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**Japan’s Korean Roots**

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EDITOR’S NOTE: A growing body of evidence, historical, documentary, and archaeological demonstrates Korea’s profound influence on the Japanese islands. Not only does anthropological evidence and theory support continental migratory patterns of humans, other evidences are becoming ever clearer that Korea, especially the Paekche Kingdom, had direct and deliberate colonization efforts in what is now Japan.

Dr. Kim Yongduk has prepared numerous papers, which are published in the pages of Transactions, on the subject of Korean influence in ancient Japan. This paper is, in fact, two separate papers on this theme. The first deals specifically with evidences of the colonies established by Paekche’s rulers on the Japanese islands, and the second paper focuses specifically on the amazing discovery of a bronze mirror in Japan which was virtually identical with an older mirror discovered in Korea.]

In Search of Paekche’s Tamnos

The chronicle of Liang China (502 - 555 C.E.\*) records that Paekche had twenty-two Tamnos1), which were equivalent to provinces or countries in China. Princes or royal. members of Paekche were appointed to rule. The chronicle of

\* B.C.E. (before common era) and C.E. (common era) are the modern scholarly date references which replace the old-style B.C. and A.D. (“Before Christ” and “Anno Domini” or Year of Our Lord) date references which denote a strictly Christian orientation.

1) Tamno records in Liang’s chronicle

“號所治城固麻謂色日魯将

如中國之言 部縣也基國有二十二魯

皆以子第宗親分據之---- “

梁書百濟傅

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Japan (written in 720 C.E.) also records that Japanese islands were born with Tamro Island2) as their placenta (or foundation). Althougn Tamro and Tamno are written in two different ways, having different ways of representing the same word was not unusual in I-du (I-du was a style of writing used in ancient Korea, which employed Chinese characters to sound-out Korean words. See Dr. Kim’s paper on this subject in Transactions 74 (1999) RAS-Korea Branch). In Nihon Shoki, it says in the outset that the word Tamro is “shameful” and should be pronounced Awaji.

Oddly, the Korean chronicles, Samguk Sagi and Samguk Yusa, made no reference to Tamno at all, although some of the provincial rulers in Paekche were called kings of vassal states, which may be considered Tamnos.

So this Tamno is an important and interesting topic for understanding the history of Paekche and also of neighboring countries as well. In the second chapter, the Tamnos in Paekche will be examined; in chapter three those in Wae Japan will be explored; and in chapter four, Tamnos in China will be considered. The conclusion will be a summary of the findings.

Tamno as an administrative institution of Paekche

Among many articles about the Tamno institution of Paekche, the latest thesis by Lee, Yongbin3) seems to present a consistent and convincing argument on the real nature of a Tamno. According to Lee, a Tamno was a newly occupied territory, which was ruled by a royal member of Paekche as an expedient measure to administer a territory far away from the capital.

According to Lee, during the reign of King Keunchogo (346 - 375 C.E.), Paekche carried out a war of conquest, with the collaboration of Wae Japan, in the Cholla province or the land of Mahan, and in the Kaya States along the Nam River. This fact can be inferred from the records in the oldest Japanese chronicle Nihon Shoki. In the forty-ninth year of the Jingo reign in Wae Japan or in 369 C.E., Paekche and Wae Japan of Jingo successfully launched an attack against the Kara States along the Nam River and other states in Cholla province. Although these conquered states are recorded as granted to Paekche by Wae Japan after the war, according to Nihon Shoki, it is obvious that this was a war of conquest by Paekche in consideration of Paekche’s victorious war soon after the one against Koguryo in 371 C.E These conquered Kaya states were Tara, Kara, Taksun, Chimitare, Namkara and Takkuk, while the subjugated states in Cholla province

2) Tamno records in Japanese chronicles

“先以淡路州爲胞

意所不快故名之白淡路州”

3) Lee Yongbin, Study on the Tamno institution of Paekche, Myongi historical journal 2, #12, 2000

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were Pisi, Midi, Dohan, Paradi, Acha, Maera, Piri, Pidi and Parage It turns out, Chinese records such as “Liang “s book of ambassador’s portraits4) confirm some of these Kaya states as Paekche ‘s vassal states, while the Liang China chronicle suggests names of feudal lords of the conquered lands in Cholla province.

Lee concludes that the Tamno institution was set up as an expedient way to rule these newly occupied lands. However, he notes that the Kaya States were left to be ruled by native kings as vassal states, although Paekche sent representatives there to exercise military and political domination However, Tamno lords appointed by the Paekche king directly ruled states in the Cholla province. This can be inferred from records in the Chinese chronicles.

