

## Functional Affinities Between Ōkuninushi & Daikokuten (Links jump to Kakugakuin University's [Encyclopedia of Shinto](#))

The conflation of [Ōkuninushi](#) 大国主神 with [Daikokuten](#) 大黒天 in Japan's Edo era (1603-1867) was a late and artificial development, one engineered by [Izumo Shrine](#) 出雲大社 (Shimane Prefecture) to piggyback off [Daikokuten's](#) widespread popularity and thereby raise funds for the impoverished shrine. Prior to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, [Ōkuninushi](#) was mostly unknown among clerics and commoners. Why? Because his mythology appeared almost solely in Japan's oldest text, the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Records of Ancient Matters; 712 CE) – and the *Kojiki* lingered in obscurity until its importance was “rediscovered” by [Motoori Norinaga](#) 本居宣長 (1730-1801). [Ōkuninushi](#) also appeared in the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (Chronicles of Japan; 720 CE), but this latter work omitted nearly all of his mythology. In other words, [Ōkuninushi](#) (an Izumo deity) was largely ignored until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, when the priests of [Izumo Shrine](#) began to aggressively conflate him with [Daikokuten](#). Why [Ōkuninushi](#)? It is a relevant question, for [Izumo Shrine's](#) main deity in medieval times was [Susano-o](#) 須佐之男, not [Ōkuninushi](#). In classical Japanese mythology, [Ōkuninushi](#) is one of [Susano-o's](#) descendants and the undisputed leader of the earthly deities. What caused Izumo's clerics to conflate [Ōkuninushi](#) with [Daikokuten](#)? I cannot say with certainty. My guess is that it sprang primarily from [Ōkuninushi's](#) close familial ties with [Ōmononushi](#) 大物主命 (*kami* of Mt. Miwa). [Ōmononushi](#) had been invited to Mt. Hiei in [the 7th or 8th century](#). By the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, he had fused with [Daikokuten](#) (another important Mt. Hiei deity). See [Slide 35](#). In similar fashion, Izumo's 17<sup>th</sup>-century conflation strategy undoubtedly involved preexisting affinities between [Daikokuten](#) and [Ōkuninushi](#), along with some inventive thinking by Izumo authorities. Various affinities (incidental and major) are presented below. For a review of Izumo's successful fusion (confusion) of [Ōkuninushi](#) and [Daikokuten](#), see [Yijang Zhong](#) (2012).

