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The Way to Wa (in the Age of Himiko)

by
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with additional research by Frank W. Clements
and a foreword by Victor H. Mair

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The Way to Wa
(in the Age of Himiko)

Andrew C. H. Jones

With additional research by Frank W. Clements, Stockton University

Foreword by Victor H. Mair, University of Pennsylvania

人问寒山道，寒山路不通。

People ask about the way to Cold Mountain

But no road to Cold Mountain is open

—Han Shan, *Han Shan*¹

¹ 人问寒山道，寒山路不通。夏天冰未释，日出雾朦胧。似我何由届，与君心不同。君心若似我，还得到其中

ABSTRACT

In the long history of studying the first textual description of the Japanese islands in the Wa² section of the third century *Wei zhi* 魏志, compiled by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297), the possibility that the travel portion of the text is realistic has been overestimated, the proficiency of the Wa people in sea voyaging greatly underestimated, and the political acumen of the early residents of the archipelago often ignored in favor of their much-lauded spiritual prowess. By altering these perspectives, a more realistic picture may emerge, although it is one we may not expect. This paper proposes that the rulers of Wa, whose authority, in contrast to continental Chinese ideology, was grounded in matriarchal and spiritual power, were aware of the potential danger Chinese states posed to their realm. The maritime prowess of the Wa suggests that, since they were certainly capable of providing clear and accurate directions to Chinese officials had they wished, it is possible they instead transmitted deliberately vague directions in order to make their realm less accessible to possible subjugation or conquest.

Keywords: "Wajinden," Wa, Himiko, Yamatai, *Wei zhi*

² In this paper, Wa 倭 (MC wō) will stand for the people inhabiting the Japanese archipelago, before they themselves changed the name to Yamato (reading the same character 倭 as Yamato or using the character 和) and, much later, to Nihon 日本.

FOREWORD

Andrew Jones was the author of only the second issue of *Sino-Platonic Papers*, of which this is the 336th. That was “The Poetics of Uncertainty in Early Chinese Literature” (December 1986), thirty-seven years ago. It is a brilliant work of literary criticism that combines history, politics, philosophy, and religion to describe narrative construction and progress in fiction and other genres. Particularly well suited to Chinese cosmology and psychology, Andy’s closely reasoned analysis of the architectonics of literary works illuminates the nature of narrative as few works of scholarship have before or since.

Andy was born on December 23, 1953, in Jackson, Michigan, and grew up primarily in Rocky River, Ohio, after which he traveled throughout Canada, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. He attended Brown University, Yale University, Antioch College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (all through the University Without Walls) and eventually received his MA in East Asian Studies from the University of Pennsylvania in 1983. Owing to his passion for travel, he became a master linguist, an achievement he parlayed into a career working for such diverse companies as Mazda and Nikon. He and his wife, Kazuko Hokumen Jones, translated books and published in Japan. They lived in Hiroshima, Japan, for fourteen years, eventually coming back to the United States and settling in the San Francisco Bay area.

At Mazda, Andy worked in the legal department as a translator. At Nikon Precision Inc., in Belmont, CA, a subsidiary of Nikon, he was the manager of the documentation department that handles semi-conductor manuals, where he automated the translation process by adopting machine translation.

The water was Andy’s passion, and regardless of its shape—be it raft, canoe, sailboat, catamaran, or yacht—Andy was most at home on a boat. He had sailed on Lake Erie when he was young, and he sailed and boated all the rest of his life, including on the Seto Inland Sea near Hiroshima, where he lived with his family for fourteen years, and on the San Francisco Bay. His boating adventures extended to the waters around Tahiti, the British Virgin Islands, and Greece.

At the time of his death, he was researching a paper on the history of Japanese naval matters. I knew that Andy was working on this paper because he and I corresponded about it over a period of many years. As a matter of fact, we had been discussing how to bring the paper to a conclusion when word came that he had died unexpectedly on June 1, 2022, while working on his beloved Kanpai III, a thirty-eight-foot motorboat docked at the Marin Yacht Club in San Rafael, California.

I was fully aware of how valuable Andy's paper would be for anyone interested in early Sino-Japanese naval affairs, so I was eager to finish it up for him somehow. Fortunately, Kazuko and Emily Jenks (his daughter) found the unfinished draft of the paper in Andy's computer and sent it to me, together with his voluminous research notes and a sizable library dedicated to the subject of this paper.

These were turned over to Frank Clements, a specialist on Japanese history and religion who received his doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania's Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. Frank filled in the gaps in the paper and brought it to a conclusion. Mark Swofford, the technical editor of this journal, is both knowledgeable about and interested in early sea travel between China and Japan, so he was able to provide invaluable expertise on crucial matters pertaining to the overall framework of the paper. Paula Roberts, the manuscript editor of SPP, who has been to Japan many times, revised the final drafts with a keen insight into the details of Andy's unique thesis.

Together, we are pleased to present Andy's breakthrough paper on early maritime travel between Japan and China, "The Way to Wa (in the Age of Himiko)."

Victor H. Mair

Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

August 24, 2023

P R E F A C E

By Andrew C. H. Jones

This is a report on a brief third-century itinerary for traveling from northern Korea to places in the Japanese archipelago. Almost all research on the itinerary for the past hundred years or more has had, as its primary or secondary focus, finding the location of Yamatai, the capital of the land of Wa, as the main territory of Japan was then known. The problem is that the location is still unknown, and so if we propose specific coordinates for Yamatai, all places preceding it in the itinerary must be arranged to ensure that point is reached. If, for example, the capital was in the east, then the places in the itinerary must be arranged to make reaching the east possible. If it was in the south, then the locations given for the east must be wrong, and so the places rearranged to fit a southern bearing. Most of the studies are of great value to the extent that we read between the lines of the text to find the compelling story of life in early East Asia. And there a lot of lines to read between.

I have tried to avoid the conflict mentioned above by concentrating on almost everything but the location of Yamatai—or most of the other places mentioned in the itinerary. The reason this works is the notion that the people of Wa did not want the Chinese (who wrote the itinerary) to know where it was, or at least not be able to get there by themselves. And, in fact, during this period, no envoys of the Chinese government are recorded as ever reaching Yamatai by themselves.

Sometimes international strategies read like fiction, but only after the fact. In China during the early centuries of the common era, a story not anchored in fact was often signaled by a sudden (*hū* 忽 or *hūanghū* 恍忽) change in the cosmic harmonies.³ This was due in part to the thought that fiction was considered frivolous to the point of being immoral, but was quite different from deception, which was anything but sudden (except usually when those it is directed at discover it). It is deeply and long-planned, even if it is sometimes so spectacular that it reads like fiction.

³ For details, see Andrew Jones, “The Poetics of Uncertainty in Early Chinese Literature,” *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 2 (1987): 1–45.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The earliest somewhat detailed account of the people inhabiting the islands of Japan was written in the third century by the Chinese official historian, Chén Shòu 陳壽 (233–297), as part of the Wèi 魏 dynasty (220–264) section (“Wèishū” 魏書) of his *Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (MC: *Sāngúozhì* 三国志). The account, known in Japanese as the “Wajinden” 倭人伝 (“Treatise on the People of Wa”; MC: “Wōrénzhuàn”), is only two thousand or so characters long and provides a tantalizing glimpse of the Japanese many centuries before they themselves started to record their version of history.⁴

In part because of its brevity, its contents being very different from many other chronicles of people foreign to the Chinese (whom they usually called “barbarians”), and in part because of the politics so often heavily involved in histories of the region, there is a great deal of controversy over what the text says and means. The main part of the work discusses the customs of the Wa 倭 (MC: Wō), many of which are extremely foreign to modern Japan, such as having female rulers, practices such as slavery and tattooing, and a relatively primitive lifestyle in general. Interesting as these parts are, here I will concentrate on the first section of the text, which provides, in rudimentary form, the itinerary for the route from the Chinese commandery at Dàifāng 帶方 (J: Taihō; K: Taebang), an area roughly between modern Pyongyang and Seoul, to the residence of the leader of the Wa at Yamatai 邪馬臺 (MC: Yāmātái).

That itinerary has been studied for hundreds of years, in order to find out exactly where Yamatai was and hence to know where the female leader of the Wa, known in the chronicle as Himiko 卑弥呼 (MC: Bīmíhū) lived and ruled. This is an important objective, as it would help scholars understand how the people of the archipelago progressed from the Wa described in the *Wei zhi* to become the powerful kingdom of Yamato founded in 390 CE. If, for example, Yamatai were in western Japan (Kyushu in particular), certain developments seen in later histories and archaeology could be confirmed, and

⁴ Although a few artifacts with rudimentary characters on them have been unearthed, the *Wei zhi* account we are discussing says the Wa presented the Chinese with a memorial (*biao* 表). No details of the memorial exist today. See Wang Zhenping, “Speaking with a Forked Tongue: Diplomatic Correspondence between China and Japan, 238–608 A.D.,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, No. 1 (January–March 1994): 26. Wang suggests that even later memorials were probably written by Chinese or Korean emigrants (*Ibid.*, 27).

likewise if Yamatai were in the east (Kinki, the Osaka/Nara area), then we could surmise that the power shift from Kyushu to Kinki, clearly seen later, had happened much sooner than previously thought.

Unfortunately, however, using the itinerary to find Yamatai is untenable. The account is deliberately vague and misleading. It makes use of indirection as a diplomatic tactic, and it is a precursor to the way the Japanese later would manipulate diplomatic language to maintain a higher status vis-à-vis a much larger (if not stronger) Chinese counterpart.⁵ Enough information is given in the itinerary to be plausible but not enough to be actionable without a local pilot. In addition, somewhat naturally supporting this tactic, navigation was not well developed—the compass was still not used for direction finding—so that sailing along the coasts and the use of dead-reckoning were necessary. Although this was no great hindrance to the highly experienced mariners of the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago, it required information that was (and is) very hard to understand for landlubbers, such as the Chinese envoys, to grasp and articulate. On the other hand, the sea passages from Korea to the islands of Japan were already well-known in this period, having been traversed for trade and maritime use for well over a millennium. This means that the itinerary could easily have been made accurate and detailed.

⁵ It may also provide insights into how the earliest Japanese histories were manipulated to prove that the power of Yamato was legitimate in a sacred way.



Figure 1. "Gujin hua yi quyu zongyao tu" (General Map of the Ancient and Present Territories of China and Foreign Countries).⁶ Japan is barely visible among the waves in this Song dynasty map.

⁶ *Lidai dili zhizhang tu*, (Easy-to-use maps of geography through the dynasties, 1098-1100, supplemented 1162). The whole map is reproduced as Figure 3.23 in Cordell D. K. Yee, "Reinterpreting Traditional Chinese Maps," in *The History of Cartography Volume One, Book Two: Cartography in the Traditional Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 58.

The Japanese archipelago is what is considered a protected zone—a sea-only access, like the British Isles in that respect, though not in many others—a shrimp-shaped landmass (as Yukio Mishima noted in *Spring Snow*)—with an odd cartographic trajectory leaning at an angle southwest to northeast. This convenience of geography was a central strategic part of the emerging Japanese state, probably employed by Himiko, if not before, in keeping official envoys (though likely not traders, emigres, and adventurers) at a place the itinerary calls Ito 伊都, and what would soon thereafter be situated at Dazaifu 太宰府, near Fukuoka 福岡, and of course much later in Hirado 平戸 and then Dejima 出島, until Perry arrived in 1853.⁷

The benefits of being so protected were mainly in the military sphere, a plus that began to quickly deteriorate because of steam navigation, although it enabled an early isolation that permitted its primitive society to last longer than any other on earth (with a lasting effect on culture, among other things), and without which it would no doubt be much closer culturally to Korea, with which it otherwise shares so much.

