

CHAPTER 6

EARLY KAMI WORSHIP

From prehistoric times the Japanese have revered animistic spirits and deities called *kami*. Eventually the worship of kami developed into a religious system known as Shinto or “the kami way.” The two Chinese characters used in Japan for writing “Shinto” had been used for centuries in China to refer to the supernatural or the mysterious. Adopted in Japan at the end of the sixth century A.D., these characters were employed to distinguish native kami worship from Buddhism (the Buddha way), recently imported from the Asian continent. Early sources suggest that Shinto was then synonymous with the old word *kamunagara*, which denoted a “way” handed down by the kami themselves without human revision.

By the time that Japan’s native religion was identified as Shinto, kami worship had moved beyond awe of natural forces to institutionalized rituals believed to ensure protection and prosperity for the clans (*uji*), and to provide religious sanction for the clan chieftains and territorial rulers. This chapter will therefore be devoted mainly to showing how kami beliefs and practices, while retaining their animistic core, moved from simple to complex forms.

GENERAL PROBLEMS

The concept of kami

The standard translation of kami is “deity,” a word suggesting the Western concept of a transcendental divinity such as in the Judaeo-Christian God. But the gulf between divinity and humanity found in the Judaic religions does not exist in Shinto. Even though the Shinto kami are given credit for creating various parts of the universe, kami are neither omniscient nor omnipotent, and unlike the ancient Greek gods, they are not necessarily immortal.

The classic definition of kami is the one advanced by Motoori

The Munakata region served as a passageway between Japan and the continent from the Burial Mound age through the first century of the Heian period. Fifth-century missions to China may have sailed from Munakata ports, and rites to ensure safety on the rough open sea were probably conducted at Munakata's sanctuary on Okinoshima.¹²⁹ Such rituals were definitely held in later times; in 838, when an official mission to China finally set sail from Hakata near Munakata, prayers for the mission's safety were offered to the Munakata kami. Some of the artifacts found on Okinoshima, such as the three-colored vase from T'ang China, may have been presented by envoys grateful to have returned alive.¹³⁰ After 894, when Sugawara no Michizane convinced the court to discontinue such hazardous missions, ritual activity at Okinoshima declined.¹³¹

At the end of the Burial Mound period, Japan entered the domain of written history. The court, operating from its power base on the Yamato plain in the Kinai, had obtained the allegiance of clans in all but the most distant regions of northern Japan. Written records were now used to carry out government functions; Buddhism was enthusiastically embraced; and Chinese technology stimulated such diverse fields as calendar making, architecture, and the construction of irrigation systems. Missions from Japan to China no longer sought only luxury goods, or even Chinese recognition of a Japanese ruler's authority, but sophisticated forms of learning as well.

If Japan was ready by this time for an episode of conscious, systematic cultural borrowing, the situation in China was appropriate as well. In 589, China was reunified under the Sui dynasty for the first time in over 350 years. The Sui collapsed in the reign of its third emperor but was replaced in 618 by the T'ang, a cosmopolitan, long-lived dynasty. In search of new techniques to achieve control and strengthen political authority, the Japanese of the mid-seventh century attempted to emulate China's centralized imperial system, its bureaucratic state, and its methods of controlling the provinces and collecting taxes. In addition, the military expansion of early T'ang posed a threat to Japan and forced the court to strengthen its defenses, a process that contributed to the centralization of the state. When the T'ang pulled back in the late seventh century – leaving Japan unthreatened and Korea to Silla rule – East Asia entered a long phase of stability and peace. During the next hundred years, continental culture was sought, absorbed, and adapted to the needs of a maturing Japanese civilization.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.474. ¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.624–5. ¹³¹ *Ibid.*

control. Ritual objects left at sacred places on Okinoshima were no doubt taken there by these fishermen.

