

3.

AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Egami (1964), the kings of Kaya 伽耶 were descendants of the kings of Chin 辰 [Chin Wang] of the Three Han 三韓 period, and one of them called Mimaki-iri-biko [Sujin], invaded Tsukushi [north Kyūshū] from the operational base of Imna 任那 [Mimana] in southern Korea. Egami believes that the myth of the Descent of the Children of Heaven under Ninigi 瓊瓊杵尊 actually depicts the activities of Sujin 崇神. Egami further contends that Mimaki-iri-biko established a confederated Korean-Japanese state comprised of Kaya and Kyūshū 九州 [Mimana and Tsukushi] in the first half of the fourth century and located its capital in Kyūshū until Jimmu moved eastwards and conquered the Kinki 近畿 region in the late fourth century. Egami believes that the kings of Yamato Wa ruled the Korean-Japanese Confederation [the Kaya-Wa Confederation] until the time of Tenji 天智, during whose reign the kings of Wa finally became sole sovereigns over the islands of Japan. He believes that it is from the time of Tenji onwards that Japan's view of its own history changed.

Unlike Egami, we focus on the Paekche people. The royal family of the Paekche state were descendants of the founding family of the Koguryeo state, who in turn were descendants of the Puyeo ruling family. It was a group of Paekche people, led by a royal family member, Homuda-wake 譽田別, and whole-heartedly blessed by the ruling sovereign of Paekche at Hanseong 漢城, that invaded Japan and conquered the Yamato region in the second half of the fourth century. Mimana 任那 [Imna] served as an operational base for the expeditionary force of Homuda-wake and, as such, maintained a close relationship with the Yamato Court for a long time.

Every story in Kojiki and Nihongi must be sifted in order to find whatever factual element it may contain.⁷ This is not an easy task, but our study has attempted to glean some knowledge of the early history of Japan from an

⁷Sansom (1931: 23) notes that “[t]here are many signs of the deliberate selection and arrangement of myth and legend for dynastic as well as religious ends, and it is not too much to say that these chronicles [rewrote history], in such a way as to justify retrospectively the supremacy of the leading clans over other families or tribes.”

analysis of these chronicles. To understand the efforts made in this study, one needs to have an accurate historical perspective on this early period. In the Yayoi 彌生 period, or perhaps even long before that time, people of the Three Han 三韓 on the Korean peninsula and especially those from the Kaya 加耶 area began to cross the sea and settle in the *kyūshū* area. During the age of the Three Kingdoms in Korea 三國時代, the Paekche people came across the sea *en masse* and settled in the New World called Yamato [the Kinki area], bringing with them the culture and production technologies of Kudara [Paekche]. What the Kojiki and Nihongi tell us is the happy story of the newcomers from the Korean peninsula blending smoothly with the aboriginal inhabitants and creating Yamato Wa. This simple historical context is the only necessary requirement for anyone reading Kojiki and Nihongi to behold the untainted panorama of Korea and Japan -- or more narrowly, the undistorted scenery of Paekche and Yamato Wa in this early period -- and to gain valuable insight into the roots of Japanese history.

It is clear that Yamato Wa 大和倭 would not have developed as it did without its continental connection with Paekche. The organization of the nobility and the *be* points to a common heritage with the Paekche people. The founders of Yamato Wa must have been a group of military leaders from Paekche's ruling families who crossed over the sea in search of a New World. As Kyūshū was already an Old World by that time, however, they found their New World in the Yamato area.⁸ Archeological evidence clearly indicates that conquest was an important element in the formation of Yamato Wa. The development of Yamato Wa should thus be seen as one part of the history of Paekche.

Homuda-wake was a military leader from Paekche and quite likely a member of the Paekche royal family. It was the Paekche ancestry of *Ōjin* 應神 and his imperial descendants in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries that explain the remarkably close cultural, political, and military ties that characterize the relationship between Japan and Paekche during this period.

Although one may study early Korean history without having any knowledge of Japan, one cannot study early Japanese history without knowing Korean history, or without recognizing the influence of Korea on Japan. In studying Japan, one has to introduce Korea, even if in the guise of the deliberately ambiguous term *Continent* or under the catch-all term *China*,

⁸Aoki (1974: 18) states that "[s]ince northern Kyūshū and the western edge of the Japanese main islands were firmly held by the Yayoi farmers, immigrants in the third and fourth centuries had to go by way of the Inland Sea 内海 or the southern coasts of Shikoku 四國 Island to reach the present Nara- *Nara* 奈良-大阪 region."

which was the dominating source of all East Asian civilization. Without broad historical perspective, Kojiki and Nihongi simply become elaborate legends of the gods 神代物語, fictions about the divine descent of the imperial family 天孫降臨 and the native Shinto. Unfortunately, this myth-making was acceptable to the Japanese Kokugaku scholars who chose to delude the Meiji Japanese people, ultimately leading them into national defeat and disillusionment in 1945. It is lamentable to watch the present-day Japanese continuously seeking answers to questions like “Who are we? Where did we come from? How did Yamato Wa 大和倭 come to be established, and when?” -- and categorically precluding Paekche or Korea as possible answers.

The post-War economic growth of Japan may represent the triumph of the Japanese system and the diligence, sacrifice and teamwork of the Japanese people, but most Japanese are again encouraged to believe that their successful growth is rooted in the purity, uniqueness, and superiority of the Japanese race. Perhaps the deep-seated sense of inferiority among the Japanese people, which a few decades of successful economic growth can not dislodge easily, makes them extremely clannish, insular and parochial. Even today most Japanese seem to occupy their minds with proving whether they are inferior or superior to some other race or races rather than appreciate different peoples of different races as equal human beings. The post-War economic miracle in Japan once again has generated a euphoric feeling about the uniqueness of the Japanese race, culture and beliefs. Unfortunately, such inclinations can never be conducive to harmony in our multi-racial world.