

Diplomatic Stances of Japan in the 7th Century: Rivalry between the Pro-Silla and Pro-Baekje Factions

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With China united by Sui and then by Tang, East Asia was about to experience turbulent changes. What diplomatic stance could Japan take in such a tense situation? This study highlights changes in Japan's diplomacy through the 7th century, in the context of the rivalry between the pro-Silla and the pro-Baekje factions within the country. The following is a summary of the factors considered. First, early in the 7th century, Suiko Tenno [推古天皇] extended the country's diplomatic range to include Koguryo, Silla, Sui and others, escaping from the exclusive relationship with Baekje that had been maintained in the previous century. As a result, a bipolar structure of pro-Silla and pro-Baekje parties formed within Japan.

Secondly, the tension surrounding Japan's diplomatic stance still existed during the reigns of Jomei Tenno [舒明天皇] and Kogyoku Tenno [皇極天皇], the period of the 630s and 640s. It was only kept under the surface by Soga Uji [蘇我氏, the Soga family], one of the pro-Baekje officials in power.

Third, Kotoku Tenno [孝德天皇] took a pro-Silla/Tang line after replacing the Soga family through a coup in 645. But shortly thereafter, he encountered political opposition from Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko [中大兄皇子]. Realizing the pro-Silla/Tang forces were destroying Baekje, Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko demanded a revision of diplomatic lines, which help win the majority of the royal court over to his side. He succeeded in isolating Kotoku Tenno, took power, and eventually turned the country pro-Baekje.

Fourth, after Silla and Tang's allied forces destroyed Baekje in 660, Saimei Tenno [齊明天皇] and Tenji Tenno [天智天皇] dispatched troops to support the reconstruction of Baekje. But the Japanese marine force and the pro-Baekje forces were defeated by the allied forces.

Fifth, Tenmu Tenno [文武天皇], who came into power after Tenji Tenno, took a pro-Silla line to get through the diplomatic crisis. He kept the country open solely to Silla, exchanging envoys. But this was merely a stopgap measure to get the post-war situation under control.

Keywords: *Nihon Shoki* [日本書紀], Soga Uji [蘇我氏, the Soga family], Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko [中大兄皇子], Kotoku Tenno [孝德天皇], Pro-Baekje Foreign Policy, Pro-Silla Foreign Policy, Tang [唐], Kim Chun-chu [金春秋], *Samguk Sagi* [三國史記]

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I. Introduction

East Asia went through a period of turbulence in the 7th century, with China at the epicenter of the storm. As Sui united China in 589 and Tang emerged in 618, an ominous shadow loomed across the nations of East Asia. Subsequently, there was a great deal of contention among Sui, Tang and Koguryo for the leadership and domination of East Asia.

The conflicts didn't remain within the borders of China and Koguryo, but affected Baekje and Silla. There had been fierce fights among the three states in the Korean peninsula until Baekje and Koguryo fell and Silla rose as a united nation, which brought about a political cataclysm. In concert with these tumultuous changes in East Asia, Japan also experienced its own whirlwind of turmoil.

The ruling class of the Yamato Dynasty was under a great deal of tension, witnessing the rapidly changing relations between East Asian nations in the 7th century. The continent and the peninsula were the epicenter of the disturbance that reached Japan.

What was guiding Japan's diplomatic relations in the 7th century?

Setting aside Koguryo, the northern superpower, Baekje and Silla were constantly fighting. Japan could not be free from the influence of the two conflicting countries. For instance, having Kim Chun-chu [金春秋] visit Japan in 647 can be seen as pro-Silla, while the dispatch of troops to Baekje by Saimei Tenno [齊明天皇] and Tenji Tenno [天智天皇] represents a pro-Baekje orientation.

Traditionally, Japan's diplomatic stance reflected its relations with the regions and regimes in the Korean peninsula. From the mid-6th century, when Baekje and Silla dominated the southern part of the peninsula, the situations surrounding the two Korean kingdoms were a decisive factor in Japan's stance. Given this, it can safely be said that the pro-Silla and pro-Baekje lines shaped Japan's diplomacy, although it also had diplomatic interactions with Koguryo.

In the 7th century, when international relations were rapidly changing in the wake of severe wars, diplomacy was a matter affecting the destiny of the nation. In this regard, Japan's diplomatic stance at that time was also a major factor that affected its regime's rise and fall. Given that Japan is an ancient nation (Japan Dynasty) that came into being in the Japanese Archipelago in the late 7th century, against this historical backdrop, this study of Japan's diplomacy guidelines in the 7th century gives us important suggestions about the very formation of the nation.

II. Two Dominant Diplomatic Lines in the 620s

Japan maintained a close and exclusive relationship with Baekje throughout the 6th century. Baekje introduced scholars to Japan such as "Doctors of the Five Chinese Classics [五經博士]" and advanced culture including Buddhism; in return, Japan provided military assistance to Baekje. In this regard, the partnership between the two in the 6th century can be characterized as a sort of military mercenary exchange (Kim, 1985).

However, this exclusive pro-Baekje diplomacy needed to adjust to

the changing international situation in the late 6th century. At the center of this change stood the Sui Dynasty, as a newly united China was setting a new international order in East Asia.

The three states in the Korean peninsula actively and swiftly built relationships with Sui. Pivoting on the relations with Sui, the relationships amongst themselves were also rapidly readjusted. As is well known, Koguryo soon started a war against Sui, and its troubled relationship with Sui led it to strengthen ties with Japan in order to restrain Silla, the emerging power in the south (Kim, Park, Woo & Lee, 2003). In response, Silla made efforts to develop friendly relations with Japan, as well as with Sui (Kim et al., 2004). Baekje, too, tried to build advantageous surroundings for itself through diplomatic ties with Sui, even declaring military actions against Koguryo, although it really had no such intention.¹

Meanwhile, Yamato rulers pursued multifaceted diplomacy (Kim, 1985, Chapter 3). They not only continued close relations with Baekje but also established diplomatic relations with Koguryo and Silla from the end of the 6th century, adopting aspects of their cultures. In addition, Japan moved quickly to pursue closer relations with Sui, sending envoys first and actively seeking to develop diplomatic ties.² This period marked the resumption of Japanese-Chinese relations, 120 years after the tribute diplomacy with the Song Dynasty had ended in 478.

