

The Exchange of Written Communications between Japan, Sui and Tang Dynasties

HORI, Toshikazu

1. Introduction: The Significance of Written Communications Exchanged between China and Surrounding Countries

The written communications exchanged between early Han and Xiongnu (Hun) are the earliest messages recorded between China and surrounding countries.

“The Emperor sincerely asks the great ruler of Xiongnu of his health.” 皇帝、敬問匈奴大單于、無恙。¹⁾

When the Han Emperor sent a message with an opening statement mentioned above, the Xiongnu leader responded as follows.

“The Xiongnu’s great ruler created by heaven, respectfully asks the Han Emperor’s health.” 天所立匈奴大單于、敬問皇帝、無恙。²⁾

The following is another type of opening message observed in written communications.

“The great ruler of Xiongnu, created by the universe, ordered by the sun and moon, respectfully asks the Emperor of your health.”³⁾

During this period, Han and Xiongnu had already established mutual diplomatic relations, but in reality, Xiongnu possessed far superior power. Thus relations can be assessed from the wording of the written communications mentioned above.

In early Han period, Southern Yue (Nanyue) was a tributary state of Han, but when Lü Empress gained power, Southern Yue was no longer under the Han sphere of influence. When Wendi was enthroned as emperor, he sent a written communication with the following opening message.

“The Emperor respectfully asks the ruler of Southern Yue. I think you are encountering troubled times.”⁴⁾

This cordial message was sent for the purpose of aligning Southern Yue and the words imply that exact motive.

In early Sui period, Ishbara Qaghan of Tujue (Turk) was flourishing and sent the following written communication to the Gaozu of Sui dynasty.

“The great Tujue’s ruler created by heaven, the sacred and wisdom, the Son of Heaven, 天下聖賢天子 Ilikülshadbaghaishbara Qaghan sends a written communication to the great Emperor of Sui” 致書大隋皇帝.

The following was the response from the great founder of Sui.⁵⁾

“The great Emperor of Sui sends a message to the great Tujue Ilikülshadbaghaishbara Qaghan.”⁶⁾

These depict a balanced power relationship between Sui and Tujue, but soon hereafter, Tujue Qaghan was to follow the Emperor of Sui. A written communication sent from Tujue at the time, began with the following opening message.

“Ilikülshadishbarabagha Qaghan of the great Tujue, Shetu a follower 臣撰圖 of Sui speaks.”⁷⁾

Shetu is the name of Ilikülshadishbarabagha Qaghan and as a general rule, the family name was omitted while the first name came immediately after the title depicting “subordinate,” as a follower sends a message to the emperor. Thus Ishbara is abiding this general rule. As mentioned in all these cases stated, written communications reflected the power relationship between state and state.

Numerous written communications from Tang Dynasty remain as Tang emperor sent messages to the rulers of Uighur, Kirghiz, Tufan (Tibetan), Paekché, and Silla. According to Kaneko Shūichi, the content can be categorized as the following three formulas, ① “the emperor respectfully asks,” 皇帝敬問, ② “the emperor asks” 皇帝問, and ③ “Imperial command” 勅. Formula ① represents equal relations, brothers, or family, while formulas ② and ③ represents sovereign-ruled relations.⁸⁾ But in Kaneko’s theory, nothing concerning Japan is mentioned. Thus it is quite questionable whether his theories are applicable to Japan.

As for messages previously recorded between Japan and Sui dynasty, there are two written communications sent from Japan to Sui, and one from Sui to Japan. Following is the content of the earlier written communication sent from Japan to Sui dynasty.

“The Son of Heaven of the land of the rising sun sends a message to the Son of Heaven in the land where the sun sets. How are you?” 日出處天子、致書日

沒處天子、無恙。⁹⁾

According to Japanese studies hitherto, this written communication was sent under the premise that Japan wished for equal relations with China. It must be emphasized that the content of this written communication follows the other messages exchanged between Han and Xiongnu, Tujue and Sui. Along with these messages, numerous arguments considering the relation between Japan and Sui still remains to be answered. The argumentative points will be dealt in the later section, therefore omitted here.

Since there are no official records of written communications sent from Japan to the Tang court, numerous discussions have been centered on whether Japanese missions did or did not carry written communications. Concerning this point of argument, Itazawa Takeo has pointed out errors in the theory that Japanese missions were not producing written communications.¹⁰⁾ Recently, Nishijima Sadao and Yuasa Yukimago have presented studies, as to written communications being produced and now this theory seems to be widely accepted.¹¹⁾ There are some remaining records concerning written communications sent from Tang to Japan which can be found in a detailed study written by Yamada Hideo.¹²⁾ Between Japan and Tang dynasty, as the Tang emperor dispatched troops to the Korean peninsula, and until the period Silla gains complete control of the region, tensions remained high and there is a major difference in the style of written communications sent at the time and later periods. From this perspective, in international relations, Yamada feels that Japan was emphasized at the beginning while in the later periods, there was a condescending attitude toward Japan. Generally speaking, this perspective is more or less correct, although dissenting arguments remain as to the minor details concerning the messages.

In the following section, written communications exchanged between Japan and Sui, Japan and Tang, the relations between Japan and China during those periods will be analyzed with consideration to the formulas mentioned earlier.

2. The first and second missions and written communications Japan sent to Sui

In the fifth century, when Japan was called Wo kingdom, the so-called five kings of Wo kingdom made tributary visits to the Song of the Southern Dynasties, received an official rank and became a vassalage to Song. This relation was severed in 478, and 120 years later, during the period of Suiko Tennō 推古天皇 and Shōtoku Taishi 聖德太子, Japan normalized diplomatic relations with Sui Dynasty which had unified China. This incident is expressed in the *Suishū*, the Chapter of Wo kingdom, as follows:

“In the 20th year of Kaihuang (600 A.D.), king of Wo, under the family name Ame and first name Tarishihiko who called himself Ohkimi dispatched

envoys to the imperial court. When the emperor asked the manners and customs through an official, the envoy answered 'heaven is King of Wo's older brother and sun his younger brother. Politics is dealt before daybreak, after dawn work ceases and rendered to younger brother.' Gaozu stated that this prompts no sense of duty and requested to have the statement amended."

