

# Founding Territorial Cults in Early Japan

*Traces of a Forgotten Ritual  
in Ancient Myths and Legends*



Gaudenz Domenig

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## Founding Territorial Cults in Early Japan



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*By*

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Cover illustration: Mikageyama, the sacred mountain of the Izumo Daijingu of Kameoka, Kyoto Prefecture. The shrine is hidden in the dark green grove at the foot of this mountain. An old painting of this mountain is described on p. 208. Photograph Gaudenz Domenig, 1974.

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## Preface

This book carries the readers into an early time when it was still possible to claim and appropriate new land in the Japanese archipelago. When taking possession of ownerless land, early settlers had to deal with 'nature', and I argue that they did it by making a deal with the nature spirits which they assumed were inhabiting and owning the land they intended to use. It was this deal that allowed the settlers to expel the spirits from their land, but the same deal also required them to then worship these spirits in an area beyond their land and to keep this other area sacred as long as they held the land they had opened up.

The theoretical model of this ritual has originally imposed itself in a study about the spatial organisation of settlements in early Japan that was carried out with a general interest in the history of human space-ordering. The model has already been tested in a few articles, but in the present book, it is for the first time used as an analytical tool in exploring the territorial aspects of the cults to which many of the relevant sources refer. The title of this book highlights the foundation ritual because it is the key to an adequate understanding of the territorial cults, but the book also includes chapters that deal with various other characteristics of territorial cults and with their correspondences in the traditional 'grove beliefs' (*mori no shinkō*) and in the worship of estate deities (*yashikigami*).

The main conclusion is that there was a time when religion was still a rather earthly affair and the dwelling area of gods was not yet imagined to be far away in the sky vertically above the earth. The ideal type of a settlement had its own local 'heaven', as it were, in the form of a sacred area that was often situated in an adjacent mountain side and was reserved as dwelling space of the local guardian deities. Trying to make this evident by dealing with the territorial aspect of religion in early Japan, this book aims to contribute to a better understanding of territorial cults and the basic spatial organisation of settlements founded in the way described.

Numerous scholars and friends have inspired me on the way and I express my sincere gratitude to all of them, but having written the book in retirement age and with almost no exchange with other researchers, I will only mention here the few who were most important for me during my early years in Japan. Professor Masuda Tomoya (1914–1981) of Kyoto University introduced me into various fields of Japan's traditional culture. His Saturday lectures for foreign architects were legendary, and for me, it was particularly helpful that he once also lectured on Shinto, partly basing himself on an interesting work by Tsukushi Nobuzane. Ten years later I first met Professor Harada Toshiaki

(1893–1983), the noted historian and ethnographer of Japanese religions, and had the privilege to spend an unforgettable day with him visiting numerous shrines and temples in the Nara area. On this occasion and on a number of later meetings in Tokyo and at his home, he taught me his views of the territorial nature of early Japanese village cults. I admired Professor Harada as a great scholar and for his persistence in emphasising the territorial character of the early Japanese village cults against the then more popular ancestor worship theory. To know him personally has encouraged and confirmed me in my own studies. Herbert Plutschow (1939–2010), professor of Japanese Studies at UCLA, I first met in 1970 and we later often met in Japan, in Zurich and in Los Angeles, when I was lecturing there in 2001. Herbert was my best informed and most honestly interested friend when it came to speaking about ancient Japanese texts and about Japanese religions. Our discussions often lasted for hours and hours.

I also express my honest thanks to Martin Repp, professor of religious studies. He took an active interest in my first representative article on the subject of this book (1988) and, as editor of the journal *Japanese Religions*, later made it possible that an English translation could appear in that journal (2008). His lasting interest was one of the reasons that have prompted me to revisit the topic and deal with it in the wider context of the present book.

I am also grateful to the Swiss National Science Foundation for having funded the open access publication of this book, after having already supported a considerable part of my Japanese studies before the mid-1980s. The editors of Brill's Japanese Studies Library have contributed valuable comments and taken care of transforming the manuscript into a book. A special thank I express to Patricia Radder who patiently guided me through the editing process, making me feel good although transdisciplinary studies of this kind naturally involve additional problems.

My wife Mioko has experienced the development of the thoughts presented in this book from the very beginning. She has accompanied me on almost all field trips and often discovered interesting publications related to my research interests. She also contributed by writing several related articles in Japanese, helped with the bibliography, and read the text when it was finished. I can think of no better way to thank her than to dedicate this book to her.

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# Introduction

The remarkable progress of Shinto studies over the last decades has led to a situation where many scholars no longer believe that it makes sense to speak of Shinto when meaning the religious beliefs and practices of people living on the Japanese archipelago before the seventh or sixth century. The more this becomes clear, the more we may feel that the traditional understanding of earlier religious cults in the Japanese archipelago might be inadequate so long as we only orient ourselves on the archaeological record and on what appears to have survived of such cults in combination with parts of later Shinto.

The present book argues that territorial cults must have been common in pre-Taika times and tries to understand them on the basis of a theoretical model of the ritual procedure applied in taking possession of land in ownerless regions. The model is a result of comparative studies carried out earlier, but it is used here for the first time as an analytical tool in a study of numerous ancient myths and legends of Japan. In chapter 10, it is also applied to a few relevant sources from other cultures.

## The Problem of the Pre-Shinto Cults

Dealing with the pre-Shinto cults of early Japan is usually thought to be almost impossible because of the lack of relevant written sources (Grapard 2002: 228–29; Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 27). Mori Mizue, for example, thinks that the late date of the written sources “renders it very difficult to reconstruct concrete instances of kami cults before the formation of the state cult”. As she points out, only the archaeological record is reliable as a source of information on early cults. She refers to archaeological sites where “fetishes carved from wood, precious objects such as jewels, and containers for food” have been found in combination with large rocks, and she notes that such sites “are generally understood to have been places of kami worship”. However, the source value of material objects for questions of religion being limited, Mori cannot help but interpret the archaeological record in terms of ideas based on the textual sources and religious traditions of later times. Thus, she states, for example, that the kami were imagined as invisible spirits and had no permanent dwelling places – ideas that cannot be deduced from material objects such as those known from archaeological excavations (Mori 2003: 15).

Similar ideas were already held by Ōba Iwao (1970), the pioneer of Shinto archaeology, and by other scholars who assumed that Shinto somehow developed from animistic roots. Matsumae Takeshi (1993: 325), for example, suggested that in the prehistoric Jōmon and Yayoi periods “the roots of Shinto developed from animistic forms of nature worship”, whereas in the next period (4th and 5th centuries) “animistic spirits were personalized, honoured at special places of worship, and frequently adopted as tutelary deities of local clans”.

It is of course correct to stress the lack of written sources from the protohistoric period and the failure of the archaeological record to inform us well about beliefs, but this does not force us to sketch early beliefs by following more or less common patterns of speculation about the nature of early religious practices and experiences. In addition to focusing on historical sources and archaeological evidence, we can also study the rich material in the form of myths and legends that were written down in Japanese texts of the early eighth century, notably in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* and in the various *fudoki* reports from the provinces. Rather than attempting to extract historical truths from such sources or fill in the gaps with tentative sketches of early cults and beliefs, we can focus research on matters that can be learned from these texts.

Myths and legends usually lack historicity, but by comparing ancient Japanese stories we can observe in them recurring themes, motifs and story patterns that open up perspectives on ritual behaviours that are likely to have been characteristic of numerous local cults in early Japan. Mark Teeuwen is probably right when he notes that during the Kofun period (c.250–700 CE) there was so much foreign influence and regional diversity that it is unthinkable that people in the archipelago “could have shared a single religion at any time during this period”. If he adds that “any attempt to pin down ‘what the ancient Japanese believed’ is doomed to fail” (2012: 68), he may think of complex belief systems; but we can expect that territorial cults were widely distributed although other beliefs and ritual practices may have been specific and restricted to particular groups of people. It is precisely the fact that the protohistoric centuries of Japan witnessed numerous immigrations and movements of people within the archipelago that calls for studies trying to understand the way in which the local cults of pre-Taika times used to be founded.

Traditionally, Shinto was and is often still thought to have deep roots in Japanese protohistory and even prehistory, but Kan'ichi Asakawa (1873–1948) wrote more than a hundred years ago in his *Early Institutional Life of Japan* that “Shinto is, even in its earliest records, found to be a composite body of beliefs which in general fall in two classes, namely, the lower religious ideas



common with other primitive races of like stage of culture and the higher ones peculiar to the Japanese people” (Asakawa 1903: 31). According to Asakawa, the higher religious ideas peculiar to the Japanese are those which centre on Amaterasu as the ancestral deity of the imperial family, on the myth of the conquest of Japan by the heavenly ancestors and on the emperor as the high priest of the nation whose political sovereignty rests on religious sanction (1903: 32–33). Asakawa believed that these specifically Japanese aspects of Shinto predate the advent of Buddhism in the middle of the sixth century. This can no longer be assumed today, but whereas the composite body of Shinto beliefs also includes Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian ideas and characterises Shinto through recorded history, some of the not specifically Japanese beliefs and practices of Shinto can indeed be assumed to have deeper roots in the proto- and prehistory of Japan.

By no longer classifying the early, prehistoric and protohistoric cults of Japan as forms of Shinto, the problem of understanding these cults presents itself in a new light. It now seems more likely that these earlier cults had characteristics that make them comparable to early cults and indigenous religions in other parts of Asia and the world.

Itō Mikiharu (1998), for example, has proposed that we focus on certain aspects of indigenous religions in Southeast Asia, using this perspective as an analytical framework for dealing with the concept of *kami* in ancient Japan. More recently, Mark Teeuwen (2007b) looked at a problem of Japanese religious history in a comparative perspective on Southeast Asia. Interested in identifying cases in other Asian cultures where interactions of certain earlier features of religion with Buddhism led to the emergence of something comparable to Shinto, he notes that certain features of Shinto – “worship of deities associated with water, trees and mountains in sacred groves, worship of snakes as messengers or manifestations of deities, myths about the descent of heavenly deities to earth, and so forth” – are also found in other religions of Asia and the world and “that it makes little sense to label their occurrence in Japan as ‘Shinto’, as though they share a common origin in a specific Japanese tradition” (2007b: 375).

### Territorial Cults

In light of such new developments, this book looks at Japanese myths and legends related to the founding of territories in pre-Shinto times and seeks to

understand how settlers ritually proceeded when settling down in a new place and what characterised the primary spatial organisation of their territories as well as the corresponding ‘territorial cults’.

The study of territorial cults has a long history, but the use of the English term as an analytical concept seems to have come up only in the 1970s in works about African religions.<sup>1</sup> Japanese scholars rather used compounds like *chien saishi* (‘land-related rituals’), *chiikiteki saishi* (‘regional rituals’) or *chiiki shūkyō* (‘region cults’). The importance of territorial cults in early Japan has been recognised by Tsuda Sōkichi (1964), Aruga Kizaemon (1954) and others, but it was Harada Toshiaki (1893–1983) who most consistently emphasised this point.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1941 he wrote in an article that appeared in English translation:

The fact that the Japanese had to depend from ancient times on husbandry as the means of their livelihood has given a specific character to the Japanese community since old. It may, therefore, be safely said that farming went a long way, even in the case of clans and families, in the formation of territorial units of people. Accordingly, the *Ujigami* or village-tutelary-deities, worshipped by such units of people, came to acquire and manifest a territorial character, regardless of whether or not the said groups of people were united by ties of blood. In other words, it is the locality which characterizes the *Ujigami*, and this fact marks it off from other deities of this country. (Harada 1941: 2)

Harada’s insistence that the village deity (*ujigami*) was originally a deity guarding the village as a territorial unit was partly provoked by the contrary theory of Yanagita Kunio, who, based on ethnographic research, argued that the village deity was originally a deified ancestor and the rituals were therefore blood-related (*ketsuenteki saishi*). This controversy regarded only the ‘original’ beliefs and rituals in proto and prehistoric times. Like many Japanese scholars today, Harada thought that the original concept of *kami* (spirit, deity) referred to no more than a mysterious and vague presence (Harada 1970: 100) and that the worship of human persons came up only after the Taika Reform

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- 1 Schoffeleer 1972, cited in Van Binsbergen 1979: 47. See also Ranger 1973. French scholars used to deal with such cults by referring to a famous study by Edouard Chavannes (1910), which deals with the ‘god of the soil’ in ancient China. Recently, however, French researchers dealing with populations living on the margins of state power in parts of Asia also prefer the term *territoire* (Schlemmer 2012).
  - 2 Harada is known for his ‘thesis of the essentially territorial nature of religious ceremonies in Japan’ (*Nihon shūkyō no chiensaishi honshitsuron*). For a discussion of his work, see for instance Yoshitani 1986.

(645 CE). He argued that *ujigami* was originally the name of the clan deity as a territorial village guardian deity that “was worshipped there alone”, and “did not have much individuality to be distinguished from others by means of a proper name”. Whereas “most of the present shrines [...] are dedicated to deities referred to in the myths”, most of the shrines registered in *Engishiki* (ninth century) “are named after places and a few after natural phenomena, and only a very small number of them located in districts near the capital, Izumo and a few other provinces, have names” (Harada 1959: 216).<sup>3</sup>

Harada dealt with the territorial nature of the village deity, but to my knowledge he did not also focus research on the question of how territories were founded. The territorial founding rites have not yet become a subject of intensive research: not generally and not in Japan. Although countless Japanese scholars have commented on the key story discussed in chapter 2 and on other stories discussed in this book, I do not know of a comprehensive study of the available sources that would propose a theoretical model of the typical procedure followed in taking possession of land in early Japan. In an article dealing with *senyū girei* (occupation rites) based on *fudoki* stories, Komatsu Kazuhiko (1977) comes to the conclusion that in the myths, the claiming of land was done by gods who placed their staff at the place where a sanctuary was to be founded, in which the claiming deity was then worshipped (1977: 125). Komatsu mentions several earlier scholars who have dealt with the subject in the context of general works on Japanese mythology, ancient politics or culture (1977: 138n1), but he does not mention an established theory regarding this subject. The same can still be said of a recent article by Sakae Wataru (2013), which deals with land-claiming myths from *Harima fudoki*. Considering how little the subject has been studied in other parts of the world, this is not surprising, although the ancient texts of Japan are particularly rich in stories about the making of territories.

We only see what we already know and understand: Goethe’s phrase written in a letter to a friend two hundred years ago is a truth that is sometimes also responsible for the neglect of a research topic. Knowing about the function of oracles and other forms of divining in the founding of ancient Greek colonies, for example, it has been easy to see that the usual interpretations of the ancient Japanese sources about land-claiming might miss something of importance as long as they ignore the role which divination played in the making of territories. Here lies the heuristic value of cross-cultural comparative research; for sometimes we indeed see something only if we already know

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3 Referring to early village cults, Harada would sometimes even speak of a sort of local ‘monotheism’ (personal communication).

it from somewhere else. Divination has become a major subject in this book, because knowing what it implied in the case of opening up land for agriculture and settlement means to understand that it was a necessary rite that was intended to stipulate a contract with the local spirit-owners of the land. This contract was a typical feature of early territorial cults, whereas the later Shinto cults are usually not said to be based on a contract with the deity worshipped. Divination is therefore dealt with at length in chapter 1, but the subject pops up again and again in other chapters as well.

The cross-cultural comparative aspect is not central in this book, but it is important enough that chapter 10 is devoted to it. Although the ancient texts of Japan first inspired me to study rites performed for taking possession of land, I would not have spent so many years on them if my interest had not also been a more general one. As a researcher in the anthropology of space with interests in protohistory, prehistory and human evolution, I thought from the beginning that different cultures may have used the same basic procedure for taking possession of land, although they enacted it in many different, culturally specific ways.

When I first realised that the ancient sources of Japan are particularly valuable for finding out what this basic procedure was like, I soon also studied the medieval literature of Iceland, which had long been known to be uniquely rich in stories telling of settlers taking possession of land in ownerless areas. In doing so, I noticed that the worship of local spirits, for example, is not well represented in the Icelandic sources because by the time these texts were compiled a Christian law had already forbidden the worship of spirits as protectors of property. This and other such differences are discussed in chapter 10, which has been added to open up a wider perspective for future research.

Comparative research is useful because it can make us familiar with hitherto neglected sources, but the validity and fruitfulness of a new working hypothesis must be tested in the study of the sources available for specific cultures. The need to work with one's own sources – even when being partly inspired by foreign ones – is the reason why, except for chapter 10, the focus in this book is only on the sources from Japan. Foreign traditions are only mentioned in a few cases where comparison seems helpful.

Chapter 9 is also an exception, but only insofar as it does not deal with ancient Japan but with ethnographic sources about traditional Japanese cult places and cult marks. The materials presented are only relevant here insofar as they can convey ideas of what the material aspects of local cults might have looked like in ancient times. Perhaps some readers will prefer to read chapters 9 and 10 first, before turning to chapter 1.

The rest of this introduction deals with the historical background of the ancient texts, with the main sources used and with the method of interpretation adopted in this book. Finally, a very brief overview of the structure and content of the chapters is given, followed by notes regarding technical details such as the transcription of Old Japanese words and the method of quoting ancient sources.

### The Focus on Early Japan

Our main sources are the oldest ('ancient') texts of Japan dating from the eighth and ninth century. All of them are available in scholarly Japanese text editions, and many also in English or other translations, but we must be aware that they have not usually been studied with a view to understanding what they say about the ritual performed when founding a territory. Translators have mostly followed established interpretations of difficult passages and adopted the meanings of words as given in dictionaries of Old Japanese. Yet, for a study like the present one, it is necessary to turn to the original texts with an awareness that even established scholarly interpretations might sometimes overlook details that can be important when one focuses on a particular new theme.

By 'early Japan' I roughly mean the archipelago that later came to be called Japan, but with the focus on Honshu and Kyushu and on its protohistory preceding the Taika Reform of 645 CE. It is taken as a matter of course that the opening up of land for agriculture and settlement was an activity that required some ritual procedure at that early time. It was not enough to clear an area, plant crops and build shelters; early settlers also had to do something to make them feel well and safe in the new micro-worlds they were creating for themselves.

As a handy term for the act of taking possession of land, I often use the word 'land-taking', which corresponds to German *Landnahme* and Old Norse *landnám*.<sup>4</sup> In English, 'land-taking' seems to be still only used in works either

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4 The literal Japanese correspondence to 'land-taking' is *kunitori*, but this word is not testified for Old Japanese. It is associated with the 'warring states' period of Japanese history (c.1477–1573) when warlords were fighting to take (*toru*) territories (*kuni*) from others. In a sense, the early form of claiming land has survived in numerous games where a dice or something else is thrown. A traditional game of this kind, played by Japanese children, is also called *kunitori* ('land-taking'). By flipping a small stone (*hajiki*) with a finger into a neighbouring field of a subdivided playground the players can claim more and more land; when all fields are occupied the player with the largest territory has won, or the players continue



dealing with the medieval settlement of Iceland or with modern land-grabbing. As a technical term, I prefer it here to 'land-occupying' or 'land-occupancy' because it fits with the old idea that even no-man's-land could not simply be occupied and settled but had to be ritually taken over from local nature spirits that were thought to own and occupy it. Often, I use instead the form 'to open up (land)', meaning that a not yet settled area was claimed and appropriated to be used for agriculture and settlement. In discussing ancient Japanese stories, I sometimes also use the term 'land-making', which translates Old Japanese *kunitsukuri* (or *kunizukuri*) and refers to the making of a territory (*kuni* in the sense of 'territory').

### Japan's Protohistory

In the Chinese histories, the inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago were originally called Wa and the first mention of these Wa says that they sent two embassies with tribute to the Han Court in 57 CE and in 107 CE (*Hou Han shu*, 'Book of the Later Han', compiled about 432 CE). As these are considered the earliest trustworthy pieces of written history about the Wa, Japan's protohistory would, strictly speaking, begin in the first century of the Christian era. However, the first substantial written information about conditions in Japan we have from *Wei zhi*, the history of the Chinese Wei Dynasty, which was compiled about 297 CE. This text reports that in the land of the Wa a queen called Himiko entertained relations with the Wei Court by sending tribute in the years 238, 243, 245 and 247 CE. Beside a detailed description of native customs, *Wei zhi* records two missions sent from the Wei to the Wa and describes the political conditions at the time of Queen Himiko, mentioning long wars that had been waged among the Wa. Figure 1 gives an impression of how a king's village may have looked at the time of Queen Himiko.

As described in *Wei zhi*, Queen Himiko's realm comprised about thirty small 'kingdoms' or 'states' (probably village states and/or regional states). Two of them were located on the islands Iki and Tsushima between the southern coast of Korea and the northern one of Kyushu; four others were on the northern coast of Kyushu and two still further away, one of them being the residence of the queen and called Yamatai. Of twenty-one other such states the text only gives the names and says they belonged to the realm of the queen but lay further off, so that it was not possible to get detailed information about them. Due

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by taking land from their rivals. Modern forms of *kunitori* games described on the internet decide by cards or by shooting darts whether the player can add a new field to his or her territory.



FIGURE 1 The reconstructed Yayoi period settlement of Yoshinogari in northern Kyushu  
SOURCE: PHOTOGRAPH BY SAIGEN JIRO 2013, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

to textual problems the location of Yamatai is still a matter of debate. Usually, it was assumed to have been established either in Kyushu or in Kinai, the central region of the ancient state on Honshu.

In whatever way the riddle of the location of Yamatai might perhaps be solved one day, the ‘Queen State’ described in *Wei zhi* was hardly the only confederation of petty states in the Japanese archipelago that in the third century was headed by a king or queen. If Yamatai was situated in Kinai it was probably identical with the realm of the Yamato Court, although the Japanese chronicles nowhere mention a Queen Himiko. If, on the other hand, Yamatai was in Kyushu, there was certainly also a more powerful state called Yamato in Kinai, as archaeology suggests, but which was not mentioned in *Wei zhi* because it did not yet have diplomatic relations with Wei China. The Wei Chinese would probably have heard of its existence, but the compiler of *Wei zhi* may have confounded it with Himiko’s state in Kyushu.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Kida Sadakichi (1917) argued that the compilers of *Wei zhi* confounded the Yamato Court with Himiko’s realm in Kyushu, which he thought was subject to Yamato. I would rather suggest that in the time between the two Wei missions to the Wa, the king of Ito, who had been subject to Queen Himiko, had come to be subject to Yamato. This would mean that the second Chinese mission got new information regarding the far distant Yamato in Kinai, which could have led to confounding Yamato with the Queen State in Kyushu.

What seems clear is that eventually some rulers of larger political units would tend to further increase their power by subduing smaller territories and by challenging rivalling powers. The protohistory of Japan was therefore not only a time of settlement when small groups of immigrants from the Asiatic continent as well as already established settlers more or less peacefully opened up new land for agriculture and settlement; it was also a time of warfare when different powers came to struggle for supremacy. The building of tumuli (*kofun*) of various sizes, which has given the name to the archaeological Kofun period, clearly indicates that many political powers coexisted at that time (variously dated, e.g., 250 to 538 CE). One of the most developed and successful ones eventually emerged as the Yamato kingdom (Yamato Court), which was reigned over by kings that the later chronicles call emperors.

By the second half of the seventh century the Yamato Court had become so dominant that it proclaimed a 'reform' by which all land and people in (the main parts of) the archipelago should come under its jurisdiction. This was the Taika Reform, which is usually dated after the coup d'état of 645 CE, although according to *Nihon shoki* it was promulgated by an imperial edict on the first day of the year Taika 2 (646 CE). The innovation gradually led to the formation of the *ritsuryō* state, so-called by scholars because it was a state based on laws adopted from Chinese models, including interdictions (*ritsu*) and commandments (*ryō*). By the beginning of the eighth century the *ritsuryō* state was considered to be sufficiently powerful to claim sovereignty over most of present-day Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu.

### Innovations Introduced by the Taika Reform

One of the most important innovations of the Taika Reform was the abolishment of private property in land used for rice cultivation. Paddy land newly belonged to the state headed by the emperor. To have it worked by the population, a census, a system of temporary distribution and redistribution of land (*handen shūju*) and a taxation system were initiated (Aston II: 207–208; NKBT 68: 281).

Further, the *jingi* cult, a national religious organisation was established, according to which shrines were registered, ranked and subjected to rules regarding rituals. The term *jingi*, probably an abbreviation of *tenjin-chigi* ('heavenly deities and earthly spirits'), was taken over from Chinese, but while it is said to have referred in China to specific classes of deities and rituals, the ancient texts of Japan often used the term to designate the totality of 'heavenly deities' and 'land deities' (*amatsukami* and *kunitsukami*) recognised by the *jingi* system.

The administration of the *jingi* cult was entrusted to a special government office called Jingikan, the ‘Office of Jingi Deities’, which together with the ‘Great Council of State’ (Daijōkan or Dajōkan) formed the highest organ of the *ritsuryō* government. Although the *jingi* cult was partly based on Chinese ritual laws, the Jingikan as a special state office for this cult had no parallel in China. Formally, the Jingikan had precedence over the much larger Daijōkan, but the officials of the Daijōkan held higher ranks.<sup>6</sup>

A third novelty that appeared in *ritsuryō* time was the compilation of the two national ‘histories’ or ‘chronicles’, *Kojiki* (completed 712) and *Nihon shoki* (720), and of the provincial collections of local reports that came to be called *fudoki* (‘Records of Wind and Earth’).

The change to the *jingi* ideology of the ancient state was a major paradigm shift that may have begun already before the Taika Reform and later led the authors of both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* to often qualify deities as ‘heavenly’ or ‘earthly’. Nevertheless, the older paradigm based on the territorial ideology has left many traces in these ancient works as well. It is generally better represented in *Kojiki*, which in this respect reflects older traditions and is the more important source in the present book.

The two ‘histories’ are the main sources of our knowledge of Japanese mythology, myth-history and early history up to the death of Empress Suiko (628; *Kojiki*) or the abdication of Empress Jitō (697; *Nihon shoki*). Since both works were concluded when the *ritsuryō* state and the *jingi* cult were already well established, it is assumed that their compilation was partly motivated by the need to explain and legitimise the new situation under the laws introduced since the Taika Reform. *Kojiki* has a preface saying that it was based on two earlier records that were memorised by a certain Hieda no Are in the time of Emperor Tenmu (r. 673–686) and written down by Yasumaro in the time of Empress Genmei (r. 707–715). *Nihon shoki* often offers different versions that sometimes put the stress on the *jingi* ideology of the new state or even deliberately contradict *Kojiki*. The understanding that these two sources must be studied separately is a major progress of recent research (Kōnoshi 2000; Kishine 2016; Teeuwen 2018). Paying attention to this, I usually keep their doctrines apart, rather than trying to extract from them a single meaning by

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6 Helen Hardacre in her comprehensive book on Shinto (2017: 18) takes the position that the *jingi* religion of the *ritsurō* state represents the institutional origin of Shinto. She notes that this “is consonant with recent studies by Inoue Nobutaka, Mitsuhashi Tadashi, Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun, and Mori Mizue, while departing to some extent from the views of Kuroda Toshio, Mark Teeuwen, Fabio Rambelli, and others”. Okada Shōji mentions four different theories that place the establishment of Shinto at different times: in the seventh (second half) and eighth century, in the eighth and ninth centuries, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and in the fifteenth century (Okada 2010: 14–16).

combining what they differently say. While keeping them apart, I do not share, however, the now frequently held opinion that the older *Kojiki* presents the myths in younger forms than *Nihon shoki*, so that it would make sense to speculate about how a specific *Kojiki* myth might include, omit or change material from assumedly older forms of the same myth included as variants in *Nihon shoki* (Wittkamp 2018: 449, 469).

### Different Versions of the Same Story in Nihon Shoki

Since many myths or stories about the ‘age of the gods’ (OJ *kami no yo*) have been handed down in two or several versions, scholars usually assumed that there was an original and ‘true’ version, while variants deviate from the ‘truth’ and were therefore either not taken over by the ancient compilers, as in the case of *Kojiki* (Philippi: 41), or were included as variants of a main version, as in the first two books of *Nihon shoki*. Isomae Jun’ichi (2010), who has recently dealt with this problem, speaks of “alleged book’s records”, meaning records quoted from books that were alleged to have existed among various ancient clans. He argues that the variants were not deviations from an original ‘true’ version but rather coexisting accounts that were excluded or co-opted in a process of canonisation. This view seems to me more likely because canonisation imbues a text with normative meaning, which corresponds to what I mean by referring to different ‘doctrines’, at least as far as the politico-religious system of the ancient law state and its mythical prehistory is concerned.

What the authors or compilers of these chronicles apparently considered to be ‘true’ depended on whether it was in harmony with the actual ideas and plans of the government at the time of compilation; and since the compilation was based on earlier records and begun already in the time of Emperor Tenmu (673–686), *Kojiki* naturally does not always also reflect the official thinking of the government when it was concluded in 712. This means that *Nihon shoki* may have been compiled as an update that should represent the new thinking and plans of the government at its later time. If, in contrast to *Kojiki*, the mythological parts of *Nihon shoki* contain variants, then the cases studied for this book suggest that it is to make the variants support the main version, to modify older versions according to new ideas, or to identify them as wrong and outdated. The three versions of the land-ceding myth, for example, differ significantly in *Nihon shoki*. The first two versions (9.0 and 9.1) probably represent the official doctrine at the time of concluding the compilation when they suggest – in contrast to *Kojiki* – that Ōkuninushi ceded the rule of the land without asking anything in return. Variant 9.3, however, corresponds in this particular respect to the older doctrine of *Kojiki*, but in *Nihon shoki* this older version

is modified by saying that Ōnamuchi was offered a shrine, instead of having requested one, and that this shrine had already been built for him in the god age and with Ame no Hohi as the first priest. This clearly contradicts *Kojiki* but fits with the government's new plan to have the Izumo Shrine built in Kizuki and with a head priest descended from Ame no Hohi (chapter 6). Moreover, by suggesting that the Ise Shrine was founded at the time when, according to *Kojiki*, the Izumo Shrine was founded, the later *Nihon shoki* again suggests that the author of *Kojiki* was wrong and may have confounded the two dates.

On the other hand, there are also cases where no new political motif was involved and the compilers of *Nihon shoki* only tried to clarify the meaning of a myth in *Kojiki*. A good example is the descent myth discussed in chapter 5. The main version 9.0 probably represents the compilers' interpretation of the *Kojiki* text and 9.1 was chosen as the first variant because it best fits with this version and makes it more understandable. The three other variants (9.2, 9.4, 9.6), however, may have been added to identify them as partly wrong and outdated.

### The God Age Mythology

Speaking of Japanese mythology, one usually thinks of the mythology that is expounded in the first parts of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. This is the mythology of the 'god age' (*jindai* or *kami no yo*), a sort of mythic prehistory that leads from the time of the first gods and the creation of the archipelago to Ninigi's descent from heaven and on to the time of his descendants ruling in a part of Kyushu. The two main spaces of the god age mythology are heaven (*ame*, *ama*) and land (*kuni*), which are named respectively Takama no hara (the plain of high heaven) and Ashihara no Nakatsukuni (the central land of the reed plain/s). Takama no hara (or Takamagahara) is the dwelling area of the heavenly gods, whereas Ashihara no Nakatsukuni is the earth as *kuni* (land, territory) and may also mean the great land that will be ruled by the imperial dynasty. Within that land, geographic areas are distinguished by using the names of later provinces, districts, villages, mountains and rivers, but the spatial extension of such areas usually remains vague, and sometimes a mountain or river is named but cannot be identified in its location.

The protagonists of the god age mythology are gods (*kami*), often anthropomorphic gods who can act like human beings. Takama no hara, 'the Plain of High Heaven', is pictured as a landscape with a mountain named Kaguyama, a river, a marketplace and an area where Amaterasu, the 'heaven shining one', has rice fields and a weaving house. Amaterasu is likened to the sun and when she once hides in a heavenly stone house because her brother Susanoo has

defiled her property, the world falls into ‘eternal’ darkness. Sometimes the gods are distinguished as *amatsukami* (‘gods of heaven’) or *kunitsukami* (‘gods of the land’), which in English is often rendered as ‘heavenly’ or ‘earthly’ gods, respectively. In principle, heavenly gods dwell in heaven but can sometimes descend to the land and even settle down there. The land gods, however, have always lived on earth and are almost never said to ascend to heaven. These concepts changed over time, however, and are not consistently used in the ancient texts.

The god age mythology (see the overview at the beginning of chapter 4) is now usually understood as a scholarly construct that was devised by court historians who adapted older mythic traditions to form a narrative that should provide the ancient state with a long history and with mythic sanction for imperial rule and the policy of the new law state that took form after the Taika reforms.

### The Fudoki Mythology

The *fudoki* of the various provinces, on the other hand, are basically registers of the names of administrative units of the *ritsuryō* state but include traditional stories (mostly fragments of such) that explain why these names or older ones had originally been given. Their value for the government which ordered them to be compiled has long been a mystery to scholars. Karl Florenz described them in his history of Japanese literature as reports “made according to a common schema, extremely dry and tasteless, and uncritical in their inclusion of materials. Sober observation and fanciful drivel are mixed together in colourful mixtures” (1909: 73, from the German). So small was the interest of Western scholars in these early works as a body of meaningful texts that for a long time, apart from selected stories, only two of the five old *fudoki* – the *Izumo fudoki* and the *Hitachi fudoki* – have been completely translated into English. It was not before the end of the last century that a first English translation of all five extant ‘old’ *fudoki* appeared (Aoki 1997).

*Fudoki* stories are generally legends, but as they often tell of gods, they are sometimes regarded as myths too. We could therefore also speak of a *fudoki* mythology that differs from the *jindai* (‘god age’) mythology in character and by focusing on minor territories. Since these territories are relatively well defined in their location relative to mountains and rivers, the *fudoki* are not only important sources for the study of ancient geography but also for understanding how territories used to be founded. As territories got their names when they were first opened up, or when they were renamed by a new ruler, most stories in the *fudoki* can be assumed to allude to something that allegedly happened when the respective territory was established.

The compilation of the *fudoki* reports was based on the following imperial edict of Wadō 6 (713 CE):

To all provinces of the Central Region and the Seven Circuits: Write the names of the districts and villages with pleasing graphs; list up the silver and copper, dyes and colours, grasses and trees, birds and animals, etc. which are found in these districts; put down in a register the fertility of the lands, the reason for the appellations of mountains, rivers, and uncultivated fields, and old stories and strange things handed down by the elders; and report this up. (\**Shoku nihongi*, Wadō 6. Translated from Akimoto 1958: 9)

The *fudoki* were and often still are referred to as a sort of local gazetteer, but their main purpose was not to list the local products and indicate the fertility of the land, but to report the valid names of the districts and villages as administrative units of the new law state. The last two items of the imperial edict ordered the provinces to report the traditional names of landscape features as well as old stories and strange things, but the responses to this in the extant *fudoki* show that this was understood to mean that the old stories and strange things must explain the names of the traditional territories. By referring to these territories as “mountains, rivers, and uncultivated fields”, which was an expression for ‘no-man’s-land’, the edict indicated that these areas were no longer recognised as independent territories but had become administrative units of the emperor’s realm and as such should “write their names with pleasing graphs” (graphs consisting of two Chinese characters).

Perhaps the most common present view about the *fudoki* is that one can see in their stories a way of ‘speaking of ownership and rulership’, as Shimizu Yoshio has put it (1996). Sakae Wataru, for example, regards the land-claiming myths in *Harima fudoki* (full name: *Harima no kuni fudoki*, ‘*fudoki* of the province of Harima’) as stories about the local deity’s original land-claiming that used to be told on the occasion of periodic rituals that were intended to promote agriculture and to provide legitimation to the rule of the village chiefs (2013: 356). Sakae thus sees the *fudoki* as sources that testify to the performance of such village rituals during the protohistoric centuries. Isomae Jun’ichi (1999), by contrast, noted that the *fudoki* contributed to the extension and consolidation of the state by “surveying the geographical extent of the imperial line’s involvement in the development of the land through tours and expeditions of pacification”. Since such tours were intended to ascertain the loyalty of territories and to subject new territories to one’s rule, this interpretation clearly recognises a significance in terms of state policy in the *fudoki*. This is particularly evident in those parts where a representative of the political centre is



mentioned in connection with explaining a place name. Such passages suggest that the respective person made a territory subject to the political centre and named or renamed it on that occasion.

Another interesting aspect was mentioned by Mitani Kuniaki (1986), who noticed a double structure in the *fudoki*. On the one hand, they consist of ‘place name origin legends’ (*chimeikigen densetsu*) that take the form of land-claiming stories (*tochi senyū setsuwa*); on the other hand, one must not overlook the magic of the written word in presenting such stories to the imperial court. Mitani thereby seems to suggest that these stories were ultimately useful as documents or charters confirming the actual extension of the area ruled by the emperor who ordered their compilation (Mitani 1986: 198). I would go a step further and suggest that the primary issue was to indicate that the traditional territories in the provinces had been properly claimed and opened up and have therefore been rightly held and ruled. The crucial point was that reporting this information to the government of the *ritsuryō* state, and doing so in response to an order issued by that government, may have meant abandoning that traditional right and transferring it to the government of the new state. I therefore see, in the compilation of the *fudoki*, a law-symbolic formality that provided the government of the new state with written proof of submission and loyalty from the side of the earlier territories.<sup>7</sup>

### The Method of Interpretation

The fact that I first studied the subject of this book in a research project that was carried out with a special focus on space and space-related problems has of course had an influence on the way in which I approach the ancient texts interpreted in this book. In many cases, it was the focus on space that has led to new insights, but I do not draw attention to this each time. I wish to mention here only one important point which I have been especially aware of when reading ancient stories about the founding of territories: such stories usually play out in horizontal space.

There is, for instance, the linguistic problem of how horizontal space was verbally represented in the texts. Old Japanese *mine* is usually translated as ‘top’ or ‘mountaintop’ (its modern meaning), but comparing its use in the ancient

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<sup>7</sup> I have suggested and partly discussed this view before in several articles (1992a: 102n35). Herbert Plutschow presented it in two of his books, crediting my contribution and making me aware of the earlier work by Ide Itaru (Plutschow 1990: 82n18; Plutschow 1995: 22). For a comprehensive collective work about all the *fudoki*, including the *itsubun* (quotations from *fudoki* in later works), see Kanda 2009. This work includes, on pp. 327–59, a synopsis of the more than 650 place-name-origin stories that are contained in these ancient reports.

texts we can notice that the word rather designated either a high mountain (when added to a mountain's name) or a place high up on a mountain's side. Although this is a fact known to linguists (KKJ 2012: 1157), it is not usually considered in translations. When *mine* is used to describe the location of a cult place, this makes a great difference, because a place high up on a mountain's side can still be at the source of a river that fructifies the fields below. In this sense, a *mine* could belong to a horizontal space that extended from the flat bottom of a valley up along a mountain's side to the visible horizon. It is this kind of 'horizontal' space – space extending towards the local horizon – that is usually referred to in the ancient texts of Japan. Reading that a shrine was on the top of a mountain, however, we may rather get the misleading idea of a shrine related to the sky in a vertically structured macrocosm.

Or, to give another example, the 'throw and fall' motif discussed in chapter 1 has been said to be related to the concept of a 'spirit of the land' or of the 'great earth' (*daichi*) that would accept the falling object on its land. I argue, however, that this story motif refers to an archaic form of divination which is addressed to land spirits that were assumed to dwell 'on' the land not 'in' the earth (as opposed to the sky). Unfortunately, there is still a tendency to regard the vertical world view as extremely old, which often leads to a mistaken understanding of spatial relationships in the study of ancient texts. This is partly due to the fact that we are members of civilisations with religions that have developed a vertical world view in the course of their history. In Japan, it was Buddhism that propagated the vertical world view, and Buddhist influence probably accounts for the tradition of many Shinto shrines still claiming that their deity was originally worshipped on the very top of their mountain. Noted scholars like Harada Toshiaki (1981: 38, 113) and Ōba Iwao (1967: 51–52) refuted this view long ago, but many still uphold it. In chapter 5, we shall deal with an important myth where research has always been deadlocked on a once established interpretation that fits with the vertical world view but finds no convincing support in the ancient sources of Japan.

Mountains (*yama*) often played an important part in the founding of territories, but the word *yama* apparently meant then usually only a part of what we would normally call a mountain. Still now the word *yama* often means 'forest' in the compound *miyayama* (literally, 'shrine mountain'). A *miyayama* usually covers only a part of a mountain and can even lie flat in a plain.

Occasionally, it is also important to know that rivers may have had different names in different sections of their course down to the sea and that a word for 'source' may have had different meanings according to context. Old Japanese *minamoto* could designate the source of a river in the normal sense (where the waters come out of the earth), but it could also mean the place where two source rivers meet and form the beginning of the main river.

The most important point concerning the method of interpretation is, however, that I only deal with stories about the founding of territories and interpret them consistently in terms of whether and how they mention land-taking rites. In doing so, I compare them with a theoretical model that can be described here from the very beginning because it has already been published before in two small articles.

### The Theoretical Model

The model characterises the territorial founding ritual as a two-phase process that creates a bipolar space, as schematically indicated in figure 2.

First, the local spirits (*kami*), which can sometimes become visible in the form of wild animals, are regarded as owners of the land. As such, they are addressed in an act of divining to find out if they agree to depart from the area and enter into a cult relationship with the settler. This act is performed at the entrance to the territory or in front of it. If a good sign is seen, this first phase is concluded by placing a claiming mark at A.

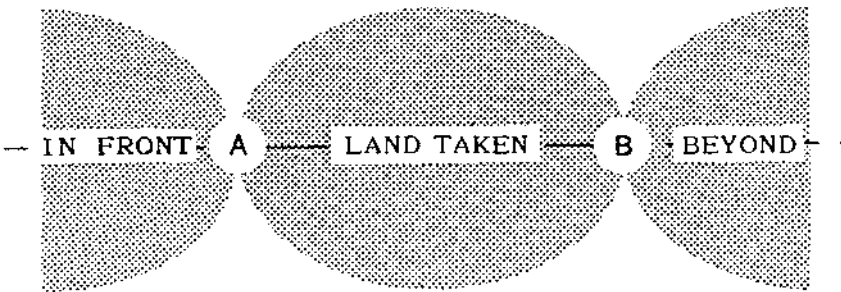


FIGURE 2 Theoretical model of the two-phase ritual performed when taking possession of land in ownerless regions. The shape of the areas vary, of course, depending on the circumstances

DIAGRAM BY THE AUTHOR

The second phase may begin when returning after some time that is granted to the spirits for leaving the area. The land between A and B is now cleared and spirits thought to still be there are expelled beyond B at the 'upper' boundary, where another mark is placed. The land beyond B is then dedicated as the spirits' new dwelling space where they will

henceforth be worshipped. Their function as worshipped spirits is to protect the land opened up between A and B as well as the people belonging to it. When being addressed in rituals, they may be represented by a singly local chief-spirit or deity. The place of worship is situated beyond B, but probably rather close to the boundary at B.

As should become clear in the first two chapters, this model is well based on explicit sources. It is therefore scientifically sound to use it as an analytical tool in the study of stories featuring the land-taking motif. Comparing such stories with the theoretical model, we shall look for correspondences between the stories and the model. If it turns out that a story supports the model or that using the model sometimes leads to significant new insights, we can conclude that the model proves fruitful and is worth being considered in future research.

To correctly understand the model, it is essential to bear in mind that it only regards the basic structure of the ritual; it does not postulate that the ritual was performed everywhere in the same way. To the contrary, the methods of divining, clearing the land, marking boundaries and preparing the cult place could differ from place to place, but the basic structure of the ritual, whose parts are held together by a common logic, had in principle to be the same everywhere because the legal validity of the territory was based on it. That it has always and everywhere been correctly performed in history cannot, of course, be postulated too.

The plausibility of the ritual procedure represented by the model is evident if we consider that it was similar to what human settlers used to do when they took land from other human owners. They had to first ask the owner and get to terms with him or her, but the conditions of the deal were different. They did not have to worship the former human owner; for the human owner was only the tenant, whereas the real owner was still the deity who had owned the land from the beginning. For getting land from other humans, one had therefore not only to pay the required price for the land but additionally to take over the territorial cult which belonged to that land. This is the likely reason why the abolishment of private property in rice land required that the government of the ancient law state had to make regular offerings to countless registered shrine deities all over the country.

Another point to stress is that the stories on which the theoretical model is based can be classified as *charter myths* because their likely purpose was to indicate that the respective territories had been properly founded before they were integrated into the ancient state. To fulfil this purpose and to justify the political integration of these territories, the *fudoki* stories had to refer to at least one ritual act that was considered valid. The way in which they did

it, however, was frequently so unrealistic that modern scholars often failed to understand the mere hints.

The main purpose of the present book is to demonstrate the fruitfulness of this theoretical model by using it as an analytical tool in discussing numerous myths and legends from the ancient texts of Japan. I hope to show that the model not only suggests new interpretations of difficult passages in the ancient texts, but also opens up insights into the nature of territorial cults and the basic spatial structure of the corresponding territories.

### The Structure of the Book

The book consists of ten chapters, the first seven of which analyse myths and legends from ancient Japanese texts to demonstrate the fruitfulness of the theoretical model described on the preceding pages.

These chapters first discuss stories dealing with relatively small territories of different size (chapters 1, 2 and 3); then they deal with three important stories of the god age mythology that regard a much larger territory, namely, the myth of the making of the great land, the myth of the ceding of the rule of the great land to the heavenly descendants of Amaterasu (chapter 4) and the myth of the descent from heaven of Amaterasu's grandchild Ninigi, who begins ruling a peripheral part of the great land (chapter 5).

The next two chapters discuss two further consequences of the land-ceding myth: the foundation of two shrines at the periphery of the country roughly west and east of the ancient capital – the Izumo Shrine (chapter 6) and the Ise Shrine (chapter 7), respectively. Chapter 8 draws conclusions and describes various aspects of territorial cults in early Japan.

Chapter 9 presents ethnographic material on cult signs and sacred groves in modern Japan, whereas chapter 10 opens up comparative perspectives on land-taking rites generally by briefly discussing sources from medieval Iceland, ancient Greece, Vedic India and recent Southeast Asia.

### Romanisation

Intending to also address readers used to older translations of the relevant texts, I make no attempt to render Old Japanese names and words by following one of the new linguistic theories about how they were pronounced in ancient Japan. When I sometimes wish to mention an Old Japanese form, I follow the *furigana* reading of the Japanese text editions and prefix the abbreviation OJ

to indicate that it is supposed to be an ancient spelling (OJ *kaha*, instead of *kawa*; OJ *Ihibo* instead of *Iibo*).

In my own translations, however, and in discussing stories and translating from modern Japanese, I consistently use the revised Hepburn system to put Old and modern Japanese words into Roman letters. OJ *-ha*, for example, is rendered as *-wa* (Shisawa; Naniwa), OJ *ihi* (cooked rice) as *ii* (OJ *Ihibo*>*Iibo*, name of a hill) and *oho* as *ō* (*Ōkami* instead of OJ *Ohokami*, ‘great god’ or ‘great deity’). When quoting from older English translations, however, the orthography is not modernised, except in a few cases where it is indicated that the spelling is modified.

The word *kami* (‘spirit’, ‘deity’ or ‘god’) is written with italics, although this is often not done any more in Western books dealing with Japanese religions.

Assuming that anachronisms belong to ancient texts such as those used here, I do not follow the modern practice of using ‘king’ instead of ‘emperor’ when an early ruler is referred to with characters read as *tennō* or OJ *sumeramikoto*.

The name of the god usually called *Ōkuninushi* in *Kojiki* is written with different characters in *Nihon shoki* and elsewhere that are variously read as *Ōnamuchi*, *Ōnamochi*, *Ōanamuchi*, *Ōanamochi* (etc.). I always quote this latter name as *Ōnamuchi* and sometimes also use the double forms *Ōnamuchi/Ōkuninushi* or *Ōkuninushi/Ōnamuchi* when I do not particularly refer to only one of the two chronicles.

The names of deities will only be translated when their meaning is clear and informative in a given context. Usually, the suffixed title *no Mikoto* will not be added to the names, except in translations. In mentioning the names of Japanese authors, I follow convention and cite them by giving the surname first.

### Quoting from Ancient Texts

The first two books of *Nihon shoki*, which deal with the ‘god age’ (*jindai* or *kami no yo*), are usually analysed to consist of eleven parts called *dan*, numbered from 1 to 11, and of variant versions or fragments that are introduced with ‘in one book it is written ...’. For easy reference, the main text of these eleven parts is referred to by the numbers 1.0, 2.0, 3.0 etc. and the variants of each part by replacing the 0 with 1 or 2 or 3 etc. In part 9, for example, the main text is referred to as 9.0 and the variants as 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 etc.

English translations from *Nihon shoki* are quoted from the two separately numbered parts in Aston’s translation (1956, originally 1896). For example, Aston I: 85 refers to page 85 of part I of that translation. References to Philippi’s

translations of *Kojiki* are made by giving the page number only (Philippi: 203, instead of Philippi 1968: 203).

When only the name of a Japanese text or text edition is mentioned for a translated passage, this means that the translation is my own one. In such cases, an asterisk is added before the name of the text or text edition (e.g. \**Izumo fudoki* or \*NKBT 2: 181). In other cases, trans. is prefixed to the translator's name (trans. McKinney 2013).

The translations of *fudoki* stories include entries from the five *ko-fudoki* or 'old *fudoki*' of the provinces of Hitachi, Izumo, Harima, Bungo and Hizen, as well as a few *fudoki itsubun*, separate stories from later works that were said or thought to have been quoted from a lost *fudoki* (*Ise*, *Owari*, etc.) or from a lost part of a *fudoki* (*Harima* etc.).

Since singular and plural are usually not distinguished in Japanese words, I rarely also use forms like chopstick/s to indicate that both singular or plural may be meant in the given context.

Other ancient or medieval sources that are occasionally quoted are dated when they are first mentioned. For further details about them, interested readers are referred to the Internet.

## Divination, the Crucial Rite

Already in *Wei zhi*, the third-century inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago are said to have consulted divination when undertaking something. The text says that they used to burn bones, first indicating what they divine about and then looking if the cracks predict good fortune (Tsunoda et al. 1969: 5). This was similar to what the ancient Japanese texts mention as the burning of the shoulder blade of a deer (OJ *futomani*), but it was hardly the oldest and certainly not the only method of divination that was practised in early Japan. Perhaps the most common method used when claiming land was ‘throw and fall divination’, as I am going to call it for want of a fitting established term. Many stories in the *fudoki* allude to this but do so in more or less cryptic statements that are not usually understood as allusions to divination.

The book *Divination in the Ancient World* (Rosenberger 2013) defines the term on the back cover like this: “Divination may be a means [...] of legitimising decisions, to decide competition or to achieve distinctiveness.” When taking possession of land, divination was a method of legitimising the decision to take, but it also implied a promise. It is this promise that has been forgotten, and with it also the function and deeper meaning of divination as it was used in taking possession of land.

Unfortunately, divining in the context of opening up land is therefore a rite that tends to be often ignored, although it is of capital importance for understanding the logic implied in the territorial foundation ritual. Asking permission from the *kami* for disturbing their domain in founding a settlement is usually thought to have been done with prayer and offerings and with the founding of a shrine, for “without a shrine, a place is ‘unfit for human habitation,’ because proper relations with the Kami have not been established” (Hardacre 2017: 1). The conclusion is correct, but it would be more precise to say that asking permission was done by an act of divining that had to be taken in advance.

Implied or expressed in land divination was the stipulation of a cult contract, according to which the local spirits had to leave the area to the settler and accept in compensation the conditions of a cult relationship. By giving a good sign the local spirits agreed with the terms of this contract and had to be worshipped as ‘divine beings’ as long as the land was held by the settlers.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Note that the Latin verb *divinare* is derived from the adjective *divinus* (‘divine’). Etymologically, it could therefore have had an early meaning of ‘to make divine’.



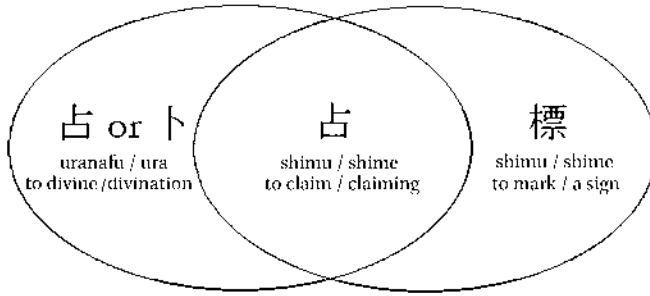


FIGURE 3 Semantic relations between Chinese characters and Old Japanese concepts such as claiming and divining  
DIAGRAM BY THE AUTHOR

The usual neglect of divining in discussions of Japanese land-claiming stories is difficult to understand, given the fact that the Old Japanese word *shimu* ('to claim'), as it appears in OJ *kunishime* ('land-claiming'), was written with a Chinese character 占 that basically meant 'to divine' (OJ *urafu* or *uranafu*).<sup>2</sup> The nominal form of OJ *shimu* ('to claim') was *shime*, which meant 'a sign' and was written with a different character (figure 3). If there was a single cultural context in which all three concepts – divining, claiming and marking – were intimately connected, then it was the claiming of land. In the course of later history, *shimu* became *shimeru* and assumed the meaning 'to occupy', but while this word is still written with the same character, which also means 'to divine', the idea of divining is no longer associated with it.

Divining was by no means something of minor importance for the cult of the land's guardian deity. To the contrary, it was the essential rite that constituted the cult relationship. The use of the same Chinese character 占 for 'divining' and 'claiming' does not justify that (perhaps under the influence of modern *shimeru*, 'to occupy') one often does not differentiate between divining and claiming or neglects the aspect of divining altogether. In principle, divining was a rite that made sense because it did not always have to be successful. Although it usually turns out to be successful in stories, it is necessary to differentiate because divining had in principle the form of a question-and-answer pattern in which the answer was given by a sign whose meaning was determined in advance by a 'divining oath'. To ignore the aspect of divining therefore

2 The lower part of the Chinese character 占 is said to represent a 'mouth' or, according to a newer interpretation, an 'ossuary'. The upper part indicates the 'crack' that appeared when the shell of a turtle was burnt.

means to miss what divining implied, namely, the offer of a cult agreement such as described in our key story discussed in chapter 2.

Knowing about the meaning of divining, we can also better understand the implications of the question-and-answer pattern in other parts of the ancient texts that tell how gods or human chiefs took land from other gods or human chiefs. Whereas spirits were addressed by divining because they were assumed to speak by giving signs, chiefs and anthropomorphic gods of the mythology could speak with words, so that divination could then be replaced by a verbal request or order for ceding the land in a meeting with the landowner. In myths, such exchanges of questions and answers usually end with the chief or god ceding the rule of his land to the challenger. A point of considerable consequence for the interpretation of certain myths and legends is the fact that the initial question can take different forms in such episodes, either that of an explicit request to surrender the land or that of a seemingly harmless question such as “is there a land?” or “what is the name of your land?” The latter form appears repeatedly in the foundation story of the Inner Shrine at Ise (chapter 7). The most direct form – “will you cede this land?” – we shall meet in the god age mythology where the central myth tells that Ōkuninushi, who has ‘made’ (opened up) the great land, is forced to cede the rule to the heavenly descendants (chapter 4). What takes the form of an exchange of questions and answers between anthropomorphic gods in this land-ceding myth corresponds to what settlers would do by divining when they addressed the spirit-owners of the land in an area not yet occupied by human settlers. In either case, the land-ceding *kami* (nature spirits or mythical deities or gods) finally had to be worshipped.

One of the few scholars who have emphasised the importance of the land-claiming motif in almost all place name origin stories of the *fudoki* is Ide Itaru. He did this in an article where he classifies all place name tales according to whether the origin of the land name is said to be based on (1) the name, (2) the action or (3) the words of a deity or of a human person, or (4) on something else (Ide 1970: 290). Ide quotes numerous passages to illustrate that all four ways have to do with claiming and opening up land for cultivation. Using terms like *senyū* (‘claim’, ‘occupy’), *kaihatsu* (‘open up’) and *takushoku* (‘open up and cultivate’), he also indicates that claiming was only the first part of a procedure that included the opening up of the land for cultivation (1970: 290). According to classes (1) and (2), the names refer either to the land-claimers or to their actions which were supposed to have taken place at the time of claiming land. Regarding (3), Ide distinguishes instances where a word is spoken on the occasion of land-claiming (OJ *kunishime*) or of founding a shrine (*chinza*), and other cases where the context is a god’s or a person’s tour of inspection, a

land-viewing (*kunimi*) and so on. Although Ide notes that such explanations of place names may not seem convincing to modern people, he thinks they were considered valid due to the ancient *kotodama* ('word soul') belief. According to this belief, words could have a special power when they were used in certain contexts.

Under (4), finally, Ide classifies strange occurrences, such as are often given in the *fudoki* as reasons why a place name had been chosen. He suggests that people of the time could see in them expressions of a 'divine will' and behind this the 'magic of nature', and that they could relate them to their life (Ide 1970: 296). What Ide failed to see, like most scholars who have dealt with instances of the last category, is that strange occurrences as expressions of a 'divine will' or the 'magic of nature' may have been mentioned as allusions to signs received in performing divination.

The main problem in the study of ancient Japanese stories about land-taking is that explicit references to initial divination in the sense of using a word meaning 'divination' is usually lacking in the *fudoki*. To understand some of the mere allusions to divination, however, we must have an adequate knowledge of the divining methods used, whereas to acquire such a knowledge we must compare relevant stories with one another. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss stories referring to divining by throwing or shooting, for this is the kind of divination that is often alluded to but usually not understood as divination. First, we look at cases where the thrown thing hits the land by falling down and then at other cases where it reaches the land by floating and drifting ashore.

### Divining with Things Thrown and Falling Down

Numerous stories in the various *fudoki* explain a place name by saying that something 'fell down' or 'was dropped' there (OJ *otsu*, 'to fall or drop'). Scholars have therefore spoken of the 'falling' motif, of 'falling legends' or of the 'dropping myth'.<sup>3</sup> That they do not speak of allusions to divination suggests that they are not aware that the 'falling' motif refers to a form of divining.

3 *Ochiru* or *ochi* (Seki 1994: 41–59); *geraku setsuwa* (Uegaki 1997: 71111); dropping myth (Palmer 2016: 1611424). Katō Kiyoshi (2009) classifies the story motifs in the more than 600 *fudoki* entries and lists the falling motif as *mono o otosu* ('to drop a thing'). Komatsu Kazuhiko (1977) never speaks of 'divination' (*uranai* or *ukei*) in his article about land claiming ceremonies in Japanese mythology and the same is true for Iizumi Kenji (1989) in a study of land-claiming in *Harima fudoki*. Iizumi interprets the throw as 'indicating the enshrinement of the deity' (*kami no chinza o hyōji suru*) and mentions a scholar who sees in '*ochiru*' a special term meaning 'land claiming' (1989: 85).

Seki Kazuhiko (1994) rightly mentions in this context the children's game of asking about the next day's weather by kicking off one *geta* (a wooden clog) and observing how it falls to the ground. But although he sees in this game a sort of divining (*uranai*) and finds this very suggestive regarding the meaning of OJ *ochi* ('falling') in the ancient legends, he does not say it was an allusion to divination but sees the background of such stories in the people's feeling that the great earth has spiritual power (Seki 1994: 41–50). Similarly, Edwina Palmer, in her translation of *Harima fudoki*, follows Japanese scholars when she notes that "objects that were dropped or fell seem to have had some special or magical significance". Noting that "most dropping myths in *Harima fudoki* are associated with territorial possession", she suggests that by accepting the dropped item the spirit of the land indicated the dropper's right to it (Palmer 2016: 161n424). This comes closer to the point, but it would still seem better to speak of land spirits in the plural and interpret the falling as an allusion to divining. The concept of a 'spirit of the land' (in the singular) or of the 'great earth' (*daichi*), as Seki calls it, appears to be based on the ancient Japanese concept of *kunitama* and on Sino-Japanese expressions like *chi no kami* or *shikichi no kami*, terms that used to refer to the guardian deities of particular pieces of land (territories). Because in agriculture such spirits were associated with the fertility of the ground, it is often assumed that they were thought to dwell 'in' the ground, as chthonic spiritual powers, as it were. The spirits (*kami*) addressed in taking possession of land, however, occasionally become visible in the form of snakes or other wild animals and were therefore imagined to dwell 'on' the land, not 'in' the ground.

As mentioned in the introduction, this is a crucial point where the perspective of spatial anthropology requires differentiation with respect to whether the horizontal or the vertical world view is relevant in a given context. The idea of earth spirits dwelling in the earth or under the ground corresponds to the vertical world view, whereas the horizontal world view, which was relevant in taking possession of land, accounts for the different idea that earth spirits or land spirits are dwelling on the land. When they are expelled from a site, they leave horizontally, and when they later visit a place of worship, they come from their new dwelling area, which is often on the slope of a nearby mountain (Domenig 2014: 120–23).

Living 'on' the land, these nature spirits (earth or land spirits) were nevertheless imagined to be in control of the local weather. They were therefore not only thought to be able to make the fields produce rich crops, but they could also occasionally express their anger by raising a sudden storm. The latter idea is well expressed in the story leading to Yamatotakeru's death in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (chapter 8) and is still familiar to ethnic groups of Southeast

Asia and other parts of the world. It was sometimes so strong that in times of continued drought, farmers would decide to violate a taboo on purpose, expecting that the angry local deity would react by sending a storm, and with it the rain urgently needed.<sup>4</sup> In divining, the same belief in the power of land spirits to control the wind probably accounts for divinatory arrow shooting, for the spirits addressed could be supposed to express their disagreement by causing a sudden gust of wind to make the arrow miss the target. Hitting the target, however, would mean that the spirits agree to the terms of the agreement stipulated by the divining person.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, according to the logic implied, a settler might even assume that these forces are so powerful that they could counteract gravity. In short, the ‘falling’ motif in ancient stories about land-claiming must be understood as an allusion to a form of divining that was based on the belief or assumption that the land spirits could prevent the falling object from hitting their land if they wanted to.

The falling motif is well known to scholars dealing with ancient and medieval European legends about the founding of territories or temples and churches. The nature of the object thrown and/or falling can also change in European legends, but it usually consists of something that could have been used in a law-symbolical ceremony.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, almost anything can be substituted as the falling item in Japanese *fudoki* stories, depending on the place name that has to be explained by referring to this kind of divination. The context can be fishing, catching birds, hunting, arrow shooting, dancing, putting on armour, fighting autochthonous settlers, searching for a deity, searching for a good place, moving around in the land or taking a meal. Among the objects that are said to have fallen down, some are said to have been carried by an animal. Thus, a kite drops

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4 Domenig 2014: 132–33 (examples from Indonesia and India).

5 Cleromancy, the casting of lots, can also be understood as a form of throw and fall divination where good or bad depends on how the lots fall.

6 For the Germanic traditions, Zeissberg (1868) discussed numerous stories about throwing an object for finding the place to found a temple or a church. A legend from Bavaria says that a countess shot an arrow from her castle, vowing that she would build a church at the place where the arrow will fall down. In Europe, many pre-Christian and Christian legends of this type are known. The prayer is not always mentioned and the object thrown or shot can be different from case to case; it may also be a lance, a stone, a battle-axe, a mason’s hammer, a mattock, a bunch of keys, a glove, etc. The function is nevertheless always the same: to divine (find, decide) a place by seeing where the object thrown touches the ground. Zeissberg saw in the throw or shot both a ‘law symbol’ (*Rechtssymbol*) and an ‘oracle’. He also noted that the same motif is implied in legends that do not mention the throwing or shooting but simply state that a site was chosen because something ‘fell down’ or ‘was found’ there (1868: 419–23).

a small bell; a wild duck drops an arrow; a flock of birds drops a net; a horse drops a jug of rice wine; a stag drops a *sakaki* twig mounted on its back.<sup>7</sup> Often the falling object has to do with hunting (arrow, bell, catching net, hunting dog, game) or with taking a meal (rice corn, cooking pot, raw meat, fire, sake jug); or it is a part of a warrior's clothes and equipment (belly belt, arm protection, helmet, arrow). In most instances the object simply falls down, in rare cases even from heaven.<sup>8</sup> When a story indicates that the object was first thrown, the distance covered is often so exaggerated that the act turns into a method of miraculously finding the place, instead of finding out if a place already found and chosen by rational criteria will be good for settling down.

### Divining the Place for Founding a Shrine

According to a pattern often met with in the texts, wildly behaving *kami* (*araburu kami*) are said to have caused calamities, whereupon one would perform divination to find out where one should establish a new shrine to pacify them:

Himekoso no sato: In this village there is a river called Yamajigawa. Its source being in the north of the district, it flows down to the south and meets the big Mii River. Formerly, there were wildly behaving *kami* (*araburu kami*) in the west of this river. Many travellers were hurt; half of them got away, the other half succumbed. When the reason of the curse was divined, the sign said: "Let Kazeko, a man of the Munakata District of Tsukushi no Michinokuchi serve my shrine. If you do according to my wish, I shall not flare up with a wild heart." Kazeko was searched and ordered to dedicate a shrine to the deity. Kazeko then lifted up a flag and prayed: "If my service is truly wished, this flag may fly off with the wind and fall down at [the place of] the deity who bids me to come." Then he lifted the flag high up and sent it with the wind. The flag flew away, fell down at the Himekoso grove in the district of Mihara, flew back again, and fell down here at the Yamaji River. So Kazeko naturally knew the places of the deity. That night he saw in a dream *kutsubiki* and *tatari*

7 *Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 305, 337; 339; 335; 267. The last example is from the foundation legend of the Kasuga Taisha according to *Kashimagū shareidenki*, p. 472.

8 Two fallen stars turn into stones (*Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 285). Amaterasu throws bells down from heaven to indicate the place where her shrine should be built in Ise (*Yamatohime seiki*, Hammitzsch 1937: 31).

[weaving instruments] flying out in a playful dance, hassling and frightening Kazeko. By this he knew that it was a female deity (*himegami*). Now he founded a shrine and worshipped. Since then, the travellers were no longer hurt. In allusion to this, one spoke of Himekoso. Now it has become the name of the village. (\**Hizen fudoki*, NKBT 2: 383–85)

In this case, the problem is that accidents have occurred along a river and are thought to have been caused by angry *kami*. Intending to pacify these *kami* by founding a sanctuary for them, one first reacts by divining to find out who should be chosen as the founder and priest of the new shrine. The person chosen is Kazeko. Using a flag as his divining tool, he sends it off with the wind to identify first the place where the deity to be worshipped at the new place is already worshipped and then also where this deity should be newly worshipped additionally. After a dream has also revealed that the deity is of female gender, Kazeko can found the shrine and start worshipping as the first priest. Founding that shrine apparently also meant founding the village that was named after it.

A somewhat similar story is told in a quotation from the lost *Owari fudoki*, entry for Azura no sato. When Prince Homutsuwake, the son of Emperor Suinin, is seven years of age and still cannot speak, the empress has a dream in which a female deity reveals herself as Ama no Mikatsuhime, the deity of the land of Taku. The deity says she has no priest yet (at the place where the story was told) and predicts that if a priest is appointed for her, the prince will speak and be long lived. Now the emperor divines to find a man who can ‘search the deity’ and a certain Takeoka no kimi, the ancestor of the Hiokibe, meets the divination:

When searching the deity, Takeoka no kimi went to Mount Hanaka in Mino, twisted *sakaki* twigs into a *kazura* [a head ornament], and made an oath, saying: “where my *kazura* falls down must be this deity.” The *kazura* went and fell down here. Knowing therefore that the deity was here, he founded a cult place (*yashiro*). Accordingly, this village was named after the *yashiro*. Later people corrupted the word, saying Azura no sato. (\**Owari fudoki itsubun*; NKBT 2: 442)

In this case, Ama no Mikatsuhime, a deity worshipped in Taku (a place on the Shimane Peninsula in Izumo), wants to be also worshipped in Owari Province where she has no priest yet. To find out the right place for her shrine, the founder first goes to Mt. Hanaka in Mino Province to make a *kazura* with *sakaki* twigs from that mountain. Using this *kazura* as a divining tool he finds

the right place and founds both the new shrine and a new village (*sato*). As the village was named after the shrine and the shrine apparently after the *kazura*, the story suggests that the village was originally named Kazura but later called Azura.

The story does not say why *sakaki* twigs from a mountain in the neighbouring province of Mino were used to make the *kazura*, but perhaps the deity was already worshipped in Mino and wished also to be newly worshipped in a place of Owari and on behalf of the empress. What is also not clear is how the *kazura* ‘went’ to its aim. Perhaps Takeoka no kimi was supposed to have carried it on his head, going the distance on horseback, and it fell down where the shrine should be built. This would correspond to what is told in the following story:

Kamuki no sato. The original name was Kameochi. Soil upper middle. The reason why one gave the name Kameochi is that in the era of the sovereign of the Palace of Takatsu at Naniwa the far ancestor of the Kisakibe no Yumitori, Osada no Kumachi, fixed a sake jug to the back of the horse and went in search of a dwelling place. The jug fell down at this village. This is why it was called Kameochi (‘jugfall’). (\**Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 267)

### Absurd Uses of the Falling Motif

As noted, most stories in the *fudoki* use the falling motif in connection with things that were probably never used in the practice of divining. The falling motif alone was clearly intended to allude to divination, while the falling thing was freely chosen or invented to explain the existing name of the place, regardless of whether or not it was of a kind that could have been used in the practice of divining. This is obvious in stories that use the motif repeatedly and in an absurd way:

Kamihako oka, Shimohako oka, Nabetsu, Aukoda. In the era of the emperor of Uji, the far ancestors of the Uji-no-muraji, E-takanashi and Oto-takanashi, these two requested the place Yōto in the village of Ōta. When they came to open up fields and sow seeds, a servant carried cooking articles on a shoulder bar (*auko*). The bar broke and the load fell down. Therefore, the place where the pan fell down was named Nabetsu (‘pan harbour’), where the front box fell down was named Kamihako oka (‘upper box hill’), where the back box fell down, was named Shimohako



oka ('lower box hill'), and where the carrying bar fell down was named Aukoda ('carrying bar field'). (\**Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 297)

An even more bizarre story of this kind tells of a ship that was wrecked in a storm and washed ashore with such tremendous force that the things carried on board were hurled far onto the land. Then the names of two hills are explained by reference to the ship and to the waves which were washed ashore (Ship Hill and Wave Hill), and the names of twelve other hills are said to derive each from a different object that fell down at the respective place (Koto Hill, Box Hill, Combcase Hill, etc.). Even hills named after animals are explained according to the same pattern: "Where the deer fell down it is called Deer Hill; where the dog fell down it is called Dog Hill, where the silkworms fell down it is called Silkworm Hill" (*Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 271/273).

All this does not mean, however, that the kind of divination alluded to was not practised at all. In some of its forms it must have been well known.

### Realistic Methods Exaggerated

Divining by shooting arrows or throwing stones are two practicable methods that are, however, often referred to by exaggerating the distance covered by the arrow or stone:

Hiroyama no sato. The old name was Tsuka no mura. Iwatatsuhime no Mikoto stood at the shrine of Izumi no sato, shot, and came here. The arrow penetrated deep into the ground, only a hand's breadth (*tsuka*) stuck out. That is why the place was called the village of Tsuka. (\**Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 293)

Other ancient stories mention arrow shooting for deciding the boundary of a territory,<sup>9</sup> and one in *Harima fudoki* tells that creepers (*tsuzura*) were kicked over an unrealistically great distance to claim a place.<sup>10</sup> Such ancient methods have left traces in associating special trees and stones with the custom of

9 See the story quoted on page 34. For divination by arrow shooting, see also Yanagita 1930. For stories about old boundary stones that are said to have been thrown by Shōtoku Taishi, see Tanioka 1976.

10 NKBT 2: 323. See here the entry for Mikata no sato translated in chapter 3 and my comment, suggesting that the text might have *ashi* ('foot') instead of *ishi* ('stone'), so that the real meaning would be that each creeper was fixed to a stone and both together were thrown by swinging them round above the head and letting them go.

divining when visiting shrines or temples. Throwing a stone on the top beam of a *torii* gate hoping that it comes to rest there is still often done for divining good luck.<sup>11</sup>

### Land Divination Typically Performed in Front

That divining was in principle done in front of and outside the place or territory that it regarded seems logical and is also attested, for example, by a method mentioned in *Jōgan gishiki*, the Ceremonial Procedures of the Jōgan Era (859–874 CE): “One goes inside the field, takes a clod of earth (*tsuchikure*), returns, and divines this” (\**Jōgan gishiki*, Book 2). This sentence refers to divination performed for a ceremonial place (*saijō*) at Kitano in the ancient capital of Heian-kyō. According to *Nihon shoki*, the same method was also used by Iwarebiko in his legendary conquest of Yamato. Before the final attack, he has earth brought secretly from Mt. Kagu in the enemy’s land and uses this for divining whether or not he will be successful and subdue the land (Aston I: 120–21).<sup>12</sup>

A divining method that was naturally performed in front of the land was used when approaching land from the sea and casting something overboard, letting it drift ashore to indicate the place for going ashore and settling down.

### Divining with Things Cast Overboard

This method is best known from medieval Iceland, where arriving settlers were said to have thrown their high-seat pillars overboard when they approached the coast of Iceland, vowing that they would take land wherever these pillars should come ashore (chapter 10). Whereas in shooting an arrow or throwing a spear it is rather the human will that decides where the object will go, because the line of flight depends on how the object is thrown, the movement of a floating object would seem to be more up to chance. To speak of the entire fortuitousness of the pillar-oracle, as Zeissberg did (1868: 435), is nonetheless to trust too much in the texts, which of course like to emphasise the part played by chance and supernatural forces. In practice, the pillars could be thrown

11 See figure 44 in chapter 8. At Buddhist temple gates one throws instead a wet paper pellet (*kamitsubute*) at one of the guardian figures representing two Deva kings.

12 The same method, sometimes combined with dream divination or with an animal sacrifice, was still recently practised in parts of Southeast Asia (Domenig 2014: 48, 76, 218).

overboard close to the coast, such that the risk of them floating away was no higher than the danger of a sudden gust of wind preventing an arrow from hitting a target. Nevertheless, the floating motif best reveals the basic idea, namely, that the result should depend not only on the diviner's skill but ultimately on the powers that control the medium by which the object reaches the aim. If these powers were supposed to control the wind, then they were also able to stir up waves and thereby decide where a floating object would drift.

Several stories in the ancient texts of Japan refer to this kind of divination, but only one is fully comparable with the stories from medieval Iceland. It regards a territory in Harima Province that belonged to the Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine of the neighbouring province of Settsu.

### Floating a Wisteria Twig to Find the Right Place

A short version of this story is contained in *Manyōshū-Chūshaku* and features Suminoe no Ōkami, a deity worshipped as protector of seafaring:

Suminoe no Ōkami cut a *fūji* branch, let it float on the sea, and made an oath: "Where this *fūji* drifts to, I will make my territory!" But as this *fūji*, rocking on the waves, drifted here, the place was named Fujie no Ura (Beach of the Wisteria Inlet). It is the territory of Suminoe. (\**Manyōshū-Chūshaku*, vol. 4; NKBT 2: 484–85)

A more detailed version of the same story is told in *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*, compiled in the eighth century (789?) at the Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine of Settsu Province. This text partly contains older materials on the foundation of this shrine and on ancient geography that are not found in other ancient texts (JKDJ: 881).

[They] subjugated the Kumaso and the Land of Shiragi. Returning, [they] settled the Great Deity at Fujishiro no take in the Province of Ki. At that time [they] punished the wild *kami* and made the boundary by shooting and setting up the sounding arrow (s) of *soshishi*.