The three kami of the Munakata shrines were venerated not only by the clan but also by the Yamato court. A brief quotation from the *Nihon shoki* points to the reason. This passage states: “You three kami shall descend to Michi-no-naka (the pathway to Korea) and help the imperial descendants of heaven, who are to hold you in reverence.”¹²³ This passage portrays the Munakata kami as the deities of a region – and by implication a clan – that could link the Yamato court with Korea, the source of high technology, culture, treasures, and iron. Other passages in the chronicles show how highly these kami were regarded by Yamato. In the reign of Yūryaku, the kami warned the ruler against a planned invasion of Silla, and the invasion was called off.¹²⁴ Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* myths describe the Munakata kami as the daughters of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, claimed by the Yamato clan as their ancestral kami.¹²⁵

Items found at Okinoshima sites dating from the first and second stages link the island with the continent. These articles include iron ingots like those found in Silla tombs in the Kyōngju and Pusan regions. Weaving implements and their gilt-bronze miniatures have also been found on Okinoshima. The *Hizen fudoki* suggests that the people of the Munakata area excelled in weaving, and a *Nihon shoki* item for Ōjin’s reign tells of a delegation sent to one of the southern courts of China to obtain seamstresses, one of whom was given to Munakata to serve its kami.¹²⁶ This item may refer to one of the delegations from “the five kings of Wa” noted in Chinese dynastic histories.¹²⁷ At other archaeological sites in the Munakata region, items similar to Okinoshima relics have been found, including pottery and ritual objects made of steatite. It seems likely that some of these were intended for use at the Okinoshima shrine.

The Yamato court sought the support of the Munakata chieftains, who controlled the shortest sea route between Japan and the Korean peninsula, as well as sailors familiar with that route. In return, the court honored the Munakata kami and presented the shrine with valued offerings.¹²⁸ Thus religious beliefs and symbols were used to link the court with a clan that occupied a strategic position in relations with the continent.

¹²³ *Okinoshima*, 1.477; *Nihon shoki*, bk. 1, NKBT 67.108–9; with a different interpretation in Aston, 1.37.

¹²⁴ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 14, Yūryaku 8/3, NKBT 67.480–1; Aston, 2.353.

¹²⁵ *Okinoshima*, 1.475–8.

¹²⁶ *Hizen no kumi fudoki*, NKBT 2.384–5; *Nihon shoki*, bk. 10, NKBT 67.380–1; Aston, 1.271.

¹²⁷ *Okinoshima*, 1.473. ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:472.

three-colored ceramics have also been found. The steatite articles were probably used in purification rites (*katashiro*) and include images of humans, horses, and boats. The coins are of a type that were first minted in 818 and became rare after the beginning of the tenth century.

The first and second stages are of special interest to this inquiry. During this time Yamato gained firm control of distant regions, including northern Kyushu. Although this was accomplished partly through military action, the manipulation of religious symbols also played a crucial role. Information gained from archaeological investigations on Okinoshima and from related historical sources indicates the way in which contacts with the continent affected the birth of the centralized Yamato state.

A mountain that floats in the sea, Okinoshima ultimately derived its sanctity from the belief that certain mountains were the homes of kami. People believed that one of the three Munakata kami resided on the island, just as they thought that kami lived on spectacular mountains such as Miwa and Kasuga in the Kinai and Akagi and Futara in the Kantō. Lowland farmers built mountaintop shrines to worship the kami who might then make the rice crops prosper, and both farmers and fishermen built shrines on Okinoshima, in hopes of abundant yields.

Local clan chieftains also worshiped at Okinoshima, in hopes of claiming special ties with the kami that would add religious sanction to their political authority and help them extend their control over land and people. The clan that dominated the area of the main Munakata Shrine on the northern coast of Kyushu was called the Munakata no Kimi. Several keyhole-shaped tombs in this area were probably built for Munakata clan leaders. One, a large stone chamber with an opening tunneled into the side of a hill, dates from the final years of the Burial Mound period and is thought to be the grave of Munakata no Kimi Tokuzen, who appears as father of an imperial consort in a *Nihon shoki* episode dated 673.¹²² This suggests that by the seventh-century reign of Emperor Temmu the Munakata clan had developed strong ties with Yamato-lineage rulers.

