

## What was Iwa no Ōkami, the Great Deity of Iwa?

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### Deities that Occupy the Land, and Iwa no Ōkami

Iwa no Ōkami is considered the archetypal deity of Harima Province as seen in *Harima Fudoki*. However, there is no consensus about his identity. I should like to clarify his fundamental nature through his behaviour as recorded in the myths, his relationship to other deities (divine genealogy), and the geographical distribution of the relevant tales.

Iwa no Ōkami appears *only* in *Harima Fudoki*. By the time of *Shinsen Kyakuchoku Fushō*, a collection of ancient laws dating from Daidō 1 (806 CE), there were thirteen households serving as *jinpō* (households allocated and designated to serve a particular shrine) to ‘the Iwa deity of Harima,’ and this is the earliest record of Iwa no Ōkami in central government documents. Thereafter, ‘Iwa imasu Ōnamuchi no Mitama no Kami’ (‘Deity of the spirit of Ōnamuchi who is enshrined at Iwa’) appears in the entry for the first month of Jōgan 1 (859) in *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku*, a history of the early Heian period. The same shrine name appears also in *Engishiki*, which stipulated the execution and detailed regulation of laws in the first half of the Heian period: designated *myōjin taisha*, the shrine was accorded the highest position for a provincial deity. This means that by the Heian period at the very latest, Iwa no Ōkami was deified in Shisawa *Kōri* and was enshrined at present-day Iwa Shrine, Ichinomiya-chō, Shisō-shi; and it also means that he was regarded as identical with the deity Ōnamuchi.

It is recorded in *Harima Fudoki* that there were people in Shikama *Kōri* called Iwa no Kimi, but the centre of Iwa no Ōkami’s activities was Shisawa *Kōri*. Of these, the tales that most vividly reflect Iwa no Ōkami’s personality are the passages in Shisawa *Kōri* and Iwa *Mura* [hamlet]. In Shisawa *Kōri*, after Iwa no Ōkami had finished making the land, he encountered a large deer with its tongue hanging out while he was on his way to determining the boundaries of the country, and the Great Deity declared that there was an arrow in this deer’s tongue. On account of that he called the *kōri* Shisawa and the village Yata *Mura* [‘Arrow Field’]. Iwa no Ōkami named this place Shisawa, which means that it was he who governed the district. And in the passage on Iwa village, it says that when the Great Deity had finished making the land, he declared, “I have finished!” so Iwa village was also called Owa [‘Done!'] village. This shows that once he had completed the land, he was enshrined in Iwa village.

What was the size of the land that Iwa no Ōkami had made? In the ancient period, the work *kuni* [land, country, province] was used to denote the geographical extent of political and social entities varying in size from the national level down to the village. In regard to the foregoing examples, it seems acceptable to consider that the extent of the ‘land’ in question denotes Shisawa *Kōri*. But is that really so?

### The distribution of the tales

Iwa no Ōkami’s occupation of the land was not actually confined to Shisawa *Kōri* (see Table 1). Kaguyama in Ihibo *Kōri* is said to have been called Kaguhaka originally, and that it was so-called because when the Great Deity was occupying the land, a deer came and stood on the top of this hill. In the same *kōri*, Hayashita *Sato* was originally called Iwanashi, because when the Great Deity was occupying the land, the *mishirushi* [marker post] he erected turned into a tree. Erecting a marker post indicates the act of inserting his staff in the ground. Moreover, in neighbouring Sayo *Kōri*, a deity referred to only as ‘Ōkami’ [Great Deity] appears in no fewer than four places. One of these is regarded as a deity who had come from Izumo, and in *Harima Fudoki* it is only in Shisawa and Sayo *Kōri* that any are called simply Ōkami (see Table 2). However, a deity of Sayo *Kōri* called Sayotsuhime [‘Maiden of Sayo’] (also known as Tamatsuhime [‘Maiden of the Spirit’]), and Ōkami are said to be siblings (*imose*, which may alternatively mean a husband and wife couple). After contesting the occupation of the land with Sayotsuhime, Ōkami is defeated by Sayotsuhime’s use of deer’s blood to make rice seeds sprout in one night, and he goes elsewhere. Since these myths and tales indicate that there was a particularly close

relationship between Shisawa and Sayo *Kōri*, we can take it as certain that the ‘Great Deity’ referred to Iwa no Ōkami.

