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The Land-Pulling Myth and Some Aspects of Historic Reality

Izumo fudoki describes Izumo Province, situated in today's Shimane Prefecture and facing the Japan Sea. It is the oldest surviving Japanese text compiled by aristocrats from a region, hence giving us unique information about a Japanese province during the Nara period. However, *Izumo fudoki* has been little consulted by Western scholars. The land-pulling myth is the first myth to be related in *Izumo fudoki*; it narrates how one of the local deities looks across the Japan Sea and decides to pull land from four of the places that he can see, including from the Korean Peninsula. This land he cuts off, pulls across the sea, and attaches to Izumo, hence making the province larger. This article discusses two ways of interpreting the myth. One possible interpretation is that the four places from which land is being pulled correspond to an area that was in different ways connected to Izumo during the late Yayoi period. The other, perhaps more worthwhile, explanation of the myth is to see how it supported the local aristocracy in Izumo Province as it tried to maintain partial autonomy vis-à-vis the central government.

KEYWORDS: *Izumo fudoki*—Izumo Province—Izumo no Omi—myths—deities—burial mounds—*kofun*—Yayoi period—Nara period

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THE EIGHTH-CENTURY text *Izumo (no kuni) fudoki* 出雲国風土記 (733) narrates several intriguing myths, most of them not mentioned in the official records, *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720), compiled by the central government.¹ The myths not only differ from the ones of the central tradition; some of them even outright oppose the hegemony of the court.

Almost all of the myths included in *Izumo fudoki* are fragmentary: either they only recount one short part of a myth, or just briefly allude to a tale where gods are the principle characters. However, two myths appear to be related in their full length. One of these, the land-pulling myth (*kunibiki shinwa* 国引神話), is without a doubt the most impressive of the narratives included in *Izumo fudoki*. It tells of how the great god Yatsukamizu Omitsuno 八束水臣津野 finds the land of Izumo too small. As a consequence, he looks across the ocean and learns that excessive land exists in Silla 新羅, a territory on the southern part of the Korean Peninsula. After cutting off a piece of this land and pulling it across the Japan Sea, he attaches the land to Izumo and moors it firmly to a nearby mountain. This is how the first part of the land-pulling myth ends, but Omitsuno is still far from content, and he further pulls land from three other localities bordering the Japan Sea (see OKIMORI et al., 2005, 8–9).

The Izumo region is special in many ways. Archaeological finds from as far back as the Yayoi 弥生 period (ca. 400 BC–ca. AD 250) imply that the area nurtured its own unique culture. Towards the late Yayoi period, this culture culminated in what has been described as the “Izumo Alliance” (*Izumo rengō* 出雲連合; see, for example, WATANABE 1995), spreading out eastward from Izumo to the Hokuriku 北陸 region, and northward to the Oki islands 隠岐諸島. During the following period, the Kofun 古墳 period (ca. 250–592), the awareness of there being an Izumo culture seems to have remained, as it is reflected in the special types of tombs built in Izumo. Judging from the historical records that have survived, the distinctive Izumo culture can be further traced up to the Nara period (710–784).

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1. If nothing else is indicated, all years refer to AD.

Could it be possible that the land-pulling myth describes the geographical extent of the “Izumo Alliance” and the character of the Izumo culture in the Yayoi period? Would this be the reason why the myth is related in *Izumo fudoki*? Or, could there be another, more intricate, motive for the compilers of the book to incorporate the myth in *Izumo fudoki*? Is it possible that the myth is an answer to political tension between the center and periphery in eighth century Japan? In search of an answer, this article intends to relate the land-pulling myth to some aspects of historic reality.

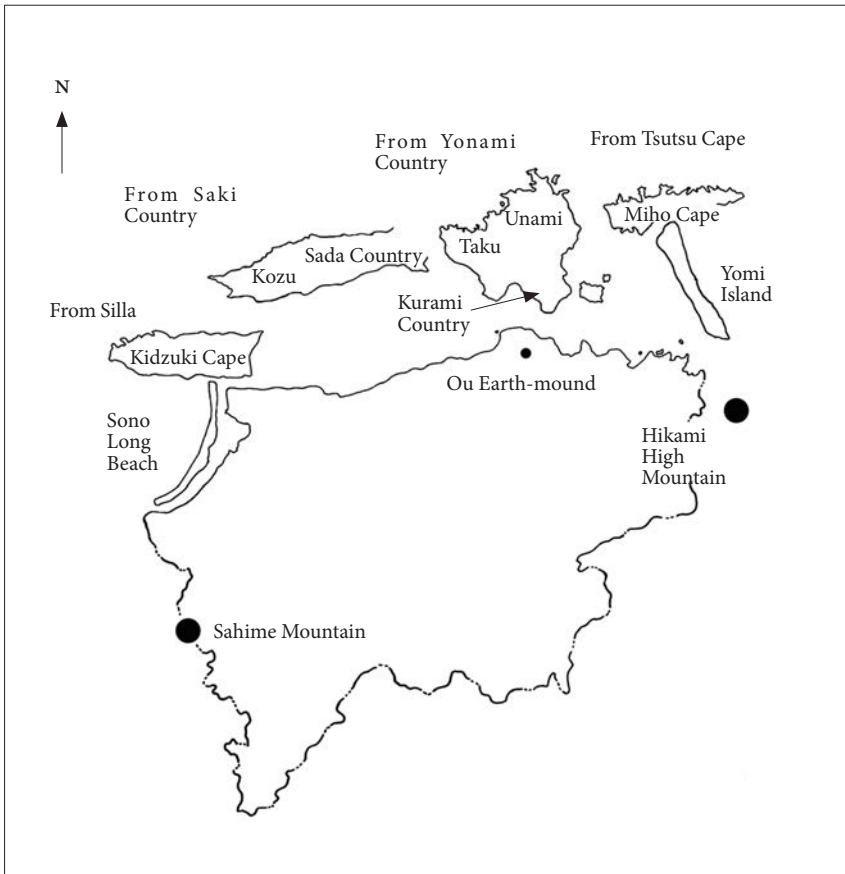


FIGURE 1. The land-pulling myth. The dotted lines on the lower left and right indicate the borders of Izumo 出雲 Province with neighboring provinces: Iwami 石見 Province to the west, Hōki 伯耆 Province to the east, and Bingo 備後 Province to the south.



FIGURE 2. Geographical names used in the article. Most of the names that are written in italics indicate provinces. However, Kibi is the name of a larger area that later became Bizen, Bitchū, and Bingo Provinces.

The Land-Pulling Myth

Izumo fudoki consists of eleven parts that are labeled “chapters” in this article. The first chapter gives a very brief introduction to Izumo Province (*Izumo no kuni* 出雲国), and explains the procedures employed in the compilation. The last chapter gives a detailed description of the major roads in the province, and gives an account of military-related installations. Each of the nine chapters in between describes one of the nine districts (*kōri* 郡) that constituted the province. The first district to be dealt with is Ou District 意宇郡. After listing the administrative units of the district, *Izumo fudoki* narrates the land-pulling myth:²

2. The translation is by the author. It is based on *Hosokawa ke bon* 細川家本, the oldest known manuscript of *Izumo fudoki* that can be dated (1597). Photographs of this manuscript published

PART I

The reason why the district is called Ou is that the honorable Yatsukamizu Omitsuno, who performed the land-pulling, said: “The country Izumo, of the many clouds rising, is a land like a pile of narrow cloth. First the land was made small. Therefore, it ought to be sewn larger.” He looked towards the cape of Silla, of the white nightdress, to see if there was land in excess. “Land is in excess,” he said.

He took a hoe, shaped like the chest of a young girl, and thrust it into the gills of the big fish. He tore off the land just like the ears of waving silver grass are torn off when shaken. He lashed a three-ply rope around the land and, frosty *kurokadzura*, he heaved, he heaved. Like a riverboat, slowly, slowly, the land came, the land came. The land he had pulled, he sewed on to where Kozu ends, and it became Kidzuki Cape, of the many-eared rice. The firmly-erected post he moored the land to is what forms the border between Iwami Province and Izumo Province, named Sahime Mountain. Furthermore, the rope he held to pull the land became Sono Long Beach. (For the position of the geographical names mentioned in the myth, see FIGURE 1.)

The short format of this article does not allow lengthy textual commentaries on the myth. However, to facilitate understanding, some explanations are necessary:

ANNOTATIONS ON PART I

“Yatsukamizu Omitsuno”: *This deity is thoroughly neglected in the central mythology. The only mention of Yatsukamizu Omitsuno in the texts compiled by the court is when Kojiki lists Omitsuno as being offspring five generations down the line from the god Hayasusanowo 速須佐之男命 (see YAMAGUCHI and KŌNOISHI 1999, 72–4). Since ya tsuka mizu could mean “many tsuka of water” (tsuka is a measure), and o mitsu no could be interpreted as “big water” the name of the god most likely refers to water (KATŌ 1997, 46–7; OGIHARA 2005, 25; UEGAKI 1998, 131). Whether the water in the god’s name refers to the rivers or to the sea is debatable (KANDA 1992, 138–39; MAEDA 2006, 73; SAIGŌ 2001, 13).*

in AKIMOTO Yoshinori 1984 have been used (see page 190 of this article). The translation intends to follow *Hosokawa ke bon* as closely as possible, although this occasionally results in a somewhat awkward English rendition.