There is a passage in Nihon Shoki that sheds light on the status of Jingo in Paekche. Nihon Shoki records that in 372 C.E. a seven-branched sword and a seven-child mirror were offered to Jingo. This seven-branched sword is kept at Isonogami shrine, and it carries an inscription of sixty-one Chinese characters that tell the sword was offered to a feudal king, Ji of Wae Japan. Naturally this leads us to infer that Jingo was a feudal lord of Paekche. It makes sense why Jingo, as a feudal lord of Paekche, collaborated with Paekche in waging a war against the Kara States along the Naktong River. But the question remains how and where Paekche managed to establish a feudal state in Wae Japan this early in history. Surely this Paekche vassal state of Jingo must have been located somewhere in Kyushu. As we shall see later, we identify Ojin of Wae Japan with Nyeh the conqueror of Wae Japan as recorded in King Mu’s epistle to Liu Sung5). This is a reasonable guess since the royal member King Ojin/Nyeh encountered a fierce resistance in conquering the Osaka area or the ancient land of Naniwa where he established a new Yamato court of Wae Japan.

This question of Jingo’s state will be deferred to the next section. Let’s turn our attention to the Tamno at Kabara or present day Kongju in Korea. Kabara is written as Keobal in I-du, and it was also called Koma. Both Kabara and Koma mean a big village according to Ryu Ryul6) This place was also called Komanaru in Korean or Kumanari in Japanese, which indicates a port at Koma. Kom also means bear in Korean while Kuma means bear in Japanese. A river called Kum or Kom ran along the Kabara. The significance of these names will be dealt with later when we discuss a Tamno in Kyushu near the Kuma River.

A bronze crown worn by a feudal lord was excavated from one of the old tombs near the estuary of the Kum River, suggesting the existence of another

4) Soh, Jinchul, King Muryong’s world as recorded on metal and stone inscriptions, Wonkwang Univ. Press 1998

5) King Mu’s epistle to Liu Sung,”...自昔祖...庵喪父兄...”

6) Ryu Ryul, “Idu during the three Kingdom Period”, Munwhasa pub., co. 1995

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Tamno in this area during the middle of the fifth century. It so happens that Kabara was located upstream on the same Kum River and became a new capital for Paekche in 475 C.E. This provides another indication that Kabara was a Tamno. In Nihon Shoki, Kumanari is referred to as the place from where the god Susanoonomikoto was banished in his journey to Kyushu.

Ledyard7) identifies Keobal with the place name “Ihare” found in the title of Jimmu [Kami Yamato lhare-biko] and is the name of the residence of Ojin and his birthplace. Ledyard suggests the connection of Ojin with Keobal. It is clearly demonstrated in the evidence that Ojin/Nyeh was the feudal lord at Keobal until Koguryo sacked this Tamno in 396 C.E. The stele of the famous King Kwang-gae-to records that Keobal was one of fitiy-eight fortresses he subjugated. The presence of Ojin/Nyeh in Keobal is even more plausible when one reads the records in the early years of Ojin’s reign. Nihon Shoki records that in November 392 C.E., Kino Tsuno, an Ojin follower, was sent to the Paekche court to King Jinsa, who usurped the throne from his young nephew to protest the loss of a fortress, Kwanmi, and the war against Koguryo in October 392 CE. Jinsa was assassinated while hunting in Kangwha Island King Ahwa was enthroned immediately and this fact was reported back to Ojin/Nyeh in the same month. These events suggest that Ojin/Nyeh was located near enough to the capital as an influential royal member of Paekche, and he exerted his power. This point was made by Kim S.H.8)

Four years later in September 396, Koguryo again assaulted Paekche from both sea and land this time. Upon the fall of Keobal, Ojin/Nyeh must have fled to Kyushu and launched his war of conquest and established his new state in Osaka in January, 397. On this occasion, the crown prince, Toki of Ahwa, arrived at the new Yamato court to stay until he returned home several years later to succeed his father in 405 C.E.

All these sequence of events fall in place consistently, convincing us that Ojin/Nyeh was the feudal lord of the Tamno at Kabara.