"As for the place where I wish to dwell, I wish to cross over and live in the land of Harima, like opposite a great house." So [the deity] cut a big *fūji*, let it float on the sea, and took an oath: "Where this *fūji* drifts to, worship me in purity!" When [the deity] was speaking this, it drifted to this shore. For this reason, it was named Fujie ('Wisteria Inlet'). From

the Upper Kamide mountain and the Lower Kamide mountain of the Akashi River area until the Small Beach of Oumi, all was settled as *shinchi* (sacred land or shrine land). (\**Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*, ed. Tanaka 1998, lines 624–31)<sup>13</sup>

This longer and more detailed version of the *fuji*-floating story is interesting for more than one reason. First, it tells that when the shrine at Mt. Fujishiro was founded they ‘punished’ the wild *kami* and made the boundary by shooting and setting up sounding arrow/s. As shown in chapter 2, this ‘punishing’ probably describes the expelling of the spirits in the founding ritual for a territory, which in this case was established at Fujishiro no take, a mountain in the Province of Ki (old name of Kii).

The main part of the story describes the later making of a different territory some 80 kilometres north-west from there, at Akashi in the province of Harima. First divination by floating a wisteria branch in combination with an oath is described, then two mountains are named as forming the upper boundary of the territory which extends down to the coast. The ritual procedure suggested by this story thus corresponds to both main parts of our theoretical model, beginning with an act of divining and ending at two mountains that were called Kamideyama because they were dedicated to the *kami* or guardian deities of the territory. The place name Fujie is now the name of a railway station to the west of the estuary of the Akashi River and the area of the two deity mountains (OJ *kamideyama*) corresponds to Kande-chō (*kande* from OJ *kamide*), a district of Kōbe situated in the northern source area of the Akashi River (figure 4).<sup>14</sup>

Finally, it is also noteworthy that another story, which was quoted from the lost part of *Harima fudoki* in a later work, states that a female deity called Niotsuhime, who had also contributed to the success of the Shiragi expedition, settled down at Mt. Fujishiro (NKBT 2: 482–83). It is therefore possible that there was an older tradition according to which it was this other deity

13 Quoted from the section dealing with the territory at Nasuki no hama in Akashi District of Harima Province.

14 The *de* in *kamideyama* can mean ‘place’, but is written with the character for *de* meaning ‘out’, presumably to indicate that these *kamiyama* (‘mountains dedicated to the guardian deities of the territory’) were situated outside the territory proper, which is here called *shinchi* (‘sacred ground’) because it belonged to the shrine of Suminoe no Ōkami. Two prominent mountains (indicated as small triangles in figure 4) are linked to a tradition, according to which the western one would have been the place where the god Ōnamuchi was born (*kande*, interpreted as meaning ‘*kami* birth’).



FIGURE 4

The area along the Akashi River where the territory mentioned in *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki* was established between the coast and two 'god mountains' called Kamideyama. The small triangles indicate two prominent mountains in the district of Kande-cho of Kobe where the two ancient *kami* mountains were situated

MAP BY THE AUTHOR

that performed the *fuji*-floating rite and made a territory in Harima. If so, then the name Niotsuhime was later replaced by Suminoe no Ōkami because the Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine had taken over that territory. To exchange the name of an earlier owner with that of a later one was a stratagem to bring the past in harmony with the present.<sup>15</sup>

### Letting a Cooking Set Float to Enemy Land

Another story that associates the floating method with Suminoe no Ōkami is the story about the Shiragi expedition. In the myth-historical narrative of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, it forms the link between the sections about the emperors Chūai and Ōjin. It features Okinaga Tarashihime, the second wife of Emperor Chūai, also known as Jingū Kōgō ('Imperial consort Jingū'), who, after Chūai's sudden death, starts the expedition to subdue Shiragi on the Korean Peninsula.

According to *Nihon shoki*, a deity (or several deities) told Jingū Kōgō that Shiragi is a land of treasures, rich in gold and silver, and that if they worship properly, they can gain it without bloodshed (Aston 1: 221). Soon afterwards, Emperor Chūai dies and Jingū Kōgō starts preparing for the expedition by repeatedly doing acts of worship and divining. Before she sets out, she gets another oracle, saying that the fleet will be accompanied by the *nigimitama*

15 Another example of using this stratagem is discussed in chapter 3, p.85.

(quiet spirits) of the worshipped deities to protect the royal life and vessel and by their *aramitama* (wild spirits) serving as vanguards and guides (*Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 336; cf. Aston I: 229).

In *Kojiki*, where the whole story is much shorter, the corresponding part reads thus:

If you now truly think to seek that land, then you should offer *mitogura* to all deities of heaven and earth and of mountains and waters. Let our august spirits dwell on the ship and put ashes of true wood into a gourd; make also many chopsticks and flat plates, and casting all out to float on the ocean, cross over! (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 231)

Whereas the first sentence in the gods' admonition can represent the instruction by Amaterasu, the second sentence could be understood as the advice of the three Tsutsunoo deities, which were collectively called Suminoe no Ōkami.<sup>16</sup> The 'august spirits' staying on the boat (*Kojiki*) apparently correspond to what *Nihon shoki* calls the *nigimitama* or quiet spirits, whereas the articles cast out to float represent the *aramitama* or wild spirits.

The usual interpretation is that the floating of a gourd and many *hashi* and *hirade* may have been a magical practice intended to quiet down the spirits of the sea.<sup>17</sup> Thinking of the *fuji*-floating story, however, it is more convincing to assume that the floating of the three kinds of objects is mentioned as a form of divining performed when approaching a foreign coast in order to take possession of land. If these floating things are cast out as divining tools, then they have to reach the land, but since this land is enemy land whose guardian spirits might not let them get ashore, they are accompanied by the 'wild spirits' of the three Tsutsunoo deities. Thus strengthened, they form a set so powerful that the waves are said to have washed the ships ashore and deep into the country (Philippi: 262; Aston I: 230). According to *Kojiki*, the king of Shiragi immediately surrendered, after which the empress placed a staff at his gate

16 The three deities were the lower, middle and upper Tsutsunoo. A note in *Kojiki* says that their names were revealed just before the conquest of Shiragi (Silla) (Philippi: 260). There is also a quotation from the lost *Settsu fudoki*, saying that Suminoe no Ōkami 'appeared' at that time and 'went round in the world' (NKBT 2: 422; Nishimoto 1977: 105, 114).

17 A note in a newer *Kojiki* edition still mentions this idea but states that the meaning is unclear (SNKBZ 1: 425n23). Abe (2018) discusses Buddhist legends of treasures that were thrown into the sea on the way to Japan. These were to appease the Dragon King during a storm and were brought back by a turtle, ending up as relics in a temple. For other stories of this kind, see the end of this chapter.

and worshipped the *aramitama* of Suminoe no Ōkami as the tutelary deity of the conquered land.<sup>18</sup>

Chopsticks (*hashi*) and flat plates (*hirade*) were used in eating and the ashes in the gourd could have contained embers, so that together these floating articles could also have symbolised a cooking and meal-taking set. As Okada Seishi has pointed out in a seminal article, the taking of a meal is sometimes mentioned in the ancient texts as a rite meaning to rule the land by eating of its products. A land ruled could be called *osukuni* ('eat-land', 'land to eat [from]'), and the other side of this – to offer a meal – was an allegiance-yielding rite (*fukuzoku girei*) by which the old owner of the land expressed his allegiance to the claimer (Okada 1962: 42, 45). By letting a cooking and meal-taking set float ahead towards the desired land, the conquerors could therefore announce their intention to rule that land by eating of its products.

### Susanoo and the Floating Chopsticks

A story from the god age mythology, which mentions floating chopsticks indicating a place for settling down, at least temporarily, is the myth of Susanoo's descent from heaven, as told in *Kojiki*:

Therefore, Susanoo was expelled and descended to a place called Torikami in the upper reaches of the river Hi of Izumo. At that time chopsticks came floating down that river. Thinking that there were people in the upper reaches, he went up to search for them. (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 85)<sup>19</sup>

The repeated use of the same word translated as 'upper reaches' (*kawakami*) indicates that Susanoo is not yet in the upper reaches when he sees the floating chopsticks. Although he is first said to have descended from heaven to Torikami in the upper reaches of the river, this does not have to mean that he got there directly by way of the air. Rather, we have here an instance of a stylistic pattern, according to which a story first summarises the main points and then tells what happened at that time. For want of a better term, I call this

18 In *Nihon shoki*, it is the spear of the empress that is planted at the king's gate, "as a memorial to after ages", and there is no mention of Suminoe no Ōkami being worshipped as the tutelary deity of the conquered land (Aston 1: 231).

19 For the context of this episode in the mythic narrative, see parts C and D in the overview of the mythology given at the beginning of chapter 4. As for the geographic location, see the map at the end of chapter 6.

the ‘title sentence pattern’; we shall meet this pattern again in chapter 5, where it calls for a new interpretation of a very important myth. In the present case, the title sentence says that Susanoo descended to a place called Tori-Kami in the uppermost part of the river’s catchment area. What happened ‘at that time’ (when he descended) is that he saw the chopstick/s floating down the river and went up to see if there were people in the upper reaches. The story therefore suggests that Susanoo reaches Torikami by going up along the Hinokawa. *Nihon shoki* supports this interpretation by saying that Susanoo “descended and went” from heaven to the upper course of the river (8.0 and 8.1).<sup>20</sup> One version (8.4) even clearly says that he came by ship:

At this time, Susa no wo no Mikoto, accompanied by his son Iso-takeru no Kami, descended to the land of Silla, where he dwelt at Soshimori. There he lifted up his voice and said: – “I will not dwell in this land.” He at length took clay and made a boat, in which he embarked, and crossed over eastwards until he arrived at Mount Tori-kamu no Take, which is by the upper waters of the river Hi in Idzumo. (*Nihon shoki*, trans. Aston 1: 57, adapted; NKBT 67: 126)

Based on the literal meaning of the text in *Kojiki* and on these variants in *Nihon shoki* we can understand that Susanoo was meant to have reached Izumo from the sea and probably from the Korean Peninsula (see figure 5). The story suggests that the chopsticks had come floating down because they had been thrown away by people living in the upper reaches, but this is not the only possible interpretation. Dealing here with floating divination, we can also consider that he could have used the chopsticks as divining tools when he came to the estuary of the Hinokawa (A in figure 6, p. 42). For immigrants coming across the sea, river mouths were most important places where they had to make the crucial decision whether they should go up along the river or continue searching along the coast. The text in *Kojiki* does not say that Susanoo saw the chopsticks at the mouth of the river, but it does not exclude this possibility either.

Technically, divining at river mouths could have been done by taking account of the tides. A settler casting out something to float in the estuary of

<sup>20</sup> NKBT 67: 121. Aston translated: “descended from heaven and proceeded to the head-waters of the River Hi, in the province of Idzumo” (8.0) and “having descended from Heaven, came to the head-waters of the river Hi, in Idzumo” (8.1) (Aston 1: 52, 55). As these versions do not use the normal expression for ‘descend from heaven’ (*amoru* or *ama kударu*) they assume that Susanoo first descended and then went to the upper course of that river.





FIGURE 5 Geographical relation of Izumo to Korea and Yamato  
MAP BY THE AUTHOR

a river at high tide (something bigger than chopsticks) might first see it float into the land, but seeing it later float back with the low tide he could interpret this as a good sign.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere in the god age mythology, Susanoo says that there is gold and silver in Karakuni (Korea or the continent) and that it is therefore not good if there are no ‘floating treasures’ (*ukutakara* or *ukitakara*) in the land to be ruled by his son. So he plucks out hairs from his beard and eyebrows and plants them as seedlings. From the hairs of the beard grow up *sugi* trees, from those of the eyebrows *kusunoki* trees. Then he declares that these two kinds of tree should be used for making ‘floating treasures’ (*Nihon shoki* 8.5; NKBT 67: 128; Aston I: 58).

The form and function of these wooden ‘floating treasures’ is not specified, but if they were to be used for gaining the gold and silver of Karakuni they could have served the same purpose as the three items floated in the Shiragi expedition (*Kojiki*), which included chopsticks. That is, the ‘floating treasures’

21 *Hizen fudoki* has a story that mentions this phenomenon: “Shiotagawa. [...]. This river originates in the Tara no mine in the southwestern part of this district and flows east to empty into the sea. At high tide the water flows upstream with a very strong current” (trans. Aoki 1997: 267; NKBT 2: 404).

might have been floats in the sense of floating things that were used for divining when approaching a foreign coast.

### Kisakahime and the Lost Bow and Arrow

When one practised the floating method, it could of course happen that the floated articles were lost because a rough sea carried them away.<sup>22</sup> A fragment of a legend from *Izumo fudoki* clearly refers to this motif when it tells that a golden bow and arrow had got lost and were recovered from a littoral cave:

Kaga no Kamuzaki. There is a cave, 10 *tsue* high, 502 *ashi* around. One passes through eastwards, westwards and northwards. It is the place where Sada no Ōkami was born. When he was about to be born, a bow and arrow got lost. At that time his mother Kisakahime no Mikoto, the august child of Kamumusubi no Mikoto, prayed: “If my august child is the child of a heroic god, the lost bow and arrow may come forth!” When she prayed so, a bow and arrow of horn floated forth with the waters. Then she took the bow and declared: “This bow is not my bow and arrow!” Saying so, she threw it back. Next there came a bow and arrow of gold floating forth. So, she waited, took them, and said: “What a dark cave!”, and shot through. Accordingly, the shrine of the mother Kisakahime no Mikoto is here. When the people of now pass by this cave, they always go with echoing voices. If they would go silently, the deity would appear, raise a storm, and overturn the passing ship without fail. (\**Izumo fudoki*, NKBT 2: 149)

Kisakahime probably came from beyond the sea and hoped to find a good place to settle down and give birth to her child.<sup>23</sup> Assuming that she used the bow and arrow as divining floats, she would have hoped to see them drift into a bay (B or C in figure 6), but the waves carried them away and they got lost. Therefore, searching for them along the coast, she comes to the rocky promontory at Kukido no hana (B) where the famous caves can still be seen. Suspecting

22 Stories saying that the item set afloat got lost but was recovered later are also known from Iceland. Reykjavik is said to have been founded where the first settler's high-seat pillars were found after they had been lost two years earlier some 400 kilometres east of there (Pálsson and Edwards 1972: 19–21).

23 For mythical immigrants like Kisakahime, see Miura 2016: 161–78.

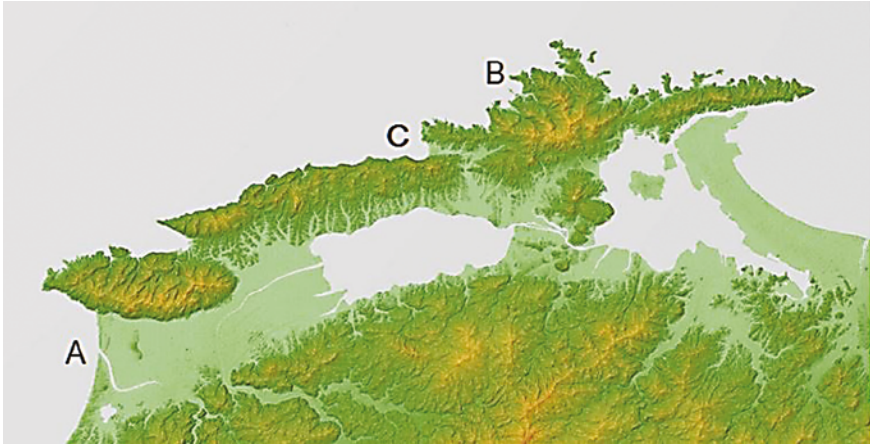


FIGURE 6 Shimane Peninsula. (A) Estuary of the ancient Hinokawa; (B) Kukedo no hana; (C) Etomo, the bay into which the Sadagawa empties, where the shrine of the Great God of Sada is situated

SOURCE: SHIMANE PENINSULA RELIEF MAP, SRTM-1.JPG (LETTERS ADDED)

that the lost bow and arrow might have drifted in there, she divines that they may come forth, and when the wrong ones come forth, she tries again and recovers the golden ones. These she uses for repeating divination by shooting into the cave. What then happened says another entry in the same *fudoki* which regards the village of the same name:

Kaga no sato, 24 *sato* 160 *ashi* northwest of the district house. The place where the great god of Sada was born. The august child of the ancestor Kamumusubi no Mikoto, Kisakahime no Mikoto, declared: "What a dark cave!" When she shot with the golden bow, a bright light shone up (*kagayakiki*). That is why it was called Kaga. (\**Izumo fudoki*, NKBT 2: 127)

Here, the first part of the story was omitted because in a *fudoki* it was only necessary to tell what could explain the place name. By shooting into the cave, Kisakahime divined about the future of her son. The bright light which shone up was the good omen and the village was named after it. As with the *fuji*-floating story quoted earlier, we have here another good example that illustrates the fragmentary nature of *fudoki* entries as well as the fact that it is sometimes nevertheless possible to get a fuller image by studying stories comparatively.

### Articles to Play on the Sea

Another passage in *Nihon shoki* says that Susanoo's descendant Ōnamuchi was promised three kinds of 'articles to play on the sea' (*watatsumi ni asobu sonae*) in compensation for ceding the rule of his land to the heavenly descendants (chapter 4). In that case, the three kinds are distinguished as a *takahashi* ('high bridge'), an *ukihashi* ('floating bridge') and an *ame-no-torifune* ('heavenly bird boat').<sup>24</sup> The first two words were also used for bridges crossing a river,<sup>25</sup> but as 'articles to play on the sea' both must have also meant something that was used while floating on the sea. As the third kind is the 'bird boat' it is likely that all three items were boats used for 'playing' on the sea. And since divination can be understood as a sort of play (many games originate from divining methods), the bridge type was apparently a small boat comparable to a ferry that bridges a short distance when going ashore, either by floating from one place to another or from a large ship to the land.

In the ancient texts, the word *hashi* was written with different Chinese characters that could stand for different meanings. In the form of a tree stem, a *hashi* could serve as a simple bridge to cross a small stream; when provided with notches, it could form a ladder pole; and as a pair in small dimensions, it could serve as an eating tool, as chopsticks. As house posts, the *hashi* were used in greater number, which may explain why the word came to be distinguished as *hashira*, with the suffix *-ra* indicating plurality. Designating a ladder, the word also came to take the form *hashigo*. All these words are thought to go back to the same basic concept, from which a variety of meanings were developed (JKDJ, entry for *hashi*). A further meaning of *hashi*, which is usually not considered, could have been 'logboat', as in *ukihashi*; for even if this ancient word was written with characters meaning 'floating bridge', a boat was also a floating bridge and could have been poetically called so.

### Floats Used for Divining

Thinking about the meaning of words like *ukihashi* and *ukitakara*, we must be aware that the ancient texts of Japan were compiled about a thousand years or more after the first Yayoi immigrants reached the archipelago by way of the sea.

24 *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 150; Aston I: 80.

25 *Takahashi* ('high bridge') probably meant a normal bridge leading over the water and *ukihashi* ('float-bridge') came to mean a bridge supported by floating elements, such as was also called *funahashi* ('boat bridge') (JKDJ: 111).

We therefore have no clear sources for some of the rites the early settlers may have practised. Some rites could have left traces in legends that were handed down orally for a long time, but by the time they were eventually put down in writing they may no longer have been practised and the eighth-century scribes might have found it difficult to represent them with Chinese characters. What this meant for the reliability of ancient family traditions we may gather from the opening sentences of *Kogoshūi*, a text dating from the early ninth century:

Tradition says that writing was unknown in old Japan, so that all people, whether high or low, youthful or aged, handed down from hoary antiquity their sacred traditions verbally among themselves, memorizing them from one generation to another. When, however, the art of writing was introduced, the Japanese began to discard the old simple way of transmitting orally their family traditions. [...] Hence change after change occurred in the traditional accounts handed down during the long centuries, and consequently, no one nowadays is competent enough to decide the true origin and the exact nature of those cherished venerable traditions. (*Kogoshūi*, trans. Kato and Hoshino 1924: 15)

The author of *Kogoshūi*, Inbe no Hironari, not only regretted the loss of the original meaning of many words but also did something to avoid further loss by occasionally adding a gloss about what a word meant ‘in the old language’. One of these glosses regards the word *uke* in the myth of Amaterasu’s concealment in the rock house of heaven.<sup>26</sup> *Kojiki* writes the word only phonetically and says that Ame no Uzume overturned an *uke* to stamp on it. *Nihon shoki*, however, first writes the word with a Chinese character meaning ‘tub’ and later adds a gloss saying that the overturned tub was called *uke*.<sup>27</sup> Hironari, however, writes the word with two characters meaning ‘oath tub’ and adds a gloss, saying it was called *ukefune* in the old language, the meaning being *ukei* (‘oath’, ‘divining oath’).

Having dealt here with things set afloat for divining – wisteria branches, a gourd, plates and chopsticks, a bow and arrow, and small boats – we cannot easily dismiss this gloss as false etymology, as is usually done because one cannot see a relation between a tub called *uke* and a divining oath. Hironari

26 For the context of this myth in the mythic narrative, see part C in the overview of the mythology given at the beginning of chapter 4.

27 This is typical of the way in which the compilers of *Nihon shoki* used to deal with old words whose meaning was no longer known. By first giving the meaning according to their own interpretation and adding the phonetic reading afterwards in a note, they created the impression that they knew the real meaning.

was, however, a member of the Inbe family which was charged with religious ceremonies at court and probably knew the word *ukefune* from the *chinkonsai*, a ceremony in which this word is still used when Ame no Uzume's dance is ritually repeated at court (Holtom 1928: 111). Since *fune* could mean a 'vessel' or a 'boat', Hironari may have followed *Nihon shoki* in assuming that it meant here a 'tub', but thinking that the first part, *uke*, could not mean the same thing as *fune*, he may have thought that *ukefune* was a contraction of *ukei-fune*. Semantically, this makes sense insofar as Uzume's performance on the overturned tub can be understood as a divining test intended to lure Amaterasu out of her hiding. By describing her stage as an overturned *ukei-fune* (>*ukefune*) one could have intended to indicate the divinatory meaning of her performance.

Although Hironari's gloss can make sense, it does not follow that he was right in suggesting that *ukefune* was the older term for what *Kojiki* called *uke*; for *uke* is also testified in the meaning of a 'float', in the sense of a floater used in fishing (JKDJ: 113). It could therefore also have been used for things set afloat for divining, as long as that custom was still practised or remembered. Used in that sense, the word could have designated a divining float and the word *fune* could have been added in the *chinkonsai* to indicate that a hollow float or boat was meant that would have been placed upside down to serve both as a stage and as a foot drum for Uzume's performance.

### Divining in Boats

How exactly divining with a boat serving as a 'floating bridge' might have been performed in early Japan is up to our imagination, but that certain boats could really be used in this way is suggested by the mention of 'two-forked boats' (*futamatabune*) in the two chronicles. *Nihon shoki* records that such a boat was made from a huge, forked tree that had come floating down a river in the reign of Emperor Nintoku. This boat was moved from Tōtomi Province to Naniwa, where it was enrolled among other imperial vessels. Almost thirty years later, a forked boat was also launched on the pond of Iware to carry Emperor Richū and his concubine during a feast. When out of season suddenly a cherry blossom falls into the emperor's cup, he decides to name his palace after it, calling it Iware no Wakazakura no Miya, the Palace of the Young Cherry Blossom at Iware.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 412, 425–26; Aston 1: 297, 306. Forked tree stems were in protohistoric times also used as sledges (*shura*) for transporting stone blocks. Examples that have been excavated were V- as well as Y-shaped (Ozawa and Shimotsuma 2016). They were

These two stories from *Nihon shoki* mention forked boats belonging to the emperor, and one of them explains the name of an imperial palace by saying that an auspicious sign was received when the emperor feasted in the forked boat. A story from *Kojiki* tells of a 'forked small boat' (*futamata obune*) that was made of a forked *sugi* tree from Owari. It was floated on the ponds of Ichishi and Karu in Yamato to entertain prince Homuchiwake, the son of Emperor Suinin (NKBT 1: 197). Just after telling this, the text says that the prince had a beard eight hands long and was still unable to speak; but now hearing the cry of a high-flying swan, he uttered childish babbling for the first time. The bird was a good omen, for its appearance led to the events by which the prince eventually learned to speak, as we shall see in chapter 6, p. 135. Although the text does not say explicitly that the prince was in the forked boat when this omen appeared, the context suggests it.

Discussing these stories, Mishina Akihide (1974) speaks of a 'pond-playing ceremony' (*ikeasobi no shinji*) and points out that a forked boat has been excavated at the Mitsushima site of Kadoma City in Osaka Prefecture. It was made of a forked *keyaki* log (*Zelkova serrata*) about thirteen metres long, three quarters of which were hollowed out. The width of the hollowed section measures about 120 centimetres at the back and tapers to a point at the front. The boat's hull continues as a mere log for about two more metres and then branches out into two arms of unequal length, the longer one measuring about two and a half metres. Inside, earthenware fragments were found that are thought to come from Yayoi-style pottery (Mishina 1974: 139–140, fig. 138, 139). Although this was not a small boat like the one mentioned in *Kojiki*, we can well imagine that it was once used in ceremonies.

Early immigrants to Japan might have used smaller samples if they used them for divining when approaching land. Judging from the form of the sample that has been excavated, such boats were Y-shaped logs that had been partly hollowed out to support several passengers. As *sugi* trees are normally not forked, the log mentioned in *Kojiki* may have been chosen because the fork was extraordinary and therefore considered auspicious, like the V-shaped roof finials of a shrine. Or the Y-form could have symbolised the use in divination, since divination was a rite where the issue was to find out which of two possibilities will happen. Clay models and pictures of ships from the Kofun period often have two peaks, some of them because they were composed of two sides, each with upward-turned ends in the front and back. As we shall see in

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apparently moved on land with the forks pointing forward, which was also typical of forked boats.

chapter 5, *Nihon shoki* (9.0) mentions a *futagami no ame no ukihashi* (NKBT 67: 140) which, if we interpret *ukihashi* as a divining boat, might mean a boat with ‘two peaks’ (*futagami*).

We can deduct from the sources quoted that special boats may have served in divining ceremonies, but we need further support for the hypothesis that such boats were used for divining when approaching land with the intention to settle down. For this, we must turn to stories that tell how an early immigrant arrived on the coast of the archipelago. A good example is the story of Ame no Hiboko’s arrival with a small boat (*hashifune*), which is discussed in chapter 3.

### The Religious Use of Wood Drifted Ashore

The use of boats and other floats in the sense of things set afloat in divination was probably a tradition that had become long obsolete by the time the ancient Japanese texts were compiled in the early eighth century. What later remained of this custom is the idea that driftwood and other things that happened to float ashore were often thought to have been sent by a deity that wished to be enshrined. *Nihon shoki* includes such a story when it reports that in the reign of Emperor Kinmei (sixth century) a miraculously shining tree was discovered floating in the sea of Chinu, in the southern part of the present Osaka Bay, and that this tree was used for carving the two camphor wood images which later stood in the Buddhist temple of Yoshino.<sup>29</sup> Later stories are based on the same story motif. Kashima Mondō, a Buddhist-Shinto text dated 1337 that regards the Kashima Jingū-ji, the Buddhist temple attached to the famous Kashima Shrine, has the following story, according to which a monk fetched three trees in the paradise island of Kannon and let them float on the sea:

In olden times Mankan Shōnin came on a pilgrimage to this shrine and practised abstinence. When he prayed regarding the *honji*, he thought the deity (*myōjin*) had spoken in his dream, saying: “The *honji-kanzeon* is always in Fudaraku. For the sake of mankind, she crosses over.” Because of the revelation of the great deity (*daimyōjin*), Shōnin crossed over to Fudaraku, felled three oak trees and let them float on the waters of the sea. These trees drifted here to the shore. (\**Kashima Mondō*)<sup>30</sup>

29 NKBT 68: 104; Aston II: 68.

30 Jōdoshūzensho vol. 12 (1911: 821).



Although Kannon is supposed to have come together with the trees, it is the deity of Kashima that invited her and lets the trees get ashore to have three Kannon images for the Buddhist temple carved from them. The Yoriki Hachiman Jinja of Kaseda city is a Shinto shrine and has a story saying that it was named after driftwood (*yoriki*) that floated ashore at its place in the year 1514. Since the wood was thought to have been sent from the Usa-Hachiman Shrine, where three deities were worshipped with images, one made three images of it and founded the shrine for them.<sup>31</sup> It was apparently assumed that the deity or the priests of the main Hachiman Shrine in Usa had sent the trees to indicate where a branch shrine should be founded.

Many such examples regard Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines influenced by Buddhism.<sup>32</sup> Since Shinto shrines usually had no images of their deities, driftwood was sometimes also used for building or rebuilding a shrine. A famous case is reported in a document from the end of the Heian period (794–1185) which tells that around the year Tenei 3 (1112) a huge tree 15 *jō* long (45 m) and 1 *jō* 5 *shaku* thick (4.5 m) drifted ashore near Kamimiya of Inaba Province. When the local people wanted to cut it, a big snake was coiled around it, so that they were frightened, fled and became ill. Then, the deity of Kamimiya gave an oracle, saying that this tree must be used for rebuilding its shrine. The tree was allegedly one of about a hundred big trees that at that time also drifted ashore at Inasa. These trees were used for rebuilding the nearby Izumo Grand Shrine at Kizuki in 1114. This became known as the ‘driftwood construction’ (*yoriki zōei*).<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

The stories discussed in this chapter clearly show that land divination in the ancient texts of Japan is often represented by the mention of things falling to the ground, sometimes also of things floating on land, but only rarely also by mentioning a divining oath (*ukei*) or using the normal word for ‘divining’ (OJ *urafu* or *uranafu*). The concept of divining was, however, also implied in the Chinese character used for writing the word OJ *shimu*, meaning ‘to claim’.

31 National Diet Library, NDL Digital Collections, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1226293>.

32 For other ancient and medieval stories of this kind, see for instance Matsumoto 1966; Kajitani 2007; Itō 2018; Abe 2018.

33 The original Japanese text can be read online at National Diet Library, NDL Digital Collections, <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/950372>, where the passage mentioned is on pp. 103–104.

As we shall see in chapter 3, OJ *kunishime* ('land-claiming') was only the first part of a 'land-making', *kunitsukuri*, but to say that a 'land' or territory was claimed made it normally superfluous to also say that it was then also 'taken', because successful divining implied the making of a cult promise and stories usually assume that this promise was later kept. This might be the reason why stories that tell how the second part of the ritual was performed and concluded are extremely rare. The one that is discussed in chapter 2 is unique in its explicitness and can therefore rightly be called a 'key story', although it only mentions divination indirectly as the first part of the ritual.

## The Story of Yato no Kami

The five old *fudoki* have about 450 entries and together with the almost 200 quotations from various *fudoki* in later works we have a total of about 650 entries, each with at least one ‘story’ (often only a sentence) explaining the name of a village or a district. Only one of these many stories clearly tells of *kami* that were expelled beyond the upper boundary of the land and then worshipped at a cult place (*yashiro*). This is the story of Yato no kami in *Hitachi fudoki*.

The story is included in the entry for Sone Village of Namekata District. First the text explains the name of the village and its horse post station (here omitted). Then two stories are told, the first of which helps to understand the second one. The second story explains the name of an irrigation pond and is translated later in this chapter. The first story tells how a local cult was founded by dedicating the upper part of a valley to the local *kami* which appeared as snakes with horns:

The elders say: In the reign of the sovereign who ruled the Great Eight Islands in the Tamaho-Palace at Iware, there was a man, Matachi of the Yahazu clan, who dedicated 南献 a reed plain in a valley in the west of the district, opened up, and made new rice fields. At that time Yato no kami (‘the *kami* of the valley’), leading its followers, came forth, made difficulties here and there, and did not allow that fields be made. [Note inserted in small characters:] The natives say: “what are called snakes are the *kami* of the dales. These have the body of snakes and horns on the head. If someone looks [at them] when escaping from trouble, his house will be ruined and his family will die out. They always dwell in great numbers in the fields by the district house.” Thereupon Matachi had a fit of anger, put on armour, grasped the spear with his own hand, and striking deadly blows he drove them in front of him. Arriving at the entrance to the mountain (*yama no kuchi*), he set up his sign-staff at the boundary ditch (*sakai no hori*) and spoke to the *kami* of the dale, saying: “From here up may become *kami* land (神地), from here down I must make the people’s fields. From now on I shall be the priest, and I will always respect and worship you. I beseech you: No revenge! No grudge!” And he founded a sanctuary (*yashiro*) and worshipped for the first time. Then he opened up about 10 *chō* of rice-fields. The descendants of Matachi took over, and

without interruption they celebrated the festivals until now. (\**Hitachi fudoki*, NKBT 2: 55, 57)

The story of Matachi and Yato no kami is often quoted and interpreted when the early local cults of Japan become the focus of scholars' attention. It is not surprising that opinions differ considerably about whether, and to what degree, the cult of this deity was typical of local cults in early Japan. The fact that Matachi is said to have first attacked the *kami* in the outfit of a warrior has led some interpreters to suggest that the story might tell of a fight with autochthonous settlers (Suenaga 1972: 37–38). Others thought that the fighting of evil spirits contradicts the idea of worshipping these spirits. For Tsukushi Nobuzane (1972: 40–41), Yato no kami was a frightening animistic spirit and Matachi's worship of this spirit was not typical of the local cults of early Japan. Normally, higher gods would have been invoked to overpower such spirits and these gods were dwelling in heaven or in a horizontally distant beyond. Similarly, Furuhashi Nubuyoshi (1982: 14) noted that the story is often quoted as an example of a degenerate *kami* concept. Other scholars suggested that Matachi's fighting behaviour represents an earlier level in the evolution of religious beliefs, a stage where 'fetishist deities' were feared and dispelled to an area that was not needed by the settlers (Yokota 1969) or where natural phenomena and animals were regarded as *kami* without being worshipped in a shrine (Sakurai 1976). Itō Mikiharu (1998) finds it striking that Yato no kami as a wild spirit (*araburu kami*) was worshipped, but he thinks that it is "virtually certain that this kind of a wild nature kami was widely enshrined and worshipped also in regions other than Hitachi Province".

More adequate in my view are interpretations that fully recognise the significance of such cults in early Japan. Mishina Akihide (1974), for example, has pointed out that for people it was most important to fight, pacify and worship *kami* like Yato no kami because they were thought to control the land and the water sources. Similarly, Harada Toshiaki (1981: 38) regarded Yato no kami as a water deity and protector of agriculture, but also as a village guardian deity such as came to be called *ujigami*, and as the prototype of a shrine deity.

The image of Yato no kami appearing with its followers can also invoke the idea of a transformation of a multitude of wild, not-yet-worshipped spirits (*kami*) into a single worshipped deity (*kami*), a point that has been emphasised by Mitani Eiichi. He concluded that in this way "a *kami* worshipped as a single deity was born. No doubt there existed a great number of such deities throughout Japan. The majority of the gods of Japan are gods who as land gods (*kuni no kami*) bring luck to the land (*tochi*)" (Mitani 1974: 32–33, from the Japanese). The further possibility that local land deities such as represented in

the story of Yato no kami could sometimes become deities of a higher status, such as Ōmononushi and Ōkunitama, has been pointed out by Yoshie Akio. Noting that the story of Yato no kami tells “of a very old relation between mankind, nature, and *kami* that was possibly valid since the beginning of wet rice cultivation in the early Yayoi period”, Yoshie theorised that when the Yamato kingdom developed from a small regional kingdom it was going to make the deities of the king’s family greater and higher, both qualitatively and in scale. Gradually constructing myths that place the imperial family’s deity above the level of gods like Ōmononushi and Ōkunitama, it eventually suppressed the land gods and proceeded towards the change of the *ritsuryō* state (Yoshie 1993: 196–200).

These views represent only a few of the countless interpretations that our story has been given by Japanese scholars in the past. Among foreign scholars, I only mention here Mark Teeuwen because he has quoted the story in *A New History of Shinto* to exemplify what he calls the “perhaps most common ancient prototype of today’s shrines [...] an open-air site of seasonal worship, located at the boundary of the human realm where crops were grown and the chaos beyond it.” (Breen and Teeuwen 2010: 24–25).

I myself have first dealt with the story in an article (Domenig 1988) where I suggested that the wild nature spirits were ritually transformed into a single local guardian deity with its messengers and that the local deities thus ‘born’ were assumed to control everything in the local realm under their protection, including the local weather. The point where my interpretation differs from all others known to me is that I regard the story as incomplete because it does not mention the initial act of divining and claiming.<sup>1</sup>

## The Topography

It is clear from the context in the *fudoki* that the land opened up by Matachi must have been situated in one of the shallow valleys (*yatsu*) that are lined

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1 Another point where my first interpretation (1988, but not the English translation of 2008) and the present one differ is that I do not follow the established emendation of the text that regards the character 獻 (OJ *tatematsuru*, ‘to dedicate, offer’) in the oldest manuscripts as a mistake for 截 (‘to cut’) (NKBT 54m10). Since this story has a title sentence that summarizes the main part (see chapter 1), we must consider that the main subject is not the fact that Matachi cuts the reeds in a part of the valley, but that he ‘dedicates’ an upper part of the valley to the local *kami* and thereby creates an obstacle to the later building of a pond there, as the second story tells (see later).

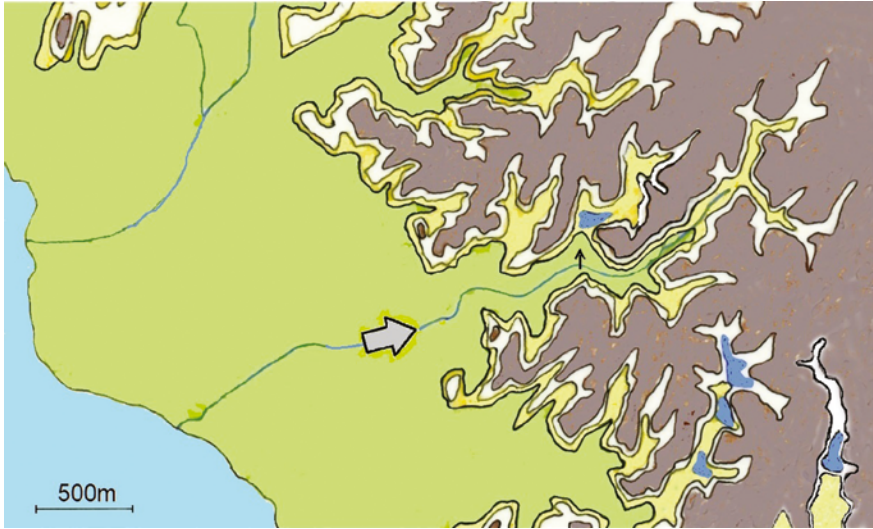


FIGURE 7 Map showing the valley (big arrow) where the story of Matachi and Yato no kami was probably meant to be set. North is at the top  
MAP BY THE AUTHOR

up to the north-east and south-east of modern Tamatsukuri-chō in Ibaraki Prefecture. Since all the valleys there are fairly similar in form and size, the question as to which one of them should be identified with that of our legend is not of crucial importance for the interpretation of the text. We could assume that the plot of the story took place in any of them. Yet there are good reasons for accepting the traditional theory which locates the story in a specific valley situated some four kilometres to the south-east of the railway station of Tamatsukuri-chō (Toyosaki 1970: 241–59). This valley (figure 7, arrow) is about 2.5 kilometres long, and like all valleys in the region it has a flat and branching bottom bounded by steep slopes rising only about twenty metres higher up to an equally branching plateau. As long as the slopes were still mostly grown with trees, they formed a forest border that stood in stark contrast to the rice fields on the flat bottom of the valley.

Locating the story in that particular valley, we must consider that Matachi is said to have opened up ten *chō* of rice fields. At the time when *Hitachi fudoki* was compiled this may have corresponded to about ten hectares, an area that was probably enough to nourish sixty persons or more. We may guess from this that Matachi may have been the leader of a group of settlers and that as such he may also have founded a small village, either on the elevated flat land framing the valley or on the edge of the lower field land.

## The Mountain Entrance

The fact that Matachi is said to have dedicated a reedy plain (*ashihara*) to the *kami* of that valley suggests that the land higher up the valley was still also covered with reeds. If so, why was the entrance to that 'land above' called *yama no kuchi* ('mountain entrance')?

As noted in the introduction, the old concept of *yama* has survived to this day in the word *miyayama* for 'shrine forest', a term that is often also applied to shrine forests situated in flat land. As Yanagita Kunio (1963: 502) has pointed out, the term *yama no kuchi* or *yamaguchi* used to be applied to places at the boundary between the occupied and the not yet occupied land, and it was at such places that the mountain deity (*yama no kami*) was worshipped. This corresponds to the situation in our story, where *yama no kuchi* is the entrance (*kuchi*) to the land dedicated to Yato no kami. Dwelling behind and above, Yato no kami was actually a mountain deity (*yama no kami*), although the 'mountain' was in this case probably a flat part in the bottom of the 'valley'. It might still have been covered with reeds, featuring perhaps a few isolated trees. Basically, this particular concept of *yama* apparently meant a sacred land, regardless of whether it was a woody slope, a reedy field, a part of an open plain or a combination of such landscape features.

Another noteworthy point of the quoted story is the anticipatory use of certain words and names. Opening up a wilderness was a process in the course of which boundaries and places were defined, and names were newly given. To later describe such a process, it was practical to locate the action in space by using the later names that had not yet been given at the time of opening up the area.

We often encounter such anticipatory use of certain words or names in the ancient texts; in the present case, the pattern appears more than once. Matachi comes to the 'mountain entrance' and places his staff on the 'boundary ditch', but in opening up a wilderness there is of course no boundary yet, nor is there a 'ditch' or a 'mountain entrance'. It is Matachi himself who, by placing his staff, decides the boundary as well as the place that will become the *yama no kuchi* or mountain entrance. The digging of a boundary ditch will likewise follow later when the rice fields are made. So, what we have here are instances of anticipatory uses of words and names that locate ritual actions performed before the respective places were distinguished and named.

Significantly, the same use of words is also applied to the wild nature spirits that Matachi is going to ritually elevate to the status of local deities. We might

expect that these spirits are depicted as a wild and nameless multitude representing the wilderness, but the story pictures them as a multitude of *yato no kami* ('kami of the valley') headed by a leader, thereby anticipating the later situation that will become effective only when the *yashiro* is established and a single deity called Yato no kami will represent the many *yato no kami* that continue to function as its messengers.

Another and, in this case, probably better way of interpreting this is to assume that the story really describes a ritual performance that used to re-enact Matachi's land-taking at the time of an annual cult feast. This might explain why Yato no kami is represented as a single deity with followers and why Matachi is said to have placed his sign staff at a boundary ditch. The story has been compared with the myth of Susanoo's killing of the 'eight-forked serpent', which is still the subject of dramatic dances called *orocho kagura* in many places in Shimane Prefecture and other parts of the Chūgoku region. The mythic dragon snake is then often represented by images made of straw and treated with offerings in shrine precincts (figure 13).

Such re-enactments can also explain why certain parts of a play or story anticipate later conditions. In other cases, however, the anticipatory use of words is probably due to the wish to identify something in a story that plays at a time when that element does not yet exist or is only becoming what it is said to be. The same is true for the anticipatory use of titles, as we shall see for instance in the story of Yamatohime meeting the chiefs of Ise (chapter 7).

Another story that describes the marking of a boundary when founding a sanctuary is the first part of the *fūji*-floating story translated in chapter 1. It says that when a deity was settled at Fujishiro no Take they "punished the wild *kami* and made the boundary by shooting and setting up the sounding arrow/s of *soshishi*".<sup>2</sup> The 'punishing' corresponds here to what Matachi does by fighting the *kami* and chasing them beyond the land's upper boundary, whereas the arrow shooting is done to decide the boundary, here apparently the upper one, since it follows on the punishing. Whereas Matachi places his sign staff where the upper boundary is already marked by a ditch, this fragment of another story tells that the founder decided the boundary by arrow shooting. This source might therefore mean that sometimes (or regularly?) also the upper boundary of a territory was decided by divination to make sure that the *kami* agree with its course too.

2 \**Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*, Tanaka 1998, lines 624–27.



### The Lacking First Part of the Story

When I first came across the key story discussed here, I studied it together with the topography of the valley in which it is usually set and tried to imagine, realistically, where and how the settler might have started to open up his rice fields. As it occurred to me that in building a house one would first lay the foundation, I thought that the settler would have begun by marking the lower boundary of the land he was going to open up, although the story only says that he marked the upper boundary. This, together with general knowledge about various functions of divination, has led to the hypothesis that the story, as it has been handed down, only describes the second part of a more complex, two-phase ritual.

While this was a natural conclusion for a researcher focusing on space and on the interpretation of spatial relations, other scholars dealing with the story of Yato no kami only considered what the story says. This has led to the usual interpretation that Matachi uses his sign staff as a claiming sign when he places it at the mountain entrance and decides the cult place (figure 8a).<sup>3</sup>

However, since a territory also needed a lower boundary, the land-taking ritual had a dual structure and was performed in relation to the bipolar space between A and B (figure 8b). The story of Yato no kami does not mention the first part of the ritual, but it provides at least circumstantial evidence for its omission by describing Matachi's behaviour as somewhat strange. Why is he first fighting, killing and expelling the *kami* which he is going to worship? This has puzzled many interpreters, but we can understand it, if we assume that these spirits had no longer a right to oppose the clearing because they had already expressed their agreement when they were addressed in divining.

The text confirms this interpretation. What Matachi declares when he marks the upper boundary is the law of the land, as it were, but the fact that he does not request the *kami*'s agreement indicates that he must have done this already before by stipulating the same terms in a divining oath, which the text omits to mention. He repeats the terms at the upper boundary of the land to remind the *kami* of the deal and to confirm that they must henceforth remain beyond the mountain entrance where he will worship them.

When opening up land, the divining was combined with the marking of the claim, and the claiming sign signalled successful divination. These two rites belonged together. The story of the ceremony on Iibo Hill, which is dealt with in chapter 3, clearly combines the *kunishime* or 'land-claiming' with an allusion to divination that preceded the placing of the claiming mark.

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3 Komatsu 1977: 134; Akasaka 1989: 132; Iizumi 1989: 85–86, 92.

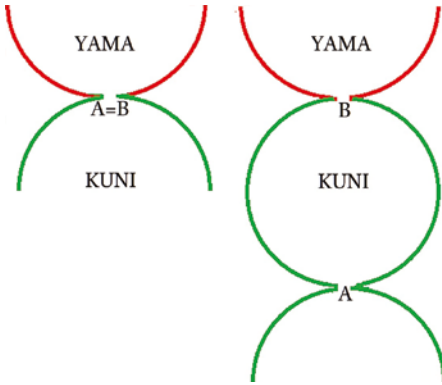


FIGURE 8

Two different interpretations of the story. 8a (left): The usual interpretation that considers only what the story tells. The place of claiming (A) is either neglected or identified with the mountain entrance where Matachi places his sign-staff (B). 8b (right) The interpretation proposed here. Matachi claims the land at the lower boundary (A) and later marks the upper boundary as the 'mountain entrance' (B)

DIAGRAMS BY THE AUTHOR

### The Yashiro at the Upper Boundary

If the story of Matachi and Yato no kami is a true key story, then this is because it is the only story from a *fudoki* that lets us understand the ritual procedure in the way described. Whereas other *fudoki* stories sometimes mention the establishment of a sanctuary (*yashiro* 社) or of a sacred grove (*mori*, OJ also 社), only this one clearly refers to a cult agreement, which explains that Matachi expels the *kami* by force because they are supposed to violate an agreement which he has already made with them. The story from *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki* quoted earlier even speaks of 'punishing the wild *kami*'. A further story that mentions the foundation of a *yashiro* goes as follows:

Ise no. The reason why it is named Ise no (Ise plain). Each time when human houses were in this plain one failed to get peace. But then Kinunui no Ite, the ancestor of the Ayabito no Torara, intended to stay here. He founded a *yashiro* at the foot of the mountain and worshipped respectfully. The deities in the high part (*mine*) of the mountain are Isetuhiko no Mikoto und Isetuhime no Mikoto, children of Iwa no Ōkami . Since then, the houses had it easy and eventually it was possible to form a village. Therefore [the plain] was called Ise no. (\**Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 291)

Interpreting this story, we can assume that Isetuhiko and Isetuhime were the original founders of the territory and came to be worshipped as such after their death. But later settlers apparently failed to get peace because they did not continue worshipping the original founders when they newly opened up land

and perhaps introduced their own ancestor cult from their former home. The new settler mentioned by name, however, was successful because he founded a cult place at the foot of the mountain and also worshipped the original founders which were thought to dwell high up in that mountain. Perhaps there was a second cult place up there, as in the case of the Sokinoya no Yashiro discussed in chapter 6.

### Matachi's Ritual Procedure Reconstructed

To sum up, we should assume that the real Matachi (not his impersonator in a cult play) begins by performing some kind of divination somewhere in front of the desired land, presumably in the lowest part of the valley. Perhaps he shoots an arrow combined with a divining oath, saying that he will take land *from where* the arrow hits the ground. The shot having been successful, he takes it for a sign of agreement from the side of the local *kami* and marks the point from where he intends to open up, using perhaps the arrow as a provisional sign. By thus claiming the land, he gains the right to take possession of it, but he has yet to make use of this right by actively exercising it.

More realistically, we can assume that Matachi first decides by rational criteria from where he wants to appropriate the land and provisionally marks a point at the lower boundary (perhaps also at other points of the boundary), and then divines by arrow shooting whether the local spirits agree with his intentions.

Granting the *kami* some time to withdraw, Matachi would return later to perform the second part of the ritual that is described in the story quoted from *Hitachi fudoki*. Whereas a real settler might now start clearing the area, assuming that this would expel the local spirits, the impersonator of Matachi in a cult play only pretends that the spirits oppose him and puts up a mock fight, mimicking a warrior pushing out an enemy. Arriving at the point up to where he wants to open up, he sets up his staff as a second sign, and declares in formal speech what he may have already stipulated in his divining oath: the *kami* will have the land further up, he himself will take the land below; moreover, he will worship the *kami* and the *kami* must not have a grudge or take revenge. Finally, he founds a *yashiro* as the deity's temporary seat at times of presenting offerings, probably selecting a tree in the *kami* land, but close to the 'mountain entrance'. This done, he worships Yato no kami and celebrates the first festival with his family and followers.

Having properly taken possession in this way, Matachi can let his people start cultivation in the belief that they have no need to fear the wrath of the local *kami*, as long as they worship Yato no kami without fail.

### Mibu no Muraji Maro and the Divine Snakes

Whereas the story of Matachi and Yato no kami tells how a settler founded a local cult when taking possession of agricultural land, the second story, which immediately follows in *Hitachi fudoki*, deals with what later happened to that local cult when, after the Taika Reform, the shrine's sacred land became an obstacle to an agricultural development project of the new *ritsuryō* government. It is because of this second story that the first one is included in this *fudoki*, for only the second one explains a name:

When it later came to the era of the sovereign who ruled the country in the palace of Nagara no Toyosaki at Naniwa [Kōtoku Tennō], Mibu no muraji Maro first claimed this valley and had a dike for a pond constructed. At that time the deities of the dale were assembled on a *shii* tree by the pond which they had climbed, and although the old times had passed, they had not withdrawn. Now Maro raised his voice and made big words: "As for this pond, it is planned for the benefit of the people. What heavenly *kami*, what earthly *kami* refuse to submit to the new wind?" Thereupon he ordered the official labourers, saying: "The various things seen with the eyes, fish, insects, and the like, without fear or hesitation kill them all!" As soon as he had spoken thus, the divine snakes withdrew and disappeared. The said pond is now called Shii'i no ike. At the front of the pond is the *shii* tree. As water runs out, the 'fountain' (*i*) was taken as name of the pond (*ike*). (\**Hitachi fudoki*, NKBT 2: 55/57)

The Taika Reform put an end to private ownership of rice land and marked the beginning of the time when rice cultivation was newly managed according to the *handen* system of land distribution. To increase the productivity of the land the state could build irrigation ponds, and since the interest of the state had priority over that of the individual cultivators it could happen that the place for a new pond was chosen in an area that had been dedicated to the *kami* of a local cult. In such a case, the government had two options: either it could use its authority to simply abolish that cult or it could order the local people

to move their cult place to another part of the valley and establish a new *kami* land there. The text seems to suggest that Mibu no muraji Maro chose the first option, but this is probably an illusion, for the first story says in the end: “The descendants of Matachi took over, and without interruption they celebrated the festivals until now.” This ‘now’ refers to the time when *Hitachi fudoki* was compiled more than sixty years after Maro exorcised the snakes.

The snakes are said to have ‘climbed’ that tree, but their assembly on the trees is reminiscent of the old custom to mark the place of a ‘snake cult’ by hanging a snake image made of straw in the branches of a tree or around its stem. By doing so every year without removing the old straw snakes each time, one can get over the years a situation such as Maro may have encountered. What he exorcised were most likely not living snakes that were assembled on a tree but the abandoned snake images which the worshippers of Yato no kami had not dared to destroy when they moved their *yashiro* to another part of the valley.

As we have seen, the first story has a note inserted according to which the *kami* had the body of snakes and horns on the head. Yet, living snakes with horns are probably not found in Japan. An ancient picture of a horned snake found in a burial cave dated to the Late Kofun period shows a snake with horns (figure 9). Comparing it with a straw snake still used in rituals (figure 10), it is clear that the ancient picture may have been inspired by an artificial model, rather than by the form of a zoological species. Snake images made of straw are traditionally still used at shrines in many areas of Japan, and since they often display horns, it is most likely that the snakes which Maro had to remove from that tree were snake images in various states of decomposition.

Figures 9 to 14 show only a few of the countless cases of cult places in Japan where a straw snake is still hung in the branches of a tree or around its stem at certain festivals. The straw snake is now usually replaced with a new one at the annual festival (figures 10 and 11), but often it is still left in place and the new one is simply added on top. When this additive method of renewal is practised over many years, one can usually see one fresh snake image lying on top of a clump of old grey ones, the lowest ones being no longer distinguishable from one another (figures 12–14).

In contrast to the first story, the second story begins with an introductory sentence saying that “Mibu no muraji Maro first claimed/divined (占) this valley and had a dike for a pond constructed”. This either means that Maro was the first to claim the valley where the irrigation pond was going to be made or that he first divined to find out if the local *kami* agreed with his intention of building a pond there. As the claiming or divining was apparently successful, Maro later reminds the snakes that under the new political circumstances they

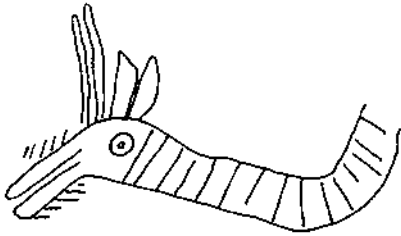


FIGURE 9  
A horned snake represented on a wall in  
one of the burial caves of Hata in Hitachi  
Ōta-shi of Ibaraki-ken. Late Kofun period  
SOURCE: SKETCHED AFTER SAITŌ  
1968: 236



FIGURE 10  
Straw snake at the entrance to the Tsuna  
no goō Jinja. Three *gohei* represent the  
horns. Okayama-ken, Niimi-shi, Tessei-chō,  
Kami-Kōjiro  
PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2011

no longer have a right to remain on that tree; then he orders his workers to kill them and the text says that they ‘withdrew’.

In a sense, Maro’s behaviour is similar to that of Matachi when he gets angry and expels the *kami* by force. In either case, the rude behaviour is justified by the preceding act of divining, which requires that the *kami* withdraw, but since Maro’s task is to remove the material remains of a cult that had apparently already been moved to another place he will not have to recompense the *kami* with a cult.

This is how we can interpret the story by assuming that Matachi’s descendants moved their *yashiro* to another place when the government told them of the plan to build that pond. Since, as worshippers of Yato no kami, they were afraid to remove the remains of that cult, it was Mibu no muraji Maro as a representative of the new government who had to ritually exorcise the remaining spirits at their former place.

A story from *Tsurezuregusa*, a work written by the monk Yoshida Kenkō between 1330 and 1332, supports this interpretation. It tells that when the ground for building the Kameyama Residence was levelled, a heap of large divine snakes was discovered. People thought that since the snakes had always



FIGURE 11 *Tatsu* ('dragon') made of straw hanging in the tree branches behind a small shrine. Hiroshima-ken, Shōbara-shi, Takano-chō, Minami  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2004



FIGURE 12  
A new snake rope above many old ones on the foot of a tree in the precinct of the Ōmoto Shrine. Hiroshima-ken, Yamagata-gun, Kita Hiroshima-chō  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1977





FIGURE 13 A sacred tree with a new snake rope on top of countless old ones that are no longer distinguishable. The head of the snake is visible above the offering platform. Shimane-ken, Matsue-shi, Nogi-fukutomi-chō, Fukutomi Shrine  
PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2019



been there one should not simply destroy the heap. But the Minister Fujiwara Sanemoto disagreed:

‘Why should these creatures prove vengeful at the construction of an imperial residence, when they’ve been living all this time on imperial ground?’ he said. “Gods do no evil”, after all. There’s no need to worry about them. We should just go ahead and root them all out.’ So they did, and threw all the snakes into the nearby Ōi River. And no ill came of it. (*Tsurezuregusa*, story 207; trans. McKinney 2013)

In this much later story the snakes were also probably not real snakes. Even the word used for ‘snake’ is not the normal *hebi* but *kuchinawa*, which can literally mean ‘rotten rope’ or a rope (*nawa*) with a mouth (*kuchi*). There had apparently been a cult place on the site where the ground for that residence was levelled, but since the straw snakes representing the deity had been annually renewed according to the additive method, a clump of snake images remained when the cult was moved to another place. It was again a nobleman who finally convinced the people that there was no longer a reason to fear these old snakes. Our story from *Hitachi fudoki* plays some six hundred years earlier, but the problem was the same and it was likewise solved by performing a rite of exorcising.



FIGURE 14 A new straw snake on top of many old ones heaped up around the hidden stump of a tree whose upper part was no longer extant. Shimane-ken, Matsue-shi, Mihono-seki-chō, Hōda

PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2007

Figure 14 shows that even today it can be difficult to simply do away with an old cult sign. On a field trip in 2007, we discovered three very unusual sanctuaries, each consisting of a heap of old rotten straw snakes with a new one on top. In each of these cases, the straw snakes had been put around the base of a tree, but the upper part of the tree was no longer there. These were arrangements we had never seen elsewhere. In two of the three cases there was not even a shrine building; the heap of straw snakes alone represented the cult place. As they were still cared for, the local farmers apparently did not dare to move the cult to another place where the new snake images could again have been attached to a living tree. A report from the early 1990s describes the three cases as if the trees had still been visible at the time (Shimane-ken kodaibunkasentā 1997: 39–45).

### Moving a Shrine to Another Site

The practice of moving sanctuaries no doubt goes back to the protohistoric period. How important it must have become after the Taika Reform we can imagine if we consider that the whole country came to be reorganised by the *ritsuryō* government and that this led to extensive logging for new building activities and to the opening up of more and more land for agriculture. Today, many shrines still have records saying that they have been moved to their present site from somewhere else, while others are still dislocated to make space for the extension of a settlement or for the construction of a street or highway.

*Hitachi fudoki* contains yet another story that tells of a high-ranking government official who had to ritually disestablish a sanctuary at its traditional place. In that case, the deity was a god called Tachihayao no Mikoto, who had descended from heaven and was dwelling in the forks of a pine tree in an area called Matsuzawa. The text says that the farmers were embarrassed by the presence of this god because he would cause too many calamities, for instance bringing harm if someone relieved himself facing the deity. When the farmers reported the conditions to the court, Kataoka no Ōmuraji was dispatched to solve the problem. Arriving, he worshipped respectfully and addressed the deity as follows:

Now you stay here, the farmers dwell nearby, and there is defilement morning and evening. Reason [says] you must not be here. Truly, you must withdraw and dwell in the pure boundary of a high mountain.  
(\**Hitachi fudoki*, NKBT 2: 84–87)

Hearing the request, the god is said to have moved up to the high mountain called Kabire no Takamine, where his *yashiro* is described as a stone enclosure containing many of his descendants and the petrified remains of treasured articles such as armour, bows, spears, etc. Birds would pass by hastily without alighting.

Interpreting this story realistically, we may think that a cult symbol representing Tachihayao had been installed in that tree on the plain and the real reason for moving it away was perhaps not the danger of defilement but the plan to reclaim and open up the marshy area called Matsuzawa ('pine marsh'). This would have been enough reason to appoint a government official to formally ask the deity to move to a place situated on a nearby mountain.

### The Location of the Ancient Pond

Although we do not know where the ancient pond was really located, it is not futile to deal with this question because it gives us the opportunity to think about the problem of how sacred places may have been situated in the valleys of early Japan. Assuming that Matachi opened up his field land in the relatively broad middle section of the valley, which is locally called Tonagiyatsu (figure 15 and A in figure 16), the dam later built by Maro's people would have blocked the water of one of the two source valleys, but whether it was the longer main valley or the shorter branch valley where the present pond is situated is open to question.

Today, the water sources at the top of the main valley provide sufficient water for irrigating the longer valley above A in figure 16. The pond which still exists (the dam is seen in figure 15) is called Ubagaike and the small valley there is known as Ubagayatsu.<sup>4</sup> It provides the water for irrigating the fields in the wider, lower parts of the main valley where Matachi might have opened up his ten *chō* of rice fields and where the *ritsuryō* government apparently intended to open up still more land for rice cultivation. If the pond built by Mibu no muraji Maro was where the present Ubagaike is, then Matachi's descendants could have moved their cult place to the longer main valley, which in that case would have remained free for upward extensions of the rice fields. The land dedicated to the deity could still have been a flat part of the valley, and with each upward extension the *yashiro* could have been moved as well, but eventually the *kami* land would come to lie in the lateral slope, like so many shrine forests that

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4 Information received on the site in 1974. *Uba* means 'nursing mother' or 'old woman' and ponds (*ike*) called Ubagaike are often associated with some death said to have occurred there.



FIGURE 15 View from the south towards the dam of the present pond seen in figure 16. This might have been the plain where Matachi opened up his 10 *chō* of rice fields  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1974

still exist in Japan. In the sixteenth century, Yato no kami was apparently worshipped in the shrine of Atago Gongen (B in figure 16) which was later moved to where Yato no kami is still worshipped today (C in figure 16).

The scenario sketched is hypothetical, but it seems to me more likely than what we imagine might have happened if Maro's pond had been in the larger main valley, as is usually presumed.<sup>5</sup> However, we do not have to solve the riddle of the pond's location to understand the two stories. What is important is the fact that, according to the second story, the sacred land of the first story must have been where the pond was made. This tells us that the deity's sacred 'land above' – above the 'mountain entrance' – was initially not a portion of the lateral slopes but an area in the bottom of the valley where later a pond could be made. This is also what the name Yato no kami suggests, for *yato* (now *yatsu*) refers to the flat and damp bottom of a valley.<sup>6</sup>

5 For literature assuming that the pond was situated in the long main valley, see Yoshida 1907: 3628; Kitabatake 1984: 419–20; Seki 1994: 161–76, figure 11.

6 日本書紀: index s.v. *yato*. Present-day *yatsu* is thought to either derive from an ancient word *yato* or to be an ancient word that was wrongly written *yato* in this *fudoki*. In the valley discussed here, *yatsu* is traditionally used to designate different parts of the larger valley (see earlier, Ubagayatsu and Tonagiyatsu).

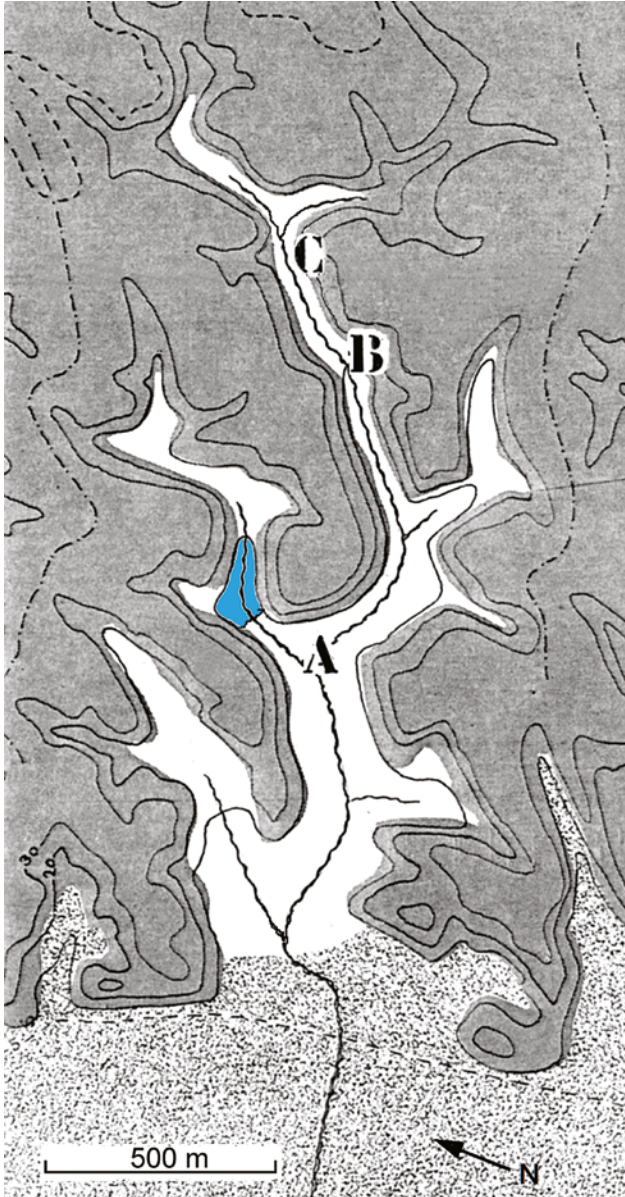


FIGURE 16 The location of the extant pond Ubagaike (blue) and other places mentioned in the text. (A) and below: The area where Matachi's rice fields might have been situated (see figure 15); (B) Furu Atago, the former Atago Shrine where Yato no kami was also worshipped; (C) The present precinct of the Atago Shrine, where recently a separate shrine for Yato no kami has been built. Adapted from Domenig 1988, p. 66



### The New Conditions in the Ritsuryō State

The story of Maro has sometimes been interpreted as representing the abolition of a traditional sanctuary by a government official of the *ritsuryō* state and as being typical of the new religious ideology of the *ritsuryō* time. If this were meant to suggest that the cults of lower deities were simply disestablished and abolished when they were in the way of a government project, it would be difficult to agree with such a view. What the story of Maro does tell is that by the middle of the seventh century the government's project of building an irrigation pond to increase the productivity of the land had priority over the private worship of a local guardian deity. Since the *yashiro* established by Matachi was an obstacle to the making of an irrigation pond, it had to be abolished at that particular place, but this could be done by moving it to another place, as I have suggested.

*Engishiki*, completed and presented to the throne in 927, contains in volumes nine and ten 'a register of deities' (*jinmyōchō*) which lists a total of 3,132 deities worshipped at *shrines* all over the country. These deities were registered because they received offerings from the central government. Countless other deities were not registered, the likely reason being that there were so many of them that it was simply not possible to present state offerings to them all. Although these minor land deities did not receive offerings from the state, we cannot assume that their worship was suppressed by the state and discontinued by the people who worked the respective fields. Yato no kami was one of them, but how long Matachi's descendants really continued to worship this deity we do not know. According to the *fudoki* quoted, Maro performed his rite of exorcising during the reign of Emperor Kōtoku (645–54), which ended eight years after the proclamation of the Taika Reform. The new state was still very young then. Though the land reform was one of the innovations mentioned in the reform edict of 646 (Aston II: 207–208), it is doubtful that the private ownership of rice land was abolished in practice a few years later in Hitachi Province, far from the political centre.

It therefore seems possible that Matachi's descendants could move the cult place of Yato no kami to a new place when the government planned to build that pond. Even if their land should have belonged to the state and they would have received their part according to the 'land receiving' system of the new state, they could have continued to worship Yato no kami as a divine protector of their lives and welfare.

## Conclusions

Apart from supporting our model of the two-phase founding ritual, this chapter has led to a number of other insights and interpretations:

1. When the upper part of a small valley had not yet been opened up and was dedicated to a deity, it could be called *yama* ('mountain') and the entrance to it *yama no kuchi* ('mountain entrance').
2. The first ritual act in land-taking was divining and claiming, as Maro is said to have done before he exorcised the divine snakes. The story of Matachi and Yato no kami does not mention this initial act but tells instead what it implied: the offer of a cult relationship addressed to the local *kami*.
3. This cult relationship implied that the cult was based on a contract with the *kami* that required both parties to behave accordingly. It is because the *kami* have given a positive sign in the preceding rite of divining that Matachi can fight them when they oppose his clearing of the area.
4. The snakes that were still assembled on the *shii* tree when Maro arrived should be understood as straw snakes that symbolised the deity. To imagine them as living snakes with horns does not make sense in view of the ethnographic facts regarding the custom of using straw snakes in Japanese folk religion.
5. When opening up land, one used to ritually raise the status of the local nature spirits by worshipping them as guardian deities of the land. In this way, not-yet-worshipped nature spirits were transformed into local deities. In the local cult, people addressed a single main deity as the representative of these many deities, who in turn were thought to be its manifestations or messengers.

## Making a Large Territory in Harima

The flat valley opened up by Matachi according to our key story offered, in its lower half, a plain about 200 metres wide and less than one kilometre long. Matachi is said to have opened up an area less than half of this, and later the *ritsuryō* government may have cultivated more, both in the valley and in the coastal plain. Today, the bottom of the valley is still a single continuous zone covered with rice fields extending over some three kilometres from the coast inward.

Other river valleys of Japan are many times larger and were originally opened up piecemeal by different settlers who sometimes may have done so in competition with one another. A family who, over generations, may have opened up more and more territories in a region might eventually have felt that they could lay claim to the rule of a larger area, so that the numerous individual territories within that larger area would eventually come to be tied together into a larger unit of political relevance.

With this ideal-type image in mind, we may wonder how, in such a case, the larger territory was spatially organised. Interestingly, some sources suggest that the organisation of a larger territory could replicate to some extent the bipolar pattern that was typical of the small-scale territories. But while, in a small valley, the whole upper part could perhaps be dedicated as *kami* land, this was not possible in a large valley when there were already settlements established in all parts. What one could do in such cases was to define a lower and an upper pole, and to associate the lower one with divination and claiming and the upper one with worshipping the protective deity of the larger area. By such associations the two poles would symbolise that the territory has been established according to traditional ritual, although in reality the various parts of the valley may have consisted of regions that were already partly settled when the larger territory was established on a higher level of spatial organisation. Moreover, it was now possible to also devise a foundation legend creating the fiction that the whole large valley was taken into possession in one large undertaking.

This chapter deals with stories from *Harima fudoki* that tell of the making of such a larger territory. The main feature of *Harima fudoki* is that it sometimes gives explicit references to land-claiming (*kunishime*). As Akimoto Kichirō has put it, *Harima fudoki* “tells of the beginnings of societies that were developed



by migrants through the claiming and opening up of land for rice cultivation” (NKBT 2: 20). This aspect is particularly expressed in the two sections dealing with the ancient Iibo District and Shisawa District (modern Ibo-gun and Shisō-gun), which extended along the lower and upper course of the Iibogawa (modern Ibogawa). Earlier, they formed a single political unit called Iibo, but after the proclamation of the Taika Reform in the reign of Emperor Kōtoku, Shisawa was cut off and both areas were established as separate districts of the province of Harima. When *Harima fudoki* was compiled, the Iibo District therefore comprised the land around the lower half of the long river, while the upper half and parts of the upper courses of the Chikusagawa to the west formed the district of Shisawa (figure 18).

### Ame no Hiboko and Iwa no Ōkami

The land-claiming stories which interest us here seem to tell of an earlier time when the Iibo River area was not yet divided into two districts. At that time there was probably still much unclaimed land in the upper parts, where the Shisawa District was later established. The claiming there is said to have been done by two rivalling gods (*kami*), one of which, Ashihara no Shikoo alias Iwa no Ōkami was already settled in the river’s lower course, whereas the other one, Ame no Hiboko (also Ama no Hiboko), was a newcomer.

To explain why often gods are said to have been active as claimers of land in the *fudoki*, it has been suggested that land-claiming was done in the name of a god or with a god’s help and that it often meant extending a god’s area of influence (Ide 1970: 290; Ueda 2013: 223). The stories discussed in this chapter rather suggest that the founders of territories were sometimes worshipped after death and therefore also called ‘gods’ in later stories about their lifetime.

In the present case, this interpretation is supported by both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* when they state that Ame no Hiboko was a son of the king of Silla on the Korean Peninsula, who arrived as an immigrant and eventually established himself in Japan.<sup>1</sup> The two chronicles do not even add the honorific ending *no Mikoto* to his name when they record his arrival in Japan. *Nihon shoki* dates his arrival to the third year of the reign of Emperor Suinin and quotes a detailed report saying that Ame no Hiboko had first arrived in Harima and lived there in Shisawa Village. The Yamato ruler sent messengers to question him and then

1 Ame no Hiboko is said to have arrived during the reign of Suinin, the eleventh emperor (*Nihon shoki*), or during that of Ōjin, the fifteenth emperor (*Kojiki*).

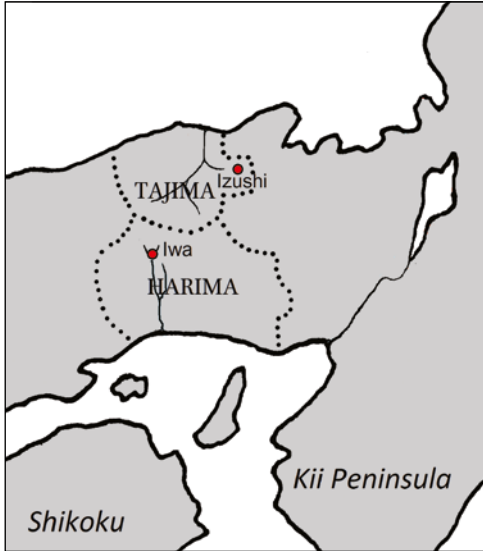


FIGURE 17  
The location of the ancient provinces  
of Harima and Tajima  
MAP BY THE AUTHOR

offered him the option to dwell either in Shisawa of Harima or in Idesa of Awaji Island. Hiboko, however, expressed his wish to search for a place himself. Being allowed to do so, he went east, and then by way of the Uji River north to Ōmi, where he stayed for some time.<sup>2</sup> Later, Hiboko continued westwards by way of Wakasa to Izushi in Tajima (figure 17), where he stayed and married.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, *Harima fudoki* calls him a *kami* and *Kogoshūi* says he ‘became a great shrine [-god]’ in Tajima. *Kojiki*, which was concluded a few years earlier than *Harima fudoki*, makes Hiboko a distant ancestor of Jingū Kōgō, the wife of Emperor Chūai, and has a note saying that his first wife Akaruhime became the deity of the Himekoso Shrine at Naniwa. André Wedemeyer therefore wrote in his book about Japan’s protohistory (1930) that Ame no Hiboko is certainly a god because he has a shrine in Izushi, but “it is equally certain that as an immigrant and ancestor of the Tajima family he is a human being, [...] probably the historical leader of a human group”. Wedemeyer therefore saw two possibilities: either Ame no Hiboko was deified or he “came to merge with an

2 *Nihon shoki* (NKBT 67: 260–61, 278; Aston I: 169, 186).

3 Nakamura and Endo 2004: 116; Kato and Hoshino 1924: 37. The Izushi Shrine has still a forbidden area (*kinsokuchi*) of about 300 *tsubo* (993 square metres) in its precinct that in Edo period was called Hiboko-Byōchi (‘Hiboko Mausoleum land’) (Setodani 1985: 314). According to local legends, the Toyooka basin of Tajima was originally a lake and Hiboko reclaimed it by opening a channel to the northern sea (Kuwabara 1984: 661–62).

