

CHAPTER 3

THE CENTURY OF REFORM

Japan's history has been deeply marked by reforms adopted during two long but widely separated periods of contact with expansive foreign cultures. The first began around A.D. 587 when Soga no Umako seized control of Japan's central government, made an extensive use of Chinese techniques for expanding state power, and supported the introduction and spread of Chinese learning. The second came after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 when new leaders moved the country toward industrialization and Western ways.

Japanese life was greatly altered by Chinese culture long before the Soga seizure of power in 587 and long after the closing years of the ninth century when a decision was made to stop sending official missions to China. But during the intervening three centuries Japanese aristocrats were understandably fascinated by the power and achievements of China under the great Sui (589 to 618) and T'ang (618 to 907) dynasties, giving rise to action and thought that gave Japanese life of those days a strongly Chinese tone, especially at the upper reaches of society. The first of the three centuries of remarkable Chinese influence – roughly the seventh century and the subject of this chapter – was a time of reform along Chinese lines. The second – the eighth century, which is covered in Chapter 4 – is known as the Nara period, when Japan was ruled from a capital patterned after the Chinese capital at Ch'ang-an. And the third was a time when almost every aristocrat was immersed in one aspect of Chinese learning or another.

Throughout the century of reform there flowed two broad and deep currents of change: one arising from a strong and persistent urge to build a powerful Chinese-style state and the other coming from an increasing openness to diverse expressions of Chinese art and learning. When tracing these movements through this century of reform, one soon notices that they were accelerated and turned in new directions not only by an ever-greater familiarity with Chinese achievements but also by three political upheavals within Japan: (1) the Soga seizure of control over state affairs in 587, which ushered in what has been called

the Asuka enlightenment; (2) the coup of 645 followed by the adoption of the Great Reforms; and (3) the civil war of 672 (the *jinshin no ran*) after which new leaders were remarkably successful in making Japan a strong and despotic state.

THE ASUKA ENLIGHTENMENT

Historians have tended to think of the Asuka enlightenment as beginning with the 587 seizure of power by Soga no Umako or with the 593 enthronement of Empress Suiko, but the Chinese character of the enlightenment suggests that the reunification of China in 589 may be the most significant starting point, even though Japan did not send an official mission to the Sui court until 600. Before considering the political and cultural history of these early years of Japan's century of reform, let us look at the question of how the rise of this new Chinese empire affected Japan's channels of contact with the continent.

The Sui empire

After the collapse of the Western Chin in A.D. 317, north China was overrun by non-Chinese people and torn by internal strife. For the next 250 years or more, the country was divided by a succession of regional states and kingdoms. Then in 578 a Northern Chou emperor united most of north China, and in 581 a well-connected Northern Chou general (the famous Yang Chien who is known as Emperor Wen-ti) founded the Sui dynasty. In 589 he conquered the powerful Southern Court of Ch'en and brought the whole of China under one rule. The rise of the new empire was followed by the reestablishment of tributary relationships with neighboring states and kingdoms throughout most of east Asia. Visitors from such foreign lands as Japan were impressed by China's massive building projects, which included a walled palace-city about six miles long and five miles wide and an empirewide canal system. The foreigners' attention was also drawn to other achievements: a complex and effective bureaucracy that reached local communities in distant regions, an extensive revenue system, a huge military organization, and detailed codifications of law. Foreign observers interested in state building could also see that China's imperial rule had been reinforced by an ideology in which Confucian rites honored its emperors as Sons of Heaven, Confucian ethics valued obedience to heads of state, Buddhist texts de-

picted rulers as agents of universal law, and Taoist teachings added legitimacy to imperial control.¹

The Korean kingdoms located near the China border (Koguryō and Paekche) were affected earlier and more deeply by the new Chinese empire than were states located farther away, that is, Silla and Japan. Koguryō (the closest) reacted first by mobilizing troops to prevent a possible Chinese advance to the north; Paekche quickly established relations with the Sui court but did not feel seriously threatened; Silla allowed three years to pass before sending a mission; and Japan made no official contact until 600. Because Chinese influence on Japan was affected by a rapidly shifting pattern of relations among the Korean kingdoms, and between those kingdoms and China, an overview of these relationships will help show how contacts with the continent influenced Japan's Asuka enlightenment.

Holding a key position among Korean kingdoms paying tribute to north China courts, Koguryō had traditionally sent tribute to one northern court after another. And as soon as the Northern Chou was replaced by the Sui in 581, Koguryō immediately sent tribute. But when word reached the king of Koguryō in 589 that Northern Chou forces had destroyed the southern Ch'en court and resurrected the unified Chinese empire, he and his advisers assumed that Emperor Wen-ti would soon send armies against Koguryō in an attempt to reestablish the Chinese colonial system that had existed in Korea during Han times. The Sui court probably did have such ambitions, as in the following year Wen-ti condemned Koguryō for not sending a tributary mission and demanded an apology. For a few years the new Koguryō king (Yōngyang) dealt with the Sui court in the traditional fashion (sending tribute and accepting appointments), and their relations remained amicable.

But in 598 Yōngyang suddenly mobilized 10,000 horsemen and attacked territory located on the Chinese side of the border. Emperor Wen-ti immediately called up 300,000 troops, ordered an invasion of Koguryō, and stripped the Koguryō king of his offices and titles. Thereupon Yōngyang apologized and accepted Sui appointments and awards. The emperor's troops were then withdrawn, but they had suffered heavy losses. For a time Sui–Koguryō relationships gravitated toward normalcy, but reports recorded in the *Sui shu* indicate

¹ Arthur F. Wright, "The Sui Dynasty, 581–617," in Denis Twitchett, ed., *Sui ad T'ang China, 589–906, Part I*, vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 148–9.

that the position of Chinese court officials who favored another campaign against Koguryō was becoming stronger. Afraid that a powerful and independent Koguryō might trigger resistance from other peoples in northern regions, Wen-ti's successor (Emperor Yang-ti, who reigned between 605 and 617) organized three campaigns against this Korean kingdom between 612 and 614, after condemning it for "nefarious collusion with the Khitan and Malgal and for violating Sui territory." But not one of the three campaigns was successful. Indeed, the cumulative expense and failure invited widespread disorder and hastened the fall of the Sui dynasty in 618. Scholars have explained the Sui's military failures in different ways, but clearly Koguryō was then strong enough to defend itself against massive attacks by the great Chinese empire.²

Paekche, to the south and west of Koguryō, had long occupied a key position among those kingdoms (including Yamato of Japan) that paid tribute to south China courts. Paekche's response to the rise of a new Chinese empire, therefore, was quite different from that of Koguryō, and more directly related to the nature and extent of Chinese influence on Japan's Asuka enlightenment. Having paid tribute to the Ch'en court of south China, Paekche's sympathies were with the south at the time of the 589 war, from which the Sui emerged victorious and a new Chinese empire was born. And yet, as soon as Paekche heard of the Sui victory, it sent a congratulatory message to Wen-ti and made the friendly gesture of returning a Chinese war vessel that had become stranded on an island in the East China Sea. Wen-ti was delighted to receive friendly overtures from Paekche and justified his liberal treatment of that Korean kingdom by pointing out that its envoys had come by sea from a distant land.

Silla, the third major Korean kingdom and the one farthest from China, did not immediately send tribute to the Sui court and, moreover, set out to strengthen its military defenses, apparently sharing some of Koguryō's fear that Wen-ti would soon move to restore Chinese control over the entire Korean peninsula. By responding to the rebirth of China's empire in somewhat the same way as Koguryō did, Silla was continuing to act like a member of the old northern alliance (in which Koguryō's tributary relationship to the dominant north China court had been a major factor), just as Yamato continued to think of Paekche (the central state in the southern alignment) as the principal supporter of, and Silla the major obstacle to, its effort to

² *Ibid.*, pp. 143–7.

regain rights and privileges in areas located on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula.

The *Nihon shoki* claims that as early as 591, Emperor Sushun told his ministers that Japan must regain control of Mimana (Kaya). And in the next item of that chronicle we are given the names of individuals placed in charge of the expeditionary force to be sent against Silla. Three officers set out for Korea with more than twenty thousand soldiers under their command. One was sent to Mimana and another to Silla to elicit information about the Mimana situation. We are not sure what happened after the troops arrived in Kyushu, but they seem never to have been transported across the Tsushima Straits to Korea. Finally, in 595 the expedition's commander returned to the capital.³

Why did Soga no Umako and the Japanese court decide to take military action at this time of uncertainty surrounding the rise of the new Chinese empire? One view has it that Umako, now in full control of Japanese affairs, wanted credit for expeditiously resolving the Korean problem. But he and his colleagues – well aware that Silla (Japan's old enemy) had not yet sent tribute to the Chinese emperor – may have concluded that Japan had an excellent opportunity, while Koguryō was preoccupied with its relations with China, to force a restoration of the rights and privileges that Japan had once enjoyed in Mimana. In any case, the *Sui shu* reports that in 594, the king of Silla finally sent tribute to the Sui court. Now all three Korean kingdoms had become incorporated into the Sui tributary system. This may explain, in part at least, why Japan then dropped the idea of sending an expedition against Silla.

But within three years, the Korean situation was again destabilized, this time by another outbreak of war between China and Koguryō, a war that began in 598 (according to the Sui account) with an invasion by Koguryō of Chinese territory. Japan's old ally Paekche, whose rivalry with Koguryō had been long and bitter, soon became involved in the conflict by offering military support to China. Emperor Wen-ti was delighted with the offer, but Koguryō retaliated by invading Paekche and preventing the delivery of the promised assistance. Not long afterward, Umako and his group decided that the situation on the continent was ripe for another attempt to improve Japan's position in Korea. But their approach this time was different: In addition to sending an army against Silla in 600, Japan dispatched an official mission (the first in more than a hundred years) to China. The *Nihon*

³ Sushun 4 (591)/8/1 and 4/11/4, in Sakamoto Tarō, Ienaga Saburō, Inoue Mitsusada, and Ōno Susumu, eds., *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (hereafter cited as NKBT) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967), vol. 68, pp. 169–71 and Suiko 3 (595)/7, NKBT 68.174–5.

shoki claims that the army of more than ten thousand was successful in Silla, forcing its king to hand over six strongholds and to promise annual payments of tribute. But the same report concludes with the statement that as soon as Japanese troops were withdrawn, Silla reinvaded Mimana.⁴

Although the official mission to China was apparently considered diplomatic reinforcement for a military expedition against Silla, and the expedition ended in failure, the reestablishment of direct contact with a reunified China was an event of special significance in the history of Japan. Until 600 the flow of Chinese methods and ideas had reached Japan largely through Korea, especially Paekche. But henceforth there was an increasingly voluminous and direct flow from China. As important as this event was, however, the *Nihon shoki* does not mention it, possibly because the contact did not help Japan resolve its Korean problem or possibly because the Chinese response was not something the chroniclers wished to record. But the *Sui shu* offers considerable details of the mission and provides a fairly long account of contemporary conditions in Japan as reported by Japanese envoys.

After hearing the memorial and the explanations supplied by members of the mission, Emperor Wen-ti admonished Empress Suiko for approaching his court in such a rude manner. He was apparently annoyed mainly by the way that she referred to herself and by the way that Japanese envoys explained her relationship to Heaven. When the Yamato kings had sent missions to the Sung court in the fifth century, they had assumed the posture of foreign kings serving China's Son of Heaven. But instead of following that precedent, Suiko used her Japanese name (including the word for Heaven) and her title (*ōkimi* or "great queen").⁵ To Emperor Wen-ti, Suiko's identification of her position with Heaven must have been particularly irksome, for it suggested that she considered herself an equal of the Son of Heaven. We do not know whether the drafters of the memorial were ignorant of the proper way to address a Son of Heaven or were consciously drawing attention to the power that Japan had accumulated since the previous official contact more than a century before. But at the close of the Chinese summary of what the Japanese envoys had to say about conditions in Japan, this comment was made: "Both Silla and Paekche

⁴ Suiko 8 (600)/2, NKBT 68.176-7.

⁵ By this time, Japanese myths and names commonly linked Japanese kings and queens with ancestors who had descended to the Japanese islands from the Plain of High Heaven.

consider Wo [Japan] to be a great country, replete with precious things; and they pay her homage.”⁶

After this first contact with the Sui court, Yamato history was colored by two different but related types of endeavor: the use of Chinese administrative techniques for increasing the power of the state, and the introduction of various forms of Chinese learning. Although administrative change was directly related to seventh-century reform, cultural change – especially that connected with the official adoption and spread of Buddhism – seems to have given the Asuka enlightenment its basic character.

Official support of Buddhism

The earliest and brightest rays of the enlightenment emanated from the activities of the immigrant priests who participated in the construction of temples as master craftsmen (temple carpenters, roof-tile and roof-spiral makers, wall-painting artists, sculptors, and wood carvers), providing expertise for building and equipping the forty-six Buddhist temple compounds founded during the Asuka period. These compounds included three famous ones: the Asuka-dera, the Arahaka-ji, and the Ikaruga-ji. Many of their immigrant priests – as scholars of such non-Buddhist forms of learning as Confucianism, Chinese law, and Chinese literature and history – made crucial contributions to the Asuka enlightenment.

Great works of Asuka art created by foreign priests and preserved as Japanese national treasures include (1) the Shaka triad (Shaka *sanson*), Northern Wei-style statue of Shaka and two attending bodhisattvas made in 623; (2) a standing wooden statue of Kannon (known as the Kudara Kannon) with south China characteristics and thought to have been made during the first half of the seventh century; (3) paintings on the sides of a small lacquer altar (the Tamamushi no zushi);⁷ and (4) a statue of the healing Buddha (Yakushi *nyorai*) which bears an inscription stating that the statute was completed in 607. All of these national treasures are kept at the Hōryū-ji (the name given to the Ikaruga-ji after it was rebuilt sometime in the seventh century), a truly remarkable

6 *Sui shu* 81:13a–16b, trans. Ryusaku Tsunoda and L. Carrington Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories: Later Han Through Ming Dynasties* (South Pasadena, Calif.: P. D. and Ione Perkins, 1951), p. 32.

7 This altar, 2.3 meters high, resembles a small palace on a pedestal. On its pedestal have been painted a golden bodhisattva aura (*Konkōmyō*) and a Buddhist saint sacrificing its life to a tiger. It is said to have been used by Empress Suiko in worshiping a guardian Buddha.

institutional representation of the enlightenment. Other national treasures have come down to us from those times, of which some are thought to be on a par with the finest objects of art produced in contemporary China including a tapestry (the *tenju koku shū-chō*)⁸ belonging to the Chūgū-ji nunnery and a wood carving of the Buddha of the Future (Maitreya) held by the Kōryū-ji in present-day Kyoto (see Chapter 10).

Before sketching the process by which institutional foundations were laid for such cultural development, let us look briefly at Japan's increasingly wide use of the Chinese system of writing. For centuries, the Japanese had seen Chinese characters carved on imported mirrors, seals, and swords. It is assumed that by the fifth century the Japanese were keeping various types of written records in Chinese although only inscriptions on mirrors and swords, and the memorial that Yūryaku addressed to the Sung court in 478, have been preserved. But what has come down to us supports the assumption that Japan's first chronicles, particularly the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*, were based on fifth- and sixth-century sources that are no longer extant, as well as on information obtained from Paekche chronicles.

Although the knowledge of writing must have been used in those preenlightenment years mainly for keeping accounts, verifying state appointments, and certifying lines of genealogical descent, a few sixth-century items in the *Nihon shoki* point to a growing interest in other types of written materials. For example, one entry for the year 513 states that the king of Paekche (Muryōng) sent, as tribute, a scholar of the five Confucian Classics.⁹ And three years later Paekche sent another Confucian scholar to replace the one who had arrived in 513.¹⁰ As we noted in Chapter 2, Paekche's contacts with China had been largely with the southern courts, a conclusion substantiated by the *Liang shu* (Liang dynastic history) entry that reports the dispatch of a scholar of Confucian rites (*li*) to Paekche in the year 541. From such spotty evidence it is surmised that Confucian ideas were reaching

8 Preserved only in fragments, this tapestry is an embroidered mandala representing Buddhist heaven and eternal life (*tenjukoku*), which Prince Shōtoku was believed to have attained at the time of death. Designed by immigrant artists, it depicts the figures of one hundred tortoise shells bearing the names of deceased persons. The tapestry was embroidered by Prince Shōtoku's consort and her attendants, and it has an inscription recorded in the "Jōgū Shōtoku Hōō teisetsu," published in Hanawa Hokiichi, ed., *Gunsho ruijū*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1960), vol. 5.

