

April 2025

(revision: September 2025)

Observation Regarding the Chronology of the Nihon Shoki

Official Repository: Zenodo

Author : Hironobu Shiina

ORCID : 009-0005-6158-3320

Contact : h.shiina.contact@gmail.com

License : CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.15352764

While reviewing the *Nihon Shoki* recently, I discovered what appears to be a structural pattern in its chronological accounts:

1. Until the 13th year of Emperor Yūryaku, each “year” recorded in the *Nihon Shoki* seems to represent two actual solar years (a dual-year system).
2. The regnal years of Empress Jingū and Emperor Ōjin appear to have been absorbed into those of Emperor Nintoku.

From the 14th year of Emperor Yūryaku (470 AD), the text appears to transition to a one-to-one calendrical system. Interestingly, this shift aligns with the date engraved on the iron sword excavated from the Inariyama Kofun, which may have been produced to commemorate this change.

Regarding point 2, although the *Nihon Shoki* presents Emperor Ōjin as a separate sovereign following Empress Jingū, my analysis suggests that his recorded reign years may in fact correspond to the period during which Empress Jingū served as regent. The

title *Taichū Tennō* (“Emperor in the Womb”) associated with Emperor Ōjin may support this interpretation.

A corresponding chronological table is attached as a PDF.

Moreover, Emperor Nintoku’s reign years seem to match his lifespan, which raises the possibility that he and Emperor Ōjin may have been the same individual.

If we set the first year of Emperor Nintoku’s reign at 391 AD, the subsequent reigns align precisely with the dates of diplomatic missions recorded in Chinese sources concerning the Kings of Wa.

I believe the *Nihon Shoki* compilers misunderstood Empress Jingū’s political role, treating her governance as a formal regency (*shōsei*), and inadvertently miscalculated the timeline. Additionally, their efforts to synchronize events on the Korean Peninsula with Japanese records may have led to distorted accounts in the latter part of her

narrative.

This model, when applied to earlier periods, aligns the 9th year of Emperor Chūai with 390 AD. Tracing back from there, the reigns of Emperors Kaika and Sujin align with the chronology described in the **Records of Wei** (**Weizhi Woren zhuan**) — bearing in mind that two years were counted for each actual year.

Regarding the “queen” (**joō**) referenced in Chinese records, I believe this may reflect a misunderstanding. Since the Japanese imperial line worships a female sun deity, Chinese observers may have assumed the sovereign was a woman.

The name “Himiko” may have derived either from **Ōhihihi** (a possible reading of Emperor Kaika’s name), or more plausibly from **Himiko** as “Child of the Sun” — a sacred title for a royal descendant of the sun goddess.

The outbreak of disease following Emperor Sujin’s enthronement and the religious

rituals performed by Toyosukiirihime appear to correspond with the *Records of Wei*'s account: "After Himiko's death, the country fell into disorder; a female relative named Iyo (or a misspelling of "Toyo") succeeded her."

The *Records of Wei* mention the arrival of the envoy at Ito-koku, followed by vague descriptions, suggesting that this may have been the actual location of the envoy's stay.

The latter part of Empress Jingū's chronology contains events that seem to mirror Himiko's accomplishments, perhaps due to the compilers of the *Nihon Shoki* retroactively incorporating elements from the *Records of Wei*.

Altogether, the chronology aligns without contradiction, suggesting that no additional reign periods are necessary between Empress Jingū, Emperor Ōjin, and Emperor Nintoku.

These discrepancies likely reflect the compilers' limited historical understanding rather

than deliberate fabrication. It appears they recorded what was available at the time, unaware of structural inconsistencies.

Revision History

2025-09-16 Corrected the transition year from the Double-Year Calendar: revised from the 16th year of Emperor Yūryaku (471 CE) to the 14th year (470 CE). Accordingly, the description now states “up to the 13th year” and “from the 14th year.” This correction does not affect the core arguments, including the identification of the Five Kings of Wa or the correlations with the Wei Zhi.