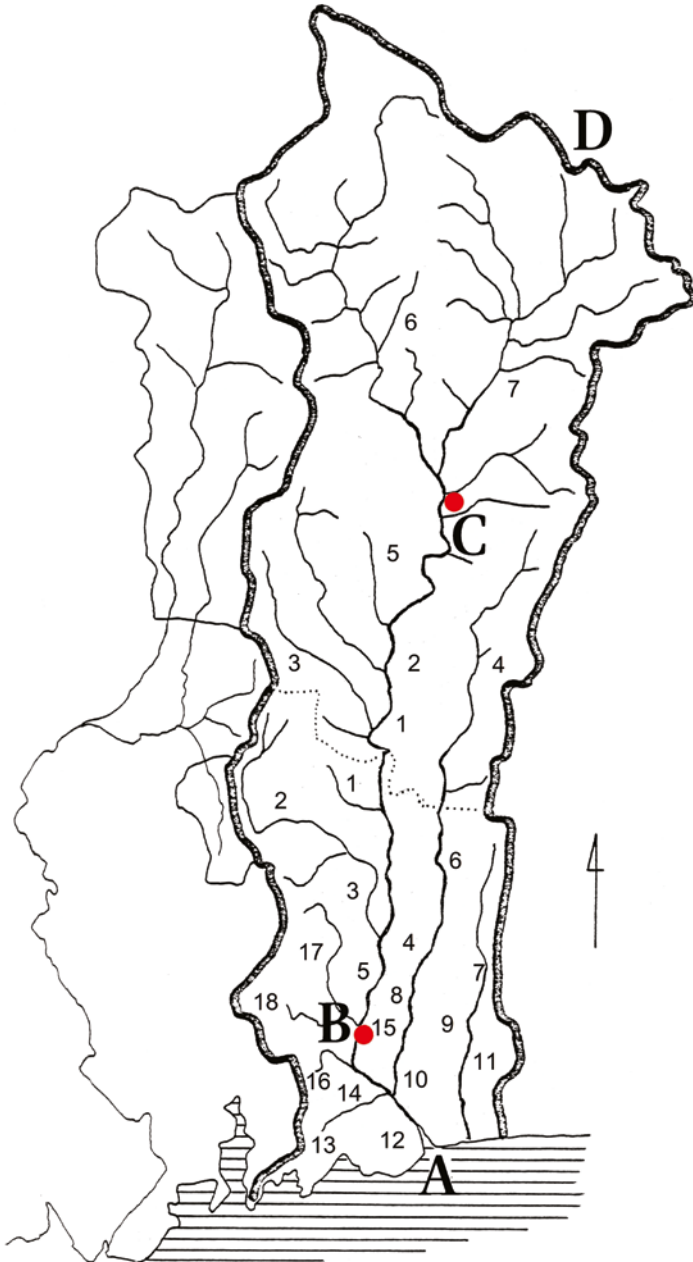


FIGURE 18 The main places along the Ibo River where the story of Ame no Hiboko and Ashihara no Shikoo alias Iwa no Ōkami is set. B-C = 28 km. The numbers roughly locate the *sato* (communities) according to the sequence in which they appear in *Harima fudoki*

MAP BY THE AUTHOR

older god of his group” (1930: 145, 146n327).<sup>4</sup> As for Iwa no Ōkami, I presume that he was the founder called Iwa no kimi and came to be worshipped after death, so that his spirit then gradually merged with that of the nameless nature *kami* which he himself had started to worship at Iwa Village. Similarly, Edwina Palmer (2016: 36) notes that Iwa no kimi, the chief of the Iwa family, could have been conflated with Iwa no Ōkami as a deity associated with rocks (*iwa*) or rock sites.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki* tell what happened when Ame no Hiboko left Shisawa, a number of stories in *Harima fudoki* picture Hiboko as a god who claimed land along the Iibo River (figure 18) in rivalry with Ashihara no Shikoo alias Iwa no Ōkami. These stories repeatedly use the word *kunishime* in the sense of land-claiming, whereas *kunitsukuri* (land-making) is used at the end when Iwa no Ōkami says that he has finished ‘making’ the land. We must therefore assume that the two gods made rival claims to one territory after the other. When they finally decide by divination who will be allowed to stay, Hiboko is the loser and must search for land in neighbouring Tajima, leaving his claims to Iwa no Ōkami who concludes the work alone.

### Ame no Hiboko’s Arrival

The story of this land-making on a grand scale begins with Ame no Hiboko’s arrival in Harima (A in figure 18), which is described thus: “riding a *hashifune* he stayed in the land of Harima”.<sup>6</sup> The word *hashifune* is explained as meaning a ‘small boat’, but as a son of a Korean king, Hiboko of course did not travel alone to the Japanese islands. Two entries in *Harima fudoki* say that he had an army that fought with Iwa no Ōkami (NKBT 2: 329, 331). This may be exaggerated, but he certainly arrived with a group of followers and therefore would not cross the ocean in a small boat but in a ship of some size. So, why does the text say that he was riding a small boat? And why does it also use the same words – “riding a *hashifune* he stayed in the land of Tajima”<sup>7</sup> – for recording his later arrival in Tajima?

4 Similarly, Frédéric (2002: 27) says that Ame no Hiboko ‘was deified and is still worshiped in a shrine in Izushi’. For a further discussion of founder cults, see chapter 8.

5 Palmer refers to an article by Iwai Tadahiko, who gives about the same interpretation (Iwai 1986: 22).

6 NKBT 67: 260; cf. Aston 1: 168–70.

7 NKBT 67: 278; cf. Aston 1: 186.

As we saw in chapter 1, a small boat could be used as a ‘floating bridge’ (*uki-hashi*) in the sense of a barge used to cover the distance from a large ship to the land when going ashore. Given that *Nihon shoki* mentions Hiboko’s *hashifune* twice, each time when Hiboko intends to settle down, the compilers probably had a special reason for doing so. The most likely reason is that they wanted to indicate that Hiboko was not a normal visitor but one who performed divination on arrival because he intended to make his own territory in the foreign country. We therefore have a case where there is some circumstantial evidence to the effect that foreigners coming with the intention to settle down sometimes used small boats for divining before going ashore.

How Hiboko then met the owner of the land in the lower course of the river (A in figure 18) is described in *Harima fudoki* as follows:

Iibo Hill. The reason why it was called Iibo Hill: Ame no Hiboko no Mikoto came over from Karakuni [Korea], arrived at the lower course of the Uzu River, and asked Ashihara no Shikoo no Mikoto for a place to stay, saying “You are the master of the land. I would like to get a place to stay.” Shiko offered him the sea. Now the guest *kami* took his sword, churned the seawater, and stayed. The ruling *kami* was awed by the imposing behaviour of the guest *kami*, and thinking to claim the land first, he went round and up, arrived at the Iibo Hill, and took a meal. Here rice corns [*iibo*] fell from his mouth. That is why it was named Iibo Hill. The pebbles on this hill are all quite similar to rice corns. Again, when he stuck the staff into the ground, water gushed forth from the place of the staff, flowing north and south; to the north cold, to the south warm. (\**Harima fudoki*; NKBT 2: 305/307)

Ashihara no Shikoo’s land-claiming ceremony on Iibo Hill is clearly represented as a reaction to the arrival of Ame no Hiboko. He immediately understands that the foreigner wants more than a place to stay overnight, so he refuses by offering him the sea. Seeing that Hiboko churns the seawater with his sword and stays, Shikoo understands the meaning and is alarmed.

Akimoto Kichirō (NKBT 2:305/31) and other commentators have noted that Hiboko’s reaction is reminiscent of the land-ceding myth, where the two messengers from heaven arrive at the beach of Inasa, sit on a sword placed upside down and challenge Ōkuninushi to cede the rule of the land (Philippi 129–30).<sup>8</sup> In that case, the use of the sword and the location in the coastal waters are comparable, but there is no mention of churning the sea water with a sword.

<sup>8</sup> See part G in the overview of the mythology given at the beginning of chapter 4.

Other scholars, such as Uegaki Setsuya (1997: 71n8), have therefore pointed to the similarity with the Japanese creation myth that depicts the gods Izanagi and Izanami as lowering the jewelled spear and churning with it the ocean, whereupon Onogorojima, the 'self-coagulated island', takes form.<sup>9</sup> This is a more convincing comparison, but to make full sense of it we should consider that the two gods then use this first island merely as a temporary base; they descend to it and marry in order that Izanami can give birth to the 'eight' islands of the Japanese archipelago. Similarly, Ame no Hiboko's churning of the seawater with a sword is simply a gesture indicating his intention to make a larger territory consisting of a number of smaller ones. Understanding this, Ashihara no Shikoo hastens "to claim the land first". This can only mean that he now wants to claim a territory larger than the one he already rules in the lower course of the river.

### The Claiming Ceremony on Iibo Hill

The story of Ashihara no Shikoo going to a hill to signal his claim is particularly revealing because it tells us what elements belonged together in the first part of the ritual procedure for opening up land. Whereas other entries in the *fudoki* usually allude to only one rite and rarely mention it explicitly, this entry alludes to three. Speaking of the intention to claim land (*kunishime*, 'land-claiming'), the text first mentions the taking of a meal, then the falling of rice corns and finally the placing of a staff. Since all these things happen at the same time and place, we can assume that they all belong to the act of claiming.

The taking of a meal as the first thing mentioned when the god arrives on the hill might be intended as an act by which he confirms his already existing rule over the territory at that place. This would correspond to what Okada Seishi (1962) has called the *osukuni girei* (eat-land rite): a rite by which one grasped the right to rule the land by eating of its products. However, if we make the distinction between claiming and taking, we should think that by eating of the land in a claiming rite one could only gain the right to take, while the right to rule was gained by then also actively taking (expelling the spirits) and by concluding the ritual with the founding of a sanctuary. The context of the ceremony on Iibo Hill (figure 19) is land-claiming and the few rice corns falling to the ground (the falling motif) represent the good sign received on

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<sup>9</sup> See part A in the overview of the mythology given at the beginning of chapter 4.



FIGURE 19 The hill traditionally identified with the Ibo Hill mentioned in *Harima fudoki* seen from the south. The modern water reservoir on top of the hill has been retouched  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1981

that occasion.<sup>10</sup> To also confirm and announce his act of claiming, Ashihara no Shikoo finally sticks his staff into the ground; and it happens that from this place cold and warm water gushes forth, which he can take as another good sign.<sup>11</sup> The story seems to refer to different qualities of the land for rice cultivation. Whereas north of Ibo Hill, fresh and ‘cold’ water from the mountains makes the land fruitful, in the southern coastal plain ‘warm’ seawater running upriver at high tides renders the land less valuable for rice cultivation. The image can therefore indicate that Ashihara no Shikoo may now open up land in the northern parts of the Ibo River valley.

10 Another story in *Harima fudoki* also tells of a god who takes a meal on a hill, but since a piece of deer meat does not enter his mouth and falls to the ground, the god moves on to another place (NKBT 2: 313). It has therefore been suggested that the falling rice corns on Ibo Hill should not be interpreted as a good omen but explained by the fact that the god was in a hurry (Iizumi 1989). However, in the case of the falling deer meat the story says that it was meat from a deer that had been caught in a fish trap by mistake. In the present case, the falling rice corns are clearly regarded as an auspicious sign, otherwise the god would not signal his claim by placing his staff.

11 This placing of the staff is a variant of the well-known story motif of the founder who sticks his staff into the ground and thereby opens a water source.

As noted, the wider context in *Harima fudoki* indicates that the claiming ceremony on Iibo Hill relates to a territory larger than the one Ashihara no Shikoo already rules in the lower course of the river. This may be the reason why several claiming rites (meal taking, divining, marking) are mentioned. If the place had only been of local importance, it would have been sufficient to say that the hill was so named because rice corns fell from the god's mouth. Another entry in *Harima fudoki* explains the similar name Iibe Hill by only referring to a meal (NKBT 2: 321).

### Other Claiming Stories

It has been said that *Harima fudoki* has no story about the founding of a larger territory (Sakae 2013: 341, 345). This is true if we consider only stories that are told in a single entry of this *fudoki*. The story of Ame no Hiboko's rivalry with Ashihara no Shikoo alias Iwa no Ōkami, however, continues in most entries of the section about Shisawa District. If we regard Ashihara no Shikoo as another name of Iwa no Ōkami, as is usually done, no less than 17 of the 25 entries for Shisawa District more or less clearly refer to the land-claiming of one or both of these two gods. True, how the full story develops after the claiming ceremony on Iibo Hill can only be guessed from brief references in these seventeen entries. Reading them together, however, we learn that the two gods as rivals individually claim portions of land in the upper course area of the Iibo River and that Hiboko finally has to depart, whereas Iwa no Ōkami can conclude the land-making at Iwa Village.

The final decision about who must leave his claims behind and search for land in Tajima is made by a divining competition on top of the boundary mountain between Harima and Tajima (D in figure 18):

Mikata no sato. Soil lower/upper. The reason why it was named Mikata: Ashihara no Shikoo no Mikoto and Ame no Hiboko no Mikoto came to Kurotsuchi no Shinidake (Mount Shini of the black earth). Taking each three lengths of *tsuzura* creepers, they fixed them to a foot and threw them. Now one of the *tsuzura* of Ashihara no Shikoo no Mikoto fell to the district of Keta in Tajima, one fell to the district of Yabu [also in Tajima], and one fell to this village here; that is why [the village] is called Mikata ('three lengths'). The *tsuzura* of Ame no Hiboko no Mikoto all fell to the land of Tajima. Therefore, he claimed the place Izushi of Tajima and is [now] there. One [person] says that Ōkami planted his staff at this village



(*mura*) as a token (*katami*) and that this is why it was called Mikata. (\**Harima fudoki*; NKBT 2: 323)<sup>12</sup>

The special location of this episode at the provincial boundary indicates that the basic issue of these claiming stories is the rule of the whole Iibo River area, from the southern sea to the top of the northern mountains. After Ame no Hiboko has departed, Ashihara no Shikoo alias Iwa no Ōkami, will probably have to establish the cult places of all individual smaller claims, a ritual necessity that is not mentioned in the text but later alluded to (see later in this chapter). Only when this is done too, can Iwa no Ōkami conclude his work at Iwa mura (figure 18C) and the text state that he has concluded the ‘making’ of the land:

Iwa no mura. The original name was Miwa. [Iwa no] Ōkami brewed rice wine in this village. That is why it was called Miwa no mura [sacred wine village]. Again, it was called Owa no mura. Having finished making the land (*kuni tsukuri*), Ōkami said: “Owa. I shall protect in my coffin.” (\**Harima fudoki*; NKBT 2: 325)

The deity’s final declaration that he will protect in his coffin means that he will be worshipped after death as the guardian deity of the larger land which he has opened up and ‘made’.<sup>13</sup> His tomb is perhaps the one called Iwa Nakayama kofun, which is situated on a hill about one kilometre to the south-east of the

12 Here, divination by throwing is performed to decide who gets the land in Harima and who must search for land in Tajima. The text probably implies that each one got three trials with one *tsuzura* each time. A children’s story based on this myth says that the two gods threw stones that were tied to creepers by swinging them round above their heads and letting them go (Miyazaki and Tokuyama 1963: 15–17). The orally transmitted ancient story might have had *ishi* (‘stone’) instead of *ashi* (‘foot’).

13 Akimoto Kichirō reads the last sentence as *aga miki ni mamoranu* and notes that he follows the original text, although many commentators regarded the last part as corrupted and have interpreted it differently (NKBT 2: 324–25, 324n5–11). Referring to ancient uses of the character 等 in the sense of ‘protect’ and to a comparable story in *Izumo fudoki* where the place name Mori is explained in a similar way (NKBT 2: 102–103), he thinks that the meaning here is “being enshrined (being in the coffin) I will protect” (*chinza shite [hitsugi ni atte] mi-mamotte iyō*; NKBT 2: 325n11). More recently, Uegaki (1997: 92) reads the problematic words as *waga miki to hitoshi* (‘like my sake’) and Palmer follows him, translating “I’m done! It is as good as my sake!” (Palmer 2016: 192). I follow Akimoto’s reading because it corresponds to the structure of the sentence and fits with what is to be expected: the land-making god will be worshipped as guardian deity of the land. That the god predicts this corresponds to a pattern that W. J. Boot has noticed in his study of historical cases of posthumous deification (2000: 158).

main hall of the present Iwa Shrine (D in figure 21). According to an investigation made in 1986, it has a stone chamber with a wooden coffin and dates from the end of the fourth century (early Kofun period).<sup>14</sup>

### The Iibo Hill and Its Special Relation to the Iwa Jinja

Iibo Hill as the place of land-claiming (*kunishime*) and Iwa mura as the place of concluding the land-making (*kunitsukuri*) formed two significantly related poles in the wide space of the territory which, according to the interpretation given here, was meant to have been opened up by Iwa no Ōkami. The Iwa Shrine at the upper pole was considered so important that it later became the *ichinomiya*, the ‘first’ and highest-ranked shrine of whole Harima Province.

The ancient Iibo Hill is traditionally identified with a hill on the eastern shore of the present Iibo River (figure 19; B in figure 18). About 500 metres to the south-west of its top is situated the Yahira Jinja, an ancient shrine that is not mentioned in *Harima fudoki* but listed in the tenth-century shrine register of *Engishiki*. It was therefore probably established later, when the custom had developed to also have a shrine at the lower pole of a bipolar territory. This shrine explains its name using a story that in early times a white flag eight *hira* (*ya hira*) long suddenly stood on the rock where the north-western corner of the hill faces the nearby Iibo River (the modern Ibogawa). People were astonished, and a loud voice was heard from the mountain which said: “I am Iwa no Ōkami.”<sup>15</sup> A panel in the shrine’s precinct explains that the Yahira Shrine was once called the Southern Hall in opposition to the Iwa Shrine, which was then called the Northern Hall.

14 Edwina Palmer, following an archaeologist’s opinion, thinks that the myths about Iwa no Ōkami in *Harima fudoki* might date from the 2nd or 3rd centuries. This might be true for the various smaller territories mentioned, but the synthesis of these territories into a larger realm stretching from Iibo Hill to Iwa mura and beyond was rather the work of a later Iwa chief, who might be buried in the Iwa Nakayama kofun. For a discussion of the ‘Iwa people’, see Palmer’s introduction to her translation of *Harima fudoki* (Palmer 2016: 31–38).

15 Information received on a visit of this shrine in 1981. Note that this legend fits with the old theory that identifies the Iibo Hill of the *fudoki* with the hill on the eastern side of the Ibo River in Ibo-chō Nakajin (figure 19). Formerly, this hill was called Nakajin yama, the deity worshipped there was Nakajin Iibo no Ōkami (NKBT 2: 305n24) and the shrine was identified with the Nakatomi Itate Jinja, which was founded in 770 and later registered in *Engishiki* (Shikinaisha kenkyūkai 1980: 85–90; Shiga 1983: 45, 50–53). There are other hills in the wider area that have been identified with the Iibo Hill of the *fudoki*. See for this Shiga 1983: 45–46; Sakae 2013: 350; Palmer 2016: 160n424.

Creating a large territory like the Iibo River area was not done in a single act of land-making (*kunitsukuri*). Rather, it was a process that might have continued over decades, if not centuries. Individual migrants would arrive at different times, search for land that was still unclaimed and begin with opening up small stretches, as did Matachi in our key story discussed in chapter 2. Each of these land-taking enterprises would have ended with the foundation of a local cult place. The territory made by Iwa no Ōkami according to *Harima fudoki*, however, was many times larger and of a different kind.

Archaeological remains indicate that people in Harima Province originally lived along the rivers and that the regions were only united in the fifth century. Rice cultivation began in narrow and small valleys or on damp ground in the mountains, proceeded gradually forwards from there to places between the hills and plains and moved again lower down to the wide alluvial plains around the rivers' lower courses (Yagi 1970: 180). If this assessment is still correct, then the stories which depict the land-claiming of Iwa no Ōkami and Ame no Hiboko might reflect the early settlement of the upper-course regions, whereas the claiming at Iibo Hill in the river's lower-course area would belong to a later time when these early settlements came to be united as parts of a larger territory. When Iwa no Ōkami later ends his work at Iwa Village, almost 30 kilometres north of Iibo Hill, saying that he will protect the land from his coffin, he means this larger territory.

The founding of the composite territory was followed by periodic tours of inspection, such as are mentioned in the entry for the name of Shisawa District:

Shisawa no kōri. The reason why it was called Shisawa: After Iwa no Ōkami had finished the making and hardening of the land, he was going round to decide the boundaries of mountain rivers and valley ends. At that time a big deer whose tongue was hanging out met him at the village of Yata. He said: "An arrow is in its tongue." That is why the district was named Shisawa [deer meeting] and the village was named Yata no mura [arrow field village]. (\**Harima fudoki*; NKBT 2: 317)

This story suggests that the arrow in the deer's tongue was shot in a divining hunt and that both the village of Yata and the district of Shisawa were named after this occurrence when Iwa no Ōkami went round to decide the boundaries. However, the next entry in *Harima fudoki* says that Shisawa was established as a district of Harima Province in the era of Emperor Kōtoku (645–654), which was much later. It seems, therefore, that this story originally only explained

why Yata no mura got its name and that it was later adapted to also explain the name of the later district of Shisawa.

### Hardening the Land

The expression 'hardening the land' invokes the idea that the land had been soft before, as creation myths often seem to imply, but the context of land-taking suggests that the phrase could also mean turning a mere claim into a definite possession. This is what Matachi does in our key story when he sets up his sign staff at the mountain entrance and declares the rule of the land (chapter 2). As we shall see in chapter 4, *Nihon shoki* also refers to this rite when it says that Ōnamuchi, before concluding his great land-making at Mt. Mimoro, made a second tour and 'wherever there was in the land a part which was imperfect, [he] visited it by himself, and succeeded in repairing it' (trans. Aston I: 60–61). When the entry for Shisawa says that the god "was going round to decide the boundaries of mountain rivers and valley ends" this also means 'hardening the land' in that special sense. But since the text says that he did it *after* having finished "the hardening and making of the land", the phrase probably refers here to a later repetition of the ritual on a tour of inspection that was intended to adapt the political structure of the area to the new conditions at the time when Shisawa was established as a district. This, too, could have been a reason for going round and deciding the mountain boundary of the district by organising a divining hunt. But at that later time, it could not have been Iwa no Ōkami who did it. Rather, it was an official of the new state, perhaps the provincial governor. Many other villages and places of Harima are said to have been named or renamed when Emperor Homuda (Ōjin Tennō) was travelling the land.

The interesting point about the entry for Shisawa is that it uses the expression *kunitsukuri*, 'land-making', and associates its meaning with the 'hardening of the land' by 'deciding the boundaries of mountain rivers and valley ends'. This fully supports our model of the two-phase ritual which requires that after having claimed the land (*kunishime*) one had to return for appropriating it (*kunitsukuri*) by clearing it, marking its mountain boundary and beginning to worship the spirits expelled from it. Apart from that, this story also provides another piece of evidence suggesting that the mountain boundary, too, was sometimes decided by divination. A divining hunt (*ukeigari*) was perhaps thought to be particularly well fitting in such cases.

### A Model of the Grand-Scale Land-Making Myth?

What Ashihara no Shikoo alias Ōnamuchi/Ōkuninushi (alias Iwa no Ōkami), does on Iibo Hill is claim the whole river area so as to eventually establish himself as the superior ruler or god presiding over all minor deities worshipped in the smaller settlements that already exist and will be newly made along the Iibo River and its tributaries. When he ends his work at Iwa, saying that he will protect the land from his coffin, he predicts that he will be worshipped after death as the superior guardian deity of the land which he has claimed and opened up.

Since *Harima fudoki* apparently identifies Iwa no Ōkami with Ashihara no Shikoo, the last entry about the foundation of Iwa mura suggests that the regional land-making (*kunitsukuri*) in the Iibo River area is related to the mythic opening up of the much larger territory of the whole of Japan by the same god, Ashihara no Shikoo alias Ōnamuchi/Ōkuninushi (chapter 4). Both *kunitsukuri* or 'land makings' were also said to have ended at a place called Miwa. In the grand mythology of the god age, this is the later name of Mt. Mimoro in Yamato, whereas in *Harima fudoki* Miwa is the original name of Iwa Village, a place in the upper course of the Iibo River where the Iwa Jinja is situated.<sup>16</sup> This is an intriguing coincidence. The fact that Ashihara no Shikoo is in *Harima fudoki* pictured as claiming land together with Sukunabikona is significant too; for as we shall see in chapter 4, the same two gods also appear in the grand mythology as a team claiming the much larger territory of Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, the great realm of the future emperors.

These coincidences suggest that some of the mythic materials used in the construction of the grand land-making myth may have been taken from lost records of the Iwa family of Harima, and that this might have involved the need to somehow cover up the relationship between the *fudoki* stories about Iwa no Ōkami and the god age mythology. Thinking about this possibility, it would seem that the compiler of *Harima fudoki* might have intended to achieve this by sometimes replacing the name of Iwa no Ōkami with that of Ashihara no Shikoo.

Generally, it must be said that it would be naive to think that the *fudoki* stories collected in the provinces were not partly 'rectified' after they had been presented to the central government. After all, to collect such stories only made sense, politically, as long as they did not seriously contradict the

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<sup>16</sup> Iwa was also the name of a village (*mura* or *sato*) lower down the Iibogawa, which in 670 was renamed Ishizukuri because stone workers were living there (*Harima fudoki*, НКВТ 2: 323). As for Iwa no sato in Shikama District, see the last footnote in this chapter.

ideology of the *ritsuryō* state. It may therefore not have been in keeping with this ideology that Iwa no Ōkami, a character ignored in the national mythology, claimed and opened up such a large area in Harima. To change the original text by using Ashihara no Shikoo as an alternative name for Iwa no Ōkami would have been a clever stratagem to create the illusion that the stories featuring Ashihara no Shikoo alias Ōnamuchi in *Harima fudoki* actually belong to the great land-making myth of the god age mythology.

The compiler of *Harima fudoki*, or, rather, an editor on the part of the central government, apparently did make use of this stratagem; for the later shrine register of *Engishiki* (completed 927) lists the shrine as Iwa ni imasu Ōnamuchi mitama Jinja, ‘the shrine of Ōnamuchi’s august spirit in Iwa’. Ōnamuchi is the most impressive mythic example of a divine land-maker in the two ancient chronicles. That his myth may have had a smaller-scale model is to be expected, for to be convincing as a charter myth it had to correspond to what was still known about the correct ritual procedure for founding a territory. Human settlers usually claimed and opened up small-scale territories, and the general image of a human founder was apparently mythologised in the figure of the anthropomorphic god Ōnamuchi.

### The Two Foundations of the Iwa Shrine

Interestingly, the foundation of the present Iwa Shrine (figures 24 and 25) is not only associated with Iwa no Ōkami’s land-claiming in *Harima fudoki*, but also, and even more, with a legend that is known at the Iwa Shrine. It says that a certain Iwa Tsunesato had received a dream oracle in which Ōnamuchi said “worship me”. Then a stand of *sugi* and *hinoki* trees grew up in a single night, many cranes came flying round and two big white cranes perched on top of a stone, facing north. The shrine was therefore built facing north and the ‘crane stone’ (*tsuru-ishi*) is still seen behind the main hall.

Oracles in which a deity reveals the wish to be worshipped are usually mentioned in the ancient texts when a deity wants to be additionally worshipped at a new place (chapter 1). The Iwa Shrine, however, was originally founded at Iwa because it was the place where Iwa no Ōkami concluded his land-making, as *Harima fudoki* says. Even though Iwa no Ōkami in the end only says that he will protect the land from his coffin, this was understood to mean that he was originally worshipped in Iwa mura. The story about the dream oracle, however, clearly belongs to a later time when Ōnamuchi came to be newly worshipped there, either instead of Iwa no Ōkami or as the main deity beside Iwa no Ōkami. The mention of miraculously growing trees suggests that the shrine was then

newly established in the middle of the plain (figure 20), and the legend about the cranes was added to explain why the new shrine faced north, which is anomalous for a shrine in the upper part of a valley whose river flows southward. The normal orientation of the shrine should have been towards the south.

The earlier situation has apparently left a trace in the spatial relation between the present location of the shrine (C in figure 21) and its sacred mountain (A in figure 21), which is called Miyama, written with characters usually read *miyayama*, 'shrine mountain'. The present shrine forest is separated from that mountain by a broad built-over area, which is also unusual. It has therefore been suggested that the cult place was originally located on the foot of Miyama (B in figure 21), where it would have had the sacred mountain at its back (Kōbeshinbunsha gakugeibu 1971: 366). As an early shrine, it might have been an open-air sanctuary without a main hall situated in the sacred mountain area reserved as a dwelling space for the guardian deity. The later change may have involved the cult place being newly dedicated to Ōnamuchi and moved into the middle of the plain, where it was perhaps equipped with a wooden main hall (*honden*) oriented north for the first time. This unusual orientation in the local topography could have been intended to deny the shrine's former status and to indicate that it was now dedicated to Ōnamuchi's spirit and no longer specifically related to the Iibo valley. Whereas the original shrine had probably faced south, the change of orientation may have been adopted when the territory was integrated into the *ritsuryō* state and Ōnamuchi became the shrine's main deity.<sup>17</sup>

About ten minutes south, below the top of Miyama (514.4 metres), is a small shrine (*hokora*) dedicated to Iwa no Ōkami. It is the object of the *hitotsuyama matsuri* ('one mountain festival'), which takes place every twenty-one years. Three other mountains in the north, east and west are also related to the shrine; they are celebrated every sixty-one years by the 'three mountains festival' (*mitsuyama matsuri*). The age of these mountain festivals is not known, but it is tempting to imagine that they ultimately go back to the time when Iwa no Ōkami established his large territory in the Iibo River valley. As it was not possible to declare the regions further upstream as sacred dwelling areas of the land's guardian deities, as Matachi could do in his small valley (chapter 2), the guardian deities of the large Iibo River territory may have been thought

17 As Palmer notes (2016: 33), the shrine's unusual orientation has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of resistance to Yamato authority. It seems to me more likely that the Yamato authority enforced the new situation in a conflict with the Iwa family and that this might be the reason why a substantial part of the Iwa family moved away from Shisawa District and founded Iwa no sato, a community in Shikama District close to the Inland Sea (*Harima fudoki*, NKBT 2: 271).



FIGURE 20 The forest of the Iwa Shrine in the upper course of the Ibo River seen from the ancient Iwa Nakayama kofun  
 PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2016



FIGURE 21  
 Situation of the Iwa Shrine  
 in the midst of a plain  
 surrounded by mountains.  
 (A) Miyama, the shrine's  
 sacred mountain;  
 (B) The hypothetical original  
 situation of the cult place at  
 the foot of Miyama, facing  
 south; (C) The historical  
 shrine facing north in its  
 isolated forest; (D) Iwa  
 Nakayama kofun (tomb)  
 SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH  
 (LETTERS A, B, C, D ADDED)



to dwell in these mountains which surrounded the territory's upper pole on three sides. Similarly, Matachi's descendants later worshipped Yato no kami in a sacred grove that was situated on the slope of a lateral mountain, so that the bottom of the valley further upstream could be opened up to cultivation as well.

This was a typical change that naturally used to occur in the course of opening up more and more land for rice cultivation. According to the logic implied in the land-taking ritual, the land dedicated to the *kami* should ideally have been an adjacent area comparable in size to the land from which the spirits had been expelled in taking possession. Historically, however, the *kami* lands had a tendency to become smaller and smaller in relation to the land to which they belonged, so that they finally became small sacred groves dedicated to *kami* that were thought to dwell further away.

### Conclusions

The stories of *Harima fudoki* that mention Iwa no Ōkami and Ame no Hiboko have been interpreted in this chapter as fragments of a larger story which tells of the creation of a territory that might have included the whole present Ibo River area and some adjacent parts. The entire story has not survived and the fragments mainly mention the claiming (*kunishime*), except for two which say that Iwa no Ōkami finally concluded his 'land-making' (*kunitsukuri*), which probably means that he established cult places for the guardian deities of the land's parts. That he also founded a cult place that stood for the large territory as a whole is indicated by his last words, which mean that he will protect the land after his death at Iwa Village. As other passages in the *fudoki* suggest, this means that he ends his activity as a land-maker and will later be worshipped as such. What the *fudoki* omits to state is that the founder himself had to first worship the local nature spirits, but this was probably a matter of course for people of the time.

Taken together, the stories discussed here have allowed us to reconstruct the foundation myth of a large territory which consisted of numerous small ones that were politically united by a native founder who had to claim the lands in a rivalry with the immigrant son of a Korean king. Both protagonists were called 'gods' because they were both worshipped after death, Iwa no Ōkami in Harima and Ame no Hiboko in Tajima.

Regarding our model of the land-making ritual described in the introduction, we can state, therefore, that this model has proved fruitful in the interpretation of this part of *Harima fudoki*. It has made us understand that *kunishime*

(land-claiming) was not the same as *kunitsukuri* (land-making). Both rivalling gods 'claimed' pieces of land, but only Iwa no Ōkami later 'made' and 'hardened' the land by deciding the mountain boundaries where the land deities were to be worshipped. Having turned the individual claims into territories, he also united them as parts of a larger territory with a bipolar structure. The Iibo Hill was the lower pole associated with claiming, while Iwa mura was the upper pole where the land-making had been concluded and where the main deity of the composite territory was worshipped. However, since the territory was a very large one, the land dedicated to the local *kami* was not an upper part of the whole valley, as in the case of our key story, but represented by Mt. Miyama and other mountains around the territory's upper pole in Iwa.

## Making and Ceding the Land in the God Age

Japanese mythology, as represented in the first parts of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, was compiled to provide the ancient *ritsuryō* state with an adequate prehistory, beginning with the creation of the Japanese archipelago and leading to the foundation of the imperial dynasty that came to rule the land. Since it was partly conceived and constructed by ancient scholars to legitimate the imperial rule, Tsuda Sōkichi has argued that the stories of the god age are not myths as the term is commonly used, because they are not the products of folk religious beliefs. Nonetheless, modern scholars usually speak of Japanese mythology because the ideological construct includes raw materials that reflect folk traditions and folk beliefs.<sup>1</sup> As the Taika Reform had abandoned private property in rice land, one basic idea behind the literary construct was to form a myth, according to which the territory of the new state was rightfully ruled by the imperial dynasty. However, instead of saying that the divine ancestors of the emperors had opened up all the land of the empire long ago and thereby gained the exclusive right to rule it, the myth makers devised a different scheme.

To place this scheme in context, and for readers not familiar with Japanese mythology, the following overview may be helpful.

### The God Age Mythology: An Overview According to *Kojiki*

- (A) At the beginning of heaven and earth five separate heavenly deities come into being, followed by the ‘seven generations of the god age’. The last of these seven generations is represented by **Izanagi and Izanami**, who make the island Onogorojima to coagulate. They descend to it, build a palace, and marry, whereupon Izanami gives birth to ‘the eight islands’ of the archipelago as well as to six other islands and to many further deities.
- (B) Giving birth to the fire god, Izanami dies and goes to the Land of **Yomi**, a sort of netherworld or underworld, perhaps horizontally removed and therefore separated from the normal human world by the ‘flat slope of Yomi’ (*Yomi no hirasaka*). Izanagi visits her there. Returning, he purifies himself and three children come into existence: Amaterasu, Tsukiyomi

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<sup>1</sup> NKBT 67: 543, additional note 1-1. See also Tsuda 1963a; Philippi: 32; Brownlee 1997.

and **Susanoo**. Izanagi entrusts them with the rule of three different parts of the world. Amaterasu (associated with the sun) is to rule **Takama no hara** (heaven), Tsukiyomi (associated with the moon) is to rule the realms of the night, and Susanoo is to rule the ocean.

- (C) Susanoo, however, is not pleased with his part and challenges Amaterasu in heaven. He claims and destroys her rice fields and defiles her weaving house, which causes Amaterasu to hide in the rock cave of heaven, leaving the world in darkness. To lure her out, the heavenly gods make a metal mirror and *magatama* beads and perform divination with the shoulder blade of a male deer. Then they hang the mirror and beads and pieces of cloth to the branches of an uprooted *sakaki* tree and **Ame no Uzume** performs a sort of dance, stamping on an overturned tub in front of the cave. Bearing her breasts and pushing the skirt-band down, she causes the gods of heaven to break out in great laughter. This arouses Amaterasu's curiosity. She opens the door a bit and asks why they are merry and Uzume says they celebrate because they have here a superior deity. When they show the mirror, Amaterasu gradually comes out and two of the gods are able to pull her out entirely. The sun begins to shine again. Susanoo, however, is expelled from heaven.
- (D) Descending to earth, Susanoo comes to the upper course of the **River Hi** in **Izumo**, where he meets an old couple who tell him that an eight-headed dragon snake comes year after year and devours one of their daughters. Susanoo pacifies and kills the dragon, wins the daughter and goes with her in search of a place where to marry and settle down. They settle in Suga, traditionally identified with a location in one of the eastern tributaries of the lower main course of the same river. Susanoo later goes to **Ne no Kuni**, the 'Root Land', which is another lower world where people go after death.
- (E) Next in the mythic narrative of *Kojiki* are stories not found in *Nihon shoki* which apparently regard the opening up of land in and around Izumo. They tell of Susanoo's descendant **Ōnamuchi**, who is harassed again and again by his eighty half-brothers, who all wish to gain the hand of Yagamihime of Inaba. Finally, Ōnamuchi seeks council from Susanoo in Ne no kuni where he meets Susanoo's daughter Suserihime, and where Susanoo subjects him to a number of nasty tests. When Ōnamuchi finally escapes with Suserihime, Susanoo gives them his blessing and bestows on Ōnamuchi the names **Ōkuninushi** ('Great Ruler of the Land') and Utsushi Kunitama ('Actual Spirit of the Land'). Having thus gained the needed power, Ōnamuchi succeeds in expelling his half-brothers, who must leave both the land and Yagamihime to him. But Yagamihime is afraid of Ōnamuchi's jealous wife Suserihime and returns after having

born a child to him. The section ends with two exchanges of long poems between Yachihoko (alias Ōkununushi) and Nunakawahime and between Ōkununushi and his jealous wife Suserihime.

- (F) An important section follows, in which Ōkununushi ‘makes’ (opens up) the much larger land called Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, ‘The Central Land of Reed Plains’, as mythic Japan is often called in the ancient texts. This ‘land-making’ (*kunitsukuri*) includes both what we call ‘land-taking’ in the narrow sense and the opening up of the land to cultivation and culture. Ōkununushi does this together with a mysterious companion called **Sukunabikona**. When Sukunabikona departs before the work is completed, Ōkununushi completes the work alone but with the help of a spirit who requires to be worshipped on Mt. Mimoro in Yamato.
- (G) The land-making is followed by the land-ceding. Amaterasu declares that the land opened up and ruled by Ōkununushi must be ruled by her descendants and sends her son Oshihomimi down to rule it; but seeing that the land is in great disorder, Oshihomimi returns before setting foot on it. Now, messengers are sent down from heaven one after the other to negotiate a deal with Ōkununushi. The first does not report for three years; the second also does not return and is killed because he shoots the bird-messenger that is sent to ask about his intentions. Finally, Takemikazuchi is sent together with Ame no Torifune. They descend to the beach of Inasa in Izumo and tell Ōkununushi that his land must be ruled by Amaterasu’s descendants. Ōkununushi says he must first ask his two sons. One son agrees and the other is defeated. Finally, Ōkununushi agrees to retire on condition that they will worship him in a palace like the one of the descendants of the heavenly deities.
- (H) The land being at peace, Oshihomimi is again charged with ruling it, but since a son has been born to him in the meantime, he proposes that this son is sent instead. So Amaterasu’s grandchild Hikoho no Ninigi is sent to rule the land. Ninigi descends from heaven to a mountain at a place called Takachiho in Kyushu. Three generations of Ninigi’s descendants continue to live there, ruling what appears to have been imagined as a small kingdom.

We learn from this concise summary that the creation of the archipelago in its natural state produced a wilderness that had yet to be turned into inhabitable land by opening it up to cultivation and settlement. Consequently, the ‘birth’ of the archipelago (A) is followed by several myths about territorial problems (B, C, D, E) that culminate in the two myths of Ōkununushi’s ‘making’ of the land (F, *kuni-tsukuri*, ‘land-making’) and of his ceding the rule of that land to the heavenly descendants (G, *kuni-yuzuri*, ‘land-ceding’).

These two myths – the land-making myth and the land-ceding myth – are analysed in this chapter. They differ considerably in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, not only in details but also in some important points regarding the extent to which they reflect the structure of the land-taking ritual. The comparative analysis shows that the older *Kojiki* reflects that structure better than *Nihon shoki*. I therefore mainly deal with *Kojiki* and mention variants in *Nihon shoki* where it seems necessary for a better understanding and for bringing out the difference of the two doctrines presented in these works.

To first locate the two myths in western Honshu, we can note that the land-making god Ōnamuchi (alias Ōkuninushi) begins the claiming and opening up of the land at Cape Miho, the eastern end of the Shimane Peninsula in Izumo, and concludes it some 260 kilometres east (south-east) from there at Mt. Miwa of Yamato, from where the first emperors will later rule it (figure 22). The size of the area opened up is not specified, but interpreting the myth as a charter myth, we must assume that, ultimately, the territory of the early eighth-century state at the time when the two chronicles were concluded is meant. How the mythic land-maker moves over that land when opening it up is also not mentioned; only the two points where the process begins and ends are identified.



FIGURE 22 The geographic locations of Cape Miho, Miwa, and the beach of Inasa  
MAP BY THE AUTHOR

The land-ceding, on the other hand, takes place at the beach of Inasa at the western end of the Shimane Peninsula, some sixty kilometres to the south-west from where the land-making began, but also in Izumo. The ceding god Ōkuninushi (alias Ōnamuchi) will later be worshipped both at Mt. Miwa in Yamato and close to the beach of Inasa, where he has ceded the rule of the land.

### The Land-Making Myth

In contrast to *Nihon shoki*, *Kojiki* presents the land-making myth as a consistent story that makes sense in the way in which its parts follow on from each other:

When Ōkuninushi no kami was at Cape Miho of Izumo, there was a *kami* approaching, riding the crests of the waves in a heavenly *kagami* boat and wearing as cloth the skin of a wagtail flayed with an inner flaying. Although he asked his name he did not reply. And although he again asked his companion deities, they all said “we don’t know”. Now the toad (*taniguku*) said: “This is something that Kuyebiko knows for sure.” So, when he called Kuyebiko and asked him, he replied and said: “This is the child of Kamimusubi no kami, Sukunabikona no kami”. When he then respectfully informed Kamimusubi mioya no Mikoto, he answered and spoke: “This one is indeed my child. Among my children, he is the child who slipped through my fingers. Therefore, you, Ashihara no Shikoo no Mikoto, and he become brothers to make and harden this land.”

From then on, the two *kami* Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona together made and hardened this land. But afterwards this Sukunabikona went to the Eternal Land. [...] Now Ōkuninushi no kami lamented and said: “How can I alone successfully make the land? Together with which god can I make the land well?” At this time there was a *kami* lighting the sea, who came over. This *kami* said: “If you worship well in front of me, I shall make it well together with you. Otherwise, it will hardly become complete.” Then Ōkuninushi no Kami asked: “If it is so, how is the manner of worshipping?” He answered: “Worship me reverently on the eastern mountain of the green fence of Yamato.” This is the god who dwells on Mount Mimoro. (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 107, 109)<sup>2</sup>

2 Compare Chamberlain 1919 [1882]: 103–110; Philippi 116–17. The omitted part in square brackets identifies Kuyebiko with the scarecrow and calls him a god who knows everything under the heavens.

Kamimusubi is the highest deity of Izumo mythology and one of the first three deities to come into existence at the beginning of heaven and earth (Philippi: 47). The expression ‘create and harden the land’ has often been interpreted to mean that the creation of the archipelago by Izanagi and Izanami had not been concluded and therefore had to be brought to an end by Ōkuninushi/Ōnamuchi together with Sukunabikona. However, Izanagi and Izanami create the islands by having Izanami give birth to them, whereas Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona later ‘make’ the land by turning the wilderness into inhabitable land and opening it up to agriculture and settlement. This is what was meant by ‘land-making’ (*kunitsukuri*).<sup>3</sup>

Addressing Ōkuninushi as Ashihara no Shikoo (‘ugly or odious man of the reed fields’, one of his alternative names), the deity Kamimusubi orders him to take possession and open up the land together with Sukunabikona. In other words, Ōkuninushi and Sukunabikona are invested with the authority and power to be successful in ‘making’ the large territory (*kuni*) together. After some time, however, Sukunabikona goes to the Eternal Land and Ōkuninushi does not know how to complete the work alone. A deity then approaches from the sea and offers help on condition that Ōkuninushi worships him on a mountain in Yamato, which the text identifies as Mt. Mimoro. The last sentence means that Ōkuninushi did worship the deity on that mountain. This concludes the myth of the land-making in *Kojiki*. Regarding the way in which the land is made, the text only says that Ōkuninushi made it first together with Sukunabikona and brought it to an end alone, but with the help of another deity which Ōkuninushi must worship on Mt. Mimoro.

In contrast to *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which do not tell how the countless individual places of the great land were opened up, *fudoki* stories sometimes do refer to Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona as pioneers claiming small territories. In *Izumu fudoki*, Ōnamuchi is once called the god who made the world below heaven by using 500 ploughs (NKBT 2: 109), and *Harima fudoki* tells that Ashihara no Shikoo (alias Ōnamuchi alias Iwa no Ōkami) opened up the large Iwa territory, as we saw in chapter 3. Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona are also mentioned together as going around in Harima, claiming pieces of land for growing rice on them. In one place (Hakooka), a local deity offers them a meal; in another one (Inadaneyama) they heap up rice seeds; and in a third case they test whether it is better to walk a long distance shouldering a load of clay or to go without defecating. Ōnamuchi chooses the latter option and gives up

3 ‘Hardening the land’ may have meant concluding the ‘land-making’. See chapter 3, section ‘Hardening the Land’. For a study that distinguishes different concepts of *kunitsukuri* in the ancient texts, see Nishimiya 1976: 70.



first, but Sukunabikona cannot continue either. They leave two heaps of clay behind, which later turn into stones, and the hill is called Hanioka ('clay hill'). Another mountain name, Mihashiyama, is explained by saying that Ōnamuchi piled up sacks of rice in the form of a ramp. Three valleys finally get names associated with Ōnamuchi's use of a rice-stamping mortar (*usu*), a winnow (*mi*) and a rice wine house (*sakaya*).<sup>4</sup>

Such stories offer us glimpses of individual land-claiming events that were supposed to have added up to the claiming of the large land which was poetically called Ashihara no Nakatsukuni or Toyo Ashihara no Mizuho no kuni. But they also raise the question why Ōnamuchi needs his companion Sukunabikona when he opens up land to cultivation.

### Sukunabikona

In *Kojiki*, the whole first half of the land-making myth is dedicated to the mysterious appearance of Sukunabikona. Scholars have interpreted the nature of Sukunabikona in many different ways, most convincingly as another side or manifestation of Ōkuninushi himself.<sup>5</sup> According to Yoshii Iwao (1968), for example, Sukunabikona was 'the god who was excluded from the genealogy of the gods' and originally not a land-making god but a deity from a horizontally distant other world called *tokoyo* or *tokoyo no kuni* ('eternal land'), a world belonging to folk religion. In the horizontal world view of land-making, Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona would have represented the politico-social world and the world of the special *tokoyo* belief, respectively. As for Sukunabikona's early departure to *tokoyo no kuni*, however, Yoshii cannot explain this and therefore thinks that this part is not original. He notes that Tsuda Sōkichi and others have assumed that the final part of the myth has been inserted from another source.<sup>6</sup>

Yet it is unlikely that a part from elsewhere would have been inserted into a myth of such importance. It would be better to think about what the reason could have been for Sukunabikona's strange appearance and for his early return. Reading the text with the model of the two-part land-taking ritual in mind, the answer is not difficult to find, for we must ask what happens in

4 NKBT 2: 277 (Hakooka), 291 (Inadaneyama), 325/327 (Hanioka), 287 (Mihashiyama), 339 (Usuidani, Mitani, Sakayadani). The two gods together also appear once in *Izumo fudoki* (NKBT 2: 217) and in several *fudoki itsubun* (NKBT 2: 445, 449, 480, 493).

5 Philippi: 590–91 mentions that Sukunabikona was interpreted as a rain god, a deity worshipped by the Ainu, a deity of generation, etc., and, in cooperation with Ōkuninushi, as another manifestation of Ōkuninushi.

6 Tsuda 1963b: 416; Yoshii 1968: 7–8.

the beginning and what might correspond to divination in this important land-making myth. Having already dealt with different forms of divining in chapter 1, we can see in Sukunabikona's small boat drifting on the crests of the waves an allusion to a divining boat floating ashore, and in the image of the falling child that has slipped through the fingers of his father a reference to the 'falling motif', meaning divination. *Nihon shoki* says he slipped "and fell" and was later "jerked off" from a millet stalk when he departed to the Eternal Land (Aston I: 63, 60). This can also be understood as an allusion to divining by throwing or shooting something off. While these allusions might be intended to associate Sukunabikona with divining, he himself is a *kami* of strange appearance, a dwarf in *Nihon shoki*, with a bird-dress, whose collaboration is apparently needed to let the land-making enterprise be successful. This strongly suggests that he is to be understood as Ōnamuchi's diviner, the personification of divination. Diviners are often mysterious figures, transvestites for instance, or blind seers, or untouchables.<sup>7</sup> Often they are also medicine men, or medicine men function as diviners.<sup>8</sup> This also fits with the nature of Sukunabikona; for *Nihon shoki* (8.6) pictures Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona as culture heroes who taught people the methods of healing diseases and preventing calamities (Aston I: 59).<sup>9</sup>

The most important point that identifies Sukunabikona as Ōnamuchi's diviner is, however, what has been regarded as most mysterious about him: the fact that he returns to the Eternal Land before the land-making is concluded. That he may have a reason for doing so is suggested in the following passage in *Nihon shoki*, which Aston translates as follows:

Before this Oho-na-muchi no Mikoto spake to Sukuna-bikona no Mikoto, and said: – "May we not say that the country which we have made is well made?" Sukuna-bikona no Mikoto answered and said: – "In some parts it is complete and in others it is incomplete." This conversation had doubtless a mysterious purport. Thereafter Sukuna-bikona no Mikoto went to Cape Kumano and eventually proceeded to the Everlasting Land. Another version is that he went to the island of Aha, where he climbed up

7 *Nihon shoki* describes Sukunabikona as a dwarf with clothing made of the feathers of a wren (Aston I: 62).

8 Raphals 2005: 78, regarding China: "Divination had profound effects on the origin and development of medicine, law, philosophy, medicine, and the history of science". See also Swantz 1990: 63: "Among the Zaramo of Dar el Salaam 'almost all diviners are medicine men'".

9 Torrance (2019), following Makabe Yoshiko (1999), stresses aspects of a 'winged' deity and a physician, but does not consider that, as a medicine man, Sukunabikona could also be Ōnamuchi's diviner.

a millet-stalk, and was thereupon jerked of, and went to the Everlasting Land. (*Nihon shoki*, trans. Aston I: 60; NKBT 67: 128–29)

This is the only place where Sukunabikona says something in either of the two chronicles. Regarding him as a diviner, we can understand the profound meaning of his words: he means that the divining and claiming is now done, but there are still places where the land-making must be concluded by sending the nature spirits away and starting to worship them. Since his work, the divining, is now done, his help is no longer needed. He can go to the Eternal Land and Ōnamuchi must go around a second time alone. *Nihon shoki* is quite clear about that when it says that Ōnamuchi then went again and succeeded to make the land:

After this, wherever there was in the land a part which was imperfect, Oho-na-muchi no Kami visited it by himself, and succeeded in repairing [making] it. Coming at last to the province of Izumo, he spake, and said: – “This Central Land of Reed-plains had been always waste and wild. The very rocks, trees and herbs were all given to violence. But I have now reduced them to submission, and there is none that is not compliant.” Therefore he said finally: – “It is I, and I alone, who now govern this Land. Is there perchance any one who could join me in governing the world?” (*Nihon shoki*, trans. Aston I: 60–61; NKBT 67: 129–30)

The final conversation which follows in *Nihon shoki* differs significantly from that in *Kojiki*. It is only relevant here insofar as it identifies Mt. Mimoro with Mt. Miwa (figure 23) and says that the *kami* from the sea was the god of the Ōmiwa Shrine. Since the main god of this shrine was always Ōmononushi, the ‘Great Master of Spirits’ (*mono*, ‘spirit’), worshipping him at Mt. Mimoro means to worship the nature spirits of the great land.<sup>10</sup>

In *Nihon shoki*, the land-making myth appears as the last part (8.6) of the section dealing with Susanoō’s descent from heaven (8.0 to 8.5) and in a form whose parts are wrongly patched together and sometimes conflate the land-making with the land-ceding.<sup>11</sup> Since, apart from a genealogical note

10 When applied to *kami* (‘deities or spirits’), *mono* means ‘spirit/s’ (JKDJ, entry for *mono*; Nishimiya 1979: 401–402). Since the usual meaning of *mono* is ‘thing’, the name of this important god has often been mistranslated, for instance as ‘Great-thing-master’ (Aston I: 81) or as ‘Great Deity the Great-Master-of-Things’ (Chamberlain 1919: 215).

11 *Nihon shoki* 8.6 (NKBT 67: 128–32; Aston I: 59–63). Since the single *Nihon shoki* version of the land-making myth (8.6) begins with the statement that Ōkuninushi is also called Ōmononushi and Kunitsukuri no Ōnamuchi no Mikoto, the *kami* from the sea is identified



FIGURE 23 Mt. Miwa at the eastern side of the Nara basin

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1981

in 8.1, this is the only place where the name Ōkuninushi appears in *Nihon shoki*, the compilers of this later work may have avoided using this name because it means ‘Great Master of the Land’; while Ōkuninushi was for them the loser who had to cede the rule to the heavenly descendants. As we have seen, the *Nihon shoki* version is nevertheless valuable as it helps us to understand the nature of Sukunabikona.

As for the concept of the Eternal Land, Donald Philippi has suggested that “whereas Takama no hara seems to be closely connected with the system of heavenly deities (*ama-tsu-kami*), Tokoyo seems to be the abode of earthly deities (*kuni-tsu-kami*)”.<sup>12</sup> If we interpret Sukunabikona as a diviner, he was an expert in addressing nature spirits, and it would indeed make sense if he had come from another world that was situated beyond the sea as a terrestrial counterpart of Takama no hara.

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with Ōnamuchi’s own separate spirit, instead of with Ōmononushi as the different main deity of the Ōmiwa Shrine. Moreover, the first appearance of Sukunabikona is told at the end, instead of at the beginning, and located at the small beach of Isasa, which is usually identified with the beach of Inasa, where according to *Kojiki* the land-ceding takes place. Instead of the Izumo deity Kamimusubi, the Yamato deity Takamimusubi identifies Sukunabikona as the child who fell through his fingers, and *Nihon shoki* omits to say that this god then entrusted the two with the mission of making the land.

12 Philippi: 611 (Romanisation of Japanese words adapted).

### Ōnamuchi as a Beginner in Land-Making

It is noteworthy that Ōnamuchi (alias Ōkuninushi alias Ashihara no Shikoo) is represented in this myth as a god who apparently does not yet know how he must proceed in land-making. First it is Kamimusubi who tells him that he needs Sukunabikona as a companion, and after Sukunabikona's departure he laments about being left alone and does not know how to conclude the work without help. Then the *kami* from the sea appears and offers help, but Ōkuninushi does not know what this means. As in the case of Iwa no Ōkami discussed in chapter 3, this means that even though he has now 'made' territories everywhere, he must still tie these territories together by founding a cult for the single deity of the larger land to which they will belong. If the *kami* comes from the sea to tell him that, then perhaps this is because land spirits were thought to originate from the sea and belong to the sea as long as they are not worshipped.<sup>13</sup>

The god age mythology thus depicts Ōkuninushi as a beginner who must learn the correct procedure for making a territory by getting help from others. The same pattern is conspicuous in the story of Iwarebiko's conquest of Yamato. Iwarebiko repeatedly needs supernatural help and he, too, is assisted by a strange figure. In his case, it is an 'eight-handed crow' called Yatagarasu that guides him to the place, flying ahead and asking the local chiefs whether or not they are ready to submit to the heavenly descendant.<sup>14</sup>

Summing up, we may state that the land-making myth according to *Kojiki* clearly supports our theoretical model of the land-taking ritual. Sukunabikona's strange character, combined with his expertise in medicine and the fact that he appears at the very beginning of the land-making and can retire before the work is done, is certainly best explained by seeing him as the diviner. Although other land-taking stories assume that divining is done by the land-maker himself, we must consider that Ōkuninushi's work is of a very special kind because he must open up the whole great land that will become the territory of the future emperors and of the eighth-century *ritsuryō* state, which made ample use of professional diviners.

Equally important is the fact that the end of this mythic land-making also corresponds to what our key story tells: Ōkuninushi can only conclude his work properly if he finally worships the autochthonous spirit-owners of the

13 Another possibility worth considering is that Ōkuninushi may have made the mistake of expelling the land spirits into the rivers that carried them to the sea, instead of worshipping them on a mountain.

14 Philippi 171; Aston I: 116–25. Yatagarasu's functions and dual image (bird and man) suggest that he was also regarded as a diviner (see also p. 164).

land. These spirits are represented by their chief, the *kami* coming from the sea who requests to be worshipped on Mt. Mimoro in Yamato, where he was later known as Ōmononushi.

We may therefore conclude that in the same way as Matachi worships Yato no kami in the upper part of a small valley of Hitachi Province, so Ōkuninushi concludes his large-scale land-making by worshipping Ōmononushi, the great master of the countless land spirits, on Mt. Mimoro. The fact that *Nihon shoki* identifies Mt. Mimoro with Mt. Miwa in Yamato is of further significance, because Ōmononushi at Mt. Miwa later reveals himself to Emperor Sujin and requests to be worshipped (Aston 1: 152). The coincidence is not accidental; it indicates the myth makers' intention to identify the cult place of the early emperors with the place where already Ōnamuchi alias Ōkuninushi had worshipped the spirit-owner of the great land.<sup>15</sup>

In *Kojiki*, the land-making myth is concluded with the genealogy of an agricultural deity called Ōtoshi no kami. Then the text continues with a sentence saying that Amaterasu commanded that the land is to be ruled by her son Ame no Oshihomimi. Entrusted with the mission, Oshihomimi descends, but standing on the heavenly floating bridge (*ame no ukihashi*) he sees that the land is not yet ready to be ruled:

Now Ame no Oshihomimi no Mikoto stood on the heavenly floating bridge and spoke: "Ashihara no chiaki nagaihoaki no mizuho no kuni is in great turmoil." Thus saying, he returned and informed Amaterasu Ōkami. (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 113)<sup>16</sup>

Since the land is not yet ready to be ruled by Oshihomimi, it must first be subdued, but as it already has a ruler, Ōkuninushi, the 'Great Master of the Land', this ruler must be forced to 'cede' the rule to the heavenly descendants. Therefore, what follows is the 'land-ceding myth' (*kuniyuzuri shinwa*).

### The Land-Ceding Myth According to *Kojiki*

According to *Kojiki*, first Ame no Hohi is sent down to subdue the land, and when he does not return Ame no Wakahiko is sent, who also does not return. Finally, Takamikazuchi with Ame no Torifune no kami are sent. Descending to

15 For more about Mt. Miwa, see also the section 'The Sacred Forest of the Ōmiwa Shrine' in chapter 9.

16 The version of this episode in *Nihon shoki* (9.1) is quoted in chapter 5 (p. 120). It includes an exchange of questions and answers that is equivalent to divination.

the beach of Inasa in Izumo, placing their swords upside down on the waves and sitting with crossed legs on top, they question Ōkuninushi:

Amaterasu Ōmikami and Takaki no kami send us to inquire. The land Ashihara no Nakatsukuni which you control is the land entrusted to be ruled by our child. So, what is your intention? (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 121)

Ōkuninushi replies that his son Kotoshironushi will say it. When this son is found at Cape Miho he says they should present the land to the heavenly deities, but another son called Takeminakata is not ready to surrender and proposes a test of strength. Losing twice, he runs away and is pursued. When his pursuers finally catch up with him at the lake of Suwa in Shinano and are about to kill him, he promises to stay there and to cede the land to the heavenly deities.

Hearing that both his sons have now agreed to surrender, Ōkuninushi says that he will also not disobey and will surrender the Central Land of the Reed Plains:

But as for my dwelling place, if you make it like the rich heavenly nest where the child of the heavenly deities rules the heavenly descendants, firmly planting the posts of the shrine (*miya*) on the bedrock below, raising high the roof finials (*higi*) to the plain of high heaven, and deign to worship me, I will hide and wait in the less than a hundred *kumade*. (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 123)

So, according to *Kojiki*, Ōkuninushi is ready to cede the rule of the land, but only on the condition that the heavenly descendants build for him a *miya* style shrine like that of their rulers and worship him. The last sentence means that he will hide and wait until this condition is fulfilled.<sup>17</sup> He then erects a heavenly palace (*ame no miaraka*) at the beach of Tagishi in Izumo and offers a banquet. The text continues with his words of blessing, saying that Kushiyatama, the food-server, fetches clay from the bottom of the sea to make offering plates with it, makes a mortar and a pestle, and drills a fire, while reciting a poem about his fire-drilling and the seafood to be offered to the challengers.<sup>18</sup>

17 For the meaning of *kumade* as hiding places, see the beginning of chapter 6.

18 As Masuda Katsumi (1957: 180) has pointed out, the grammatical structure of the long sentence means that Kushiyatama pronounces his poem inside of Ōkuninushi's words of blessing; it is therefore Ōkuninushi who offers the banquet. This new reading is an important advance in interpretation, which is said to be now accepted by most Japanese scholars (Okada Shōji 2005: 68). Philippi's translation (p. 135) does make Ōkuninushi the grammatical subject but is misleading by calling the building (*ame no miaraka*) a 'temple'.

We have here another instance of what Okada Seishi (1962) has called a *fukuzoku girei*, 'a ceremony of submission and loyalty', which seen from the side of the challengers meant to ritually eat of the land's products (*kuni osu*, 'eat the land') as a form of claiming it.<sup>19</sup> After the banquet, Takemikazuchi goes up again and reports on the state of pacifying Ashihara no Nakatsukuni.<sup>20</sup> The presentation of the banquet means that the mission has been successful so far, but Ōkuninushi's condition for ceding the land has still to be fulfilled before the task of subjugating the land can be considered as completed.

Whereas the land-making myth starts at Cape Miho at the eastern end of the Shimane Peninsula in Izumo and ends on Mt. Mimoro/Miwa in Yamato, where Ōkuninushi, the pioneer, must worship Ōmononushi, the great master (*nushi*) of the land spirits, the land-ceding myth is set on the beach of Inasa at the western end of the Shimane Peninsula.

Since the serving of the meal and the words of blessing conclude the land-ceding episode in *Kojiki*, we may wonder why the text does not also say that the heavenly descendants met Ōkuninushi's condition by building for him the shrine which he has requested.<sup>21</sup> The answer is again suggested by our model of the ritual procedure, which requires that a time interval follows and that the heavenly challengers also have to deal with eventual rebels before they can think of building that shrine. In *Kojiki*, it will indeed take many generations until this process comes to an end, as we shall see in chapter 6.

An agreement having been reached, Amaterasu again orders Oshihomimi to descend and rule the land, but Oshihomimi says that a son has just been born to him and that this son should be sent. It is therefore Oshihomimi's son, Ninigi no Mikoto, the grandchild of Amaterasu, who finally descends and

19 There is another episode, recorded in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, where a special building is erected on a similar occasion. When Iwarebiko on his journey to the east comes to Usa in Tsukushi, the local chiefs Usatsuhiko and Usatsuhime build a palace (*miya*) and offer a grand feast to him (Philippi: 163; Aston 1: 112). Here, too, the building of the palace and the food offering belong together and must be understood as a sign of submission and loyalty. Similarly, in *Harima fudoki*, the consuming of a meal on Ibo Hill is mentioned as something that accompanies the *kunishime* or 'land-claiming' (chapter 3); and in *Yamato hime seiki* the local deities offer a meal to Yamatohime when she questions the chief of Uji at the lower course of the Isuzugawa (chapter 7).

20 *Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 125. Philippi: 136 translates that he "reported on his mission, how he had subdued and pacified the Central Land of the Reed Plains", but the text only says that he reported on the state of his mission of subduing and pacifying.

21 Before Masuda's correct interpretation was known (see note 18), the 'heavenly august abode' (*ame no mīaraka*) built on the shore of Tagishi has often been misinterpreted as the residence (*sumika*, 'dwelling place') or shrine (*miya*) that the heavenly descendants must build for Ōkuninushi, that is, as the mythical first form of the Izumo Grand Shrine (see e.g. Chamberlain 1919: 124; Philippi: 135n10).



settles down on earth to rule the land. His full name in *Kojiki* is Ame Nigishi Kuni Nigishi Amatsuhiko-hikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto.

### The Land-Ceding Myth According to *Nihon Shoki*

*Nihon shoki* has three versions of the land-ceding myth, one in the main text 9.0 and two in the variants 9.1 and 9.2. The main text says that Ōnamuchi, following the advice of his son Kotoshironushi, cedes the land respectfully and without asking for anything in return. He offers his staff to the challengers to make it easier for them to subdue the rebels, and simply becomes concealed, whereupon the two gods kill all the rebellious spirits and deities. This version creates the impression that there is nothing left to be done; only the words saying that Ōnamuchi became concealed might suggest that he will finally be worshipped. Similarly, version 9.1 in *Nihon shoki* ends by saying that Ashihara no Nakatsukuni was completely subdued (Aston 1: 76). Whereas these two versions picture Ōnamuchi as a ruler who humbly delivers his land to the heavenly challengers without asking for anything in return, the third version 9.2 is quite different. When asked whether he will deliver his land to the heavenly deity, Ōnamuchi bluntly refuses:

“Wilt thou deliver up this country to the Heavenly Deity, or no?” He answered and said: – “I suspected that ye two gods were coming to my place. Therefore I will not allow it.” (trans. Aston 1: 80)

So Futsunushi, one of the two challengers in *Nihon shoki*, goes up to heaven and reports this to Takamimusubi, the higher god who according to this version of the myth has ordered the subduing of the land. Takamimusubi shows understanding for Ōnamuchi's refusal and sends the messenger back with an offer. He proposes that Ninigi should take over public matters and he, Ōnamuchi, should rule matters of religion. Then he offers him not only a palace (*miya*) that would be built for him now, but also rice fields and articles to play on the sea, a high bridge, a floating bridge and a heavenly bird boat, as well as white shields. Moreover, Ame no Hohi (a son of Amaterasu) would preside as priest over the cult in his honour.<sup>22</sup>

22 NKBT 67: 150; Aston 1: 80. According to the 82nd Izumo *kokusō*, Senge Takamune, this passage from *Nihon shoki* 9.2 would mean that Takamimusubi decreed to Ame no Hohi the ritual (*saishi*) of the Great Shrine of Izumo (Senge 1972: 180–81).

This generous offer induces Ōnamuchi to comply. He says he will now retire to rule on secret matters and leave the rule of the visible things to the sovereign grandchild (Ninigi no Mikoto). Futsunushi then goes on a circuit of pacification: those who are rebellious are killed; those who render obedience are rewarded.

All three versions in *Nihon shoki* suggest that Ōnamuchi had already ceded his land to the heavenly descendants in the god age, but only version 9.2 is explicit about a shrine being built for Ōnamuchi and a cult being dedicated to him. In contrast to *Kojiki*, this third version of *Nihon shoki* suggests, however, that the shrine (*miya*) will be built ‘now’, even before Ninigi descends from heaven, and that Ame no Hohi will be its first priest. *Nihon shoki* later confirms this when it records under the date Suinin 26, eighth month, that the emperor ordered an inspection of the divine treasures of the land of Izumo, which Takehinateru, the son of Ame no Hohi, had brought down from heaven. The story told about these treasures clearly assumes that the shrine of Ōnamuchi had existed since the god age in Izumo but that it was unclear where the treasures were kept. The location of Ōnamuchi’s shrine is also not identified (Aston 1: 162, 163).

One year earlier, in Suinin 25, third month, *Nihon shoki* records that Amaterasu is transferred to Ise and that the Ise Shrine is founded at the upper course of the river Isuzu (Aston 1: 174–78). This is an extremely important event that finds no mention at all in *Kojiki*, presumably because this work only covers the time until the death of Empress Suiko in 628.<sup>23</sup>

### Kojiki and Nihon Shoki: Two Different Doctrines

As noted, *Kojiki* associates the reign of Suinin with the emperor’s first worship of Ōkuninushi in Izumo, whereas *Nihon shoki* 9.2 implies that Ōnamuchi had been worshipped in Izumo since the age of the gods. It seems, then, that according to *Kojiki*, the early emperors before Suinin did not yet have the full legitimate right to rule over all the land opened up by Ōkuninushi because the god’s condition for ceding the rule of the land had not yet been fulfilled.

23 When *Kojiki* was concluded in the time of Empress Genmei (r. 707–715), the first Ise Shrine probably existed and *Kojiki* could at least mention its name as Isuzu no Miya (NKBT 1: 129; Philippi 140). That *Kojiki* at the same time also mentions the To-tsu-Miya (‘Outer Shrine’) of Watarai and the names of three princesses that allegedly served at the shrine is, however, probably due to later redactions.

By contrast, according to *Nihon shoki* the ancestors of the imperial dynasty already had a sacred right over all the land before Ninigi's descent from heaven. Nevertheless, *Nihon shoki* – as well as *Kojiki* – again mentions chiefs who refuse to cede their lands peacefully, so that the early emperors had to deal with potential rebels, repeating what their heavenly ancestors had already done in the god age; with the difference, however, that the emperors would not have to reward collaborative chiefs by dedicating a cult to them. Instead, human rebels who refuse to surrender are usually said to be killed, whereas those who express their submission and loyalty are often given a function in the administration of the territory under the new ruler.

The various differences between *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* suggest that both doctrines were meant to provide religious sanction for the imperial rule over the land and people as well as for the abolishment of private property in land opened up for rice cultivation under the *ritsuryō* government; but only *Nihon shoki* implies that the imperial dynasty had already acquired the full legitimacy for this policy in the mythic god age. It was the newer doctrine promoted in *Nihon shoki* that proved successful and was followed in later ancient texts. A ritual prayer (*norito*) which was recited for the great exorcism of the last day of the sixth month, for example, represents the mythic land-making thus:

Having thus entrusted the land, they inquired with a divine inquiry of the unruly deities in the land, and expelled them with a divine expulsion; they silenced to the last leaf the rocks and the stumps of the trees, which had been able to speak, and caused him [Ninigi] to descend from the heavens. (Engishiki, trans. Philippi 1959: 45–46)

Here, the whole land-making process is expressed in a single sentence. If we know the procedure, we can understand that the 'divine inquiry' stands for 'questioning Ōkuninushi', the expulsion for sending the unruly *kami* away, and the silencing for pacifying the *kami* through worship. However, one can also read the sentence as if it simply meant to get rid of the rebellious spirits. Another *norito* omits to mention the inquiry and simply speaks of subjugating the unruly deities, using words meaning to purify, subjugate and silence (NKBT 1: 449; Philippi 1959: 69).

All this is revealing with respect to the way in which the structure of the land-taking ritual inspired the compilers of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* 9.2 when they had to devise a myth-history that should legitimate the imperial rule and provide religious sanction for the land policy of the early eighth-century state. They constructed two central myths, making the first one end with a supreme ruler, Ōkuninushi/Ōnamuchi, whose legitimacy is based on his having pioneered and opened up ('made') all the land together with Sukunabikona,

whereas the second myth tells that the heavenly descendants succeeded in making a deal with this ruler, which made him cede the rule of the land to them, but on the condition that they will worship him in a shrine built in the style of their palaces (*miya*). This version of the land-ceding myth, too, is therefore based on the same ritual principle as our key story that tells how Matachi came to worship Yato no kami (table 1). However, there was also a crucial difference: Ōkuninushi did not get a shrine situated at the *upper* boundary of the land.

TABLE 1 Two versions of the land-ceding myth compared with the story of Yato no kami

	<i>Hitachi fudoki</i>	<i>Kojiki</i>	<i>Nihon shoki</i>
Settler or gods	Matachi of the Yahazu clan	Takemikazuchi with Ame no toribune	Futsunushi and Takemikazuchi
Land-ceding deity	Yato no kami (snake formed)	Ōkuninushi (anthropomorphic)	Ōnamuchi (anthropomorphic)
The land to be opened up	10 <i>chō</i> of rice fields in a valley	Ashihara no Nakatsukuni	Ashihara no Nakatsukuni
Marking the place of divining or inquiring	(Not mentioned)	Sticking sword upside down into the water at the beach of Inasa	Sticking sword upside down into the water at the beach of Itasa ( <i>sic</i> )
Method of asking the former owner	(Divination, not mentioned)	Speech (question and answer pattern)	Speech (question and answer pattern)
Things required by, or offered to, the retreating spirit or deity	A <i>yashiro</i> , a priest, worship (expressed in ritual formula)	A shrine ( <i>miya</i> )	No offer in main text 9.0 and version 9.1, but a shrine, a priest, rice fields, etc. in 9.2
Confirmation of the deal	(Not mentioned)	Ōkuninushi presents a meal	(Not mentioned)
Purifying the land	Matachi fights the spirits and chases them beyond the upper boundary	Iwarebiko later conquers Yamato and becomes the first emperor, Jinmu	The rebels were expelled and/or killed in the god age
Founding the cult of the land god	Matachi dedicates land above the mountain boundary to Yato no kami and founds a <i>yashiro</i>	Suinin lets a shrine 'like the emperor's palace' be built for Ōkuninushi in Izumo	Ōnamuchi's shrine is assumed to exist in Izumo since the god age with Ame no Hohi as the first priest (9.2)

### Consequences of the Land-Ceding Myth

The reason why Ōkuninushi's shrine was not located at the upper boundary was that the myth makers also had to follow the new *jingi* cult, which required them to accommodate Amaterasu as another main deity. Already *Kojiki* associates Amaterasu with the sun and predicts that her shrine will be in Ise and that of Ōkuninushi in Izumo.<sup>24</sup> Both chronicles apparently understood up and down on the national religious level in relation to the sun's course as seen from the capital. Consequently, they let Amaterasu's spirit be brought down from heaven to be eventually enshrined in the upper east, in Ise, and relegated Ōkuninushi, the god-owner of the land, to the lower west, where the sun goes down. The land-ceding myth thus predicts the splitting of the single territorial cult of the country into two different and opposite cults that were dedicated to a heavenly deity in the upper position and to a land deity in the lower one.

If we can speak here of opposites of comparable status, then because architecture was a means to express status and *Kojiki* has Ōkuninushi specifically request a dwelling like the palaces (*miya*) of the heavenly descendants. Size was also a status symbol and Takamimusubi praises the size and heaviness of the Izumo Shrine when he offers to Ōkuninushi a *miya*, saying that "its pillars shall be high and massy, and its planks broad and thick" (trans. Aston 1: 80). Later the height of the Izumo Grand Shrine was indeed legendary, but that it had once been even higher than the Great Buddha Hall of Tōdaiji is very unlikely.<sup>25</sup>

24 See the beginning and end of chapter 7, according to which Sarutahiko's appearance at the crossroads of heaven is a good omen predicting that Amaterasu's shrine will be built in Ise.

