**The Yamato Kingly Power and Rituals on Okinoshima Island**

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**Abstract:** It has been pointed out since early that state-related rituals on Okinoshima Island were performed under the participation of the Yamato kingly power (yamato ōken). However in the past, it is conventionally considered that the Yamato kingly power was established at the beginning of 4th century and advanced into the Kyūshū region in the first half of the century and further into the Korean peninsula in the second half of the century. It is also conventionally considered that rituals were intended to pray for a safe voyage following the advance of the Yamato power. However, it is conceivable that the establishment of the Yamato power dates back to the mid-3rd century, while it is hardly conceivable that the Land of Wa (wakoku) autonomously advanced into the Korean peninsula in the second half of the 4th century. This is because it is presumable that Paekche (Baekje) intended to tie up friendly relations with the Land of Wa against Koguryo (Koguryo, Goguryeo) advancing into the southern part of the peninsula in the second half of the 4th century and then the Land of Wa dispatched troops to the peninsula at the request of Koguryo. Rituals on Okinoshima Island may have been launched concurrently with the dispatch. It seems that rituals were actually undertaken by the Munakata forces, yet in the Munakata region, large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound were constructed one after another especially from the second half of the 5th century to the 6th century. This suggests that the Munakata forces played a major role also in the negotiations between Wa and Korea.

**Keywords:** Okinoshima ritual site, three goddesses of Munakata, Yamato kingly power, Wa-Korea negotiation route, large keyhole-shaped tombs, Munakata clan, Minuma-no-Kimi, Paekche (Baekje), Silla, Koguryo (Koguryo, Goguryeo), Japanese envoys to the Tang Dynasty

1. **Introduction**

Such a notion has been already proposed very early that rituals or the kami worship at Okinoshima, a solitary island in the Genkai Sea were not executed solely by a local powers in northern Kyūshū but at a state level in connection with external negotiations conducted by the Yamato polity (yamato seiken) or Yamato kingly power (yamato ōken). This notion is derived from the results of archaeological investigations into ritual sites at Okinoshima which started in 1954 as well as philological study which indicates the important position in the myths of the **kojiki** and **nihonshōki** of the three goddesses of Munakata as objects of worship at the Munakata Shrine and worshiping Okinoshima as Okitsu-Miya.

In the report of the Series 1 investigation of the Okinoshima ritual site carried out from 1954 to 1955, it is noted that rituals can be considered to have a state-related character, judging from the presence of a variety of imported objects, including Silla type horse trappings and cut glass and moreover Tang Dynasty three-colored glazed ware (tōsansai) [Munakata Shrine Revival Association, 1958]. In the report of the Series 2 investigation carried out from 1957 to 1958, the discovery of gorgeous votive offerings, including many bronze mirrors dating back in the second half of the 4th century at site no. 17 on Okinoshima is considered to show that rituals were established not only with the support of a local force but also as for state deities of “the Yamato court” (yamato choi) [Munakata Shrine Revival Association, 1961].

Moreover, in the report of the Series 3 investigation carried out from 1969 to 1971, the results of three excavations at Okinoshima are summarized together with a comprehensive study based on the history of foreign negotiations conducted by ancient Japan. The report presents such a view that the establishment of rituals on Okinoshima in the second half of the 4th century was initiated by the Yamato polity which embarked on close foreign negotiations with Paekche and other kingdoms on the Korean peninsula. Moreover, it is pointed out that the discontinuance of Japanese envoys to the Tang Dynasty may be considered to be a reason why the rituals came to end toward the end of the 9th century or the beginning of the 10th century. This very clearly leads to such a notion that Okinoshima was the very site of state-related
rituals connected with foreign negotiations by the Yamato polity or the ancient Ritsuryō state [Series 3 Okinoshima Scientific Investigation Team, 1979].

These opinions of the people concerned with this Series 3 investigation about the fundamental character of the Okinoshima rituals have been subsequently passed on to many researchers whether in archaeology or history which is based on written documents. Those are opinions formed on the basis of the results of three series of investigations carried out at Okinoshima more than 40 years ago from 1954 to 1971. Needless to say, we should respect the conclusions of the people in charge because they are based on the results of very significant on-site investigations. Since then, however, remarkable progress has been made in 40 years up to now in archaeological research concerning the Kofun period and the connections with the Korean peninsula in those days and ancient history research based on written records relevant to the process of forming the Yamato kingly power (yamato ōken) and their foreign negotiations. For example, it is conventionally considered that the emergence of the standard type of keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound (teikeika zenpō kōen fun) and the establishment of the Yamato polity (yamato seiken) or Yamato kingly power (yamato ōken) as their background date back to the last third of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century. In recent years, however, there is an increase in the number of researchers who seek their establishment in or after the middle third of the 3rd century.

If we take these recent findings of Japanese archaeological and ancient history research into consideration, how can we interpret the relation between Okinoshima rituals and the Yamato kingly power? It seems that we do not need to change the fundamental notion that Okinoshima rituals were connected with foreign negotiations conducted by the Yamato polity or the Yamato kingly power. However, it is rational to discern difference in the understanding of Okinoshima rituals, especially their establishment according to the stage of the research. In the older research literature, the Yamato kingly power was considered to have been established in the 4th century, while at the present stage, researchers seek the date of establishment in the middle third of the 3rd century. It seems that the results of recent studies enable us to clarify the fundamental character of Okinoshima rituals more clearly. From this point of view, the author will re-examine anew the relation between Okinoshima rituals and the Yamato power, especially the Yamato kingly power in consideration of recent progresses in the history research of ancient Japan.

The author distinguishes “the Yamato polity” (yamato seiken) from “the Yamato kingly power” (yamato ōken). As a result of progress in the post-war Japanese archaeological research, the Kofun period has come to be understood as an period during which political heads across the Japanese archipelago except for the northern and southern parts formed a alliance of the heads on the initiative of great chiefs of Yamato and Kawachi located in the central part of the Kinki region. In this respect, it seems that this nationwide political alliance itself should be distinguished from a political force in the central part of the Kinki region, which was later called Kinai (ancient provinces in the immediate vicinity of Kyōto and Nara: Yamashiro, Yamato, Settsu, Kawachi, Izumi). From this standpoint, the author would like to declare at first that he calls the former alliance of the heads “the Yamato polity” and the later force “the Yamato kingly power” that took the leadership in the alliance [SHIRAISHI 1999].

2. Existing Theories about the Relation between Okinoshima Rituals and the Yamato Kingly Power

First of all, let us take a glance into theories about the relation between Okinoshima rituals and the Yamato kingly power which have been proposed on the basis of the results of the Okinoshima ritual site investigations carried out after the end of World War II.

The Series 1 investigation from 1954 to 1955 was a full-scale survey conducted for the first time with regard to the distribution of the gigantic rock group near Okitsu-Miya of the Munakata Shrine located halfway up the south slope of Okinoshima Island and ritual sites around the rocks and accompanied by the excavation of sites no. 4, 7, 8 and 16. Various votive offerings were discovered at these sites. In particular, at site no. 7 dating back in the first half of the 6th century, pieces of Iranian cut glass and splendid gilt bronze horse trappings seemingly made in Silla were excavated together with a mirror with an inner field of pearl relief design (shumon kyō) and a gold finger ring and moreover, pieces of Tang Dynasty three-colored glazed ware were also discovered in the western part of the site. In the report, KAGAMIYAMA Takeshi
who headed the investigation team made the following remarks based on the excavation of objects seemingly of Silla lineage, including the gold finger ring and gilt bronze horse trappings etc. as follows:

“Turning to history books, we can find many articles on conflict and dispute with Silla in the time called the Late Kofun period. If we consider relics at Okinoshima in view of such historical disputes, a simple idea will come across our mind that they were trophies or objects to pray for victory. However, this interpretation needs to be closely examined. If anything, we would like to derive an unrecorded aspect of cultural exchange from the tense international relationships with Silla. (Passages omitted.) Although it is not a relationship limited to one kingdom on the peninsula from which culture spread widely from the west, the position of Silla will have a subtle effect on the consideration of the route through. Despite being unfortunately broken into small pieces, glass vessels are also relics which can link us to the west as objects discovered in the Silla mounded tombs give us a precious connecting link.”

He suggests that culture from the west was accepted via Silla. Looking at the whole picture it appears appropriate that we do not necessarily have to consider rituals in connection with war against Silla. Moreover, he points out a possibility of state-related rituals on Okinoshima stating as follows:

“As time passes, pieces of Tang Dynasty three-colored glazed ware are also notable imported objects. These relics are also found although rarely in the Japanese mounded tombs. Judging from abundant ritual objects on Okinoshima, it is presumable that the character of the rituals is not a privilege exclusive to northern Kyūshū gained through unique circumstances there, it bears a state-related coloring.” [KAGAMIYAMA 1958]

In Series 2 investigation subsequently conducted from 1957 to 1958, sites no. 17, 18 and 19 were investigated around the huge rock “I”, the highest place inside the gigantic rock group at the Okinoshima ritual site. Among these sites, no. 17 as well as no. 18 are the oldest of the group of Okinoshima ritual sites and various objects were discovered there, including 21 bronze mirrors. They are common to grave goods of the Early Kofun period. In the report, HARADA Dairoku in charge of the analysis of the excavated mirrors comments about the group of bronze mirrors found at site 17 as follows:

“(Passages omitted.) Who undertook this offering then? (Passages omitted.) These things may have been en bloc offered from a certain region. If we regard a powerful clan in Kyūshū as an entity which offered en bloc 21 mirrors and other objects, what will turn out? As many as 21 bronze mirrors have not been found together buried in any of the graves of the mounded tombs (kofun) dating back to Early Kofun period culture in Kyūshū, though it may be possible in the case of the Yayoi culture. The highest number of mirrors is 14 found in Buzen-ishizuka-yama tomb. (Passages omitted.) Not even one of the mirrors of Class A found at site 17 on Okinoshima is reported to be found in Kyūshū. Guessing from mirrors of the same type and similar ones found in Kinai, it is presumable that there was no power other than the Yamato court in Kinai that could offer so many things.” [HARADA 1961]

KAGAMIYAMA Takeshi who headed the investigation team also summarized as follows:

“It could be understood that the rituals of the Munakata deities were established not only in the context of a local independent force but also for state deities of the Yamato court.” He understands that the Munakata deities themselves are state deities of the Yamato kingly power [KAGAMIYAMA 1961].

