

***Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀) Trilingual: Selections**  
in the Original Classical Chinese (*Kanbun*) with English Translation  
based on the *Iwanami Bunko* edition (five volumes, 1994-1995)

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The publisher Iwanami Shoten consulted regarding using the original text of *Nihon Shoki* in the *Iwanami Bunko* edition for this translation.

## Introduction

Two reasons account for my doing this translation project. Firstly, an article on the Shinto religion in the newspaper *The Japan Times* of May 4<sup>th</sup> 2016 reported a comment that “[w]hen the [creation] myth was written, in the eighth-century ‘Kojiki’ (‘Records of Ancient Matters’) and ‘Nihon Shoki’ (‘The Chronicles of Japan’), the authors were not aware that the world consisted of much more than the islands of Japan. The archipelago was seen as the entire Earth.” This is simply not correct. Lively interactions between Japan and the Korean kingdoms, together with occasional reports on Sino-Japanese relations, make up a sizable portion of *Nihon Shoki*, the first official national history of Japan compiled during the late 7<sup>th</sup> century and the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. Historian Kōnosshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光 (Kōnosshi 2016) and calligrapher Ishikawa Kyūyō 石川九楊 (Kojima 2007, vol. 1) both noted the international character of *Nihon Shoki* and indicated that its compilation was an effort to position Japan at its rightful place among the three cultures of East Asia.

Secondly, I am amazed that *Nihon Shoki* was written in classical Chinese, with the exception of some verbal poetic exchanges or ballads that were recorded in Man’yōgana (万葉仮名). Man’yōgana are Chinese characters used only with their phonetic value to represent Japanese spoken contents. The sounds of these characters probably serve well to convey the sentimental Japanese utterances in their original oral form. While the Chinese text does at times exhibit certain influence of “Japanese custom” (和習, washū) in the style of discourse such as the way of expression (Kojima 2007, 2:309), the original is still highly readable for people who are comfortable with classical Chinese. This translation, based

directly on the original text, is an exercise and attempt by a non-native speaker of English to try to make this important historical writing of Japan, which perhaps is comparable to *Shi Ji* (史記) of China, more accessible.



Manuscript version (1540 CE, Important Cultural Property of Japan) of *Nihon Shoki* prepared by Urabe Kanemigi (卜部兼右), on which chapters 3-30 of the *Iwanami Bunko* (岩波文庫) edition are based. The page above is the beginning of chapter 3 on Emperor Jinmu. Reproduced by permission of Tenri Central Library, Tenri University (天理大学付属天理図書館蔵)

## Contents of *Nihon Shoki*

*Nihon Shoki*, commonly called The Chronicle (or Chronicles) of Japan, comprises thirty chapters. The first two chapters describe the Era of the Gods (神代, Jindai) which begins with the spontaneous appearance of heaven and earth and that of the first eleven gods. The last two of these eleven gods – Izanaki no Mikoto (伊奘諾尊) and Izanami no Mikoto (伊奘冉尊) – were creators who, after consummating as a couple, gave birth to the archipelago of Japan and its seas, rivers, mountains and flora. They then wanted to produce the master of “the place under heaven” (天下, amanoshita); so they bore four children, the first and second being the deities of the sun (Amaterasu Ōmikami, 天照大神) and the moon. Later, Amaterasu Ōmikami’s grandson, Amatsu Hikohikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto (天津彦彦火瓊瓊杵尊), was sent down from heaven (高天原, Takamagahara) to the archipelago. His great grandson was

Hikohohodemi (彥火々出見), who later led the eastern expedition from his home base in south Kyushu towards eastern Japan. Settling down in the Kashihara (橿原) area in today's Nara Prefecture, Hikohohodemi ascended the throne as the first human-god emperor of Japan known as Jinmu Tennō (神武天皇). According to legend and heritage, the date of his enthronement was Day One in the First Month (lunar calendar) of 660 BCE. The main text of the Era of the Gods is interspersed with numerous alternative accounts, called arufude (一書), of the same stories, hence the various versions of Japanese mythology emanating from *Nihon Shoki*.

Following the first two chapters on the gods are twenty-eight chapters, each recording chronologically the events during the reign of individual emperors, empresses and a queen. There were merciful emperors exemplified by Emperor Suinin (垂仁天皇) who abolished human sacrifice and a cruel Emperor Buretsu (武烈天皇) who took pleasure in seeing people suffer. There was the coming to Japan of the Chinese classics and Buddhism, both from the Korean peninsula (Selections 10 and 14). There were earthquakes; a major one that reportedly resulted in forming a new island near the Izu Peninsula took place in 684, Year Thirteen of Emperor Tenmu (天武天皇). *Nihon Shoki* comes to its conclusion in 697 when Empress Jitō (持統天皇) ceded the throne to the Crown Prince.

## A New Name for the Country: Writing “*Yamato*” as 日本 (Yamato)

When *Nihon Shoki* was completed and presented to the royal court in 720 by the compiler-in-chief Prince Toneri Shinnō (舍人親王), a son of Emperor Tenmu, the country name “日本” (Yamato) in written kanji merely had a history of several decades, even though the name of 日本 (read as Yamato, not Nihon) is used constantly in *Nihon Shoki* throughout the entire work. While Japan's encounter with Chinese characters happened very early, its actual use of them, either as Man'yōgana for transliterating spoken Japanese or as a written grammatical script for composing semantic writings, began only in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century (Okimori 2011, 40-42). The oral appellation that Japan had been using for itself was “Yamato”. The initial Chinese character for the people on the Japanese islands was “倭” (read as Wo in Chinese) which came from China. Reading this character as Yamato, Japan adopted “倭” as its written country name too, until it made the name change later on. When and why Japan changed its written name from 倭 to 日本 is never mentioned in *Nihon Shoki*. The clue to answer this question may however be found in Chinese historical writings. *Sui Shu* (隋書), the

official history of the Sui dynasty (581-618) of China, recorded an episode in the year 607 in which Emperor Yangdi was made unhappy by the state memorandum from the Japanese sovereign Empress Suiko who called herself “The Son of Heaven at the place of sunrise” (Tōdō 2010, 468). Here we may sense that, at that point in time in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, Japan had already been harbouring some reluctance to accept a country name coined for it by another country.

The first official history of the Tang dynasty (618-907), *Jiu Tang Shu* (舊唐書), mentions that Japan changed its written country name from 倭 to 日本 because Japan disliked the vulgarity of the name 倭, and chose the new name of 日本 – literally, the sun’s origin or the sun’s roots – because the country is near the place where the sun rises. The later official history of the Tang dynasty, *Xin Tang Shu* (新唐書), says that Japan used a new name for itself some time after 670 (咸亨元年, Xianheng yuan nian, of China). This momentous event of when and why Japan acquired its new name was also recorded in subsequent official histories of China, but never disclosed anywhere in Japan’s own official history. It should be noted that the change was only in the written form of the name, and that the verbal form of 日本 remained as Yamato. The definite date of the formal name change was given by Kōnoshi Takamitsu as 701 (Kōnoshi 2016, 20-24) when the Taihō law code (大宝律令, Taihō ritsuryō) was promulgated. Sinologist Tomiya Itaru 富谷至 mentions the new form 日本 probably was adopted in the Asuka Kiyomihara law code (飛鳥浄御原律令, Asuka Kiyomihara ritsuryō) of 689 (Tomiya 2018, 200-202). Earlier, in spring of 681, Emperor Tenmu ordered his princes and high officials to prepare a definitive record of the sovereigns’ reigns and ancient matters (Selection 19). Probably by this time the idea of formulating a brand-new written name for Japan to replace the name of 倭 had been crystallising, or the new name had actually been decided on. Incidentally, *Kojiki* (古事記), the historical and mythological work completed in 712, does not contain the name of 日本 at all.

## Extent of This Project

This project comprises twenty short selections taken from the original text of thirty chapters. The scope spans many years, from the appearance of the universe (天地, tenchi), through the coming of the Chinese classics and Buddhism to Japan, and Emperor Tenmu’s initiation of the writing of Japan’s first national history generally called *Nihon Shoki*, until the reign of Empress Jitō in the concluding years of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

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# Nihon Shoki Chapter One (Selection 1)

## Era of the Gods Part I

### Formation of Heaven-and-Earth and the First Three Gods<sup>4</sup>

In the remote past heaven and earth were not demarcated; the negative and the positive were not divided. It was an amorphous whole like the inside of a chicken egg, and with natural energy containing omens of genesis. Subsequently clear and bright matters rose and floated, forming the heaven; heavy and murky matters sank and piled up, becoming the earth. The delicate and subtle conglomerated easily; the heavy and murky solidified with difficulty. Therefore the heaven formed first and the earth settled afterwards. Then the sacred came to life in this heaven-and-earth.<sup>5</sup> Thus it was said, “At the beginning of heaven-and-earth, islands and land were floating and drifting like swimming fish floating on water.” At this time, something came to life in heaven-and-earth, with the shape of the sprout of reed, and it transformed into a god, named Kuni no Tokotachi no Mikoto [God of the Everlasting State]. Next was Kuni no Satsuchi no Mikoto<sup>6</sup> [God of the Young (or Narrow) Land]. Next was Toyo Kumunu no Mikoto<sup>7</sup> [God of Abundant Water]. Altogether there were three gods. Only the masculine line transformed, thus forming these pure males. (volume 1, page 423)

# 日本書紀 卷第一

神代上

古天地未剖、陰陽不分、渾沌如雞子、溟滓<sup>1</sup>而含牙。及其清陽者、薄靡而為天、重濁者、淹滯而為地。精妙之合搏<sup>2</sup>易、重濁之凝竭難、故天先成而地後定、然後神聖生其中焉。故曰、開闢之初、洲壤浮漂、譬猶游魚之浮水上也。于時、天地之中生一物、狀如葦牙、便化為神、號國常立尊、次國狹槌尊、次豐斟淳<sup>3</sup>尊、凡三神矣。乾道獨化、所以成此純男。(第一冊 四二三ページ)



## About punctuation and sentence division in the original Chinese/Japanese text

Since the original text is not punctuated, punctuation in this transcription of the text may not exactly follow the practice in the *Iwanami Bunko* edition.

## Notes on Selection 1

<sup>1</sup>The character 滓 is pronounced in Cantonese as 幸.

<sup>2</sup>The character 搏 is pronounced in Cantonese as 團.

<sup>3</sup>The character 滄 is pronounced in Cantonese as 亭.

<sup>4</sup>*Nihon Shoki* begins with this passage on the initial appearance of heaven, the earth and the gods.

<sup>5</sup>In the context of *Nihon Shoki*, heaven-and-earth is a literal translation of the two Chinese characters meaning the sky or heaven, and land or the earth.

<sup>6</sup>This god's name "Satsuchi" comprises three Chinese characters. The second and third characters "tsuchi" together have been interpreted as the land. The first character "Sa" literally means narrow. Thus, these three characters together may mean a narrow piece of land, which succinctly reflects the shape of the Japanese archipelago, as geographically known to people of the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, the character "Sa" is also interpreted as rice plants.

<sup>7</sup>"Mikoto" is an honorary suffix to the name of a god. This is the Japanese reading attached to actually two different Chinese characters, 尊 (son) and 命 (mei). When either of these two characters is used in a god's name, the Japanese reading is identical, as Mikoto. However, the character 尊 is for the noblest gods, whereas the character 命 is for gods in ordinary ranks. This linguistic treatment clearly shows that Chinese characters are much more than mere phonetic symbols: their physical and graphic forms by themselves, visible to the human eyes without utterance, serve as a subtle dimension of meaning in its own right.

## Nihon Shoki Chapter One (Selection 2)

### Era of the Gods Part I

#### Birth of the Sun Goddess, the Moon God and Susanoo no Mikoto

Then Izanaki no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto discussed, “We already gave birth to Ōyashima no Kuni<sup>3</sup> and also mountains, rivers and plants. Why do we not bear the master of the land under heaven?” So together they bore the Sun Goddess, with the name Ōhirume no Muchi.<sup>4</sup> This child was ablaze with brilliance and sparkingly magnificent, shining thoroughly in heaven-and-earth in all directions. Therefore the two gods said happily, “Although we have many children, none is as wonderful and miraculous as this child. We should send her early to heaven and invest her with authority in heaven’s affairs, instead of letting her stay long in this country.” Since heaven and earth were still not far apart at the time, they lifted her up to heaven with a heavenly pillar. Next they bore the Moon God.<sup>5</sup> His brilliance was second to the sun and could complement the sun to rule; so they also sent him up to heaven. . . . Next they bore Susanoo no Mikoto.<sup>6</sup> . . . Therefore, to Susanoo no Mikoto the two parent gods decreed, “You are very tyrannical, so cannot reign over the universe. Definitely you should go far away to Ne no Kuni.”<sup>7</sup> Subsequently they banished him. (volume 1, pages 428-429)

神代上

## 日本書紀 卷第一

既而伊奘諾尊・伊奘冉尊共議曰、吾已生大八洲國及山川草木、何不生天下之主者歟。於是共生日神、號大日靈貴！此子光華明彩、照徹於六合之內。故二神喜曰、吾息雖多、未有若此靈異之兒、不宜久留此國、自當早送于天、而授以天上之事。是時天地相去未遠、故以天柱舉於天上也。次生月神、其光彩亞日、可以配日而治、故亦送之于天。・・・次生素戔鳴尊<sup>2</sup>。・・・故其父母二神、勅素戔鳴尊、汝甚無道、不可以君臨宇宙、固當遠適之於根國矣、遂逐之。（第一冊 四二八～四二九ページ）

## Notes on Selection 2

<sup>1</sup>The character 靈 is pronounced in Cantonese as 靈. The character 貴 means a noble person; this character may be an honorific term here. 大日靈貴 is Amaterasu Ōmikami (天照大神), the Sun Goddess of Japan. The character 靈, which in Chinese is regarded as a feminine name used in olden times, may be interpreted here as a female shaman or sorcerer. It may also echo the description “靈異之兒” (a wonderful and miraculous child) appearing later in the text.

<sup>2</sup>The character 爰 is pronounced in Cantonese as 煎.

<sup>3</sup>Ōyashima no Kuni literally means the Great State (or Country) of Eight Islands, the first island being the present-day Honshu, Japan's main island. Among these eight places, Koshi-no-shima (越洲) was the northwest coast of Honshu, not really an island. The large northern island of Hokkaido was still not part of this group of eight.

<sup>4</sup>Ōhirume no Muchi (大日靈貴) is the name used in this part of the original text for Amaterasu Ōmikami (天照大神), the Sun Goddess of Japan.