Five manuscripts of *Izumo fudoki* from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have survived: *Hosokawa ke bon*, *Kuranoshi hon* 倉野氏本, *Hinomisaki jinja bon* 日御碕神社本, *Kuwahara bunko bon* 桑原文庫本, and *Manyōi bon* 万葉緯本. They are all of high value, however lately *Hosokawa ke bon* has gained great esteem (see KATSUBE 2005, 2; OKIMORI 2005, 82–6). *Izumo fudoki* has been translated to English (AOKI 1971 and 1997). Aoki’s renditions and interpretations of the land-pulling myth differ from the one presented in this article (see AOKI 1971, 82–3 and 1997, 80–2).

所以考意字者國引坐八東水臣津野命詔八雲

立出雲國者狹布之堆國在哉初國小所作故
將作總詔而拵余志羅紀乃三埜交國之餘
有耶見者國之餘有詔而童女曾鈕所取而大
莫之丈太衝別而波多須之丈穗振別而三身
之詔打柱而霜里葛例之耶之今河船之毛曾
呂之今國之來引未離國者自去豎豆乃折
純而八穗米又豎文乃御崎以此而豎豎如志
者石見國與出雲國之埜有居仇比黃山是也
亦持引經者國之長濱是也亦北門仇伎之國
矣國之餘有邪見者國之餘有詔而童意
女曾鈕所取而大莫之丈太衝別而波多須
之丈穗振別而三身之詔打柱而霜里葛例之
耶之今河船之毛曾呂之今國之來引未
經國者自多久乃折純與拵國是也亦北門
長波乃國矣國之餘有邪見者國之餘有詔
而童意女曾鈕所取而大莫之丈太衝別而

波多須之丈穗振別而三身之詔打柱而霜
里葛例之耶之今河船之毛曾豎之今國之來
引特引離國者自字改離折純而爾見國是
也亦高志之都都乃三埜交國之餘有耶見者
國之餘有詔而童意女曾鈕所取而大莫之
丈太衝別而波多須之丈穗振別而三身之詔
打柱而霜里葛例之耶之今河船之毛曾
呂之今國之來引未離國者三穗之埜接
引經視見鳴固堅立如志者有伯耆國火神
岳是也今者國者引記詔而意字社公御杖衝
立而意惠登詔故云
意字 冥謂意字者耶來東小道田中在整是之國
八步許其上有以一尺

FIGURE 3. The text of the land-pulling myth according to Hosokawa ke bon (AKIMOTO 1984, 12-16).

“Of the many clouds rising” (yakumo tatsu, 八雲立): “The many clouds rising” probably refers to a cloudy sky and rich precipitation, resulting in a fertile land.

“Narrow cloth” (狭布): The expression “narrow cloth” most likely carries the connotation of incompleteness (AKIMOTO 1997, 100; HISAMATSU 1977, I: 50).

“Of the white night-dress” (袴袞): White is read “shiro” in Japanese, referring to the name Shiragi 志羅紀, which is what Silla is called in Japanese. (For the position of the geographical names mentioned in the annotations, see FIGURE 2.)

“Big fish” (大魚): Actually, the myth could refer to any kind of big fish, but perhaps tuna is meant here. Big fish like tuna were caught by thrusting harpoons into the gills of the fish (MATSUMOTO 2007, 45).

“Frosty kurokadzura” (霜黒葛): This plant is recorded in several sources contemporary to Izumo fudoki, but no modern equivalent has been found (CARLQVIST 2005, 198–9). However, the plant is most likely a kind of vine, which appears to have been used as a rope.

“Kidzuki Cape, of the many-eared rice” (八穂米支豆支乃御埼): The many-eared rice alludes to a rich land.

“Sahime Mountain” 佐比黄山: Today it is called Mount Sanbe 三瓶山, and with its height at 1126m above sea-level, it is the largest mountain in Izumo Province.

PART II

Furthermore, he looked towards Saki Country, of the Northern Gate, to see if there was land in excess. “Land is in excess,” he said.

He took a hoe, shaped like the chest of a young girl, and thrust it into the gills of the big fish. He tore off the land just like the ears of waving silver grass are torn off when shaken. He lashed a three-ply rope around the land and, frosty *kurokadzura*, he heaved, he heaved. Like a riverboat, slowly, slowly, the land came, the land came. The land he had pulled, he sewed on to where Taku ends, and this became Sada Country.

ANNOTATIONS ON PART II

Parts II and III neglect to tell where the land was moored and what became of the rope. As a consequence, Parts II and III are shorter than Parts I and IV.

“Saki Country of the Northern Gate” (北門佐伎之國): It is not certain what Izumo fudoki intended here. Most commentators on Izumo fudoki suggest that the Northern Gate means the Oki islands. This is a group of islands situated about fifty kilometers off the coast of Izumo, consisting of three smaller islands to the west, and one larger to the east. Following this interpretation, Saki country might refer to Naka Island 中ノ島, one of the western islands (KATSUBE 2005, 8–9; OGIHARA 2005, 38; UEGAKI 1998, 137).

“Sada country” (狭田之國): Geographically, Sada country corresponds to an area around, and south of, modern-day Etomo 恵曇町.

PART III

Furthermore, he looked towards Yonami Country, of the Northern Gate, to see if there was land in excess. “Land is in excess,” he said.

He took a hoe like the chest of a young girl and thrust it into the gills of the big fish. He tore off the land just like the ears of waving silver grass are torn off when shaken. He lashed a three-ply rope around the land and, frosty *kurokadzura*, he heaved, he heaved. Like a riverboat, slowly, slowly, the land came, the land came. The land he had pulled, he sewed on to where Unami ends, and this became Kurami Country.

ANNOTATION ON PART III

“Yonami Country” (良波乃国): *Scholars have not yet determined what area is referred to here. Somewhere on Dōgo 島後, the eastern island of the Oki islands, seems logical (KATSUBE 2005, 9), but also Chiburi (知夫村), south of Naka Island (UEGAKI 1998, 138), as well as places on Shimane peninsula 島根半島 (see AKIMOTO 1997, 100–101), have been suggested.*

PART IV

Furthermore, he looked towards Tsutsu Cape in Koshi to see if there was land in excess. “Land is in excess,” he said.

He took a hoe like the chest of a young girl and thrust it into the gills of the big fish. He tore off the land just like the ears of waving silver grass are torn off when shaken. He lashed a three-ply rope around the land and, frosty *kurokadzura*, he heaved, he heaved. Like a riverboat, slowly, slowly, the land came, the land came. The land he had pulled became Miho Cape. The rope he held to pull the land became Yomi Island. The firmly erected post he moored the land to is Hikami High Mountain in Hōki Province.

“Now, the land has been pulled and completed,” he said. Into Ou earth-mound he thrust his staff, let it stand and yelled, “Owe!” Therefore we call the district Ou.

The so-called Ou earth-mound is the hillock in the rice field to the north east and adjacent to the district-office. The circumference is roughly eight *ho*. On top, trees grow luxuriantly.

ANNOTATIONS ON PART IV

Although the composition of Part IV is very similar to that of Part I, the order is somewhat altered. No information is given to where the land is attached, either.

“Tsutsu Cape in Koshi” (高志之都都乃三崎): *Generally, Koshi refers to a large area along the coast of the Japan Sea, from middle Honshu to its northern parts. From*

the southern portion of this area, Noto Peninsula 能登半島 protrudes into the Japan Sea. On the tip of the peninsula the geographical name Suzu Cape 珠洲岬 exists. This might correspond to Tsutsu Cape (KATŌ 1997, 70–1). The position of Tsutsu Cape will be further discussed later in this article.

“Yomi Island” (夜見島): Today this is a peninsula jutting out into the sea from its base at Yonago City 米子市, dividing the Naka Sea 中海 from the Japan Sea. At the time of the compilation of *Izumo fudoki*, the island belonged to Hōki Province.

“Hikami High Mountain” (火神岳): At present, the mountain is called Mount Dai (Daisen 大山) and it stands in Tottori Prefecture. With an elevation of 1729m, the mountain is the largest in the region.

“Thrust his staff” (御杖衝): To thrust a pole into the ground is a metaphor for taking possession of that land (UCHIDA Tadayoshi 2001, 121).

“Therefore we call the district Ou” (故云意宇): The compilers insert this myth in *Izumo fudoki* on the pretext to explain the etymology of the name Ou.

“District-office” (郡家): A district-office (*gūke*) is an administrative unit from where the district is governed. In the case of Izumo Province, the province-office (*kokuga* 国衝) was situated right next to Ou District-office.

Possible Influences on the Land-Pulling Myth

Several scholars have brought attention to the idea that Japanese mythology shares traits with myths found both in the southeast Asian archipelago, as well as on many islands in the Pacific Ocean (see DIXON 2008, 203–12; PALMER 2010, 223; TSUJI 1998, 129–34; OGIHARA 1997, 132; YOSHIKAWA 1997, 167; ŌBAYASHI 1972, 119–20). The usual supposition is that these motifs have entered Japan from the southwest. However other directions have also been proposed (see ŌBAYASHI 1972, 120).