Finally, in the Series 3 investigation conducted from 1969 to 1971, sites no. 1, 4, 5, 6, 18, 20, 21 and 22 were investigated. In this investigation, plenty of gorgeous offerings were excavated at site no. 5, including gilt bronze dragon heads and Tang Dynasty three-colored glazed ware. But more important is that the investigations of site no. 7 (7th century) and site no. 1 (8th to 9th century) revealed the continuation of rituals at Okinoshima sites from the Asuka to the Nara period and until the beginning of the Heian period and the actual condition of ritual sites and artifacts in these periods. In the report containing these results of the Series 3 investigation along with those of the first and second one, OKAZAKI Takashi, chief of the investigation undertook a summary evaluation of the Okinoshima ritual sites. It is pointed out in the report that rituals on Okinoshima started from a stage classified as rituals on top of a rock exemplified by sites no. 17 and 18 around huge rock “I”. This phase began in the second half of the 4th century equal to a new phase of the Early Kofun period featured by bracelet-shaped stone objects composed of hoe-shaped
Moreover, examining the role of the Munakata deities in the Ritsuryō kings of Wa period of the 5th century. Munakata deities continued even during and after their exchange with the Southern Dynasties in the “five Munakata-no-Kimi in Tsukushi”. He considers that such a relationship between the Yamato polity and the new rituals and offerings to the Munakata deities that had been “deities worshiped by Munakata-no-Kimi”, a powerful clan. Therefore, he continues that the Yamato polity began to worship with new rituals and offerings to the Munakata deities that had been “deities worshiped by Munakata-no-Kimi in Tsukushi”. He considers that such a relationship between the Yamato polity and the Munakata deities continued even during and after their exchange with the Southern Dynasties in the “five kings of Wa” period of the 5th century.

Moreover, examining the role of the Munakata deities in the Ritsuryō period, OKAZAKI Takashi reasons that they played a certain role in the dispatch of the Japanese envoy to the Tang Dynasty and negotiations with the unified Silla. Referring to site no. 1, the latest of Okinoshima ritual sites in the second half of the 9th century or the beginning of the 10th century and the end, he points out that the discontinuance of the state level Japanese envoy to the Tang Dynasty is one of possible reasons for the discontinuation of state-related rituals on Okinoshima.

The general examination and evaluation of Okinoshima ritual sites by OKAZAKI Takashi in the Series 3 investigation report is critically important. In the preceding first and second reports, the assumption that rituals on Okinoshima were state-related ones held by the Yamato polity was merely a product of the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of gorgeous imported objects and bronze mirrors dedicated to Okinoshima. On the contrary, OKAZAKI specifically places the processes of establishing, developing and discontinuing Okinoshima rituals in the Japanese history of external negotiations in the period of 4th to 9/10th centuries and clearly highlights the important role of Okinoshima rituals in the history of external negotiations by the Yamato polity and the Ritsuryō state.

With regard to the roles of the Munakata deities and Okinoshima rituals in the dispatch of Japanese envoys to the Tang Dynasty among others considered by OKAZAKI. As OKADA Seishi points out, at the beginning of the 8th century, the route of the Japanese envoy was changed from north to south and envoy ships stopped passing by Okinoshima Island. If this is taken into account, it will be hard to consider that special rituals were performed at Okinoshima in connection with the Japanese envoy to the Tang Dynasty until the discontinuance [OKADA 1985]. Moreover, it can hardly be evaluated that among other deities throughout the Japanese archipelago, including the Ise Grand Shrine, the Munakata deities played a major role, such as action against Silla pirates. There is still a question about the evaluation of the Munakata deities to be considered. Nevertheless, as far as the state-related character of Okinoshima rituals at least in the stage of the Kofun period is concerned, it may be said that its evaluation has been affirmed by the Series 3 investigation report based on the results of the first and second investigations. In particular, as for the inception of Okinoshima rituals which can be gathered from Paekche-related historical records cited in the section of the time of Empress Jingi in the Nihonshoki, should it not be highly evaluated that he clearly points out the relevance to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Paekche in the second half of the 4th century?

A monograph entitled “Rituals on Okinoshima Island in Ancient Japan” written by INOUE Mitsusada specializing in the philological study of Japanese ancient history in 1978 was published about one year before the publication of the Series 3 investigation report [INOUE 1978]. Prior to writing it, however, INOUE received some advice and instructions YUBA Tadanori with regard to the results of the investigation and how the study team understood the results of the investigation [INOUE 1978] YUBA participated in the Series 3 investigation and the compilation of the report. Therefore, the monograph tells us how a researcher of ancient history based on written records understood the standpoint OKAZAKI Takashi who placed Okinoshima rituals in the history of external exchange by the Yamato polity based on the results of the Okinoshima ritual site investigations. In the monograph INOUE attempted several examinations of many problems raised by the results of the investigation from a philological point of view. A question, among others, in which INOUE had the highest interest is whether “Ritsuryō rituals” or their precursory form can be considered to already have resided in the third stage of the Okinoshima rituals. Despite being extremely interesting, this question will not be examined here because it is not directly
relevant to this paper “The Yamato Kingly Power and Rituals on Okinoshima Island”.

INOUE argues as follows:

“The Yamato kingly power put northern Kyūshū under its control at latest at the beginning of the 4th century and expanded its power to southern Korea for iron resources from the middle third of the century on. The cultural expression of their power is the kofun culture, which emerged in Kinai at the beginning of the 4th century and gradually expanded to Kyūshū extensively and deeply throughout the 4th century. The Yamato kingly power’s control penetrated into Kyūshū and expanded to southern Korea. Is this situation itself not a real historic background of the fact that the Yamato kingly power came to take a hand in Munakata rituals which had been primarily performed by a local powerful clan in Tsukushi? When the Yamato kingly power embarked on advancing into southern Korea from the base in northern Kyūshū, the safety of voyage from Japan to Korea necessarily became a main problem. Then, we can find it significant to prove archaeologically the participation of the Yamato kingly power in rituals on Okinoshima at latest at the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 5th century.”

As clearly shown in the above-mentioned excerpt, the notion that the Yamato kingly power started advancing into northern Kyūshū at the beginning of the 4th century was based on the results of archaeological research in those days with regard to the establishment of mounded tombs and their transmission to the east and the west. In the archaeological circles in the 70s, KOBAYASHI Yukio’s view became almost an established theory that the emergence of mounded tombs could date back to the beginning of the 4th century or at earliest the last third of the 3rd century [KOBAYASHI 1961]. It need hardly be said that INOUE accepted this theory in understanding the establishment and development of the Yamato kingly power. INOUE understands that the Yamato kingly power was probably established toward the last third of the 3rd century and advanced into northern Kyūshū at the beginning of the 4th century and further into the southern part of the Korean peninsula for iron resources in the second half of the century. At that stage, the Yamato kingly power prayed for the safety of voyage to the Korean peninsula and came to take a hand in rituals on Munakata Okinoshima Island which had been primarily local rituals of a powerful clan in Tsukushi. This understanding was not limited to INOUE Mitsusada himself but common to many researchers of ancient history. It is probably a natural conclusion as far as the emergence of mounded tombs is understood in connection with the establishment of the Yamato kingly power and people accept the results of archaeological research showing the emergence of mounded tombs in northern Kyūshū at the beginning of the 4th century.

Earlier than INOUE’s monograph, UEDA Masaaki specializing in ancient history based on written records published a book “The Century of the Great Kings”. In this book, he expressed his own opinion about the character of Okinoshima rituals from a slightly different point of view than INOUE [UEDA 1973]. UEDA clearly recognizes the dual aspects of three goddesses of Munakata, namely goddesses with an intrinsic character deified by the Munakata clan and goddesses to pray for voyages made by the central power. However, he argues that “the remains on Okinoshima are no more than ritual sites and cannot be regarded as a military base for sending troops to Korea.” As the goddess of “Kaithokudōchū”, Okinoshima has many objects of Korean peninsula lineage, which “tell us that not only the course from Japan to Korea but also the course from Korea to Japan were swirling.” He suggests such a possibility that rituals were also performed upon the voyage from Korea to Japan. It is certain that relics on Okinoshima include weapons, defensive equipment and weapon-shaped ritual utensils, which are, however, not excellent compared with ritual sites in this time across Japan but rather low in relative importance. His argument seems to be important as a criticism against such an illogical interpretation that rituals which have survived up to now on Okinoshima are regarded as sites of military rituals accompanying the dispatch of troops to Korea.

INOUE Mitsusada understands Okinoshima rituals in connection with the advance of the Yamato kingly power into the Korean peninsula after the second half of the 4th century. On the contrary, OKAZAKI Takashi points out the start of close exchange between the Land of Wa and Paekche in the second half of the 4th century according to the section of the time of Empress Jingū in the Nihonshoki and the inscription on the seven-branched sword (shichishitō) in the report of the Series 3 investigation introduced earlier in this paper. He indicates that the inception of rituals on Okinoshima is concurrent with the start of those exchanges. As a prerequisite for the start, OKAZAKI understands that the 4th century was a chaotic time following the southward advance of northern horse-riding people, during which the exchanges between the
Land of Wa and the Wei Dynasty and the Daifang Commandery of the Jin Dynasty seen in the 3rd century were completely broken off. According to OKAZAKI, exchanges with Paekche as an emerging force became possible for the first time in the second half of the 4th century. They had the same significance as former exchanges with the Daifang Commandery and indispensable for securing iron resources and advanced technology and culture. It is difficult to bring the start of those exchanges forward to the first half of the 4th century when chaotic times prevailed on the Korean peninsula.

In other words, whereas INOUE Mitsusada emphasized such an internal situation that the Yamato kingly power was established, expanded to northern Kyūshū and advanced into the Korean peninsula iron resources, OKAZAKI put emphasis on external changes in international circumstances in a broad perspective of changes in Asian circumstances where external exchanges became possible in the second half of the 4th century. Under such objective circumstances, it was considered to be essential for the Yamato kingly power to secure the cooperation of the Munakata clan. However, he does not necessarily clarify why it was the Munakata clan that the Yamato kingly power chose from among other forces, such as Ito and Na in the western part of the Genkai Sea that took the initiative in foreign exchanges in the Yayoi period. He does not necessarily explain clearly what momentum made the Land of Wa resume exchanges with the Korean peninsula in that period.

ODA Fujio who participated in all three investigations on Okinoshima compiled a book entitled “Thinking about Ancient Times – Okinoshima Island and Rituals in Ancient Japan” in 1988. In this book, he wrote an essay “Kaihokudōchū – The Continent and Okinoshima Rituals [ODA 1988]. ODA, like OKAZAKI Takashi, referring to the inscription on seven-branched sword and the section of the time of Empress Jingū in the Nihonshoki, emphasizes that diplomatic relations with Paekche were launched in the second half of the 4th century and the intervention of the Wa polity into the Three Kingdoms (sangoku) conflict was made known. Then, taking into consideration the inception of Okinoshima rituals in that period, he argues as follows:

“Intrinsically, three goddesses of Munakata were local ones for voyages administered by the Munakata clan. In the second half of the 4th century, however, when the Yamato (Wa) polity began to intervene into the military conflict on the peninsula, frequent traffic via the “Kaihokudōchū” route was suddenly highlighted. Then, “Kinai-type rituals” (state-related rituals) were established with the support of the Wa polity.”

In the 5th century when five kings of Wa reigned, he continues:

“The safety of voyage was not secured unless they ask for a divine message from the goddesses upon the dispatch of troops to the peninsula”; and therefore

“Concerning the diplomacy of the Yamato polity the establishment of a status as important state deities”

Moreover, he argues that the end of Okinoshima rituals can be understood in connection with the discontinuance of Japanese envois to the Tang Dynasty.

