

1.

KING KWANGGAET'O'S STELE:

Paekche Gets Help from Its Brother Country, Yamato Wa

A. The Stele as a Proof of Japan's Control of Korea

The myth that Japan had a unified and powerful state as early as the third or fourth century, possessed a colony called Mimana 任那 on the southern tip of Korea, and controlled Paekche and Silla is based on anachronistic and incoherent bits and pieces of episodes and fantasies recorded in Nihongi. There are, however, no records which suggest any such *possibility* in any Korean or Chinese chronicles. Nonetheless, the Japanese made a discovery in 1882 which could be viewed as objective support for their claim. It is a single line in the inscription on the royal monument of King Kwanggaet'o of Koguryeo 廣開土王碑 (A.D. 391-413), a copy of which was brought to Japan by Sakao Kagenobu 酒向景信, an army officer and intelligence agent of the Japanese General Staff Office.¹ This is the famous "Sinmyo 辛卯 (A.D. 391) Record." The Japanese interpreted the line of inscription in the following fashion: "The Paekche and Silla [people] had been the subjects of Koguryeo and paid tribute to Koguryeo. Since the year of Sinmyo [or in the year of Sinmyo], however, the Wa came 而倭以辛卯年來 [and] crossed over the sea,

¹King Kwanggaet'o or King Hot'ae [Kukkang-sang Kwanggaet'o-gyeong p'yeong-an hot'ae-wang 國岡上廣開土境平安好太王] was the son of King Kogukyang and was enthroned in A.D. 391 [or A.D. 392] at the age of seventeen. He was sometimes referred to as Great King Yeongnak 永樂太王, after the era name selected by him. He expanded Koguryeo's territories far into the Korean peninsula by advancing southward at the expense of the Paekche. His successor, King Changsu, moved the capital from Kugnae-seong to Pyeongyang in A.D. 427, and it was Changsu who constructed the memorial stele in A.D. 414 in commemoration of his predecessor. The stele stands on a hill on the north side of the Yalu River in Ji-an 集安, in the Tonghua Special Area, Jilin 吉林 Province, which is to the east of the Koguryeo capital, Kugnae-seong.

[and] conquered Paekche . . . Sil-la 渡海破百殘 . . . 羅, [and] thereby made [them Wa's] subjects 以爲臣民.² There are three letters missing after "Paekche" until we get to the letter 羅 that may be read either "la" or "ra." Virtually without exception, the Japanese make it read "x x Sil-la" or "Im-na, Sil-la."

This interpretation of the Sinmyo Record constitutes the indispensable basis for the dogma of almost every Japanese historian working on this period. The overwhelming majority claim that the control of Korean territory suggested by the monumental inscription proves that the Yamato State had already existed in the fourth century as a unified and powerful regime.² According to Hatada (1979): "Prewar [Japanese] history textbooks were based on the records of the Nihon shoki and said that Japan had controlled ancient Korea, whereas postwar texts were based on the King Kwanggaet'o stele inscription, but still accepted Japan's control of Korea. Thus the basis for the view that Japan had controlled Korea moved from an unreliable ancient chronicle to the reliable stele inscription. Though the history texts written after the surrender were vastly different from their prewar counterparts, in this one respect there was no change, and King Kwanggaet'o's stele was the basis of the argument."

B. Interpreting the Inscription

We must critically examine the content of the inscription. No historical record substantiates that the Paekche and Silla had ever been the subjects of Koguryeo or paid tributes 百殘 新羅 舊是屬民 由來朝貢. Instead, Samguk-sagi (Lee edition: 27-28) records that Koguryeo was frequently invaded by the Paekche before King Kwanggaet'o appeared. In A.D. 369, King Keun Ch'ogo of Paekche (A.D. 346-375) permitted his Crown Prince to invade Koguryeo, and the Crown Prince captured five thousand Koguryeo soldiers. In A.D. 371, King Keun Ch'ogo defeated the invading Koguryeo troops. In the same winter, King Keun Ch'ogo, together with the Crown Prince, invaded Koguryeo and attacked Pyeongyang. The King of Koguryeo, Kogukweon