Myths do not travel by themselves; someone has to carry them. Accordingly, it has also been suggested that people and language entered Japan from southeast Asia (see MURAYAMA 1976, 426). Whether this introduction occurred as early as during the Jōmon period (PALMER 2010, 225–26), or later during the Yayoi period (KUMAR 1998, 269; KUMAR and ROSE 2000, 228, 236) has not yet been determined. The degree of influence from the southwest has been questioned (see VOVIN 1994, 378–86), but it seems problematic to deny that some kind of southeast Asian influence reached Japan during the Yayoi period, or perhaps earlier. Hence, it is justifiable to ask if the land-pulling myth has also entered Japan from southeast Asia.

It has been suggested that the reason the compilers chose to insert the land-pulling myth in the beginning of *Izumo fudoki* was because the official mythology, as recorded in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, starts with the creation of land (KANDA 1992, 140–41). The two official chronicles relate (slightly differently) how Izanagi and his wife Izanami, standing on the rainbow, dip a spear into the sea. After some stirring they pull out the spear again, and the water dripping from

it coagulates and forms land, Onogoro Island (see YAMAGUCHI and KŌNOSHI 1999, 31; KOJIMA, et al 2006, 1: 24–5). The two deities descend to the island and copulate, creating more land, and later on, also other gods.

The idea of land being created out of the sea is common not only in southeast Asia, but also on the Asian continent (see THOMPSON 1966, 1: 161). Differing from the Japanese tradition, in these myths it is often an animal that brings something up to the surface of the sea, and in this way creates new land (ŌBAYASHI 1973, 65–71). However, in the Pacific, the motif of a man hauling land from the bottom of the sea, be it a rock on the sea bottom or the sea bottom itself, can be found in several locations (see DIXON 2008, 37, 59–60, 115). It has hence been suggested that the Onogoro Island myth is related to these myths where land is fished from the bottom of the sea (ŌBAYASHI 1973, 72–4).

On the other side of the Eurasian continent, the Indo-European people with the most written mythological sources extant, beside the Indians and the Italic people, are the Scandinavians (STUTYNSKI 1973, xxv). The rich written material is perhaps the reason a Scandinavian similarity to the Onogoro Island/Pacific sea bottom fishing motif has been illuminated by earlier scholars (see YOSHIKAWA 1997, 167; ŌBAYASHI 1973, 80).

These scholars refer to the myth where Thor fishes the Midgard serpent that, laying on the bottom of the sea, was big enough to encircle the whole world. However, one crucial difference with the Onogoro Island/Pacific sea-bottom fishing motif is that the action of Thor does not create any new land. Two versions of the myth exist, both ending with the Midgard serpent sinking back to the bottom of the sea. In the first version, *Hymiskviða* (17–24), after getting the large serpent on the hook, Thor hits it with his hammer and lets it sink back to the bottom (JÓNSSON 1985, 1: 134–36). In the second, *Gylfaginning* (48), Hymir, the giant that is accompanying Thor on the fishing trip, cuts off the fishline before the god gets to deliver the blow, and the serpent returns to the bottom of the sea (GRAPE et al. 1977, 29–30). That the latter version was known over a large part of Scandinavia in the eleventh century is indicated by the illustration on a stone found in Altuna, situated west of Uppsala, Sweden (SIGURÐSSON 2004, 3–5).

That people living close to the sea, whether it be the Pacific Ocean or the North Atlantic, relate stories about large objects (be it a rock, the sea bottom itself, or a large serpent) being hauled from the bottom of the sea is not very surprising, and does not necessarily indicate influence from one to the other. Nevertheless, the idea that the motif has travelled from the northwestern corner of the Eurasian continent to Japan, and further to southeast Asia and the Pacific has been put forward (ŌBAYASHI 1973, 86). Painting with such a wide brush, it is all but natural that it has also been suggested that the land-pulling myth forms a branch of this widely expanded motif, hence regarding the

hauling of something from the bottom of the sea and the pulling of land across the sea as being the same motif (ŌBAYASHI 1973, 74–5).

However, instead of glossing over the differences between the Onogora Island/Pacific sea-bottom fishing motif on the one side and the land-pulling motif on the other, perhaps it would be worthwhile to notice the discrepancies between the two motifs since the concept of creating new land out of the sea by hauling something from its bottom seems to be different from the concept of cutting off a piece of land from an already existent landmass, pulling it across the sea and making it become part of another territory.

This latter concept, or motif, to which the land-pulling myth belongs, does not seem to be very common at all. Although he sites numerous sources, including some which are Scandinavian, THOMPSON (1966) does not mention it at all. Nevertheless, there is a Scandinavian narrative tradition, recorded by Snorri Sturluson in *Ynglinga saga* (5), that bears great resemblance to the land-pulling myth in *Izumo fudoki* (AÐALBJARNARSON 1961, I: 14–15). Odin (here portrayed as a Danish king) sends Gefjon (a goddess in the *Prose Edda*) across the strait (that is, Øresund) to visit Gylfa, a Swedish King. He gives her a “plógsland,” that is, as much land as could be plowed in one day using four oxen (JOHANSSON 1991, I: 308). Gefjon then travels to Jötunheimr, the land of the giants, and bears four sons there. She transforms her giant sons into four huge oxen and lets them plow the land promised by Gylfa. After plowing a large area of land, Gefjon lets her four oxen pull this land out into the sea (that is, the Baltic Sea), and then pulls it to the west where it becomes Zealand (the largest Danish Island). The story ends with the explanation that what remained in Sweden was a big lake, and that the bays of this lake correspond exactly to the capes of Zealand.

The similarities between *Ynglinga saga* (5) and the land-pulling myth in *Izumo fudoki* are remarkable. However, the logical assumption that the land-pulling motif has travelled from Scandinavia to Izumo does not seem fully convincing. An early, albeit very faint, connection between Scandinavia and Japan has been suggested. According to this theory it was the Arabs and their silver that constituted the link (IKUTA 1987). Although for the most part clear-sighted, this idea has many problems. The Scandinavians first started to penetrate deep into Russia, using her rivers, in the second half of the eighth century at the earliest (NOONAN 1998, [article 1] 330–45). Although some of these Scandinavians undoubtedly reached Constantinople, and others traded in goods such as hides and slaves that were coveted by Muslim merchants (NOONAN 1998, [article 2] 278–82), no Scandinavians seem to have come in direct contact with these merchants before the latter half of the eighth century, when *Izumo fudoki* had already been compiled. Further, it seems unlikely that the Arabs started to trade with China before the eighth century (LEWIS 2002, 95; HOURANI 1995, 69, 140; RAY 2003, 286). Accordingly, Ikuta’s perceptive theory can hardly be applied here. Of course, people

have travelled across continents and seas from antiquity (see, for example, MAIR 2006, 6), hence the idea of a land-pulling motif brought from Scandinavia to Izumo (or the other way around) can never be totally refuted.

This said, the possible relation between the land-pulling myth and the Onogora Island/Pacific sea-bottom fishing motif still needs further examination, though it is beyond the scope of this article.

Burial Mounds With Protruding Corners

Archaeological evidence based on observations of the historical development and geographical distribution of burial mounds along the Japan Sea coast, centered on Izumo, lends support to the hypothesis that the land-pulling myth depicts some aspect of the political reality of the late Yayoi period (see FIGURE 4).

Unique kinds of burial mounds flourished in the Izumo area during the latter stages of the Yayoi period. These burial mounds are referred to by Japanese archaeologists as *yosumi tosshutsugata funkyūbo* 四隅突出型墳丘墓, literally “burial mound in the shape of four protruding corners.” Here they will be called “burial mounds with protruding corners,” although they usually are referred to in the English literature as “four-cornered burial mounds” (see, for example, PIGGOTT 1989, 50).

As the middle Yayoi period changed into the late Yayoi period (in the first century), stones and small rocks were laid on the corners of the tiny squarish burial mounds erected around the higher stretches of the Gōno River 江の川 around Miyoshi City 三次市, situated in northern Hiroshima Prefecture. This procedure did not result in burial mounds with protruding corners, but the corners themselves were clearly accentuated by the stones, and one of the four corners was more accentuated than the others, with at least one of its stones larger than the others used on the mound. The most accentuated stone was likely to function as a step, and at the same time double as an entrance to the grave, hence forming a passage from the world of the living to the realm of the dead (WATANABE 2006, 122–23). The scale of the mounds was very modest, being just a couple of meters long. Soon, burial mounds of this kind came to be constructed close to the Japan Sea coast: almost simultaneously, small burial mounds with stones on the corners were built north of Izumo City in the west, and south of Yonago City, in the east.

Ideas and commodities no doubt spread along the rivers in East Asia (see, for example, LEE 2002, 279–80). It has been suggested that the knowledge of the burial mounds with protruding corners spread via the Gōno River and reached the Japan Sea at Gōtsu City 江津市, to the west of Izumo (SENOO 1995, 33–4). Another possible idea is that the influence spread up the Saijō River 西城川 from Miyoshi to Mount Sangoku 三国山 where the Saijō River has its source, and from here was transmitted to the other side of the mountain, where the Hino

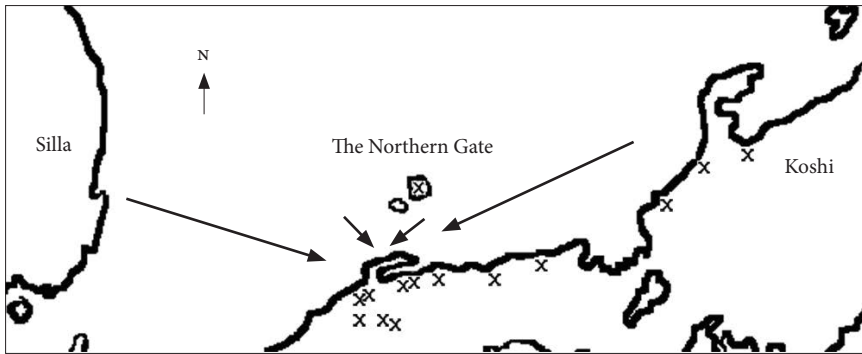


FIGURE 4. The land-pulling myth and mounds with protruding corners. Note that the map does not intend to mark every single mound; it only shows in what area they can be found.