The *Wei zhi* account was told by the people of Wa for Chinese travelers, not so they could find Yamatai, but to give minimum hints or reference points and ultimately make it impossible to find: a strategy of misdirection. Put another way, if at some point it is possible to prove exactly where Yamatai was, it will be because of remarkable archaeological finds, not by following the directions in the *Wei zhi*.⁸

⁷ It should be noted that the Japanese had asked Perry, as they did every foreigner, to go to Nagasaki, a later-day diversionary tactic, which Perry refused to do, knowing it was a way to keep him away from the central government.

⁸ There have been suggestions that it is possible to show where Yamatai is despite the routing given in the *Wei zhi*, but even then, the routing is used, as in, for example, the work of Yasumoto Biten 安本美典 (1934–), whose *Yamataikoku no kai* 邪馬台国の会 (Yamatai nation association) is very active (yamataikokunokai.com). Most therefore rely on the routing to lead to either Kyushu (Yasumoto now claims he is 99.9% sure it is in Fukuoka Prefecture, in Yasumoto Biten, *Deeta saiensu ga toku Yamataikoku: Hokubu Kyūshū setsu wa yuruganai* (Yamatai Solved by Data Science: The Northern Kyushu Theory is unshakeable) データサイエンスが解く邪馬台国: 北部九州説はゆるがない (Tokyo: Asahi shinshu, 2021) or the Kinai region of Osaka/Nara, a confrontation that had its real start in the Meiji era, between Naitō Konan 内藤湖南 (1866–1934), from Kyoto University, believing Yamatai was in the Kinai region, and Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 (1865–1942) from Tokyo University, espousing the idea it was Kyushu. Of course, there are many theories besides those, including that it is in Okinawa and other places. J. Edward Kidder reviews the main arguments in *Himiko and Japan's Elusive Chieftom of*

This is not to say that the research done on the *Wei zhi*, including on the directions, has been without great benefit. The understanding of life in the third-century Japanese archipelago has been greatly enriched by this research, especially concerning the nature of Wa society, a presentation that occupies most of the account.

There were a lot of fishermen, and fisherwomen, in early Japan. During most of the earliest, post-paleolithic, periods of the islands, the ten-thousand-year Jōmon period in particular, the residents derived much of their sustenance and more from the seas and inland waterways. Despite many drastic environmental changes over the millennia, over two hundred dugout canoes have been unearthed in the past few decades. These boats were used not only for local fishing, but also for long-distance trading of everything from pottery to obsidian (including with the Korean peninsula and sites near Vladivostok) as well as for offshore trawling for yellowtail, tuna, and even, at some point, whales, among other prey.⁹

They plied the seas for centuries, but, during the subsequent Yayoi period, advances in seafaring nearly kept pace with what Kidder called the “Koreanization” of the archipelago, but that also may be directly called the militarizing as well as the politically empowering process that began in the Yayoi and carried on into the following Kofun era (c. 250 CE–710 CE). From roughly 900 BCE (there is still considerable debate over when the start of the Yayoi period should be dated), the amount of people, goods, and technology streaming into the lands we now call Japan was remarkable in many ways, but essentially the fairly stable ten thousand years of Jōmon culture was upended.¹⁰ The change is certainly evident in the change of genotypes as seen in Figure 1, though recent genomics analysis has identified

Yamatai: Archaeology, History, and Mythology (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

⁹ Not to mention net fishing on rivers and estuaries and, of course, harvesting shells, the abundant remains of which are found in many shell middens throughout the archipelago.

¹⁰ It was probably in a not-too-different time period (around 1500 BCE), on the other side of the world, that trade in metals and metal technology began spreading from the Aegean westward, with comparable changes we see in Japan, such as the rise of chiefdoms, “codified warrior lifestyles,” greater overall mobility, and so on. See Cyprian Broodbank, *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 371.

a third major stage of immigration to the Japanese archipelago during the Kofun era, resulting in a new tripartite model of Japanese ethnogenesis.¹¹

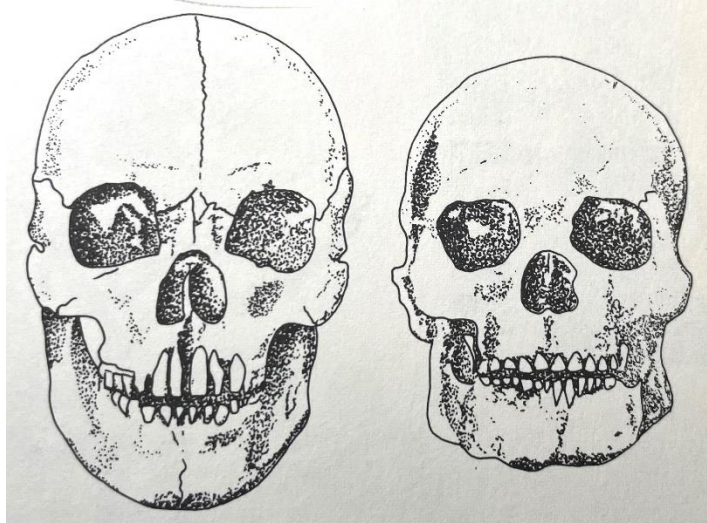


Figure 2. Yayoi (left) and Jōmon (right) contrasting genotypes.¹²

What is equally remarkable is the confluence and consequent growth of local cultures. Although there was a good deal of diversity in this growth—with the eastern regions of the main island of Honshu’s resisting agricultural production, for example—there was a fairly consistent pattern of maintaining certain Jōmon traditions while exploiting the technology and culture arriving from the mainland.

The most significant continuity was in the status of women in the community, as reflected in the presence of powerful female leaders, exemplified by the aforementioned female sovereign Himiko, who figures prominently in the *Wei zhi*. Strong, independent female sovereigns continue to appear until the Nara period, including Suiko (r. 592–628), Jitō (r. 690–697), and Shōtoku (r. 764–770). Even after the imperial title became the preserve of men, aristocratic women retained secure rights over

¹¹ See Niall P. Cooke, Valeria Mattiangeli, and Lara M. Cassidy, et al., “Ancient genomics reveals of tripartite origins of Japanese populations,” *Science Advances* Vol. 7, Issue 38 (September 2021), 1–15.

¹² Image from Gina Barnes, *China, Korea, and Japan: The Rise of Civilization in East Asia* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 171.

property and continued to shape the cultural life of court society through literature and poetry. Probably nothing could have been further from the culture of the mainland, especially China, than the role of women in production and governance.

They were, without question, a brave lot. There is evidence of a respected martial tradition from early on, with warriors from the archipelago in demand for aid in peninsular conflicts. The archipelago was divided into a great many polities, often referred to as "kingdoms," which competed for dominance. Eventually, the "great kings," or *ōkimi* of the Yamato line, possible descendants of the female sovereign Himiko, would bring most of these smaller kingdoms under their control through a combination of diplomacy and warfare. In the late seventh century, Yamato rulers replaced the title of *ōkimi* with the more prestigious one of *tennō*, or "heavenly sovereign," later to be rendered in English as emperor or empress.¹³

The earliest detailed account of the Japanese archipelago is in the third-century official Chinese history *Wei zhi*, compiled by Chen Shou (233–297), in which envoys from the state of Wei are said to have visited the islands and reached the capital, called Yamatai. While laconic in many parts, it is the most reliable textual account available. The findings from archaeology give us a much more detailed understanding of these early periods, but it is still difficult to definitively bring about correspondence with what the early texts tell us.

For this reason, we are only at a slightly more advantageous position than the people who studied the *Wei zhi* from ancient times to the present. As an example, the *Wei zhi* seems to say that the main territory on the islands was called Wa, its leader was a woman named Himiko, and her chief residence was in a place called Yamatai. Despite the fact that many very large archaeological sites have been uncovered, there is still no conclusive evidence that any of them is Yamatai. As a consequence, a great industry has arisen in TV, films, blogs, vlogs, books, articles, and anime devoted to various theories on where the capital was—based on directions given in the *Wei zhi* and assorted hints in that chronicle.

What we will show is that any search based on the *Wei zhi* is not worth the effort. These directions are not just vague. Almost all sailing information was vague at that time, for the reason given

¹³ Douglas Fuqua, "Centralization and State Formation in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Japan," in *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, ed. Karl F. Friday (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), 98–108.

above. They are strategic. If any mission from China were to attempt to follow them, without a local pilot, they would have become lost, and that was the intention. It was a strategy on the part of the Wa, and one that started a tradition that kept the islands in a favorable position with their much larger and more advanced continental neighbor.

Although the thrill of the chase can be unbearably inviting, and if proof could be had of the actual location of Yamatai, it would be a very big and profitable event (in Japan, at least), there are several reasons why its possibility should be set aside. But before giving these details, we should note that the itinerary section of the “Wajinden” is not very well written, from a pilot’s or travel guide point of view. The phrasing used to describe how to go from point A to point B changes quite a lot (although it becomes more consistent from Ito onward), and it is not easy to read or remember. This schematizes the description of the routes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Itinerary phraseology

“Method”: Whether travel was by land, by water, or both.

Daifang to Kuyahan	Method → Direction → Destination → Distance
Kuyahan to Tsushima	Method → Distance → Destination
Tsushima to Iki	Direction → Distance → Destination
Iki to Matsura	Method → Distance → Destination
Matsura to Ito	Direction → Method → Destination
Ito to Na	Direction → Destination → Distance
Na to Fumi	Direction → Destination → Distance
Fumi to Tsuma?	Direction → Destination → Method → Distance
Tsuma? To Yamataikoku	Direction → Destination → Method → Distance

For instance, in the *Wei zhi*, the text clearly says that emissaries must stop at a place called Ito, where they must stay:

When the emissary of the Daifang Commandery pays a visit, he always stays here (in Ito).

郡使往来常所駐。

In context, this is no mere coincidence. Daifang was the point of entry where the Wa had to go first before being allowed to travel, with escort, to the Wei capital of Luoyang. It is possible that the Wa learned their strategy from this Chinese requirement.

Further on in the text, we find that it is here that they must present to the local authority whatever it is they want to give to the ruler, so that it can be safely presented by others to her:

... the emissaries of the Daifang Commandery are sent to the land of Wa; they must all stop at the port for inspection, and in this way official documents and gifts will then be transmitted to the female sovereign without mishap.

郡使倭國，皆臨津搜露，傳送文書賜遺之物詣女王，不得差錯。

This probably applied mostly to political emissaries, as it is clear from other sources that others coming directly from the Korean peninsula regularly landed.

This was a wise policy. China at that time was one of the most advanced civilizations in the world. The Wa had everything to gain from China, but also everything to lose—if the Han came to know what resources they had and how close to the Korean peninsula they actually were.

We should also note the role of precedent. There is a tale in the *Nihon shoki* in which a Korean comes to Kyushu, is told not to go further, but does, and then stops in bay after bay until arriving in Tsuruga. It is possible that something like this happened, and it is about such a sojourn that the Chinese were told. This story is more in tune with the independence of early states than any kind of custom center.

