholar who became a follower of Tsuda, replaced what Tsuda called *jindaishi* with the term "political myth" (*seijiteki shinwa* 政治的神話), and attached greater importance to his analysis of *jindaishi* than of the other parts of the *Kiki*.⁵³

It was also common to define the entire *Kiki* as "myth," but Naoki and Saigō rarely referred to tales other than *jindaishi* as "myth." Tsuda, for instance, had argued that many episodes concerning *be* 部 (the name given to an assortment of occupation-based groupings) described in the latter half of the *Kiki* were not historical facts, but legendary narratives describing their origins.⁵⁴ Given that in one definition myth tells us the origin of things in a distant past, we can deal with *be* episodes as an example of such myths.⁵⁵ However, these scholars did not call these episodes "myths" or legends of *be* narrated in the early emperors' tales. Tsuda's denial of the authenticity of the Age of Gods' narratives was perhaps more important than his analysis of *be*, meeting postwar needs to "eliminate" the authorized history during the war. Naoki reduced Tsuda's term *jindaishi* to a work of fiction made by ancient intellectuals, even though Tsuda refused to "eliminate" the history.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Marxist historian Tōma Seita referenced Tsuda's books to claim that the first half of the *Kiki* included fiction.⁵⁷ The "imagined Tsuda" was a scholar who transformed *jindaishi* into fiction. Postwar research into *be*, as indicated by Kita Yasuhiro 北康宏, was based on a superficial understanding of Tsuda's work.⁵⁸ Those who welcomed the new interpretation of *jindaishi* as fiction did not pay sufficient attention to (or did not agree with) Tsuda's discussion of these *be* episodes.

A second example of postwar scholars' misunderstanding of Tsuda is in their erroneous assertion that Tsuda denied the truth of all the stories preceding the sections on Emperor Ōjin 応神 (270 AD?–310 AD?) in the *Kiki*.⁵⁹ In fact, Tsuda discussed these stories in the following terms:

52 Naoki 1971, p. 20.

53 Saigō 1961, p. 48; Isse 2005, p. 49.

54 Tsuda 1930, pp. 470, 543. For a definition of *be*, see Asakawa 2006, p. 110.

55 Breen and Teeuwen 2010, p. 131.

56 Naoki 1955, pp. 64–68; Naoki 1971, pp. 20–21; Tsuda 1958, p. 7. Naoki recognized that Tsuda's questioning of authenticity throughout the *Kiki* did not always amount to a denial of historical facts.

57 Tōma 1958, p. 11. Tōma referenced Tsuda's *Jindaishi no atarashii kenkyū* (1913) and Kojiki *oyobi Nihon shoki no shinkenkyū* (1919).

58 Kita 2013, p. 39.

59 Fujishima 1955, pp. 47–49.

Actual incidents such as the governing of the Korean Peninsula, Emperor Jinmu's eastern expedition, Yamato Takeru's ヤマトタケル conquest of Kumaso 熊襲 in Kyushu and the pacification of Izumo 出雲 should have been inserted in the sections on Emperor Ōjin and later. The authors of the *Kojiki* had nothing to write after describing them in the earlier sections.⁶⁰

Indeed, as early as *Jindaishi no atarashii kenkyū* (1913), Tsuda acknowledged these tales as being true to some extent.⁶¹ Despite this, Ishimoda, in his discussion of what he calls *ei'yū jidai* 英雄時代, that is, the heroic age of Emperor Jinmu and Yamato Takeru, emphasized that Tsuda was intent on denying the historical facts of the *Kiki*.⁶² We should note that what Tsuda called “historical facts” sometimes included the thought of intellectuals and the “spirit” of the seventh century. Ironically, Ishimoda shared with Tsuda the view that the tale of Yamato Takeru was based on “historical facts.”⁶³ Leftist scholars have located Tsuda simply as the one who denied historical facts, since his ambivalent usage of the phrase “historical facts” was beyond their understanding.

