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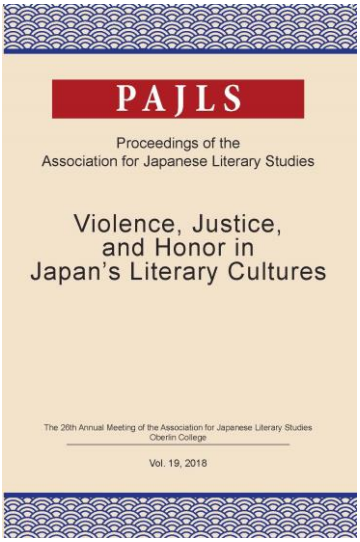

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MYTHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF THE VIOLENT VANQUISHING OF IZUMO

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One of the earliest examples of violence documented in extant sources in Japan involves the so-called *kuniyuzuri* 国譲り (surrender of Izumo/terrestrial realm) sequences in the *Kojiki* (712, Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon shoki* (720, Chronicles of Japan). This paper explores the question of whether these sequences are a reflection of some proto-historical reality in relation to the Izumo region, today located in the west of Shimane prefecture. These sources are contrasted with the locally created *Izumo no kuni fudoki* (733, Gazetteer of Izumo Province, henceforth *Izumo fudoki*), which make no reference to violence against Izumo and which can be interpreted as maintaining Izumo's relative independence.

The compilers of the *Izumo fudoki* were the Kuni no Miyatsuko 国造 (Magistrate), Izumo no Omi Hiroshima 出雲臣広嶋, and his assistant from the Aika district 秋鹿郡, Miyake no Omi Kanatari 神宅臣金太理. In the case of Izumo, there was an overlay of authority sent in on a revolving basis from the Kinai imperial court. However, there is little evidence of influence of the representatives from the center on the compilation of the *Izumo fudoki*. Indeed, from the extant sources, it is difficult to judge who the governor was at the time.[2] The title of Kuni no Miyatsuko was given to those local chieftains who had independently put together powerful regional coalitions. The imperial court, in its drive to centralize control after the Taika reforms, moved to deprive the Kuni no Miyatsuko of their political authority, but it did not or could not reduce the authority of Izumo no Omi Hiroshima, who retained the title of Kuni no Miyatsuko, priestly control of both Kizuki 杵築 and Kumano 熊野 shrines, remained senior district chieftain 大領 (*dairyō*) of Ou, and served as Izumo's representative at court.[3] He did not create the work on his own. Officials, the local elites of each district, had to report and "sign off" on the portrayals of their respective districts. Since these involved important local religious beliefs and the genealogies and gods of creation of local kinship groups, it would

[1] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4210-812X
[2] Takioto Yoshiyuki, *Kodai no Izumo jiten* (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu Ōraisha, 2001), 90–92.
[3] Mark Funke, "Hitachi no Kuni Fudoki," *Monumenta Nipponica*, 49:1 (1994), 11.

have been difficult for Izumo no Omi Hiroshima to manipulate local myths and legends in the *Izumo fudoki*.[4]

The god known as Ōnamochi no mikoto 大穴持命 in the *Izumo fudoki* is the most important deity of Izumo's several gods of creation, and he is the deity "conquered" by the heavenly gods, the gods of the imperial line. *Izumo fudoki* refers to him as "The Great Deity who Created All Under Heaven" 所造天下大神. Other texts refer to him by other names. In the *Nihon shoki*, he is referred to as Ōkuninushi no kami 大国主神, Ōmononushi no kami 大物主神, Kunitsukuri Ōanamuchi no Mikoto 国造大己貴命, Ashihara no shikoo 葦原醜男, Yachihoko no kami 八千戈神, Ōkunidama no kami 大国玉神, and Utsushikunidama no kami 顕国玉神.[5] In the *Kojiki* he is referred to as Ōkuninushi no kami 大国主神, Ōanamuji no kami 大穴牟遅神, Ashihara no shikoo 葦原色許男神, Yachihoko no kami 八千矛神, and Utsushikunidama no kami 宇都志国玉神.[6] For consistency, the deity is referred to here by his name in the *Izumo fudoki*, Ōnamochi, except in those instances in which it is significant that he is referenced by a different name in a specific source. This surfeit of names illustrates the principle that as a mythic figure becomes a major presence believed in widely, the actions of more minor deities are attributed to him/her, leading to a single composite deity with multiple aspects.

