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## The Sun Worship and Snake Worship in Dotaku

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**Abstract:** Dotaku are a representative relic of the Yayoi period in Japan. The designs and patterns of Dotaku are the reproduction of the life scene of the Yayoi people and the manifestation of their praying for a good harvest of rice. Dotaku are sacrificial utensils. On the one hand, Dotaku are the symbol of Okuninushinomikoto who is the Snake God, and on the other hand, the large golden-colored Dotaku emphasize the sacredness of the Sun worship in the sacrifice. Dotaku not only convey the unity of the Sun worship and Snake worship, but also reflect the desire of rice farmers to pursue high-yield rice and a prosperous population.

**Key words:** Dotaku; Rice Culture; Snake Worship; Sun Worship

### Introduction:

Dotaku first appeared as musical instruments in "Shoku Nihongi (Chronicles of Japan, Continued)", which were used to attract ancestor spirits and pray for a good rice harvest. Although the buttons of the Dotaku have been evolving, their cross-sections have always included rhombus-shaped patterns. The surface of Dotaku is also decorated with triangular patterns, horizontal stripes, cassocks, flowing water, scrolls, deer, birds, figures, etc., showing a correlation with paddy rice cultivation.

Dotaku are considered to be sacrificial vessels used to reflect sunlight, which embodies the worship of the Sun God. The triangular patterns on the surface of Dotaku are considered by the author to be a symbol of a snake. Thirty-nine Dotaku from the middle to late Yayoi period were unearthed from the Kamo Iwakura site in Shimane Prefecture. Among them, 13 Dotaku were engraved with an "X" character representing the Snake worship. Biten Yasumoto believes that Dotaku are the symbol of the main mission of the Okuninushinomikoto, and the main mission of the Okuninushinomikoto is the Snake God. This article will examine the cultural connotation of Dotaku by analyzing the patterns of Dotaku under the background of rice farming culture.

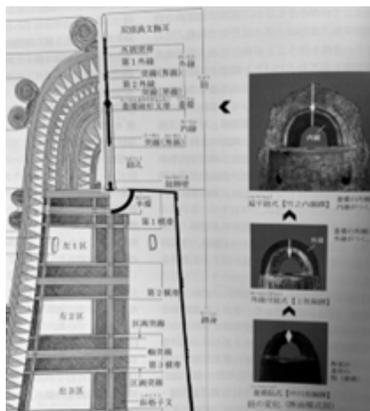
### 1. Dotaku from "Hearing" to "Viewing"

Dotaku are bronze ware manufactured and used between the 2nd century B.C. and the 2nd century A.D. Like bronze mirrors and bronze swords, they are made of copper-tin-lead alloy. But the difference is that there is no record of Dotaku in "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki". In this regard, Eiichi Fujimori [1983] believed that Dotaku were not

auspicious things, so it was obliterated in "Kojiki" and "Kogo Shūi". But Hideto Mori [1982] put forward a new point of view in his book "The Buried Dotaku". He believes that the "Kumanokusubi" that appears in "Kojiki" contains the meaning of Dotaku .

In terms of literature, it is recorded in the "Fusouryakki" that a Dotaku was unearthed in Omi Suufukuji in the 7th year of Emperor Tenchi (668). The first appearance of the name "Dotaku" is in the "Shokunihongi" that Dotaku were used as a musical instrument. The original Dotaku were used to hang and strike to make them sound, and were called "Hearing Dotaku"; around the first century A.D., the "Hearing Dotaku" was transformed into the "Viewing Dotaku". Based on the button, Makoto Sahara [2002] divided Dotaku into four categories as shown in Picture 1. The earliest Dotaku includes the Ryokan Chushiki (菱環鈕式), Gaientsuki Chushiki (外縁付鈕式), Henpei Chushiki (扁平鈕式), and Tosen Chushiki(突線鈕式). Although the shape of the button gradually changes and is complicated, judging from the section of the button, from the Ryokan Chushiki (菱環鈕式) to the Tosen Chushiki (突線鈕式), the cross-sections of the buttons all have rhombus patterns.

Trapa bispinosa's vitality is tenacious, and rhombus-shaped patterns are often seen on sacrificial utensils, which are generally related to reproductive beliefs. Picture 2 shows the sacrificial utensils used to pray for a good rice harvest and a prosperous population from the end of the Yayoi period to the early Kofun period. The surface of the utensils is engraved with flowing water patterns and rhombus patterns. Rhombus patterns are also very popular in Japan today. As we all know, March 3 is the Girls' Festival, which is called "Hinamatsuri" in Japanese. The indispensable part of the Girls' Festival is the three-color "Hishimochi"



Picture 1: Four categories of Dotaku button

Picture 1 Source: 銅鐸—弥生時代の青銅器生産—, 2009:8



Picture 2: The sacrificial utensils

Picture 2 Source: The author took the photo in Kurashiki Archaeological Museum

with a combination of red, white, and green. They are good wishes for prosperity, good health, and a long life. In addition, the clothes of the Miao nationality, an ancient rice-growing nation in China, are also commonly seen with rhombus patterns.

