The Genealogy of Toyokiirihiko and the Kamitsuken Region
——On their Historical Characteristics——

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In the Sujinki and Keikoki of the “Nihon-Shoki” (Chronicle of Japan), the ancestral legend of the clan of Kamitsuken is described. Such a phenomenon is exceptional for a clan which came from the Togoku (eastern Japan). The contents can be summarized as follows: (1) Their origin goes back to Toyokiirihiko, a prince of the Emperor Sujin. (2) The prince was engaged in the rule of the Togoku and subjugation of the Emishi race. (3) The clan of Kamitsuken participated in diplomacy and foreign expedition, as a clan forming part of the central government.

As background to the inclusion of such an ancestral genealogy, it can be mentioned that many talented members of the Kamitsuken clan were appointed as middle-class government officials of the central government of the time, when the “Nihon-Shoki” was edited. These appointments to positions of trust are considered to be closely related with trends in Kozuke Province, their home area, in the important policies of that time; that is, the statutory organization of the Dewa Region. Here, Kozuke province was regarded as an obedient and close country, showing remarkable activity in subjugation and the migration of inhabitants (“Sakuko”), ahead of other provinces in the Kanto Plain. It can be conceived that the political characteristics of the Kozuke Province were created by its geographical factors as follows; it is located in the northwestern corner of the Kanto Plain, a convenient location for traffic with the Japan Sea side, and at an important position in the Usui Pass.

Such an aspect must have been even clearer when the central government aimed to rule the Mutsu region, a little earlier. For this purpose, it is not difficult to imagine that the control of the Kamitsuken area, a strategic point for land traffic, and of local clans in charge of political stability and the supply of human and material resources, in the adjacent Shimotsukenu Area, was an essential requirement. In the “Nihon-Shoki”, it is described that Prince Toyokiirihiko, who ruled the Togoku, was the founder of the Kamitsuken clan and the Shimotsukenu Clan, and that the descendants of his grandson, Mimorowake-o, who subjugated the Emishi, settled down in the Togoku. This structure of the genealogy can be considered to reflect the above geographic characteristics.

The existence of these characteristics as fact remains only in several records of the 7th century, as far as historical documents go. However, from the archaeological viewpoint, using the Soja Tumuli Groups as an index, it can be considered that the unitary rule of the Kamitsuken area backed by the central government became notable in the first half of the 7th century.

The role of the special political features came to an end in the mid-8th century, when the management of the Ezo Area was upscaled, and “Bando”, or a new “subordinate
and close” area, was established accordingly. This is also shown in the decline of the power of the Kamitsuken clan within the central government, and the penetration of other clans into the line of Toyokiihiko, as it were in inverse proportion to the decline.