Thus, among researchers in archaeology and ancient history who considered the character of Okinoshima rituals based on the results of the scientific investigations on Okinoshima carried out in three stages, it was fundamentally the general understanding of the character, in spite of more or less difference in a subtle nuance that state-related rituals were performed to pray for the safety of voyage along with the advance of the Yamato kingly power into the Korean peninsula that started in the second half of the 4th century. Among them, more attention should be paid to the opinion of UEDA Masaaki who pointed out the risk of regarding ritual sites merely as military ones for the dispatch of troops to ancient Korea.

In the foregoing paragraphs, the author has introduced various theories about the relation between Okinoshima rituals and the Yamato kingly power proposed until the 1980s by researchers in archaeology and ancient history. Contrary to the conventional notion of the fundamental character of Okinoshima rituals, if we review the relation between Okinoshima rituals and the Yamato kingly power based on the remarkable development of mounded tombs and the results of archaeological research on that time, how can we understand it? In the following, the author would like to state his own view of this matter.
3. Re-examination of the Formation Phase of the Okinoshima Rituals

As for the iwakura (the “rock-abode” or dwelling place to which the deity descends from heaven temporarily) group consisting of huge rocks in the periphery of Okitsu-Miya of the Munakata Shrine located halfway up the south slope of Okinoshima Island and ancient rituals executed around them, the outline of them has been almost clarified as a result of the scientific investigations carried out in three stages from 1954 to 1971. The results of the investigations showed the transformation of rituals on Okinoshima in four stages: i.e., rituals on top of rocks in the first stage; rituals in the shade of a rock in the second stage; rituals performed partly in the shade of a rock and partly in the open air in the third stage; and rituals in the open air in the fourth stage. At ritual sites in the first stage, objects common to grave goods found in mounded tombs dating from the 4th to 5th centuries were excavated, including bronze mirrors, beads, bracelet-shaped stone objects, iron weapons, agricultural tools etc.. In the second stage, besides accessories and horse trappings common to grave goods in Late Kofun period, iron miniatures (hinagata) and soft stone imitations of objects (sekisei mozōhin) etc. were also added to the ritual objects. Moreover, in the third stage, a large quantity of pottery for rituals appeared, while ritual paraphernalia like metal miniatures and pottery for rituals were accompanied by small jars of Nara three-colored glazed ware (narasansai), bronze mirrors, bronze bells, coins etc. and moreover as of a large number of ritual objects unique to Munakata like steatite (soapstone) representations of objects (katashiro), such as the human figure, horses, ships, comma-shaped beads (magatama) etc..

Judging from those relics, rituals performed on top of rocks in the first stage date from the second half of the 4th century to the 6th century. The second stage, which was initially considered to be centered in the 6th century, can be probably judged to date back to the 5th or 6th century or partially the 7th century according to the today’s chronology. Moreover, it is presumable that the third stage conventionally considered to have emerged in the 7th century lasted from the second half of the 7th century to the 8th century, while the fourth stage lasted from the 8th to the 9th or 10th century. Apparently, the transformation process of the ritual forms seen at Okinoshima ritual sites tells us that they started with rituals performed on top of rocks in the first stage. In a recent chronological perspective, let us examine here how we can consider the calendrical age of site no. 17 conventionally regarded as the oldest of all sites belonging to the first stage.

At site no. 17 on Okinoshima, it is said that 21 mirrors were piled up between overlapping huge rocks and covered with a pile of stones. There are many other relics common to grave goods of the Early Kofun period, including one jadeite comma-shaped bead, 2 steatite (soapstone) comma-shaped beads, 10 jasper cylindrical beads, 11 steatite (soapstone) cylindrical beads, 4 steatite barrel-shaped beads (natsume-dama), 75 glass beads, 298 steatite beads, 2 wheel-shaped stone bracelet (sharin-seki), 1 ring-shaped stone bracelet (ishikashiro), 4 iron bracelets, 7 iron double-edged swords (tekken), 5 iron single-edged swords (tekko), 3 iron iron knives with a curled fern frond ornament on the hilt (warabite tōsu) etc.. In this context bronze mirror types as bases for decisions regarding the age determination, the items are 7 modified (remodelled) TLV mirrors (henkei hōkakukiku kyō), 3 modified mirrors with floral décor (interconnected arcs) in the inner décor field (henkei naikō kamon kyō), 2 turtle-dragon mirrors (daryō kyō), 2 modified (remodelled) pictorial mirrors (mirror with mythical images in raised flat relief) (henkei gazō kyō), 3 triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts (sankukabuchi shinjukyō), 2 modified (remodelled) beast-band mirrors (henkei jūtai kyō), 1 modified decorated mirror (henkei mon kyō) and 1 K’uei-bird-mirror (K’uei: dragon with bird head) (kikō kyō). All of these mirrors have been conventionally considered to be mirrors manufactured in Japan after continental prototypes (bōsei kyō). However, apart from triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts, the manufacturing area of which has been disputed, the K’uei-bird-mirror is apparently a Chinese mirror probably dating from the time of the Jin Dynasty, as suggested in the report of the Series 3 investigation.

The three triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts have been all considered to be mirrors manufactured in Japan after continental prototypes (bōsei kyō). According to the conventional classification, they are two triangular-rimmed mirror decorated with foliage-scroll pattern band and images of three immortals and three beasts manufactured in Japan after continental prototype (bōsei sankakubuchi karakusamontai sanshin sanjū kyō) (mirror no. 18 and 19 in the report) and one
triangular-rimmed mirror decorated with images of three immortals and three beasts manufactured in Japan after continental prototype (no. 20). Among these, as for one (no. 18) of the former two, it is known that there are a total of 7 mirrors produced from the same model (same mold) in other places: i.e., two mirrors in the Shikinzan tomb in Osaka prefecture, one in the Tsuboi-otabiyama tomb in Osaka prefecture, one in the Dodoike tomb in Kyoto prefecture and two privately possessed by an individual. These are with relatively neat patterns compared with other mirrors conventionally considered to be triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts manufactured in Japan after continental prototypes (Figure 1). The other two mirrors, by contrast, have primitive patterns in the inner decor field, the sawtooth pattern in the outer decor field degraded into a pattern of a sequence of very rough triangles; and the degradation of the pattern of two wavy lines is remarkable (Figure 2). They belong to the latest phase of the so-called triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts manufactured in Japan after continental prototypes (bōsei sankakkubuchi shinjūkyō).

Over the last twenty years, remarkable progress has been made in chronological studies on triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts. Until now triangular-rimmed mirrors (hakusai sankakkubuchi shinjūkyō) who have been identified as imported are classified into phases 1 to 4. Mirrors in the first phase are considered to date back to about 240 AD, judging from the existence of mirrors on which the third year of the Chinese Jingchu (jap. keishō) era (239 AD) or the first year of the Chinese Zhengshi (jap. seishi) era (240 AD) is inscribed. The understanding of the time interval until the fourth phase varies from researcher to researcher. However, if major changes in the cross section of the mirror are taken into account, it is hard to accept such a short span as ten years during which (Queen) Himiko negotiated with the Wei Dynasty as KOBAYASHI Yukio assumed. If we assume a time span of several decades, the subsequent emergence of the so-called triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts manufactured in Japan after continental prototypes will be considered to date back to the beginning of the 4th century. Since we must estimate a considerably long span for the manufacture of these mirrors, we should consider that the group of bronze mirrors found at site no. 17 on Okinoshima, including the ones belonging to the latest phase date back to near the middle third of the 4th century.

In recent years, on the other hand, there is an increase in the amount of research data helpful in the absolute age determination through the tree-ring dating method (dendrochronology). It was learned that the start of production of Sue ware in the stage of the Middle Kofun period extends back to a considerably earlier time. This became clear through the tree-ring dating method. In a ditch dating from the Kofun period at a site in Uji, a city in Kyoto prefecture, pottery from the Sue ware group of the TG 232 type, the oldest produced at the Suemura group of kiln sites (suemura kamaato gun) in Osaka prefecture, was associated with unfinished wood products of Japanese cypress (hinoki), proved to have been cut in the year 389. In addition in a ditch dating from the Kofun period in a lower stratum of the Heijō palace site in Nara Sue ware of the TK73 type following the TG 232 type was associated with unfinished wood products of Japanese cypress cut in 412. There is no contradiction between this facts. Without question the emergence of Sue ware dates back to the fourth quarter of the 4th century [SHIRAISHI, 2009].

Since the emergence of Sue ware is related to the Middle Kofun period furthermore the second phase, it should be probably considered to date back the beginning of the Middle Kofun period to the third quarter of the 4th century. Accordingly, we cannot but consider that the date of site no. 17 on Okinoshima that contains objects common to the group of grave goods found in tombs from the latest phase of the Early Kofun period should be placed from the middle to the third quarter of the 4th century.

Among sites belonging to the first stage of Okinoshima rituals, on site no. 18 located right above site no. 17 until now as imported identified bronze mirrors were detected, including triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with beast decor band and images of two immortals and two beasts from site and pieces of a Later Han Dynasty style TLV mirror decorated with four immortals found together with ring-shaped stone (steatite) bracelets (ishikushiro) and small glass beads. These objects were associated with 2 triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with beast decor band and images of three immortals and three beasts and 1 triangular-rimmed mirror with foliage-scroll pattern band and images of three immortals and three beasts with remarkable degeneration. Besides these, there are also 6 mirror fragments made from the same mold as the K’uei-bird-mirror found at site no. 17. Judging from these objects, it may be reasonable to consider that site no. 18 belongs almost to the same time as site no. 17.
Thus, as until now be pointed out, it is certain that sites no. 17 and 18 are considered to be representing the oldest phase of all ritual sites known at Okinoshima dating from the second half of the 4th century. However, inside the second half of the 4th century they have been until now considered to be relatively new. In the report, HARADA Dairoku who took charge of the analysis and the report of the bronze mirror group at site no. 17 made the following remarks placing this site between the Shinyama tomb in Nara prefecture and the Bizen Maruyama tomb in Okayama prefecture based on the results of close and detailed analysis of bronze mirrors:

“Presuming from Yamato Shinyama and Bizen Maruyama, the relative date of site no. 17 on Okinoshima can be considered to be between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th century.”

OKAZAKI Takashi who analyzed and examined anew a number of bronze mirrors found at Okinoshima in the Series 3 investigation report describes:

“Ritual sites on top of rocks centered around site no. 17 are thought to be operated in the second half of the 4th century when the Land of Wa started the exchange with Paekche”
This description is nothing but a product of his thinking that the start of exchange with Paekche in the 360s can be linked to the inception of Okinoshima rituals. As previously mentioned, this linkage is derived from the section of the time of Empress Jingū in the Nihonshoki and the inscription on seven-branched sword [OKAZAKI, 1979]. From the present standpoint of the author, this OKAZAKI’s chronological view can be highly evaluated for the combination of archaeological analysis and historical material. However, it cannot be said that his view was not necessarily based on the detailed investigation of archaeological data available in those days. In the circles of archaeology until the 1980s, even tombs in the earliest phase of the Middle Kofun period were not considered to go back earlier than the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the 5th century. It is not deniable that in those days, researchers generally searched the younger phase of the second half of the 4th century for the date of site no. 17 containing many objects common to grave goods found in tombs dating from the end of the Early Kofun period.
4. The Meaning of Establishment of Okinoshima Rituals

There is no doubt about the notion that rituals on Okinoshima Island were not merely local ones performed by a local force on the coast of the Genkai Sea but rituals with a state-related character in which the Yamato kingly power participated, if we take into consideration the gorgeous offerings of imported objects found at site no. 17, including a large number of bronze mirrors, cut glass, gilt-bronze dragon heads, Tang Dynasty three-colored glazed ware etc.. It is difficult to evaluate the notion that the discontinuation of these rituals was concurrent with the discontinuance of the Japanese envois to the Tang Dynasty, unless it is clarified more clearly what role the Munakata deities played in the dispatch of the Japanese envois to the Tang Dynasty. Nevertheless, it seems that the possibility of such concurrency cannot be totally denied.