<sup>5</sup>The deity of the moon is regarded as a male god, in contrast to the goddess of the sun.

<sup>6</sup>Actually, Izanaki no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto gave birth to four children of human form. After the Sun Goddess and the Moon God, and before the mischievous Susanoo no Mikoto, they bore Hiruko (蛭兒). This third child, however, had feet that could not walk even at age three. So the parents abandoned this kid. It is not easy to tell the gender from most names of the gods. Pronouns in both classical Japanese and classical Chinese are usually gender-neutral.

<sup>7</sup>Ne no Kuni may be interpreted as a domain or state underground, or the underworld.

## Nihon Shoki Chapter Two

(Selection 3)

### Era of the Gods Part II

#### Birth of Heaven's Grandson and His Descent to Earth

Amaterasu Ōmikami's son, Masaka Akatsu Kachihayahi Ama no Oshihomimi no Mikoto, married Takami Musuhi no Mikoto's daughter Takuhata Chizuhime, and gave birth to Amatsu Hikohikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto. So Royal Ancestor Takami Musuhi no Mikoto gave him special concern and love, rearing him respectfully. Subsequently he wanted to appoint his Royal Grandson (Heaven's Grandson) Amatsu Hikohikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto as the overlord of Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, Central Country of the Fields of Reeds. . . .<sup>14</sup> At this time, Takami Musuhi no Mikoto put a quilt on the Royal Grandson Amatsu Hikohikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto and let him descend. The Royal Grandson therefore left the heaven's boulder seat. Pushing apart heaven's many layers of clouds, his heavenly grandeur and mighty aura accompanied by whirling winds,<sup>15</sup> from heaven he descended on the mountain summit Takachiho no Take in the place Himuka no So.<sup>16</sup> Then, as for the manner of the Royal Grandson's touring, from the twin-summit sacred mountain he came down on the heaven's ladder and stood on the flat area of a floating island. Through this barren and empty land, he proceeded from a place with hill upon hill and went forward, looking for a good country. He arrived at the headland of Kasasa in the place Nagaya of the Ata domain.<sup>17</sup> (volume 1, pages 452, 455)

## 日本書紀 卷第二

神代下

天照大神之子正哉吾勝勝速日天忍穗耳尊、娶高皇產靈尊之女栲幡千千姬<sup>1</sup>、生天津彥彥火瓊瓊杵尊、故皇祖高皇產靈尊特鍾憐愛、以崇養焉、遂欲立皇孫天津彥彥火瓊瓊杵尊、以為葦原中國<sup>2</sup>之主。 . . . 于時、高皇產靈尊以真床追衾<sup>3</sup>、覆於皇孫天津彥彥火瓊瓊杵尊使降之。皇孫乃離天磐座、且排分天八重雲<sup>4</sup>、稜威<sup>5</sup>之道別道別<sup>6</sup>、而天降於日向襲<sup>7</sup>之高千穗峯<sup>8</sup>矣。既而皇孫遊行之狀也者、則自穗日二上<sup>9</sup>。天浮橋<sup>10</sup>、立於浮渚在平處、而贅穴之空國<sup>11</sup>、自頓丘<sup>12</sup>覓國行去、到於吾田長屋笠狹之碕<sup>13</sup>矣。(第一冊 四五二、四五五ページ)

## Notes on Selection 3

<sup>1</sup>The character 梛 in this name is a variant of 栲 and is pronounced in Cantonese as 巧.

<sup>2</sup>The name 葦原中國 (Ashihara no Nakatsukuni, the Central Country of the Fields of Reeds) may be interpreted as referring to Japan in general. Of particular interest is the use of the term 中國, literally meaning the central or middle country or kingdom. This term originated in Chinese texts over 2,500 years ago, appearing in the Chinese Classics. In many instances the term was used to juxtapose China, as a cultural and physical entity, with the neighbouring peoples then regarded as barbarians with cultures different from the Chinese. The term however was not regarded as the official name for the Chinese polity. For this very reason that the term 中國 was not official, in *Nihon Shoki* it was also employed as a designation for the Japanese state with the addition of the qualifier 葦原, perhaps to illustrate the abundance of reed fields in Japan. Perhaps this was an effort to give Japan an appropriate status. This is my attempt to understand the use of 中國 in *Nihon Shoki*. It should be clearly understood that the compilers of *Nihon Shoki* were in full awareness of the international situation in their time in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century and the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, and that they were well-versed in the Chinese Classics and other Chinese texts.

<sup>3</sup>The term 真床追衾 (makoto ōfusuma) may simply be translated as a quilt to cover the body. According to the *Iwanami Bunko* explanation, 真 means nice, 床 is a raised area in a room for sitting and sleeping, 追 is the same as to cover (覆う), and 衾 is the quilt (*Iwanami Bunko*, vol. 1, p. 371, note 11). In this instance this quilt may be regarded as a regal robe for the Royal Grandson for his descent to earth.

<sup>4</sup>The term 天八重雲 (ama no yae-kumo) may mean eight layers, or many layers, of clouds. The number eight appears frequently in *Nihon Shoki*. This number is regarded as a sacred number (聖数, せいすう) in Japan.

<sup>5</sup>The term 稜威 (itsu) here may mean the grandeur and might befitting a high god. The character 稜 is a variant form of 棱 which has the meaning of dignity and mightiness.

<sup>6</sup>This phrase contains the term 道別 repeated once. Generally this term is interpreted as separating the path or finding the right path to proceed, and this action is repeated as one moves forward. But according to another interpretation, the reading of this term — ちわき (chiwaki) — may mean gusts of whirling winds, since the character ち has an archaic meaning of wind, and わき may be interpreted as 湧き, meaning a whirling phenomenon (*Iwanami Bunko*, vol. 1, p. 371-372, note 12). This latter interpretation may be plausible, since the heavenly descent 稜威之道別道別 is really spectacular.

<sup>7</sup>The meaning of 襲 (so) cannot be determined. The place 日向 (ひむか, Himuka) is the eastern part of Kyushu by the sea.

<sup>8</sup>Takachiho no Take (Mine) (高千穂峯) is a volcanic mountain in Kyushu, situated at the border of Miyazaki Prefecture and Kagoshima Prefecture, with a height of about 1,573 metres (about 5,161 feet).

<sup>9</sup>The term 穗日二上 seems very intriguing to interpret. The term 穗日 is read as くしひ (kushihi) and may refer to the term 奇靈 (same reading as くしひ), roughly meaning spiritual dignity. Here it is translated plainly as “sacred”. The term following it, 二上 (futagami), means a twin-summit mountain. The character 穗 is pronounced as 幻 in Cantonese.

<sup>10</sup>The term 天浮橋 (ama no ukihashi) actually means heaven’s ladder, rather than heaven’s floating bridge. The heaven’s ladder is a means connecting heaven and earth. (*Iwanami Bunko*, vol. 1, p. 123, note 5)

<sup>11</sup>The term 膂穴之空國 (soshishi no munakuni) means a country or place that is barren and empty, or very sparsely populated. The term 膂穴 originally means the muscle or flesh around the human backbone; the character 穴 is a variant form of 肉 (flesh). The first character 而 in the phrase may mean either (1) arriving at a certain place, or (2) finding himself in a certain place.

<sup>12</sup>The term 頓丘 (hitao) may have come from the early Chinese text 爾雅 (*Er Ya*). In the section 釋丘 in that book, there is an explanation of this term: “丘一成曰頓丘，一頓而成，無上下大小之殺也”. This may mean that 頓丘 is a hill formed in one making, resulting in a hill of moderate height. In this context, the Royal Grandson may be travelling through a hilly area.

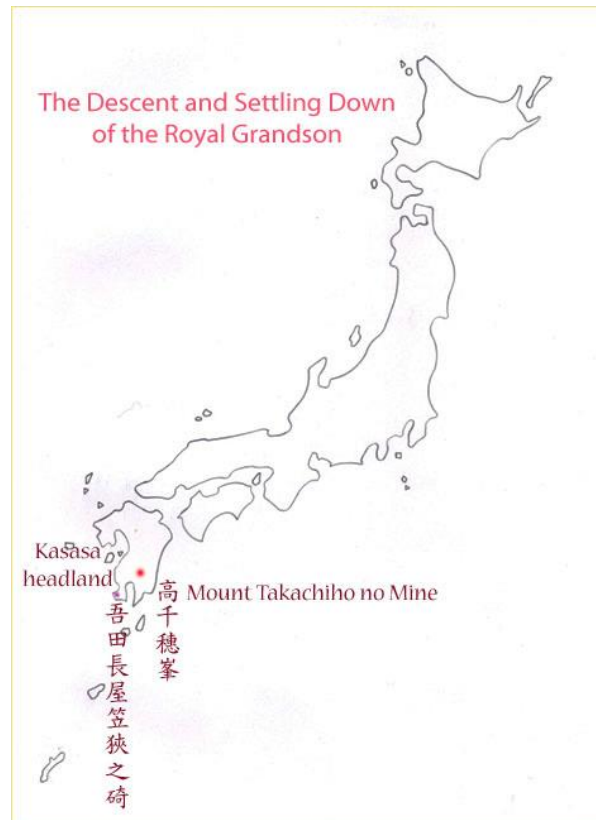
<sup>13</sup>The place 吾田長屋笠狹之碕 (Ata no Nagaya no Kasasa no Misaki) may be Cape Noma (野間岬) in Kagoshima Prefecture in Kyushu. It is the tip of a peninsula west of Minamisatsuma City (南さつま市). The character 碕 (pronounced as 奇 in Cantonese) means a twisting coast. From the summit of Mount Takachiho no Mine, the Royal Grandson travelled southwestwards towards the sea coast at the western tip of Satsuma Peninsula in Kyushu.

<sup>14</sup> Ashihara no Nakatsukuni generally refers to Japan in ancient times.

<sup>15</sup>About the translated term “whirling winds”, see note 6 above.

<sup>16</sup>Takachiho no Take, known nowadays as Takachiho no Mine, is a volcanic mountain in Kyushu, at the border of Miyazaki Prefecture and Kagoshima Prefecture, with a height of about 1,573 metres (about 5,161 feet). Himuka is the eastern part of Kyushu by the sea.

<sup>17</sup>This headland of Kasasa is probably Cape Noma, the tip of a peninsula west of Minamisatsuma City (南さつま市) in south Kyushu.



# Nihon Shoki Chapter Two (Selection 4)

## Era of the Gods Part II

### Heaven's Grandson Meets His Wife and Has Descendants

In that place [Kasasa headland, south Kyushu] there was a man who called himself Kotokatsu Kunikatsu Nagasa. The Royal Grandson asked him, "Is there a country or no?" The man replied, "There is a country here. Please feel free to travel around." Therefore the Royal Grandson settled down there. In this country there was a beauty called Kashitsuime. The Royal Grandson asked this beauty, "Whose child are you?" She replied, "I am the child born by Heaven's God who married Ōyama Tsumi no Kami."<sup>2</sup> So the Royal Grandson slept with her. She became pregnant in one night. The Royal Grandson could not believe and said, "Though I am also Heaven's God, how could I make you pregnant in a night? The child you conceived must not be mine." Kashitsuime was bitterly angry. She therefore made a doorless room and stayed inside, swearing, "If the baby I conceived is not your progeny, it will be burnt to its demise. If in fact it is your progeny, fire cannot do it any harm." She then set fire to the room. The son she bore when smoke began to rise was called Honosusori no Mikoto. The next son she bore while she was sitting away from the heat was called Hikohohodemi no Mikoto.<sup>3</sup> The next son she bore was called Honoakari no Mikoto.<sup>4</sup> Altogether there were three children. . . . (volume 1, pages 455-456)

## 日本書紀 卷第二

神代下

其地有一人、自號事勝國勝長狹、皇孫問曰、國在耶以不。對曰、此焉有國、請任意遊之。故皇孫就而留住。時彼國有美人、名曰鹿葦津姬、皇孫問此美人曰、汝誰之子耶。對曰、妾是天神娶大山祇神所生兒也。皇孫因而幸之。即一夜而有娠、皇孫未信之曰、雖復天神、何能一夜之間、令人有娠乎。汝所懷者、必非我子歟。故鹿葦津姬忿恨、乃作無戶室、入居其內、而誓之曰、妾所娠、若非天孫之胤、必當變滅、如實天孫之胤、火不能害。即放火燒室、始起烟末生出之兒、號火闌降命、次避熱而居、生出之兒、號彥火火出見尊、次生出之兒、號火明命、凡三子矣。 . . . (第一冊 四五五～四五六ページ)

## Notes on Selection 4

<sup>1</sup>According to some online dictionary information, this 變 is a variant form of the character 焦 and pronounced as such, meaning to be hurt by fire.

<sup>2</sup> Ōyama Tsumi no Kami (大山祇神) may be interpreted as a mountain god who was female. Kashitsuhihime (鹿葦津姬) was therefore the daughter of a male heaven's god and a goddess on earth.

<sup>3</sup> Hikohohodemi no Mikoto (彥火火出見尊) would be the grandfather of Jinmu Tennō (神武天皇) who incidentally also had the same name of 彥火火出見 (Hikohohodemi).

<sup>4</sup>The names of these three children all have a reference to fire.



