

December 11, 2018

Letter to the Students of Jochiwon Girls' Middle School

Dear Students:

Best wishes from Shimane Prefecture in Japan to the students of Jochiwon Girls' Middle School in the Republic of Korea.

Thank you for the 41 postcards that you sent to us. We read each and every one of them. I must admit I was a bit taken aback by what some of you wrote. For example, one postcard read: "You mustn't continue to use distorted textbooks to teach Japanese students. Please teach truthful, proper history for the sake of Japanese students." And, another said: "Japanese students should protest to the Japanese government that textbooks contain mistakes and lies."

Your postcards unanimously state that the Japanese historical understanding that Takeshima (Dokdo) is Japanese territory is wrong. The literature and old maps that you cited as evidence are identical to those in the book *Learn the Truth about Dokdo*, which you are studying.

One piece of proof that many of you cited is an entry in the *History of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk Sagi)*. The section "13th Year of King Jijeung" contains a description that the State of Usan (Usan-guk) was absorbed by Silla, so your argument is that Dokdo became Korean territory, concurrently, in the year 512 when General Kim Isabu of Silla conquered the State of Usan.

But, have you all actually read the passage in question from the *History of the Three Kingdoms*? It contains the following description of the State of Usan: "It is also called Ulleungdo (Utsuryo Island), and its area is 100 *ri* square." In other words, the State of Usan and Utsuryo Island were one and the same, and its territory spanned "100 *ri* square" or roughly the equivalent of the administrative unit size of "a county or district (*gunhyeon*)." And, the State of Usan with "an area of 100 *ri* square" did not include Dokdo.

This is shown in the entry "Venerable King Jicheol" in the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms (Samguk Yusa)*. That King Jicheol is the same person as "King Jijeung" in the *History of the Three Kingdoms*. Furthermore, the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* also contains a passage concerning General Kim Isabu of Silla. The book clearly states that the

State of Usan has “a circumference of 26,730 *bu*.” In other words, it took “26,730 *bu*” to walk a circuit around the State of Usan. One *bu* is regarded as approximately 1.6 meters, so the total circumference of the State of Usan would come to 42,768 meters. That is almost equal to the distance around Utsuryo Island. Although the book *Learn the Truth about Dokdo* claims that Dokdo was an island attached to Utsuryo Island, the measurements of “an area of 100 *ri* square” in the *History of the Three Kingdoms* and “a circumference of 26,730 *bu*” in the *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* clearly indicate that the State of Usan consisted of Utsuryo Island only. Besides, nowhere in the *History of the Three Kingdoms* is it stated that Dokdo was attached to Utsuryo Island.

Dokdo, which you believe to be an intrinsic part of South Korea, is actually 87.4 kilometers distant from what was the State of Usan. The simple fact is that you cannot rely on the *History of the Three Kingdoms* as a basis for claiming that Dokdo has been part of Korea since 512. Is there any solid evidence that Dokdo was part of the State of Usan and attached to Utsuryo Island?

There is an entry in the Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea (Dongguk munheon bigo), compiled in 1770, which states: “Both Ulleung (Utsuryo) and Usan are part of Usan-guk (the State of Usan), and Usan is called Matsushima in Japan.” Korean researchers have used this as the basis for a claim that the “Ulleungdo (Usan Island)” mentioned in the *Geographical Appendix to the Veritable Records of King Sejong (Sejong Sillok, Jiriji)* and in the *Revised and Augmented Edition of the Survey of the Geography of Korea (Sinjeung Dongguk Yeoji Seungnam)* is none other than Dokdo.

But, just as with the “area of 100 *ri* square” and “circumference of 26,730 *bu*” references in the *History of Three Kingdoms* and *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*, respectively, we need to test the historical veracity of what is written in this *Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea*, as well. That is because it was a person named Ahn Yong-bok who testified that Usan Island and Matsushima (Takeshima) were one and the same.