Moreover, the position of three Munakata goddesses in the myths of the Kojiki the and the Nihonshoki gives a clue that Okinoshima rituals had a state-related character. A myth about these three goddesses appears in the description of the age of the gods (jindaiki) in the Nihonshoki, three addendum to the description of the age of the gods to the Nihonshoki and the Kojiki. The myth reads that when Amaterasu and Susanoo took an oath (ukei), Amaterasu bit the Totsuka-no-Tsurugi (lit. ten-hands long sword) of Susanoo, from which her breath burst out like fine mist and then three goddesses, namely Tagorihime, Tagitsuhime and Ichikishishamahime were born from the mist. Amaterasu thought them as children of Susanoo because the sword belonged to Susanoo. According to the text of the Nihonshoki, these three goddesses “are the deities which are worshipped by the Munakata-no-Kimi of Tsukushi”. The third of the above-mentioned addendum says, “The three female Deities born of the Sun-Goddess were made to descend and dwell at Usa-shima in the Reed-plain Central Land. They are now in the Kaihokudōchū, and are styled the Michinushi-no-Muchi. These are the Deities which are worshipped by the Minuma-no-Kimi in Tsukushi.” The clan in charge of rituals is different from that written in the text of the Nihonshoki. This difference will be mentioned later. At any rate, it should be noted here that three goddesses of Munakata take an extremely important position as children of Amaterasu in the myths of the Kojiki and the Nihonshoki and moreover they are given the status of “Michinushi-no-Muchi” in “Kaihokudōchū”. In this respect, as pointed out by the people concerned in the aforementioned three investigations and many other predecessors with one accord, it is out of question that Okinoshima rituals were performed in a deep relationship with the Yamato kingly power and also related with marine traffic from the Land of Wa to several kingdoms on the Korean peninsula or their bilateral exchange.

A problem here, however, is that these rituals date from an earlier phase of the second half of the 4th century or according to today’s archaeological view of calendrical age, probably the third quarter of the 4th century. It goes without saying that connections between the Japanese Archipelago and the Korean peninsula date back to the Paleolithic period and the Jof the Former Han Dynasty (kanjo) and the book of the Later Han Dynasty (gokanjo), it is unquestionable that exchanges with Lelang commandery (rakuro gun) etc. had been already launched in the time of Han Dynasty. This can be also proved by the results of archaeological research. Moreover, those exchanges continued even in the time of the country of Yamatai in the first half of the 3rd century. No doubt, close diplomatic relations had been already established with not only Chinese colonies such as Lelang and Daifang commandery but also “several Korean kingdoms” as described in the so-called “Account of the Wa” in “The History of the Wei Dynasty” (gishi wajiinden). It need hardly be said that wet-rice agriculture beginning in the Yayoi period was also accepted via the route from the southern part of the Korean peninsula to northern Kyūshū. The very development of connections and trading with the Korean peninsula was almost a sole means to accept advanced culture for the people of the Japanese archipelago, including a number of proto states which depended on the peninsula for all advanced culture and its products, including resources like iron.

When considering the establishment date of Okinoshima rituals, an important thing is that the location of Okinoshima is largely deviated eastward from the main maritime route of connection and trading with the peninsula that prospered especially in the Yayoi period. The main route is unquestionably a route from the south edge of the Korean peninsula (Kuyakan-koku) (now the vicinity of Gimhae, a city in South Gyeongsang Province) to vicinity of Karatsu in Kyūshū via the islands of Tsushima and Iki as shown in “Account of the Wa” in “The History of the Wei Dynasty”. It is in and after the second half of the 4th century that rituals were initiated on Okinoshima and there are no traces of rituals carried out on a full scale before that time. That is why we cannot but consider that before the second half of the 4th century,
Okinoshima rituals had no linkage to the Japan-Korea exchange via the Iki-Tsushima route dating from the Yayoi period.

In this respect, ODA Fujio understands that “Kaihokudōchū” in the description “The three Goddesses born of the Sun-Goddess were made to descend and dwell at Usa-shima in the Reed-plain Central Land. They are now in Kaihokudōchū, and are styled the Michinushi-no-Muchi.” seen in the aforementioned third addendum to the Nihonshoki shows the maritime route from the south edge of the Korean peninsula (Kuyakan-koku) to Tsushima, Iki and Northern Kyūshū and vice versa [ODA, 1988]. Judging from the text of Nihonshoki, however, the author considers that “Kaihokudōchū” means the very Okinoshima Island where the three goddesses of Munakata are enshrined or a route via Okinoshima, and therefore it should not be interpreted as a main route extensively via Iki and Tsushima. If you interpret “Usa island (usajima)” in the above-mentioned description as not Kyūshū island but Okinoshima as ODA does, it seems that the author’s consideration will become more reasonable.

In the second half of the 4th century, rituals were suddenly launched and continued in a large-scale related state until the 9th century at Okinoshima that had no linkage to Japan-Korea exchange via the Iki-Tsushima route as the former main route between Japan and Korea. We must consider that there was a good reason for the performance of such rituals on its own way. In this respect, a notable thing is the start of diplomatic relations with Paekche to which OKAZAKI Takashi paid attention.

Seven-branched sword that has been passed on to the Isonokami-jingū Shrine in Tenri City, Nara prefecture is known as a sword according to the inscription manufactured for and presented (in the 4th year of taiwa – chin. Taihe – the 4th year of the reign of Emperor Fei of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, which corresponds with the year 369) to the King of Land of Wa by the heir (Prince Geungusu or later King Geungusu) to the King of Paekche (Geunchogo) [MISHINA Akihide 1964; YOSHIDA Akira 2001]. This is consistent with the article about the 52th year in the Nihonshoki during the reign of Empress Jingū: “52nd year, Autumn, 9th month 10th day. Kutei and others came along with Chikumanagahiko and presented a seven-branched sword and a seven-little-one-mirror, with various other objects of great value”. Including this article about the donation of seven-branched sword, there are many articles based on the historical sources of the Korean peninsula such as the Records of Paekche (Kudaraki) in the span from the reign of Empress Jingū to the reign of Emperor Ōjin, which contain reports about this time. Since early, they have been regarded as invaluable historical sources which may be considered to be almost historical facts, if the sexagenary cycle is turned back by two cycles. The year Jingū 52, ninth year of the sexagenary cycle which is called jinshin, corresponds to the year 252 according to the yearly count of the Nihonshoki. If it is turned back by two cycles, it will become the year 372, which is as completely consistent as three years after the date of the manufacturing or the fourth year (369) of the reign of Emperor Fei of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (the 4th year of taiwa) according to the inscription on the seven-branched sword.

According to the above-mentioned descriptions in the Nihonshoki derived from the Records of Paekche (Kudaraki), Kutei of Paekche visited the land of Tokujun, one of provinces in Kaya (Gaya) in 364 (kasshi) to request the latter to mediate negotiations with the Land of Wa. When Shima-no-Sukune of the Land of Wa went to the land of Tokujun in 366 (hein), he heard this request and sent a messenger to Paekche. When a messenger from Paekche came to the Land of Wa in the next year, diplomatic relations started between Land of Wa and Paekche. Moreover, it is also described that in 369 (kishi), the allied forces of the Land of Wa and Paekche defeated Silla, and then seven provinces including Hijihoyo and four villages including Hiri surrendered to the Land of Wa. Among these, the account of the year 369 describing the beginning of control of the Land of Wa over Mimana cannot be considered to be a historical fact as it is. At least, however, as far as the records of years 366 and 369 describing the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Land of Wa and Paekche are concerned, there is material evidence like the seven-branched sword. Cooperation with the Land of Wa is reasonably conceivable in the situation of Paekche under tense international circumstances, such as the southward advance of Koguryo in East Asia. It may be safe to recognize it as a historical fact. In this point, it is highly suggestive that diplomatic relations between the Land of Wa and Paekche were initiated through the land of Tokujun (now the vicinity of the city of Changwon, South Gyeongsang Province), one of several provinces in Kaya (Gaya) with which the Land of Wa had have a closely cooperative relationship since before through the acquisition of iron resources.

Records in the Nihonshoki derived from the historical sources of the Korean peninsula, such as the Records
of Paekche (Kudaraki) cannot be judged to be highly valuable historical documents merely because they are citations from such sources. They did not necessarily describe clearly the actual situation of the military advance of the Land of Wa into the Korean peninsula just after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Land of Wa and Paekche. According to the History of the Three Kingdoms (Sangokushiki; kor. Samguk Sagi), Paekche took the offensive against Koguryo in 369 and 371 and Geunchogo, King of Paekche drove Gogugwon, King of Koguryo to death in battle. Although the role played by Land of Wa in this battle is not clear, such a possibility is not deniable that Paekche could take great strides with Land of Wa as an ally behind Paekche. Moreover, an inscription on the stone monument of King Gwanggaeto in Ji’an (city in the Jiangxi province, People's Republic of China) says that the Land of Wa advanced into the peninsula in 391, twenty years after the above-mentioned year and directly crossed swords with armed forces of Koguryo in 400. Furthermore, the Land of Wa, which advanced deeply into a place connected with itself in the Daifang commandery in 404, was driven back by a large army of Koguryo.

Thus, there is little doubt about the record that diplomatic relations started between Paekche and the Land of Wa in a relatively early phase of the second half of 4th century and subsequently led the Land of Wa to send troops to the peninsula. That was almost concurrent with the inception of rituals on Okinoshima as OKAZAKI points out. Nevertheless, OKAZAKI does not necessarily explain clearly what made Paekche seek diplomatic relations with the Land of Wa. As already seen, of course, their alliance was one of countermeasures Paekche could take against the southward advance of Koguryo, if we take into consideration the subsequent shift of Paekche to an offensive action against Koguryo.

Since the situation of the Korean peninsula since the second half of the 4th century is extremely complicated, the movement of the Land of Wa in that situation is too difficult to clarify correctly. Nevertheless, Paekche took the way to the battle with Koguryo, unlike Silla which surrendered for survival to the latter whose movement to the south created a very severe situation for the southern kingdoms on the peninsula. It may be not wrong to consider such a fundamental schema that Paekche won an ally by building diplomatic relations with the Land of Wa for that purpose and often fought with Koguryo and its subordinate Silla. Since the Yayoi period the Land of Wa which depended on Byeonhan (Byeonjin; jap. benshin) or later Kaya (Gaya) for important iron resources on the peninsula had large concern in the situation of the peninsula. They were probably concerned that if Koguryo defeated Paekche and Silla, it should directly invade the Land of Wa. Probably, that is why the Land of Wa accepted the request of Paekche to take part in the battle on the peninsula.

