

The *Ōmikotomochi* and *Subeosa* System in *Harima no Kuni Fudoki*

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The *subeosa* in *Harima Fudoki*

In the entry for Hiroyama Sato, Ihibo *Kōri*, in *Harima Fudoki*, it records that the name of the village that was previously called Tsuka *Mura* was changed to Hiroyama Sato while Prince Ishikawa (Ishikawa no Ō) was ‘*subeosa*’ (総領), ‘chief superintendent’. According to the entry for the third month of Emperor Tenmu in *Nihon Shoki* (679 CE), Prince Ishikawa died while he was the *ōmikotomochi* (大宰)—also “chief superintendent” or ‘chief of defence’—of Kibi, and was interred there. In other words, Prince Ishikawa held the posts of *subeosa* in *Harima Fudoki* and *ōmikotomochi* in *Nihon Shoki*, but do these refer to the same official position or not, and what kinds of responsibilities did these posts involve? Below I shall discuss these questions on the basis of *Harima Fudoki*.

Official duties of a *subeosa*

It is well attested that there were three levels of local government administrative district in ancient Japan: *kuni* (province), *kōri* (rural district, or county) and *sato* (village). Reference to these administrative districts first appeared in Article 2 of the Reform Edict issued in Taika 2 (646 CE); but this does not mean that they were all immediately implemented. The *kuni* was a territorial division (hereafter called the administrative *kuni* to distinguish it from the former jurisdiction of a *kuni no miyatsuko*) that was not established until the task of determining provincial boundaries was settled in the period 683–685 CE.

On the other hand, it is believed that *kōri* were put into operation not long after the Reform Edict was promulgated. However, it has been clarified from *mokkan* (wooden tags) excavated from the Fujiwara Palace Site that the orthography for *kōri* as 郡 was introduced from Taihō 1 (701) under the Taihō Codes. It had previously been written as 評, but both were glossed *kohori* (Old Japanese for *kōri*). The etymology of *kohori* is *kofuri* (Korean: *go-eul*), which was used in the ancient Three Kingdoms of the Korean Peninsula (Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla) as a district of military administration—usually referred to in English as a ‘commandery’.

That being so, it is highly likely that when the *kōri* (評) system began in the reign of King Kōtoku who issued the Taika Reform Edict, the *kōri* was undifferentiated as to civil and military administration, as on the Korean Peninsula.¹ The military administrative system was separated off from the *kōri* (評) under the Taihō Codes, so it was at that stage that the *kōri* (郡) became a solely civil administrative district. In *Hitachi no Kuni Fudoki* the *subeosa* is associated with this division of the functions of the *kōri* (評). Also, in the entry for the 11th month of Tenmu 14 (685) in *Nihon Shoki*, it says that the office of the *subeosa* of Suō Province sent ‘bamboo for use in arrows’ to Tsukushi (northern Kyūshū). And there is also the opinion that the *subeosa* was involved in the maintenance and administration of the Korean-style fortifications that were emplaced all over western Japan after the Battle of Baekgang² in 663 when the allies were routed by the combined forces of Silla and Tang. So on this basis it appears that *subeosa* were tasked with military affairs.

According to *Harima Fudoki*, Prince Ishikawa, the *subeosa* of the neighbouring province of Kibi, carried out the change to the new unit of control, from Tsuka *Mura* to Hiroyama Sato. Similarly, according to the entry in *Nihon Shoki* for the 8th month of Jitō 3 (688), the *subeosa* of

¹ Translator’s note: under the *ritsuryō* system of government, military conscripts and security guards were conscripted from men in each *kōri* aged 21–60 years.

² Translator’s note: a battle on the Baek River (Korea) between the allied forces of Baekje and Yamato against Silla and Tang China, 27–28 August 663.

Iyo Province was ordered by Empress Jitō to release a white (albino?) swallow that had been caught in the neighbouring province of Sanuki. From examples such as these, it is evident that the *subeosa*'s responsibilities involved civil control over a territory that was much broader than the later *kuni* under the *ritsuryō* system.

