

## Evidence of subjugation gleaned from the origin of place names: The tale of Kisumino, Kamo Kōri

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### Stories about migration, land reclamation, and occupation of the land

There are more than thirty stories in *Harima no Kuni Fudoki* about new settlement, land reclamation, and occupation of the land by various groups who are thought to have been dispatched from the central government in Yamato, and who included people from the political centre, the provinces and migrants from overseas. Historically speaking, the most numerous are recorded as being during the reign of King Ōjin, but quite a few are in the reigns of Nintoku, Jomei and Kōtoku. The dating of many of these is unreliable; but it is likely that the underlying transition of the control of Harima to the Yamato Court of the 5th–7th centuries is condensed into these stories. In regard to the takeover there are several magical acts and rituals that visibly confirmed that subjugation.

### Tribute of foodstuffs, girls and ritual objects

Based on research and analysis of the entries in *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, we know that as part of the rituals, there was the offering of foodstuffs by subjugated locally powerful families (*gōzoku*) and their consumption by the king; the daughters of those local nobles were sent to the Court as proof of the family's submission (known at Court as *uneme*); and that the king had the right to sleep with these young women (*tomone*) on the nights of palace banquets. As further signs of submission, there were ceremonies for hanging the ritual objects such as mirrors, swords and jewels that were possessed by the *gōzoku*'s own local deities, in the branches of sacred *sakaki* trees; and for appropriating these in order to enshrine them in the ships of the Yamato fleet. This represented the subjugation of the tutelary deities of the *gōzoku* through tribute of their ritual objects to the Court.

### Reporting the *kunigata* (the lie of the land) to the Court

According to *Harima Fudoki*, there was yet another, different, form of subjugation ritual. In the entry for Kisumino in Narahara Sato, Kamo Kōri, it says: 'It is so called because when the Ōtomo no muraji [family] petitioned for these lands in the reign of King Homuda, he summoned Kuni no miyatsuko Kurodawake and questioned him about the topography. On that occasion, he replied, "It is like an embroidered silk garment which has been stored in the bottom of a chest." Hence it is called Kisumino.'

In other words, according to this, in the reign of King Ōjin (Homuda), the Ōtomo no muraji family petitioned the King for ownership of Kisumino, which is thought to have been located in the vicinity of present-day Kishi-chō in Ono-shi [Hyōgo Prefecture]. So the King summoned the local ruling nobleman (*kuni no miyatsuko*) called Kurodawake and interrogated him about its landscape. He replied to the effect that "That land is as excellent as a robe that has been stored away in a wooden chest. It is written that that was the reason why it was called Kisumino".

From the fact that Kurodawake was 'summoned', we can infer that Kurodawake belonged to the local *gōzoku* who had previously ruled this area. The act of asking such a person about the *kunigata*—the lie of the land—was not simply a request for information about the land: it implied the confirmation of whether or not he submitted to Yamato rule. The act of responding to that question in itself indicated that he submitted to his interlocutor and surrendered his land to him. What this means is that in ancient Japanese local society, there was a ritual in which one indicated one's subjugation by disclosing the state of one's land to a new ruler or authority sent by the King.

Later, in the district from Kishi-chō to Shimoōbe-chō in Ono-shi, there was a *shōen* (manor) held by the Tōdaiji temple in Nara, called 'Ōtomobe Manor' (or Ōbe Manor).<sup>1</sup> It is thought

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: founded 1147.

to have been named after the Ōtomo family, in which case the dating of it to the reign of Ōjin is dubious, but it is indeed quite possible that it was the Ōtomo family who became the new owners of Kisumino after the disclosure of the *kunigata*/lie of the land. There is scope here for deepening our understanding of the significance of stories about *kunigata*.

### Myths of praise for *kunigata*/the lie of the land

In *Izumo Fudoki* we do not see the disclosure as such of the topography, but instead myths about deities praising it. For example, ‘Kunioshiwake, a son of the deity Susanoo, declared, “The [lie of the] land (*kunigata*) that I occupy is excellent.” Hence it was called Katae.’ (Katae Sato, Shimane *Kōri*); or ‘When Iwasakaiko, a son of the deity Susanoo, travelled around the country, he reached here and declared, “This district looks very youthful and perfectly beautiful. The landscape (*kunigata*) looks like a decorated armguard (*etomo*). Build me a shrine and worship me here!” Hence it was called Etomo.’ (Etomo Sato, Aika *Kōri*).