Since there are no Japanese records of envoys being sent, some Japanese scholars have either disregarded this fact or take little notice of the issue. The writer takes a different approach as he mentions, this is totally without any grounds. It was a misunderstanding of the Chinese to separate Ame Tarishihiko by family and first names. Ame Tarishihiko or Amenotarashihiko is the title of the Japanese ruler (later emperor) at the time. Without an envoy being sent, the unique characteristics of Japanese titles would have never been introduced in China. Even by compromising, it can be assessed that *Suishu* compiler added this line as a means to yielding after the Chinese realized through later envoys. But considering the phrase where heaven is depicted as older brother and sun as younger brother, there is no possibility of the phrase being inserted later in the records. Even due to a discrepancy with the Japanese perspective, the idea seen in this article is still difficult to understand as to why Sui had to create this insertion. In the year 600, when the mission was sent, which was two years after Sui had mobilized and dispatched troops to Koguryō, and needless to say, the eastward expansion of the great nation was actually felt in Japan. Moreover, Japan was at war with Silla at the time, therefore, Japan had ample motives to normalize relations with Sui. Thus until recently many scholars acknowledge that envoys were sent during this period.

The second mission also is known from the following renowned article of *Suishu*, the Chapter of Wo kingdom.

"The third year of Daye (607 A.D.), king Tarishihiko sent a tributary envoy. The envoy mentions, relating to the following message, 'I heard the Son of Heaven Bodhisattva of western seas had expanded Buddhism. Therefore an envoy was dispatched to pay respects to the Son of Heaven and furthermore, to have several monks study Buddhism in this country.' In the written communication, it is stated, 'the Son of Heaven of the land of the rising sun sends a message to the Son of Heaven of the land where the sun sets.' Emperor (Yangdi) was displeased after reading the message and instructed the official incharge of diplomatic affairs 'never to confer if the message from barbarians bear insolence.'"

In the *Nihonshoki* article, 15th year Suiko (607 A.D.), the envoy of this mission is confirmed as follows.

“On an unknown day of the 7th month, Onono omi Imoko 小野臣妹子 who held the position of dairai was dispatched to China with interpreter Kuratsukurino Hukuri.”

According to the contents of the remaining written communications sent from Japan to Sui, we can see that the previous relation of Japan being a tributary state in the fifth century had to be changed to equal diplomatic relations. As mentioned in the introduction, the content of these written communications resemble those exchanged between Han-Xiongnu and Tujue-Sui, therefore either Shotoku Taishi or his counsels must have fully studied the previous messages. The knowledge could have possibly filtered through Paekché and Koguryō or been assisted by the people visiting Japan from those countries. Moreover, the previous mission to Sui might have assisted in some way or another.

Unfortunately, the content of the written communication displeased Yangdi of Sui. Now let us consider the content which displeased Yangdi of Sui. Concerning this issue, there are two major reasons which can be identified. The first is the contraposition of the land of rising sun and the land where the sun sets. Another reason was that both Japanese and Sui rulers were referred as sons of heaven. Concerning the first issue, in Japan the region of the rising sun is traditionally considered better or superior compared to the region where the sun sets.¹³⁾ Whether a similar notion had existed in China is questionable and unknown, but to say the least, there was a notion that China existed as the middle kingdom of the world.¹⁴⁾ Therefore, it is understandable that Yangdi had been displeased with such phrasing. But it is common practice to depict the east and the west as sunrise and sunset. The origin of the terms such as Asia and Europe, Oriental and Occidental is similar in content. The German *Morgenland* and *Abendland* can be taken in this same content. The value of these terms do not fluctuate. Therefore, the early periods in Japanese history, such as the Suiko period in the early seventh century, whether a superior position was given to the region of rising sun is questionable. This notion might have occurred in Japan as early as the eighth century after the Tenno system was established and as a direct result of the notion of great powers.

There is a theory that the region of the rising sun, in other words, Japan, being located in the east, and the region where the sun sets, in other words, China, being located in the west is seen from Korea. According to an advocate of such theory, Koguryō which was oppressed by Sui at the time, instigated a Japanese administrator to produce a discourteous written communication.¹⁵⁾ There were Buddhist monks and scholars sent by Koguryō assisting Shotoku Taishi as subordinates and in the year 605, 300 liang of gold was sent from Koguryō for the construction of a Buddha. Needless to say, Koguryō had intended to establish close alliance with Japan. But this issue and the written communication produced in Koguryō's perspective are two different issues. In the writer's perspective, there is nothing mysterious with the Japanese identifying themselves with Japan as a

country in the east. Japan is located on the eastern edge of Asia and absorbent of civilizations from the west. The Japanese at the time, referred to the civilization of the west as *kure*. In Japanese the origin of the term *kure* is strongly believed to have derived from *kureru* as in evening or sunset. Thus it is only natural to consider Japan, which is geographically located to the east as the land of rising sun. The name of the country Nihon (or Nippon) (meaning the origin of sun) was established later derives from the same notion.

The second issue as in the Son of Heaven derives from heaven's child, and related to the traditional Chinese thought of the Land under Heaven 天下. The Land under Heaven depicts the infinite land under the sky and considers the entire world controlled by the Chinese ruler. The Chinese ruler is the child of heaven, thus the Son of Heaven. Therefore, although a lone Son of Heaven should exist in this world, the Japanese written communication addressed the Japanese and Chinese rulers as Sons of Heaven, which naturally displeased Yangdi. However, in early Sui period, Japan was not the first foreign country or people to refer to a ruler as the Son of Heaven. As stated in the previous section, in early Sui, the Qaghan of Tujue produced a written communication to the Gaozu as Son of Heaven. But during this period, Tujue possessed supreme power thus the newly established Sui dynasty was compelled to approve the title. Contrarily, Japan was a minor power in the east. Since Yangdi was an emperor who had strongly advocated the notions Mandate of Heaven and the Land under Heaven, he could not accept the ruler of a minor power to use the title of Son of Heaven.