**Nihon Shoki** Chapter Three (Selection 5)

Jinmu Tennō

**The First Emperor's Genealogy**

Kamu Yamato Iwarebiko no Sumera Mikoto [Jinmu Tennō], named Hikohohodemi, was the fourth son of Hikonagisatake Ugayafuki Aezu no Mikoto.<sup>3</sup> His mother was called Tamayoribime who was the younger daughter of the Sea God. The Emperor was wise from birth, and was resolute in character. He was appointed as Crown Prince at age fifteen. When mature he married Ahiratsuhime of the place Ata no Mura in the domain Himuka no Kuni,<sup>4</sup> giving birth to Tagishimimi no Mikoto. (volume 1, page 478)

**日本書紀** 卷第三

神日本磐余彥天皇 神武天皇

神日本磐余彥天皇、諱彥火々出見、彥波瀲<sup>1</sup>武鸕鷀草葺不合尊第四子也、母曰玉依姬、海童之少女也。天皇生而明達、意確<sup>2</sup>如也。年十五立為太子、長而娶日向國吾田邑吾平津媛為妃、生手研耳命。  
(第一冊 四七八ページ)

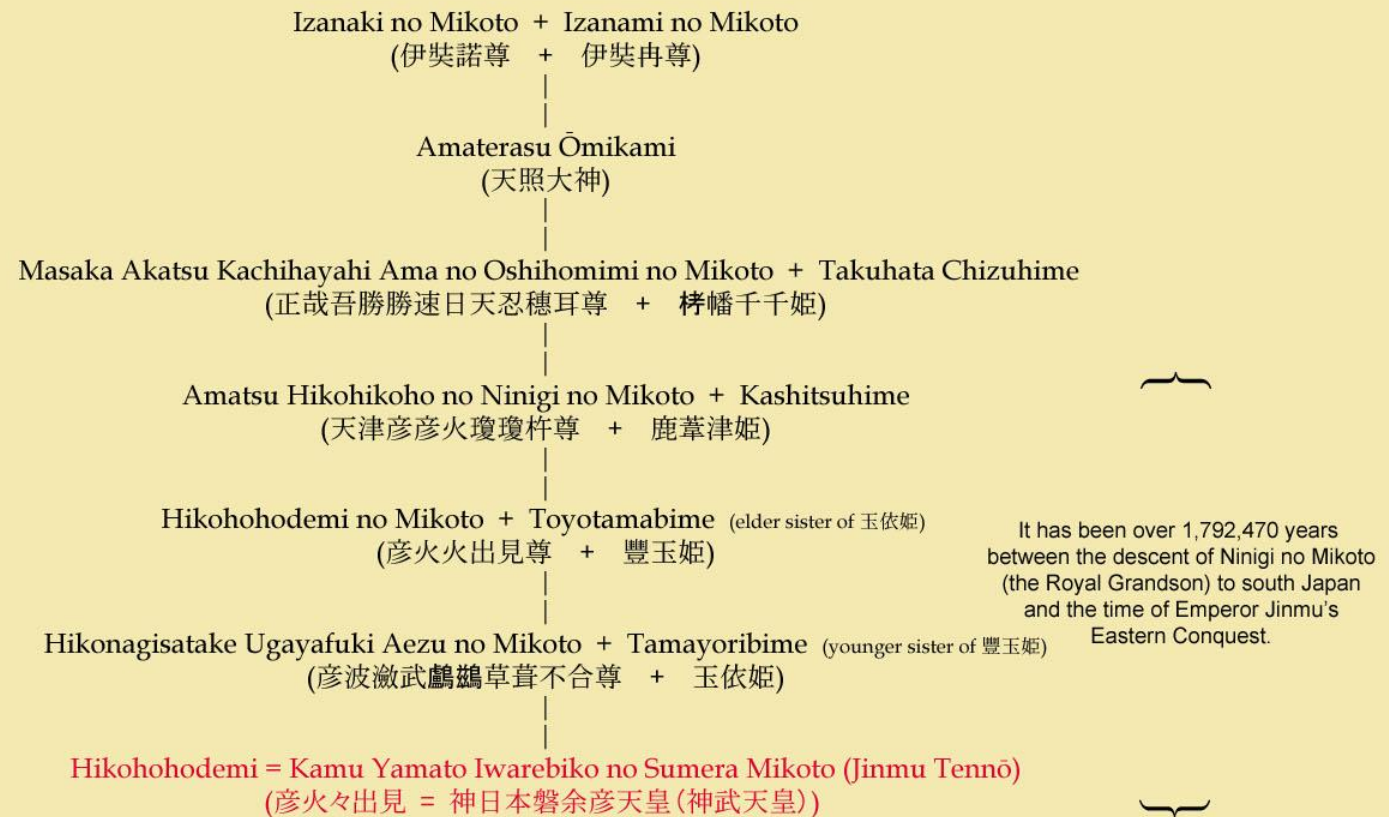
## Notes on Selection 5

<sup>1</sup>The character 激 is pronounced in Cantonese as 念. A variant pronunciation is 臉. It may mean the seashore or waves.

<sup>2</sup>The character 確 is pronounced in Cantonese as 確. In this context it means having a resolute personal character.

<sup>3</sup>The names of these personages are sometimes descriptive of the background of the individuals. This long name “Hikonagisatake Ugayafuki Aezu no Mikoto” (彦波瀲武鸕鷀草葺不合尊) actually tells the story of the mistrust between the mother and father of this son. As the story goes, the mother asked the father not to see her at the time of her delivery of the baby, but the father did not heed her request and watched her when she transformed into a dragon at the time of delivery. The mother felt very ashamed and, in anguish, wrapped the newborn infant in grass, abandoning him on the seashore and then returned to the sea herself, never to meet her husband again. According to the alternative accounts accompanying the main text of *Nihon Shoki*, the mother asked the father to build a child delivery house thatched with cormorant (鸕鷀, roji, but here read as う, “u”) feathers (hence the characters 鸕鷀草葺 (Ugayafuki)). But before the roof of the house was finished she gave birth to the baby; hence the baby’s name included the two characters 不合 (Aezu, meaning “not matched” or “not completed”), which refer to the unfinished roof of the delivery house.

<sup>4</sup>Emperor Jinmu’s first wife, Ahiratsuhime (吾平津媛), was native to the region where the Royal Grandson descended to at the beginning. Therefore, we may assume that the royal family of Emperor Jinmu, before his Eastern Conquest, was based in south Kyushu throughout all four generations. Emperor Jinmu was the great grandson of the Royal Grandson or Heaven’s Grandson who himself was the grandson of Amaterasu Ōmikami.



### The Genealogy of Emperor Jinmu

# Nihon Shoki Chapter Three

(Selection 6)

Jinmu Tennō

## Emperor Jinmu's Intention for the Eastern Conquest

Upon reaching age forty-five, Emperor Jinmu said to his elder brothers and son, "In the past our heaven's gods Takami Musuhi no Mikoto and Ōhirume no Mikoto selected this Toyoashihara no Mitsuho no Kuni<sup>6</sup> and bestowed it on our Heaven's Grandfather Hikoho no Ninigi no Mikoto. Then Ho no Ninigi no Mikoto, opening heaven's gate and clearing out a path through the clouds, moved his heaven's presence to this place. Back then, fate was at the stage of primordial barrenness, and the times were unenlightened. Therefore our ancestors remained inactive, nurturing the way of rightness while ruling this peripheral region in the west.<sup>7</sup> Our royal grandfathers and fathers are indeed gods and saints. For ages they have been sustaining their benevolent governance that is constantly shining bright and warm. It has been more than 1,792,470 years since Heaven's Grandfather's descent.<sup>8</sup> However, the faraway land has not yet been nourished with our royal beneficence. Consequently over there domains have their own rulers and villages their headmen, carving up territories and struggling for power against one another. Besides, I heard the Old Deity of Sea Currents saying, 'There is beautiful land in the east, with green hills on all sides. Someone also flew and descended there on a heaven's stone ship.' I think that place definitely can let our grand enterprise flourish and our glory brighten up the land under heaven. Certainly it is the centre of the world. The one who flew and descended there should be Nigihayahi. Why not move on and found our capital there?" (volume 1, pages 478-479)

# 日本書紀 卷第三

神日本磐余彥天皇 神武天皇

及年卅五歲<sup>1</sup>、謂諸兄及子等曰、昔我天神、高皇產靈尊・大日靈尊、舉此豐葦原瑞穗國<sup>2</sup>、而授我天祖彥火瓊々杵尊。於是火瓊々杵尊、闢天關、披雲路、駟<sup>3</sup>仙蹕以戾止。是時、運屬鴻荒、時鍾草昧、故蒙以養正、治此西偏。皇祖皇考、乃神乃聖、積慶重暉、多歷年所。自天祖降跡以逮、于今一百七十九萬二千四百七十餘歲、而遼邈之地、猶未霑於王澤、遂使邑有君、村有長、各自分疆、用相凌躐<sup>4</sup>。抑又聞於鹽土老翁<sup>5</sup>曰、東有美地、青山四周、其中亦有乘天磐船而飛降者。余謂、彼地必當足以恢弘大業、光宅天下、蓋六合之中心乎。厥飛降者、謂是饒速日歟。何不就而都之乎。  
(第一冊 四七八〜四七九ページ)

## Notes on Selection 6

<sup>1</sup>The character 卅 is pronounced in Cantonese as 舍. It means forty.

<sup>2</sup>The name 豐葦原瑞穗國 (Toyoashihara no Mitsuho no Kuni) is the ancient name of Japan. With the meaning of The Country of Auspicious Rice Plants and Bountiful Reed Fields, this name connotes a sense of auspiciousness and wellness. The Japanese reading used here for 瑞穗 is “Mitsuho”. However, these two characters are more commonly read as “Mizuho”.

<sup>3</sup>The character 駟 is a variant of 驅.

<sup>4</sup>The verb 凌躐 as used here means fighting for dominance or bullying others. The character 躐, pronounced as 礫 in Cantonese, might have been used here instead of the more relevant character 轢 which is pronounced as 力.

<sup>5</sup>This name 鹽土老翁 actually is understandable only through its Japanese reading which is “Shiotsuchi no Oji”. “Shio” is sea currents or tides, the following “tsu” stands for the connecting particle “no (の)”, and the final “chi” refers to supernatural spirit or power (靈). Therefore, “Shiotsuchi no Oji” may be the reading for the name 潮の靈. It is not clear why the Chinese characters 鹽土, meaning salt and soil, are used in this instance, although they match the Japanese reading “Shiotsuchi”. Here the name is translated as the Old Deity of Sea Currents.

<sup>6</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>7</sup>Emperor Jinmu’s home base was in south Kyushu. His conquest would be northeastwards, not exactly eastwards. Today, it is customary to mention East Japan and West Japan, while “North Japan” and “South Japan” do not commonly appear in discourse.

<sup>8</sup>There have been four generations since the descent of the Royal Grandson from Takamanohara (高天原). Emperor Jinmu was his great grandson. This span of over 1,792,470 years is of interest.

# Nihon Shoki Chapter Three

(Selection 7)

Jinmu Tennō

## Founding the New Capital at Kashihara

All the princes replied, “The reasons are very clear. We also have this always in mind. Better proceed soon.” This year was the year Kinōe Tora [year Kōin].<sup>4</sup> On Day Five in the Tenth Month in winter of that year,<sup>5</sup> the Emperor himself led the princes to embark on the eastern expedition in a marine fleet. . . .

On Day Seven in the Third Month in the year Tsuchinoto no Hitsuji [year Kibi], he gave the order saying, “It has been six years<sup>6</sup> since we began our eastern conquest. With reliance on the might of Heaven, the villains yielded and perished. Though the frontiers have not been pacified and the remaining demons are still obstacles, the central areas [the Yamato area in today’s Nara prefecture] no longer have wars. It is now opportune to establish our royal capital and plan our magnificent palaces. Now that our times are barely enlightened, and the people, their character simple and plain, are living on trees or in caves, clinging to unchanged customs. When those in authority set up institutions, their guiding principle always is to match the needs of the times. Whatever project is beneficial to the people, why would the emperor not undertake it? Therefore we should clear the hills and woods and build our palaces. And I will respectfully ascend the treasured throne to wisely govern the populace. Thus, to heaven above, to repay the gods for their kindness of bestowing the country on us; down on earth, to promulgate the Royal Grandson’s way of rightness. Then, amalgamate all six parts of the world and expand our capital, and encompass all eight corners of the world as our house.<sup>7</sup> Would this not be possible? The area of Kashihara which is to the southeast of Mount Unebi looks like a secure place of our country.<sup>8</sup> Our capital can be there.” That month, the Emperor promptly ordered officials to begin construction of the royal residence. . . . (volume 1, pages 479, 489)

# 日本書紀 卷第三

神日本磐余彥天皇 神武天皇

諸皇子對曰、理實灼然、我亦恆以為念、宜早行之。是年也、太歲甲寅。其年冬十月丁巳朔辛酉、天皇親帥諸皇子舟師東征。 . . .

〔己未年〕三月辛酉朔丁卯、下令曰、自我東征、於茲六年矣。賴以皇天之威、凶徒就戮、雖邊土未清、餘妖尚梗、而中洲之地、無復風塵、誠宜恢廓皇都、規摹大壯。而今運屬屯蒙、民心朴素、巢棲穴居、習俗惟常、夫夫人立制、義必隨時、苟有利民、何妨聖造。且當披拂山林、經營宮室、而恭臨寶位、以鎮元元。上則答乾靈授國之德、下則弘皇孫養正之心。然後、兼六合以開都、掩八紘而為宇、亦可乎。觀夫畝傍山東南檣原地者、蓋國之塹區乎、可治之。是月、即命有司、經始帝宅。 . . . (第一冊 四七九、四八九ページ)

## Notes on Selection 7

<sup>1</sup>In the Chinese calendar, years, and days in a month, are represented with a pair of two Chinese characters. Each of these two character is consecutively taken from an established sequence of characters. The first sequence, called 天干 (tian gan (Chinese Mandarin reading, same for other characters in this paragraph)), comprises ten characters: 甲 (jia), 乙 (yi), 丙 (bing), 丁 (ding), 戊 (wu), 己 (ji), 庚 (geng), 辛 (xin), 壬 (ren), 癸 (gui). The second sequence, called 地支 (di zhi), comprises twelve characters: 子 (zi), 丑 (chou), 寅 (yin), 卯 (mao), 辰 (chen), 巳 (si), 午 (wu), 未 (wei), 申 (shen), 酉 (you), 戌 (xu), 亥 (hai). There are sixty different combinations of these paired characters, forming a cycle which is perpetually repeatable. Thus, this system is used for naming the progression of years as well as days in a month. The following table may serve to clarify the mechanism:

天干 (てんかん)	甲 こう	乙 いつ・おつ	丙 へい	丁 てい	戊 ぼ	己 き	庚 こう	辛 しん	壬 じん	癸 き	甲	乙	丙	丁	戊
地支 (ちし)	子 し	丑 ちゅう	寅 いん	卯 ぼう	辰 しん	巳 し	午 ご	未 び	申 しん	酉 ゆう	戌 じゅつ	亥 がい	子	丑	寅

In the date designation 十月丁巳朔辛酉 in the text, the character 朔 (tsuitachi) means the first day in the Tenth Month, that is, the day of the new moon. The preceding two characters 丁巳 is the day name representing this first day. By consecutively counting from this day name 丁巳 to the day name 辛酉, we can ascertain that 辛酉 is Day Five in the Tenth Month. This may be illustrated as follows:

	Day 1 (朔)	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
天干	丁	戊	己	庚	辛
地支	巳	午	未	申	酉

As another example, the designation in the second passage 三月辛酉朔丁卯 means Day Seven in the Third Month:

	Day 1 (朔)	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
天干	辛	壬	癸	甲	乙	丙	丁
地支	酉	戌	亥	子	丑	寅	卯

Dates (days in the month) in *Nihon Shoki* can be ascertained in the above manner. Incidentally, the twelve chishi (地支) characters also represent the twelve animals in the Chinese zodiac called 十二生肖 (jūni seishō), as shown in the following:

子 鼠	丑 牛	寅 虎	卯 兔	辰 龍	巳 蛇	午 馬	未 羊	申 猿	酉 鶏	戌 犬	亥 猪
ね	うし	とら	う	たつ	み	うま	ひつじ	さる	とり	いぬ	い

<sup>2</sup>The term 元元 (ōmitakara) means the common people.