If acts of violence by imperial gods against Izumo gods can be extrapolated to suggest invasions of Izumo by Yamato, then a general outline in chart form of the "invasions" described during the age of the gods in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* can be constructed (see Table One). Full names and honorific titles are abbreviated.

If we are to read this as a reflection of some historical reality, there are a number of inconsistencies. It seems clear that Amaterasu was a later interpolation.[7] The number of "expeditions" sent against Izumo varies

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[4] Takioto Yoshiyuki, *Izumo kodaishi ronkō* (Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 2014), 147.

[5] W.G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956, rpt. 1896), 59; Kojima Noriyuki, et al. ed., annot., trans. *Nihon shoki*, in *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, 88 vols. (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1997), v. 1 (2), 102–103. Henceforth, SNKBZ (2–4), *Nihon shoki*, vols.1–3.

[6] Donald L. Philippi, trans., *Kojiki* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968), 92; Yamaguchi Yoshinori, and Kōnoshi Takamitsu, ed., annot., trans., in Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū, 88 vols. (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1997), v. 1 (1), 75. Henceforth, SNKBZ (1), *Kojiki*, 75.

[7] Mizoguchi Mutsuko, *Amaterasu no tanjō: kodai Ōken no genryū o saguru*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009), 176–182; Russell Kirkland, "The Sun and the Throne. The Origins of the Royal Descent Myth in Ancient Japan," *Numen*, 44:2

Kojiki SNKBZ, 1: 99–111	*Nihon shoki* 6th variant SNKBZ, 2: 150–151	*Nihon shoki* 2nd variant SNKBZ, 2: 133–139	*Nihon shoki* 1st variant SNKBZ, 2: 122–125 & 127–132	*Nihon shoki* Main Text 本文 SNKBZ, 2: 110–113 & 116–120	*Source*
Amaterasu & Takamimusubi (Takagi no kami)	Takamimusubi	Takamimusubi	Amaterasu	Takamimusubi	*Dispatching deity*
1 Amenohohi *Fails* 2 Wakahiko *Fails* 3 Female Pheasant *Fails* 4 Takemikazuchi & Amenotorifune *Succeed*	1 Wakahiko *Fails* 2 Male Pheasant *Fails* 3 Female Pheasant *Fails*	Futsunushi & Mikazuchi	1 Wakahiko *Fails* 2 Pheasant *Fails* 3 Futsunushi & Takemikazuchi *Succeed*	1 Amenohohi *Fails* 2 Mikumanoushi *Fails* 3 Wakahiko *Fails* 4 Pheasant *Fails* 5 Futsunushi & Takemikazuchi *Succeed*	*Gods sent to conquer Izumo or Izumo and terrestrial realm*
In response to armed demands to surrender his realm, Ōnamochi defers decision to his sons, Kotoshironushi & Takeminakata. Takeminakata violently resists.	Wakahiko, a heavenly deity, meets resistance by earthly deities and doesn't return	Ōnamochi refuses non-violent demands. Takamimusubi offers bribes.	In response to non-violent demands to surrender his realm, Ōnamochi defers decision to Kotoshironushi	In response to armed demands to surrender his realm, Ōnamochi defers decision to his son, Kotoshironushi	*Ōnamochi's response and resistance*
Kotoshironushi agrees to demands. Takeminakata is defeated and Ōnamochi pledges fealty to the heavenly deities and to withdraw	Not mentioned	In exchange for rule over divine affairs, a palace, etc. Ōnamochi surrenders and withdraws.	Kotoshironushi agrees to demands and Ōnamochi surrenders terrestrial realm	Kotoshironushi agrees to surrender the realm, and Ōnamochi surrenders and conceals himself.	*Result*
Oshihomimi and later Ninigi, who descends to peak of Takachiho	Ninigi, who descends to peak of Takachiho	Oshihomimi and later Ninigi, who descends to peak of Takachiho	Amaterasu's son Oshihomimi declines in favor of his son, Ninigi, who descends to peak of Takachiho	Takamimusubi's grandson Ninigi descends to peak of Takachiho in Himuka	*Heavenly deity dispatched to rule terrestrial realm*

(May 1997), 123; John Breen, and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto* (Chichester; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2010), 134.