As mentioned above, the notion of the thought of land under heaven was employed solely by the Chinese, and in reality the neighboring countries had been informed of this monopolistic use. In East Asia when the authority of the sovereign mature, it was imminent to emulate or learn the thoughts and system to strengthen the authority from China. Therefore, the mandate of heaven was also adopted by the other peripheral countries. In Japan, relics dated as early as the fifth century depicting the mandate of heaven were unearthed. In one unearthed iron sword from Inariyama tumulus in Saitama prefecture, the phrase "When Wakatakeru Daiō's (Dawang 大王 in Chinese) palace was in shiki, saved and assisted him to rule the land under heaven 左治天下 and ordered to make this sharp sword." was inscribed. In another sword found in the 19th century at the Eda Hunayama tumulus in Kumamoto prefecture, it is inscribed "the reign of Wakatakeru Daiō who rules the land under heaven 治天下…大王." Formerly the latter was interpreted as, "Mizuha Daiō who rules the Tajihhi palace," identified as the Hanzei Tenno of the first half of the fifth century, but due to earlier relic being unearthed, both inscriptions can be read as Wakatakeru and now being academically identified with Yūryaku Tenno of the latter half of the fifth century. Both Hanzei Tenno and Yuryaku Tenno are said to be vasselages Zhen and Wu of Wo kingdom which payed tribute to the Southern Dynasty.

If the notion, the land under heaven had been dissipated earlier in Japan, it is

understandable that the title, Son of Heaven, had been used during Suiko period which had a powerful sovereign authority compared to the Five Kings of Wo. There is a theory that the written communication sent from Japan during this period whence the Japanese ruler announced itself the Son of Heaven and amended the diplomatic relations of tributary status from the period of Five Kings of Wo and intended for equal foreign relations for the intention of overpowering the Korean rulers.¹⁶⁾ Question remains as to when Japan began considering Korea as a tributary state, but it seems probable that this intention had been existing since the Suiko period. But the title of Son of Heaven was not merely a result of changes in diplomatic policies. A change in the sovereign authority from the previous internal policy obviously created this new title and established a new external policy.

These changes did not satisfy Yangdi of Sui dynasty, but Yangdi could not reject Japan's diplomatic requests. Japan had sent a mission in 607, and this was the year Yangdi visited Tujue Qaghan's tent and realized the interchange between Koguryō and Tujue. Yangdi had to be prepared for a confrontation with Koguryō. The visit to Tujue Qaghan's tent took place in the eighth month, and the Japanese mission was decided in the seventh month, therefore, the delegation arrived at the imperial palace after this relationship had occurred. Yangdi reanalyzed the situation and stressed Japan's position in backing Koguryō and as the Japanese envoy Onono Imoko returned, Pei Shiqing was dispatched to Japan as Sui's envoy.

3. Exchange of missions and written communications between Sui and Japan

In the fourth month of 608 (Daye 4th year, Suiko 16th year), Sui's envoy, Pei Shiqing 裴世清 accompanied Onono Imoko to Japan. As seen in the *Gankōjiengi* (records of the origin of temple Ganko) a delegation of 12 officials with vice-envoy, Bian Guanggao, had been dispatched. The detailed activities of Pei Shiqing and others are recorded in the *Nihonshoki* thus considered quite reliable. According to the records, the mission arrived at the capital in the eighth month and submitted Sui's written communication.

But strangely, the records reveal that it was reported in the sixth month, during Onono Imoko's trip back to Japan, that the written communication from Sui stolen while residing in Paekché. If this is the written communication produced by Sui, there must have been two messages, but question remains whether this really was the case. Former theory never questions this,¹⁷⁾ and considers the written communication to be authentic, thus the problem remains only with Imoko's appeal for having the message stolen. First, there is a theory that the content of the message might have offended the Japanese imperial court and being apprehensive, Onono Imoko lied that the message was stolen.¹⁸⁾ The second theory is that Paekché was apprehensive with Japan-Sui negotiations, thus

ordered someone to steal the message to analyze the content.¹⁹⁾ The third theory is that amanuensis planned to entrap Ono family and altered the content.²⁰⁾ The writer believes that the official written communication to the emperor was delivered by Pei Shiqing but after considering Tang Dynasty cases, it is understandable that the Sui emperor had entrusted Imoko with an imperial command. In this case, perhaps Yangdi's displeasure was expressed in the imperial command. If such an imperial command did not exist, perhaps it was Imoko's conduct to hinder Pei Shiqing's submission of the written communication which had failed.

According to *Nihonshoki*, the following is the content of the written communication submitted by Pei Shiqing.

“The emperor asks Wohuang (Emperor of Wo) 皇帝問倭皇. Envoy Su Yingao (Onono Imoko's Chinese name) and others arrived and sincerely saluted the audience. With Heaven's decree, we rule the country, and wish to spread moral excellence to all creation. With the sentiment of benevolence, discrimination of lands near and far will be tolerated. I have come to realize you have sincerely made tribute from a distant, secured assurance of the masses, established internal peace and promoted harmony among the masses. We commend your beautiful feelings. Recently the weather has become warm and there have been no changes. Therefore, Honglusi Zhangke (Manager of foreign guests) Pei Shiqing and others have been sent to visit your country along with gifts listed in another record.”

The emperor of Wo 倭皇, originally written as the King of Wo 倭王 was altered by the compiler of the *Shoki*. In China, the title of wang (king) is subordinate to the title of huangdi (emperor). Generally, the Chinese emperor addressed the rulers of other countries as wang (king). As stated in the introduction, written communications beginning with the statement “emperor asks” 皇帝問 and addressed to tributary states, was analyzed by Kaneko Shuichi. Japan sent written communications with the intention of obtaining equal diplomatic relations but the Chinese did not accept this request. The Chinese did not establish a sovereign and subject relationship with the king of Wo to make Japan a vassalage but China still considered Japan as an inferior tributary state. Considering the Mandate of Heaven and the Land under Heaven, this was an inevitable treatment.

In the publication called *Shōtokutaishidenryaku* of later years, a dialogue between the emperor and the crown prince is recorded. When the emperor asked the crown prince concerning this written communication, the crown prince recommended “the form is depicting the Son of Heaven honoring various feudal lords. The character emperor exists solely under the heaven but the characters Wohuang 倭皇 was used from courtesy. Thus this message should be respectfully considered.” But, Wohuang should have been Wowang as mentioned earlier, thus

this argument makes no sense but there must have been a reason why Japan had to accept this type of written communication.

It is clear from the records compiled in the *Shoki* that this written communication was accepted by the Imperial Court. For Japan at the stage of emulating the Chinese example of nation building, it was necessary to normalize relations with China. Especially during the Suiko period, sovereign authority was strengthened compared to the preceding kings and learning from China had become a necessity. In the ninth month of the same year, as Pei Shiqing was returning, Onono Imoko was once again appointed as the Japanese emissary accompanied by vice emissary Kishino Onari, and dispatched eight students and monks to study in China. Japan had sent numerous monks earlier which is recorded in the *Suishu* but this reveals the objective of promoting contacts with the Chinese.