Tamnos in Wae Japan

Since Ojin/Nyeh was a Tamno lord, it is understandable why Nihon Shoki records that Japan was born of a Tamno as its foundation, and then immediately it states its embarrassment of this fact. The historian who was entrusted to record the glorious beginning of new Japan in 720 must have felt embarrassed by mentioning a ramno or the feudal land of Paekche as its foundation. No wonder, the

7) Ledyard, Gari, “Galloping Along with the Horseriders ; looking for the founders of Japan”, journal of Japanese studies, Vol.l, No 2, 1975

8) Kim, Sungho, Japan’s origin and Piryu Paekche, Jimunsa, 1982

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instruction was to pronounce Tamro as Awaji.

Nihon Shoki continues to record the numerous subsequent refugees from Paekche. Displaced and devastated by the onslaughts of Koguryo’s army, they chose to follow their leader, who set up a new court in Japan. There were all sorts of skilled and unskilled people in various fields. Horses were introduced to Wae Japan by the equestrian conqueror Ojin/Nyeh and his followers but also by later followers. It was at this time also that Chinese classics were introduced. These people came through a port of passage at Imna Kaya, which was under the control of Paekche through the previous war in collaboration with Jingo’s army. According to Nihon Shoki, Paekche general Mongna Keunja, who conducted war against these Kaya states, had a son Manchi who was in a powerful position there. This facilitated the moving of Paekche refugees on their way to Wae Japan.

Next we find another Tamno, this time at Awaji Island. As mentioned before, Awaji is written using two Chinese characters, which may be pronounced Tamro or Tamno in Korean. Since this island must have been occupied by Paekche conquerors around 400 C.E., and probably ruled by one of the royal members or aristocrats, it is a Tamno by definition. No wonder the island is written as Tamro Island, though it is pronounced Awaji.

Nihon Shoki records that Ojin’s son Nintoku was married to a daughter of Paekche’s aristocratic family, Mogna, and three princes were born. These princes become Wae kings in succession; one, Hansho was born on this island- The family name Mogna was changed to Soga, and for ten generations they exerted a great political influence in the Wae court.9) In this Awaji Island10) bronze daggers, bronze bells dating to the first and second centuries BC and also bronze mirrors were found. These relics show that people from Kaya settled on the island early in the Yayoi period (the 3rd c. B.C.E. to the 3rd c. CE). It is amazing to find in the island one of the oldest Shinto shrines where the founding god Izanagi is enshrined. This name is similar to the founding king’s name, Ijinasi of Great Kaya. It is supposed that these mythological traditions were carried on by settlers from the Kaya region, and they were eventually woven into the founding myth of Japan.

Over one hundred and forty old tombs were found on the island. Forty of them are the Paekche style tombs with a side opening. These tombs often contained equestrian trappings. These archeological. findings, through the old tomb period in Japanese history, show the presence of a powerful Paekche culture making it very convincing that the Awaji island was ruled by the Paekche people

The third probable Tamno in Wae Japan is located at Tamana, Kumamoto

9) Moon, Jungchang, History of ancient Japan, Ingansa Pub. Co. 1989

10) “Awajrs Old Tomb Period”, Sumoto city museum, 199:ダ, “Awaji’s history and culture11, Hyogo Prefecture museum, 2000

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prefecture, Kyushu. The sound of the place name Tamano’ is already suggestive of Tamno. Tamana is located near the Kuma River, just as Tamno at Kabara in Paekche is located near the Kum River. But the best evidence for a Tamno is provided by relics contained in the Funayama tomb of the Paekche style found near the city of Taman. One is a bronze crown^ which was worn by a feudal king. An identical bronze crown was excavated from the Paekche tomb of the fifth century at Ipchomli, Chollada This indicates strongly the affinity between the two Tamnos. The second set of relics is a pair of golden shoes with four spikes under the sole. These are quite similar to King Muryong’s shoes and indicates again its connection to Paekche’s royal family.

A third relic is an iron sword with an inscription. This inscription definitely suggests that the sword was made in Paekche and bestowed by Paekche’s great King Kaero to his feudal king interred in this tomb. Besides these evidences for a Tamno, one finds foundation sites of octagonal shapes, which were identical to the design of building sites in Paekche’s old fortress, Isung, near Seoul. All the evidence supports the idea that Tamana was one of Paekche, s Tamnos,

Finally, there is one more Tamno, which existed in the fourth century and is associated with the Wae king, Ji. This name is inscribed in the blade of the seven-branched sword kept at the Isonogami shrine. According to Nihon Shoki, a seven-branched sword together with a seven-child mirror was offered by a Paekche king in 372 C.E, to Jingo of Wae Japan. It seems apparent that Jingo was the Wae King Ji. Actually the inscription reads; “On May 13th, the fourth year of Tai-wha, this seven-branched sword was produced with him(ted-times-wrought iron. As this sword has magical power to rout the enemy, it is bestowed to the King of the Vassal State. Produced by , never has there been such a sword. Wishing a long life, the king of Paekche had this sword made for the king of Wae, Ji- in hopes that it be transmitted and shown to posterity.”11) This sword was offered in 372 C.E. according to Nihon Shoki.