²Hatada (1979) states that ". . . when the General Staff learned the activities of the Wa from King Kwanggaet'o stele . . . they believed Korea had originally been Japanese territory . . . [The] Japanese army, planning a continental advance, found in this a powerful source of historical rationalization for their contemporary ambitions." Egami (1967) suggests that the horserider conquest of Japan occurred sometime in the fourth century. If so, neither the Japanese interpretation of King Kwanggaet'o's stele nor any one of the traditional theories on early Japanese history is valid. Hence very few Japanese historians are willing to accept any part of Egami's theory.

(A.D. 331-371) was killed by an arrow in the fighting. In A.D. 377, King Keun Kusu (A.D. 375-384) led thirty thousand soldiers and attacked Koguryeo.² Indeed, Paekche was at the height of its power in the fourth century prior to King Kwanggaet'o's invasion. King Kwanggaet'o routed the Paekche troops in A.D. 396 but could not make either the Paekche or Silla his subjects.³

In any case, King Kwanggaet'o never fought against Silla. At that time, Koguryeo was actually on the side of Silla, helping it fight against Paekche and Wa. The sentence immediately following the Sinmyo Record reads: "therefore King [Kwanggaet'o] himself led a naval [expeditionary] force 水軍 in the sixth year, Byeong-Shin 丙申 [A.D. 396], and destroyed Paekche . . ." A lengthy description of King Kwanggaet'o's campaign (which was waged against Paekche in A.D. 396) records the acquisition of 58 Paekche castles, one thousand *pil* of fine fabrics, one thousand captive persons, including ten Paekche ministers and a brother of the Paekche King, as well as a promise that Paekche would serve Koguryeo 永爲奴客 (which was to be broken in only a few years). But it never records that Paekche was conquered.⁴ On the other hand, Nihongi as well as King Kwanggaet'o's stele record frequent participation of Wa troops in Paekche's battles against Silla and Koguryeo.

Considering these facts and also taking into account the content of the following inscriptions, the most logical way to fill up the missing three letters in the Sinmyo (A.D. 391) Record [between the word "Paekche" and the letter "ra"] is to make them read "Im-na, Ka-ra." Indeed it is a real curiosity that people, including Wang (1984), could simply fill up the missing three letters following Paekche to read "x x Sil-la" or "Im-na, Sil-la." First of all, no one can ever deny that the Sinmyo Record (A.D. 391) was inserted to justify the invasion of Paekche, not Silla, by King Kwanggaet'o in A.D. 396. The following inscriptions clearly state that Koguryeo and Silla maintained a friendly relationship, that Koguryeo never invaded Silla but rather helped it to repulse Wa troops, and hence that Silla did not have to be implicated in the official excuse for the invasion carried out in A.D. 396. Indeed, a later line of the inscription for the year A.D. 400 specifically records that King Kwanggaet'o annihilated the Wa troops by chasing them all the way to the *Imna, Kara* 任那加羅 area and thereby rescued Silla. Reading it as "Im-na,

³Hirano (1977) notes that "it is an overstatement to say that Koguryeo 'destroyed' Paekche in 396, since Paekche's capital at Hanseong was left intact. It was only in 475 that Hanseong finally fell and the capital was moved to Ungjin 熊津." Samguk-sagi records that as early as A.D. 398 and 399 the Paekche King Asin [or Ahwa, A.D. 392-405] laid plans for a large-scale expedition against Koguryeo.

Ka-ra" instead of "x x, Sil-la" is therefore more consistent with the fact that Koguryeo did not fight against Silla at that time.