9 The authenticity of this report is reinforced by its parenthetical comment that the name of the Japanese person accompanying the mission was rendered somewhat differently in a particular Paekche source; see Keitai 7/6, NKBT 68.28–29.

10 Keitai 10/9, NKBT 68.33–35.

Japan several decades before Umako's seizure of power in 587, by way of Paekche from the southern court of Liang.¹¹

But books on and scholars of other subjects were also arriving, and many were supplied in response to specific requests made by a Japanese king. The most convincing evidence of a broader and deeper interest in Chinese learning appears in a 553 entry of the *Nihon shoki*. After disclosing that Paekche envoys had come to ask for military assistance, the entry states that five scholars of the Confucian Classics had arrived to replace a Confucian scholar sent to Japan at an earlier date and that nine Buddhist priests had come to take the place of seven scheduled to return. In closing, the report adds that the following additional specialists had arrived in Yamato from Paekche on a rotational basis: one diviner, one calendar specialist, one physician, two herbalists, and four musicians.¹² When we link this reference with sixth-century archaeological findings and official actions taken during the enlightenment years, we see that an increasingly large number of court officials were aware – long before the Soga seizure of power – of the political and personal benefits to be obtained from knowing how to read and write Chinese characters. That is, these officials were learning about Chinese ideas of governance as laid out in the Confucian texts, adopting Buddhist symbols and practices favored by the Chinese, and studying Chinese divination, calendar making, medicine, herbs, and music.

Because Buddhism lay at the center of the sinified cultural mixture known as the Asuka enlightenment, special attention should be given to the way that Buddhism joined Paekche's interests to Soga's fortunes. The connection is revealed in both the timing and wording of the first known reference to the presentation of Buddhist statues and Buddhist scriptures to the Yamato court by a Paekche king. This presentation seems to have been made in 538, the year in which King Sōngmyōng of Paekche had been forced by Koguryō pressure to move his capital from Ungjin to Puyō, farther south and farther away from the Koguryō border. According to the *Jōgū Shōtoku Hō-ō tei-setsu*, this was when Sōngmyōng sent King Kimmei a Buddhist statue and several volumes of Buddhist scripture. The *Nihon shoki* version of the event (dated 552 rather than 538) is preceded by the statement that King Sōngmyōng had made a plea for military aid that would

11 Inoue Mitsusada, "Teiki kara mita Katsuragi no uji," in Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon kodai kokka no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965).

12 Kimmei 15/2, NKBT 68.108–9.

strengthen his defenses against aggressive neighbors: Koguryō and Silla. In a separate item for the same year, the *Nihon shoki* tells us that the Buddhist gifts were accompanied by a memorial in which Sōngmyōng made these points: Great men of the past (including the duke of Chou and Confucius) had full knowledge of the doctrine; people in states as far away as India revered Buddhist teachings; and Buddha himself predicted that his law would spread to the east.¹³ Sōngmyōng seems to have been arguing, in order to obtain needed military support, that Buddhist universalism had benefited and would continue to benefit the builders of strong states everywhere, especially in such eastern lands as Yamato.

Upon receiving the Buddhist statue and scriptures and hearing what had been said about the wondrous power of Buddha's teachings, Kimmei is said to have "leapt for joy." When he asked his ministers what they thought about honoring the statue, they offered conflicting views. Soga no Iname, head of an increasingly powerful immigrant clan, recommended official sponsorship, reiterating the view that all states to the west worshiped Buddha and that he saw no reason that Yamato should be an exception. Nakatomi no Muraji, head of an old conservative clan, insisted that adoption would anger the native kami. Kimmei therefore compromised by not extending his royal blessing to the foreign faith but instead allowing Iname the freedom to honor the statue in whatever way he wished.

The disagreement between the two clans over the question of whether Buddhism should be officially sponsored reflected fundamentally different assumptions about the authority of a chieftain to rule his clan, or a king to rule the Yamato state: Whereas the immigrant clans felt that their chieftain could or did receive religious authority from the imported Buddhist faith, the older and more conservative clans had become accustomed to the worship of clan kami for which their chieftains were high priests. Thus the Buddhist question was not simply a matter of individual conversion but, rather, a political and social issue that made adoption impossible as long as conservative clans were in control of the court.

Not until 587, nearly a half-century later, was the balance of power altered, and only then was Buddhism officially recognized. The military clash of that year was between immigrant-connected clans such as

¹³ Kimmei 13/10, NKBT 68.100–3. Both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* state that during the fifth-century reign of Ōjin, a scholar named Wang Jen brought from Paekche ten volumes of the Confucian *Analects* and one volume of a Liang dynasty primer. But these reports, meant to glorify Kawachi no Omi's ancestors as court scribes, were probably fabricated.

the Soga and Japan-rooted clans like the Mononobe. While troops were being drawn up for the showdown, Soga no Umako vowed to propagate the Buddhist faith throughout the land if he and his allies should win. Accordingly, not long after his victory, envoys arrived from Paekche bringing Buddhist priests, Buddhist relics, temple builders, metalworkers, potters, and painters. Work was soon started on a great Buddhist temple, the Asuka-dera, that came to stand at the very center of enlightenment activity.¹⁴ The *Nihon shoki* goes on to tell of nuns returning from Paekche, a search for timber with which to build Buddhist halls, the conversion to Buddhism of aristocratic young ladies, and the arrival at court of Chinese Buddhist priests.¹⁵ But 593 was truly a remarkable year in the history of Japanese Buddhism. In that year Empress Suiko (just enthroned) ordered her court nobles to support Buddhism; Prince Shōtoku (just appointed crown prince) became involved in the Buddhist activities that led to his reputation as the father of Japanese Buddhism; and Buddhist relics (probably imported) were placed below the Asuka-dera's central foundation stone. A 594 entry in the *Nihon shoki* states that this was when the heads of the leading clans were competing with one another in erecting Buddhist temples "for the benefit of their [deceased] chieftains and parents,"¹⁶ and a 595 item notes that two Buddhist priests (one from Paekche and one from Koguryō) arrived, preached their religion widely, and became mainstays of Japanese Buddhism.¹⁷ Finally the first great Buddhist temple compound, the Asuka-dera, was completed in 596.

Until recently, neither the precise location of the original Asuka-dera nor the size and location of its buildings were known. But as a result of meticulous research carried out between 1956 and 1957, archaeologists located the great temple compound and identified and measured each of its main structures. They discovered the foundations of a pagoda built at the center of the compound, three golden halls (*kondō*) erected on three sides of the pagoda, a large main gate at the compound's southern entrance, a corridor running around the halls and pagoda, and a lecture hall outside the corridor to the north.¹⁸ This temple compound is historically significant on several counts: It was the first large continental-style building ever erected in Japan; it occu-

14 Sushun 1 (588)/3, NKBT 68.168–9. The Asuka-dera was later called the Hōkō-ji (Propagation of Buddha Law Temple), but the original name will be used here.

15 Sushun 3 (590)/10, NKBT 68.68–69. 16 Suiko 2 (594)/2/1, NKBT 68.174–5.

17 Suiko 3 (595)/5/10, NKBT 68.174–5.

18 Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūjo, *Asuka-dera hakkutsu chōsa hōkokusho* (Nara: Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūjo, 1958).

pied a central position in Japan's first "permanent" capital; it was the first in a series of great state-sponsored compounds divided into square areas; it had a layout and style similar to those of Buddhist temples already built in Korea; and it possessed a clan-temple (*ujidera*) character common to all Buddhist institutions founded in these early decades of the reform century. What is left of the great Asuka-dera provides concrete and impressive evidence that Japan then stood at the threshold of a new China-oriented period of history.

Another Buddhist temple built in those early Asuka years, the Arahaka-ji (later known as the Shitennō-ji or Four Heavenly Kings Temple) has meaning of a different sort. It seems to have originated with vows that Prince Shōtoku (not Soga no Umako) took in 587 when opposing clan camps were mobilizing troops for war.¹⁹ These vows, as well as later references to the Four Heavenly Kings and their temple at Arahaka-ji, are linked with the prince. Moreover, the Arahaka-ji was not built in the Asuka capital, as was the Asuka-dera built by Soga, but in the port city of Naniwa, some distance to the west and closer to Ikaruga where the prince's palace was later erected. Indeed, the emergence of Arahaka-ji as an important temple seems to have been connected with the rise of Prince Shōtoku to a position of great influence in both internal and foreign affairs.

A tenth-century treatise on the life of Prince Shōtoku flatly states that the statue of the Four Heavenly Kings, made when the prince took his 587 vow, was installed (at the Arahaka-ji) facing west in order that its mysterious power could be captured for "subjugating foreign enemies." The Four Heavenly Kings, prominent in the famous Benevolent King Sutra (*Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtra*), were honored for their mysterious power to protect the state. This sutra, central to the early history of Buddhism in both China and Korea, is rated as one of the most important to the history of Japanese Buddhism. And yet it was not mentioned in Japanese chronicles until 660, the sixth year of Empress Saimei's reign. Even the sutras on which Prince Shōtoku is reputed to have written commentaries did not include the Benevolent King Sutra. Thus one wonders whether the *Nihon shoki*'s references to Arahaka-ji as the Four Heavenly Kings temple and to a Four Heavenly Kings statue made by Prince Shōtoku himself were not added at a later date, possibly nearer the middle of the seventh century when Japan was far more worried about the danger of foreign invasion and far

19 Sushun, Introduction (587)/7, NKBT 68.163.

more involved in the “protect the country beliefs” expressed in the Benevolent King Sutra.²⁰

Although we have doubts about early Asuka connections among the Arahaka-ji, Prince Shōtoku, and the Four Heavenly Kings, recent archaeological investigations show that a temple compound actually was constructed in Naniwa in the closing years of the sixth century and that it included a centrally located pagoda, a golden hall, a lecture hall, and both a central and a southern gate. A large number of Asuka period tiles have been found there including some like those excavated from the Asuka-dera site. Also, the ground plan of the compound indicates that it was built early in the Asuka period and that the *Nihon shoki* may have been correct in reporting that its construction was started in 593. I (Inoue) am inclined to think, however, that the temple was not completed until the closing years of the Asuka period, when it became another majestic structure like the contemporary temple compounds erected in Paekche and Silla.

A third temple of early Asuka period, one which has attracted more attention than either the Asuka-dera or the Arahaka-ji, is the Ikaruga-ji (now the Hōryū-ji). Built near Prince Shōtoku's palace, the Hōryū-ji houses great national treasures of Asuka times. From excavations made before World War II, two important discoveries were made. First, the prince's palace, where the *Nihon shoki* says he resided after 605, was located in the eastern part of the present Hōryū-ji compound. Second, a great Asuka period temple compound was built a short distance south of the prince's palace but outside the precincts of today's Hōryū-ji. The remains of this ancient compound (referred to here as the Ikaruga-ji) and of the prince's Ikaruga palace provide hard evidence around which we can now construct the general outlines of Prince Shōtoku's emergence as a dominant figure in state affairs at the turn of the seventh century, just when the state began actively to adopt Chinese methods and ideas for increasing its strength and control.

Archaeological evidence of the existence of an Asuka period residence and temple compound at Ikaruga indicates that in about the year 600, Prince Shōtoku was moving, or was being moved, from the Asuka capital to Ikaruga some twenty kilometers to the north, at the foot of a mountain in the western corner of the Yamato plain. Some have concluded that the prince's move to Ikaruga coincided with his retreat from politics, but I (Inoue) believe that he wanted a base closer

²⁰ Inoue Mitsusada, *Asuka no chōtei*, vol. 3 of *Nihon no rekishi* (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1974), pp. 205–6.

to Naniwa, the gateway to Korea and China. The move did come at about the time the prince was developing a more positive foreign policy, as reflected in the dispatch in 600 of an expeditionary force against Silla and a diplomatic mission to the Sui court of China.

Noting that Ikaruga is quite far from the Asuka capital and outside what is thought to have been Soga territory, some historians have reasoned that the prince had come to enjoy the support of a non-Soga immigrant clan (such as the Kashiwade) whose territory was in the Ikaruga area. That view is supported by recent investigations of the Fujinoki burial mound, located just 350 meters from the Ikaruga-ji and thought to have been built in the last half of the sixth century. Whether the descendants of the person buried there had any special connection with Prince Shōtoku is not definitely known, but the location and size of the mound (40 meters in diameter and enclosing a stone chamber 16 meters long) provides strong evidence that a clan chieftain of extraordinary power and wealth had gained control of that area before Prince Shōtoku moved into his Ikaruga palace and built the Ikaruga temple.

The Fujinoki tomb also has a Korean appearance, which suggests the person buried there was from a clan that, like the Soga, was made up largely of immigrants with close cultural ties to Korea. Iō Yūsuke concluded that the harness found in the tomb was a Korean import. He also stated that the native Japanese of that day would not have known the meaning of the ornamental patterns carved on saddle fittings found in the Fujinoki mound, nor how to make such fittings.²¹ The imported grave goods excavated from this mound, the Korean style of the three great temple compounds built at the beginning of the Asuka period, the continental character of Asuka period national treasures stored at the Hōryū-ji, the prominence of Korean priests among the 1,384 clerics (815 priests and 569 nuns) serving in the forty-six temple compounds built by 624, as well as Korean connections with the Soga-dominated court, all suggest that huge strides were being taken (during the Asuka enlightenment) toward the establishment of an urban civilization that was definitely Korean in character.

Preparations for reform

The urge of the Japanese to use continental methods and ideas for state building became stronger after the mission in 600 to the Sui court,

²¹ *Japan Times*, April 23, 1985, p. 11.

when Crown Prince Shōtoku was beginning to overshadow Soga no Umako in the handling of state affairs. The prince's rise to prominence was reflected in the 601 decision to start building a new palace for him at Ikaruga and in the 602 selection of his younger brother as commander of a new expeditionary force sent against Silla. After that he was linked with the introduction of continental methods of strengthening the state, highlighted by the 603 adoption of a system of court ranks similar to those of Koguryō and Paekche, the 604 formulation of the famous Seventeen Injunctions, and the 607–8 diplomatic exchange with the Chinese court. Although questions have been raised about what part (if any) the prince played in these developments and whether the injunctions were actually written that early, each of these developments was prominent in the pre-645 prelude to the so-called Great Reforms.

Although a system of “caps and ranks” (*kan'i*) had existed in China as early as the Wei dynasty of the third century A.D., the system adopted by Japan in 603 was closest to, and most directly influenced by, sixth-century Koguryō and Paekche. They all shared the Sui practice of wearing caps made of purple silk, decorated with gold and silver, and presented to persons whose rank was indicated by feathers of different kinds. The names of the ranks varied from state to state, but those adopted in Japan had a stronger Confucian character than did those in Koguryō. Each of the twelve Japanese ranks was named after the greater or lesser measure of one particular Confucian virtue (presumably in a descending order of importance): (1) greater virtue (*toku*), (2) lesser virtue, (3) greater benevolence (*jin*), (4) lesser benevolence, (5) greater propriety (*rai*), (6) lesser propriety, (7) greater sincerity (*shin*), (8) lesser sincerity, (9) greater justice (*gi*), (10) lesser justice, (11) greater knowledge (*chi*), and (12) lesser knowledge.²²

As in Korea, the bestowal of caps and ranks was paralleled by a change from appointments based on hereditary status to those based on ability and achievement. Whereas the old titles (*kabane*) had been granted to clan and occupational group chieftains as hereditary rights, the new caps and ranks were granted to individual officials who were qualified by experience to perform the special functions of a given office. When Ono no Imoko was appointed head of the 607 mission to the Sui court, he was undoubtedly thought to be well qualified for this important assignment, as he was then at the fifth rank (greater propriety). But upon his return and because his mission was deemed success-

²² Suiko 11 (603)/12/5, NKBT 68.180–1.

ful, he was advanced to the first rank (greater virtue). Even holders of low-ranking *kabane* in the old order were awarded high caps and ranks at the time, presumably because they were able and experienced. For example, a Korean immigrant by the name of Kuratsukuri no Obitoro, originally holding a *kabane* title lower than that held by the heads of leading clans, was awarded the third rank (greater benevolence) for successfully casting a Buddhist statue honored by the Asuka-dera. That promotion, according to one scholar, gave him the same rank as that held by a nobleman who was a favorite of Prince Shōtoku. It seems clear that the new caps and ranks helped strengthen imperial control by conferring status on appointments and promotions based on merit.