from one to five. The composition of the expeditions differs. It is unclear why Ninigi no mikoto 瓊瓊杵尊 descends to Takachiho 高千穂 in Kyūshū after so much effort is expended in conquering Izumo. In the *Kojiki* and 1st variant of the *Nihon shoki*, Ōnamochi is the ruler of the entire terrestrial realm, so when he surrenders, Takemikazuchi no kami 建御雷神 and Amenotorifune no kami 天鳥船神 return to the heavenly realm to report the success of their mission: the securing of the whole of the terrestrial realm for the rule of Amaterasu's grandson Ninigi. However, in the main text of the *Nihon shoki* and in the 2nd variant, Futsunushi no kami 経津主神 and Takemikazuchi no kami 武甕槌神 go on to conquer all the rebellious deities and spirits, which suggests that Ōnamochi's rule is limited to Izumo. Finally there is variation in the levels of violence, from little or no violence in the 2nd variant in the *Nihon shoki* to great violence in the *Kojiki*: Amewakahiko 天若日子 slays the pheasant and in turn he is slain by Takamimusubi no kami 高御産巣日神; Takemikazuchi demonstrates his ferocious resolve to use violence to force Ōnamochi to surrender by planting his huge sword upside down on the waves and sitting cross-legged on the tip of his sword; Takeminakata no kami 建御名方神 demonstrates his resolve to resist by bearing a huge boulder on his fingertips.

As noted above, the *Kojiki* and the 1st variant of the *Nihon shoki* record that the gods of Izumo surrendered not just the land of Izumo but also the terrestrial realm to the divine descendants of heaven. If taken literally as reflecting an historical event, this would mean that Izumo pre-existed the Yamato as the dominant power in the archipelago and that the people of Izumo were an indigenous "race' which was displaced by the superior Yamato "race." This impression is further strengthened by the fact that, from at least the historical period, a distinction was drawn between the gods of heaven (*amatsugami* 天津神, *tenjin* 天神), and the gods of the earth (*kunitsukami* 国津神, *chigi* 地祇), who were held to be the ancestors of Izumo people. Yamato *minzoku*, the Japanese, were said to be the descendants of the heavenly gods, and the descendants of the Izumo gods were a different, inferior people.[8] This distinction between gods, and indirectly between peoples became formalized, and at the beginning of the Meiji period, it served as one of the arguments for downgrading the status of shrines associated with the gods of Izumo.

So prevalent was the idea that the people of Izumo were of a different race that Mizuno Yū felt compelled in his seminal and pioneering work on

[8] Okamoto Masataka, *Minzoku no sōshutsu: matsurowanu hitobito, kakusareta tayōsei* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014), 5 and 45–46.

Izumo to carry out an exhaustive survey of the health records of Izumo public school students' blood types, skull circumferences, weights, and heights, only to come to the conclusion that there is no physical difference between the natives of Izumo and other Japanese.[9] Arguments concerning ethnic or cultural definitions of Yamato and Izumo as distinct unified "races" are simply not tenable.[10] As Mizuno further points out, given the fact that it required some three centuries for the Yamato, a relentlessly expansionary power utilizing the latest technology, ideas, and peoples from the Asian continent, to establish a somewhat widely recognized central authority which even then did not extend to the whole country, it makes no sense to maintain, with no evidence other than several contradictory myths, that Izumo had control of much of the Japanese archipelago during the Yayoi period.[11] The one constant in all of the imperial accounts is the "overarching plot line of court myth": how the heavenly gods imposed order on the unruly gods of the earth by forcing them to relinquish power over the land to the "grandson of heaven" the godly lineage of Yamato.[12]

Because Ōnamochi represented an alternate, independent, and older religious tradition, the center has, from at least the time of Tenmu Tennō (天武天皇, c. 631–686), attempted to erase the deity, or at least coopt the religious tradition he came to represent. One need only revisit a version of Ōnamochi's surrender of the terrestrial realm to the heavenly deities to understand the extent to which the compilers of imperial myth were intent on denigrating the gods of Izumo.