According to Song-shu, the King of Wa signed his name 自稱 as "An-dong da-jiang-jun, Commanding All Military Affairs in the Six Countries 使持節都督六國諸軍事 of Wa, Paekche, Silla, Imna, Chin-han and Ma-han" and requested in A.D. 426 that the Song Court formally confirm this self-claimed title. In A.D. 451, the Song Court at last confirmed the title with two revisions: *da-jiang-jun* became *jiang-jun* and the list of *six* countries excluded Paekche, reading "Wa, Silla, *Imna, Kara*, Chin-han and Ma-han." In A.D. 478, the King of Wa requested the Song Court to confirm the title with "da-jiang-jun" "Commanding All Military Affairs in the *Seven* Countries of Wa, Paekche, Silla, *Imna, Kara*, Chin-han and Ma-han," and this time he got the rank of "da-jiang-jun" 大將軍 but was still denied his request to include Paekche in the list of countries.^{<3>} In any case, we can observe the expression "Imna, Kara" among the inscriptions of King Kwanggaet'o's stele and also the expression "Imna, Kara" in the orthodox Chronicles of Chinese Dynasties.^{<4>} (See also Nihongi, NII: 43 & 54.)^{<5>} Chin-han and Ma-han must have represented other members of the Kaya Federation that were the remnants of Old Chin-han and Old Ma-han.

The statement that "Wa conquered Paekche, Imna and Kara and made them Wa's subjects" seems to reflect the feeling of contempt that Koguryeo must have held for Paekche's dependence on Wa troops. That is, Koguryeo must have been angered by Paekche's frequent reliance on Wa soldiers, and therefore could have decided to inscribe on the monument, with contempt, that Paekche, together with Imna and Kara, were conquered by Wa and became its subjects 渡海破百殘任那加羅. After the late fourth century, a strong alliance among Paekche, Imna, Kara and Yamato Wa must have emerged. What the stele captures is the conflict between the "Koguryeo-Silla" alliance on the one hand and the "Paekche, Imna, Kara and Yamato-Wa" alliance on the other.

C. The Practice of Paekche Using Wa Soldiers

Indeed, according to Nihongi, the practice of Paekche using Wa soldiers in intramural armed conflicts continued well into the sixth century. Nihongi records the statements made by King Seong-myeong 聖明王 of Paekche in A. D. 544; he intended to request from Kimmei 欽明 "an army with which to succour the Land of Imna 夫建任那之國 . . . 請將士 (NII: 51)," and he intended to construct six fortresses along the frontier between Silla and Ara and to

request from Kimmei “3,000 troops—500 for each fortress 三千兵士 每城充以五百” to be provided with clothing and food 吾給衣糧. These he would augment with his own soldiers 并我兵士 (NII: 57). Nihongi (NII: 62) records that in A. D. 547 Paekche sent envoys to Wa “to ask for auxiliaries 乞救軍,” and in A. D. 548 “three hundred and seventy men were sent to Paekche to assist in constructing a fortress 助築城 at Tik-i-sin.” Nihongi (NII: 69) also mentions the message sent by Seong-myeong to Kimmei in A. D. 553 informing the latter of the statements supposedly exchanged between Silla and Koguryeo, i.e., “Paekche and Imna resort frequently to Japan, doubtlessly to ask for troops 乞軍兵 wherewith to invade our territories . . . it may be hoped that we conquer Ara before they have started.” Nihongi (NII: 68) records that “Uchi no Omi 內臣 was sent on a mission to Paekche [in A. D. 553] with a present of two good horses, two travelling barges, fifty bows, fifty sets of arrows, and an Imperial message, saying, ‘As to the troops asked for by the King, his wishes shall be complied with’ 所請軍者 隨王所須.” Nihongi (NII: 70) records another communication sent to Kimmei from Seong-myeong in A. D. 553 saying that: “the lands beyond the sea are very scarce of bows and horses. From old times until now, they have received them from the emperor, and have therewith defended themselves against their powerful enemies. I humbly pray the Celestial bounty to bestow on us a large supply of bows and horses 弓馬.” Nihongi (NII: 71-72) further records that in A. D. 554: “Paekche sent Mok-hyeop Mun-cha . . . to Tsukushi, to communicate with Uchi no Omi . . . ‘We have just heard that thou, by command of the August Emperor, hast arrived in Tsukushi in charge of the troops bestowed on us by him 看送賜軍 . . . The campaign of this year is a much more dangerous one than the last; and we beg that the force granted to us 賜軍 may not be allowed to be later than the first month.’ Hereupon Uchi no Omi answered . . . ‘Accordingly there is being sent an auxiliary force to number 1,000 men, 100 horses, and 40 ships’ 答報曰, 即令遣助軍數一千馬一百匹 船四十隻.”