The question is where this Tamno could be located since Jingo received this sword offered to Wae King Ji. According to Nihon Shoki, Jingo is unmistakably the Wae king, Ji. This explains why Paekche carried out a war against the Kaya

11) The inscription on the Seven-Branched-Sword

泰 四年 月十六日丙年正陽 造百練鋼七支刀生壁百兵 宣供矣五. 作

先世以來未此刀百慈王世

奇生聖音故爲矮王旨造

傳示後世

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states in 369 in collaboration with Jingo/Ji.

So it could have been an occasion of jubilation for Paekche that the sword and a bronze mirror were offered to Jingo/Ji in 372 after Paekche’s victory against Koguryo in 371. Since Paekche, s army and Jingo/Ji launched their war from the estuary of the Somjin River, the most likely port of departure for Jingo/Ji was somewhere from the coast of Kyushu. Most likely the coast facing the Kaya States was settled by people friendly to the Kaya States, and the only possibility for the site of this Tamno is the Tamana area in the west of Kyushu. My contention is that the Tamno at Tamana has a long history as feudal land, lasting from at least the middle of the fourth century down to the time of Paekche’s downfall in the middle of the seventh century.

The important question of sea transportation for war troops during Ojin/Nyeh’s war of conquest must be discussed. When the Tamno king, Ojin/Nyeh, crossed the sea on his way from Paekche to conquer Wae Japan, he must have had reliable ships to transport horses, soldiers and other supplies. There is no record of ships and their remains. Paekche, which means one hundred families crossing the sea, is known to have been a seafaring nation from early in her history just as the name Paekche implies.

Paekche received her Buddhism directly from eastern Jin China in 384 from early in her history and sent trading and diplomatic missions to the Chinese states in the south near the Yangtse River for which good shipping capability is required- From Kabara or Koma the site of Ojin/Nyeh’s Tamno, ships could sail down the Kum River to the open sea at Kunsan, and follow the coast down to the southern shore of the peninsula. Then the Kuroshio Current could carry ships to the coast of Kyushu. Provided with good arms, such as good swords and horses, the Ojin/Nyeh army did not have much trouble winning battles against earlier settlers along the coast of the Seto Inland Sea. This campaign ended when they reached the Osaka area where they met fierce resistance but managed to be victorious.

We know that Ojin/Nyeh had horses because a Paekche saddle was found in the tomb of Ojin/Nyeh, and Nihon Shoki records the importation of horses from Paekche. It seems clearly evident that Paekche had several Tamnos in Wae Japan in its early stage, but Wae Japan eventually expanded its rule throughout Japan later on.

Tamnos in China

Chinese chronicles of southern states such as Liang, Chou and Sung record the establishment of two Paekche provinces, Liaosi and Jinping in China, towards the end of the Jin Dynasty (317 C.E.). Some scholars believe the Liaosi Province refers to the present day Beijing area while the Jinping Province may be located at the [page 20] present day Kwangsi Province. There are controversies, however, as to their exact locations.

Concerning Jinping, there is a place named “Paekche ruin” in Kwaing-si Province, and according to a report, its residents call themselves the descendants of Great Paekche. However, no research to date confirms this report. At any rate, it seems very certain that these two provinces were once occupied by Paekche and ruled by appointed royal members of Paekche, and thus they may be regarded as Paekche’s Tamnos.

In addition there were two more Tamnos in China with convincing evidence. One Tamno was located in Taiwan toward the end of the seventh century. According to Soh Jin-chul12), the Sui Chronicle (581-618 C.E.) recorded an incident of a warship wrecked near Tamora in the Taiwan island. This was repaired and sent back to Sui with a congratulatory envoy from Paekche for the successful unification of China by Sui. The description of the island was mistakenly identified as Chejudo Island in Samguk Sagi, but Soh noted the description of the island fits well with Taiwan, not with Cheju.

The Sui Chronicle continues to record that the place called Tamoro of this Taiwan Island was a vassal state of Paekche. So this Tamoro must have been another Tamno of Paekche, which is quite a surprise since nobody expected it until now. Sui subjugated this island of Taiwan later, but it was soon forgotten until the Dutch established a port of call here a thousand years later. Eventually it was taken over by Ching China.