In the *Kojiki*, in the *kuniyuzuri* sequence, the gods of Izumo are portrayed as contemptible. The emissaries of heaven, Takemikazuchi and Amenotorifune, are sent to Izumo to demand that Ōkuninushi surrender his realm to the descendants of Amaterasu. Ōkuninushi is addressed as an inferior by the emissaries who threaten him with violence. He temporizes, deferring the decision to surrender to his two sons. Kotoshironushi no kami 事代主神 submits and withdraws. His brother, Takeminakata no kami 建御名方神, refuses and challenges Takemikazuchi to a contest of strength. Takemikazuchi rips off Takeminakata no kami's arm and flings it away. Pursued by Takemikazuchi, Takeminakata no kami flees to the shore of Lake Suwa 諏訪湖. There he begs Takemikazuchi not to kill him, and he

[9] Mizuno Yū, *Kodai no Izumo* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1972), 117–141.
[10] This conclusion is forwarded in Mizuno Yū, *Nihon minzoku no genryū* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1969), 266–69.
[11] Mizuno, *Kodai no Izumo*, 105.
[12] Mark Teeuwen, and John Breen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 20.

surrenders the terrestrial realm to the descendants of heaven. After learning that both his sons capitulated, Ōkuninushi yields to the demands of the two emissaries. Moreover, Ōkuninushi is forced to build a structure to offer up a ceremonial feast of surrender to the conquerors.[13]

It is difficult to imagine a more humiliating treatment of the great god, the deity who created all under heaven, he who wielded five hundred hoes, the noble deity of the eight thousand spears.[14] In the *Kojiki*, he passively refuses to fight by deferring his decision, observes his son's arm being torn off and begging for his life, and then Ōkuninushi passively surrenders his realm without a murmur of protest. But, of course, this is the definition of Ōnamochi from the point of view of the imperial court.

From the perspective of the local leadership of Izumo, the great god did not surrender, as is clear from the following well-known passage from the *Izumo fudoki*:

> The Great God Ōnamochi no mikoto, he who created all under heaven, returned from having pacified the region of Koshi no Yakuchi. On arriving on the summit of Mt. Nagae, he gazed out into the distance and declared, "The lands I created and over which I ruled I have entrusted to the benevolent governance of heaven and its descendants in order to bring peace to the world. All except this land of Izumo, this land of eight-fold clouds where my spirit resides in peace, this land surrounded by fences of green mountains—I shall love it as a jewel, I shall attach to it my jeweled spirit, and I shall defend it." (SIKFS, 83)[15]

The Great God issues these words on Izumo's border facing Nara. As Murai Yasuhiko has argued, the passage was a strong statement on the part of Izumo's elite, which may well have traced their lineages back to the age of the Izumo gods in the Yayoi period, declaring the independence of the region and warning the Nara imperial court not to interfere in the region's affairs or make incursions into Izumo territory. In this sense, the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* is a forceful contemporary political document.[16]

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[13] *Kojiki*, v. 1, SNKZ, (1), 107–113. This relatively new interpretation of the structure as not the origin of Izumo Taisha is supported by Miura Sukeyuki, "Izumo to Izumo shinwa," *Gendai shisō*, 41:16 (Nov. 2013), 38.

[14] Miura, 38–42.

[15] Parenthetical page citations for the *Izumo fudoki* refer to Katō Yoshinari, ed., annot., *Shūtei Izumo no kuni fudoki sankyū* (Matsue: Imai Shoten, 1992), henceforth SIKFS.

[16] Murai Yasuhiko, *Izumo to Yamato rekishi no nazo o toku*, no. 2277 of the

The imperial accounts and the Izumo accounts of the relationship between heavenly deities and Izumo deities differ in a number of other respects as well. In the *Izumo fudoki*, Futsunushi no mikoto 布都怒志命 appears as a peaceful deity who praises the land.

> Futsunushi no mikoto was touring the terrestrial realm. He came to this place and declared, "This land is a fine land. I long to gaze upon it without ceasing (yamanaku, 止まなくに見が欲し)." Thus this township is called Yamakuni 山国. (SIKFS, 106)

This is not the threatening presence described in the *Nihon shoki*. If anything, it suggests a kind of reconciliation between the gods of heaven and the gods of Izumo. Neither Takemikazuchi no kami or Amenotorifune no kami are mentioned in sources written by the leaders of Izumo. Takemikazuchi no kami was the ancestral deity of the Nakatomi clan 中臣氏 and is presently worshipped at the Kashima Shrine 鹿島神宮 in Ibaraki prefecture. Takeminakata no kami also does not appear in 8th century sources authored by local Izumo people. He is not an Izumo god but is a deity associated with the Hokuriku region, which judging from the archeological record, had close ties of trade with Izumo.[17]