The "Viewing Dotaku" is mainly of Tosen Chushiki (突線鈕式). The largest Dotaku in Japan was excavated in Oiwayama, Yasu City, Shiga Prefecture, and is of the Kinki type, standing 134.7 cm high and weighing 45.47 kg. This Dotaku has a "double-headed scroll-shaped ear" and cannot be hung or struck. The shape of Dotaku has also changed from the "Hearing Dotaku" to the "Viewing Dotaku", and the initial "Hearing Dotaku" has a thick hanging hand (button) and a rhombus-shaped cross-section. Initially, the "Hearing Dotaku" has a thick hand (button), a rhombus-shaped section, and a "tongue" inside the Dotaku, and a stick similar to that used for striking as shown in Picture 3, while the "Viewing Dotaku" is gradually decorated and carved with patterns, making it more beautiful in appearance.

At present, more than 500 Dotaku have been unearthed throughout Japan, all of which were found by accident. According to the statistics of the Department of Cultural Affairs in March 2001<sup>1)</sup>, the top five unearthed Dotaku are 56 in Hyogo Prefecture, 54 in Shimane Prefecture, 42 in Tokushima Prefecture, 41 in Shiga Prefecture, and 41 in Wakayama Prefecture. According to the latest data from the Shimane Prefectural Museum of Ancient Izumo History, the number of Dotaku excavated in Shimane Prefecture has reached 58, of which 39 were excavated at the Kamo Iwakura site in Yunnan City, Shimane Prefecture (2nd-1st century B.C.).



Picture 3: Viewing Dotaku  
Source: The author took the photo in Osaka Prefectural Museum of Yayoi Culture

The unearthed Dotaku are distributed in the western part of Honshu, with Kinnki Chiho as the center, extending to Nagano and Shizuoka prefectures in the east, Shimane and Hiroshima prefectures in the west, and Kagawa, Tokushima and Kochi prefectures in the east of Shikoku, and in the northern part of Kyushu, Saga and Fukuoka prefectures. Kinki style Dotaku (近畿式銅鐸) are mainly distributed in Kinki as the center, east to Too-toumi, west to Shikoku eastern half, and north to the Sanin area. The Sanen style Dotaku (三遠式銅鐸) are distributed in the east to Shinano, Too-toumi area, and west to Noubiheiyai area.

At the end of the 1st century, Dotaku were suddenly large-scale (mainly Kinki style and Sanen style). By the end of the 2nd century, only Kinki style Dotaku remained, and

they were no longer made at the end of the 3rd century. In the middle and late Yayoi period, Wakoku was in turmoil, and Dotaku changed from Hearing to Viewing. As for the cause of the chaos, Kaoru Terasawa attributed the advance of Kyushu power to social tensions. Nobuya Fukunaga thinks it is due to the circulation of iron resulting in power imbalance; Jiro Akatsuka thinks it is due to climate change; Kazuhiro Taguchi attributed it to natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Whatever the reason, it is an indisputable fact that Dotaku production stopped at the end of the Yayoi period and disappeared from the ground at the beginning of the Kofun period. Based on this, Iwao Yamato [2012], from the perspective of Sun worship, believed that the reason why Dotaku were no longer made was that after the Japanese Rebellion, the illuminated copper mirrors replaced the illuminated Dotaku as unified sacrificial instruments in the public government of Pumiho, and since then, Dotaku were no longer made.

## 2. Dotaku and Rice Culture

Dotaku emerged during the popularization of rice culture in Japan. Dotaku are closely related to water. Fumio Miki [1983] mentioned in "Dotaku" that Dotaku may have been used to pray for rain at the earliest. The act of putting Dotaku in the Monobe River to pray for rain at Birafu Shrine in Kochi Prefecture still exists today. Miki [1983] also mentioned that Dotaku are closely related to sacrifices. Yukio Kobayashi [1939] pointed out that Dotaku are a form of sacrifice with public significance. Makoto Sahara [2002] pointed out that Dotaku must be a sacrificial vessel related to farming sacrifices. Hideji Harunari [1982] of the National Museum of History and Folklore of Japan believes that the Dotaku are used as musical instruments to attract ancestor spirits in the rituals of praying for a good rice harvest. The author fully agrees with the above points of view.