In the story, a person who claimed to be the son of the king of Kara 加羅國 came to Shimonoseki, and there met a man who said, "I am the king of this land, and therefore there is no other

king but me. Do not thou therefore proceed further.” The Korean thought he did not have the manner of a king, and so he “departed again from that place, and, not knowing the road, anchored at one island and bay after another,” until he finally arrived at the current Tsuruga 敦賀.¹⁴

WAYPOINTS AND ARRIVALS

There is, however, a more subtle but stronger sign that the Wei emissaries did not proceed past Ito. In the *Wei zhi* (and many other accounts), a difference is made between the word for “coming to,” *zhi* 至, and “arriving at,” *dào* 到. In early Chinese historical writing, the latter is rarely used, while the former is very common and denotes a wide variety of passage-making: a step on the way somewhere, a waypoint in modern parlance, a typical arrival situation, as well as other types of “reaching” unrelated to travel, such as “searched for water but it could not be reached” (*qiú yǐn wèi zhi* 求飲未至).¹⁵ In the itinerary section of the *Wei zhi* chronicle, “arriving at” is only used twice.¹⁶ The first time the emissary “arrives,” it is at what is now known as Busan (prior to the trip across the Tsushima Straits from Korea to the Japanese islands); at the second time of “arriving,” the Chinese mission stops, as required, at Ito. In the other locations mentioned, and where it has been assumed the mission went, they “come to” the place. It seems likely that these places are waypoints, or places the Chinese were told about but not necessarily ones they actually visited.

Most importantly, what would have been the highlight of the trip, arrival at the main city of the

14 W. G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), 166–167.

15 *Mù tiānzǐ zhuan* 穆天子傳 (The Emperor Mu Chronicle) (Taipei: Chung Hwa Book Company, Ltd., 1978), ch. 3.3. Cheng Te-k'un translates this more naturally as “he was thirsty, and water could not be obtained” (Cheng Te-k'un, “The Travels of Emperor Mu,” *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 64 [193]: 141). Examples of the pre-Han use of *dào* include the following: in *Zhūangzǐ* 莊子, it is used six times (but four in a name), while *zhi* is used 254 times; in the voluminous *Shǐ jì* 史記, *dào* is used 57 times, and *zhi* 2,122 times; in *Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子, *dào* is not used, and neither does it occur in *Mù tiānzǐ zhuan*, despite its being mainly a travelogue; while in *Hànshū* 漢書, *dào* was written 101 times and *zhi* 3,033 times; the rate increased in the *Hòuhànshū* 後漢書, at 362 times for *dào* and 2,165 for *zhi*. This data is based on searches in the Chinese Text Project (中國哲學書電子化計劃) at <https://ctext.org>.

16 *Dào* is, later in the document, used once more, in referring to the arrival of an important person to important places or posts. Another “arrival” term is 詣 (MC *yì*), which is used, in this text, when a person makes an appearance at a court.

Wa territory, Yamatai, is described not with the word for “arrive” but simply with the word for “come to.” They certainly are not portrayed as “paying a visit” (詣 *yū*) to the court, as they were described in the concluding sentence of the “Wajinden,” in what seems to be one of the only two actual visits to the Wa court 詣臺. If this is the only instance, it is probably because Zhang Zheng was in Ito, and he went to the court at the time Iyo was the new leader, not during Himiko’s reign. It should be remembered that, at this time, Iyo was only thirteen years old. It may also be remembered that in some texts, instead of “Iyo,” the historian wrote “Taiyo,” the “Tai” used here for Yamatai.¹⁷ What may have happened is that the announcement Zhang was to make was that the Chinese understood the importance of the war, and so it was necessary for him to go to Wa. Saeki Arikiyo also notes that Zhang Zheng, et al., “who had been sent to Wa in Zhengshi 8 (247),” were being escorted back to Daifang, and thence to Luoyang.¹⁸ However, it is not at all clear that by “Wa” is meant Yamatai.

It is hard to imagine the historian specifying “arriving” at the last stop on the Korean peninsula and then at the required location in Kyushu, but not at the supposed end of their journey. Unless, of course, they never went past Ito, but still wanted to show readers the main places of interest their guides told them about.

There were actually only two instances in which someone from China is considered to have visited what may have been the Wa court. One was in 240 (Zhengshi 1), when a person named Ti Jun was sent by the governor of Daifang to accompany the mission from Wa (including Nanshōbei) back home from its visit to Luoyang in 239. In this case, the word 詣 is used, indicating they made an official visit.¹⁹ The second was in 247, when Zhang Zheng, an “administrator of the border section” for the Daifang Commandery sent to Wa to convey support for Himiko’s successor Iyo, was accompanied by the Wa Ambassador Ekiyuki and twenty men of Wa back to Daifang. Ekiyuki then visited the capital (詣臺), Luoyang, and presented the Wei court with gifts of slaves, pearls, jade, and brocade.²⁰

¹⁷ Saeki Arikiyo, *Treatise on the People of Wa in the Chronicle of the Kingdom of Wei*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Portland: MerwinAsia, 2018), 357.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 324.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 337, 356–357, 359–360.

Further evidence that they did not proceed past Ito is given by the fact that, except for the next two itinerary spots (Na and Fumi), they suddenly stop using a definitive geographic measurement (*li*) and instead replace it with the more primitive measurement by length of time (days, months, years).

I suggest that they knew the locations of Na and Fumi from previous encounters: Na was famous for its gold seal, and it is known that Fumi had had some contact with the mainland from the discovery of ten Former Han mirrors.²¹ It is highly likely that the locals told the emissaries these distances/locations, to satisfy their curiosity but also make it nearly impossible to follow with any certainty.²² It may be assumed that the distance between Ito and Na was well-known, as Na had been one of the main locations communicating with the mainland for some centuries prior. We know this in part because of a gold seal that has been linked with a passage in the *Houhanshu* 後漢書 (the official history of the later Han dynasty), stating that in 57 C.E. Emperor Guangwu gave a gold seal and ribbon to an emissary from Na.

Finally, when diplomatic relations further developed in 240, and a commander (Ti Jun of Jianzhong) was sent to Wa with an imperial edict from the Wei emperor and honorary presents, he was given an audience with the Wa ruler (詣倭国、拜假倭王). Unfortunately, no details of his journey were preserved.

It may also be noted that, in the seventh century, when the Korean kingdom of Silla sent twenty-three embassies to Japan (Japan sending only nine to Silla), they spent almost all of their time in Kyushu, never being invited to Yamato.²³

21 Ibid., 298. This is the site known as Tateiwa, group 5, Iizuka city. Saeki also notes (297–298) that the number of mirrors given to Himiko was unprecedented among gifts to other foreign groups.

22 Kidder, *Himiko*, xi, notes that the mix of directions and distances for reaching Yamatai were incompatible, and so it was “impossible to reach Yamatai by following both.” I would say, instead, impossible by following either.

23 Bruce L. Batten, *Gateway to Japan: Hakata in War and Peace, 500–1300* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 52–53. It should also be recalled that during the Nara period, with some exceptions, sea passage between Bungo 豊後 (Roughly Ōita, Kyushu) and Iyo 伊予 (Ehime, Shikoku) was prohibited without government permission. The ban was for the most part unenforceable, but attempts were made to require passes (*kusho* 過所), among other controls, later on. For details see Kawai Shōji 河合正治, “Kodai naikai kōtsū no shomondai” (Various Issues in Ancient Inland Sea Transport) 古代内海交通の諸問題, in *Naikai sangyō to suiun no shiteki kenkyū* 内海産業と水運の史的研究 (Historical Studies in Inland Sea

MARINE TRANSPORT

To travel across water without shrinking from the curly dragon—this is the courage of the fisherman.²⁴

夫水行不避蛟龍者、漁父之勇也。

Zhuang zi, “Autumn Floods”

As we attempt to portray the maritime world of third-century Japan, it must first be noted that the history of maritime Japan remains stalled in a highly immature state, especially in English. The only major book covering the entire history is G. A. Ballard’s *The Influence of the Sea on the Political History of Japan*. Published in 1921 and clearly riding the wave of Alfred Mahan’s 1890 *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, it mainly concerns the buildup to the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars in the nineteenth century. There is also a very hard-to-find English rendition of Fukuda Ryōichi’s delightful and pathbreaking *Kaiun no rekishi* 海運の歴史 (The History of Marine Transportation) (1961) and Duncan Macfarlane’s *A Short History of Japanese Merchant Shipping*, published by the Tokyo News Service in 1967. A very major exception in the overall field is Douglas Brooks’ *Japanese Wooden Boatbuilding*, which details, more than any book in Japanese, the craft and tools involved in making traditional boats, though mostly from the Tokugawa and later eras, and so outside the range of this study. More recently, John Andrew Black has written *A Short History of Transport in Japan from Ancient Times to the Present*, which has two chapters on maritime transport.²⁵

Despite this, it is clear that Japan from many millennia ago has focused on the marine world, and there is much evidence that dugout canoes were used to hunt large fish and sea mammals, as well

Industries and Water Transportation), ed. Fukuo Takeichirō 福尾猛市郎 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1966), 14.

²⁴ Translation by Fogel in Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa in the Chronicle of the Kingdom of Wei*, 102.

²⁵ John Andrew Black, *A Short History of Transport in Japan from Ancient Times to the Present* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2022).

as in long-distance trade in obsidian (used in many tools), jade, and asphalt,²⁶ in addition to such precious commodities as salt.²⁷ Put another way, although the people of the earliest times are often referred to as “hunter-gatherers,” in the case of Japan, they were from the start “fisher-hunter-gatherers,” and the hunters disappeared as a major group long before our story begins.²⁸

More to the point here, boats were called “floating treasure” (*ukitakara* 浮寶) in antiquity, signifying their economic value for maritime trade and transportation.²⁹ There was a high degree of interest in and understanding of the maritime world during this period that is not found in Japanese culture after the establishment of a more centralized, China-oriented, culture in Nara, and even today to a great degree.³⁰ Although there is information on ancient boats in early eighth-century political writings such as the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, it is unfortunate that the Japanese were still not writing

26 Junko Habu, *Ancient Jōmon of Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224–227, 227–231. Asphalt was used as a waterproof adhesive, to fix broken pottery and affix handles to stone and bone tools. Asphalt is almost exclusively from the northeast coast and parts of Hokkaido. Amber, cinnamon, shells, and completed tools were also traded (Habu, *Ancient Jōmon*, 233–236. Asphalt was also an important trade item—for the same reasons—in ancient Mediterranean culture. See William Schaw Lindsay, *History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce*, vol. 1 (London: S. Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), xxv.

27 Richard J. Pearson, *Ancient Japan* (New York: George Braziller, 1992), 80; Habu, *Ancient Jōmon*, 231–233.

28 The continued use among historians and archaeologists of the term “hunter-gatherer” for Jōmon people is a misnomer. It really is not akin to the continued use of the word “barbarian” when discussing non-Han political groups in Chinese history—even though many of the groups were ethnically Han, although not attuned to Han culture. See, for example, the continued use of “barbarian” to signify non-Han political groups in Kenneth Pletcher, ed., *The History of China* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2011). This is rather surprising, considering that the myth of the barbarian vs. cultured Han groups was shown clearly to be wrong in 1940 by Owen Lattimore in his *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940), 344–345. See also the excellent discussion of this issue in Heather Peters, “Tattooed Faces and Stilt Houses: Who Were the Ancient Yue?,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* no. 17 (April 1990): 1–27.