The participation in the battle on the peninsula must have been a great ordeal to the Land of Wa. Up to that time horses were unknown in the Land of Wa. They had to quickly accept equestrian culture and horse riding tactics from Paekche and Kaya in order to fight with Koguryo. It is not hard to imagine that Paekche and the provinces in Kaya actively provided the Land of Wa with manufacturing know-how of horse harness and techniques for breeding horses in order to survive. With this as a momentum, a variety of new technologies and cultures, beginning with equestrian culture were transmitted to the Land of Wa, which from then on joined the civilized societies of East Asia at a rapid pace [SHIRAISHI, 2004b].

It is probably out of question that the inception of rituals on Okinoshima was concurrent with the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Land of Wa and Paekche in this turbulent situation of East Asia and the subsequent dispatch of troops from the Land of Wa to the Korean peninsula. That is, however, never the autonomous advance of the Yamato kingly power that gained ground in northern Kyūshū in the first half of the 4th century as INOUE Mitsusada assumed. It is nothing but a great wave of change surging over the Land of Wa in the situation of East Asia as a result of the southward advance of Koguryo driven by nomadic equestrian people coming down to the south. The sequence of historical events under these circumstances can be clearly explained by the newly proposed notion, unlike the conventional one, that the inception of rituals on Okinoshima dates back to not the late phase of the second half of the 4th century but to a relatively earlier time, the third quarter of the 4th century shortly after the start of connection between Paekche and the Land of Wa in 364 as described by the citation from the Records of Paekche (Kudaraki) in the Nihonshoki.

In this connection, INOUE Mitsusada or any other researchers who examine ancient history on the basis of written sources proposed a schema that the Yamato kingly power was established toward the end of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century and subsequently advanced into northern Kyūshū and
furthermore into the Korean peninsula in the second half of the 4th century as introduced in section 2. For this schema, the archaeology has also a great responsibility. At least until the 1970s, it was a general view in the archaeological world that tombs which seemed to have a close relation with the formation of political order of the Yamato polity, especially the standard type of keyhole-shaped tomb with round rear mound had emerged toward the last third of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century. Substantially from this point of view, INOUE expressed his opinion about the time of the formation of the Yamato kingly power. This is apparent, if you read “From Mythology to History” written by INOUE in 1965. In this book, he regards it as a critically important fact that the reign of Hatsukunishirasu-Sumeramikoto or Emperor Sujin as the first emperor gathered from written sources estimated from the second half of the 3rd century to the beginning of the 4th century corresponds with the time of the appearance of mounded tombs (kofun) archaeologically understood [INOUE, 1965].

This theory seeking the emergence of mounded tombs in the last third of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century was substantially derived from KOBAYASHI Yukio’s view of mounded tombs. He took the initiative in research on mounded tombs in this phase of the Kofun period. His view was based on the detailed analysis of the chronological sequences of triangular-rimmed mirrors decorated with images of immortals and beasts as grave goods buried in large quantities in the time of the appearance of mounded tombs. He also analyzed meticulously the ownership relations of mirrors produced from the same mold (dōhan kyō). Many researchers gave in to his view [KOBAYASHI, 1961]. After then, however, in the 1980s, questions were raised about this chronological view one after another. In particular, in and after the 1990s, progress in research on the chronological sequences of triangular-rimmed mirrors was accompanied with an increase in the number of researchers who began to think that the emergence of mounded tombs might date back to the second half to the middle third of the 3rd century. In recent years, accordingly, it is considered that the Yamato polity, a political federation embracing a wide area centered in Yamato in the Kinki region was formed in or after the middle third of the 3rd century, when northern Kyūshū must have been also included in its territory [SHIRAISHI, 1999].

As for the relation with the Korean peninsula, it has become clear that the important iron production did not begin on the Japanese archipelago before the 6th century. Throughout all times after the Middle Yayoi period until the 6th century, it cannot be doubted that the important iron resources were brought from Byeonhan (Byeonjin; jap. benshin) or later Kaya (Gaya) in the southern part of the peninsula. Therefore, we cannot but consider that exchange between the Land of Wa and Byeonhan or Kaya in the southern part of the peninsula had constantly continued regardless of the conditions of the situation of East Asia. In the second half of the 4th century, on the other hand, the southward advance of Koguryo as a great change in the situation of East Asia led the Land of Wa to approach Paekche. Thus, the Land of Wa was drawn out onto the international stage of East Asia whether it liked or not.

Needless to say, such a great wave of change in the international situation of East Asia also exerted a remarkable effect on the inside of the Yamato kingly power. The old kingly power of Yamato with a strongly religious and magic character had difficulty in coping with the great change in the international situation. It is presumable that the force of Yamato was superseded by that of Kawachi (including Izumi) on the coast of Osaka Bay which probably took charge of trading and negotiations with the Korean peninsula inside the Yamato kingly power in the central part of the Kinki region.

In the second half to last third of the 4th century, gigantic keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds presumably as graves of great kings or leaders of the Yamato polity which had been consistently constructed in the Nara Basin began to appear in the Furuichi and Mozu mounded tomb groups in the southern part of the Osaka plain. We cannot but consider their appearance to tell that the force of Kawachi/Izumi in the southern part of the Osaka plain took the kingly power because mounded tombs were to be constructed in the home ground of this political force [SHIRAISHI, 2000].

It is impossible to clarify how and when the succession of the kingly power took place. Nevertheless, there is a high possibility that it was the force of Kawachi that took the initiative in negotiations with Paekche and the subsequent performance of rituals on Okinoshima, if we attach importance to the fact that the Isonokami-jingū Shrine has preserved the seven-branched sword presented by the King of Paekche in commemoration of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Paekche and the Land of Wa and that rituals at the Isonokami-jingū Shrine were administered by the Mononobe clan as the Tomo-no-Miyatsuko.
Gōzoku (powerful local clans). It is assumed that this clan was originally based in the southern part of Kawachi and supported the new kingly power of Kawachi. It were these great kings based in the Osaka plain that subsequently developed the diplomacy of five kings of Wa with the Southern Dynasties (420–589 AD) in China. Accordingly, it seems that rituals on Okinoshima were launched on the initiative of the Kawachi force.

There is no doubt that state-related rituals on Okinoshima, a solitary island in the Genkai Sea were initiated along with the start of a new relationship between the Korean peninsula and the Land of Wa that experienced a major change as mentioned above. It is interesting that the Okinoshima Island deviates to the east from the Iki-Tushima route as the previous main route for Japan-Korean exchanges. It is very suggestive that the island is located near the course of the old Kanpu ferry connecting Shimonoseki to Pusan via a direct route from Kinai through the Seto Inland Sea and the Shimonoseki Straits (Figure 3). It is located right along the very shortest route connecting Yamato and Kawachi to the southern part of the Korean peninsula. Of course, it seems that the Iki-Tushima route was practically used more frequently because it was safer. However, we can see an important symbolic meaning of its location which is largely deviated from the previous Iki-Tushima route and yet along the shortest route between Yamato and the southern part of the Korean peninsula.

At any rate, it seems out of question that state-related rituals on Okinoshima were performed by the Yamato kingly power together with the local force of Munakata to which the Yamato kingly power entrusted navigation because the Yamato kingly power bound to Paekche by diplomatic relations opted to send troops to the Korean peninsula following a major change caused by the southward advance of Koguryo in the international situation of East Asia in the second half of 4th century. In that case, as UEDA Masaaki noted before, it is probably dangerous to confine those rituals only to a military character like prayer for victory. Weapons and weapon-shaped ritual utensils do not necessarily have a high share in offerings found at ritual sites in the first stage of Okinoshima rituals, which are fundamentally consistent with combinations of grave goods found in mound tombs of the Early Kofun period featuring a strong religious and magic character. Those rituals were related to direct exchanges between the Yamato kingly power and Paekche and other provinces on the peninsula which were rapidly promoted under historical and international circumstances. It may be safe to say that judging from the divine character of Okinoshima as the goddess of sea, they were primarily intended to pray for the safety of voyage.
5. The Transition of the Wa-Korea Exchange Route and Okinoshima Rituals

The most important Wa-Korea exchange route had been consistently a route from near Karatsu in northern Kyūshū through Iki and Tsushima to Kuyukan-ku through the Seto Inland Sea and the Straits of Shimonoseki to the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula. Moreover, for a long time from the beginning of the Yayoi period until the middle third of the 4th century the voyage via the Iki-Tsushima route had prospered which seems to be also related to the absence of traces of rituals on Okinoshima. That is probably because following the new change in the international situation of East Asia, Munakata as an eastern force began to play a certain role anew in negotiations between the Yamato kingly power in Kinai and Paekche, separately from western forces on the coast of the Genkai Sea, such as Matsura, Ito, Na etc. which had once taken charge of the Iki-Tsushima route. Of course, however, it was the safest and shortest Iki-Tsushima route that was practically used in making a voyage even in and after the second half of the 4th century. It is also unquestionable that on the the Land of Wa side of this route, leaders in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast continued to play an important role as before or a more important role than before in Wa-Korea negotiations via this route.

Their important role can be gathered from the fact that the heads of the countries of Matsura, Ito and Na in the west of the Genkai Sea coast introduced the oldest corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance (yokoanashiki sekishitsu) on the Japanese archipelago into keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds from the second half to the end of the 4th century. Good examples are the Taniguchi tomb in Karatsu city included in the territory of the country of Matsura, the Sukizaki tomb in the western part of Fukuoka city seemingly included in the territory of the country of Ito and the Rōji tomb in the southern part of Fukuoka city included in the territory of the country of Na (nakoku). All of these mounded tombs have a unique corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance called a “pit-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance” (tateanakei yokoguchishiki sekishitsu) created in this region through integrating ideas of the corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance into the concept of the pit-style stone chamber (tateanashiki sekishitsu) conventionally constructed in this region. This tells that the heads who succeeded to the rulers of the countries of Matsura, Ito and Na visited the territory of Paekche or Koguryo on the Korean peninsula in that time and personally saw corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance which had been already established there. Doubtless, as an advance guard for the Yamato kingly power, they made an expedition to the Korean peninsula and played a major role in the dispatch of many troops from the Land of Wa to the peninsula. Although his role was never minor, the head of Munakata cannot be considered to have been powerful enough to supersede the former heads in the western region of the Genkai Sea coast. Is it not that the rituals of the Yamato kingly power on Okinoshima Island had a more symbolic meaning as the goddess of sea on the shortest route between Yamato and the Korean peninsula?

As previously seen, there is the following article in the third addendum to the description of the age of the gods (jindaiki) to the Nihonshoki: “The three Goddesses born of the Sun-Goddess were made to descend and dwell at Usa-shima in the Reed-plain Central Land. They are now in Kiihokudōchū, and are styled the Michimushi-no-Muchi. These are the Goddesses which are worshipped by the Minuma-no-Kimi in Tsukushi.”

