

The Circumstances of the Legend of Oke and Woke: a comparative reading of *Kojiki*, *Nihon Shoki* and *Fudoki*

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The legend of Oke and Woke

The story of how the brothers King Kensō¹ (Prince Woke) and King Ninken (Prince Oke) acceded to the Yamato kingship is well known through *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. Their father, Prince Ichibe no Oshiha, a son of King Richū, was assassinated, and they fled to Shijimi in Harima (present-day Shijimi, Miki-shi). Although they remained there *incognito*, eventually they were discovered and placed on the throne. It is noted that the brothers demurred to each other over the accession, and that the younger brother acceded first as King Kensō.

This series of tales appears not only in *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, but also in *Harima Fudoki*, so they are excellent material for learning how each of these texts approached the motifs they had in common and for what purpose, and on what sources they might have relied (see Table). There is a persistent negative view that the story of Princes Oke and Woke cannot be deemed historically reliable since it is so dramatic. In the following discussion I should like to narrow down what is fabricated and what is historical truth by examining the points in common and the points of difference among the three texts.

The *Nihon Shoki* version

To start with, let us look at the story of Oke and Woke in *Nihon Shoki*. King Yūryaku invites Prince Ichibe no Oshiha to Kutawatano, a moor in Ōmi Province, and assassinates him. The steward who accompanies the prince, Saekibe no Urawa (also known as Nakachiko) is murdered along with him, but Oke and Woke are rescued by Kusakabe no Muraji Omi, and they all flee. At first the pair go to Yosa *Kōri* in Tango Province, and then they move to Shijimi in Harima, where they enter into the service of Hosome, of the Oshinumibe no Miyatsuko *gōzoku* (local prominent family). After Yūryaku's death, they are discovered by Iyo no Kumebe no Odate, the Provincial Governor of Harima;² they are instated, and accede to the kingship in turn, with the younger brother reigning first.

A large number of individuals appear in the *Nihon Shoki* version, and their roles are all clarified. A character called Kara Fukuro from Ōmi Province sets up the opportunity for killing Prince Ichibe no Oshiha, and after the event he is enslaved to the Yamabe no Muraji. Yamato Fukuro, on the other hand, the elder brother of one Okime who finds the remains of Prince Ichibe no Oshiha, is awarded the name and title of Sasakiyama no Kimi for such meritorious service. Odate is made Yamabe no Muraji and appointed as 'Yama no Tsukasa'.³

The *Nihon Shoki* version of the Oke and Woke tale, then, is basically told as a 'story of meritorious deeds' on the part of the Sasakiyama no Kimi and Yamabe no Muraji families. Other families are also depicted in detail. The descendants of Nakachiko are awarded the position and title (*kabane*) of Saeki no Miyatsuko. Kusakabe no Muraji Omi commits suicide, but *Nihon Shoki* makes special mention that his son Atahiko serves the two princes devotedly. The *Nihon Shoki* tale is composed, then, from the standpoint of the families who were proud of having served Princes Ichibe no Oshiha, Oke and Woke.

The *Kojiki* version

The entry about Oke and Woke is much shorter in *Kojiki* than in *Nihon Shoki*, and it is basically written from the standpoint of the service to the King of the Sasakiyama no Kimi and the

1 Translator's note: Often transcribed as Kenzō, but recent recent prefers Kensō.

2 Translator's note: *kokushi*, i.e., the administrator appointed by the Yamato Court.

3 Translator's note: *Yama no tsukasa*, i.e., superintendent of forests.

Yamabe no Atai families. There is no mention of Tango in *Kojiki*, and reference to Harima is brief. We can see that *Kojiki* paid less attention to society in the provinces.

On the other hand, *Kojiki* includes a story about an old swineherd, Ikai, of Yamashiro Province. He obstructs the flight of Oke and Woke, for which he is later put to death and his whole family are hamstrung. On account of that, whenever the descendants of the swineherd go up to Yamato, they 'limp' (*ashinae*). Here this means that they proceed on bended knees, as a sign of their subservience. In other words, this incident is related as though the origin of ritual subservience on the part of the swineherd family of Yamashiro towards to the king lay in their persecution of Oke and Woke. From this we can see that the legend of Oke and Woke in *Kojiki*—unlike that in *Nihon Shoki*—is written from the viewpoint of the Yamato Court.

Another characteristic of the *Kojiki* version is that it is set *after* the death of Seinei, when Ichibe Oshiha's younger sister Oshinumi no Iratsume (also known as Ido no Himemiko) is regent during the interregnum, whereas *Nihon Shoki* sets the discovery of Oke and Woke *during* Seinei's reign. *Kojiki* says, 'After King Seinei died, there was no king to rule the land. Upon searching for a successor, Oshinumi no Iratsume was found to be living at the palace of Oshinumi no Takaki no Tsunusashi in Katsuragi (and so she was made regent).' Then when she heard that Oke and Woke had been discovered alive, she was delighted and welcomed them to the palace. In *Kojiki* the story of the discovery of Oke and Woke takes place at Oshinumi no Iratsume's palace, the palace of Takaki no Tsunusashi.

The Harima no Kuni Fudoki version

The main focus of the story in *Harima Fudoki* is on what happened to the two princes after they took refuge at Shijimi. But as a preamble it also relates the assassination of Prince Ichibe Oshiwake and the help from the family of Kusakabe no Muraji Omi, so we can surmise that parts of this were based on the same sources as *Nihon Shoki*. It likewise tells that it was Odate who discovered the two princes, so the development of the tale is essentially the same as in *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. Because of this, there is a theory that there is little or no originality in the Oke/Woke story in *Harima Fudoki*.