There was one other Tamno. This one was in the land of Blackteeth where a royal member of Paekche was appointed to rule. The location of this Blackteeth land is not known but its existence became known with the discovery of the epitaph of General Hukchi (Blackteeth) Sangji. This stone epitaph was found in 1929 in the burial ground of dignitaries of Tang China. The epitaph recorded that his great grandfather was a royal member of Paekche with the family name Puyeo and was appointed to rule the land of Blackteeth.

People of the land had a custom of blackening their teeth and the family name Puyeo was changed to Hukchi or Blackteeth. Since General Hukchi Sangji was active during the war between Paekche and the united army of Silla and Tang, it is a fair guess that his great grandfather was sent to rule the Blackteeth and around the middle of the fifth century. Although the exact location is not certain, it is believed this land was located in south China or in Southeast Asia since the people of this area had a custom of black teeth. However, it is certain that Paekche had another Tamno in this area. So we may conclude that Paekche had at least four

12) Soh Jinchul, “Tamora, the feudal land of Paekche as recorded in Sui chronicle^”, Tanguk Univ. museum reports, 1999

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Tamnos in China in different areas at one time or other.

Conclusion

We have attempted to examine the known facts about the Tamno institution of Paekche as a way of administering its newly occupied lands by appointing royal family members to rule. In the process we learned that Paekche had Tamnos not only in Korea but also in Wae Japan and China at various places in different periods. We also reached the surprising conclusion that the Tamno king, Ojin/Nyeh of Kabara or present day Kongju, Chungchongdo conquered Wae Japan in 396 C.E. Further, we have seen that Paekche had Tamnos in the island of Taiwan at the turn of the seventh century and in the Blackteeth land in southern China or perhaps in Southeast Asia. Indeed Paekche had an extended domain at its heyday not only in Korea but also in Wae Japan and in China, making it one of the greatest states in Far Eastern history. [page 22]



Bronze Mirror with human figures

**On Bronze Mirrors: Relating Paekche and Wae Japan**

1. Introduction

On a visit to an archeological museum in Fukuoka, Japan, I was surprised to see a bronze mirror of the Wiman Chosun, The Wiman Chosun was a kingdom that succeeded the Old Chosun in the third century B.C.E. It lasted from 194 B.C.E. to 108 B.C.E. when it was overthrown by Han China, I knew this much from records but never heard of any real tangible material, so my curiosity was immediately aroused. How do people know it is from Wiman Chosun? Eventually I read an article written by Jeon Y. R.13) on the genealogy and chronology of bronze mirrors of ancient Korea, and also read other books14) on Korean bronze mirrors. In these papers I learned about how bronze mirrors of certain patterns are found in different areas depending on the historical periods, which I will discuss in section two. These bronze mirrors were kept by religious and political leaders of the time and often buried with them. When these leaders of people moved to other areas, they carried these important artifacts with them for their magical powers and prestige value. So these bronze mirrors can provide us with valuable information on the political, religious and cultural matters, complementing the paucity of written

13) Jeon Y.R, Genealogy and Chronology of Bronze Mirrors of Ancient Korea. 1977, Archeological report #7, Chunbuk University.

14) Lim P, T.,Study on the Korean Bronze Culture, 1996, Hakyun Munwha Co.; The Bronze Culture in Korea, National Museum of Korea, 1995

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records on Korean history of this ancient period.

This culture of bronze mirrors and bronze weapons was transmitted to Japan during the Yayoi period (3rd c B.C.E. to 3rd c C.E) from Korea. Such bronze mirrors and swords and comma shaped jades became the set of three sacred emblems of Japanese royalty. Among many bronze mirrors, two bronze mirrors attract our attention. These mirrors reveal an important historical relationship between Paekche and Wae Japan during the fifth and sixth centuries.

One bronze mirror excavated from the largest royal tomb of Osaka, Japan attracts our specific attention since it is so similar to the one found at King Muryong’s tomb. The similarity was closely studied by the Korean Broadcasting team, and the subject was explored in a video, entitled “the Secrets of a Bronze Mirror”.15) We will discuss this bronze mirror in the third section.

There is one more bronze mirror that carries important historical significance in shedding light on the relationship between Paekche and Wae Japan. This particular bronze mirror is a national treasure of Japan and kept at the Shidahachiman shrine, dating back to 503 C.E. This bronze mirror has the inscription of forty-eight Chinese characters, which contains the name Sama of King Muryong. These forty-eight Hanja provide additional invaluable records on the real nature of the relationship between Paekche and Wae Japan at the time. This bronze mirror will be discussed in section four.