<sup>3</sup>The character 塙 is pronounced in Cantonese as 澳. Here 塙區 may be interpreted as a secure and suitable place for establishing the capital.

<sup>4</sup>Kinoe Tora is the native Japanese reading (訓読み kun'yomi) of the year name 甲寅, whereas Kōin is the Sino-Japanese reading (音読み on'yomi) of the same name.

<sup>5</sup>For the method of specifying days in the month, see note 1 above.

<sup>6</sup>In fact, the actual expedition, launched in south Kyushu and concluded in the Nara area of Honshu, took about four and a half years, not fully six years.

<sup>7</sup>The sentence “. . . encompass all eight corners of the world as our house” is a translation of the sentence 掩八紘 (ame no shita) 而為宇. This sentence literally means covering or occupying the eight geographical strings (紘, “kō” in Japanese, 弘 in Cantonese) bordering the world which then becomes our house.

<sup>8</sup>Mount Unebi (畝傍山, Unebiyama, height 199 metres, or about 653 feet) is situated in the city of Kashihara, to the south of Nara city.



# Nihon Shoki Chapter Three (Selection 8)

## Jinmu Tennō

### Emperor Jinmu Ascends the Throne and Tours the New State

On Day One in the First Month in spring of the year Kanoto no Tori [year Shin'yū], the Emperor ascended the throne at Kashihara no Miya palace.<sup>11</sup> This year was Year One of Emperor Jinmu.<sup>12</sup> He honoured his principal consort as the Queen. They gave birth to princes Kamu Yai no Mikoto and Kamu Nunakawamimi no Mikoto. . . .

On Day One in the Fourth Month in summer of Year Thirty-one of Emperor Jinmu, the Emperor staged a royal tour. Proceeding up on the hill Hōma no Oka in Wakigami,<sup>13</sup> he observed the panoramic view of the state and said, “How beautiful it is, this country we acquired! A very narrow land notwithstanding, it resembles a dragonfly during mating.”<sup>14</sup> This was how the appellation Akizushima, the Dragonfly Island, appeared.<sup>15</sup> In the past when Izanaki no Mikoto looked at this land, he said, “Yamato is the country of the peaceful mind, the country with an abundant supply of well-made spears,<sup>16</sup> the magnificent country.” Also Ōanamuchi no Ōkami looked at it and said, “The country with jade walls.” To the time when Nigihayahi no Mikoto was flying in space on the heaven’s stone ship, he saw this homeland and descended on it, saying, “From up in space I see the Yamato State.”<sup>17</sup> (volume 1, page 489, pages 490-491)

## 日本書紀 卷第三

神日本磐余彥天皇 神武天皇

辛酉年春正月庚辰朔、天皇即帝位於橿原宮<sup>1</sup>、是歲為天皇元年。尊正妃為皇后、生皇子神八井命・神渟名川耳尊。・・・

卅有一年夏四月乙酉朔、皇興巡幸、因登腋上噉間丘<sup>2</sup>、而廻望國狀曰、妍哉乎國之獲矣、雖內木綿之真迹國<sup>3</sup>、猶如蜻蛉之臀帖焉<sup>4</sup>。由是始有秋津洲<sup>5</sup>之號也。昔伊奘諾尊目此國曰、日本者浦安國<sup>6</sup>、細戈千足國<sup>7</sup>、磯輪上秀真國<sup>8</sup>。復大己貴大神目之曰、玉牆內國<sup>9</sup>。及至饒速日命、乘天磐船而翔行太虛也、睨是鄉而降之、故因目之曰、虛空見日本國<sup>10</sup>矣。(第一冊 四八九、四九〇、四九一ページ)

## Notes on Selection 8

<sup>1</sup>The palace 橿原宮 (Kashihara no Miya) does not exist now. Today's city of Kashihara (橿原市) is situated south of Nara city in Nara Prefecture. The Kashihara Shrine (橿原神宮) in Kashihara city occupies the site supposedly to be where the palace once was.

<sup>2</sup>This hill 噉間丘 (Hōma no Oka) may be situated in the eastern part of Gose city (御所市) in Nara Prefecture. Gose city is several kilometres to the southwest of Kashihara city (橿原市). The character 噉 has more than one reading in Cantonese depending on usage: 咸, 協 or 欠.

<sup>3</sup>The introductory term 内木綿 (うつゆふ, utsuyū) is regarded as a makurakotoba (枕詞). This kind of introductory terms are usually used in poetic works and may have no specific meanings except for serving a decorative function. The character 迤 here is interchangeable with 窄 and pronounced the same in Cantonese. The whole sentence may be interpreted simply as “Though this is a very narrow country”.

<sup>4</sup>Using mating dragonflies as an analogy of the shape of the country – Japan – seems quite logical, since the Japanese archipelago is of a curved elongate shape, resembling the curled long bodies of mating dragonflies. However, this analogy is also interpreted as reflecting the country of Japan with hills and mountains. The insect 蜻蛉 (akizu, or akitsu) is dragonfly; 臀 is the end part of the body; the character 貼 is pronounced as 貼 in Cantonese, meaning to taste.



<sup>5</sup>The appellation 秋津洲 (Akizushima) may be translated as the Dragonfly Island(s). “Akizu” (あきづ, あきず) or “akitsu” (あきつ) is the name for dragonfly used in the old days. The kanji may either be 秋津 or 蜻蛉. The long archipelago of Japan makes one think of a dragonfly, logically.

<sup>6</sup>The appellation 浦安 (urayasu) means peace of mind. Ura means the heart; yasu means peaceful.

<sup>7</sup>The appellation 細戈千足國 (Kuhashi hoko no chidaru kuni) is translated as the country with an abundant supply of well-made spears (weapons, armament). Chidaru means abundant. The weapon 戈 (hoko), however, is not exactly a spear. Its blade looks like the Arabic numeral “7”, instead of being straight as a spear. Like a spear, it has a long shaft.

<sup>8</sup>The appellation 磯輪上秀真國 (Shiwakami hotsuma kuni) may simply be interpreted as the elegant and magnificent country. In the *Iwanami Bunko* edition, the term 磯輪上 is explained as a term with unknown meaning (*Iwanami Bunko*, vol. 1, p. 245, note 2).

<sup>9</sup>The appellation 玉牆内國 (Tamagaki no uchitsu kuni) literally means the country with (or within) walls of jade. The walls of jade, however, may also be interpreted as hills and mountains found in the country.

<sup>10</sup>The name 日本國 is read as Yamato no Kuni (Yamato State), not Nihonkoku or Nipponkoku. Probably the name Yamato was the country name used by the Japanese themselves from a very early date. Thus early Chinese historical records about Japan used the name 邪(耶)馬臺國 (Yemataiguo) for the chief state on the archipelago. Before Japan adopted the name 日本 around the time of the early Tang dynasty in China, China referred to Japan as 倭國 (Wakoku in Japanese), an appellation which Japan later disliked and reportedly made Japan change its written name from 倭 to 日本 (read as Yamato as before).

<sup>11</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>12</sup>The year of Emperor Jinmu's ascending the throne, that is, Year One of the Emperor, was dated as 660 BCE. This year is the 1,260<sup>th</sup> year counting backwards from the year 601 CE, Year Nine of Empress Suiko (推古天皇). The Chinese year designation system operates as cycles of 60 years each. Twenty-one cycles constitute one 蔀 (bō), that is, 1,260 years. Year Nine of Empress Suiko and Year One of Emperor Jinmu are both the year Shin'yū (辛酉) which is regarded as an epochal year.

<sup>13</sup>The hill Hōma no Oka might perhaps be in the eastern part of Gose city, Nara Prefecture. See also note 2 above.

<sup>14</sup>The long, curved shape of the Japanese archipelago might have inspired Emperor Jinmu to think of the shape of dragonflies during their mating.

<sup>15</sup>Dragonflies were called akizu or akitsu (秋津, 蜻蛉) in the old days. See also note 4 above.

<sup>16</sup>The word “spears” is used here to translate the Chinese character 戈 (ほこ, hoko). However, this character actually does not exactly mean spears. A spear has a straight blade for forward thrusting or throwing. The weapon called 戈 seems unique to China. It has a blade shaped like the Arabic numeral “7”.

<sup>17</sup>See note 10 above.



# Nihon Shoki Chapter Nine

(Selection 9)

## Jingū Kōgō

### Queen Jingū Consults Heaven and Her Ministers in Preparation for the Western Conquest

[In Year Nine<sup>6</sup> of Tarashinakatsuhiko no Sumera Mikoto (Emperor Chūai)], the Queen<sup>7</sup> returned to Kashihi no Ura.<sup>8</sup> Loosening her hair and facing the sea, she said, “Having received the advice of the gods, and relying on the spirits of our royal ancestors, I intend to cross the wide green sea and myself launch the western expedition. So I shall wash my head in the sea. If there is promising omen, my hair would by itself part into two halves.” Promptly she went to the sea and washed her hair, and her hair parted by itself. The Queen then coiled her parted hair respectively into mizura knots.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently she said to her ministers, “Mobilising the army to wage a war is a significant matter for the state. Peace or perils, triumph or defeat, surely hinge on it. Now there will be a conquest, and this mission is assigned to you high officials. If the mission fails and the blame is to be borne by the officials, it really hurts. I, being a woman, am thus especially culpable. But for now I adopt the male style and daringly launch this bold plan. With the blessing of the gods’ spirits and the assistance of all officials, I am sending troops across the daunting sea and dispatching warships to acquire the land of treasures.<sup>10</sup> If the mission succeeds, all officials will share the merit; if the mission fails, I alone will bear the blame. I already have this intention. Please consider it among yourselves.” The officials all said, “Our Queen is thinking for the sake of our country so as to bring peace to the royal ancestral hall and the state. Furthermore, no blame will be shifted onto us. We bow to obey your decree.”

On Day Ten in the Ninth Month in autumn, the Queen ordered the domains to muster the ships and train the troops . . . (volume 2, page 495)

## 日本書紀 卷第九

氣長足姬尊 神功皇后

〔足仲彥天皇九年〕<sup>1</sup>、皇后還詣檀日浦<sup>2</sup>、解髮臨海曰、吾被神祇之教、賴皇祖之靈、浮涉滄海、躬欲西征、是以令頭滌海水、若有驗者、髮自分為兩。即入海洗之、髮自分也。皇后便結分髮而為髻<sup>3</sup>、因以謂群臣曰、夫興師動眾、國之大事、安危成敗、必在於斯。今有所征伐、以事付群臣、若事不成者、罪有於群臣、是甚傷焉、吾婦女之加以不肖。然暫假男貌、強起雄略、上蒙神祇之靈、下藉群臣之助、振兵甲而度嶮浪<sup>4</sup>、整艦船以求財土<sup>5</sup>。若事成者、群臣共有功、事不就者、吾獨有罪。既有此意、其共議之。群臣皆曰、皇后為天下計、所以安宗廟社稷、且罪不及于臣下、頓首奉詔。

五ページ 秋九月庚午朔己卯、令諸國集船舶練兵甲。 . . . (第二冊 四九)

## Notes on Selection 9

<sup>1</sup>Year Nine of Tarashinakatsuhiko no Sumera Mikoto (足仲彥天皇九年) is interpreted as the year 200 CE. However, this claim is not substantiated.

<sup>2</sup>Kashii no Ura (榎日浦) is in the eastern district of Fukuoka city in Kyushu today. It should be the place where Kashii Palace (榎日宮), one of Emperor Chūai's palaces, was situated.

<sup>3</sup>The hairstyle mizura (髻, 角髮, 美豆良) features a ring-shape knot of hair on either side of the head, beside the ear. The hair is parted into two parts down the middle of the top of the head. It was the style worn by young men in ancient times. The practice probably began during the time of the Yamato court. Earlier in *Nihon Shoki*, before Amaterasu Ōmikami met her younger brother Susanoo no Mikoto in Takamanohara, she also changed her hairstyle to mizura. This stance is therefore a show of masculinity to confront adversaries or to reinforce one's own determination.

<sup>4</sup>The character 嶮 is pronounced in Cantonese as 險, meaning dangerous, or high and steep.

<sup>5</sup>The term 財土 is read as “takara no kuni”, literally meaning a land or country of treasures. It refers to the state of Shiraki or Shiragi (新羅), which was on the eastern part of the southern Korean peninsula. Queen Jingū and Emperor Chūai, her husband, both received advice from the gods to conquer Shiragi, where treasures were bountiful.

<sup>6</sup>This Year Nine is claimed to be the year 200 CE. However, since the early part of *Nihon Shoki* may contain a large proportion of fictitious content, this date of 200 CE may be imaginary.

<sup>7</sup>Queen Jingū was the consort of Emperor Chūai, and the daughter-in-law of the famous prince Yamato Takeru no Mikoto (日本武尊). Yamato Takeru no Mikoto's original name was Yamato Oguni (日本童男). After pacifying the Kumaso (熊襲) people in southern Kyushu and conquering the Emishi (蝦夷) people in northeastern Honshu, he contracted an illness probably contrived by a wicked mountain god in Mount Ibuki (伊吹山, Ibukiyama, 1,377 metres, or about 4,518 feet) near Maibara city (米原市), Shiga Prefecture. Later he passed away at the age of thirty in Nobono (能褒野), a place bordering Kameyama city (亀山市) and Suzuka city (鈴鹿市) in Mie Prefecture. The story of Yamato Takeru no Mikoto is recounted in Chapter 7 on Emperor Keikō (景行天皇), his father.

<sup>8</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>9</sup>See note 3 above.

<sup>10</sup>See note 5 above.