Japan's multifaceted approach to diplomacy was the result of changes in circumstances in the Korean peninsula due to Sui, and the support of Yamato rulers who were in favor of this diplomatic orientation. That is, Japan and Korea shared interests, as the Yamato

¹ Baekje was attacked by Koguryo for offering Sui to dispatch guide troops in the event of war breaking out between Sui and Koguryo. However, it was often secretly in league with Koguryo, even as it made such offers to Sui.

² According to *Suishu* [隋書, *The Book of Sui*], diplomacy toward Sui started in the 8th year of the reign of Suiko Tenno [推古天皇] (600 CE). The name of the envoy sent by Japan to Sui is not known.

regime sought to adopt advanced cultures from as diverse sources as possible, while Korea acknowledged the geographic significance of Japan, located southeast of the peninsula. But this multifaceted diplomatic approach doesn't mean that Japan had given up its original diplomatic line. As Kim Hyun-gu (1985, Chapter 3) pointed out, the multilateral diplomacy pursued during the reign of Suiko was within the context of a pro-Baekje stance.

However, with the multilateral diplomacy, conflicts between pro-Baekje and anti-Baekje factions came to the surface during the time of Suiko Tenno (r. 593-628), and are recorded in *Nihonshoki* [日本書紀, *The Chronicles of Japan*].

① *Nihonshoki*, Suiko Tenno, 31st Year

是歲，新羅伐任那。任那附新羅。於是，天皇將討新羅。謀及大臣，詢于群卿。田中臣對曰，不可急討。先察狀，以知逆後擊之不晚也。請試遣使覩其消息。中臣連國曰，任那是元我內官家。今新羅人伐而有之。請戒戎旅，征伐新羅，以取任那，附百濟。寧非益有于新羅乎。田中臣曰，不然。百濟是多反覆之國。道路之間尚詐之。凡彼所請皆非之。故不可附百濟。則不果征焉。爰遣吉士磐金於新羅，遣吉士倉下於任那，令問任那之事...

That year, Silla invaded Mimana, and Mimana became a feifdom of Silla. Thus the Empress wanted to attack Silla, and planned with the Senior Minister, and inquired of the ministers. Tanaka-no-Omi said in reply, "We cannot attack soon. First we must observe the circumstances, and know Silla's response, and after doing that, it will not be too late to attack. Try sending a messenger to take a look at the situation." Nakatomi-no-Muraji-Kuni said, "Mimana was originally our domain, and now the Sillans have invaded and taken it. We should prepare for battle and attack Silla, and take Mimana and attach it to Baekje. At any rate, it is better than letting Silla have it." Then Tanaka-no-Omi said, "No. Baekje is a country with many covered in rebellion, and in the time it takes to pass on the road they will deceive us, and all the things they

say cannot be believed. Therefore we cannot attack and give Mimana to Baekje.” As a result, they were not able to attack. Then the Empress dispatched Kishi-no-Iwakane to Silla and Kishi-no-Kuraji to Mimana, with orders to ask about the Mimana incident.

The record in ① concerns Japan’s military expedition against Silla in response to Silla’s incursion into Mimana’s [任那] territory. However, it hardly seems true that Silla indeed invaded Mimana at that time. As Kito Kiyooki (1976) has pointed out, the real cause behind Japan’s military action must be the conflict that surfaced in the royal court of Yamato, between the pro-Baekje line represented by the statement of Nakatomi-no-Muraji [中臣連國] and the pro-Silla line represented by the statement of Tanaka-no-Omi [田中臣]. That is, in the record above, the confrontation between two diplomatic lines at that time was transformed into an issue of Mimana recovery.

But ① also shows that the emergence of anti-Baekje voices at the end of Suiko’s reign suggests changes in Yamato’s old diplomatic policy, which had been dominated by the pro-Baekje line. Several incidents, including Baekje’s extortion of Yamato’s national literature during a Sui envoy Pei Shi Qing [裴世清]’s visit to Japan,³ are seen as relevant factors. The events described in the following document are believed to be the outcome of such incidents.

② *Nihonshoki*, Suiko Tenno, 7th Month of the 31st Year

新羅遣大使奈末智洗爾，任那遣達率奈末智，並來朝。仍貢佛像一具及金塔并舍利。且大觀頂幡一具·小幡十二條。即佛像居於葛野秦寺。以餘舍利金塔觀頂幡等，皆納于四天王寺。是時，大唐學問者僧惠齋·惠光·及醫惠日·福因等，並從智洗爾等來之。於是，惠日等共奏聞曰，留于唐國學者，皆學以成業。應喚。且其大唐國者，法式備定之珍國也。常須達。

³ *Nihonshoki*, Suiko Tenno, 6th Month of the 16th Year

The Sillans dispatched Nama Ji Seoni as grand ambassador, Mimana dispatched Tatsusotsu Namalji, and they came to the court. They brought as tribute a Buddhist statue, a golden tower, cremated remains, a baptismal flag, and 12 smaller flags. The Buddhist statue was set in Uzumasa Temple in Kadono. The cremated remains, golden tower, baptismal flag, and the rest were set in Shitenno temple. At that time, the student-monks Esai and Eko and the doctors Enichi, and Fukuin who had went to study in Tang, all came back following Ji Seoni. Then, Enichi and the others together reported, “Those who went to study in Tang have all succeeded in their studies and should be summoned back. Tang laws and rituals are prepared and established, and it is an excellent country. We should regularly have correspondence.”