D. Alternative Ways to Interpret the Inscription

Of course there are alternative ways to interpret the Sinmyo Record. For instance, Cho (1984) interprets it in the following fashion: “Paekche and Silla were formerly [King Kwanggaet’o’s] subjects. Since then, they have been paying [their] tribute, but the Japanese came in the year Sinmyo 而倭以辛卯年來. Thereby [the King] crossed over the sea and destroyed Paekche x x Silla to make them his subjects 渡海破百殘 x x x 羅以爲臣民.” According to Lee

(1984: 46), “Paekche . . . called on forces from the petty states of Wa in Kyūshū, Japan, founded by people who had migrated from the Paekche area, to mount attacks against Silla. This caused Silla to turn to Koguryeo for support . . .” Hence we can understand the statement that “the Japanese came 來 in the year Sinmyo.” According to Cho, the “sea” in the inscription implies “the Yellow Sea 黃海 along the western coastline of Korea, as it was the most convenient sea route to the southwestern and southern parts of Korea from the northwestern coast of Korea.” Thus do we understand the statement of “crossed over the Sea and destroyed . . .”⁴

According to Hirano (1977), “since the stele was a eulogy of King Kwanggaet'o's military exploits, the inscriptions are subject to exaggeration and therefore require careful textual criticism . . . [T]here is no evidence that Paekche had become a tributary to Koguryeo. On the contrary, she had frequently attacked Koguryeo before King Kwanggaet'o appeared [M]oreover, the Yamato state was not in a position to *subjugate* Paekche. The relations between the two countries are more properly described by the frequently repeated terms for peer relations” Hirano also notes that “Paekche, in order to cope with Koguryeo, depended on the Yamato-Kara [Kaya] alliance and therefore maintained amicable relations with the Kara [Kaya] states.”⁵ Indeed King Kwanggaet'o's stele (Wang, 1985: 305) describes the relations between Paekche and Wa as an amicable alliance 百殘違誓 與倭和通.

The Kaya 伽耶 league states were allies of Paekche and Yamato Wa until they were conquered by Silla. Also, the people of Paekche were closely related to the Yamato people, and they therefore, as is frequently recorded in Nihongi, naturally sought military support from Yamato Wa in their feuds with Koguryeo and Silla.⁶ In a slightly different context, Ledyard (1975)

“Park Si-hyung 朴時亨 of North Korea interprets the Sinmyo Record in the following fashion: The Paekche and Silla had been the subjects of Koguryeo and paid tribute to Koguryeo. Wa came in the year of Sinmyo. Koguryeo crossed over the [Yellow] sea and destroyed them. Paekche, x x x ra thereby became [Koguryeo's] subjects.” See Kim Jeong-hak 金廷鶴 (1981: 120).