25 The Heian period text *Kuchi zusami*, a work by Minamoto Tamenori written in 970, quotes a saying that was interpreted to mean that the Izumo Taisha was once even higher than the Great Buddha Hall of Tōdaiji (45 metres). Although the saying does not specifically refer to the height but to the size, and could also refer to the thickness of the pillars, the material remains of the 'iron ring construction' (*kanawa zōei*), excavated in 1999–2000, are interpreted to justify the reconstruction of an extremely high shrine. However, judged objectively, these remains rather suggest a special kind of *nemaki* construction. Instead of using three *nemaki* posts and driving them into the ground close around a thick buried pillar, one buried three thick posts close to each other, each measuring between 125 centimetres and 140 centimetres in diameter. Since only the lower parts of these posts were excavated (Matsuo 2005: figure 13), their upper parts did not necessarily have to support the shrine. They could also have ended about one metre or less above the ground and partly been cut out at their inner sides to provide a deep bed for a single high post in their middle. With iron rings keeping the parts together, this would have looked like a *nemaki* construction, although it was made differently. To have all posts go up in bundles of three

The most relevant criterion for the status of a shrine was, however, not its size or height as a building but its classification as a *miya* or a *yashiro*, of which the *miya* represented the higher status. The main hall of the Izumo Shrine is physically still higher than that of the main halls of the Inner Shrine and Outer Shrine at Ise, but in history the latter were classified as *miya* and the Izumo Shrine only as *yashiro*. Although *Kojiki* and the variant 9.2 of *Nihon shoki* also predict a *miya* for the Izumo Shrine, thereby suggesting that the two shrines in Izumo and Ise should oppose and complement each other on the same level, it must be emphasised that this was only an idea expressed in these two variants of the land-ceding myth. As such, it was perhaps inspired by the early *jingi* system, which distinguished heavenly shrines (*amatsuyashiro*) and land shrines (*kunitsuyashiro*), using the same word *yashiro* for both classes.

As far as ancient history is concerned, however, the main version in *Nihon shoki* (9.0) is relevant because it probably reflects the policy of the government at the time when the compilation of this chronicle was completed in the year 720. It is therefore significant that this main version of *Nihon shoki* does not say that Ōnamuchi was promised to be worshipped in a *miya*. If the compilers left out this crucial part, this probably means that the government had in the meantime developed a different plan, according to which the Izumo Shrine should be the highest-ranked *yashiro* or land shrine but as such belong to a lower class than the Ise Shrine, which was the highest-ranked heavenly shrine and classified as a *miya*.<sup>26</sup> We can conclude, therefore, that by the time the two chronicles were compiled, the *jingi* system was still being modified and developed.

We get the same impression if we look at the way in which the myth-historical part of *Nihon shoki* later describes the foundation of the Ise Shrine in the reigns of the emperors Sujin and Suinin. Both chronicles say that in the reign of the tenth emperor, Sujin, the distinction of heavenly and earthly shrines had already been introduced (a backdated precedence of the later *jingi* system) and that Sujin was the first to worship Ōmononushi, the territorial deity at Mt. Miwa. But only *Nihon shoki* also claims that the first distinction of heavenly and earthly shrines (both *yashiro*) in the reign of Emperor Sujin had already led to the establishment of the Ise Shrine. This chronicle tells that Amaterasu

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to support the shrine, however, would have been structurally unnecessary and aesthetically unacceptable to shrine carpenters of the time.

26 I thank the anonymous reviewer who drew my attention to the fact that, historically, the Izumo Shrine and the Ise Shrine were not regarded as two national shrines of equal status in ancient times. This has induced me to pay more attention to the facts that the historical Izumo Shrine was always classified as a *yashiro* and that the main version of *Nihon shoki* (9.0) does not say that Ōnamuchi was offered a *miya*.

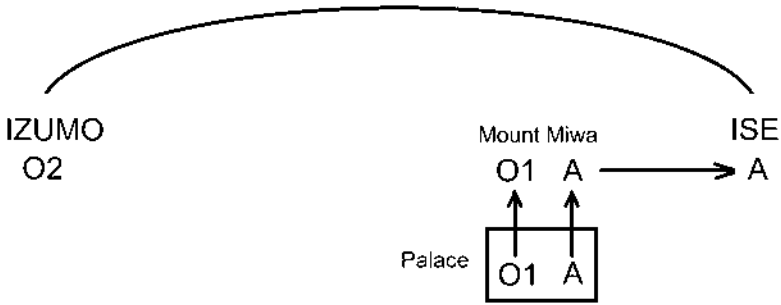


FIGURE 24 Innovations introduced during the reigns of emperors Sujin and Suinin, according to *Nihon shoki*. (A) Amaterasu; (O1) Yamato no Ōkunitama (Ōnamuchi's aramitama in Yamato); (O2) Ōnamuchi in Izumo since the god age (*Nihon shoki* 9.2)

DIAGRAM BY THE AUTHOR

and a deity called Yamato no Ōkunitama had been worshipped in the emperors' palaces but were brought out under Emperor Sujin and newly worshipped at two open-air sanctuaries near Mt. Miwa (figure 24). Since these two gods had already accompanied Ninigi on his descent from heaven, they were probably regarded as what would later have been called the *aramitama* ('wild' or movable spirits) of Amaterasu and Ōnamuchi, respectively, but the latter god was here called Yamato no Ōkunitama because he was now to be worshipped as the great land deity of Yamato.

Significantly, however, the cult of Ōkunitama (alias Ōnamuchi) was at first neglected. The priestess selected for serving it "was bald and lean, and therefore unfit to perform the rites of worship" (Aston 1: 152). The problem is said to have been solved the following year, but according to a different tradition quoted in *Nihon shoki* (Aston 1: 177), it was almost ninety years later in the reign of the next emperor, Suinin, that the god himself complained about the neglect of his worship and then finally did get a proper cult in Yamato.<sup>27</sup> The emperors apparently still had to learn that newly worshipping Amaterasu at an open-air sanctuary did not free them of the obligation to also properly worship the land god who had ceded the rule of the land to their heavenly ancestors.<sup>28</sup>

27 He was later identified with the deity of the Ōyamato Shrine, where he was indeed regarded as Ōnamuchi's *aramitama* (Ponsonby-Fane 1954: 228–48).

28 For this, see also the section 'The Cult Contract and the State Ritual after the Taika Reform' in chapter 8.

Amaterasu as the ancestral deity of the imperial family, on the other hand, should have properly remained in the emperor's palace, as she herself says to Ninigi in version 9.2 of *Nihon shoki* (Aston 1: 83). To bring her out of the palace and worship her at a separate place was therefore a crucial innovation. The compilers of this part of *Nihon shoki* apparently conceived the establishment of the two sanctuaries as a precedent for a future situation where two Grand Shrines would be established east and west of the capital (figure 24).

The capital was moved from Fujiwara to Heijō in 710 and *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were completed in 712 and 720, respectively. Since *Shoku nihongi*, the next national chronicle compiled after *Nihon shoki*, records for 716 that the governor (*kuni no miyatsuko*) of Izumo presented divine greetings at court, it seems that by that time the Izumo Shrine existed too; but whether it was already located at Kizuki or at a different place, as *Kojiki* suggested only four years earlier, is a matter of speculation.<sup>29</sup>

When the shrine was really built at Kizuki it could have been intended to form a counterpart of the already existing Ise Shrine; for although it was now only a *yashiro*, it is unlikely that the earlier idea of a special mutual relationship between the two shrines got entirely lost. After all, not only *Kojiki* but also *Nihon shoki* 9.2 has a story saying that Ōkuninushi was once promised a *miya* for ceding the rule of the land to the heavenly descendants.

The fact that the two shrines were then located almost exactly in opposite directions from the new capital is of course accidental; for we must think east and west as directional sectors, and where the two shrines were founded within these sectors depended on the circumstances and on where the local topographies were favourable. At Kizuki, the topography was very favourable because it allowed building the shrine at the foot of a northern mountain range, with a small valley in the shrine's back (Matsuo 2005: figure 3), and orient it to a southern plain in front – an ideal orientation for a land shrine. The orientation of the heavenly Ise Shrine was in reverse; looking south meant facing the main mountains upstream, which is very unusual but fitting for a deity believed to dwell in a far heaven (chapter 7).<sup>30</sup>

29 The text in *Shoku nihongi*, translated by Haguenaer (1929: 35–36n57), mentions the name of the priest, Hatayasu, but not that of the shrine and its location. For the earlier shrine mentioned in *Kojiki*, see chapter 6.

30 The Inner Ise Shrine's reverse orientation is intriguing because it suggests that the idea of a yin–yang complementarity may have been involved at some time. Hirohata Sukeo (1974) has suggested that the mutual relation of the two shrines corresponds to the Chinese custom of correlating the *tsung-miao* ('earth shrine') and *she-chi* ('ancestor shrine'). In China, the former was sacred to the emperor and said to be situated in the east of the capital, the



Although the land-ceding myth in its older version given in *Kojiki* suggests that the two shrines in Izumo and Ise were once planned as complementary counterparts, corresponding to the relation of heaven (*ama*) and land/earth (*kuni*), the main text of *Nihon shoki* does not support this idea, and the historical Izumo Shrine has, since Nara times, always been called a *yashiro*, which indicates that it was not recognised as a counterpart of the Ise Shrine on the same high level. At the Ise Shrine, the idea of such a mutual relationship was not welcome anyway. Perhaps it was to make the Izumo Shrine seem redundant that the Outer Ise Shrine was founded for Toyouke, a different agricultural deity.

Certainly, it would be an illusion to think that the Izumo Shrine was going to be as successful as the Ise Shrine in the course of its later history. Ōkuninushi was said to have ceded the land to the heavenly descendants, but strictly speaking he had only ceded the rule of the land, while as the ruler of the land spirits he continued to be the god-owner of the land. As such he had to be worshipped by the heavenly descendants. He was also worshipped by them, at least insofar as the hereditary office of the chief priest at the Izumo Shrine was given to a family that claimed descent from Ame no Hohi, a son of Amaterasu.

As the highest-ranked land shrine, the Izumo Shrine could represent the foundation of the state's territory, whereas Amaterasu was the deity from which the emperors claimed descent. But since the chronicles were compiled on the command and in the interest of the imperial dynasty, they claimed supremacy for Amaterasu and the Ise Shrine and regarded the Izumo Shrine as a lower shrine. The tendency to favour the Ise Shrine later continued to affect the perception of the two deities and shrines, as Yijiang Zhong has discussed at length in his book on the "vanquished gods of Izumo" (2016). The Izumo Shrine declined for centuries because *Nihon shoki* became the standard work, and the relation between the two shrines eventually came to be interpreted in a new way. Ōkuninushi, as the main deity of the shrine, came to be replaced with Susano, the brother of Amaterasu. In the seventeenth century he again became the main deity and his shrine was then the first to free itself from Buddhist influences. Shinto scholars then used the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* to raise the status of Ōkuninushi, and by the first half of the nineteenth century they had even elevated him to the apex of the pantheon. But when Shinto was reorganised after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the government distinguished the Izumo cult from the national shrine system headed by Amaterasu and the Ise Shrine (Zhong 2016). After World War II, the Izumo cult ended

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direction of yang; the latter was situated in the west of the capital, the direction of yin, and was dedicated to the god of the land and of agriculture.

up as a private religious institution that is now represented by two Shinto sects, the Izumokyō and the Izumo Ōyashirokyō. It is still a famous shrine, but Ōkuninushi has become most popular as a god of marriage and matchmaking, not as the god who had opened up the land of Japan.

### Conclusion

The most important conclusion to be drawn from the discussion in this chapter is that the land-making myth, as told in *Kojiki*, fully supports our theoretical model of the two-phase structure of the ancient land-taking ritual. This is particularly important, as this myth regards the making of the whole territory of Japan as it was seen at the time of its creation.

A charter myth of such importance could only be effective if it represented the ritual in a way that corresponded to what the people of the time knew about the correct method that was really used in early times for taking possession of land. As a mythical paradigm intended to justify a historical situation, the land-making of Ōnamuchi and Sukunabikona is therefore also relevant for understanding the way in which smaller territories used to be created when this was still possible in the archipelago. Normally, divining was performed in many different and simple ways, as we saw in chapter 1. The structure of the ritual, however, was probably the same as long as people still cared about following the correct procedure.

The land-ceding myth, on the other hand, reflects the same structure as the land-making myth in *Kojiki*, although divination is replaced by an exchange of questions and answers among anthropomorphic gods who can speak with words. It was conceived as a charter myth that should provide mythic sanction for the emperors' rule of that great territory. As such, it could also justify the abolition of private property in rice land under the new laws of the ancient state.

## Ninigi's Descent and His Territory in Kyushu

The final part of the 'god age' mythology deals with the immediate consequence of the land-ceding deal: Amaterasu's grandchild Ninigi can be sent down from heaven to rule the land. He descends to Kyushu where he and his descendants rule until his great-grandson Iwarebiko later moves east to conquer Yamato in the centre, where he becomes the first emperor, posthumously called Jinmu Tennō.

The myth of 'the descent of the heavenly grandchild' (*tenson kōrin shinwa*) poses serious problems for our interpretation because the single version in *Kojiki* and several versions in *Nihon shoki* seem to suggest that Ninigi arrived on the land twice, first through the air to a high mountain and then again from the sea to the coast. Noticing this doubling, Kaneko Takeo (1968) has pointed out that Japanese mythology knows of two methods for descending from heaven, a 'sea type' and a 'land type', and that these two were made to coexist or merge in the myth of Ninigi's descent. The sea type, he noted, is represented in the myth of Izanagi and Izanami who descend from heaven to a 'heavenly floating bridge' (*ame no ukihashi*) and from there to an island in the sea. The 'land type', on the other hand, would be the method whereby the god first descends from heaven to the top of a high mountain and then down to the plain below. In the *tenson kōrin* myth, the land type would be mentioned first and the sea type immediately after it (Kaneko 1968: 170–71).

### The Title Sentence Pattern

Approaching the text with a special interest in the way in which land-taking stories and spatial relations are represented in ancient texts, we can observe a further significant difference: the first sentence tells where Ninigi comes from and where he formally 'descends', whereas what follows pictures him as arriving at the coast and going in search of land until he finds a place where he claims a territory. The relation between the two parts is reminiscent of stories that begin with a 'title sentence' that first summarises the main part of the story. One example is our key story (chapter 2), which first says that Matachi dedicated a reed plain and made new rice fields and then continues by giving more details on how he opened up the land and worshipped Yato no kami *before* he could make his rice fields. Similarly, the story which tells what happened later

to that cult first tells that Maro occupied the area and had a pond built, but what follows is a description of how he got rid of the divine snakes *before* the pond could be built. A third example, which is particularly relevant here, says that Susanoo descended from heaven to Torikami in the upper course of the river Hi of Izumo and then adds that 'at that time' he saw chopsticks floating down the river and thought that people were living in the upper course. Here, too, the second sentence evidently tells what happened before the god arrived at Torikami (see chapter 1).

The main problem with interpreting the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven by referring to this peculiarity of storytelling is that it requires a new understanding that contradicts the long-established and apparently never-doubted interpretation, according to which Ninigi was meant to have descended from heaven directly to the top of a mountain and to have searched for land afterwards.

Since the myth has, in this standard interpretation, no parallel in Japanese mythology, it is usually explained by referring to descent myths from Korea and other parts of the north-east Asian mainland. However, not all such myths from Korea tell of a founder who descended to the top of a mountain; only two out of five mentioned by Manabu Waida (1973) say that the founder did so. A third founder was said to have descended to a well at the foot of a mountain, a fourth to a forest and the fifth even came floating to the shore of the Chinhan area (Table 2).<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 2 Descent myths of Korea, based on text in Waida 1973

Name of founder	Founder of	Place of descending
1. T'arhae	Royal Sak clan, Silla	Floating to the shore of Chinhan
2. Hwang-wung	Ancient Chosŏn	A tree on the top of Mt. Tehbaek
3. Hyökköse	Silla	A well at the foot of Mt. Yang
4. Archi	Royal Kim clan, Silla	A forest of Wölsheng
5. Suro	Karak	Top of Mt. Kuji

1 Ōbayashi Taryō (1973: 215) refers to Oka Masao as the one who has pointed out that heavenly descent myths are widely distributed from Korea to inner-continental Asia. Ōbayashi himself (1984) describes two such myths from Korea that tell of a descent to the top of a mountain (2 and 5 in Table 2). That he does not also mention the myths 1, 3 and 4 in Table 2 is typical of the generally biased assumption that only the vertical descent to the top of a mountain is relevant in connection with the story of Ninigi's descent to Takachiho.

Seeing that these myths from Korea include at least one case of the horizontal approach by way of the sea, it would seem that the story of Ninigi should rather be compared with other myths from Japan that also tell of gods who descended by way of the sea. Some of them suggest that the descending gods arrived at a seashore, from where they went upriver and settled down at the foot of a mountain.

To also interpret the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven in this way requires that we first consider the possibility that the ancient compilers might have made an exception in this case, because Ninigi is the grandson of Amaterasu and the first ancestor of the imperial family who ruled on earth. This could perhaps have caused them to say that he descended vertically to the top of a mountain. However, the fact is that not only Susanoo, but even Amaterasu, is said in *Nihon shoki* to have searched for land before she formally 'descended' in Ise. The early rulers worshipped her over many generations in their palaces, until Emperor Sujin brought her out to an open-air sanctuary near Mt. Miwa. Under the next emperor, Suinin, Princess Yamatohime travelled through several provinces in search of a good place for enshrining her. Eventually she found one at the upper course of the river Isuzu in Ise. Giving a short version of this story, *Nihon shoki* ends with the sentence: "This is the place where Amaterasu Ōkami first descended from heaven" (\*NKBT 67: 270).

This statement has puzzled many scholars, but it is revealing with respect to what *ama kudarū* or *amoru*, usually translated as 'to descend from heaven', could mean in the ancient language. It could mean not only that a deity moved down to earth; it was also a technical term expressing that a deity searched and found a proper place of residence on earth. Ninigi, too, may therefore have searched for land before he formally 'descended' and settled down at Takachiho.

To make this comprehensible without entering into a lengthy philological discussion of all five versions of this myth given in *Nihon shoki*, in this chapter I mainly deal with the single version given in *Kojiki* and with the main version from *Nihon shoki* (9.0). Variants from *Nihon shoki* will only be considered so far as they are helpful for getting a fuller image of the myth.<sup>2</sup>

The following translations of the only version of *Kojiki* and the main version of *Nihon shoki* distinguish what I have called the 'title sentence' (A) and the part of the story that is told after it (B). While A tells that Ninigi descended to Takachiho, B is here interpreted to say what happened on the way to there, not after arrival. I therefore insert a line break between the two parts of each of the two versions of the myth. Since the mountain mentioned had different names

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2 As for the reason why two or several versions of a story or myth are sometimes given in the ancient texts, I refer to the introduction where this topic is briefly addressed.

in the different versions, and Takachiho was also the name of the palaces where Ninigi's son and grand-grandsons were dwelling according to *Kojiki*, I assume that Takachiho was primarily a place name.

### The Two Main Versions of the Myth

\**Kojiki* (NKBT 1: 129): Then they ordered Amatsuhikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto to leave the heavenly rock-seat. Pushing aside the manifold heavenly clouds and opening a way with a mighty way-opening, *ukijimari* standing upright on the heavenly floating bridge (*ame no ukihashi*), he descended from heaven to Mount Kujifuru of Takachiho in Himuka of Tsukushi (A).

Therefore, the two deities Ame no Oshii no Mikoto and Amatsu Kume no Mikoto, carrying the heavenly stone quivers on their backs, wearing their swords with mallet heads, taking up their heavenly *haji*-bows, and grasping the heavenly deer arrows, went in front and served him. Now, this Ame no Oshihi no Mikoto (this is the ancestor of the Ōtomo no muraji) and Amatsukume no Mikoto (this is the ancestor of the Kume no atae) spoke: 'This place faces Karakuni; searching [we] passed through Cape Kasasa; it is a land on which the morning sun shines directly, a land where the evening sun shines brightly, therefore this land is an outstandingly good place.' Saying so, [they] broadly planted the palace posts on the bedrock below, raised high the crossed rafters to Takama no hara, and stayed (B).<sup>3</sup>

\**Nihon shoki* 9.0 (NKBT 67: 140): The august grandchild then left the heavenly rock seat, and pushing aside the many-layered heavenly clouds, cleaving a way with an awesome way-cleaving, descended from heaven to Mount Takachiho (Takachiho no take) of So in Himuka. (A)

Now as to the manner of the august grandchild's progress, from the mysterious double-peaked heavenly floating bridge he stood on the flat part of a floating beach, and passing in search of land from straight hills (*hitao*) through empty land, [worthless] like the back meat of an animal, he came to Cape Kasasa of Ata no Nagaya. In that land there was a

3 Karakuni means Korea. Philippi (141) translates "the peak Kujifuru-take of Mount Takachiho", but the text has only *take* meaning 'mountain' in combination with a mountain's name. For the obscure term *ukijimari*, see later in this chapter. The translation 'searching [we] passed through' follows the old understanding which takes *maki* as an alternative form of *magi* ('search') (NKBT 1: 129n17).

man. Of himself he gave his name as Kotokatsu kunikatsu Nagasa. The Sovereign Grandchild questioned him, saying: “Is there a land or not?” He answered. “There is here a land. Please come as you like.” Consequently, the sovereign Grandchild went and stayed (B).<sup>4</sup>

The words praising the location of Ninigi’s palace appear only in *Kojiki* and have traditionally been interpreted to mean that the place was searched (*maku/magu*, ‘to search’) by going to or through Cape Kasasa. Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) was already convinced that *Kojiki* refers here to the same land search as *Nihon shoki*. But since it was assumed that Ninigi dwelt near Cape Kasasa, as vaguely suggested in a variant of *Nihon shoki* (9.2, see later in this chapter), this was not taken to mean that the search for land preceded the descent to Takachiho. Later, however, other scholars felt that *Kojiki* rather suggests that Ninigi’s palace was built at Takachiho and that the ‘searching’ is problematic because the praising words in *Kojiki* could then mean that Ninigi came in search of land and reached Takachiho by way of Cape Kasasa. This, however, would contradict the firmly established interpretation that Ninigi descended directly from the sky to the top of a mountain.

### Cape Kasasa as a Place on the Way to Takachiho

Instead of putting the long-established view into doubt, these scholars tried to eliminate the reference to a land search by suggesting different translations of the characters read *ma-ki*. As Omodaka Hisataka (1940) noted, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* have different traditions and it is therefore not necessary to follow *Nihon shoki* and interpret the characters 真来 (*ma-ki*) in *Kojiki* in the sense of *magi* (‘searching’). Various scholars have therefore come to interpret the characters

4 For the ‘floating beach’ see note 8. Part B is introduced in the text by *sude ni shite*, which I translate neutrally as ‘now’ because the meaning of this conjunction is problematic. In modern Japanese, *sude ni* means ‘previously, before’ and *sude ni shite* ‘in the meantime’. Around Muromachi period, *sude ni* was often used in the sense of ‘just now’ or ‘shortly afterwards’ (JKDJ: 390). In the context given here (9.0), Aston has therefore followed earlier scholars and translated *sude ni shite* as ‘after this’ (1: 70). He also did so in the story of Wakahiko’s mission later in the text (*Nihon shoki* 9.1; Aston 1: 76), apparently without noticing that there the same conjunction clearly refers back to Oshihomimi’s earlier mission (chapter 4). My conclusion, reached after further studies, is that, in the case dealt with here, *sude ni shite* is not intended to refer to what happened afterwards but means ‘at that time’ (when Ninigi descended) or ‘now’ with an explanatory tone.

真来通 differently, as 'going straight through' or 'where one comes 来 passing 通 straight 真 through'.<sup>5</sup>

These interpretations therefore regard Cape Kasasa as a place on the way to Ninigi's palace, but they do not claim that Ninigi was supposed to have originally come to Takachiho by passing through Cape Kasasa in search of land. The term *ukihashi* ('floating bridge'), which in *Kojiki* already appears in the title sentence before 'Takachiho', came thus to be interpreted as a 'bridge' floating in the sky, which was thought to correspond to what other cultures know as a mythical ladder that once linked heaven and earth. Even the fact that *Nihon shoki* also mentions an *ukihashi* as one of three kinds of 'articles to play on the sea' (9.2; see chapter 1) could not convince scholars to abandon the idea that, according to *Kojiki*, Ninigi's *ukihashi* would be floating in the air.

If we assume here, however, that the text makes use of the title sentence pattern, the difficulty disappears and we can understand that the *Kojiki* version mentions the *ukihashi* in the first sentence in order to indicate that Ninigi descended to Takachiho by way of the sea. I conclude from this that the text in *Kojiki* fully supports the unorthodox interpretation proposed here, and that the compilers of the main version in *Nihon shoki* (9.0) tried to clarify this point by omitting to mention the 'heavenly floating bridge' in the first sentence and then saying that it served Ninigi for getting ashore before he started to search for land along the coast.

### Ninigi's Arrival at the Coast

Whereas the *ukihashi* promised to Ōnamuchi in compensation for ceding the rule of the land to the heavenly descendants was one of three kinds of 'articles to play on the sea', as we saw in chapter 1, Ninigi's 'floating bridge' (*ukihashi*) is further distinguished as 'heavenly'. This does not mean that it was floating in the sky, as is still sometimes assumed, because *Kojiki* mentions it before Ninigi's arrival at Takachicho. As in most such cases, the adjective 'heavenly' is a praising word or a laudatory title when used with personal names. The heavenly floating bridge (*ame no ukihashi*) is therefore a valuable thing 'to play on

5 Ōta Yoshimaro (1962) translated as *massugu ni zutto tsūjite ite* ('going straight through'), similarly Sugano Masao (1993: 154n7, *massugu tsūjite ite*). A slightly different reading is given in SPNKZ 1 (1997: 118n3): *kasasa no misaki o massugu tōtte kite [...] kuni* ('a land to where one comes passing straight through Cape Kasasa'). This corresponds to Philippi's earlier translation: '[it is a place to which one] comes directly through the Cape of Kasasa' (1968: 141). Similarly, Klaus Antoni writes in his German translation of *Kojiki*: "ein Ort .... an den man direkt vom Kap Kasasa aus herüberkommt", assuming that Ninigi settled down at Cape Kasasa (2012: 80, 595n67).



the sea' that Ninigi uses when he goes ashore at the coast of Kyushu. The confusing thing is that the main text of *Nihon shoki* (9.0) characterises this floating bridge as 'mysteriously double-peaked' (*futagami no*), whereas version 9.4 speaks of a 'mysteriously double-peaked' mountain, and 9.2 of a 'mysterious Mount Takachiho'. Scholars have usually interpreted the main version by following the two variants, although it lacks a word meaning mountain.<sup>6</sup>

Considering, however, that the heavenly floating bridge has sometimes been interpreted as a kind of boat, and that early boats often had a double-peaked bow and could be used for divination (chapter 1), it seems possible that the main version 9.0 refers to a boat with a double-peaked bow. We must therefore consider that Ninigi may be divining when he stands upright on the heavenly floating bridge.

That Ninigi should be divining at this crucial moment is also suggested by comparing his situation with that of his father Oshihomimi, who earlier in the mythic narrative was in the very same situation when he was sent down from heaven (chapter 4):

At this time Katsu-no-haya-hi no Ama no Oshi-ho-mimi no Mikoto stood on the floating bridge of Heaven, and glancing downwards, said: – “Is that country tranquillized yet? No! it is a tumble-down land, hideous to look upon,” So he ascended, and reported why he had not gone down. (trans. Aston 1:76; NKBT 67: 146)

Here we have a passage that clearly pictures Ninigi's father as standing on a heavenly floating bridge, inquiring about the state of the land which he should rule. Since he answers his own question, the inquiry can be regarded as being equivalent to an act of divining whether or not the land is ready to be ruled, and the chaotic state of the land is the bad sign that makes him give up and return.<sup>7</sup> It is only after others have been sent down to subdue the land that

6 *Nihon shoki* (9.4) has the following expression: *takachiho no kushii no futagami no take no ame no ukihashi* (reading of NKBT 67: 156). This could mean “the heavenly floating bridge of the mysterious Mount Futagami of Takachiho” or, as Aston (1: 87) translates, “the floating bridge of Heaven, which is on the two peaks of Kushibi of Takachiho”. Obviously, this makes no sense; it only shows that the author of this version was more familiar with the concept of a double-peaked mountain than with that of a floating bridge with “two tops”. He therefore inserted the words *take no* ('of the mountain'), which are lacking in the representative main version 9.0 (NKBT 67: 140). Further confusion was created by translations combining what the two chronicles differently say: “he stood on a flat floating island by the Heavenly Floating Bridge” (*Kojiki*, trans. Philippi: 141).

7 Even more obvious is the aspect of divining in the myth of the creation of Onogorojima, where Izanagi and Izanami stand on a heavenly floating bridge and inquire about the land. See chapter 8, p. 219.

his son Ninigi is sent to rule it (chapter 4). As Ninigi also stands on a floating bridge before going ashore, he is likewise supposed to have inquired (divined) whether or not the land is now ready to be ruled. The coastal waters being quiet, he can stand upright on the floating bridge without losing balance. Taking this for a good sign, he goes ashore to search for land on which to settle down.

To test this interpretation, we can look at the version of *Kojiki* which mentions the term *ame no ukishashi* followed by a phrase that is only written phonetically as *u-ki-ji-ma-ri-so-ri-ta-ta-shi-te*. If we had only *Kojiki*, we would probably understand that Ninigi is 'firmly standing up or upright (*sori-tatashite*) on the heavenly floating bridge' (*ame no ukishashi ni*), while *ukijimari* may be added to indicate that he does so while 'floating' (*uki*). The only mysterious part is *jimari*, which could be the continuative stem form of the verb *shimaru*, which is known to have meant either 'to bind' or 'to become tense'. Since Ninigi is standing upright on an *ukishashi* he is 'tense', for falling into the water would be a very bad omen.<sup>8</sup>

### Ninigi Questions the Master of the Land at Cape Kasasa

The story of Ninigi's land search ends at Cape Kasasa, where he claims a territory by questioning the local chief. This part is found only in *Nihon shoki* which, beside the main version 9.0, has three variants that partly differ in interesting ways. Whereas the main version 9.0 and version 9.6 introduce the owner of the land simply as a 'man', version 9.2 calls him 'the chief of the land' (*kuni no nushi*) and 9.4 identifies him as a god and child of Izanagi with the alternative name *Shiotsutsu no Oji*. The wording of the question-and-answer pattern is also not identical in all versions:

8 This interpretation also makes sense in relation to *Ame no Hiboko* and his *hashifune* mentioned in chapter 3. Since the compilers of *Nihon shoki* also no longer knew the meaning of *ukijimari*, they interpreted *jimari* unconvincingly as a contraction of *jima ari* ('island is'). Noticing, however, that phonetic *jima* (*shima*, 'island') would not fit with the context, they represented it in their ideographic version with a character meaning *nagisa* ('beach') (NKBT 67: 140). The correct translation in the main text 9.0 of *Nihon shoki* should therefore be 'beach', not 'island', while the 'floating' follows the *uki* of *Kojiki*. Note that *Nihon shoki* uses here the same method as in its interpretation of the word *uke* appearing in the myth of *Uzume's* dance (chapter 1): it first gives its interpretation of the meaning in ideographic characters and later adds the phonetic reading in a note. In this particular case, the compilers also changed the phonetic reading according to their interpretation, replacing the *sori-tatashite* (*Kojiki*) with *tahira ni tatashite*, meaning 'standing on a flat [part] of' (a floating island/beach).

- 9.0 “Is there a land or not?” – “There is a land here. Please come as you like.”
- 9.2 [Ninigi questions the lord of the land] – “There is a land here. In any case, I follow your order.”
- 9.4 “Is there a land?” – “There is. At your command, I will offer it.”
- 9.6 “Whose land is this?” – “This is the land where Nagasa dwells. But I offer it now to the heavenly son.”<sup>9</sup>

In version 9.2, Ninigi’s words are not mentioned, but the answer shows that he is supposed to have asked the same kind of question as according to 9.0 and 9.4. Only in 9.6 does Ninigi ask whose land it is. The noteworthy point is that all these variants show that the question does not openly indicate what it is intended to mean. Like in the case of Yamatohime’s questioning of the chiefs in Ise (chapter 7), it is the answer which indicates that the question does not simply express the curiosity of a traveller but implies an order to surrender the rule of the territory. Moreover, in all four versions the answer consists of two parts. The first part is affirmative. ‘There is here a land’ means that there is a territory which the speaker rightfully rules and therefore can surrender. Only the second part expresses that the ruler is ready to surrender the rule.

Compared with the more circumstantial exchange of questions and answers that we have met in the great land-ceding myth, this story represents a shortened version of the same pattern. It does not give any details about how exactly Nagasa surrenders to Ninigi, but it does tell that Nagasa first introduces himself as the inhabitant and ruler of the land and then declares that he will surrender it. Similarly, the land-making myth of the god age mythology first tells that Ōnamuchi ‘makes’ the land and holds it as the rightful ruler. Only after stating this does the text continue with the land-ceding myth, which tells how Ōnamuchi transfers the rule of the great land to the heavenly descendants.

### Ninigi at Cape Kasasa

The new interpretation of the descent myth has an influence on how we can think of Ninigi’s territory. This is, however, again a question for which it is necessary to keep the doctrines of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* strictly apart.

If we only followed *Kojiki*, we would probably assume that Ninigi had his palace at Takachiho; for *Kojiki* mentions the Palace of Takachiho as the name of the residences of Ninigi’s son and grand-grandson (*Kojiki*; Philippi: 158, 163).

<sup>9</sup> \*NKBT 67: 141, 154, 157, 161.

By saying that Mt. Kujifuru of Takachiho was in Himuka of Tsukushi, the text could mean any place in southern Kyushu, but if Cape Kasasa was on the way to Takachiho, as the land-praising formula in *Kojiki* suggests, we get the impression that Takachiho might have been situated rather near to Cape Kasasa.<sup>10</sup> The same idea is suggested if we later read that Cape Kasasa is where Ninigi meets Atatsuhime, the 'maiden of Ata' and daughter of the mountain god there. As Ninigi married her and the text does not say that they moved away (Philippi: 144), they were probably supposed to have dwelt near Cape Kasasa. This too speaks in favour of assuming that, according to *Kojiki*, the Palace of Takachiho was meant to have been situated not far from Cape Kasasa and Ata.<sup>11</sup>

Considering further that the usual identification of Cape Kasasa with Cape Noma is well founded, it seems most likely that *Kojiki* wants to say that Ninigi's territory extended from present Cape Noma into the interior. If we look, therefore, at the morphology of the landscape there, we notice that Cape Noma is not a place where one would go ashore with the intention to found a large territory. There is, however, a valley nearby that was well suited for making a small territory: the valley of present Ōura-chō (figure 25, inset).<sup>12</sup> The river of this valley has its sources in the southern mountains and empties into the broad bay at the north-eastern side of Cape Noma. Today, the rice fields extend about six kilometres southwards into the mountains. If Takachiho was close

10 As for the old concept of Himuka, it is important that *Shoku nihongi* (797) records that the four districts Kimotsuki, Soo, Ōsumi and Aira were cut off from Himuka no kuni in Wadō 6 (713 CE). These four districts (in modern Kagoshima Prefecture) were therefore still parts of Himuka when *Kojiki* appeared in 712. Although this was no longer the case when *Nihon shoki* was compiled in 720, this later chronicle understandably still used this older terminology in the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven. Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (9.1) first locate Himuka in Tsukushi, but *Kojiki* later says that Iwarebiko travelled from Himuka to Tsukushi and arrived at Usa (Philippi: 163), which may reflect an earlier use of Himuka and Tsukushi as names of the southern and northern parts of Tsukushi in the wider sense of Kyushu.

11 The tenth-century *Wamyōshū* lists a village of Ata in Ata District of Satsuma Province, which roughly corresponded to the western half of modern Kagoshima Prefecture. The Hayato of Ata was an ethnic group that brought tribute to the court (*Nihon shoki*, Aston 11: 356) and had a role in the 'great tasting' (*dajōsat*) celebrated at the Yamato Court (Teeuwen 2018: 6, 10–11). *Kojiki* tells that Ninigi's oldest son Hoderi was the ancestor of the Hayato's Ata no kimi and also Iwarebiko's first wife Airahime was a relative of the Ata no kimi (Philippi: 147, 178).

12 The identification of Cape Kasasa with Cape Noma is found in *Sangoku meisshō zue* (1848, vol. 27: 37–40), but it was in 1922 that a village in the smaller valley there was first called Kasasa-mura. In 1940 it became Kasasa-chō, which has been a part of Minami-Satsuma-shi since 2005 (Shimono 2005: 306–307). It has also been suggested that the old name Kasasa could have changed over the centuries to Kasada and Kaseda, the name of the former city nearby.

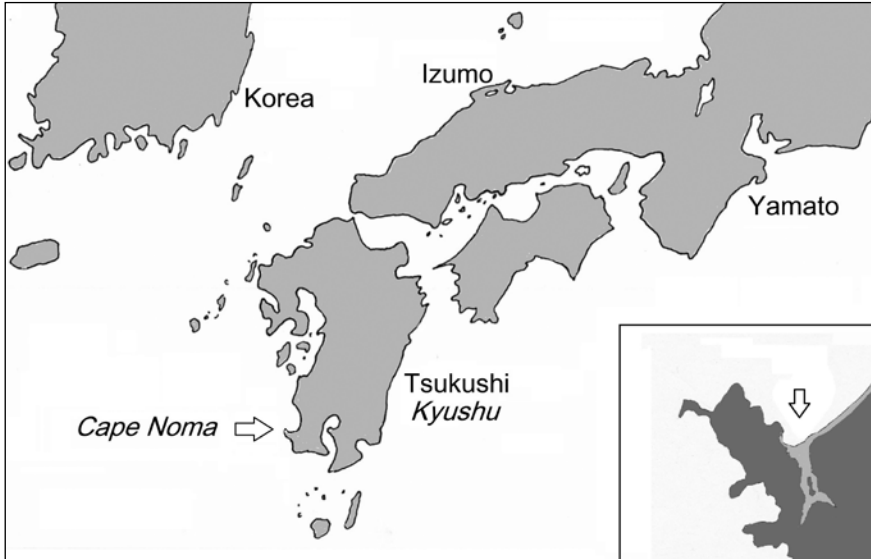


FIGURE 25 The identification of the mythic Cape Kasasa with Cape Noma at the south-western end of Kyushu. Inset: Cape Noma and the valley of Ōura-chō, a district of Minami-Satsuma-shi  
MAPS BY THE AUTHOR

to Cape Kasasa, it might therefore have been a place at the foot of a mountain belonging to this valley and the mountain best fitting there would seem to be Mt. Chōya at the valley's eastern side.<sup>13</sup>

Cape Noma marks the south-western end of Kyushu and Japan, as it was conceived when the chronicles were compiled: a fact that might have been the reason for choosing it as the location of Ninigi's territory in the ancient myth construction. By having Ninigi arrive there, the myth makers could create the fiction that the heavenly descendants intended to extend their rule along a bent longitudinal axis that traversed whole Japan from southernmost Kyushu to northernmost Honshu. Ninigi's grand-grandson, Iwarebiko, later conquers Yamato in the centre and founds the imperial dynasty there, which then gradually extends its rule from Yamato in all directions. It is therefore not unlikely that the old theory which identifies Cape Kasasa with Cape Noma is correct

13 Mt. Chōya or Chōyasan forms part of the eastern border of the valley seen in figure 25 (inset). Chōya is the Sino-Japanese reading of the characters for Nagaya, whose name is reminiscent of the ancient Nagaya in *Ata*, where *Nihon shoki* (9.0) locates Cape Kasasa. The mountain has carried this name in memory of the ancient myth at least since the first half of the nineteenth century (*Sangoku meishō zue* 1848: vol. 27, pp. 19, 40).

and the compilers of both chronicles imagined that Ninigi's territory stretched inland from the present Cape Noma at the south-western end of Kyushu.

The view, however, that Ninigi's territory was limited to a small valley at Cape Noma, and that Mt. Takachiho should be imagined to have been located nearby, contradicts the usual assumptions that have traditionally been made in attempts at identifying the location of Mt. Takachiho on a map. The compilers of *Nihon shoki* apparently also found that this valley at Cape Noma was too small to represent Ninigi's territory, as is suggested by the following passage:

Thereupon he called to him Koto-katsu-kuni-katsu-Nagasa, the Lord of that country, and made inquiry of him. He answered and said: – “There is a country here. I will in any case obey thy commands.” Accordingly, the August Grandchild erected a palace-hall (*miya*) and rested there. Walking afterwards by the sea-shore, he saw a beautiful woman. (*Nihon shoki* 9.2; trans. Aston 1:84; NKBT 67:154)

This is the only place in *Nihon shoki* where Ninigi is said to have built a palace 宮殿, but the palace has no name and the characters used to describe Ninigi's staying there mean ‘taking a rest’ 遊息. The compilers apparently wanted to express that it was merely a temporary palace. In the main version 9.0 (NKBT 67: 140), the text says that Ninigi “stopped and dwelled” (Aston 1: 70, “took up his abode”), but no palace is mentioned, and the variant 9.6 says that he went up to Takashima of Nagaya, but nothing indicates that he had his permanent palace built there.

There is another variant, however, that is noteworthy because it clearly distinguishes between Ninigi's descent from heaven and his arrival at Mt. Kujifuru of Takachiho:

Then the august grandchild left the heavenly rock seat, and pushing aside the many-layered heavenly clouds, cleaving a way with an awesome way-cleaving, he descended from heaven. Finally, according to the earlier oath, the august grandchild arrived at Mount Kujifuru of Takachiho in Himuka of Tsukushi. (\**Nihon shoki* 9.1, NKBT 67: 148; cf. Aston 1:78–79)

As the compilers quoted this as the first variant (9.1) they may have found that it supports their interpretation according to which Ninigi searched for land before he arrived at Mt. Kujifuru.

Whereas *Kojiki* apparently assumes that Ninigi and his followers in Kyushu reigned in the Palace of Takachiho, *Nihon shoki* does not mention this palace but states that Ninigi's grandson, Hikonagisa, died in ‘the palace of the western

country' and was buried on Mt. Aira of Himuka. This mountain has been identified as one situated in modern Aira about sixty kilometres east-south-east of Cape Noma (NKBT 67: 185n21). Moreover, *Nihon shoki* also says that Iwarebiko, the fourth son of Hikonagisa, married a woman from Ata in the western part of modern Kagoshima Prefecture (NKBT 67: 188n11), thereby creating the impression that the whole of southern Kyushu may have been ruled by Ninigi's descendants when it was still called Himuka.

Since the ancient texts agree in locating Takachiho in Himuka, it is usually assumed that Mt. Takachiho must have been a conspicuous mountain in the ancient province of Hyūga, whose name is said to derive from Himuka and which roughly corresponded to modern Miyazaki Prefecture. The mythical mountain is therefore usually identified with a high mountain in Miyazaki Prefecture, such as the volcanic Mt. Kirishima or a mountain further north in that prefecture. The fact is, however, that the location of an ancient mountain called Kujifurutake (*Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* 9.1), Sōri no yama (9.6) or Takachiho no take (9.0) cannot be identified in Kyushu with any certainty.

The older Himuka probably comprised the whole of southern Kyushu, but where the compilers of *Nihon shoki* imagined Takachiho to have been situated is a matter of speculation. Several variants locate Takachiho in So of Himuka, (9.0, 9.4, 9.6) and the mountain at So is once called Takachiho no Sohori no yama (9.6). Since *sōri* (OJ *sohori*) is assumed to be a changed form of Korean *sio-por*, the name of the royal capital of Silla (NKBT 67: 161n14), this may have inspired the compilers of *Nihon shoki* to refer to the palace of the "western country"; but where this palace was situated, they did not say. Perhaps they left the question open to give the mountain an aura of mystery.

### Takama no Hara as a Horizontally Distant Heaven

The interpretation proposed here about the arrival of Ninigi on the coast is not entirely new. Maruyama Rinpei in his *Jōdaigo jiten* (1967) is quite definite in interpreting the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven realistically as an arrival from the sea. He refers to the fact that *ama* meant not only 'sky' or 'heaven' but also had an archaic meaning 'sea'. Moreover, *amoru* (often written with two characters meaning 'heaven' and 'descend') was also an honorific verb meaning simply 'to arrive' when it was used with an emperor as subject.<sup>14</sup> An ancient

14 Maruyama 1967: 39, 57, 146. The meaning 'sea' is also preserved in *amabe* for 'sea people', 'seafarers'. According to Ueda Masaaki, there was a relation between Amaterasu and the *amabe*, and Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725) interpreted the word *ama* in Takama no hara

elegy in *Man'yōshū* (no. 199), for example, uses *amoru* to say that Emperor Tenmu arrived at a temporary palace after having crossed a mountain.

Although these are relevant facts, one cannot simply interpret the story of Ninigi's descent realistically; for the text also speaks of a descent from heaven that leads through a cloudy sky. Even though *ukihashi* is clearly a maritime floating thing and not an imaginary bridge or boat floating in the sky, the fact remains that the texts use graphs meaning 'heaven' and 'clouds' and not 'sea' and 'waves'. An objective analysis has to consider this. We should assume, therefore, that the texts deliberately represent Ninigi's descent from heaven as ambivalent, using words that first indicate a descent from heaven and then others that refer to a horizontal approach by way of the sea. Taking this view, it is still possible to think that there might have been an older version of the myth that saw Ninigi arrive from across the sea and that this older version was later modified to make it fit into the god age mythology created for the *jingi* cult of *ritsuryō* times.

The common idea that Takachiho must be imagined as a conspicuous mountain to which Ninigi descends straight down from heaven conforms to the well-known image of a macrocosm extending around a vertical axis that can be symbolised by a cosmic mountain. The makers of the Japanese mythology may have known of this idea due to foreign influence, but I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter that it is an illusion that they wanted to express this idea in the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven. Foreign influence inspired them to devise a mythology that distinguishes between heavenly and earthly deities and shrines, but this did not require them to devise a three-layered cosmography and think of Takama no hara as a mythic heaven that would have been situated perpendicularly above the land Ashihara no Nakatsukuni.

Oka Masao (1956) distinguished in Japan a vertical and a horizontal view, the vertical one being related to the cultures of Korea and the north-east Asian continent, the horizontal one to the 'old layers' of the cultures of Southeast Asia and Oceania. In his study of postmodern research dedicated to the *Kojiki* myths, Robert F. Wittkamp (2018) notes that this model seems to still meet with broad approval. While the majority of modern researchers sees the mythic world of *Kojiki* as three layered, opinions differ only regarding the lowest of the three. A model that Miura Sukeyuki presented in 2013 in an educational television programme combines the two world views; for he locates *yomi no kuni*, the world of the dead, vertically below, but sees *ne no katsu no kuni* (= Ne no

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as 'sea' (Ueda 2003: 140–59, 147; 2013: 49; Brownlee 1997: 48). See also Matsumoto 1966: 58; Senda 1992: 61. *Kogoshūi*, completed in 808, writes the *ama* in the name of Ama no Hiboko likewise as 'sea' (Nakamura and Endō 2004: 116).



kuni), the ‘root land’ where Susanoo retired, on the same layer as Ashihara no Nakatsukuni (Wittkamp 2018: 179–87).

This chapter shows that I fail to find sufficient evidence for the vertical view in early Japanese mythical macro-cosmography, although the vertical view of course played an important role in the small spaces of a house or tree. An ancient poem dated 752 (*Man'yōshū*, no. 4274) calls the ceiling or attic of a house *ama*, and the attic or the lattice above the fireplace in farmhouses was still recently called *ama* in certain parts of Japan.<sup>15</sup> On the large scale, however, it would seem that mainly horizontal views along a sea–mountain axis were represented as spatially structured in the ancient texts.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, we also have to distinguish between the visible sky and heaven as the dwelling space of the gods of mythology. Both could be called Takama no hara, for the expression simply means ‘plain of high heaven’ and may originally have been coined to differentiate between *ama* meaning ‘sky’ and an archaic *ama* meaning the sea or the attic of a house. When an ancient formula praising the building of a noble house says that the crossed rafters (*chigi* or *higi*) rise high to Takama no hara, this means that their free upper ends point to the visible sky, not to the mythical Takama no hara.<sup>17</sup>

As noted in the introduction, the mythical heaven was described as a landscape with a mountain and a river. I therefore interpret the *tensonkōrin shinwa* discussed in this chapter as referring to an approach from the sea which started in a ‘heaven’ that was imagined as being situated ‘higher up’ but horizontally removed from the Japanese archipelago, which is why gods were sometimes said to descend from it in boats. The connecting medium may have been imagined as air-like or sea-like, but having arrived close to the coast, the gods would enter the land as human immigrants used to do when crossing the sea from the Asian mainland.

A story that can support such a view is the one of Nigihayai who is said in *Nihon shoki* to have ridden a heavenly rock boat when ‘he moved round in the

15 SNMG, s.v. *ama*, *amaya*.

16 The myth of the ‘returning arrow’ in *Kojiki* tells that the arrow with which Ame no Wakahiko shot the pheasant flew on and into Takama no hara, from where it was thrust back through the same hole by which it had entered, killing Wakahiko lying on his bed (Philippi: 123–25; NKBT 1: 115, 117). As both chronicles say that the episode was the origin of the saying ‘beware of the returning arrow’, the arrow’s trajectory was hardly supposed to have been a perpendicular one.

17 *Sokotsuiwane ni miyabashira futo shiri, takama no hara ni higi takashirite* (‘Placing thick the house posts on the bedrock below, raising high the *higi* to the plain of high heaven’) (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 123). The noble house (*miya*) is here seen as extending vertically from the firm foundation on the ground to the roof ridge, from where the arms of the finials (*higi* or *chigi*) rise higher toward the sky.

wide sky, espied this land, and descended'.<sup>18</sup> According to *Sendai kuji hongji*, he first descended to the headwaters of Mt. Ikaruga in coastal Kawachi, which suggests that he was thought to have first landed with his 'rock boat' at the coast of Kawachi and to have moved up along a river before he arrived there. Later, he went further east to settle in Yamato.<sup>19</sup>

### Ninigi's Descendants Living in Kyushu

The dual orientation towards mountain and sea is a conspicuous motif in the subsequent myths about Ninigi's descendants.<sup>20</sup> His youngest son, Hikohohodemi, represents the 'luck of the mountain' and gets involved in a contest with his elder brother Hoderi, who represents the 'luck of the sea'. Having lost Hoderi's fishhook, he gets advice from Shiotsutsu no Oji, the 'old one of the sea', and visits the palace of the sea deity Watatsumi, whose daughter Toyotamahime he marries. Three years later he returns with the lost fishhook and two jewels by which he can control the tides and thereby make his elder brother get poorer and poorer.<sup>21</sup> His wife from the sea gives birth to children at the coast, but according to *Kojiki*, Hikohohodemi dwelled in the Palace of Takachiho and his tomb was west of that mountain. His son Hikonagisa marries Tamayorihime, Toyotamahime's sister (his aunt), and their youngest son Iwarebiko also dwells in the Palace of Takachiho (*Kojiki*).

This is a very brief summary of what *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* tell in the last part dedicated to the god age mythology. The connection with the following myth-historical part of the narrative is that Ninigi's great-grandson, Iwarebiko, and his elder brother, Itsuse, are born in Kyushu but move east to Yamato, where Iwarebiko founds the imperial dynasty.

18 \*NKBT 67: 215; 189, 208; Aston I: 135, 110, 127–28.

19 *Sendai kuji hongji* (also called *Kujiki*), book 5, trans. Bentley 2006: 196. KST 7: *Sendai kuji hongji*, p. 29. Book 5 of this work is considered a valuable ancient source regarding the Mononobe clan, to which Nigihayai belonged. Note the similarity with the story of Susanoo's descent from heaven discussed in chapter 1.

20 NKBT 1: 131–46; Philippi: 148–59; Aston I: 92–108.

21 The story suggests that Hikohohoderi's marriage with Watatsumi's daughter invested him with an additional 'luck of the sea', so that together with his 'luck of the mountain' he was superior to his brother who had only the luck of the sea. The message is, presumably, that henceforth Hikohohoderi and his descendants will have both the luck of the mountain and of the sea and will therefore have to worship not only Ōyamatsumi but also Shiotsutsu no Oji, the 'Old one of the Sea', who had ceded the land to Ninigi.

## The Conquest of Yamato

The third book of *Nihon shoki* first states that when Iwarebiko, the future emperor, was forty-five years old, he made a speech addressing his elder brother and his children. He says that long ago the heavenly deities had given all the land to their ancestor Ninigi, but the far regions are not yet under imperial rule; towns and villages have still their own chiefs and are dealing with conflicts among themselves. Having now heard from Shiotsutsu no Oji that there is a beautiful land in the east surrounded by mountains, and that a certain Nigihayai had come down there in a rock boat, he proposes to move east and to make the capital there (NKBT 67: 189–190; Aston I: 110).

This confirms that *Nihon shoki* advocates the doctrine that Ninigi had already gained the full right to rule all the land, but that his descendants could not exert this right without facing trouble from potential rebels. The place of the new capital in the east (Yamato) even has a heavenly ruler called Nigihayai who had descended there from heaven, as Ninigi had done in Tsukushi (Kyushu). The place of the new capital had therefore to be conquered.

This information is revealed by Shiotsutsu no Oji, the old man or god who, in the story of Ninigi's arrival, also carries the name Kotokatsu kunikatsu Nagasa. The text apparently alludes here to an act of divining which Iwarebiko is supposed to have performed to find out whether the expedition would be successful or not. In *Kojiki*, the same allusion takes the simpler form of a question asking little more than whether or not it would be good to move east to carry on the government:

Kamu Yamato Iwarebiko no Mikoto and his elder brother Itsuse no Mikoto were in the palace of Takachiho and consulted with each other: "Where should we dwell to carry out the government of the kingdom peacefully? After all, let us go eastward." Thus, setting out from Himuka they went to Tsukushi. (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 149)

Between the end of the god age and the reign of the tenth emperor, Sujin, the two chronicles include the story of the conquest of Yamato by Iwarebiko, the first emperor posthumously called Jinmu Tennō, and brief records of the next eight reigns that contain almost nothing except the names of the respective emperors and genealogical information. These first parts of the myth-history are somewhat different from the rest; many scholars assume that they were fabricated later and inserted by the compilers to extend the age of the imperial dynasty.

Both chronicles agree that Jinmu was the first emperor, but they both later also say that Sujin “was praised as the emperor who ruled the first state (*hatsukuni shirasu sumaramikoto*)” and *Nihon shoki* also uses the same expression for Jinmu.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as they both represent Sujin as the first to worship Ōmononushi, the master of the spirits, it has often been assumed that there had been another tradition, according to which it was Sujin who founded the Yamato dynasty.

As Naoki Kōjirō has argued (1971), the story of the conquest of Yamato was partly inspired by the Jinshin War, the succession war of the year 672 through which Prince Ōama became emperor as Tenmu Tennō. Since it was Tenmu who commissioned the *Kojiki* to be written, based on earlier records, it seems quite possible that he was also responsible for adding this problematic part about the conquest of Yamato. Perhaps there were two different theories or traditions: according to one Ninigi descended to Kyushu and he and his descendants ruled a kingdom there, whereas the other theory claimed that Sujin was the first imperial ancestor who ruled in Yamato. If so, then the story of the conquest of Yamato may have been constructed to link the two traditions together and provide the imperial dynasty with a longer history. The fact that both chronicles have Ninigi descend to a place in Kyushu and not to Izumo, where the land-ceding myth is located, has puzzled researchers as “one of the most baffling mysteries of Japanese mythology” (Philippi: 423). It suggests that the god age mythology may have been formed by combining different regional traditions.

Be that as it may, the story of the conquest of Yamato is a land-taking story that may reflect the ideology and ritual practices of early *ritsuryō* times, rather than being based on earlier records. For this reason, it is not treated here, although it contains some interesting episodes, some of which have already been mentioned, while others are mentioned in later chapters.

## Conclusion

According to the new interpretation given in this chapter, the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven does not say that Ninigi descends directly to a mountain-top. Although he departs from heaven, he arrives at the archipelago from the sea and divines before going ashore and in search of land along a coast. Except for the starting point in Takama no hara, the *Kojiki* version of this myth is a

<sup>22</sup> *Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 187; *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 248–49, 213.

land-making myth that could have been based on the story of a real immigrant. In contrast to our key story about Matachi and Yato no kami, which tells only of the second part of the founding ritual, the myth of Ninigi mentions both parts, but not both equally well in the different versions.

Having interpreted the 'heavenly floating bridge' as a divining tool, I am inclined to think that the aspect of divination is the most important and unique part of the story of Ninigi's descent from heaven. Comparing this story with the stories of the first famous emperors, Iwarebiko/Jinmu and Sujin, with regard to how they represent the different parts of the land-making ritual, we can notice an intriguing point. If divination is best represented by the story of Ninigi, the clearing of the land is the most obvious theme in the story of Iwarebiko's conquest of Yamato, and the worshipping of the local deities is most conspicuous in the story of Sujin, who worships Ōmononushi of Mt. Miwa, the master of the nature spirits. If we do not want to attribute these differences to coincidence, we can imagine that the ancient myth makers had the land-making ritual in mind when they structured the founding of the Yamato state as an event that began with Ninigi's descent from heaven, was later carried out by Iwarebiko and was concluded by Emperor Sujin.

## The Foundation of the Izumo Shrine

As we saw in chapter 4, according to the *Kojiki* version of the land-ceding myth, Ōkuninushi agrees to cede the land to the heavenly descendants on condition that they build for him a shrine in palace style:

Only, if you will worship me, making my dwelling-place like the plentiful heavenly dwelling where rules the heavenly sun-lineage of the offspring of the heavenly deities, firmly rooting the posts of the palace in the bedrock below, and raising high the crossbeams unto Takama-nō-hara itself, then I will conceal myself and wait [upon you] in the less-than-one-hundred eighty road-bendings. (*Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 123, trans. Philippi: 134)

These words, spoken in the god age, were meant to lead to the foundation of the Izumo Taisha, the Izumo Grand Shrine, but it is not before the reign of the eleventh emperor, Suinin, that, according to *Kojiki*, a shrine of the requested kind will be built for Ōkuninushi. In the meantime, Ōkuninushi is supposed to hide and wait somewhere.<sup>1</sup>

### Ōkuninushi's Place of Hiding and Waiting

Both chronicles speak of *momo tarazu yaso kumade*, in which *momo tarazu* ('less than one hundred'), is a poetic pillow word used with *yasō* ('eighty'), a number that often expresses a vague plurality in the ancient texts. The semantically essential part of the phrase is therefore the word *kumade*, which is often testified together with words meaning 'way' or 'river'. Although the text does not mention a 'way' or 'river' in this particular case, the word is usually rendered as if it meant places along a way. Chamberlain, for example, has translated the phrase as "I will hide in the eighty (less than one hundred) road windings" (1919: 123).

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<sup>1</sup> Philippi's suggestion ['upon you'] does not fit with the context. OJ *samorafu* also meant to wait for the passing of time (JKDJ: 341) and this is what Ōkuninushi must now do because it will take a long time until he gets the shrine he has demanded.

This translation does not make good sense, not even if the road to the land of Yomi were being referred to, as some commentators have assumed.<sup>2</sup> Why should the former ruler of the land hide in the turnings of a road to the Netherworld, waiting there until he finally gets the shrine he has demanded? After all, Ōkuninushi has only promised to resign as the ruler of the land if the heavenly descendants build his shrine and worship him. We must therefore first think about a better interpretation of the word *kumade* and consider that no way or river is mentioned in the text. *Kumade* alone could have meant nooks and recesses (*kuma*) formed by landscape features generally. *Man'yōshū* has a poem in which the expression *momotarazu yaso kuma* characterised a slope (*saka*).<sup>3</sup> It is therefore better to assume that Ōkuninushi's shrine is meant to be built at a place with rocks providing 'nooks' (*kuma*), such as were typical features of open-air nature sanctuaries.

A fitting mountain of that kind could have been Mt. Miwa in Yamato, where Ōkuninushi, at the end of his land-making, had to worship the god of Mt. Miwa and from where he might have come to meet the heavenly challengers at the beach of Inasa in Izumo. The Ōmiwa Shrine is famous for having no wooden main hall because the deities worshipped there are thought to dwell in the sacred forest where several rocks are dedicated to them. However, it is not Miwa in Yamato but a place in Izumo where Ōkuninushi finally gets the shrine he has requested. He therefore rather withdraws to wait in a similar grove of Izumo, where the people already worship him as the Great God of Izumo.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, the transition from open-air sanctuaries to shrines in a dwelling style was probably mediated by cult places with only a treasure house that was placed beside the cult mark.<sup>5</sup> The novelty Ōkuninushi requests in the

2 Aston (1: 69n3), referring to the *Nihon shoki* version, says: 'The eighty-road-windings are put for a long journey, i.e. to Yomi or Hades, or rather for Yomi itself' (similarly, Antoni 2012: 76; Heldt 2014: 47). Philippi (1968: 134n7) thinks that with *yaso kumade* 'a far-removed place' is meant and that Ōkuninushi probably 'merely retires to the unseen world of the spirit'.

3 The poem (*Man'yōshū* no. 427) begins with *momotarazu yaso kuma saka ni tamuke seba* ('if you make *tamuke*-offerings at the slope of (less than a hundred) eighty nooks'). JKDJ, article *kumade*, mentions only bending roads and rivers but says that the word is composed of *kuma* ('corner, nook') and the suffix *te*, which can mean 'place'.

4 This is supported by *Kan'yogoto*, the 'divine congratulatory words' (OJ *kumuyogoto*) which each governor of Izumo later used to recite at court some time after his appointment. See the translations by Haguenaer (1929) and Philippi (1959). This text says that after having ceded the rule of the land, Ōnamuchi attached his *nigimitama* to a large mirror dedicated to the spirit of Ōmononushi and had it dwell in the sacred grove of Ōmiwa, whereas he himself dwelled peacefully in the shrine at Kizuki. This corresponds to the ideology of the later Izumo Shrine, according to which the place was from the beginning at Kizuki.

5 See the section 'Cult Marks Replaced by Shrine Buildings' in chapter 9.

land-ceding episode, however, is a shrine in the form of a noble house (*miya*) that would be comparable to early imperial dwellings ('palaces'). It is therefore likely that he wants to be worshipped by the future emperors in a shrine that befits a new, higher status. The foundation of his *miya*-type shrine in Izumo could therefore be paradigmatic of the transition from early open-air sanctuaries to cult places with a 'main hall' (*seiden* or *honden*) in which to keep a sacred treasure as a *shintai* ('god-body') representing the deity's presence during worship.

### Prince Homuchiwake Worships the Great God of Izumo

When the age of the gods has come to an end and the first emperors have been established close to Mt. Miwa in Yamato, it happens that Prince Homuchiwake, the son of Emperor Suinin, has already grown a beard and is still not able to speak. Yet, hearing one day the cry of a high-flying swan, he tries to say something. The emperor takes this for a good sign and orders that the bird should be caught, whereupon it is brought to him after having been searched for and found in Koshi, a place at the western coast. So far, this story is found in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.<sup>6</sup> But whereas *Nihon shoki* says the bird was caught in Izumo and the prince learned to speak while playing with it, *Kojiki* continues with the following story that ends with the order to build a shrine for Ōkuninushi in Izumo.<sup>7</sup>

Seeing the swan for a second time, the prince tries to say something again, but cannot. The emperor is much grieved and eventually has a dream in which he is told: 'If you repair my shrine (*miya*) like the emperor's palace (*miaraka*), the prince will surely speak.' Now the emperor makes a great divination by burning a deer's shoulder blade to find out the identity of the deity. The answer is that the curse is the will of the Great God of Izumo. Ready to send the prince off for praying at the shrine of that god, the emperor first divines again to find out who would be a good choice to send along as an attendant. Prince Aketatsu is chosen, and the emperor orders him to make divining oaths. Finally, this prince and Prince Unakami no miko are dispatched with Prince Homuchiwake, but once again they first divine, this time to find out by which 'door' it would be

6 Philippi: 219–20; Aston I: 174–75. See also the story about the divining boats in chapter 1.

7 *Nihon shoki* dates the episode of the crying swan to Suinin 23, tenth month, and the foundation of the Ise Shrine between Suinin 25, third month, and 26, eighth month. Since the compilers knew *Kojiki* but advocated the doctrine that the Izumo Shrine had existed since the god age, they may have chosen a date after the omen of the crying swan to suggest that *Kojiki* was wrong and that it was the Ise Shrine that was built at that time.



auspicious to start the journey. It is only when all these various acts of divining have produced good signs that the emperor is fully convinced and the prince and his attendants can travel to Izumo:

So, they arrived in Izumo, and when [the prince] had finished worshipping the Great God and [they] went back up [to the capital] they made a pontoon bridge (*subashi*) in the middle of the river Hi, built a temporary palace, and let [the prince] stay. Then, the ancestor of the Izumo no kuni no miyatsuko, named Kiisatsumi, decorated a mountain of green leaves, set it up down the river and offered a great meal. At this time the prince spoke: “That mountain-like thing of green leaves down the river looks like a mountain but is not a mountain. Is it perhaps the cult place of the priest who worships Ashihara no Shikoo no Ōkami dwelling in the So no Miya of Iwakuma in Izumo?” (\*NKBT 1: 199)

The two attending princes are most delighted to hear Prince Homuchiwake speak for the first time. When they are back at the capital, they report to the emperor that the prince can now speak because he has prayed to the Great God of Izumo. The emperor rejoices and sends Prince Unakami back to have him build the shrine.<sup>8</sup>

This story is usually interpreted as referring to a later repairing or rebuilding of a shrine that had already been built in the god age for Ōkuninushi, as *Nihon shoki* suggests. Yet we must respect that *Kojiki* advocates a different doctrine and has no other story saying that Ōkuninushi's condition for ceding the rule of the land was met by the heavenly descendants. At the beginning, the text has Chinese characters meaning *miya* and ‘repair’, but the story ends with the emperor finally ordering the *miya* to be built.<sup>9</sup>

Since *Kojiki* covers the time up to the death of Empress Suiko (628 CE), it is understandable that it does not deal with the foundation of the Ise Shrine, which historically may have happened later. To also omit a story about the building of the shrine in Izumo, however, would have jeopardised the success of the stratagem implied in the land-ceding myth, namely, the promotion of the doctrine that the emperors of *ritsuryō* times had a legitimate right to rule all the land opened up for rice cultivation. To make the land-ceding

8 *Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 197–201; cf. Philippi: 220–23.

9 Yamaguchi and Kōnoshi (1997) ignore the fact that the emperor finally orders the shrine to be ‘built’ (instead of ‘repaired’) and interpret the obvious analogy with the land-ceding myth as a mere correspondence in a different later context. They assume that Ōkuninushi's request of a shrine must have been met earlier but that this shrine now apparently needed repair (SNKBZ 1: 207n3).

myth effective as a charter myth, *Kojiki* did have to mention the building of Ōkuninushi's shrine, regardless of whether it had already been built or not.

The passage quoted earlier identifies Kiisatsumi as the ancestor of the *kuni no miyatsuko* (governors) of Izumo and as the priest who worships the 'great god' Ashihara no Shikoo (alias Ōkuninushi). This clearly refers to a cult such as was later typical of Ōkuninushi's shrine in Kizuki where the hereditary *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo held the position of the chief priest. By introducing Kiisatsumi as performing the meal-offering rite, the text therefore anticipates that he will become the priest of the new shrine and the governor of Izumo as a province of the emperor's realm.

Although this is what I see expressed in *Kojiki*, I do not think that the shrine in Kizuki (which became famous as Izumo Taisha) is the place being referred to. A closer look at the text suggests that *Kojiki* rather refers to a predecessor of the famous Izumo Shrine that has left no clear traces except this account in *Kojiki*. If it existed for some time, then it was probably abolished when the shrine in Kizuki was founded.

The crucial point in the story of Homuchiwake's visit to Izumo is that the prince suddenly starts speaking and asks whether the mountain-formed object made of green leaves might perhaps be the ceremonial place of the priest who worships Ashihara no Shikoo no Ōkami in the So no Miya at Iwakuma in Izumo. Why does the prince ask this strange and long question after having worshipped the Great God of Izumo?

### Ashihara no Shikoo and the Worship at Iwakuma

Since the speechless prince from Yamato is hardly familiar with the topography and cult situation of Izumo, and cannot be supposed to make such a long sentence when he spells his first articulate words, we must assume that the words are not his own but those of the Great God of Izumo. Similarly, a story in *Nihon shoki* says that in the reign of the former emperor, Sujin, a child from Tanba reveals the long names of the treasures which Takehinateru has brought from heaven and stored in the shrine of the Great God of Izumo. However, the man who reports this then adds: "These do not seem like the words of a young infant. May they have been spoken by divine inspiration?" (trans. Aston 1: 163).

In the present story, the god apparently speaks through the prince to let the emperor know where and by whom he wishes to be worshipped. The place will be called Iwakuma, the shrine So no Miya, and the priest is Kiisatsumi, who is just going to offer a meal to Prince Homuchiwake at the lower course of the Hinokawa. The object made of green leaves is apparently the temporary seat for

the deity invoked during that ceremony, and its form and colour may suggest that the god comes from his dwelling area in a wooded mountain. Kiisatsumi will therefore offer the meal to the prince on behalf of Ashihara no Shikoo no Ōkami, thereby re-enacting the banquet which that god as Ōkuninushi (his usual name in *Kojiki*) had offered when he agreed to cede his land to the heavenly descendants. In the present case, the ceremony is only a reminder, meaning that the emperor must now finally meet the condition of the earlier deal and build that shrine. If he does so, the curse would be lifted, the prince would start speaking his own articulate words and all the land would henceforth be rightly ruled by the heavenly descendants.

A point that deserves special attention is that Ōkuninushi is here mentioned under his alternative name Ashihara no Shikoo, which is said to mean ‘ugly man of the reed plains’. Tsuda Sōkichi has suggested that this name might be an allusion to Ōnamuchi’s rule of Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, the Central Land of the Reed Plains (Tsuda 1963b: 479). If so, then the name may perhaps have been chosen to refer to Ōkuninushi in the state of opening up a reed wilderness (*ashihara*) and turning it into *kuni* (‘territory’). In *Harima fudoki*, this special name Ashihara no Shikoo is used in several land-claiming stories, as we saw in chapter 3. In *Kojiki*, it appears three times. First, Susanoo uses it when Ōnamuchi visits him in Ne no kuni to ask for help in the fight with his half-brothers, from which he will emerge as the winner.<sup>10</sup> The second time the name is used in *Kojiki* is when Kamimusubi tells Ashihara no Shikoo that he should make the great land together with Sukunabikona. Since both uses of the name mark the beginning of a land-making enterprise, we may expect that the single third use in *Kojiki*, in the present story, might imply a similar meaning. Ōkuninushi can therefore use this special name to highlight his achievement as the great land-maker before he gets the requested shrine in compensation for ceding the rule of the land to the Yamato Court.

Assuming therefore that the name Ashihara no Shikoo was associated with Ōkuninushi’s active side as a land-maker, its use here corresponds to what in a perhaps later terminology would have been called his ‘wild spirit’ or *aramitama*.<sup>11</sup> As noted earlier, *Kan’yogoto* says that Ōnamuchi’s *nigimitama*

10 *Kojiki*, Philippi: 98. See part E of the overview of the god age mythology given at the beginning of chapter 4.

11 In *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the terms *nigimitama* and *aramitama* only appear in the story of Jingū Kogō’s conquest of Shiragi (see chapter 1). Basically, the two terms seem to be related to movement and rest, respectively. The *aramitama* was the dynamic aspect of a deity in motion and action and could be carried along on a journey, whereas the *nigimitama* rather stayed fixed to a certain place. Thus, when a spirit was moved from

was in Mt. Miwa of Yamato. There, it eventually came to be conflated with Ōmononushi, the deified chief of the nature spirits. *Nihon shoki* can therefore say that Ōmononushi was another name for Ōkuninushi, whereas *Kojiki* clearly distinguishes between the two gods in the final episode of the great land-making myth.<sup>12</sup> Later, however, *Kojiki* represents the god of Mt. Miwa as a deity called Ōmononushi, whose snake form (representing Ōmononushi) can occasionally change into that of a young man and a lover of women, which is typical of Ōkuninushi.<sup>13</sup>

This somewhat confusing cult situation is a consequence of the founder's cult, which in this case was associated with two different land-making myths.<sup>14</sup> First, Ōkuninushi/Ōnamuchi 'makes' the land by taking it from the nature spirits and therefore must worship Ōmononushi on Mt. Miwa; then the heavenly descendants force him to cede the land to them, for which they must build him a shrine in the palace style and worship him in Izumo.

The question remains: where in Izumo was the shrine for Ashihara no Shikoo supposed to have been built according to *Kojiki*? Our interpretation so far suggests that this was at a place called Iwakuma, but no place of that name in Izumo is mentioned elsewhere in the ancient texts. It is the name of Kiisatsumi, and the location of the meal-offering ceremony at the lower course of the Hinokawa, that can solve the riddle to some extent. The name Kiisa suggests a relation with Kiisakami Takahiko who, according to *Izumo fudoki*, was worshipped in the Sokinoya Shrine situated about three kilometres east of where the lower Hinokawa flows northward into the coastal plain (see figure 27).

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the original place to a new one it was the *aramitama* that was moved and enshrined at the new place, but through worship the *aramitama* could then be turned again into a *nigimitama*. Sometimes both aspects were worshipped at the same place. In the precinct of the Inner Shrine at Ise, Amaterasu's *nigimitama* is worshipped in the main hall and her *aramitama* in the Aramatsuri no Miya, a smaller shrine behind the main shrine.

- 12 The names given in *Kojiki* as aliases of Ōkuninushi no kami are Ōnamuchi no kami, Ashihara Shikoo no kami, Yachihoko no kami and Utsushi-kunitama no kami (NKBT 1: 91; Philippi: 92). *Nihon shoki* quotes a source that mentions six aliases of Ōkuninushi no kami, namely, Ōmononushi no kami, Kunitsukuri no Ōnamuchi no Mikoto, Ashihara no Shikoo, Yachihoko no kami, Ōkunitama no kami and Utsushikunitama no kami (NKBT 67: 128; Aston 1: 59). Note that only the list in *Nihon shoki* contains Ōmononushi as an alias of Ōnamuchi/Ōkuninushi and mentions Ashihara no Shikoo without calling him a *kami*.
- 13 *Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 161–62, 181–82; Philippi: 178–79, 201–204; *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 246–47; Aston 1: 158.
- 14 See the Introduction and the section 'Founder Worship' in chapter 8.

### Mt. Kannabi and the Sokinoya Shrine

*Izumo fudoki* includes for each of the nine districts of Izumo Province a list of shrine names followed by mountain names. The mountains are usually localised relative to the district office, and in four districts one of them was called Kannabiyama, which is thought to have meant a mountain forest (*yama*) inhabited by *kami*.<sup>15</sup> The Kannabiyama of Izumo district (figure 26) is described as follows:

Kannabiyama. 3 *sato* 150 *ashi* [1890m] to the south-east of the district office. 175 *tsue* high, 15 *sato* 60 *ashi* [8208m] circumference. The *yashiro* of Kiisakami Takahiko no Mikoto of the Sokinoya no *yashiro* is in a high place (*mine*) of this mountain. That is why it is called Kannabiyama. (\**Izumo fudoki*, NKBT 2: 191)

The text identifies the deity as Kiisakami Takahiko of the Sokinoya Shrine and says the *yashiro* of this deity is in a *mine* of Mt. *Kannabi*. The distance from the district office to the mountain being less than two kilometres, this probably refers to a place at the foot of the mountain close to which the Sokinoya Jinja is situated today.<sup>16</sup> From there it is another 1.5 kilometres to the top of the mountain, measured horizontally.

Since *mine* has come to mean ‘top’ or ‘peak’, it is often assumed that this ancient shrine was originally on the top of the Kannabiyama. However, as noted in the introduction, the view that shrines were originally situated on mountaintops in all probability came up under Buddhist influence, which in the present case has even changed the mountain’s name to Bukkyōzan (Sutra Mountain). As in many other such cases, *mine* meant a high place on a mountain, and the long phrase, saying that “the *yashiro* of Kiisakami Takahiko no Mikoto of the Sokinoya no *Yashiro* is in a mine of this mountain”, probably meant that this deity had two cult places, one on the mountain and one at the foot of the mountain, the latter being called Sokinoya no *Yashiro*.