Japanese representatives to Sui, accompanying the Chinese envoy Pei Si-Qing [裴世清], passed through Baekje while returning to their home in the 16th year of Suiko Tenno’s reign. But in the 31st year of Suiko, Hui Ri [慧日] and other envoys came back via Silla. This change in the route was not just a matter of traffic convenience, but has political implications.⁴ The fact that students and scholars studying abroad started to go by way of Silla instead of Baekje also has some significance with regard to Japan’s diplomacy. Silla territory was used as a route even though it implied Japan’s willingness to have closer relations with Silla, which means the Yamato court had supporters of such diplomatic alliance.

What should be noted by “其大唐國者，法式備定之珍國也。常須達 [Tang laws and rituals are prepared and established, and it is an excellent country. We should regularly have correspondence]” in ② is that the students and scholar monks themselves suggested the country promote

⁴ The political implication here means that decisions over the Silla route or Baekje route imply cooperation with the nation the route traverses and represent a political alliance between Japan and the nation; see Kim, Park, Woo & Lee (2003, pp. 66-67).

direct exchanges between Tang and Japan. Establishing diplomatic relations with Tang required Japan to cooperate with Tang's foreign policies; it was not possible to have hostile relations with Tang while trying to attain their advanced cultural products. Namely, the proposal reflected the pro-Tang movement growing within the Yamato court, which indicates further enhanced relations with Silla.⁵

Considering that the anti-Baekje forces were beginning to be formed in the Yamato court, as shown in ①, the route change would seem to be the other side of the coin to the emergence of this anti-Baekje faction. Through its multifaceted diplomacy, Japan was becoming more involved in the power structure in East Asia.

III. Diplomacy Lines during Jomei Tenno and Kogyoku Tenno's Reigns – Soja Uji in Power

Suiko Tenno's Period is also known as the Period of Soga Uji [蘇我氏] or the Soga family. At the top of the regime was an Ooomi [大臣, top minister], Soga-no-Umako-no-Ooomi [蘇我馬子大臣] (Lee, 1998). He came into power after surviving power struggles against a number of royal families and his rival family, Mononobe Uji [物部氏, the Mononobe family], after the death of Yomei Tenno [用明天皇] (r. 585-587). He helped Sushun Tenno [崇峻天皇], a Soga descent, ascend to the throne (r. 588-592),⁶ but assassinated him in the fifth year of his reign.⁷ Suiko Tenno was seated on the throne as the successor.

In the time of Suiko Tenno, Umayado-no-Miko [厩戸皇子] (i.e. Prince Shotoku [聖德太子]) was raised as a so-called political advisor. Some records hold that Prince Shotoku and Soga-no-Iname-no-Ooomi

⁵ The use of Silla for stops by students and scholar monks demonstrates Tang's diplomatic ties with Silla.

⁶ *Nihonshoki*, Sushun Tenno, Records on the Accession.

⁷ *Nihonshoki*, Sushun Tenno, 11th Month of the 5th Year

‘co-governed’ the country.⁸ But in practice, Soga Uji possessed the real power (Suzuki, 1983; Kadowaki, 1991). Both Prince Shotoku and Suiko Tenno belonged to Soga Uji’s royal family line.⁹ Above them were their maternal relatives, Soga Uji, which held the real power over the nation in their hands. This leaves us with the fact that Soga-no-Ooomi held the reins of government for 60 years during the Yamato regime, from when he took power in 587 to the Uprising of Eulsa [乙巳] in 645, a coup d’état that brought about the demise of the Soga family’s power.

After Suiko Tenno’s death in 628, Prince Tamura [田村皇子] (i.e. Jomei Tenno [舒明天皇]) acceded to the throne, confronting the opposition of King Yamashiro [山背王], son of Prince Shotoku, as well as that of the Soga family.¹⁰ The situation was temporarily settled when Soga-no-Emisi-no-Oomi [蘇我蝦夷大臣], son of Soga-no-Umako-no-Ooomi [蘇我馬子大臣], killed Soga-no-Marise [蘇我境部臣摩理勢], who had been persistent in his opposition.

Many view this event as part of a power struggle for the throne within the royal family. And by those who believe that Soga Uji failed to enthrone King Yamashiro, who was opposed by the whole body of officials [群臣層], it is often referred to as a historical example of the political dynamics of the Yamato regime (Harajima, 1960; Tamiya, 1989; Sato, 1994; Kato, 1998). I have examined the political dynamics as well, and concluded that the root cause of the conflict still remains unclear (Lee, 2002). On the surface level, it is true that the fight had characteristics typical of a conflict over ownership of the throne. However, to attribute

⁸ For example, it is stated in *Jogu Shotoku Hou Teisetsu* [上宮聖德法王帝說] as “小治田宮御宇天皇之世，上宮麻戶豐聰耳命・嶋大臣共輔天下政。” Translation: “During the period of the Emperor of Oharita Palace [Suiko Tenno], King Kamitsumiya [Prince Shotoku] and Shima-no-Ooomi [Soga-no-Ooomi] assisted the emperor together in ruling the country.”

⁹ The Soga clan’s royal family line starts from the marriage of Kitashi Hime [堅鹽媛] and Oane-no-Kimi [小姉君], two daughters of Soga-no-Iname-no-Ooomi, to Kinmei Tenno [欽明天皇], which is specifically described in the record of the 2nd Year of Kinmei Tenno, *Nihonshoki*.

¹⁰ *Nihonshoki*, Jomei Tenno, Records on the Accession

the foundation of this conflict simply to a matter of a prince being liked or disliked is implausible and an over-simplification.

It rather seems that the fight over diplomatic lines at the end of Suiko Tenno's reign shares common ground with the fight surrounding Jomei Tenno's accession to the throne. In other words, the diplomatic conflict that surfaced in the 31st year of Suiko is not unrelated to the political schism over Jomei Tenno's enthronement. This issue will not be fully discussed here, but the idea can be briefly stated as follows.