29 Sumida Shōji, 住田正一, *Kaijō unsō shiron* 海上運送史論 (Historical Essays on Maritime Transportation) (Tokyo: Ganshōdōshoten, 1925), 88. An early citation is in the *Nihon shoki*. Aston translates the term as “floating riches.” Aston, *Nihongi*, 58.

30 Thus Douglas Brooks, a foreigner, is one of the leaders in preserving, and learning from, traditional Japanese boats.

much, apart from a few Chinese characters here and there. It is fortunate for us, however, that they made pottery (*haniwa* 埴輪) in the shape of boats, and also drew them.

Examining these drawings and *haniwa* provides us with an insight into boats and boat culture around the time of the early Wa. There was a wide diversity of boats, and they were depicted as having more than normal maritime use—they were also conveyors of the dead to the world of spirits.

To see one example of the sea adventures that might have taken place during (and before) the Wa missions to and from the mainland, we can observe an illustration of three ships drawn on a vessel from the Yayoi period unearthed from the Arao Minami site located in Ogaki city, Gifu Prefecture (Figure 3). The illustration shows three ships: two with sails and one a galley with eighty-two oars and banners waving in the wind (Yayoi V period).³¹ Among the many interesting aspects of these depictions is the inverted triangle sail, which is common on Tahitian piraguas.³²

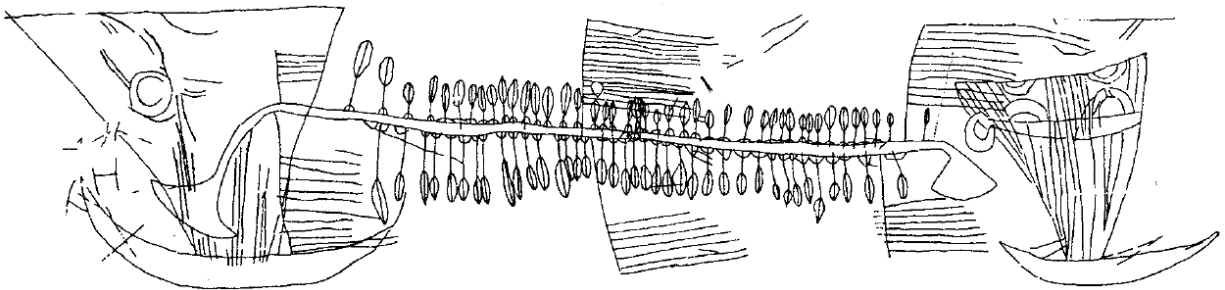


Figure 3. Three Yayoi-period ships of the Arao Minami site, Ogaki city, Gifu.³³

³¹ Sentō Katsuhiko 千藤克彦, Ogiso Fumikazu 小木曾文和, Onogi Manabu 小野木学, *Araominami iseki* (The Arao Minami Site) 荒尾南遺跡 (Gifu: Gifu-ken Bunkazai Hogo Sentaa Asset, 1998), 18–19.

³² Graham Blackburn, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ships, Boats, Vessels and Other Water-borne Craft* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1978), 261.

³³ Sentō, Ogiso, and Onogi, *Araominami iseki*, frontispiece, 19.



Figure 4. Killer whale object from the middle Jōmon, Kikyō 2 site, Hakodate City.³⁴

The heavy reliance on rivers, estuaries, bays, and seas is evident in almost all aspects of early Japanese culture, but, in part because of the paucity of material, a great deal of misinformation exists. As an example, in a major study of Japanese pirates, it is claimed that the early Japanese did not name any of their oceans.³⁵ Actually, there were many names for the seas. For example, in the *Nihon shoki*, the Sea of Japan is called the Great Sea 大海, as was the Mediterranean.³⁶ They are referred to as smaller

34 Hokkaidō Maizō Bunkazai Sentaa 北海道埋蔵文化財センター, ed., *Kikyō 2 iseki* (The Kikyō 2 Site) 桔梗 2 遺跡 (Sapporo: Hokkaidō Maizō Bunkazai Sentaa, 1988), frontispiece, 173–174, 219–222. The piece is just over six centimeters long and dates from the Middle Jōmon period. Note the blow hole (*funkikō* 噴気孔).

35 Peter D. Shapinsky, *Lords of the Sea: Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2014), 1, note 4.

36 For the Great Sea in Japan, see, for example, the term “Southern Sea,” in Aston, *Nihongi*, 297. This use of the term is interesting because it recounts an incident in which a very large log was found stuck in a bend of a river, and it was taken by way of the Southern Sea to Naniwa (Osaka) to be fashioned into a boat. For the term “South Sea,” see also Edwina Palmer, trans., *Harima Fudoki: A Record of Ancient Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 330. Later, at least, there was a Western Sea Route (Saikaidō 西海道), mentioned in the dedication of *Manyōshū* poem # 971; see Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, trans., *The*

areas in most cases, depending on the orientation of the viewer, e.g., East Sea, North Sea, and so on.³⁷ Another misconception that hinders a clearer understanding of what could have happened during this period is the idea that there was no transfer of nautical knowledge between the mainland and the islands. There is, in fact, a high likelihood of frequent exchanges from at least the Former Han (202 BCE–9 CE).³⁸

It is also said that there was a prejudice against mariners, and that for that reason there is not much literature related to the sea. This may be true to a certain extent, but we should remember, for comparison, that sake and other alcoholic drinks are also rare in Japanese literature—I would wager Li Bo has more wine-drinking poems than all of Japanese literature combined—but that is far from saying the Japanese didn’t enjoy drinking. It is an unfortunate circumstance, but it should not be taken as a true indication of the value rulers placed on shipping and naval action. Most of them, in fact, made a lot of money in official and unofficial overseas trading. Nonetheless, the prejudice evinced by such beliefs tends to distort our understanding of the actual maritime world. Of course, the challenges are enormous and data hard to compile, let alone analyze. Here, then, we will try to narrate the story of the maritime world in a very general way, trying to paint an understandable picture from disparate dabs on a palette of known historical colors.

It is common for historians to note the dangers of sea travel and to see it as a reason for

Manyōshū (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 214. An “Eastern Sea” (東海 Tōkai) is also mentioned in the *Nihon shoki*; see Aston, *Nihongi*, 155. For the names of the Mediterranean, see David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxiii. Among its many names, the Mediterranean was known as “Our Sea” (Mare Nostrum) by the Romans, the White Sea (Akdeniz) by the Turks, the Great Sea (Yam gadol) by the Jews, and the Middle Sea (Mittelmeer) by the Germans. Regarding Hānhāi, Saeki Arikiyo says this logically refers to the Tsushima Straits (Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa*, 46–47), but the name Hānhāi is nowhere else used to refer to the straits. It may also be mentioned that, in the “Wajinden,” itself there is the Hānhāi 瀚海, presumably a name for the Tsushima straits, though it is found nowhere else but in the *Wei zhi*.

³⁷ The designation “Northern Sea” (北海) appears in the *Nihon shoki*; see Aston, *Nihongi*, 167. It is also found in the *Izumo Fudoki*, which gives a long list of the delicious seafood to be found there. Michiko Yamaguchi Aoki, trans. and introduction, *Izumo Fudoki* (Tokyo: Sophia Library, 1971), 150, 164, 176, 198, 212.

³⁸ Adachi Hiroyuki 安達裕之, *Nihon no fune: Wasen-hen* (Boats of Japan: Wasen Section) 日本の船和船編、(Tokyo: Nihon kajji kagaku shinkō zaidan fune no kagakukan 日本海事科学振興財団船の科学館, 1998), 15.

limitations of contact between the mainland and the islands. Such concerns were undoubtedly realistic, but they also seem anachronistic in the sense that they existed as serious apprehensions (among the elite) only much later in Japanese history, made especially popular by court officials from Nara and the Heian capitals.³⁹ The rewards for travel between China and the archipelago were simply so great that the vision of such treasures cast a veil over the dangers of sea travel. To cite one example, Wang Zhenping makes the point that, in the ninth century, the Japanese elite were “oceanophobic,”⁴⁰ based on the fear of the sea exhibited in such stories as the *Utsuho monogatari* 宇津保物語. The tale begins when the hero, then just fifteen years old, joins a mission to China. The grief at parting is intense (as it almost always is), and the hero’s ship is tossed about until he and two compatriots land in Hashihoku 波斯国, or Persia. They are richly rewarded later, however, when the Buddha gives them thirty magical *koto* 琴, or Japanese zithers, which will bring them luck and fame. This plot, usually with much less drama, became common in Buddhist tales of difficulties faced when going to China in search of the Dharma, with benefits in various forms upon returning to Japan.

At the same time, almost all sea voyages during this period were coastal and the weather was known. What is perhaps more important, the water was an important aspect of life, and rulers and sea people were not estranged.

The bad experiences are frequently cited—they make exciting reading—and they almost always occur because the departure date is during seasons of poor weather. While sea travel is dangerous even now,⁴¹ mariners were transiting between the mainland and the islands and around the

39 We are thinking of course of Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), whose refusal to go to China has often been linked to the misperception that sea travel was impossibly dangerous. To his credit, Robert Borgen corrected his acceptance of that falsehood in the paperback version of his *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994), xix.

40 Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors from the Islands of Immortals: China–Japan Relations in the Han–Tang Period* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 62.

41 As evidenced by the ship Evergiven’s blocking of the Suez Canal, among other incidents. See the NOVA special “Why Ships Crash.” Ninety-five percent of all goods is transported by ship. Timothy Clarkson, Ian Glatt, and Valerie Mellon, directors, *NOVA*, season 49, episode 8, “Why Ships Crash,” aired May 18, 2022, on PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/video/why-ships-crash-suzsci/>.

Japanese archipelago for well over a thousand years prior to the missions under discussion. With the development of societies in Korea and Japan, a great deal of political and economic trade had begun by at least 100 BCE. As an example, in 109 BCE, five thousand troops were sent from China across the Bohai to stop an insurrection in Korea.⁴² There are abundant finds of Chinese silk, coins, weapons, bronze mirrors, and so on in Korea and Japan. The ships could be heavily laden, as in the case of eighty horses being shipped from Koguryo to the Chinese state of Wu.⁴³ Still, in the words of the maritime historian Ishii Kenji:

From the southern coast of Korea to the western coast of Japan, the archipelago has a ria coastline [i.e., having drowned river valleys cut parallel to the structure of the country rock at right angles to the coastline], and because of the tremendous change in current between low and high tides, navigation was extremely difficult if one did not have experience. However, since it did not lack for safe anchorages against wind and waves, the passage was safe with an experienced person on board. On the other hand, there were three straits to cross from Korea to north Kyushu, and so that was a difficult crossing. For this reason, the "Wajinden" of the *Wei zhi* describes it as "crossing a sea," and there were restrictions on the season for crossing.⁴⁴

42 Yingshi Yu, *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 183.

43 *Ibid.*, 185.

44 Ishii Kenji 石井謙治, *Zusetsu wasen shiwa* (Illustrated History of Japanese Boats) 図説和船史話 (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 1983), 16.