1. INCIDENTAL. The 13<sup>th</sup>-C Japanese text [Chiribukuro](#) 塵袋 (p. 30 online) says Ōkuni 大国 and Daikoku 大黒 can **BOTH** be pronounced **DAIKOKU**. Says Iyanaga Nobumi (email exchange, 2017): “This may represent a possible conflation of the two deities, but it was more likely simple wordplay, without much implication.”
2. INCIDENTAL. Early 14<sup>th</sup>-C. Japanese text [Miwa Daimyōjin Engi](#) 三輪大明神縁起 (p. 29 online) equates the Miwa deity ([Ōmononushi](#)) with Daikokuten. [Ōmononushi](#) is one of [Ōkuninushi's](#) many alternative names. It must be noted that medieval texts rarely used these names or other names found in Japan's classical mythologies. Instead of referring to [Ōmononushi](#), for example, medieval documents most often referred to Miwa Daimyōjin 三輪大明神 or [Sannō Gongen](#) 山王権現. The supreme sun goddess [Amaterasu](#), moreover, was most often rendered in medieval texts as Tenshō Daijin 天照大神. Writes Iyanaga Nobumi (email exchange, 2017): “Today's standard usage of classical names was only established in the Meiji era (1868-1912), although the practice was already common in the Edo era (1603-1867).”
3. INCIDENTAL. Both are associated with snakes. Early images of Mahākāla/Daikokuten (**M/D**) are often adorned with snakes or with M/D standing atop a snake (see [Slide 7](#)). Both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* say the true form of [Ōmononushi](#) (aka [Ōkuninushi](#)) is a snake. See [Kojiki, Book 2, Ch. 66, Philippi, p. 203-204](#).
4. INCIDENTAL. Both are landlord deities. [Ōkuninushi](#) is the original landlord of all Japan, whereas M/D was associated with India's earth goddess (Pṛthivī 地天) in the writings of central-Asian monk Huilín 慧琳 (737-820). See [T.54.2128.366b14-17](#). In the 11<sup>th</sup>-C. Japanese text *Daikoku Tenjin Hō* [\[T.21.1287.0355b13\]](#), Daikokuten is portrayed as a manifestation of the earth deity Kenrō Jiten 堅牢地天. Asks Iyanaga Nobumi (email exchange, 2017): “Was Kenrō Jiten conceived as male or female? Unclear, but the Japanese compiler of this 11<sup>th</sup>-C. text (monk Jingai 神愷) likely considered the deity as male.” In the early 14<sup>th</sup>-C. Japanese text *Keiran Shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集, Daikokuten unequivocally appeared to Saichō 最澄 (767–822; founder, Japan's Tendai school) as an old man [\[T.76.2410.0634b06\]](#). See Slides 35 & 36.
5. INCIDENTAL. Both are associated with the underworld. M/D is a chthonian deity. He was sometimes assimilated to Kālāratri (J = Kokuanten 黑暗天), the consort of King Yama (J = Enma 閻魔), the lord of the underworld, the world of the dead. Moreover, the flesh-eating female [Dākinīs](#) ([Slide 33](#)) are part of M/D's retinue. In the [Womb World Mandala](#), the [Dākinī](#) demonesses are placed close to King Yama. On the other hand, [Ōkuninushi](#) retires to the land of shades (*yūkai* 幽界) -- the invisible realm, the world of the unseen – after ceding the land to the heavenly deities. See [Y. Zhong, pp. 26-27](#) for details on [Ōkuninushi's](#) role in the unseen realm.
6. INCIDENTAL. Both have short-sized assistants. Śiva (aka M/D) is served by dwarf-like sprites known as Gaṇa ([Slide 9](#)), while [Ōkuninushi](#) is assisted in building (taming) the land by a midget deity known as [Sukunahikona](#) 少名毘古那 (aka [Sukunabiko](#) 少名彦), translated as “Little Name Lad.”
7. INCIDENTAL. Both are associated with theft. M/D is lord of those who steal one's vital life essence or one's physical wealth ([Slide 10](#)), while [Ōkuninushi](#) tames the land with the powerful tools he steals from [Susano-o](#) 須佐之男 (i.e., the sword of life, the bow-and-arrow of life, and the heavenly speaking cither).
8. MAJOR. Both carry a big sack. In the *Kojiki*, [Ōkuninushi](#) [carries his brothers' belongings in a sack](#) during their journey to Inaba.
9. MAJOR. Both are associated with rats / mice. M/D's messenger is a rat ([Slides 38-39](#)). In the *Kojiki*, [a mouse saves Ōkuninushi's life](#) (Book 1, Page 35). For English version, see [Kojiki, Book 1, Ch. 23, Philippi, p. 98](#). The “major” affinities mentioned in items #8 and #9 were employed by Edo-era scholars to explain the conflation of the two deities. See, for example, the Japanese text [Kiyū Shōran](#) 嬉遊笑覧 by Kitamuta Nobuyo 喜多村信節 (1783-1856).
10. To borrow from [Faure, p. 267](#): “We never obtain a neat structure à la Lévi Strauss (1908-2009), but an entangled knot that leaves us confused and bewildered. The networks of associations and permutations determine a field of potentialities, within which a precise and composite image becomes fixed.”

### Miwa Daimyōjin Engi Origins of the Great Bright Miwa Deity

Writes scholar [Anna Andreeva](#) (pp. 266-267) about the text [Miwa Daimyōjin Engi](#) 三輪大明神緣起 (Origins of the Great Bright Miwa Deity), dated 1318 CE:

The ninth chapter tells the story of the great patriarch of Japanese Tendai, Saichō 最澄 (767–822), who is faced with the dilemma of finding a powerful deity willing to become the protector of Mt. Hiei. He first asks Katte 勝手 and Komori 子守, the deities of [Yoshino](#), who refuse and advise him to ask the great kami of the north (i.e., to the north of [Yoshino](#)). Saichō then goes to Mt. Miwa and is at last able to procure an agreement with a powerful kami to be installed on Mt. Hiei. Saichō is thus credited with establishing strong and flourishing bonds between the deities of Miwa and the Tendai school. Here, [Miwa Daimyōjin Engi](#) makes a powerful claim regarding the supreme position of the kami of Miwa, whose status must therefore match that of the deities installed in the two shrines at [Ise](#) and of the protective deities of Mt. Hiei. The Engi provides a crucial link between the sacred [sites of Miwa](#) and Hiei by citing the “fact” that Miwa Myōjin manifested itself to Saichō as Daikoku Tenjin 大黒天神 (aka [Daikokuten](#)) while holding a branch of the *ayasugi* 綾杉 tree. More importantly, Daikoku Tenjin was one of the deities revered by the Tendai school, as well as by the Saidai-ji lineage. The remainder of the ninth chapter is dedicated to questions and answers regarding the identity of Daikoku Tenjin, its relation to Miwa Myōjin, and its efficacy in protecting the state and the emperor just as well as [Amaterasu](#). One striking feature of this complicated chapter is a reference to a myth of Hindu origin, namely that of King Kalmāsapāda (Hansoku 班足), who in order to ascend the throne had to kill a thousand kings and present their heads to the god Mahākāla (J = Makakara / Daikokuten). It is understood that Mahākāla—originally a graveyard deity strongly associated with death rites, and by extension with the world of the unseen—is a powerful esoteric figure who came to be venerated in India, China, and Japan, eventually manifesting itself at Miwa. The last sequence of this section asserts that Daikoku Tenjin (a manifestation of Miwa Myōjin) is at least as powerful as [Amaterasu](#) in protecting the rulers of the country. FOOTNOTE 75: Iyanaga mentions Kalmāsapāda’s story in relation to esoteric enthronement rituals ([sokui kanjō](#) 即位灌頂) and draws parallels between Mahākāla’s worship and the veneration of *dākinī* demonesses in medieval Japan ([Iyanaga 2002](#), pp. 139–51; and [Iyanaga 2003](#), pp. 150–52).”

### Quotes from Anna Andreeva’s [The Karmic Origins of the Great Bright Miwa Deity](#), Monumenta Nipponica, Vol. 65, No. 2, 2010, pp. 273-296

- p. 275.** In “The Age of the Gods” section of the [Nihon Shoki](#) it says, “[Ōnamuchi](#) no Mikoto 大己貴命 spoke to Tenshō Kōtaijin 天照皇大神 [[Amaterasu](#)] and said, ‘Now, where do you wish to live?’ She replied, ‘I wish to live on Mt. Miwa in the [Land of Yamato](#) 大和.’” We therefore know that the descent of the Miwa Deity happened in the age of the gods.
- p. 275, footnote 99.** The [Nihon Shoki](#) passage alluded to here actually appears following the account of the creation of the land of [Izumo](#) by [Ōnamuchi](#) and [Sukunabiko](#) 少名彦 (see [Nihon Shoki, Aston 1972, vol. 1, pp. 60–61](#)). [Amaterasu](#) never appears in the original [Nihon Shoki](#) text. [Ōnamuchi](#) asks a mysterious guest where the latter wishes to live. The unknown deity then replies that it wishes to live on Mt. Mimoro 三諸 [aka Mt. Miwa] in [Yamato](#). [Nihon Shoki](#) goes on to explain that this was the origin of the Miwa deity, and gives an account of its lineage. [Note Schumacher: The “mysterious guest” is none other than [Ōnamuchi](#)’s alter ego.]
- pp. 248-249.** Several important deities were enshrined on Mt. Miwa and in its vicinity. The deity [Ōnamuchi](#) no Mikoto 大己貴命, the “Great Name Possessor” (also known as [Ōkuninushi](#) 大国主, the “Great Land Owner”), was hailed by both [Kojiki](#) and [Nihon Shoki](#) as a descendant of [Susano-o](#) 須佐之男 and creator of the land, or the sub-celestial world. In these records [Ōnamuchi](#) often appears accompanied by a dwarf deity, [Sukunabiko](#) 少名彦 (Little Name Lad; aka [Sukunahikona](#) 少名毘古那). Originally the deities of [Izumo](#), these gods were most likely of continental origin. Both [Kojiki](#) and [Nihon Shoki](#) include episodes in which [Ōkuninushi](#) (in [Nihon Shoki](#), [Ōnamuchi](#)) is met by his own spirit arriving from beyond the sea with a request to be enshrined at Mt. Mimoro 三諸 [aka Mt. Miwa] in [Yamato](#), thereby becoming the deity of Ōmiwa (Ōmiwa no kami 大三輪之神). The deities enshrined on Mt. Miwa were associated with an early power center in the southern [Yamato basin](#) and received special treatment from the early [Yamato](#) rulers. For example, official records mention a deity appearing as a mysterious visitor presenting himself to the daughter of a local chieftain, only to reveal his true form as a snake living on Mt. Miwa. This deity, [Ōmononushi](#) 大物主 (Great Spirit Possessor), played a central role at the court of [Emperor Sujin](#) 崇神天皇 & was regarded by the [Yamato](#) kings as protective but fearsome.
- p. 248, footnote 13.** The name [Ōnamuchi](#) was recorded in a [variety of other ways](#): Ōnamuji 大穴牟遲, Ōnamochi 大名持, and Ōnamochi 大穴持. This deity, credited with creation of the land, is also identified by several other names, such as Yachihoko no Kami 八千矛神, [Ashihara](#) no Shikoo 葦原醜男, [Ōmononushi](#), and Ōkunidama no Ōkami 大国魂大神, to list a few.