15 *Kannabi*: OJ *kamunabi*. The dictionary of Old Japanese (JKDJ: 224) renders the meaning as *kami no imasu tokoro* (‘a place where *kami* are’) or as *kami no yadoru basho* (‘a place where *kami* are dwelling’) and analyses the word as *kamu-na-bi*, with *bi* meaning a place as in other compounds designating localities such as mountains and rivers. According to another common interpretation, the element *nabi* rather comes from the verb *nabu*, ‘to hide’, so that *kannabi* would mean ‘*kami* hiding’ (NKBT 2: 191m15). A further interpretation is based on the use of *nabi* and related words with the meaning ‘snake’ (Takasaki 1962: 21–42).

16 Following the NKBT edition, I read the distances as *sato* and *ashi*. 1 *sato* = 300 *ashi* = 540 metres (Nara period measurement according to Dettmer 2005: 8).



FIGURE 26 Mt. Bukkyō, the ancient Kannabiyama of Izumo District, seen from the north-west

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2019

The existence of cult places high up on a mountain's side is also mentioned in another story from *Izumo fudoki*. It regards the worship at the *kannabi* mountain of Tatenui District:

Kannabiyama. [...]. To the west of the peak there is a stone deity, one *tsue* in height and one *tsue* around. More than a hundred stone deities are by the side of the highway [below]. The old people say that Ame no Mikajihime no Mikoto, the wife of Ajisuki Takahikone no Mikoto, came to the village of Taku and gave birth to Tagitsuhiko no Mikoto. At that time, she spoke to him: "This place is good for your mother to give birth safely." The said stone deity is the august spirit abode (*mi-yosashi*) of Tagitsuhiko no Mikoto. When [people] pray for rain in case of drought, he always makes rain without fail. (\**Izumo fudoki*, NKBT 2: 171, 173)

In this case, a 'stone deity' some three metres high to the west of the mountain's top was the 'spirit abode' of the deity, whereas many other stone *kami* by the side of the highway below were apparently offerings dedicated to that deity when worshipping from afar.

Katō Yoshinari (1962) has pointed out that Kiisa may have been the name of the area around the ancient Kannabiyama of Izumo District, while Kiisatsumi was perhaps the ruler of this area who worshipped Kiisakami Takahiko as the guardian deity of his land.<sup>17</sup> If so, then the place where, according to *Kojiki*, the emperor had to build the new *miya* could have been at the foot of Mt. Kannabi (the present Bukkyōzan), and its name Iwakuma no So no Miya might have alluded to a rocky place high up in the mountain where the deity would be dwelling and occasionally receive offerings as well.<sup>18</sup>

Such a situation would correspond to what *Izumo fudoki* suggests for the Sokinoya Jinja. It is therefore understandable that an information panel in the present precinct of the Sokinoya Jinja says that this shrine is thought to be the ancient Iwakuma no So no Miya mentioned in *Kojiki*. High up in the mountain there is a huge rock about eight metres high and thirty metres in circumference. It is now called Kiisa Iwa or Kiisa Ōiwa ('large rock of Kiisa'), and a small wooden panel in front of it identifies it as the original mountain shrine (*yama no miya motomiya*) of the Kiisa Jinja.<sup>19</sup>

The identification of the Iwakuma no So no Miya with the Sokinoya Jinja in its present location is not convincing, however. The present shrine is too far from the main body of Mt. Kannabi. It is more likely that it was the family shrine of Kiisatsumi who, according to *Kojiki*, should have served as a priest at the Iwakuma no So no Miya on behalf of the emperor.

17 Katō 1962: 333. Others have suggested that Kiisatsumi was also worshipped in that shrine. See the Izumo Oyashiro Club, a website with illustrated reports on numerous shrines of Shimane Prefecture, <http://www2.izumo-net.ne.jp/oyashiro/izumo/cat124/>. Kiisatsumi might be the name of a deity (compare *yamatsumi*, 'mountain deity'), but considering the phonetic difference of *i* and *i*, the word *kami* in Kiisakami means 'chief', not deity (*kami*). Whereas *Kojiki* therefore seems to call a chief by his posthumous name Kiisatsumi, *Izumo fudoki* uses a chief's name (*Kiisakami*) as the name of the deity worshipped. This seems to support the argument that there was a custom of posthumous deification of founders of territories in early Japan (see chapter 8).

18 Iwakuma means 'rocky nook' and the character 會, which is read *so* in the name Iwakuma no So no miya, could also be read *sono*; *Wamyōshū*, vol. 9, p. 9 writes the ancient place name 大會 phonetically as OJ *oho-sono*. JKDJ explains OJ *sōne* as 'a barren rocky place' and notes that, in modern dialects, this word often means a rather flat place high up on a mountain or a high-lying, dry field.

19 A Kiisa no Yashiro is already mentioned in a shrine list of *Izumo fudoki* (NKBT 2: 190) and later mentioned as a non-registered shrine in the precinct of the Sokinoya Jinja in documents dated 1682 and 1717 (Yoshioka 1983: 535). For a map of Bukkyōzan, showing the location of various rock sites and their names, and a photograph of the Kiisa Ōiwa, see Hirano 2016: 238 and colour photo 16.

### A Suitable Site at the Foot of Mt. Kannabi

Although the story in *Kojiki* does not have to correspond to historical facts, it is tempting to take a closer look at the topography and think about a more likely site where the Iwakuma no So no Miya could have been built.<sup>20</sup> Three special features of the topography are noteworthy: (1) Mt. Bukkyō is, at 366 metres, one of the highest mountains in this part of western Izumo; (2) its location is similar to that of Mt. Miwa in Yamato because both are conspicuous mountains situated to the right of the place where an important river enters into a plain; and (3) the boundary where the mountain meets the wide plain in the north (north-west) includes an area where the lowest spurs of the mountain embrace a part of the plain from both sides (figures 27 and 28).

The area between the protruding spurs is about 700 metres wide where it meets the open plain but narrows to about 200 metres further inside and then branches out into three small valleys. The central valley comes almost straight down from the direction of the mountaintop; at the bottom it is about 60 metres wide where it meets the flat land. From there, it rises for about 300 metres with an average gradient of about 10 per cent before it gets progressively steeper. This central valley now features several farm houses and a Buddhist temple called Honseiji. As a relatively flat part at the foot of the mountain, it would have been an ideal site for an important shrine, roughly corresponding in its relation to the top of the mountain to the location of the Ōmiwa Jinja. From the Honseiji, it is only about 500 metres to the Sokinoya Jinja, where the head priest could have worshipped the ancestor of his own family. The word *miya* in the name 'Iwakuma no So no Miya' tells that a shrine building (not a simple rock site) is meant in *Kojiki*, but the rest of the name might indicate a rock seat high up on the mountain's side after which the *miya* at the foot of the mountain could have been named.

This is of course hypothetical, but if the shrine had been built, that small valley would have been a perfect site for it.

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20 Murai Yasuhiko (2013) has also come to the conclusion that the story from *Kojiki* deserves full attention with respect to the foundation of Izumo Taisha. He climbed Mt. Bukkyō and found a rock formation on the very top which he interprets as an ancient *iwaza* and as the place where 'the spirit of Izumo Taisha' was dwelling before the shrine in Kizuki was built. Assuming that the god's cult place was then only an open-air rock seat (*iwaza*), he thinks that the *miya* ('palace', 'shrine') mentioned in the land-ceding myth of *Kojiki* was built later, in 659 (Seimei 5), when *Nihon shoki* records that the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo was ordered to repair a shrine (Murai 2013: 29–33, 204–213).





FIGURE 27 The ancient Mt. Kannabi (right) in relation to the Izumo Grand Shrine at Kizuki (left). The red circle corresponds in length (not in form) to the circumference of the sacred area according to *Izumo fudoki*

SOURCE: BATHOLITH, SHIMANE PENINSULA RELIEF MAP, SRTM-1, WIKIPEDIA COMMONS, PUBLIC DOMAIN (RED POINTS, RED CIRCLE AND APPROXIMATE COURSE AND EXTENSION OF ANCIENT LAKES AND RIVERS HAVE BEEN ADDED)

### The Political Aspect

Without going into the problem posed by the statement that Kiisatsumi was the ancestor of the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo, it is clear that this statement in *Kojiki* does not fit with what is known about the later situation at the Izumo Shrine at Kizuki. The head priest of the latter shrine was a member of the Izumo kokusō, as the *kuni no miyatsuko* family of eastern Izumo was called.<sup>21</sup> Either the story in *Kojiki* is a mere fiction introduced to conclude the land-ceding myth, or the Iwakuma no So no Miya was really built but later abolished because a later government decided to select Kizuki as a new site

21 *Kokusō* is the Sino-Japanese spelling of the same Chinese characters which normally are read *kuni no miyatsuko*. The form *kokusō* was only used for the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo serving at the shrine in Kizuki.

and to appoint a powerful family from eastern Izumo to hold the hereditary offices of *kokusō* and head priest of the shrine.

The fact that the former shrine, if it had existed for some time, was not mentioned in *Izumo fudoki* is understandable because the compilation of that work was completed in 733 under the supervision by Izumo no Omi Hiroshima, the governor of Ou District, who was also the Izumo *kokusō* and the hereditary chief priest of the shrine at Kizuki. This influential person had of course no interest in making the world remember that there had been an earlier shrine of the Great God of Izumo that had been cared for by a different lineage of *kuni no miyatsuko* settled in western Izumo. Rather, he can be expected to have tried to ‘correct history’ by eliminating all traces of a past that was in conflict with the situation during his time. This also required an adjustment of the genealogy of the Izumo *kokusō*, which was done by adopting Kiisatsumi as an alternative name of Kiitaiho, the fourteenth *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo according to their genealogy (Senge 1882).<sup>22</sup>

Whether the So no Miya of Iwakuma was ever built we cannot know, but the compiler of *Kojiki* intended to suggest this. To really build the shrine would have been a clever stratagem, because its material existence, together with an appropriate ritual, could have been a visible memorial of the land-ceding myth, indicating that the imperial dynasty had a sacred right to rule the great land which Ōkuninushi had ‘made’ and opened up to agriculture. Later, this stratagem did work with the shrine in Kizuki, which was and is situated on the opposite side of the plain about twelve kilometres north-west of Mt. Kannabi (figure 27).

### The Foundation of the Shrine at Kizuki

As we saw in chapter 4, the section about the reign of Emperor Sujin in *Nihon shoki* includes a story about the treasures which Takehinatori, the ancestor of the Izumo no Omi, had brought down from heaven. The text says that he deposited the treasures in the shrine of Izumo no Ōkami and that the Izumo

22 The genealogy given in the Japanese Wikipedia article on ‘Izumo kokusō’ has a brief note added to the name of Kiitaiho no Mikoto, saying that Kiisatsumi mentioned in *Kojiki* ‘is said to be the same person’. Family conflicts around 1344 resulted in the separation of the *kokusō* into two lineages, Senge and Kitajima, who until the late nineteenth century took the position of Izumo *kokusō* by turns. After that, both lineages formed their own religious associations (Izumo Ōyashirokyō and Izumo kyō, respectively) and the position of the head priest was taken over by the Senge family (<https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/出雲国造>). When the newly renovated Izumo Taisha was inaugurated in 2013, the head priest was Senge Takamasa, the 84th Izumo *kokusō*.

no Omi had a separate family shrine, but it does not tell us how these two shrines were named and where they were located in Izumo. We may guess from the context that the reference is to the Kizuki Shrine and the Kumano Shrine of Ou District, but the text leaves the question open. Similarly, under the much later date Saimei 5 (659 CE), *Nihon shoki* records that the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo was ordered to repair a shrine (*kami no miya*), but neither the name of that *kuni no miyatsuko* nor that of the shrine, nor the location of the shrine in Izumo, are specified. Since the text continues with two stories that are set in the district of Ou, it is usually assumed that the Kumano Shrine of Ou is the one being referred to (NKBT 68: 340n22), but this is sometimes still contested in favour of the shrine in Kizuki. It therefore seems to be a fact that the location of Ōnamuchi's shrine in Izumo is not mentioned anywhere in *Nihon shoki*. Considering the importance and the alleged age of this shrine, this is strange and raises the suspicion that the shrine at Kizuki may not have existed when *Nihon shoki* was compiled. Although the lineage of the Izumo kokusō could already be mentioned in *Nihon shoki*, the site for the shrine was not identified. It was *Izumo fudoki*, compiled thirteen years later in 733, that first mentions the shrine as 杵築大社 Kizuki no Ōyashiro:

Kizuki 杵築 no sato. It is 28 *sato* and 60 *ashi* north-west of the district office. After Yatsukamizu Omitsuno no Mikoto had concluded the land-pulling they built the shrine (*miya*) of the great deity who made the [land] below heaven. All the sovereign land deities (*sumegami*) gathered at the place of the *miya* and stamped (*tsuki* 築) the ground with a pounder (*ki* 杵). Therefore, it was called Kizuki 寸付. In the year Jinki 3 [726] the characters 寸付 were changed to 杵築. (\**Izumo fudoki*, NKBT 2: 181)

This entry no doubt refers to the Izumo Taisha in Kizuki (figure 30) and to the year 726 as the date when the name Kizuki was given a new meaning to memorise the stamping of the ground when the shrine was built. The date is six years after *Nihon shoki* was completed and might perhaps indicate the time when the shrine was really founded. The place name Kizuki is older. As the *fudoki* entry indicates, it was formerly written 寸付. It also appears on a wooden tablet that was excavated from the site of the Fujiwara capital (694–710). The inscription – “Izumo District, Kizuki 支豆支 Village, great food, boiled fish, *suzuki*” – has been interpreted to mean that Kizuki of Izumo sent *suzuki* fish to the capital (Okada 2005: 70–71). This shows that by the end of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth, Kizuki had relations with the capital, but since the village is mentioned, not the shrine, we cannot conclude that the shrine of Ōkuninushi existed in Kizuki at that time.

As Torigoe Kenzaburō has pointed out, according to the genealogy of the Izumo kokusō, it was in 708 that Hatayasu no Omi became *kuni no miyatsuko*. He held this position for fourteen years until 721 and, as a note in the same genealogy adds, he was the first to move his dwelling from Ōba in Ou District to Kizuki (Torigoe 2006: 119). Considering the fact that *Kan'yogoto* was first presented at the court in 716, Torigoe concludes that the shrine in Kizuki was not founded before the compilation of *Kojiki* in 712 (Torigoe 2006: 119–38). This would explain why *Kojiki* still mentions Kiisatsumi as the first *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo.

### The Land-Pulling Myth and the Four Kannabi of Izumo

As noted, the compilation of *Izumo fudoki* was supervised by the powerful Izumo no Omi Hiroshima, who had a genuine interest to backdate the shrine's foundation. The passage quoted from *Izumo fudoki* therefore suggests that the new writing of the name Kizuki memorised the pounding of the earth *in hoary antiquity* when the god Yatsukamizu Omitsuno had formed the land mass of the Shimane Peninsula. Ironically, however, the famous story of the 'land-pulling' (*kunihiki*) is not only an etiological myth but also a land-making story that tells of the eastward extension of a territory along the Shimane Peninsula, an event that could have happened in history not long before *Izumo fudoki* was compiled. Read as an etiological myth (figure 28), the story says that the god formed the peninsula by cutting off its four parts from somewhere else, one after the other, pulling them across the sea and stitching them to the part that already existed. Moreover, he also moors the first and the last part to two stakes on the mainland; the stakes later become mountains and the ropes leave their traces in a long beach (in the west) and a long peninsula (in the east).<sup>23</sup>

The difficulties in understanding the text are limited to several pillow words (*makura kotoba*) and a long phrase that is repeated in each of the four parts and includes poetic images, some of which are not well understood. This phrase describes the act of cutting off and pulling land from another place to add it to the land already here. It has been translated thus:

[He] took the spade of the maiden's breast, pushed it into the cape like into the gill of a large fish, shook it round like the flag-shaped pampas-grass-ears, and took off the land. Then, putting a three-ply rope upon

23 The parts about mooring could also be based on a different etiological myth, according to which the peninsula would originally have been a long island floating in the sea.

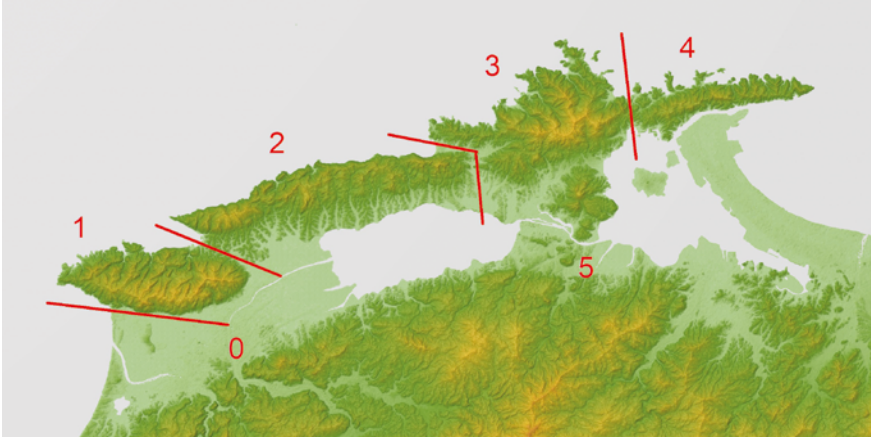


FIGURE 28 The Shimane Peninsula and its four parts mentioned in the land-pulling story. (1) Kizuki no mi-saki; (2) Sada no kuni; (3) Kurami no kuni; (4) Miho no saki. The later districts Izumo and Ou are indicated by 0 and 5, respectively. In ancient times, the western inland sea (Lake Shinji) reached further west than shown in this modern map (see figure 27)

SOURCE: BATHOLITH, SHIMANE PENINSULA RELIEF MAP, SRTM-1, WIKIPEDIA COMMONS, PUBLIC DOMAIN (RED LINES AND NUMBERS ADDED)

the land, he pulled it slowly and slowly, like a river-boat, in the tackling-and-tackling manner of a frost wicker-basket, saying: “Land come! Land come!” The land thus joined is ... (Kōno 1941: 157)

If we abbreviate this part and omit all pillow words and honorifics, we can get a simplified version of the story that is sufficient as a basis for the interpretation to be presented here. Numbers refer to the areas distinguished in figure 28.

The reason why Ou was named.

Yatsukamizu Omitsuno spoke: “Izumo was first made as a small land; so, I will take and stitch to it.”

“If I look to Shiragi no misaki and ask if there is surplus land, there is surplus land”, he spoke. He took the spade ... took off ... pulled ... and said: “Come land! Come land!” The land thus pulled and stitched is Kizuki no misaki (1), backward from Koze.

The stake which he firmly fixed is the boundary between Iwami no kuni and Izumo no kuni, called Sahimeyama; again, the rope held and pulled is the long beach of Sono.

“If I look to Kitado no saki no kuni and ask if there is surplus land, there is surplus land”, he spoke. He took the spade ... took off ... pulled ... and said: “Come land! Come land!” The land thus pulled and stitched is Sada no kuni (2), backward from Taku.

“If I look to Kitado no nunami no kuni and ask if there is surplus land, there is surplus land”, he spoke. He took the spade ... took off ... pulled ... and said: “Come land! Come land!” The land thus pulled and stitched is Kurami no kuni (3) inward from Tashimi.

“If I look to Koshi no Tsutsu no misaki and ask if there is surplus land, there is surplus land”, he spoke. He took the spade ... took off ... pulled ... and said: “Come land! Come land!” The land thus pulled and stitched is Miho no saki (4).

The rope held and pulled is the island Yomi; the stake which he firmly fixed is Mount Hinokami of Hōki no kuni.

“Now the enlargement of the land is concluded”, he spoke. Setting up his staff in the grove of Ou, he said: “Oe”. This is why Ou was named so. (\*NKBT 2: 99–103)

Two circumstances also allow a reading of the text as a land-making story: (1) each time the god begins with an act of divining, represented by the question-and-answer pattern, before he starts cutting off and adding a new piece of surplus land; and (2) he finally puts his staff into the ground of a sacred grove. These two ritual acts correspond to what our model of the ritual procedure requires. We therefore have a story that tells of a ‘small Izumo’ in the west that was enlarged by the successive addition of four new parts. Two of these were established as *kuni* (‘territories’), and two as *saki* (‘promontories’). Each *saki* apparently belonged to a *kuni*, namely, Kizuki to Izumo and Miho to Kurami, and both pairs later combined to form the districts of Izumo and Shimane, respectively.

Another thing we notice if we compare our model of the land-taking ritual with the land-pulling story is that the story ends in a grove belonging to Ou, whereas the ritual rather requires that it should end where the adding of Miho no saki is concluded. Since this promontory belonged to Kurami, the final sacred grove should be expected to belong to Kurami. So, why does the text say that the process ended in a grove of Ou?

To understand this, we must consider that by the time *Izumo fudoki* was concluded in 733, Izumo no Omi Hiroshima was not only the supervisor of the compilation of *Izumo fudoki* but also the head of the Izumo kokusō family and head priest of the shrine at Kizuki. This required that his family, which

was settled in the Ou River valley on the mainland, had to claim a very long tradition as the ruling political power in the area. Whereas the story of the extension of 'small Izumo' along the peninsula suggests that a power of western Izumo moved its political centre to eastern Izumo, the *fudoki* had to legitimise the later political situation when the district with this political centre was Ou and ruled by the Izumo kokusō. To achieve this, the compilers had to adapt the land-pulling story in the interest of the *kokusō* family by using the simple stratagem of replacing the original name in the last sentence by that of Ou. In this way, they created the illusion that Ou had always been the power centre of Izumo, ever since, according to the etiological myth, the god Omitsuno created the landmass of the Shimane Peninsula.

So far, our theoretical model helps us to understand that the land-pulling myth has probably been adapted to serve as a charter myth. We could leave it at that, but if we also wonder where the grove of Ou was situated, we face another problem that calls for further analysis. Although *Izumo fudoki* usually locates important places by indicating the direction and distance from another place, it leaves it open where that 'grove of Ou' was situated. We only learn from a note in small characters that it was a small elevation to the north-east of the district office. The location of the district office is usually assumed to have been close to the provincial office, whose remains have been excavated about 800 metres south-east of the southern foot of Mt. Kannabi. However, the entry for Kannabiyama in *Izumo fudoki* locates this mountain 3 *sato* 129 *ashi* (1,852 metres) true north of the district office (NKBT 2: 117), which means that the district office should rather have been situated at the entry to the Ou valley (4 in figure 29).<sup>24</sup> In either case, the grove of Ou could not be identified with the *kannabi* of Ou.

Knowing from *Izumo fudoki* that four districts of Izumo had a *kannabi* mountain, and that one of them was situated in Ou District, we may wonder why the *fudoki* does not say that the god Omitsuno set up his staff in the *kannabi* of Ou. A close look at the topography suggests an unexpected answer (4 in figure 29). As the boundaries of older *kuni* often followed the course of mountains, the *kannabi* mountain of Ou District could have formerly been a southern boundary mountain of the earlier Kurami no *kuni* and in its northern part could have been the *kannabi* of Kurami. But by the time *Izumo fudoki* was compiled, the district boundary followed the river between the two inland seas, so that this mountain had come to lie in Ou District, where it continued

24 The first assumption is based on another entry in *Izumo fudoki* that says that the crossroad north of the provincial office and the district office of Ou was 21 *sato* west of the Nogi bridge (NKBT 2: 247). But the fact that the crossroad was north of both offices does not have to mean that these offices were in the same place.

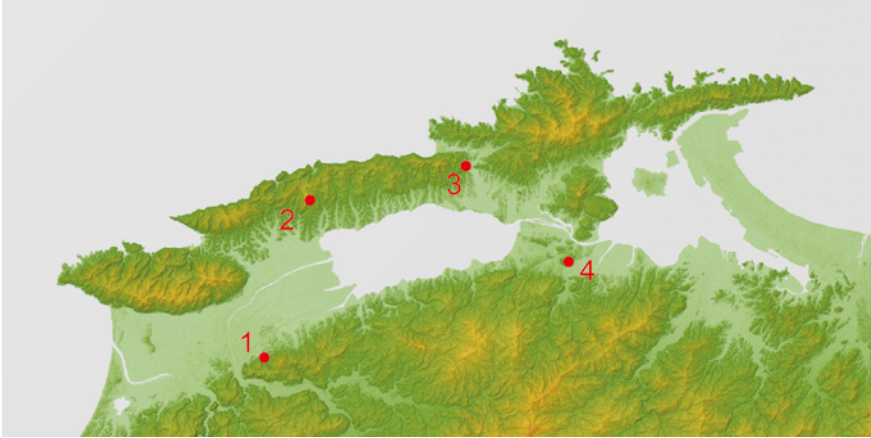


FIGURE 29 The four *kannabi* of four districts mentioned in *Izumo fudoki*. (1) Izumo; (2) Tatenui; (3) Aika; (4) Ou. Before the northern district boundary of Ou followed the river between the two inland seas it could have followed the hills, so that the *kannabi* of Ou (4) could have been a boundary mountain of the earlier Kurami no kuni

SOURCE: BATHOLITH, SHIMANE PENINSULA RELIEF MAP, SRTM-1, WIKIPEDIA COMMONS, PUBLIC DOMAIN (RED POINTS AND NUMBERS ADDED)

to be called *kannabiyama*, although it had lost that function.<sup>25</sup> Assuming that the *kannabi* had earlier belonged to Kurami no kuni, the people of the time would have remembered this, which would explain why the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* could not let the land-pulling end there. To achieve their goal, they had to make the old story end in their own district, which they did by writing that it ended in a 'grove of Ou'.

Since, on the other hand, they also could not deny the existence of that mountain still called Kannabiyama, they represented it as a hill of minor importance. In the list of the seven mountains of Ou District, they put it at the very end, only adding that it was situated true north of the district office and, in small characters, that it had fir trees in the east and grass growing on three sides. By contrast, the other three *kannabi* mentioned in *Izumo fudoki* are all given first place among the mountains of the respective districts; the one of Izumo District is even put before Mt. Misaki, the mountain in the back of the Izumo Taisha at Kizuki (NKBT 2: 191).

Seeing the possibility that an earlier version of the land-pulling myth could have ended in a *kannabi* belonging to Kurami, we may finally also wonder if two of the three other *kannabi* of Izumo had perhaps likewise been related to the land-pulling story. Having already discussed the *kannabi* of the district of Izumo, we know that it belonged to former Izumo no kuni, so that the integration of Kizuki no misaki as a dependant part could have ended with a



ceremony in that *kannabi*. Sada no kuni had also its own *kannabi*, but as it was later divided into the districts of Aika and Tatenui, its *kannabi* then came to lie in Aika District.<sup>25</sup>

We cannot conclude from these observations that an earlier version of the land-pulling myth must have also mentioned the names of the *kannabi* of Izumo, Sada and Kurami; it was not necessary to say each time how the adding of a territory (*kuni*) or promontory (*misaki*, *saki*) ended. The story of Iwa no Ōkami discussed in chapter 3 also first mentions the claiming of various territories and says only at the very end how and where the whole land-making process ended. Nevertheless, seeing that the land-pulling myth clearly stands out through ritual speech and the use of the stylistic element of repetition, it seems likely that an earlier version of this story might also have mentioned the grove or *kannabi* in which each of the four phases ended.<sup>26</sup>

To interpret the land-pulling myth in the way proposed means interpreting it as another charter myth that was intended to legitimate the new political situation at the time when *Izumo fudoki* was compiled. In real history, it may have been only a few decades or years before *Izumo fudoki* was compiled in 733 that a family settled in the Ou River valley was able to take over the office of *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo. In order to be able to take this office and that of the hereditary head priest of the new shrine, the family claimed descent from Ame no Hohi, a son of Amaterasu, or of Ame no Hohi's son Takehinateru. The head priest was then appointed Izumo no Omi and district governor of Ou, but he had to leave the office of provincial governor to a *kokushi* dispatched from the central government of the *ritsuryō* state, for the first time perhaps in the year 708, as Torigoe has suggested. By 720 the lineage of the Izumo no Omi is mentioned in *Nihon shoki* in the story about Takehinateru's treasures, but the fact that the location of the shrine is not mentioned in the text suggests

25 The foundation story of the *kannabi* of Tatenui by Ame no Mikajihime has already been quoted (p. 141). Although it was apparently an old and important sacred grove, it perhaps achieved the status of a *kannabi* only when Sada no kuni was later divided into the two districts of Aika and Tatenui.

26 The use of the word *kannabi* instead of *mori* ('grove') might have meant that a *kannabi* was dedicated to the guardian deity of a larger territory such as an old *kuni* or a later district of the *ritsuryō* state. This understanding is suggested by *Kan'yogoto*, where it is said that Ōnamuchi caused his *nigi-mitama* to dwell in the *kannabi* of Ōmiwa (chapter 4; Philippi 1959: 74) while the *mitama* of three other deities were to dwell in three other *kannabi* of Yamato, all serving the emperors as close guardian deities. Since the four *kannabi* of Izumo were positioned around lake Shinji (the western inland sea; figure 29) it is sometimes speculated that their deities might have guarded that lake, but there is no evidence for that and it does not seem to make sense.



FIGURE 30 The inner precinct of the Izumo Taisha at Kizuki  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1962

that the shrine had perhaps not yet been built by that time.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, the Kiisatsumi mentioned as the first *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo in *Kojiki* was related to Mt. Kannabi of western Izumo and belonged to a family that probably claimed descent from Kamimusubi, the last of the three initial deities that came into existence in heaven according to *Kojiki*.<sup>28</sup> Although he could therefore be called a heavenly descendant, he is not even mentioned in *Nihon shoki*; for according to the doctrine of this other chronicle, the heavenly descendants are supposed to be descendants of Amaterasu and/or Takamimusubi. Since the newer doctrine of *Nihon shoki* prevailed, the double office of *kuninomiyaatsuko*

27 Carlqvist (2010) has presented a new translation of the land-pulling myth together with a discussion that considers different perspectives. In essence he concludes that “the land-pulling myth forms part of a message expressing that the province desires and has the legitimacy to govern itself” (2010: 214). By contrast, I think that the Izumo no Omi followed the new policy of the central government regarding the shrine in Kizuki and that this was the reason why he was so powerful in Izumo.

28 The entry for Shitsunu no sato in *Izumo fudoki* (NKBT 2: 181) says that Amatsukichikami Takahiko was a son of Kamimusubi, but the context suggests that his correct name was Ama-tsu Kiisakami Takahiko (NKBT 2: 180n2). Consequently, the ancestor of the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo according to *Kojiki* was also a descendant of Kamimusubi. *Kojiki* follows a probably earlier understanding which has also left traces in another part of *Izumo fudoki*, where it is Kamimusubi (instead of Takamimusubi) who orders the building of the shrine for Ōkuninushi (NKBT 2: 167; Aoki 1971: 110).

and head priest at Kizuki was finally entrusted to a different lineage that claimed descent from a son or grandson of Amaterasu.

The shrine (figure 30) was then built at Kizuki in western Izumo, although the priest family was settled in Ou of eastern Izumo. As briefly mentioned at the end of chapter 4, a possible reason for the choice of Kizuki could have been the topography, which allowed the shrine to be built at the foot of a mountain while facing south (4 in figure 31).

### Summing Up

I have argued in this chapter in favour of interpreting the story about Homuchiwake and the founding of a shrine in Izumo as the foundation story of the Izumo Shrine according to *Kojiki*. However, *Kojiki* suggests that this shrine was initially intended to be built at Mt. Kannabi of Izumo District, and the priest family was not the same as that of the later shrine in Kizuki.

The *kunihiki* ('land-pulling') myth has been analysed because it makes another good case for demonstrating that land-taking in early Japan was an activity that involved a ritual procedure such as that described in the introduction. The myth underscores, with its repeated question-and-answer pattern, the importance of starting an act of land-taking with divining and does not forget to also say that the ritual ended in a sacred grove and at another place. The heuristic value of the theoretical model could be shown by introducing the hypothesis that an earlier version of the story probably also mentioned three of the four *kannabi* of Izumo, which have found no satisfactory explanation in the past.

Historically, the shift of the power centre to Ou may have been a recent development at the time when *Izumo fudoki* was compiled; for it was apparently not yet known when the author of *Kojiki* introduced Kiisatsumi of western Izumo as the ancestor of the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo. This also speaks in favour of regarding the doctrine of *Kojiki* as representing an older idea about the foundation of the Izumo Shrine than the one that was later realised with the building of the Izumo Taisha at Kizuki.

Looking at things in this perspective, it is perhaps also relevant that Cape Miho, the last part of the Shimane Peninsula opened up according to the land-pulling myth (5 in figure 31), is also the place where, according to *Kojiki*, Sukunabikona appears and meets Ōkuninushi, and from where the two together begin to open up and 'make' the great land to be ruled by the future emperors (chapter 4). When Ōkuninushi later cedes the rule of that land to the

heavenly descendants, he does so at the beach of Inasa (near 4 in figure 31), but only after his son Kotoshironushi has first agreed to this at Cape Miho, at the other end of the peninsula.

Could it be that the *fudoki* myth of the gradual extension of 'small Izumo' eastward along the Shimane Peninsula was conceived to form a link between the old mythology related to the river system of the Hinokawa, where Susanoo had descended from heaven, and the myth of the making of Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, the great land to be ruled by the future emperors?

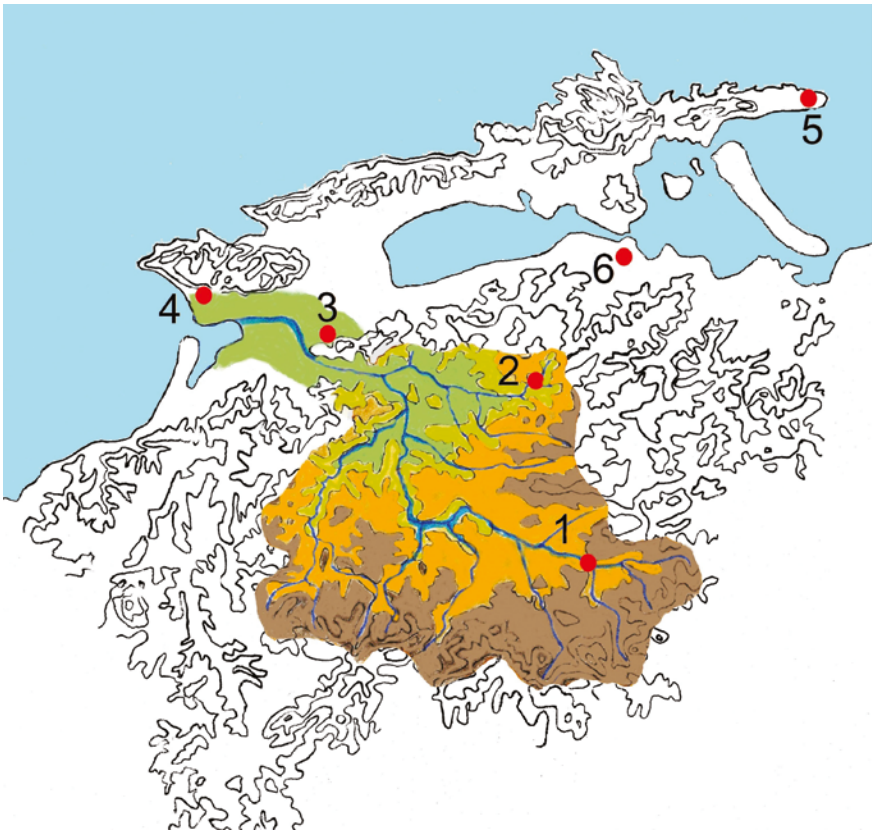


FIGURE 31 Mythically important places along the Hinokawa in relation to the Shimane Peninsula and Ou in eastern Izumo. (1) Susanoo at Torikami in the upper courses; (2) Susanoo dwells at Suga; (3) Mt. Kannabi of Izumo District; (4) Kizuki; (5) Cape Miho; (6) Ou

MAP BY THE AUTHOR

## The Foundation of the Ise Shrine

When Ninigi is about to descend from heaven, two things occur that were not mentioned in chapter 5 because they do not belong directly to the story of Ninigi's land-claiming at Cape Kasasa. First,

when he was at the eight crossroads of heaven, there was there a deity, shining above through Takama no hara and below through the Central Land of the Reed Plains.

Amaterasu and Takaki send Ame no Uzume to ask who is on their grandson's way, and the deity replies:

"I am an earthly deity, my name is Sarutahiko no kami. The reason why I have come out is that I have heard that the honourable child of the heavenly deities is descending from heaven. Therefore, I have come out to meet him and serve by going ahead." (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 127)

After that, five clan heads are sent down from heaven and Amaterasu gives Ninigi three treasures to carry with him: the beads, the mirror and the sword (the three regalia of the future emperors). Entrusting him with the mirror, she says:

"This mirror, regard it just as my spirit and worship it as if you would be in my presence. Moreover, let Omoikane no kami take care of the worship and carry out the government." These two *kami* are worshipped at the Sakukushiro Isuzu no Miya. (\**Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 127)

In *Kojiki*, these two incidences mark the beginning of the foundation story of Amaterasu's shrine in Ise. The noteworthy point is the strange sequence: why does Amaterasu not hand over her mirror to Ninigi before he comes to the crossways of heaven? Why first the meeting with Sarutahiko and only then the handing over of the mirror that will eventually be enshrined in Ise?

The reason is obvious if we ask our standard question about the initial act of divination. We then realise that Ninigi is at the crossroads of heaven because crossroads were favourite places visited for getting oracles, as we know from

numerous ancient poems in *Man'yōshū* and other texts.<sup>1</sup> Ninigi needs a good omen before he can descend from heaven with the intention of taking over the rule of the land on earth. The appearance of Sarutahiko at the crossroads of heaven is therefore the good omen that is needed before Amaterasu can invest him with the three regalia and explain the function of the sacred mirror.

Sarutahiko's appearance at the crossroads of heaven corresponds to a pattern we can also observe in other parts of the two chronicles where a deity or chief comes out to meet a heavenly descendant, saying that he is ready to serve. Three other instances are found, for example, in the story of the conquest of Yamato (Philippi: 164, 170, 177). The pattern usually means that the newcomer is welcome to take over the territory of the one who comes out to meet him. Usually, such a meeting occurs in front of the territory to be subjected to a new rule, but this is different in the story of the foundation of the Ise Shrine because it begins in heaven and divination was also necessary before setting out from there. The good omen is Sarutahiko, who is ready to offer his service; for this implies, according to the usual meaning of the pattern, that he welcomes Amaterasu to his land. However, where on earth this land is, Sarutahiko does not say in *Kojiki*. It is the author of *Kojiki* who says that Amaterasu's mirror and Omoikane no kami are worshipped at the Isuzu no Miya.<sup>2</sup> *Kojiki* never mentions the mirror again and also does not mention Sarutahiko when Ninigi later descends to Mt. Kujifuru of Takachiho; two other gods are said to have served him as vanguards (chapter 5).

The main text of *Nihon shoki* (9.0), however, does not even mention Sarutahiko, but the first variant (9.1) represents him as the god of the crossroads (*chimata no kami*) who offers his service. When first asked, he answers that he will go first and open the way, but then he only guides by saying that Ninigi must go to Mt. Kujifuru of Takachiho in Tsukushi (Kyushu), whereas he and Ame no Uzume must go to the upper course of the river Isuzu in Ise.<sup>3</sup> He thus indicates that the mirror of Amaterasu will finally go to his place in

1 JKDJ s.v. *yufugë*, 'evening oracle' received at a crossroad. See the scholarly article on this topic by Ernest Satow (1927: 66–72).

2 Philippi: 140. That this sentence was probably added later is suggested by the fact that the next sentence says that Toyouke no kami dwells in Watarai of the 'outer shrine' (*totsumiya*). But Toyouke has not been mentioned in this part of *Kojiki* before, and even *Nihon shoki* nowhere mentions the foundation of the Outer Shrine. See Teeuwen 1996: 30.

3 NKBT 67: 147–48; Aston 1: 77–79. For Uzume's role in luring Amaterasu out of hiding, see chapter 1 (p. 45) and the overview of the god age mythology at the beginning of chapter 4.

Ise, where he will welcome it, but first Ninigi must descend to Takachiho in Kyushu.<sup>4</sup>

According to *Nihon shoki*, the sacred mirror will indeed go with Ninigi down to Takachiho and will be handed down to his descendants until it eventually finds the way to the upper course of the river Isuzu in Ise, as predicted by Sarutahiko. But as we saw at the end of chapter 4 (figure 24), *Nihon shoki* says that Amaterasu and Yamato no Ōkunitama were worshipped in the emperors' palaces until the time of Emperor Sujin, who brought them out to be worshipped at two separate open-air sanctuaries established near Mt. Miwa. In the reign of the next emperor, Suinin, Amaterasu is further transferred from there to Ise, where she is for the first time worshipped in a wooden shrine building. For perhaps similar shrines, see figures 32 and 33. The move to Ise is described in *Nihon shoki* as follows:

Now Yamatohime no Mikoto, going in search of a place where the great deity could be in peace, went to Sasahata of Uda. Again returning, she entered into Ōmi no kuni, went eastward round Mino, and arrived in Ise no kuni. Now Amaterasu Ōkami instructed her, saying: "This land of Ise of the divine wind is a land where the waves of eternity, the returning waves, come in. It is a good land of a side land. In this land I wish to dwell." Therefore, following the great deity's instruction, she founded her shrine in the land of Ise. Accordingly, she established the abstinence hall at the upper course of the river Isuzu. This was called the Iso no Miya. This is the place where Amaterasu Ōkami first descended from heaven. (\**Nihon shoki*)<sup>5</sup>

So far, I have followed the two chronicles, but for the Ise Shrine and its foundation we also have the longer record of *Kōtaijingū gishikichō*, the oldest 'book of rites' of the Imperial Grand Shrine or Kōtaijingū, dated 804. A more detailed but later version is found in *Yamatohime no mikoto seiki*, a text of later Ise Shinto that was perhaps compiled in the early Heian period (794 to 1185) and concluded later, but which belongs to the later works that "draw on ancient materials that can be traced back at least to *Enryaku Gishikichō* (804)."<sup>6</sup>

4 The commentary in NKBT 67: 147n24 interprets that Sarutahiko went along to Kyushu and returned from there to Ise, but there is no evidence for that in text.

5 NKBT 67: 269–70. The expression 'side land' is interpreted as referring to the fact that Ise was at one side when Yamato was seen as the centre (NKBT 67: 270n4).

6 Teeuwen 1996: 11–16. The expression *Enryaku Gishikichō* is sometimes used to refer to the two books of rites called *Kōtaijingū gishikichō* and *Toyukegū gishikichō*, which were both completed in the year Enryaku 4 (804) at the Inner Shrine and Outer Shrine, respectively. Note that Toyuke [sic] in the title stands for Toyouke, the name of the deity.





FIGURE 32 The open-air sanctuary in the precinct of the Matsushita Shrine discussed in chapter 9. In this case, the sanctuary was composed of a stone platform and a cult mark made of evergreen *sakaki* twigs that were tied around a wooden stick

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1972



FIGURE 33 The Takihara no miya, a high-ranking shrine (*betsugū*) of the shrine complex of the Inner Shrine at Ise. The first shrine of Amaterasu might have looked somewhat like one of the buildings of this shrine. The alternative site, which is used for rebuilding the shrine every twenty years, is seen in the foreground

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1966



The following discussion is mainly based on *Kōtaijīngū gishikichō*, but it should be noted that this work was compiled when the shrine had already been developed into a large shrine complex comprising numerous sanctuaries with different functions and statuses, all situated in the southern part of the ancient Ise Province, which roughly corresponds to the present Mie Prefecture. There were already two main shrines (*shōgū*), the inner one (Naikū) dedicated to Amaterasu and the outer one (Gekū) dedicated to Toyouke, an agricultural deity. Each of these two main shrines headed a group of separate shrines (*betsugū*) and subordinate shrines (*sessha* and *massha*), the two groups being tied together by the relation between the two main shrines. Whereas this complex cult system is commonly known as the Ise Shrine or Ise Grand Shrine (Ise Daijīngū), Isuzu no Miya was the name of the very first shrine of Amaterasu in Ise mentioned in *Kojiki*. The form later developed from this first shrine was called *Kōtaijīngū* (Imperial Grand Shrine) or Naikū (Inner Shrine).

### The Later Version of the Foundation Story

*Kōtaijīngū gishikichō* begins the section about Amaterasu's move to Ise with the following sentence:

The ritual of the time when the sovereign great deity Amaterasu (Amaterashimasu sumeōkami) deigned to move to the upper course of the Sakokushiru Isuzu River of the village of Uji in the district of Watarai of the province of Ise. (\**Kōtaijīngū gishikichō*, GRJJ 1, p. 2)

As these words indicate, it is formally Amaterasu who is said to move to Ise. The text therefore later calls Princess Yamatohime the deity's 'staff substitute' (*mitsueshiro*). Carrying the sacred mirror (we can assume), Yamatohime starts out from her abstinence palace built on a site called Mimorohara of Miwa and first proceeds east to Uda. From there she continues her search by travelling through Iga, Ōmi and Mino. In each of these areas (later provinces, except for Uda) she takes temporary residence, twice in Uda and twice in Iga, once in Ōmi and once in Mino. When she enters Ise from the north her approach becomes more dramatic:

Next, she stayed in the palace of Noshiro at Kuwana in Ise. When she dwelled in that palace, she inquired of Takehinakata, the far ancestor of the *kuni no miyatsuko* (governors) of Ise: "What is the name of your land?" He said: "Kamikaze no Ise no kuni." And he offered *mitoshiro* (shrine fields) and *kanbe* (shrine servants).

Next, she stayed in the palace of Oyama at Suzuka in Kawawa. At that time, she inquired of Ōbiko, the far ancestor of the *agata no miyatsuko* of Kawamata: “What is the name of your land?” He said: “Umasake no Suzuka no kuni.” And he offered *mitoshiro* and *kanbe*.

Next, she inquired of Makuwae, the *agata no miyatsuko* of Ano: “What is the name of your land?” He said: “Kusakage no Ano no kuni.” And he offered *mitoshiro* and *kanbe*.

Next, she resided in the palace of Katai of Fujikata in Ichishi. The evil *kami* of Asaka there was pacified. The envoy Abe no Ōnehiko served together with her. At that time, she inquired of Takeasako, the far ancestor of the *agata no miyatsuko* of Ichishi: “What is the name of your land?” He said: “Shishiyuku Asaka no kuni.” And he offered *mitoshiro* and *kanbe*.

Then she inquired of Otokazuchi, the ancestor of the *agata no miyatsuko* of Iitaka: “What is the name of your land?” He answered: “Oshi Iitaka no kuni.” And he offered *mitoshiro* and *kanbe*.

When she resided in the palace of Taka at Iino she inquired of Mishiro no Sukune, the *agata no miyatsuko* of Sana: “What is the name of your land?” He answered: “Komoriku Shitabi no kuni, Makusamuke Kusamuke no kuni.” And he offered *mitoshiro* and *kanbe*.

When she stayed in the temporary palace of Sasamu at Take she inquired of Yoshihiko, the *obito* of Take: “What is the name of your land?” He said: “Momohari Soga no kuni, Ihoesasu Takeda no kuni.” And he offered *mitoshiro* of Negura in Kushida.

Next, she stayed in the palace of Tamakiharū Iso, next in the palace of Yatatanoe at Sakokushiro Uji in Momofune wo Watarai no kuni. At that time, she asked Ōta no Mikoto, the far ancestor of the local chiefs (*tsuchi-gimira*) of Uji who served as *ō-uchindo* (OJ *oho-uchibito*) of Uji: “What is the name of your land?” He said: “The name of this river is Sakokushiro Isuzu no kawa; at the upper course of this river there is a good site for a large shrine.” Then [Yamatohime] saw it and decided that it was a good site for the great shrine, and [praising the land as] “the land that faces the morning sun; the land that faces the evening sun; the land where the sound of the waves is not heard; the land where the sound of the wind is not heard; the land where the sound of bow and arrow and recoil pad is not heard, the land that puts my heart at peace’ she rejoiced and deigned to establish the great shrine”.<sup>7</sup>

The same pattern is followed eight times, and Yamatohime puts the stereotype question to a total of eight different chiefs and governors she meets one

7 \**Kōtaijūngū gishikichō*, GRJJ 1, pp. 3–4. For a German translation, see Hammitzsch 1937: 13–14.

TABLE 3 New land names and titles of their governors or chiefs (left column) whose answers to Yamatohime's question "what is the name of your land?" reveals the old name of the land (right column)

New name + title	Ancestor?	Old land name
1. Ise no kuni no miyatsuko	Yes	Kamukaze no Ise no kuni
2. Kawamata no agata no miyatsuko	Yes	Umasake no Suzuka no kuni
3. Ano no agata no miyatsuko	?	Kusakage no Ano no kuni
4. Ichishi no agata no miyatsuko	Yes	Shishiyuki no Azaka no kuni
5. Iitaka no agata no miyatsuko	?	Oshi Iitaka no kuni
6. Sana no agata no miyatsuko	?	Komoriku Shitabi no kuni Makusamuke no Kusamuke no kuni
7. Take no obito	?	Momohari Soga no kuni Ihoesasu Takeda no kuni
8. Uji no tsuchigimi	Yes	Momofune Watarai no kuni Sakokushiro Isuzu no kawa

after the other along the way (table 3). The chiefs are variously introduced with titles such as *miyatsuko* ('governor'), *obito* ('chief') or *tsuchigimi* ('local chief') and all respond to Yamatohime's question by revealing one or two names of their land (*kuni*) together with a pillow word. Moreover, having revealed the name, they all offer *mitoshiro* (fields for growing rice to be offered to the deity) and *kanbe* (shrine households that will serve the deity). The last of the questioned chiefs is introduced as the ancestor of the *tsuchigimi* of Uji and is said to serve as *ouchindo* of Uji. It is he who shows the princess the place for the shrine (*miyadokoro*) where Amaterasu can find a home.

When Yamatohime questions the various chiefs about the name of the land, the stereotype question for the name of the land is supposed to be a formal and legally significant act: a law-symbolical way of requesting proof of submission and loyalty. What exactly this means in the present case depends on whether or not the questioned chiefs are supposed to be subjects of the Yamato Court already, before they answer the ominous question. Their status changes in either case, as is clear from table 3, which contrasts the land names that the chiefs reveal (right side) and the titles by which the compiler introduces them. The fact that four of the eight chiefs are not introduced as 'far ancestors' (3, 5, 6, 7 in table 3) might be due to inadvertent omission; three of them (3, 5, 6) are called 'ancestor' in *Yamatohime seiki*, which has sixteen instances where Yamatohime asks the same question, the answer being always a land

name with pillow words (Hammitzsch 1937: 25–26). In the case of Ano, the name remains the same, but the status of the land changes: a territory (*kuni*) becomes an *agata*, a sort of district in the political system of the Yamato Court. The same applies to the governors (*miyatsuko*) who are introduced as distant ancestors of *miyatsuko* families. Theoretically, the text could imply either that these chiefs have received the title already, some time before Yamatohime questions them, or that they got it afterwards because they responded to her question. In the present case, the text probably uses the titles in anticipation of the new status the chiefs will get for revealing the names of their territories.

The names the chiefs reveal appear to be old ones and mostly differ from the names of the administrative districts they will govern when they carry these titles. For example, the second chief is introduced as the distant ancestor of the *agata no miyatsuko* of Kawamata, which means that he is the first head of the district (*agata*) of Kawamata, but the land name he reveals is Suzuka, and the added pillow word suggests that this is an old territorial name. Reading between the lines we can understand, therefore, that by responding to Yamatohime's question the chief of Suzuka renounces his old status and expresses his submission and loyalty.

Yamatohime faces each chief with the same question: what is the name of your land? And each chief declares his submission by telling the name and by offering shrine fields. For their submission, the chiefs are later rewarded with the titles by which the compiler introduces them at the beginning. Although the Isuzu no Miya does not yet exist when the questioning takes place, the far ancestor of the *tsuchigimi* of Uji is introduced as the *ouchindo* of Uji because this was going to be his title as a priest serving at Amaterasu's shrine.

It seems clear, therefore, that by responding to the ominous question the chiefs agree to assume a title and to have their land or lands given a new name. This indicates a significant change. Nevertheless, it is not entirely clear that it is a change from an independent territory to an administrative unit, because the compilers might have meant that the old *kuni* (territories) were already subject to the Yamato Court when Yamatohime questioned their chiefs. In that case, the stereotype question could be intended to have the chiefs formally agree to assume a new status and title in view of the new situation, which is going to be established by the foundation of the imperial shrine in Ise.

### Name-Asking as a Form of Claiming

The first sentence of this story speaks of a 'ritual', and what follows leaves no doubt that Yamatohime indeed performs a ritual when she later repeatedly

asks the chiefs to tell her the name of their land. She does so eight times in *Kōtajingū gishikichō* and sixteen times in *Yamatohime seiki*, and each time with exactly the same words: “What is the name of your land?” The simple question really meant “do you agree to cede your land to the imperial deity Amaterasu?” By revealing the names, the chiefs express their agreement, and by also offering fields and people (*kanbe*) for producing the daily rice to be offered to Amaterasu and other deities, they perform, moreover, a variant of the meal-offering rite and confirm the sincerity of their agreement.

Another source that mentions name-asking as a form of claiming is *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*. In the section dealing with the ‘entrustment of mountains and rivers’ (*yamakawa yosashi-matsuru hongī*) Yatagarasu, the eight-handed crow, says he will claim new places in mountain areas:

“Where the mist of cloud-sent hail rises, without deciding spring or fall,  
I shall seven times fly round and ask and establish names of places.”  
Thus saying, he made claims. (\**Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*, ed. Tanaka 1998,  
lines 415–16)

Here, asking for names means claiming the respective places as new properties of the Sumiyoshi Shrine. Yatagarasu (or Yata no karasu) is an ambivalent mythical figure, sometimes flying ahead as a bird and at other times acting like a human vanguard. In cults, he is associated with guiding and divination, which fits well with his function as a land claimer (Ponsonby-Fane 1954: 143–52). In the final phase of the conquest of Yamato, he flies ahead and questions the chiefs of Uda and Shiki as to whether or not they are willing to serve (Aston 1: 125). There, the crow uses human language (*Kojiki*) or its crowing is translated into human speech (*Nihon shoki*), but in the passage quoted here the crow does the same by asking for names, although places in mountain regions may not have names yet.

The role played by the land’s name in the name-asking ritual can also be understood in terms of what is usually discussed as the ancient belief in *kotodama* or ‘word soul’. According to this belief, to tell one’s name in a relation between a man and a woman was to open one’s heart, and to ask the name meant to ask for marriage.<sup>8</sup> We know this from ancient love poems, but the concept applies not only to personal names. Yamatohime’s name-asking shows that the name of a land could also stand for the land as a ruled unit, so that,

8 JKDJ, s.v. *na* (‘name’). More than a hundred years ago Andrian noted that “name and thing, soul and name are conceived of as being in a mystic connection on the most different cultural stages” (Andrian 1896: 20–21, 22; from the German).

depending on the context, the question ‘what is the name of your land’ could be understood as a request to surrender a territory (Domenig 1992a).

### Pillow Words Alluding to Land-Making Myths

But how can we interpret the meaning of the ‘pillow words’ (*makura kotoba*) that preface all the land names in Yamatohime’s performance of this ritual?

The usual understanding is that a pillow word should be somehow related to the meaning of the word to which it is added, but usually it seems impossible to see a plausible relation of this kind. Dealing with territorial names, however, we can imagine that a pillow word might refer to something that is typical of the respective territory, regardless of how it was named. Considering the context of land-ceding, it would appear that the pillow word might refer to something that could confirm the legitimacy of the land tenure, as when place names in the *fudoki* are explained by stories about why a name had originally been given. A unique example is the following story from the lost *Ise fudoki*, which tells of a chief who resists and is expelled. To quote the relevant part:

The *fudoki* of the province of Ise says: This Land of Ise is the place subdued by Ame no Hiwake, a descendant in the twelfth generation of Ame-no-Minakanushi. [...] In that village there was a *kami* called Isetsuhiko. Ame no Hiwake questioned him: “Will you offer your land to the heavenly descendant?” He answered: “I have searched this land and dwelled a long time; I do not listen to the order.” Ame no Hiwake raised an army in order to kill this *kami*. Then [the *kami*] was afraid and humbly said: “My land, I offer it entirely to the heavenly descendant. I will not dare to stay.” Ame no Hiwake asked: “What sign will you make when you depart?” The answer was: “Tonight I shall raise eight winds and stir the sea water. Riding the waves, I shall enter the east; this will be the sign of my leaving.” Ame no Hiwake arrayed his army and watched. When midnight came, a great storm arose in the four quarters, beating up the waves. There was light shining like at noon and both land and sea were illuminated. At length he rode the waves and went to the east. The old saying *Kamukaze no Ise no kuni, tokoyo no nami yosuru kuni*, [the Land of Ise of the divine wind, the land reached by the waves of eternity] – refers to this. (\**Ise fudoki itsubun*; NKBT 2: 432–33)

Since *kamukaze no* is the common pillow word of the land name Ise, this is a case where the pillow word could indeed be meant as an allusion to the land’s

foundation story, as the final sentence suggests. The ‘divine winds’ (*kamukaze* or *kamikaze*) correspond to the ‘eight winds’ Isetsuhiko raises as a sign of his departure and of his ceding of the land to Ame no Hiwake.<sup>9</sup>

Another source that allows the interpretation of a pillow word in this way is the story of the conquest of Yamato, which in *Nihon shoki* ends with Emperor Jinmu’s land-viewing. Seeing the shape of the land all around, Jinmu says: ‘Oh! what a beautiful country we have become possessed of! Though a blessed land of inner-tree fibre, yet it resembles a dragon-fly [*akizu*] licking its hinder parts. From this it first received the name Akizushima’ (trans. Aston I: 134). The pillow word *akizushima no* was therefore understood to refer to a land-viewing proclamation in the story of the conquest of Yamato.<sup>10</sup> In the same context, *Nihon shoki* says that Nigihayai called the land ‘Soramitsu Yamato no kuni’ because he had ‘seen’ (*mitsu*) it from the air (*sora*) when he came down riding in a heavenly rock boat.

For those who knew that pillow words could refer to foundation stories, the pillow word of a land name was probably a formal element that made the land name stand for the land itself in a verbal land-ceding contract. The ancient texts feature many other pillow words that were used with land names, but in most such cases, we have no story that could explain the relation between the place name and its pillow word.

### The Topography of the Isuzu Valley

To further discuss the foundation procedure, we must pay attention to the topography of the Isuzu valley. Figure 34 shows that the shrine was located at the confluent of the two upper courses of the river, a position that in the ancient texts is usually meant by ‘at’ the upper course/s of the river Isuzu. About 600 metres down from there the northern front mountains leave a passage about 250 metres wide where the river flows into a wide area surrounded by mountains and low hills. About twelve kilometres further down from there the lateral hills again approach the river, forming another passage about 300

9 Isetsuhiko is one of the land deities worshipped in the Asakuma Shrine (see later).

10 The real meaning was probably *aki tsu shima* (‘island of harvests’). According to *Nihon shoki*, Izanagi and later Ōnamuchi had already given praising names to Yamato. Izanagi used names that refer to ‘inner peace’, ‘a slender spear or halberd’ and ‘superiority’. Ōnamuchi named it Tamagaki no uchitsukuni (‘Land within the jewel fence’) because mountains surround the Yamato basin on all sides (see figure 46). *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 214–16; Aston I: 134–35.



FIGURE 34  
Landforms along the Isuzu River where the Isuzu no Miya, the predecessor of the Inner Shrine (Naikū), was founded at the confluence of the two upper courses. The field land of Uji (green) is presumed to have extended down to about the place where the Asakuma Shrine was later founded for the land deities. Note that north is at the bottom.

MODEL BY MIOKO DOI

metres wide. From there, a short distance further down, the Asama River joins the Isuzu from the south-east, while the Isuzu continues and soon branches off in two directions. The northern branch is said to have been formed by a tsunami about five hundred years ago; figure 34 therefore shows it not yet connected to the main course.<sup>11</sup> Whether the land further down the old Isuzugawa was already cultivated when the Ise Shrine was founded we cannot say for sure, but the middle course area was probably the cultivated territory of Uji.

*Kōtaijūgū gishikichō* does not tell us where Yamatohime was supposed to have met the chief of Uji, but the pattern of the chief who comes out to meet the challenger (mentioned earlier in this chapter) suggests that it must have been in front of the entrance to the territory of Uji. The later *Yamatohime seiki* supports this expectation when it describes how Yamatohime arrives at the

<sup>11</sup> This newer branch is now called Isuzugawa, while the ancient Isuzugawa continues north-east and is now called Isuzu-hasen.





FIGURE 35 View of the Isuzu when looking upstream towards the southern mountains where the Inner Shrine is situated. The river passes between the two hills seen in the foreground, which probably formed the entrance to the land of Uji  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1966

estuary of the Isuzu and approaches the territory of Uji by going upstream by boat. When she stays for a while on a small island, she observes the mountain tops and the river and describes the view as like being in front of ‘a large house gate’ (*ōyado*), calling the place *Ōyado*. What she probably sees are the two hills shown in figure 35, between which the Isuzu flows out of the field land of Uji. The association of these hills with a large house and gate (*ya*, ‘house’, *to*, ‘gate’) could be due to the fact that the distant mountains in the background suggest to Yamatohime that there is much flat land beyond these hills. The author of the story knew of course that this flat land was the cultivated part of a territory which was called Uji because it was ‘inside’ (*uchi*) the mountains that enclosed it.

Continuing her journey upriver, Yamatohime comes to the middle of that flat land, but then she is suddenly back at the mouth of the river, for the text – or another source inserted here – says that at that time five land deities offered her a meal at the mouth of the Isuzu and it was then that Yamatohime met the chief of Uji and questioned him.<sup>12</sup> After describing how the chief wel-

12 KST 7, *Shintō gobusho, Yamatohime no mikoto seiki*, 50.

comes her and how Amaterasu's shrine is built and inaugurated on a site at the upper course of the river, the text notes that the deities mentioned earlier were enshrined at the place where they had offered that meal.<sup>13</sup> The name of that shrine is not mentioned, but the later list of shrines notes that the same five deities are worshipped at the Asakuma Shrine. This shrine was situated where the Asama River meets the Isuzu (near the lower end of the area marked green in figure 34).

There is therefore a problem here regarding the place of that meal and of the meeting with the chief of Uji. First, the text says that the meal was offered at the mouth of the Isuzu, and then it suggests that the place was near the Asakuma Shrine. Assuming that the field land of Uji extended roughly as far down as shown in figure 34, the latter possibility is more likely,<sup>14</sup> otherwise the meeting would have taken place lower down the river, but in either case at a place in front of the entrance to the territory.

Two important shrines were therefore established in the valley after the meeting with the chief of Uji, the Isuzu no Miya for Amaterasu at the upper course of the river and the Asakuma Shrine for the local land deities at the lower course of the river. In *Kōtaijingū gishikichō*, the latter shrine is called Ko-Asakuma Jinja and is listed as the first and therefore highest ranked of the twenty-four subordinate shrines (*kanchōsha*) with a wooden main hall (*shōden*).

Another point where *Yamatohime seiki* differs from *Kōtaijingū gishikichō* is that it says that the chief of Uji was a descendant of Sarutahiko and that the site offered for Amaterasu's shrine was where the chief of Uji had worshipped Sarutahiko.

Thinking of our key story and of other stories mentioning shrines in the *fudoki*, it would seem that in early times a territory only needed one territorial shrine. The land-claiming sequence in *Harima fudoki* featuring Iwa no Ōkami and Ame no Hiboko, for example, begins at Ibo Hill low down in the Ibo River area and ends with Iwa no Ōkami founding a village at the upper courses of that river, where he will be enshrined as the guardian deity of the land opened

13 Hammitzsch (1937: 30–31, 33) mistranslates the first mention of that meal by saying that it was offered by Yamatohime. In the second mention he correctly makes the deities the subject and says they offered a meal and a shrine was erected there. The text, however, says that the shrine was erected at the place where the deities had (earlier!) offered a meal.

14 This place would then correspond to the mouth of the Uji river, the part of the Isuzu that passed through Uji. Perhaps this river mouth was originally meant, but the text confounded it with the mouth of the Isuzu.

up. Ibo Hill remained a significant place because it symbolised the legal basis of the territory, but it was not the place where a second cult place was already established when the large territory was founded. Rather, the final situation was characterised by a bipolar space where the lower pole was associated with the land-claiming rite but had not yet become a cult place like the upper one. A space organisation of that earlier kind could have also been established in the Isuzu valley when Sarutahiko was still worshipped there, as *Yamatohime seiki* says.

*Kōtaijūngū gishikichō*, however, omitted to mention Sarutahiko, as did *Nihon shoki* in its main text (9.0). As already mentioned, 9.1 is the only *Nihon shoki* variant that mentions the episode of Sarutahiko's appearance at the crossroads of heaven, but it distorts Sarutahiko's image, depicting him as a creature with a nose seven hands long, a back measuring more than seven fathoms, large eyes that sparkle like red beans and light shining forth from mouth and ass. The poetic *Kojiki* image of a land god shining over heaven and earth was thus turned into that of an ugly creature in *Nihon shoki*.<sup>15</sup> The compilers apparently found the idea of an earthly god with a heavenly aura misleading because it could be confounded with what was meant by a 'heavenly deity' (*amatsukami*) in the sense of the *jingi* system of *ritsuryō* times.

### Sarutahiko and a Heaven in the Mountains

Based on the version in *Kojiki*, some scholars have nevertheless argued that Sarutahiko might really have been a solar deity. Tsukushi Nobuzane (1971), for example, has interpreted the episode at the crossroads of heaven as meaning that Sarutahiko is originally the sun spirit and therefore really the same as Amaterasu (Tsukushi 1971: 152, 158–59; 1970: 23, 62–65). Similarly, Matsumae Takeshi (1974) suggested that Sarutahiko was a solar deity worshipped in Ise and “a primitive form of Amaterasu”. Other scholars have also seen the deified sun in this god (Matsumae 1974: 178–80; 1978: 4–5; Sugano 1993: 156). However, Sarutahiko clearly introduces himself as an ‘earthly *kami*’ (*kunitsukami*) in *Kojiki*. This is an important point because it tells that not only ‘heavenly’ gods could display a heavenly aura. We should therefore rather assume that Sarutahiko is meant to represent the paradigm of a territorial deity in *Kojiki*,

15 NKBT67: 146–49; Aston 1: 77. *Sendai kuji hongū* combines the different versions of this episode from *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* (Bentley 2006: 227), which indicates that this work is of later date, as most scholars assume (see Teeuwen 2007a).

and that his 'shining' is related to his high status and to what could be called his 'terrestrial heaven' in the mountains of his territory.

The 'heavenly eight crossroads' (*ame no yachimata*) where Sarutahiko meets Ame no Uzume is a mythical image that had a correspondence in a typical landscape feature. English 'crossroads' corresponds to Japanese *chimata*, which basically means 'way-fork' and designates places where a way branches off in two or more directions, like at the confluent of two rivers. The Inner Shrine of the Ise complex was and still is situated where the two upper courses of the Isuzu meet. According to *Yamatohime seiki*, this was the site where Sarutahiko had been worshipped before the shrine for Amaterasu was built there. If so, then the two mountain valleys within the catchment basin of the two upper courses (figure 36) could have represented Sarutahiko's 'terrestrial heaven', while the land below was where his worshippers worked the fields which he had to protect and keep fruitful.

This relation could be seen as analogical to that between heaven and earth in terms of a macro-cosmography, where *ama* ('heaven') or Takama no hara was opposed to *kuni* ('land', 'territory') or to Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, respectively. Yet this is not to say that the terrestrial 'heaven' in the mountain



FIGURE 36 The southern mountains of the Isuzu Valley seen from north-east. The whole wide catchment area belongs to the Inner Shrine (Naikū)

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1994

was conceived of as a reflection of the macrocosmic heaven. Rather, Takama no hara, the mythical macro-heaven in the sky, was initially imagined as a large-scale projection of a terrestrial heaven such as could sometimes still be seen, for instance, in the upper-course area of a river.

Japanese scholars have often paid attention to this kind of correspondence. Tsuda Sōkichi (1966), the pioneer of the modern interpretation of ancient Japanese history and mythology, pointed out that the landscape of Takama no hara is characterised by the heavenly Mt. Kagu, the heavenly river Yasu and the heavenly high market – all images that were probably transferred to that heaven secondarily, whereas originally these names belonged to features of Yamato where the early emperors had their residences (Tsuda 1966). Tanaka Takashi (1966: 61–62) suggested that Princess Takuhata's burying of a 'divine mirror' at the upper reaches of the Isuzugawa (*Nihon shoki*, Aston I: 341) could have been the model for the famous myth of Amaterasu hiding in the heavenly rock house; and Tsukushi Nobuzane even argued that the wide cosmic stage of Japanese mythology could be understood as a projection of the ritual space of the Isuzu valley and that the respective myths were generally acceptable because people living in valleys all over Japan had the same basic type of belief (Tsukushi 1970: 48–50; Domenig 1992a). He also pointed out that a small basin in the upper course of the Isuzugawa is called Takama no hara and that many other instances are known where the word *ama* ('heaven') appears in place names (1970: 154–55). There was also the belief that Takama no hara is situated in the back mountains of Hasedera, a famous Buddhist temple that was intimately related to the cult at Mt. Miwa (Tsukushi 1970: 159). The Takamahiko Jinja of Katsuragi (Nara Prefecture) is also famous for this kind of belief; until the beginning of the Edo period many thought the mythical Takama no hara was situated there.

Such beliefs indicate that the notion of an earthly heaven has long been a familiar idea for some people in Japan. Takama no hara, the dwelling space of the heavenly gods of the god age mythology, was described as a landscape, and the idea of land gods residing in sacred mountains has persisted in some cases to the present day. Whereas normal shrine forests have come to serve only as appropriate settings for Shinto shrines, the early concept of '*kami* land' can still be associated with some of today's rare sacred groves that people are strictly forbidden from entering.<sup>16</sup>

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16 For a study on Shinto shrine forests, see Domenig 1997. A famous sacred grove that is still a taboo forest is the *kinsokuchi* area of the Ōmiwa Shrine (chapter 9).

*Ise sangū meisho zue* notes at the end of the eighteenth century that the mountain land to the south-east of the Inner Shrine (figure 36) was called Kamijiyama ('kami-way mountains') and another name was Amateruyama ('heaven-shining-mountains') (Sakurai 1929: 372). This too suggests that these mountains had once been thought to represent a sort of 'terrestrial heaven' inhabited by *kami*. The name Kamijiyama is first mentioned in a trustworthy document in 1181 (Sakurai 1969: 110) but may be much older and could ultimately date from a time when deities (*kami*) were still thought to be dwelling in these mountains. This may have been so when Sarutahiko was worshipped there before Amaterasu's shrine was built.

Originally, Amaterasu also had an agricultural aspect, for according to the god age mythology, one reason why she was once hiding in the heavenly rock cave was that Susanoo had broken down the ridges between her paddy fields and covered up the trenches (*Kojiki*, Philippi: 79). It has therefore been said that the foundation of the Outer Shrine for Toyouke, an agricultural deity, might have meant that Amaterasu's aspect as a deity of agriculture was cut off and transferred to the newly worshipped deity at the Outer Shrine (Tanaka 1966: 80–81). As the book of rites of the Outer Shrine writes, Amaterasu later instructed Emperor Yūryaku in a dream, saying:

I have settled down in the place that I have seen and searched when I was in Takama no hara. However, being in one place only, I suffer much and cannot taste the great food in peace. That is why I wish to have in my presence the Great Deity Toyouke who dwells in Hiji no Manai of the Land Tanba. (\**Toyukegū gishikichō*)

As the Outer Shrine was in all likelihood really founded in the eighth century, it was probably the ideology of the *ritsuryō* state that led to establishing a separate shrine for taking care of the agricultural aspect of the Ise Shrine. By that time, Amaterasu was probably thought to be dwelling in Takama no hara, while her mountains in the upper course of the Isuzu continued to serve her cult by collecting the waters that fructified the rice fields and by producing the timber needed for rebuilding her shrine every nineteen (later every twenty) years.

The name Kamijiyama remained in use, however, and inspired later visitors to dream of forgone times or to interpret the situation in other ways. When the Buddhist monk Saigyō temporarily lived in Ise in the twelfth century and heard that these mountains were called Kamijiyama, he saw in them an earthly trace of Buddha Dainichi Nyorai and made several poems about them. Saka Jūbutsu,

who visited the shrine as a pilgrim, also describes the scenery as mysterious in his diary dated 1342:

As we went on deep in the shade of the chamaecyparis groves there was not even the smoke of any habitation to be seen, and we felt as though we had suddenly transcended the bounds of this painful world, while the hills with their cloud-capped mystery transported us to the world of Taoist fairyland. (*Ise daijingū sankeiki*, trans. Saddler 1940: 47)

### The Precinct of the Inner Shrine (Naikū)

It is assumed that the present shrine precinct of the Inner Shrine (figures 37 and 38) corresponds more or less to the time when the Outer Shrine (Gekū) had been founded and both shrines simultaneously presented their 'book of rites' to the central government in 804 CE. According to *Kōtaijingū gishikichō*, Amaterasu's shrine is by that time identified as being situated "in the wide mountains of the upper Isuzugawa" and a century later an official document (*jingi kanpu*) dated 926, quoted in *Jingū zatsureishū*, defines the boundaries thus:

Boundaries of the Daijingū: timber mountains without human houses in the east, south and west, the Uji River in the north, the distance to the shrine more than one *ri* [533m in *ritsuryō* times], inside no dwelling houses, most strictly prohibited. (\*Sakamoto 1965: 24)

As the Uji River is identified as the northern boundary in that document, this is a case where the river, so long as it passed through a territory, could be named after that territory. The lower (northern) boundary of the shrine precinct was therefore at the point where the river Isuzu passed the upper boundary of Uji.

After the middle age, the taboo on building houses was no longer respected and the mountains were increasingly robbed of their trees. In 1922, the whole wide catchment area of the two upper-course rivers, except for a few patches, some 5,300 hectares, came to be established as *kyūiki-rin* or 'shrine area forest'. Since then, this area has been administered by the Shrine Forestry Office so that in the future it may again produce the timber for rebuilding the shrines every twenty years. A special zone of about 95 hectares within this shrine area (*kyūiki*) is the 'sacred precinct' (*shin'iki*), schematically indicated as an oval in

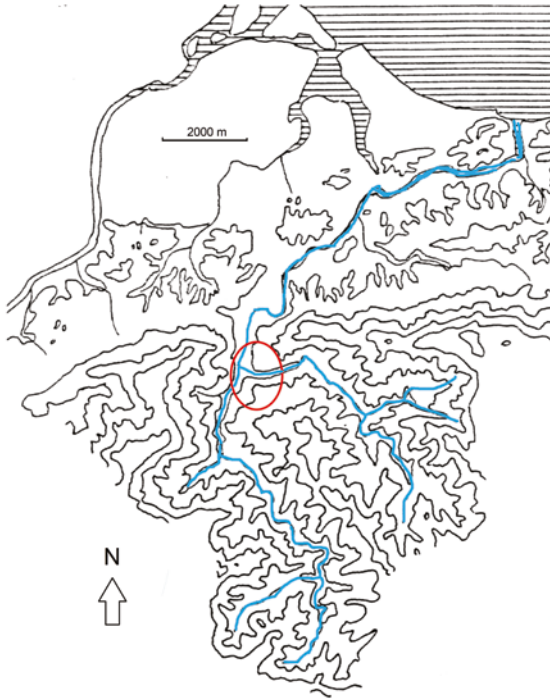


FIGURE 37

The Inner Shrine (Naikū) within the wide catchment area that belongs to the shrine as 'shrine precinct forest' (*kyūkirin*). The red oval indicates the area of the inner precinct (*shin'iki*), where most buildings are situated on the northern side of the river, which cuts the *shin'iki* in two parts

MAP BY THE AUTHOR

figure 37. More than half of this is still a tabooed sacred grove extending from the publicly accessible northern part across the river and up the slope of the central southern mountain (Sakamoto 1965: 23–27).