A few remarks on these findings and other bronze mirrors will be found in the concluding section.

2. Bronze Mirrors with Many Handles

Historically it is known that the adjacent region that surrounds the Palhae Bay of the Yellow Sea was originally inhabited by the so-called Tong-Yee in general and Tungus in particular. They were considered the ancestors of the Korean people. Recent archaeological findings in the area as well as historical records support it. The ancient custom of burial in stone cysts was common throughout this region, and the land yields similar relics such as bronze daggers of specific shape and bronze mirrors of certain features and comma shaped jades etc. Interestingly, the oldest artifacts of pure copper and copper slugs were found near Tangshan City of this region. They are four thousand years old. In the same area, one also finds bronze weapons dating a couple of centuries later. On the other hand, the bronze culture flourished in the Shang State (14 c. B.C.E. to 11 c. B.C.E) which was located upstream of the Yellow River. Here，all kinds of bronze artifacts were found including bronze mirrors dating to the 14th c. B.C.E. This art of bronze

15) K.B.S. Video, titled The Secrets of a Bronze Mirror”, 1999

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mirror making seems to have spread to the Palhae region at around the 10th c. B.C.E. This is about the time these bronze artifacts made their appearance in Korea.

Korean archaeological sites of the Bronze Age (1000 to 300 B.C.E) are located clustered along major rivers of Korea such as the Taedong River, the Han River, the Keum River, the Youngsan River and the Nakdong River. At these sites, many stone relics and bronze implements are found. Study of these relics can provide us with much information as to their cultures and their origins and the people who left them .

In this article we study bronze mirrors. These bronze mirrors with two or more handles can be grouped into different types by their materials as well as by their designs and motifs. According to Jeon16), these bronze mirrors may be classified into three types: A, B and C. These different types are associated with the transmission of the bronze culture into the Korean peninsula in different periods.

The oldest, type A, has the feature of a coarse motif of Hanja (Chinese Character) 山 or 乙 with slash lines filling the space. These mirrors are found near Pyongyang and date around 300 B.C.E.

At about this time, the Palhae plain to the east of Beijing and north of Palhae Bay was overrun by the Yen state of the Chou Dynasty in China. As a result, some of the displaced people presumably fled to the Pyungyang area with their bronze culture.

The B-type mirrors can be characterized by motifs of triangles filled with slash lines. The workmanship is still very coarse. The mirror’s rim has a round or triangular shape in its cross-section, and the handles become earthworm-like in shape. These mirrors were found at sites along the Keum River. They were often found together with native slim bronze daggers. These B-type bronze mirrors date around the 2nd c. B.C.E. when the Wiman Chosun took over the old Chiosun in the Liaoning area of the Palhae coast. According to historical records, at about this time, the last king, Joon of the Old Chosun, fled to the Korean peninsula by way of the sea. Therefore, it is most likely these people brought the B-type bronze mirrors or eventually influenced the making of these types of mirrors on the peninsula. Noteworthy are the incidences that bronze mirrors, bronze daggers and comma shaped jades were found together as a set such as at the Koejongdong site in Taejon near the Keum River. This set of three artifacts became the symbolic sacred emblem of later Japanese royalty.

In contrast to the previous two types, the third C-type bronze mirrors show finely executed workmanship in design. The motifs consist of a series of geometric patterns of triangles and circles with slash lines filling them. The handles are now strip-shaped, while rims have a round cross-section. These C-type bronze mirrors

16) op. cit. Jeon, 1977.

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were found along the Taedong River, the Han River, the Youngsan River, as well as the Nakdong River. These kinds of C-type mirrors are also found in different areas of Japan such as Saga, Kyushu or Nara, and Honshu. These mirrors date around the 1st c B.C.E. This happens to be the time that Han China made a big push against the Huns in the north and then overthrew the Wiman Chosun, whose rulers and people fled. Four Chinese Provinces were set up in its place. So it is believed that the Wiman Chosun’s mirrors were brought to Korea and eventually the new C-type mirrors became fashionable and were produced in Korea. With its establishment of power, Han China’s impact was felt directly and immediately in Korea. No wonder many Han Chinese bronze mirrors with one knob were found in a number of places in the Kaya area, which is recorded to have engaged in metals trading with neighboring countries.