Citing local historians, shrine histories, and local myths, Elaine Gerbert argues that there were also close ties of marriage between the two regions:

> [M]embers of the Izumo tribe traveled by boat from Izumo . . . northward along the Japan Sea coast to Etsu no kuni (present-day Niigata prefecture), where Ōkuninushi wed Nunakawa-hime, the daughter of the Etsu-no-kuni chieftain. Nunakawa-hime subsequently gave birth to Takeminakata south of Itoigawa, where the Himegawa River ("Princess River") flows into the Japan Sea. The migrant Izumo tribe then followed the same river south to Suwa, taking with them the deity Takeminakata. Armed with metal weapons (the making of which the Izumo people are said to have learned from Koreans), and possessing agricultural skills unknown to the inhabitants of the Suwa Basin, the Izumo tribe was able to overwhelm the local Moreya clan, who still used weapons and tools of stone. Takeminakata was installed in what

Bessatsu Takarajima series (Tokyo: Takarajimasha, 2015), 25.

[17] Richard Torrance, "The Infrastructure of the Gods: Izumo in the Yayoi and Kofun Periods," *Japan Review* 29 (2016), 15–18.

> was later the Mae Miya [of the Suwa Taisha] as the guardian deity of the Izumo people and eventually of all who dwelled in the area. The regional ruling elite, Suwa clan, claim Takeminakata as their ancestor. Nunakawa-hime is worshipped as the patron goddess of the City of Itoigawa in the southwest of Niigata prefecture.[18]

Takeminakata is a heroic figure and is ultimately worshipped as the Suwa Daimyōjin at the Suwa Grand Shrine in Suwa City, Nagano prefecture. Mihosusumi no Mikoto 御穂須須美命, the offspring of the union between Ōnamochi and Nunakawa-hime 奴奈宜波比売命, is enshrined at Izumo's Miho Shrine 美保神社, Matsue City (SIKFS, 186). It goes without saying that the compilers of imperial myth were intent on incorporating as heroic the gods of the kinship groups in the imperial confederacy and denigrating as Izumo gods those who were not—whether the deities in question were Izumo deities or not, as is the case with Takeminakata.

The "Divine Congratulatory Words of the Kuni no Miyatsuko of Izumo" 出雲国造神賀詞 (Izumo no Kuni no Miyatsuko no Kamuyogoto, 716) was a rite performed at court by the Izumo Kuni no Miyatsuko to pray for the emperor's longevity and the prosperity of his reign. In this long prayer/incantation, the Izumo Kuni no Miyatsuko pledges the fealty of the gods of the 186 shrines he serves and he names the most powerful of these, including Kumano Ōkami and Ōnamochi. According to this poem/song, most likely created at least in part by the Izumo elites and meant to be performed, Futsunushi no mikoto and Amenohinadori no mikoto 天夷鳥命 flatter Ōnamochi and he willingly surrenders the terrestrial realm to the divine descendant. There is no violence involved and Ōnamochi installs his offspring and his benign spirit, Ōmononushi 大物主, at key points around the imperial capital to protect the descendants of heaven.[19] Amenohohi no mikoto 天穂日命, in contrast to his portrayal in the *Kojiki* as a traitor and deserter to the cause of the heavenly deities, is described in the "Kamuyogoto" as being ordered to reconnoiter the terrestrial realm. He does so and dutifully reports back to the heavenly deities, and even dispatches his son, Amenohinadori no mikoto, to win over Ōnamochi.[20] But "the overarching plot line" of imperial myth is the story of how the deities of the heavenly realm, through their innate superiority, were justified in imposing the rule of their descendants, the imperial lineage,

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[18] Elaine Gerbert, "The Suwa Pillar Festival," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56:2 (Dec. 1996), 325.
[19] Felicia Gressitt Bock, *Engi-shiki: Procedures of the Engi Era, Books VI-X*, a *Monumenta Nipponica* monograph (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1972), 102–105.
[20] Bock, 103.

over the turbulent, disruptive deities of the terrestrial realm.[21] Since the Izumo Kuni no Miyatsuko claim Amenohohi as their ancestral deity, and their office is charged with the maintenance of Ōnamochi's shrine and of the rituals that venerate and worship the Great God, it is not surprising that the compilers of imperial myth should portray Amenohohi, as they did with other Izumo deities, in a disparaging light.

