

## 1.

## SOSA NO WO FROM SILLA:

*A Non-Historic Yayoi Ruler*

This chapter examines the origins of some ritual-religious chieftains who ruled in Japan during the Yayoi period: Sosa no wo 素戔鳴 (須佐之男), Mimaki-Iri-Biko 御間城入彦, and Himiko 卑彌呼. Although the nature of their rule is far from certain, there is little doubt that Sosa no wo ruled in Idzumo, and Himiko ruled in Kyūshū. Egami believes that Mimaki-Iri-Biko first ruled in Kyūshū, after migrating there from Korea, and then conquered Yamato. We begin with the origin of Sosa no wo.

According to Sansom (1931: 26), “it seems almost certain that, several centuries before the Christian era, south-eastern Korea [the Silla area] and the part of Japan which includes Idzumo were inhabited by people of the same stock.” Nihongi (NI: 57) records that: “Sosa no wo no Mikoto’s 素戔鳴尊 behavior was unmannerly. A fine was therefore imposed on him by all the Gods . . . and he was driven into banishment. At this time, Sosa no wo no Mikoto, accompanied by his son Iso-takeru no Kami, descended to the Land of Silla 降到於新羅國, where he dwelt at Soshi-mori 曾尸茂梨. There he lifted up his voice and said: ‘I will not dwell in this land.’ He at length took clay and made of it a boat, in which he embarked, and crossed over eastwards 東渡 until he arrived at Mount Tori-kamu no Take 鳥上之峯, which is by the upper waters of the river Hi in Idzumo 出雲國.”<sup><1></sup>

Nihongi (NI: 58) continues: “Before this, when Iso-takeru no Kami descended from Heaven, he took down with him the seeds of trees in great quantity. However, he did not plant them in the land of Han 韓地 [Korea], but . . . sowed them every one throughout the Great Eight-island-country 大八洲國 [Japan], beginning with Tsukushi.” However, Nihongi (NI: 58-59) also records another version--that Sosa no wo first planted trees in Silla, built ships with them, and then crossed to Idzumo, Japan: “Sosa no wo no Mikoto

said: ‘In the region of the Land of Han 韓鄉 [Korea] there is gold and silver. It will not be well if the country ruled by my son should not possess floating riches 浮寶者 [ships].’ So he plucked out his beard and scattered it. Thereupon Cryptomerias 檜 were produced . . . . The hairs of his eye-brows became Camphor-trees . . . . These two trees . . . were to be made into floating riches [ships] . . . . Now the children of Sosa no wo no Mikoto . . . dispersed well the seeds of trees, and forthwith crossed over to the Land of Kii 紀伊國. Thereafter Sosa no wo no Mikoto dwelt on the Peak of Kuma-nari 熊成峯 [in Kaya], and eventually entered the Nether Land 根國者.”<sup>20</sup>

Sansom (1963: 33-34) notes that “in a work called Idzumo Fudoki (a topographical survey compiled in 733) there is a legendary account of the origins of the people of Idzumo. It relates that a god, observing that there was too much land in southern Korea, tore off a part of the country of Silla, dragged it across the sea, and fastened it on to the land of Idzumo. This is obviously a folklore version of emigration . . . .”

According to Book I of Nihongi (NI: 59), the emigrants from Silla settled in Idzumo and, “with united strength and one heart, constructed this sub-celestial world 經營天下.”<sup>21</sup> Book II of Nihongi, however, records that they were eventually conquered by the people who came to the Yamato area via Kyūshū [i.e., the imperial clan from Paekche]. Sansom (1931: 26) writes that “[c]ertainly the Idzumo people formed a separate group, with a culture of their own, shared with or derived from a kindred people in south Korea. This is clear, if only from the fact that the Kojiki and the Nihongi both contain three legend-cycles, one recounting the ancestral history of the Idzumo clan, the second that of the Kyūshū people who settled and ruled in Yamato, and the third dealing with events in Yamato.”

