

2.

UNDERSTANDING THE HIDDEN MOTIVES OF KOJIKI AND NIHONGI

As Paekche was completely destroyed by the Silla-Tang allied forces in A.D. 663 and annexed by Silla shortly thereafter, the Yamato rulers had to redefine their identity. They officially changed the name of their country from *Wa* 倭 to *Nippon* 日本 in A.D. 670.¹ They began rewriting their history around A.D. 682, eventually producing *Kojiki* in A.D. 712 and *Nihongi* in A.D. 720. The imperial clan began to insist upon its sovereignty over Japan since ancient times.

Kojiki (KC: 3) writes that Temmu 天武 [A.D. 673-686] lamented, saying: “I hear that the chronicles 帝紀及本辭 of the various families deviate from exact truth, and are mostly amplified by empty falsehoods. If at the present these imperfections be not amended, ere many years shall have elapsed, the purport of this, the great basis of the country 邦家之經緯, the grand foundation of the monarchy 王化之鴻基焉, will be destroyed. So now I desire to have the chronicles of the emperors selected and recorded 撰錄帝紀, and the old words examined and ascertained, falsehoods being erased and the truth determined, in order to transmit [the latter] to after ages.”^{<1>} Thus had the work started: the so-called *errors in the old words* and *the misstatements in the former chronicles* were corrected and in due course the Court Noble Ō no Asomi Yasumaro 太朝臣安萬侶 [who died on August 30th, A.D. 723] presented *Kojiki* and then *Nihongi* to Gemmei 元明 and Genshō 元正.

What Egami (1964) calls “the conquest of the autochthonous people, the gods of the land, by the alien race called the gods of heaven” was skillfully concealed in *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*. The primary purpose of these chronicles was to give the *Ōjin* 應神 line of the imperial clan a native Japanese ancestry in the form of “one unbroken line for ages eternal 萬世一系.” Furthermore, in

¹Aston (NI: 1n) writes that “I have little doubt that Nihon [Nippon], as a name for Japan, was first used by the Corean [Korean] scholars who came over in numbers during the early part of the seventh century In 670 it was formally proclaimed to one of the Corean Kingdoms [Silla] that this would be the name of the country in the future, and from about the same time the Chinese also began to use it officially.”

order to give the illusion of great antiquity to the dynasty, the authors of these two chronicles first split Homuda-wake 譽田別 [from Paekche] into two emperors, manufacturing Jimmu 神武 [660-585 B.C.] out of the early experiences of Homuda-wake and constructing Ōjin [A.D. 390-430] out of his later experiences.² Then they had to advance the reign of Ōjin by two cycles [A.D. 270-390] in order to connect him to Jingu 神功 [A.D. 193-269], a fictitious creature inspired by Queen Himiko 卑彌呼 as portrayed in Wei-zhi. They filled up the periods between Jimmu and Ōjin with various imaginary figures, as well as with some actual Kyūshū chieftains such as Mimaki-iri-biko [Sujin] and Okinaga-Tarashi-hime 息長帶日賣命 [Jingu 氣長足姬尊] who came to Kyūshū from the Kaya area in the Yayoi period.³

Some of the stories recorded in these chronicles are probably attempts to record actual happenings, although they appear in garbled form. Even more important, however, is that this reconstructed history has been used to indoctrinate the Japanese people ever since its appearance. It was taught and believed by the ruling classes and was accepted by the people as true.⁴ As a result, for over a thousand years, politicians, scholars and ordinary Japanese people have sought political and spiritual guidance in Kojiki and Nihongi, which has cultivated extreme religious and patriotic prejudices in Japan.

The Japanese court historians in the Kammu period [A.D. 782-806] applied the letter *jin* 神 [God] in manufacturing the titles of *emperors* 天皇 only in three cases: Jimmu 神武 [written Jin-mu but pronounced as Jimmu], Su-jin 崇神, and Ō-jin 應神. Another important figure that was dignified with the letter *jin* was the Empress *Jin-ŋū* 神功. Historians also converted Jimmu-

²Reischauer and Fairbank (1958: 464) note that “[i]nfluenced by eighth-century concepts, the authors of these works obviously reshaped Japanese mythology and historical traditions to enhance the prestige and power of the ruling family and to create a false picture of long centralized rule and a respectable antiquity comparable to that of China. Although reasonably reliable on the later period, their accounts of the early centuries are almost worthless as history . . . [N]onetheless . . . their accounts of the beginning of Japan were accepted as sober facts throughout most of Japanese history.”

³The practice of creating fictitious emperors and stretching the life span of actual or imaginary figures continued even in post-Ōjin records.

⁴History contains very frequent mention of Nihongi being publicly read and expounded to the Mikado’s 御門 Court, beginning the very year after its completion. It superseded the recitations of the Katari be 語部 and other similar customs. A series of affirmative commentaries began to be written upon it immediately after its appearance (see the Introduction to Aston’s Nihongi).

