

King Keitai and Harima

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An unusual king

‘Emperor Keitai’ is said to be King Ōto who acceded to the kingship around the end of the fifth century or start of the sixth. Keitai’s accession was unusual. Above all, with the single exception of Chūai who was said to be the son of Yamato Takeru, kings until then were placed as the sons of a previous king. However, Keitai was said to be a fifth generation descendant of King Ōjin, i.e., his three-times-great-grandson. There is no other example of anyone acceding to the kingship with such a distant blood relationship to the king, even in later history. Moreover, it is narrated that the place of his upbringing was Echizen and Ōmi provinces, far distant from the seat of the Yamato kings at the time. His father, Hikoushi no Kimi, was from Ōmi, and his mother, Furihime, from Echizen; *Kojiki* has him coming to Yamato from Ōmi, and *Nihon Shoki* from the three provinces of Echizen (present-day Fukui Prefecture). Either way, so far as we know, no other kings acceded from any areas other than the political stronghold in and around Nara and Ōsaka.

Harima Fudoki contains no particularly special traces of King Keitai. However, if the tales are read carefully, we realise that his accession greatly affected the province of Harima.

The tale of Hoakari no mikoto

There is a tale in *Harima Fudoki* about the deity called Hoakari no mikoto (Iwa Sato, Shikama Kōri). Hoakari was a son of Ōnamuchi and behaved quite delinquently, so when Ōnamuchi moored his boat on the sacred hill of Idate and sent Hoakari to fetch fresh water, he pushed off in his boat and fled from him. Hoakari was so enraged that he conjured up a storm and caused his father’s boat to capsize. Thereupon, the upturned boat and the implements within it turned into the fourteen hills of Iwa Sato (see Photograph 1). Ōnamuchi complained, “I tried to get away from my violent son, but instead I ended up suffering!”, and that is said to be the origin of the place names Ikashio [‘Raging Current’] and Kurushimi [‘Suffering’] Ferry. The name Ikashio is said to be the origin of both Okishio (Yumesaki-chō, Himeji-shi) and of *mikashio*, the *makura kotoba* [pillow word, epithet] for Harima. The latter is thought to refer to the strength of the tidal current. The ferry suggests a harbour, so it is very likely that the place name refers to the coastal strip of Shikama called Shikama Tsu (Shikama Bay).

The likening of the present day hills of the Himeji Plain to a boat and various other objects makes a magnificent plain name origin myth, and it is also an explanation for the origin of the port of Shikama which was formerly strategic for transportation in western Harima, but Hoakari was not originally a Harima deity. He was an ‘exotic’ deity from Owari and Minō provinces.

Harima and families descended from Hoakari

In *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, Hoakari is called Ame no Hoakari no mikoto, and is the elder brother of Ninigi no mikoto, who descended from the heavens to the peak of Mt. Takachiho.¹ He seems to be a deity closely associated with the Yamato polity, but on the other hand, the families that claimed descent from him were mostly *gōzoku* [prominent local families] in Owari and Minō provinces, such as the Owari and Ishitsukuri. That is why Hoakari is thought to be a deity from that region.

One of the families claiming descent from Hoakari, the Ishitsukuri, were scattered throughout Harima, and there is a theory that this shows that the powerful factions supporting King Keitai extended their influence into Harima. According to *Harima Fudoki* the Ishitsukuri were in Inami Kōri and Shikama Kōri; moreover, there was an Ishitsukuri Sato in Shisawa Kōri and the Ishitsukuri family were there too. It also records that the Owari family were in Shikama Kōri. It was King Keitai who took a young woman from the Owari family as his queen. In *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* Keitai marries Menokohime, the daughter of Owari no Muraji Kusaka. The theory is—taking

¹ Translator’s note: a volcanic peak on the border between Miyazaki and Kagoshima Prefectures, Kyūshū.

the above points into account—that the influence of Owari and Minō who supported Keitai reached into Harima and governed it at the beginning of the sixth century when Keitai acceded to the kingship.

Among the children of Keitai and Menokohime were two who both later acceded to the throne as Kings Ankan and Senka. It was also unusual for the sons of a consort who had come from a local *gōzoku* family to become kings, and this tells just how influential the Owari family was for Keitai.