The answer to the mystery of Soga Uji's support for Prince Tamura, rather than their closest relative King Yamashiro, can be found in the fact that the Kaminomiya royal family [上宮王家], including Prince Shotoku and King Yamashiro, were pro-Silla. It is accepted that a special connection existed between the Kaminomiya family and the Hata clan [秦氏] from Silla (Kato, 1998; Nito, 1998), as well as Silla Buddhism (Hirano, 1969, p. 207). Some hold that the appearance of Prince Shotoku during the Suiko Period¹¹ was due to the intended multifaceted diplomacy of the openly pro-Baekje Soga in power, and this would add credibility to the well-known interpretation that Silla and the Kaminomiyas had close relations (Kim, 1985, pp. 305-322). This does not necessarily mean the Kaminomiyas were anti-Baekje, because it was unlikely that those in such a position would have publicly adhered to anti-Baekje policy. But it does imply that the Kaminomiyas were distinct from the Sogas and other pro-Baekje families in terms of their pro-Silla character, which could eventually stand out even more.

As mentioned previously, conflicts between the pro-Silla and the pro-Baekje started to become palpable at the end of Suiko's time. The pro-Silla King Yamashiro, who took the throne after Suiko's death, could have caused the Yamato State to become an absolutely pro-Silla regime. This explains why the pro-Baekje Soga family held themselves back

¹¹ *Nihonshoki* records that Prince Shotoku held the title of regent.

rather than supporting King Yamashiro.

The conflict over Jomei Tenno's throne was outwardly a power struggle, but underlying this was the continuing tension between pro-Silla and pro-Baekje forces that had been present since the end of Suiko. In this regard, it is wrong to ascribe the conflict over Jomei Tenno's throne simply to an internal power struggle in the Yamato court. Rather, it shows that the changing power structure in East Asia had begun to affect the very core of the Japanese regime and caused an internal dispute. That is, the trouble surrounding Jomei Tenno's throne was provoked by the international situation of the time.

The seeds of conflict still existed even after Jomei's reign had started, but were kept under the surface while Soga-no-Ooomi was in power. Although it was not obvious, evidence of the dormant conflict can be seen in the following two examples. First, Soga Uji kept pro-Tang scholars, such as the Monk Min [僧旻], who had studied in Tang, from being appointed. This is evidenced by the fact that most of the scholars who returned from Tang were spending time training younger students rather than holding important government positions until the Soga regime fell to a coup d'état in 645. Second, the regime seemed reluctant to improve relations with Tang. This is indicated by the rupture of negotiations with Gao Biaoren [高表仁], which was referred to in the records of Wa Kingdom from *Jiutangshu* [舊唐書, *Old Book of Tang*] as follows:

③ *Jiutangshu*, Records of Wa Kingdom [舊唐書, 倭國傳]

“遣新州刺史高表仁，持節往撫之。表仁無綏遠之才，與王子爭禮，不宣朝命而還”¹²

¹² *Nihonshoki* records Gao Biaoren's visit in the 8th and 10th months of the 4th year of Jomei Tenno's reign. It refers to his departure from Japan in the 1st month of the following year, but mentions no arguments with the Wa prince.

The governor of Xinzhou sent Gao Biaoren as an envoy to appease Japan. However, Gao Biaoren didn't have the diplomatic skill required for the task. Hence, he ended up quarreling with the prince over courtesy, and came back without achieving the mission given by the [Tang] emperor.

According to the document, Gao Biaoren, a Tang envoy to Japan, ended up having a quarrel with a Japanese prince over courtesy. The fraternal delegate was sent with a view to winning Japan to Tang's side, whose background included the Tang-Silla alliance (Kim, 1985). Gao Biaoren's visit can be interpreted as Tang's demand for a change in Japan's diplomatic line. This is significant in the sense that unlike the situation during the Sui Dynasty, Japan was being pressured to take a side.

Gao Biaoren's visit to Japan ended in discord, which means that the official diplomatic stance of the Yamato court was still pro-Baekje. But whatever Japan's intention was, tension surrounding international relations was building up in East Asia.

IV. Kotoku Tenno's Reign and Diplomacy Change

When Jomei Tenno died in 641, his wife succeeded the crown to become Kogyoku Tenno [皇極天皇]. Kogyoku Tenno's reign began with news of drastic changes in East Asia. News of political changes led by King Uija's¹³ and Yeon Gaesomun's coup d'état¹⁴ was heard in the first year of her reign, according to *Nihonshoki*. Japan was likely to have received the news of Baekje's attack on 40 castles¹⁵ and the taking of Daeya Fortress in Silla¹⁶ the next year. It is not difficult to imagine that the coups d'état

¹³ *Nihonshoki*, Kogyoku Tenno, 2nd Month of the 1st Year

¹⁴ *Nihonshoki*, Kogyoku Tenno, 2nd Month of the 2nd Year

¹⁵ *Samguk Sagi*, Baekjebongi (Annals of Baekje), King Uija, 7th Month of the 2nd Year

¹⁶ *Samguk Sagi*, Baekjebongi (Annals of Baekje), King Uija, 8th Month of the 2nd Year

and wars breaking out in the Korean peninsula would have alarmed the royal court of Yamato.

In the 11th month of the 2nd year of Kogyoku Tenno's reign, Soga Uji annihilated the whole Kaminomiya royal family,¹⁷ and in the following year, the Soga family strengthened their defense strategies by building fortresses around their house and mobilizing 50 security guards.¹⁸ The Kaminomiyas' fall is generally accepted as the result of a power struggle,¹⁹ but I believe that it was associated with the international situation at that time. The act of Soga Uji well represents the highly tense situation surrounding diplomacy in Japan, which has been well proven in the work of Kim Hyun-gu (1985).