The Munakata probably emerged as a powerful local clan in the fourth century, when close contacts were first established between Japan and southern Korea, especially Paekche. The clan's power base lay along the coast of Genkai Bay, a natural harbor for ships sailing to Korea. Local fishermen, who often sailed the open sea between Kyushu and Okinoshima and then to Korea, were under Munakata

¹²² *Nihon shoki*, bk. 29, Temmu 2 (673) 2/27, NKBT 68.410–11; Aston, 2.322.

gious artifacts, many of continental origin, have been found at twenty-three places in the forested, boulder-strewn vicinity of the shrine.¹²⁰

An examination of the evidence at Okinoshima shows that religious worship on the island developed in four stages, as ritual sites moved from the tops of boulders to their shadows and then into the open air. In the first stage, the fourth through the fifth centuries, *magatama*, mirrors, knives, and swords were presented as offerings at *iwakura* (also called *iwasaka*), boulder-top altars formed out of piled-up stones.¹²¹ It was thought that when offerings were made, kami descended to these altars. Objects found at these sites are similar to Japanese grave goods from the same period: mirrors from Han and Wei China and their Japanese imitations, bracelets made of dark green nephrite, iron weapons and tools, and steatite articles.

In the second stage, from the fifth through the seventh centuries, ritual objects were offered to the kami at sites in the shade of huge boulders. These objects included Japanese imitations of Chinese bronze mirrors, personal and equestrian ornaments, pottery of both domestic and continental manufacture, metal miniatures of everyday objects, and ritual articles of steatite. Some of these articles, such as gold rings, equestrian ornaments, and iron ingots, are similar to those found in Silla tombs dating from Korea's Three Kingdoms period (from around the fourth through seventh centuries). Fragments of a glass bowl of Sassanian Persian origin have also been found at one site, indicating that some items had made their way to Japan from a very great distance. Articles like those discovered at Okinoshima in this second stage have also been found in Japanese tombs of the late fifth and sixth centuries.

In the third stage, the seventh through early eighth centuries, rituals were conducted partly in the shadows of boulders and partly in the open. Ritual objects included those made of steatite – larger than earlier examples – and metal miniatures of weaving and spinning implements. Artifacts discovered at one site include two Eastern Wei gilt bronze finials in the shapes of dragons' heads, and fragments of a T'ang dynasty three-colored (*san-ts'ai*) long-necked vase.

One site dates from the final stage, the eighth through early ninth centuries. Artifacts found at the open-air altar (*kamudokoro*) there include small bronze mirrors, bronze bells (*suzu*), domestic and continental pottery, metal miniatures, ritual objects made of steatite, and bronze coins minted in Japan. Twelve small Japanese copies of T'ang

¹²⁰ *Okinoshima*, 1.621. ¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.622.

Buddhism. According to the *Nihon shoki*, the Paekche king sent an image of the Buddha and several volumes of scriptures to the Japanese court in 552.¹¹⁹ Though Buddhism occupied a precarious position for a time, alternately embraced and rejected by the court, its symbolism contributed to the consolidation of political and economic power (see Chapter 7). Buddhism also stimulated the development of art and architecture. Japanese styles were usually developed from continental prototypes introduced by immigrant artists from Paekche and the other Korean kingdoms. Monks from the continent also contributed to Japan's absorption of sophisticated forms of Chinese learning, and the Japanese monks who traveled to the continent in the eighth and ninth centuries continued to infuse Japanese Buddhism with new ideas and modes of expression.

Relations with the continent were crucial to the development of a unified Japanese state based on a literate and technologically advanced society. The control of relations with the continent was one decisive factor in the formation of the Japanese state under the control of the Yamato clan. The victors, based in the Kinai region, established the line of hereditary sovereigns who occupied the throne in later periods. Archaeological findings from the island of Okinoshima – off the coast of Kyushu and far from Yamato – reveal the importance of sea routes to the continent in this process and suggest ways in which these routes were established and maintained by the Yamato court.

