NEWS HEADLINES IN YAMATO

September 5, 660. Shocking news arrived at the Yamato court from Paekche: in July, Silla drew the Tang people onto the Korean peninsula, destroyed Paekche, and captured the King and his ministers. Shortly thereafter followed another report: Bok-sin, Minister of Paekche, collected the scattered ranks, regrouped an army, strengthened their fighting spirit, and the Tang forces dared not launch an attack against Bok-sin.

October, 660. Bok-sin dispatched an envoy to the Yamato court, asking for troops and assistance, and Paekche Prince Pung-jang returned to inherit the throne.1

Queen Saimei proclaimed: “We learn that in ancient times [likely implying the time of King Kwang-gae-to the Great] there have been cases of troops being asked for and assistance requested: to render help in emergencies, and to restore that which has been interrupted, is a manifestation of ordinary principles of right. The Land of Paekche, in its extremity, has come to us and placed itself in our hands . . . Our resolution in this matter is unshakable. We will give separate orders to our generals to advance at the same time by a hundred routes . . .”2

January 6, 661. Queen Saimei sailed westward to Kyūshū in order to command the entire operation to rescue Paekche at
the front. July 24. Queen Saimei, who had been leading the rescue operation at the Asakura temporary palace in northern Kyūshū, died. November 7. Crown Prince (Tenji) carried her remains back to Asuka, and held the funeral. 3

July, 662. The Crown Prince, dressed in white mourning clothes, set up his residence in the Nagatsu temporary palace in Kyūshū, commanding the overseas rescue operation. 4

March, 663. The Crown Prince dispatched an army of 27,000 to attack Silla. August 28. Soldiers of Yamato, ten thousand strong, who came across the sea to rescue Paekche, were annihilated at the mouth of the Paek-chon River. Pungjang took a boat and escaped to Koguryeo along with a few followers. September 7. Fortress Chu-yu fell to Tang force. 5

January 3, 668. The Crown Prince, who had been in mourning clothes coping with the emergency on the Korean peninsula, belatedly succeeded to the throne, becoming King Tenji. September, 668. Tang forces destroyed Koguryeo. 6

All of the above are excerpts from Nihongi. Western scholars have tended to accept the one-sided Japanese version of the ancient Korea-Japan relationship, but they cannot help but remain puzzled by such a question as posed by Batten (1986: 212): “Why the Japanese should have thrown themselves with such vigor into a war that, if not quite an intramural Korean conflict, had at least no direct bearing on Japanese territory, is not easy to answer. The explanation offered by Nihon-shoki . . . while high-sounding, can hardly be taken at face value.”

CREATING A NEW HISTORY OF THE YAMATO KINGDOM

In the month of December 670, the Silla Pon-ki (the Annals of Silla in Samguk-sagi) reports that “Wa State” changed its name to “Nippon.” King Tenji died on December 3, 671. 8 Earlier, Tenji’s younger brother had married the second daughter of Tenji (who later became Queen Jitō). He staged the so-called “Coup of Jin-shin” in 672, and made himself king on February 27, 673, becoming King Tenmu. 9

March 17, 681. Tenmu ordered six princes and six ministers to compile the histories of the Yamato kingdom. 10

As Paekche and Koguryeo were conquered one by one by their archenemiy Silla that drew Tang forces onto the Korean

3 齊明 七年春正月 丁酉朔丙寅 御船西征 始就于海路 …居于…行宮…名曰長津 五月…遷居于朝倉…宮…秋七月…天皇崩于朝倉宮…皇太子奉従天皇喪 遷至…歸就于海…還泊難波 十一月…崩于飛鳥 (NII: 348 -351)

4 天智 即位前紀 七年七月…皇太子素服稱制 … 迁居于長津宮 稍聴水表之軍政 (NII: 353)

5 天智 二年三月…率二萬七千人 打新羅…秋八月…率健兒萬餘…於白村江…戊申 日本船師初至者 與大唐船師合戰…己酉…官軍敗績…百濟王豐璋 與數人乘船 進去高麗 九月辛亥朔丁已 百濟州柔城 始降于唐 (NII: 357- 358)

6 天智 七年春正月 丙戌朔戊子 皇太子即天皇位 冬十月大 唐大將軍英公 打滅高麗 (NII: 367-371)

7 文武王 十年十二月…倭國更號日本 自言 近日所出以爲名 (S1: 128) Nihongi was still reading the Chinese characters Nippon as Japan. 日本 此云耶麻謄 (NI: 81) 夜麻登 (K: 162)

8 天智 十年十二月 癸亥朔乙丑 天皇崩于近江宮 (NII: 381)

9 天武 二年二月 丁巳朔癸未…卽帝位於飛鳥浄御原宮 (NII: 411)
CREATING A NEW HISTORY OF THE YAMATO KINGDOM