The pace of such a development cannot be accurately measured, but chronicle references of the Suiko period leave no doubt of the greater reliance on experienced and skilled officials who were appointed and promoted on the basis of their ability to perform specialized administrative tasks and who possessed caps and ranks. Under the old clan-title system, occupational group managers (*tomo no miyatsuko*) performed managerial functions for the court and various clans, but during the Suiko period and after the institution of the cap-and-rank system, a new and very high managerial post appeared: imperial secretary (*maetsukimi* or *taifu*). The first-known mention of such an official is made in the *Nihon shoki* account of envoys from Silla and Mimana (Kaya) being received at court. After the envoys had approached the empress and presented their memorials, four imperial secretaries, serving four ministers (three of whom held the *kabane* title of *omi* and one the title of *muraji*), reported to Soga no Umako what had transpired.²³

Following Empress Suiko's death in 628 and at a crucial point in long discussions over who should be her successor, Soga no Emishi (who dominated political affairs after the death of his father in 626) tried to get the imperial secretaries attached to officials (holding the *kabane* titles of *omi* and *muraji*) to convince Prince Shōtoku's son (Prince Ōe) that Empress Suiko had wanted someone other than Ōe to be her successor.²⁴ On the basis of such evidence Seki Akira decided that the imperial secretaries, who participated in imperial conferences attended by high-ranking ministers, were under imperial orders to report directly to the throne about what the ministers were saying and thinking about particular issues.

²³ Suiko 18 (610)/10/9, NKBT 68.194–5.

²⁴ Jomei, Introduction (628), NKBT 68.218–19; Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 234–5.

At lower levels of government, officials were selected more frequently for their ability to perform specialized functions. The largest number were probably the occupational group managers engaged in the use of imported techniques for producing weapons and tools, building palaces and temples, and making statues, bells, paintings, and other symbolic and decorative works of art. Most of these managers (as well as the *be* or *tomo* they managed) were probably immigrants who were given such appointments because of their expertise and achievements, not because of birth in a prominent clan.

Although more officials at both central and local government levels were now selected and ranked for their ability to perform particular managerial functions, bureaucratization was not nearly as advanced as it was in Paekche. To be sure, Japanese imperial secretaries were now carrying out specialized functions at court, but they were not yet like the six Paekche ministers (*chwap'yong*) who headed the departments for royal affairs, state finances, public ceremonies, palace security, penal matters, and provincial defense. In foreign affairs the court assigned certain officials (*shōkyaku*) the responsibility of welcoming visiting envoys, but the *shōkyaku* were not associated with anything like Paekche's ten departments for external affairs. Japan also had managers of royal estates and occupational groups, but these were not tied to a complex governmental structure of the type found in Paekche.²⁵ Although the 603 cap-and-rank system was followed by significant advances toward a new bureaucratic order and prepared the way for the Great Reforms of later years, these bureaucratic arrangements were well behind those of Paekche. The old clan-title (*ujikabane*) order was still quite strong.

Although we are certain that the rank system was instituted in 603 (this is verified by a statement appearing in the Chinese dynastic history of Sui), the dating of the Seventeen Injunctions is still a subject of discussion and disagreement. Spelled out in a *Nihon shoki* item for the first day of 604,²⁶ they contain words and phrases suggesting that they were written down at a much later date. Historians who argue that they are spurious tend to point first to the office of provincial inspector (*kuni no mikotomochi*) mentioned in Injunction 12 and remind us that this office did not appear until after the Great Reforms of 645. But the court may have been sending imperial inspectors to outlying provinces as early as Asuka times to inspect the royal estates and other court-

²⁵ Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 238–40; Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 53.

²⁶ Suiko 12 (604)/4/3, NKBT 68.180–6.

controlled property in one or more provinces. A second point made by the doubters is that Injunction 12 seems to have been based on the assumption that Japan's bureaucratic system was already in place, which is not true. But as we noted, an increasingly large number of officials had been appointed – long before 645 – because they were qualified to handle particular administrative tasks. It therefore seems logical to conclude that the Asuka leaders may well have been inspired to write out injunctions that might make these officials more effective instruments of imperial control.

Somewhat similar injunctions had been handed down by Chinese emperors for centuries. As was made clear by Okada Masayuki, five such injunctions were proclaimed by a Western Chin emperor back in the year 268. In 544 a Western Wei emperor addressed six injunctions to local officials, enjoining them to (1) carry out administrative affairs with compassion, (2) value learning, (3) make the land productive, (4) use persons who are able and good, (5) hand down penalties sparingly, and (6) tax fairly. But these differed from Japan's Seventeen Injunctions in basic ways. Whereas the six Western Wei injunctions were addressed to local officials and were firmly grounded in Confucian principles, those of Japan were directed to central government officials and were rooted, with a strong Confucian coloration to be sure, in genealogical thought and belief. It is thought, therefore, that the Japanese injunctions (rules and principles for officials to follow in exercising absolute obedience to the emperor) were appropriate to the political concerns and conditions of Asuka times.

The first three of the Seventeen Injunctions provide foundations of ideological support for the remaining fourteen. Injunction 1 affirms the primacy of the Confucian principle of "harmony above and friendliness below" by which officials are enjoined to obey the emperor and their parents. Injunction 2 advocates conversion to Buddhism, declaring that this will enable an official not only to transform bad into good but also to follow established teachings (presumably Confucian as well as Buddhist) and to straighten out everything crooked. But Injunction 3 seems to me (Brown) to provide the most central pillar of ideological support by equating the emperor with Heaven and stating that imperial orders must always be obeyed. Injunctions 4 through 17 tell officials just how they should serve the emperor in accordance with Confucian and Buddhist teaching: to act with propriety (4), to prescribe penalties cautiously (5), to hand down punishments impartially (6), to fill offices with able persons (7), to rise early and work late (8), to act in good faith (9), not to hold others in contempt (10), to recognize meritorious service

(11), not to arrogate the ruler's authority to oppress the people (12), to treat underlings fairly (13), not to be jealous (14), not to put personal consideration above the public weal (15), not to trouble farmers at planting and harvesting times (16), and to consult others and reach a consensus on important issues (17). These injunctions reflect Confucian principles and stress absolute obedience to the emperor and can be thought of as expressions of a Confucian-oriented, emperor-centered state ideology.

For centuries, historians have wondered why the famous Seventeen Injunctions included no references to kami belief or to the kami origins of the imperial line. A legal scholar of the Meiji period, Ariga Nagao, concluded that the person or persons who had written the injunctions had decided, in the face of arbitrary behavior by leaders of the Soga clan, that a Confucian ideology explaining how a state should be governed was more useful than was an ancient belief in kami descent. But it should be remembered that Japanese envoys sent to the Sui court in 600 had said, according to the dynastic history of Sui, that the Japanese had their own conception of imperial authority: "The Queen of Wa deems Heaven to be her elder brother and the sun her younger brother."²⁷ Ishimoda Shō concluded that the compilers may have omitted references to the ruler's divine descent from kami and relied on the Chinese conception of "heaven overspreads and the earth upholds" because the Sui emperor had stated that the Japanese view of rulership was unknown in China. But even though there are no direct references to kami origins, it is clear that the special position of the emperor – as set forth in Injunction 3 on absolute obedience – was firmly grounded in beliefs about his sacred descent. But probably the articulation and institutionalization of these beliefs did not come until the reign of Temmu in the last half of the seventh century.

A third significant event, following the adoption of ranks and the formulation of the Seventeen Injunctions, was an exchange of official missions with the Sui court in 607 and 608. Since the first mission of 600 and the rise of Prince Shōtoku to a position of influence at court, Japan had moved slowly toward a foreign policy position centered on relations with the reestablished Chinese empire. Old attitudes toward the Korean kingdoms (antagonism toward Silla and Koguryō and friendship with Paekche regarding the restoration of Japanese interests in southern Korea) had not been abandoned, but military expeditions were no longer sent against Silla, and more attention than ever was

²⁷ *Sui shu* 18:13a–16b; Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, p. 29.

given to the use of continental techniques for strengthening the state. It was in the context of this new Sui-centered view of foreign affairs that the Japanese government sent its second mission to China in 607.

These were years of rapid change on the Asian continent. In 604 – the year in which the Seventeen Injunctions are said to have been written by Prince Shōtoku – the founder of the Sui dynasty (Emperor Wen-ti) died. He was succeeded by Yang-ti, who moved immediately to beautify the capital, build canals in various parts of the empire, and display military might in aggressive action against neighboring peoples. In 607, the year the Japanese mission was dispatched, Yang-ti toured the northeast and established contact with the T'u-chüeh, a Turkish people of Mongolia and central Asia. Koguryō had also established relations with those same people, causing Yang-ti and his court to conclude that Koguryō was a menace. Paekche and Silla had long been preoccupied with the possibility that they would again be invaded by Koguryō troops, and so they were not displeased to hear that Koguryō's relations with the Sui empire had soured. Both Paekche and Silla sent envoys to the Sui court complaining of Koguryō's aggression and requesting that it be punished.²⁸ Surrounded by enemies, Koguryō opted to establish friendly relations with distant Japan. As early as 605, before the open break with Sui, Koguryō had sent gold to Japan for a Buddhist statue at Asuka-dera.²⁹

At this critical juncture the Japanese decided to send envoys to the Sui court.³⁰ The dynastic history of Sui relates that the chief of that mission (Ono no Omi) explained his objective in these words: "Our queen has heard that beyond the ocean to the west there is a Bodhisattva sovereign who reveres and promotes Buddhism. For that reason, we have been sent to pay her respects. Accompanying us are several tens of monks who have come to study Buddhist teachings." The same source also states that Ono no Omi submitted a memorial containing this sentence: "The Child of Heaven (*tenshi*) in the land where the sun rises addresses the Son of Heaven (*tenshi*) in the land where the sun sets."³¹ Japanese and Chinese historians have long debated the question of whether this memorial was intentionally insulting. Certainly Yang-ti was angered for he is said to have turned to his foreign minister and ordered: "If memorials from barbarian states are written by persons who lack propriety, don't accept them." From the Sui point of view,

²⁸ Wright, "The Sui Dynasty," pp. 143–4; Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 246–7; Lee, *A New History of Korea*, p. 47.

²⁹ Suiko 13 (605)/4/1, NKBT 68.186–7. ³⁰ Suiko 15 (607)/7/3, NKBT 68.189.

³¹ *Sui shu*, Ta-yeh 3 (607); Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, p. 32.

Japan was no more than an isolated and insular state to the northeast. Japanese court officials, however, were apparently no longer willing to have their ruler referred to as merely a Wa king or queen.

Although Yang-ti was upset by the wording of the memorial, he could not overlook the possibility of obtaining Japan's support for his plans to put Koguryō in its place. He therefore ordered the well-connected P'ei Shih-ch'ing to accompany Ono no Omi back to Japan. Both the Sui chronicles and the *Nihon shoki* provide considerable detail about the places they visited (such as Paekche) before arriving at Naniwa in the sixth month of 608, where a new building had been erected for properly receiving the Chinese envoy and his entourage of twelve. When the party arrived at Asuka, P'ei Shih-ch'ing delivered a message that, according to the *Nihon shoki*, stated:

The emperor of China greets the Wo empress.

Your envoys . . . have arrived and made their report.

Having been pleased to receive the command of Heaven to become emperor, We have endeavored to extend virtue (*toku*) everywhere, irrespective of distance.

We are deeply grateful that the Wo empress – residing in the seas beyond – bestows blessings on her people, maintains peace and prosperity within her borders, and softens manners and customs with harmony.

Being grateful that you have sent tribute from such a great distance, We send P'ei Shih-ch'ing . . . to convey Our greetings.³²

The Sui chronicle says nothing about a message being handed to the Japanese empress but does mention that she was pleased to grant P'ei Shih-ch'ing an audience and that she answered him as follows:

Because We had heard of the great Sui empire of propriety and justice located in the west, We sent tribute. As barbarians living in an isolated place beyond the sea, We do not know propriety and justice, are shut up within Our borders, and do not see others. Now that the streets have been cleared and a visitor's hall has been decorated, We await the Sui envoy, wishing to hear about the restoration of the Chinese empire.³³

Obviously the Japanese version of the Yang-ti message to Empress Suiko and the Chinese report of what she said to P'ei Shih-ch'ing have been edited: Surely Yang-ti did not refer to Suiko as an empress, using the same character found in the Chinese word for emperor, and surely Suiko did not express ignorance of "propriety and justice" right after instituting a ranking system with four ranks bearing names of different degrees of propriety and justice.

32 Suiko 16 (608)/8/12, NKBT 68.190–1.

33 *Sui shu* Ta-yeh 4 (608), Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, p. 33.

Both reports, however, reveal a strong Japanese interest in what was going on in China. One statement made in the Chinese account of what the empress said to P'ei Shih-ch'ing has a ring of truth: She wanted to hear about the restoration of the Chinese empire. But a more direct expression of Japanese curiosity can be found in the Chinese report that the Japanese had sent several students to study Buddhism. Moreover, when P'ei Shih-ch'ing returned to China in 608, he was accompanied by eight more students sent to China for study.³⁴ One bore the name of a powerful Chinese immigrant clan associated with the Soga, and the names of three others indicate that they too (or their ancestors) had come from China, had a knowledge of Chinese that would make it easier for them to achieve their objectives in China, and were not selected because they belonged to an old *kabane*-holding clan but because they held (or would hold) appointments based on merit – that they were, or would become, members of Japan's incipient bureaucracy.

Later references to these same students reveal that most of them remained in China for more than twenty years and, after returning to Japan, occupied influential positions in various fields. At least three (Takamuko no Kuromaro, the priest Min, and Minabuchi no Shōan) became leading architects of reform.

THE GREAT REFORMS

Before considering the reforms adopted after 645, let us look briefly at two aspects of their historical background.

The T'ang empire

Koguryō envoys arrived in Japan during the summer of 618 and reported that their state had successfully repelled an invasion of Chinese armies.³⁵ We do not know whether they had come to request military assistance or simply to express satisfaction with their victory against the great Chinese empire. But not long afterward, and possibly as a result of defeats suffered at the hands of Koguryō, the Sui dynasty was destroyed by rebels whose leader was enthroned as Emperor Kao-tsu (r. 618–26), founder of the T'ang dynasty.