**Bernard Faure, [Protectors and Predators](#), 2015, pp. 50-51.** As the protector of Mount Hiei, [Daikokuten](#) was identified with [Sannō](#) Gongen 山王権現, that is, the god of Miwa ([Ōkuninushi](#) 大国主), who was also worshiped at Ōmiya 大宮, the western main shrine (Nishi Hongū) of Hie Taisha 日吉大社, located at the foot of Mount Hiei. The fusion (or confusion) of [Daikokuten](#) with [Ōkuninushi](#) is traditionally attributed to a scribal error committed by Kūkai 空海 (774-835) when he wrote the Sino-Japanese name of Mahākāla (Daikoku 大黒 or Great Black One) as Daikoku 大国 (Great Country; also read as Ōkuni). The alleged confusion took place much later, however, during the medieval period. At any rate, the fusion of the two figures would probably have taken place without Kūkai’s “error,” owing to the functional affinities shared by the two gods. Deliberate or not, the play on words confirmed a preexisting situation. As the “original landlord” (jishū or jinushi 地主) of Japan, [Ōkuninushi](#)—also known as [Ōmononushi](#) 大物主, a former demonic figure (as master of the [mono](#) ‘ghosts’)—was indeed predisposed to merge with [Daikokuten](#).

## IMPORTANT EARLY LAND DEITIES

1. Miwa Deity, aka [Ōmononushi](#) no Mikoto 大物主命 (Great Spirit Possessor), aka [Ōnamuchi](#) no Mikoto 大己貴命 (Great Name Possessor), aka [Ōkuninushi](#) no Mikoto 大国主命 (Great Land Owner).
2. Izumo Deity. Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* include episodes involving [Ōkuninushi](#) (in *Nihon Shoki*, [Ōnamuchi](#)). Both say he is a descendant of [Susano-o](#) 須佐之男 and creator (tamer) of the land.
3. The Miwa *kami* & Izumo *kami* are different gods. Scholars tend to simply & utterly conflate them, but this is not correct.
4. True form of [Ōmononushi](#) / [Ōnamuchi](#) / [Ōkuninushi](#) is that of a snake and/or arrow. He is both protective and fearsome.
5. When taming the land, the deity was assisted by the midget *kami* [Sukunabiko](#) 少名彦 (Little Name Lad).
6. Ōyamakui 大山咋神 is the original *kami* of Mt. Hiei. He is the child of [Ōtoshi no Kami](#) (Kami of Great Harvests). The latter is one of [Susano-o](#)'s many sons. Ōyamakui was also installed at neighboring [Matsu-no-o Shrine](#) 松尾神社 & [Kamo Shrine](#) 賀茂神社. All three shrines shared a common priestly lineage & ritual connections. [Ōkuninushi](#) is Ōyamakui's distant relative and undisputed leader of the earthly deities.
7. Ōmiya Gongen 大宮権現 (Great Shrine Avatar) and [Sannō](#) 山王 (Mountain King) are other names for the Miwa deity. The latter was conflated with [Daikokuten](#) in the early 14<sup>th</sup> C.