⁵Hirano (1977) continues: “it is therefore certain that Paekche . . . concluded an alliance with Wa For this reason, the inscription on the Kwanggaet'o's stele says that Koguryeo *saved* Silla [in A.D. 400] . . . and deals merely with Wa's invasion into Silla without any mention of her [Wa's] conflict with Paekche. The Silla *border* along which the Wa troops are said to have swarmed was apparently the boundary with Kara, since Koguryeo chased the Wa army into *Mimana* [*Imna*] *Kara* 追至任那加羅”

⁶Fairbank, Reischauer and Craig (1973: 282-283) note that: “The expansion of

writes that: “The Puyo in Paekche . . . by the 390’s came under heavy and continuous battering from their Koguryeo cousins in the north, and were quite severely in trouble during the 390’s and 400’s. Help from their brothers in Japan may have been the only thing that saved them -- in any case, this is what I think it means on the Kwanggaet’o Stone when it says that the Wa came across the sea and fought in Korea.” And Nihongi (NII: 44) clearly records the following statement made by King Seong [A.D. 523-554] of Paekche: “Formerly Silla asked for help from Koguryeo, and with its assistance invaded Imna and Paekche 攻擊任那與百濟, but to date without conquering them 尙不剋之.”⁶

E. Reliability of the Early Records of Samguk-sagi

Samguk-sagi records that Kwanggaet’o was the 19th monarch of Koguryeo, and that Koguryeo was established in 37 B.C. and destroyed in A.D. 668. A statement in Nihongi (NII: 289-290) reveals the precision of the Samguk-sagi record: “[w]hen King Chung-mu 仲牟王 [Chumong 朱蒙, written as 鄒牟 on King Kwanggaet’o’s stele] of Koguryeo first established that kingdom, he wished his government to last for a thousand years 欲治千歲也. His mother said: ‘If thou governest the country well, thou mayst accomplish this. However, it will last for just 700 years.’ The downfall of this kingdom at this time[i.e., A. D. 668] took place just at the end of its existence for 700 years 當在七百年之末也.”⁸ One can now only be numbed with awe upon reading the uncannily accurate statement on King Kwanggaet’o’s stele that Kwanggaet’o was the 19th monarch of Koguryeo.⁷ With the discovery of this stele, the Japanese effort to discredit the early periods of Korean history can

Koguryeo southward during the fourth century and the consolidation of Paekche at the same time brought these two kingdoms into conflict over the area around the Han River. In 369 invading Koguryeo forces were driven back by Paekche, which then invaded Koguryeo and killed its king in 371 . . . Paekche had won the first round, and, occupying the best agricultural regions of Korea, it was relatively populous and rich, but during most of this protracted period of warfare it proved to be less well organized and weaker than Koguryeo. Perhaps the original divisiveness of the many tribal units of the Ma Han area or the alien origin of its ruling house undermined its solidarity. Paekche, in order to maintain itself, was constantly forced to seek alliances either with Silla or with the Japanese.”

⁷King Kwanggaet’o’s stele states that he was the 17th king of Koguryeo when counted from the third king Taejuryu 大朱留王 (大解朱留王 = 大武神王, King Taemusin), and hence the 19th king when counted from Chumong (朱蒙 or 鄒牟). See Wang (1985: 298).

be counteracted, and historians can now return to the records of Samguk-sagi.

