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From the second half of the 8th century through the first half of the 9th century, the government of emperors Konin and Kammu engaged in large-scale military activities in response to the "rebellion" of the Tohoku Emishi. This was the so-called 38-year War. The government built Isawa-jo, Shiwa-jo and Tokutan-jo castles as military and political bases. Around the same time, in Watarishima (Hokkaido) as well, significant changes were taking place in its relationship with the Japanese archipelago.

Sueware not produced in Watarishima has turned up at some archaeological sites in Chitose City in the Ishikari River Basin, Eniwa City, Ebetsu City and other places in central Hokkaido. Funbo, the term used for Hokkaido style kofun, also appeared during the same period, and Sueware accompanying funerary accessories, as well as coins and copper bowls not found anywhere else in Watarishima have been found buried in these graves. These archaeological materials establish that part of the powerful elite in central Hokkaido at that time had strong links with the government of Japan. Akita-jo Castle, which served as a gateway for trade with Watarishima at that time, is thought to be the route through which such objects were brought to Watarishima. A comparison of Sueware excavated from Akita-jo and that from Watarishima revealed that this possibility applies to a significant portion of the pottery. Furthermore, this comparison also showed that Sueware, albeit an extremely small quantity, that had been used at Nagaoka-kyo, the seat of the imperial government at that time, had in fact been brought to Watarishima. Given the strong possibility that it had been brought via Akita-jo, we may conclude that Sueware cups from the capital were presented as "prestige items" upon the forging of relations between the Konin and Kammu government and certain powerful figures of Watarishima.

During this same period, a building with a distinctive official character was built on Kikaishima located in the Nansei Islands. It was built as a base for ruling the various islands from which "imperial tributes" had been demanded since the founding of the ritsuryo state. We may conclude that the occurrence of this sort of phenomenon up until the Early Modern period in regions perceived as borders with countries to the north and south are a reflection of the government's policy for establishing its "national borders".
Meanwhile, the Konin and Kammu government altered and established styles for the “Iroshosho”, the government’s sole diplomatic document for foreign lands. By identifying the territories ruled by the ritsuryo state, the document paints a clear picture of the “empire” that ruled foreign countries.

As a result of previous research, it is now known that the Konin and Kammu government was an important government that oversaw huge changes in the ritsuryo state as the Nara period gave way to the Heian period. This paper illustrates that with regard to diplomatic policy as well, the government at that time undertook the major task of establishing the space it ruled, which prescribed the “Japan” of later years.

Key words: Government of emperors Konin and Kammu, national borders, 38-year War, Tohoku Emishi, Watarishima, Kikaishima, Sueware cup A, fired salt jar