The home ground of the Minuma-no-Kimi is a coastal area of the Ariake Sea near the mouth of the Chikugo River among other areas in Kyūshū and far distant from the western region of the Genkai Sea and Munakata. WADA Atsumu, an ancient historian, indicates from the article in the above-mentioned third addendum, that “it is not enough to take up only Munakata-no-Kimi as a local prominent clan which worshiped at Okinoshima Island”. Moreover, he concludes that “in the first and second stages of Okinoshima rituals presumably located on Kiihokudōchū, they should be understood in connection with
not only Munakata-no-Kimi but also the kingly power in Kinai and other clans in the northern and central parts of Kyūshū” [WADA Atsumu, 1988]. The author has no objection to his conclusion itself but considers that there is even greater significance behind the myth about the three goddesses of Munakata. Let us examine this matter in the following.

As mentioned many times earlier, the Iki-Tsushima route had remained the main artery connecting the Land of Wa to the Korean peninsula even in the Kofun period since the Yayoi period. On the Korean side, this route was supported by forces near the mouth of the Nakdong River, such as Kuyakan-koku or later the country of Kinkan Kaya (kor. Geumgwan Gaya). On the side of the Land of Wa, it was supported by forces on the west coast of the Genkai Sea, such as the countries of Matsura, Ito and Na as seen in the “Account of the Wa” in “The History of the Wei Dynasty” (gishi wajinden). In the first half to middle third of the 5th century, however, a great change took place in the Wa-Korea trading and negotiation route connecting the coast of the Genkai Sea to the vicinity of the mouth of the Nakdong River. It is that the country of Kinkan Kaya among provinces in Kaya became unable to continue playing its role as before in negotiations with the Land of Wa because Silla advanced into the vicinity of the mouth of the Nakdong River. They were replaced in the west by Daegaya (ōkaya; daikaya) in the middle reaches of the Nakdong River, by Ara in the south and finally more to the west the area centered in the present Jeollanam-do which came to play an important role in negotiations with the Land of Wa. Although this change can be somewhat gathered from historical documents and materials, it can be more clearly told by the fact that keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds doubtless under the influence of the Land of Wa began to be constructed throughout the South Jeolla Province in the second half of the 5th century to the beginning of the 6th century (Figure 4). Those burial mounds are featured not only by the keyhole-shape and the round rear mounds. Some of them have also the same cylindrical (entō) haniwa (ceramic clay figures placed on the surface of mounded tombs) as those found on the Japanese archipelago, while others have corridor-style stone chambers with horizontal lateral entrance of Wa lineage [YANAGISAWA, 2001].

In the Land of Wa, on the other side, there was also a major change comparable with the one on the Korean side in the bilateral negotiations. From the Early Kofun period to the beginning of the Middle Kofun period, maximum large-scale keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds were constructed in Matsura, Ito and Na along the coast of the Genkai Sea even in northern Kyūshū. In the first half of the 5th century corresponding to the second phase of the Middle Kofun period, however, large-scale keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds like those disappeared in this region. Instead, they began to be constructed on the coast of the Ariake Sea and in the basin of the Chikugo River flowing into the Ariake Sea. Northern Kyūshū is an area where large tombs were not originally constructed in the Early and Middle Kofun period. Even so, keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds with a burial mound 60 to 100 meters in length had been constructed in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast until the beginning of the 5th century. In the second quarter of the 5th century, however, the scale of mounded tombs (kofun) was rapidly reduced in this area for an unknown reason. In Chikugo, by contrast, large mounded tombs began to appear in the first half of the 5th century as exemplified by the Sekijinsan tomb (120 m) at Hirokawa town in Fukuoka prefecture. This is also the case in Hizen. Keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds which had been seen before only in the coastal area of the Genkai Sea began to appear also in the Saga Plain in the first half of the 5th century as exemplified by the Funazuka tomb (115 m) at Saga city in Saga prefecture. Moreover, in the middle reaches of the Kikuchi River in Higo, Iwabaru Futagozuka tomb (102 m) was constructed at Yamaga city in Kumamoto prefecture.

Thus, whereas the scale of keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds was rapidly reduced from the beginning of the 5th century on in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast as the pivot of the Wa-Korea maritime connection, local forces on the Ariake Sea coast and in the basins of the Chikugo River and Kikuchi River flowing into this sea launched the construction of large-scale keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds which had not been seen there. This can be considered to be the consequence of such a transition that several forces on the Ariake Sea coast superseded those in the west of the Genkai Sea coast and began to take the initiative in Wa-Korea negotiations and trading.
The active participation of people on the Ariake Sea coast in the voyage to Korea may be gathered from the fact that the first full-fledged mound tomb decorated with colored paintings on the stone chamber walls (sōshoku kofun) seemingly under the influence of East Asia was constructed in this coastal area of the Ariake Sea around the first half to the middle third of the 5th century. Moreover, in this period, hollowed-out boat-shaped stone coffins (kurinukishiki funa(fune)gata sekkan) made in three areas in Higo on the Ariake Sea coast were introduced into many areas along the Seto Inland Sea and the Kinai region. This can be understood only on the assumption that people in these areas were active in water transport. In this period, their water transport probably facilitated the extensive spread of corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance of the Higo-type created in the coastal area of the Ariake Sea to areas along the Seto Inland Sea and the Kinai region. It also probably facilitated the spread of stone chambers shaped like a stone coffin with lateral entrance (yokoguchishiki no sekkanshiki sekishitsu) and corridor-style stone chambers with horizontal lateral entrance to the San’in region. It should be taken for granted that people in the coastal area of the Ariake Sea also developed water transport in the direction of the Korean peninsula [SHIRAISHI, 2004a].

Corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance applied to keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds etc. seen in the region of Jeollanam-do are apparently of Kyūshū lineage and can be found to be similar to those seen in the coastal area of the Ariake Sea rather than the Genkai sea coast [YANAGISAWA, 2001; SHIRAISHI, 2004a]. From this fact, it can be gathered that exchange activities were prosperous between the Jeollanam-do region and the Ariake Sea coast. These archaeological phenomena show the very transition of power in Wa-Korea negotiations in this period from the western part of the Genkai Sea coast and near the mouth of the Nakdong River to the Ariake Sea coast and the Jeollanam-do region. Probably, it tells that the Iki-Tsushima route seen in the “Account of the Wa” in “The History of the Wei Dynasty” (gishi wajinden) was replaced with the Ariake-Jeollanam-do route, which became the center of the Wa-Korea exchange route.
In that case, of course, it may be safe to say that voyages were practically made via a safer route, namely Matsura→Iki→Tsushima at least from the mainland of Kyūshū to Tsushima. What seems certain here is the substantial change of the leading force. This change is clearly shown in the census register for Kawanobe village, Chikuzen province (chikuzen no kuni shimagun kawanoberi koseki) included in the one of the document collections of the Nara period held in the Shōsōin – treasure house that belongs to the Tōdai-ji – (shōsōin monjo). The register reads that Hi-no-Kimi-no-Ite was the head administrator of Shima-gun in the Chikuzen province near a port in the country of Ito, which was a key base on the the Land of Wa side of the Iki-Tsushima route and where according to the “Account of the Wa” in “The History of the Wei Dynasty”, the country of Yamatai placed Ichidaisotsu. Hi-no-Kimi was originally a powerful clan in Hii village in Yatsushiro-gun in Higo province on the coast of the Yatsushiro Sea adjacent to the Ariake Sea. They advanced into the vicinity of the Ito port in an unknown time. This can be gathered from the fact that at Tsushima, there are several large-scale mounded tombs in the terminal stage of the Kofun period with a gigantic corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance dating from the last third of the 6th century to around the 7th century. The structure of the chambers are fundamentally of Chikugo/Higo type.

The above-mentioned major shifts of the Wa-Korea exchange route and the leading negotiator are unquestionably attributable to a great change in the situation of the Korean peninsula. That is the advance of Silla into the southeast part of Kaya including the country of Kinkan -Kaya (kor. Geumgwan-Gaya) and the emergence of a new force in the region extending from the Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas to the basin of the Chikugo River. The new force superseded the force on the coast of the Genkai Sea in the northern part of Kyūshū, probably coupled with the transition of Korea. Taking these changes into consideration, can we not regard it as naturally that the Minuma-no-Kimi which had a great power in water transport on the coast of the Ariake Sea along with the Munakata clan took part in Okinoshima rituals which prayed for the safety of voyage from Land of Wa to Korea? That the Minuma-no-Kimi took charge of the Okinoshima rituals which is indicated in the legends in third addendum to the description of the age of the gods (jindaiki) to the Nihonshoki and on this background being a the driving force of the Wa-Korea exchange route can be understood for the first time when we take into consideration the historical changes.

6. The Role of the Munakata Clan in Okinoshima Rituals

In the previous section, we have examined the historical changes of the Wa-Korea exchange route and the driving forces in relation with the Okinoshima rituals. In the last section, let us consider the role played by the Munakata clan as a carrying force in the Munakata region in the Okinoshima rituals seemingly with a state-related character to pray for the safety of voyage following the start of negotiations between the Yamato kingly power and Korea in the foregoing transition.

It is not known well what role was specifically played by the Munakata clan as a local force in negotiations with Korea until the middle third of the 4th century.

Of course, it is presumable that the Munakata force that occupied a key location facing the Genkai Sea played a certain role in negotiations with Korea or concerning the sea route to Korea. At that time, it is considered that chiefs across the Japanese archipelago except for the northern and southern parts had already formed a union called the Yamato polity (yamato seiken) focused on forces in the central part of the Kinki region. Judging from the significance of mounded tombs constructed presumably in close connection with the political order of the political union, it cannot be necessarily said that the political force in the Munakata region in this time played a major role compared with other forces, such as Na, Ito and Matsura in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast.

In this situation, in the early phase of the second half of the 4th century, namely the third quarter of the 4th century, the Yamato polity, namely the Land of Wa achieved an alliance with Paekche under the influence of the major changes in the international situation of East Asia and then sent troops to the Korean peninsula. Concurrently with this, rituals were launched on a large scale at Munakata Okinoshima. If we take this process into account, as already stated, we can assume that the Munakata force played a certain role at the beginning of state-related rituals on Okinoshima.

As mentioned in the previous section, even after the Yamato polity began to send troops to the peninsula in...
the second half of the 4th century and the Yamato kingly power as the pivot of the Yamato polity actively embarked on negotiations with Korea, a decline of the role played by forces in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast in negotiations with Korea is difficult to imagine. On the contrary the role may have increased at least until around the beginning of the 5th century. This seems out of question if we consider the continuous construction of large-scale keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds in Na, Ito and Matsura at this time and the creation of the corridor-style stone chambers with horizontal lateral entrance of the first phase by the chiefs of these regions and usage for their mourned tombs.