I would like to point out the possibility that Iwa no Ōkami was referred to by alternative names. Above we saw that in the Heian Period Iwa no Ōkami was regarded as identical with the deity Ōnamuchi. This deity is also worshipped in Izumo Province, but essentially he was enshrined at Miwa in Yamato. In *Harima Fudoki* it says that Iwa *Mura* in Shisawa *Kōri* was called *Miwa* because the Great Deity brewed oblatory sake [*miwa*] there. And *Nihon Shoki* records that during the reign of King Suinin, the Ōtomo no Kimi, founding father of the Miwa no Kimi lineage, visited Ame no Hiboko, who had immigrated from the kingdom of Silla on the Korean Peninsula to Shisawa *Mura*. The Miwa no Kimi family is thought to have been active around the sixth century. There is a strong likelihood that the arrival of the Miwa no Kimi in Shisawa *Kōri* predates the Nara Period. So it is not that Iwa no Ōkami *started* to be seen as identical with Ōnamuchi in the Heian Period, but that this has a longer history dating to before the Asuka Period (see Table 3).

Iwa no Ōkami was also called by an alternative name for Ōnamuchi: Ashihara no Shikowo (see Table 4). There is the following tale in the entry for Mikata *Sato*, Shisawa *Kōri*. Ame no Hiboko and Ashihara no Shikowo fought for occupation of the land by tying *kadzura* vines to their legs and kicking them away. Ame no Hiboko’s vines all landed in Tajima Province, so he set off to settle in Izushi in Tajima. This means that Ashihara no Shikowo gained the district of Mikata. This tale is another version of its being the ‘Great God’ who occupied the land. Tales of Iwa no Ōkami or Ashihara no Shikowo competing against Ame no Hiboko for occupation of the land are scattered throughout the Ibo River catchment area. It was noted above that Ōnamuchi and Iwa no Ōkami were the same deity, and it can be taken that in Harima Ashihara no Shikowo and Iwa no Ōkami were also regarded as identical.

### The deities of Harima Province

By assuming that Ōnamuchi and Ashihara no Shikowo were one and the same as Iwa no Ōkami in Harima, it means that the sources relating to Iwa no Ōkami’s occupancy of the land increase. There is a record that a deity called ‘Ōmononushi Ashihara no Shikowo’ occupied the land in Minagi *Kōri* on the eastern edge of Harima. This name links to an alternative name for Ōnamuchi, and it clarifies that occupation of the land was closely related to the making of the land. Occupation of the land by Iwa no Ōkami did not simply stop at western Harima but extended widely across the province.

The sections on Akashi *Kōri* and Akaho *Kōri* are missing from the extant *Harima Fudoki* manuscript, but what is thought to be a passage quoted from the Akashi *Kōri* section remains in other historical documents, and in that it says that Nihotsuhime of Akashi *Kōri* was ‘the daughter of the Great Deity [Deities?] who formed the land’ (*Shaku Nihongi*, 11). The commonly accepted theory is that this ‘Great Deity/Deities’ refers to Izanagi and Izanami, the first deities to make the land of Japan. But as we have seen above, the land-making deity in Harima was Iwa no Ōkami, and we should understand this passage in that context. There is an Iwatsuhime [‘Maiden of Iwa’] Shrine in Akashi *Kōri*, dedicated to Iwa no Ōkami. We should take it that the ‘Great Deity who formed the land’ refers here to Iwa no Ōkami.

There is still an Iwatsuhime Shrine not only in Akashi *Kōri* but also in Akaho *Kōri* (present-day Misaki, Akō-shi). Furthermore, the lineage of deities in which many of the deities of *kōri* and *sato* districts are subordinated as his wives and children, were centred on western Harima. The sphere of belief in Iwa no Ōkami truly covered the whole of Harima Province.

How far back was the period when Iwa no Ōkami was worshipped as the highest deity in Harima? *Harima Fudoki* does not indicate this, but we can gain an inkling by noting the tales of Ame no Hiboko, who was Iwa no Ōkami’s opponent in competing for occupation of this area. We saw earlier that Ame no Hiboko is thought to have come from Silla, and as the place he was enshrined is at Izushi in Tajima, he was essentially a deity of Tajima Province. Apart from in Harima and Tajima, tales about him also appear in Awaji Island. The most powerful family who started exerting their authority throughout these areas in the fifth century was the Katsuragi. The tales of Ame no Hiboko in Harima have points in common with the dispersal of the Katsuragi family. Judging by the fact that the Katsuragi declined in power in the early fifth century, being suppressed by the Yamato kings, it is hard to think that the Ame no Hiboko tales, that were so closely connected with the Katsuragi family, could have been later than that, even at the commencement of their power. In other words, the period when the basic bones of the Iwa no Ōkami myths were produced must also be the latter half of the fifth century at the latest, when the Katsuragi were in decline. This also goes to show that when we read *Harima Fudoki*, which was

written down at the beginning of the Nara Period, it is essential for us to undertake the task of digging out the layers of its myths and tales, just like excavating the strata in the earth.