However, whereas *Nihon Shoki* describes the local powerful family of Shijimi who took in the two princes as Oshimibe no Miyatsuko Hosome, with his name and title in full, *Harima Fudoki* calls him simply 'the Headman [*obito*] of Shijimi village, Itomi'. It also describes Odate's official position from a more local viewpoint, as 'the superintendent of forestry in Harima'. Furthermore, if we suppose *Harima Fudoki* to have been based on central government records, there are some unlikely errors, such as that it records Tashiraka, who was actually Prince Oke's daughter, as the mother of the two princes. And then, at the end of the story, after the pair have gone back to the capital, they return again to the Shijimi district, where they build detached palaces at Takano, Ono, Kawamura and Ikeno, and make these their country seats. And it says that they seek marriage with Nehime, the daughter of Kuni no Miyatsuko Koma in Kamo *Kōri* (Tamano *Mura*, Narahara *Sato*). The names of these palaces do not appear in *Nihon Shoki*, so we should perhaps take it that this was based on information especially gathered for the compilation of *Harima Fudoki*. In short, the story of Oke and Woke as passed down in Harima develops in a different and more original way than the versions that appear in either *Kojiki* or *Nihon Shoki*.

Transport links as depicted in the story

So who was it who passed on the legend of Oke and Woke in the Shijimi district? The most obvious answer is the Kusakabe family. *Harima Fudoki* includes a tale of King Richū visiting Shijimi *Sato*. The 'Ōe' of Richū's name Ōe no Izahowake was part of a place name in Kusakabe *Sato*, Kawachi *Kōri*, Kawachi Province (present-day Kusakabe, Higashi Ōsaka-shi, Ōsaka-fu). Moreover, the Kusakabe family were present in Yosa *Kōri* in Tango Province (*Tango no Kuni Fudoki Itsibun*), where *Nihon Shoki* records that the two princes fled at first. The relationship between Oke/Woke and the Kusakabe continued that of the master-servant relationship between Richū and his descendants and the Kusakabe family, so there is a strong likelihood that the legend was passed down through the Kusakabe's Tango–Harima network (see Fig. 1).

Another possibility is that of a relationship between Shijimi and the palace of Oshinumi no Iratsume. The name Oshinumibe no Miyatsuko Hosome appears in *Nihon Shoki*, and people who served in the palace of Oshinumibe no Iratsume were settled in Shijimi, as is indicated by the place name of Oshibe-tani [valley] on the route between Akashi *Kōri* and Minagi *Kōri*. A relationship between Shijimi and the Oshinumi has also been confirmed by archaeological

evidence, such as that iron nails thought to have been manufactured by the Oshinumi were excavated from Iwaya 1-gō-fun (burial mound) in Shijimi (see Fig. 2). The Oke/Woke legend was no doubt taken to the Shijimi district by such complex routes.

It is recorded in *Nihon Shoki* that in the late fifth century King Yūryaku abducted Wakahime from Kamitsumichi no Omi Tasa of Kibi, and that after the death of Yūryaku, she and her son Prince Hoshikawa incited a rebellion that was suppressed; Kamitsumichi no Omi was also punished and he was deprived of his control over the Yamabe. It is highly probable that some of Kamitsumichi no Omi's Yamabe were sent to Harima.

Harima was the site of confrontation between the powers of Kibi and the Yamato kings, and the placing of the Oshinumibe in Shijimi implies the strengthening of control by Yamato. As well as indicating violent conflict among members of the king's family in the late fifth century, the legend of Oke and Woke arose and was passed on through the process of the Yamato kings overwhelming regional powers.

Comparison of the Oke/Woke Legends

Region	Elements in common	<i>Kojiki</i>	<i>Nihon Shoki</i>	<i>Harima Fudoki</i>
Ōmi	Assassination of Prince Ichibe Oshiha.	Recruitment of Sasakiyama no Kimi Kara Fukuro.	Recruitment of Sasakiyama no Kimi Kara Fukuro. The loyalty of Saekibe no Urawa.	Assassination only.
	The flight of Oke and Woke.	Intervention by an old man, Yamashiro no Ikai.	--	--
		--	The loyalty of Kusakabe no Muraji Omi and his son Atahiko. Omi's suicide between Tanba and Harima.	Kusakabe no Muraji Omi's loyalty and suicide by hanging
Harima	Oke and Woke in hiding	In service at Shijimi.	The loyalty of Atahiko. In service to the head of the grain store at Shijimi <i>Miyake</i> , Oshinumibe no Miyatsuko Hosome	In service to Itomi, the Shijimi village headman.
	The discovery of Oke and Woke	Identified by Yamabe no Odate at celebrations for a new grain store. The rejoicing of Oshinumibe no Iratsume.	The rejoicing of King Seinei (Shiraga no Kimi) thanks to Yamabe no Odate at celebrations for a new grain store.	The rejoicing of Tashiraga no mikoto thanks to Odate at celebrations for new grain store.
		--	The location of palaces	Return from Yamato. The location of palaces.
		--	--	Proposal of marriage to Nehime, daughter of Kuni no Miyatsuko Koma.
		Confrontation with Shibi no Omi and his death penalty.	Saekibe's reward	--
Yamato	Search for their father's remains	Okime's good deed and Kara Fukuro's punishment.	Okime's good deed. Kara Fukuro's punishment. Yamato Fukuro's reward.	--
		Execution of the old swineherd Ikai.	Odate's reward.	--
	Destruction of Yūryaku's burial mound	Elder brother Ninken's demurral [of accession to the kingship].	Elder brother Ninken's demurral [of accession to the kingship].	--