LOCATION, LOCATION, DISLOCATION

We remember we've forgotten

When we get to Takinawa

高縄へ来てわすれたることばかり

Ikku Jippensha, *Shanks' Mare*⁴⁵

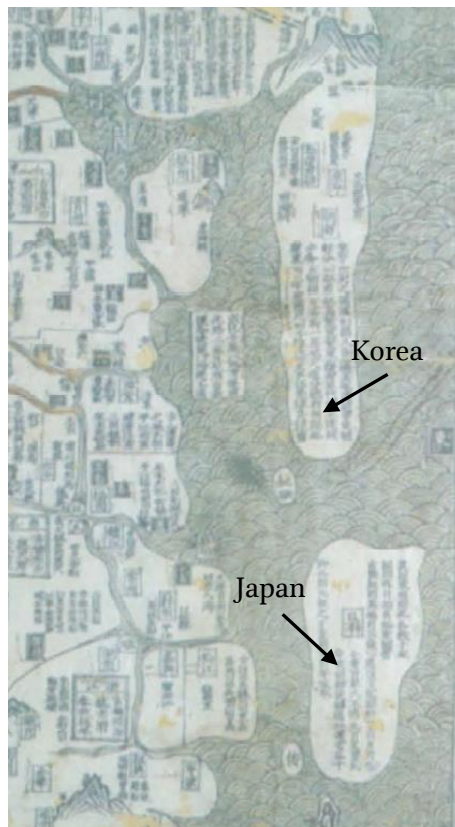


Figure 5. Japan in a 1555 Chinese map, *Gujin xingsheng zhi tu* (Map of Advantageous Terrain Past and Present, 1555).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Jippensha Ikku, *Hizakurige, or Shanks' Mare*, trans. Thomas Satchell (Rutland & Tokyo: Charles Tuttle Company, 1980), 23.

⁴⁶ Cordell D. K. Yee discusses the *Gujin xingsheng zhi tu* in Yee, "Reinterpreting Traditional Chinese Geographical Maps," 59. The entire map is reproduced as Plate 1.

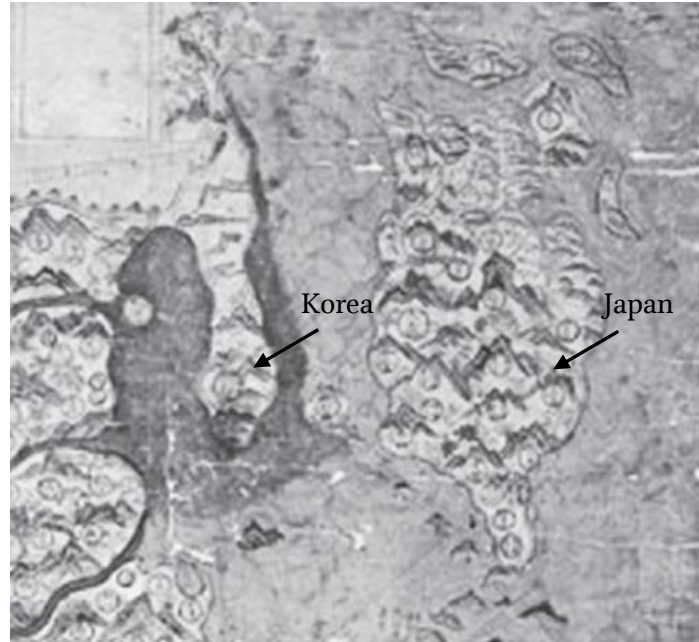


Figure 6. Korea and Japan depicted on the Selden Map.⁴⁷

The trite real estate expression referenced in the part title, “location, location, location,” is rooted in economic reality. Where a place is determines its exclusivity (or lack thereof), and therefore its value. To preserve its exclusivity, it is best to keep it private, and this can be done in many ways, as in the old Mainer’s response when asked how to get to some well-known place: “You can’t get there from here.”

As noted in Table 1, the *Wei zhi* says that missions from one hundred island communities had come to the court in the Han, and thirty were still doing so when the *Wei zhi* was written. Not only were the routes well known, but the people of Wa knew what they were up against. The fact that interpreters were included in the missions is itself evidence that there was close contact—there was no online Berlitz to help crews learn the language required. In particular, the presence of these interpreters suggests that they could have provided exact information about routes if they had wanted to.

⁴⁷ Robert Batchelor, “The Selden Map and the Archipelagoes of East and Southeast Asia,” *Education about Asia* 19.2 (fall 2014): 33–38.

Table 2. Directions, Distances, and Travel methods in “Wajinden”

Start	Arrive	Travel Method	Direction	Distance
Daifang commandery 帶 方郡	North coast of Kuyahan 北岸 狗邪韓國	Over water (水行)	Coastal, pass through Han 韓 國, South then East	7000 <i>li</i> +
Kuyahan	Tsushima 對海 國	Over open ocean (渡一海)	NA	1000 <i>li</i> +
Tsushima	Iki 一支國	Over open ocean	South, crossing Hanhai 瀚海	1000 <i>li</i> +
Iki	Matsura 末廬國	Over open ocean	NA	1000 <i>li</i> +
Matsura	Ito 伊都國	Overland (陸行)	Southeast	500 <i>li</i>
Ito	Na 奴國	Unknown	Southeast	100 <i>li</i>
Na	Fumi 不彌國	Unknown	East	100 <i>li</i>
Fumi	Tsuma 投馬國	Over water	South	20 days
Tsuma	Yamatai 邪馬壹 國	Over water and/or overland	South	10 days by water and/or 1 month by land

To truly understand what the distances recorded in the “Wajinden” itinerary mean, it is necessary to know exactly where the locations are. For example, assuming Kuyahan is present-day Kimhae 金海 and Tsushima is the island of Tsushima, and the distance between them is approximately 95 kilometers, we can estimate that the *li* of “1000 *li* +” is about 95 m. To give an idea of the distance between Korea and Tsushima, it may be noted that, prior to World War II, people on Tsushima used to take boats to Pusan 釜山 to go to the movie theater.⁴⁸ Further, if the “large country” is the island of Iki, then the actual distance of about one hundred kilometers means one *li* is about one hundred meters.

48 Ishino Hironobu 石野博信, *Yamataikoku jidai no ōkokugun to Makimuku ōkyū* (The Kingdoms and Makimuku Royal Palace during the Age of Yamatai) 邪馬台国時代の王国群と纏向王宮 (Tokyo: Shinsensha, 2019), 112.

On the other hand, if the next stop, at Matsura, is near the current Karatsu city 唐津市, which is about fifty-two kilometers away from Iki, then one *li* is only about fifty-two meters. This inconsistency is another piece of evidence that the itinerary was intended to dissuade the Chinese from attempting to reach Yamatai on their own. It is most likely that “1000 + *li*” is intended to mean “a long way,” just as it is used in the *Mutianzi juan*.⁴⁹

In addition, the descriptions of the method of travel are inconsistent. Although it is obvious that water transport (渡一海 and 水行) was required initially to get to Kyushu, it then becomes (1) overland (陸行), (2) left vague (行), (3) over water, or (4) either a combination or choice of land or sea (水行十日陸行一月). The last expression, in particular, is the ultimate source of confusion. As it could mean either by sea or land or by a combination of both, someone has to make a choice. Among scholars, the choice usually decides if one wishes Yamatai is in Kyushu or Kinai.⁵⁰ Another factor to consider, in contrast to traveling up to Tsuma, where each waypoint is named, in the considerable distance (no matter which choice is taken: sea, land, or both), between Tsuma and Yamatai no waypoints are mentioned. This would make travel, especially by dead reckoning, in a seascape that required navigation from peninsula to peninsula,⁵¹ virtually impossible and not very relevant if you wanted information about the country, as the Chinese obviously did. It could only be done by a good pilot, and it was not something they were going to tell the Chinese.

49 There have been hundreds of studies on how long a *li* (and *bu* 步, a stride) were. When Shinohara Shunji 篠原俊次 wrote a series of articles on the subject starting in 1979, he noted there had been twenty-seven papers and books on the subject since 1967. See Shinohara Shunji, “Gishi Wajinden no ritei tan’i: ri(bu)tei ronsō o megutte” 「魏志倭人伝の里程単位—里(歩)程論争をめぐって」 (The Unit of *ri* in the *Gishi Wajinden*: The Debate over the Length of *ri* (and *bu*)) *Keiryōshi kenkyū* 計量史研究 1 (2), 2 (1), 3(1), 7(1) (1979, 1980, 1981, 1985), 38–58, 1–15, 1–15, 7–22. Shinohara covers details that are relevant to the “Wajinden,” such as the meaning of 餘 (MC: *yú*; J: *yo*), “more than,” which we here give simply as “+.” *Keiryōshū* 3(1), 1, note 4, 12. Among the many issues is how long a “short *li*” 短里 is compared to a “long *li*” 長里. If the itinerary had any intention of giving realistic figures, these issues would be vital. As there seems no such intention, however, they are very interesting and important for other texts, but for the “Wajinden,” they are mute. A *bu* was equal to six *chi*, and in the Wei period, one *chi* was 24.12 cm, making one *bu* 144.72 cm. See Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa*, 351.

50 See Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa*, 67–68. Needless to say, from a practical vantage point, it is equivalent to saying, “You can’t get there from here.”

51 Ishii, *Zusetsu wasen shiwa*, 16–18.

DISLOCATION

The twentieth-century writer Yukio Mishima observed that the main islands of Japan are shaped like a shrimp. It is hard to forget this image, but here it is mainly something to consider when thinking of how Wa could be imagined in an age in which there was no compass (used for navigation), no way to measure coordinates, and no distance-viewing devices such as binoculars—not to mention, no weather reports. The Wa and the Chinese assigned different directional orientations to the Japanese islands, which may reflect their differing agendas. To the Chinese, the islands were on a north–south axis, while to the Wa, they were on an east–west axis. Himiko’s identification with the Queen Mother of the West may have influenced the latter conception.

In this period, the Chinese believed the Japanese islands were parallel to China to the south, and so the account of travels in the *Wei zhi* may be forty-five degrees off.⁵² This is at least in part the reason the territory of Wa 倭 is positioned in the northern area within the seas in the *Shanhaijing*, along with the Mountain of the Snake Shaman, the Queen Mother of the West, the Devil Country, as well as areas of the Korean peninsula. In contrast, the Wa seem to have located their homeland in the west. Considering this east–west orientation of spiritual presences in Japan, Himiko’s identification with the Queen Mother of the West is quite natural.

Furthermore, it is likely that Himiko and other Wa leaders knew how the Chinese court might treat them in the future, potentially putting a stranglehold on Japan via water, and it was necessary to prevent this possibility. The easiest way to do so was simply not to show them the way to Yamatai, hence the deliberately unclear itinerary preserved in the “Wajinden.”

⁵² Kidder, *Himiko*, 27, and Koji Mizoguchi, *The Archaeology of Japan: From the Earliest Rice Farming Villages to the Rise of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 30, 50. This mistake was important politically because when a mission from Wa arrived in Loyang in 238, the Wei court believed that having the support of a southern territory would help them in their fight against their rivals, the Wu, in southern China. Yamao Yukihiisa 山尾幸久, *Shinpan Gishi Wajinden* (The Gishi Wajinden: A New Edition) 新版魏志倭人伝 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1986), 135–150.



Figure 7. Fifth-century *haniwa* boat from Saitobara 西都原 kofun (Miyazaki Prefecture).⁵³ The Saitobara *haniwa* is often cited as an example of an ocean-going ship that may be similar to those used in the third century. This ship was powered by six oarsmen on each side.