Even in the Munakata region where the remarkable keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds were not constructed before the second half of the 4th century when the Tōgō-takatsuka tomb (61m in mound length) in Munakata city appeared (Munakata Town’s Board of Education, 1989). Probably, this proves that the Munakata force played a certain role in response to the direct advance of the Yamato kingly power concerning the relations with Korea. This mourned tomb, being 61 m long, is not so large. Rather, it is small in comparison with the Ikisan-chōshizuka tomb (103 m long) in the Ito region [KOBAYASHI, 1952] which is slightly older and the Rōji tomb (about 80 m) in Fukuoka city [Fukuoka City’s Board of Education, 1989] which is slightly younger. Therefore, it is not conceivable that the Munakata force superseded the forces in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast and took the leadership in negotiations with Korea.

Notwithstanding, it is of great significance that in the second half of the 4th century for the first time with the Tōgō-takatsuka tomb, a keyhole-shaped tomb with round rear mound, appeared in the Munakata region which can be regarded as a burial of the class of a powerful chief. Because this time is close to the inception of Okinoshima rituals, the appearance of this mourned tomb seems to be an event which indicates a close connection with the establishment of a certain relationship between the chief of Munakata and the Yamato kingly power that launched a new policy towards Korea and the subsequent cooperation of Munakata as a local force for state-related rituals on Okinoshima. In this way, the Munakata force may have established itself as a member of the Yamato polity for the first time. In this connection, it is reported that 12 round mirrors (enkyo) and 72 arrowheads were discovered in the Kamitakamiya tomb on the present premises of Hetsu-miya of the Munakata Shrine in the third year of the Keian period (1650) [OKAZAKI, 1979]. In the re-investigation toward the end of the Taishō period, a bronze mirror with four raised conical bosses and images of beasts (shinyūjūmon kyō), different kinds of beads, iron double-edged and single-edged swords, bronze and iron arrowheads, chest armor bound together with leather thongs (kawatoji tankō), iron adzes, iron knife with a hilt resembling a curled fern frond (warabite tōsu) and other knives etc. were unearthed. If the discovery of 12 bronze mirrors is a fact, it is an important mourned tomb parallel to the Tōgō-takatsuka tomb, though slightly younger than the latter, in the examination of the connection between the beginning of Okinoshima rituals and the local force of Munakata. At the present time, unfortunately the shape and scale of the burial mound are unknown and there is some doubt, whether the artifacts are representing a closed find. That is why we cannot use them as certain evidence.

In the Munakata region, the construction of remarkable keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds broke off for a while after the Tōgō-takatsuka tomb was constructed in the second half of the 4th century. As previously stated, the construction of large keyhole-shaped tombs rapidly declined in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast from the beginning of the 5th century on in northern Kyūshū. Instead, large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds began to be constructed on the coast of the Ariake Sea and in the basin of the Chikugo River. It does not seem that the Munakata region played a key role above all in the great changes of political power. In this area, unlike the Chikugo area, large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds were not immediately constructed. Rather, like the west of the Genkai Sea from the beginning of the 5th century, there were no powerful political leaders seen in this area. It seems that a force on the coast of the Ariake Sea like the Minuma-no-Kimi played an important role in Okinoshima rituals at this time.

Presumably, it is around the middle third of the 5th Century that the construction of keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds was resumed on a certain scale in the Munakata region. That is the appearance of the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb no. 1 (original names: Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb no. 17; mound length 50 m) [HASHIGUCHI and IKEBE, 1989]. After that, from the second half of the 5th century to the 6th century, the end of the Middle Kofun period to the stage of the Late Kofun period, extremely large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds began to be constructed in the Munakata region. Major mourned tombs in the Munakata region from the middle third of the 5th century to the 6th century developed not in the basin
of the Tsurui River where the Tōgō-takatsuka tomb and the Takamiya tomb are located but in the coastal area extending long from Kusazaki west of Kōnominato to the southwest. They are divided into three groups, namely the Katsuura mounded tomb group, the Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group and the Sudata mounded tomb group from north to south [YANAGISAWA, 1992].

In the one in between, the Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group, circular-shaped mounded tombs (enpun) about 30 m in diameter began to be constructed in the first half of the 5th century. After the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb no. 1 appeared in the middle third of the same century, middle-sized keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds were constructed in succession until the second half of the 6th century, including the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb no. 12 (57 m long), no. 22 (mounded tomb with scallop shell-shaped base (hotategaishiki kofun); diameter of the circular-shaped part of the mound 54 m), no. 30 (burial mound length 54 m) etc. [HASHIGUCHI and IKEBE, 1989]. Big keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds, by contrast, were constructed in the Katsuura mounded tomb group in the north in the phase from the second half to the last third of the 5th century and later in the Sudata mounded tomb group in the south. For instance, the Katsuura-inoura tomb (original names: Tsuyazaki tomb no. 10, Katsuura tomb no. 12; mound length 70 m) appeared in the Katsuura mounded tomb group in the second half of the 5th century (Figure 5). Next, the Katsuura-minenohata tomb (original names: Tsuyazaki tomb no. 41, Katsuura tomb no. 14) was constructed, the largest keyhole-shaped tomb (97 m) in the Munakata region [Compiled by ISHIKAWA, 1977]. This tomb has a unique corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance in the round rear part of the tomb whose main burial chamber is divided by stone pillars into three parts (Figure 6). A deity-and-beast mirror with an wide image band (gamontai shinjū kyō), a mirror with interconnected arcs (naikō kamon kyō) and a mirror with an inner field of pearl relief design (shumon kyō) etc. were found. Moreover, in the 6th century, the Araji-tsurugizuka tomb (85 m) was constructed probably from the first half to the middle third of the century and then probably in the second half of the century the Sudata-amafurijinja tomb (80 m) was constructed in the Sudata mounded tomb group in the south [YANAGISAWA, 1992].
Figure 5  The mound of the Katsuura-inoura tomb (original names: Tsuyazaki no. 10, Katsuura no. 12) (Source: "The Shimbara-Nuyama mounded tomb group")
Figure 6  The corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance of the Katsuura-minenohata tomb
(original names: Tsuyazaki no. 41, Katsuura no. 14)
(Source: "The Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group")
Thus, in the Munakata region, large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds with 80 to 100 m in length were constructed for generations during the second half of the 5th century to the 6th century. Parallel to them, mound tombs 50 to 60 m long were also constructed there. However, there are only a small number of areas where large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds, 80 to 100 m long, continued to be constructed in this phase even in the northern and central parts of the Kyūshū region: e.g., the Yame mound tombs in Chikugo where the Iwato-yama tomb (140 m long), the Zenō-zuika tomb (about 90 m) and the Tsurumiyama tomb (85 m) in Yame city, Fukuoka prefecture, were constructed in succession; in the Ukiha region in the upper reaches of the Chikugo River, the Tsukinooka tomb (95 m), the Tsukadō tomb (90 m), the Hinooka tomb (75 m) and the Shigesada tomb (70 m) at Ukiha city, Fukuoka prefecture, etc. were constructed in succession; in the lower reaches of the Hikawa River in Higo, the Nakanojō tomb (98 m), the Himenojō tomb (85 m) and the Ōnoiwaya tomb (about 100 m) at Hikawa town, Kumamoto prefecture were constructed. Besides these, there are also examples of keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds of the 80-meter class, including the Tōkōji-kenzuka tomb in Fukuoka city (75 m), the Keisen-ōzuka tomb at Keisen town, Fukuoka prefecture (80 m), etc. which were, however, sporadically constructed without similar tombs ahead of or after each of them.

It goes without saying that the above-mentioned Yame mound tomb group in Chikugo was left by the Tsukushi-no-Kimi, while the above-mentioned Hikawa River mound tombs were in Higo was left by the Hi-no-Kimi. It is unquestionable that a local force in the Munakata region in and after the second half of the 5th century, namely the Munakata clan occupied a certain position inside the Yamato polity at this stage as Tsukushi-no-Kimi in Chikugo, Hi-no-Kimi in Higo etc. did. It is also out of question that their position was secured by a certain role that they played in the Yamato polity’s negotiations and trading with Korea at this stage. It is known that in negotiations and trading between the Yamato polity and Korea at this stage, an important role was played by chiefs in the coastal areas of the Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas, including Hi-no-Kimi, Minuma-no-Kimi and Hi-no-Ashikita-no-Kuninomiyatsuko or perhaps the person buried in the Eta-funayama tomb in the basin of the Kikuchi River [SHIRAISHI, 1997]. Along with these forces, it is presumable that the Munakata clan also played a critically important role in negotiations and trading with Korea, including the performance of rituals on Okinoshima.

There is the Miyajidake tomb on the premises of the Okumiya of the Miyajidake Shrine at Fukutsu city Miyaj in the Sudata mound group where large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds were constructed in the 6th century, namely in the middle third to second half of the century, such as the Araji-tsurugizuka tomb and the Sudata-ama-furijinja tomb. It is a circular-shaped mound tomb, 35 m in diameter with a long and massive corridor-style stone chamber with horizontal lateral entrance made with cut stones, 22 m in length inside. This tomb seems to have been excavated in the early modern period and gorgeous grave goods were found, such as beautiful accessories including a gilt bronze openwork crown, horse trappings including a gorgeous gilt bronze bridle with cheek plates and stirrup with pot-shaped cover for the toes (tsubo abumi), weapons including a gilt bronze single-edged long sword with bulbous pommel (kabutsuchi no tachi) and moreover a bronze bowl (dōwan), a bronze plate (dōban) and glass plates which seem to be raw material [MORI, 1976]. Judging from the Sue ware excavated together with those objects, it can be assumed that the tomb dates back in the third quarter of the 7th century.

According to the section of the 2nd month of the second year of the Emperor Tenmu (673) in the Nihonshoki, it says that the Emperor got married to Amako-no-Iratsume, a daughter of Munakata-no-Kimi Tokuzen, and then Prince Takechi-no-Miko was born as their son. Prince Takechi-no-Miko passed away in 7th month of the tenth year of the Empress Jito (696). According to the directory of court nobles (kugyō bunin) his age at the time of his death was 42 or 43 years, it can be assumed that his birth year was about 654 and his father probably passed away in the third quarter of the 7th century. This assumption is consistent with the construction age of the Miyajidake tomb estimated from Sue ware found at the tomb. The Miyajidake tomb is a large circular-shaped mound tomb of the terminal stage following large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds, such as the Araji-tsurugizuka tomb, the Sudata-ama-furijinja tomb etc. being burials of chiefs of the Munakata clan probably around the second half of the 6th century, which are located in the Sudata mound group immediately north of the Miyajidake tomb. This fact clearly tells that the burials of the chiefs in the Sudata mound tomb group and the Katsuura mound tomb group older than the former are nothing but the graves of the heads of the Munakata clan. Moreover, it tells that those tombs including the Shimbaru-Nuyama mound tomb group are nothing but groups of graves of the Munakata clan.
When these are taken into consideration, it seems that as of the first half of the 5th century during which chiefs in the coastal areas of the Ariake Sea or the Yatsushiro Sea south of the former are considered to have embarked on negotiations and trading with Korea, for the local force of Munakata the period of not playing a major role in the bilateral negotiations continued. This is the case with several forces in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast that had taken leadership in the exchange in an earlier phase before the first half of the 5th century. From the second half of the 5th century on, however, especially from the last third of the 5th century on when the Katsuura-minenohata tomb as the largest keyhole-shaped tomb with round rear mound in the Munakata region appeared, it can be assumed that the Munakata clan began to take a critically important position in new exchanges and trading with Korea along with several forces in the coastal areas of the Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas and in the basin of the Chikugo River, if we take into account the nature of the mounded tombs in the northern and central parts of the Kyūshū region, including Munakata.