The year 645 marks a critical moment in Japan's history. In 645, anti-Soga forces led a coup d'état (the Uprising of Eulsa [乙巳]) and had Soga-no-Iruka [蘇我入鹿], the central power figure, assassinated. The coup d'état concluded with the suicide of Soga-no-Ooomi, Soga-no-Iruka's father. With the collapse of the Soga family, a new regime emerged with Kotoku Tenno [孝德天皇] as its central power figure. This

¹⁷ *Nihonshoki*, Kogyoku Tenno, 11th Month of the 1st Year

¹⁸ “冬十一月.蘇我大臣蝦夷·兒入鹿臣,雙起家於甘樞岡.稱大臣家曰,上宮門.入鹿家曰,谷宮門.<谷.此云波佐麻.>稱男女曰王子.家外作城柵,門傍作兵庫.每門置盛水舟一,木鉤數十,以備火災.恒使力人持兵守家.大臣使長直於大丹穗山,造鉾削寺.更起家於畝傍山東.穿池爲城.起庫儲箭.恒將五十兵士,續身出入.名健人曰,東方儂從者.氏氏人等,入侍其門.名曰祖子孺者.漢直等,全侍二門” (*Nihonshoki*, Kogyoku Tenno, 11th Month of the 3rd Year). Translation: “Senior Minister Soga-no-Emishi and his son Iruka-no-Omi built houses next to each other at Umakashi Hill. Then the Senior Minister's house was called the capital of Ue-no-Mikado, and Iruka's house was called Hasama-no-Mikado. Their sons and daughters were called *miko* [Imperial Prince/Princess], and a wall was constructed outside their houses, and beside the gate they made an armory. At each gate they placed one water tank and ten or so hooked poles [used to pull down sections of wall or building] to protect against fire, and stationed armed guards to protect the house. The Senior Minister made Naga-no-Atai in Oionoyama build Hokonuki Temple, and also built a house in the east of Mt. Unebi, and dug a lake and made a castle, and made an armory and stored up arrows. He also had 50 soldiers, who surrounded him as bodyguards when he went in and out. These strong men were called Azuma-no-Shitobe, the Eastern Company. The people of the clan who attended on the gates were called Oya-no-Kowarawa. The Aya-no-Atai completely attended on their two gates.”

¹⁹ *Nihonshoki*, Kogyoku Tenno, 10th Month of the 2nd Year

is how what are known as the Taika Reforms [大化改新] happened. A group of nobles who brought about the Soga family's downfall, including Karu-no-Miko [輕皇子] (later Kotoku Tenno), Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko [中大兄皇子] (later Tenji Tenno [天智天皇]), and Kamatari [中臣鎌足], started to establish a royal family-centered regime. This *tenno*-centered power structure ultimately developed into an ancient form of the Japanese Absolute Emperor system, which was based on the Ritsuryo system [律令体制, Legal system] established from the late 7th century to the early 8th century. The Taika Reforms are said to have laid the foundation for the Japanese Absolute Emperor system, as it held on to the trend towards absolute rule by the centralized bureaucracy of the imperial court (Lee, 2005).

But it is important to note that the 645 coup d'état in the Yamato court was one of many rebellions in East Asia at that time. In that sense, Yeon Gaesomun's coup in Koguryo (641), the political upheaval during King Uija's reign in Baekje (642), the Uprising of Eulsa in Japan (645), and Bidam's rebellion in Silla (647)²⁰ can all be understood in the same context. That is, the coup d'état in the Yamato court was part of a chain of political upheavals in East Asia that happened in Koguryo, Baekje, Japan and Silla in sequence. And according to previous studies, the events shared one common cause: struggle for power (Ishimoda, 1971). After the Kingdom of Gochang [高昌國] surrendered in 640, tension between Tang and Koguryo increased, and it eventually triggered Koguryo's coup d'état, which then started a domino of coups d'état in the region. Tang's east-oriented policy, whose core objective was the conquest of Koguryo, started to affect all of East Asia.

This means that Japan's political upheaval was not isolated from the influence of the East Asian situation. There are a variety of views about diplomacy during Kotoku's reign. Some believe that pro-Silla

²⁰ *Samguk Sagi*, Sillabongi (Annals of Silla), Queen Seondeok, 16th Year

parties led by Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko and Kamatari succeeded in dragging the nation out of the previous pro-Baekje regime (Ishimoda, 1971, Chap. 1). Other theories include a split, dual diplomacy between the pro-Tang/pro-Silla and the pro-Baekje factions (Yagi, 1975), the continuance of policies favoring Baekje (Nishimoto, 1987), a balanced stance calculated to keep the tributary relations with the both countries (Kito, 1976), a revival of the multifaceted diplomacy of the Suiko Period (Yeon, 1998), and the return to the pro-Baekje line taken after failing to establish a tripartite coalition between Japan, Silla, and Tang in the Taika years (Kim, 1985, Book 4: Chap. 1-3).

As stated in the previous section, Kim Hyun-gu's theory that the pro-Baekje replaced the pro-Tang-Silla when Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko replaced Kotoku Tenno seems the most reasonable. This and the following citation lead us to the conclusion that the new Kotoku government was taking a pro-Tang and pro-Silla line.

④ *Nihonshoki*, Kotoku Tenno, 3rd Year of Taika

新羅遣上臣大阿滄金春秋等，送博士小德高向黑麻呂，小山中中臣連押熊。來獻孔雀一隻，鸚鵡一隻。仍以春秋爲質。春秋美姿顏善談笑。

Silla sent Senior Minister Daisan Kim Chunchu and others to accompany the scholar Kotoku Takamuka-no-Kuromaro and Middle Shosen rank Nakatomi-no-Muraji Oshikuma to come to court and offer the tribute of one peacock and one parrot. Chunchu was made a hostage. He was very beautiful and smiled often.

⑤ *Xintangshu* [新唐書, *New History of Tang*], Records on Japan

永徽初，其王孝德即位，改元曰白雉，……時新羅爲高麗百濟所暴，高宗賜璽書，令出兵援新羅。未幾孝德死，其子天豐財立。

In the early years of Yeonghwiwon, King Kotoku acceded to the throne and changed the era name to *Hakuchi*.... At that time, Japan was

harassed by Silla, Koguryo and Baekje. Gaozong sent Japan a document with the emperor's seal that ordered it to help Silla by sending troops. However, Kotoku died shortly thereafter, and his son Ametoyo-Takara succeeded to the throne.