The site of the main shrine consists of two rectangular areas side by side that are alternately used for rebuilding the shrine every twenty years. On the site that is not used there is now only a small hut seen where the central pillar of the former main hall had been installed (as in figure 33, which shows the precinct of an important detached shrine of the Ise shrine complex).

The sacred precinct of the Inner Shrine is anomalous in its orientation. Usually, Shinto shrines have their mountain in the back, but this shrine has the main hall face its mountains in the south. Visitors approaching upriver must therefore finally turn back north to face the deity. The Outer Shrine faces south too, and so do most branch shrines and subordinate shrines, with minor variations. It is therefore the Ise Shrine system as a whole that faces south, an orientation that was presumably chosen because the Ise Shrine was an imperial institution and facing south was typical of the early capitals of Japan that followed Chinese custom.





FIGURE 38 View of the fenced inner precinct of the Inner Shrine (Naikū), showing the roof of the main hall and close behind it that of a treasure house. At the extreme right, the top of a roofed gate is visible

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2004

### From Simple to Complex Cult Systems

Early territories apparently used to have a single territorial cult place at the upper pole of a bipolar territory and the deity worshipped there was imagined to be dwelling in its mountain land higher up and guarding the human territory below. Like Sarutahiko at the crossroads of heaven, this kind of a deity could therefore be said to ‘shine’ above over ‘heaven’ and below over the land, its territory.

This earlier system changed, however, when a second cult place used to be established at the opposite lower pole of a territory, which had hitherto been associated with the first part of the foundation ritual and the entrance to the territory. By having a shrine there too, one naturally introduced a hierarchy in which the spatially lower cult place or deity was also lower in rank than the upper one. By subordinating further cult places separately to these two initial ones, one could establish a more complex system of the kind that is described in *Kōtaijingū gishikichō*. Finally, one could establish a whole second cult system of that kind, as described in *Toyukegū gishikichō*, and make it as a

whole subordinate to the first one, which would again make the system more complex.

It seems possible that such ranking systems already existed in the political associations of pre-Taika times,<sup>17</sup> but this does not have to mean that each territory already had a second cult place corresponding to the Asakuma Shrine in the Isuzu territory. It is significant that *Kōtaijingū gishikichō* does not mention the Asakuma Shrine in the foundation story quoted earlier, although it does mention it later as the first of the subordinate shrines and as a shrine that was founded by Yamatohime. It is the later *Yamatohime seiki* that integrates the founding of the Asakuma Shrine into the foundation story by mentioning it as the last shrine built at that time.

A presumably older way of taking care of the local land deities when introducing a new cult to an already settled territory was to continue worshipping the local *kami* at the upper pole of the territory. According to *Kōtaijingū gishikichō*, the Takimatsuri Jinja could keep its place at the upper pole, although it was an open-air sanctuary related to water (*taki*, 'waterfall') and thus to agriculture. It was listed as the very first of the subordinate shrines but had no hall, whereas the Asakuma shrine was listed in second place as the first among all that did have a hall (GRJJ 1, pp.18–20). Other local deities, however, were dislocated, some to the Asakuma Jinja. It might seem, therefore, that the founding of a second cult place for land deities at the lower pole of a territory could have been an innovation introduced by the *jingi* system of *ritsuryō* times.

The problem is that we do not really know how the 'heavenly' and 'earthly' shrines and deities were originally defined in the *jingi* cult. As Endō Jun writes in the online *Encyclopedia of Shinto*:

The meaning of the two expressions differs depending on the era and the materials in which they appear, and debate continues to revolve over attempt to achieve a comprehensive interpretation. [...] The first evidence of a clear demarcation in usage between the expressions *amatsukami* and *kunitsukami* appears in the legal commentary *Ryō no gige*, which states that the *amatsukami* include the deities of Ise, Kamo in Yamashiro, Sumiyoshi (in present-day Osaka), and the *kami* served by the

17 A comparable ranking system might already be meant where Queen Himiko's realm is described in *Wei zhi* (see the introduction). First, six northern 'states' are named, and one of them, Ito, is said to be ruled by a king who is subject to Queen Himiko for generations; then Queen Himiko is said to reside in Yamatai, and twenty-one other 'states' are named and said to belong to her realm (Wedemeyer 1930: 176–178).

Izumo no Kuni no miyatsuko. The *kunitsukami* are said to include deities of Ōmiwa, Ōyamato, Kamo in Katsuragi, and Ōnamuchi no kami.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, it is not known how the two concepts were defined when the texts were written. Even *Ryō no gige*, written in 833, gives only a few examples instead of a definition. Nevertheless, the two terms had a strong connotation of ‘above’ and ‘below’ and it is therefore not unlikely that they were also applied to spatial organisations, so that a heavenly and an earthly shrine would sometimes mark, respectively, the upper and lower pole of a bipolar territory.

### Sarutahiko’s Destiny

*Kōtaijingū gishikichō* does not mention Sarutahiko by name, and *Yamatohime seiki* identifies him with Okitama no kami who had a simple cult place without a hall in the fenced precinct of the Inner Shrine – hardly an adequate place for Sarutahiko and perhaps one that was only used for worshipping him from afar. On the other hand, it is quite likely that Sarutahiko was the anonymous ‘evil *kami* of Asaka’ that had to be pacified before Yamatohime could continue on her way to the river Isuzu. As we have seen, *Kōtaijingū gishikichō* only briefly mentions this incident by saying that the evil *kami* of Asaka was pacified when Yamatohime resided in the palace of Katai at Fujikata and that the envoy Abe no Ōnehiko served together with her. *Yamatohime seiki*, however, has two longer versions of this story, one of which was said to be from the lost *Ise fudoki*:

Ise no kuni fudoki. Amaterasu Ōkami went round from Mino and came to the palace of Katai at Fujikata of Ano. At that time there was an *araburu kami* on Mt. Asaka. Of a hundred travellers he killed fifty; of forty travellers he killed twenty. For this reason, Yamatohime no Mikoto did not go further in to the shrine at the upper course of the river Isuzu of Uji no mura in the district of Watarai, but did abstinence in the palace of Katai at Fujikata. At that time, Yamatohime no Mikoto dispatched Nakatomi no Ōkashima no Mikoto, Ise no Ōwakago no Mikoto and Imbe no Tamakushi no Mikoto to inform the emperor of the behaviour of the *araburu kami* of Mt. Asaka. The emperor spoke: “This land is the mountain that Ame no Hiwake no Mikoto, the far ancestor of Ōwakago no Mikoto, has subdued. Ōwakago no Mikoto, worship and pacify this *kami* and make Yamatohime

18 Kokugakuin Daigaku Digital Museum, *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, <https://d-museum.kokugakuin.ac.jp/eos/detail/?id=8513>.

no Mikoto go to the Isuzu no Miya.” Then he presented various offerings and sent them back. Ōwakago no Mikoto worshipped and entirely pacified this *kami*. Accordingly, he erected a *yashiro* at Asaka and worshipped. (\**Ise fudoki itsubun*, NKBT 2: 437–38)

Ōwakago was another name of Ōhatanushi who came to hold the position of the first head priest at the Ise Shrine. He was said to have also served as governor of the Ise Shrine’s legendary *shinkoku*, the ‘sacred territory’ east of the Isobe River which included the districts of Iino, Take and Watarai (Tanaka 1966: 157–58). Asaka (Azaka) was situated close to the north-western boundary of this *shinkoku* (figure 39).

The shrine register of *Engishiki* lists an Asaka Shrine with three seats but without telling who was worshipped there. Many scholars assume that the three seats were for the three spirits which came into being when Sarutahiko drowned in a fishing accident at Asaka, as told in *Kojiki*. Later, there were two Asaka Shrines in Asaka and both worshipped Sarutahiko. It appears, therefore, that in ancient times there may have been a taboo on mentioning Sarutahiko’s name in connection with the Ise Shrine and that this might be the reason why Sarutahiko became a deity with many alternative names, as Iida Michio (1998) has pointed out.

Considering the circumstances, the incident at Asaka might have been part of a historical land-ceding story. If so, the troubles blamed on the *araburu kami* of Asaka could reflect the armed resistance of Sarutahiko worshippers blocking the way to southern Ise when the imperial shrine was to be established there. The problem was perhaps solved with military force and peace was restored by the emperor’s offer of compensation in the form of gifts and by the founding of a shrine for Sarutahiko in Asaka, where Ōwakago would have to serve as the first priest.

The further destiny of Sarutahiko as a worshipped deity was strongly influenced by his representation as a guide in *Nihon shoki* (9.1). As a divine guide with a fantastic appearance, equipped with a fancy mask and head gear, and wearing colourful clothes, he is still often impersonated as leading a procession (figure 40; Domenig-Doi 1993). What is usually overlooked by seeing in Sarutahiko the divine guide is that his myth does not represent him as a guide going in front. As pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, he only offers to be a guide; it is guiding by pointing the way from afar that is meant when Ninigi later says that Sarutahiko was the one ‘who has served as a guide’ (Philippi: 143). Sarutahiko’s brief appearance is therefore an omen, and Uzume has to find out if it is a good one or a bad one. By revealing his name and saying that he is an

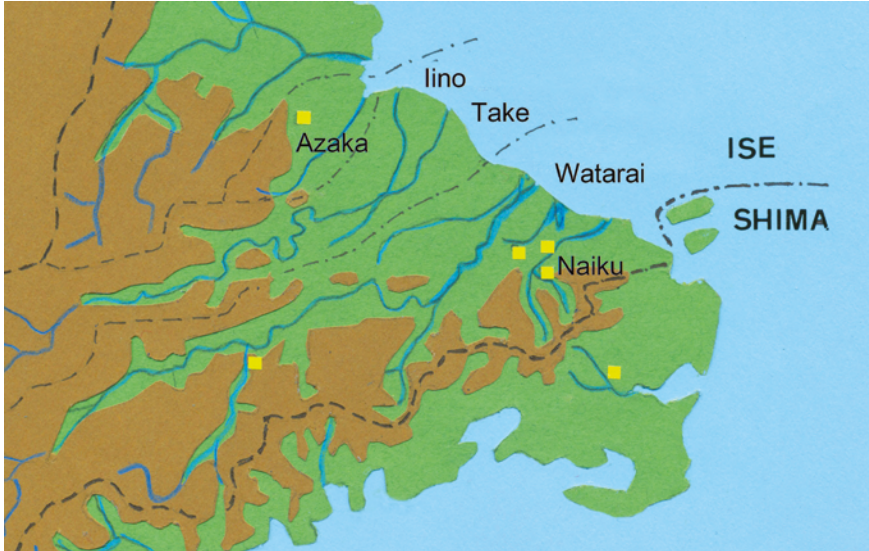


FIGURE 39 The southern part of the ancient Ise Province. The districts Iino, Take and Watarai formed the legendary *shinkoku* or 'sacred territory' of the Ise Shrine  
AUTHOR'S MAP

earthly deity and ready to serve, Sarutahiko indicates that his main function is that of a land owner whose appearance means that he welcomes Amaterasu to his territory in Ise where she will eventually settle down on earth.

In iconography, Sarutahiko's mythical image of a god shining over heaven and earth (*Kojiki*) is usually not represented. Perhaps the best way to visualise it is to think of a *chigi* cross in shrine architecture. While the upper parts of the oblique cross point up to the sky, the lower parts point to the ground and enclose what is below.

As regards Sarutahiko's drowning, briefly mentioned, *Kojiki* records it after Ninigi's descent to Takachiho, when Sarutahiko has returned with Ame no Uzume to Ise. In Ise, Uzume assumes Sarutahiko's name (Saru), and this is said to be the reason why her female descendants were called Sarume no kimi. Immediately after that, *Kojiki* mentions Sarutahiko for the last time. The text says that he was fishing in Azaka when he got his hand caught by a shellfish and sank into the sea. This accounts for the three names being given to his spirits, one referring to the bottom of the sea, one to the bubbles on the surface and one to the foam gushing forth. Ame no Uzume then 'sends Sarutahiko off' and returns to begin providing the court with fish from Shima (*Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 131; Philippi: 142; Torigoe 1973: 68).



FIGURE 40 Sarutahiko leading a procession at the summer festival of Kosuge. Nagano-ken, Iiyama-shi  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1971

Since scholars usually hesitated to consider that gods could die, many have interpreted Sarutahiko's drowning as an allusion to a ritual or, as Matsumura Takeo has suggested, to "some sort of ritual-dramatic pantomime, perhaps a fisherman's rite to ensure an abundant catch" (Philippi: 143n10). The phrase saying that Ame no Uzume "sent Sarutahiko off and returned" was therefore interpreted to mean that Uzume accompanied Sarutahiko to Cape Kasasa in Kyushu and then returned to Ise (NKBT 1: 131n9; Philippi: 143). However, Sarutahiko is not said to have gone to Cape Kasasa and the text in *Kojiki* only says that Uzume sent him off and returned. We must therefore consider the fact that 'to send off' could also mean 'to send to the grave' or 'to attend a funeral' (JKDJ: 146, *okuru* 2). The context supports this interpretation. First,

Sarutahiko's name (a part of it) is transferred to his companion Uzume and her descendants, as a legacy; then the fishing accident accounts for his three spirit names; and finally, he is 'sent off' and never mentioned again. Together, this amounts to a strong statement meaning that Sarutahiko was thought to have died by drowning and that Uzume was meant to have attended his funeral. This apparently still unorthodox interpretation is also given by Iida Michio in his study of Sarutahiko.<sup>19</sup> It is likewise upheld at the Tsubaki Daijinja of modern Suzuka City in Mie Prefecture, the ancient main shrine of Sarutahiko worship. This shrine has a keyhole-shaped tomb from protohistoric times in its precinct which is traditionally regarded as the tomb of Sarutahiko.<sup>20</sup>

Here we have, therefore, a case comparable to that of Iwa no Ōkami. In history, both figures could have been powerful regional chiefs who were posthumously worshipped and therefore called 'gods' in stories about their human lives. The difference is that the deified Sarutahiko also got a place and function in the god age mythology and that his death in a fishing accident was therefore represented as the death of a god that happened in the god age.

### Summing Up

Although the Ise Shrine was probably founded in the second half of the seventh century (Teeuwen and Breen 2017: 236), not in protohistoric times as *Nihon shoki* claims, its foundation story is relevant here because it suggests what distinguished early territorial cults from the later *jingi* cults and from historical Shinto. *Kojiki* represents the figure of Sarutahiko as the paradigm of a territorial deity of the anthropomorphic kind whose function in the god age mythology may have been based on his human career as a great chief in ancient Ise. When Sarutahiko welcomes Ninigi at the heavenly crossroads and offers himself as a guide, this is a good omen meaning that he invites Amaterasu to his territory in Ise. By having him return to Asaka, the author of *Kojiki* seems to suggest that the shrine of Amaterasu was going to be built there, but the Ise Shrine was later built further south in Ise. This may have caused the incident of the evil *kami* of Asaka, which had to be solved before the shrine could be built there.

Yamatohime's stereotype question "what is the name of your land?" clearly represents a case of repeated land-claiming, while the chiefs' equally stereotype

19 Iida 1998. Chamberlain translated that Sarutahiko "was drowning in the brine of the sea", but he apparently did not mean that the god was meant to have died by drowning (1919: 139n6).

20 Okada Yoneo 1981: 279.

response – telling the land name together with a pillow word and offering fields and people for the shrine (*mitoshiro* and *kanbe*) – is another instance of what Okada Seishi (1962) has called a ‘a ceremony of submission and loyalty’. The story thus offers a significant analogy to what Empress Genmei did in 713 by ordering the compilation of the *fudoki*. The pillow words added to the land names had the same function as the explanations of place names in the *fudoki*. Both could be understood as allusions to foundation stories of old territories. Even vague and mysterious references to such stories were considered significant.

A third point that must be emphasised is that the story of Yamatohime in the version of *Yamatohime seiki* clearly indicates that the two parts of the land-taking ritual had to be performed at two different places in the Isuzu valley, namely at the lower and upper ends of the territory of Uji.



## Characteristics of Territorial Cults

So far, the chapters in this book have shown that various stories and myths in the ancient texts of Japan support the model of the two-part founding ritual introduced in the introduction and further explained in chapter 2. By claiming that the basic local cults were territorial cults, I have assumed a view that has also been held by other scholars, most consistently by Harada Toshiaki; it is mainly the two-part founding ritual and the question of its consequences that open up new perspectives in this book.

This chapter is intended to summarise the important points and to give a tentative characterisation of the territorial cults of pre-Taika times. In doing so, additional materials and subjects will be considered that have not been discussed in the preceding chapters. Having paid special attention to the function of divination as an important element that is often overlooked or neglected, it is best to begin with an overview of what has already been said about this particular subject.

### Divination as the Primary Rite

In order to understand the concept of *kami* addressed in the land-taking ritual, it is essential to distinguish between *kami* that were not (or not yet) worshipped and *kami* that were worshipped at a sacred place. *Kami* of the first kind could perhaps be imagined to exist anywhere, but they were of little religious significance as long as they were not thought to be related to the places used or intended to be used by human settlers or travellers.

One occasion for making *kami* objects of worship was when one intended to take possession of land for human use in a wilderness that was not yet opened up. On such occasions, it was apparently natural to think that *kami* of the not-yet-worshipped kind would be dwelling in the area as owners of the land. Based on this belief, one would propose a deal to these *kami* according to which they must move away to a place beyond the area to be opened up, where they would be recompensed by being worshipped as the guardian deities of the land newly turned to human use (chapter 2).

As one could not expect to get an answer in human speech from such spirit-owners of the land, one method to propose such an agreement was to stipulate the terms by an oath (OJ *ukehi*) and to seek the spirits' answer in a

sign invoked by divining. Since the basic terms of the deal were always more or less the same it was perhaps not even necessary to spell them out each time; it might have been enough to divine about the land to be opened up, and a good omen would be understood to mean that the *kami* agree with one's intentions on the condition that they would be worshipped afterwards as long as the territory was held.

In the introduction, I argued that numerous 'place name origin stories' (*chimeikigen setsuwa*) in the *fudoki* allude to acts of divining. Even the compilation of the *fudoki* can be understood as a formal act of question-and-answer that was intended to have old territories in the provinces deliver up place name origin stories as declarations of loyalty to the new *ritsuryō* state. Chapter 1 dealt with references to divination in the *fudoki* and in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Particular attention was paid to the throwing and falling motifs as referring to acts of divining and to a story that mentions the use of a floating wisteria branch to divine the place where land should be claimed. Based on this source, other stories mentioning floating things in connection with land-claiming (*hashi*, *ukihashi*, *hashifune*) have been discussed to show that they can be reasonably interpreted in the same way. Even Ninigi's heavenly floating bridge could be newly understood in this sense (chapter 5).

The main issue of chapter 2 was to show that the story of Matachi and Yato no kami is incomplete as a land-making story because it lacks a clear reference to initial divination. In chapter 3, the story of a claiming ceremony on Ibo Hill was found to include an allusion to 'falling divination', and I argued that this ceremony marked the beginning of a larger land-taking story that ended at Iwa Village with the foundation of the Iwa Shrine high up in the same river area.

Whereas chapters 1, 2 and 3 emphasised the importance of divination, chapter 4 showed that two of the central myths of Japanese mythology – the land-making myth (*kunitsukuri shinwa*) and the land-ceding myth (*kuniyuzuri shinwa*) – likewise support the reconstruction of the two-part foundation ritual. In the land-making myth, the aspect of divination was found in Sukunabikona's strange character and in the puzzling fact that he can retire before the work is concluded. Taking this for a genuine element of the myth, we came to the understanding that this mysterious figure was meant to represent Ōkuninushi's diviner. The fact that Ōkuninushi must finally worship the 'great master of the spirits' (Ōmononushi) on Mt. Mimoro was also found to correspond to the theoretical model.

The land-ceding myth, on the other hand, is the crucial charter myth of the god age mythology. It begins with a verbal questioning of the ruler Ōkuninushi, who as an anthropomorphic god can answer in human speech. The questioning is therefore equivalent to an act of divining and ends with Ōkuninushi's

agreement to retire on condition of being worshipped by the heavenly descendants in a shrine they must build for him. This condition also corresponds to what the land-taking ritual requires. It is later met with the building of the Izumo Shrine, which according to *Kojiki* follows after a long time in the reign of Emperor Suinin.

Chapters 4, 5 and 7 showed that the motif of initial divination corresponds to the questioning of the chief of a territory that was already occupied by other settlers, whereas chapter 6 highlighted the repeated acts of divining which introduce the story leading to Emperor Suinin's order to build a shrine in Izumo (*Kojiki*). This confirms the thesis that this shrine was indeed meant to be the one which Ōkuninushi had requested in the land-ceding myth. Analysing the land-pulling myth (*kunihiki shinwa*), the repeated motif of the self-answered question made us aware that the etiological myth had been merged with a land-making story that tells of the repeated extension of a territory. This opened the way to the new interpretation that a former version of this story probably existed but was modified to fit the political interests of the Izumo kokusō. In chapter 7, finally, it was the understanding that questioning the chief of Uji was equivalent to an act of divining which, together with a critical focus on space, has made us see that the territory of Uji in the Isuzu valley also had a bipolar structure created by the two-phase land-taking ritual.

Ultimately, the focus on divining has helped us to understand what divining really meant in the old context of land-taking; it meant considerably more than just asking whether or not taking possession of land would be good or bad. The initial question was meant to propose, tacitly or explicitly, the usual terms of a cult relationship with the local spirits, which would become valid if the answer was yes. Consequently, getting a positive answer through divining for taking possession of land meant that the wild nature spirits agreed to these terms. To say that someone had divined and received a positive answer could thus mean that a cult contract had been made through which the local spirits had been given the status of divine beings that henceforth had to be worshipped. What remained to be done was to actively take possession and start worshipping these spirits as local deities.

### Variants of the Cult Contract

The making of a 'cult contract' is, however, variously represented in the ancient texts. An often-recurring pattern is that a serious problem is interpreted as a curse sent by some deity, whereupon either the emperor would perform divination to find out the name of the deity, or the deity would reveal its name in

a dream (dream divination), saying that the curse will be lifted if he or she is worshipped at a specific place. Then the place is searched and a cult is founded for that deity. Such stories have the fact that it is the deity who proposes the cult contract in common.

Good examples where no curse is involved are found in *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*, where the foundation of the Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine is set at the time when Jingū Kōgō returns from her legendary conquest of Shiragi. In reality, the foundation of the shrine probably happened much later, so that the following sentences may mirror conditions in early *ritsuryō* time that are backdated to the protohistoric period.<sup>1</sup> The text says that on the occasion mentioned, the three deities of Suminoe wished to be worshipped in a new shrine. Staying at Nagara of Naniwa (a place in present Osaka), they first climb Mt. Ikoma and dedicate the sacred mountain area (*kannabi yama*). Then they declare that they wish to dwell in a shrine at Nunakura no Nagaoka no Tamade no O, a place on the land below that mountain (Tanaka 1998: lines 309–312). In a later section of the text that deals with the ‘entrustment of mountains and rivers’, we read:

Ōkami made a declaration, saying: “The places are entrusted as desired: the great land/s according to the emperor’s wish, the great mountain/s according to our wish.” Again, [they] made an oath (*uket*), saying: “Where the mist of cloud-sent hail rises we shall make the boundaries.” Again, they pledged, “if you worship us with this pure holy *sakaki* of black wood, with products of the land (*kunitsumono*), fruits from grasses (*kusa no mi*) and the like, [...] we shall likewise peacefully protect the emperor’s land below heaven [...]” At that time Yatagarasu said: “Where the mist of cloud-sent hail rises, without deciding spring or fall, I shall seven times fly round and ask and decide the names of places.” Thus saying, he established claims. (\**Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki*)<sup>2</sup>

Here, the deities of Suminoe refer to a division of the land between them and the emperor, claiming the mountain/s for themselves and leaving the land/s below to the emperor, while promising under oath to protect the emperor’s

1 *Nihon shoki* mentions this shrine as receiver of imperial offerings first in the year 686 (NKBT 68: 478; Aston II: 378).

2 Tanaka 1998: lines 409–16. The last sentence was quoted in chapter 7 as a case of asking the land name as a form of claiming. In a later section of this work, we read: ‘If you worship with fruits of our mountain and products of the land, we shall safely protect the emperor’s world below heaven’ (Tanaka 1998: lines 453–45).

realm on the condition they are worshipped by him.<sup>3</sup> This is of course the same as the division of the land in the story of Yato no kami, using a (probably older) form that gives the initiative to the human settler (chapter 2).

In the same sense, it would have been possible to say that the human founder Jingū Kōgō proposed the terms of the deal with Suminoe no Ōkami and that she performed divination to get the deity's agreement. But this is not how the compilers of *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki* later wished to represent this deal. They preferred to turn the human decision into a divine revelation made under oath. Alternatively, they could have referred to dream divination and let the deities express their wish by speaking to Jingū Kōgō in a dream, or they could have said the empress used a human medium. That they let the deities express their wishes under oath shows that the oath or divining oath was still known as an important element of a cult contract.

A cult vow made by a deity (*kami no chikai*) is sometimes also mentioned in later Shinto texts. As Wilhelm Gundert has pointed out, Shinto noh dramas used the word *chikai* to mention the cult vow as “a matter so natural that one could be tempted to take it for a genuine Shinto concept”, but it refers to the ‘vow of salvation for all living beings’ (*shujō saido no seigan*), a concept of Mahāyāna Buddhism (\*Gundert 1925: 184–86; see also Hayashi 1992). In light of what has been discussed here, however, the fact that the Buddhist idea was so naturally accepted, even in noh dramas about Shinto deities, may have had its reason in the circumstance that the cult vow had also been a characteristic of pre-Taika territorial cults, and people still remembered that because the new state ritual was still based on the idea of such contracts.

### The Cult Contract and the State Ritual after the Taika Reform

The cult contract was a characteristic of territorial cults, but this is not to say that it played no part after the Taika Reform when the land for rice cultivation came to be owned by the state ruled by the emperor. To the contrary, the abolition of private property in rice land meant that it was now the emperor who had to fulfil the obligations of all the many cult contracts that were traditionally still associated with the land everywhere in his realm. A passage in

3 Knowing that the Sumiyoshi Shrine as a powerful religious institution had ‘sacred territories’ (*shinchi*) in several provinces, we can assume that Yatagarasu decides many boundaries and apparently does so for the Suminoe deities. For the ancient territories of the Sumiyoshi Taisha, see Watanabe 1961 and Ponsonby-Fane 1954: 339–41. See also the example of the territory at Fujie no Ura discussed in chapter 1.

*Nihon shoki* refers to this when it mentions a vow that was taken “at the great beginning”.

As briefly mentioned in chapter 4, *Nihon shoki* reports that in the reign of Emperor Sujin an open-air sanctuary was founded for Yamato no Ōkunitama (the ‘wild’ spirit of Ōnamuchi), but that the cult of this deity was first neglected (Aston I: 152–53). Later, *Nihon shoki* quotes a different version of this story, which says that the problem was solved in the reign of the next emperor, Suinin. According to this other story, the god, here called the Great God of Yamato, appeals to a vow that had been taken at the time of the first beginning (*motohajime no toki*), according to which

Amaterasu Ōkami will rule the entire plain of heaven; the imperial sovereigns (*sumemima no mikoto*) will devotedly rule the many *mitama no kami* of Ashihara no Nakatsukuni; and I will rule the chiefs of the great earth [...] But although the former sovereign, Emperor Mimaki, worshipped the heavenly and earthly deities, he has not yet fully searched the root of it; he stopped short at branches and leaves. Therefore, that emperor was short-lived. (\**Nihon shoki*, NKBT 67: 270)<sup>4</sup>

The vow mentioned here lays down that Amaterasu will rule over heaven, as Izanagi has already declared when he distributed the parts of the world among his three children, but it also defines the relation between the emperors and the many *mitama no kami* on the one side, and between the emperors and Ōnamuchi (alias Yamato no Ōkunitama) on the other side. This cult vow therefore clearly regards the foundation of the *jingi* system of *ritsuryō* times, according to which the emperor had to present offerings to all registered shrines in the country and also had to worship Ōnamuchi as the god who had ceded the rule of the land to their heavenly ancestors. If this god calls himself the ruler of “the chiefs of the great earth”, this means that he claims to be worshipped as the ruler over the land spirits of all individual territories.<sup>5</sup>

4 \*NKBT 67: 270. Aston’s translation (I: 177) is based on a different edition of the text and does not include the third sentence as a part of the oath.

5 This refers to the *kunitama* or *kunitama no kami* (land spirits or land spirit *kami*) (NKBT 67: 271n24). In Japanese folk religion they are also called *jinushi no kami* (literally, land master deities) and *chi no kami* (earth spirits, land spirits; see chapter 9). The land-making myth pictures Ōnamuchi as the god who opened up the land when it was still a wilderness and who finally had to worship Ōmononushi, the great master of the (land-) spirits. At Miwa, however, the spirit of Ōnamuchi came to be conflated with that of Ōmononushi, so that he too became master of all the land spirits (chapter 4).

The quoted agreement from the ‘time of the first beginning’ requires that the emperor had to properly worship Ōnamuchi alias Ōkuninushi as a consequence of the land-ceding myth. But apart from that, the emperors also had to satisfy the many deities that had come to be classified as either heavenly deities or earthly deities (*amatsukami* and *kunitsukami*). To do so became the subject of a great state ritual, which according to *Engishiki*, the Procedures of the Engi period (901–922), involved offerings that were presented three times a year to the 3,132 deities of the shrines registered in that work (Bock 1970). As Mark Teeuwen has pointed out, to do so was the central idea of the *jingi* cult and represented a radical departure from Tang Chinese rituals, but why it was done has hardly been studied yet (Teeuwen 2012: 74, 75). Based on the materials discussed in the preceding chapters, it seems clear that this costly ritual was due to the fact that land ownership had traditionally been based on a sacred contract between the human founder of the territory and the local land deity as spirit-owner of the land. When the Jingikan, the Office of Jingi Religion, made offerings to these many shrines in the name of the emperor, this was therefore meant to acknowledge the traditional contracts with the *kami* who were still thought to really own the land.

We have to consider what would have happened to the obligations from such a contract when a territory was later abandoned or taken over by someone else. If the land was abandoned it could gradually return to a state of wilderness, so that the nature spirits could be supposed to occupy it again. In this case, the contract would have been naturally dissolved and a new human pioneer (or the former user) could have later opened up the area again by making a new cult contract with the nature spirits.

This is the reason why land-taking rites have sometimes survived to the present day in the context of shifting cultivation, where the land was often left fallow for ten years or more and the spirits were thought to have occupied it again by the time the same plot was reopened. In the case of wet rice cultivation, claiming rites were usually not performed repeatedly because the fields were worked annually and therefore thought to offer no quiet residence for spirits.<sup>6</sup>

By turning all cultivated land into state property, the ancient *ritsuryō* state either had to take over the obligations from these many pre-existing cult contracts or risk divine punishments from countless local deities. The fact that the government chose the first option, in spite of its inclination to receive continental influence in so many other respects, shows that the old territorial paradigm continued to be valid for some time after the Taika Reform. It is therefore

6 Ypes 1932: 400; Domenig 2014: 89, 33–56 and *passim*. Such rites could, however, be repeated in dramatic performances at the yearly festival of a shrine, as I suggested in chapter 2.

not a futile undertaking if we study the oldest texts dating from that time with a focus on the traces of the ideology which in protohistoric Japan was typical of territorial cults.

It is also true, however, that the belief in the necessity of this expensive ritual, or the fear from divine punishment that would be caused by neglecting it, was soon diminishing among those who were not directly responsible. In 914, a statesman called Miyoshi Kiyoyuki presented a memorial to the throne in which he complained, among other things, that on the occasion of the three great annual festivals the representatives of shrines who visit the capital to receive and carry home the state offerings partly keep the offerings for themselves and partly sell them to traders waiting right in front of the Jingikan.<sup>7</sup>

### Founder Worship

Based on the materials discussed in the preceding chapters, it would seem that the custom of worshipping founders of territories can be regarded as another characteristic feature of at least some territorial cults in protohistoric times. What remains an open question is to what extent this custom was already practised.

I see no reason why Ame no Hiboko and Iwa no Ōkami should not be considered human land-claimers that were worshipped after death and therefore also called *kami* in stories about their human lifetime. Sarutahiko, who died in a fishing accident (*Kojiki*), was probably also imagined as a human chief who was worshipped after death before he could appear in a myth at the crossroads of heaven. But it probably took some time until the idea of this kind of deification was as common as suggested by the following oracle, which the Great Deity Niu was said to have revealed when Kūkai founded the Buddhist monastery of Koyasan in 816:

I have been a follower of the way of the Shinto deities, and I have hoped for power and blessings for a long time. Now you have come to this place, much to my great fortune. In the past when I was a human being, the deity Kekunisuera no mikoto gave me about ten thousand square measures of land for houses. [...] I wish to donate this to you for all eternity as an expression of my belief. (*Kongōbuji konryū shugyō engi*, trans. Tanabe 1999: 357)

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<sup>7</sup> Bock 1970: 13–14. The three great festivals were the Toshigoi in the second month and the Tsukinami in sixth and twelfth months.



This is not a case of euhemerism but a literary reference to posthumous deification in a text dated 968. In spite of the Buddhist context, the Shinto god apparently follows old native custom when he refers to “the past when I was a human being”. How long it took until the founders of small territories were also frequently worshipped as ancestor deities, as in many folk traditions of later times, we cannot know because the relevant sources are not old enough. In the case of Matachi, the *fudoki* does not say that he was worshipped after death as the founder of the territory; to the contrary, as we have seen, the text states that his descendants continued to worship Yato no kami after the Taika Reform.

On the other hand, there is the case of the ambivalent image of Ōmononushi worshipped at Mt. Miwa. *Nihon shoki* pictures this god as a *kami* who once appeared as a great serpent and in another story changes from a little snake into a man (Aston I: 158, 347). In this case, the double image can be explained by assuming that Ōmononushi, representing the theriomorphic (animal-shaped) aspect, came to be conflated with the anthropomorphic Ōnamuchi. Based on such examples, Matsumae Takeshi has suggested that the worship of clan ancestors might have begun by worshipping a nature *kami* and eventually designating one ancestor as the clan's founding hero and claiming that he was descended from the *kami* worshipped (1993: 340).

Harada Toshiaki did not deny the importance of ancestor worship, but he argued that it did not exist in the most ancient times. As already noted in the introduction, according to him, the original concept of ‘deity’ (*kami*) referred to no more than a mysterious and vague presence (Harada 1970: 100) and *ujigami* was originally the name of the clan deity (*uji*, ‘clan’) as a territorial village guardian deity and “did not have much individuality to be distinguished from others by means of a proper name”. As he also pointed out (Harada 1959: 216), most of the shrines registered in Englishiki “are named after the places and a few after natural phenomena, and only a very small number of them located in districts near the capital, Izumo and a few other provinces, have names”.<sup>8</sup> Yet over time this clan deity came to be viewed as the deified ancestor, a change that Harada thought was based on the custom of deifying a human being in a shrine in response to a person's great contributions to the state (Harada 1959:

8 Harada's point is supported by investigations that were made when the national shrine system was reorganised in the early Meiji period (after 1868). According to the *Tokusen-jinmyōchō* (‘genealogy of recognised deity names’), the identity of the deity worshipped (*saijin*) was not known in 45 per cent of the shrines registered in *Englishiki* and the authentic place was not known in 15 per cent of the shrines registered when that investigation was made (Nishikawa 1973: 35). Since then, many of these shrines have probably adopted a named deity from the god age mythology as their *saijin*. For the authentication problem of *shikinaisha* shrines, see also Watanabe 2008.

216–17). This latter kind of worship corresponds to what Marek Winiarczyk (2013) calls *euergetism* in his scholarly work on Euhemerus. Referring to the deification of Greek heroes and to traditions about gods creating their own cults, he points out that a person could also be called a god if he became a benefactor (εὐεργέτης) and that euergetism could be found in the works of Homer:

Euhemerism, *sensu stricto*, is the reduction of Olympian gods to the role of deified people, but it does not specifically concern the apotheosis of people who had served humanity well as this view had already existed before Euhemerus. (Winiarczyk 2013: 162, 164–65)

In Japan, the historically oldest, well-documented case of *euergetism* is the worship of Michi no kimi Obitona, the governor of the province of Chikugo. According to his obituary, which is recorded in *Shoku nihongi* under the date Yōrō 2 (718), Obitona taught the people how to cultivate fields and plant gardens; he set up rules for the raising of chickens and pigs, had dams and ponds constructed and propagated irrigation. The people profited so much of his governorship that on his death in the year 718 the farmers worshipped him.<sup>9</sup>

Okada Shōji (2013) draws attention to the fact that the worship of humans was a cult category in China that was not taken over into the *jingi* system of *ritsuryō* Japan. He mentions the exceptional case of the worship of Michi no kimi Obitona and also that of another entry in *Shoku nihongi*, dated Tenpyō 2 (730 CE), which says that when people assembled and revered the souls of the dead in the provinces of Aki and Suō, this was prohibited. As for mausoleums, Okada points out that the Kashii-byō, where Chūai Tennō and Jingū Kōgō were worshipped, was turned into a shrine only after the middle of Heian period. Similarly, the Tonomine-byō, where the remains of Fujiwara no Kamatari were laid to rest, became a shrine only in Kamakura period (Okada 2013: 24–25).<sup>10</sup>

Needless to say, such statements and conclusions regard the times covered by written history and cannot exclude the possibility that before that time and even before the arrival of Buddhism in the archipelago there was a custom of posthumous deification in the sense of merging the identity of the human founder of a territory with that of the nature *kami* the founder had started to worship when opening up a territory. Yanagita Kunio and other ethnographers

9 For an Italian translation of the relevant passage, see Migliore (2012: 98).

10 Another author, Okada Seishi (1997: 264), claims that except for *goryō* belief – persons who were posthumously deified because they were thought to have the potential to bring a curse after their death – there was no worship of humans as gods in Japan before the end of Muromachi period (early sixteenth century).

and students of Japanese folk religion have collected countless sources telling of families all over Japan who traditionally worship a ‘deity of their estate’ (*yashikigami*) and often identify that deity with an ancestor who opened up their land long ago (see chapter 9). Then there are the studies by researchers dealing with sources from the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa Prefecture), who tell of immigrant settlers who opened up the land long ago and came to be deified after death (Ouweland 1985; Baksheev 2008). However, scholars approaching Japanese religions as historians usually seem to ignore these traditions because of the lack of trustworthy documents to prove their antiquity.

On the other hand, it seems to me that the ancient texts provide sufficient evidence to understand that a practice of posthumous deification in the sense mentioned here must have existed before these texts were compiled. Instead of assuming Chinese influence to explain the well-documented later cases of posthumous deification in Japan (Boot 2000: 144), we should rather consider that the practice known in China may have been known in early Japan as well and ask why it came to be no longer tolerated in the *jingi* cult of the *ritsuryō* state.

The view I wish to advocate here differs from Harada’s only in that I assume that the process of worshipping important founders of territories began in the protohistoric period. This is what the land-claiming stories in the *fudoki* suggest to me, as they often feature the claimers of territories as gods. To explain why the two identities could come to merge, we can imagine, for instance, that the founders of territories were often thought to deserve burials in the sacred land they had dedicated to the *kami*. Since the nature spirit and the spirit of the deceased founder were then worshipped at the same place, the two identities could come to merge in the course of time. Eventually, the anthropomorphic aspect might have become so dominant that the nature spirit aspect was often forgotten and the founder’s spirit continued to be worshipped as the ancestor of his descendants.

### Shrine and Tomb

The story of Kabire no mine in *Hitachi fudoki*, briefly discussed in chapter 2, regards the cult of a deity called Tachihayao who was ritually moved from a pine tree in the plain to the nearby Mt. Kabire, where his (new) cult place (*yashiro*) was a stone enclosure in which there were “many descendants”. Assuming that this stone enclosure was an ancient tomb (as suggested in NKBT 2: 86n7), we can imagine that Tachihayao was really a human immigrant who had opened

up land in the plain and was buried in that stone enclosure on Mt. Kabire. After his death, his spirit was worshipped on a pine tree in the plain, but when his presence in the plain was later felt to be disturbing, his spirit was ritually asked to move to the place of his tomb where in the meantime many of his descendants had been buried (*Hitachi fudoki*, NKBT 2: 85, 87).

Elsewhere, *Hitachi fudoki* mentions a sacred grove (*mori*) with a 'stone house' that may have been a tomb as well (NKBT 2: 39), and *Sumiyoshi taisha jindaiki* knows of two tombs of imperial princes that were situated in the ancient sacred mountain (*kannabi*) of the Sumiyoshi Grand Shrine (Tanaka 1998: lines 55–58). Such sources suggest that there was a time when there was no taboo on having a shrine close to a tomb or a tomb in the precinct of a shrine. Later on, this was different. The tenth-century *Engishiki* contains a rule (*shiki*) that forbids burying the dead in shrine precincts: "At all times, within the perimeter of shrine precincts no trees may be cut nor the dead be buried" (Bock 1970: 117). In an effort to deny that clan ancestors used to be deified, as Yanagita Kunio had claimed in his famous *Yamamiya-kō* (1947), Matsumae Takeshi has argued that it is not common "to find graves, on mountains or elsewhere, that are believed to be the *shintai* where the kami reside" (1993: 337). This is probably correct, but the *shintai* could have been kept separately in a shrine at the foot of the mountain while the dead body was buried on the mountain which originally may have been dedicated to a nature spirit.

Seen in this perspective, it would seem that graves may once have been a rather common sight in shrine precincts, particularly in the forests of important shrines. Despite the well-known general tendency of Shinto to avoid anything to do with death, it is a fact that there are still quite a few Shinto shrines that have an old tomb in their sacred precinct or mountain, some of them being dated to the Kofun period (300–600 CE). To mention only a few,<sup>11</sup> there is the Izushi Jinja with the forbidden grove (*kinsokuchi*) that was said to contain the tomb of Ame no Hiboko; the Kibitsuuhiko Jinja with a burial mound (*misasagi*) of Kibitsuuhiko; the Mononobe Jinja of Ōda City with the main god's tomb in its shrine forest (figure 41); the Tsubaki Daijinja of Suzuka with a *kofun* that is said to be the tomb of Sarutahiko; and the Izumo Daijingū of Kameoka, which has an ancient stone burial chamber (*yokoana kofun*) in its forest about 60 metres straight behind the fence of the main building (figure 42).

11 The following five shrines were once *ichinomiya*, the highest-classed shrines of their province (Tajima, Bizen, Iwami, Ise and Tanba, respectively). Except for the Tsubaki Daijinja, I have visited them and seen their tomb. For the Tsubaki Daijinja, see Okada Yoneo 1981: 279 and <http://tsubaki.or.jp/keidai/>.



FIGURE 41 Tomb of the deity worshipped at the Mononobe Jinja of Ōda-shi, Shimane Prefecture. The tomb about 40 metres behind the shrine is said to be protected by a snake

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1994

Considering such cases, the *Engishiki* rule mentioned earlier cannot mean that there were no graves in shrine precincts. Rather, it means that under the *ritsuryō* government it was eventually no longer allowed to make *new* tombs in shrine precincts. Ōba Iwao, the founder of Shinto archaeology, found so many tombs and graves near shrines that he saw two constituents in a village deity (*ujigami*): the ancestor or the deity in which the ancestor believed, and the ancestor's tomb as an object of worship. The first constituent would be rooted in the worship of primitive divine spirits with natural things as objects of reverence; the second one would have occasionally led to shrines with tombs as objects of worship (Ōba 1967: 102–117).

One of Ōba's most impressive examples for the latter case is the Owaribe Jinja in Nagoya, where Ame no Hoakari no Mikoto is worshipped as the ancestor of the Owari family. This shrine was built right on top of an ancient tomb on the very top of Mt. Higashidani, from where one has a good view of the Owari plain below. About a hundred other ancient tombs distributed over the lower parts of the western mountainside might have been from the same family.<sup>12</sup>

12 Ōba 1967: 115–17, 223. I rather presume that the shrine was originally at the foot of that mountain, while only the most important grave was on the top.



FIGURE 42 An ancient tomb in the shrine forest of the Izumo Daijingu of Kameoka-shi  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1994

Thinking of such cases, it is difficult to believe that the worship of departed souls (*goryō*) and ceremonies for the dead have always been “quite different in nature from the ancient worship of the deities of communities and clans”.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it might have been quite common in protohistoric times to bury a great chief in the sacred grove of the territory he had founded, so that eventually his spirit might come to merge there with the nature spirit he had started to worship when he opened up the land. Knowing that the worship of humans was a cult category in China which was not taken over into the *jingi* system of *ritsuryō* Japan, it is not surprising that *Engishiki* prohibited burials in shrine precincts. But again, we cannot conclude from this that there was no practice of worshipping human founders before the Taika Reform.

### The Guardian Deity Is Excluded from the Land Opened Up

According to the cult contract, the *kami* must stay in their ‘land above’, which is usually a forest or a wooded part of a mountain from where they are to protect the land below. They are not allowed to return to the land, however, except when invited on special occasions. If they nonetheless return, they violate the

<sup>13</sup> Harada 1959: 217. For the contrary view, see Yanagita 1946; 1947; 1988.

unwritten law of the land and can be punished by the settler. This is what the *yato no kami* (or some of them) are supposed to do in our key story when they obstruct the clearing of the area, although Matachi, as we must assume, has previously got their agreement in an act of successful divining. In that case, a note in the text suggests that the *kami* appeared in the form of snakes. In other cases, they could take the form of another animal, as in the following story:

Kubi-no-mine. It is [situated] to the southwest of Mount Yufu (Yufu-no-mine). Below this mountain there is a paddy field. The original name was Yakeda. A deer always ate the seedlings of this field. When the master of the field built a barricade and waited, the deer came, raised his neck (*kubi*), pushed it through an opening in the barricade, and ate of the seedlings. The field master grabbed him and wanted to cut his neck. Now the deer said: "I will now make an oath. Forgive my deadly sin. If you show great mercy and let me live, I proclaim that my descendants will not eat the seedlings." Now the field master thought this very strange, had mercy and did not cut [the deer's neck]. Since then, the seedlings of this field can ripen without being eaten by the deer. Consequently, it was called Kubita ['neck field'], and this became the name of the mountain [Kubi-no-mine]. (\**Bungo fudoki*, NKBT 2: 373)

This story is included in *Bungo fudoki* to explain the place names Kubita and Kubi-no-Mine, in which *kubi* means 'neck' or 'head' and *mine* means 'high mountain'. But since the story is set at the boundary between the mountain and the farmer's fields, here we might have a case where the mountain beyond the barricade had been dedicated to the local deity and the 'barricade' was provided to prevent the entering of wild animals. The deer could therefore be a manifestation or 'messenger' of the local deity. Having no right to enter the field cultivated by the farmer and nevertheless eating of the seedlings, the deer was breaking the law of the territory and the field master could treat him as a criminal. This is one message of the story. Another one is that it might nevertheless be better to be content with a formal warning and to spare the deer's life; for this might oblige the deity to be thankful and desist in future from letting the deer intrude into the farmer's field.

### Nature Spirits Can Become Manifest in Wild Animals

The role played by wild animals in territorial cults may have to do with the fact that animals were the only other living beings of some size that humans could see and encounter in areas of nature that were not yet opened up. In later

Shinto, the old idea of the theriomorphic cult deities has often given way to anthropomorphic images of gods such as are known from the god age mythology; but many deities are still assigned certain animals as their ‘messengers’ (*kami no tsukai*, *kami no tsukawashime*) and some shrines even still keep live animals of the respective species in their precinct. Most famous with tourists are the deer of the Kasuga Shrine at Nara, which move around freely in the shrine’s wide park. The Kasuga deity itself was said to have been riding on a white deer when it originally came from Kashima to Kasuga. Medieval deer mandalas sometimes show the deer alone, carrying only a branch of a *sakaki* tree on its back (Kageyama 1973: fig. 81, 83, 84, 87, 88).

That the deer in the above story from the *Bungo fudoki* is a manifestation of the local deity or one of the deity’s ‘messengers’ is suggested by the context and corresponds to numerous other cases where local deities appear as animals. Yamatotakeru meets deities appearing as deer, boar or snake (see later in this chapter) and Emperor Shōmu (724–749) orders that a white deer showing up from time to time is worshipped in a ‘heavenly shrine’ (*amatsuyashiro*) (*Owari fudoki itsubun*, NKBT 2: 443). Furthermore, there was the concept of the ‘divining hunt’ (OJ. *ukehigari*) as a form of divining under oath (*ukei*); it was performed by making a ‘hunting excursion’ (*kari*) in order to let the appearance and behaviour of wild animals decide about good or bad luck. Success in hunting could be interpreted as a good omen, for it was apparently imagined that otherwise no game would show up.<sup>14</sup>

The term *ukeigari* does not appear in the *fudoki*, but numerous *fudoki* entries allude to the naming of places in the context of hunting. Either the appearance of a deer or of some other game is mentioned, or things that happened during hunting are said to have been the reason why places received their names. The special importance of the deer in divining is also evident from the custom of divining by burning the shoulder blade of a deer and observing the cracks, a method mentioned in the god age mythology.<sup>15</sup>

The Ōmiwa Shrine south of Nara is the place where Ōmononushi is worshipped, a god whose snake form is attested in *Nihon shoki* (Aston 1: 158, 347). In the shrine’s precinct I saw a sacred *sugi* tree (cryptomeria) which was called *mi no kamisugi* (‘divine snake *sugi*’). In its partly hollow foot, eggs and rice wine were deposited as offerings for snakes that were said to be living there. According to Nakayama Wakei, who was the chief priest at this shrine, there

14 The term *ukei gari* appears in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* in the episode where Prince Kakosaka is killed by a wild boar, which was taken for a bad omen predicting the outcome of the succession war fought for Prince Homuda, the later Emperor Ōjin (Philippi: 266; Aston 1: 237).

15 See part C in the overview of the mythology given at the beginning of chapter 4.



were during his time four or five snakes more than two metres long, blue in colour and sometimes beautifully shining in a golden hue when met by the rays of the sun. Not afraid of humans, they would often crawl under the feet of shrine visitors to drink at a brooklet nearby. Yellow-striped snakes were said to live close to the shrine's threefold *torii*, while poisonous *mamushi* would dwell in the forbidden area of the mountain behind the fence (Nakayama 1971: 160).<sup>16</sup>

### The Guardian Deity Is Believed to Control the Local Weather

Among the sources about animals as manifestations of local deities, the story of Yamatotakeru and the deity of Mt. Ibuki is particularly revealing because it clearly shows that local deities were thought to control the local weather. The version given in *Nihon shoki* goes as follows. Returning from his expedition to the eastern lands where he has conquered the *kami* of two mountain passes, both appearing in the form of a white stag, Yamatotakeru comes to Mt. Ibuki, where he meets a great snake. Thinking that he is faced with a messenger of the deity, he calls the snake a mere messenger, whereupon a violent storm with icy rain suddenly comes upon him. He almost faints and gets lost in the rising mist. Only with great trouble and struck down by illness does he eventually find his way out of the area. Although his physical condition worsens, he moves south and manages to reach the province of Ise; but there his last strength fails and he dies on a lonely moor at the age of 30 (Aston I: 208–209). To assume that the tragic death of the hero was due to the wrath of a deity's messenger would be wrong, however. The ancient text blames the disaster to the fact that Yamatotakeru offended a 'master deity' by mistaking it for a mere messenger. According to *Nihon shoki*, the snake was actually the mountain god and a note in *Kojiki*, where the deity is 'a white boar as large as a cow', explains that it was the deity's main body and the young hero was dazed because he spoke out (Philippi: 242–47).

According to this story, the deity of a mountain or mountain pass is ascribed the power to react to an insult by raising a storm so violent that Yamatotakeru gets lost and ill, and later even dies. The fateful misunderstanding was apparently possible because the master deity could assume different animal forms

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16 For an article on the subject of the gods' animal messengers, see Kōno 1974a: 42–47. See also Herbert 1967: 102–106. When Mircea Eliade was working on his article on the ritual hunt (Eliade 1972) he was so much impressed by the role of wild animals in myths and legends that he wrote in his journal that an archaic world view survives in such stories, "perhaps the oldest one" (Eliade 1989a, entry for 8 June 1965).

in different local cults. What in one place was a white stag was in another a white boar, and in a third a big snake. The story indicates that the potential power of such deities was thought to reach far beyond the immediate concerns one would associate with local land deities. All kinds of disaster were attributed to them, including bad luck hitting people and their land from the sky, sickness, and even death.

Although local deities could be thought to control the local weather and the wind, they were not 'sky deities' in the more usual sense. Rather, they were thought to exert their power from their terrestrial dwelling space in the mountain, controlling everything that might benefit or harm their worshippers and their fields, including the weather. Another story in *Nihon shoki* speaks of a 'thunder god', but the context indicates that it was also a local mountain deity. In that case, a tree regarded as sacred to the thunder deity (*ikazuchi no kami*) was to be felled for ship timber in the year 618. As in the story about the snake tree of Yato no kami (chapter 2), an official of high rank came to exorcise the deity. Referring to an imperial order, he justified his action, presented offerings (*mitogura*) and ordered his workmen to fell the tree. The deity is said to have finally changed into a small fish which stuck between the branches of the tree and was burned.<sup>17</sup>

The association of snakes with thunder and lightning is well known from other ancient stories and from Japanese folk religion (Philippi 1968: 415–16). As Daniels (1960) has pointed out, snake deities often had associations with water, mountains, trees, thunder and rice wine, and a snake deity is often locally important as a 'weather-controller' and as the object of rites performed to obtain rain in times of drought (1960: 155, 156).

As noted in chapter 3, the fact that local deities were thought to react to violating a taboo by sending a heavy storm sometimes accounts for the practice of insulting a local deity in times of long drought. Mention of this practice, known from other parts of Asia, may be difficult to find in the ancient texts of Japan, but the mechanism is well expressed in the *fudoki* in sentences such as: "if people pray for rain in case of drought, he always lets rain without fail" or "when the people of now pass by this cave, they always go with echoing voices; if they would go silently, the deity would appear, raise a storm, and overturn the passing ship without fail".<sup>18</sup>

17 *Nihon shoki*, NKBT 68: 202; Aston II: 147. A small fish called *okoze* is a typical offering for the mountain deity.

18 See the stories about Kaga no Kamuzaki in chapter 1 and on Mikajihime and Tagitsuhiko in chapter 2.

It is also relevant in this context that the underlying assumption of divination by throwing was that the local deities had the power to trigger a sudden storm that could prevent the flying object from hitting their land.

### Calamities Blamed on Some Mistake in the Ritual

The contract with the spirit-owners of the land requires that the settler must worship the deity properly and with due respect. If, nonetheless, calamities sometimes occur it is therefore feared that they are caused by the local deity who might feel that its rights have been violated by some mistake in worship. It is then assumed that the deity may have broken out of its mountain reserve in its original state of wildness and in its pluralistic aspect (OJ *araburu kami*, *araburugami*), as a mass of vengeful spirits (OJ *tatari kami*, *tatarigami*) wreaking havoc (*tatari*) by causing illness, bad harvest or other troubles. To appease them, the worshippers had to confirm and refresh the initial cult contract by presenting adequate offerings. The following quotation from an ancient ritual prayer (*norito*) contained in *Engishiki* illustrates this practice. It was recited on certain occasions in the imperial palace ‘to move away vengeful *kami*’. The prayer apparently assumed that some calamity had occurred in the imperial palace and that the local guardian deity had sent out vengeful spirits (*tatarigami*) in response to some violation of its right. To restore the ordinary state of things, these *tatarigami* were ritually sent back to the mountain where they had come from. The prayer euphemistically calls them ‘sovereign deities’ to show them respect and to remind them that they are really protective deities and should no longer take revenge for some occurrence that might have violated their rights. To appease them, one prepared many offerings, such as garments of coloured cloth, plain cloth and coarse cloth; a mirror, a jewel, bow and arrow, a sword, a horse; wine and various kinds of food. Then one recited the prayer, reminding the deities first of the “matters begun in the High Heavenly Plain” (the cult agreement implied in the land-ceding myth) and telling them that they may change their hearts and move to another place of “lovely mountains and rivers where they can look out over the four quarters, and [...] reign over that as their place”. Then the offerings are named and praised, and the prayer ends with words again expressing the wish that the deities will no longer seek vengeance (trans. Philippi 1959: 69–70; NKBT 1; 447–51).

The mention of the high heavenly plain and the great number of offerings indicate that this prayer was used at the imperial court in *ritsuryō* times, but otherwise the lines can well illustrate the religious ideology associated with

territorial cults in earlier centuries. By presenting offerings and reciting the prayer, one ritually appeased the *tatarigami* and made them return to their mountain sanctuary, which hopefully would put an end to the calamity.

### Cult Places Could Be Moved to Enlarge the Agricultural Land

The fact that the mountain boundary was established by a contract with the nature spirits did not mean that this boundary could not be moved higher up when it was later considered necessary. This explains why a shrine could be ritually moved to another place if it became an obstacle to a necessary increase in the land given over to fields. Such a move could involve the old sacred place being ritually disestablished or abandoned and re-established at the new place.

The right to later enlarge a territory could have already been tacitly implied in the cult contract. Sometimes it might even have been explicitly stipulated in the contract if there was still valuable land in a deity's 'mountain' that one wished to open up later.<sup>19</sup> The story of the irrigation pond built in the land of Yato no kami is a case in point. I therefore assumed in chapter 2 that the problem could be solved by moving the cult place to another part of the valley.

### The Mountain God as a Multifunctional Deity

The fact that there are still authors who speak of 'mountain worship' instead of worship of the mountain god (*yama no kami*) makes it necessary to insist that there seems to be no evidence for the worship of mountains as such in the ancient texts of Japan.<sup>20</sup> We should not distinguish different deities by naming them based on their appearance or on how they revealed their power in a specific situation. What *Nihon shoki* calls a 'mountain god' in the shape of a great serpent in one story it calls 'thunder god' in another one. Thinking of early territorial cults, we should rather think that the 'mountain god' was not a

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19 A story from South Sumatra tells how the land was once divided among the forest people (representing the local nature spirits) and the village people. When all land was divided, both parties had to declare under oath their agreement with the division, but with two stipulations: the people of the forest must not refuse the people of the village when these are short of land and come with a request to clear for agriculture; and the people of the village must offer forty 'dollars' to show proof of the sincerity of their request (Collins 1979: 317–18; discussed in Domenig 2014: 53–55).

20 See also what is said about the modern concept of *shintaitizan* in chapter 9.

deity worshipped with the same characteristics everywhere in Japan but could in each place have a specific identity depending on the terms of the cult contract and on other circumstances. In the story of Matachi, Yato no kami was the 'deity of the valley' and as such also the mountain god, because the area behind the 'mountain entrance' was the upper part of a valley and dedicated as its dwelling space.

When people still knew how territories used to be founded, they also knew that the *kami* dwelling in the mountain had to protect the fields because this was required by the cult agreement or tacitly implied in it. When this was later no longer remembered, the still well-known custom came up to prepare a special cult place in the fields and to temporarily worship a 'field deity' (*ta no kami*) there during cultivation times. The knowledge that this 'field deity' was actually the same as the 'mountain deity' did not get lost but led to the idea that the mountain deity would move temporarily to the fields to protect and promote the growth of the rice plants. It is perhaps typical of pre-Taika territorial cults that *yama no kami* was usually thought to do so from a mountain resort and did not yet need a second cult place in the fields.

Since the rice fields got their water from rivers with sources in the mountains, the mountain deity was also a water deity and often worshipped as such (*mizu no kami*; *suijin*). The multifunctionality of the local deity dwelling in a mountain area was probably once a characteristic feature of the concept of *kami*. Guardian deities were still assumed to control everything in their small world, including the local weather. In some parts of Japan, traces of this old concept of the multifunctional *kami* have sporadically survived to modern times. The *kami* worshipped in *garō* groves of Tanegashima, for example, were basically mountain deities that protected the fields that had been opened up nearby; but as guardian deities of the fields they also functioned as water, field, earth, snake and wind deities (chapter 9).

The idea that different deities take care of different aspects of nature and of human life was in all likelihood the product of developments that were not yet far advanced in protohistoric Japan.

### The Mountain Entrance and the Torii

It is doubtful that the entrance to a sacred precinct would have been marked by a *torii* gate in protohistoric times. Archaeological excavations have not yet found remains of *torii*, and the earliest safe text that mentions the name *torii* dates from the year 914 CE (Tanita 2014: 28).

Since early evidence is lacking, it is often suggested that the *torii* might derive from the Indian *torana*, which at Sanchi was already an elaborately carved stone gate in the first century BCE. The prototype of the *torana* was probably a wooden gate similar to the one I happened to see at a village festival in Sanchi. The lower parts were missing, but above it had five vertical elements, like a normal *torana*, but each with a wooden bird figure perching on top (figure 43). I have not found this mentioned in connection with the ancient stone *torana*, but bird figures are a well-known feature of simple village gates used by the Akha of Thailand.

Since the Japanese word *torii* could mean 'bird perch' (*tori-i*) and wooden bird figures of fitting size were excavated in 1969 at the Yayoi period site of Ikekami, it has been suggested that the Japanese *torii* might have its name because it also had once wooden bird figures perching on its top beam (Torigoe 1983: 70). This view has recently been considered in archaeological



FIGURE 43

The upper part of a wooden *torana* used in a festival at Sanchi (India)

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1971



FIGURE 44

A *torii* at the coast of Naoshima in the Seto Inland Sea. Divining is done by throwing a stone and trying to get it to rest on top of the *torii*. If the stone stays there, it is a good sign

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG,  
2004

reconstructions at the Yayoi site of Yoshinogari in Kyushu, where bird figures are now seen perching on the top of a gate as well as on simplified *torii* gates that lack the lower cross beam.<sup>21</sup> Since the *torii* is associated with divination (figure 44), and the appearance of birds was sometimes regarded as a good or bad omen, it seems possible that a bird flying down and perching on the top beam of a gate was once regarded as a good omen. This might at least explain why the *torii* got its name.<sup>22</sup>

Thinking of our key story, we know that Matachi is said to have stuck his sign staff at the boundary ditch and mountain entrance, but we cannot assume that he left it there as a permanent landmark indicating the entrance to the mountain which he dedicated to the *kami*. It seems more likely that this place was marked differently, depending on how boundaries of territories used to be marked. If we imagine that the mountain entrance was an opening in a wooden fence, for example, it is likely that the entrance was marked by two higher posts that may have ended above in a decorative form, if they were not

21 On the Ikegami site, however, in 2004 I saw the wooden bird figures mentioned by Torigoe being placed on the top of the roof of a reconstructed house.

22 For an English article on the *torii*, its possible relation to the Indian *torana* and its correspondences in other parts of Asia, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torii>.



FIGURE 45 The entrance to a sacred grove dedicated to a frog deity. Yamaguchi-ken, Shühō-chō, Yowara

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2007

connected by a top beam to form a *torii*-like gate. Another possibility was of course to hang a *shimenawa* between two such posts or between two trees growing there (figure 45).

### Boundary Marks

Although boundaries of territories are mentioned in the ancient texts, it is usually not said to what extent and in which way they were marked. Phrases like “deciding the boundaries of mountain rivers and valley ends” (chapter 3) and “making the boundary by shooting and setting up the sounding arrow(s) of *soshishi*” (chapter 1) probably regard the mountain boundary specifically. Other references to boundary marks also seem to mean mountain boundaries primarily. If a story says that the boundary was decided by arrow shooting, the arrow could perhaps be used as a provisional boundary mark, in the same way as the settler’s sign staff of our key story could temporarily mark the boundary at the mountain entrance (chapter 2). The myth of Susanoo’s killing of the dragon snake mentions a fence with a gate, to which a shelf is tied on which



rice wine is offered in a container. In this way, the dragon snake is lured to approach and drink the wine, whereupon it becomes drunk and Susanoo can kill it.<sup>23</sup> Since this dragon snake will be worshipped after death (chapter 2), this also regards a snake worship at the mountain boundary. *Harima fudoki* has a story, according to which the boundary between the two *kuni* Harima and Taniwa was made by burying a large jug (or jugs). It is thought to have been a rice wine container used in a ritual that was performed at the boundary (NKBT 2: 337n23–24). Signs (*shirushi*) that were set up at *kuni* boundaries are also mentioned in *Shinsen shōji roku*, an ancient genealogical text dated 815, but what kind of signs are meant the text does not say.<sup>24</sup> For Yamato, both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* say that in the time of Emperor Sujin the gods on the two main mountain passes at the eastern and western boundary of the Yamato basin were worshipped with shields and spears, with red ones in the east and with black ones in the west (figure 46).

To prevent wild animals from entering the cultivated fields one probably also made special fences or barricades, as mentioned in the story of the deer that ate the farmer's seedlings (see earlier in this chapter). Other boundary marks probably consisted of signs placed at intervals and did not physically prevent entry, but were believed to do so due to their 'magical' power. Such signs could even be thought to keep off wild animals. Prohibition signs made by bending and tying tufts of high-growing grass or the ends of twigs on tree branches could have been used in this sense too (see figures 78 to 81 at the end of chapter 9). A more permanent variant of this type of boundary sign is still known as *musubigi* ('knot-tree') and can be made either by tying a knot into the slender stem of a very young tree or by tying the stems of two young trees together; in either case, the tree would continue growing, and although the knot would grow in, it would remain visible for many years. The Izumo Daijingu of Kameoka keeps a treasured painting dated 1234, which is supposed to show the situation when the shrine was founded, allegedly in 709. It shows the mountain boundary marked by nine pine trees and a small *torii*. Twice two of these pine trees cross one another, which may indicate that the trees are boundary trees separating the sacred mountain land from the field land and the three small houses on this side of the boundary.<sup>25</sup> To hang a *shime* rope

23 For the context, see part D of the overview of the mythology in chapter 4. In the myth, everything is multiplied by eight: the dragon snake has eight heads and eight tails, Susanoo makes eight fences and eight gates, ties eight shelves, and so on.

24 *Shinsen shōji roku*, entry for Emperor Ingyō, No. 233 in the following online edition: <https://miko.org/~uraki/kuon/furu/text/mokuroku/syoujiroku/syoujiroku.htm>.

25 The picture was exhibited in the Kyushu National Museum, 'The Great Shrine Exhibition', 15 January–8 March 2014. [https://www.kyuhaku.jp/exhibition/exhibition\\_s34.html](https://www.kyuhaku.jp/exhibition/exhibition_s34.html). The same mountain is seen in the cover illustration of this book.

(*shimenawa*) across a door is mentioned in the myth of Amaterasu's concealment, where it has to prevent the deity from going back into the heavenly rock house (Aston I: 45). A *shimenawa* is also still often seen hanging between the posts of a *torii*.

### Tabooed Mountain Areas

If the *kami* were not allowed to return to the land opened up, then the other side of the coin was that the settlers had to respect the mountain land they had dedicated to the *kami*. Even if in a valley the entire catchment area of the upper courses had once been dedicated as the dwelling space of a deity and its 'messengers', this would not always have prevented travellers from passing through such mountain land. Yamatotakeru was not punished because he crossed over Mt. Ibuki but because he did not show due respect to the deity dwelling there. When a mountain pass was opened up for traffic, one probably marked at least one place along it for depositing offerings (OJ *tamuke*, a word from which the modern word *tōge* for 'mountain pass' is said to be derived). Sometimes a special shrine was founded for that purpose, as in the case of the Himekoso Shrine according to the *fudoki* story translated in chapter 1.

Ethnographic reports by travellers who climbed mountains in Southeast Asia often mention that their indigenous guides first refused or hesitated to intrude into such areas and then kept silent on the way and presented offerings on the mountain pass. The Sarasins describe a case from Celebes (now Sulawesi, Indonesia) where travellers used to set up offering sticks on a mountain pass. The authors quote the missionary A. C. Kruijt, who had heard a native village chief making a prayer on that occasion. Addressing the deities in the plural, the chief said he does not know their number but presented them with offerings in order that they make the way straight and the sun shine (Sarasin and Sarasin 1905: 234–35). The chief apparently thought the spirits of the mountain might otherwise express their anger by obstructing his way and causing bad weather.

Furthermore, the degree of sacredness of a place is also a matter of experience or feeling and therefore diminishes with the distance from the sacred place. Watersheds and certain mountain spurs could probably be regarded as natural boundaries of a deity's dwelling area, but most important was the boundary to the settler's land. To also define the outer boundaries of a *kami* land was perhaps not considered necessary or was even thought to be wrong. Ancient texts that indicate the boundaries of a shrine's sacred mountain land exist, but they usually reflect the customs of *ritsuryō* times and are of limited relevance for the practices in protohistoric times.

### The Bipolar Structure of Territories

The mountain entrance was the most important part of a territory because it separated the territory from its *kami* land and allowed for communication with the local *kami*. Its counterpart was the entrance from outside into the territory, which was associated with divining and claiming and therefore symbolised the legal basis of the territory.

Ideally, in early times territorial boundaries followed the courses of mountains and rivers, so that the natural entrances to territories were often passages between hills and mountain passes. The ancient territory of Uji in Ise is a case in point and probably had numerous correspondences in early Japan. It was called Uji because it was situated 'inside' (*uji, uchi*) the hills which surrounded it on all sides (chapter 7, figure 34). The entrance was where the river passed between two low hills, a situation which *Yamatohime* likens to a 'big house door' (Hammitzsch 1937: 30). Similarly, Yamato was poetically called *tamagaki no uchi tsu kuni*, 'the land within the jewel fence' (NKBT 67: 215; Aston 1: 135), because Yamato was originally the name of the Nara basin, which is surrounded by mountains (figure 46).

For Yamato, both chronicles say that when Emperor Sujin first organised the cult and worshipped the god of Mt. Miwa, he also worshipped the gods of Sumisaka and Osaka, the two natural entrances into the Yamato plain situated at the opposite ends of the east–west thoroughfare (A–B in figure 46). Osaka, the 'great slope', was the main mountain pass in the west (B) that led in from the coastal plain of Kawachi (the southern part of modern Osaka); Sumisaka was the boundary slope in the east (A) where the main river originated in the Hase valley and the way continued to the highland of Uda. As already noticed, the god of Osaka was worshipped by offering black shields and black spears; the god of Sumisaka by offering red shields and red spears. These two passages (A and B) represented an early stage when the east–west axis was dominant (NKBT 67: 242, Aston 1: 155; NKBT 1: 181, Philippi 202). Later, the entrances from the south (D) and north (C) also became important. *Kojiki* calls these entrances to the Yamato basin *to* ('doors'). When divination was performed to decide by which 'door' it would be auspicious to begin Prince Homuchiwake's journey to Izumo (chapter 6), the answer was that the Nara door and the Osaka door are not good; only the 'Ki door' was auspicious (Philippi: 221).

Though the bipolar structure of territories is usually not well described as such in the relevant sources, the comparison of different stories indicates that land-claiming (*kunishime*) was combined with divination and related to the entrance of a territory, whereas the term *kunitsukuri* ('land-making') is used when the whole process is meant, which ends with the founding of a local cult at a different place, ideally at the opposite end of the territory. This allows us to

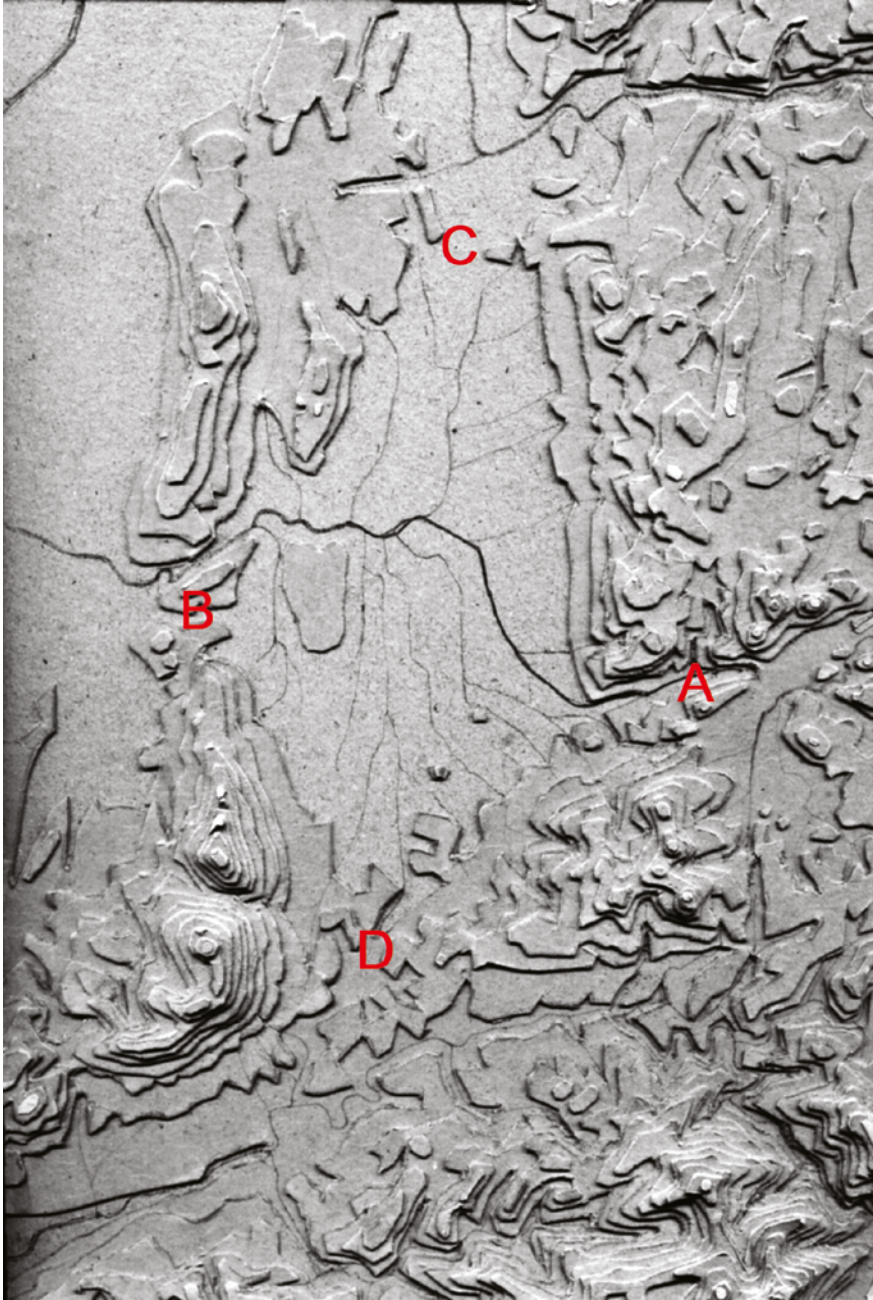


FIGURE 46 The Yamato basin (Nara basin) and its four main entrances mentioned in the two chronicles. (A) Sumisaka (east); (B) Ōsaka (west); (C) Nara (north); (D) Ki or Kii (south). Mt. Miwa is situated just north of where the river (emphasised) flows westwards into the plain. The distance A–B is about 23 kilometres  
MODEL BY THE AUTHOR

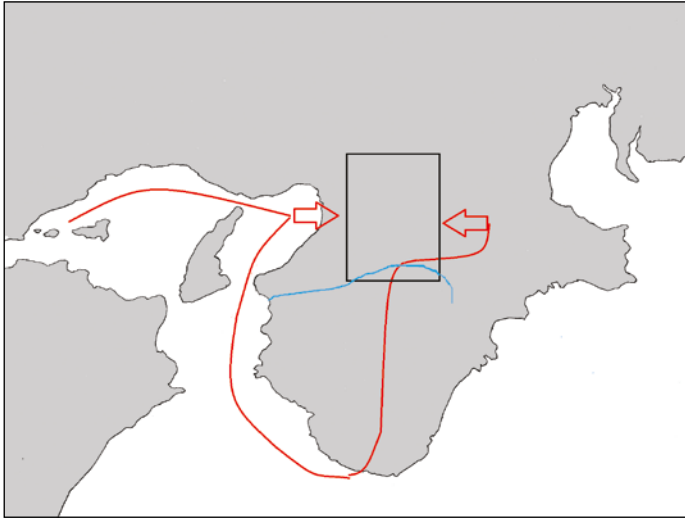


FIGURE 47 Iwarebiko's detour in the story of his conquest of Yamato.  
The rectangle indicates the part shown in figure 46  
MAP BY THE AUTHOR

speak of basically bipolar territories in which the main entrance was the lower pole, while the main cult place was established close to the upper pole which could be called the mountain entrance (*yama no kuchi*).<sup>26</sup>

The story of the conquest of Yamato corresponds to this view, when the conqueror Iwarebiko first tries to advance with his army into the interior from the coastal plain of Kawachi (figure 47, left). But when his brother is wounded in battle, he interprets this as a bad omen, meaning that as a descendant of the sun deity he should not attack with his face turned towards the sun. He therefore decides to attack from the opposite side with the sun at his back. After a long and arduous detour over the mountains of Kumano, he arrives at Uda (figure 47, right) and from there enters the Yamato basin victoriously via Sumisaka from the east (A in figure 46). The ancient author of this story could also have chosen to let the detour go via the river Ki (running east to west in figure 47), which would have been a much easier way to Uda. But he apparently wanted Iwarebiko to undergo unusual hardships before he could attack from the east with the sun behind him. By letting Iwarebiko's brother succumb to his

26 *Yama no kuchi*: The corresponding term for the entrance is perhaps *ttsuchi no kuchi* (or *ji-guchi*), which *Yamatohime seiki* uses several times for sacred rice fields (*mi-ta*) that were offered to Yamatohime in a ceremony of submission and loyalty. The meaning of this term is said to be unclear (Hammitzsch 1937: 22–25, 56n79; JKDJ, s.v. *kuchi*), but as it literally means 'earth/land entrance', it might perhaps refer to the fact that such ceremonies took place at the entrance to a territory.

wounds at the mouth of the river Ki, he indicated that this would have been an inauspicious approach (*Kojiki*, NKBT 1: 151–61; Philippi: 165–77). An advantage of the greater detour was that it made Iwarebiko also approach Yamato from the south, which corresponded to the late time when this story was probably created and the first capital Fujwara-kyō with its southern orientation already existed in the south-eastern part of the Yamato basin.