Nihongi (NI: 80-81) records that the Heavenly Deity [Taka-mi-musubi 高皇產靈尊, father of the daughter-in law of Ama-terasu 天照大神] sent two deities in advance in order to tranquilize the central land for the sake of his grandchild. These two deities “descended and arrived at the Little shore of Itasa in Idzumo, and questioned Oho-na-mochi no Kami 大己貴神 [the child of Sosa no wo], saying: ‘Wilt thou deliver up this country to the Heavenly Deity, or no?’ He [the child of Sosa no wo] answered and said: ‘I suspected that ye two gods were coming to my place. Therefore I will not allow it.’ . . . . [After hearing this response] Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto sent the two Gods back again, and commanded Oho-na-mochi no Mikoto, saying ‘Having now heard what thou hast said, I find that there is profound reason in thy words. Therefore again I issue my commands to thee more circumstantially, that is to say: Let the public matters which thou hast charge of be conducted by my

grandchild 治顯露之事, and do thou rule divine affairs 治神事 . . . I will also cultivate thy rice-fields for thee . . . and Ame no Ho-hi no Mikoto shall be the president of the festivals in thy honour.’ Hereupon Oho-na-mochi no Kami answered and said: ‘The instructions of the Heavenly Deity are so courteous that I may not presume to disobey his commands. Let the August Grandchild 皇孫 direct the public affairs of which I have charge. I will retire and direct secret matters 幽事.’”<sup><3></sup> Thereafter, it is recounted that the grandchild of the Sun Goddess [i.e., the grandchild of Taka-mi-musubi] came down to take over the Central Land.<sup>1</sup>

Sansom (1931: 26-27) notes that “[t]here is an obvious effort to reconcile the conflicting mythologies of Kyūshū and Idzumo . . . . *Ōnamochi* [of Idzumo] gives up to the grandchild of the Sun Goddess descended in Kyūshū secular dominion, and declares that he will henceforth direct ‘secret matters.’ . . . Kyūshū clans were able to assume sovereign power, but . . . it was necessary to propitiate the Idzumo clans by leaving to them the control of religious affairs.” Accordingly, in Japan, the great shrine of Idzumo has been second in importance only to that of Ise 伊勢.

Sosa no wo is described as a wicked, cruel deity, forever weeping and wailing, who brought many people to an untimely end and destroyed rice-fields so that his parents at last sent him to rule the Nether Land of Darkness. Such a description of Sosa no wo befits the traditionally hostile treatment of the Silla people in Japanese histories, which stand in conspicuous contrast to their rather tender treatment of the Paekche people. Indeed, the Korean chronicles on Silla abundantly recorded the habitual pirate-like raids of the Kyūshū Japanese on the Silla coasts, while *Nihongi* recorded the bitter feelings harbored by the Japanese people against Silla.<sup>2</sup> It is only natural that all the sins were transferred to Sosa no wo. As Sansom (1963: 33) notes, “the chroniclers thought it of the highest importance to support the claim of

<sup>1</sup>The explanation of the meaning of the names of the various Deities appearing during the Age of the Gods is often very conjectural. According to Aston (NI: 11n): “Possibly some of the obscurer names are Korean. The *Seishiroku* speaks of a Korean Sagiri no Mikoto, and other known Korean Deities were worshipped in Japan.”

<sup>2</sup>*Nihongi* (NII: 81) records an edict issued by Kimmei: “The Silla people, a tribe of wretches in the West, have, in defiance of Heaven and devoid of right feeling, disregarded the favour We have shown them. They have broken Our Miyake, poisoned Our black-haired people, and massacred the population of Our districts . . . [T]hey have committed ravage amongst the living souls, rending their livers and hacking off their feet with insatiable delight, scorching their bones in the sun, and burning their dead bodies without saying to themselves that it was cruel.”<sup><4></sup>

the Yamato sovereigns by basing it upon the supreme will of the Sun Goddess, at the same time showing that Sosanowo was not worthy of such an inheritance.”

The transfer of ruling power from the descendants of the Silla royal family to those of the Paekche royal family is told in a roundabout way in Nihongi (NI: 185-186) in the following fashion: The Silla Prince Ama no hihoko 天日槍王子 [Sun-Spear of Heaven] brought with him divine treasures (one Ha-buto gem, one sun-mirror, one Kuma-himorogi and one short sword called Idzushi); he came riding in a ship, cast anchor in the land of Tajima, and dwelt in Tajima; Emperor Suinin dispatched messengers to Kiyō-hiko, great-grandson of Ama no hihoko, with the imperial commands to present those divine treasures to the Emperor; Kiyō-hiko brought the divine treasures 神寶 himself and laid them before Suinin; and then they were deposited in the Sacred Treasury 神府.<sup><5></sup>