

Myths of the Izumo Province

This film presents several myths from the *Izumo no kuni fudoki* (Gazetteer of Izumo Province), an eighth-century record of regional geography, customs, and oral narratives compiled for the imperial court.

The film opens with the *kuni-biki* (“land-pulling”) myth. One day, a deity named Yatsukamizu-omizunu no Mikoto decides that the region of Izumo is too small. Looking out across the sea, he spots areas with land to spare and breaks off several chunks with a massive spade. Using thick ropes, he pulls these chunks to the coast of Izumo and ties the ropes to two stakes. These stakes eventually become the mountains of Mt. Sanbe (southwest of Izumo) and Mt. Daisen (in neighboring Tottori Prefecture), and the “pulled” land is the modern Shimane peninsula.

Another myth describes the birth of the deity Sada no Ōkami. Sada’s mother, Kiskahi-hime no Mikoto, retreats into a coastal cave when she goes into labor, but loses her golden bow in the process. After praying for the bow to be returned, Kiskahi-hime sees it drifting towards her along the waves. Retrieving it, she fires an arrow at the cave wall, creating a passage through to the sea. It is said that travelers passing through this opening must shout loudly or a gust of wind will capsize their boat.

The film also tells the tale of “Tamahime no Mikoto and the Shark.” Spying the goddess Tamahime on the shore, a shark is enthralled by her beauty. He swims inland along a river to profess his love. Frightened by the shark’s appearance, Tamahime dams the river with boulders. The location of this incident, a boulder-strewn river gorge southeast of Izumo, was named after “the shark who longed for love” (*wani no shitau*). Over time, pronunciation changes resulted in its current name: Oni no Shitaburui Gorge.