Ōjin, Sujin and Jingū into native Japanese, obligingly tracing both Sosa no wo 須佐之男 who was from Silla in the pre-historic period, and *Ōjin*, who was from Paekche in the proto-historic period, back to the Sun-Goddess 天照大神. According to Egami (1964), “[t]hese special posthumous names, [which] contained the character [jin] are therefore to be understood as distinguished personalities who played an especially important role in the activities of the race descended from the Children of Heaven 天孫, in particular the founders and conquerors.” Indeed Egami should have simply stated that the alien people referred to as the gods of heaven were the Paekche people, who were related to the people of Puyo 夫餘 and Koguryeo, as is evident from the social structure, myths, and traditions that they brought to Japan with them.

According to the King Kwanggaet’o’s stele 廣開土王碑, the founder of Koguryeo, Chumo 鄒牟 [Chumong], called himself “the son of the Emperor of Heaven 皇天 [Whang-Cheon or Huang-Tian], the King Chumo,” and King Kwanggaet’o’s grace and benevolent influence were comparable to those of the Emperor of Heaven. The Yamato Court historians seem to have adopted this unique Koguryeo expression for their kings, simply reversing the order of those two Chinese letters [i.e., Cheon-Whang 天皇 or Tian- Huang].^{5<2>}

Varley (1974: 24) notes that “Japanese scholars of the twentieth century have proved conclusively that this central narrative of myths [in Kojiki and Nihongi], which tells of the descent of the imperial family from the omnipotent Sun Goddess and of its assumption of eternal rule on earth, was entirely contrived sometime during the reform period of the late sixth and seventh centuries to justify the claim to sovereignty of the reigning imperial dynasty.” Historians of the Yamato Court manufactured a history for the imperial family dating back to B.C. 660, eradicated from all records its ancestral relationship to Paekche (which had then been annexed by Silla), and claimed a divine ancestry for the ruling house. The migration of the imperial family from “Paekche” was transformed into the mythological descent of this clan from the “Heaven.”⁶

⁵Aoki (1974: 135-136) notes that “when Prince *shō toku* 聖德太子 designed the fortification of the Japanese sovereign [in the 28th year of Suiko 推古, A.D. 593-628 皇太子 . . . 錄天皇記], he devised to express the latter’s office with . . . *sumera mikoto*, while expressing the term in the Chinese graphs *t’ien huang* . . . *sumera mikoto* connoting *one who controls prayers (soothsaying)*.” According to Twitchett and Fairbank (1979: 259), Gao-zong of Tang took the grandiose title heavenly emperor 天皇 in A. D. 674, for the first time in Chinese history [高宗天皇大聖大弘孝皇帝].

⁶According to Egami (1964), “what is called the *descent of the Children of Heaven* was in fact a progress from *the place to the north of the sea* (south Korea) to Tsukushi.

One may now understand why Nihongi and Kojiki do not offer any straightforward statement on the true relationship between Paekche and Yamato Wa. One might, however, have difficulty understanding why Samguk-sagi 三國史記 fails to give any definitive records on their relationship. First of all, we can see that the record of Paekche in Kim Pu-sik's 金富軾 Samguk-sagi is rather cursory, amounting to a bare minimum for a chronicle. Kim Pu-sik apparently compiled the history of Paekche with a basic lack of sympathy and systematically excluded all the stories that might glorify Paekche beyond the limit of his tolerance, which could not have been very high. He furthermore seems to have thoroughly downgraded the important aspects of the relationship between Paekche and Yamato Wa to eliminate any hint of Paekche's role in the formation of the latter.

In his analysis of Koguryeo's foundation myth, Gardiner(1988) notes that: "To understand Kim Pu-sik's attitude it is necessary to remember that his family claimed descent from the old Silla 新羅 ruling clan . . . For a man of this background, Koryeo's right to rule rested upon his role as legitimate heir to Silla, and the history of Korea before Koryeo 高麗 was basically the history of Silla. This view is reflected in the Samguk-sagi, where Silla is allotted more space than either Koguryeo 高句麗 or Paekche 百濟, although source material for early Silla was scanty or non-existent. Kim Pu-sik established the date 57 B.C. for the foundation of Silla . . . The real significance of 57 B.C. was that it was . . . exactly twelve cycles earlier than the final elimination of Silla's traditional rival, Paekche, in A.D. 663."

From these traditions in Kojiki and Nihon Shoki it may be inferred that the Children of Heaven 天孫, who are considered to be the ancestors of the Emperors of the Yamato court, crossed from south Korea to north Kyūshū and established their first settlement at Tsukushi, and after the lapse of some generations migrated in the direction of the Kinki region."