

Myth of Japan and Dokdo

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There is a story of the gods of Japan creating the Japan islands in 'Kojiki' (completed in 712), the oldest history book in Japan. The book contains the story of where each of the created lands and islands were located in Japan when 'Kojiki' was written. For example, the current island of Tsushima(対馬) is recorded under the name of Tsushima(津島) used different Chinese character at the time.

However, interestingly, Hokkaido does not appear in the story of creation of islands in 'Kojiki,' because it was not part of Japanese territory at the time. Okinawa and Ogasawara islands also do not appear in 'Kojiki.' That is because the islands were not yet territories of Japan. Then, does Dokdo (Takeshima, as referred to in Japan), which is currently an island disputed between Korea and Japan, appear in the story? No, it does not.

This means that Dokdo was not an indigenous territory of Japan. Pioneering of Hokkaido started in the 19th century, and Okinawa was incorporated into Japan during the latter part of 19th century. These are the reasons why Hokkaido and Okinawa are not indigenous territories of Japan. It would be hard to find any Japanese people claiming that the two areas are indigenous territories of Japan.

A Buddhist monk called 'Gyoki(行基)' in the 8th century walked all around Japan and volunteered his service for many people. In addition, during the process, he completed a Japanese map called 'Gyoki Map.' This Map was used as the official map of Japan until the early 17th century. When seeing 'Gyoki Map,' it corresponds well with the story of the creation of islands in 'Kojiki,' making one

feel as if Gyoki **referred to** 'Kojiki' when making the map. Of course, Dokdo does not appear in 'Gyoki Map.'

When thinking about it, three territorial disputes currently exist in Japan. The three disputes involve the Kuril Islands of Hokkaido (Northern Territories), Dokdo, and Senkaku Islands of Okinawa. These islands were areas or kingdoms that were not indigenous territories of Japan. Curiously enough, the current territorial issues of Japan all exist in places that were not indigenous territories of Japan.

In Nihon Shoki (History of the Emperor of Japan) (completed in 720), which was compiled for external use as the official history of Japan, a story on the family of the gods of the sky is included. In the generation of the gods, a family appears with members composed of Izanagi and Izanami, who gave birth to the Japanese islands, Amaterasu, their child who became the goddess and feminine god of Japan, and Susano, the brother of Amaterasu. However, because Susano was extremely violent, he became expelled from the land of the gods and descended to earth. Nihon Shoki records that the place where Susano descended was 'Sosimori' of Silla.



Gyoki Map made in the 8th century. Dokdo does not appear in the Map.

The Japanese Empire concluded that Sosimori was Mount Udu in Chuncheon (春川), Gangwon-do of Joseon. The Japanese governor general of Korea thought that Sosimori meant 'head of cow' based on its Korean pronunciation, and concluded that Sosimori was Mount Udu of Chuncheon. Because Udu(牛頭) also means 'head of cow' based on its Korean pronunciation. Afterwards, the Japanese governor general of Korea established the Susano Shrine at Mount Udu.

The Japanese governor general of Korea forged a story that Susano was Dangun(檀君) of Go-Joseon(古朝鮮), who was born from the marriage between a god Hwanwoong who descended from the land of the gods and a beautiful woman who had been a bear but became a human being after 100-day-hardship in a cave. Then, Japan crafted a story justifying the Japanese annexation of Korea

to control Joseon, claiming that just as Amaterasu and Susano were siblings from ancient times, the two nations, Japan and Joseon, which were descended from them, should become unified.

However, how does 'Nihon Shoki' subsequently record the acts of Susano who descended to Silla? Susano temporarily stayed at Silla, however, moved to the east because he was not pleased. Then, he encountered the East Sea of Korea. Susano sailed across the East Sea on a boat from Silla and arrived at present-day Izumo of Shimane Prefecture.

Susano learned that Izumo was a place with abundant lumber, gold, and silver, and started to transport these resources to Silla. It is written in 'Nihon Shoki' that Susano travelled back and forth between Silla and Izumo.

During the Japanese imperialism period, a shrine enshrining Susano as the 'god of great light from Silla' existed in Izumo. In reality, the story of Susano is interpreted as symbolizing the history of the Korean race that settled down in Japan through Izumo from Silla.