At this time, it became the practice of Chinese states to bestow bronze mirrors as goodwill gifts in recognition of the status of local rulers with titles. This practice of bestowing bronze mirrors to feudal lords seems also to have been adopted by Paekche in the fifth and sixth centuries. Currently, we are interested in finding the significance of this practice in understanding the political relationship between Paekche and Wae Japan by comparing some of Paekche’s bronze mirrors and those found in Wae Japan.

3. Bronze Mirror with Human Figures

This bronze mirror with human figures attracted attention of many historians both in Korea and Japan since it has an inscription of forty-eight Hanja that could reveal significant facts about the relation between Paekche and Wae Japan.

癸未年八月日十大王年

男弟王在意紫沙加宮時

期麻念長壽遣開中費直

穢ᄉ今州利二ᄉ等

取白上同二百旱作比竟

On August 10, 503 in the year of the Great King Sama, he dispatched Kumjuri of the Yeh clan, the governor of Kawachi, and two others with two hundred units of best bronze ingots to make this mirror, wishing a long life for King Ooto at the Ishisaka palace.

This mirror was found on a farmland in the Wakayama prefecture to the south of Nara in 1834 and kept at the Sudahachiman shrine until 1951 when it was [page 26] designated a national treasure and moved to the Tokyo National Museum. In the inscription, one finds three names: Sama, Ooto and Kumjuri. There are many suggestions as to their identification, but Soh Jinchul5 made the most consistent and persuasive one. According to him, Sama refers to King Muryong the twenty-fifth king of Paekche; Ooto was the king of Wae Japan, and Kumjuri was the highest official of the Kawachi or Osaka area. The name Sama is well known to belong to the twenty-fifth king of Paekche as confirmed definitely with the discovery of the unlooted tomb of King Muryong which produced many relics including the tomb tablet that tells us exactly his name, date of birth and death and titles conferred to him by Liang China

As to the name Ooto, many ancient chronicles of Japan recorded it although with different spellings which happens often, and Nihon Shoki indicates that the name Ooto is the given name of the twenty-sixth king, Keitai of Wae Japan. The name Kumjuri, with his title, was the governor of Kawachi or Osaka of the modern day. He is said to have belonged to the Yeh clan. These Yeh people were one of two important tribes that settled in Korea beside the Maek people. Some of the Yeh people moved on to Japan to settle there.

Now the crucial point is that King Muryong dispatched Kumjuri to make the mirror for King Ooto wishing him a long life in 503 right after Sama’s return home to become the king of Paekche in 502 and thus vacating his position as the Wae King Mu17). But then, why did Sama have mirrors made for him and why at this time? What is the true nature of this special relationship between the two? These are some of the fascinating questions to be answered.

One relevant fact is that Sama was born in an island near Kyushu and raised and lived in Japan until his return home at age forty. Could it be that he was raised together with Ooto in youth?

Another relevant fact seems that Sama’s uncle, King Konji, accompanied him on his trip to Japan. Konji had the title of Left Wise King which is the highest rank in the political system of Paekche. King Konji is known to have had five sons in Japan. One of the sons became the twenty-fourth king of Paekche. All these facts suggest various possibilities. Relevant also is the fact that Paekche was called the Great Country or Kudara by Japanese both then and now. But why the Great Country? All these facts can be correlated at once by recalling that King Muryong was the king of Wae Japan and ruler of the Asuka area18) and other Tamro19) or

17) Soh J.C., The World of King Muryong as Recorded in Stone and Metal, 1998, Wonkwang Univ. Press.

18) Ibid

19) Kim Y.D.: “Wae Japan as a Tamro”, RAS Transactions 71; “I-du” RAS Transactions 72.

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territories under control of Paekche in Japan as Soh Jinchul argued so persuasively in his book If we accept the idea that Sama was the king of Wae Japan which became Kundara toward the end of fifth century, then upon his return, the vacancy must have been filled and the choice would have been his royal family members according to the age old tradition of Paekche. Now the natural choice would have been either his son or one of King Konji’s sons who were Sama’s cousins or a close royal family member. To these Paekche people in Japan, Paekche was a great country or Kundara, which became shortened to Kudara as Paekche is called by Japanese to this day. It was a great occasion for the great King Muryong to celebrate and endorse the ascension of King Ooto, who was most likely one of Konji’s sons, by forging mirrors for distribution to commemorate this great occasion. According to Nihonshoki, the Japanese chronicle, King Ooto became the twenty-sixth King of Japan.