A third example of postwar scholars' misunderstanding lies in their interpretation of lineage accounts. Tsuda himself argued that almost none of the *miyake* 屯倉 (state-controlled territory) episodes, including those in the reigns of emperors Keitai 繼体 (r. 507–531) and Ankan 安閑 (r. 531–535) in the sixth century, could be considered historical facts.⁶⁴ However, as indicated by Yamao Yukihisa 山尾幸久, some postwar scholars drew on Tsuda's discussion of the chronicles of imperial genealogy to argue that the legend of Emperor Sujin and the later tales, including the accounts of *miyake*, were fairly credible as historical facts.⁶⁵

There are a couple of explanations for this misunderstanding: this was either because of the impact of Tsuda's account on “manipulated” imperial genealogy, or because he had acknowledged as factual that Silla overthrew the Mimana *miyake* 任那屯倉 in the twenty-third year of Emperor Kinmei's 欽明 reign (r. 539–571). His account was based on the existence of the Mimana Nihonfu 任那日本府 (the Japanese Mimana government that controlled *miyake* in the Korean peninsula). Kim Sok-hyong 金錫亨 denounced the “Japanese scholars' accounts” for forging a state that kept managing the Mimana *miyake* in the fourth or fifth century and “their misleading and imperialist/colonialist approach.”⁶⁶ Kim was implying that Tsuda was one of the “Japanese scholars.”

Those who welcomed the “imagined Tsuda” focused on the problem of the emperors' existence. They believed that the latter part of the *Kiki* contained history and paid little attention to Tsuda's accounts. Tsuda also cast doubt on the authenticity of the chapters of *Nihon shoki* that dealt with emperors from Ōjin 応神 to Tenji 天智 (r. 668–671). In

60 Tsuda 1924a, pp. 478–79, 487–89.

61 Tsuda 1913, pp. 12–13, 117–19; Tam 1983, p. 175. Some contemporary scholars overlook the fact that Tsuda interpreted these tales as the reflections of historical facts. See Hagino 2004, pp. 23–24, Tanaka 2008, p. 64, for instance.

62 See Isse 2004, p. 47 and Isse 2006b, pp. 32–34, for details.

63 Isomae 1998, pp. 146–54; Ishimoda 1948, pp. 52–55, 61. Ishimoda declared that only the poems in the *Kiki* retained some traces of *ei'yū jidai* as a historical era and censured the *Nihon shoki* authors for depicting the earliest emperors as “despotic rulers.”

64 Tsuda 1930, p. 122.

65 Yamao 1975, pp. 224–25.

66 Kim 1969, pp. 5, 51–53.

his *Nihon jōdaishi kenkyū* (1930), he demonstrated that the later chapters of the *Kiki* incorporated many creations, fabrications, and transliterations from old Chinese books, despite their location in the historically “reliable” parts of the imperial genealogy.⁶⁷ Postwar historians nevertheless ascribed more importance to Tsuda’s accounts of imperial genealogy than to his *Nihon jōdaishi kenkyū* (1930), which included a philological analysis of the chapters following Emperor Ōjin, of *Kogo shūi* 古語拾遺, and of *be* and *miyake*. Inoue Mitsusada, for instance, who took a positivist approach, referenced Tsuda’s idea of “manipulated” imperial genealogy and discussed the origin of the social structure of the early Yamato court as reflected in the *Kiki*.⁶⁸

Because of these misinterpretations resulting from their common desire to reconstruct a new Japanese history, postwar scholars neither cited nor disputed *Nihon jōdaishi kenkyū* of 1930 as frequently as they did the rest of Tsuda’s banned books.⁶⁹ Many postwar historians searched for a detailed picture of the Yamato imperial court of the earliest era in archeology. If *Nihon jōdaishi kenkyū* did not influence the historical accounts of the Kofun period, it was because Tsuda mostly ignored archeological findings. When the discovery of iron swords reinforced the *Kiki* interpretation that Emperor Yūryaku 雄略 ruled the Yamato state as a coercive and absolute monarch, *Nihon jōdaishi kenkyū* was sidelined.

Postwar archaeology set out to conduct a full-scale study of the earliest period.⁷⁰ The designated burial mounds of the earliest emperors became a prompt to the imagination. Naoki, for example, argued that the origin of the Yamato court dated back to the late third century, when, it is alleged, Emperor Sujin’s burial mounds were constructed.⁷¹ These burial mounds inspired postwar scholars such as Naoki to depict the early Yamato authority and associate archaeological findings with the *Kiki* documents.

However, the alleged burial mound of Emperor Yūryaku did not unequivocally authenticate the tales of Emperor Yūryaku in the *Kiki* or the idea that Yūryaku was a despotic ruler.⁷² As for the chapters of Ōjin and subsequent rulers, Tsuda admitted that

67 Tsuda 1930, pp. 57, 102, 123, 150, 154, 196, 200, 226, for instance. Despite Tsuda’s remark that the story of the Iwai Rebellion in 527 during the reign of Keitai drew on unreliable sources, Tōma Seita not only acknowledged it to be true but also gave it a new meaning, namely that it was an expression of popular protest against the invasion and exploitation of the Korean Peninsula (Tōma 1951, p. 211).