If one is to judge the proto-historical reality of Izumo from the perspective of imperial myth, then it would seem that multiple violent invasions occurred, most failed, but they ultimately resulted in Izumo's abject capitulation. However, if one is to judge from the perspective of the *Izumo fudoki* and the "Kamuyogoto," there was no *kuniyuzuri*; it was a non-*kuniyuzuri*. Violence is not portrayed as a factor in Ōnamochi's determination to have his benign spirit and his progeny protect the imperial lineage.

Chronologically coming after the age of the gods, there are other accounts of violence against Izumo by representatives of the imperial confederacy.

1) *Nihon shoki*, Reign of Emperor Sujin 崇神天皇, 60th year, 38 BCE: Emperor sends Takemorosumi 武諸隅 to bring the divine treasures brought from heaven by Takehinateri no mikoto 武日照命 and stored at the Grand Shrine of Izumo. The leader of Izumo, Izumo Furune 出雲振根, was away in Tsukushi no kuni 筑紫の国, and his younger brother, Iiirine 飯入根, orders his brother, Umashikarahisa 甘美韓日, and his son, Ukazukunu 鸕濡渟, to offer the treasures up to the Yamato. On his return, Furune is enraged by this lack of respect for his authority and for the submissive surrender of the treasures. Years later, he still has not forgotten his anger. He fashions a wooden sword which he wears himself and invites his brother to swim in the Yamiya Pool. Furune suggests they exchange swords, his brother agrees, and then Furune slays his brother. He recites the following poem, a parody of Susanoo's *waka*, taunting his dead brother:

> The hero of Izumo,
> land where the eight-fold clouds appear,
> Your sheath is decorated by pretty encircling vines
> But the sword has no blade
> How pitiful!

[21] Mark Teeuwen, and John Breen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital*, 20.

The brothers reported this murder to the court. As a result, Kibitsuhiko 吉備津彦 and Takenunakawawake 武渟河別 were dispatched and they slew Izumo Furune.[22]

2) *Nihon shoki*, Reign of Suinin 垂仁天皇, 26th year, 4 BCE: The Emperor announces that numerous emissaries had been sent to inspect the divine treasure stored at the Grand Shrine of Izumo, but all had been turned away. He orders Mononobe no Tōchine no Ōmuraji 物部十千根大連 to go inspect the divine treasures at Izumo. Tochine finally succeeds in inspecting the divine treasures, reports back to the Emperor, and the Emperor places him in charge of the treasures.[23]

3) *Kojiki*, Reign of Emperor Keikō 景行天皇 (d. 130 CE): Izumo Takeru 出雲建 is approached by Yamato Takeru no mikoto 倭建命 who pledges friendship. However, the emissary of the Yamato secretly replaces his real sword with a wooden sword and invites Izumo Takeru to bathe in the Hii River. On emerging Yamato Takeru offers to exchange swords. Izumo agrees and both draw their swords. Yamato Takeru slays Izumo Takeru. He then composes a song, a parody of Susanoo's *waka*, mocking Izumo Takeru.

> The hero of Izumo,
> land where the eight-fold clouds appear,
> Your sheath is decorated by pretty encircling vines
> But the sword has no blade
> How pitiful![24]

The first instance of the use of this poem in the *Nihon shoki* portrays Izumo Furune as a heartless, duplicitous villain, and he is duly punished for his resistance to the imperial will. In contrast, the prince Yamato Takeru is the great and tragic warrior hero of the *Kojiki*, and he suffers no retribution for his trickery. Service to the imperial cause is justified. The use of the same poem in these contrasting situations suggests that the incidents of violence are fictional.

Imperial myth, then, records more than ten expeditions sent against Izumo from the time of the gods until the 2nd century. Needless to say, the dates bear little relation to historical reality. Similarly, the sheer number of expeditions sent against Izumo, the differing accounts of the deities in

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[22] *Nihon shoki*, v. 1, SNKBZ (2), 291–293. All translations by the author, unless otherwise noted.
[23] *Nihon shoki*, v. 1, SNKBZ (2), 321–322.
[24] *Kojiki*, v. 1, SNKZ, (1), 220–223.

conflict, the varying imperial generals in charge, the diverging objectives of the "conquerors," the similar literary formulations that bear the marks of oral formulaic composition are aspects of the imperial mythology of the subjugation of Izumo that lead one to doubt the veracity of the historical inferences to be drawn from this body of myth.