T'ang rule (618 to 906) came at a particularly glorious time in Chinese history. T'ang art (especially its sculptures and paintings) and literature (notably its poetry) are regarded as truly remarkable human

34 Suiko 16 (608)/9/11, NKBT 68.192–3. 35 Suiko 26 (618)/8/1, NKBT 68.201–3.

achievements. Indeed, institutional and social changes made during the T'ang period have led such distinguished scholars as Naitō Torajirō to say, mainly because of the importance assigned to the appearance of an increasingly complex and extensive bureaucracy of officials selected largely on the basis of merit, that this was when China moved into the modern age. The rapid economic growth of those years, arising from increased agricultural production and expanded commerce, has led some scholars to suggest that by the thirteenth century, China was on the verge of becoming a capitalist society. In any case, as one of the world's most impressive empires, T'ang left the stamp of Chinese civilization on the neighboring peoples of Asia.³⁶

The first T'ang emperors were bent on restoring and extending China's imperial greatness. But realizing full well that the collapse of Sui had been due in the main to military failures against Koguryō, the T'ang rulers were quite cautious on that front. Koguryō dispatched tribute to the T'ang court as early as 619; Paekche did likewise in 621; and Silla followed suit in 624. And the kings of all three Korean kingdoms accepted T'ang appointments, indicating their incorporation into the T'ang tributary system.³⁷

Japan's old enmity toward Silla temporarily softened after the first Japanese mission to Sui in 600 and the rise of Prince Shōtoku to a position of influence in foreign affairs. Improved relations with Silla account, in part at least, for the *Nihon shoki*'s report that a large number of people migrated from Silla to Japan in 608 and that envoys from Silla and Mimana (Kaya) arrived – and were well received – in 610. But following the demise of Sui and the rise of T'ang in 618, Japan again became hostile toward Silla. When that state sent “tribute” to Japan in 621 but did not follow the precedent of bringing along Mimana emissaries, Japanese officials interpreted this break with tradition as a clear indication that Silla had absorbed, or was going to absorb, Mimana.³⁸ Not long after the death of Prince Shōtoku in 622, a faction at court advocated war with Silla and closer cooperation with Paekche, and an army of “tens of thousands” reportedly invaded Korea in 623.³⁹ Scholars explain Japan's foreign policy reversal in two ways: that the Sui collapse suggested to Japanese leaders that their old position in Korea could now be regained and that the death of Prince Shōtoku left the hawkish Soga no Umako in sole control of foreign affairs.

³⁶ Denis Twitchett, “Introduction,” *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3, pp. 8–38.

³⁷ Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 256–7.

³⁸ Suiko 29 (621), NKBT 68.204–5; Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, p. 261.

³⁹ Suiko 1 (623)/7, NKBT 68.206–9.

But relations with Silla were soon improved, possibly because Japanese leaders were suddenly made less belligerent by Silla's conciliatory moves. The court was surely affected also by reports and recommendations made in 623 by two Chinese Buddhist priests and two Chinese medical doctors who had arrived in Japan by way of Silla. Reporting that the Japanese students who had been sent to China in 608 had completed their studies, these Chinese visitors recommended that the Japanese students be brought home. After passing along the observation that the T'ang empire had become strong and well regulated, they also advised that Japan establish and maintain relations with the T'ang court.⁴⁰ We do not know whether these priests and doctors had been sent by way of Silla for the purpose of heading off Japanese attacks against Silla or whether they (and the Japanese students in China with whom they had apparently been in contact) were simply pointing out, on the basis of their observations of T'ang power, that Japan would benefit from regular relations with this new and flourishing Chinese empire. Whatever the reason, there are no more reports of Japanese military action against Silla. But in spite of the advice received from the doctors and priests, Japan did not send an official mission to the T'ang court until 630 – after the death of three influential Asuka period leaders: Prince Shōtoku in 622, Soga no Umako in 626, and Empress Suiko in 628. Meanwhile, the Chinese empire was becoming stronger and wealthier than ever under Emperor Tai-tsung, who reigned from 626 to 649.

Japan's delay in establishing relations with T'ang was probably due to unsettled conditions in both lands. China was not reunified until 624; a violent coup brought about the overthrow of Kao-tsu in 626; and an unpleasant succession dispute erupted in Japan after Empress Suiko's death in 628. But when the mission was finally organized in 630, its assistant head was one of the Chinese doctors (E'nichi) who had arrived in Japan by way of Silla seven years earlier.⁴¹ Both the dispatch of the mission and E'nichi's position as second in command suggest that the earlier recommendations made by E'nichi and his three Chinese colleagues had been taken seriously. After the envoys arrived at the T'ang court, Emperor Tai-tsung first announced that Japan, being so far away, need not send tribute every year. Then he announced that a high-ranking aristocrat (Kao Piao-jen) had been appointed head of a mission to accompany the envoys home and to extend personal greetings to Japan's new emperor.⁴²

⁴⁰ Suiko 31 (623), NKBT 68.205–6. ⁴¹ Jomei 2 (630)/8/5, NKBT 68.228–9.

⁴² *Hsin T'ang shu* Chen-kuan 5 (631), Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, p. 39.

This first official T'ang mission to Japan, arriving in 632, was significant on three counts. First, it went by way of Silla – as did the Chinese doctors and priests – and arrived in Japan in the company of a Silla mission, suggesting that Silla had already achieved a special position in T'ang's relations with the Korean kingdoms and was expected to serve as a intermediary in future contacts between the T'ang court and Japan. Second, the Japanese court arranged an elaborate welcome that symbolized a new and official interest in the powerful and expanding T'ang empire. And third, several Japanese who had gone to China for study as far back as 610 returned home with the Chinese envoys, providing Japanese authorities with reliable sources of information on various aspects of Chinese civilization.⁴³

Opening channels of direct contact with the T'ang was complicated somewhat by the reemergence of conflict and rivalry among the Korean kingdoms. Even though they had been incorporated into the T'ang tributary system, they continued to invade one another's territory. Because of these squabbles, T'ai-tsung again became suspicious of Koguryō's intentions. In 631 – at about the time that the T'ang mission was on its way to Japan by way of Silla – T'ai-tsung heard that Koguryō had built a monument in honor of its soldiers killed in wars with Sui China, and he promptly ordered military retaliation. Chinese armies demolished the hated monument and gathered up the remains of Chinese soldiers who had died in Koguryō. Assuming that T'ang was considering further military action, the king of Koguryō built more than a thousand forts at places where the Chinese might strike, and he sought to improve his relations with Paekche.

As early as 630 both Koguryō and Paekche sent envoys to Japan and, according to the *Nihon shoki*, offered tribute, possibly attempting to obtain support if invaded by Chinese troops. In 631 Paekche's king even had a member of his own royal family delivered to Japan as a hostage, a traditional sign of a state's urgent need for military assistance. The other Korean kingdoms involved in the T'ang–Koguryō confrontation also sought Japanese backing. In the face of an impending T'ang attack on Koguryō, Japan seemed at first to stand on the sidelines. And yet its decision in 630 to send an official to the T'ang court and to establish more friendly relations with Silla, suggested a pro-T'ang tilt, although Japan's long-standing ties with Paekche could not be easily forgotten or severed. Not much happened during the 630s either to sharpen the confrontation or to force Japan into one or

43 Jomei 4 (632)/8, NKBT 68.288–9; Jomei 5 (633)/1/26, NKBT 68.230–1.

the other of the two camps. Still, in 639 and 640 more students who had studied in China returned home by way of Silla.

Then in 641, after a T'ang official returned from a tour of inspection of Koguryō, Emperor T'ai-tsung decided that the time had come for military action. By the following year Koguryō, too, was mobilizing for war, and in 643 T'ai-tsung warned both Koguryō and Paekche to break off aggressive activity against Silla. But the new king of Koguryō disregarded these warnings, and so T'ai-tsung ordered his troops to attack this uncooperative Korean kingdom and requested Paekche and Silla to provide support. In the sixth month of 645, just as T'ai-tsung and his armies were crossing the Liao River, Prince Naka no Ōe (the future Emperor Tenji) and his group were setting up a new government in Japan, having thwarted the control by the Soga that had lasted for more than fifty years. It was therefore under the shadow of a powerful and expanding T'ang empire that Japan's great reforms (*taika kaishin*) were adopted.

Political upheaval

After Emperor T'ai-tsung's preparations for war in 641 against Koguryō, all three Korean kingdoms were beset by internal and external strife as they sought to strengthen themselves for anticipated invasions. Japan, too, could not help but be affected. The Japanese internal upheaval of 645 did not arise directly from disagreement over foreign policy issues but, rather, from more than a decade of growing struggle for power at court. On one side was a group of clans headed by the Soga, and on the other was an increasingly strong group of imperial princes, court officials, and clan chieftains who had been united by common feelings of irritation with (1) the arbitrary and ruthless behavior of the Soga ministers, (2) the consistent Soga opposition to and eventual elimination of Prince Shōtoku's son, and (3) the failure of the Soga regime to make an effective and extensive use of men familiar with Chinese techniques for increasing political control.

Antagonism between the two groups broke out after the death of Empress Suiko in 628 over the question of who should succeed her. The empress had not named a new crown prince to replace the recently deceased Prince Shōtoku, but two princes had strong claims to the throne: Prince Tamura, the son of King Bidatsu's crown prince (who never became emperor), and Prince Yamashiro no Ōe, the son of Prince Shōtoku. Both were grandsons of former emperors, but Prince Yamashiro no Ōe seems to have had the strong claim: His grandfather

had been emperor more recently; his father Shōtoku had shared rulership with Empress Suiko; and his mother was a daughter of Soga no Umako. And yet Soga no Emishi, who had replaced Umako as head of the Soga clan in 626, did not want the son of the deceased Crown Prince Shōtoku enthroned, probably because he preferred an emperor whose rule would be largely symbolic. Whatever the reason, Emishi schemed to induce leading clan chieftains to accept a fabricated report that Empress Suiko had wanted Prince Tamura to succeed her. But two high-ranking aristocrats, Shōtoku's son Prince Yamashiro and an Emishi uncle by the name of Sakaibe no Marise no Omi, refused to accept this as an authentic expression of imperial will. According to the *Nihon shoki* account (which has an anti-Soga bias), Prince Yamashiro's meeting with the empress in her last hours left him with the distinct impression that she expected him to succeed her. Nevertheless, Prince Yamashiro decided to go along with the engineered consensus, stating that he would follow the teachings of his father and be "patient, not wrathful."⁴⁴

But Sakaibe no Marise was impatient and angry. At a final meeting of chieftains, he hotly announced that he had nothing more to say and stomped out. As head of the Sakaibe branch of the Soga clan and brother of the deceased Soga no Umako, he soon created another stir when at a Soga meeting set up to make plans for building a tomb for Umako,⁴⁵ he openly aired his views on the succession issue. Emishi could not abide such opposition, even from his father's brother. He therefore ordered his troops to surround the Marise residence, forcing the strangulation of Marise and the suicide of his eldest son. Then Prince Tamura ascended the throne as Emperor Jomei. But Emishi's ruthless action against a member of his own clan aroused resentment that, after further provocation, culminated in the coup of 645.

Emperor Jomei's death in 641, just as T'ai-tsung was calling up troops for a massive invasion of Koguryō, refueled the old conflict over who should occupy the throne: either Prince Yamashiro (son of Crown Prince Shōtoku) or Crown Prince Naka no Ōe (Jomei's eldest

⁴⁴ Jomei, Introduction (628), NKBT 68.226–7.

⁴⁵ The Ishibutai tomb, thought to have been built for Soga no Umako, is located on a slope near the village of Asuka. It has an inner chamber 7.7 meters long, 3.5 meters wide, and 4.7 meters high, as well as an entering corridor 20 meter long and 2.5 meters wide. As a result of archaeological research carried out there between 1933 and 1935, we now know that the entire mound was about 51 meters square and was surrounded by a ditch and, farther out, by an embankment that gave the entire tomb an area 81 by 83 meters. Nearby, archaeologists also found what is thought to have been the remains of Umako's palace. See Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 264–5.

son). Because Crown Prince Naka no Ōe was then only sixteen years old and not mature enough to rule, Prince Yamashiro was again the strongest candidate. But Emishi still did not want him to become emperor and favored, instead, another son of Jomei: Prince Furuhito no Ōji, whose mother was a daughter of Umako. Emishi did not, however, receive much backing for the proposal and had to agree that Jomei's empress should follow the Suiko precedent and ascend the throne. She thus reigned as Empress Kōgyoku (642 to 645).

During early months of Kōgyoku's reign, Emishi's son Iruka seized control of administrative affairs, gaining the reputation of being even more authoritarian than his father: He was said to have been such a terror that "robbers dared not pick up anything dropped along the road."⁴⁶ But before the year was out and while Iruka was exerting pressure on people to supply more labor for the construction of two tombs (one for his father and another for himself), he was openly berated by the sister of Prince Yamashiro for acting like an emperor and employing forced labor for his own personal ends. Being even less able than his father to accept criticism or opposition, Iruka resorted immediately to the use of military force. As a result, some twenty-three descendants of Prince Shōtoku, including Prince Yamashiro and several members of his immediate family, were driven to suicide. Such brutal treatment of an illustrious branch of the imperial family horrified even Iruka's father Emishi.

By the next spring, three important aristocratic figures were working out a plan to forcibly remove Iruka and his clan from positions of power. The triumvirate was made up of (1) a bureaucrat by the name of Nakatomi no Kamatari who came to be known as Fujiwara no Kamatari (614–69), founder of the Fujiwara clan; (2) a son of Emperor Jomei, the future Emperor Tenji (626–71); and (3) the son of the high-ranking Soga no Ishikawa Maro (d.649), a clan chieftain whose father had favored the enthronement of Prince Yamashiro back in 629. From a review of the backgrounds and interests of these three men, the roles they performed at the time of the coup, and the posts they were awarded in the post-645 government, we can see something of the proreform, anti-Soga character of their rebellious movement.

Nakatomi no Kamatari, the principal architect of the coup, has been referred to as an early bureaucrat, as he held a high rank and office that were bestowed on him mainly because of his demonstrated ability

46 Kōgyoku 1 (642)/1/15, NKBT 68.236–7).

and achievement. As early as 629, when Emishi was trying to force clan leaders to accept the fabricated report that Empress Suiko had wanted Prince Tamura to follow her on the throne, Kamatari's father was one of the four imperial secretaries whose views were decisive in the selection of Prince Tamura to ascend the throne as Emperor Jomei. Kamatari's father was therefore influential but had not yet become a Soga opponent or a reform advocate. Kamatari held the same high rank and office as his father did and probably attended high-level court conferences (*byōgi*). According to the Nakatomi clan chronicle (the *Kaden*),⁴⁷ Kamatari was fond of learning, read widely, and displayed a special interest in a Chinese classic on military strategy (the *Liu-t'ao*), suggesting a persistent preoccupation with foreign and internal affairs. After 632, when the Buddhist priest Min returned from twenty-five years of study in China and began lecturing on divination (*shūeki*), Kamatari frequented Min's temple. After 640, the year in which Minabuchi no Shōan returned from his thirty-three years in China, Kamatari regularly called on Shōan. So it is thought that by the 640s, Kamatari had become a studious and inquiring bureaucrat who was concerned with the burning political question of what the eastward advance of T'ang meant for Japan.

At the time of the 641 dispute over who should succeed the deceased Emperor Jomei, Kamatari seems to have favored the candidacy of Prince Yamashiro. Then after the decision to choose Empress Kōgyoku and the forcible elimination of Prince Yamashiro and all the members of his immediate family, Kamatari took steps that led directly to the coup of 645. He first approached two imperial princes: Prince Karu (who was later enthroned in 645 as Emperor Kōtoku) and Prince Naka no Ōe (who ascended the throne in 661 as Emperor Tenji). Kamatari apparently felt that if one of these two princes should become the emperor, he should actually rule and not simply be a front for some clan chieftain. But in order to establish imperial rule of this kind, he knew that the Soga must be ousted from their positions of control and that this could be done only with military might. He therefore contacted Soga no Ishikawa Maro, a military man who was not on good terms with Iruka and whose father had held reservations about Emishi's forcing the enthronement of Jomei. With the military backing of this Soga malcontent, Kamatari was able to devise a plan

47 The first of the two *Kaden* volumes was written by "the great minister," probably Kamatari's grandson Fujiwara no Nakamaro who was chancellor between 760 and his death in 764. Nakamaro, who may have compiled this part of the *Kaden* while he was chancellor, seems to have had access to sources not available to the compilers of the *Nihon shoki*.

for establishing the kind of imperial rule that he felt would enable Japan to meet the challenge of the expanding T'ang empire.

The compilers of the *Nihon shoki* were obviously aware that the assassination of Soga no Iruka on the twelfth day of the sixth month of 645, during a court ceremony in which memorials from the three Korean kingdoms were being read to Empress Kōgyoku, was truly important. But before discussing the details of what transpired, they described (in items for the eleventh month of the previous year) Iruka's nefarious activities: building two great mansions (one for himself and one for his father) that were like imperial palaces, calling Soga offspring princes and princesses, erecting a moat-encircled house that looked like a castle, storing up military weapons, and making certain he was guarded constantly by fifty sturdy soldiers from the east. Between these reports and the one dealing with the coup itself, the compilers inserted two items (one for the first month and the other for the fourth month of 645) regarding mysterious developments: The first was the humming of a band of monkeys that could not be seen (interpreted as messengers from the Sun Goddess), and the second was about a Korean monk who had learned (from a tiger) how to cure any disease, even how to make a barren mountain green. Then a short item for the eighth day of the sixth month (four days before the palace coup) tells us that Prince Naka no Ōe had secretly revealed his plan to have Iruka killed.