According to Wei-shu (CCI: 505, 508), King Kaero of Paekche sent a letter to the Court of Northern Wei in A. D. 472 stating that "Paekche, together with Koguryeo, had originated from Puyeo 與高句麗源出夫餘."^{3, 6, 23} Samguk-sagi (Lee Edition, I: 260 and II: 15) states that the founder of Paekche, King Onjo 溫祚王, was the son of Chumong 朱蒙 (鄒牟) who was the founder of Koguryeo and son of Habaek's daughter 河伯之女. Shoku-Nihongi's records on the 9th year of Kammu (續日本紀卷四十延歷八年條) state that Kammu's mother Takano-no-niigasa 高野新笠 was the Queen to Kōmū (A. D. 709-782) and a [great] granddaughter of Paekche's King Munyeong. Indeed she was a descendant of King Do-mo who was born to Habaek's daughter and was the father of Paekche's founder (King Onjo) 百濟遠祖都慕王.⁸ The record of Shoku-Nihongi on the following year (*ibid.*, 九年條 quoted in Kim Jeong-hak 金廷鶴, 1981: 6-7) also states that King Kwi-shu 貴須王 (King Keun Kusu 近仇首王) was the 16th king of Paekche when counted from the Great King Do-mo 太祖都慕大王. Apparently, the Great King Do-mo represents Chumong who was the father of King Onjo. The more important point, however, is the fact that Samguk-sagi records King Keun Kusu as the 14th king of Paekche counted from Onjo. Furthermore, Shinsen Shōjiroku (佐伯有清 1962: 286) writes that King Munju 文周王 (also written as 汶洲王 in Samauk-sagi but written as 汶淵王 in Shinsen Shōjiroku) was the 24th king of Paekche when counted from King Do-mo 都慕王二十四世孫 while Samguk-sagi places him as the 22nd king of Paekche. It also states that King Hye 惠王 was the 30th king of Paekche when counted from King Do-mo while Samguk-sagi considers him as the 28th king of Paekche.

Shinsen Shōjiroku (*ibid.*: 304) records a clan that has the seventh King of Paekche, Saban 沙伴王 (A.D. 234), as its progenitor 百濟國沙伴王之後也. It (*ibid.*: 301) further records two clans that have King Piryu 比流王 (the eleventh king of Paekche, A.D. 304-344) as their progenitor, who was in turn, Shinsen Shōjiroku notes, the descendant of King Ch'ogo 肖古王 (the fifth King of

⁸Shoku Nihongi [續日本紀 Chronicles of Japan Continued] began to be written under the order of 光仁 (A. D. 770-781), covering nine reigns from A. D. 697 to A. D. 791. It was completed in A. D. 797 during the reign of 桓武's son Kammu 桓武 (A. D. 781-806), and was presented to the throne by Sugano (Tsu Muraji) Mamichi 菅野(津連)真道 (A.D. 741-814). The chief compiler was Fujiwara Tsugutada 藤原繼繩 (A. D. 727-796), who died a few months before the completion. Sakamoto (1991: xii) notes that it is particularly valuable for recording edicts in their original Japanese style (Senmyōka 宣命體) instead of converting them into Classical Chinese (kanbun 漢文).

Paekche, A.D. 166-214) 出自百濟速古王孫比流王也. It (*ibid*: 287) notes a clan that has a descendant of the thirteenth King of Paekche, Keun Ch'ogo 近肖古王 (A.D. 346-375), as its progenitor 出自百濟國人近速王孫. We can see that Shinsen Shōjiroku records the Paekche Kings who, according to Samguk-sagi, ruled during A.D. 166-214 (King Ch'ogo) and in A.D. 234 (King Saban) as the progenitors of some Yamato ruling clans. Furthermore, we can see that Shinsen Shōjiroku clearly distinguishes King Keun Ch'ogo (the thirteenth King of Paekche) from King Ch'ogo (the fifth King) by recording that the eleventh King Piryu was a descendant from the latter.¹

The early traditional royal lineage of Koguryeo as well as the lineages of Paekche and Silla now have to be shifted from legend to history. Szczesniak (1951) states: "For the student of the Korean chronicles the inscription gives additional proof of their exactness and authority. The oldest Japanese chronicles . . . have really a great amount of first class scientific material; however, they have many intentional deviations and lacunae on essential questions concerning national development and government. Even the most critical historian . . . is unable to get a clear idea of the Japanese - Korean wars at the end of the IVth and beginning of the Vth century, if he relies only on the Nihonshoki and Kojiki, and he will be unable to restore historical truth." The time to confront this challenge is overdue.

¹According to Nihongi (NI: 231), the King of Silla, whom 眞骨王 allegedly made her "forage provider" in A. D. 200, was "Phasa 波沙 Maekeum 寐錦, the fifth King of Silla who, according to Samguk-sagi, reigned from A. D. 80 to A. D. 112.