OKINOSHIMA, THE YAMATO COURT, AND THE CONTINENT

Okinoshima, since prehistoric times the site of an especially sacred shrine, lies in Genkai Bay, directly on the sea route between Kyushu and the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula. On the island is one of three Munakata shrines, each dedicated to a female kami. Okinoshima is important to our inquiry for two reasons: It was an early and continuing locus of contact between Japan and the continent, and its emergence as a religious site during the Burial Mound period can be connected with the rise of the Yamato kingdom. Archaeological evidence, such as a narrow bronze spear of Korean origin discovered at a Yayoi site, indicates Okinoshima's importance in early contacts between Japan and Korea. The richest store of archaeological treasures, however, comes from the fourth through the ninth centuries: Reli-

¹¹⁹ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 19, Kimmei 13/10, NKBT 68.100–1; Aston, 2.65

tribute and that the Wa king (Nintoku) received an imperial appointment in 421. In 438 and 443, Wa kings (probably Hanzei and Ingyō) were designated as “generals who have subdued the east,” a title also given to the last of the five kings (probably Yūryaku). Thus Japanese rulers sought and received Chinese confirmation of their dominant positions.¹¹³ The benefits of reestablishing relations with the Chinese courts were economic as well as political, and Japan was once more in touch with a source of mirrors, silken goods, and technology such as methods of raising silkworms.¹¹⁴

In the later years of the Burial Mound period, Japanese clans accumulated regional power and began to form alliances, a process that culminated with the extension of Yamato control to nearly all of Japan. Contacts with the continent were crucial to this centralization process. Luxury items such as gold ornaments and elegant horse trappings might serve as symbols of authority; and iron, as we already noted, enhanced the technologies of warfare and of agriculture. But the influence of the continent was not limited to tools and weapons, or even to the skills needed to produce them. Immigrants from the Korean peninsula – some perhaps Chinese-lineage refugees from Lo-lang and Tai-fang – played an important role in the transmission of political ideas and administrative methods. Many important court figures in Ōjin’s reign, for example, were immigrants from Paekche.¹¹⁵ During Kimmei’s reign, a Korean named Wō-jin-mi was assigned the task of keeping a record of the taxes levied on shipments.¹¹⁶ Immigrants of all social strata contributed to the political and economic development of Burial Mound Japan. An item in the *Nihon shoki*, dated in the seventh year of Ōjin’s reign, relates that men from Korea (Koguryō, Paekche, Silla, and Kaya) were ordered by the monarch to construct an irrigation pond,¹¹⁷ and laborers from Silla were employed on a flood control project during Nintoku’s reign.¹¹⁸

The introduction of the Chinese writing system in the fifth century was one of Paekche’s most important gifts to the Japanese. By the middle of the next century, the Yamato court was utilizing written records to facilitate administrative matters and thus to extend and solidify its political control. Literacy among the aristocracy also enhanced the acceptance of another import from Paekche, the religion of

¹¹³ Okazaki, “Sanseiki yori nanaseiki no tairiku ni okeru kokusai kankei to Nihon,” p. 637.

¹¹⁴ Okazaki, “Kokusai kankei to Nihon,” p. 638. ¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 19, Kimmei 14/7/4, NKBT 68.104–5; Aston, 2.69. Also see Okazaki, “Kokusai kankei to Nihon,” p. 638.

¹¹⁷ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 10, Ōjin 7/9, NKBT 67.366–7; Aston 1.257.

¹¹⁸ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 11, Nintoku 11/10, NKBT 67.394–5; Aston, 1.281–2.