What is clear from the above is that a *subeosa* controlled civil administration over an area wider than that of the later administrative province, and that an important part of the post's responsibilities were military matters.

When Prince Ishikawa was *subeosa*

According to the entry for Ishitsukuri *Sato*, Shisawa *Kōri*, in *Harima Fudoki*, the name of Iwa *Mura* was changed to Ishitsukuri *Sato* in 670, so we know that it was then that the *sato* (里) system was first implemented. Four examples of *sato* name changes are recorded: Kisasi *Sato* to Ogawa *Sato* (Shikama *Kōri*); and Mikoshiro *Sato* to Koshibe *Sato*, Ayabe *Sato* to Woyake *Sato*, and Ōmiya *Sato* to Ōyake *Sato* (all three in Ihibo *Kōri*); and of these, the changes to Ogawa and Woyake are both dated to 690. In other words, the change in administrative unit from *mura* to *sato* in Harima Province was implemented in 670, and some of the *sato* names were revised in 690. These dates coincide with the first *koseki*, or *kōgo nenjaku* (household registrations) and the later *kōin nenjaku*, respectively. When we take into consideration the length of time it would have taken to carry out the *koseki* registrations, it was not so much that the *sato* administrative district changes were particularly planned in and of themselves, but that in the process of compiling *koseki*, the administrative unit was first changed from *mura* to *sato*, and then later the *sato* names were revised in accordance with some new principles for naming places.

In the entry for the 26th day of the 6th month of Tenmu 1 (672) in *Nihon Shoki* during the so-called Jinshin War,³ the name of a man called 'Kibi no Kuni no Kami Tagima no Kimi Hiroshima' appears as someone who was accused of being on the side of Prince Ōama and was assassinated, and on the 24th of the same month Prince Ishikawa joined the military camp at the Suzuka Barrier. From then on Prince Ishikawa remained close to Prince Ōama (later Emperor Tenmu), and it is thought that it was because of this that he was despatched to Kibi, which was a strategically important area during Tenmu's reign. Deducing from these two points, it seems that the timing of the events in *Harima Fudoki*—including the administrative change from Tsuka *Mura* to Hiroyama *Sato*—must have been in the early period of Tenmu's reign.

The role of the *ōmikotomochi*

The next point for consideration is the disparity between Prince Ishikawa's being titled *subeosa* in *Harima Fudoki* but *ōmikotomochi* in *Nihon Shoki*. The only districts ascribed an *ōmikotomochi* in *Nihon Shoki* are Tsukushi and Kibi. *Subeosa* and *ōmikotomochi* are differentiated in *Nihon Shoki*, and are not confused. The office of *ōmikotomochi* of Tsukushi is thought to have been the forerunner of the Dazaifu, so the *ōmikotomochi* of Kibi probably fulfilled a similar function. Let us first consider the role of the *ōmikotomochi* of Kibi.

It was in the sixth century when the Yamato polity seized control of the transportation route through the Inland Sea, and after suppressing the Tsukushi no Kimi Iwai Rebellion (527 CE) they set up Kasuya *Miyake* (present-day Koga-shi, Fukuoka Prefecture) and Nanotsu *Miyake* (south of Hakata Station, Fukuoka Prefecture) in northern Kyūshū; and also Shirai *Miyake* (Maniwa-shi, Okayama Prefecture) and Kojima *Miyake* (present-day Kojima Peninsula, then an island, Okayama Prefecture) in Kibi. In other words, Tsukushi and Kibi were the most important places as regards marine transportation for the Yamato Court, which is why they later established the offices of *ōmikotomochi* in Tsukushi and Kibi.