**SAYS IYANAGA NOBUMI (email exchange, 2017):** The *kami* of Mt. Miwa ([Ōmononushi](#)) was very important to the [Yamato](#) dynasty, perhaps even its supreme god before [Amaterasu](#). In the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712 CE), *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (720 CE), and other classical texts, he is represented as a snake, as a deity of water & thunder, as a protector of the realm. But he was also a dangerous *kami*. One must note that in Japan's classical myths, the name [Ōmononushi](#) was also one of the different names of [Ōkuninushi](#) (deity of [Izumo](#) 出雲). [Ōkuninushi](#)'s identity incorporated characteristics from various other deities, including Miwa's [Ōmononushi](#). Beliefs in the Miwa *kami* were "imported" to Mt. Hiei at an early date (probably before the Nara era). Saichō was certainly aware of such beliefs & actively venerated the *kami*. Named [Sannō](#) 山王 (Mountain King) after the god of China's Mt. Tiantai 天台山 (also named Ōmiya Gongen 大宮権現 or Great Shrine Avatar), the Miwa *kami* became the principal *kami* of [Sannō Shintō](#) 山王神道 (Tendai Shintō). [Daikoku](#)'s conflation with the Miwa *kami* in the early 14<sup>th</sup> C. significantly elevated [Daikoku](#)'s importance in Japan's religious traditions.

## SPECULATIVE → DEVELOPMENT PATH OF ŌKUNINUSHI IN JAPAN

1. Mt. Miwa Deity (aka [Ōmononushi](#) / [Ōnamuchi](#) / [Ōkuninushi](#)) is introduced to Mt. Hiei in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century. The Miwa deity was probably Japan's "supreme" *kami* in these early years.
2. Mt. Hiei Deity. The original *kami* at Mt. Hiei was Ōyamakui 大山咋神. He is, like Mt. Miwa's deity, a descendant of [Susano-o](#) 須佐之男, and a fearsome *kami* who appears as a snake or arrow to impregnate young virgins. The [Yamato](#) court worked hard to appease such deities, who "likely" had continental [Korean] origins. In the *Kojiki* ([Book 2, Ch. 53, Philippi, p. 178](#)), the Miwa deity transforms itself into a red arrow & impregnates a beautiful maiden while she is defecating in a ditch. The begotten child becomes the wife of [Jimmu](#) 神武天皇, Japan's legendary first emperor.
3. Saichō 最澄 (767-822) introduces [Daikokuten](#) to Mt. Hiei to nourish the new Tendai school. At the time, Saichō was also certainly aware of the Miwa deity and actively venerated it.
4. 13<sup>th</sup>-C. Japanese text [Chiribukuro](#) 塵袋 (p. 30 online) says both 大国 (Ōkuni) & 大黒 (Daikoku) can be pronounced DAIKOKU. Most likely wordplay, but may be early attempt to conflate the two.
5. Early 14<sup>th</sup> C. Japanese text [Miwa Daimyōjin Engi](#) 三輪大明神縁起 equates the Miwa deity ([Ōmononushi](#)) with [Daikokuten](#). Although [Ōmononushi](#) is another name for [Ōkuninushi](#), the two were perceived as different gods, the former from Mt. Miwa, the latter from Izumo.
6. [Ōkuninushi](#) remained largely unknown and ignored among the common folk & temple-shrine community in Japan's middle ages.
7. In late 17<sup>th</sup> century, itinerant preachers of [Izumo Shrine](#) aggressively conflated the Miwa deity ([Ōmononushi](#) / [Ōnamuchi](#) / [Ōkuninushi](#)) with [Daikokuten](#) to raise funds for their impoverished shrine. They basically "piggy-backed" off the already popular [Daikokuten](#) to drum up money. They also conflated [Ebisu](#) with [Kotoshironushi](#) ([Ōkuninushi](#)'s son). Thereafter, [Daikokuten-Ebisu](#) pairing and [Ōkuninushi-Kotoshironushi](#) pairing became incredibly popular.
8. Popularity of [Ōkuninushi](#) & [Daikokuten](#) skyrocket in Edo era, even rivaling the power of sun goddess [Amaterasu](#), the supreme *kami* of Japan's imperial household. See [Yijiang Zhong](#) (2012).