A written communication sent from Japan to Sui is recorded in the *Nihonshoki* as follows.

“The Tennō (Tianhuang in Chinese) in the east sincerely addresses the Kōtei (huangdi in Chinese) in the west. 東天皇敬白西皇帝 One of my long time dream had been realized with Honglusi Zhangke (Manager of foreign guests) Pei Shiqing and others’ visit. It becomes cold at the end of autumn, but how is your health. I assume all is well. Currently Su Yingao and Hunali (Onari) and others shall be dispatched. I shall sincerely inform you. Please excuse all imperfectness. 謹白不具”

Some scholars have indicated that this written communication is identical to the previous “Son of Heaven of the land of the rising sun, and so forth.”²¹⁾ If this is the case, “emperor in the east and so forth” the phrase written as in the letters, and it is virtually impossible to assume that in the *Suishu* “land of the rising sun” had been altered. Therefore, the compiler of the letters altered the passage “Tenno of the east” in the written communication after referring to the *Suishu*.²²⁾ But there are no satisfactory answer as to why an alteration had to be made and why we have to rationalize this issue as such. It might be no more than jumping to conclusions. Certainly there was only one written communication mentioned in the *Suishu* and another mentioned in the *Shoki*. Therefore, several different opinions can be easily presented while the writer analyzes that there is a motive as to the inscription in the *Shoki*.

As stated above, since it is improbable that the contents of the written communication in the *Suishu* had been altered, the inscription “land of the rising sun” is the original message which was sent from Japan. Then why was this message omitted in the *Shoki*? The writer presents the following analysis. When the first mission from Japan was sent to Sui, they were referred as “extremely nonsense,” and the written communication sent with the second delegation to Yangdi incurred his displeasure. Thereupon the written communication pro-

duced by the third mission had to be altered in order to amend the previous messages. Thus due to this reason, the written communication with “emperor in the east” had been devised. Furthermore, as for the administrators of Suiko period, the previous messages were deemed unsuccessful and had to be omitted from the records, and the compilers of the *Shoki* might have followed that instruction.²³⁾ From the olden days, “the land of the rising sun” expressed in written communications was thought to glorify the national prestige of Japan, but it was merely self-complacency without acceptance of written communications by other countries.

The written communication which begins “emperor in the east” Jingbai 敬白 and ends with Jinbaibuju 謹白不具 is a new formula. This formula never existed in the previous contacts, while it is a theory interpreted according to Wang Xizhi and Wang Xianzhi letters.²⁴⁾ Moreover, later in Japan, it has been said that this formula was used by the emperor to address priests of high virtue.²⁵⁾ The scribe probably copied a shuyi (a book of model messages) to write this message. The message is addressed to a respectable individual. Furthermore, in this written communication, the terms east-west were used to simply express direction and Tenno and Huangdi, the title of the ruler of each country were used. Thus the words or phrasing was tolerable compared to the previous contacts. But there seems to have been no changes in the attitude of equality which had been requested earlier.

Some scholars emphasize that the title of Tenno 天皇 was not used during this period. But theories that the title of Tenno existed by Suiko period seems prevalent.²⁶⁾ This is substantiated by engraved inscriptions of Yakushi (Bhaisajyaguru) mandorla of Horyuji temple and Joroku buddha mandorla of Gankoji temple, and embroidered articles of Tenjukoku mandala which have been inscribed during the Suiko period. Contrarily, there is a theory strongly supporting that the dates of these articles are after the Suiko period.²⁷⁾ The popular theory concerning the title of Tenno being used began in the period after the so-called Taika Reforms, as the authoritative establishment had been strengthened.²⁸⁾ If these theories are widely accepted, the term Tenno used in the written communications during Suiko period must have been altered by the compiler of the *Shoki*. Then the problem of how the original document had been analyzed obviously becomes the major issue of argument. However, relatively few theories satisfactorily answer this question.

If the title of Tenno was altered at a later date, it is possible that in the originals found, it will be written as either “Daio (Dawang in Chinese), the Great King,” “Ten’o (Tianwang in Chinese), the King of Heaven” or according to the Japanese traditional reading of the terms. First, the term Daio (Dawang),²⁹⁾ the Great King, as mentioned above, can be seen in the unearthed iron swords from the fifth century, the period of the Five Kings of Wo kingdom. The Japanese traditional reading of Ohokimi was used for Daio during and after the Suiko period, and in China, king was considered inferior to an emperor. Furthermore

in the previous written communication, Son of Heaven which is superior to the Daio (Dawang), the Great King, is used. Therefore it seems improbable that the administrators of Suiko period would use these titles for official diplomatic correspondences.

Although rarely used, the term Ten'ō (Tianwang in Chinese), King of Heaven is found in the old manuscripts of *Nihonshoki*, thus indicating that this term was actually used in Japan during a certain period.³⁰⁾ Only a few scholars agree with this theory and the terms used in *Nihonshoki* manuscript might have written Tenno as Ten'ō after the title of Tenno was established.³¹⁾ However if this title was used, the transformation from Ten'ō to Tenno should have been relatively simple. The position of Ten'ō is superior to that of wang (king), but still inferior to that of the emperor; therefore if this title was used in written communications to China, it must be assumed that the policy of gaining equality had receded. Contrarily for Sui dynasty, written communication became more acceptable.

As mentioned earlier, the title of Japanese rulers was written as Ohokimi in the *Suishu*, but the original characters of this title should be interpreted as Amekimi rather than Ohokimi.³²⁾ Furthermore, Amekimi in Japanese traditional reading is interpreted as Tenno,³³⁾ and should be emphasized that Amekimi can be interpreted as Ten'ō (Tianwang) in Japanese traditional reading.

Lastly, considering whether Japanese traditional reading was used in written communications, it is probable that during Tang Dynasty the term Sumeramikoto was used, as mentioned later. Therefore, the Japanese traditional reading system could have been used during Sui dynasty, but in that case, the term Amenotarishihiko should have been used. However the formula of written communications differs between Tang and Sui dynasties. During Sui dynasty, in the case where X of east and X of west were written in collation, rather than the Japanese traditional reading system, it should have been a rational arrangement to use Chinese characters. Needless to say, this message was written in Chinese, and Onono Imoko was written in Chinese as Su Yingao, therefore it becomes significant that the ruler's title to be written in Chinese to coordinate the entire tone of the article.