Silla's expansion. A Yamato court official was ordered to implement Muryōng's request, but his wife argued against it, declaring that certain kami had bestowed on the ruler Homuda (King Ōjin, who probably reigned in the early fifth century) "the gold and silver lands beyond the sea, namely, Koryō (Koguryō), Paekche, Silla and Imna (Mimana)." Nevertheless, the districts were ceded to Paekche in accord with the wishes of the Yamato ruler.¹¹⁰ This account, and others written in the eighth century, leave little doubt that by that time the Japanese wanted to believe that the sixth-century Korean kingdoms had been tributary to the Yamato state.

Relations with Silla and Koguryō were not nearly so peaceful, and they sometimes deteriorated into armed conflict. One such episode was the conflict in 399, when the combined forces of Japan and Paekche attacked Silla and were driven back by Silla and its ally Koguryō.¹¹¹ Despite such an uneasy relationship, however, trade among them continued. Some of the iron ingots found at Japanese sites may have come from Silla, and the iron weapons may have come from Koguryō. According to the *Nihon shoki*, the Yamato court entertained guests from Koguryō in 324, and "ministers and functionaries were assembled and made to shoot at the iron shields and targets" presented by the visitors.¹¹² Whatever the official relationship between Japan and the Three Kingdoms, iron implements and the technique of making them came to Japan from all parts of the peninsula, along with methods of tomb construction, glazed pottery manufacture, and mounted warfare.

In the fifth century, the Japanese resumed direct contact with China, probably through the agency of Paekche. Although the situation in China was far from stable, it was once more settled enough to make diplomatic contacts possible and fruitful. Like Himiko, Japanese rulers of the Burial Mound period sent tribute embassies to the Chinese courts and sought Chinese acknowledgment of their authority.

Chinese sources record thirteen visits of envoys from "five kings of Wa" to the Eastern Chin, Sung, Ch'i, and Liang courts between 413 and 502. The first of the five is thought to have been King Nintoku, though there is a discrepancy between the dates noted in the Chinese records and the traditional dates (313–99) assigned to Nintoku's reign. The Chinese records note that the embassies from "Wa" came with

¹¹⁰ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 17, Keitai 6/12, NKBT 68.26–29; Aston, 2.7–9.

¹¹¹ This episode is documented by the inscription on King Kwanggaet'o's stele.

¹¹² *Nihon shoki*, bk. 11, Nintoku 12/8/10, NKBT 67.282–3; Aston, 1.282; *Okinoshima*, 1.359–61.

Korean states. Kaya provided a foothold on the peninsula for the Japanese until the middle of the sixth century, when the small states were absorbed by Silla.

Perhaps the most important reason that the Japanese were anxious to maintain relations with southern Korea – and to define these relations in their own terms – was to guarantee access to Korean sources of iron. Iron, scarce in Japan, was crucial to both farming and warfare. Late Yayoi period weapons were made of iron, not stone or bronze, and any clan that wished to retain control of its territory had to maintain its supply of iron. Iron was also used extensively in agriculture for hoeing, digging, and plowing and for making wooden tools. Thus a control of the iron supply was important to clearing land and increasing agricultural yields, which provided the economic base for the expansion of powerful clans. As the Yamato rose to power and took steps toward forming a centralized state, the need to maintain control over the iron supply must have seemed paramount.

This need for iron motivated the fourth-century Japanese to develop close ties not only with Kaya but with Paekche as well. These ties are described in the Japanese chronicles written some four centuries later and substantiated by a contemporary source, the inscription on a sword found at the Isonokami Shrine in Nara Prefecture. According to this inscription, the sword was a gift of the Paekche king in 369. This sword may be the same one presented, according to the *Nihon shoki*, to Queen Jingū by the king of Paekche in 252.¹⁰⁹ (The discrepancy in dates need not trouble us, as many accounts in the *Nihon shoki* appear to be dated too early.) Both parties took advantage of the alliance: From 391 to 399 Japanese armies supported Paekche when it was attacked by the combined forces of Silla and Koguryō, and Paekche helped the Japanese establish diplomatic contact with the southern Chinese courts in the fifth century.