The word *kunigata* does not appear in all such entries but there are many similar. For example, ‘The Great Deity who made all under heaven declared he had made this land neatly (*tashi*). Hence he gave it the name Tashi.’ (Tashimi Sato, Shimane *Kōri*); and ‘When Tsukikinetooyoruhiko, a son of the deity Susanoo, travelled around the country, he arrived here and declared, “My heart has been refreshed and purified (*tadashiku*). I shall stay here quietly [enshrined] forever!” Hence it was called Tada.’ (Tada Sato, Aika *Kōri*).

In all such myths, a local deity praises the landscape (*kunigata*) with a forced pun, which is claimed to be the origin of the place name. The place names ‘Katae’, ‘Etomo’, ‘Tashimi’, ‘Tada’ and so on no doubt existed previously, and the myths surrounding their origins, such as those above, would have been fabricated later, predicated upon those names.

It can be seen that in the case of the landscape of Kisumino above, there was likewise a laudatory myth of this sort to explain the place name Kisumino prior to the summoning of Kurodawake, irrespective of the actual beauty or otherwise of the landscape in question. Kurodawake would have said something like “It is like an embroidered silk garment which has been stored in the bottom of a chest. That is why it is called Kisumino,” as a mark of his offering it as tribute. That is to say, the disclosure to the central authorities of the state of the landscape (*kunigata*) was by means of describing what it was like through a place name origin myth that praised it. In the local society of the time there were opportunities such as on the occasion of the land-viewing ritual (*kunimi*) for the shrine priests and shamanesses who conducted ceremonies to narrate and pass on such myths to the local inhabitants.

### Place names to which ‘pillow words’ (*makura-kotoba*) were attached

Apart from cases such as those above, we find many rather long place names that are embellished with *makura-kotoba*, so called ‘pillow words’<sup>2</sup> in the various *Fudoki* texts. In *Hitachi Fudoki*, for example, there is ‘*Koromosode Hitachi no kuni*’: ‘The land of Hitachi, of the kimono sleeves’<sup>3</sup> (Preface), which is cited by such explanations as a ‘customary phrase’ or ‘local term’. Likewise, Tsukuba *Kōri* is dubbed ‘*Nigiri-ii Tsukuba no kuni*’: ‘The land of Tsukuba, of the rice balls’;<sup>4</sup> and there is ‘*Komomakura Taka no Kuni*’: ‘The land of Taka, of the straw pillow.’<sup>5</sup> In *Izumo Fudoki* (Kutami Sato, Tatenui *Kōri*), there is ‘*Hayasame Kutami no yama*’: ‘Mt. Kutami, of the

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<sup>2</sup> Translator’s note: an epithet, in the form of set phrases of usually five syllables that ‘pad out’ and adjectively qualify a given word.

<sup>3</sup> Translator’s note: this is elaborate word play alluding to the word *hitachi* meaning ‘drenched’, the provincial name, and the reality that much of its area at the time was marshy. The ‘drenching’ of kimono sleeves with tears was a common trope for parting with loved ones.

<sup>4</sup> Translator’s note: the significance of ‘rice balls’ as a pillow word for Tsukuba is not entirely clear. Possibly a pun on the *tsuku* of Tsukuba and *tsuku* meaning ‘to stick’, as in the way grains of rice stick to the hand when eating *o-nigiri* rice balls. (Nakada Norio et al. (ed.), *Kogo Dai Jiten*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1983, p. 1252.)

<sup>5</sup> Translator’s note: A pillow made of bundled straw. It implied travel lodging or lodging near the waterside. It was higher than a usual pillow, and so connoted height/*taka*—the place name in question here. (Nakada Norio et al. (ed.), *Kogo Dai Jiten*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1983, p. 654.)

storms.<sup>6</sup> In *Hizen Fudoki* (Yabu Kōri), there is ‘*Inu no koe yamu no kuni*’: ‘The land that stops the dogs from barking.’<sup>7</sup> As in the previous examples, most involve plays on words.