### The Chigi Cross as a Symbol

Judging from Kofun period *haniwa* roof models with broad bargeboards crossing at the gable ends, we can assume that these boards, combined in X-form, were considered important and meaningful elements of architecture. In the Ise style of shrine architecture, the V-form of the finials is more conspicuous than the X-form because their lower parts optically merge with the roof construction; but in Izumo style they are fully visible as diagonal crosses sitting on the roof ridge (figure 48). The crossed elements (gable boards or rafters) were originally named by words like *chigi*, *higi* or *hafu*, which meant the wooden pieces in their full length, as they were used by carpenters who tied or jointed them crosswise together. A medieval text about the decoration of the Outer Shrine at Ise, however, defines *chigi* as the name of the upper parts only and *hafu* as the name of the parts below the point of crossing. This new terminology was probably introduced to facilitate the correct application of the metal ornaments on the *chigi* of the Ise main shrines.<sup>27</sup> The carpenters, however, continued to use the old terminology too.<sup>28</sup>

Thinking about the meaning of the *chigi* cross, one possibility is that it was sometimes regarded as a kind of *kami no yorishiro*: a decorative form that would symbolise the *kami*'s presence at times of offering.<sup>29</sup> *Yorishiro*, known from folk religious festivals, are sometimes also formed by crossing vertical elements. Depending on the degree of inclination of the crossed parts, the forms may look rather tree-like or hut-like, but in either case they are characterised by displaying a free upper part that grows out of the lower stem or trunk, with which it forms a unity (figure 49). Such dually structured objects could have already been used in protohistoric times to mark the presence of a deity at times of offerings (see chapter 9). If so, then the *chigi* cross could have

27 *Jōwa okazari-ki*, GRJJ 7, pp. 277–313, figure on p. 278. This text regards the adornments (*kazari*) of the Outer Shrine (Gekū) used at its rebuilding in 1345.

28 A list of timber elements dated 1344 and used for building the eastern treasure house of the Outer Shrine still uses the word *chigi* for the crossed elements in their full length. See Fukuyama 1977: 99, where the document is quoted.

29 For the modern technical term *yorishiro* and illustrations of such structures, see chapter 9.



FIGURE 48 The *chigi* cross on the roof of a shrine in Izumo Taisha style  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2019

symbolised the structural principle of such sacred objects whose free upper parts were probably seen as the place where a *kami* might be present during a ceremony. It therefore seems possible that the *chigi* cross was once understood as a structure whose upper arms would invite the deity to the shrine when offerings were presented.<sup>30</sup>

In earlier medieval literature, the two crossed elements (or their upper parts?) were also called *katasogi*, and the compound *chigi-katasogi* was used for the oblique cross.<sup>31</sup> *Hōkikhongi*, the oldest of the ‘Secret Books’ of Watarai

30 I have proposed and discussed this interpretation at length in a study of roof finials on traditional houses of Indonesian ethnic groups; see Domenig 2014: 385–429.

31 *Toshiyori zuinō*, for example, a work by Minamoto no Toshiyori written about 1113, says that *katasogi* is the name of the “woods which stick high out at the roof-ridge of a kami shrine”. *Heike monogatari*, compiled prior to 1330, has *katasogi zukuri* as the name of the architectural style of shrines displaying roof finials. Another medieval source speaks of the “*chigi-katasogi* shrine building style” (*chigi katasogi no miyazukuri*) and quotes from



FIGURE 49  
 A *marushime* during construction.  
 The bamboos with leafy tops were made to intersect and the lower part was further decorated. The finished structure was considered highly sacred. See the accompanying text in chapter 9  
 PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1972

Shinto, dating from the thirteenth century, interprets the *chigi-katasogi* by saying that it is “the origin of water and fire” (yin and yang) and “a symbol of heaven and earth”. The diagonal cross as an upright architectonic form does indeed lend itself to interpretations in terms of dual oppositions, including that of heaven and earth as two opposed cosmic regions. For a priest at the medieval Ise Shrine, to call the *chigi* cross a symbol of heaven and earth may therefore have meant to draw attention to its symbolism in terms of Chinese philosophy. But seeing that this particular cross form was already a conspicuous element of architecture in pre-Taika times, and was even emphasised in ritually used house models, it is likely that earlier people saw it as more than just an ornament.

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a poem by Saigyō contained in *Sankashū* (twelfth century) that uses *katasogi* as a pillow word for *yuki-ai* (‘go together’ or ‘meet’) (*Kogo Jiten* 1974: 299, s.v. *katasogi*). It is important to note, however, that *katasogi* came to later assume a different meaning at the Ise Shrine. Instead of meaning the arms of the cross that are optically ‘cut off’ by the intersection of two rafters, the word became a technical term for the physical cutting off of the outer ends of the *chigi*, either horizontally (figure 38) or vertically (figure 48).



Already in protohistoric times, some may have recognised that the same structural principle was also involved when a territory was founded. In opening up a stretch of land, one may have first envisaged a larger area and then taken only a part of it, leaving the rest above it to the *kami*. The ‘mountain entrance’ was the place where the human territory ended and turned into a land above which was dedicated to the local deities. The meaning of the mountain entrance therefore corresponded to that of the point of intersection in a *chigi* cross, so that the *chigi* cross as a dually structured whole could also have been a symbol of a terrestrial microcosm in which the *kami* land was an external part of the territory proper that projected beyond the upper boundary. In a similar sense, I interpreted the *chigi* cross in chapter 7 as an image that might symbolise the nature of Sarutahiko as the paradigm of an old-style territorial deity “whose radiance shines above through Takama no hara and below through the Central Land of the Reed Plains”. In contrast, the new *jingi* religion of the *ritsuryō* state distinguished two classes of deities, calling one ‘heaven deities’ (*amatsukami*), the other ‘land deities’ (*kunitsukami*).

### The Name of the Kami Land

Knowing that, from ancient times, *ama* had also been used as a name for the attic in the upper part of the vertically structured space of a house (chapter 5), we might expect that the word was sometimes also used for the *kami* land of a territory; but although *ama* still frequently appears in place names of Japan, I have not come across an example of its ancient use in that sense, except for the name Takama no hara, which means ‘plain of high heaven’ but which was described as a landscape with a mountain and a river where the heavenly gods are living.

Since the *kami* land, as an external part of a territory, was land ‘in surplus’ (*amari*), it could also have been called *amari* or *kuni no amari*, like the land pulled near in the land-pulling myth (chapter 6). Although there is no evidence for that, the term makes us aware of the possibility that, linguistically, *amari* might be a cognate of *ama*. Semantically at least, this seems quite likely, and we should in any case consider the possibility, mentioned earlier, that the *kami* land could be understood as an external part of the territory that projected from the territory in the same way as the upper part of a *chigi* cross projected from the lower part. On the other hand, if the land of the *kami* had originally been called *kuni no amari*, the designation as *amari* would have become inappropriate as soon as the *kami* land was no longer directly connected to the territory. This was, however, the case when the *kami* land came to be imagined in the sky.

Otherwise, ancient texts sometimes use the name *kannabi* (OJ *kamunabi*), a word for which various explanations have been given.<sup>32</sup> Generally, however, the texts rather suggest that *kami* lands were normally called *yama*, in the religious sense of a sacred area that could also include large parts of a landscape in early times. In our key story, the *yama no kuchi* or ‘mountain entrance’ separated the *kami* land from the field land, which means that the *kami* land was classified as *yama*, although it was in this case the flat upper part of a valley and dedicated to the deity of the valley. I also used the expression ‘terrestrial heaven’ in chapter 7 because Takama no hara, the heaven of Japanese mythology, was basically no different from the landscape of a valley down on earth (Tsukushi 1970: 48–50, 154–59).

### The Age of the Yorishiro Concept

The word *yorishiro* was introduced early in the twentieth century as a technical term to be used in the study of folk religious festivals (chapter 9), but, theoretically, simple forms made with reeds or other vegetal material could have been already used as *yorishiro* in protohistoric times, although there are no sources that would clearly say so. Archaeology can, for obvious reasons, provide no evidence of such perishable artefacts and the few relevant mentions in the ancient texts are all too vague.

The ‘green leaf mountain’, which was ‘not a mountain’ according to Prince Homuchiwake (chapter 6), was probably an artificial cult mark made of green-leaved branches, but *Kojiki* does not tell us what it looked like or whether it was further decorated. Similarly, the pillars (*hashira*), which *Nihon shoki* says were erected by different families in the year 620 on an artificial hill (Aston II: 147–48), might perhaps have been artefacts such as were later called *hashiramatsu* (‘pillar pines’, chapter 9, figure 67); but we can only speculate that they might have been decorated and used as *kami no yorishiro*. On the other hand, the two taboo pillars of the Inner and Outer Shrine at Ise probably functioned as *kami no yorishiro*, and medieval texts say that they were decorated with *sakaki twigs*. The technology needed for making a *kami no yorishiro* was available already in prehistoric times and we must not underestimate the sense of beauty that may have been at work in the making of cult marks, long before the time for which we have written evidence. There is one source, however, that is easily overlooked in this context.

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32 See chapter 6, notes 15 and 26. Whether *mori* should be mentioned here too depends on the context, because it did not always mean a sacred grove that was still believed to be inhabited by *kami*.

Myths about the origins of gods may seem to tell of very early times, but what they say often corresponds to the thinking of the late time when they took form. One such myth is found in the Japanese god age mythology, where it even precedes the story of Izanagi and Izanami. It tells how the first deities came into existence. According to *Kojiki*, the first five deities were 'separate heavenly deities' and their form was 'not visible'. The first three came into existence in Takama no hara and nothing is said about how they originated, but the two other ones are said to have been somewhat like reed sprouts in a drifting land:

Then, when the land was young and resembling floating oil drifting about like a jellyfish, deities came into existence from something sprouting up like reed shoots, named Umashi Ashikabihikoji no kami, then Amenotokotachi no kami. These two gods also came into existence as single gods and hid their bodies. (\**Kojiki*. NKBT 1: 51. cf. Philippi: 47)

The first of the two deities mentioned is named after the reed shoot (*ashikabi*), while the second name suggests the idea of standing (*tachi*) on a basis or place (*toko, tokoro*). Considering that *ashi* or reeds can symbolise the material of a chaotic wilderness, this is a fitting image with which to associate the first deities. But why does *Kojiki* say that their form was not visible? The answer is suggested by *Nihon shoki* (Aston 1: 4–6), which has no less than seven variants of this myth, five of which say that the thing resembling a reed shoot was *transformed* into a deity. So, while *Kojiki* suggests that the first gods were like reed shoots but not visible as gods, *Nihon shoki* clarifies the meaning by saying that they were transformed into deities, implying that this made them visible.

Knowing about the custom of making *yorishiro* for use in worship, as it is still practised in Japan (chapter 9), we can imagine that the authors of *Nihon shoki* might have had simple cult signs of this kind in mind when they described some of the first gods as being transformations of something like reed sprouts. A tuft of small reed sprouts would grow higher and, tied together halfway up, it would be transformed and become visible as a form such as could be used in rituals to invoke the presence of a deity. As a primitive temporary form representing the presence of a deity, it could have inspired the ancient myth makers in their thinking about the coming into existence of the first deities.

Interpreted in this way, the *ashikabi* myth suggests that when the two chronicles were compiled in the early eighth century, the custom of making simple structures of reeds or other vegetal material and using them as the temporary seats of deities was probably not only well known but thought to go back to times immemorial.

### The Land-Making Motif in Creation Myths

As noted in chapter 3, the land-making idiom was also involved in the Japanese 'creation myth', which features Izanagi and Izanami as a divine couple who first churn the primeval ocean, whereupon the island Onogoro takes form by itself, and then use this island as a basis for Izanami's giving birth to the islands of the archipelago. Similarly, Ame no Hiboko 'churned the seawater' to express his intention to open up islands of land (territories) in Harima, as I interpreted his gesture in chapter 3. The analogy suggests that the creation of Onogorojima was equivalent to an act of divining and claiming, performed before creating the islands of the archipelago.

A reading of the different versions of the myth supports this interpretation; for the images used are familiar from land-claiming stories. Thus, Izanagi and Izanami act on the order of the heavenly gods who first invest them with the heavenly jewel spear (*Kojiki*; *Nihon shoki* 4.1) and describe their mission as 'make hard and rule this drifting land' (*Kojiki*) 'or go and bring to order the land Toyoashihara no chiihoaki no mizuho' (*Nihon shoki* 4.1). Then the two gods are said to stand firmly on the heavenly floating bridge (*Kojiki*; *Nihon shoki* 4.0, 4.1), and before thrusting down the jewel spear, they say: "Is there not a land below?" (4.0), or "we wish to gain a land" (4.2), or "there must certainly be a land" (4.3), or "there is something resembling floating oil; in there is perhaps a land" (4.4). In other words, they doubt whether or not there is a land to which they can descend. But then they churn the water with the spear and, lifting the spear up, they see that the brine dripping from the spear's point becomes an island. Rejoicing they say: "good! there is a land" (*Nihon shoki* 4.2; cf. Aston I: 10–16).

That the island forms by itself, as expressed in the very name Onogorojima ('self-coagulated island'), is typical of signs received in divining generally. The diviner asks for a sign but does not create it. In the story of the conquest of Yamato, Iwarebiko divines before starting the final attack. His method is described as declaring under oath that he will make *tagane* (or *ame*, glutinous rice-jelly) without using water, and that he will be successful if it forms of itself (*Nihon shoki*, trans. Aston I: 121; NKBT 67: 201). It does form of itself and he will be successful. In that case, the text clearly says that the words are spoken under oath (OJ *ukehi*), but often only a question and an answer are mentioned and sometimes the answer comes from the questioner himself, as in the Onogoro myth and in the land-pulling myth (chapter 6).

The myth of the creation of Onogorojima ends in the chronicles with the birth of the 'eight' islands by Izanami; but when *Nihon shoki* (4.1) says that Izanagi and Izanami are invested with the heavenly jewel spear to bring the land Toyoashihara no chiihoaki no mizuho in order, this is work the two gods will not complete themselves. It is Ōnamuchi who is later charged with 'making and solidifying'

(opening up) the large land together with Sukunabikona. There were perhaps other ancient traditions according to which it was Izanagi who concluded the work after Izanami's death. A later source which could suggest this is the medieval noh play *Sakahoko*, which says that the inverted spear (*sakahoko*) of Izanagi and Izanami then also opened up the original wilderness of the eight islands:

Now, since the lands were just like wild islands the spear became a rough wind that mowed and cleared the reed wilderness, raked the reeds together and heaped them up to become mountains. [...] Also, the soil was still hard like a rocky ground, but the tip of the spear loosened it. [...] Then [the spear] subdued the world in all ten directions, expelled the devils and brought order to the land of the luxuriant reed plains.<sup>33</sup>

This, too, is a land-making story. The divining had already produced the first island as a good omen (Onogorojima) and the 'eight' islands of the archipelago had already been 'born' in their state of wilderness. By then clearing the reed wilderness and raking the reeds together to form mountains, the spear – so we can think – also chased the land spirits into the mountains. Finally, by loosening the hard ground the spear also prepared the land for agriculture and human life.

These notes about creation myths tell of the earliest beginnings of the world of Japan, but they are not the oldest parts of the mythic material contained in the ancient texts of Japan. Rather, they represent how ancient scholars chose to describe the creation of the Japanese archipelago as the territory of the ancient state in terms of a macro-land-making story that begins with the coagulation of Onogorojima as a mythical act of godly divining that should form the legal basis of the large territory.

### Conclusion

In the introduction, the theoretical model of the two-phase land-taking ritual was introduced as an analytical tool, the fruitfulness of which would be tested in the subsequent chapters. Looking back, it is evident that it was notably the focus on initial divination – the question of what might represent divination in a given story – that has proven fruitful. Having already drawn attention to this point in the beginning of the present chapter, I only add here that the focus on space, too, has led to new interpretations of some stories about the founding of territories.

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33 My translation based on UTAHI Hangyō bunko (半魚文庫), <http://hangyo.sakura.ne.jp/utahi/text/yoo31.txt>. For a German translation, see Gundert 1925: 75.

The fact that Susanoo sees the floating chopsticks before he goes to the upper course of the river to look if people are living there (chapter 1) means that he is not supposed to have first descended from heaven to the upper course, although the preceding sentence says so. The first sentence must therefore be understood as a mere 'title sentence'. Noticing similar contradictions in other stories too, we could speak of the 'title sentence pattern' and notice that the first long sentence of the myth of Ninigi's descent from heaven also follows this pattern. Assuming this has made it possible to explain the differences between the forms of this myth in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which has led to a new consistent interpretation (chapter 4).

The new reading of the land-pulling myth in chapter 6 is likewise partly due to the special focus on space; for without studying the locations of the four *kannabi* mountains on topographic relief maps this view would not have imposed itself.

The critical focus on space and spatial relations is also the reason why I argued in the introduction that *mine* should not always be translated as the 'top' of a mountain but often as 'high up', and that a sacred place high up could belong to the horizontal world view. If I have repeatedly emphasised that it is important to keep the two world views apart – the horizontal one and the vertical one – this is because conflating them has often led to misinterpretations in the past (chapter 10).

The concept of the 'terrestrial heaven' has been introduced because the myths mention a mountain and a river as landscape features of Takama no hara and sometimes also gods who descend from there in ships. This indicates that this 'high heaven' really belonged to the horizontal world view and was imagined to be horizontally distant from the human world of Ashihara no Nakatsukuni (chapter 5). As the dwelling space of the heavenly gods of mythology, this heaven had microcosmic correspondences in the 'terrestrial heavens' that were represented by the numerous sacred groves of human territories as long as these groves were still thought to be inhabited by local guardian deities.

The concept of 'terrestrial heavens' was probably not based on that of the macrocosmic Takama no hara; instead, as Tsukushi Nobuzane suggested long ago, the relation between macrocosm and microcosm was reversed. What the present study can contribute in confirming this unorthodox assumption is a new understanding of the land-making ritual; for, according to this ritual, the creation of terrestrial heavens was required by the human need for inhabitable space in coexistence with nature spirits in times when such spirits were still feared. By assigning these spirits a separate, local dwelling space – a terrestrial heaven, as it were – and then worshipping them as guardian deities, one thought to pacify them, so that one could live in peace with them and even ask for their help in times of need.

## Sacred Groves and Cult Marks

This chapter is intended to convey what simple cult places can sometimes still look like in Japan today. However, to what extent the (in some cases) rare examples selected here may also reflect conditions in protohistoric times is difficult to assess. First, a few sacred groves are illustrated and described, then the focus is on structures belonging to the category of *kami no yorishiro*, and finally simple boundary marks of a now very rare kind are discussed. As some of the groves and structures discussed belong to *yashikigami* worship, a brief overview of this cult is given by way of an introduction.

### Yashikigami Worship

*Yashikigami* is a technical term used by Japanese scholars for a class of deities (*kami*, *-gami*) that are differently named in different places but have in common the fact that they are worshipped as the tutelary *kami* of a family's *yashiki* or 'estate'. The *yashikigami* cult is an aspect of Japanese folk religion which is characterised by a great variety of local forms. As Naoe Hiroji showed in an article (1963) and in a comprehensive study (1966), this cult is distributed over most parts of Japan, but its main features can be different in different places. The names of the worshipped deity, the ideas about the nature of this deity, the social structure of the worshipping group, the details of the ritual, the times of the festivals, the place of worship and of course the material objects regarded as temporary seats or dwellings of the deity may change from place to place. While this variety is confusing at first sight, it is also a valuable asset. It is probable that the present diversity is the result of various kinds of innovations which, in the course of history, have been introduced differently in different places. In a country like Japan, we may expect that some of the modern aspects of this cult still reflect its ancient forms, while others can be recognised as later innovations. Japanese folklore is still extremely rich in seemingly old and very old traditions that are kept alive in one place, although they have long been abandoned in most others. What reasons decided whether a custom was preserved in the old form in a specific case, whether it was changed or whether it was discontinued altogether is often impossible to say. However, a tendency towards preservation of the old and a readiness to accept the new have long

coexisted and played their part in history, as is clear to everyone familiar with Japanese religious folklore.

Under such circumstances, Japanese ethnologists often profit from being able to establish their theories on fairly complete sets of possible 'survivals'. Sometimes they can even illustrate all of the stages in a hypothetical developmental scheme through examples of customs that can still be seen in our time. Of course, the fact that such examples can be given does not prove the correctness of such a scheme, but it often increases its plausibility.

Naoe's theory regarding the evolution of *yashikigami* worship is a good case in point. It traces the lines along which this kind of cult could have developed over the course of time, and the author is in a position to show convincingly that the main stations of this development correspond with traditions that are still alive and accessible for study in our time. Regarding the ancient form of *yashikigami* worship, Naoe argues that the ancestor was originally the founder of an estate who opened up the land and was worshipped after death as the *yashikigami* of the kinship group descended from him. The place of worship was a corner of the yard or a field, or a forest distant from the house, and the deity was believed to govern the entire life of the kinship group, including its agricultural work.

The deity was, moreover, believed to have a vengeful character; if not shown proper regard and respect it could make people ill and families decline, or do harm in some other way. Taken together, this would correspond to a sort of founder's cult, but Naoe does not consider that the founder's identity was conflated with that of a nature spirit, as has been suggested in this book.

Furthermore, Naoe thinks that the cult developed in two different directions. In some cases, the branch families later started to worship each their own *yashikigami*, so that each family in a village finally had its own place of worship and its own ritual. In other cases, however, the *yashikigami* of a particular family or the united *yashikigami* of several families came to be worshipped as the tutelary deity of a whole village. According to Naoe, ancient *yashikigami* worship would therefore have been one of the roots of village shrine Shinto, and thus of Shinto in general.

An example of a *yashikigami* grove is seen in figures 50–52. Exceptionally, the trees of this grove were growing on a U-shaped mound about 60 centimetres high and an outer ditch was about 70 centimetres deep. The shrine was a cone-shaped hut, as is usual for *yashikigami* shrines, 110 centimetres high and made of bamboo and miscanthus thatch. Inside, it contained three roundish stones, each placed in a small bed made of straw. According to a local informant, the place was originally in the garden of the Ogomori family, which had





FIGURE 50 Sacred grove of a *yashikigami*. Kagoshima-ken, Minami-Kyūshū-shi, Chiran-chō, Nakafukura PHOTOS (50, 51) GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1969

started worshipping its ancestor here around a thousand years ago. At the time we visited this place only branch families were still living in the area and taking care of the cult. Every year in December, ten family members were alternatively in charge of renewing the straw shrine and presenting offerings.

Naoe was a follower of Yanagita Kunio's view that ancestor worship was at the origin of Japanese religion. He mentioned cases from various parts of Japan where local informants said that the ancestor who had opened up or bought the land was worshipped as the tutelary deity of the ground under various names such as *jigami*, *ji no kami*, *jinushisama*, *kōjin*, *iwaijin* and so on. Naoe's conclusion that "[i]n all these instances, an ancient ancestor or founder has been deified as *yashiki-gami*" (Naoe 1963: 208) is nonetheless doubtful, because these recent local beliefs and interpretations do not necessarily reflect ancient traditions.



FIGURE 51 The straw shrine of the deity that was worshipped in this grove

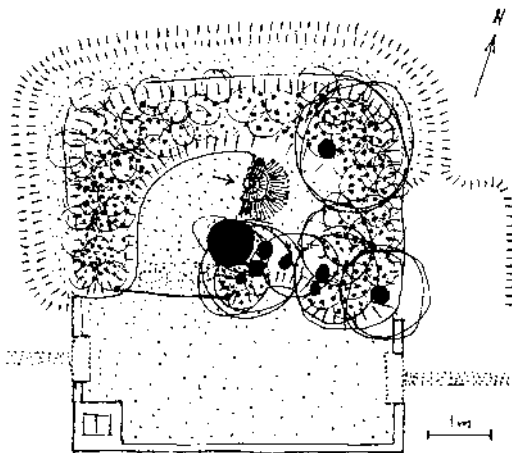


FIGURE 52 Author's field sketch of the plan of this grove, which was partly surrounded by a mound and a ditch. The small arrow points to the straw shrine

Sasaki Masaru (1983) later also wrote a book on *yashikigami* worship but argued that there was a development from earth-related worship to ancestor worship. Similarly, Tokumaru Aki recently concluded from his research on *mori no shinkō* ('grove beliefs') in Yamaguchi Prefecture, that there is a strong tendency to worship the grove deity (*morigami*) as an agricultural deity and to combine with this belief notions such as water deity (*suijin*), corn spirit (*kokurei*), earth spirit (*jirei*) and the like (Tokumaru 2002: 42). A collection of articles edited by Tanigawa Kenichi (1995) deals with grove cults of various regions such as Wakasa, Nara and Hyōgo, Nishi Iwami, Futaoi shima, Tsushima, Ikinoshima, southern Kyushu and Tanegashima. The sacred groves (*utaki*) of Okinawa and the *kami*-mountains (*kamiyama*) of the Amami Islands are also famous among ethnographers. Apart from such regions where grove beliefs were still widely distributed in the last century and now continue to exist in many cases, there are also places where a sacred grove without a house-like shrine building can occasionally still be found.

As is argued in this book, there are good reasons to believe that sometimes the founders of territories were already worshipped after their death in pre-Taika times. Yet we cannot say to what extent this was the case. The cult of nature spirits appears to be older, but it has often come to be conflated with a founder's cult. It is therefore quite likely that in the course of time the ancestor aspect often became so dominant that the nature spirit aspect was eventually forgotten. This could then lead to the situation where an ancestor was worshipped under the traditional name of a nature spirit like *ji no kami* or *chinushi no kami* (Yamazaki 2010).

While it is right to associate the foundation of a territorial cult with its founding ancestor, to identify that ancestor with the first deity worshipped at that place means to ignore that the founder had to start worshipping the nature spirits whose land he had opened up. In Shiiba mura of Miyazaki Prefecture, for example, the person who had opened up a new dry field (*hatake*) used to be buried in a corner of that field. Such a grave was called *chinushisama* ('earth master') and the field *senzohatake* ('ancestor field') (Noma 1970: 172). I assume that in this case *chinushisama* (or *jinushisama*) was originally the 'land/earth spirit' worshipped by the person who had opened up the field. But when that person died and was buried there, his identity came to be conflated with that of the land's spirit-owner, so that eventually the ancestor (*senzo*) was worshipped in the corner of the field as *chinushisama* and the field came to be called *senzohatake*. Historically, however, the custom of burying the ancestor in a corner of the field may have come up much later than the custom to worship the land spirit there.

*Yashikigami* worship interests us here for two reasons. First, the characteristics of grove beliefs pointed out by scholars like Sasaki Masaru and Tokumaru Aki suggest that these cults are related to the territorial cults of pre-Taika times and, second, the place of worship of this type of deity is sometimes still a sacred grove that does not have a house-like building like ordinary Shinto shrine precincts.

### A Sacred Grove on Hirado Island

On Hirado, the island close to the north-west corner of Kyushu, an old-style sacred grove was found on a hillside north of Hōki (figure 54). This grove protruded from a forest area into a patch of field land extending uphill and measured about ten by twenty metres when we first visited it in 1969. It was entered from the longer southern side, but usually a *shimenawa* was stretched across to forbid entrance (figure 53). Inside, there were three straw shrines called *tobiyashiro*, consisting of layers of *kaya* grass (*miscanthus*) heaped on top of a stone that is no longer visible.<sup>1</sup> Two of these *tobiyashiro*, seen to the left when entering the grove, were marked off by a thin *shimenawa* stretched between trees all around. They were dedicated to Izanagi and Izanami, the mythical creators of the Japanese archipelago. They had been moved there from the precinct of the Sarutahiko Jinja, which was situated some 500 metres south on the coast.<sup>2</sup> Also, a tiny cult place for *ushigami* (a cow protecting deity) at the south-eastern corner of the grove had been moved there secondarily from another place lower down the hillside. The only cult mark that had apparently always been in this sacred grove was the single *tobiyashiro* standing opposite the entrance to the grove (figure 75, bottom right). It had a small ring-*shime* hanging around its top and was dedicated to *chi no kami*, the ‘earth’ deity or

1 For a comparative study of the *tobiyashiro* of Hirado, see Domenig 1976. See also the section ‘Changing Forms and Interpretations of Cult Marks’ later in this chapter. I have visited Hirado repeatedly together with my wife Mioko Doi between 1969 and 2007. What first inspired me to study this case are three photographs of *tobiyashiro* from different villages on the island by Inoguchi Shōji, included in *Nihon Minzoku Zuroku* (Minzokugaku Kenkyūsho 1958: 134 and figures 638–40).

2 A drawing of Sarutahiko Jinja given in Hirado's *Jinja meisai shirabechō* dated Meiji 8 (1875) shows the two *tobiyashiro* and the text says that they were *massha* (subsidiary shrines) dedicated to Izanagi and Izanami. The source is one of the many *jinja meisai chō*, records made at the beginning of Meiji period to provide detailed information about the condition of shrines all over the country.



FIGURE 53 Entrance to the sacred grove of Hōki shown in figure 54. The vegetation on the ground shows that the grove is not usually entered, except at the time of the yearly festival

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, APRIL 1969



FIGURE 54 The sacred grove of Hōki seen from the east. Nagasaki-ken, Hirado-shi, Hōki-chō  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, APRIL 1969

guardian deity of the land, here also worshipped and feared as an *aragami-sama* ('wild deity') who particularly dislikes women entering the grove.<sup>3</sup>

The history of this local cult seems to go back to the early seventeenth century, but the type it represents is certainly much older. The Miwa Shrine of Himosashi, the community to which Hōki formerly belonged, keeps a document dated Kanei 5 (1628) and newly copied in Taishō 3 (1914), which says that the Sarutahiko Shrine of Hōki was founded in Kanei 2 (1625) and that a certain Sakamoto Zenbei was the chief petitioner (*daiganshū*) at its festivals. It was said that some years later the mighty Sakamoto family founded an exclave (*tobichi*) of the Sarutahiko Shrine adjacent to its fields. This was the sanctuary that is described here. It was locally called Sakamoto-san, but the *Jinja Oaratamechō*, the shrine register of Hirado dated Enkyō 2 (1745), mentions it under the name Sakamoto Daimōjin. A note says that it is situated in the countryside and celebrates its *matsuri* on the first day of the eleventh month (old calendar).<sup>4</sup> The further history of the sanctuary is not clear, but it is known

3 Minzokugaku Kenkyūshō 1958: 134.

4 The manuscript is held in the City Library of Hirado, where we were able to study it together with other documents in 1969.

that the Sakamoto family later declined and sold the land to the Fukuda family, which has taken care of the sanctuary ever since.

According to the priest of the Miwa Shrine of Himosashi, who at the time of our first visit used to serve in the yearly festival, the ceremony used to take place in December at night, lasting about one hour and ending around midnight. In earlier times, one used to begin in the hour of the cow (one to three in the morning) and to continue until daybreak. There would only be four persons present, one member each of the Fukuda and Sakamoto families, the village chief of Hōki and the priest of the Miwa Shrine of Himosashi. While a fire (*kagaribi*) illuminated the grove, the priest would present offerings and read the prayers (*norito*), first in front of the two *tobiyashiro* at the side and then in front of the single main *tobiyashiro* which is dedicated to *chi no kami*. Traditional sayings associate the grove with strange occurrences. The fire burning in it at the yearly festival would make ships stop down on the sea, and the heat produced by the fire would not wither the leaves of the trees. It is also said that the deity formerly protected the village from pirates.<sup>5</sup>

The *kaya* grass used for periodically renewing the *tobiyashiro* before the annual festival was taken from a special *kaya* field that was reserved for this ritual on top of the mountain. The renewal was done according to the method of only adding a new layer of *kaya* without removing the old ones. As the inner layers gradually rotted away the form did not grow any more. Other types of *tobiyashiro* on the island were no longer renewed by the additive method and most of them had assumed the form of conical huts in which a stone served as a platform for a *gohei* or as a cult seat of the deity (figure 75).

To sum up, the main characteristic of this local cult is that the sanctuary was probably founded when a stretch of field land was opened up in the early seventeenth century. This field land may originally have been smaller and situated only on the hillside below the grove. The main deity worshipped was *chi no kami*, the deity of the land opened up. The two *tobiyashiro* in the separate enclosure were treated as subordinate shrines, although they were dedicated to the mythic creators of the Japanese archipelago.

Another noteworthy point about this grove is that the Sakamoto family had sold the land belonging to the grove to the Fukuda family, which continued to take care of the cult. The ownership of the land was still so strongly tied to the territorial cult that taking over the land meant to also take over the obligations of the cult dedicated to the land's protective deity. Not to do so might cause the revenge (*tatari*) of the deity. The fear of *tatari* might therefore be the reason

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5 This information about the history of this local cult was received in an interview held on 18 April 1969 with Mr Miwa, the priest of the Miwa Shrine of Himosashi.

why the cult continues today. No great changes have occurred in this grove since we first visited it in 1969, except that the grove has become less dense due to typhoon damage. In October 2007, the *tobiyashiro* had suffered significantly from the weather.

The fact that the grove deity was once registered as Sakamoto Daimyōjin and was later called Sakamoto-san suggests that it was a case where the cult of the nature spirit (*chi no kami*) was associated and conflated with an ancestor cult. Another sacred grove related to the Miwa Shrine of Himosashi is situated on a small island called Oki no shima about three kilometres south of Hōki. When we visited it in 1994 a protected forest covered the whole island. Members of the Suenaga family we met on the site said that their ancestor, who arrived on Hirado together with members of the Miwa family six hundred and fifty years ago, is worshipped on this island “because he became a *kami*”.

### The Garō Yama of Tanegashima

Tanegashima is an island to the south of Kyushu where one of these archaic cult traditions coexists with one of the most modern technological achievements, the Tanegashima Space Center, Japan’s largest rocket-launch complex. Shimono Toshimi, who has conducted field research about the *garō* or *garō yama* of this island since the 1950s, could locate no less than 175 such sacred groves, about two-thirds of which were in the southern half of the island (Shimono 1995b [1969]). One area where eighteen *garō* were still extant at that time of our visit is the Kकिनaga plain about six kilometres west of the Space Centre. As usual, the *garō* were distributed at the foot of the hills surrounding the cultivated plain.

Shimono points out the following characteristics of the *garō* or *garō yama* of Tanegashima. They are forests or groves (*mori*) and often found by the side of paddy fields, dry fields (*hatake*) or an estate (*yashiki*). People say that when the place was cleared the spirits present on the land were displaced into the *garō yama*. Later, the person who had opened up the respective land was also worshipped, and then even later a gravestone was erected in the grove or nearby. The *garō* deity was originally the deity of one clan, but later it sometimes became an *ujigami* and a *jinja* deity. In the northern part of Tanegashima, a gravestone (*sekitō*) is often set up later for the spirit of the pioneer who owns a *garō yama*, while another side of the deity is separated off as a field deity and worshipped in a *ta no kamiyama* or ‘field deity grove’. The latter type of *kami* has best preserved the character of a *chigami* or *chi no kami*. Yet the tendency towards an agricultural deity is also strong in mid- and southern Tanegashima,



where these groves are not called *ta no kamiyama* but *garō yama*. If one does something wrong, the *garō* deity suddenly becomes angry, and if one does not constantly worship the angry spirit, it comes out of the grove and wreaks havoc (Shimono 1995b: 503–504).<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere, Shimono draws attention to the many sides of the *garō* deity. People say that this deity protects the water sources, serves as wind protection and is a ‘wild deity’, a *ta no kami* (‘field deity’), a *hebi no kami* (‘snake deity’), a *chigami* (‘earth deity’) and a *yama no kami* (‘mountain deity’). Shimono thinks, however, that the main aspect is that of *yama no kami* (1995a [1961]: 469). As Kokubu Naoichi has pointed out, these different sides of the *kami* concept probably developed rather late and from an archaic concept that has survived in the character of the *garō* as the original form of the folk belief (Kokubu 1995 [1958]: 462). While most *garō* groves are situated in the foot of hills at the edge of a plain, some are patches of forest in the rice fields.<sup>7</sup>

The *garō* grove illustrated in figures 55 and 56 is from an area called Hirayama about 4.5 kilometres north of the Space Centre. Situated where a hill extends into the fields of a narrow valley, it is the *garō* of thirteen families and also the village shrine (*ujigami*) of Mukai sato. When we visited the place in 2012, it had still a number of impressive old trees, but the cult place inside was marked by a miniature stone shrine (*hokora*) with an inscription saying that it was set up in Meiji 27 (1894). By the side of that *hokora* a big piece of coral and two or three small ones were seen, while the offerings consisted of libations in two cups and green leaves in two vases (figure 56).

When Kokubu Naoichi visited this *garō* in 1957, the *shintai* in the *hokora* was a piece of coral resembling pumice stone and behind the *hokora* was still a large *tabu* tree with a hollow root, suggesting that this tree had marked the place of offering before the *hokora* was added (Kokubu 1995 [1958]: 459, 461). Since trees of different kinds still marked the temporary seat of the deity in other *garō* groves (Shimono 1995b: 487), this was a case showing what could happen when a small shrine was set up in front of a tree representing the cult mark of a sacred grove. The added shrine could, in time, take over the ritual function of the tree, which then could continue to contribute to the religious atmosphere of the grove or eventually disappear as in the case discussed. We can still get an impression of what such cult arrangements looked like when

6 The names *garō* and its variant *garan* probably derive from *garan*, meaning a Buddhist temple. On Tanegashima, the contact with Buddhism goes back to the Nara period, but Shimono thinks that the name *garan* for such groves may have come up only in the middle age (1995b: 504). In earlier times people may have used different generic names for such groves, for instance *kamiyama*.

7 For a recent study with illustrations, see Nagasawa 2013.



FIGURE 55 The *garō yama* of Hirayama Mukai  
PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2012



FIGURE 56 Inside view of the sacred grove shown in figure 55  
PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2012





FIGURE 57 The sacred grove called *o-ta no mori* belonging to the sacred rice fields of the Hōman Jinja. A *garō yama* that still only has an old sacred tree marking the cult place. Tanegashima, Minami Tanega-chō, Matsubara  
PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2010

the tree alone was still the cult mark in the sacred grove belonging to the sacred rice fields of the Hōman Jinja in the southern part of the island. Here a large piece of coral was placed openly at the foot of the tree (figure 57).

The *garō yama* of Tanegashima is only one example of what has come to be called *mori no shinkō* ('grove belief') by Japanese scholars. Shimono (1995b) mentions as comparable cases the *kamiyama* of the Tokara islands, the *moidon* of Satsuma, the *utaki* of Okinawa, the *kamiyama* of Amami, the *kojin no mori* of the Chūgoku region and the *niso no mori* of Fukui ken.

### The Sacred Forest of the Ōmiwa Shrine

Among the Shinto shrines already mentioned in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, the Ōmiwa Shrine in the south-east of the Nara basin is famous for its sacred grove, which covers much of Mt. Miwa (Miwayama). The main deity worshipped is still Ōmononushi (here called Ōmononushi Kushimikatama), the deity which Ōkuninushi had to worship on this mountain according to the land-making myth discussed in chapter 4. Numerous rocks in the sacred forest have been identified as *iwakura* ('stone seats') and are regarded as temporary seats of the deities worshipped. Three main groups situated at different levels on the western mountainside are distinguished. The group highest up is associated with Ōmononushi, the middle one with Ōanamuchi (Ōkuninushi) and the lowest one with Sukunabikona (Nakayama 1971: 62).

The whole precinct, including its mountain forest, was said to measure 350 hectares within a circumference of about sixteen kilometres, measured along the course of the boundaries as indicated on a map (Nakayama 1971: 45, 65).<sup>8</sup> Comparing that map with a topographic map of the region, we notice that the precinct reached beyond the top of the mountain (466 metres above sea level) and about 800 metres down the eastern back side to the mountain pass that separates Miwayama from the higher Makimukuyama (566 metres) behind it. The southern boundary cuts across the southern side of the mountain without reaching down to the bottom of the valley.<sup>9</sup> Between the numerous minor

8 According to Umeda (1982: 554–55), the size was 885'644 *tsubo* or 293 *ha*.

9 A similar situation is seen at the Kasuga Taisha of Nara, where the mountain area as part of the shrine's precinct is called Mikasayama (293 metres above sea level). There too the precinct includes the top of the mountain and ends beyond at a pass and two eastern valleys that separate it from the higher Kasugayama further east. See the very detailed study of this shrine precinct in Kasuga kenshōkai 1990: 256, figure 32.

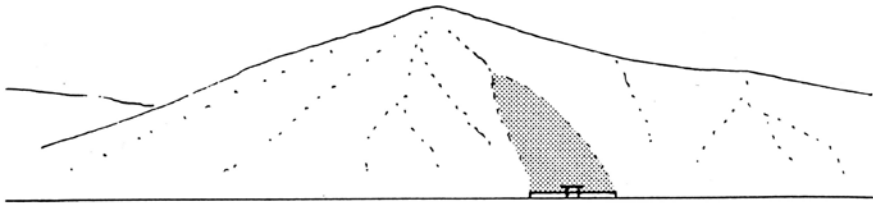


FIGURE 58 Sketch of Miwayama seen from the west, indicating the forbidden zone behind the straight fence and the *torii* of the Ōmiwa Jinja  
SOURCE: DOMENIG 1997

spurs of the mountain, about 60 concave parts are identified by names, most of them as *tani* ('valleys') (Nakayama 1971: 45). That they now carry names at the Ōmiwa Shrine does not fit with the old idea of a mountain as the dwelling space of deities; the names only serve the priests to identify different places of the forest. Nevertheless, it is interesting that they characterise the mountain as consisting of numerous small valleys. Even the so-called *kinsokuchi* or 'forbidden land' behind the fence with the threefold *torii* is called Ōmiyadani ('Shrine valley'). It reaches halfway up the mountain and may be about 900 metres long and 250 metres wide at its broadest section (figure 58).<sup>10</sup>

The recent history of this 'forbidden land' of the Ōmiwa Shrine goes back to a dispute that arose among the priests in the seventeenth century because some of them took stones from Miwayama for making fences for other shrines. In 1665, this led to a lawsuit, which ended the following year with the decision to declare a part of the shrine's mountain as 'forbidden mountain' (*kinsokuyama*). The area, provided with boundary marks, was then about 430 metres wide and more than 2 kilometres long, which means that it reached from the western foot of the mountain across the mountain top to the pass (*tōge*) in the east, which still forms the eastern boundary of the shrine's precinct today. This part of the mountain was established as the 'forbidden mountain' (also called *kinsokuzan*) or 'main shrine mountain' (*honshazan*) of Miwayama or Miwa myōjin.<sup>11</sup> A later document, dated 1810, says that this 'forbidden mountain' was a very important place that was worshipped as the *goshintai* of the

10 Measured on a map reproduced in Nakayama 1971: 65.

11 A document dated 1666 gives its size as 20 *chō* 56 *ken* from west to the pass in the east and 4 *chō* from south to north (Nakayama 1971: 50–51). According to the normal measurements of the time, this would equal 2,283 by 436 metres and an area several times larger than the present *kinsokuchi*.

deity (Nakayama 1971: 51), but it was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that the whole Miwayama precinct came to be called a *shintaiizan* or 'kami body mountain' (Yamada 1993).<sup>12</sup> It was apparently still later that other sacred mountains in Japan came to be regarded as *shintaiizan*. The term is now properly understood in the sense of 'a mountain where *kami* are dwelling' (Miwayama bunka kenkyūkai 1997: 376), but unfortunately it appears to be more often misunderstood as meaning the material body of a *kami*, as if the mountain were the object of worship. The same misunderstanding has probably also led to associating the concept with the idea of regularly formed mountains such as Miwayama, which seen from the west displays a gentle conical form. Yet it was not the form of the mountain that accounted for declaring mountain land as the dwelling space of worshipped deities, nor was it normally the mountain as a whole that was considered sacred. Rather, the idea of the sacred mountain as a regularly formed body belonged to Buddhist imagery, and this influenced how Miwayama was represented in Buddhist mandalas.<sup>13</sup>

A tradition quoted in Ōgishō (compiled 1124–1144) says that Miwa no Myōjin, the deity or deities of Miwa, had no shrine, but that on the day of the festival one made three reed rings (*chi no wa*), placed them on rocks and worshipped (Nakayama 1971: 60). This tells that the absence of a wooden main hall (*honden*) had a long history at Miwa. Towards the end of the twentieth century there was still one natural stone of the kind that might formerly have been marked as an *iwasaka* in the forbidden zone behind the sacred fence. Its position was said to be about 200 metres behind the *haiden* or prayer hall. Close by are also traces of a small rectangular area which might perhaps have been a former cult place (Shirai 1991: 101–119).

On the other hand, it is clear that the present cult situation at Mt. Miwa has not survived from ancient times without changes. The cult has not been free of Buddhist influence in its long history. To the far right, behind the fence which separates the most sacred and strictly forbidden part (*kinsokuchi*) from the public area, there is still a small wooden storehouse. Before 1877, it formed a pair with another storehouse to the far left in which Buddhist sutras were kept. These treasure houses inside the *kinsokuchi* corresponded to some extent to the main building (*honden*) in other shrines (Nakayama 1971: 152; Harada 1980: 201–202).

12 For a discussion of Yamada's article, see Domenig 1997: 98–102. For a study that deals with Shinto sacred forests in a wider context, see Rots 2015.

13 Already earlier, the Buddhist priests who authored the *Miwa daimyōjin engi*, dated 1318, found that the Ōmiwa Shrine "could demonstrate that the mountain itself was the sacred body of Miwa Myōjin, and therefore, a physically existing source of Buddhist enlightenment" (Andreeva 2017: 193).

Nonetheless, if we abstract from all the buildings except for the fence and the gate which separate the mountain from the land opened up, the Ōmiwa Shrine can still convey a good idea of what a sacred mountain forest may have been like in ancient times: a mountain, or rather a mountain side, in its natural wooded state with at least one tree or rock formation marked as a place where one would deposit offerings. A partial boundary to mark it off from the land below would probably belong to it too, but it did not necessarily have to be a wooden fence with a gate in it, although this might have already been a frequent sight in protohistoric times. That the gate was already a *torii* is doubtful.<sup>14</sup>

A shrine with a fence resembling that of the Ōmiwa Shrine, but simpler, was still in recent times the Asuka ni imasu Jinja to the south of Miwa. When I visited this shrine in 1981 it was no longer in its ancient location, but it still had a straight fence with a closed gate and behind it a flat ground on which four cult stones were lined up, each covered with a little two-sided roof.<sup>15</sup>

The question of how far ‘above’ the boundary of a territory the land used to be dedicated to *kami* in early times cannot be answered in a general way. The Ōmiwa Shrine is interesting as an example of an important shrine that displays the aspect of a straight fence that cuts off a sacred zone in a mountain as the dwelling space of deities, but we do not know whether this is a feature surviving from early times or one that was later introduced to revive a lost tradition. What we do know from archaeological investigations is that several rock formations on the western slope of Miwayama had been used in early times for depositing offerings (Nakayama 1971; Koike 1997). Perhaps the most reasonable assumption is, therefore, that in protohistoric times sacred mountain areas used to be vague in their extension and were usually not yet defined by artificial boundary signs. The natural features of a landscape, such as mountain tops and rivers, may already have been regarded as boundaries in many cases, as they were in later times, but, as pointed out in chapter 8, the most important thing was that people entering such areas behaved correctly and showed due respect to the *kami* that were supposed to own them and to be present there.

Thinking of protohistoric times, we must consider that the main sacred object at a cult place was often a tree or a stone that was marked as sacred or another simple cult sign prepared instead of this. It would seem natural in such cases to have the sanctuary or *yashiro* inside the *kami* land and close to the boundary, so that the ‘mountain entrance’ might have corresponded to what in later Shinto shrines was the *torii* at the entrance of a shrine precinct. In the

14 For the problem of the *torii*'s age in the history of Japan, see chapter 8.

15 On a later visit in 1994, the small roofs had all collapsed and the stones were visible. On my last visit in 2007 the whole arrangement had disappeared and a large shrine was standing at the place where the open-air enclosure with the sacred stones had been before.

case of Matachi's *yashiro* (chapter 2), the cult mark was apparently the *shii* tree where the 'divine snakes' were still assembled when Maro had to build an irrigation pond. This was the situation when there was relatively flat land behind the 'mountain entrance', but the situation at historical shrines of the Shinto tradition is often different because the main hall (*honden*) can be so close to the foot of a slope that its ground is partly cut into the slope and secured by a retaining wall (figure 59). The forest usually extends forwards from there, so that the buildings stand in a clearing on flat land. The shrine's forest behind the main hall is then situated on the slope of the mountain and is often visible in its extension because of the higher growth of its protected trees. Even if it is not strictly forbidden to enter the forest behind the main hall, visitors would usually remain in the front part of the forest where the buildings are erected in a clearing. A good example is the Matsushita Shrine of Ise.

### The Matsushita Shrine and the Somin Sanctuary

The Matsushita Shrine (figures 59–64) is situated in the same river valley as the Inner Ise Shrine (Naikū) but about eight kilometres further downstream and close to the estuary of the old Isuzugawa. Its early history is not known, but it is likely that it had once been in some way related to the Ise Shrine. *Ise sangū meisho zue*, the illustrated guidebook for pilgrims visiting the Ise Shrines (dated 1797), includes a drawing of this shrine, which was then called Somin Shōrai no yashiro, after the cult place of Somin Shōrai at the western side of the precinct. The old drawing shows six small subsidiary shrines (*massha*) at different places of the precinct, each consisting of a bunch of twigs erected on a small heap of stones. Nowadays the shrine features no fewer than thirteen such arrangements. They are all made of evergreen *sakaki* twigs, locally called *o-sakaki-san* or *sakaki-maki* ('*sakaki* bundles'). Some are set up to mark places for worshipping certain distant deities of other shrines (Kōtaijingū, Jinmu Tennō, Hachiman); some are placed in pairs to the right and left of the main shrine and the *torii*; one is dedicated to *yama no kami* and one to Somin Shōrai; and one is found under the main shrine, where now Susano no Mikoto is worshipped as the main deity (figure 61).

The cult place of Somin Shōrai (2 in figure 60) is situated close to the main entrance of the precinct (9 in figure 60) and its *sakakimaki* stands on a round stone platform. When it was freshly renewed at the end of 1972 it looked like the same *sakakimaki* seen in figure 32 (chapter 7), but on a later visit in autumn 1973 it looked rather miserable because it was almost eleven months old (figure 62). Nevertheless, it was impressive to see such a simple structure still marking the cult place of a deity. The illustration in *Ise sangū meisho zue* shows this site



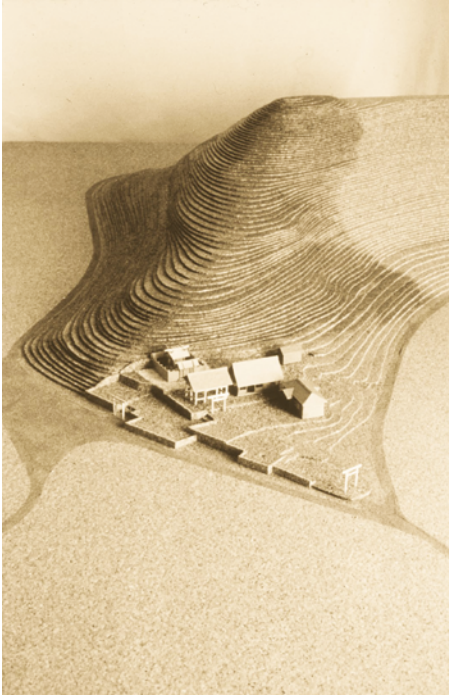


FIGURE 59

The Matsushita Shrine in its protected shrine forest extending from the two streets uphill (darker area). The main hall (*honden*) is built close to the foot of the hill. Ise-shi, Futami-chō, Matsushita Jinja. Model Mioko Doi

as it looked some two hundred and twenty-five years ago. The only differences were that two steps led up to the ground and that the *sakakimaki* was erected on a heap of stones instead of on a round platform.

The *sakakimaki* consist of evergreen *sakaki* boughs that are tied around a wooden stick. In the case of the main shrine only, a large stone is said to be half buried in the ground and the *sakaki* boughs are tied around it (Furukawa 1952). Not rooted in the ground, the *sakaki* soon wither and are therefore replaced annually with fresh ones before the New Year festival. Those under the raised floor of the main hall only receive a new layer of twigs around the old ones, so that the arrangement grows thicker over the years. When the shrine is rebuilt, which happens every twenty years, the old layers are removed and a single new one is added again. Formerly, the normal *sakakimaki* also used to grow thicker over the years (Furukawa 1952: 15). In 1994, only one year before the rebuilding of the shrine, I noticed that the old twigs had not all been removed before the new ones were added around them.

The arrangement at the cult place of Somin Shōrai has changed in an interesting way since I first saw it in 1972. On a visit in 1994, the ground was newly fenced off at the front and a small wooden shrine had been erected close behind the *sakakimaki*, which stood still on its platform (figures 63 and 64/2). This was still so in 2004, but a photograph on the internet, taken in 2011, shows



FIGURE 60 Plan of the Matsushita Jinja and plan of its public part (right). Ise shi, Futami-chō. (1) The main shrine or honden, raised on piles and enclosed by a fence; (2) The sanctuary dedicated to Somin Shōrai; (3) Haiden (prayer hall); (4) Okomori-dō (hall of confinement, used in a New Year's ritual); (5) Store-room; (6) Well; (7) Shamusho (shrine office); (8) An old camphor tree (prefectural natural monument); (9), (10) and (11) torii. Author's plans  
SOURCE: DOMENIG 1997: 94 (ADAPTED)

only the small building on the platform, whereas the *sakaki* bundle had been moved to the lower ground in front of it (figure 64/3).<sup>16</sup> When the shrine was rebuilt again in 2015, the *sakakimaki* dedicated to Somin Shōrai was again placed on the platform and the small shrine stood on higher piles right over it (figure 64/4).<sup>17</sup> Although these changes took place in recent years, they are typical of a kind of embarrassment that people may already have felt in protohistoric Japan when treasure houses derived from granary architecture first came to be set up at cult places.

16 [https://jingu25.info/2011/01/23/20110123\\_0758339688/](https://jingu25.info/2011/01/23/20110123_0758339688/) (figures 5 and 6 from the top).

17 For a photographic documentation of the shrine's rebuilding in 2015, see <http://www2.jingu25.info/2015/11/01/post-35706/>.



FIGURE 61 The main hall of the Matsushita Shrine in its wooden fence. On the right there is a withered *sakakimaki* on a small stone platform

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 2004



FIGURE 62 The cult place of Somin Shōrai in November 1973. The *sakakimaki* alone was standing on its platform and the sacred place was not yet fenced off

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG



FIGURE 63 The cult place of Somin Shōrai in March 1994. A little shrine had been erected close to it and the place was fenced off at the front  
 PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG

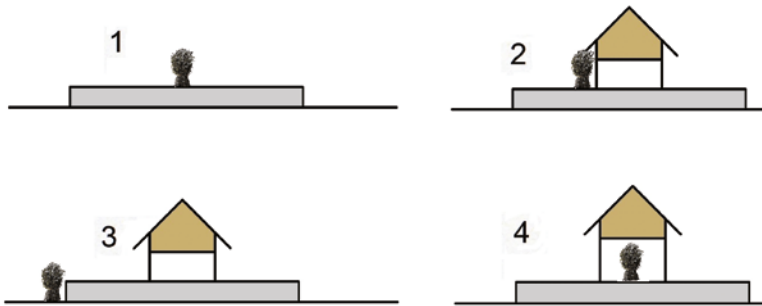


FIGURE 64 Changing positions of the *sakakimaki* dedicated to Somin Shōrai between 1994 and 2015  
 AUTHOR'S DRAWING

### Cult Marks Replaced by Shrine Buildings

When a particular piece of treasure offered to the deity and kept in a granary (figure 65) came to be regarded as representing that deity, the granary assumed the function of a shrine, and where to place this shrine relative to the older open-air cult seat of the same deity became a problem. One of several possible solutions was to build the shrine on posts and place it over the cult mark.





FIGURE 65 A granary from the protohistoric Kofun period reconstructed in the Miyoshi Fudoki-no-oka Park. Hiroshima-ken, Miyoshi-shi  
 PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1981

The famous example is the Ise Shrine where, since ancient times, the Naikū and Gekū each have a sacred cult mark under the raised floor of their main hall (here called *shōden*). This is the *shin no mihashira* ('august heart pillar') or *imi-bashira* ('taboo post'), a post that has no structural function and originally used to be erected first when the shrine was rebuilt. According to *Gochinza denki* (twelfth century), in the middle age it was a post four *sun* (twelve centimetres) wide and five *shaku* (150 centimetres) long, tied up with five-coloured strings and decorated with layers of *sakaki* boughs (*yae sakaki*).<sup>18</sup> A nineteenth-century source says that two-fifths of it were buried in the ground.<sup>19</sup>

In ancient times, the selection and felling of the tree for making the wooden post of this cult mark was already the subject of an elaborate ritual, as was its erection and decoration. If the oldest texts do not mention the decoration with *sakaki* boughs (*Kōtaijōgū gishikichō* (804 CE); *Engi shiki*, book 5 (Bock 1970:

18 *Kokushi taikē* 7: *Shintō gobusho*, p. 26. Miyaji and Sakamoto 1929: 86. Other sources quoted by Kōnō (1974b: 140–41) say it was wrapped in white silk when being carried to the building site.

19 *Gekū sengū yōshu ki*, quoted in *Jingū ten-ryaku* vol. 6: 381, a work in 44 volumes compiled after 1816 by Sonoda Moroyoshi (1785–1849) (*Online Encyclopedia of Shinto*).

133–34)), then presumably this is because it was the most important part of the ritual. Some scholars have suggested that this taboo post may originally have been a form of the ancient *himorogi* and that the *sakaki* boughs, not the supporting wooden post, were the main sacred elements (Harada 1961b; Sakurai 1991: 48–52). What exactly the decorated taboo pillar of the two main shrines looked like originally is not known; even its present form is still a secret matter at the Ise Shrine.

As for the ancient *himorogi*, *Nihon shoki* records that Emperor Sujin had Amaterasu brought out of the palace and moved to Mt. Miwa (chapter 4, figure 24), where a *himorogi* was established for her at the village of Kasanui, something that, according to the Chinese characters, would be a ‘*kami*-hedge’ and has therefore often been interpreted as a ‘sacred enclosure’ (Aston 1: 152). But the meaning of *himorogi* is unclear. In Shinto, it has come to designate a small *sakaki* branch or *sakaki* tree used as the temporary seat of a deity invoked in a ritual (a kind of *yorishiro*, see figure 76). However, if in ancient times a *himorogi* had been a simple tree or tree branch set up for a ceremony, it would be hard to understand why the ancient scribes did not write the word with a different Chinese character. By choosing one that meant ‘hedge’, they probably intended to indicate that a *himorogi* consisted of more than only one green bough. Harada Toshiaki has therefore suggested that a bundle of *sakaki* branches, such as that traditionally still erected in the precinct of the Matsushita Jinja, might better correspond to the *himorogi* referred to in *Nihon shoki* (Harada 1961a; 1961b). A variant in *Nihon shoki* (9.2) says that Takamimusubi set up a *himorogi* and ordered to carry it down to earth to use it in worship (Aston 1: 81–82; NKBT 67: 152), which also suggests that a *himorogi* was not an enclosure but rather something small like a *sakakimaki*.

The *sakaki* tree (*Cleyera japonica*) is particularly associated with the imperial house and Shinto, but in early times the name might have been used for various plants used in rituals. In the myth of Amaterasu’s concealment in the heavenly rock cave, the god Futotama no Mikoto holds up an uprooted *sakaki* to whose upper, middle and lower branches are attached *magatama* beads, a large mirror and white and blue cloth, respectively. In *Kojiki*, this decorated *sakaki* is called a *mitegura*, a kind of offering (Philippi: 83–85; NKBT 1: 81). When later in the mythic narrative Ninigi no Mikoto is to descend from heaven and Amaterasu entrusts him with the beads and the mirror, she identifies the beads and the mirror as those ‘which had lured’, referring back to the episode where they decorated the uprooted *sakaki* held up by Futotama no Mikoto (Philippi: 139–40; NKBT 1: 127, 127n15).

These treasures (perhaps together with the *sakaki*) were therefore meant to have served as items that could lure the spirit of Amaterasu out of hiding.

Today, we could call them *kami no yorishiro* or *yorishiro*, using the technical term that has become common for an object that a deity is supposed to 'approach' (*yori-tsuku*) when being invoked in ritual.

### Yorishiro and Ogishiro

The term *yorishiro* is so often used by students of Japanese religion that it is important to note that it was coined and introduced by Orikuchi Shinobu together with the term *ogishiro*. The context was an article that dealt with a special kind of basket called *higeko* that was fixed to the top of a pole at festivals (Orikuchi 1915/16). The basket had its name because its ribs, closing in above, crossed one another at the top, their upward projecting ends forming a *hige* (literally, 'beard'). Orikuchi interpreted this basket as an object symbolising the sun and the *hige* as its most important part representing the sun's corona. Referring in this context to the myth of Amaterasu's concealment in the heavenly rock cave where the mirror was used to lure the deity out, he coined the word *ogishiro* for something by which a *kami* can be 'enticed (to approach)', whereas the object to which a *kami* 'approaches' he called *yorishiro*. Numerous other things that are also used to function in this way he likewise classified as *ogishiro* or *yorishiro*, depending on the perspective taken.

Although it was Orikuchi who introduced the term *yorishiro* into the vocabulary of Japanese religious studies, the term later came to be used in a wider sense following the view of Yanagita Kunio, according to which not only the top of a thing but the whole thing would be approached and possessed by a *kami* (Tokieda 2015). Referring to the illustration included in Orikuchi's article (figure 66; cf. figure 67), we can say, therefore, that Orikuchi would regard the *dashi* at the top as the *yorishiro* or *ogishiro*, whereas according to Yanagita and the now normal understanding, the structure as a whole (*dashi, hoko* and *yama*) would be possessed by the spirit of the deity in worship.

Orikuchi's basic idea was that a sign (*mejirushi*) was needed to show the deity where to approach so it could be addressed in a ritual, and that this sign was also an *ogishiro* by which one could actively entice the deity to approach. Orikuchi assumed that land spirits (*chi no kami* or *chijin*) were probably first thought to be attracted by small plants like reeds or *sakaki* branches erected on the ground, but he did not consider that they were thought to approach these elements horizontally. Noting that *ogishiro* for land deities later also came to be attached to the top of a tree or pole, he interpreted this to mean that for the people of ancient times, *kami* communicating by way of the air must have come from the sky and therefore also had characteristics of a sun deity to some extent (Orikuchi 1915/16; Tokieda 2015: 18).

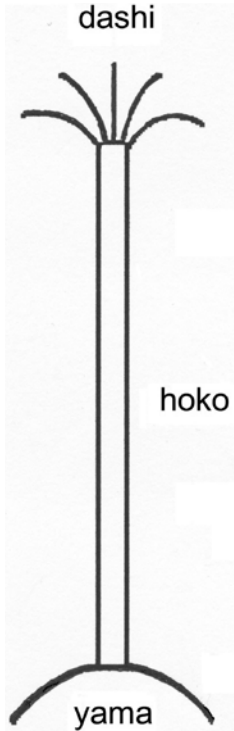


FIGURE 66  
Illustration from  
Orikuchi 1915–1916  
(adapted, with words  
written in roman  
letters). Each of the  
three words *yama*  
(‘mountain’), *hoko*  
(‘halberd’) and *dashi*  
(‘out ...’) can also  
designate a festive float  
as a whole



FIGURE 67  
A structure called *hashiramatsu* (‘pillar-pine’), two samples of  
which were used in a divining ritual. Nagano-ken, Iiyama-shi,  
Kosuge  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1971

Seeing, therefore, that Orikuchi understood the concept of *yorishiro* as related to the idea of a deity’s descent from heaven, Sasō Mamoru has recently argued that the concept is inadequate to explain the sacred rock formations of Okinoshima because the deities of the Munakata Shrine, to which Okinoshima belongs, are deities whose spirits reside “in the natural environments and its working” (2012: 71). However, there is no reason why the concepts of *yorishiro* and *ogishiro* could not also be applied in a wider sense and in relation to deities that were thought to approach horizontally, as when coming from a nearby mountain.





FIGURE 68

Two *marushime* set up in the back of the Ukehi Shrine on the third day of the New Year. Mie-ken, Shimashi, Agō-chō, Tategami. Compare figure 49 (chapter 8), which shows another type of *marushime*

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1972.

Japanese ethnography knows of countless things that are made, set up and used as *yorishiro* of a *kami* in religious festivals (figures 67–71).<sup>20</sup> The examples shown in figures 68 and 69 are variations of a potentially very old type that was generally called *ohake* and used in villages where there still existed a cult group (*miyaza*) headed by a *tōya* priest descended from an old family (Harada 1980: 211–75). As the *ohake* was newly made every year, its proportions could change over time, but the comparison of forms suggests that some may be older than others. It is known, for example, that the proportion between the conical lower part containing offerings and the free upper parts of the *marushime* shown in figure 68 was rather balanced in the past and similar to that of the presumably older type seen in figure 49 (chapter 8), which is from another village in the same area. There, the completed form was placed in an alcove (*tokonoma*) and its upper part was hidden behind a screen.<sup>21</sup> These *marushime* are considered highly sacred; the type from Tategami was said to be an image of the deity.

The type of *ohake* shown in figure 69 is from another part of Japan and represents a further change in the sense that the lower part with the offerings was

20 For figure 67 and an illustrated description of such a festival, see Domenig-Doi 1993.

21 For a photograph of a similar case from another village of the same area, see Hotta 1972: photo pages.



FIGURE 69 A type of *ohake* (here called *hakke*) in the form of a conical hut (left) with a higher central bamboo pole that carried a white *gohei* at its top (right). Tōban festival of the Yoshikawa Hachimangū. Okayama-ken, Kako-gun, Kibichūo-chō

PHOTOS GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1970

emphasised, while the upper part was replaced by parallel elements arranged around a central bamboo pole that rose high up into the air and carried a white *gohei* at its top (figure 69a). The pole corresponded to the *hoko* in Orikuchi's schema (figure 66), while the hut and *gohei* represented the *yama* and *dashi*, respectively.

Whereas these forms are variations based on the prototype of a conical structure made with elements that cross one another, another type of *yorishiro*



FIGURE 70  
Altar with parallel legs  
on the dam of a small  
irrigation pond. It measured  
115 centimetres up to the  
platform and a wish for good  
luck was written on the white  
streamer attached to the leafy  
top. Nagasakiken, Hirado-shi  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG,  
1994

takes the basic form of an offering-stand with a rectangular platform and is characterised by parallel legs that rise higher than the platform and carry leafage at the top (figure 70). Based on their appearance from the side we can distinguish the two prototypes as X-type and H-type. As I have shown in a study of offering stands that were used by ethnic groups of Indonesia, the H-type can be understood as a transformation of the X-type, which is easier to construct (Domenig 2014: 139–82). In Japan, the H-type is sometimes also used as a simple altar for the Buddhist *bon* festival (*o-bon*) where it can serve as a *yorishiro* for a family's ancestral spirits.

The great range of constructive, formal and decorative variations in the making of both the X-type and H-type *yorishiro* cannot be illustrated here. The two last examples (figure 71) show more elaborate structures that used to be finally burnt at the fire festival (*hi-matsuri*) of a shrine (Shinoda Jinja 1966; Egenter 1982).



FIGURE 71 Decorative torches (*kazari taimatsu*) used at the fire festival of the Shinoda Shrine. Shiga-ken, Ōmihachiman-shi, Shinoda

PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1969

### The Shimenawa and the Straw Snake

Apart from man-made *yorishiro*, we also still find single sacred trees that served as cult marks in sacred groves related to *mori no shinkō* or 'grove beliefs' (figure 57). Many scholars assume that such single natural trees were the original kind of *yorishiro* where a *kami* used to be invoked in rituals. Historically, however, such trees were usually marked with something artificial, most often with a *shimenawa*, a rope made of straw that is distinguished from normal ropes by having tassels and white paper cuttings (*shide*) hanging down (figures 72 and 73).

The *shimenawa* has its name because it was apparently understood as a 'claiming sign' (*shime*) that marks a thing or site as claimed for a *kami* cult. Often the *shimenawa* is therefore also tied across the entrance to a cult place (figure 45, chapter 8). When it is hung around the stem of a tree, the tree is usually considered sacred but does not carry a special *ogishiro* on its top.

In the ancient texts, the *shimenawa* appears in the myth of Amaterasu's concealment in the rock cave. When Amaterasu is pulled out of the cave a rope is





FIGURE 72 A shimenawa with paper *shide* and tassels hung around the foot of the cult tree in a sacred grove that was dedicated to a snake deity. Yamaguchi-ken, Shūhō-chō, Yowara

PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2007



FIGURE 73 Offering-sticks (*gohei*) set up in front of a *shimenawa* forbidding access to a straw snake hanging in the lowest branches of a tree. Shimane-ken, Matsue-shi, Mihonoseki-chō, Kitaura

PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2007

hung behind her to prevent her from going back in again. In *Kojiki*, this rope is called a *shirikumenawa* (a back-twist rope), whereas *Nihon shoki* writes this name with ideographs meaning ‘a rope with *shiri* (back-end/s) coming out’. This corresponds to the traditional form of a *shimenawa* that is made by letting the ends of the lengths of twisted straw stick out to form a sort of decorative tassel. Significantly, when the *shimenawa* is replaced by a straw snake, it may be the snake image rather than the tree that is felt to be sacred.<sup>22</sup> In our key story discussed in chapter 2, it was not a tree that was in the way of the building project, it was the assembly of old ‘snakes’ that could not be removed without due ceremony. The tree was only the support or seat of the sacred snakes, as it were; the ancient text does not say that it was cut down and removed as well.

Seeing that the *shimenawa* is, in parts of Japan, sometimes replaced by a straw snake, and that both are then usually seen close to the ground (figures 72 and 73), it seems possible that both were once thought to also function as *ogishiro* attracting deities that were expected to approach a cult place horizontally when offerings were presented.<sup>23</sup> In the case of the straw snake, the relation to the ground is obvious, whereas the *shimenawa* expresses it with its tassels, which point down to the ground, in contrast to the usually upwards-opening top of a *yorishiro*.

This interpretation could also be considered with regard to large stones or rocks that served as *iwaza* (‘rock seat’) and *yorishiro* in early times. Whether and how such rocks were additionally marked with perishable materials we cannot know for sure, but it is not unlikely that *shimenawa* and snake images were used for this long before the Taika Reform.<sup>24</sup> As noted earlier in connection with the sacred forest of the Ōmiwa Shrine (Nakayama 1971: 73–81), rocks in their natural situation in areas dedicated to deities were often regarded as places where offerings could be deposited. This is thought to explain why archaeologists have sometimes found treasures in the shade of such rocks or nearby, as for instance also on the island Okinoshima in Fukuoka Prefecture (Sasō 2012).

Harada Toshiaki has sketched an interesting theory about the ways in which the countless types of artificial *yorishiro* known to Japanese ethnography might have been developed from the ancient *himorogi*. Assuming that the *himorogi* was a bundle of twigs set up on a sacred base made of stones (*twasaka*), he considers that two basic changes could occur over the course of time. On the one

22 For a *shimenawa* in snake form that receives offerings before it is attached to a large *torii*, I refer to the Etoeto festival of the Oisugi Shrine of Kusatsu in Shiga Prefecture (see the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuHHgnaroAA>).

23 Horizontally in the senses of ‘from the local horizon’, as for instance when approaching from a nearby mountain and in contrast to ‘vertically’ (from the sky).

24 It is easy to find photographs of numerous types and forms of *shimenawa* online.

hand, as the bundle of twigs would wither and occasionally fall off, the remaining stick or post might come to be regarded as the sacred object or *yorishiro*. As such, single sticks or twigs could come to serve as *yorishiro* and be further developed in many different ways. If, on the other hand, the organic twigs were tied around an upright stone, then this stone could eventually come to be seen as the *yorishiro* when the twigs had withered and fallen off. A further possible change was that the twigs could come to be regarded as a cover hiding a sacred object inside. This could have led to developing the cover into a simple hut (*kariya*) which had to be rebuilt annually as long as it consisted of perishable materials (Harada 1961b).

On Hirado island, I studied a tradition where a cult mark called *tobiyashiro* underwent various developments of the kind described by Harada. A sacred grove with three *tobiyashiro* of a special kind I discussed already earlier in this chapter. In principle, a *tobiyashiro* consists of a stone and a *tobi* in the form of a bunch of straw that is tied together at one end. The *tobi* is either placed on an upright stone that supports it or it is erected as a sort of hut over a stone while being supported by a conical bamboo frame. According to Inoguchi Shōji, who visited Hirado in 1952, the simplest type of a *tobiyashiro* was then still frequently used. When someone got fox-possessed one would immediately make a *tobiyashiro* and worship Inarisama, the 'fox deity' (Minzokugaku Kenkyūsho 1958: 134).

Such simple shrines also used to be set up in the farmers' estates (as *yashikigami*), but later some of them came to be assembled in the precincts of village shrines. In one such case, there were five *tobiyashiro* in the form of conical straw huts standing side by side when we first visited the place in 1969 (figure 75, top right). It is therefore not unlikely that in the case of figure 74, too, all five deities were originally worshipped with a *tobiyashiro*. However, when we first visited the place only one of the five cult marks was still a *tobiyashiro*, and its *tobi* had been blown off by the wind and was lying behind the stone that had supported it. On the last visit, in October 2007, the harvest festival had just been celebrated and the newly made *tobi* was still fresh, as seen in figure 74. It was supported by the same slender stone I had sketched nearly forty years earlier. If we could assume that, here too, there were originally five *tobiyashiro*, then the situation shown in the photograph could be interpreted as the result of a kind of diachronic change that may have happened at many simple cult places since ancient times. Eventually, the perishable part (in this case the *tobi*) was no longer added in some cases and the remaining stones were marked with a *shimenawa* instead, or they were kept in small house-shaped shrines (*hokora*).