**Table 1. Entries related to 'Iwa no Ōkami'**

No.	<i>Kōri</i>	<i>Sato</i>	Content
1	Shikama	<i>Aga Sato</i>	His children are there
2	Ihibo	<i>Kaguyama Sato</i>	Touring around to occupy the land
3		<i>Kaguyama Sato Atsu Mura</i>	Touring around
4		<i>Hayashita Sato</i>	Plants a tree to signify occupying the land
5		<i>Hayashita Sato Iseno</i>	His children are there
6		<i>Ihibo Sato Minashi River</i>	His children are there
7	Shisawa	<i>Shisawa Kōri</i>	Making the land
8		<i>Anashi Sato</i>	Woos a female deity
9		<i>Ishitsukuri Sato Awakayama</i>	His wife/younger sister is there
10		<i>Ishitsukuri Sato Haka Mura</i>	Touring around to occupy the land
11	Kamusaki	<i>Kamusaki Kōri</i>	His child is there
12		<i>Tada Sato Nuka Hill</i>	Battles with Ame no Hiboko
13	Taka	<i>Kuroda Sato</i>	His wife arrives here

**Table 2. Entries related to 'Ōkami'**

No.	<i>Kōri</i>	<i>Sato</i>	Content
1	Sayo	Sayo <i>Kōri</i>	Occupies the land with his younger sister
2		Sayo <i>Sato</i> Yegawa	Drops his bead(s)
3		Kashihara <i>Sato</i> Uhetō	Arrives from Izumo, sets up his fish trap
4		Uno <i>Sato</i>	His offspring are there
5	Shisawa	Hiji <i>Sato</i> Hiramī <i>Mura</i>	Drops his scarf/sash here
6		Hiji <i>Sato</i> Niwato <i>Mura</i>	His dried rice turns mouldy
7		Hiji <i>Sato</i> Inatsuki Ridge	He hulls rice here
8		Anashi <i>Sato</i>	He dines here
9		Ishitsukuri <i>Sato</i> Ikama River	Touring around to occupy the land
10		Uruka <i>Sato</i>	His wife is here
11		Mikata <i>Sato</i>	Occupies the land with his staff
12		(Ishitsukuri <i>Sato</i> ) Iwa <i>Mura</i>	He brews <i>sake</i> here. Completes making the land

**Table 3. Entries about Ōnamuchi**

No.	<i>Kōri</i>	<i>Sato</i>	Content
1	Shikama	Iwa <i>Sato</i> Fourteen hills	His child and wife are there
2*	Ihibo	Hirano <i>Sato</i> Hako Hill	Proposes marriage to deity of Himeji Hill * Recorded as Ōnamuchi-Sukunahikone
3		Koshibe <i>Sato</i> Mihashiyama	Piles up rice sacks to make a ladder
4		Hayashida <i>Sato</i> Inadaneyama	Piles up rice grain with Sukunahikone
5	Kamusaki	Hanioka <i>Sato</i>	Competes against Sukunahikone
6	Kamo	Shimokamo <i>Sato</i> Usui Valley, Mi Valley, Sakaya Valley	Threshes rice, winnows it, and brews <i>sake</i>
7		Narahara <i>Sato</i> Ihimoritake	Piles up boiled rice
8		Narahara <i>Sato</i> Nuka Hill	Rice bran flies over from Shimokamo <i>Sato</i>

**Table 4. Entires about Ashihara no Shikowo**

No.	<i>Kōri</i>	<i>Sato</i>	Content
1	Ihibo	Ihibo <i>Sato</i>	Occupies the land with Ame no Hiboko
2	Shisawa	Hiji <i>Sato</i> Uhara Village	Occupies the land
3		Hiji <i>Sato</i> Ubai Valley	Tug o' war against Ame no Hiboko for the valley
4		Kashiwano <i>Sato</i> Inaka River	Occupies the land with Ame no Hiboko
5		Mikata <i>Sato</i>	Competes against Ame no Hiboko to kick vines
6*	Minagi	Shijimi <i>Sato</i>	Forms the land * Recorded as Ōmononushi Ashihara no Shikowo