Moreover, there is no mention of violence between Izumo and the imperial court or of these armed expeditions in the *Izumo fudoki*. While the other extant gazetteers, of which there are only four that survived in somewhat complete form, mention the imperial house in obsequious terms, frequently citing visits by the Heavenly Sovereign and members of the imperial family, there are only four peripheral mentions of the Heavenly Sovereign in the *Izumo fudoki*, compared to 44 in the *Hitachi no kuni fudoki* 常陸国風土記, 95 in the *Harima no kuni fudoki* 播磨国風土記, 22 in the *Bungo no kuni fudoki* 豊後国風土記, and 40 in the *Hizen no kuni fudoki* 肥前国風土.[25] In addition, in terms of achievements by the imperial personage, Hizen lists 22, Bungo lists 14, Izumo lists none, Harima lists 85, and Hitachi lists 23. In terms of the accomplishments of local gods, Hizen lists none, Bungo lists none, Izumo lists 60, Harima lists 78, and Hitachi lists none.[26] The discrepancy between the *Izumo fudoki* and the other *fudoki* is not surprising given that the others were written under the authority of representatives of the imperial court, while the *Izumo fudoki* was compiled by the local political elite. It would seem that in 733, the local leadership of Izumo was so secure in their positions that they could ignore or defy the imperial institution.

The question naturally arises why the literary representation of Izumo and Izumo gods occupies such a large and critically important place in the imperial sanctioned mythology of the 7th and 8th centuries. Historians and literary scholars in the postwar period have posited numerous theories as to how these cycles of Izumo myth relate to political and religious conditions in Japan during the Kofun period and beyond.[27]

Their theories are, at least in part, based on a number of historical factors. The gods of Izumo are closely associated with agriculture, the manufacture of iron implements, medicine, and the cessation of epidemic disease, everyday functions useful to farming populations. While the so-

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[25] Takioto Yoshiyuki, *Kodai Izumo no shakai to shinkyō* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1998), 14.

[26] Kanda Norishiro, *Nihon shinwa ronkō: Izumo shinwa hen* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1992), 60.

[27] Ueda Masaaki provides a useful summary of these various arguments in his *Nihon shinwa*, no. 748 of Iwanami shinsho series (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970), 162–163.

called *kiba minzoku* theory has been discredited, gods of the Izumo line are associated with Korea, particularly Silla, and there appears to have been substantial immigration from the continent. In light of recent archeological discoveries, it is undoubtedly mistaken to state, as does Matsumae Takeshi 松前健, that "There is not the slightest evidence that Izumo was a region that could oppose Yamato in political or cultural terms."[28] However, it is probably reasonable to conclude, following Matsumae, that the widespread worship of Izumo gods was due in some measure to folk beliefs that originated locally in different parts of the country and later were associated with Izumo.[29]

I believe that the prominence in imperial myth of Izumo gods as representatives of the deities of the terrestrial realm conquered by the gods of heaven came about primarily for the following reasons: First, Izumo was a focal point for trade along the Japan Sea coast and its independent religious traditions, preceding those of the Yamato, spread along trade routes together with iron, *tama* (jewels fashioned from such material as agate, jasper, or jade), medicines, and other trade items. Second, the continued insistence of the Izumo chieftains that Izumo was an independent polity caused the compilers of imperial myth to cast the deities of Izumo as antagonists. Third, Izumo's traditional relations with Silla in the 7th century at a time when relations between Silla and the imperial court were very tense, and Izumo's traditional alliances with northern Kyushu, Tsukushi, and Koshi (parts of Hokuriku) raised the specter of an independent foreign policy and military alliance on the part of Izumo and caused the imperial court to view Izumo as the distant threatening other, the enemy. Finally, the age of myth was also the age of confederacies, and there is substantial evidence that Izumo was one of a number of regional powers—Yamato, Kibi, Koshi, Tsukushi—whose direct contacts with the continent, among other factors, enabled them to expand their authority and influence beyond their original boundaries during the Yayoi and Kofun periods. Whether Izumo's expansion was owing to force of arms or religious influence or superior technology, or trade, or some combination of these factors is a difficult question, but one can speculate that the reason it played such a crucial role in compilations of imperial myth is that it was one of the last regional powers to continue to resist incorporation into the Yamato confederacy.