# Nihon Shoki Chapter Ten

(Selection 10)

Ōjin Tennō

## Classics Scholar Wani from Kudara Comes to Japan as Teacher of the Crown Prince

On Day Six in the Eighth Month in autumn of Year Fifteen [of Emperor Ōjin], the King of Kudara<sup>3</sup> sent Achiki to submit two good horses as tributary gifts. They were then kept in the stall at Karu no Saka.<sup>4</sup> Achiki was assigned the duty of rearing the horses, and the place where they were kept was therefore called Umayasaka. Achiki also could read the classics;<sup>5</sup> so he was the teacher of Crown Prince Ujinowaki Iratsuko. Subsequently, the Emperor asked Achiki, “Would there be scholars better than you?” The reply was, “There is one Wani<sup>6</sup> who is excellent.” Then Aratawake and Kamunakiwake, ancestors of Kamitsukeno no Kimi, were sent to Kudara to send for Wani. Achiki was the ancestor of the Achiki no Fubito group.<sup>7</sup> In the Second Month in spring of Year Sixteen,<sup>8</sup> Wani came. Crown Prince Ujinowaki Iratsuko studied various classics with Wani as teacher, and fully understood all the texts. Wani was the ancestor of the groups and clans of Fumi no Obito.<sup>9</sup> (volume 2, pages 512-513)

# 日本書紀 卷第十

譽田天皇 應神天皇

十五年秋八月壬戌朔丁卯、百濟王遣阿直伎、貢良馬二匹、即養於輕坂上廐<sup>1</sup>、因以阿直岐令掌飼、故號其養馬之處曰廐坂也。阿直岐亦能讀經典、即太子菟道稚郎子師焉。於是、天皇問阿直岐曰、如勝汝博士亦有耶。對曰、有王仁者、是秀也。時遣上毛野君祖、荒田別・巫別於百濟、仍徵王仁也。其阿直岐者、阿直岐史之始祖也。十六年春二月<sup>2</sup>、王仁來之。則太子菟道稚郎子師之、習諸典籍於王仁、莫不通達。所謂王仁者、是書首等之始祖也。  
(第二冊 五一二～五一三ページ)

## Notes on Selection 10

<sup>1</sup>輕坂 (Karu no Saka) may be a place near Ōgaruchō (大輕町) in today's Kashihara city (橿原市), Nara Prefecture.

<sup>2</sup>There are two possible years that may correspond to Year Sixteen of Emperor Ōjin: either 285 CE or 405 CE, with the latter being more correct. With the year 660 BCE as the starting date of Emperor Jinmu's reign, Year Sixteen of Emperor Ōjin should be 285 CE, and the year 405 CE is 120 years after that. This difference of 120 years is the result of the application of the “kanshi nijun” (干支二巡) calculation. Thus, year 285 becomes year 405 by adding two cycles of the 60-year kanshi cycle used in the Chinese year designation system. This mechanism, first elucidated by historian Naka Michiyo (那珂通世), is generally regarded by historians as a valid interpretation of the chronological treatment in *Nihon Shoki* for the presentation of the relations between Japan and Kudara (百濟) on the Korean peninsula around the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, for events that actually happened in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the compilers of *Nihon Shoki* subtracted 120 years and therefore presented them as events of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The year 405 is substantiated by matching years and events in the diplomatic history of Kudara and Japan. Furthermore, according to a Korean historical source, Kudara began to learn Chinese characters and texts only in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. The fact that Wani of Kudara came to Japan in 405 as a teacher of Chinese classics is therefore chronologically correct.

Converting dates in *Nihon Shoki* to the western calendar is not straightforward. For instance, given that 405 CE is the year when Chinese characters and texts were adopted for use in Japan, and that 552 or 538 CE is the year when Buddhism was officially introduced to Japan, how can the intervening period of over two hundred years from Emperor Nintoku (仁德天皇) to Emperor Senka (宣化天皇) fit in?

According to historian Tsuda Sōkichi (津田左右吉), because the Chinese calendar was introduced to Japan from Kudara of Korea during the reign of Emperor Kinmei (欽明天皇) in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, dates prior to his reign as recorded in *Nihon Shoki* may be fabrications or conjectures and their reliability is questionable.

<sup>3</sup>Kudara (百濟) is more commonly known as Paekche. Its location is roughly at the western half of the southern part of the Korean peninsula.

<sup>4</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>5</sup>The classics are Chinese texts which were previously introduced into the Korean peninsula. Before Kudara (Paekche) learnt the Chinese texts, Goguryeo (高句麗), the kingdom on the northern part of the peninsula, already had had the opportunity to adopt this written heritage of Chinese culture.

<sup>6</sup>In *Nihon Shoki*, the classics which Wani (王仁) brought to Japan were not specified. However, in *Kojiki* (古事記), the first extant history text of Japan, it was recorded that Confucius' *Analects* and the vocabulary text called *Senjimon* (千字文, *Qian zì wén*) were brought to the royal court by Wani Kishi (和邇吉師) who is regarded to be the same person as Wani.

<sup>7</sup>Fubito was the group mainly responsible for documentation or record keeping. These people were mostly immigrants, that is, the so-called toraijin (渡来人).

<sup>8</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>9</sup>Fumi no Obito may be the immigrant group originated with the coming of Wani. Since they were well-versed in Chinese characters and texts, they might have played a significant role in the transmission of Chinese learning into Japan.

## Nihon Shoki Chapters Ten & Eleven (Selection 11)

### Ōjin Tennō

#### Requesting Seamstresses from the Kingdom of Wu in China

On Day One in the Second Month in spring of Year Thirty-seven [of Emperor Ōjin], Achi no Omi and Tsuka no Omi were dispatched to Wu [kingdom in China],<sup>5</sup> with the order to ask for seamstresses.<sup>6</sup> Then Achi no Omi and his group crossed the sea to go to Koma,<sup>7</sup> intending to reach Wu. However, upon arriving in Koma, they did not know the route forward. There they humbly asked for someone who knew the route, and the King of Koma let Kureha and Kureshi assist them as guides. Thus they established relationship with Wu. The King of Wu therefore gave them four seamstresses, women called Ehime, Otohime, Kurehatori and Anahatori.<sup>8</sup> (volume 2, page 516)

### Nintoku Tennō

#### The Kingdom of Wu in China Pays Tribute to Japan

In the Tenth Month in winter of Year Fifty-eight [of Emperor Nintoku], . . . the Kingdom of Wu and the Kingdom of Koma both paid tribute.<sup>9</sup> (volume 2, page 532)

## 日本書紀

### 卷第十・第十一

譽田天皇

應神天皇

卅七年春二月戊午朔、遣阿知使主・都加使主於吳<sup>1</sup>、令求縫工女。爰阿知使主等、渡高麗國<sup>2</sup>、欲達于吳、則至高麗、更不知道路、乞知道者於高麗、々々王乃副久禮波・久禮志二人為導者、由是得通吳。吳王於是與工女兄媛・弟媛、吳織、穴織四婦女<sup>3</sup>。(第二冊 五一六ページ)

大鷦鷯天皇

仁德天皇

五十八年・冬十月、吳國・高麗國並朝貢<sup>4</sup>。(第二冊 五三二ページ)



## Notes on Selection 11

<sup>1</sup>This state with the name of Wu (吳) should be one of three states of the Three Kingdoms Period of China, the other two states or kingdoms being Wei (魏) and Shu (蜀). Wu's fate ended in 280 CE with the conquest of the new Jin (晉) dynasty. Assuming that Year Thirty-seven of Emperor Ōjin is 306 CE (without adding the 120 years of the kanshi calculation mentioned above in note 2 of Selection 10), this mission of requesting for seamstresses from China might have taken place in the court of another dynastic ruler of China. The Kingdom of Wu was situated in southeast China.

This mission to the state of Wu (吳国, Kure no Kuni) in China in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century has significant cultural implications for Japan. With the application of certain new technological developments introduced from China, perhaps especially in silk weaving, high-quality fabrics were produced and named gofuku (吳服) which literally means woven materials of the state of Wu. Incidentally, in China elaborate silk fabrics known today as “yun jin” (雲錦) began to be produced in the area of today's Nanjing city – then the capital of the state of Wu and subsequent kingdoms of the North and South Dynasties Period of China – in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps the Japanese royal court of the time – possibly during the reign of Emperor Ōjin – was aware of these developments and therefore eager to acquire from China talents for advanced silk weaving. Sericulture and silk production began in Japan probably around the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE.

<sup>2</sup>Goguryeo (高句麗), which is called Koma (高麗) in *Nihon Shoki*, was actually an adversary of Japan during the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when this mission was possibly dispatched.

<sup>3</sup>These four female weavers – probably all specialising in silk – were subsequently deified as Shinto gods in Japan. The first two, Ehime (兄媛) and Otohime (弟媛), are worshipped at Ōsake Jinja (大酒神社) in Kyoto. They are however not the principal deities enshrined in the shrine. One of the three principal deities of Ōsake Jinja is, interestingly, the First Emperor of China (秦始皇帝, Qin Shihuangdi) who is revered as the first ancestor of the influential Hata clan (秦氏, Hata Uji) of Japan. The third weaver, Kurehatori (吳織), is the deity of Gofuku Jinja (吳服神社), while the fourth weaver Anahatori (穴織), also known as Ayahatori (漢織), is enshrined in Ikeda Jinja (伊居太神社). Both of these two Shinto shrines are in Ikeda city (池田市), Osaka Prefecture, the place that is claimed to be where these weavers began their new life in Japan.

<sup>4</sup>It is unimaginable that a state or kingdom of China would ever pay tribute (朝貢, chōkō) to Japan throughout history.

<sup>5</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>6</sup>It may be understandable that the seamstresses or weavers requested might not be just any category of weavers, but specifically those who were skilled in weaving silk.

<sup>7</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>8</sup>See note 3 above.

<sup>9</sup>See note 4 above.

# Nihon Shoki Chapter Eleven (Selection 12)

Nintoku Tennō

## Ice Cellar for Storing Winter Ice for Summer

Year Sixty-two . . . , this year, when Prince Nukata no Ōnakatsuhiko no Miko<sup>6</sup> was hunting in Tsuke,<sup>7</sup> he looked down from a hill and saw something in the shape of a hut in the open meadow. He sent an attendant to take a look. The attendant returned and said, “An underground chamber.” The prince then summoned Tsuke no Inaki Ōyamanushi,<sup>8</sup> the local administrator of Tsuke, and asked, “What is that underground chamber in the meadow?” The administrator replied, “It is an ice cellar.”<sup>9</sup> The prince asked, “What are the contents? And what are they for?” The administrator said, “Dig more than one chō<sup>10</sup> into the soil and use grass to cover it. Carefully lay down reeds, then put ice on the reeds. The ice will remain unthawed through summer. As for its use, we steep it in wine during the hot months.” The prince then fetched the ice and offered it to the royal court. The Emperor liked it. From that time on, every year ice was always stored up in late winter until spring equinox. Then the ice would be distributed.<sup>11</sup> (volume 2, pages 532-533)

# 日本書紀 卷第十一

大鷦鷯天皇

仁德天皇

六十二年・・・・、是歲、額田大中彥皇子獵于鬩雞<sup>1</sup>、時皇子自山上望之、瞻野中有物、其形如廬、乃遣使者令視。還來之曰、窟也。因喚鬩雞稻置大山主<sup>2</sup>、問之曰、有其野中者何甯鯽矣<sup>3</sup>。啟之曰、冰室也。皇子曰、其藏如何、亦奚用焉。曰、掘土丈餘、以草蓋其上、敦敷茅荻、取水以置其上、既經夏月而不泮<sup>4</sup>。其用之、即當熱月、漬<sup>5</sup>水酒以用也。皇子則將來其冰、獻于御所、天皇歡之、自是以後、每當季冬必藏冰、至于春分、始散冰也。(第二冊 五三二～五三三ページ)

## Notes on Selection 12

<sup>1</sup>The name of the place 鬪雞 (Tsuke or Tsuge) is now written as 都祁. Specifically, it was the former Tsugemura village (都祁村) in Nara Prefecture, and has now become part of Nara city. In a broader sense, the Tsuge area also includes the neighbouring Fukusumichō (福住町) in the eastern part of Tenri city (天理市), Nara Prefecture.

<sup>2</sup>The term 稻置 (inaki or inagi) means a local administrator below the rank of 国造 (kuninomiya-tsuko).

<sup>3</sup>The character 窖 is pronounced in Cantonese as 蔭, and means an underground chamber or storage. The character 鯽, pronounced as 即, does not seem to have any meaning here, although it means a kind of freshwater fish. Other online text versions of *Nihon Shoki* do not even have this character in this passage.

<sup>4</sup>The character 泮 is pronounced as 判 in Cantonese and means the melting of ice.

<sup>5</sup>The character 漬 means to soak or steep in liquid or water.

<sup>6</sup>Prince Nukata no Ōnakatsuhiko no Miko (額田大中彥皇子) was the son of Emperor Ōjin and brother of Emperor Nintoku but of a different mother.

<sup>7</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>8</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>9</sup>Around 1988, in the excavation of the Heijōkyō capital (平城京) site in Nara city, a large quantity of wood tablets (木簡, mokkan) were discovered. Among the over 35,000 tablets related to the high official Nagaya no Ōkimi (長屋王) of the early Nara period, there are three tablets that have detailed information on the ice cellars (氷室, himuro) at Tsuge (都祁). Each of the two ice cellars mentioned on one tablet measured 1 chō (丈, about 3 metres) in depth and had a circumference of 6 chō (about 18 metres, that is, 5.7 metres in diameter). Recent research in the Tsuge area in Tenri city and Nara city has discovered about 30 large bowl-shaped holes that probably were ice cellars of former times. (Kawamura, Kazumasa 川村和正, “Tsuge himuro ni kansuru ichikōsatsu” 都祁氷室に関する一考察 [A study of the ice cellars in Tsuge], *Ryūkoku Daigaku kōkogaku ronshū* 龍谷大学考古学論集 1 (2005): 251-267). In the Fukusumichō (福住町) district of Tenri city, there is a Shinto shrine called Himuro Jinja (氷室神社) dedicated to Emperor Nintoku (仁徳天皇), Prince Nukata no Ōnakatsuhiko no Miko (額田大中彥皇子) and Tsuke no Inaki Ōyamanushi (鬪雞稻置大山主). A replica of an ice cellar, complete with a hut on top of the cellar, has been constructed near a primary school in Fukusumichō district in Tenri city. Incidentally, there is also a Himuro Jinja (氷室神社) in Nara city. It seems that the ice from these ice cellars was mainly intended for the royal court or high officials.

<sup>10</sup>One chō is equivalent to approximately 3 metres (about 10 feet).

<sup>11</sup>From this episode, it seems that the practice of ice storage and constructing ice cellars did not originate as a custom of the royal court, but had its beginnings in the locality.