According to the scholar of Japanese classics, Yutaka TSUCHIHASHI [1909–1998], the meaning of many *makura-kotoba* is unknown, and it is hard to fathom why many were applied to place names. But he assumed that the application of *makura-kotoba* to place names was intended to praise that name and that place. For example, in the case of ‘*Nigiri-ii, Tsukuba no kuni*’ above, *nigiri-ii* combines or hybridises with the *tsuku* of Tsukuba, such that on ritual occasions it conveyed the multiple meanings of a land that offers oblations of rice balls to the gods, and of a [fertile] land that piles them high, and also of a land where rice [is so plentiful that it] sticks to one’s fingers. In all of these cases, by means of embellishment with the *makura-kotoba nigiri-ii*, the meaning of the place name’s origin is explained along with the abundance of the land of Tsukuba being eulogised.

In this way we can understand naming of places with *makura-kotoba* attached as a kind of toponomastic tale that praises the land in question, just like the stories in which a deity praises the landscape (*kunigata*) of a given place. It is likely that by narrating such tales as these too at festivals they went on to be passed down as local ‘customary phrases.’ This means that place names and their origin stories were very precious to people in ancient Japan. That they interpreted them as auspicious was connected to their love of their land; and as such they considered them as something that could [magically] decide their future, for better or for worse.

### **The disclosure of place names that were described by *makura-kotoba***

Disclosure of a place name that was qualified by a *makura-kotoba* to an official who had been sent by the Yamato Court signified submission to him. According to the Shintō document *Yamatohime no mikoto Seiki* belonging to Ise Grand Shrine, which dates from the Kamakura Period and is said to contain tales transmitted from ancient times: there is a story that when Yamatohime, who enshrined the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, first entered Ise, all the various local powerful families (*gōzoku*) went out to meet her and responded to her with the names of their lands, and also presented her with them. It was on that occasion that the name of the district (*kuni*) was embellished with a *makura-kotoba*.

For example, it records: ‘She asked, “What is the name of my land?” (Kuni no miyatsuko Tatehikata no mikoto) said, “It is called the land of Ise, of the divine wind [*Kamikaze no Ise no kuni*].”’ ‘She asked Otokazuchi, a descendant of the Agata no miyatsuko of Iitaka, “What is the name of my land?” He said it was called *Osuhi no Iitaka no kuni* [The land of Iitaka, of the women’s jacket],<sup>8</sup> and presented her with shrine rice fields along with *kanbe* shrine workers.’ ‘She shifted to Ise no miya [the seashore shrine], where she remained. She asked Ōwakugo, “What is the name of my land here?” He said it was *Momo fune no Watarai no kuni* [the land of Watarai, of one hundred boats] and *Tama hirou Ise no kuni* [the land of Ise, where gemstones may be picked up], and offered to establish salt-fields and forests for her there.’

The addition of *makura-kotoba* such as *osuhi*, *momo fune no watarai*, *tama hirou iso* and so on eulogised that land and also became intrinsic to the respective place name origin stories. Revelation of these to outsiders signified surrender and loyalty to them. Vice versa, those who learnt that name were considered to be its new rulers.

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<sup>6</sup> Translator’s note: *Hayasame* means a squall or sudden downpour accompanied by strong winds. They dampen everything and cause things to go mouldy or rot. Thus, as a pillow word, it plays on *kutasu* (v.t., to rot) and *futami* (“two views?”). Here, *Kutami* being a combination of both, *hayasame* is applied through thought association. (Nakada Norio et al. (ed.), *Kogo Dai Jiten*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1983, p. 1355.)

<sup>7</sup> Translator’s note: the *Hizen Fudoki* text itself goes on to explain that *yabu* is local dialect for *yamu* ‘to cease’; i.e., the place name origin explanation is a play on words.

<sup>8</sup> Translator’s note: *Osuhi*, a women’s jacket; thought to be depicted in *haniwa*, and to have been worn by shamanesses at rituals (Nakada Norio et al. (ed.), *Kogo Dai Jiten*, Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1983, p. 265.)

### **The order for the compilation and presentation of *fudoki***

In ancient Japan, to learn or know the origins, pedigree, or beginnings of things and people was not simply a question of gaining knowledge. As the Old Japanese word *shirasu* indicates, it contained the meaning of controlling the things and people that were newly learnt about. The rituals of subjugation that we saw above were based on such ways of thinking.

All the provinces of Japan were obligated by an official order in 713 CE to present so-called *fudoki* to the central government. Myths were collected in each of the *fudoki* that formed the origins of all the various place names, as outlined above. The *ritusuryō* state aimed nationally to appropriate these place name origins and the tales that celebrated them, by means of this order; and thereby to strengthen the submission and loyalty of all the people of the provinces to the Yamato king.