Thus we have analyzed the Japanese ruler's titles used in written communications, there are no definite conclusions in sight, but the writer believes that either Ten'ō or Tenno (Tianhuang) is highly probable. The titles used are superior to Daio (Dawang), the Great King of the fifth century. These terms were first used in diplomatic correspondences, jointly with former terms Daio or Ohokimi and fixed later as the title of Tenno.³⁴⁾

4. Written communications sent from Tang to Japan

When Tang Dynasty was established in 618, tumult in East Asia had become violent. Tang was involved in a struggle for supremacy entangled with three states

of Korea. Tang collaborated with Silla, defeated Paekché in 660, Koguryō in 668 and the following year, established the Andong Duhufu, the protectorate-general in P'yongyang. Meanwhile, Silla annexed the territory of Paekché, and as Koguryō was annihilated, Silla resisted Tang domination and virtually unified the entire Korean peninsula. In 676, Tang withdrew Andong Duhufu, the protectorate-general from Korea.

Initially, Japan was simply observing the situation and dispatched its first mission to Tang, China in 630. Tang reciprocated the visit two years later by dispatching envoy Gao Biaoren to Japan. According to the article in the Chapter of Wo kingdoms in *Jiu Tangshu*, Gao Biaoren had "disputed manners with an imperial Japanese prince, and returned without addressing the imperial orders." It is presumed that Tang had tried to treat Japan as a subordinate, and by following the path established during Suiko period, Japan did not obey the order.³⁵⁾ But Japan must have felt the pressure exerted from Tang imperial court. It is said that the Taika Reforms in 645, triggered a turning point as the pro-Paekché policy which centered on the Soga family was dissolved, and proceeded to pursue a pro-Silla policy. An imperial edict was issued by Tang to the third Japanese mission to Tang dynasty in 654 which was to "mobilize its troops and assist Silla." But Japan was not completely able to discontinue its relations with Paekché. The remaining followers of Paekché revolted after the destruction of the state and Japan sent Paekché's prince P'ungjang as requested, mobilized troops and they were defeated in the renowned battle of Paek-kang (Baijiang in Chinese and Hakusonko in Japanese) in the year 663.

Under such tense international situation, a written communication from Tang is recorded in the *Zenrinkokuhoki* 善隣國寶記.

"In the tenth year of Tenji emperor's reign (671 A.D.), an envoy from Tang, Guo Wuzong and others arrived with imperial gifts. The message was addressed as, "The great Tang's emperor sincerely asks the Tenno of the State of Japan 大唐[皇]帝敬問日本國天皇." In the first year of Temmu Tenno (672 A.D.), Guo Wuzong and others arrived at Otsu and were received there. The guests enshrined a boxed letter and on the box it was written "the message from the great Tang emperor sincerely asks the king of Wo 大唐皇帝敬問倭王書." Furthermore, the great Tang emperor addressed the Japanese Eijishokei Ohkida and others in a message as "the emperor sincerely sends a written communication to the king of the State of Japan. 皇帝敬到(致)書於日本國王."

There is a theory as mentioned in the *Nihonshoki* article of the first month of 671 that Tang envoy, Liu Renyuan, the garrison general of Paekché sent Li Shouzhen and others who submitted a message.³⁶⁾ But it would be better to assume that in the 11th month of the same year, a message from Tsushima island to Dazaihu, the frontier generalment in north Kyushu was dispatched stating Guo

Wuzong and 600 people, and Shazhai Sundeng and 1400 people, a total of 2000 people arrived in 47 boats. Regarding the envoys and people who had arrived that year, this was related to Silla overtaking the majority of the Paekché territory from the previous year. Therefore the above mentioned Li Shouzhén's motive was to request Japan to mobilize and dispatch troops to Paekché, and Guo Wuzong and 600 people were Chinese stranded in Paekché while the remaining 1400 were Paekché people. Thus both groups can be interpreted as refugees³⁷⁾ or prisoners of war returned to Japan.³⁸⁾ Relations between Silla and Tang had also deteriorated, thus prompted Silla to send a mission to Japan while Japan supplied their ruler with silk, pongee, floss silk, leather and other materials.

In the 12th month of 671, the year Tenji emperor passed away, and in the 3rd month of the following year (1st year of Temmu's reign) the activities of Guo Wuzong and others are described in the *Nihonshoki*. Guo Wuzong was informed about the emperor's death while in Tsukushi, northern Kyushu. This was when Guo and others presented the boxed letter and gifts which was mentioned earlier. Later, in the fifth month, large amounts of armor, bows and arrows, pongee, hemp cloth, silk were supplied to Guo and others as they were prepared to return home to fight.

Thus we can assess that Guo Wuzong and others arrived in Japan in the 11th month, resided at Tsukushi or northern Kyushu and remained there until the following year. If so, why are there two written communications mentioned in the *Zenrinkokuhoki*. It can be assessed that one message was addressed to the emperor while the other message was addressed to an imperial court member other than the emperor,³⁹⁾ or the second message was written in Dazaihu, the frontier generalment in northern Kyushu.⁴⁰⁾ However both written communications resemble the formula used by the Chinese imperial court, and the title of "king of Wo" as already seen in the written communications delivered from Sui was properly addressed to the ruler of Japan. Furthermore, the possibility of an inferior official producing the emperor's written communication should we disregard.

Then, how should we analyze the question of two written communications. It should be emphasized that the first message was addressed to the "emperor of the State of Japan 日本國天皇." Generally speaking, the country name Japan was not used during this period. It was only in the eighth century, when the Japanese mission was sent to Tang court that the title, Japan, became known in China. The original title is "Wowang, the king of Wo 倭王" as seen in the second written communication. Therefore, considering the circumstances of Guo Wuzong's stay in Japan, there must have been only one written communication in the boxed letter.

Written communications addressed to the "king of Wo" was used after Sui dynasty, whence the Japanese ruler was still inferior to the Chinese emperor and it was inevitable for China with the notion of Mandate of Heaven to consider foreign countries as subordinate tributary states. However this written com-

munication uses “the emperor sincerely asks 皇帝敬問” the most cordial phrasing according to Kaneko’s classification. With the rise of Silla, territorial security became difficult to maintain in the east for Tang dynasty, such as negotiating post war settlements, requesting Japan to accept refugees and requesting for supplies or weapons. Thus the style of written communications became more cordial.