WHY THE WA?

It is, I hope, clear by now that the Wa had the means to travel on the seas and waterways of the region and, further, had good reasons and the sense to avoid providing Chinese envoys with the knowledge to go directly to their territorial center. What remains to show is why it was the Wa who could do this. Who, in other words, were the Wa? In fact, the impression given by the term Wa is essential background to understanding why the Chinese emissaries in 234 did not push beyond Ito on their mission to Japan.

THE GRAPH WA

These days the Japanese word “wa” usually stands for the graph 和 and the word “peace,” but it really connotes harmony, especially as a signature Japanese means of achieving group success. The phoneme “wa,” however, has a long history, largely unencumbered by any notion of peace. Taking full advantage

⁵³ Image located via ColBase database. (ColBase (nich.go.jp))

of the unbounded nature of kanji Chinese characters, where one kanji can take on many meanings and pronunciations that then adhere to the phoneme behind the kanji, the graph 和 is also read as “Yamato,” which is the name of the earliest recognized government of a major part of the archipelago. Oddly, though, the graph 和 is a replacement for the original graph representing the phoneme “wa,” which was 倭. In a further twist of this story, while the people of Wa were thus rearranging their written representation, they were asking others to call their kingdom, 日本, the origin of the sun, or Nihon, a geocentric approach to the wholly ethnocentric name of China, 中国, the middle country (Zhongguo).

It is often said that the word the Chinese used to denote the people of the Japanese archipelago, Wa, meant “dwarfs,” intended derisively. This would imply that the Chinese (and by extension those observing the history) thought the Wa were weak and submissive. This may have a small bit of truth to it, as the Chinese were extremely ethnocentric and considered almost everyone else to be barbarians. There are several reasons, however, to believe that this was not the case, at least until much later when the Chinese (and Koreans) wanted to make the Wa seem to be evil—in particular, when utilizing the term *wakou*, or “Japanese pirates.”

The first use of the word *wō*, not referring to the land of Wa, was in a late Western Zhou poem,⁵⁴ “Four Stallions” (Sì mǔ 四牡, no. 162), in the *Book of Songs* (Shī jīng 詩經). The word was paired with *chí* 遲 (“slow, delay”) to connote “winding and long,” signifying an arduous journey:

The four stallions run on and on;
the road to Zhou is winding and long

四牡駢駢
周道倭遲⁵⁵

Although we do not know why the graph 倭 was chosen as an autonym for the land of Wa, it may well have been because the Wa people called themselves something that sounded like *ʔuaci (wa-i), the

⁵⁴ C. H. Wang, *The Bell and the Drum* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 29–30.

⁵⁵ Translation adapted from Bernard Karlgren, trans., *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1974), 105. Arthur Waley translates this more lyrically as “My four steeds are weary, / The high road is very far.” In Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), no. 146.

pronunciation of 倭 around the time “Wajinden” was written,⁵⁶ and that their land was in fact a long and winding way from the land of Zhou.

The first time Wō occurs as signifying the Japanese archipelago (and probably covering a lot more territory than that) is in the twelfth book of the *Book of Mountains and Seas* (*Shānhǎijīng* 山海經), covering the north, interior sea (海内北經)⁵⁷:

The territory of Gài is south of the powerful Yān and north of Wō. Wō is a dependency of Yān.

蓋國在鉅燕南、倭北。倭屬燕。

The authors of the *Book of Mountains and Seas* rarely hesitated to describe far away peoples by referring to any oddity they may have heard about or imagined. This is unless they had a reason not to, and in most cases that reason was that they were using names for real geographical areas they actually knew about. Accordingly, they had a chance to say something either positive or negative about Wō, but instead simply state geographical information.⁵⁸ It should also not be forgotten that the *Wei zhi*

⁵⁶ The reading is the Late Han reading from Axel Schuessler, *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), cited in John R. Bentley, “The Search for the Language of Yamatai,” *Japanese Language and Literature* 42 (2008): 16. Bentley also cites Kotani Hiroyasu 小谷博泰, *Jōdai bungaku to mokkan no kenkyū* (Research into Ancient Japanese Literature and *mokkan*) 上代文学と木簡の研究 (Osaka: Izumi shoin, 1999), 33–34, as suggesting that a person with familiarity with the Wa, and who could speak Chinese, told the Chinese court the names used in the “Wajinden” (Bentley, “The Search for the Language of Yamatai,” 2–3).

⁵⁷ Ogawa Takuji 小川琢治, *Shina kodai chirigakushi* 支那古代地理学史 (A History of Ancient Geography in China) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1933), 36; Miyoshi Kouma 高馬三良, trans., *Chūgoku no koten shirūzu 4* (The Chinese Classics Series 4) 中国の古典シリーズ 4 *Sangaikyō* 山海經 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1983), 496.

⁵⁸ This point is obfuscated in translations that render pronouns as if they were descriptive nouns. In Anne Birrell's interpretation, for example, Wō becomes “dwarfs” based on a later derogatory meaning of the word: “Canopy Country lies south of the land of Giantsswallow and north of the land of Dwarfs. The land of Dwarfs belongs to the kingdom of Swallow.” (Anne Birrell, trans., *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* [London: Penguin Books, 1999], 147.) Although this method is intended to improve the literary value of the work, it removes its geographic and historic value. Readers of the original would

mentions a “land of dwarfs” south of Wa, apparently not of the same ethnicity, along with lands of “naked men” and “people with blackened teeth.”⁵⁹ According to Ogawa, we should understand that Wa in *The Book of Mountains and Seas* refers to the Japanese island of Kyushu, and that it is described in this way because there had been interactions between the Wa and the Chinese during this period of the Warring States.⁶⁰

SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Much is made of the fact that the ruler described in the *Wei zhi* is a woman and a spiritual phenomenon to boot. Often described as a “shaman,” she evidently utilized the spiritual power thought to reside in bronze mirrors, especially those with Queen Mother of the West motifs,⁶¹ to build the aura or charisma important in supporting her power base.

The combination of matrilineal and spiritual powers, while not unheard of among the Chinese of the Han and Three Kingdoms periods, must have been something very remarkable in a society such as Wa that was developing very rapidly, as many of the other matrilineal and spirit-based kingdoms, such as the Nakhi of Yunnan, were not particularly strong. In addition, Confucianism was a central corollary to the Chinese state, and its patrilineal and humanistic ideals were dramatically opposed to the Wa way. In addition, the spiritual range of the later Yamato rulers then diversified and intensified,

not read descriptive notions into common place names such as Gàì, Yān, and Wō.

⁵⁹ The *Shanhaijing* also notices a “land of black teeth” (黑齒国), and, in his note on this area, Guo Pu refers us to its mention in the *Wei zhi* discussed here (Kouma, *Sangaikyō*, 259; see also 348). There is also a land of “small people,” but they are considerably shorter than those referenced in the *Wei zhi*. They are also placed in the extreme northeast 東北極. (Kouma, *Sangaikyō*, 342)

⁶⁰ Ogawa, *Shina kodai chirigakushi*, 37.

⁶¹ There is at least one mirror (from Tōdayama 藤田山 burial mound, Murano, Hirakata, Osaka 村野、枚方市、大阪府) that has an inscription that reads: “This work by Mr. Yan has its own record. To the King Father of the East and the Queen Mother of the West” 顏氏作、自右己、東王父、西王母。 (Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa*, 304). It seems possible, given the interest in the Queen Mother of the West, that this was made for export to Japan.

later becoming what Ross Bender has called "a cultic matrix in which may be discerned proto-Shinto, Buddhist, and Confucian elements."⁶²

This was not a kingdom to be dealt with lightly or without serious study. In contrast to other nearby groups, such as the Xiongnu, who were more or less nomadic and in the habit of attacking Chinese frontier communities, the Wa mattered militarily in the third century as primarily a potential ally in the shifting power balance of the three kingdoms: Wu, Wei, and Shu-Han. This, too, would expand in the following centuries as territorial struggles emerged on the Korean peninsula, where the Wa had a large stake, not only because it was a source of many of the "latest" products and technologies, but also because it was, for many, the homeland, or at least the home of their distant relatives.

As Yingshi Yu noted, "Han gifts of silk and grain, sweet as it tasted, was nevertheless poisonous."⁶³ The people of Wa were themselves aware of the possibility of invasion by their continental benefactors and worked to prevent it. The bite of tribute was clearly shown by the fact that certain Han advisors, who had immigrated to tribal bands along the Han northern border, had advised the tribe (the Xianbei) to refuse offers to join the tributary system.⁶⁴

Although a full discussion of the name Wa is not possible here, a brief review will help us situate the people in their historic context. The literature suggests that "Wa" is decidedly pejorative and means "dwarf." This is not based on any usage in early literature but rather in later linguistic and historical developments. The first use of the word Wa as designating the people of the Japanese archipelago, and probably part of the Korean peninsula, was in the aforementioned *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing*):

62 Ross Bender, "Changing the Calendar: Royal Political Theology and the Suppression of the Tachibana Naramaro Conspiracy," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37.2 (2010): 239. He also suggests that Daoist elements were added to the mix.

63 Yu Yinshi, *Trade and Expansion in Han China*, 37.

64 Yü Ying-shih, "Chapter 6: Han Foreign Relations," in *The Cambridge History of China Volume 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. – A.D. 220*, edited by Denis Twitchett and Michael Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 445.

The territory of Gài is south of the powerful Yān and north of Wō. Wō is a dependency of Yān.

蓋國在鉅燕南、倭北。倭屬燕。⁶⁵

Against this we need to compare China's methods of dealing with peoples outside their territory, people they invariably considered "barbarians." One of the most common expressions, used from the Later Han into the Three Kingdoms, was "use barbarians to subdue barbarians," or *yǐ-yí-fā-yí* 以夷伐夷. A memorial after one such use in 88 CE stated the policy succinctly:

We are fortunate to have such an opportunity given by Heaven that the northern barbarians ... have split into two groups and engaged in wars against each other. It is to the advantage of our state to use barbarians to attack barbarians.⁶⁶

今幸遭天授，北虜分爭，以夷伐夷，國家之利...

This was a highly applicable policy in the case of Korea and Japan, where frequent battles occurred between various local groups and against the Chinese command posts in Daifang and Lelang.⁶⁷ And part of accepting submission (in the eyes of the Chinese, at least) was the assumption that the submitters would help China in case the country was attacked, which was very important on the

⁶⁵ Ogawa, *Shina kodai chirigakushi*, 36; Kouma, *Sangaikyō*, 496.

⁶⁶ Cited in Yingshi Yu, *Trade and Expansion*, 15.

⁶⁷ Lelang was established in 108 BCE and taken by the peninsular state of Koguryo in 313 CE; Daifang was established in 204 CE and taken by Koguryo in 314 CE. The fall of the commanderies cut Wa off from direct trade with China, making it reliant on peninsular states for continental trade. Song-nai Rhee, C. Melvin Aikens, with Gina L. Barnes, *Archaeology and the History of Toraijin: Human, Technological, and Cultural Flow from the Korean Peninsula to the Japanese Archipelago c. 800 BC – AD 600* (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2022), 83–86, 122–123.

increasingly militant peninsula.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Chinese rulers also helped spread the use of iron technologies, such as iron plows, to help bring about more efficient farming (particularly useful in settling “barbarian” nomads).⁶⁹ Of course, iron was also used in military weapons, quickly replacing the more malleable bronze as the metal of choice in warfare, and that gave the Chinese a strong hand to play.⁷⁰ There were thus various enticements but also equally important dangers.