River 日野川 flows northerly to Yonago City. Whatever route the idea of the new mounds was spread along, once down by the sea, the influence soon reached several places up and down the coast from Izumo City in the west to Tottori City in the east.

During the late Yayoi period, the corners of the mounds were soon emphasized. They were no longer only covered by stones, but actually extended out from the graves forming protruding corners. The larger the burial mounds were built, the longer the corners became, and the most prominent corner's function as steps became more and more accentuated. Still, only one of the four corners had the function of steps, and the other corners were just decorations (WATANABE 2005a, 58, and 2006, 123–24). During the late Yayoi period, the burial mounds with protruding corners gradually gained in size and popularity. Now, mounds of this kind were erected far away from Izumo, both on the Oki Islands and in the Hokuriku region.

At the same time, other kinds of burial mounds were also built in the Izumo area during the late Yayoi period. On the river plains where burial mounds with protruding corners are concentrated, other kinds of burial mounds also exist. Those with protruding corners are not even the most common of the burial mounds, but they are the largest. It is axiomatic amongst Japanese archaeologists that the larger the burial monument, the more political power the person interred in the grave wielded (OKAMURA 2002, 237; SHIRAIISHI 2002, 48). This article will adopt the same approach. Accordingly, it can be said that the leading stratum in Izumo identified itself by having burial mounds with protruding corners built for its members.

Five major concentrations of these graves can be found (for geographical names mentioned here, see FIGURE 5). From the west these are: western Izumo,

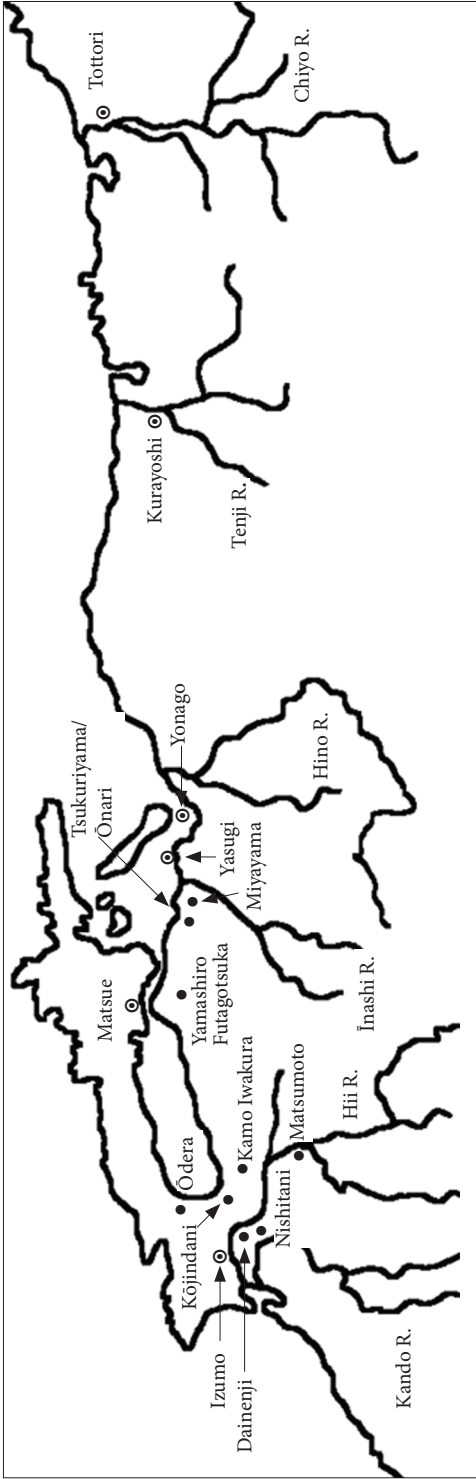


FIGURE 5. Main rivers, burial sites, and finds of bronze artifacts in the Izumo area. The circled black dots indicate modern cities.

around Izumo City, eastern Izumo, southwest of Yasugi City 安来市, western Tottori, southeast of Yonago City, central Tottori at Kurayoshi City 倉吉市, and eastern Tottori, south of Tottori City 鳥取市. What is common to these five regions is that large rivers here flow through fertile alluvial land before they flow out into the sea. These rivers are the Kando River 神戸川 and the Hii River 斐伊川 in western Izumo, the Inashi River 飯梨川 in eastern Izumo, the Hino River in western Tottori, the Tenjin River 天神川 in central Tottori, and the Chiyo River 千代川 in eastern Tottori. For this reason, it appears that communities developed on the low-lying land around these rivers, and that these communities were held under the leadership of chieftains, who were inhumed in burial mounds with protruding corners.

It may be surmised that the similarities in funeral practices among the leaders indicate that the area from western Izumo to eastern Tottori was united in one large political union. However, most research suggests instead that the area shared several cultural aspects, such as burial ceremonies and dialects, and that some kind of alliance existed between the different communities, which, however, were governed independently (SHIRAISHI 2002, 47; WATANABE 1995, 63). Geographically, the areas along the lower reaches of the rivers where burial mounds with protruding corners were built are separated from each other by mountains. This might be one reason as to why no strong political union was established between the separated chiefdoms. In contrast, the large political unions Kibi 吉備 (Okayama Prefecture) and Yamato 大和 (Nara Prefecture) were established on large plains where several rivers flow together forming a wide, flat area that was easily accessible by a leader and his/her organization. However, the finds of burial mounds with protruding corners on the Oki Islands and in the Hokuriku region naturally show that some kind of exchange existed between these areas and those in and to the east of Izumo. Perhaps it can be said that a large area along the coast of the Japan Sea formed one cultural entity. Since the largest burial mounds with protruding corners have been found in Izumo (seven of the eight largest), it is natural to conclude that the center of this loosely united cultural entity was situated either in eastern Izumo (three mounds) or, perhaps more likely, in western Izumo (four mounds, including the very largest ones).

The largest burial mound with protruding corners that has been excavated is Nishitani 西谷 no. 3 in western Izumo. Although not the largest of all burial mounds with protruding corners, this is still a sizeable burial mound. Including eight graves, it has dimensions of 50m by 40m, with a height of 4.5m. If the protruding parts are excluded, the mound measures 40m by 30m (YAMAMOTO 1995, 122). What is perhaps most interesting with this excavation is the pottery used at the funeral. The pottery can be divided into three groups: Izumo pottery, pottery from Kibi, and pottery made in Izumo but modeled after the pottery often found in the area between Tango Province (northern Kyoto Prefecture) and the

Hokuriku region (WATANABE 2006, 140). While the pottery made in Izumo is of moderate size, that transported from Kibi consists of very large pieces. The pottery hence indicates a close connection between Izumo and Kibi, and also a definite influence from Tango/Hokuriku. While Kibi is characterized by its special *haniwa*, 埴輪 (specially designed pottery placed on burial mounds), Tango seems to have had a distinctive form of burial ceremonies (WATANABE 2005b, 56).

In Nishitani, the largest burial mounds with protruding corners can be found. Geographically there is a clear connection between the burial site at Nishitani and the two sites of Kōjindani 荒神谷 and Kamo Iwakura 加茂岩倉, where immense numbers of bronze artifacts, probably interred towards the end of the middle Yayoi period, have been excavated. The finds at Kōjindani and Kamo Iwakura are the largest of their kind in Japan. Both Kōjindani, where 380 objects, mostly bronze swords, have been excavated, and Kamo Iwakura, where 39 bronze bells have been discovered, are situated a couple of kilometers east of Nishitani. It can therefore be suggested that the same factors, such as the existence of profitable trade routes and a local elite that was able to gather and organize wealth, leading to the concentration of bronze artifacts in Kōjindani and Kamo Iwakura, moreover resulted in the large burial mounds in Nishitani. That burial mounds with protruding corners can be found not only in western Izumo, but also along the coastline all the way to Hokuriku, suggests a widespread network of trade and cultural exchange. The presence of large pieces of funeral pottery, undoubtedly brought to Nishitani from Kibi, clearly indicates a further exchange across the Chūgoku Mountain range (see CARLQVIST 2009, 15–17; BARNES 2007, 119).

If we recall the land-pulling myth, clear similarities between the geography of the myth and the distribution of burial mounds with protruding corners can be observed. In Part IV, Omizuno pulls land from Tsutsu Cape in Koshi. As was mentioned before, Tsutsu Cape possibly refers to the northern part of Noto Peninsula. Although no burial mounds with protruding corners have been found here, several finds have been made south of the peninsula, both in Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui Prefectures. The burial mounds with protruding corners in these prefectures stand witness to the fact that local chieftains, who were in some way connected to the Izumo area, resided in the Hokuriku region. However, whilst the absence of archaeological evidence makes it risky to speculate about the presence of chieftains connected to the Izumo area living on Noto Peninsula, the presence of burial mounds with protruding corners in Toyama Prefecture strongly indicates that this speculation is not impossible. To reach Toyama Prefecture by the sea, Noto Peninsula has to be circumnavigated.