# **Nihon Shoki** Chapter Fourteen (Selection 13)

Yūryaku Tennō

## **Collecting Babies Instead of Silkworms for the Emperor**

On Day Seven in the Third Month of Year Six, the Emperor intended to let his queen and consorts perform the ceremony of picking mulberry leaves in order to promote sericulture.<sup>8</sup> He ordered Sugaru<sup>9</sup> to collect silkworms in the state. Then, Sugaru mistakenly gathered babies<sup>10</sup> and presented them to the Emperor. The Emperor broke into big laughter. He bestowed the babies on Sugaru, saying, “It is better that you rear them.” Thus Sugaru reared the babies by the palace walls; and the Emperor granted him the hereditary kabane title<sup>11</sup> of Chiisakobe no Muraji.<sup>12</sup> In the Fourth Month in summer, the Kingdom of Wu sent an envoy to offer tributary gifts.<sup>13</sup> (volume 3, page 420)

# **日本書紀** 卷第十四

大泊瀨幼武天皇 雄略天皇

六年・・・、三月辛巳朔丁亥、天皇欲使后妃親桑<sup>1</sup>、以勸蠶事。爰命螺贏<sup>2</sup>聚國內蠶、於是螺贏誤聚嬰兒<sup>3</sup>、奉獻天皇。々々大咲<sup>4</sup>、賜嬰兒於螺贏曰、汝宜自養。螺贏即養嬰兒於宮墻之下、仍賜姓<sup>5</sup>為少子部連<sup>6</sup>。夏四月、吳國遣使貢獻也<sup>7</sup>。(第三冊 四二〇ページ)

## Notes on Selection 13

<sup>1</sup>This term “親桑” probably refers to the picking of mulberry leaves by the queen and other consorts of the emperor. This was an annual ceremonial gesture in spring to show the people the importance of sericulture. Sericulture has a history of some 5,000 or 6,000 years in China. In Japan, it probably began in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Japan probably also adopted the Chinese court ceremonies for sericulture promotion.

<sup>2</sup>The name 螺贏, pronounced as 果螺 in Cantonese, is here used as the name of a person. It is actually the name of a kind of wasps, commonly known as potter wasps. In China, before the fact was clarified around the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, the belief had been that potter wasps, which were supposedly all males, caught the larvae of other insects or caterpillars and brought them back to their nests to rear them into mature insects. The fact is that potter wasps catch other insects or larvae to use as food for their own offspring. In this episode of Emperor Yūryaku, his official Sugaru (螺贏) who mistakenly gathered babies instead of silkworms for the emperor, acted like a potter wasp which collects young insects and subsequently would rear them. Perhaps at the time of compiling *Nihon Shoki*, the compilers were not yet aware of the real life cycle of the potter wasp. The potter wasp however is regarded as a beneficial insect that feeds on harmful insect pests.

<sup>3</sup>The Japanese reading of the character 蠶 (蚕 is the modern form) usually is “kaiko”, but “ko” is another reading of the same character. Emperor Yūryaku must have given a verbal order to Sugaru, who misunderstood that the emperor wanted babies since babies are “ko” (子) too. Therefore he gathered babies in the state and presented them to the court. This is a humorous episode in the otherwise formal history of Japan.

<sup>4</sup>The character 咲 is the old form of the character 笑 and is pronounced the same in Cantonese.

<sup>5</sup>Kabane (姓) is “[a] hereditary title indicating the social rank and specific duty of the *uji no kami*, the chieftain of a lineage group (*uji*) who served the Yamato Court from the late 5<sup>th</sup> through the late 7<sup>th</sup> century.” (*Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993) 1:701). The top three ranks – *omi* (臣), *muraji* (連) and *miyatsuko* (造) – were traditionally granted to chieftains serving at the court.

<sup>6</sup>The kabane rank of 少子部連 (*Chisakobe no Muraji*) indicates that Sugaru was appointed, with the rank of *Muraji* (連), as head of the group of young or teenage children who were attendants to the royalty at the court. The term “be” (部) refers to “hereditary occupational groups that supplied labor, goods, and other economic services to the Yamato Court and to powerful lineage groups (*uji*) from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century.” (*Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993) 1:102).

<sup>7</sup>This is another instance of mentioning the paying of tribute to Japan by the Kingdom of Wu in China. This is simply unimaginable. Perhaps Japan, in its official history, endeavoured to reverse the tributary relationship between Japan and China in an effort to unilaterally bolster its status internationally. Diplomatic relationship between China and Japan during the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century was recorded in official Chinese historical texts of the Northern and Southern Dynasties Period of China. In Japan, this period is known as the time of the Five Kings of Wa (倭の五王, *Wa no Goō*). From 413 CE to 502 CE, Japan’s envoys came to China over ten times, mainly to ask for investiture of official titles and recognition of the overlord status of Japan in the Korean peninsula.

<sup>8</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>9</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>10</sup>See note 3 above.

<sup>11</sup>See note 5 above.

<sup>12</sup>See note 6 above.

<sup>13</sup>See note 7 above.

# Nihon Shoki Chapter Nineteen (Selection 14)

Kinmei Tennō

## The Kingdom of Kudara Officially Introduces Buddhism to Japan<sup>9</sup>

In the Tenth Month in winter of Year Thirteen, King Seimei-ō of Kudara<sup>10</sup> sent Seihō Kishi Dachisochi Nurishichikei<sup>11</sup> and others to offer a gilt-bronze statue of Shakyamuni the Buddha,<sup>12</sup> together with some Buddhist parasols and several sutras and treatises. Additionally, there was a memorandum<sup>13</sup> in praise of the virtue of promulgating and worshipping Buddhism, which said, “Among various doctrines, this doctrine is most distinctively excellent, being difficult to explain and difficult to approach. Even the Duke of Zhou and Confucius<sup>14</sup> did not have any knowledge of it. This doctrine can generate boundless and limitless benevolent deeds with their resultant rewards, to the extent of accomplishing ultimate awakening and enlightenment. It can be likened to a person carrying a wish-fulfilling treasure which, whenever it is used, can fully realise one’s desire accordingly. This wonderful sacred belief also acts the same way, without fail fulfilling wishes through one’s praying. Moreover, this doctrine has come from faraway India to the three kingdoms of Korea,<sup>15</sup> all of which have converted to the religion, and are upholding it with respect. Therefore, your minister Mei, King of Kudara, respectfully sent subordinate minister Nurishichikei to deferentially introduce the doctrine to the Empire, so it may spread across the country. This is exactly what the Buddha has mentioned: My doctrine would flow in the East.” That day, upon hearing this, the Emperor jumped for joy. To the envoy the Emperor decreed, “I in the past have not known such profound and intriguing doctrine. However, I do not make a decision myself.” (volume 3, pages 492-493)

# 日本書紀 卷第十九

天國排開廣庭天皇 欽明天皇

十三年・・・・冬十月、百濟聖明王<sup>1</sup>遣西部姬氏達率怒喇斯致契等<sup>2</sup>、獻釋迦佛金銅像<sup>3</sup>。一軀・幡蓋若干・經論若干卷、別表、讚流通禮拜功德云、是法於諸法中、最為殊勝、難解難入、周公・孔子<sup>4</sup>、尚不能知。此法能生無量無邊福德果報、乃至成辦無上菩提<sup>5</sup>。譬如人懷隨意寶、逐所須用盡依情、此妙法寶亦復然、祈願依情無所乏。且乎遠自天竺、爰洎<sup>6</sup>三韓<sup>7</sup>、依教奉持、無不尊敬。由是、百濟王臣明、謹遣陪臣怒喇斯致契、奉傳帝國、流通畿內<sup>8</sup>、果佛所記我法東流。是日、天皇聞已、歡喜踊躍、詔使者云、朕從昔來、未曾得聞如是微妙之法、然朕不自決。(第三冊 四九二～四九三ページ)

## Notes on Selection 14

<sup>1</sup>King Seimei-ō (聖明王) ruled Kudara (百濟) for some 32 years. Unfortunately, he had a humiliating demise, having been captured in a battle with Shiragi (新羅) and then perishing at the hands of a horse-rearing slave. This happened some time around the Twelve Month of Year Fifteen of Emperor Kinmei, just about two years after the king sent envoys to introduce Buddhism to Japan. The close relationship between Kudara and Japan was based on mutual benefits. Kudara needed Japan's help in dealing with its neighbours on the peninsula, and gifts and envoys – such as the introduction of Chinese texts and Buddhism to Japan – were probably cost-effective.

<sup>2</sup>The name 西部姬氏達率怒唎斯致契 comprises these elements: 西部 (Seihō) refers to one of the five divisions of Kudara's households; 姬氏 (Kishi) may be the family name; 達率 (Dachisochi) is the second rank of the sixteen ranks of Kudara's officials; 怒唎斯致契 (Nurishichikei) may be the given name of this official.

<sup>3</sup>How large was this gilt-bronze statue of the Buddha? To inspire awe, the statue probably was quite sizable so that his facial expression could convey the heavenly aura. About seven years earlier, Kudara had sculpted for itself a statue of the Buddha whose upright height was said to be 1.60 chō (over four metres).

<sup>4</sup>The Duke of Zhou (周公, Shūkō), who lived around the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE, was the younger brother of King Wuwang (武王) of the newly established Zhou dynasty of China. The Duke set up an exemplary framework of governance with the use of rites and music. His statesmanship was praised by Confucius (circa 551-circa 479 BCE) who presented his Confucian ethics and philosophy in his education of students. Both the Duke of Zhou and Confucius are regarded as sages of the Confucian system of thought and practice. On this occasion of Kudara's introduction of Buddhism to Japan, the Buddhist belief was offered as a more subtle and perhaps more superior system than Confucian ethics. However, it has to be clearly understood that while Buddhism is a religion, the Confucian system is plainly this-worldly. Confucius clearly distanced himself from any belief in the supernatural, as evidenced in his *The Analects*.

<sup>5</sup>*Bodhi* (菩提, bodai in Japanese) is a transliteration of the Buddhist term for ultimate awakening through Buddhist practice.

<sup>6</sup>The character 洎 is pronounced in Cantonese as 記. It means “until” but here it may mean “coming to”.

<sup>7</sup>The term 三韓 (Mitsu no Karakuni) refers to the three kingdoms on the Korean peninsula, namely, Goguryeo (高句麗), Shiragi (新羅) and Kudara (百濟).

<sup>8</sup>The term 畿内 (Uchitsukuni) here refers to Japan as a whole, not just to the royal capital area as this term commonly means.

<sup>9</sup>This episode describes the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan with the coming of the envoy of Kudara to the royal court of Emperor Kinmei in Year Thirteen (552 CE) of his reign. Another source has it that Buddhism officially – that is, through the diplomatic channel – came to Japan in 538 CE. However, it is also recorded that before that date, around 522 CE, an immigrant from the continent with the name of Shime Dachito (司馬達等, also read as Shima Datto) settled down in today's Nara prefecture and began worshipping Buddhism there. His grandson was the Buddhist sculptor Kuratsukuri no Tori (鞍作止利), the well-known sculptor who made the Buddhist statues in the main worship hall of Hōryūji (法隆寺).

<sup>10</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>11</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>12</sup>See note 3 above.

<sup>13</sup>The term memorandum is used here to translate the original character 表 (read “biu” in Cantonese) in the text. Usually his term “biu” is translated as “memorial”. However, since memorial may convey the idea of a stone tablet or the like, here it is deemed more advisable to use the term “memorandum” instead. This kind of written communication was usually used by high officials who wanted to submit pleas to the emperor.

<sup>14</sup>See note 4 above.

<sup>15</sup>See note 7 above.

## Japan and China: A Matter of Status

The following four selections – Selection 15 to Selection 18 – describe the exchange of diplomatic envoys between Japan and China in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, about a hundred years before the completion of *Nihon Shoki*. By the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, Japan had given itself the written country name of 日本 (read as Yamato, not Nihon or Nippon) and had also named its supreme ruler with the title of 天皇 (Tennō). Hitherto known as Wa (倭, read as “Wo” in Chinese) or Wakoku (倭国, “Wo guo” in Chinese) – a name given to Japan by China – Japan probably started using the written name of 日本 (Yamato) around the Taika (大化) period (645-650 CE) of Emperor Kōtoku (孝徳天皇). The use of the sovereign title of Tennō for the supreme ruler might have begun even earlier, in the first decade of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.\* Therefore, as the following four selections show, Japan was striving hard to bring itself up to the rank of a sovereign nation with its own distinct identity on a par with its western neighbour on the continent. (For information on when the use of the terms 日本 and 天皇 began, see the supplementary notes 9 and 1 for Chapter 16 on Emperor Buretsu (武烈天皇) in the *Iwanami Bunko* text, v. 3, pp. 374-376 and pp. 370-371 respectively. The notes in the *Iwanami Bunko* edition, however, represent scholarship and research before the 1990s.)

\*However, Sinologist Tomiya Itaru, in his book of 2018, claims that both the country name of “日本” (read as “Yamato”) and the sovereign’s title of “天皇” (“Tennō”, the emperor or empress) were adopted no earlier than during the reign of Emperor Tenmu (reign 672-686).



**Nihon Shoki** Chapter Twenty-two (Selection 15)  
**Sui Shu · Lie Zhuan** Chapter Forty-six

The Second Envoy Mission to the Sui Court of China in 607 CE

**Nihon Shoki** Suiko Tennō

On Day Three in the Seventh Month in autumn of Year Fifteen [607], Ono no Omi Imoko, of the rank of Dairai,<sup>6</sup> was sent to China,<sup>7</sup> with Kuratsukuri no Fukuri as interpreter. (volume 4, page 462)

**Sui Shu**<sup>8</sup>

In Year Three [607] of Reign Daye,<sup>9</sup> its [Japan's] ruler Duolisibigu<sup>10</sup> sent a mission to pay tribute. The envoy said, "Hearing that the very kind Son of Heaven west of the sea is promoting Buddhism again, our ruler sent us to pay tribute and worship, together with several dozens of monks who came to study Buddhist doctrines." Their state memorandum said, "The Son of Heaven at the place of sunrise writes to the Son of Heaven at the place of sunset.<sup>11</sup> I wish you well and healthy, . . . and so and so." Upon reading this the Emperor [Sui Yangdi] was not pleased, and said to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, "Should there be impolite letters or memoranda from the barbarians, do not present them to me anymore." (*Wakokuden*, page 468)<sup>12</sup>

**日本書紀** 卷第廿二 豐御食炊屋姫天皇 推古天皇  
**隋書·列傳** 第四十六 倭國

**日本書紀**<sup>1</sup> 十五年・・・、秋七月戊申朔庚戌、大禮<sup>2</sup>小野臣妹  
 子遣於大唐<sup>3</sup>、以鞍作福利為通事。(第四冊 四六二ページ)

**隋書** 大業三年、其王多利思比孤<sup>4</sup>遣使朝貢、使者曰、聞海西菩  
 薩天子重興佛法、故遣朝拜、兼沙門數十人來學佛法。其國書  
 曰、日出處天子致書日沒處天子、無恙、云云。帝覽之不悅、  
 謂鴻臚卿曰、蠻夷書有無禮者、勿復以聞。(『倭國伝』 四六  
 ハページ)<sup>5</sup>

## Notes on Selection 15

<sup>1</sup>In this and the following two selections, in addition to the *Nihon Shoki* passage, a passage from the Chinese official history *Sui Shu* (隋書, History of the Sui Dynasty) is included, since this visit of the second mission of Japanese envoys to China in 607 during the Sui dynasty was recorded in both sources. Together, these two sources give a more vivid picture of the interactions by complementing each other.