When the priest Nichira returned from Baekje in Bidatsu 12 (583 CE), he went to Naniwa no Murotsumi via this Kojima *Miyake*. According to *Bitchū no Kuni Fudoki Itsibun* (cited in *Honchō Monzui* 2),⁴ there is a story that when they were intending to send relief troops to Baekje, which had fallen in the 1st month of Saimei 7 (661), they got as far as Nima *Sato*, Shimotsumichi *Kōri* in

³ Translator's note: a brief war of succession upon the death of Emperor Tenchi, between his brother, Prince Ōama, and his son, Prince Ōtomo.

⁴ Translator's note: a mid-eleventh century Japanese book of Chinese prose and poetry, compiled by Fujiwara no Akihira.

Bitchū Province (present-day Kami Nima and Shimo Nima, Mabi-chō, Kurashiki-shi, Okayama Prefecture), and upon conscripting troops there to rescue those still in Baekje, twenty thousand men were mustered, which is why they called it Nima ('twenty thousand') *Sato*. Naturally, they could not possibly have conscripted twenty thousand men from this village alone, so this is just a place name origin tale for 'Nima *Sato*'. But we should assume that this place name origin tale is related to the reality that this district was the mustering point for troops conscripted from all over the Kibi region. On this basis, it can be surmised that one of the powers of the Kibi *ōmikotomochi*, which had developed out of the Kojima and Shirai *Miyake*, was related to the military, and that even when the Jinshin War broke out, the partisans based in Ōmi Province conscripted troops in Tsukushi and Kibi (see 6th month, Tenmu 1, *Nihon Shoki*).

Ōmikotomochi and subeosa

When Prince Ishikawa died in the year Tenmu 8 (680), he was posthumously conferred the second rank of non-succeeding princes.⁵ Kamitsukeno Ason Wotari, who became *subeosa* of Kibi in Monmu 4 (700) is recorded as having the 14th grade (*jikikō san*), and then under the Taihō Codes it was made an official position graded equivalent to the Governor of a Great Province (*taikoku no kami*),⁶ so its status was downgraded. Moreover, on the same day that Kamitsukeno Ason Wotari was redeployed as Shimofusa no Kami (Governor of Shimōsa Province) in 703, the Governor of Bizen Province was also appointed, so the post of *subeosa* of Kibi was amalgamated with that of Governor of Bizen.

From the above, it is evident that at the stage of the early years of Tenmu's reign, when the foreign policy problem after the Baekje expedition had yet to be fully resolved, military authority along the Inland Sea lay under the control of the *ōmikotomochi* of Kibi (probably combined with the role of Governor of Kibi, Kibi no Kuni no Kami). But government under the *ritsuryō* state had been established by the end of Tenmu's reign, and conditions had been set in place for provincial governors (*kokushi*) to take over authority for military matters in their jurisdiction. As a result, there was no longer a need for military power to be solely in the hands of an *ōmikotomochi* in Kibi, and as a transitional measure they adopted a system of several *subeosa* instead, based in Suō, Iyo and Kibi Provinces, until eventually they were abolished completely under the Taihō Codes, and their diplomatic and overseas-directed military functions were concentrated in the Dazaifu. In a nutshell, the title changed from *ōmikotomochi* to *subeosa* at the end of the seventh century.

So the reason why Prince Ishikawa was called *ōmikotomochi* in *Nihon Shoki* but *subeosa* in *Harima Fudoki* might well be because the difference between the roles of the relatively recent *subeosa* and its forerunner the *ōmikotomochi* had already become hazy by the time *Harima Fudoki* was compiled at the beginning of the eighth century.

⁵ Translator's note: *Shoō*, 諸王二位. From 603 CE the Yamato Court introduced a system of ranks among the royal lineage and the nobility, which were frequently revised thereafter. These included 4 ranks of *shinnō* (the reigning king's/emperor's brothers and sons) and 15 ranks of *shoō* ('other' royal males, not close to the line of succession).

⁶ Under the *ritsuryō* system of government, there were four designations of *kuni*, provinces, the most important being *taikoku*, 'great provinces'.