In Part II and III of the land-pulling myth, Omizuno looks at two countries of the “Northern Gate.” As mentioned earlier, many scholars believe that this refers to somewhere on the Oki Islands. On these islands, a burial mound with protruding corners has also been found (OKI DŌGO KYŌIKU IINAKI 1999, 5–6),

once again indicating that the sphere depicted in the land-pulling myth overlaps with the one of the burial mounds with protruding corners.

In Part 1, the deity pulls land from Silla. No burial mounds with protruding corners have been found in the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, but perhaps the myth shows that contacts existed across the sea. The position of the burial site of Nishitani is such that it is geographically situated within the sphere that is depicted in this first part of the myth: south of the land pulled (Kidzuki Cape 支豆支乃御埼), east of the rope (Sono Long Beach 藪之長浜), and north of the mooring post (Sahime Mountain).

At the end of the land-pulling myth, Omizuno thrusts his pole into the ground at the district office. About eight kilometers to the east of here, the largest concentration of burial mounds with protruding corners in eastern Izumo exists (southwest of Yasugi City).

Arguably, the land-pulling myth is geographically describing the political and commercial network built up by the political power that existed in Izumo during the late Yayoi period; a political power that manifested its strength in the erection of large burial mounds with protruding corners.

Tombs in Izumo

In the third century, the last, but also the biggest, burial mound with protruding corners was built: In western Izumo, Nishitani no. 9 (48m long; IZUMO KŌKOGAKU KENKYŪKAI 1986, 21) was erected.³ Also in eastern Izumo some rather large burial mounds with protruding corners were built: Miyayama 宮山 no. IV (30m long; MATSUMOTO et al. 2003, 83), Chūsenji 仲仙寺 no. 9 (27m long; YASUGISHI KYŌIKU INKAI 1977, 6), and Anyōji 安養寺 no. 3 (estimated to have been 35m long; YAMAMOTO 1995, 120).

However, with this last effort the construction of burial mounds with protruding corners came to a halt. Around this time, a new kind of grave became common over a large area of Japan. Its construction was initiated in Yamato, by the political power there that seems to have constituted the embryo of the first Japanese state. These graves are popularly called keyhole tombs, since the shape, when viewed from above, resembles an old-fashioned keyhole. These tombs are sometimes also known as round keyhole tombs (*zenpōkōenfun* 前方後円墳), to distinguish them from the similar looking square keyhole tombs (*zenpōkōhōfun* 前方後方墳), where the rear section that is round in the former, is squarish in the latter.

With the discontinuation of the burial mounds with protruding corners, it could easily be surmised that the culture and the traditions of the Izumo area

3. Since the lengths of the tombs vary slightly from one source to another, references are given here whenever these types of measures appear.

were dispersed and lost. If that were the case, it appears all but natural that the knowledge of an old Izumo that had expanded its influence across the Japan Sea to the Hokuriku region and Oki Islands, and traded with the Korean Peninsula, should also have been lost. In that case, it would be difficult to explain the land-pulling myth as depicting aspects of the historical reality of late Yayoi.

However, the political power in eastern Izumo still showed signs of survival. While a round keyhole tomb (Ôdera 大寺, no. 1, 52m long; MASUDA 2005, 6) was built in western Izumo, indicating that this part of Izumo was thoroughly subjugated to the growing political power in Yamato, eastern Izumo maintained its cultural peculiarities. The largest tombs that were built in eastern Izumo during the early Kofun period were not round keyhole tombs, but square tombs (*hōfun* 方墳) consisting of just a squarish structure. The two largest are Tsukuriyama 造山 no. 1 and Ônari 大成, both 60m long (WATANABE 2006, 146). In the early Kofun period, when square tombs were erected almost nowhere else in the archipelago, many large such tombs were built in eastern Izumo. The outer characteristics of a square tomb is reminiscent of the burial mounds with protruding corners since it is rectangular in shape. Judging from the external form, it is therefore easy to draw a parallel between the strong political power of the late Yayoi period and its rectangular burial mounds with protruding corners, and the political power in eastern Izumo that built the large rectangular square tombs. However, both the exterior and interior of the structure of the square tombs in eastern Izumo, and the way the dead were interred share many similarities with the round keyhole tombs built in Yamato and elsewhere in Japan (WATANABE 2005b, 58 and 2006, 144–46). However, some differences also existed. For example, some of the coffins of the square tombs in eastern Izumo are boat-shaped, a variation originating in Kyūshū (MAKABE 1993, 104). The square tombs in eastern Izumo could be interpreted as indicating that in eastern Izumo, although the influence from Yamato was great, the regional political power chose to emphasize its originality. Another possible interpretation is of course that the leaders of eastern Izumo were not allowed by the political power in Yamato to build round keyhole tombs. Both interpretations indicate that in some way the awareness of eastern Izumo as a peculiar area prevailed.

Whereas the largest burial mounds of the late Yayoi period had been characterized by homogeneity in the Izumo area, the largest tombs of the early Kofun period show great diversity. While the sizable round keyhole tomb Ôdera no. 1 was built in western Izumo, and several huge square tombs were erected in eastern Izumo, two large square keyhole tombs, Matsumoto 松本 no. 1 (50m long; SHIMANEKEN KYŌIKU IINKAI 1963, 1) and Matsumoto no. 3 (52m long; KONDŌ 1991, 236) were built in the Mitoya 三刀屋 area, in the middle reaches of the Hii River, in an area where no larger burial mounds with protruding corners had been erected during the late Yayoi period.

During the middle Kofun period, while the leaders in the Mitoya area disappeared without leaving any trace, people in western and eastern Izumo continued to build tombs, although on a smaller scale than before. It is notable that at this time, although both round tombs (*enpun* 円墳) and round keyhole tombs were constructed, the majority of the tombs were square tombs (YAMAMOTO 1997, 20). The smaller size indicates that the political power in the Izumo area, including eastern Izumo, had lost some of its vigor. However, during the late Kofun period, eastern Izumo once again showed its peculiarity and strength. During this period, sizable square keyhole tombs were constructed in many localities of eastern Izumo. Perhaps the belligerence between Yamato and Kibi prevented the former from executing control over the Izumo area, creating a scope that enabled the region to once again express political power (PIGGOTT 1989, 55). In contrast to the early Kofun period, when square keyhole tombs were commonly constructed all over the archipelago, during the late Kofun period, square keyhole tombs were, with some very few exceptions, only erected in eastern Izumo (WATANABE 2006, 154–55). During the late Kofun period, a polarization between western and eastern Izumo can be observed. It culminates with two large tombs: Dainenji 大念寺 (92m long; UCHIDA et al. 2006, 42), a round keyhole tomb in western Izumo, and Yamashiro Futagotsuka 山代二子塚 no. 2 (94m long; SHIMANEKEN KYŌIKU INKAI 2001, 110), a square keyhole tomb, in eastern Izumo. While the first large square keyhole tombs during the late Kofun period in eastern Izumo were built southwest of Yasugi City, Yamashiro Futagotsuka no. 2 was built further to the west, in southern Matsue City 松江市. Although both sites are in eastern Izumo, the first one is close to the lower reaches of the Inashi River and the large plain at Noki 野義, stretching from Hirose 広瀬 to Yasugi and Mori 母里, while the second one is close to the lower reaches of the Iu River 意宇川 and the plain at Yamashiro, which is connected by the Iu River to yet another plain to the south extending from Kanna 神納 to Sōde 早田. This seems to indicate that towards the end of the late Kofun period, the family that held the power in eastern Izumo either moved from Noki to Yamashiro, or was replaced by a family in Yamashiro.

Although Yamashiro Futagotsuka no. 2 has a different shape to that of the tombs built in Yamato, many of the items on and in the tomb are identical, and many objects of prestige sent from Yamato have been encountered in the tomb. However, the shape of the burial chamber, and of some of the pottery (although not the *haniwa*) found at Yamashiro Futagotsuka no. 2 are different from the tombs in Yamato (WATANABE 2005a, 75, and 2005b, 74–5). Even if some regional characteristics exist in the tomb, it is still clear that the political power that built Yamashiro Futagotsuka no. 2 was strongly influenced by Yamato. It could be suggested that the move from Noki to Yamashiro indicates that a new family aware of the Izumo tradition, and supported by Yamato, had risen to power in eastern Izumo.

This suggestion is further supported by the fact that while Yamashiro Futagotsuka no. 2 is 94m long, the largest square keyhole tomb among the ones west of Yasugi is only 57m long (UCHIDA et al. 2006, 42). Excavations have revealed both a moat and an earthen enclosure around Yamashiro Futagotsuka no. 2.; including them, the length of the tomb would have reached about 150m (SHIMANEKEN KYŌIKU IINKAI 2001, 81), without a doubt the largest tomb in eastern Izumo.