The *Nihon shoki* report of the coup begins by explaining that although Iruka was a suspicious man who always carried a sword, Nakatomi no Kamatari had shown entertainers how to get him to put his sword aside. Prince Naka no Ōe made the following preparatory moves: closed the palace gates, bribed certain guards, hid a long spear at a convenient place in the Great Hall of State (Daigokuden) where the memorials were to be read, arranged for the support of soldiers, and ordered four armed men to kill Iruka. But at the appointed time, key men in the plot became frightened: The body of the man reading the memorials became "moist with streaming sweat, his voice was indistinct, and his hands shook." Even the four designated killers were apparently intimidated by Iruka's prestige. And so Prince Naka no Ōe himself rushed forward and with a sword "cut open [Iruka's] head and shoulder." Before dying, Iruka protested his innocence and pleaded for an investigation. Then Prince Naka no Ōe placed his case before the empress, stating that the Soga wished to destroy the imperial house and to subvert imperial authority. Finally he asked her: Do you want Soga descendants to replace imperial descendants? When

the Empress withdrew to consider, the four assassins attacked and killed the wounded Iruka, thereby bringing to a close a half-century of Soga control. Empress Kōgyoku immediately abdicated and Prince Furuhiito (Iruka's favorite candidate for the throne) entered the Buddhist priesthood. The political stage was thus set for the entry of three famous reform-minded leaders: Prince Naka no Ōe with imperial dignity, Nakatomi no Kamatari with clan power and knowledge of modern ways to govern, and Soga no Ishikawa Maro with military might.⁴⁸

The Great Reforms

The day after Iruka was killed, Kamatari recommended that Prince Karu (the younger brother of Empress Kōgyoku and a student of Confucianism) occupy the throne as Emperor Kōtoku and that Prince Naka no Ōe take charge of state affairs, just as Prince Shōtoku had done during Suiko's reign. Under Kōtoku and his crown prince, three ministerial positions were created and filled: (1) minister of the left for Abe no Uchi Maro no Omi, whose father had also been an imperial secretary during the reign of Empress Suiko; (2) minister of the right for Soga no Ishikawa Maro, the rebels' military commander; and (3) minister of the center, a ministerial position unlike any that had existed in China, for Nakatomi no Kamatari, making him something like a personal adviser to the emperor and the crown prince.

The China specialists were also appointed state scholars (*kuni no hakase*). The first was Min, the Buddhist priest who as a "recent Chinese immigrant" had gone to China for study in 606, stayed for twenty-two years, and was regularly visited by Kamatari after returning home. The second was Eon, a learned Buddhist priest who had returned to Japan in 640 after thirty-two years of study abroad. These two priests had observed and studied the formation of China's centralized bureaucratic structure, based on codifications of penal and administrative law, and had firsthand knowledge of a Chinese empire that exercised remarkable control over affairs in surrounding states and territories. In close association with Kamatari, they made important contributions to the formulation and implementation of Japan's reform program.

The new government immediately dispatched imperial messages to the kings of Koguryō and Paekche. The tone of the one to Ko-

⁴⁸ Kōgyoku 4 (645)/6/12, NKBT 68. 262–3.

guryō – the state with which Japan had had the least contact – was quite friendly: “Past [relations] have been of short duration, but [their] future is unlimited. So we should continue to call on each other in a friendly manner.” But criticism and demands can be found in the imperial message to Paekche, the Korean state with which Japan had had the longest and closest association. After explaining that the “tribute” presented by Paekche was being returned because it was insufficient, Paekche ministers were asked to clarify their position as soon as possible.⁴⁹ Although earlier contacts with T’ang through Silla had revealed a tilt toward the emerging T’ang–Silla alliance, no message was sent to Silla. Instead, friendliness was expressed toward Koguryō and demands were made on Paekche, suggesting that Yamao Yukihiisa may be right in concluding that the new government intended to do nothing more than improve relations with the three Korean kingdoms. The decision made toward the end of 645 to move the capital to the port city of Naniwa suggests that the new leader wanted to have their base at the port where diplomatic missions were embarking and disembarking.

The reformers first moved to maintain and strengthen the government’s control. An early and particularly significant step was taken when Emperor Kōtoku and his crown prince called a meeting of their new ministers and had them swear an oath of allegiance. Questions have been raised about the authenticity of this oath recorded in the *Nihon shoki*, but the first sentence expresses the same theme found in the Seventeen Injunctions of 604: “Just as heaven overspreads and earth upholds, there is only one imperial way.”⁵⁰ By asking the new ministers to take this oath, the crown prince and Kamatari were not simply adopting a traditional method of cementing loyalty but, rather, were explicitly affirming the principle that an emperor (and his advisers) – not the chieftain of a powerful clan – should rule the state directly. The same note was struck in an imperial edict addressed, about two weeks later, to the two military leaders who had just been appointed ministers of the left and right: “You are to administer the affairs of the empire by strictly obeying Japan’s sacred rulers and being faithful to them.”⁵¹

Another early measure taken to increase governmental control was

49 Taika I (645)/7/10, NKBT 68.272–3. Both messages were introduced with the following phrase: “This is the mandate of the emperor of Japan who is a manifest kami [*akitsumikami*],” but this conception of Japanese sovereignty probably did not emerge until the time of Temmu.

50 Kōtoku, Introduction (645)/6/19, NKBT 68.270–1.

51 Taika I (645)/7/12, NKBT 68.272–3.

aimed at Buddhist temples. During the eighth month of 645 imperial messengers were sent to the “big temple” (probably the Kudara-dera, the building of which was started in 639 and completed in 641) after Jomei’s death and in response to an order issued by Empress Kōgyoku. Although enjoying imperial associations, the Kudara-dera was, like other Asuka temples, essentially a clan institution. So when the reformers moved to increase imperial control, they had to concern themselves with ways of downgrading Buddhist temples as symbols of clan power and upgrading them as instruments of imperial rule. First they adopted the T’ang practice of placing ten Buddhist masters in charge of the temple affairs.⁵² The ten were, like the state scholars, old China hands. The priest who headed the list is thought to have migrated to Japan from Koguryō; another had arrived from south China; a third had studied long in China; and a fourth had been a student of Buddhism in Koguryō. None of them seems to have had any direct tie with Paekche, another indication of the new government’s preference for T’ang models and teachers.

Priests and laymen were also assigned to posts at certain temples, and imperial messengers were dispatched to report that any temple built by a person holding a position as high as occupational group manager (*tomo no miyatsuko*) could obtain financial assistance from the government. By adopting such measures, the reformers weakened these institutions as symbols of clan power, making them instruments of governmental control and using them for the introduction and absorption of Chinese culture. Although such old temples as the Asuka-dera and the Kudara-dera continued to retain much of their original clan character, after 645 even they were seen as important temples in an increasingly strong state-oriented Buddhist system.

The new government also attempted to keep dissidents from obtaining possession of weapons, especially in outlying regions. When imperial messengers were sent to the eastern provinces in the eighth month of 645, they were instructed not only to establish a system of provincial inspectors (*kuni no mikotomochi*) but also to have all weapons collected, except those in areas near Emishi territory, and deposited in government storehouses.⁵³ A few weeks later the enforced collection of weapons was extended to the entire country. The government was trying thereby to obstruct any attempt by a discontented clan chieftain to overthrow the government.⁵⁴

⁵² Taika I 645/8/8, NKBT 68.276–7. ⁵³ Taika I (645)/8/5, NKBT 68.274–5.

⁵⁴ Taika I (645)/8/5 and 7/13, NKBT 68.272–5.

Another set of orders was aimed at removing sources of popular discontent. The day after the emperor issued an edict demanding that his ministers be faithful, he handed those same ministers another edict requiring them to make sure that the imperial secretaries, provincial inspectors, and other emperor-appointed officials be gentle and considerate in their use of commoners for labor on public projects. Later instructions to provincial inspectors warned them not to violate the judicial prerogatives of local officials, not to go about with an entourage of more than nine attendants, and not to deal directly with the irregularities of local officials, but simply to submit reports after ascertaining the facts. Finally, a Chinese arrangement was adopted for permitting anyone to report complaints that were not properly considered at lower levels.

The new government was only two months old when it ordered a census taken and a land survey made in order to facilitate the collection of revenue from all peoples and lands. These orders were first carried out in the eastern provinces, just after, and in connection with, the dispatch of provincial inspectors. Imperial messengers were also sent to the six districts (*agata*) around the capital and finally to all provinces of the land to make certain that people everywhere had been registered and their land surveyed. In an imperial edict issued in the eleventh month of 645, such endeavors were explained and justified:

Since ancient times, and in every imperial reign, people and their land have been designated as imperial *be*, and the names of these *be* have been passed on to posterity. In like fashion, clan chieftains with the title of *omi*, *muraji*, occupational group manager, or provincial governor have each set up their own *be*, used those people (*tami*) in willful ways, and divided up the mountains and seas, the woods and plains, and the lakes and fields of the several provinces and districts. Conflict among the clans over these possessions has been incessant. Some chieftains have taken over tens of thousands of *shiro* of rice land, and others lack enough land for a place to insert a needle. When the time comes for paying taxes, these *omi*, *muraji*, and occupational group managers first take their own cut and then divide up or hand over [to officials of the central government] what is left. When building palaces and burial tombs, they force *be* people to perform labor at their personal whim. The Book of Changes says: "Increase the losses for those above and the advantages for those below. In this way property will be undamaged and the people unharmed." But now the people are more destitute than ever because powerful clan chieftains divide up the land, sell it to farmers, and collect yearly tribute. Henceforth the selling of land is forbidden. No one is permitted to become an unauthorized landlord or to increase, by one iota, the miseries of the weak.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Taika I (646)/11/19, NKBT 68.278–9.

In addition to taking a census and making a land survey, the new regime was attempting to ensure popular acceptance of its new policies.

The imperial edict issued on the first day of the first month of 646 and referred to here as the Four-Article Edict⁵⁶ is comparable to the Five-Article Oath of 1868. Each was issued by an emperor at a time when new leaders had decided to make bold and sweeping political changes – in the name of the current emperor – that would help the country to meet the threat of invasion by foreign powers, at first Chinese and then Western. Unfortunately, the historical significance of the Four-Article Edict has been clouded by questions about its authenticity and by a tortuous and largely undocumented process of implementation. But new evidence and additional study suggests that it was an imperial proclamation that, by outlining the Great Reforms, stood midway between the Seventeen Injunctions of 604 and the Taihō code of 701.

Discovering that the Four-Article Edict contained words and phrases identical with those occurring in later administrative codes, historians have been forced to conclude that the edict could not have been written that early, that it must have been misdated or fabricated. For a time I (Inoue) went along with such scholars as Tsuda Sōkichi who claimed that the edict could not have been written as early as 646. But further reflection led me to realize that (1) steps taken during the first six months of the new administration were in accord with the reforms for which the edict called and that (2) later orders and reports (recorded in the *Nihon shoki*) may be seen as attempts to implement those reforms. I also found that offices and titles in use after the promulgation of the Taihō code in 701 had existed at an earlier date, leading me to conclude that the *Nihon shoki* compilers had revised the edict's wording.

Although this theory has been subjected to considerable criticism, several scholars have published findings that support it. Tanaka Tei's genealogical studies of the Wake clan, for example, show that the first Wake clan chieftain held a rank first established in 649 and occupied the position of district supervisor (*kōri no miyatsuko*), that this man's son and grandson held the same rank and position, and that the Chinese characters used for recording this rank and position were those used in both the edict and the later Taihō code. Moreover, thirty-three wooden blocks (*mokkan*) bearing the characters for "district" were excavated in 1966 at Fujiwara where the imperial capital was located between 694 and 710. On thirty of them the character for "district"

⁵⁶ Taika 2 (646)/1/1, NKBT 68.280–3.

was the one in common use before 701, and on the remaining three was the one used in the Taihō code. Such evidence suggests that compilers of the *Nihon shoki*, who completed their work by 720, thus attempted to modernize the phraseology of the Four-Article Edict, squaring it with subsequent codifications of administrative law.

Article 1 of the edict proclaims that the clan possession of people and land be abolished and that the confiscated property (people and land) be used henceforth for sustenance households (*hehito* or *jikifu*) granted to high-ranking officials of the imperial government or for allotments of goods (*fuhaku*) granted to lower-ranking imperial officials. Even the most skeptical scholars generally do not doubt that this article, making up what is referred to as the introductory section, was written during or before 646. It was a logical product of the concept of direct imperial rule expressed in the Seventeen Injunctions of 607 and reiterated in edicts handed down immediately after the reform leaders seized control in 645. Moreover, the idea that direct imperial rule meant direct imperial control of all lands and all peoples was not only reflected in other imperial edicts issued as early as the eighth month of 646 but also lay at the base of later codifications of administrative law. Indeed, Article 1 was the first clear, authoritative statement of the basic (Chinese) idea underlying the revolutionary process by which the old clan order was gradually but surely transformed into a monarchical state administered by officials appointed by, and responsible to, the emperor.

Article 2 proclaimed that the capital was to be divided into four wards headed by able persons, that the home provinces around the capital were to be headed by new-line provincial inspectors (*kuni no mikotomochi*) and divided into districts headed by supervisors who could read and make calculations, and that a system of post stations, barriers, and guards was to be enacted. Clearly, the aim was to establish a local government structure administered by officials of ability who were responsible to the imperial court. The form of the structure was undoubtedly influenced by developments in Korea, as well as by the sixth-century rise of districts (*agata*) headed by supervisors (*agata no nushi*) who served the Yamato kings.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In areas outside the home provinces, direct imperial control was established first through districts (*agata*) and district supervisors (*agata nushi*), rather than through provincial supervisors (*kuni mikotomochi*). The creation and use of districts and district supervisors to extend imperial control are revealed in a *Hitachi kuni fudoki* report of 649 that states that parts of two old provinces (headed by a *kuni no miyatsuko*) were made into a district (*kōri*) headed by a district supervisor (*kōri no miyatsuko*). The official who made this change was called a *sōryō*, a new title for an official who was somewhat like a provincial supervisor. The history of the

Article 3 provided for the registration of households and the survey of land. It stipulated that fifty households were to make up one village (*sato*) with a headman (*osa*) who was to supervise the households within his village, direct the planting of fields and mulberry bushes, prevent and deal with crime, and enforce the payment of produce and service taxes (*etsuki*). As preparation for the land survey, the article stipulated that an area thirty-by-twelve paces would be one *tan*, that ten *tan* would make up one *chō*, and that two sheaves and two bundles of rice should be paid as tax on one *tan* of rice land (about 3 percent of the yield).

Article 4 added details about these taxes, stating first that new produce and service taxes (*etsuki*) were to be created. The new ones were (1) a fixed field tax (*ta no mitsuki*) paid in locally produced cloth (amounts of different types of cloth for each *chō* of land were spelled out); (2) a fixed household tax (*hegoto no mitsuki*) paid in local produce (amount per household stated); (3) a horse tax of one horse for every one hundred households (for every two hundred households if the horse were a good one); (4) a weapons tax of a sword, armor, bow, and arrows for each person; (e) a corvée tax of one worker for every fifty households (in place of the old tax of one for every thirty households); and (f) a “rice lady” (*uneme*) tax of one good-looking sister or daughter for every official of the rank of assistant district supervisor or above (one hundred households were to provide rations for the courtesan who was to be sent to the court with one male and two female attendants, and the amount of cloth and rice that could be paid in lieu of one courtesan was the same as that paid in lieu of one corvée worker).⁵⁸

During the later months of 646 one imperial edict followed another, a series of reminders that the state was now being ruled directly by the emperor. Some edicts reiterated what had been previously proclaimed. In some cases they condemned (or outlawed) improper behavior by officials, and even by husbands and wives. One famous edict issued in the third month of 646 dealt with burials and began with a quotation from an edict once issued by a Chinese emperor:

creation of local government organs responsible to the emperor was therefore paralleled by the emergence of new districts and provinces headed by officials serving the court. Old clan-connected officials were not eliminated, but their power and control were gradually reduced. See Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 322–5.