**SAYS IYANAGA NOBUMI (email exchange, 2017):** In the 16<sup>th</sup>-C. *Jingi Shūi* 神祇拾遺 (Miscellany Related to Shintō Kami) by Yoshida Kanemitsu 吉田兼満 (d. 1528), he writes: "In recent years, [Daikoku](#) is worshipped at Ōmiwa Shrine 大神神社. I heard a statue of this deity with three faces was created by Saichō, brought here [Miwa Shrine] in the Shōwa 正和 era [1312-1317], and installed as a divine object. People without knowledge venerated it as a manifestation of the Bright [Miwa] Deity. In reality, the form of this worthy has [only] one face & one body. He represents the appearance of [Ōkuninushi](#) carrying his bag on his journey to marry Yagami-hime 八上姫 in Inaba Province 稻葉國. ....What he wears on his body & head is entirely Japanese garb." See Slides 16, 17, & 18.

Kanemitsu's theory linking the standing form of [Daikoku](#) with [Ōkuninushi](#) is interesting. Many scholars in the Edo era (1603-1867) adopted this theory. Examples include the [Kiyū Shōran](#) 嬉遊笑覽 (Laughing Miscellanea on Playful Deeds) by [Kitamura Nobuyo](#) 喜多村信節 (1783-1856) & the [Shintō Mondō](#) 神道問答 (Questions & Answers on Shintō) by [Saitō Hikomaro](#) 齋藤彦磨 (1768-1854). The latter tried to refute the theory (see [Iyanaga, 2002](#), p. 343 & p. 512). This is also how [Kita Sadakichi](#) 喜田貞吉 (1871-1939) explained the big bag carried by [Daikoku](#). Although this theory seems plausible, we cannot simply adhere to it. Why? First, [Ōkuninushi](#) myths were mainly described in the *Kojiki* & largely omitted in the *Nihon Shoki*. The *Kojiki* was little known until its "resurrection" by [Motoori Norinaga](#) 本居宣長 (1730-1801). Second, statues of Shintō *kami* created before the Meiji era (1868-1912) were rarely named (except Hachiman 八幡).

## Miwa Deity = Sannō = Daikokuten Courtesy Iyanaga Nobumi (email, 2017)

The Miwa deity was venerated as a powerful protector of Mt. Hiei. The Miwa deity was also identified as Sannō 山王 (Mountain King), the composite name for Mt. Hiei's numerous protective *kami*. In Japan's medieval period, Daikoku too was conflated with Sannō. The early 14<sup>th</sup>-C. Japanese text *Keiran Shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集 contains a passage about a Daikoku icon installed at Mt. Hiei's *Mandokoro* 政所 (Hall of Shaka; see T.76. 2410 634b3-29). It states: "When our exalted founder and master opened our mountain, the earth trembled in six ways, and from the lower part of the sky sprang forth an elderly man. He had the countenance of the present-day Daikoku of *Mandokoro*. This is the Deity of the Firm Earth, Kenrō Chijin 堅牢地神 (see Slides 35 & 36).....Daikoku is a form of the Bright Deity of Miwa having appeared in our country. In his original body [*honji* 本地] he is Daikoku. In his manifested form [*suijaku* 垂迹] he is Sannō, that is Daikoku."

Iyanaga adds: The *Keiran Shūyōshū*'s account of Daikoku reveals the important associations of this deity with the Earth Deity (represented as an old man), with Vaiśravaṇa 毘沙門天 (J = Bishamonten), and with Miwa Daimyōjin 三輪大明神. It is interesting to note here that India's female deity of the earth, Pṛthivī 地天 (J = Jiten), is replaced with a male god. Pṛthivī is the goddess of the earth as a whole (i.e., the ground on which plants grow), while the "Old Man" deity of the earth is more a protector of a place or a locality. This transformation is probably due to differing concepts of "earth" and its divinity in India, China and Japan. (See Slide 36.)