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[28] Matsumae Takeshi, *Izumo shinwa*, no. 444 of the Kōdansha gendai shinsho series (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1976), 198.
[29] Ibid., 107–119.

CONCLUSION

There is no substantial archeological evidence, such as mass graves, caches of arms, the remains of Kofun period military encampments or massive defensive installations, of military action against Izumo from outside forces from Kinai. Indeed, the primary influence from outside the region in tomb construction during the late 6th and early 7th centuries came from northern Kyūshū.[30] The only substantial evidence that I know of for the violent subjugation of Izumo by the forces of the Yamato comes from imperial myth, and as we have seen, this body of myth is internally highly contradictory and is directly refuted by the myth in the *Izumo fudoki*.

This is not to argue following Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉 that Izumo myth was entirely the fictional creation of the minds of the compilers of imperial myth. Rather, the compilers of imperial myth may well have believed that the imperial presence actually was the descendant of the heavenly deities. As such, the compilers, when faced with the diverse, confusing, contradictory reports of the numerous *kataribe* from Izumo and other regions, could only make some sense of this mass of information by making it conform to the narrative of the heavenly deities conquering the deities of the terrestrial realm.[31]

To summarize, Izumo was probably not subjected to violent subjugation by the Yamato confederacy. Rather, a plausible alternative account of the relations between the two regions can be realized by exploring the ramifications of the notion of peer polity interaction.[32] We tend to define a kingship or a state by its independence from external pressure and influence and by the integrity of its borders. In reality, however, it is seldom the case that these aspects of sovereignty are absolute. Take for example the contemporary Japanese state. Foreign troops occupy strategic parts of its territory, it is dependent on a foreign power for its defense, its economy is largely based on foreign exports, and yet there are few not on the extreme political right or left who would

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[30] Torrance, 21–26.

[31] For a plausible theory of how these reports may have been transmitted to the capital, see Kadowaki Teiji, *Kenshō Kodai no Izumo* (Tokyo: Gakushū Kenkyūsha, 1987), 241–245.

[32] "Peer polity interaction designates the full range of interchanges taking place (including imitation and emulation, competition, warfare and the exchange of material goods and of information) between autonomous (i.e. self-governing and in that sense politically independent) socio-political units which are situated beside or close to each other within a single geographical region, or in some cases more widely." Colin Renfrew, "Introduction: peer polity interaction and socio-political change," in *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-political Change*, ed. Colin Renfrew and John F. Cherr (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.

maintain that Japan is not a sovereign nation state. Or again there is the spectrum of interchanges indicated by the terms vassal state, tributary state, client state, associated state, and so on.

In the case of Izumo and the Yamato confederacy, one can well surmise that an agreement in practice was worked out by which Izumo's elites were left to govern independently a diminished realm while those elites in turn recognized through the ceremony of the "Divine Congratulatory Words of the Kuni no Miyatsuko of Izumo" (716) imperial control of lands formerly allied with Izumo. This situation, a state of peer polity interaction between Izumo and the Yamato confederacy, continued until the very end of the 8th century when the imperial court felt powerful and confident enough to deprive Izumo's elites of their political status and incomes and restrict their representative, the Izumo no Kuni no Miyatsuko, to religious functions. As Ishizuka Takatoshi 石塚隆敏 writes, "Some one hundred and fifty years after the institution of the Taika Reforms . . . central authority was finally thoroughly enforced in Izumo."[33] This was accomplished without any record of violence. It was a gradual process, probably extending over two centuries, specifically, the 7th and 8th centuries.

ABBREVIATIONS

SNKBZ: *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集, 88 vols. Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1997,

SIKFS: Katō Yoshinari, ed., annot., *Shūtei Izumo no kuni fudoki sankyū* 修訂出雲国風土記参究. Matsue: Imai Shoten, 1992.

[33] Ishizuka Takatoshi, *Izumo heiya to sono shūhen: seisei, hatten, henbō* (Izumo City: Wan Rain, 2004), 96.