As referred to in ④, Kim Chun-chu's visit to Japan implies that there were good relations between Silla and Kotoku Tenno's regime, because it was an unprecedented event for as central a political figure from Silla as a future king to visit Japan (Kim, 1985). He made a return visit for Takamuko-no-Kuromaro [高向玄理]'s call in 646,²¹ paving the way to enhanced relations between two nations via Tang.²² The record in ⑤ shows King Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty officially demanding military assistance from Japan in the third round of Takamuko-no-Kuromaro's visit in 654,²³ as Silla was being attacked by Baekje and Koguryo. From this, it can be inferred that Japan had made an agreement regarding military assistance to Tang some time earlier (Kim, 1985, pp. 465-466).²⁴ Gaozong was calling upon Japan to fulfill the previous contract. The fact that Tang could make this demand shows that the early Kotoku government pursued the pro-Tang and pro-Silla diplomatic line.

V. Changes in East Asia and Return to the Old Diplomatic Line

However, the following documents contradict the assumed pro-Tang/Silla stance of Kotoku Tenno's government, bringing up another side of the issue.

²¹ *Nihonshoki*, Kotoku Tenno, 9th Month of the 2nd Year of Taika

²² Kim Hyun-gu understands Kim Chun-chu's visit marks the beginning of the trilateral alliance.

²³ *Nihonshoki*, Kotoku Tenno, 2nd Month of the 5th Year of Hakuchi

²⁴ According to Kim Hyun-gu, the message delivered by Takamuko-no Kuromaro [高向玄理] was a refusal of military support.

⑥ *Nihonshoki*, Kotoku Tenno, 2nd Year of Hakuchi [白雉]

是歲. 新羅貢調使知萬沙淦等, 着唐國服, 泊于筑紫. 朝庭惡恣移俗. 訶噴追還. 于時, 巨勢大臣, 奏請之曰, 方今不伐新羅, 於後必當有悔. 其伐之狀, 不須舉力. 自難波津, 至于筑紫海裏, 相接浮盈艦舳, 徵召新羅, 問其罪者, 可易得焉.

That year, the Sillan tribute messenger Sasan Jiman arrived in Tsukushi, wearing clothes of Tang. The court was very angry that he had casually adopted this custom, criticized him, and sent him back. At that time, Senior Minister Kose said to the Emperor, “Now if we do not attack Silla, we will certainly regret it later. This attack need not be in earnest. From Naniwa port to Tsukushi, cover the surface of the sea with floating boats, then invite the Sillans and ask what their offense is, and they should easily give in.”

According to the record from 651 (2nd Year of Hakuchi [白雉]), Kose-no-Ooomi [巨勢大臣] insisted Japan go to war against Silla after receiving a Silla envoy dressed in Tang costume. This is unlikely to have happened in the very core of the regime, given its friendly relations with Silla. Nevertheless, an anti-Silla voice was among those at the highest levels, which brings us to the possibility of a diplomatic shift. Hostility towards Silla soon led to diplomatic apathy toward Tang, as Silla’s response to Yamato in the following documents suggests.

⑦ *Nihonshoki*, Saimei Tenno, 3rd Year

是歲. 使使於新羅曰, 欲將沙門智達·間人連御廩, 依網連稚子等, 付汝國使, 令送到大唐. 新羅不肯聽送. 由是, 沙門智達等還歸.

That year, a messenger was dispatched to Silla, saying, “We want the monk Chidatsu, Hashihito-no-Muraji Miumaya, and Yosami-no-Muraji Wakugo to be sent with the messengers of your country to Tang.” Silla did not receive this order, so the monk Chidatsu and the others came

home.

⑧ *Nihonshoki*, Saimei Tenno, 7th-12th Months of the 5th Year

遣小錦下坂合部連石布，大仙下津守連吉祥，使於唐國。仍以陸道與蝦夷男女二人示唐天子。伊吉連博德書曰，…客中有伊吉連博德奏。因即免罪。事了後，勅旨。國家來年必有海東之政。汝等倭客不得東歸。遂逗西京，幽置別處，閉戶防禁。不許東西困苦經年。

The Empress dispatched Lower Shokin Sakaibe-no-Muraji Iwashiki and Lower Daisen Tsumori-no-Muraji Kishi to Tang. They took an Emishi man and woman from Michiku to show the Emperor [of Tang]. According to the writing of Iki-no Muraji-Hakatoku, ... Among the guests, Ishi-no-Muraji Hakatoku made a statement to the court, and they were pardoned. When this matter was settled, afterwards the Emperor ordered, “Our country will next year certainly administrate the eastern sea-countries [Korea]. You guests from Yamato may not return to the east.” In the end, they were forced to stay in the western capital, and placed at separate locations. Their doors were blocked and they were prevented from going out, and not permitted to go east or west, and spent several years in hard times.

Silla turned down a request by Japanese monks for help to get to Tang at once, as ⑦ states.²⁵ Silla would have never refused this request formally made by a Japanese envoy if the Tang-Silla-Japan triangle had been solid. So here, we must understand this refusal as Silla’s response to Japan’s hostility that it had sensed.

Meanwhile, Tang imprisoned Japanese envoys before going on to the conquest of Baekje, as shown in the words of ⑧. The Tang-Silla

²⁵ In *Nihonshoki*, Saimei Tenno, 7th Month of the 4th Year, it is said that Shamen Zhitong [沙門智通] and Zhidal [智達] boarded a ship coming from Silla to enter Tang, but the ship was found to be not an official ship provided by the Silla court.

alliance evidently clashed with Japan's interests. Otherwise, there was no reason to have kept its war plans secret from Japan or its envoys by putting them in jail. Tang no longer considered Japan its ally, and this was reflected in the action. Japan had already started to be seen as a pro-Baekje nation by neighboring countries.

To sum up, the diplomatic line was not consistent through Kotoku Tenno's time. Rather, the records show that Japan was turning into a pro-Baekje country during this period. A power struggle between Kotoku Tenno and Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko was the background to a turning point in the diplomatic line.