68 Inoue 1985, p. 233. Inoue refused to reference *Kuni no miyatsuko hongī* 国造本紀, that genealogy of Kuni no miyatsuko, men who governed small territories in antiquity. Instead, he employed the method of extracting examples of Kuni no Miyatsuko, such as the tale of Shinetsuhiko 椎根津彦 in the *Nihon shoki*, or Saonetsuhiko 槁根津日子 in the *Kojiki*, or the legendary narrative of Yamato no Kuni no Miyatsuko 倭国造 from the *Kiki*. Unlike Tsuda, whose research on *be* treated *Kogo shūi* as a historical record and tended to deny the authenticity of the *Kiki*, Inoue’s analysis of *be* and of the *Kuni no Miyatsuko* system still used the *Kiki* as though it was a historical record. See Satō 1995, p. 144. Inoue’s publications expressed a certain degree of understanding of Marxist history.

69 Scholars frequently referenced *Jōdai Nihon no shakai oyobi shisō* (1933), which his work on the Taika reforms included, as well as his books on the mythical legends. See Kadowaki 1991; Isse 2007b.

70 See Edwards 1996; Harunari 2006.

71 See. “Naoki Kōjirō shōgen,” 8 October 1969, in Kyōkasho Kentei Soshō o Shien Suru Zenkoku Renrakukai 1969. Tsuda argued that one could not understand the origin of the Yamato court exclusively from the *Kiki*. See Tsuda 1948b, pp. 307–308. Some contemporary studies conclude that the Yamato hegemony had been established earlier (such as Allen 2003). This might be similar to his opinion.

72 Ishimoda 1948, p. 29; Mizutani 2013, pp. 22–23. Until recently, scholars have presupposed a tyrannical reign by Emperor Yūryaku, or a despotic state in the fifth century because of the existence of the Oka misanzai 岡ミサンザイ burial mounds, and the tales of Emperor Yūryaku as reliable sources.

the *Kiki* authors had often invented the stories and failed to draw on original records.⁷³ Nevertheless, the putative burial mounds of early emperors and archaeological findings made up for what Tsuda referred to as a lack of original records in postwar Japan. Tsuda maintained that the chronicles of *Yūryaku* and the descriptions of his oppressive personality were derived from Chinese books.⁷⁴ He proposed that the *Kiki* authors interested in Chinese letters adapted the tales perhaps during the sixth to the seventh centuries, but he acknowledged the tales' description as an embodiment of those intellectuals' sentiments and ideas.⁷⁵

In sum, postwar historians did not regard Tsuda's analysis of the tales of the early emperors in the latter half of the *Kiki* highly. They disregarded his hypotheses about *be* and *miyake*. For Tsuda, *be* was neither a group of people united by kinship nor a group of commoners. Instead, in his prewar work, he argued that *be* included farmers and government officials.⁷⁶ In contrast, influential Marxists such as Watanabe Yoshimichi argued that *be* referred to a group of subordinated or vanquished people.⁷⁷ The *Kiki*, at least in its latter portions, took on a new meaning as the people's history or a history of class struggle. Unlike Watanabe, who emphasized the existence of a Japanese form of slavery, Tsuda took a philological approach.⁷⁸ Consequently, Marxists did not draw on Tsuda's work in their new interpretation of the early emperors' tales.

Whereas Marxist historians presupposed an underlying distinction between high authority and exploited slaves behind the construction of large burial mounds, Tsuda maintained that they were not intended as displays of the sovereign's authority.⁷⁹ Indeed, there was no evidence that these people had been forced to work. Some Marxist scholars wished to transform the first half of the *Kiki* into fiction (and Ienaga likewise sought to "eliminate" the existence of the earliest emperors from history because of "the lack of original records"), but Tsuda, in his *Nihonjin no shisōteki taido* (1948), chose to reject the Marxist reinterpretation of the *Kiki* such as that by Hani Gorō 羽仁五郎 (1901–1983). Hani acknowledged the *Kiki* authors' accounts of subordinate people as true: they were not sufficiently recompensed, and they suffered at the hands of, or were enslaved by, the earliest emperors.⁸⁰

73 Tsuda 1930, p. 63.

74 Tsuda made a distinction between his terms. He defined *jutsusaku* 述作 as a creation or fabrication based on original records, and *zōsaku* 造作 as a creation or fabrication without such records. According to Tsuda, the accounts of early emperors' personalities were the authors' *zōsaku*. In other words, these accounts included many copies of old Chinese books. See "Kōhan sokkiroku," pp. 516–17, pp. 796–801.