In relation to the aforementioned continuous construction of large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds in Munakata from the second half of the 5th century on, what should be noted anew is a description in the ninth year of the reign of the Emperor Yūryaku in the Nihonshoki. It says that in 2nd month of the ninth year, Oshikōchi-no-Atai Katabu and court ladies were sent to Munakata to offer to the Munakata Goddess. It continues “3rd month. The Emperor desired to chastise Silla in person, but a God warned him, saying:"Go not." For this reason the Emperor did not carry out his intention of going”. This means that when the Emperor intended to make an expedition to Silla by himself, the Munakata goddess opposed it and the expedition by the Emperor was suspended. Instead, Ki-no-Oyumi-no-Sukune, Soga-no-Karako-no-Sukune, Otomo-no-Katari-no-Muraji and Okahi-no-Sukune were dispatched to Silla. Apart from the question whether this description is a historical fact, it is important that the goddess of Munakata was recognized to have status which could affect even a decision to be made by the Emperor about external expeditions and policies in this time. The construction of the Katsuura-minenohata tomb, the largest keyhole-shaped tomb with round rear mound in Munakata is estimated around the last third of the 5th century near the time of Emperor Yūryaku’s court. At this stage, the Munakata clan was presumably in a position which could affect external policies of the Yamato kingly power.

7. Conclusion

In the preceding six sections, we have examined the relations between Okinoshima rituals and the Yamato kingly power from an archaeological point of view. Based on the results of the scientific investigations on Okinoshima rituals carried out from 1954 to 1971, it has been pointed out since early that rituals on Okinoshima, a solitary island in the Genkai Sea were not limited to a local force of Munakata but were certainly state-related rituals where the Yamato kingly power has played a profound part in. It has already passed such a long time as 40 years since the end of the Series 3 investigation, during which remarkable progress has been made in archaeological and document-based historical research concerning the Kofun period to Ritsuryō period. From the present situation of studies in ancient history this paper has re-examined how we can understand the fundamental character of the Okinoshima rituals and its interrelation with the Yamato kingly power. In the following, the author will briefly summarize what seems to have been clarified so far.

First of all, with regard to the inception of rituals on Okinoshima, the absolute age determination of mounded tombs and the artifacts of this period has been significantly adjusted and the beginning dates back to earlier times. As for sites no. 17 and 18 probably in the oldest stage of the surveyed ritual sites, there are not a few researchers who previously thought them to be in a newer phase of the second half of the 4th century, namely from the end of the 4th century to the beginning of the 5th century. In recent years, however, reexamination concerning the dating of the emergence of mounded tombs based on the recent detailed analysis of the chronological sequences of triangular-rimmed deity-and-beast mirrors or the establishment of the Sue ware by absolute age determination through the tree-ring dating method (dendrochronology) etc. took place. Based upon on such chronological adjustments, the author has indicated that they should be considered to date back to an earlier stage of second half of the 4th century, namely the third quarter of the 4th century.
While the emergence of rituals on Okinoshima has been adjusted to an earlier time, we have also had to substantially change the evaluation of their relations with the Yamato kingly power and their fundamental character. This reflects a great change in the view of the beginning of the Kofun period. The conventional notion is that large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds emerged toward the end of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century. On the contrary the recent notion is that they date back in the middle third of the 3rd century. As for the the standard type of big keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds, there is no major change in the stance that their emergence corresponds to the establishment of a political union called the Yamato polity. Conventionally, however, not a few researchers have considered the inception of Okinoshima rituals directly in connection with the advance of the Yamato polity into the Korean peninsula. They have depicted a schema that the Yamato polity was established toward the end of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century and advanced into northern Kyūshū in the first half and further into the peninsula in the second half of the 4th century.

However, on the assumption that large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mound date back to the middle third of the 3rd century and Okinoshima rituals date back to the time after the middle third of 4th century, it will be hard to establish a schema that the Yamato polity unified domestic forces and advanced into the Korean peninsula immediately after the unification. It will become necessary to assume the presence of some external momentum for the military involvement of the Yamato polity on the peninsula from the second half of the 4th century on. In this point, it deserves more attention that OKAZAKI Takashi who conducted the Series 3 investigation proposes such a view in the report that the inception of Okinoshima rituals should be connected with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Paekche and Land of Wa in the second half of the 4th century which can be gathered from Paekche-related historical documents, such as from the description the time of Empress Jingū in the *Nihonshoki*. His view is extremely important, though from the general chronological point of view in those days, it was unreasonable to advance the date of site no. 17 consistent with the grave goods of mounded tombs of a quite new phase of the Early Kofun period to the second half of the 4th century even to around the middle third. In the present view of the calendrical age, the establishment of diplomatic relations between Paekche and Land of Wa are completely consistent with the beginning of Okinoshima rituals.

In East Asia in the 4th century, northern equestrian people began to move south. This great wave of migration of people drove Koguryo southward, and consequently Paekche and Silla on the southern part of the Korean peninsula were faced with state crises. At that moment, whereas Silla gave way to Koguryo for survival, Paekche chose the way of all-out fighting. What caught the attention of Paekche in battle was the Land of Wa, which, depending on iron resources of the Korean peninsula, chose the way of cooperation with Paekche. These great changes in the international situation of East Asia led Land of Wa to appear on the international stage of East Asia. It may be unquestionable that Okinoshima rituals were concurrently launched with the start of diplomatic relations between Land of Wa and Paekche and the subsequent dispatch of troops by the Land of Wa to the Korean peninsula.

It is very suggestive that the location of Okinoshima Island is largely deviated from the Iki-Tsushima route as the conventionally main route of Wa-Korea connection and rather close to the later Kanpu ferry route from the Straits of Shimonoseki to near the mouth of the Nakdong River via the Seto Inland Sea from Kinai. Okinoshima rituals were probably performed by the Yamato kingly power, now cooperating with Paekche and dispatching troops, with the support of a local force of Munakata to pray for safely crossing the sea on Okinoshima near the shortest route connecting Kinai to the Korean peninsula. Of course, however, the safest Iki-Tsushima route may have been practically used to make the sea crossing. As a goddess on the “Kaihokudōchū”, the shortest route connecting Kinai to the Korean peninsula, the goddess of Okinoshima probably had a symbolic meaning upon the performance of rituals for the safety of the sea crossing from the Land of Wa to Korea.

Even though rituals were launched on Okinoshima at this moment, all the most prominent mounded tombs are located in northern Kyūshū from the second half of the 4th century to the beginning of the 5th century. Their location can prove that a main maritime route was the Iki-Tsushima route between the Land of Wa and Korea, and leading forces which supported this route on the side of the Land of Wa were Matsura, Ito and Na in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast. However, the leading driving force via this route began to substantially change in the first half of the 5th century. As a result of the advance of Silla into near the mouth of the Nakdong River where Kuyakan-Koku or later the country of Kinkan-kaya (kor.
Geumgwan-Gaya) was located as a Korean window of exchange with the Land of Wa, more in the west Daegaya ( Josékaya, daikaya) in the middle reaches of the Nakdong River or the even more westward the region of Jeollanam-do took the lead in the exchanges with the Land of Wa. Following this supersession, a leading role on the side of the Land of Wa began to be assumed by forces in the coastal areas of the Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas, instead of Matsura, Ito and Na in the western part of the Genkai Sea coast. This transition can also be proved by the fact that prominent mounded tombs began to disappear on the Genkai Sea coast in the first half of the 5th century and instead, large mounded tombs began to be constructed on the Ariake Sea coast and in the basin of the Chikugo River. In the section of the time of Empress Jingū in the Nihonshoki, it is written that rituals to worship three goddesses of Munakata were undertaken by the Munakata clan. On the contrary, the third addendum to the Nihonshoki says that offerings were done by the Minuma-no-Kimi from the mouth of the Chikugo River on the Ariake Sea coast. It may be unquestionable that the latter description reflected a major change in the driving force via the Wa-Korea exchange route.

There are many unknown things with regard to specific roles in Wa-Korea negotiations played by local forces in Munakata, including the Munakata clan maintaining Okinoshima Island. Notwithstanding, if we take a look at the presence of mounded tombs in this region, it is apparent that the Tōgō-takatsuka tomb, a middle-sized keyhole-shaped tomb with round rear mound appeared in the second half of the 4th century when rituals were launched on Okinoshima. This seems to show that the force of Munakata played a certain role upon the start of a new negotiation between the Land of Wa and Korea. After that, however, until the middle third of the 5th century, remarkable keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds were not constructed, and it does not seem that the Munakata force played a major role in Wa-Korea negotiations. From the second half of the 5th century on to the 6th century, on the contrary, in this region the construction of keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds of the 70 – 100 m class began with the Katsuura-minenohata tomb whose mound is near 100 m long, followed by others. At this stage, it’s common knowledge that the Munakata force had developed into one of the leading forces in northern and central Kyūshū comparable to the Tsukushi-no-Kimi who constructed the Yame mounded tomb group in Chikugo and the Hi-no-Kimi who constructed the Hikawa mounded tomb group in Higo.

Following those large keyhole-shaped tombs with round rear mounds in the 5th and 6th century, the Miyajidake tomb, a large circular-shaped tomb in the terminal stage of the Kofun period was constructed. Such a possibility cannot be denied that this mounded tomb is the grave of Munakata-no-Kimi Tokuzen, the father of Amako-no-Iratsume, one of wives of the Emperor Tenmu, judging from gorgeous grave goods and the date of excavated pottery. From the presence of mounded tombs in this region, it can be gathered that the political force of Munakata, namely the Munakata clan along with several forces in the coastal areas of the Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas played a critically important role in foreign exchanges of the Yamato polity from the second half of the 5th century on. It can be considered doubtless that the Munakata clan practically assumed the performance of rituals on Okinoshima in this period.

Thus, the author has presented a report on the results of his consideration with regard to “The Yamato kingly power and Rituals on Okinoshima Island” as a subject of study given to him. The author would appreciate it, if you would criticize this paper without reservation.

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I have continued to have much interest in ritual sites on Okinoshima Islands and ancient rituals performed there since I took charge of the exhibition entitled “Okinoshima Island” at the National Museum of Japanese History opened to the public in 1984. For the completion of the exhibition, I would like to appreciate great help and valuable instructions of OKAZAKI Takashi and YUBA Tadanori who led the Okitsumiya ritual site investigation team. It is one of my memorable things now that I was permitted to visit Okinoshima Island three times in order to carry out field surveys and make a model of a “rock-abode” (dwelling place to which the deity descends from heaven temporarily). Now that 27 years have passed since then, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the World Heritage Promotion Committee of Okinoshima Island and related sites in the Munakata region for this opportunity to re-examine the character of Okinoshima rituals.
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