10 天武 十年三月 天皇...以詔...令記定帝紀及上古諸事 (NII: 447)

11 古事記上巻 井序
臣安萬侶言...飛鳥淸原大宮御大八州天皇御世...潭探上古...明観先代...於是天皇詔之 議聞諸家之所 資帝紀及本辭 既違正實 多加虛僞 今之時不改其失 未經幾年其旨欲滅 斯乃邦家之經緯 王化之鴻基焉 故惟撰錄帝紀 討覈舊辞 削僞定實 欲流後葉時有舍人 姓稗田 名阿禮 年是二十八 爲人聰明 度目誦口 拂耳勒心 即勅語阿禮 令誦習帝皇日繼及先代舊辭 然運移世異 未行其事矣...以和銅四年九月十八日 諭臣安萬侶 撰錄稗田阿禮所誦之 勅語舊辭 以獻上者...和銅五年正月二十八日 正五位上勳五等太朝臣安萬侶 (K:44-46)

12 In 1979, a 41-character epitaph was excavated from the grave of Yasumaro. Murayama and Miller (1979) note that “the Chinese language of the inscription contains a startling linguistic Koreanism, in its employment of the Chinese grammatical particle Ch. qī ‘this’ [which is used as the direct object of the intransitive verb ‘died’] ... It is a usage that is remarkably well attested [though totally ungrammatical for Chinese] from early epigraphical specimens of Chinese as it was written in Korea from the sixth through the peninsula, the sense of crisis and anxiety of the Yamato rulers regarding the fate of their kingdom on the Japanese archipelago was heightened far beyond imagination. The disappearance of the Paekche kingdom and the unification of the Korean peninsula in the hands of the Silla people caused an unprecedented identity crisis for the Yamato rulers. Should they continue to identify themselves with the Paekche, they feared their days on the Japanese islands would be numbered. They did not want to cast their fate with the Paekche. In order to establish an entirely new identity as a native polity disconnected from the Paekche, and to secure a permanent future in the Japanese islands, Tenmu (673-86) ordered [in 681] the creation of new histories of the Yamato dynasty.

The Preface to Kojiki states that Tenmu had profound knowledge of ancient histories and was able to comprehend the previous age thoroughly. On an appointed day before Tenmu died in 686, the outline of the new history of the Yamato kingdom was at last finalized, and was memorized by Hieda Are, then 28 years old, who had extraordinary powers of memory.

Tenmu’s own words, quoted in the Preface of Kojiki, offer a glimpse of Tenmu’s sense of crisis and of the necessity, therefore, to create a new history: “Those chronicles handed down and kept by the head family of each clan contain records which differ greatly from the facts. Unless we correct those false records at this very moment, the foundation of our kingdom and royal family will be lost in a few years. I now intend to scrutinize all those records with great care, eliminate the falsehoods, correct the errors, and hand down the true version of our history to posterity.”

HISTORY OF ROYAL MANDATE 勅語舊辭

Genmei (707-15), born in 661 as the fourth daughter of Tenji, was a niece, the younger sister of Tenmu’s wife, and, at the same time, a daughter-in-law of Tenmu. She had relocated capital from Fujiwara-kyō to Nara (Heijō-kyō) in 710. On September 18, 711, Genmei ordered Yasumaro to write down the new History of Royal Mandate 勅語舊辭 that had been memorized by Hieda Are, who must have been more than 54 years old by that time. Hieda Are dictated and Yasumaro wrote.
Four months later on January 28, 712, Yasumaro presented the results to Genmei. Kojiki records this bare outline of the newly created history without specifying dates, months or years.

On the basis of Kojiki, the Yamato court immediately commenced, under the co-chairmanship of Prince Toneri and Yasumaro, the compilation of official annals called Nihongi. This formal history of the Yamato kingdom was finished in 720, the sixth year of the reign of Genshou (715-24), a daughter of Genmei. It came to be called Nihon-shoki in later ages. Yasumaro died in 723.12

**COMPILING KOJIKI AND NIHONGI WITH DEFINITE OBJECTIVES IN MIND**

The Yamato rulers compiled Kojiki and Nihongi with definite objectives in mind. They wanted to eradicate any original connection with the Paekche kingdom; they wanted to make the origin of ruling clans as ancient and as native as the Yayoi aborigines; and they wanted to make the Yamato kingdom a dominant regional force. In the new history, the Yamato kingdom is said to have been established in time immemorial (660 BC) without any connection with Paekche; the imperial family became a truly native force without any relation to the Paekche people; and all Korean and Chinese kingdoms were under the suzerainty of the Yamato court. The ruling clans were postulated to have come down to the Japanese islands, not from the Korean peninsula but directly from heaven. An entirely new identity as an ancient native polity was thus created for the Yamato kingdom.