75 Tsuda 1930, pp. 108–15, 201, 273–81, Tsuda 1948b, p. 293. For scholars' understanding of the process of adaptation, see Nitō 2011, p. 73.

76 Tsuda 1930, pp. 462–63, 485.

77 Tanaka 2008, pp. 69, 86. Marxists such as Watanabe tended to focus on "slaves" in the *Nihon shoki*. On Marxist historiography in the 1930s, see Tanaka 2008 for details.

78 Watanabe 1948, pp. 98–101; Tsuda 1930, pp. 541–43, for instance.

79 Hayakawa 1937, p. 162; Tsuda 1918, p. 14. Recent studies focus on the excavated crowns and swords as "authorized items" possessed by Emperor Keitai. See Takamatsu 2007, for instance.

80 In 1946, Marxist historian Hani Gōro enumerated twelve "facts regarding popular rebellion, flight, death of slaves, and their uneasiness" described in the latter part of the *Nihon shoki* as having led to the Taika reforms. See Hani 1946, pp. 58–59.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tsuda's work has been greatly misunderstood. My analysis of Tsuda's writings reveals, in particular, that his use of the term *rekishiteki jijitsu* (historical facts) was ambivalent and could be interpreted in different ways. Tsuda employed the phrase in the sense of both objective fact and imaginary tale. Thus, he could never be the "denier of historical facts" that some insisted he was. The preceding discussion has offered evidence that postwar scholars reinterpreted the Age of Gods sections of the *Kiki* as imaginary tales without value. This was not merely the case with Marxists who emphasized that the *Kiki* included fiction, but also with scholars such as Ienaga, Inoue, and Naoki.⁸¹ They accentuated the absence of Emperor Jinmu and ignored Tsuda's affirmation that "the *Kiki* are invaluable sacred texts" for what they reveal of the thought and beliefs of ancient intellectuals, which Tsuda referred to as "historical facts." Mainstream critics of the left stressed Tsuda's impact and brought him fame.

As Tsuda himself wrote, postwar Marxists were equivalent to wartime right-wing intellectuals. They interpreted his work on the *Kiki* as Minoda Muneki did: as "a theory that obliterated the Age of Gods and Japan's earliest history." His assertions regarding the existence of emperors appeared ambiguous. Many postwar historians were obsessed with the matter of the earliest emperors as historical figures. As they struggled to understand Tsuda's work in its entirety, they oversimplified his achievements. They reduced him to a "denier of historical facts" or a "historian who undermined the existence of the earliest emperors." While the "imagined Tsuda" motivated postwar Marxists to reinterpret the *Kiki*, Tsuda himself set out to analyze the changes in narratives and avoided engaging too much with the earliest history. I suggest that Tsuda's interpretive community was mistaken in believing that he denied the existence of the earliest emperors. Their collective perceptions of Tsuda bore little resemblance to his actual intention.

In "Watakushi no *Kiki* no kenkyū no shushi" (1958), Tsuda was determined to confront his readers' misunderstandings. They had conjured up an "imagined Tsuda" who eliminated all traces of historical facts from the Age of Gods and the earliest eras of the emperors in the *Kiki*. This imagined, oversimplified version of his work became a symbol of hope amid the despair following Japan's defeat in the war. Although Marxist historians found Tsuda's love for the imperial family offensive, they praised him and sought to follow him as a "historical scientist." For those who sought to reinterpret the *Kiki* from a Marxist perspective or demystify them, Tsuda's critical analysis was useful. It is unfortunate that his analysis was not fully appreciated as literary criticism, one which explores the process of the text's creation. The misinterpretations of his work on the *Kiki* compelled Tsuda in his later years to clarify its purpose. He remained active past the age of seventy, continuing to publish articles and revise his old books. He did not set out to be a "denier of historical facts," but rather to understand the text of the *Kiki* by examining the layers of myth within it, and in so doing to verify real "historical facts."

81 For Inoue's case, see Isse 2006a, p. 50.

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