If one were to throw cans into the ocean water from the coast of Gangwon-do, most of the cans would drift ashore at Shimane Prefecture and Tottori Prefecture. That is because the ocean current flows from Gangwon-do towards Shimane and Tottori. The cans would drift ashore to Shimane and Tottori in the same manner when flowing from Ulleungdo as well. That means that the residents of Gangwon-do and Ulleungdo would have observed Dokdo, which is located between Gangwon-do and Shimane and Tottori, a number of times by riding the ocean currents.

Volume 234, 'Chapter on Goryeo,' of 'Dai Nihonshi' compiled by Mito-han, where the lord was a relative of Edo Shogunate is documented as follows.

"In 1004, residents of Ulleungdo, a region of Goryeo, drifted ashore and

reached Inaba. (ellipsis) Residents from Uruma Island drifted ashore during the Silla era, however, Uruma Island is the current Ulleungdo."

This record is a description on the incident where residents of Ulleungdo reached Inaba of Tottori. In addition, in Volume 34, Chapter on August of 'Annals of King Taejong' (1817), it is recorded that, "The Japanese raiders invaded Usan and Mureung." Usan indicated here refers to Usando, which is Dokdo. Mureung refers to Mureungdo, which is Ulleungdo, now. The Joseon dynasty started to mark Dokdo as Usando from the 15th century and began to clearly perceive Usando as a territory of Joseon. Accordingly, records remain as above showing that residents of Ulleungdo drifted ashore to Shimane or Tottori, dating from the Silla or Goryeo era.

However, 'Kojiki' or 'Nihon Shoki' also contains another story of 'Tensonkorin' (Descending from descendants of the gods). It is a story of Ninigi, a grandson of Amaterasu, the feminine god of Japan, descending down to Mount Takachiho of Kumamoto prefecture, Kyushu.

Interestingly, it is written that Ninigi descended to Mount Takachiho saying, "This is a very good land where Korea can be seen well." This story is interpreted as symbolizing the Korean race that went over to Kyushu from the southern part of the Korean peninsula, which is a different route from the one taken by the Korean race that went over to Izumo.

However, in reality, Korea cannot be seen from Mount Takachiho. Thus, the ancient Kumamoto residents attached the name 'Karakuni-dake (Korean mountain)' to the mountain located next to Mount Takachiho to supplement the story of Ninigi. The current Karakuni-dake is famous as an excellent hiking course.

However, according to myths, Ninigi's grandson Jinmu made a request to

Okuninushi, a descendant of Susano, to yield the entire land to him. In response, Okuninushi made a request to make a big shrine for himself in Izumo, and later bequeathed the land to Jinmu and became the ruler of the afterlife. This story can be interpreted to say that the Korean race represented by Amaterasu and Ninigi subdued the other Korean race of Izumo, represented by Susano and Okuninushi, and executed the representative. In reality, the god of Izumo Shrine, which remains as a huge shrine these days, is Okuninushi.

Afterwards, Jinmu, the grandson of Ninigi, suppressed the world by entering Nara area and became the first emperor of Japan. This line is the current family of the emperor of Japan that continues to this day in literature.

The descendants of Ninigi did not mark Dokdo as an indigenous territory of Japan in 'Kojiki' nor 'Nihon Shoki.' However, the source of the modern Dokdo issue was created as the residents of Shimane and Tottori, the descendants of Okuninushi, began to make visits to Ulleungdo and Dokdo in the 17th century. Prime Minister Abe, who stubbornly insists that Dokdo is a territory of Japan, is from Yamaguchi Prefecture, which is a neighboring prefecture on the west side of Shimane.

The rulers of Japan's emperor family did not regard Dokdo as a territory of Japan. However, the local residents of Shimane, who are offspring of Susano and Okuninushi, another line of descendants, began to insist that Dokdo is a territory of Japan. Naruhito, the current crown prince of Japan, stated that, 'Japan must maintain its current Constitution,' in a press conference held on his birthday in February 2014. On the other hand, the Abe administration is promoting the rearmament of Japan. According to myths, Jinmu, who became the first Japanese emperor and succeeded in the end. Knowing this, how will the current situation unfold?

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