⑨ *Nihonshoki*, Kotoku Tenno, 4th Year of Hakuchi [白雉]

是歲. 太子奏請曰. 欲冀遷于倭京. 天皇不許焉. 皇太子乃奉皇祖母尊. 間人皇后并率皇弟等. 往居于倭飛鳥河邊行宮. 于時公卿大夫. 百官人等皆隨而遷. 由是天皇恨欲捨於國位. 令造宮於山碕. 乃送歌於間人皇后曰.

That year, Hitsugi-no-Miko [the crown prince] said, "I want to move to the capital in Yamato." The Emperor would not permit it. Then the crown prince spoke to the Empress Dowager and Empress Hashihito, and leading all the imperial princes, they moved to Yamato, Asuka-no-Kawabe, to a temporary palace. At that time, the ministers and public officials all followed their lead. The Emperor resented this and wanted to abdicate the throne, and ordered they make a palace in Yamasaki, and then sent a song to Empress Hashihito.

Just as above, Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko suggested Kotoku return from Naniwa-no-Nagara-no-Toyosaki-no-Miya [難波長柄豐碕宮] to Asuka, but was rejected in 653. Then, Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko went back to Asuka along with Sumemioya-no-Mikoto [皇祖母尊] (Kogyoku Tenno), Hashihitono Himemiko [間人皇后] (Kotoku Tenno's consort), his brother (Ooama-no-Miko [大海人皇子]), and civil and military officials. Left to himself, Kotoku wanted to resign, and had a palace built on the mountain

side. His plan to relocate the capital to Naniwa [難波] was challenged by Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko, who moved the capital back to Asuka in Yamato Province in 653, and this reverted the political fate of the two royal figures.

So, what had caused this power struggle between Kotoku Tenno and Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko? There are two perspectives from which we can approach this conflict. One is the power structure. That is, a centralized power structure had been continued since the new regime after the Uprising of Eulsa. Unlike the cases in Koguryo or Baekje,²⁶ the 645 upheaval against the Soga family was led by allied royal families. The true picture of the uprising was Kotoku Tenno,²⁷ allied with Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko, bringing down the Sogas. But this soon changed in Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko's favor. This means that, although Kotoku held the leadership, the power structure wasn't given to a specific person in the first place, but rather was established and maintained by the united power of the two royal figures. This power sharing, in a sense, portended another fight among the nobles for exclusive power.

The other perspective that can be considered is international. The record in ⑨ shows Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko was supported by a majority of officials. I find the reason for this in the diplomatic issues of the times. Issues surrounding conflicting diplomatic lines that could determine the fate of the nation and the fight over power became intertwined amid the political turbulence in East Asia. The fall of Baekje to the coalition troops of Silla and Tang of China is likely the direct cause of the power struggle. This will be explained below (Lee, 2010).

²⁶ Yeon Gaesomun's uprising against his king resulted in concentrated power of a retainer, while King Uija had concentrated power as a monarch.

²⁷ Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko had been widely believed to be the leader of the Taika regime before Kadowaki Teiji (1993) raised questions about this assumption. Since then, the opinion that places Kotoku Tenno as the central figure of the 'Uprising of Eulsa' has been more widely accepted. Kim Hyun-gu (1985) and Touyama Mitsuo (1993) further provide evidence that supports the latter theory, which I also think more plausible.

As stated in the document below, it was Kim Chun-chu and Tang's Taizong [太宗] who designed the plan to destroy Baekje in the first place.

⑩ *Samguk Sagi*, Sillabongi, King Munmu, 11th Year (671)

大王報書云，先王貞觀二十二年 入朝，面奉太宗文皇帝恩勅。朕今伐高麗 非有他故，憐你新羅。攝乎兩國，每被侵陵。靡有寧歲。山川土地，非我所貪。玉帛子女，是我所有。我平定兩國，平壤已南，百濟土地，竝乞你新羅 永為安逸。垂以計會。賜以軍期。

The king answered as follows: the late king [King Taejong Muyeol] had an audience of Taizong in the 22nd year of Zhenguan and received the royal edict in person, which stated, 'The reason why I try to attack Koguryo now is that I pity your country Silla for being constantly attacked by two countries and having no peaceful days. I desire neither your nature nor your land, and already have both riches and children that your country has. If I conquer those two nations, I shall give you Silla, all Baekje's land south of Pyeongyang, to have you live in peace.' Then, the emperor told [Kim Chun-chu] the plan, and decided the date for the military operation.

The citation from King Munmu [文武王]'s letter to Xue Ren Gui [薛仁貴] states that Taizong agreed that Baekje's territory and the districts south of Pyeongyang would be Silla's after defeating Koguryo and Baekje during Kim Chun-chu's visit in 648 (the 22nd year of Taizong). That is, Silla and Tang had already made a post-war plan far before the collapse of Baekje in 660. Such an agreement postulates their intention to start an aggressive war against Baekje,²⁸ although both Sui and Tang had mainly targeted

²⁸ *Samguk Sagi*, Sillabongi, King Jindeok, 2nd Year states, “春秋跪奏曰。臣之本國。... 而百濟強猾。屢肆侵凌。... 若陛下不借天兵剪除凶惡。敝邑人民盡為所虜。則梯航述職無復望矣。太宗深然之。許以出師。” Translation: “Chunchu kneeled down and said, ‘... Baekje is strong and cunning and has been constantly attacking us. Moreover, last year it invaded our country with a tremendous

Koguryo for war, but never Baekje before. The quotation above indicates changes in China's diplomatic policy.

In short, in 648, Silla successfully obtained a promise from Tang to form Silla-Tang coalition forces to attack Baekje. This pledge was secured by Kim Chun-chu, who had visited Japan in 647. In 649, Kim Da-su [金多遂], another envoy from Silla, was sent to Japan.²⁹ His visit, if Kim Chun-chu's visit to Japan was indeed to persuade them to join the coalition against Baekje, was highly likely to strengthen relations among Silla, Tang and Japan and to make sure the three stood on the same ground (Lee, 2010). In order to maintain the tripartite collaboration, Silla and Tang ought to have shared information with Japan before any action. Kim Da-su's visit is significant, as it marks the first time that Japan shared the concrete direction of the tripartite coalition.