According to the compilation in the above mentioned *Zenrinkokuhoki*, the third written communication was presented to Sakaibeno Ohkida prior to his return voyage to Japan after entering Tang China in the year 702. It was addressed to the “king of the State of Japan 日本國王,” and uses the following comment, “will send a message 致書.” This Japanese mission to the Tang was different from the previous missions mentioned earlier and was sent to Tang court to inform the installment of central authority system and establishment of the Taiho Ritsuryo (lüling in Chinese or code) in the year 700 after turmoil in East Asia had subsided. At the same time, it must have also informed the Tang court that the official name of the country, Japan, was to be used. Therefore the address was written as “king of the State of Japan,” while the term “king of state 國王” was used for regions without direct dependence, and for tributary states of distant regions.⁴¹⁾ An established statute forced such treatment. The unusual treatment of Tang dynasty written communication “致書” might have been related to this situation.⁴²⁾

However, for some unknown reason, the Japanese mission to Tang dynasty returned separately. Awatano Mahito, the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary 遣唐執節使 returned in 704, while vice envoy Koseno Oji, of the Japanese mission to Tang dynasty returned in 706. As for ambassador 大使 Ohokida, he returned in 718 with the following mission to Tang dynasty.⁴³⁾ If the written communication was presented in the year 718, it must have been directed to Tajihino Agatamori, the envoy 遣唐押使 in charge of the mission to Tang court. Therefore, this written communication was perhaps not given to Ohokida. If the written communication was given to Ohokida, it must have been under special circumstances, thus the peculiar formula might have influenced the message. This question remains to be answered by future studies.

From this period on, the Japanese mission to Tang dynasty differed from previous missions which confronted major problems, and focused upon literature, religion and organizational systems of Tang as the missions began to hold cultural significance. There is one remaining written communication produced by Tang from this period. It was written by Zhang Jiuling who was appointed administrator of Xuanzong and compiled in his collection of works known as *Qujiang Anthology*.

“Imperial command to the king of the State of Japan, Sumeramikoto, 勅日本國王主明樂美御德. It is a country of good manners, where the divine spirit shall protect him. Even after voyaging the high seas, it has never confronted misfortune. However for some peculiar reason, it confronted an unusual

situation last year. Once Tajihino Mahito Hironari and others entered China and on the way back east, at the mouth of Yangtze River, heavy fog set in so much that they lost their direction and heavy winds blew the ship off course. Thereafter, one ship landed at Yuezhou, and Mahito Hironari tried to leave from there. The other ship drifted to the south China sea, Ason Nashiro encountered numerous difficulties but finally managed to save his life. Before Nashiro left the site, I received the report from Guangzhou, but according to the content, Ason Hironari and others drifted to Linyi (Champa). Since they drifted to a strange land, and without any knowledge of the local language they were either killed after being looted or sold. Thinking about this misfortune, it is hard to tolerate. But countries such as Linyi always payed tribute and through the Annan Dufu, the protector-general, we delivered an imperial command to return the remaining men. After the men return, we will allow them to recuperate and set sail. Moreover another ship had been lost and we are still worried about their whereabouts. Perhaps they arrived at some barbarian country, thus if anyone passes through the area, we have asked them to report their safety. This type of misfortune is absolutely unpredictable. Although you are loyal, why do we need to ask for god's mercy and encounter such misfortune. I imagine you will be saddened with this message. But the universe is eternal and each have their destiny. The cold is unbearable in mid-winter. May peace prevail on your leaders and people. When Ason Nashiro returns, a detailed explanation will be available. Enough can not be stated in this message."

This written communication from Xuanzong to Shomu, the Japanese emperor, was presented to Nakatomino Nashiro in 736 as he was about to return. The opening statement is written as "Imperial command to the king of the State of Japan," and according to Kaneko's classification, this type of opening message is given to the most inferior country. At the time, Zhang Jiuling produced numerous written communications to rulers of various countries. By comparing those written communications, we can assess that Japan was deemed and treated as one of the most inferior country at the time.⁴⁴⁾

The statements in the written communications produced by Tang dynasty in the early period were mostly cordial as stated earlier. However this was due to expectations placed on Japan during the years of continuous international tension. Moreover, the written communication from 718 differs from the previous messages but still cordial in content. The content of the written communication is not introduced and perhaps it meant to compliment the establishment of codes of law in Japan. On the contrary, the above mentioned message was written during the height of Xuanzong's power which gained self-confidence as the Son of Heaven of the Chinese Empire. Meanwhile Japan simply followed a path of absorbing the culture of Tang dynasty, therefore, the small country in the east was considered inferior.

The reason why the written communications addresses “Sumeramikoto, the king of Japan” depicts that Tang dynasty assumed Sumeramikoto as the name of the ruler. Actually this was the Japanese traditional reading of the term Tenno (Tianhuang in Chinese). This indicates that the Japanese written communication did not use the term emperor but signed according to the Japanese traditional reading of the term.⁴⁵⁾ One reason for this practice, as mentioned in the dialogue of *Shotokutaishidenryaku*, since “huang” in Tenno (Tianhuang in Chinese) overlaps with the huang in huangdi, therefore it was not used in written communications to China. Furthermore, earlier in Gaozong and Wu Empress periods, there was a scheme to call Gaozong, Tianhuang and empress as Tianhou. Therefore, Japan requested to Tang court for the use of traditional Japanese reading of Sumeramikoto.

Within the written communication, Japan was called the “the country of good manners 禮儀之國.” A resembling term “the country of gentlemen 君子之國” was also used. There is a theory that this indicates the good manners and moral characters of Japanese to the Chinese. But this is merely a self satisfying misunderstanding. This type of term was also used for Silla. In the countries surrounding China, Japan and Korea most enthusiastically received Chinese culture which was accepted more than any other country in the area. Thus the Chinese merely praised the Japanese as disciples for accepting or receiving their culture.

It has been stated earlier that the Tang court had regarded Japan as an inferior country, but between Tang dynasty and Japan, a sovereign and subject relationship was never established. The following is a statement in the imperial command issued in the year 700.