Judging from burial mounds and tombs, between the late Yayoi period and the late Kofun period, the Izumo area (especially eastern Izumo) maintained a cultural distinctiveness that differed from other places in the Japanese archipelago: burial mounds with protruding corners during the late Yayoi period, square tombs during the early and middle Kofun period, and square keyhole tombs during the late Kofun period.

It is hence possible to argue that the land-pulling myth depicting aspects of the historical reality of the late Yayoi period survived as an important ingredient in Izumo culture during the Kofun period. If the myth had survived until the second half of the sixth century (when the last square keyhole tombs were built in eastern Izumo), it is also likely that the myth was still vivid when *Izumo fudoki* was compiled in the first half of the eighth century.

However, it is important and relevant to consider who the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* were, and what their motives for recording the myth were.

The kuni no miyatsuko of Izumo

At the very end of *Izumo fudoki* two names are recorded: these are the names of the compilers. The first name is Miyake no Omi Kanatari 神宅臣金太理.⁴ Judging from the style in which *Izumo fudoki* is written, it can be assumed that Kanatari was well versed in classical Chinese literature. However, the only thing we know about him is what *Izumo fudoki* itself states: that he was a local from Aika District 秋鹿郡 and that he compiled *Izumo fudoki* (TAKEUCHI et al. 1992, 6: 1690). The other name given is Izumo no Omi Hiroshima 出雲臣広島. He was the *kuni no miyatsuko* 国造 of Izumo Province, and the district leader (*dairyō* 大領) of Ou District.

In the eighth century, Izumo was one of about sixty Japanese provinces. Like all other provinces, it was governed by an official (*kokushi* 国司) called *kami* 守 dispatched from the capital, Heijōkyō 平城京, by the central government. Although the office of *kuni no miyatsuko* had been officially abolished during the seventh century, in sharp contrast to most other provinces, in Izumo Province the office existed until the tenth century (OBINATA 2005, 103). It is unknown

4. Due to discrepancies in the manuscripts, another possible reading of the name is Matatari 全太理 (AKIMOTO 1997, 255).

what authority and obligations this office entailed, but it seems plausible that the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo possessed a political power worthy of note. This suggestion is given further validity if it is taken into account that besides his office as *kuni no miyatsuko*, Hiroshima was also leader 大領 of Ou District, the largest district in the province, at the time of the compilation of *Izumo fudoki*.

Before the establishment of provinces at the end of the seventh and the first half of the eighth centuries, the *miyake* 屯倉, and to various extent, the *kōri* 評 (at an early stage the term referred to a larger unit than a district), had been ruled by *kuni no miyatsuko*, many of them of regional origin (KURAMOTO 2006, 27; SATŌ 2006, 45). As provinces were established, they were ruled by *kami*. It is difficult to estimate when Izumo Province was established as an administrative unit, but according to *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀, the first *kami* of Izumo Province was Inbe no Sukune Kōbito 忌部宿禰子首, and he was appointed in 708. (The account can be read in ŌTSUKA 1998, I: 135.) Logically, this should mean that the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo lost his powers and influence to Kōbito, as he was the *kami*, but this does not seem to have been the case. As provinces were established, administrative centers that controlled the provinces were also built. In this article, these centers are called province-offices. In 708 Kōbito was hence appointed *kami* of Izumo Province, and sent to Izumo Province-office to administer the province. This administrative center was built in Ou District, close to Yamashiro, the very homeland of the Izumo no Omi. Ou District-office, where the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo resided, stood in the immediate vicinity of the province-office.

The *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo was an office that was inherited within the family of Izumo no Omi. It is not known how far back this tradition goes. A short passage in *Nihon shoki* from the year 659 is the oldest source that mentions the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo. (The passages can be read in ŌTSUKA 1989, II: 341.) When the old *kuni no miyatsuko* passed away, his eldest son went to court in order to obtain permission from the sovereign to become the new *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo. This was a complicated procedure that took two or three years (see MAEDA 2006, 105–8). However, none of the sources mention that the emperor ever refused to give permission to a member of the Izumo no Omi family to become the new *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo.

Several facts indicate that the Izumo no Omi family (and the office of *kuni no miyatsuko* that they held) was still very important, influential, and powerful in the first half of the eighth century, constituting a local political power that even the emperor had to take into account:

1. Izumo Province was governed from the very center of where the Izumo no Omi had their homeland (see FIGURE 6).
2. Izumo Province-office was situated right next to Ou District-office (OKIMORI et al. 2005, 73).

3. Izumo no Omi Hiroshima was the highest official in Ou District, the largest district in the province (OKIMORI et al. 2005, 76).
4. *Izumo fudoki* mentions as many as eight members of the Izumo no Omi family in high positions at five of the nine district-offices in the province (OKIMORI et al. 2005, 19, 30, 41, 61, 66).
5. Every time a new *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo succeeded his late father he went to the court to recite the *kanyogoto* 神賀詞 in front of the emperor.⁵
6. The *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo was also highest priest (*kanushi* 神主) at Izumo Taisha (Kidzuki Ōyashiro 杵築大社) (TAKASHIMA 1995, 181). The *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo became the one who was responsible for the compilation of *Izumo fudoki*.
7. The *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo became the one who was responsible for the compilation of *Izumo fudoki*.

The Izumo Province-office was constructed just a couple of kilometers south-east of Yamashiro where the largest tombs from the late and the final Kofun period were built in the Izumo area. It is only natural that these tombs were erected in the closest surroundings of where the interred men of power had lived and had had their strongest support. Due to the geographical position of Izumo Province-office situated in the vicinity of Yamashiro, it is logical to suggest that the same regional power that can be traced to the large tombs in Yamashiro was also that which lay behind the establishment and administration of Ou District-office (OBINATA 2005, 84; WATANABE 2005b, 79).

No archaeological sources directly demonstrate that the area around the Iu River (Yamashiro is situated north of where the river turns east to pour out into the Naka Sea) was the homeland of Izumo no Omi. However, historical records such as *Izumo fudoki* and *kanyogoto* clearly point to a connection between Izumo no Omi and Kumano Great Shrine 熊野大社, situated on Tengu Mountain 天狗山 in the upper reaches of the Iu River. This is not the only shrine connected to the area around the Iu River. In total, *Izumo fudoki* names 399 shrines: of these, 67 belong to Ou District. It is difficult to determine exactly where shrines mentioned in *Izumo fudoki* were situated in the eighth century, but these shrines can be mapped reasonably accurately, mainly based on the order the shrines are listed in *Engishiki* 延喜式, and the research by SHIKINAISHA KENKYŪKAI 1983, YAMAMOTO 2001, and SEKI 2006 (see FIGURE 6). This map shows that more than a third, or 24, of the shrines in Ou District were adjacent to the Iu River and its tributaries, although this comprises only a very small part of the district as a whole. *Izumo fudoki* mentions shrines both recognized and not noted by

5. *Kanyogoto* is a text that inter alia presents the Izumo version of the land-ceding myth. It will be further discussed later in this article.

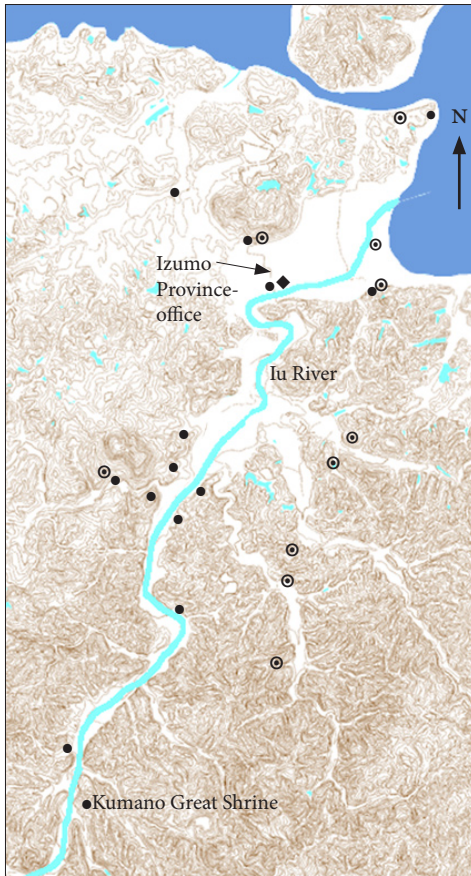


FIGURE 6. Shrines along the Iu River. The black dots indicate *kansha*. The circled black dots identify shrines not noted in the official records. The diamond marks Izumo Province-office. The trajectory of the Iu River is adopted from KUWABARA and ONDA 1992, 50. The position of the coastline comes from TAKAYASU 2002.

the central government. The recognized ones are called *kansha* 官社 by Japanese scholars; however, this is not the term *Izumo fudoki* uses. In Ou District, 48 shrines are *kansha* and 19 are not. More than half, or 10, of these 19 shrines are situated around the Iu River. Shrines not recognized by the central government, but anyway recorded in *Izumo fudoki*, are obviously shrines important to the compilers of *Izumo fudoki*, and, by extension, to the Izumo no Omi family. Hence, this concentration of shrines around the Iu River, especially of shrines not recognized by the central government, clearly shows that this area must have been the homeland of the Izumo no Omi.

It seems clear that of the two names mentioned at the very end of *Izumo fudoki*, Hiroshima was the one that directed the compilation and was responsible for it to the central government, and that he had instructed Kanatari to execute the actual compilation work itself (see, for example, UEGAKI 1998, 277).