<sup>2</sup>Dairai (大禮) was the fifth in the 12-rank ranking system of officials set up by Shōtoku Taishi (聖德太子) about four years before this mission. Ono no Imoko (小野妹子) was male, not female as his name might have suggested.

<sup>3</sup>Read in Japanese as Morokoshi, 大唐 here actually was China during the Sui dynasty (581-618) which only lasted for 37 years.

<sup>4</sup>This name of the ruler of Japan as rendered in Chinese as 多利思比孤 (“Duolisibigu” in Chinese, “Tarishihiko” in Japanese) has various interpretations. The following interpretations are based on the two main sources (Tōdō 2010, and Sakamoto 1994-1995) used in this project.

Source	Interpretation of Tarishihiko (多利思比孤), or Tarashihiko (タラシヒコ)	Examples
<i>Wakokuden</i> (倭国伝): p. 187, footnote 24	Perhaps it was a form of auspicious address for the emperor or empress.	
<i>Nihon Shoki</i> (日本書紀, Iwanami Bunko edition): v. 1, pp. 407-412, suppl. note 1 for Chapter 4; v. 2, p. 59, note 1 for Chapter 7	Tarashihiko (タラシヒコ) probably was a generic address for the emperor or empress around the 7 <sup>th</sup> century.	Posthumous titles of emperors and queen:  Emperor Keikō (景行天皇): オホ <u>タラシヒコ</u> オシロワケ Emperor Seimu (成務天皇): ワカ <u>タラシヒコ</u> Emperor Chūai (仲哀天皇): <u>タラシナカツヒコ</u> Queen Jingū (神功皇后): オキナガ <u>タラシヒメ</u> ノミコト Emperor Jomei (舒明天皇): reigned 7 <sup>th</sup> century オキナガ <u>タラシヒ</u> ヒロヌカ Empress Kōgyoku (皇極天皇): reigned 7 <sup>th</sup> century アメトヨタカライカシヒ <u>タラシヒメ</u>

<sup>5</sup>The text of this passage was taken from Tōdō Akiyasu, Takeda Akira and Kageyama Terukuni 藤堂明保, 竹田晃, 影山輝國, eds. *Wakokuden: Chūgoku seishi ni egakareta Nihon: zen'yakuchū*. Kōdansha gakujutsu bunko 倭国伝: 中国正史に描かれた日本: 全訳注 (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 2010.), 468.

<sup>6</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>7</sup>The original text uses the term Morokoshi (大唐), literally meaning “the great Tang state”, to refer to China. Actually this event happened in the Sui dynasty (581-618) which, though short-lived, was a significant era preceding the Tang dynasty.

<sup>8</sup>Since this passage is from the official Chinese source, transliteration of proper names and book titles follows the Chinese pinyin romanisation scheme.

<sup>9</sup>Daye (大業) was the reign name of Emperor Sui Yangdi.

<sup>10</sup>See note 4 above. Although in Japan the sovereign was Empress Suiko, this official Chinese history uses the term “King” (王). Here it is deemed appropriate to translate “王” as ruler.

<sup>11</sup>This well-known opening address of the state memorandum of Japan upset the Chinese emperor, Sui Yangdi (隋煬帝), probably because (1) Japan claimed to be of equal status with China in also having a sovereign called Son of Heaven, and (2) it represented Japan as equivalent to sunrise while China as equivalent to sunset. Nevertheless, Emperor Yangdi, though indignant, did not close the diplomatic channel. On the contrary, in the following year 608, the emperor sent his envoy, Pei Shiqing (裴世清), to accompany the Japanese envoy, Ono no Imoko, back to Japan and visit the Japanese emperor with China's state memorandum. This Chinese visit was recorded in some detail in both Chinese and Japanese official histories, as the following two selections show.

<sup>12</sup>The passage from *Sui Shu* is translated from the text in *Wakokuden*. For the full citation of this book, see note 5 above.

**Nihon Shoki** Chapter Twenty-two (Selection 16)  
**Sui Shu · Lie Zhuan** Chapter Forty-six

**China's Envoy Pei Shiqing Pays Visit to Japan's Empress in 608 CE**

**Nihon Shoki** In the Fourth Month in summer of Year Sixteen [608], Ono no Imoko returned from China. China called him So Inkō.<sup>9</sup> With Imoko to arrive at Tsukushi were China's envoy Pei Shiqing and his twelve aides. . . . On Day Three in the Eighth Month in autumn, the Chinese guests came to the capital. . . . On Day Twelve the court summoned the Chinese guests to present the purpose of their mission. . . . China's state memorandum read, "The Emperor greets the Emperor<sup>10</sup> of Wakoku, . . . I understand the King, while isolated beyond the sea, governs the people with mercy and the country is peaceful with contentment. . . . From afar you pay us tributes. I commend you for the merit of this genuine sincerity. . . ." (volume 4, pages 462-463)

**Sui Shu** The next year [608] His Majesty sent an official Pei Qing<sup>11</sup> as envoy to the State of Wakoku. . . . Its King<sup>12</sup> met with Qing upon his arrival at the capital and was very glad, and said, "I heard about the Great Sui country west of the sea. It is a land of propriety and righteousness. Therefore I send tributary envoys there. We eastern barbarians, isolated at the sea's corner, do not know propriety and righteousness; so we are left alone within our boundary and have not met you so far. Now having cleared our avenues and prepared our guest residence, we are awaiting to receive our honoured envoy and look forward to learning the advice of your great country on civilising reforms." Qing replied, "Our Emperor's virtues parallel heaven and earth, his beneficence encompasses the four seas. Since the King is longing for civilisation, our Emperor sent me here as envoy to convey his advice." Afterwards the court guided Qing to his residence. (*Wakokuden*, pages 468-469)

**日本書紀** 卷第廿二 豐御食炊屋姫天皇 推古天皇  
**隋書·列傳** 第四十六 倭國

**日本書紀** 十六年夏四月、小野臣妹子、至自大唐、々國號妹子臣曰蘇因高。即大唐使人裴世清、下客十二人、從妹子臣、至於筑紫。 . . . 秋八月辛丑朔癸卯、唐客入京。 . . . 壬子、召唐客於朝廷、令奏使旨。 . . . 其書曰、皇帝問倭皇<sup>1</sup>、 . . . 知皇介居海表<sup>2</sup>、撫寧民庶、境內安樂、 . . . 遠脩朝貢、丹款<sup>3</sup>之美、朕有嘉焉。 . . . (第四冊 四六二～四六三ページ)

**隋書** 明年、上遣文林郎<sup>4</sup>裴清<sup>5</sup>使於倭國。 . . . 既至彼都、其王與清相見、大悅、曰、我聞海西有大隋、禮義之國、故遣朝貢。我夷人、僻在海隅、不聞禮義、是以稽留境內、不即相見。今故清道飾館、以待大使、冀聞大國惟新之化。清答曰、皇帝德竝二儀<sup>6</sup>、澤流四海、以王慕化<sup>7</sup>、特遣行人<sup>8</sup>來此宣諭。既而引清就館。(『倭國伝』 四六八～四六九ページ)

## Notes on Selection 16

<sup>1</sup>The Chinese character 皇 (pronounced as “huang” in Chinese) in the address 倭皇 (“Yamato no Sumera Mikoto” in Japanese) most probably should have been 王 (“wang” in Chinese) in the original state memorandum of China. In the text of *Nihon Shoki*, it became 皇 since the compilers probably attempted to reclaim a rightful status for Japan vis-à-vis China. The character 皇 (pronounced as “Sumera Mikoto” in Japanese) means emperor, while 王 (pronounced as “ō” in Japanese) means king. (*Iwanami Bunko*, vol. 4, p. 115, note 1)

<sup>2</sup>The term 海表 means beyond the sea, or overseas.

<sup>3</sup>Literally the character 丹 means red, and 款 here means sincerity. The term 丹款 may be rendered as pure or genuine sincerity.

<sup>4</sup>The official title of 文林郎 (“wen lin lang” in Chinese) was probably for an official of lower rank.

<sup>5</sup>In the official history 隋書 (*Sui Shu*, History of the Sui Dynasty), which was compiled during the reign of Emperor Taizong of the following Tang dynasty, the character 世 was avoided since this character was part of the given name of Emperor Taizong who was called Li Shimin (李世民). Therefore the envoy 裴世清 (Pei Shiqing) was known as 裴清 (Pei Qing) in *Sui Shu*.

<sup>6</sup>The term 二儀 (“er yi” in Chinese) means heaven and earth.

<sup>7</sup>The phrase 慕化 means longing for becoming more civilised by learning from China.

<sup>8</sup>A Chinese official title for envoys.

<sup>9</sup>So Inkō is the Japanese reading of the name 蘇因高 (read as Su Yin’gao in Chinese), the transliterated name used by the Chinese side for 小野妹子.

<sup>10</sup>In the original Chinese state memorandum, most probably the Japanese sovereign was called King (王, “wang” in Chinese), not Emperor (皇, “huang” in Chinese). In *Nihon Shoki*, 倭王 was probably converted to 倭皇 for the sake of self-respect. Incidentally, it is most probable that Japan began using the title of Tennō (天皇) for the sovereign during the 7<sup>th</sup> century; but, as Sinologist Tomiya Itaru maintains (Tomiya 2018, chap. 8), the formal adoption of the Tennō title should not be dated earlier than the time of Emperor Tenmu who reigned from 672 to 686.

<sup>11</sup>See note 5 above.

<sup>12</sup>The title “King” is used here for the Chinese title “王” which actually can mean either a female or male ruler. The sovereign of Japan at that time was Empress Suiko.

**Nihon Shoki** Chapter Twenty-two (Selection 17)  
**Sui Shu • Lie Zhuan** Chapter Forty-six

**Ono no Imoko Pays His Second Visit to China in 608 CE,  
 Accompanying Pei Shiqing**

**Nihon Shoki** On Day Five in the Ninth Month of Year Sixteen, a banquet for the guests was held at Ōgōri in Naniwa.<sup>12</sup> On Day Eleven, the Chinese guest Pei Shiqing left for China. On this occasion, a mission was sent to accompany the Chinese guests back, with Ono no Imoko again as chief envoy, Kishi no Onari as vice envoy and Fukuri<sup>13</sup> as interpreter. And the Empress communicated with the Chinese Emperor in these words, “The Eastern Empress respectfully writes to the Western Emperor.<sup>14</sup> Envoy Pei Shiqing, reception officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and his group came, relieving my thinking of you heretofore. In late autumn it is slightly cold. How are you the Honourable? I hope you are fine and joyous. I am as usual and alright. Now I am sending Dairai<sup>15</sup> So Inkō, Dairai Onari<sup>16</sup> and others to come. Sincerely written, though not in detail.” This time, being sent to China were students Yamato no Aya no Atai Fukuin, Nara no Osa Emyō, Takamuko no Ayahito Genri<sup>17</sup> and Imaki no Ayahito Ōkuni, as well as novice Buddhist monks Imaki no Ayahito Nichimon, Minabuchi no Ayahito Shōan,<sup>18</sup> Shiga no Ayahito Eon and Imaki no Ayahito Kōsai. Together there were eight people.<sup>19</sup> (volume 4, pages 463-464)

**Sui Shu** Later Qing [Pei Shiqing] sent his man to tell the ruler, “Our royal order has been accomplished. We would like to request for departure.” So the ruler [Empress Suiko] held a send-off banquet for Qing. Also the ruler ordered envoys to come with Qing to present tributary gifts of local products. ... (*Wakokuden*, page 469)

**日本書紀** 卷第廿二 豐御食炊屋姫天皇 推古天皇  
**隋書·列傳** 第四十六 倭國

**日本書紀**

十六年・・・・、九月辛未朔乙亥、饗客等於難波

大郡<sup>1</sup>。辛巳、唐客裴世清罷歸。則復以小野妹子臣為大使、吉士雄成為小使、福利<sup>2</sup>為通事、副于唐客而遣之。爰天皇聘<sup>3</sup>唐帝、其辭曰、東天皇敬白西皇帝、使人鴻臚寺掌客裴世清等至、久憶方解。季秋薄冷、尊何如、想清念<sup>5</sup>、此<sup>6</sup>即如常。今遣大禮蘇因高、大禮乎那利<sup>7</sup>等往、謹白不具<sup>8</sup>。是時、遣於唐國學生倭漢直福因・奈羅譯語惠明・高向漢人玄理・新漢人大圀・學問僧新漢人日文・南淵漢人請安・志賀漢人慧隱・新漢人。廣濟等<sup>10</sup>、并八人也。(第四冊 四六三―四六四ページ)

**隋書**

其後清遣人謂其王曰、朝命既達、請即戒塗<sup>11</sup>。於是設宴享

以遣清、復令使者隨清來貢方物。・・・・(『倭國伝』四六九ページ)

## Notes on Selection 17

<sup>1</sup>Naniwa (難波) was the old name of today's Osaka city area. Ōgōri (大郡) was probably not a place name, but the name of some buildings in Naniwa for receiving foreign guests.

<sup>2</sup>Fukuri (福利) was the same Kuratsukuri Fukuri (鞍作福利) who went with the chief envoy Ono no Imoko to China as interpreter in the previous year.

<sup>3</sup>This character 聘 means conducting diplomatic visits between states. Here it may have the meaning of communicating in writing between two rulers.