“As far as Korea in the east, Khmer (Cambodia) in the south, and as far west as Persia, Tibet and Kirghiz, as far north as Khitai, Tujue, and Mohe, Manchuria (the territory between these countries were subordinate states to Tang dynasty), entering the territory of barbarian (area), the outskirts of this area is considered a remote district 絕域 where interaction was very limited.”⁴⁶⁾

According to this inscription, Tang dynasty did not consider Japan as a regular tributary state from a far distance.

Lastly, as mentioned in the introduction, depending on the terminology used in the written communications produced by the Tang court, the messages are classified and differentiated according to status such as sovereign and subject, father and son, and brothers.⁴⁷⁾ However after analyzing the written communications between Japan-Sui and Japan-Tang, this is not always the case. The formula of written communications depends on the power relations at the time, intentions of the country, and the international arena. We cannot deny that international relations of East Asia was dependent on the relation patterns established between

China and the surrounding countries. Furthermore, we must emphasize that each participant had its own method of coping with the flexible situation.

Notes

- 1) Chapter (Biography) of Xiangnu *Hanshu* 漢書匈奴傳.
- 2) *Hanshu* 漢書匈奴傳 *op. cit.*.
- 3) *Hanshu* 漢書匈奴傳 *op. cit.*.
- 4) Chapter of Southeastern Barbarians, Yues and Korean *Hanshu* 漢書西南夷兩粵朝鮮傳.
- 5) Article of Tujue in Chapter of Northern Barbarians *Suishu* 隋書北狄傳突厥條.
- 6) *Suishu* 隋書北狄傳突厥條 *op. cit.*.
- 7) *Suishu* 隋書北狄傳突厥條 *op. cit.*.
- 8) Kaneko Shuichi 金子修一, "Todai no kokusai monjo keishiki ni tsuite" 唐代の國際文書形式について, *Shigaku zasshi*, 83-10, Tokyo, 1974.
- 9) Article of Wo kingdom in Chapter of Eastern Barbarians *Suishu* 隋書東夷傳倭國條 (hereafter 倭國傳).
- 10) Itazawa Takeo 板沢武雄, "Nitto tsuko ni okeru kokusho mondai ni tsuite" 日唐通交に於ける國書問題について, *Shirin*, 24-1, Kyoto, 1939.
- 11) Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生, "Kentoshi to kokusho" 遣唐使と國書, Mozai Torao 茂在寅男 ed., *Kentoshi to shiryō* 遣唐使と史料, Tokyo, 1987. Yuasa Yukimago 湯浅幸孫, "Kentoshi koban nisoku" 遣唐使考弁二則, *Nihon rekishi*, 464, Tokyo, 1987.
- 12) Yamada Hideo 山田英雄, "Nichi, To, Ra, Botsu kan no kokusho ni tsuite" 日・唐・羅・渤海の國書について *Nihon kodaishi ho* 日本古代史攷, Tokyo, 1987.
- 13) Kurihara Tomonobu 栗原朋信, "Nihon kara Zui e okutta kokusho" 日本から隋へ贈った國書, and "Nichi Zui kosho no ichi sokumen" 日・隋交渉の一側面, *Jodai Nihon taigai kankei no kenkyū* 上代日本対外關係の研究 Tokyo, 1978.
- 14) Matsumura Hiroshi 増村宏, "Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi to hi bossuru tokoro no tenshi" 日出處天子と日沒處天子, and "Hi izuru tokoro to hi bossuru tokoro ni tsuite" 日出ずる處と日沒する處について, *Kentoshi no kenkyū* 遣唐使の研究, Kyoto, 1988.
- 15) I Song-si 李成市, "Kokuri to Nichi Zui gaiko, iwayuru kokusho mondai ni kansuru ichi shiron" 高句麗と日隋外交—いわゆる國書問題に關する一試論, *Shiso*, 795, 1990. However the direction from Korea had been stated earlier. Refer to p. 172., Akiyama Kenzo 秋山謙藏, *Nisshi koshoshi kenkyū* 日支交渉史研究, Tokyo, 1939.
- 16) Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生, "6~8 seiki no higashi Ajia" 六~八世紀の東アジア, *Iwanami koza Nihon rekishi*, kodai 2, Tokyo, 1962, also in *Chugoku kodai kokka to higashi Ajia sekai* 日本古代國家と東アジア世界, Tokyo, 1983. Ishimoda Sho 石母田正, *Nihon no kodai kokka* 日本の古代國家, Tokyo, 1971, in the collected works, vol. 3, Tokyo, 1989, chapter 1. Xu Xianyao 徐先堯, "Sui Wo bangjian xinkao" 隋倭邦交新考, *Zhongguo yu Riben* 中國與日本 57~61, Taipei, 1964, also in *Zhongguo Tangdai xuehui* 中國唐代學會 ed., *Tangdai yanjiu lunji* 唐代研究論集, vol. 1, Taipei, 1992.
- 17) Shida Hudomaro 志田不動磨, *Toyoshijo no Nihon* 東洋史上の日本, Tokyo, 1940, P. 48. This is the sole article which states that only ambassadors were allowed to produce written communications.
- 18) Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長, *Gyōju gaigen* 馭戎概言, 1796. Numerous theories have been presented since this publication.
- 19) Mishina Akihide 三品彰英, "Shotoku taishi no Mimana taisaku" 聖德太子の任那対策 Shotoku taishi kenkyukai 聖德太子研究会 ed., *Shotoku taishi ronshū* 聖德太子論集, Kyoto, 1971. I Song-si, *op. cit.*
- 20) Sakamoto Taro 坂本太郎, *Shotoku taishi* 聖德太子, Tokyo, 1979, p. 117 and other pages.
- 21) Iwai Hirosato 岩井大慧, "Shina shisho ni arawaretaru Nihon" 支那史書に現れたる日本, *Iwanami koza Nihon rekishi* vol. 9, Tokyo, 1935. Wada Sei 和田清, *Toyoshijoyori mitaru kodai no Nihon*, 東洋史上