The Hoakari myth relates that Hoakari made his father suffer by conjuring up a storm. In *Harima Fudoki* Ōnamuchi can be taken to be an alternative name for Iwa no Ōkami (see the chapter ‘What is Iwa no Okami?’). Consequently this myth implies that there was a power struggle in the Shikama district between the Harima powers and the Owari powers. We also see that the Ishitsukuri family had a confrontation with people from Nagaune *Mura* in Kamo *Kōri* and killed them, likewise in Shikama *Kōri*. We learn from the above that arrival of Keitai’s supporters in Harima was by no means peaceful, and that there was heated conflict among the regional powers.

The entry in Shisawa *Kōri* in *Harima Fudoki* that says that Ishitsukuri *Sato* was named after the Ishitsukuri family who lived there is also noteworthy. That is because it says that this place was originally called Iwa: we can surely read this as meaning that the Ishitsukuri settled in this area that worshipped Iwa no Ōkami. Belief in local deities and political control were inextricably linked in ancient Japanese society, so it was doubtless a huge problem for the people of Harima that the Ishitsukuri family established a power base in the territory of Iwa.

The tales of Okinaga Tarashihime

Tales indicating the existence of a power base that supported King Keitai in *Harima Fudoki* include the tales of Okinaga Tarashihime. Okinaga Tarashihime (also known as Queen-Consort Jingū) is the legendary personage who is said to have made a punitive expedition to Silla on the Korean Peninsula. There are several entries in *Harima Fudoki* concerning her coming and going on her ‘Karakuni’ [‘continental’] expedition.

Okinaga was a place name in Sakata *Kōri*, Ōmi Province (the area around present-day Maibara-shi, Shiga Prefecture), and there was an extended family there called Okinaga. Among the wives and concubines of Keitai there is one called Omi no Iratsume from the Okinaga family. The stories about Okinaga Tarashihime in *Harima Fudoki* are also closely related to Hoakari and the families that claimed descent from him. The deity Idate, said to have been the protector of Okinaga Tarashihime’s voyage, was enshrined in Idate *Sato*—which contained Kamiyama, from which Hoakari set out to fetch water. And in the entry for Ōkuni *Sato*, Inami *Kōri*, it says that when Okinaga Tarashihime returned to Yamato, she took with her Ishitsukuri no Muraji Ōku.

It was Okinaga no mikoto (also known as Ōnaka no Ishiji) who acted as guide to Ōtarashihiko (King Keikō) when he wooed Inami no Wakiiratsume, who symbolised the local power base of Inami; and he acted as their marriage broker. Okinaga no mikoto is said to be the founding father of the Yama no Atai family of Kamo *Kōri*. It is evident from all of the above that the Okinaga family’s influence had penetrated deeply into Harima’s local society. The Okinaga Tarashihime tales in *Harima Fudoki* are inextricably linked with Keitai’s support base, and are stories that depict their incursion into Harima.

According to the entry for Harihara *Sato*, Ihibo *Kōri*, Okinaga Tarashihime dropped anchor here on her way home from her continental expedition. A bush clover shrub grew one *jō* (about 3 metres) in just one night, so this place was called Harihara [‘Bush Clover Field’]. They dug a well and called it Harima Well (see Photograph 2). The extraordinary growth of plants indicated a person’s supernatural power, and Harima Well gave its name to Harima Province. The existence of a well with the same name as the province indicates that the person who named it had authority over the whole of Harima. It also says that there were young women who threshed or pounded the rice here and who served the deity Sukuna Tarashi no mikoto. However, the serving men of Okinaga Tarashihime violated them. This also tells that rejection [or violent suppression] of local deities accompanied the arrival of Okinaga Tarashihime, in other words of Keitai supporters, as Harima’s ruling authorities.

This sort of rule over Harima by extraneous forces probably did not begin during the reign of King Keitai. The many tours of the province that we see in *Harima Fudoki* by King Homuda also indicate rule over Harima by Yamato kings (see ‘Tales of Provincial Tours by King Ōjin in *Harima Fudoki*’); and the tales of strife between Iwa no Ōkami and Ame no Hiboko for occupation of territory centred on the Ibo River valley can also be interpreted as reflecting conflict between the

rulers of Tajima and Harima. Through interpreting the tales of deities and humans that are recorded in *Fudoki*, we can learn something of the conflict between the people of Harima and the powers of other regions, especially those of the Yamato polity, that took place in Harima over a long period of time.