Nihongi has neither a preface, nor tables, nor treatises on contemporary systems, customs and geography, nor biographies of important persons. In China, a chronicle without such information could hardly be called “shoki.” The main text (Annals), however, could maintain the semblance of a standard Chinese dynastic history.

Ever since the appearance of Kojiki and Nihongi, their ideology was instilled into the mind of the Yamato ruling class, and eventually evolved into the semi-religious emperor worship on the Japanese islands. The appellation for Yamato rulers had in no time been elevated from Great King (Ō-kimi) to Emperor (Tenno).13 As a result, even after the traditional ruling class of mid-eighth centuries. … It will be interesting to see how long the Japanese reading public is kept in the dark concerning this startling Koreanism in the Yasumaro epitaph.”

13 Gao-zong of the Tang, in poor health for some time, had been forced to retire to a summer palace in 657, and to hold court only on alternate days. According to Twitchett (1979: 255), “the empress’s position became virtually impregnable after the tenth month of 660, when Gaozong apparently suffered a serious stroke. The empress [Wu] took easily to administering the empire during his recurrent periods of incapacity. By the end of 660 the empress Wu was ruler of the empire in fact if not in name.” In 670, she assumed the grandiose title of Heavenly Empress (Tian-Hou), bestowing the title Heavenly Emperor (Tian-Huang) on Gaozong, for the first time in Chinese history. The Japanese were soon to copy this august title, “the Heavenly Emperor.”
THE MASSIVE EXILES TO THE JAPANESE ISLANDS

After the complete destruction of Paekche by the Silla-Tang forces in 663, there occurred a series of massive exiles to the Japanese islands. Nihongi (N2: 282-92) records extensively on the emigration of Paekche refugees: “Prince Seon-Kwang of Paekche and his people were given a residence at Naniha. … [A]fter a comparison of the Paekche degrees of official rank there was granted to the Kwi-sil, Chipsa, in consideration of the eminent services of the Minister Pok-sin, the rank of lower Shokin. Moreover Paekche common people, men and women numbering more than 400, were given residences in the district of Kanzaki, in the province of Afumi …[and] rice lands were granted to the Paekche people of Kanzaki [in 665] … Over 2,000 Paekche people, men and women, were settled in the East country [in 666]. Without distinction between black and white (i.e., of priests and laymen), they were all maintained at Government expense for three years beginning with … [663]. … [T]he Minister Yeo Cha-sin, … and others, men and women, to the number of over 700 persons, were removed and settled in the district of Kamafu in the province of Afumi [in 669].

The newly arrived Paekche refugees, depending on their ranks in Paekche, received the same honors as the Yamato rulers, or the same privileges as the common people in the Japanese islands. The Nihongi (N2: 295-6) notes that: “There was a popular ditty, as follows:

The oranges – Each on their own branches,
Though they grow – When strung as pearls,
Arestrung on the same string.”

Oranges allude to the rulers of Paekche and the rulers of Yamato.
STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH SILLA AGAINST THE TANG

Batten (1986) notes that “the years between the Paekchon River debacle in 663 and the Tang retreat from Korea in 676 were worrisome for the defeated Japanese … whose anxiety can be measured by the feverish defense preparations taken during this same period. … Scattered references to the construction or repair of fortifications continue until 701.”

In the late seventh century, not only Silla but also the Yamato court was afraid of the Tang’s expansionist intention. In 664, the Yamato court established frontier guards and signal fires in Tsushima Island, Iki Island, and northern Kyushū. Also embankments storing water were built around the fortresses in Kyushū which were called the Water Fortress. In 665, the Yamato court sent Paekche generals to construct a rampart in Nagato, and two ramparts in Kyushū. In 667, a rampart was constructed in the Yamato region, another one at Sanuki, and another one at the Tsushima island. One can find the expression of the Tsukusi (Northern Kyushū) Commandery appearing in the Nihongi record for the year 667. The Yamato court intensified the preparation for a possible war against the Tang invasion forces.15

Silla and the Yamato court formed a strategic, though short-lived, alliance against the Tang. In 668, Silla sent an envoy, and the Yamato court sent a ship to Kim Yu-shin as a gift, and also sent a ship to the King of Silla through the returning Silla envoy, symbolizing the beginning of the strategic alliance between the Silla and the Yamato court.16 Between 668-95, the Yamato court sent nine envoys to Silla.

The appearance of the Parhae kingdom in Manchuria, however, substantially lessened the direct threat of the Tang on the Korean peninsula and also on the Japanese islands. The traditional animosity between Silla and the Yamato kingdom could not but re-surface. When the Parhae came to occupy the Liao-dong in 755-7, the strategic alliance between Silla and the Yamato kingdom rapidly dissolved. The Yamato court sent no envoys to Silla (while sending four envoys to Parhae) between 754-78, and rumors of invading Silla could be heard in the Yamato court in 759.17

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