Ahn Yong-bok arrived without permission in the feudal domain of Tottori-*han* (Tottori Domain) in Japan in June 1696. Upon returning to Korea, he was interrogated by the Korean authorities and he told them: “I negotiated with the lord of Tottori Domain and they recognized Ulleungdo (Utsuryo Island) and Dokdo as Korean territory.” We need to verify the truthfulness of this testimony by Ahn Yong-bok. That is because, in the year before that unauthorized visit by Ahn Yong-bok to Tottori Domain, the Edo Shogunate had queried the Tottori Domain as to whether or not Utsuryo Island and Matsushima were part of its territory. In response to this query, the Tottori Domain authorities replied in December 1695 that Utsuryo Island and Matsushima were not part of their territory. In

light of the geographical proximity of Utsuryo Island to Korea, in January 1696 the Edo Shogunate prohibited the Ohya and Murakawa families from continuing to sail to Utsuryo Island. At the time, the shogunate revoked the “sea travel license” that it had issued to the Ohya and Murakawa families which permitted them to visit Utsuryo Island. However, the permission that the shogunate had previously granted to the two families only concerned sea travel to Utsuryo Island. Clearly, it did not regard Matsushima (present day Takeshima), which was not a point of contention with the Koreans, as being Korean territory.

Another thing to remember is that Ahn Yong-bok’s surreptitious visit to Tottori Domain occurred in June 1696, five months after the Edo Shogunate had banned trips to Utsuryo Island. At that time, the Tottori Domain authorities expelled Ahn Yong-bok’s party on the orders of the shogunate. The facts of this affair are confirmed in the document published by the Northeast Asian History Foundation in South Korea titled Notes on the Course of the Consultations with the Governor of Bungo Province concerning the Korean who Voyaged to Inaba (present day Tottori Prefecture) and the Gist of His Response, As Well As a Description of the Affair from Start to Finish. It is an historical fact that Ahn Yong-bok was expelled without having negotiated with the lord of Tottori Domain.

Nevertheless, after Ahn Yong-bok returned to Korea, he stated during interrogation that he had berated the Japanese fishermen he encountered on Utsuryo Island as follows: “What you call ‘Matsuyama’ is Usan. It also belongs to our country.” He also claimed to have “directly negotiated with the lord of Tottori Domain and eventually made them recognize Ulleungdo (Utsuryo Island) and Matsushima as Korean territory.”

Please give some careful thought to this statement by Ahn Yong-bok. The Edo Shogunate had imposed its ban on travel to Utsuryo Island five months before he arrived in Tottori Domain; that is to say when he arrived in Tottori Domain, the ban on Japanese voyaging to Utsuryo Island was already in effect. Consequently, Ahn Yong-bok’s unapproved trip to Tottori Domain had absolutely nothing to do with the Edo Shogunate’s ban on travel to Utsuryo Island.

The statement by Ahn Yong-bok can be found in the *Annals of King Sukjong* (*Sukjong Sillok*). It is part of the record of the criminal investigation to which Ahn Yong-bok was subjected by the Korean authorities after he was expelled from Tottori Domain and returned to Korea. So, it’s not that what Ahn Yong-bok said at that time is considered historical fact. We cannot simply accept his account at face value; instead, we need to decide whether or not the content of his testimony is credible by verifying it through other documents and historical records. That approach is what is known as “textual criticism.”

Such textual criticism is absolutely essential when doing any kind of historical research. Before you assert that “Japanese textbooks are distorted,” I would suggest that you subject the Dajokan (Grand Council of State) Order, Korean Imperial Decree No. 41, and other documents which you believe constitute proof, to “textual criticism.”

After all, there is no proof whatsoever for the assertion that Dokdo has been Korean territory since the year 512. Likewise, Ahn Yong-bok’s claim that Utsuryo Island and Dokdo were made Korean territory as the result of his negotiations with the lord of Tottori Domain was not factual. Therefore, before asserting that “Dokdo is part of the motherland,” you need to subject the proof on which you are basing the claim that “Dokdo is Korean territory” to “textual criticism.” I am convinced that this approach is necessary in order to clarify the facts. What do you think?

I believe it is important that each of you does not just follow blindly the opinions of other people and that you scrutinize and verify situations for yourself and develop the habit of thinking for yourself.

I look forward to reading reports on the results of the “textual critiques” that you will carry out. Dear friends studying at Jochiwon Girls’ Middle School, I eagerly await further correspondence from you.

Sincerely,

Masao Shimojo
Chairman
4th Takeshima Dispute Research Council
Shimane Prefecture

Enc.