Considering that the compilation of *Izumo fudoki* was supervised by a man who headed a family (Izumo no Omi) that had close ties to, and genuine interest in, the region, it is logical to say that *Izumo fudoki* is written in such a way that the interests of the Izumo no Omi are protected. This has further been demonstrated in CARLQVIST 2007 and 2008. It is obvious that *Izumo fudoki* should be viewed in this light, and that the meaning of the land-pulling myth should be traced to the friction between a strong regional family and the central government eager to gain an all-embracing control over the land.

The Textual Context

As was mentioned earlier, the land-pulling myth appears at the very beginning of the first chapter that describes a district—Ou District. *Izumo fudoki* shows a clear tendency to place what it judges most important first. For example, Ou District is the most important of the districts in the province, here lies the province-office, and it is the district that hosts the largest population, the most temples, and so on. Accordingly, after the introduction, *Izumo fudoki* commences the descriptions of the districts in the province with Ou district. Among the temples in Ou District, only one has a name, Kyōkōji 教昊寺. This was the most dignified temple in the district, and correspondingly stands first in the list of temples. The major shrine of the district was Kumano Great Shrine, and this is also the shrine that heads the list of shrines in Ou District. Such examples are numerous. However, these should suffice to show that *Izumo fudoki* follows a clear intent to mention what it considers most important first.

The forward placement of the land-pulling myth can hence be understood as a deliberate choice by the compilers of *Izumo fudoki*: in order to stress its importance. In sharp contrast to almost all the other myths referred to in *Izumo fudoki*, the land-pulling myth appears to be related in its whole length. This further shows the importance the compilers gave to the message carried in the myth.

The land-pulling myth is not the only myth that stands at the beginning of the chapter about Ou District. The narrative about Omitsuno and his great achievements is followed by a series of fragments alluding to the land-ceding myth. Hereafter comes the second myth that appears to be presented in its full length in *Izumo fudoki*: the legend of Imaro 猪麻呂 and the *wani* 和爾. These three myths, that are related at the beginning of *Izumo fudoki*, together form one entity. To understand this, a short presentation of the series of fragments connected to the land-ceding myth, and the legend of Imaro and the *wani* is required.

The Land-ceding Series

By relating the land-pulling myth, *Izumo fudoki* explains the etymology behind Ou, the name of the district. Hereafter, *Izumo fudoki* proceeds to describe the

villages (*sato* 郷) of the district. In doing this, it alludes to the land-ceding myth several times (OKIMORI et al. 2005, 9–11).

The land-ceding myth presented in the central mythology, both in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, basically relates how the heavenly gods dispatch emissaries down to earth three times in order to persuade Ōkuni Nushi, the divine ruler of the land, to cede his domains to the heavenly gods. The first two gods sent off in this way betray the heavenly gods and side with Ōkuni Nushi. However, the third time, two gods are sent down together and they successfully accomplish their assignment. After ceding the land, Ōkuni Nushi is enshrined in Izumo Great Shrine.⁶

Three of the deities mentioned in the land-ceding myth also appear at the beginning of *Izumo fudoki*. The first one to be mentioned is Ōkuni Nushi 大國主, who is called Ōnamochi 大穴持 in *Izumo fudoki*. In the very first village to be described, Mori Village 母理郷, it is told how Ōnamochi returns from Koshi. *Izumo fudoki* tells that Ōnamochi has subjugated a place (or possibly a person) called Yakuchi 八口 in Koshi. On his return to Izumo Province, Ōnamochi proclaims that he will cede all the land that he has created to the offspring of the emperor in order to let them govern it. However, in sharp contrast to the land-ceding myth as depicted in the central mythology, Ōnamochi stipulates an unyielding condition: Izumo he will protect himself.

In the next village described, Yashiro Village 屋代郷, *Izumo fudoki* fragmentarily tells how the deity Amanofuhi 天乃夫比命 descended here. Amanofuhi was the ancestral god of the Izumo no Omi family that lived in Izumo Province (see for example NISHIMIYA 2006, 43). In the land-ceding myth as it is presented by the court, Amanofuhi is the first god to be dispatched from the heavenly sphere to negotiate with Ōkuni Nushi, but here he betrays the heavenly gods, sides with Ōkuni Nushi, and fails to bring any report back to his assigners. Of course, the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* did not see Amanofuhi as a traitor, but they do not have *Izumo fudoki* challenge the court here. This they do elsewhere: upon the death of the *kuni no miyatsuko* of Izumo, his successor traveled to the court to receive the permission of the emperor to be the next *kuni no miyatsuko*. The nomination process was complicated, contained many stages, and spanned two or three years. During one of these phases the new *kuni no miyatsuko* read a text in front of the emperor. This text is called *kanyogoto* and is contained in *Engishiki*.⁷ In *kanyogoto*, Amanofuhi is the god who directs the land-ceding. Firstly,

6. The myth can be read in the *Kojiki*, YAMAGUCHI and KŌNOSHI 1999, 98–112; English versions in CHAMBERLAIN 1982, 111–27, and PHILIPPI 1968, 120–36. Versions of the myth are presented in *Nihon shoki*, ŌTSUKA 1989, I: 135–53; KOJIMA et al. 2006, 111–36; and an English translation in ASTON 1998, 64–81.

7. It can be read in KUROITA 1996, I: 176–77; English translation in PHILIPPI 1990, 72–5.

he descends to the earth and finds it unruly. He thereupon offers himself to be the one to pacify it. In order to do so, he dispatches two of his sons to the land beneath the heavens and subjugates it. Just like in the central tradition, *kanyogoto* ends with Ōkuni Nushi being enshrined in Izumo Great Shrine in Izumo.

Since the emperor, through listening to the recital by the new *kuni no miya-tsuko* of Izumo, was clearly aware of the message of the *kanyogoto*, it was enough for the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* to mention that Amanofuhi descended from heaven in the passage on Yashiro Village, in order to highlight that it was the ancestral deity of the Izumo no Omi who had pacified the land.

The next village to be described in *Izumo fudoki*, Tatenui Village 楯縫郷, contains yet another reference to the land-pulling myth. Here it is told that the god Futsunushi 布都怒志命 sewed and repaired his shield in the village, hence naming it Tatenui (“shield-sewing”). In both *Nihon shoki* and in *kanyogoto*, Futsunushi is one of the two gods that descend to the earth and successfully subjugate the land. The difference is that in the official mythology it is the heavenly gods who collectively dispatch Futsunushi, while according to *kanyogoto* it is the ancestral deity of Izumo no Omi, Amanofuhi, who is in charge of the dispatch. Another important dissimilarity is that while in *kanyogoto* Futsunushi is the son of Amanofuhi, in *Nihon shoki* the two gods are not related.⁸

After Tatenui Village, *Izumo fudoki* describes Yasuki Village 安来郷. Here the legend of Imaro and the *wani* is narrated. We will soon return to this tale. However, following on Yasuki Village, where *Izumo fudoki* describes Yamakuni Village 山国郷, the god Futsunushi is mentioned once again. In this passage, the deity expresses his deep love for Izumo by saying that he cannot stop looking at the land. Ancient Japanese records often narrate how rulers climb a mountain, look at the land below, and in doing so ceremonially achieve the right to rule it (see for example YAMAGUCHI and KŌNOSHI 1999, 289–90). This ritual is called *kunimi* 国見. *Izumo fudoki* does not use the word *kunimi*, but the reference seems to be clear. It is highly relevant to interpret the passage on Yamakuni Village as Futsunushi, a son of the ancestral deity of the Izumo no Omi family in Izumo Province, performing a *kunimi* and hence obtaining the right to rule the land. In this way, *Izumo fudoki* strongly stresses the right Izumo no Omi had to Izumo Province. That the god repairs his shield in the passage on Tatenui Village can be understood as the god making preparations to defend the province.

Let us recapitulate the series of fragments that allude to the land-ceding myth: In the passage on Mori Village, *Izumo fudoki* tells that Ōnamochi, the creator of the land, will protect Izumo on his own accord. In the following pas-

8. PHILIPPI (1990, 73) translates *kamiyogoto* as Futsunushi accompanying a son of Amanofuhi, but the rendition that both gods were sons to Amanofuhi is plausible and followed here.

sage, Amanofuhi, the ancestral god of Izumo no Omi, descends to the province. In the passages about Yamakuni and Tatenui Villages, Futsunushi, a son of Amanofuhi, takes the land in possession and makes preparations to defend it. Accordingly, the four passages analyzed here relate to the land-ceding myth. Here, *Izumo fudoki* specifically refers to the *kanyogoto*-version of the land-ceding myth where it is the ancestral deity of Izumo no Omi who pacifies and subjugates the land. *Izumo fudoki*, while strongly opposing how the land-ceding myth is presented by the central government, hence proclaims that the Izumo no Omi family, through the doings of their ancestral deity Amanofuhi and his son Futsunushi, are the rightful rulers of the province.