But it was the symbols of power that shown most brightly in the eyes of the Wa.

Just when bronze mirrors became a common commodity in Han China,⁷¹ they were becoming a mighty symbol of power in the islands. Recently, a shield-shaped bronze mirror has been excavated from the Tomiomaruyama kofun in Nara along with a sword measuring over two meters. These grave goods likely reflect the high status of the figure interred in the burial mound.⁷²

There were, in short, great attractions as well as dangerous undercurrents in dealing with the mainland, and it is clear that the Wa knew both. It is hard, in any case, to imagine the Wa were naïve to the extent that they did not see the military power that lay behind the trade and the gifts.

WA IN WÁNG CHŌNG’S *LUNHENG*

The next appearance of the graph *wo* for the Japanese region is in Wáng Chōng’s 王充 (27 CE – c. 97 CE) *Disquisitions* (*Lùnhéng* 論衡). Wáng mentions the Wa several times, each time saying the Wa people

68 The position of the submitting group was called *bǎo-sài-wài mán-í* 保塞外蠻夷, or “outer frontier-guarding barbarians,” among other variations, depending how close to “inner” the tribe was politically and economically. See Yu, *Trade and Expansion*, 69–70.

69 Yu, *Trade and Expansion*, 21–22. In addition, silk and sericulture were important as export items, both officially and by private merchants (Yu, 23–24). The most famous silk center was in Shandong (Ch’i). Another was Sichuan. Next came lacquer (Yu, 24), which was exported to Lelang (Northern Korea), among other places.

70 Yu, *Trade and Expansion*, 24–25. Copper was also utilized, but mainly for mirrors and coins. Bronze was also used for mirrors (*ibid.*, 26).

71 Yu, *Trade and Expansion*, 27.

72 Kunihiko Imai, “Ancient mirror and iron sword found at Nara burial mound,” *Asahi shimbun* (Jan. 26, 2023), <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14824344>.

offered a plant called *chàng cǎo* 鬯草, which was considered highly auspicious. He remarks, as part of a logical argument against superstitions regarding fate, that the plant did not necessarily possess this quality.

The first mention of the plant is in the chapter “Exaggerations of the Literati” (Rú zēng 儒增, 8.1):

During the Zhōu there was great peace under heaven. The Yuècháng offered (*xiàn* 獻) white pheasants [*báizhī* 白雉], the Wa people gave as tribute (*gòng* 貢) the aromatic plant *chàng cǎo* 鬯草. Since by eating a white pheasant or using the aromatic plant, one cannot keep free from evil influences, why should vessels like bronze tripods have such a power?⁷³

周時天下太平，越裳獻白雉，倭人貢鬯草。食白雉，服鬯草，不能除凶，金鼎之器，安能辟姦？

Here, Wáng Chōng is explaining that things the literati (Confucians) considered magical were exaggerations. He goes on to deepen the argument by saying things gotten from foreigners were valued as bringing good fortune, while Chinese materials, such as bronze tripods (鼎 *dǐng*), were considered magical. Similarly, people seemed to have thought that white pheasants from Southeast Asia (the area of the Yuècháng) had such power, as did using the aromatic plant *chàng cǎo*.⁷⁴

Wáng continues this theme in the chapter “Restoring the State” (Huī guó 恢國, 19.2):

73 Adapted from Alfred Forke, trans., *Lun-Hêng, Part I: Philosophical Essays of Wang Ch'ung* (Leiden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1907), 505, 559. Joshua Fogel, in his translation of Saeki Arikiyo's *Treatise on the People of Wa in the Chronicle of the Kingdom of Wei*, 28, translates *fú* 服 as “acknowledged”; however, given the actual use of the plants, which was to ferment spiritual wine, the translation of “use” (or “take” as in “take medicine”) seems more appropriate and fits contemporaneous usage. Forke skips the word and says, “Since by eating these white pheasants or odoriferous plants....” 505.

74 Bender also highlights the auspicious quality of white pheasants, noting that the presentation of one to the Japanese court in the late seventh century was the source of the era name Hakuchi 白雉 (Bender, “Changing the Calendar,” 224).

In the time of King Chéng, the Yuècháng offered pheasants, and the Wa people gave as tribute *chàng* 暢.⁷⁵

成王之時，越常獻雉，倭人貢暢。

The passage goes on to give more examples of various outsiders basically accepting China's superiority and offering gifts and tribute.⁷⁶ It is said to be unlikely that the Wa actually sent a mission to China during the reign of King Chéng (1115–1079 BCE). While there is no way to prove it one way or the other, considering the state of maritime travel by the people of the archipelago during this period, it cannot be ruled out.⁷⁷ The important point, again, is that Wáng saw the Wa as both considering China as superior (giving them tribute) and recognizing that their tribute was of high value to the highest office.

Next, in the chapter "Abnormal Vacuities" (Yì xū 異虛, 5.1), translated as "Fictitious Prodigies" by Forke, Wáng writes:

If the aromatic plant *chàng* 暢 grew in the Zhou period, when there was great peace under heaven, then the [Wa] people came and offered it. That plant grows in the open country, just as mulberry and grains. When the eastern and northern barbarians (Yí Dí 夷狄) present it, it is considered lucky, but if the plant had grown in the Zhou court, would it be called [un]lucky?

The aromatic plant is used to distill spirits, its perfume being very intense. By pouring this perfumed wine at sacrifices, the spirits are called down.⁷⁸ If this plant had

75 Adapted from Alfred Forke, trans., *Lun-Heng, Part II: Miscellaneous Essays of Wang Ch'ung* (New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), 208.

76 Among these, Wang mentions that during the Han dynasty, they "got possession of the stone house of the Queen Mother of the West and established there the circuit of the Western Sea," 208. 遂得西王母石室，因為西海郡。

77 As an example, see the sailboats and galley depicted at the Arao Minami site and reproduced in Figure 3.

78 This recalls the *Shuowen Jiezi* definition of *chàng* 鬯: 以秬釀鬯，芬芳攸服，以降神也。

grown naturally in the Zhou period, it would not have been different from the auspicious plants *jiāhé* 嘉禾, *zhūcǎo* 朱草, and *míngjiá* 蓂莢.⁷⁹

使暢草生於周之時，天下太平，[倭]人來獻暢草。暢草亦草野之物也，與彼桑穀何異？如以夷狄獻之則為吉，使暢草生於周家，肯謂之[不]善乎？夫暢草可以熾釀，芬香暢達者，將祭，灌暢降神。設自生於周朝，與嘉禾、朱草、蓂莢之類不殊矣。

The context here is that, in ancient times, there was a superstition that the growing of plants such as the mulberry, was a bad portent, and yet when even an outsider (“barbarian”) presents a plant that grows in the wild, it could be taken as a sign of goodness. Nonetheless, if it had grown in the Zhou court, it would have been accepted as another beneficial plant, such as were the three noted.

Finally, in a most controversial mention of 暢, in the chapter “Very Extraordinary” (Chāo qí 超奇, 13.3), Wáng writes:

White pheasants were brought as a tribute from Yangshang, and *chàng* was offered from Yuān. In Yōngzhōu jewels are found, and Jīng and Yáng are productive of gold. As precious things are found in unknown, far distant countries of the four quarters, so it cannot be said that there are no extraordinary men.⁸⁰

79 Adapted from Forke, trans., *Lun-Heng, Part II: Miscellaneous Essays of Wang Ch'ung*, 167–168, following the revisions given in Huáng Hù 黃暉, *Lun heng xiào shì 論衡校釋* (Annotations and Explanations of Lunheng), vol. 1 (Changsha: Shang wu yin shu guan, 1938), 212–213. The insertion of Wa makes sense because Wáng Chōng had already mentioned the Wa offering the plant several times, and for his argument to work, those who presented it had to be foreign, as he mentions later in the text.

80 Adapted from Forke, *Lun-Heng, Part II*, 302. Forke says that Yuan is Ferghana.

白雉貢於越，暢草獻於宛，雍州出玉，荊、楊生金。珍物產於四遠，幽遼之地，未可言無奇人也。

Here the context is that brilliant people and things gain preeminent stature.

In all three notes, Wáng uses the same logic, that simple foreignness or novelty in itself should not be reasonable grounds for considering a particular plant (or pheasant) to be auspicious or special. Here our interest is not so much in the logic of Wáng Chōng’s argument (interesting though it may be) as it is in the fact that people from Wa probably did bring the aromatic plant *chàng* to China. Assuming this to be true—and there is no reason to believe it is not probable—then it tells us something important about the Wa. And that is that the Wa knew how to give appropriate gifts. The *chàng* plant was used to make an alcoholic spirit (*chàng* used by itself can mean such a drink) that only the emperor and foreign guests could imbibe, and that it was imbibed, among other occasions, at important ceremonies. The fact that the people of Wa brought this to China was an astute political move. It means they understood what was important to the rulers of China. Then, as now, the Japanese excelled at gift giving. Certainly, there was no reason for disparagement on the part of the receivers of such a gift.

The modern-day equivalent of the *chàng* plant is debatable, as are a great many other botanical varieties in ancient texts.⁸¹ The main graph used was 鬯, but the word was also written as 暢, 裳, 常, and 鬱. Standing alone, *chàng* mainly referred to the fermented product, an aromatic alcoholic spirit.⁸² The plant itself has been considered a tulip (yùjīnxiāng 鬱金香), turmeric, or black millet.

In his massive study of the “Wajinden,” Saeki Arikiyo dismisses the importance of this tribute because the text also says the western state of Yuan 宛 and “barbarians” also brought it.⁸³ He also considers it doubtful that the Wa brought tribute during the Zhou period. He further notes “aromatic herbs were perennials like wild ginger,” which the “Wajinden” says the Wa grew “but do not know of its

81 For more examples, see Arthur Waley, *The Nine Songs: A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1973), 17, where he also notes the prominent part played by “sweet-smelling plants” in the shamanistic cults of early China.

82 Bernard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa* #719a-d.

83 Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa*, 28–29.

fine fragrance.” It is of course possible that Wáng Chōng was for some unknown reason using the tribute of Wa anachronistically, but it is hard to imagine how that would help his argument, and making a strong, defensible argument is one of the main attributes of the *Lùnhéng*. Hashikawa Tokio 橋川時雄 (1894–1982) has made a more convincing argument that the Wa made this tribute in the Zhou period and, of equal if not more importance, they knew the strategic value of the plant and its use.⁸⁴

As world-class gift givers there are many other interesting cases of Japanese diplomatic presents, but one more example may not go amiss: the case of the double-tailed koi the Japanese gave King Kalākaua of Hawaii sometime after 1874. The fish became a central part of the lily pond in Kapi’olani Park, Honolulu, and perhaps would never have been known outside Hawaii had it not been stolen by a young Austin Strong (1881–1957), and his experience as told in his story, “His Oceanic Majesty’s Goldfish,” in 1944.⁸⁵ In terms of our subject, however, it is more of a reminder that the history of objects such as imperial gifts is not always straightforward and can take expected turns.

