

## Life in Ancient Izumo

The eighth-century *Izumo no kuni fudoki* (Gazetteer of Izumo Province) provides a rare glimpse into daily life in ancient Izumo. Among other details, the text contains extensive lists of the local agricultural and marine products. The “World of the *Izumo no Kuni Fudoki*” gallery has a life-sized diorama depicting a bustling riverside market. It was created based on information found in the gazetteer and other historical records.

Trade was conducted using rice or cloth as currency. In the exhibit, local inhabitants have gathered to peruse items at the market. One of the vendors is holding a Japanese sea bass (*suzuki*)—a prized product of ancient Izumo and a local specialty to this day. This fish also appears in the *kuni-yuzuri* (“relinquishing the land”) myth, where it is said to have been served at a banquet hosted by the deity Ōkuninushi no Kami.

A miniature diorama of an *utagaki* gathering shows how young men and women would meet near the bank of a stream to court each other by composing and reciting poems. An animated film in the gallery tells the fictional tale of a man and woman who meet at such a gathering. In some ways, ancient *utagaki* resemble the modern practice of *gōkon*, or organized group dating, where singles get to know one another over food and drinks.