⁵⁸ Article 4 of this famous edict says nothing about the allocation of land among individuals or about the collection of taxes on such allotments – prominent features of the Taihō administrative code promulgated in 702. But this does not mean that taxes of this sort were not collected immediately after the Great Reforms of 645. Rather, at this early date, the court was undoubtedly giving primary attention to assessments on produce and services. Other differences are discussed in Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 325–9.

In ancient times the dead were buried in graves on high ground. Dirt was not piled up, nor were trees planted. Coffins were meant to last only until the body decayed, as were the clothes placed on it. So henceforth I want burial mounds built only on land that cannot be cultivated and in such a way that after a generation has passed, they will not be recognized as graves. No gold, silver, bronze, or iron is to be placed in them; traditional funeral chariots and figures are to be represented in clay; and the joints of the coffin are to be filled with no more than three layers of lacquer. No jewels are to be placed in the mouth of the deceased, and no jeweled jackets or boxes are to be left beside the corpse. These all are vulgar practices.⁵⁹

The Japanese edict did not require the adoption of such ancient Chinese burial practices but did stipulate that the size and contents of mounds be in accord with the deceased's position and rank in the imperial government. For example, a high official could be buried in a square, Chinese-style mound of about the size of Soga no Umako's, the inner stone chamber of which could be no larger than nine-by-five-by-five *shaku*. Somewhat smaller chambers could be built for the burial of a lower-ranking official, but none at all for a commoner. Even the number of days spent on the construction was limited. The edict ended with a ban on the sacrifice of retainers and animals at the time of burial and on the custom by which a eulogist cut his hair or stabbed his thighs before presenting a eulogy. Such measures were meant to make sure that burial mounds – always believed to sanctify the power and authority of the current emperor or chieftain – would show precisely what position and rank the deceased (and his successor) held in the imperial order.

The importance assigned to imperial ranks accounts for the establishment of two new ranking systems, one announced in 647 and the other in 649. Both were made stronger instruments for state building by adding high ranks – probably prized more because of their T'ang flavor – bestowed on ministers who served the emperor directly and loyally.⁶⁰ As in other actions taken in these early years of reform the influence of state scholars who had studied and lived many years in T'ang China can be detected.

Although the flow of imperial edicts tells us much about the nature and process of reform during the years after 645, a decision made by the crown prince about two months after the Four-Article Edict was handed down seems to have been particularly significant for the empire-building enterprise. In accordance with this decision, as re-

⁵⁹ Taika 2 (646)/3/22, NKBT 68.292–3.

⁶⁰ See Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 314–17; and Richard J. Miller, *Ancient Japanese Nobility, the Kabane Ranking System* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974).

ported in a *Nihon shoki* item for the twenty-second day of the third month of 646, the crown prince (the future Emperor Tenji) turned over eighty-one royal estates (*miyake*) and 524 persons of royal occupational groups (*be*) to the emperor, explaining that just as “Heaven does not have two suns, a country does not have two rulers” and that the emperor should be served by everyone.⁶¹ Probably not many clan chieftains followed the prince’s lead, but his action, together with the discovery of burial mounds of precisely the size permitted in the edict on burials, indicates that at least some leaders were obeying the edicts and subjecting themselves to direct imperial rule.

THE IMPERIAL STATE

In 650, when the reform government was about four years old, T’ang China allied itself with the Korean kingdom of Silla. To the Japanese this was a frightening sign of China’s intent to dominate the Korean peninsula and possibly Japan as well. This alliance, followed by Chinese military advances, aroused Japan’s concerns that shaped governmental policies for decades. The effects can be detected in three massive currents of historical change in these years. The first had a military character and was manifested as resistance against T’ang advances in Korea and, later on, as frantic attempts to strengthen the country’s defenses against invasion. The second was an administrative current marked by an extensive use of immigrants and other persons familiar with continental techniques. The third took the form of internal political tension that led to civil war in 672 and the establishment of a regime intent on creating a Chinese-style empire in Japan.

T’ang expansion and Japan’s response

The 650 alliance between T’ang and Silla was aimed at Paekche. For T’ang, the difficulties it faced in Paekche were secondary to its drawn-out war with Koguryō, and for Silla, trouble with Paekche could not be disentangled from problems with its neighbors, especially Koguryō to the northwest and Japan across the Tsushima Straits. In Japan, the implications of the alliance were ominous, leading to a split among the leaders over the issue of whether the country should take immediate military action against Silla or simply strengthen its defenses.

Lines were sharply drawn in 651 when envoys from Silla arrived in

⁶¹ Taika 2 (646)/3/22, NKBT 68.292–3.

Tsukushi dressed like T'ang officials. The Japanese court decided that the mission should be sent home, and the ranking minister of the left (Kose no Tokuda) addressed a memorial to the throne in which he advocated preparations for war:

If we do not attack Silla now, we will come to regret it. We should assemble a great fleet of ships and deploy them on the seas between Naniwa and Tsukushi. Then we should summon Silla envoys and demand an accounting for offenses their state has committed. [Backed by such a display of force], we should then get what we want.⁶²

But no such action was taken. The crown prince and his advisers – many of whom had firsthand knowledge of the situation on the continent – elected instead to strengthen diplomatic ties with the T'ang court.

Within a few months they had dispatched to China a mission divided into two groups taking different routes: the first, made up of 121 persons, proceeded by way of Silla (the northern route), and the second, with 120 aboard, sailed across the East China Sea (the southern route). Both contained several scholars and students, suggesting that the main objective was to obtain more information about the T'ang control techniques and cultural achievements. The second group met with disaster soon after leaving port, and only 5 or 6 persons returned safely. But the first reached its destination and arrived back in Japan during the seventh month of 654, bringing with it several people who were soon to become active and prominent in their country's political and cultural affairs.

Before this group's return in 654, a second mission was sent to the T'ang court. Departing in two ships headed for China by way of Silla, it included officials who had already spent several years in China, including Takamuko no Kuromaro (appointed state scholar by the reform regime) and Buddhist priest E'nichi (the teacher of Kamatari's son). When this mission arrived at the T'ang capital and submitted its gifts and messages, Emperor Kao-tsung greeted it with a statement that included these words: "Your country has close contact with the Korean states of Silla, Koguryō, and Paekche. If an urgent situation develops there, you should dispatch an envoy to us and ask for help."⁶³

Kao-tsung's statement suggests that political interests, as well cultural ones, had impelled members of Japan's imperial court to send this second mission to T'ang. The *Nihon shoki* says nothing to indicate that the Japanese had heard anything about Chinese plans to send

62 Hakuchi 2(651), NKBT 68.317. 63 Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, p. 348.

military expeditions into Korea, although Emperor Kao-tsung had already decided, in response to a request for assistance from Silla, to send an expeditionary force against Koguryō.

Japan's crown prince and ministers must have learned, somehow or other, about the T'ang–Silla alliance and the plans for joint military action against Koguryō, for the crown prince decided in 653 to abandon the new imperial palace in the port city of Naniwa and to build a new one in the Asuka region of the Nara plain. Emperor Kōtoku objected, but the crown prince and key ministers of the court withdrew to Asuka anyway. We have no record of why the emperor and the crown prince took different positions on this question. But it would appear that the former did not see too much danger in the foreign situation and that the latter (the future Emperor Tenji) wanted the capital in a place that could be more easily defended against foreign invasion.

Emperor Kōtoku remained on in Naniwa but died a lonely death there a few months later. Although the crown prince was in line for the throne, he apparently preferred to govern as crown prince. Therefore his mother, the former Empress Kōgyoku, was enthroned a second time as Empress Saimei. A new palace was built for her, not in Naniwa but in the safer inland area of Asuka. This was the Futatsuki palace located on the peak of a mountain and surrounded by stone walls, something like the mountain strongholds of Korea. The *Nihon shoki* explains that a new canal had to be dug for the two hundred boats that were used for transporting rocks to the foot of the mountain where the palace's stone walls were being constructed. The heavy demand for labor and materials caused people to say that the "canals have been built by a foolish heart" and to predict that no matter how strong the forts are made, they will eventually fall.⁶⁴

Such popular discontent – possibly aggravated by the crown prince's appeasement policy as well as by his expensive defense projects – was a factor in the Arima incident of 658. Imperial Prince Arima, the eldest son of Emperor Kōtoku by a daughter of the minister of the left, had strong claims to the throne at the time of his father's death in 654. But his hopes were dashed when the crown prince's mother was enthroned as Empress Saimei. The record suggests that Prince Arima was also upset by the miseries of the people and that he was drawn into a plot against the throne by Soga no Akae, a grandson of Soga no Umako and a prominent leader of the defeated Soga clan.

64 Saimei 2 (656), NKBT 68.328–9.

While Soga no Akae was guarding the Futatsuki palace in the empress's absence, he is said to have told Prince Arima that the current administration had made three serious mistakes. First, it had built huge public storehouses where the wealth of the people was being piled up. Second, it had undertaken to dig long canals on which public revenue was wasted. And third, it had decided to transport large rocks by boat to high places in the mountains.⁶⁵ The first complaint pointed directly at the policy of increasing public revenue, but the other two stemmed from the post-653 policy of strengthening defenses against a possible invasion from abroad.

At first such talk convinced the prince that the time for drastic steps had come. But then both the prince and Soga no Akae decided that the situation was not yet ripe for rebellion. At this point Akae leaked the contents of their discussion to government authorities. Prince Arima was then arrested and strangled, and his principal backers were sent into exile. But the chronicles say nothing about punishment for Akae. Indeed, he was soon appointed to a post in distant Tsukushi but, at the beginning of Temmu's reign in 672, became minister of the left. Much remains unclear about the Arima incident of 658, and yet chronicle reports suggest that the burden of constructing defenses against a possible invasion from abroad was arousing discontent.

In 660, two years after the Arima incident, T'ang and Silla made a joint attack on Paekche, the Korean state with which Japan had had particularly close relations ever since Japan lost its Korean territory (colony) of Mimana nearly a century before. T'ang military operations in a region where Japan had always had special interests must have caused hawkish members of the court to feel they had been right, nine years earlier, to see signs of danger in the Silla envoys' coming to Japan dressed in T'ang robes. Until 660 the T'ang-Silla alliance had been directed against Koguryō, and joint attacks on Koguryō were made as early as 655; but in the third month of 660 Emperor Kao-tsung suddenly decided – ostensibly in response to a plea from Silla for assistance in warding off Paekche invasions of Silla territory – to make a coordinated military attack on Paekche. A force of 100,000 men under the Chinese commander Su Ting-fang assisted by a Silla prince crossed the East China Sea from the Liaotung peninsula, landed on the Paekche coast, and coordinated its attack with a Silla force from the east led by Kim Yusin. At the same time King Muyōl of Silla placed two of his sons in command of a force of 50,000 that marched

65 Saimei 4 (658)/11/3, NKBT 68.334–5.

against Paekche from the opposite direction. Within four months the Silla armies, having won a decisive victory against the Paekche troops near the present-day city of Yönsan, joined the T'ang armies and captured the capital city of Sabi (Püyo). The king of Paekche surrendered and his proud state disappeared.⁶⁶

Emperor Kao-tsung seems to have been fully aware that joint military action against Paekche would upset the Japanese, possibly causing them to rush to Paekche's aid, for he made special efforts to keep the Japanese envoys from hearing about his plans. We know this because a member of the Japanese mission that was then in China included a scholar, Iki no Muraji Hakatoku (later one of the compilers of the *Taihō* code), who kept a diary. After describing an interview that members of his mission had with Emperor Kao-tsung – during which the emperor asked many questions about the recent Japanese campaigns against the Ainu (written up in the *Nihon shoki*) – Hakatoku wrote that suddenly in the twelfth month of 659, he and other members of the mission were taken into custody and prevented from leaving Ch'ang-an. Charges against them were soon dropped, but the emperor handed down an order stating that because an “eastern campaign” was being waged in the following year, the Japanese visitors would not be permitted to depart. Only in the ninth month of 660, a month or so after Paekche had been destroyed, were the Japanese envoys allowed to depart.⁶⁷

But as soon as the T'ang armies had been withdrawn from Paekche and plans were made for the resumption of the long-standing conflict with Koguryō, a restorationist movement developed within Paekche, and its leaders appealed to Japan for help. According to the *Nihon shoki*, the appeal was made by messengers who arrived in Japan during the tenth month of 660, a month after the Japanese envoys to T'ang had been released. The messengers from Paekche asked not only for troops but also for the return of Prince P'ung, a member of the Paekche royal family who had been sent to Japan as a hostage in 631 and whom restoration leaders planned to enthrone as king of a new Paekche.⁶⁸

By the time these messengers had arrived in Japan, Japanese court leaders must have known that they faced a truly threatening situation abroad. They had already received numerous firsthand reports of T'ang power and expansion and must have heard that Paekche had

⁶⁶ Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 369–71; and Denis Twitchett and Howard J. Wechsler, “Kao-tsung (Reign 649–83) and the Empress Wu: The Inheritor and the Usurper,” in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 3, p. 282.

⁶⁷ Saimei 5 (659)/7/3, NKBT 68.338–41. ⁶⁸ Saimei 6 (660)/10, NKBT 68.346–7.

been crushed by a coordinated pincer attack from the T'ang and Silla armies. They undoubtedly feared that Koguryō, too, would be eliminated and that Japan itself would soon be threatened by T'ang might. No one at court seems, therefore, to have opposed support for the rebels. (In fact, a decision to provide help may actually have been made before assistance was requested.) Empress Saimei quickly took the unprecedented step of going to Tsukushi in order to assume personal command of the expeditionary force.

The empress and other key members of the court (including the crown prince and Kamatari) left the capital for Tsukushi in the twelfth month of 660, two months after the arrival of the restorationist plea. Meanwhile, the T'ang emperor was making plans for a massive invasion of Koguryō. The Paekche leaders undoubtedly made certain that this information was rushed to Japan. Shortly after arriving in Kyushu, the empress received the Japanese envoys who had been prevented from leaving Ch'ang-an. Hakatoko, the scholar member of the mission who had been keeping a diary, wrote about being received by the empress and added, "Everyone here is saying that Japan will soon be faced with Heaven's retribution."⁶⁹

Not long after their meeting, the empress died. Prince Naka no Ōe – Emperor Jomei's son who stood at the head of the triumvirate that pulled off the 645 coup and who had administered state affairs as crown prince under three sovereigns – did not now hesitate to occupy the throne as Emperor Tenji and to expedite the mobilization for war in support of Paekche. By the eighth month of 661, armies had been formed for the expedition, and before another month had passed, Prince P'ung had been returned to Paekche. Probably the first military units were sent to Korea at about that time, although the *Nihon shoki* says that this did not occur until the following year when Prince P'ung was installed as the new king of a restored Paekche. Meanwhile, Emperor Kao-tsung had ordered his troops to invade Koguryō from the north, having asked Silla to support the operation with armies and supplies.

Then suddenly during the third month of 662, T'ang forces were withdrawn from Koguryō, presumably in order to deal with the Paekche restoration movement that had gained legitimacy from the enthronement of a new king, and aided by Japanese troops and supplies. During the previous several months of 662 the rebels had increased their control over areas around the old Paekche capital, and

⁶⁹ Saimei 7 (661)/5/23, NKBT 68.350-1.

for a time they were able to hold out against the armies of Silla and T'ang. But early in 663 Silla's attacks were stepped up, and the Paekche restoration leader (Poksin) was forced to seek further assistance from Japan, presenting some T'ang prisoners as evidence that his armies were putting up a good fight. Japan had already sent thousands of troops, considerable amounts of supplies, and a fleet of 170 ships. In the fifth month of 663, Kao-tsung is said to have mobilized 100,000 soldiers for a campaign against the Paekche recalcitrants and to have ordered Silla's King Munmu to send armies to attack Paekche from the east.