The Legend of Imaro and the Wani

Most myths in *Izumo fudoki* are presented in fragments. Only two myths appear to be related in their full length. The land-pulling myth is one, and the second is the legend of Imaro and the *wani*, which is narrated in the passage on Yasuki Village. In contrast to the land-pulling myth, the myth of Imaro and the *wani* is more properly labeled a legend rather than a myth since, at the end of the story, *Izumo fudoki* tells that the account took place exactly sixty years earlier, and that the son of the protagonist Imaro is still alive. *Wani* in modern Japanese means “crocodile.” No such creatures exist along the Japanese coasts today, nor did they in the eighth century. Many scholars assume that *wani* refers to some kind of shark (for example, MIZUNO 1965, 161; UCHIDA Ritsuo 2009, 213–32). ASAYAMA 1998, 86–107, analyzes several ideas regarding what *wani* might refer to, but cannot find any clear answer and settles for some kind of sea monster.

Izumo fudoki does not say it directly, but from the legend it can be understood that the *wani* hurls itself up on the beach in order to catch its prey. Further, the legend mentions a large group of more than one hundred *wani*. As a consequence, it can perhaps be suggested that *Izumo fudoki* refers to killer whales. This sea mammal sometimes catches seals by hurling itself up on the beach, and it usually lives in pods, groups that sometimes can contain a rather large number of individuals. Whatever the case, it is actually not so important to decide exactly what kind of marine animal the compilers were alluding to, and it is enough to understand that a *wani* was a large marine creature capable of killing a young woman.

The legend tells how the daughter of Imaro was out walking along the coast. Here she was unjustly attacked and killed by a *wani*. Her father Imaro, filled with anger, asks the gods of the province to come to his aid. As he does so, one hundred *wani* appear in the sea. As they approach him, Imaro can see that they are encircling one single *wani*, the guilty one. The one hundred *wani* lead the murderer to where Imaro stands. Here he slaughters the killer, finds the shin of

a woman in the dead *wani*'s stomach, and is hence convinced that his daughter has been avenged.⁹

This is actually the only myth (legend) in *Izumo fudoki* that does not explain a name. The etymological explanation to Yasuki Village is already given before the legend about Imaro and the *wani* is related. Even so, the compilers choose to record it, strongly suggesting that they placed great importance on this legend. It can be interpreted as showing how the gods of Izumo Province are not only powerful, they are also eager to help the inhabitants when they have been wrongfully treated. Here the sixty years become significant. According to the system of *kanshi* 干支 that comes from China, sixty years equals one cycle. Originally it was only used to number the days, but later it also came to define months and years. *Kanshi* consists of ten *kan* and twelve *shi* which were combined in sixty pairs, forming cycles of sixty years. The name of every sixtieth year is thus composed of the same combination of *kan* and *shi*, and is thereby called by the same name, and regarded as the same year. In this way, by telling that the legend occurred sixty years ago, the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* link the past to the present, and imply that just as the gods helped Imaro sixty years ago, they will help the people of the province today. *Izumo fudoki* was written in order to be presented to the emperor. The party that could be unjustly dealt with here was the Izumo no Omi family, and the party that might behave maliciously towards this family was the emperor backed up by the central government. The message is clear, forceful, and determined.

Conclusion

When the messages encoded in the myths above are taken into consideration, it is also possible to reveal a rewarding interpretation of layers of previously undisclosed meaning in the land-pulling myth.

The two places that the land-pulling myth calls "the Northern Gate" have not been identified. However, Silla and Koshi are given. Silla was an expansionist kingdom that in a series of campaigns between 661 and 677 had succeeded in defeating the other contestants on the Korean Peninsula, including the Japanese (in 663) and the Chinese Tang dynasty (in 677). At the time *Izumo fudoki* was compiled, Silla stood as the sole ruler of an area that roughly corresponds to modern-day South Korea. The Japanese government intensely feared its strong neighbor, and many defenses had been constructed from northern Kyushu to the capital (TAMURA 1990, 43–65). At the time *Izumo fudoki* was compiled, the

9. The tool used by Izanagi and Izanami when they created land was a spear 矛 (NISHIMIYA 2006, 27; NOMA 1972, 17). The weapon Imaro uses in the killing of the *wani* is a sword 鋒 (AKIMOTO Yoshinori 1984, 18, 154, 290, and 435). ŌBAYASHI 1973, 74, proposes that since both Izanagi/Izanami and Imaro use a spear, the two myths (and to a further extent, the land-pulling myth) are connected. However, the different usages of characters raise objections to this assumption.

threat of an invasion from Silla was not as imminent as it had been earlier, but the risk of an invasion was never totally forgotten. In 733 (the year *Izumo fudoki* was compiled), signal fires were erected in western Izumo (TAKEUCHI 1943, 1: 332). The following year, the central government ordered Izumo and Oki Provinces to erect signal fires that could give warning in the case of an invasion (WADA 1993, 252; TAKEUCHI 1943, 1: 327).

Koshi corresponds to a large area in northwestern Japan. In the annotations to the land-pulling myth given earlier in this article, the interpretation that Tsutsu Cape in Koshi corresponds to somewhere on Noto Peninsula was presented. Although this is a possible rendition, it seems more plausible that the land-pulling myth referred to an area even further to the north. According to *Izumo fudoki*, the land pulled from Tsutsu Cape became Miho Cape. *Izumo fudoki* tells that Miho Village 美保郷 was situated on this cape. In the passage about Miho Village, *Izumo fudoki* makes further references to Koshi by taking *Wamyō ruijūshō* 倭名類聚鈔 into account. UEGAKI (1998, 138) argues that Tsutsu Cape alludes to Naoetsu 直江津 in present-day Niigata Prefecture. Although Niigata is situated far from Izumo, Uegaki might very well be right. North of Naoetsu a town called Izumozaki 出雲崎町 (town of the cape of Izumo) exists today, and in the southern part of Niigata Prefecture several place names that include the morpheme "izumo" can be traced. However, the issue of how old these place names are has not been resolved (see MIYA and YAMADA 1990, 214, 506–7, 643).

While the Hokuriku region, at the time *Izumo fudoki* was compiled, was firmly incorporated in the Japanese nation, the northern part of Honshu where Naoetsu lies was yet to be thoroughly subdued. The central government had established administrative units like Dewa no ki 出羽柵 in northern Koshi during the beginning of the eighth century (KUDŌ 2004, 115–16). However, the northern part of Koshi remained largely beyond the control of the central government until the beginning of the ninth century. Here, a "foreign" people called Emishi 蝦夷 lived and opposed the northern expansion of the Japanese state. It would take until the beginning of the ninth century before the Emishi had succumbed to the overwhelming power of the central government. At the time *Izumo fudoki* was compiled, they were still a resistant people that just some years earlier, in 724, had launched several successful attacks on the administrative apparatus the state had built up along the frontiers to their territory (SAKAЕHARA 1991, 177–78; TAKANAMI 1991, 116).

Both Silla and Koshi hence represent two antagonists to the Japanese state, enemies that had inflicted humiliating defeats on the court. Viewed in this light, the land-pulling myth becomes fascinating. What the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* obliquely convey to the emperor is the message that one of their deities, Yatsuka Omitsuno, who can pull land from both Silla and Koshi, is more powerful than the military force of the central government, and possesses greater strength

than the central gods. This must be the crucial point that the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* wanted to stress. By emphasizing the power of their own gods, they could demonstrate that there was no need for Izumo Province to be submissive. These myths thereby symbolically indicate the strength of their resistance to centralized Yamato rule.

When the textual context given to the land-pulling myth is considered, the meaning of the myth seems to be clear. It forms part of a message from the compilers of *Izumo fudoki* to the emperor stating that 1. the gods of Izumo Province have greater power than the central government (the land-pulling myth); 2. that the province desires and has the legitimacy to govern itself (the series of fragments connected to the land-ceding myth); and 3. if the province were to be unfairly treated by the central government, it has the power, through the loyalty of its gods, to defend itself (the legend of Imaro and the *wani*).

Viewed in this light it seems clear that, even though the origin of the land-pulling myth can be traced back to the Izumo culture of the late Yayoi period, as the myth is related in *Izumo fudoki* it is at least to some degree the result of the historic reality of the seventh and early eighth centuries.

SUMMARY

The land-pulling myth draws up a geographical framework along the Japan Sea that can be easily interpreted as depicting the sphere wherein the influence of the Izumo area manifested itself during the late Yayoi period. Similarly, it seems plausible that the Izumo land-pulling myth could have been relayed from generation to generation within the cultural awareness that seems to have remained alive in the Izumo area during the Kofun period and hence survived until the early Nara period when it was recorded in *Izumo fudoki*.

However, considering who was in charge of the compilation of *Izumo fudoki* and by relating the land-pulling myth to the other myths narrated in connection to it, it seems as fruitful to discuss the land-pulling myth in relation to the political situation during the first half of the eighth century, especially to the relation between the center and the periphery, as to favor the idea that the myth depicts the historical reality of the late Yayoi period.

Although it presents the possibility that the land-pulling myth originates in the Yayoi period, this article does not aim to prove this idea. However, what it does aim to point out is that the recording of the myth must be seen as the result of political tension between center and periphery in eighth century Japan. Put in its right context, it clearly illustrates one of the many potential ways in which a regional family, the Izumo no Omi, opposed the central government.

Hence, it seems likely that the land-pulling myth as it is presented in *Izumo fudoki*—although it might have its roots in an older tradition—was adjusted to

fit the needs of Izumo no Omi as the family tried to defend its rights to control their homeland from the incessantly growing greed of the court. To understand the land-pulling myth, it must be understood that it is reflecting the historical reality of the eighth century. Viewed as such, the myth stands out in all its grandeur.

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