Interestingly, the mirror has relief images of human figures such as a horse-riding warrior, two men each with a sword, a lady with long sleeves, an old man with a cane, and others. It looks as though the man on horseback and others are celebrating on the occasion of Ooto’s ascension to the throne.

4. The Bronze Mirror with a Band of Sacred Animals of King Muryong’s tomb Three bronze mirrors were found in King Muryong’s tomb. One mirror among

them attracts our special interest. According to a Video of the Korean Broadcasting station, entitled “The Secrets of a Bronze Mirror”, it is quite similar to one found at King Nihntoku’s tomb of the fifth century in Japan What is their relationship and the historical implications? On these fascinating questions, a team from the Korean Broadcasting station made this video, which was broadcast in May 1999.

Here I attempt to present some of its main features in connection with the present article.

This particular mirror had a knob in the center with a piece of leather string still remaining. The central knob with a hole for hanging was surrounded by nine smaller bumps. Two circles surround them and seven lobes with a four-leaf motif are placed between the two concentric circles. Three Hanja can be read between the nine bumps. These Hanja had the meaning of prosperity. In spaces between seven of the lobes, there are traces of images of a dragon, a tiger and a phoenix while that of a turtle is missing due to corrosion. The K.B.S. team compared this bronze mirror to that which was found a century ago at King Nihntoku’s tomb in Osaka and kept at the Boston Museum.

The Nihntoku’s tomb is the largest key-shaped tomb with a length of 486 meters and was believed built in the early fifth century. Only a copy of the picture  [page 28] of the bronze mirror of Nihntoku’s tomb was secured by the Korean Broadcasting Station, but it was good enough for comparison of these two bronze mirrors. They turned out to be identical in form and design except that the Nihntoku’s bronze mirror had the inscription of thirty-five Hanja and all four mythical animals in an excellent state. These four animals were often painted on tomb murals for the protection of the deceased in his afterlife in accord with the traditional Taoist belief as in the Koguryo’s murals. The image of four sacred anirnals on the mirrors is believed to have served the same purpose as in murals in protecting the deceased in his afterlife among the stars. It was most exciting and intriguing that the two mirrors were identical except the number of inscribed Hanja.

This suggests the close relationship and identical tradition and beliefs between the two royal families of Paekche and Wae Japan. Furthermore the Nihonshoki or Japanese chronicle records the so-called “Seven-Son mirrors”, referring to the bronze mirrors with seven lobes that were brought to Japan from Paekche.

In consideration of our understanding that bronze mirrors were transmitted from generation to generation and the superior offered bronze mirrors to the inferior as symbols of recognition for authority and trust, the close identity of two bronze mirrors confirm again the close family and political relationship between the royal families of Paekche and Wae Japan.

This bronze mirror in King Muryong’s tomb with a band of sacred animals has identical replicas in a few other old tombs20) in Japan, which again implies a close relationship between these possessors of the mirrors.

5. Conclusion

We presented a classification scheme of bronze mirrors with two handles through bronze ages in Korea and discussed also their symbolic significance as part of ceremonial and prestigious paraphernalia for a Shaman or Shaman-rulers and later kings. We learned a bronze mirror’s vital role empowering Shaman or Shaman-rulers who believed that they could see the past, present and future in a mirror. These bronze mirrors were handed down from one generation to the next until they were buried sometimes two or three centuries later.

We learned also some of these bronze mirrors were brought over by political refugees as well as by traders and many more bronze mirrors were produced in Korea.

Later bronze mirrors were forged locally and exploited to enhance the political prestige of the donor and the authority of recipients and their closer political ties as well.

Often bronze mirrors with sacred animals were buried with their owners in the

20) Catalogue, 63rd exhibition, 1999, Gunma prefecture history museum.

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belief of their protection in the afterlife.

Through archaeological studies of these findings, we learned quite a few surprising historical facts such as the historical links between the old Chosun or Wiman Chosun and the Korean peninsula and of the close family relationship between Paekche and Wae Japan.

In fact we reached a startling conclusion that Great King Muryong of Paekche or Sama offered the bronze mirror, the so-called bronze mirror with figures, to Ooto as the king of Wae Japan or Paekche’s Tamro in Asuka or Osaka area as an official recognition and celebration of the new enthronement of King Ooto who is recorded as the twenty-sixth king of Japan in Nihonshoki or the Japanese Chronicle. The existence of the so-called bronze mirrors with a band of sacred anirnals in King Muryong’s tomb, King Nintoku’s tomb and other old tombs in Japan21) suggest a close political allegiance as well as a probable family relationship between these owners.

21) Ibid