Both T'ang and Korean sources (the *Chiu T'ang-shu* and the *Samguk sagi*) report that Silla troops, accompanied by ships loaded with supplies, moved down the Kūm River where they joined T'ang forces in the eighth month of 663, that a historic naval battle was fought at the mouth of the Kūm River, and that four hundred Japanese ships were sunk. The *Nihon shoki* also describes the twenty-seventh day of the eighth month of 663:

The T'ang again assembled their ships for battle, and in a short time Japanese forces were defeated. Many of our men were thrown into the water and drowned, and our ships were unable to maneuver. Commander Echi no Takatsu prayed to heaven for victory, gnashed his teeth in anger, slew tens of enemy soldiers, and died in battle. It was after this that King P'ungchang of Paekche, with several retainers, boarded a ship and fled to Koguryō.⁷⁰

To this report was added the comment that people were now saying that Paekche no longer existed. Japan, having lost its foothold in the Korean kingdom of Mimana (Kaya) a century before (in 562), was now completely excluded from the Asian continent. The T'ang empire, on the other hand, had made Paekche into a strong base for its attempt to subjugate the entire Korean peninsula. This was a sharp blow to Emperor Tenji and Nakatomi no Kamatari – Japan's famous reformers – that presented new dangers, both abroad and at home.

Before the year had passed, the Chinese commander in charge of the Paekche occupation sent an official, Kuo Wu-ts'ung, to Japan with messages and presents. Already, a puppet king had been set up in the old Paekche capital of Ungjin, and attempts had been made to cement ties between the kings of Paekche and Silla. It is therefore assumed that Kuo-Wu-ts'ung's primary objective was to persuade Japan to recognize occupied Paekche as an integral part of the Chinese empire.

⁷⁰ Tenchi 2 (663)/8/27, NKBT 68.358–60.

Because Kuo-ts'ung had not been sent by Emperor Kao-tsung or by the king of an independent Korean state, he was not invited to the Japanese capital or given the royal treatment accorded an official diplomat. Indeed, Kuo and his party never got closer to the capital than Kyushu. But the *Nihon shoki* states that – after the lapse of five months and the receipt of an imperial decree ordering the mission to leave – Kuo received presents from Minister of the Center Nakatomi no Kamatari and was entertained.⁷¹

The Chinese did their best to encourage Paekche and Silla to become friendly and cooperative components of the T'ang empire. The kings of the two states were first required to meet and take vows of friendship. Then in 665 they were brought together again, this time at Ungjin where they worshiped various deities together and accepted some of each other's blood. Even old border disputes were settled.

During the ninth month of 665, a second mission arrived in Japan from T'ang-controlled Paekche. This one, headed by a high official from the T'ang court and made up of 254 persons, submitted documents with acceptable wording. Consequently, the party was allowed to proceed to the capital where it was properly welcomed. Not long after that, Japan dispatched envoys to the T'ang court, the first sent to China since the collapse of Paekche in 663. So within approximately two years, Japan had reestablished friendly relations with not only Paekche and Silla but T'ang as well.

But in 667 the Japanese view of the foreign scene was again darkened by Emperor Kao-tsung's decision to try, once more, to conquer Koguryō, which had successfully checked the military advances of one Chinese emperor after another since the early seventh century. Encouraged by internal dissension within Koguryō and the likelihood of substantial military assistance from both Silla and Paekche, T'ang armies crossed Koguryō borders in 667 and headed for P'yōngyang, its capital. These armies had to be withdrawn but were once more sent against Koguryō in the following year, after they were placed under the command of a naval officer (Liu Jen-kuei) who had succeeded in repelling Japanese ships at the mouth of the Kūm River in 663. By the ninth month of 668, the coordinated attacks of T'ang and Silla – not unlike earlier ones against Paekche – brought about the fall of P'yōngyang and the collapse of Koguryō.

In the face of a T'ang takeover, Koguryō sent two missions to Japan

71 Tenchi 3 (664)/6/4, NKBT 68.361–2.

in 667. Their objective, as in the case of the Paekche missions dispatched a few years earlier, was to obtain military assistance. But by this time the Japanese court had lost its taste for military intervention on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, it had now made its peace with the Chinese occupation regime in Paekche and even sent off a mission to the T'ang court. Just before the arrival of the second group of Koguryō emissaries, envoys had also entered Japan from Silla, the first since 651 when Japanese officials were upset by Silla officials appearing in Chinese robes. Now the Silla envoys (no doubt dressed as before) were well received, indicating that the Japanese had come to accept both Paekche and Silla as integral parts of the expanding T'ang empire and were not tempted to respond to the Koguryō request for military assistance.

Defense measures

The three T'ang invasions of the Korean peninsula during the 660s – the first, joint military action with Silla against Paekche in 660; the second, the destruction of the Japan-supported Paekche restoration in 663; and the third, the subjugation of Koguryō in 668 – caused Japanese leaders to become quite frantic about the possibility of a T'ang invasion of Japan. Having noted the attention given to defense in the early 650s, after word had reached the court about a T'ang–Silla alliance, it is not surprising to find that now, following the rout of Japanese naval and ground forces in 663, far more attention was given to the task of strengthening defense.

In the wake of the Kūm River disaster, the Japanese moved immediately to build forts on Tsushima and Iki (islands located between the southern tip of Korea and Kyushu) and at strategic places in northeastern Kyushu. Along this fortified line were installed watertowers by which information on enemy movements could be quickly transmitted. The military headquarters were established at Dazai-fu, high in the mountains behind Hakata Bay. Dazai-fu was in turn protected by forts constructed on peaks to the north and the south, as well as by what was called a water fortress (*mizuki*) built along the Mikasa River that flowed from Dazai-fu to Hakata Bay. The *Nihon shoki* merely tells us that the water fortress, constructed in 664, had high embankments for the storage of water. The remains of eastern and western gates reveal the fortress's original location and size. Some historians theorize that the water fortress was essentially a reservoir from which water could be released against approaching enemy soldiers, but others won-

der whether it was meant to supply water for the moats of neighboring strongholds. Remains of mountain forts built to the north and south of Dazai-fu indicated the presence of stone walls within which fairly large structures (with stone foundations) had been built, probably for the storage of weapons and food.

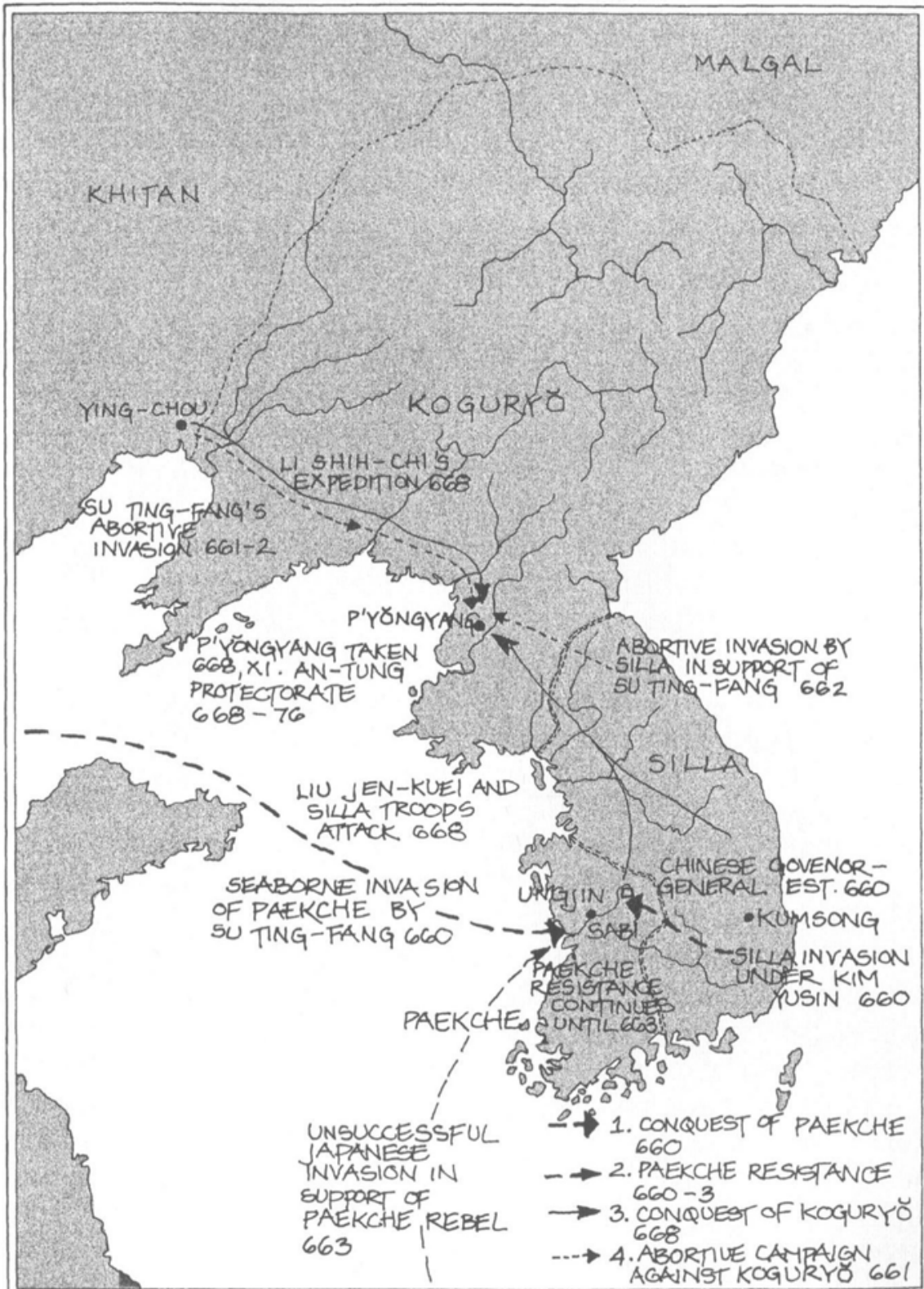
After 667 when the T'ang had begun to organize joint military action against Koguryō and the Japanese had become more disturbed than ever about a possible T'ang invasion of their country, preparations to defend Japan became fevered. On the island of Tsushima, for example, a stone wall 6 meters high and 2,370 meters long was erected. In addition, new forts were constructed at strategic positions along the Inland Sea, for Japanese leaders now feared that enemy forces (T'ang or Silla) might make a successful landing in Kyushu and advance up the Inland Sea toward the capital. Assuming that enemy soldiers might force their way past the Nagato fort at the western entrance to the Inland Sea, they erected another major fort in 667 at Yashima on a 300-meter-high promontory to the west of the Takamatsu harbor where the Inland Sea approach to the capital could be better guarded. In that same year the Takayasu fort was erected on a mountain near the capital, at a position from which defenders could watch for an enemy advance on the capital from the Inland Sea.⁷² But at none of these defense works – earthen or stone forts, watchtowers, armories, or water fortresses – do we find evidence of techniques not known in Korea, suggesting that here (as in many other areas) Japan was benefiting from an extensive use of skilled refugees from Paekche.

Korean expertise

References in the *Nihon shoki* to Korean migrations to Japan after the T'ang invasions of Korea in the 660s, together with evidence of a concurrent spread of Korean styles and methods in whatever the Japanese were making and doing point to a substantial influx of Korean artisans, builders, administrators, and various specialists: persons with continental know-how whose services could be used to strengthen the state, increase its revenues, and tighten its control. Chronicle references to such migrations provide evidence of two distinct waves: one from Paekche after its demise in 663 and another from Koguryō after it had been eliminated in 668 (see Map 3.1).

The first extant account of the arrival of refugees from Paekche

⁷² Inoue, *Asuka no chōtei*, pp. 395–8.



Map 3.1 Fall of Paekche and Koguryō. (From Denis Twitchett, ed., *Sui and Tang China 589–906, Part I*, vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of China*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 283.)

appears in a 665 report that one high-placed Paekche refugee was granted court rank in Japan and four hundred Paekche commoners were settled in the province of Ōmi, probably at a place where the government was opening up some new land for the cultivation of rice. Then an item for the following year mentions that two thousand more men and women from Paekche were settled in provinces to the east and that the government had agreed to cover their living costs for a period of three years. Finally, a 669 chronicle entry states that two former Paekche ministers of state (including a man who was later granted court rank) arrived in Japan with more than seven hundred Paekche men and women who were subsequently settled in the Kamō District of Ōmi Province. All these Koreans arrived in what may be called the post-663 Paekche wave.

The second wave was made up of persons who fled from Koguryō to Japan after 668, when their country was forced into the T'ang empire. Some migrations of this type were deemed sufficiently important for inclusion in the contemporary official chronicle, but only some years later. The first second-wave entry was for the year 687, stating that 56 persons from Koguryō were then settled in the province of Hitachi. The second one (dated 716) reports that 1,799 more were placed in Suruga (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture) as well as in other provinces to the east.⁷³ The lateness of the reports on Koguryō arrivals suggests that members of this post-668 wave were motivated by reports of opportunities in Japan.

Many immigrants, whether from Paekche or Koguryō, were members of the elite who had lost, or felt they might lose, their positions under T'ang rule and who knew that their skills and education would be appreciated in Japan. Convincing support for this conclusion is provided by a *Nihon shoki* report for the year 671 that as many as seventy Paekche officials were awarded Japanese court rank.⁷⁴ At the top of the list stood two Paekche officials on whom was bestowed the fourth rank junior grade. One of these, Sathhek Syo-Myong, was referred to as a vice-minister of justice, a man who was one of the six officials assigned to the department set up for compiling the Ōmi administrative code. (According to the *Kaden*, he was also selected because of his literary distinction to write the epitaph for Nakatomi no Kamatari who died in 669.) The third Paekche official on the list, Kwisil Chip-Sa, was awarded the fifth rank junior grade and was

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 399–400. 74 *Tenchi* 10 (671)/1, NKBT 68.376–7.

referred to as the head of the department of education, probably chief of the University Bureau (Daigakuryō) set up at about that time. Six others were awarded the sixth rank junior grade: Four were specialists in military science and two in medicine. More than fifty were granted the seventh rank junior grade, including two more medical men, a person familiar with the Confucian Classics, a devotee of yin–yang (*on'yō*) philosophy, and fifty or so followers of a high-ranking specialist in military science. The various fields in which these immigrants specialized, as well as the high ranks they received, leave little doubt that the Japanese court was determined, at this time of increasing anxiety about T'ang advances in the direction of Japan, to make extensive use of Korean experts for an accelerated and wide-ranging program of modernization.

State control

The introduction of advanced foreign methods and techniques was probably most evident in the military field, but the Tenji court was also adopting other continental methods for increasing state control. As early as 664, just a few months after Japan's humiliating defeat in Korea, Emperor Tenji ordered his younger brother (Crown Prince Ōama, who was to become Emperor Temmu) (1) to revise and increase the number of court ranks; (2) to appoint the heads of clans and award large swords to the strongest, small swords to the less strong, and shields and bows to those who were also occupational group managers; and (3) to appoint occupational group heads as *kakibe* and *yakabe*.⁷⁵

A chronicle statement that this order was carried out in 671,⁷⁶ seven years later, has led some historians to believe that it was not handed down until 671. But a study of the wording and contents of the two references makes us think that seven years might have been required to align appointments with appropriate stipends and ranks and that the 664 order was part of an ambitious attempt to use continental models and experts for erecting a strong, hierarchical system of state control.

The fact that Tenji's order was implemented in 671, the very year that so many Paekche officials were awarded high ranks for services rendered in special fields of knowledge, suggests that this was one aspect of a multidirectional drive to construct a tighter, continental-style administrative system. Two other political developments between 667 (when

⁷⁵ Tenchi 3 (664)/2/9, NKBT 68.360–1. ⁷⁶ Tenchi 10 (671)/1/6, NKBT 68.376–7.