- より観たる古代の日本, Kyoto, 1956.
- 22) Takahashi Zentaro 高橋善太郎, "Kenzuishi no kenkyu" 遣隋使の研究, *Toyo gakuho*, 33-3, 4, Tokyo, 1951. Xu Xianyao 徐先堯, *Er Wang chidu yu Ribenshuji suozai guoshu zhi yanjiu* 二王尺牘與日本書紀所載國書之研究, Taibei, 1980.
- 23) Hori Toshikazu 堀敏一, *Chugoku to kodai higashi Ajia sekai, chukatekisekai to shominzoku* 中國と古代東アジア世界—中華的世界と諸民族, Tokyo, 1993, p. 203 and other pages.
- 24) Xu Xianyao, *op. cit.*
- 25) Okuda Hisashi 奥田尚, "8 seiki no Nihon kara To eno kokusho" 八世紀の日本から唐への國書, *Toyo bunka gakka nenpo* (Ottemon gakuin daigaku) 6, Osaka, 1991.
- 26) Tsuda Sokichi 津田左右吉, "Tenno ko" 天皇考, *Nihon jodaishi no kenkyu* 日本上代史の研究, Tokyo, 1947, in the complete works, vol. 3, Tokyo, 1963.
- 27) Fukuyama Toshio 福山敏男, "Horyuji no kinsekibun ni kansuru ni san no mondai" 法隆寺の金石文に關する二、三の問題, *Yumedono*, 13, Nara, 1935.
- 28) Mori Kimiaki 森公章, "'Tenno' go no seiritsu o megutte" 「天皇」號の成立をめぐる *Nihon rekishi*, 418, Tokyo, 1983. Prior research or studies and bibliography is added.
- 29) Tono Haruyuki 東野治之, "Hi izuru tokoro, Nihon, Waqwaq" 日出處・日本・ワーク, *Kentoshi to Shosoin* 遣唐使と正倉院, Tokyo, 1992. In this publication "daio 大王" and "daiko 大皇" are said to be used but in reality, daiko is the term used after the title tenno was established.
- 30) Kakubayashi Humio 角林文雄, "Nihon kodai no kunshu no shogo" 日本古代の君主の稱號, *Nihonshi ronso* 日本史論叢, 1, takatsuki, 1972, also Kakubayashi, *Nihon kodai no seiji to keizai* 日本古代の政治と經濟, Tokyo, 1989. Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定, "Tenno naru shogo no yurai ni tsuite" 天皇なる稱號の由来について, *Shiso*, 646, Tokyo, 1978, also *Kodai Yamato chotei* 古代大和朝廷, Tokyo, 1988. And in complete works, vol. 21, Tokyo, 1993.
- 31) Tono Haruyuki 東野治之, "'Daio' go no seiritsu to 'tenno' go" 「大王」號の成立と「天皇」號, *Seminar Nihon kodaishi*, vol. 2 ゼミナール日本古代史, 下, Tokyo, 1980. Mori Kimiaki, *op. cit.*
- 32) Nihon koten bungaku taikai, "*Nihonshoki*" vol. 2, 日本古典文學大系『日本書紀』下, Tokyo, 1965, p. 538, note: Tennogo. Shimode Sekiyo 下出積與, *Shinsen shiso* 神仙思想, Tokyo, 1968.
- 33) Ohashi Kazuaki 大橋一章, "'Tenno' go seiritsu no nendai ni tsuite" 「天皇」號成立の年代について, *Rekishi kyoiku*, 18-7, Tokyo, 1970.
- 34) Inoue Mitsusada 井上光貞, "Suikocho gaiko seisaku no tenkai" 推古朝外交政策の展開, *Shotoku taishi ronshu*, above quoted, also the collected works, vol. 5, 1986.
- 35) Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生, *Nihon rekishi no kokusai kankyo* 日本歴史の國際環境, Tokyo, 1985, p. 103.
- 36) Yamada Hideo, *op. cit.*
- 37) Ikeuchi Hiroshi 池内宏, "Kudara metsubogo no doran oyobi To, Ra, Nichi san goku no kankei" 百濟滅亡後の動亂及び唐・羅・日三國の關係, *Mansenshi kenkyu*, josei vol. 2 滿鮮史研究, 上世第二冊, Tokyo, 1960. Suzuki Yasutami 鈴木靖民, "Kudara kyuen no ekigo no Nitto kosho" 百濟救援の役後の日唐交渉, Sakamoto Taro hakase koki kinenkai 坂本太郎博士古稀記念會 ed., *Zoku Nihon kodaishi ronshu*, vol. 1 續日本古代史論集, 上, Tokyo, 1972.
- 38) Matsuda Yoshihiro 松田好弘, "Tenjicho no gaiko ni tsuite" 天智朝の外交について, *Ritsumeikan bungaku*, 415, 416, 417, Kyoto, 1980. Naoki Kojiro 直木孝次郎, "Omicho matsunen ni okeru Nitto kankei no ichikosatsu" 近江朝末年における日唐關係の一考察, *Suenaga sensei beiju kimen kentei ronbunshu* 末永先生米壽記念獻呈論文集, Nara, 1985, also Naoki, *Kodai Nihon to Chosen, Chugoku* 古代日本と朝鮮・中國, Tokyo, 1988.
- 39) Matsuda Yoshihiro, *op. cit.*
- 40) Naoki Kojiro, *op. cit.*
- 41) Kaneko Shuichi 金子修一, "Todai sakuhosei ippan, shuhen shominzoku ni okeru 'oh' go to 'kokuoh' go" 唐代册封制一斑—周辺諸民族における「王」號と「國王」號, *Nishijima Sadao hakase hanreki kinen, Higashi Ajiaishi ni okeru kokka to nomin* 西嶋定生博士還曆記念, 東アジア史における國家と農民, Tokyo, 1984.
- 42) Nakamura Hiroichi 中村裕一, *Todai seichoku kenkyu* 唐代制勅研究, Tokyo, 1991, According to p. 320, during Tang dynasty, Tufan considered Tang an equal power, thus used the term "致書."
- 43) Hori Toshikazu, *Ibid.*, p. 246, it has been mistakenly stated that Ohkida returned in the year 704,

and should be amended here.

- 44) Yamanouchi Shinji 山内晋次, "To yori mita hachi seiki no kokusai chitsujo to Nihon no chii no saikento" 唐よりみた八世紀の國際秩序と日本の地位の再検討, *Shokunihongi kenkyu* 續日本紀研究, p. 245, Osaka, 1986.
- 45) Nishijima Sadao, "Kentoshi to kokusho", quoted above.
- 46) *Tang huiyao*, vol. 100, zalu. 唐會要卷百雜錄.
- 47) Kaneko Shuichi, "Todai no kokusai monjo keishiki ni tsuite", quoted above.