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David Weiss, *The God Susanoo and Korea in Japan's Cultural Memory: Ancient Myths and Modern Empire*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2022, 245 pp.

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David Weiss's *The God Susanoo and Korea in Japan's Cultural Memory: Ancient Myths and Modern Empire* is a revision of his 2017 University of Tübingen PhD thesis. The book is an ambitious study that ranges from the earliest Japanese and Korean chronicles to the twentieth century political history of the two nations that demonstrates links between ancient and modern uses of myth. Myths connect Japan's national identity as descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu, and Korea's colonised identity as descended from her younger brother, Susanoo. The Meiji restoration of 1868 brought Japan into the modern world, and the emperor promoted Shinto (rather than Buddhism) as the foundation of Japanese identity. The "theory of common ancestry of Japanese and Koreans" (5) was deployed to justify Japan's colonial rule of Korea as "a return to primordial unity ... as depicted in the *Nihon Shoki*" (8) Weiss asks how Susanoo became core to discussions of Japanese and Korean identity, and also how he was raised to prominence as a deity?

For Japan, pre-modern Korea was imagined in several different ways: as a cultured and wealthy civilization; as a "threat to Japanese security" (21); and as a rebellious "vassal state" (23). Weiss analyses the subtle negotiation of Japanese identity vis-à-vis both the West and other Asian nations, in which it was possible to leverage Japan's adoption of Western modernity to make it the pre-eminent Asian nation, while fuelling anti-West sentiment at home. Korea "became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and was annexed in 1910" (29), which resulted in policies intended to nullify Korean identity, through the promotion of the idea of common ancestry and the imposition of mandatory Shinto shrine visits. Amaterasu and Meiji Tenno (Emperor Meiji) were enshrined in the Chōsen Shrine, built in 1925 (in preference to Susanoo or the Korean heroic ancestor Tan'gun, with whom he was sometimes identified). In 1938 Susanoo was established in the Kōgen Shrine, and by 1945 when Japan was defeated in World War II there were about 1100 Shinto shrines in Korea. Chapter 2, "A Foil to Set Off the Sun Goddess: Susanoo in the Ancient Sources" and Chapter 3, "Passion for Transgression: Susanoo's Liminal Character" argue that in ancient sources Susanoo is rarely understood on his own terms, but rather in relation to other deities, most notably his 'sister' Amaterasu. However, careful investigation of sources suggests that

Susanoo originally belonged to the Izumo mythology, which is focused on earth and the realm of the dead, rather than the Plain of High Heaven, the primary location of the Yamato/ Imperial deities. In the merger of these sources into a court mythology, “Susanoo plays the role of a liminal figure that adds disorder to the order symbolized by Amaterasu” (77).

Part 2, “Political Mythology: A Genealogy of Susanoo’s connection to Korea,” mines the *Nihon Shoki* for ancient references linking Susanoo to the liminal land of Korea (Silla/ Kara). Weiss’s argument covers Izumo’s connections to otherworlds (making it parallel to the relation between Susanoo and Amaterasu, as the Izumo shrine served as a foil to Yamato and Ise); the Korean culture heroes Tan’gun and Chumong, and motif clusters (bears, rivers, and mountains) attached to them in Korean myth; and Susanoo’s various roles and names. Chapter 5, “The God with a Thousand Faces: Susanoo and His Alter Egos in Medieval Mythology,” explores his cult at Yasaka Shrine, Gion where he is a pestilence god, associated with other plague deities like Gozu Tenno and Muto; and his assumption of the roles of the major deities of Izumo, “Yatsuka Mizuomitsuno and Okuninushi” (129). Weiss also covers interest in Susanoo’s grave as an entrance to the realm of the dead, his inclusion in Tendai Buddhism, and his posited origin in Korea. Chapter 6, “Korea as a Realm of Death: Susanoo and Korea in Modern Discourses,” traces more recent interpretations of Susanoo through Confucian views in the early modern era, the separation of Shinto and Buddhism during the Meiji restoration, the perspective of National Learning (*kokagaku*), and in the colonial period. Weiss argues convincingly that “an imperialist reading of the ancient Japanese myths justified both the colonized Koreans’ inclusion and their marginalization in the Japanese empire” (173).

The epilogue, “After the War: Susanoo in Scholarship, Tourism and Popular Culture,” gives a brief account of the god’s role as a tourist attraction, and presence in videogames, among other contemporary phenomena, to indicate how his “Korean” identity has been erased and he is now perceived as entirely Japanese. Bloomsbury Shinto Studies is a uniformly excellent book series, and Weiss’s learned yet readable study is a worthy addition. It is highly recommended for academic libraries, Japanese Studies specialists, and all scholars interested in the political deployment of myth.