The *Nihon shoki* portrays the relationship between Paekche and Japan as peaceful and cooperative. For example, the chronicle reports that in 512, the Paekche king Muryōng sent an “envoy with tribute” to the Yamato court. The envoy also bore a message requesting Yamato to cede four districts of Mimana (or Kaya) to Paekche. According to this message, the districts were so close to Paekche that “their fowl and dogs [could not] be kept apart,” and they were so far from Japan that it would be difficult for the court to maintain control in the face of

¹⁰⁹ *Nihon shoki*, bk. 9, Jingū 52/9/10, NKBT 67.358–9; Aston, 1.251; Daisanji Okinoshima gakujuutsu chōsakai, *Munakata Okinoshima*, 3 vols. (Fukuoka-ken, Munakata-gun, Genkai-chō: Munakata taisha fukkō kiseikai, 1979), vol. 1, p. 469.

Japan and Korea in the Burial Mound period

According to the *Wei chih*, when the Wa queen Himiko was buried, “a great mound was raised” to serve as her tomb.¹⁰⁷ Himiko’s tomb has never been located, but hundreds of tombs dating from the third through the sixth centuries have been found all over Japan. Some tombs follow the Kyōngju construction style, but others are dug vertically into the earth or horizontally into a hillside as in Koguryō and Paekche. Such burial practices give the age its name: the Burial Mound period. During these centuries, Japan grew from a society of small agrarian communities into a consolidated kingdom under the control of a monarch supported by chieftains of strong clans. This state, based in the Kinai District of central Honshu, is known as Yamato (see Chapter 2).

In the early years of the Burial Mound period, China – the source of much of the advanced technology that made its way to Japan in the Yayoi age – was beset by civil war. We hear no more of direct contact with Chinese courts after the end of the third century. The source of bronze mirrors dried up, and the Japanese were forced to manufacture this important ritual item for themselves. Fortunately, they had already learned enough technical skills from continental prototypes and tutors to produce such mirrors ably, as we can see from the many fine domestic examples found at archaeological sites. Chinese patterns were sometimes copied, often in abbreviated or stylized forms, but the Japanese also developed their own motifs.¹⁰⁸

The confused situation in China forced Japan to turn to Korea as a source of high culture, technology, and luxury items. Though the Korean kingdoms were in general more advanced than Japan was during this period, there was not the overwhelming gulf that had marked earlier relations between the Wa people and the Chinese courts. The Japanese did not see themselves as tributary to the Korean kingdoms and felt free to interfere militarily on the peninsula. This attitude toward Korea is reflected in the *Nihon shoki*, which pictures the Kaya states (Japanese: Mimana) as a colony under the direct control of the Yamato court. But Korean sources do not substantiate this, and the nature of relations between Kaya and Japan remains a subject of much dispute. Whether a colony, a tributary state, or an ally, however, the Kaya league had the closest relationship to Japan of all the

¹⁰⁷ *San-kuo chih* 30, p. 858; Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Tanaka, *Kokyō*, pp. 24–27.

established in the early years of the Silla kingdom include Bunhwangsa, site of Korea's oldest datable pagoda, a square-based structure made of stones cut to resemble bricks; Hwangryongsa, Silla's largest temple; and Sach'önwangsa, built in 669, according to traditional accounts, to protect Silla against the armies of China.¹⁰⁶ The valley of Kyōngju is dotted with tombs, some dating from the early Silla period. Archaeologists have not yet identified any as the burial place of a particular king, but several, such as the Kūmgwan, Sobong, and Chōnma mounds, are large and grand enough to be royal tombs.

Following Chinese practice, the builders of Silla tombs constructed stone chambers and covered them with mounded earth. This style, which differed from that common in Paekche and Koguryō, was transmitted to the Japanese. Articles made of gold were often deposited in these tombs, and some, such as crowns, belt buckles, and ornaments with pendants, are similar to those found among the Hsien-pei. Three-legged bronze wine vessels, glass ornaments, and items made of blue porcelain from Yüeh Province all were imported from China.