Comparing the *tobiyashiro* in different villages of Hirado and considering the local traditions about these shrines, it was possible to understand in



FIGURE 74 A *tobiashiro* in the precinct of the Chinjū Jinja of Funagi, together with two stones marked as sacred and two stone shrines (*hokora*)  
 PHOTO MIOKO DOI, 2007

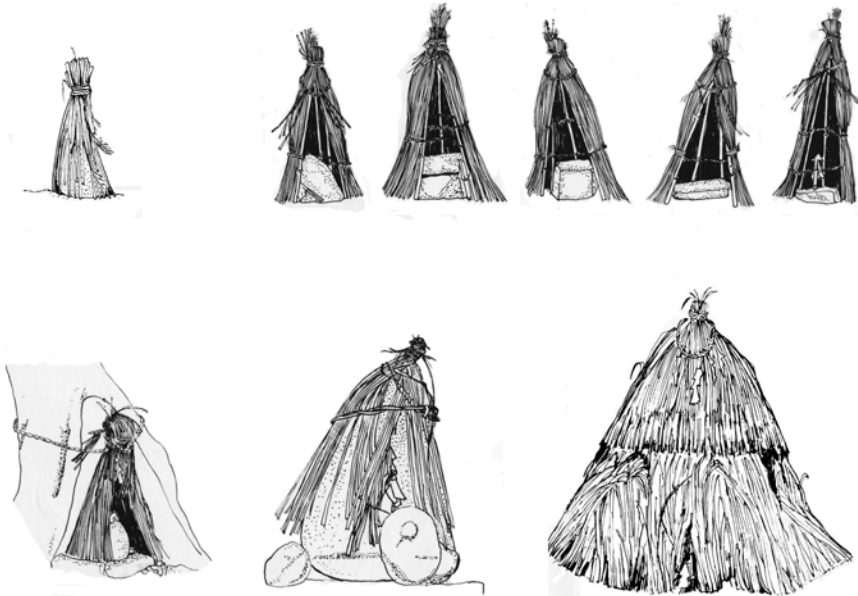


FIGURE 75 *Tobiashiro* from five different places of Hirado Island, Kyushu. The largest type was seen in the sacred grove of Hōki, shown in figure 53. Drawings by Mioko Doi  
 SOURCE: DOMENIG 1976 (ADAPTED)



which way the presumably original type was changed to eventually take the form of conical huts in one of these villages (Domenig 1976). Comparing the simple *tobiyashiro* of Hirado with similar straw shrines (*waramiya*) set up and annually renewed in other parts of the country, we noticed that in southern Kyushu the straw huts had come to be built more carefully, whereas in parts of north-eastern Japan there was no stone inside and the straw was usually put around a stick of bamboo or wood that only served as a support for the straw (Domenig 1992b: 108–112). Naoe Hiroshi has therefore theorised that the prototype for this kind of simple shrines was a sheaf of newly harvested rice that was erected as a *yorishiro* to indicate the place where the deity should descend and stay at the time of a festival. Later, this sheaf would have come to be reinterpreted as a *kariya*, a temporary shrine of a deity, and only the roof would be periodically rethatched with new straw. At this stage, often a mirror, a *gohei* or a round stone would be kept in the straw shrine as a *shintai* representing the temporary seat of the deity (Naoe 1966: 302).

Another possibility in interpreting these traditions is to assume that the straw shrines were developed from claiming signs such as those described at the end of this chapter, and that the lack of a crowning top expressed the low status of such private shrines. This interpretation is suggested by the observation that several names of simple straw shrines are identical with, or closely related to, the names of traditional claiming signs (Domenig 1976: 20–23).

In the case of the *tobiyashiro* of Hirado, the relation to a claiming sign is also suggested by the use of the *tobi* as a cover that was put on rice stacks left in the field. On the island of Takushima, which belongs to Hirado-shi, this was called *waratobe*. In other parts of Kyushu, it was called *to'wara* ('*tobi* straw'), or the rice stack as a whole was called *tobe*, *tōbe*, *tobee*, etc. Since the *tobi* placed on a rice stack is usually too small to function as rain protection, folklore scholars have interpreted it as a former claiming sign (*senyūhyō*) (SNMG 4: 1754, s.v. *waratobe*). Its message was that the stacked rice plants must not be taken away by others. In a part of Niigata Prefecture, the word *tobisa* was indeed still the name of a claiming sign that was made by binding the top of a piece of straw or miscanthus grass. A *tobisa* was stuck into a heap of harvested rice plants or leaves, or on an embankment to prevent others from cutting grass there. It was also set up where one did not want others to pass through (SNMG 3: 1057, s.v. *tobisa*).

Comparing such customs with others where the cult mark was only a stone with a *shimenawa* hung round it, it is conceivable that the stone originally only served to support a cover made of perishable grass or straw.

### Claiming Signs Made by Binding or Knotting Growing Plants

The technical term *senyūhyō* is a Sino-Japanese compound meaning ‘occupation sign’. The element *sen* (Sino-Jap.) corresponds to Old Japanese *shime*, as it appears in about 30 poems of the ancient anthology *Man’yōshū*:

<i>imo ni niru</i>	Since I saw them as grasses
<i>kusa to mishi yori</i>	that resemble my love
<i>waga shimeshi</i>	my claimed
<i>no-e no yamabuki</i>	yamabuki of the fields;
<i>tare ka taorishi</i>	who has broken them off?

While this poem (no. 4197) uses the verbal form OJ *shimu* (‘to claim’), other poems use the expression *shime yū* (‘to bind a *shime*’), where *yū* (OJ *yufu*) could mean ‘to make by binding’, as when it was used for making a fence or a simple hut. Its use for making a sign (*shime*) by using grass meant that such signs were made by knotting or tying grasses. Most of these *shime* poems are metaphorical love poems that speak of binding a *shime* in a field whose grasses or other plants are likened to the person whose love one hopes to gain.

Binding or knotting grasses or twigs was also represented in *Man’yōshū* by the expressions *kusa (o) musubu* (‘grass knotting’) and *matsu musubu* (‘pine[-twig] knotting’). Notably the verbal form *kusa o musubu* and the noun *kusamusubi* also occasionally appear in later literature. To give an example, *Yōtenki*, a text dated 1223, mentions grass knotting in the foundation story of the Hiyoshi Shrine near Ōtsu in the year 668. It tells that the deity of that shrine originally appeared as Miwa Myōjin (the deity of Mt. Miwa) at the time of Emperor Kinmei (r. 539–571) and first ‘descended from Heaven’ in the time of Emperor Tenchi (r. [662]–671).

In the time of emperor Tenchi, the deity came to this place, first went to Karasaki, the dwelling place of Kotonomitachi Ushimaro, and instructed Ushimaro, saying: “You must become my clan member and take care of the shrine. As for my treasure hall (*hōden*), you must divine a good site to the north-west from here. Indicate this by means of places with knotted grass, build the *hōden* and decide the rituals.” Therefore Ushimaro, following the oracle, went north-east, and when he looked for a place, there was a place with *nire* trees. So, he marked that place and revered it as the

place where to build the *hōden*. This became the *hōden* of today's Ōmiya. (\**Yōtenki*, quoted by Maeda 2006: 13)<sup>25</sup>

Another shrine-founding story mentioning grass binding is found in *Ezo no teburi*, a travelogue by Sugae Masumi, under the date of 25 May 1791. In summary it goes as follows. A long time ago a great boat almost overturned on the sea and the captain prayed to heaven, saying that if this is caused by the anger of the sea god, then he will pacify (worship) that deity. He clapped his hands above the waves, weeping with the head turned down, whereupon a big *wani* (a mythical sea animal) appeared in the waves and the sea calmed down. When the shipmates arrived at the coast, “they first made a so-called *orikake* [a sort of offering] and knotted grass, worshipping the deity with only a sign; later a shrine (*yashiro*) for the sea deity Sogō myōjin was erected”.<sup>26</sup>

These are examples indicating that simple signs made by knotting or tying grass were sometimes still used to mark the site where a shrine should be built. The *kusamusubi* was, in such cases, only a claiming sign, although it could be combined with the presentation of a small offering. Thinking in terms of our model of the two-part founding ritual, the shrine would be built later at some distance from that sign. Moreover, it could be dedicated to a higher deity. Miwa Myōjin, in the story from *Yōtenki*, was a deity of Mt. Miwa in Yamato; and Sogō Myōjin, mentioned by Sugae Masumi, was a sea deity. Both were invited from somewhere else to the place where a new shrine was to be built for them. The *kami* worshipped with a simple *kusamusubi*, however, were in all likelihood not these invited gods but the autochthonous local spirits. To understand such stories correctly, we must not forget about these spirits.

A similar case is when Ihara Saikaku, in a text dated 1688, uses *kusamusubi* in the sense of *kusawake*, meaning the founding or founder of a village (KGJ, s.v. *kusamusubi*, *kusawake*). These terms invoke the image of a village founder striding through the wilderness in search of land, ‘pushing aside the grass’ (*kusawake*), but eventually ‘knotting grasses’ (*kusamusubi*) to mark a claim for founding a village. The *kusamusubi* could serve as an archaic kind of claiming mark, but the cult seat of the deity would later be prepared in the form of a

25 The Ōmiya or Daigū corresponds to the present Nishihongū (Western Main Shrine), in which Ōnamuchi is worshipped. Maeda (2006: 13) quotes this story as an important source supporting the tradition that Ōnamuchi (his *nigimitama*) was originally worshipped at Mt. Miwa (chapter 4).

26 ‘*Mazu, worikake to ifu koto wo shite kusa hiki-musubi, shirube bakari ni kami wo iwai, nochi ni yashiro o tatekeru to nan*’. The mythical sea animal called *wani* is sometimes identified with an alligator or a shark. *Worikake* or *orikake* is explained as an offering of rice wine (*sake*) in a bent piece of bamboo (SNMG 1: 305, s.v. [w] *orikakedaru*).

*yorishiro* or a wooden hall built for the deity. Understanding, therefore, that grass growing on a site could be used to make a temporary sign for claiming the site of a shrine to be built, we can more easily accept the idea that such simple signs could have been prototypes in the history of minor shrines such as the *tobiyashiro* of Hirado and other straw shrines used in *yashikigami* worship.

### Pacifying the Site

The custom of starting to build a house or shrine by first worshipping at a temporary sign is of course well known in the usual forms of the *jichinsai* or *tokoshizume no matsuri* (literally, 'land-pacifying ritual'). The original meaning was probably to worship the local land spirits, but the ritual has changed in the course of history to a pacifying of the ground and is now sometimes no longer considered a true religious rite. The online *Encyclopedia of Shinto* treats such rites under 'Ritual of Daily Life' and explains them as "ground purification rites performed to pray that the project proceeds safely and smoothly and to pray that no structural problem arises after its completion".<sup>27</sup>

Historically, however, the *jichinsai* corresponds to the *miyadokoro shizume* ('pacifying the site of the shrine'), a rite which at the imperial shrine complex in Ise used to be combined with the erection of a cult mark in the form of the sacred centre pillar or taboo pillar (*shin no mihashira* or *imibashira*) (Sakurai 1969: 183). Later in history, the two parts of the ritual came to be separated. The first part was called *chinchisai* at the Ise Shrine (corresponding to the normal *jichinsai*) and was performed at the beginning of the shrine's construction; the second part, the installation of the taboo pillar, was done at the end of the long construction period more than five years later (Sakurai 1973: 168–77, 237, 267–68). The *chinchisai* was a sort of purification of the ground that was done when levelling the building site, whereas the installation of the cult mark in the form of the *imibashira* became a highly sacred and esoteric matter.

At the Outer Shrine, the relation to the guardian deities of the land also found expression in the fact that until the beginning of the Meiji period the first fruits from the sacred rice fields used to be annually presented at the *imibashira* under the raised floor of the main hall (Sakurai 1969: 72–73). The lower-ranked shrines of the Ise Shrine complex likewise sometimes used to have offerings presented under their raised floor, but where I have seen

27 Kokugakuin Daigaku Digital Museum, <https://d-museum.kokugakuin.ac.jp/eos/detail/?id=8916>.



FIGURE 76 A Shintō priest worshipping in front of a modern *himorogi* at a *jichinsai* celebrated on a building site. Kyoto-fu, Kameoka-shi  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1973



FIGURE 77 The same *himorogi*, consisting of a *sakaki* tree tied to a wooden post and left standing on the site until construction time  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1973

traces of such offerings, they were deposited inside a rectangular enclosure consisting of *sakaki* branches and there was nothing comparable to the *imibashira* of the two main shrines.<sup>28</sup>

Compared with the *imibashira* of the Ise Shrines, the sign of knotted grass in the story told by Sugae Masumi was only a temporary claiming mark that was probably left standing to naturally wither away when the shrine was later built. The modern *jichinsai* is usually also a onetime affair: it takes place before construction begins and the *sakaki* branch, usually erected on a small portable altar, is removed with the altar as soon as the ceremony is over. If the *sakaki* is sometimes erected on the ground, however, it can be left standing until construction begins (figures 76, 77).

### Ancient Land-Claiming and the Rural Gathering Economy

As I have argued in this book, when it was still possible to freely claim land for agriculture in early Japan one used to first address the local spirits, searching for their agreement through some form of divining. Then one would place a claiming sign; and returning later, one would expel the spirit-owners of the land and start to worship them collectively as the local guardian deity. If we now think of the custom of making claiming signs with the intention to only gather mushrooms or other goods, this was a temporary affair and as such did not require the founding of a permanent cult. Nonetheless, it would seem possible that in that case, too, one used to address the spirit-owners of the land when making claiming signs. Returning later to gather the products and seeing that the knotted signs have come apart, one might take this for a bad omen and desist from carrying the products home. Were the signs found intact, however, one could regard this as a good sign and gather the products, leaving perhaps a small offering behind. To others passing by such signs freshly made and still intact could have indicated that to ignore them might invoke supernatural punishment.

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28 Looking under the raised floor of subordinate shrines of the Ise Shrine complex, I sometimes saw a bare conical stone, a bare short post, or a small enclosure formed by withered *sakaki* branches with earthenware offering plates inside. The last arrangement I saw for instance under the *honden* of the Tanoé Ōmizu Jinja, a subordinate shrine (*sessha*) of the Outer Shrine I visited in 1969. The *sakakimaki* of the Matsushita Shrine are probably the best examples of a cult mark corresponding to the taboo pillars of the two Ise main shrines.

This is of course hypothetical as long as we have no trustworthy sources about how the gathering of products was done in ancient times. What the sources do tell us is that the rural gathering economy of present Japan goes back to ancient times.

Although forbidding private ownership of land for rice cultivation, the ancient laws explicitly stated that other kinds of land should be used by 'public and private in common'. Already In the year before the proclamation of the Taika Reform edict, the governors of the eastern provinces were ordered "to use gardens and ponds and water and land together with the farmers" (*Nihon shoki*, NKBT 68: 273; Aston II: 200). In principle, this phrase meant the zones that were not, or not yet, developed for rice cultivation, including areas where farmers used to collect things such as timber, fuel, grass, stones and other products of the soil, catch fish and hunt animals, and where even sweet potatoes and other things could be planted and harvested in the practice of archaic crop farming.

The law allowing the use of these zones by the public and private in common was not always followed, however, and the validity of this principle had to be stated repeatedly. Whereas an edict of the year 711 still banned the habit of disregarding that law, *Ryō no Gige*, a commentary on the laws dated 833, says that the forbidden zones should not be too numerous, because the use of mountains and rivers, bush and moor, was in principle allowed to everyone.

This change in attitude occurred with the gradual reintroduction of the private ownership of land during the eighth century, which is symptomatic of the general failure of the *ritsuryō* system. It is noteworthy, however, that despite a resignation to the fact of private forests, the principle of general use of non-rice growing zones remained valid, although exceptions were tolerated. According to medieval documents, this situation continued into the Edo period. While mighty feudal lords (*ryōshu*) insisted that the no man's lands in their sphere of influence belonged to their domain (*ryō*), they set few limits to the free use of these zones by farmers: As Toshitaka Ushiomis (1968: 14–15) has pointed out, "In most forest lands clear-cut ownership was not [...] established and a manifold relationship of usufruct and control occurred. In other words, farmers were freely allowed to enter wastelands and forests nearby to fell trees and cut grass, thus utilizing the woodlands irrespective of their ownership."

Since the Meiji Restoration (1868), much of Japan's forest land was nationalised and the government followed a policy of suppressing the traditional rights of common use (*iriaiken*) as far as possible. Nevertheless, the constant resistance of numerous villages meant that the customary *iriai* rights persisted and are still valid in quite a few rural areas today. Since the forms of exercising this

right may differ in different villages, what is allowed or required in each specific case depends on the local regulations (Toshitaka 1968: 41–48).

### Sign-Making Dealt with in Ethnographic Studies

In the years before World War II, the Kyōdō Seikatsu Kenkyūshō, the Japanese Folklore Research Institute under the direction of Yanagita Kunio, organised systematic field studies in many villages of Japan. One of the questions to be asked in the field regarded the use of house and timber signs; one apparently did not expect that the ancient custom of making *kusamushi* would have survived in some rural areas. Once in the field, however, several researchers heard of such a custom still being practised when gathering goods such as mushrooms, firewood, grass as manure or *kaya* ('miscanthus') as thatching material. Their notes about this subject were soon synthesised in a published article (Mogami 1937), but as no pictures were added it remained unclear how such signs used to be made in the respective places. A separate article that happened to appear at the same time included at least a few sketches of such signs that were seen in the south-western islands of Okinawa Prefecture (Hayakawa 1937). After the war, other authors occasionally reported on such sign-making, but usually without adding illustrations. It thus took a long time until the first well-illustrated article on the subject appeared in print (Doi 2005). It deals with signs that were observed in 1973 in two villages north of Osaka and includes not only photographs but also sketches of different forms of signs, as well as two plans showing where and in what numbers the signs had been made in the two villages.<sup>29</sup>

This is not the place to go into more detail regarding this tradition, but it may be mentioned that the comparative study of many types of such signs that were still used by Japanese farmers in the twentieth century (figures 78–81) shows that the signs were generally characterised by having tree branches or the tops of grasses bent downwards or the ends of tree branches turned backwards towards the stem of the tree. This typical feature corresponded to the fact that when the material of a sign was first cut off from the ground or from a tree its top was often bent downwards before it was tied to a stick or tree (figures 78 and 81). To have the natural top turned down was apparently a typical

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29 I am grateful to Mioko Doi for having written several articles on the subject (Doi 2005; 2006; 2018; 2019), partly using photographs and materials we collected together in the years 1973–1975 after we had discovered the first case by chance. Most other places visited on Honshu and Kyushu we knew from ethnographic literature that mentioned such signs without including illustrations.





FIGURE 78 Boundary sign made with high-growing *kaya* grass, prohibiting entry into a forest where mushrooms were growing. Osaka-fu, Toyono-gun, Nose-cho, Katayama  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1975



FIGURE 79  
Boundary sign made of the leafy tops of two young trees joined together, bent down and tied with straw. Katayama  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1974



**FIGURE 80**  
Sign made of brushwood and two downwards-bent tree branches tied with straw to the stem of a tree. Noma-guchi, Nose area  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1973



**FIGURE 81**  
Prohibition sign made of a bunch of grass that was folded and tied to a stick with the top leaves hanging down. Hirado-shi, Shishiki-chō  
PHOTO GAUDENZ DOMENIG, 1981

feature of claiming signs that distinguished them from *yorishiro*, for which a free and movable top was characteristic.

The ancient sources about signs called *shime*, *kusamusubi* and *matsumusubi* suggest that the prototypes of this sign-making tradition are represented by the types that were made on growing plants and that the custom of attaching inverted twigs and grasses to a supporting stick (figure 81) represents a development that naturally came up when signs were needed at places where no grass or tree was growing.

The custom of making signs by knotting grasses or other plants – usually high-growing grasses and sometimes bushes or tufts of grass – is still little known and received almost no attention in the past. It is not a Japanese curiosity, but once we have an eye for it, we can also occasionally find it mentioned in old travel literature and in ethnographic studies or still see samples on journeys in parts of Asia and Africa. For Europe, there is the historical study by Ruth Schmidt-Wiegand (1978), which deals with the wisp of straw tied to the top of a stick as a ban and prohibition sign. Schmidt-Wiegand came to the conclusion that the Old German names of such signs – *wiffa*, *bake*, *schaub*, *wisch* – originally referred to something bound. She noted that this was due to the fact that the sign consisted of a bound form and suspected that a ‘binding spell’ was once associated with them. “The straw wisp on the pole was, as it were, the knot that indicated a taboo, as is still the case today among peoples of the South Sea” (Schmidt-Wiegand 1978: 149).

Signs such as those illustrated at the end of this chapter (figures 78–81) could have been used at any time in human history. Although archaeology cannot provide material proof for this, the anthropological relevance of this observation is evident if we consider that early human groups lived in natural environments and could have used such signs to temporarily mark places, ways and boundaries, and to communicate messages by making the signs in different forms.

By ending the Japan-related part of this book with these notes about primitive sign-making, I also raise the question of the general anthropological relevance of the theoretical model that has been tested in this book. I am aware that cross-cultural comparative study is not a popular trend in our time, but it is important for a subject that ultimately concerns human territoriality and the territorial aspect in the evolution of religious thinking. Having already done some investigations in this direction, I conclude this book with a final chapter that opens up a wider perspective by presenting comparative materials from a few other parts of the world.

## Comparative Notes

As noted in the introduction, this book is also a study in spatial anthropology, in the sense that it focuses on space in dealing with a territorial founding ritual that may have been known and practised in other parts of the world as well. There are countless studies that could be classified as contributions to the anthropology of space, but if this relatively new name is useful, it is because it calls for research focused on space-related problems that have not received enough attention from researchers in the past (Domenig 2014: 9). The question underlying the present book is a case in point. It seems to me that the ritual procedure for taking possession of land in early times has never been dealt with adequately because scholars were too easily satisfied with simple answers such as land-taking is boundary marking or going around the boundary.

As I would not have found it helpful to write a comparative study mentioning many different cultural traditions, selectively and superficially, in this book I focused on the ancient sources from Japan that I am most familiar with. Nevertheless, having extended my research to some other cultures as well, I wish to add a few notes about what I have read about territorial founding rituals in Western literature regarding Southeast Asia and three Indo-European cultures: ancient Greece, medieval Iceland and Vedic India.

We possess old written sources from many parts of the world that include stories telling of the opening up of land and the founding of settlements. The Vedas contain many a poetic allusion to the Aryan immigrations into India; numerous passages in ancient Greek and Latin literature tell of the founding of cities and colonies; and Iceland has the unique *Landnámabók* and the family sagas, which tell how, around the turn to the tenth century, the still uninhabited island in the North Atlantic was settled by immigrants in search of land. If we study and compare such sources, we can see that they differ in content, in the way they are presented and in many other respects; but the ways in which they can be studied differ too. Scholars specialised in the study of a specific culture may tend to consider only what the sources of that culture clearly tell us, but if we approach the topic with an anthropological interest in human space behaviour generally, and in human territorial behaviour in particular, we may wonder if there was perhaps a typical ritual procedure for founding territories that shows up varying in different traditions of the world.

More than a hundred years ago, E. S. Hartland, the author of the article on 'foundation rites' in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1913: 109–115), organised his cross-cultural comparative material under the headings 'Choice of Site' (various forms of divination) and 'Appropriation of the Site' (to exorcise, mark out and consecrate the site).<sup>1</sup> While this was an adequate way of characterising the founding ritual as a two-part ritual, Hartland did not discuss the relation between the two parts, nor did he specify to whom the rites were primarily addressed and where they were performed relative to the boundaries of a territory.

Divination and the consecration of the site were and still are often thought to have been addressed to the deity that was later worshipped in the shrine or temple that was founded, and exorcising is usually assumed to have been done by expelling evil spirits in order to get rid of them for good. This is also the impression we get if we consult the literature of Vedic India, ancient Greece or medieval Iceland. The texts may tell us that a temple or altar for a god used to be founded on the occasion of settling down. But the gods mentioned in such contexts – often Agni in India, Apollo in Greece and Thor in Iceland – are gods of mythologies, whereas these texts say almost nothing about the worship of nameless nature spirits met on the occasion of taking possession of land. Although local spirits played a part in all these traditions, it is usually not clear that they were worshipped on the occasion of taking possession of land and continued to be worshipped later.

Whereas Hartland mentioned various rites that used to be performed when taking possession of land, including divination, others simplistically assumed that it was sufficient to mark out the boundaries because these identify a territory in its size and geographic location. The custom of walking around the boundaries, which is still annually practised in parts of Europe, has therefore come to be interpreted as a repetition of the act of taking possession (Kramer and Schildt 2009). In the Middle Ages, it could indeed be a part of the legal contract in the transfer of land ownership,<sup>2</sup> but whether and to what extent the boundaries of a territory used to be marked when one took possession of ownerless areas depended on the morphology of the landscape and other circumstances.

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1 This regards the founding of territories; a third part of Hartland's article deals with laying the foundation of buildings and distinguishes actions such as scaring away evil spirits, destroying spells, conciliating the local spirits by animal or human sacrifices and providing a new tutelary power.

2 Fiedlerová and Razim 2018.

Scholars like Ananda Coomaraswamy (1935) and Mircea Eliade (1959) ignored the need of divination. They thought that a shrine or temple was founded when taking possession of land and that it symbolised the 'centre of the world' according to a 'symbolism of the centre' which for *homo religiosus* would have invoked the idea of a vertical world axis (*axis mundi*) connecting the three cosmic regions Heaven, Earth and Underworld. To take possession of land would therefore have meant symbolically recreating the universe.

Settlement in a new, unknown, uncultivated country is equivalent to an act of Creation. When the Scandinavian colonists took possession of Iceland, Landnāma, and began to cultivate it, they regarded this act neither as an original undertaking nor as human and profane work. Their enterprise was for them only the repetition of a primordial act: the transformation of chaos into cosmos by the divine act of Creation. By cultivating the desert soil, they in fact repeated the act of the gods, who organized chaos by giving it forms and norms. (Eliade 1959: 10)

This statement is typical of Eliade's view, but if we wonder on what it is based we find that the author refers to an article by van Hamel (1936) that draws attention to the fact that the *Völuspá* of the poetic Edda is not a creation myth but a poem that describes the ordering of the world in an early state of wilderness and in the words of a poet who was inspired by the settlement of Iceland that had taken place a hundred years *earlier*.<sup>3</sup> As Wolfgang Lange, a scholar of medieval skaldic poetry, has pointed out:

Mythology and lived religion are two different things. The reports make it clear that on going into the uncertainty of the new land, other forces and powers than the great gods were invoked. [...] What Snorri reports and what the poems of the Edda tell about the gods is not to be put on a level with the religion of the Norwegian emigrants. (Lange 1958: 162, from the German)

To get an adequate idea of what land-taking meant for the settlers of Iceland, we must turn to the medieval sources.<sup>4</sup>

3 Van Hamel 1936: 21. Eliade refers to this Dutch article as cited by van der Leeuw, which suggests that he had not read it himself.

4 The following notes on medieval Iceland are based on my intensive two-year study of the subject in the late 1980s. For this study, I learned to read the texts in their Old Norse original, which explains why I do not always follow common interpretations.

## The Settlement of Iceland

The settlement of Iceland in the years between 870 and 930 CE is the classic case of a historical settlement where people took possession of land in uninhabited regions and were later said to have performed certain rites following their 'heathen' tradition. During the 'land-taking time' (*landnámátíð*), more and more groups of settlers arrived from Scandinavia, mainly from Norway, some also from the British islands, to take possession of a stretch of land and live in Iceland. This was called *landnám* ('land-taking') or *nema land*, 'to take (possession of) land (as a settler)'.<sup>5</sup> When, by the year 930, most inhabitable parts of Iceland had been occupied by more and more groups of settlers, the land-taking time came to an end and the Icelandic Commonwealth was founded, with the Althing as a legislative and judiciary parliament. It then probably took more than two hundred years until the time of settlement became the subject of a literary work that came to be known as *Landnámabók* ('Book of Settlements'). Together with a number of Icelandic family sagas, this work is a highly interesting source for the study of the land-taking behaviour of Nordic settlers before their conversion to Christianity.

*Landnámabók* has been called a unique work without parallel in world literature, but several of its characteristics suggest a comparison with the eighth-century *fudoki* of Japan. It contains about 400 entries, while all the *fudoki* together contain about 650 entries, if we also count the quotations from lost *fudoki* in later works. Like the *fudoki*, *Landnámabók* is mainly a register that lists the settlements of administrative districts in topographical order – in this case the four quarters of Iceland established after the middle of the tenth century. In either case, this listing is combined with short stories referring to occurrences that allegedly took place when the respective settlement was founded. But while the various Japanese *fudoki* put the stress on the names of the territories that became administrative villages (*sato*) and districts (*kōri*) of the state initiated by the Taika Reform, the Icelandic counterpart rather focuses on the location and extension of the territories and on matters of genealogy.

A further similarity consists in the political motivation that may have led to the compilation of these books. It has been said that the introduction of a tithe system for the whole country in the year 1097 may have contributed to the first compilation of *Landnámabók* (Pálsson and Edwards 1972: 2, 5).

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5 Modern German '*Landnahme*' has been testified since the eighteenth century and translates the Old Norse word *landnám*. For a discussion of the term *Landnahme* and its use in German historical studies, see Eglinger and Heitmann 2010: 11–17.

This could explain why the settlements are identified in relation to the size of the estates and the course of their boundaries. The Japanese *fudoki*, on the other hand, identified the districts and villages mainly by their names, and the political meaning was implied in a law-symbolical ritual according to which the telling of a land name could mean a declaration of submission and loyalty.

The nature of these works as registers probably accounts for the fact that the stories are usually short and never give us a full account of the whole ritual procedure that was or should have been followed in taking possession of land. The information these sources provide about the religious beliefs of the settlers and the rites they performed consists of scattered pieces that must be compared to make full sense of them. By comparative study, the meanings of some of the story motifs can be identified as allusions to parts of a larger ritual with a common purpose and an inner logic.

In *Landnámabók*, initial divination is represented by numerous passages telling of settlers that threw their high-seat pillars overboard when they approached the coasts of Iceland, vowing to settle down where these pillars came ashore. This was clearly a rite addressed to the 'land beings' (*landvættir*), as Dag Strömbäck (1928) pointed out in his classical study almost a hundred years ago. As another noted scholar put it, for the ordinary people the myths might have been "very limited in their significance" and many individuals taking land in Iceland "must have paid more attention to the land spirits, for instance, than to the higher gods" (Davidson 1964: 214).

Strömbäck treated some of the most important rites mentioned in the Icelandic texts: the initial pillar floating, the bringing of fire onto the land and the placing of a staff. He stressed the belief in the existence of land beings (*landvættir*), noted that settlement represented an encroachment on the *landvættir*'s rights and argued that the belief in *landvættir* is more ancient than the belief in ancestral spirits. What Strömbäck apparently did not recognise is that the various rites were related to one another as parts of a meaningful ritual that should have ended with a cult dedicated to the *landvættir*.

If the texts do not clearly say that the *landvættir* were worshipped, then this is because they were written when Iceland had already converted to Christianity and it was forbidden by law to dedicate one's property to 'heathen' beings. The *Grágás*, the legal corpus of the Icelandic Commonwealth written in 1117–1118, says:

Men are to put their trust in one God and His saints and are not to worship heathen beings. A man worships heathen beings when he assigns his



property to anyone but God and His saints. If a man worships heathen beings, the penalty is lesser outlawry. (trans. Dennis and Perkins 1980: 38)

Nevertheless, some entries in *Landnámabók* indicate that the land spirits (*landvættir*) were sometimes worshipped during the period of settlement (874–930 CE). One settler sacrificed to the rocks at the upper end of his land; another one to the grove after which his home was named; and a third one is said to have sacrificed to a waterfall (Pálsson and Edwards 1972: entries 241, 237, 355). Rocks, groves and waterfalls were of course typical landscape features where land spirits used to receive offerings.

If one studies the Icelandic sources with a particular interest in the question of how territories were founded, they suggest that the usual foundation ritual corresponded quite well to that described in the introduction to this book. It began with an act of divining addressed to the land spirits (e.g. the floating of the high-seat pillars in connection with a divining oath). The claim was then marked, and after some time fire was brought onto the land. This was probably done to expel the spirit-owners of the land from the area to be taken over. The fire rite should therefore have been followed by worshipping these spirits as guardian deities, but since this was no longer allowed under Christian law, the later texts interpret the fire rite as the legal act of taking possession.<sup>6</sup>

The fire rite was called ‘*at fara eldi um landit*’, which is usually misunderstood in the sense of ‘to go with fire around the land’. This common misinterpretation is based on the preconceived idea that land-taking was done by marking out the boundaries. Although the Icelandic sources are sometimes quoted as evidence for this idea, they do not really support it. The preposition *um* in the above phrase also meant ‘about’ and ‘over’; and ‘over’ is doubtless the correct meaning in the cited phrase as well as in similar ones. Not only would it often have been impossible to go all around the boundaries because many territories in Iceland were situated along the coast and ended in steep and rocky hills (figure 82),<sup>7</sup> it was also much easier to go with fire *over* the land. One entry in *Landnámabók* clearly describes this as a method of claiming entire catchment areas by lighting fires at each river mouth (Pálsson and Edwards 1972: entry 218). This was a reasonable method of claiming the land from the coast to the watersheds, whereas there are no stories that clearly tell of taking possession

6 The Viga-Glums Saga, chapter 26, tells of a law case according to which a certain Glum was sentenced to selling half of his land and to depart from the land within a fixed period of time. A certain Einar then bought that land and started cultivating it, but Glum stayed to the very end of the time that had been granted him. When that time had come, he still stayed until he was chased away by bringing fire on the land. [https://sagadb.org/viga-glums\\_saga.en](https://sagadb.org/viga-glums_saga.en).

7 See also the maps in Pálsson and Edwards 1972.

of land by riding or going all around the boundaries. The single explicit story that is often quoted in this context is from *Hen Thorir Saga* and regards a man who claimed land by riding around a burned-down house; but his claim was later not recognised as valid (Morris and Magnússon 1891: 144).

Some of the settlers additionally also founded a temple dedicated to a god of Norse mythology, often Thor. They apparently did so for political reasons; for such temples used to serve people of different settlements, whereas pagan settlers might also worship their own *landvættir* and might have done so at a place different from that of the temple, if they built one.

We get the most complete picture of a settlement in Iceland in a chapter of *Eyrbyggja Saga*, which describes in detail how a settler called Thorolf Mostrarskegg moved from Norway to Iceland and took possession of land on the northern coast of Snæfellsnes Peninsula in the western part of Iceland.<sup>8</sup> The following is a list of what he allegedly did according to that story:

Back in Norway, Thorolf divines in combination with a sacrifice, asking

Thor: shall I move to Iceland?

He pulls down the temple of Thor, takes some earth from underneath

Thor's seat, and prepares a ship for the journey.

He crosses the sea to Iceland.

In approaching Iceland, he throws the high seat pillars overboard in combination with an oath, saying that he will stay in Iceland where Thor lets the pillars come ashore.

Exploring the land, he finds the high seat pillars washed ashore on a peninsula (3 in figure 82).

He goes with fire from Staff River to Thor's River (probably making fires at all the river estuaries from 1 to 2 in figure 82).

He settles his shipmates on the mainland.

He builds his estate and rebuilds the temple of Thor on the peninsula, re-installing also the earth brought from his old temple in Norway (4 in figure 82).

He declares the hill on the peninsula as a holy place where no animals should be killed and where he and his descendants would go after death (5 in figure 82).

He decides the site on the peninsula where the high seat pillars have come ashore (3 in figure 82) for a regional assembly related to the temple.

He dwells and prospers in the new place.

<sup>8</sup> Morris and Magnússon 1892: 7–9.

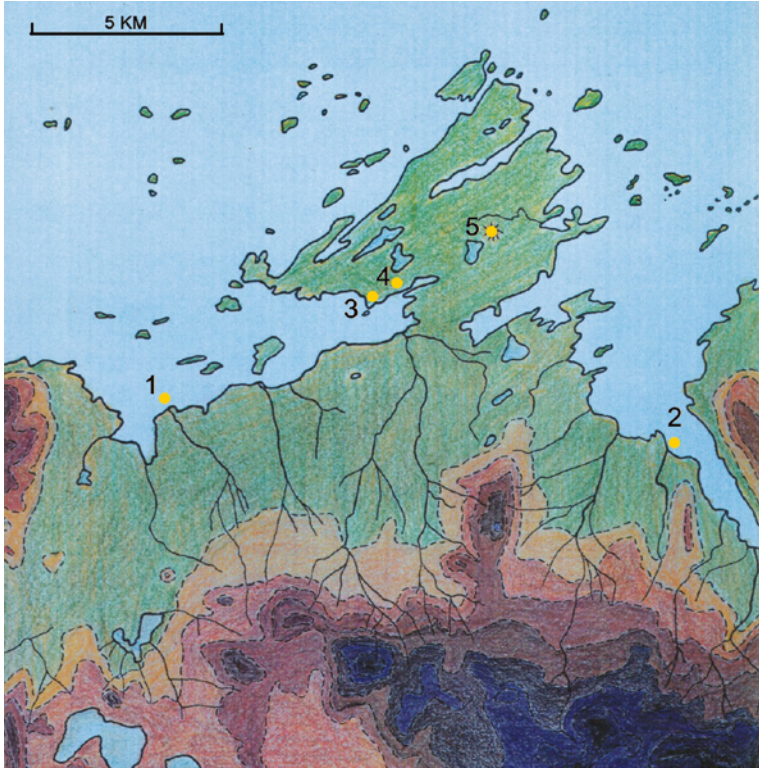


FIGURE 82 Thorolf's territory at Thorsnes, according to *Eyrbyggja Saga*.  
 (1) Estuary of Staff River (?); (2) Estuary of Thor's River (?); (3) Small peninsula where the high-seat pillars were found; (4) The temple of Thor; (5) Helgafell, the sacred hill  
 AUTHOR'S MAP

The Staff River may have got its name because a staff was erected there as a claiming sign and the holy hill may have been sacred to the *landvættir*, which would explain why no animals were to be killed there. Wooden parts of the temple of Thor in Norway were carried to Iceland and the temple was rebuilt there. This explains why Thor is exceptionally said to have let the high-seat pillars come ashore. Basically, the *landvættir* were addressed in that rite, but a god of the mythology might sometimes have been invoked to accompany the floating pillars.<sup>9</sup> The importance of addressing the *landvættir* in approaching the

9 Compare this with the story from Japan quoted at the end of chapter 1. It tells that Kannon came to Kashima with three logs which the founder of the temple floated there, but this was only possible because the founder had first asked for and received permission from the deity of Kashima. The fact that, in the above story from Iceland, a god of the mythology

coasts of Iceland is also clear from a heathen law mentioned in the *Hauksbók* manuscript of *Landnámabók*:

This was the beginning of the heathen laws, that men must not keep a ship at sea with a figure-head on; but if they have, then they must take off the head before they come in sight of land, and not sail to land with gaping heads and yawning jaws to frighten the spirits or wights of the country.<sup>10</sup>

Since this was a pagan law, not to frighten the *landvættir* (the ‘spirits or wights’) meant not to forego the chance of making a deal with them and gaining their protection at the new place.

In early times of Christianisation, the importance of worshipping land spirits was still recognised by common people in many parts of Europe, and even churchmen fighting the ‘heathen’ customs sometimes had a bad conscience when they destroyed sacred groves and expelled the spirits believed to be dwelling there. The Icelandic bishop Guðmundr the Good was said to have always left ‘a place for the evil to live’, but of course he did not go so far as to worship the spirits to whom he granted a refuge. Settlers secretly still adhering to their indigenous religion, however, used to pacify and worship the spirits they had expelled.

The Japanese *fudoki* as sources about land-taking rites can complement the *Landnámabók*, because in Japan there was no reason to suppress information about the cult dedicated to the land spirits. The story of Yato no kami, quoted and discussed in chapter 2, is the best example for this because it tells how such cults were founded. On the other hand, the *Landnámabók* is helpful in drawing attention to the need for initial divination, which the *fudoki* rarely mention explicitly by using a word meaning to divine.

### Founding Sacred Groves and Colonies in Ancient Greece

When it came to be known in the second half of the nineteenth century that sacred groves in northern India were regarded as remnants of the primeval forest, ethnographic reports of that kind inspired W. H. D. Rouse in his book *Greek*

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accompanied the floating high-seat pillars does not preclude that the rite was basically addressed to the *landvættir*, although some scholars have argued to the contrary.

10 Translation from *Origines Islandicae*: 318, [https://archive.org/stream/originesislandico1gudb/originesislandico1gudb\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/originesislandico1gudb/originesislandico1gudb_djvu.txt).

*Votive Offerings* (1902) to interpret the sacred precinct (*temenos*) of ancient Greek temples in the same way:

When the earth and its growths were regarded by the simple soul as possess [sic] or protected by unknown powers, any intrusion upon new dominions was thought to be dangerous. [...] Often a plot of land is left barren, or a clump of trees unhewn, to be the abode of the spirit which has been disturbed. In Greece, when land was occupied by conquest or colonization, a portion of the land was 'cut off' (τέμενος) for the god's habitation. (Rouse 1902: 39)

Rouse searched ancient sources to support this interpretation and, although he found a number of late ones, he concluded that "such questions can never be answered now" but "it does not follow by any means that there was nothing of the kind because we hear so little about it" (Rouse 1902: 43).

Later scholars of Greek religion ignored the sources that Rouse had cited or rejected them as being too late and unconvincing. Although there is much scholarly literature about the foundation (*ktisis*) of Greek cities and colonies, a scholarly encyclopaedia article on this topic noted that we are "not well informed" about the ancient Greek foundation ceremonies, although there must have been "a frame of traditional rules" regarding the actions of a founder (Cornell 1983: 1123, 1136). A few years later, Irad Malkin (1987: 2–3) nevertheless distinguished a "series of religious acts" that characterised the founding of a Greek colony:

1. An oracle, often the oracle of Apollo in Delphi, is consulted before setting out from the homeland.
  2. Divination is also performed by seers (*manteis*) who accompany the whole foundation process (in the mother city, en route and at the new site of settlement).
  3. Sacred fire from the public hearth of the mother city is transferred to the new colony.
  4. Taking possession of the new site is done by founding sanctuaries for imported gods, usually at the periphery of the city.
  5. The *oikist* or founder regulates the cults, religious calendars, etc.
  6. After death the founder is worshipped as a *heros* in the centre of the city.
- This is a convincing sequence insofar as it stresses both the importance of initial divination and the founding of sanctuaries at the periphery. However, if point 4 says that the sanctuaries were dedicated to imported gods, then this means that the author ignores or neglects the role of autochthonous local

spirits. Malkin is even explicit about this point when he emphasises that the cult accorded to the deceased founder was “the first cult which was the colony’s own” (1987: 2; 1996: 231).<sup>11</sup> He mentions that the founders had to respect local gods and heroes of earlier settlers as “Greek religious precedents” (1987: 148–60), but he does not consider that the settlers might have started by worshipping the spirit-owners of the land when they opened up land that had not been settled before. Stressing that he is concerned with historical colonies, Malkin admits that he has ‘little to say on legendary oikists and legendary foundation oracles’ (1987: 21). He therefore also ignored the fact that Jane Harrison (1962 [1927]: 277–340) had earlier come to the conclusion that there were two things that went into the making of a Greek hero: a dead man and a *daimon*.

A famous story where a local *daimon* played an important part is the foundation story of Alexandria. According to tradition, a large serpent appeared on the site and Alexander ordered it to be killed and worshipped in a *heroon* as the city’s good spirit (*agathos daimon*). Since this story is told in the Alexander Romance (c.300 CE), it is often neglected as a source for early Greek religion. More recently, however, Daniel Ogden (2015) compared it with other stories where Alexander is associated with serpents and notes that the tale of Alexandria’s foundation “broadly aligns with a traditional Greek story type in which the founder of a city is somehow guided to the site by an animal”. Speaking of “the old Greek foundation myths”, Ogden then mentions eight cases where different animals – a crow or crows, a mouse, a fish and a boar, wolves and sheep, and a ‘metaphorical goat’ – were said to have guided the founders to the place where they settled down (Ogden 2015: 132).

Fully explicit and sufficiently old sources saying that Greek colonists worshipped local land spirits may indeed be lacking, but oracle stories mentioning animals can also support what Rouse had suggested, provided that they allow the conclusion that the animals in question were locally worshipped. A further story, which Ogden does not mention, allows this conclusion. It regards the foundation of the temple of Apollo Smintheus (the Mouse Apollo) who was mainly worshipped in Asia Minor. In that case, an oracle predicted that the settlers should stay where the ‘earth-born’ would attack them. They finally settled near Hamaxitus because there it happened that many field mice came out of the ground at night and ate the leather in their equipment. According to Strabo

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11 Similarly, Cornell (1983: 1140) writes that there was no better-suited object for a local cult in a colony than the founder.

(13.1.48),<sup>12</sup> this story goes back to Kallinos (about 650 BCE), and Heracleides of Pontus (fourth century BCE) said that “the mice which swarmed round the temple were regarded as sacred, and that for this reason the image [of Apollo] was designed with its foot upon the mouse”.

Since it was Apollo of Delphi, a higher god of the homeland, whose oracle was said to have predicted that the ‘earth-born’ would show the place of settlement, this oracle story suggests that the ‘earth-born’ mice were meant to be integrated as autochthonous elements into the cult of Apollo at Hamaxitus. Another ancient writer, Aelian (second/third century CE) supports this interpretation:

And those who live in Hamaxitus in the Troad worship a Mouse, and that is why according to them, they give the name Sminthian to Apollo whom they worship, for the Aeolians and the people of the Troad still call a mouse sminthus. [...] And in the temple of Smintheus tame mice are kept and fed at the public expense, and beneath the altar white Mice have their nests, and by the tripod of Apollo there stands a Mouse. (Aelian, Nat.an.12.5, trans. Scholfield, Loeb Classical Library)

Here, it is clearly said that a mouse was worshipped and that white mice had their nest under the altar of Apollo. The mice were probably sacred because they were regarded as manifestations of the local spirits, and these spirits were the object of a local cult that continued to be dedicated to them as spirit-owners of the land. The foreign Apollo cult was thus established on top of a cult that was dedicated to the local spirits and continued to coexist with it.

From these and other ancient texts, it appears that Apollo sanctuaries existed along the western coast of Asia Minor, which were briefly called *sminthia* or ‘mouse sanctuaries’. In such places, Apollo was worshipped as a god of agriculture and in this capacity also controlled the animal pests, especially the mice, which were hated in the fields and worshipped in the *smynthia*. As lord of the mice, Apollo Smintheus could punish the people for some offence by sending the mice out to devastate their fields and, on the other hand, he could also listen to human requests for the removal of an already existing plague of mice.

12 Strabon 13.1.48, trans. H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer, 1903. Copied from Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0239%3Abook%3D13%3Achapter%3D1%3Asection%3D48>. For living animals being kept in shrine precincts of Japan as ‘messengers’ of the main deity, see the section ‘Nature Spirits Can Become Manifest in Wild Animals’ in chapter 8.

To the north-east of the Troas was Bithynia at the southern shore of the Black Sea. An excerpt from Apuleios (second century CE) included in *Geoponika* (13.5.4) says that the people there knew a strange method of exorcising mice from a field. First, they would stop the holes with rhododaphne, so that the mice trying to get out would gnaw it and perish. Then they would do as follows:

Take some paper and write these words on it: "I adjure the mice taken in this place, that you do me no injury yourselves, nor suffer another to do it; for I give you this ground (and you mention which); but if I again take you on this spot, I take the mother of the Gods to witness, I will divide you in seven parts." Having written these words, fasten the paper in the place where the mice are, before the rising of the sun, to a stone of spontaneous production, and let the letters be turned externally. (trans. Owen 1806: 141)

If the mice were ordered to remain in the field that was given to them and not to tolerate others doing harm, then this means that they were ritually turned into guardian spirits of the farmer's fields. The method evidently corresponds to what our key story from Japan says about the foundation of a snake cult (chapter 2). Being known from ancient Bithynia, it is also relevant in connection with the sacred mice in the temple precinct of Apollo at Hamaxitus, which may likewise have been worshipped as guardian spirits of the agricultural land.

Oracle stories mentioning animals that reveal to a founder the place of settling down were apparently intended to indicate that the respective animals were to be worshipped as manifestations of the local spirits. They therefore contradict Malkin's thesis that the cult of the deceased founder was the very first which was a colony's own.

In a later article, Malkin (1996) proposes an interesting idea to explain the peripheral location of extra-urban sanctuaries in ancient Greece. He writes that "the question should be answered in Greek religious terms: the 'division of the same' between the Greeks and their gods. As with sacrifice, in which the gods got the fat and bones and man received the meat, the gods got fat land, revenue-bearing *temenê*, which were, however, dangerous and distant plots" (Malkin 1996: 75). The analogy is appropriate; the 'division of the same' is what Rouse probably also meant when he said that a portion of the land was "cut off" (*τέμενος*) for the god's habitation. Nevertheless, Malkin's interpretation is not fully convincing. The gods got the fat and the bones because the worshippers considered these parts less valuable than the meat. When settlers took possession of land, they took for themselves the land they found most valuable and left the rest to the local spirits. The rest that they left was not



a revenue-bearing *temenos* but primarily a 'sacred grove', which the Greeks used to call *alsos*. Since, in Olympia, the temple precinct (*temenos*) was called *altis*, it seems possible that *alsos* and *temenos* (in the sense of temple precinct) were sometimes used as synonyms. But Homer, *Odyssey* 6.291–94, describes an *alsos* with a spring where also a *temenos* was situated. The *alsos* was dedicated to Athena and the *temenos* belonged to King Alcinous. Similarly, the *altis* of Olympia could originally have consisted of two distinguished parts, an *alsos* situated on the Kronos Hill and a *temenos* on the adjacent flat land below, where the temples were erected (as in figure 59, chapter 9).<sup>13</sup>

These notes indicate that the importance of initial divination is fully acknowledged in discussions of Greek foundation rites, but sources about the cults dedicated to the local spirits at the time of founding territories appear to be rare and are usually neglected because they are not considered to be sufficiently old.<sup>14</sup>

### The Vedic Tradition

In the *Rg Veda*, the Five Aryan kindreds are spoken of as immigrants; they have come from another place across the waters, and have settled and tilled the lands on the hither shore. This process of land-taking has generally been interpreted as referring to an historical immigration of an Aryan speaking people who [...] crossed the Sarasvati in the Punjab and made their home in Bharatavarsa. (Coomaraswamy 1935: vii)

Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote this in a booklet he titled *The Rg Veda as a Land-náma-bók* (1935). Although the title refers to the Icelandic *Landnámabók*, he rejected the usual interpretation that the land-taking motif in the *Rig Veda* concerns events in history. His interest was not in the form of the ritual but

13 A rather strange interpretation has been given by Walter Burkert. He derived the word *alsos* from a root meaning 'to feed' (or 'to grow') and explained the meaning as "a grazing area for the pack animals and mounts of the participants in the festival", adding that "this in no way precludes a certain feeling for nature, especially as the grove is reserved for sacral use" (Burkert 1985: 86).

14 This was quite different in the case of the Roman tradition, which is not dealt with here. Among the Romans, the importance of worshipping land spirits is well known. In the context of agriculture, such spirits or minor deities were called *lares* and worshipped everywhere. Their cult was related to the domestic hearth, and its function inspired Fustel de Coulanges to state that "it was not the laws that first guaranteed the right of property, it was religion" (1877: 86).

in what he called a metaphysical tradition, according to which such stories would signify the origin of time and history. Thus, the passages describing settlers in search of land and arriving at their destination 'here' would mean "the entering in of time from the halls of outer heaven" (1935: vii, 25). Consequently, Coomaraswamy mainly mentions the first fire, the *gārhapatya*, which one had to establish when taking possession of land according to the Vedic texts. He refers to a passage from *Śathapatha Brahmana* (ś.B. VII, 1, 1, 1 and 4), "where it is clear that those are first settlers or ere-dwellers (viśa) who build a fire-altar on any land, the performance of this rite constituting the legal act of land-taking" (Coomaraswamy 1935: 16).

What Coomaraswamy does not tell us is that the *gārhapatya* had a counterpart in a second fire, called *āhayanīya*, and that a more complex ritual is described in the text from which he quotes. Before building the *gārhapatya*, the ground had to be cleared by sweeping away the elements "crawling on their bellies", lest one should "settle on those already settled". In other words, one had to expel the local spirits that could appear as snakes. Initial divination is not mentioned explicitly; but during the sweeping episode the text says something equivalent: "Yama, the ruling power, with the consent of the Fathers, the clan, now grant to this (Sacrificer) a settlement on this earth" (ś.B. VII. 1.1.4).

Most interestingly, the text adds that some also sweep at the *āhayanīya*, but that one should not do so because "by the *āhayanīya* he rises upwards".<sup>15</sup> Interpreted in the sense of what has been argued in this book, this can only mean that the 'crawling elements' are going to be worshipped at the *āhayanīya*; for by worshipping them there the settler would elevate them to the higher status of the land's guardian deities and "rise upwards" himself, reaching the higher status of a landowner.

That the 'crawling elements' were supposed to be snakes and that they were indeed to be worshipped is clearly expressed in a passage of *Pancavimsa Brahmana*:

Through this (rite), the serpents gained a firm support in these worlds. They who undertake it get a firm support in these worlds. [...] Through this (rite), the serpents vanquished death. Therefore, they (the serpents), having left aside their old hide, creep further, for they had vanquished death. The Adityas are the serpents. They who undertake this (rite), to

15 ś.B. VII. 1.1.1 and 3.1.7. trans. Eggeling 1894. Quoted from: <https://sacred-texts.com/hin/sbr/sbe41/sbe4161.htm>.

their share falls the shining out, as it were, of the Adityas. (P.B. XXV, 15. 2 and 4)<sup>16</sup>

Here it is clear that the serpents vanquish death by being ritually transformed into deities (Adityas).<sup>17</sup> By letting them live one could get “a firm support in these worlds” and profit of their new status as guardian deities.

What is lacking in the quoted texts is a mention of the new dwelling space of these serpents after they have vanquished death and attained a higher status as worshipped deities. The analogy with the case from Japan suggests that when such a ceremony was performed in an open landscape, a part of the landscape was kept sacred as their new dwelling space. The texts quoted do not say so, although they suggest that the snakes will live on and be worshipped. This possibly has to do with the fact that the two fire altars mentioned were built on an east–west axis in a household’s offering hall (Eggeling 1894: 298n1). The *gārhapatya* was associated with ‘earth’, the *āhayanīya* with ‘heaven’, and the whole arrangement symbolised a structured microcosm which may have represented the household’s larger territory, whereas the ritual repeated the procedure followed in creating such a territory.

For land-taking rituals performed in an open landscape, we must turn to another part of *Pancavimsa Brahmana* (xxv. 10; Caland 1931) where it deals with the Sarasvati *sattra*, a ritual that was performed along a river identified with the mythical Sarasvati. The procession starts in the west, where the Sarasvati ‘is lost in the desert’, and moves upstream and eastward over a distance of forty days on horseback towards a place called Plaksa prasravana, where the river appears and from where it flows forth. Each time, before temporarily settling down to pass the night, the participants first make the *sāmnāyā* sacrifice, a libation of sweet and sour milk offered to Indra:

After the sacrifice of the *sāmnāyā*, the Adhvaryu throws a yoke-pin (in easterly direction, from the place where the sacrifice has been performed). The place where it falls down is (the place for the) *gārhapatya*(-fire).

16 *Pancavimsa Brahmana*, trans. W. Caland 1931: 640, 642, <https://archive.org/details/pancavimsabrahma032052mbp/page/n683/mode/2up>.

17 Coomaraswamy mentions this passage (1935: 17) and adds a footnote drawing attention to his separate article titled ‘Angel and Titan, an Essay in Vedic Ontology’, where he shows that “the Devas are Assuras and Serpents sacrificially transformed or ‘turned about’”. This other article appeared the same year in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 55 (1935): 373–419.

From this spot, he makes thirty-six strides (in easterly direction): this is (the place for) the āhayanīya(-fire). (P.B. XXV. 10. 4, trans. Calland)

Here we have a mention of the initial act of divination; it was done by means of a yoke pin thrown to indicate the location of the *gārhapatya* fire. The *āhayanīya* fire was built thirty-six strides from there, and the temporary campsite of the participants in this ritual may have been between the two fires. The text thus mentions parts of a ritual for taking possession of land on a small scale, but this time the land was only for temporary use.

The paraphernalia needed for this ritual were movable and included sheds on wheels and a sacrificial stake that could be set up without making a hole into the ground (P.B. XXV. 10. 5). Whereas the participants ritually took possession of a small territory each time, where they stayed overnight, the procession as a whole moved upstream until they reached Plaksa prasaravana after forty days:

At the distance of a journey of forty days on horseback from the spot where the Sarasvati is lost (in the sands of the desert), (is situated) Plaksa prasaravana. At the same distance from here (from the earth) (is situated) the world of heaven: they go to the world of heaven by a journey commensurate with Sarasvati. (P.B. XXV. 10. 16)

The usual interpretation is that the 'here' in the second sentence of this passage means the location of Plaksa prasaravana on earth, so that heaven would still be far from there. This has led to the interpretation that the mythical river Sarasvati was meant to flow down from the sky along 'the *plaksa* tree of forth-streaming' (the literal meaning of Plaksa prasaravana), and that from there it would continue streaming westwards through the earth until getting lost in the sand of the desert (figure 83b; Hildebeitel 2001: 143–49). However, if we assume that myths are sometimes misunderstood because they refer to conditions or concepts with which we are no longer familiar, we can make an attempt at understanding the quoted passage differently. Noticing that another ancient text, *Jaiminīya Brāhmana*, locates Plaksa prasaravana at the extreme end of the river Sarasvati, saying that the space of heaven is situated there (Caland 1919: 201), we can convincingly interpret the quoted passage from *Pancavimsa Brahmana* in the same sense. We can assume that the 'here' in the second sentence means the place "where the Sarasvati is lost" and where the Sarasvati sattrā begins (see earlier), which is what the third sentence suggests anyway. Assuming this, both texts mean the same, namely that heaven begins at Plaksa prasaravana and

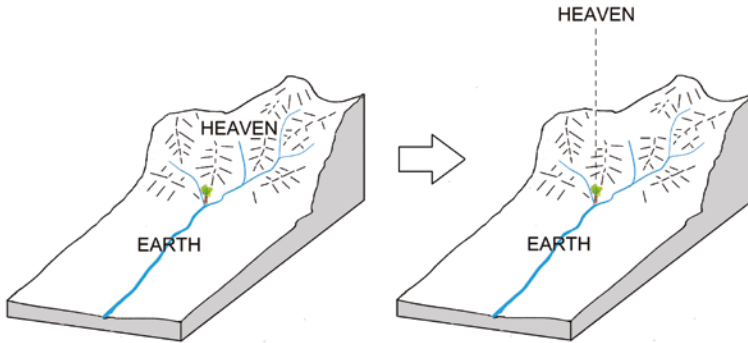


FIGURE 83 Schematic view of an older and a newer concept of 'heaven' in the myth of the river Sarasvati in Vedic texts. 83a (left): Plaksa prasravana as the boundary tree between a terrestrial heaven in the mountains and the 'earth' extending down along the river Sarasvati. 83b (right): The tree was interpreted as symbolising a vertical axis connecting the earth with the heaven vertically up and the river Sarasvati was thought to have flowed down from the sky

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that Sarasvati is the name of the river flowing down from there, whereas the source rivers further up had no name. Having become familiar in the present book with the concept of a 'terrestrial heaven', we can make sense of this and interpret the text according to figure 83a.

We therefore have a case where a text referring to the horizontal worldview (the river) has been partly interpreted according to the vertical one, which accounts for the strange idea of a river originating in the sky and flowing vertically down from there along the stem of the tree at Plaksa prasravana. This strange interpretation can only be upheld because it is still common to think that anything can make sense in myths and because one does not usually dare to assume that a word like the Sanskrit *svarga* or *svargaloka*, meaning 'heaven' or 'heavenly space', might sometimes also have been used to designate a sacred area down on earth. Even if these words were only known in the common sense, the traditions regarding the Sarasvati sattras should be a reason to consider that an interpretation as 'terrestrial heaven' (figure 83a) makes better sense in this particular case.

The lack of understanding for the evolution of the two worldviews – from horizontal to vertical – is responsible for numerous misinterpretations of ancient texts that used to be interpreted according to the vertical view but really were meant to refer to the horizontal one. Approaching this problem with an open mind, we can imagine that with the continued extension of territories, the terrestrial 'god land' (chapter 2) often came to be moved higher up the side of a mountain. It could even be separated from the territory and

connected only with a pathway, so that it eventually also became possible to think of it as being situated in the sky above the horizon. Once the land of the gods was imagined above the horizon, it also became possible to think of it as being located in the highest part of the sky vertically above the earth.

An ancient Indian myth that refers to the first stage of this kind of change is the story of King Videgha Māthara's eastward migration along the river Sarasvati. The king first held Agni Vaisvānara in his mouth, and when they arrived at the river Sarasvati, Agni fell out onto the ground. After this allusion to initial divination (the falling motif), the story continues by saying that, from there, Agni "went burning along this earth towards the east", and that the king followed him. Agni burnt over all these rivers, but the Sadānīrā, which flows from the northern Himalaya, "he did not burn over. That one the Brāhmins did not cross in former times, thinking: 'it has not been burnt over by Agni Vaisvānara'". Later, however, the Brahmins "caused (Agni) to taste it through sacrifices" (*Śathapatha Brahmana* 1:4:1:13–16; trans. Eggeling 1894).

If the text calls the last river Sadānīrā, this is probably its later name; at the time when Agni 'burnt over' all other rivers it must still have been a nameless source river of the Sarasvati. Understanding the phrase 'burning over rivers' in the sense of a technical term for making land-taking fires at intervals – as in the Sarasvati sattrā and in medieval Iceland (see p. 272) – we can understand that the last river was originally left unclaimed on purpose and that the Brahmins respected this. Therefore, this appears to be another allusion to the terrestrial 'heaven' in the source region of the Sarasvati.<sup>18</sup> But in this case the text adds that the region was later cultivated too, presumably because by that later time the old concept of the terrestrial heaven in the source region of a river had come to give way to that of a mythical heaven up in the sky. Regarding the possibility of this kind of change, we must again consider that it could have involved either the use of different words to denote the different concepts or the semantic change of a single word that was used to denote two different concepts.<sup>19</sup>

As regards, finally, the dwelling space of the snakes that were worshipped as guardian deities of the land, there is no lack of later sources from India that associate snakes with sacred groves, and which also do so in stories about the founding of territories. A legend from Kerala in southern India says that the origin of the custom of worshipping snakes in sacred groves goes back to the time

18 The apparently usual interpretation is that Agni's 'burning over' the rivers means drying the rivers up, but this would not make any sense for a land-taking god like Agni.

19 An example of the latter kind of change is Old Japanese *ama*, which could mean 'heaven' (above the earth) or 'attic' (of a house) or 'sea', depending on the context (chapter 5).

when Sri Parasurama reclaimed the land from the sea, 640 miles from north to south, and fixed images of Varuna in 108 places because he had received the land from Varuna, the god of the waters. But when he brought Brahman settlers from the north of India to colonise the new land they took to flight after a few months because the land was full of snakes and they were afraid of them. After the land had been in the possession of the serpents for some time, Sri Parasurama divided it into 64 colonies, brought another group of Brahmans from the north and advised the settlers to reserve special areas for the serpents and to worship them as household deities. Then offerings came to be made regularly and people were freed from the fear of snakes.<sup>20</sup>

Since at least the nineteenth century, we also have ethnographic accounts describing sacred groves in India. Some of them say that such groves were believed to be remnants of forests that were left standing for the local deities when the land was opened up to cultivation:

Every [Munda] village has in its vicinity a grove reputed to be a remnant of the primeval forest left intact for the local gods when the clearing was originally made. [...]. The grove deities are held responsible for the crops, and are especially honoured at all the great agricultural festivals. They are also appealed to in sickness. (Dalton 1872: 188)

The Sarna or sacred village grove [...] is a remnant of the primeval forest still retained by the first founders of permanent villages, who carved them out of the forest. The village dwellings are placed close to it, and round this centre ran the ring of cultivated land called by the Gonds the ring of the guardian snake. This separated the home of civilized life from the world of death, the land of the uncleared forest. (Hewitt 1899: 338)

This was the kind of source that inspired Rouse to interpret the sacred precincts of ancient Greece in the same way. Today, many similar ethnographic field reports are known from other parts of Asia and the world, but scholars of ancient Greek religion still seem to hesitate to let themselves be inspired by non-Greek sources when they deal with the ancient Greek concept of *alsos*.

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20 My paraphrase of a quotation in Maity (1965: 50–55) from an article by C. K. Menon that appeared in the *Calcutta Review*, 113 (1901): 19–20. Another version of this story says that Parasurama made the serpents accept an arrangement, according to which an eighth of each garden around the houses would be left to the serpents (Tarabout 2019: 230).

### Opening Up Land in Shifting Cultivation

The ritual transformation of spirits of the wilderness into local cult deities has also been discussed in reports about ethnic groups of Southeast Asia. As Anthony Walker has pointed out regarding the Lahu of northern Thailand, the spirits of the wilderness are propitiated through ritual to become specific guardian spirits and “lords of the place” of the settlements and swiddens (Walker 2015). Frederic Kris Lehman, another anthropologist familiar with northern Thailand, has described the ideology thus:<sup>21</sup>

The basic idea is simple enough – the original and ultimate owners having dominion over the face of the land are spirit lords commonly associated with more or less prominent features of the landscape. [...] [W]hen the first human settlers began to clear any given tract of land, they had to make a contract with these spirit lords. This contract ensured that there would continue to be communication between the two parties as long as both sides lived up to the requirements of that contract. The exclusive right to serve as mediators between the lords and human settlers is supposed to pass to the hereditary heirs and successors of the original founders of the settlement, in perpetuity. This is the very essence of the founders’ cult. (Lehman 2003: 16)<sup>22</sup>

Apart from the founders’ cults in the sense of cults where the founder worships the spirit-owner/s of the land with whom he has made a cult contract, there were also many cases where the founder later came to be worshipped too and both identities then came to be conflated. As Lorraine Aragon pointed out in an article dealing with Central Sulawesi (Indonesia):

Founders’ cults concern two different, but often conflated, types of spirits. The first are the unseen guardian deities, often referred to as “owners” or “lords”, of a land area (*pue*, Uma). These spirits permit the land’s initial clearing and its transfer from the “wild” to the human domain. The second type are ancestral spirits of those individuals who made successful agreements with the guardian deities. The conflation of these spirit types

21 Tannenbaum and Kammerer 2003. See also Mus 1975 [1933]; Aragon 2000; Wessing 2006; Domenig 2014, Walker 2015.

22 For other studies about founders’ cults among various ethnic groups of Southeast Asia, see Tannenbaum and Kammerer 2003.



occurs both among the followers of founders' cult and foreign observers [...]. In areas such as Central Sulawesi, the spirit of founders become so closely associated with the land guardian deities that their discrimination often serves no symbolic or practical purpose. The agency of these two types of spiritual beings is simply merged. The metaphoric collapsing of land guardian and founding ancestors holds symbolic and practical value by allowing descendants of founders to claim descent from the guardian spirits and deified ancestors as well as mere mortals. (Aragon 2000: 87–88)

Robert Wessing has shown that this other type of a founder's cult, where the spirit of the founder is merged or identified with the tutelary spirit, is "often found throughout Southeast Asia" (2017: 529).

I myself have dealt with clearing rituals in a book about the relation between architecture and sacrificial rites performed in traditional houses of ethnic groups of Indonesia. I came to the same conclusion as in the present book: the clearing of forests had to begin, in principle, with an act of divining (or an equivalent act) and the spirits expelled were later worshipped in an adjacent grove as guardian deities of the land opened up to agriculture (Domenig 2014: 21–96). Regarding the dwelling places of earth spirits that were invited to an offering, I noticed contradictory ideas caused by not keeping the two worldviews apart. Some sources say that these spirits dwell in the earth beneath the ground, whereas others say that they dwell in a horizontally distant place and therefore approach the offerings horizontally and from above. This problem has also been noticed in other parts of Southeast Asia. Andrew Turton, for example, observed an interesting case where it led to disagreement between two ritual experts. When the spirits had been expelled from a site for building a house in Thailand, the '*nagas* under the ground' (imagined as snake spirits) were to receive offerings of red and white cloth in a rite called 'exorcism of the ground'. The ambiguity in this name led to different interpretations. One expert said the offerings should be buried under the two main posts of the house, whereas the other one argued that it should be taken outside the building site 'as an exorcism' (Turton 1978: 116). In this particular case, the spirits were finally assumed to dwell outside the site but were invited to taste the offerings inside it.

I have called this kind of contradiction the 'earth spirit paradox', because the problem disappears if we understand that the first statement locates these spirits in a vertical worldview and the second one sees their place in a horizontally structured world (Domenig 2014: 120–23). The idea that the earth or land spirits dwell outside is of course conditioned by the land-taking ritual, which

required that they were expelled horizontally and worshipped as spirits or deities dwelling then outside the site.

Another significant point that I noticed is that the Japanese concept of *yorishiro* has Indonesian correspondences in temporary offering stands whose leafy decoration is intended to attract spirits and deities to their offerings.<sup>23</sup>

### From Terrestrial Heavens to the Heaven in the Sky

Figure 83 may stand as a visual representation of an important point that has occasionally been mentioned in the pages of this book. The land-taking ritual makes us doubt that the vertical worldview has been the primary one of *homo religiosus*, as Mircea Eliade always used to proclaim; it suggests, to the contrary, that the horizontal view of the world – the view of the world as a horizontally structured whole – is typologically older. Although in building houses and the like, vertical structure was always important, wider spaces were probably first organised in the horizontal dimensions of landscapes before it became possible to imagine the macrocosm as vertically structured in the same sense.

The times of land-taking in unoccupied regions are long past in almost all parts of the globe, and the sources for learning about it have been so neglected that religions are usually associated with the idea of gods that created the great World and exist somewhere in a far-off mythical heaven above us. By contrast, the present book is an argument in favour of not continuing to overlook or misinterpret the numerous sources that relativise this Eliadean view.

To give an example from Africa, the Barotse of western Zambia say that their god Nyambe originally lived on earth but moved away because he no longer wanted to be reached by Kamonu, a man who had repeatedly killed his animals. Nyambe withdrew to an island in the river, then to the top of a mountain. When human beings had multiplied and were living everywhere he searched for a place still further away. With the help of an animal diviner and a spider he eventually found a new place in the sky, and the spider stretched a string so that he could climb up. Kamonu and his people tried to build a tower to climb up too, but as they failed, they finally had to be content with seeing Nyambe from afar. At sunrise they would greet him “with loud shouts and clappings of hands”.<sup>24</sup>

Historians of religion believing in primitive monotheism would argue that Nyambe was a supreme being who dwelt in the sky from the beginning but

23 Domenig 2014: 131–238, with numerous illustrations.

24 My summary of Smith 1950: 159–61.

temporarily manifested himself as a local deity to Kamonu and later retreated to the sky. In this particular case there is, however, the problem that Nyambe only moves to the sky when human beings are already living everywhere and that he needs something material to climb up. The story therefore clearly conveys the idea of a process by which the local deity of a terrestrial microcosm eventually became the supreme being of a religious macrocosm.<sup>25</sup> If later people should have believed that Nyambe was a high god from the beginning, this would be understandable, but scholars of the history of religions should be able to also see things the other way round.

Having briefly dealt with Japanese creation myths at the end of chapter 8, I am inclined to conclude that many territories in pre-Taika Japan were still organised as bipolar microcosms with their own 'terrestrial heaven' in the form of an area that was kept sacred as the dwelling space of the local *kami*. This *kami* land can be seen as the prototype of the sacred grove, which later survived as an institution even when the deity to which it was dedicated was newly thought to dwell in a more distant heaven. Speculations about greater worlds, however, were probably made by thinking in terms of myths and legends that may originally have told of the making of territories down on earth.

The basic problem with the interpretation of such ancient traditions is the correspondence of microcosm and macrocosm. At the end of the nineteenth century, many scholars noticed that there have been influences from the human microcosm to the view of the macrocosm and vice versa. Ferdinand von Andrian, for example, distinguished two stages in human spiritual development in his cross-cultural study of mountain worship. In one, the terrestrial conditions were transferred to the sky, in the other, later one, the phenomena of the sky in turn served as a measure for the terrestrial world (Andrian 1891: xii). Similarly, Otto Gruppe, in a discussion of mythical geography, suggested that in ancient Greece certain features of a topography that played a part in ritual – gardens, caves, mountains – received secondarily their fictitious counterparts in far-removed regions which were then claimed as their mythical prototypes: the divine orchard at the end of the world, the subterranean Hades, Olympus as the dwelling place of the gods (Gruppe 1906: 384–88). With regard to the relation between architecture and world images, similar ideas were also expressed, for example, by Robert Eisler (1910: 615).

Since the 1930s at the latest, however, a different kind of interpretation has been advocated. Under the influence of the hypothesis of an original monotheism (Lang 1898; Schmidt 1912) and of C. G. Jung's archetype theory, it became fashionable to think that only the reflections from the big World to

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25 For another discussion of such a case, see Domenig 2014: 124–28.

the small world should be considered as relevant for *homo religiosus*. Mircea Eliade in particular insisted that the myth of the creation of the great world or universe was primary and came to be symbolically repeated and imitated in human works. He argued that it is wrong to rationalistically “reduce” the religious beliefs in the cosmic prototypes to a level of understanding where they might appear to be conditioned by still earlier prototypes from the small worlds of human life (Eliade 1989b: 263n18). To look for the origins of certain cosmological ideas in the tangible elements of man’s dwelling, for example, would be wrong because such elements, he assumed, must necessarily be of a kind that has to be explained by reference to a rational need, such as adaptation to the environment. The roof of a dwelling may afford protection against rain, cold and heat, but if it is also regarded as sacred, then according to Eliade this is only because it symbolises the sky and therefore participates in the sky’s sacredness.

It would lead too far away to enter into a further discussion of Eliade’s view here. Suffice it to say that the ritually established *kami* land of an ancient territory did not have to symbolise the far-off sky to be experienced as sacred: the land-taking ritual discussed in this book fully explains why and how it came to be a sacred dwelling space of local deities.



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- KST *Kokushi taikai, revised and enlarged* 国史大系 新訂増補, 60 vols, ed. Kokushi Taikai Henshūkai. Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.
- NKBT *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 日本古典文学大系, 102 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1957–1967.
- SPNKBZ *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集. 88 vols. Shōgakukan, 1994–2002.

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The first book that deals with the territorial cults of early Japan by focusing on how such cults were founded in ownerless regions. Numerous ancient Japanese myths and legends are discussed to show that the typical founding ritual was a two-phase ritual that turned the territory into a horizontal microcosm, complete with its own 'terrestrial heaven' inhabited by local deities.

Reversing Mircea Eliade's popular thesis, the author concludes that the concept of the human-made horizontal microcosm is not a reflection but the source of the religious concept of the macrocosm with gods dwelling high up in the sky.

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**Gaudenz Domenig** is an architect and researcher in anthropology of space who has mainly published on Japanese and Indonesian topics. His last book is *Religion and Architecture in Premodern Indonesia* (Brill, 2014).

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