<sup>4</sup>In the previous diplomatic mission of 607, Japan's state memorandum used the opening address of "The Son of Heaven at the place of sunrise writes to the Son of Heaven at the place of sunset" (Selection 15). It is not clear whether Empress Suiko (推古天皇) knew that her words had upset Emperor Sui Yangdi. This time in 608, the Japanese empress used a new but more formalised and unique title for herself by calling herself Tennō (Emperor, or Empress, of the East). This is regarded as one of the earliest instances of the use of the title "Tennō" in Japan. Apparently, Japan was striving to establish itself as a sovereign state in East Asia on an equal footing with continental China. However, as can be seen in the description in *Sui Shu* (Selection 16) of the meeting of the Japanese empress with the Chinese envoy Pei Shiqing, the empress' words were quite submissive. She acknowledged, at least when talking to Pei, the difference in the level of civilisation between the two countries. These significant diplomatic transactions may be illustrated in the following table:

Date & Place	Japan's State Memorandum to China	China's State Memorandum to Japan	Effect
7 <sup>th</sup> Month, 607 in China	"The Son of Heaven at the place of sunrise writes to the Son of Heaven at the place of sunset . . ." 日出處天子致書日沒處天子 …		Emperor Sui Yangdi of China was unhappy.
8 <sup>th</sup> Month, 608 in Japan		"The Emperor [of China] greets the Emperor of Wakoku [Japan] . . ." 皇帝問倭皇 (倭王, the King (or ruler) of Wo) …	Sui Yangdi affirmed his superior title of Emperor, and addressed Japan's ruler as Emperor (actually, King) of Wakoku. Upon meeting Pei Shiqing, Japan's ruler was quite submissive.
9 <sup>th</sup> Month, 608 in China	"The Eastern Empress respectfully writes to the Western Emperor . . ." 東天皇敬白西皇帝 …		In her written state memorandum, the sovereign of Japan formally used the new title of Tennō for herself. On this mission to China, Japan was sending eight students and monks, some of them would later become influential people in Japan's cultural and political developments.

<sup>5</sup>The character 愈 is pronounced in Cantonese as 預, and means joyous. The term 清愈 may be translated as joyous and relaxed.

<sup>6</sup>This character 此 refers to the Empress herself.

<sup>7</sup>The name 乎那利 (Hunali in modern Mandarin, Funalei in Cantonese, and Onari in Japanese) was the Chinese transliteration of the name of Kishi no Onari (吉士雄成), the vice envoy. It is of interest to note that this Chinese transliteration was coined by the Japanese side, as it appeared in Japan's state memorandum to China of 608.

<sup>8</sup>The phrase 不具 means that the memorandum was written respectfully yet without going into details.

<sup>9</sup>Imaki no Ayahito (新漢人) refers mainly to immigrants to Japan from the southern Korean peninsula or China after the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, as contrast to those who had moved to Japan earlier. Their home base was probably Takaichi district (高市郡) in the northern part of Nara Prefecture today.

<sup>10</sup>Of the eight people sent to China, Takamuko no Genri (高向玄理) and Minabuchi no Shōan (南淵請安) were well-known in history. Also known as Takamuko no Kuromaro (高向黑麻呂), Takamuko returned to Japan in 640, after spending over thirty years in China. At the time of the Taika reforms of Emperor Kōtoku (孝德天皇), he was appointed 国博士 (kuni no hakase), a position equivalent to chief political advisor to the central government. Upon returning to Japan in 640, Minabuchi no Shōan became the Confucian teacher of Naka no Ōe no Ōji (中大兄皇子) and Nakatomi no Kamatari (中臣鎌足), who were successful in overthrowing the Soga (蘇我) clan in 645 and then began the Taika reforms. Minabuchi, however, did not actually participate in the reforms.

<sup>11</sup>The term 戒塗 means to prepare for departure, or simply, to set off on a journey.

<sup>12</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>13</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>14</sup>See note 4 above.

<sup>15</sup>Dairai (大禮) was the fifth in the 12-rank ranking system of officials set up by Shōtoku Taishi (聖德太子) several years before this mission.

<sup>16</sup>The name Onari – read as Hunali in modern Mandarin, Funalei in Cantonese – was the Chinese transliteration of the name of Kishi no Onari (吉士雄成), the vice envoy. It is of interest to note that this Chinese transliteration was coined by the Japanese side, as it appeared in Japan's state memorandum to China of 608.

<sup>17</sup>See note 10 above.

<sup>18</sup>See note 10 above.

<sup>19</sup>The designations of Aya, Ayahito, Osa and Imaki no Ayahito in the names of these eight students and novice monks indicate that they were all descendants of immigrants from either the Korean peninsula or China.



日本書紀

卷第廿二

豐御食炊屋姫天皇 推古天皇

十七年・・・、秋九月、小野臣妹子等、至自大唐、唯通事福利不來。(第四冊 四六四ページ)

廿二年夏五月五日、藥獵也<sup>1</sup>。六月丁卯朔己卯、遣犬上君御田  
鍬・矢田部造關名<sup>2</sup>於大唐。・・・廿三年秋九月、犬上君御田鍬・  
矢田部造、至自大唐。(第四冊 四六七ページ)

卅二年・・・、秋九月甲戌朔丙子、校<sup>3</sup>寺及僧尼、具錄其寺所造  
之緣、亦僧尼入道之緣、及度<sup>4</sup>之年月日也。當是時、有寺卅六所、  
僧八百十六人、尼五百六十九人、并一千三百八十五人。(第四冊  
四七一～四七二ページ)

# Nihon Shoki Chapter Twenty-two (Selection 18)

Suiko Tennō

## The Fifth Envoy Mission to Sui China in 614-615 CE, and Survey of Buddhism in Japan

In the Ninth Month in autumn of Year Seventeen [609], Ono no Imoko and his group returned from China. Only interpreter Fukuri did not come back. (volume 4, page 464)

On Day Five in the Fifth Month of Year Twenty-two [614], it was hunting for the velvet antlers of deer.<sup>5</sup> On Day Thirteen in the Sixth Month, the court sent Inukami no Kimi Mitasuki and Yatabe no Miyatsuko (name missing)<sup>6</sup> to China. . . . In the Ninth Month in autumn of Year Twenty-three [615], Inukami no Kimi Mitasuki and Yatabe no Miyatsuko returned from China. (volume 4, page 467)

On Day Three in the Ninth Month in autumn of Year Thirty-two [624], a survey of Buddhist monasteries and monks and nuns was carried out. The origins of the monasteries, the monks' and nuns' reasons for their conversion, and the dates of their ordination were recorded in detail. At that time, there were 46 Buddhist monasteries, 816 monks and 569 nuns. All told, there were 1,385 people. (volume 4, pages 471-472)

## Notes on Selection 18

<sup>1</sup>Kusurigari (藥獵) is the hunting for the newly grown velvet antlers of deer. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) even today these velvet antlers are regarded to have medicinal efficacy. It is of interest to note that TCM was already established for wellness and cure in Japan as early as in the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The date on which this antler hunting was practised is also noteworthy, because in China, annually on Day Five in the Fifth Month of the year, it was common for people to collect medicinal herbs and use them to fight off harmful or poisonous matters.

<sup>2</sup>The name Yatabe no Miyatsuko (矢田部造) comprises probably the clan name “Yatabe” plus the kabana title (姓) of “Miyatsuko”. The given name of this envoy was missing or not known; hence the explanatory sidenote of “ketsumei” (闕名), meaning name unknown, below the name 矢田部造 in the text.

<sup>3</sup>The character 校 is pronounced in Cantonese as 教. Here it means to survey the present condition of Buddhism in Japan.

<sup>4</sup>This character 度 means to become a Buddhist monk or nun through ceremonies that typically involve shaving the head and joining a monastery, signifying the forsaking of worldly life.

<sup>5</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>6</sup>See note 2 above.

## Writing of *Nihon Shoki* Begins: A Thirty-nine Year Enterprise, 681-720 CE

It is generally regarded that the effort to write a national history began with Emperor Tenmu (天武天皇) in his tenth year of reign. This event is shown in the selection below. Some four decades later in 720 CE, the completed history was presented to Empress Genshō (元正天皇).

### **Nihon Shoki** Chapter Twenty-nine (Selection 19)

Tenmu Tennō

#### **Royal Decree of 681 CE to Compile the National History**

On Day Seventeen in the Third Month of Year Ten [681], the Emperor presided at Ōandono, the main palace, and issued a decree to Prince Kawashima no Miko, Prince Osakabe no Miko, Lord Hirose no Ōkimi, . . . Daisenjō Nakatomi no Muraji Ōshima<sup>2</sup> and Daisenge Heguri no Omi Kobito.<sup>3</sup> He ordered them to establish a chronicle of the sovereigns and a record of ancient legends and stories.<sup>4</sup> Ōshima and Kobito recorded them in writing. (volume 5, page 420)

### 日本書紀 卷第廿九

天淳中原瀛真人天皇 天武天皇

〔十年〕三月庚午朔・・・丙戌、天皇御于  
大極殿、以詔川嶋皇子・忍壁皇子・廣瀨  
王・・・大山上中臣連大嶋・大山下平群臣子  
首、令記定帝紀及上古諸事<sup>1</sup>、大嶋・子首親執  
筆以錄焉。(第五冊 四二〇ページ)

## Notes on Selection 19

<sup>1</sup>According to historian Sakamoto Tarō (坂本太郎), when Emperor Tenmu met with his three princes, three other royal relatives and six high officials in the Third Month of Year Ten (681 CE) of his reign and ordered them to establish, by collating various versions, a chronicle of the emperors and empresses and a record of ancient matters, he was laying the groundwork of a national history. In 720 eventually, after continual efforts the resulting compilation appeared as *Nihon Shoki* for presentation to the throne by the then compiler-in-chief Prince Toneri Shinnō (舍人親王), one of the sons of Emperor Tenmu.

<sup>2</sup>Daisenjō (大山上) was a rank title of one of the 26 ranks of officials established during the reign of Emperor Tenchi (天智天皇), the elder brother of Emperor Tenmu. It was a middle rank.

<sup>3</sup>Daisenge (大山下) was a rank title among the 26 ranks. It ranked below Daisenjō.

<sup>4</sup>See note 1 above.

## *The Chronicle of Japan Comes to Its Conclusion with the Year 697*

The reign of Empress Jitō (持統天皇), wife of Emperor Tenmu (天武天皇), from 686 to 697 marks the conclusion of the 30-chapter *Nihon Shoki*. The following very short selection therefore also completes this translation project.

### **Nihon Shoki** Chapter Thirty (Selection 20)

Jitō Tennō<sup>4</sup>

#### **Throne Succession in 697**

On Day Seven in the First Month in spring of Year Eleven [697], a feast was held for the top and high officials.<sup>5</sup> . . . On Day One in the Eighth Month, the Empress, formalising her decision at the royal palace, ceded the throne to the Crown Prince.<sup>6</sup> (volume 5, pages 461-462)

### 日本書紀 卷第卅

高天原廣野姫天皇 持統天皇<sup>1</sup>

十一年春正月甲辰、饗公卿大夫等<sup>2</sup>。 . . . 八月  
乙丑朔、天皇定策禁中、禪天皇位於皇太子<sup>3</sup>。  
五冊 四六一〜四六二ページ） (第

## Notes on Selection 20

<sup>1</sup>Empress Jitō (持統天皇) was the queen of Emperor Tenmu. She was the fourth female Tennō of Japan since Empress Suiko (推古天皇, r. 592-628). The second and the third Empress, Empress Kōgyoku (皇極天皇, r. 642-645) and Empress Saimei (齊明天皇, r. 655-661), were actually the same person.

<sup>2</sup>This was the annual celebration event at the palace on Day One in the First Month, called Aouma no Sechie (青馬の節会), or Viewing of the Black or Brown Horses. On this day, the Tennō viewed horses with black, brown or white coats and held a feast with the high officials. Poem 4494 of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in *Man'yōshū* says that seeing a black-coat horse (青馬) on the seventh day of the new year would bring longevity to the person. The character “ao” (青) literally means sky blue, not green or brown. When it applies to the colour of the coat of a horse, however, this character “ao” means black. Nowadays, an “aouma” (青馬) is a horse with black coat which may change to brown with the seasons. In the Heian period around the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the name of the event became 白馬の節会, but read as “Aouma no Sechie” as before. In China, Day Seven of the new year is the birthday of humans (人日, ren ri), and this belief also went over to Japan.

<sup>3</sup>The Crown Prince thus became Emperor Monmu (文武天皇, r. 697-707) at the age of fifteen. He was the grandson of Empress Jitō and Emperor Tenmu. This sentence about Empress Jitō's ceding her throne concludes the 30-chapter *Nihon Shoki*.

<sup>4</sup>See note 1 above.

<sup>5</sup>See note 2 above.

<sup>6</sup>See note 3 above.



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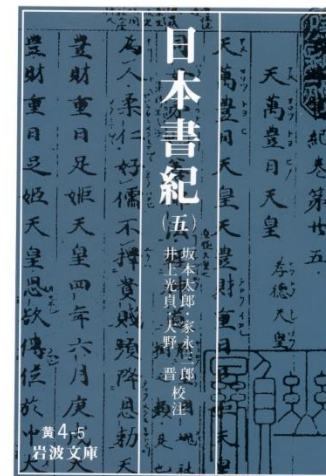
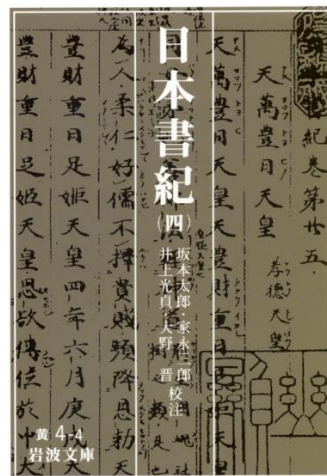
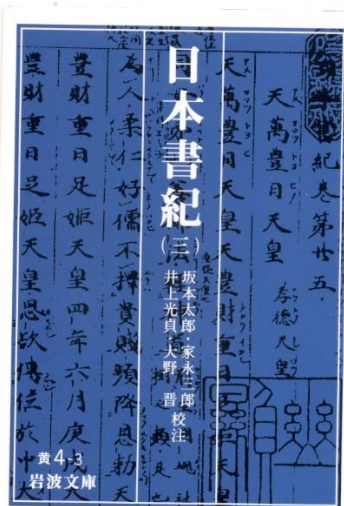
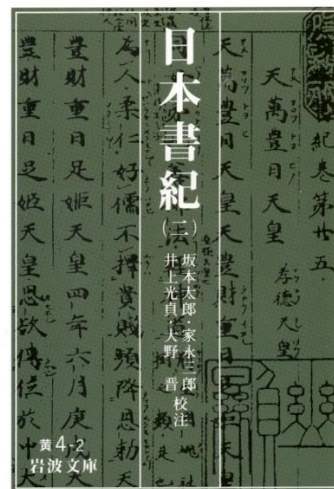
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### Brief self-introduction

Originally I am from Hong Kong. Formerly as East Asia Librarian at the University of Alberta Libraries, Canada, I have also worked at university libraries (CUHK and HKU) in Hong Kong. While not really being my passion, my undergraduate major in sociology did broaden my horizons and widen my knowledge of society, history and culture. So did my childhood readings.





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