The sharing of the plan made quite a splash within the Japanese regime, however. By taking a pro-Silla/Tang line, Japan realized that it would be part of Baekje's fall and the growth of Tang's empire, which could be disadvantageous to Japan.³⁰ This realization led to pro-Baekje voices being raised and gathering power. And in this, we find the reason why the pro-Silla line led by Kotoku Tenno, which had received support

number of troops, took dozens of castles and blocked the route to your country. If your majesty does not send troops to eliminate the evil herd, our people will all become prisoners and we won't be able to visit your majesty either, via land or sea.' At this, Taizong sympathized a great deal, and consented to send troops."

²⁹ *Nihonshoki*, Kotoku Tenno, 5th Year of Taika (649), records the following: "新羅王遣沙嚙部沙食金多遂爲質。從者三十七人。僧一人，侍郎二人，丞一人，達官郎一人，中客五人，才伎十人，譯語一人，雜人十六人，并三十七人也。" Translation: "The King of Silla sent Satakuho Sasen Kim Da-su as a hostage. His retinue numbered 37 people, including one monk, two jiro, one jo, one tatsukanro, five natsukanro, ten artists, one interpreter, and 16 other attendants."

³⁰ It seems unlikely that the pro-Silla parties foresaw Baekje's fall when starting the regime, because no records on that matter have been found dated earlier than 648. Japan was seeking routes for cultural exchange with Silla and Tang, and by doing so, it had alternatives to an exclusive relation with Baekje. That is, the decision was made due to the situation around East Asia in those times. But it is certain that they were agreeing on Silla and Tang's attack on Koguryo when taking sides, because China had been openly attempting to conquer Koguryo for generations. But war against Baekje must have been unexpected for Japan.

from the court by blocking anti-Baekje powers of the Soga family, started to lose ground to the other party.

Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko seized this chance to demand a new diplomatic standpoint, and succeeded in isolating Kotoku after the capital relocation affair. Kose-no Ooomi's argument that Japan should go on a conquest of Silla (when a Silla envoy came to Japan in Tang's costume in 651) is thus understood to be the trigger for the growth of the anti-Silla movement (Refer to ⑥). And the completion of the 180-degree shift was well symbolized by the return of the Royal Palace in Asuka in 653, which is described in ⑨.

The historical records of *Samguk Sagi* state that Japan and Baekje formed a close friendship on August 653,³¹ which refers to Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko's attempts to bring about a rapprochement with Baekje. With his decision to stand by Baekje's side, Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko won the majority over and took over the reign from Kotoku Tenno.

VI. Conclusion – Rationale for the Rescue of Baekje vs. Postwar Settlement

Baekje was destroyed by the allied troops of Silla and Tang in 660. Soon, Bok Sin [福信] and Do Chim [道琛] gave rise to Baekje revival movements. At the same time, they called on Japan for military assistance. Saimei Tenno, the mother of Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko, was on the throne succeeding Kotoku Tenno at that time, and adhered to the national stance of favoring Baekje. Military troops were soon dispatched to aid the Baekje revival forces after Japan learned of the fall of Baekje. Japanese troops convened in southern Baekje to confront Tang's naval forces in the Battle of Baekchon River, but the battle failed.³² Baekje's

³¹ *Samguk Sagi*, Baekjebongi, King Uija, 8th Month of the 13th Year

³² *Nihonshoki*, Tenji Tenno, 8th Month of the 2nd Year, records the result of the battle.

bulwark of Juryu Fortress, the stronghold of the revival movement, fell to the hands of the Silla forces.³³ This resulted in the collapse of the Baekje revival movement, and prompted Japan to strengthen its defense system, including capital relocation³⁴ and barricade enforcement.³⁵

However, the situation of East Asia was progressing in an unforeseen direction. A fierce battle between Silla and Tang occurred after the fall of Koguryo in 668. This put Japan, which feared invasion by the Silla-Tang coalition forces, in a position that required a new diplomatic stance: the pro-Silla line.

Temmu Tenno [天武天皇] brought on the so-called Jinshin [壬申] Uprising, took power, and conformed strictly to a pro-Silla line. He achieved unprecedentedly close relations with Silla to protect his nation while keeping diplomatic cessation with Tang. Silla, as well, whose relations with Tang had soured, sought to expand its sphere of influence to include Japan, its former enemy. As mentioned previously, the Yamato nobles in the later period of Kotoku Tenno perceived the close alliance between Tang and Silla as a threat, and moreover, Saimei Tenno and Tenji Tenno fought a war against the Silla-Tang coalition troops. Given this situation, Temmu Tenno and Jito Tenno apparently sought intimate relations with Silla, through which they tried to help Japan escape its vulnerable position.

The collapse of Baekje and the manner in which the postwar period played out might have confirmed Japan's fears. After all, Tang's stance toward Japan was a matter closely related to the country's destiny. As well, Naka-no-ooe-no-Miko's stance of favoring Baekje was a means of

³³ *Nihonshoki*, Tenji Tenno, 9th Month of the 2nd Year.

³⁴ *Nihonshoki*, Tenji Tenno, 3rd Month of the 6th Year, records thus: “遷都于近江。是時天下百姓不願遷都。諷諫者多。童謠亦衆。日々夜々失火處多。” Translation: “The capital was moved to Oomi. At that time, the people of the realm did not want the capital to be moved, and there was much recitation and repeating of songs. Day and night there were many fires.”

³⁵ A barricade had never been seen in Japan prior to this, which well demonstrates the sense of crisis prevailing within the country.

coping with international threats, while the return to the pro-Silla line seems to have been carried out as a follow-up measure after the war.

Overall, Japan seems to have made a strategic alliance with Silla that was based on the common interests Silla and Japan shared in the face of Tang's empire-building, rather than the relation between the two nations per se. The Silla-Japan relation was based on an agenda, as the manner in which the situation played out would have affected its shape, even had events gone in the opposite direction. As such, a new approach could feasibly have been pursued by either party once the situation surrounding Tang was settled.

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