Although Silla was the last of the three Korean kingdoms to form and the latest to adopt Chinese culture, it proved to be the strongest contender for control of the peninsula. Silla's rise was abetted by the attacks on its northern neighbor by the Sui and T'ang dynasties. In 598 Sui used Koguryō's attack on the Chinese territory of Liao-hsi as a pretext to invade the Korean kingdom. The forces of the Sui emperor Wen-ti were defeated and forced to withdraw, but Wen-ti's successor Yang-ti ordered a renewed series of land and sea invasions of Koguryō, beginning in 612 and lasting until 614. The Chinese were repeatedly defeated with huge losses. Thirty years later under the T'ang dynasty emperor Tai-tsung, China again attacked Koguryō in 645–7 and was once again repelled. Finally in 660 T'ang China allied itself with Silla in southeast Korea, and their combined forces first conquered Paekche in 660 and then Koguryō in 668. The once great kingdom of Koguryō became a T'ang protectorate; but in 676, Silla, aided by remnants of the two defeated armies, drove the T'ang from their northern Korean stronghold. Korea's first unified kingdom was thereby established, with its capital at Kyōngju. The flourishing culture of Silla influenced a wide region, stretching from Manchuria in the north to Japan across the sea.

¹⁰⁶ Edward B. Adams, *Kyongju Guide: Cultural Spirit of Silla in Korea* (Seoul: Seoul International Tourist Publishing, 1979), pp. 51, 55, 135. The lower stories of the Bunhwangsa pagoda are intact and can be viewed today; the other two temples have been destroyed, but their foundation stones remain.

dhist temples were constructed in the Liang capital. Enthusiastically adopted by the ruling classes of Paekche, Buddhism was soon passed on to the Japanese. According to traditional accounts, this occurred during the reign of King Sōng, Muryōng's son and successor. Clothing and ornaments from Muryōng's tomb, similar to those found in tombs in both China and Japan, indicate that Paekche was a major link between these two cultures during Japan's Burial Mound period. The debt that Japan owed to Paekche continued through the sixth century, when many art treasures were imported to grace the Buddhist temples of the capital region of Asuka.

The rise of Silla and the spread of Silla culture

At the end of the fourth century, a third Korean kingdom, later to be called Silla, emerged in the region of southeast Korea dominated by the Saro tribe. The new state, based in the old Chinhan region (present-day Kyōngju) allied itself with Koguryō, no doubt to counter the influence of the Japanese, allies of Paekche and the Kaya states. In the fifth and sixth centuries, as the three Korean kingdoms contended for territory and for control of the peninsula, Silla extended its borders to the north and west, annexing one of the Kaya states.

Shortly after Silla came into being, its rulers opened relations with the Eastern Chin court in southern China. Silla was the last of the three Korean kingdoms consciously to adopt Chinese culture, but when sinification came, it was rapid and thorough. Steles erected in the sixth century commemorating the conquests of Silla's kings used Chinese-style era names when recording dates.¹⁰⁵ Tribal names were abandoned, and even the state's name Silla was taken from a Chinese proverb. King Pōphūng (r. 514–40), the first of the Silla kings to sponsor sinification, assumed the Chinese title of *wang* (king). The Chinese writing system was adopted, and Silla soldiers developed a method of using Chinese characters to represent Korean sounds. Buddhism, unofficially introduced in the fifth century, was recognized by the court during Pōphūng's reign, and Silla monks sent to China for study returned with additional knowledge of Chinese culture.

Archaeological findings at Kyōngju, site of Silla's capital, reveal the nature and extent of Chinese cultural influence. Temple pagodas and worship halls were patterned after Chinese models. Important temples

¹⁰⁵ Dates and locations of these steles are (1) 555, northern Seoul; (2) 561, South Kyōngsang Province; (3) 568, two locations in North Hamgyōng Province.