## Ōkuninushi and the Transfer of the Land Courtesy [Kokugakuin University](#), written by Kobori Keiko

The "transfer of the land" (kuniyuzuri 国譲り) is a term indicating a series of episodes in *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* related to the transfer of the land of Japan to the descendants of the heavenly kami (amatsukami 天津神) by Ōkuninushi, an earthly kami (kunitsukami 国津神). After Susano-o, the brother of Amaterasu, descended from the heavenly realm to Izumo and slew the great serpent, he married Kushinadahime. Their child (according to the main text of the *Nihongi*) or grandchild (according to one alternative passage of *Nihongi*) was Ōkuninushi. Ultimately Ōkuninushi and Sukunahikona worked together to solidify the Central Land of the Reed Plains (toyoashihara no mizuho no kuni 豊葦原瑞穂の国). However, Amaterasu and Takamimusuhi, wanting the land for their descendants to rule, sent a messenger to Ōkuninushi asking him to transfer the land. Both Amenohohi, the first messenger sent, and Amewakahiko, the second, took sides with Ōkuninushi and did not report back. Amaterasu then conferred with the deities of the High Plain of Heaven and sent Takemikazuchi accompanied by Amenotorifune (Torinoiwakusufune). Takemikazuchi strongly urged Ōkuninushi to transfer the land, and received the allegiance of Ōkuninushi's son Kotoshironushi, and defeated another of his sons, Takeminakata, who opposed the plan, in a trial of strength. Then Ōkuninushi agreed to transfer the land, giving the unconcealed realm of the Central Land of the Reed Plains to the Heavenly Grandchild (tenson kōrin). Ōkuninushi retreated to govern the unseen world (yūkai, see kakuriyo) while being eternally enshrined in the Great Shrine (Izumo Taisha). With this, preparations were complete for the descent of the Heavenly Grandchild. There also exist different traditions relating to the above events. For example, *Izumo no Kuni no Miyatsuko Kamu Yogoto* says that the true messenger sent down from the High Plain of Heaven was Amenohinotori, the ancestor of Izumo Kokusō. It is now thought that the episode of the "transfer of the land" as described in *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* represents a mythical version of the process of state unification under the Yamato court. This unification was achieved over a long period of time both through negotiation with powerful local families and through military conquest. Izumo seems to have retained its ancient political and religious authority until the very end, and it was only with its fall that final unification was achieved. This appears to have happened in the time of the emperors Sujin and Suinin. <end Kokugakuin quote>

## Kotoshironushi 事代主命 (aka Ebisu) & Mihotsu Hime no Mikoto 三穗津姫命 Courtesy [Kokugakuin University](#), written by Nishioka Kazuhiko. See Slides 34 & 35.

According to an "alternative writing" transmitted by *Nihongi*, Mihotsuhime was the daughter of *kami* Takamimusuhi, given in marriage to Ōmononushi (aka Ōkuninushi). In the episode known as the "transfer of the land" (kuniyuzuri 国譲り), Takamimusuhi warned Ōmononushi that if the latter took a wife from among the earthly kami (kunitsukami 国津神), Takamimusuhi would consider him to be disaffected. As a result, Takamimusuhi gave his own daughter Mihotsuhime in marriage to Ōmononushi, charging him to lead the "80 myriad hosts of kami" [八十萬神] and forever protect the imperial line. [E = [Section Nine, Version Three](#), J = [Book 2, p. 192](#)] <end quote> NOTE. Kotoshironushi (conflated with "Ebisu" by authorities at Izumo Shrine in the late 17<sup>th</sup> C.) is one of Ōkuninushi's sons. Mihotsuhime is Ōkuninushi's wife. The two are enshrined at Miho Shrine 美保神社 in Shimane and elsewhere throughout Japan. Mihotsuhime is a protective agricultural goddess who safeguards the longevity of the family line. Kotoshironushi (aka Ebisu) is venerated widely as the kami of fishing and commerce. For more, see [this English site](#). For more on Ōkuninushi, see [this English site](#) & [this Japanese site](#).