T'ang was pressing Silla to join it in military operations against Koguryō) and 672 (when civil war broke out in Japan) make these years an important turning point in Japanese history: (1) the removal of the capital of Ōtsu in the province of Ōmi during the third month of 667 and (2) the formal enthronement of Tenji as emperor in the first month of 668. These two events, as well as the new administrative arrangements and the granting of court rank to Paekche refugees, are seen as by-products of the current preoccupation with danger from abroad.

Tenji's decision to have his palace built outside the Nara plain, on a narrow strip of land between mountains and the southwestern shore of Lake Biwa, has been considered by some historians as a step required by the rise of increasingly strong feeling of discontent among important clans in the Asuka region, where the previous imperial palace had been located. But we think of this decision, made immediately after the T'ang and Silla moves against Koguryō were reported, as an extension of the crash program to fortify strategic points along the Inland Sea and on mountains overlooking the plain that lay between the Inland Sea and the Asuka capital. For defensive purposes, the new Ōtsu capital had two advantages: It was quite far from Naniwa shores where enemy forces might land, and it was convenient for overland communication with the eastern and northern provinces from which crucial military support might be obtained.

Likewise, the long delay in holding Tenji's enthronement ceremony, coming after he had already ruled for six years, can be thought of as resulting from a desire to avoid unnecessary expenditures of time and resources while extraordinary steps were being taken to strengthen the country's defenses against a possible invasion. Scheduling the enthronement ceremony in 668, after a new imperial palace had been built and occupied, was probably considered useful for affirming and sanctifying imperial authority in the face of critical danger, both at home and abroad.

One other significant event before 672 was the handing down of the imperial order in 668 that administrative laws (*ryō*) be compiled. Because no such compilation is now extant and no mention of such an order can be found in the *Nihon shoki*, readers may be a bit uneasy about concluding that Tenji actually took such action. Nonetheless, historical evidence for this conclusion has been discovered in the following items, and in the way they reinforce one another:

1. A statement in the *kaden* (the first volume of which was thought to have been compiled between 760 and 764 by Kamatari's second son)

- reveals that (a) in 668 Emperor Tenji ordered Kamatari to compile ceremonial regulations (*reigi*) and a code of law (*ritsuryō*), (b) Kamatari was selected to head the compilation because he was considered the leading intellectual of the day and was familiar with ancient writings, and (c) articles (*jōrei*) for such a code were actually written.
2. An item in the introduction to the *Kōnin kyakushiki* (amendments to penal and administrative law compiled in 820) stating that a twenty-two-volume administrative code was compiled in 668.
 3. A *Nihon shoki* report that Emperor Tenji adopted ceremonial regulations (*reigi*) in 670.
 4. A *Nihon shoki* item stating that the crown prince was appointed chancellor (*daijō daijin*) and that other persons were named minister of the left, minister of the right, and senior counselor (*gyoshi daibu*) on the fifth day of the first month of 671.
 5. A *Nihon shoki* announcement that “cap ranks” (*kōburi no kurai*) and laws (*nori*) were promulgated on the following day.
 6. A *Nihon shoki* item that states that Emperor Temmu called imperial princes and ministers into the Great Hall of State (Daigokuden) on the twenty-fifth day of the second month of 681 and said: “We want to have the penal and administrative [*ritsuryō*] codes and laws revised. Work together in getting this done. But if you become too deeply involved in such work, state affairs will suffer. Therefore the work should be divided among you.”⁷⁷

The most detailed evidence is in Item 1. But standing alone it does not carry much weight because the first volume of the *Kaden* was probably not written until a century later. And yet by comparing the contents of this history with what is in the *Nihon shoki*, it seems that although the compilers of both had access to many of the the same sources, the author of the *Kaden* had some additional ones. Moreover, Item 1 states that Kamatari was asked to compile ceremonial regulations (*reigi*) and a code of law, both of which appeared in Chinese formulations. The compilers of Item 2 had no reason to fabricate the statement that a code had been compiled in 668. To be sure, the *Nihon shoki* does not record that Tenji ordered the formulation of a law code, but Item 3 states that ceremonial regulations were promulgated in 670. Items 4 and 5 would make more sense if a code had been assembled before 671. Finally, the use of the word *revised* in item 6 indicates that a code was already in existence, and according to Chinese tradition this code

77 Temmu 10 (681)/2/25, NKBT 68.444–5.

would have been the one compiled at the beginning of the previous Tenji reign.

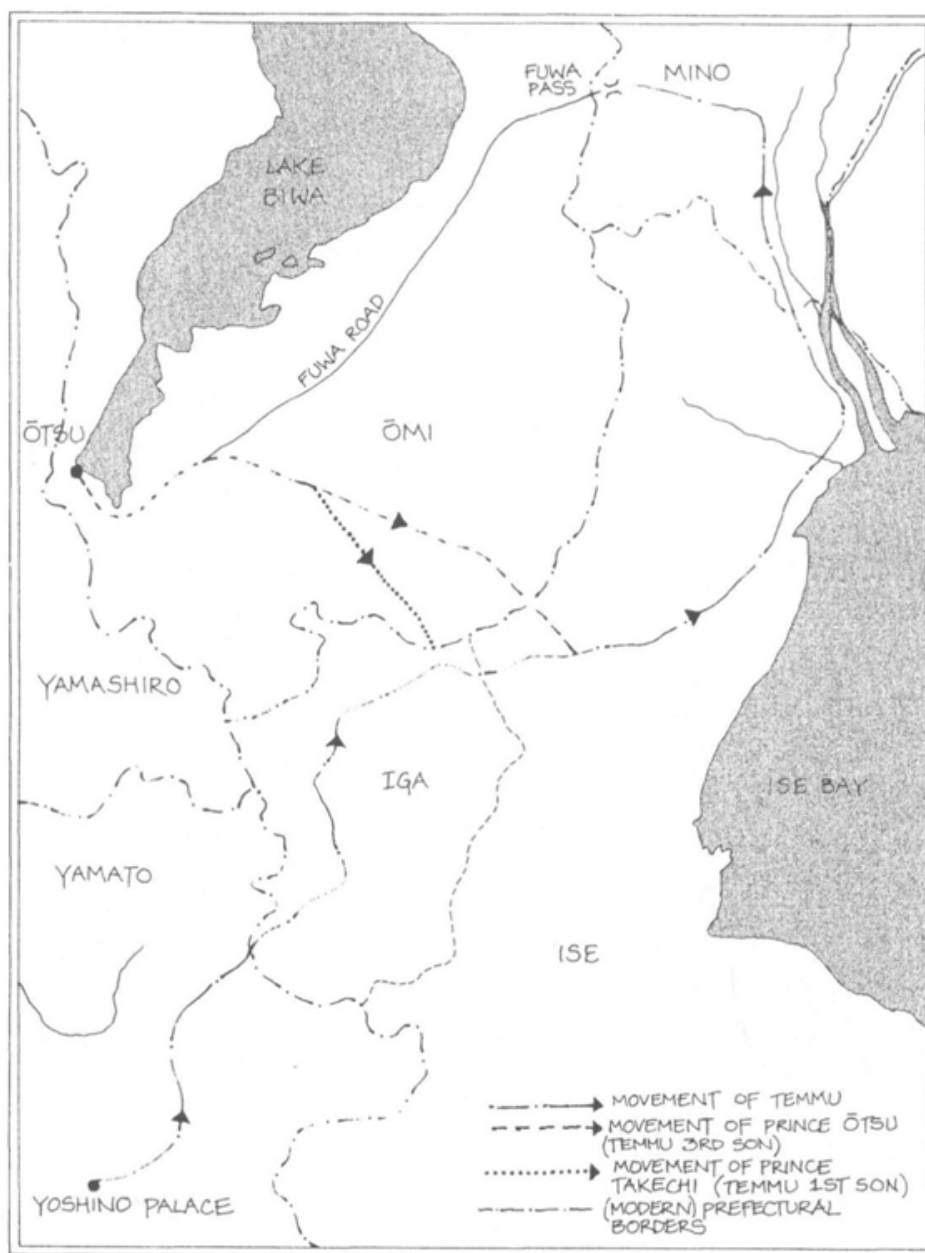
When taking an overall view of events in these last years of Tenji's reign, between the coronation of 668 and the emperor's death in 672, we can detect unmistakable signs of two parallel historical movements: an increasingly intense and multifaceted effort to strengthen the nation's defenses against the possibility that T'ang and its ally Silla might move to destroy Japan, just as they had destroyed Paekche in 663 and Koguryō in 668, and a rather feverish drive to strengthen the state by creating a continental-style control system backed by the formulation and implementation of an administrative law code. Both movements were affected by a growing fear of foreign invasion and by the realization that T'ang (as well as the subjugated Korean kingdoms of Paekche and Koguryō) had control mechanisms that were far more advanced than those of Japan.

The civil war of 672

The origins of the conflict that erupted into civil war during the year 672 – thereby propelling a new set of leaders into positions of power – can be traced back to the discontent aroused by Emperor Tenji's efforts to build an extensive defense system and to the Arima incident of 658. (See Map 3.2.) Old clan rivalries, often highlighted by attempts of Soga leaders to recapture the positions of control they had once enjoyed, were in evidence at every successive stage of disruption. But the discontent and rivalry did not break out into civil war until powerful groups became divided over the question of who should be the next emperor.

Tenji and his court had decided in 664 that he should be succeeded by his younger brother Prince Ōama, who was then appointed crown prince and later became Emperor Temmu. But before his formal enthronement in 668, Tenji apparently had a change of mind, coming to prefer Prince Ōtomo, his favorite son by a beloved courtesan. Perhaps it was Tenji's change of heart that caused his younger brother, the crown prince and the future Emperor Temmu, to create a scene at a party given in the new Ōtsu palace during 668, by suddenly seizing a spear and ramming it into the floor. The *Kaden's* account of the incident states that only the intervention by Kamatari prevented further violence.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ According to this Fujiwara account, Emperor Temmu was thenceforth indebted to Fujiwara no Kamatari. The compiler of the first volume, a grandson of Kamatari, was implying that Kamatari's death in 669 had unfortunately removed that great man's stabilizing leadership, just when the discord between Tenji and Temmu was erupting into open conflict.



Map 3.2 Troop movements in the civil war of 672. (Based on Inoue Mitsusada, *Asuka no chōtei*, 1974, p. 430.)

For the next three years discord between the two brothers (Emperor Tenji and the future Emperor Temmu) did not result in an open break. But in 671, two years after Kamatari's death, Tenji revealed his true intentions when making ministerial appointments in accordance with the new administrative arrangements. To no one's surprise he appointed Soga no Akae (prominent in the Arima incident of 658) as minister of the left and Nakatomi no Kane (a brother of Kamatari) as minister of the right. But to the crown prince's chagrin he named Prince Ōtomo (his favorite son) to the office of chancellor, the highest

ministerial post of all. The prince knew that under the terms of the new administrative code, a chancellor had to be an imperial son acting as regent (*sesshō*) for the emperor. So this appointment left little doubt that Tenji was planning on being succeeded by Prince Ōtomo, not by the crown prince.

In the tenth month of that same year, Emperor Tenji became ill and, according to the *Nihon shoki*, called the crown prince to his bedside and told him: "All matters are henceforth to be left in your hands." But the crown prince is said to have demurred on grounds of ill health and to have recommended that state affairs be handed over to the empress consort and to Prince Ōtomo. Finally, he is reported also to have asked for permission to seclude himself in the Yoshino Mountains in order to devote himself to Buddhism. Tenji apparently agreed to both requests, whereupon the crown prince, accompanied by attendants and immediate members of his family, left the capital. A later entry in the *Nihon shoki* states that the crown prince had been advised, in advance of the meeting, to be very careful about what he said in the emperor's presence, suggesting that neither he nor the emperor was saying precisely what he thought or wanted.⁷⁹

A few days before the emperor's death, Prince Ōtomo and the leading ministers of state vowed, in front of a Buddha figure, to obey the emperor's commands, which presumably included the command that Ōtomo, and not the crown prince, be enthroned as the next emperor. Although the *Nihon shoki* presents the official view that the Temmu reign began as soon as the Tenji one ended, it also shows that ten months (including two months of military combat) passed before Temmu was able to return to the capital and take up the reins of government. Consequently, the chronicle's coverage for these months has a strange cast: It treats the ultimately successful prince (Temmu) as the emperor (*tennō*) who is fighting a just cause from outside the Ōtsu capital, whereas it refers to the ultimately unsuccessful prince (Ōtomo) and his supporters as persons "at the capital" (*miyako*).

Scholars have long studied the available evidence to determine who really was emperor before Temmu's military victory in the tenth month of 672. The Mito historians who compiled the *Dai Nihon shi* between 1657 and 1906 decided that Prince Ōtomo had been enthroned and that he was therefore the emperor of Japan during this ten-month period. Later, a famous early modern historian, Ban Nobutomo (1775–1846), took the same position. And then in 1870

⁷⁹ Tenchi 10 (671)/10/17 and Temmu, Introduction (671), NKBT 68.378–9, 382–3.

Prince Ōtomo was posthumously named Emperor Kōbun. So the imperial chronologies now list Kōbun's reign before Temmu's. But we still have no proof that Prince Ōtomo was ever actually enthroned. Some historians believe that Tenji's empress consort was placed on the throne without being formally enthroned and that Prince Ōtomo, as the heir designate, handled state affairs in her behalf, just as Temmu had recommended. But possibly no one occupied the throne during those disturbed months, in which case Ōtomo would still have handled state affairs as chancellor.

The outbreak of war came in the sixth month of 672 when according to the *Nihon shoki*, Temmu issued the following order:

We hear that ministers at the Ōmi court are plotting against us. The three of you are therefore to proceed immediately to the province of Mino and to report to Ō no Omi Homuji, who is in charge of my Yuno estate in the district of Ahachima. Tell him the main points of our strategy and have him first mobilize troops in his district and then get in touch with the provincial governors and have them mobilize armies and immediately block the Fuwa road [to the capital]. We are starting now.⁸⁰

This first order, as well as later information about the support provided (or withheld) by clan chieftains in various parts of the country, indicates that the key question was which side could obtain the backing of leaders in Japan's eastern and northern provinces. By heading off across the mountains to the eastern provinces of Iga and Ise, Temmu and his sons were moving quickly and directly to obtain support from regions to the east and north. Word was soon received that the Fuwa road had been successfully cut, but Temmu still had difficulty, as only small bands of soldiers came to his support. (See Map 3.2.)

But Temmu's prospects for success suddenly brightened when the governor of Ise Province sent five hundred soldiers to close the Suzuka pass by which Temmu might be pursued from the capital. Then the governors of other eastern provinces (Owari and Mino and possibly Shinano and Kai) joined up, enabling Temmu to move from defense to offense at the beginning of the seventh month. Meanwhile, Prince Ōtomo, realizing that Temmu had cut his lines to the east and north and was obtaining support from leaders in those regions, set out to obtain military forces from areas in the west and south. But the governors of Kibi and Tsukushi refused to cooperate, possibly because they saw no chance of defeating Temmu and his backers from the north and

⁸⁰ Temmu 1 (672)/6/22, NKBT 68.386-7.

east. But the excuse given by the governor of Tsukushi, as recorded in the *Nihon shoki*, is instructive:

From the beginning, the province of Tsukushi has provided protection against external trouble. Did we build lofty battlements overlooking the sea and surrounded by deep moats in order to cope with internal trouble? If we were now to hold ourselves in awe of the prince's command and mobilize troops, the province would be left unprotected. And then if the expected foreign trouble should suddenly materialize, the state would soon be overturned.⁸¹

So even at this time of internal strife, the situation abroad could not be overlooked.

The final thrust against the capital was made by two of Temmu's armies: one crossing the mountains into Yamato from Ise and the other advancing down the Fuwa road toward the capital. In about three weeks both armies had won decisive victories. At that point Prince Ōtomo committed suicide; his minister of the right was executed; other high officials and their heirs were sent into exile; and Temmu, now truly the emperor, moved into the new palace (the Asuka Kiyōmihara) in Yamato. From an entirely different power base, Temmu and his supporters now moved the course of history in a new direction: toward the development of an imperium known as the Nara state, the subject of Chapter 4.

81 Temmu 1 (672)/6/26, NKBT 68.391–3.