The Wei court gave Himiko the highest-level title ever bestowed upon a non-Chinese state leader, as well as the regalia and other symbols, mirrors, swords, and so on, that clearly indicated the Wei supported her.⁸⁶ This is what the Wa wanted. It would be naïve, however, to think they would not need to give something back in return, and it is in consideration of what that could possibly be—including subjugation if the Chinese knew their exact location and current military preparedness—that the Wa had to make preparations.⁸⁷ One wonders if the subsequent break in missions for some centuries afterwards was because they thought the Chinese were getting too close—and only resumed when they needed Chinese help in Korea.

84 Hashikawa Tokio 橋川時雄, “Wajin ga chō wo mitsuida koto,” 倭人が鬯草を貢いだこと (The Case of the Wa Tribute of Chàng), in *Ishihama sensei koki kinen Tōyōgaku ronsō*, 石浜先生古稀記念東洋学論叢 (East Asian Studies Essays Commemorating Professor Ishihama’s Seventieth Birthday) (Osaka: Ishihama sensei koki kinenkai, 1958), 449–458.

85 Reprinted in A. Grove Day and Carl Stroven, eds., *A Hawaiian Reader* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1984), 150–159. When the King, known as the Merrie Monarch, found out, which he did when he saw Austin hiding the koi in his wet hat on the side of the road, he let the boy keep it.

86 Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors from the Islands of Immortals*, 22–26.

87 Nearly a thousand years later, the rulers of Japan would make similar preparations in response to the threat of Mongol invasion.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion to the poem by Han Shan cited at the beginning of this paper is as follows:

Were your mind just like mine
You would already have arrived

君心若似我，还得到其中

—Han Shan, *Han Shan*⁸⁸

These exchanges, and what was learned from them on both sides, may be part of building toward the great international changes in the fifth century (and perhaps earlier). These include the Chinese understanding of some unique points of Japanese culture: the leadership of women and the militarization of the territories, giving rise to a true fighting prowess. These were important factors in subsequent wars in Korea as the various sides challenged each other. For the Japanese, they probably already knew the size and importance of China, but not the actual diplomatic niceties and the power they influenced. These things were reasons to be prepared, including establishing sea and land defenses, and these required having good coordinates for important sites. This is the reason we assume the directions are not as accurate as they could be, since truly accurate directions would have increased the potential threat to the Wa.

The later history of Wa was significantly affected by events on the Korean peninsula. By 313, Lelang Commandery, the main Chinese bastion on the peninsula (K: Nangnang-kun), fell to the forces of the Koguryŏ, and Daifang Commandery (K: Taebang-kun) to Paekche.⁸⁹ The people had been greatly

88 人问寒山道，寒山路不通。夏天冰未释，日出雾朦胧。似我何由届，与君心不同。君心若似我，还得到其中。The use of "arrive" by Han Shan is probably coincidental. He did not, in fact, 至。

89 Lee, Ki-baik, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward W. Wagner and Edward J. Shultz (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1984), 19–20.

influenced by Chinese culture, albeit through the tributary system (the exchange of gifts and tribute while accepting the superiority and often control of China). It should also be remembered that when the five kings of Wa sent a mission to the Liu Song dynasty, they could not have done so without the help of the *toraijin* 渡来人, or “those who crossed over,” a term referring to Koreans who had emigrated to Japan. Furthermore, there were Koreans in the 608 mission from the Yamato kingdom to Tang China.⁹⁰

It may have been that the missions had an equal or better impact on the peoples of the Korean peninsula than those in the archipelago. From around 300, skilled artisans/technicians began arriving in the Kawachi region, intensifying after 370 when a war devastated Paekche, causing many people to flee to their friendly neighbor on the Japanese archipelago.

That is, it was not traveling the route that was at issue, but rather an affinity beyond the mere physical difficulties. From the Wa perspective, it was reasonable for the route from China to the islands to be considered “impassable.” The Wa were warriors, artisans, and fishers, and so had much to offer China (especially when they were having conflicts they thought the Wa might help with), but the Wa also held fast to the belief in the spiritual world they believed kept them in power, and in this connection they were very far from the Chinese. This was not of course an unbridgeable gulf, but they considered that it did not hurt to keep a respectful distance.

⁹⁰ Rhee, Aikens, and Barnes, *Archaeology and the History of Toraijin*, 6.

APPENDIX 1. ITINERARY PORTION OF THE "WAJINDEN"

The translation below of the itinerary in the "Wajinden" is modified from various previous renditions.

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|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | The people of Wa reside in the Great Sea southeast of Daifang Commandery. | 倭人在帶方東南大海之中 |
| 2. | To reach Wa from the Daifang Commandery, one sails along the coastline, passing through the state of Han, then, sharply turning southward and then eastward, one arrives at the northern coastline, the statelet of Kuyahan, a journey of over 7,000 <i>li</i> . | 從郡至倭，循海岸水行，歷韓國，乍南乍東，到其北岸狗邪韓國，七千餘里 |
| 3. | One then crosses a sea for the first time, traversing over 1,000 <i>li</i> , and comes to the state of Tsushima. | 始度一海，千餘里至對海國 |
| 4. | Traveling another 1,000 <i>li</i> or more to the south, one crosses a sea known as Hanhai. There one comes to a large state. | 又南渡一海千餘里，名曰瀚海，至一大國 |
| 5. | Again, one then crosses a sea, traveling over 1,000 <i>li</i> before coming to the state of Matsura. | 又渡一海，千餘里至末盧國 |
| 6. | If one proceeds on foot to the southeast for 500 <i>li</i> , one arrives at the state of Ito.... When the emissary of the Daifang Commandery pays a visit, he always stays here. | 東南陸行五百里，到伊都國。。。皆統屬女王國，郡使往來常所駐。 |
| 7. | One hundred <i>li</i> further to the southeast lies the state of Na.... | 東南至奴國百里 |
| 8. | One travels one hundred <i>li</i> further to the east and comes to the state of Fumi. | 東行至不彌國百里 |
| 9. | Sailing for 20 days to the south, one comes to the state of Tsuma. | 南至投馬國，水行二十日 |
| 10. | Traveling south, one comes to the state of Yamatai, where the female sovereign reigns, sailing for 10 days and traveling overland for 1 month. | 南至邪馬壹國，女王之所都，水行十日，陸行一月 |
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11. To the north of the land of the female sovereign ... the state of Shima, followed by Ihoki, Iya, Toki, Mina, Kokoto, Fuko, Shana, Taiso, Sona, Koyū, Kanasona, Ki, Igo, Kina, Yama, Kyūshin, Hari, Kii, Ona, and Na. The frontier of the terrain of the female sovereign ends here. 自女王國以北。次有斯馬國，次有已百支國，次有伊邪國，次有都支國，次有彌奴國，次有好古都國，次有不呼國，次有姐奴國，次有對蘇國，次有蘇奴國，次有呼邑國，次有華奴蘇奴國，次有鬼國，次有為吾國，次有鬼奴國，次有邪馬國，次有躬臣國，次有巴利國，次有支惟國，次有烏奴國，次有奴國，此女王境界所盡
12. To its south lies the state of Kuna. 其南有狗奴國，男子為王，其官有狗古智卑狗，不屬女王。
13. From the Daifang Commandery to the land of the female sovereign comes to over 12,000 *li*. 自郡至女王國萬二千餘里。
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APPENDIX 2. MISSIONS TO AND FROM WA MENTIONED IN THE
"WAJINDEN"

When	Who	Itinerary	Purpose	Note
Han dynasty	Over one hundred communities	Unknown	Received audience at Han court.	Described in introductory sentence. Includes 57 CE mission from Na to Emperor Guangwu of the Later Han.
Wei kingdom	Thirty communities	Unknown	To "maintain ties with emissaries and interpreters."	People who could speak Wa language and Chinese.
Summer, 239 (Jingchu 3rd year, 6th month)	Nanshōbei, Gyūri, and others from Wa, with an escort from Daifang	Wa [Yamatai?] → Daifang → Luoyang	To offer tribute to the new Wei emperor. ⁹¹	Six months later, Wei declares a state of friendship between Wei and Himiko.

⁹¹ Saeki, *Treatise on the People of Wa*, 266, 268.

When	Who	Itinerary	Purpose	Note
Season unknown, 240 (Zhengshi, 1st year)	Ti Jun sent by the governor of Daifang	Daifang → Wa state (but it is <i>yi</i> 詣, “paying a visit,” and accompanied by Wa people)	Audience with Himiko; Nanshōbei and others return. ⁹²	Jiangzhong is part of the title.
Season unknown, probably 240	Emissary from Wa	Unknown	Bringing a memorial, gifts in response to Ti Jun’s mission.	This may be the first record of a document written in Japan.
Season unknown, 243 (Zhengshi, 4th year)	Iseiki, Ekiyaku, eight others from Wa	Unknown	Presentation of gifts.	
Zhengshi, 6th year	Nanshōbei?	Wa → Daifang	Nanshōbei of Wa granted yellow pennant by imperial edict to be received at Daifang.	Yellow pennant may have later been delivered to Nanshōbei by Zhengshi 8 embassy, so this mission may not have happened.

⁹² Ibid., 324.

When	Who	Itinerary	Purpose	Note
Season unknown, 247 (Zhengshi 8th year)	Saishi, Uetsu, others	Wa → Daifang → Wa? Note: Saeki says Zhang Zheng was "sent" (因) to Wa to see the edict was delivered, the pennant awarded, and a circular announcement made; a Wa emissary was sent to Daifang to discuss conditions on the archipelago. However, in the following year, when Zhang Zheng returned to the archipelago, he first "went to" (yí, 詣) Wa, again, not alone. ⁹³	Inform Wei of conflicts in Wa (fighting with Kuna). Zhang Zheng, "administrator of the border section," and others went to Daifang with the edict and yellow pendant for Nanshōbei, an action that had been decided in Zhengshi 6 [425], ⁹⁴ giving Nanshōbei a position as a military commander, putting Wa ahead of Kana. ⁹⁵	In the intervening years, there had also been much fighting between Wei and Koguryō, ending in victory for Wei. Also included attacks on Daifang and Lelang, with death of Daifang governor Gong Zun. ⁹⁶ The edict with yellow pendant was a big honor. ⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid., 330–333.

When	Who	Itinerary	Purpose	Note
248 (Zhengshi 9), suggests Saeki ⁹⁸	Ekiyaku, Zhang Zheng, others	Ito? → Yamatai → Luoyang?	They first paid a visit to the capital. where they gave Iyo 30 male and female captives (or slaves), then took presents to the Wei court.	This was to escort Zhang Zheng— but note they first go to Wa capital—so probably were in Ito.

94 Ibid., 328–329.

95 Ibid., 340.

96 Ibid., 330–333.

97 Ibid., 325.

98 Ibid., 359.

When	Who	Itinerary	Purpose	Note
Taishi 2 (266) Arrived in the 11th month, ⁹⁹ but when they left is unknown.	Interpreters	Unknown	To congratulate new Jin emperor Wu.	Not in "Wajinden," but recorded in the "Annals of Emperor Wu" section of the <i>Jin shu</i> . Also included in <i>Nihon shoki</i> entry for 66th year of Empress Jingu. It seems that <i>Nihon shoki</i> accepts "female ruler of Wa," i.e., Iyo. ¹⁰⁰ This is the last mention of a female ruler of Wa in Chinese annals.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 365.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 364–366.

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