The sacrificial form of Dotaku can be known from the paintings on the surface of Dotaku. There are abundant paintings on the surface of Dotaku as shown in Picture 4, generally including herds of deer, herds of wild boars, faces (some people think it is an evil eye pattern), deer with arrows, deer hunters, pig hunters, scrambling scenes, dragonflies, praying mantises, creatures resembling spiders, creatures resembling geckos, men and women fighting, birds, frogs and snakes, fishermen, threshing, turtles, sea turtles, schools of fish, rowers, stilted buildings, etc. Most of the characters on Dotaku are threshing people or hunters holding bows and arrows, showing the scenes of farming and hunting in Japan's Yayoi period. It is reported that most of the paintings are deer, followed by birds and figures.



built. In addition, threshing scenes are often in the pattern of Dotaku, and the original threshing pattern reminds me of hitting the glutinous rice cake, which is common with the Miao and Buyi ethnic groups during important festivals in China. Pounding the glutinous rice cake is called "Mochizuki" in Japanese. The Japanese believe that rice has the "spirit of rice" and "grain spirit" and that rice is a sacred food, especially glutinous rice, which is often used for important festivals. For example, the "Kagami mochi", as well as the "Hishi mochi" on Daughter's Day on March 3, and the "Kashiwa mochi" in the Kodomo no Hi Festival mentioned above. In the article "On the Integration of Sun Beliefs and Snake Beliefs: Comparison of Japanese Mirrors with Chinese Miao Mirrors," I mentioned that the "Kagami mochi" embodies the Sun beliefs and snake beliefs of the rice planting people and is a comprehensive cultural phenomenon.

There is also a combination of a frog and a snake in the painting of Dotaku. I mentioned in the article "从斩蛇传说看东亚三国的大蛇信仰" that the frog belief and the snake belief were originally the common beliefs of rice-farming people. Snakes and frogs are both attracted to water and wetlands, and they play a crucial role in controlling pests that can affect rice yields. In China, more than 8000 years ago, a snake-biting-toad pottery jar was unearthed from the Chahai site, while a snake-biting-frog bronze ornament was discovered in a tomb containing a short sword in San Guandianzi, Lingyuan, Liaoning Province, dating back to the Warring States period.

As for the birds depicted in Dotaku, the author believes that they reflect the bird beliefs of the rice-growing nationality. Bird-shaped wooden products were unearthed in the Ikegamisoniseki (Picture 5). In this regard, Hiroshi Kanaseki [1982] pointed out in "Birds that invite God" that the birds in the sky are the messengers of the kingdom of God and the world. Sometimes they are the carriers who send the spirits of the dead to the other side, and sometimes they are the messengers who bring the Gods to this world. This is the background of ancient people's beliefs. Furthermore, Hiroshi Kanaseki [1985] also pointed out that the bird of the Yayoi era was the carrier of the spirit of the valley, and the bird of the tumulus period was the carrier of the dead spirit.

With regard to bird beliefs, Hideji Harunari pointed out that the bird patterns in the Yayoi period were not only reflected in Wooden products and soil products, but also common in Dotaku. Hideji Harunari [1982] believes that the rice soul is brought by the bird, or the rice soul transformed into a bird can escape. According to this, the bird and the face (evil eye) in Dotaku unearthed in Shimane Prefecture are an abstract representation of the birdman guarding the bird (the rice soul).



Picture 5: Bird-shaped wooden products

Source: The author took the photo in Osaka Prefectural Museum of Yayoi Culture

The rice-farming people love birds very much. Taking the Miao people as an example, there are "Hundred - bird Dress" in the Miao people's clothing, and bird patterns in embroidery are not uncommon. In the Miao Guzang Festival ceremony, the bird is the guide and the messenger who conveys the message to the ancestors. In the funeral ceremonies of the Miao people, chickens are often used as substitutes for birds to lead the deceased to the afterlife. In addition, the image of a bird standing on a pole also appears in Liangzhu jade bi. Qinjian Chen believes that the rice production in the south of the Yangtze River has germinated Chinese bird culture, and the author fully agrees.

The belief in birds is synonymous with the worship of the sun. Birds are known as the messengers of the Sun and often appear as the embodiment of the Sun God. In Chinese mythology, Emperor Jun is called the father of the Sun God. "Jun" can also be written as "爰", which is the image of a bird in Oracle bone script (甲骨文). "Shan Hai Jing • Dahuang Dong Jing" describes that the Crows carrying the Sun on their backs. "Huainanzi • jingshen xun" records that "there is a Crow in the middle of the Sun". In the early days of ancient Chinese farming civilization 7,000-5,000 years ago, there were already many patterns of the Sun and the bird that integrated the Sun and the bird. Ivory ornaments with two birds bearing the Sun were unearthed at the Hemudu site, and a large number of men with animal faces were unearthed at the Liangzhu site, and they wore feather crowns. These unearthed relics all show that the Sun and the bird are originally integrated.

In Japan, the Sun and the bird are also closely related. The "Nihon Shoki" and "Kojiki" recorded that when the Sun God Amaterasu Ōmikami was trapped in the heavenly rock cave, a songbird sang in order to invite Amaterasu Ōmikami to come out. This means that the bird can summon the Sun. After Emperor Jinmu arrived in Kumano during the

Eastern Expedition, Amaterasu Ōmikami sent Yatagarasu to guide him to Kashihara in Yamato. There is a pattern of Yatagarasu on the torii of Kumano Taisha Oyunohara (as shown in Picture 6) showing a bird. It is also the form of fire and the Sun. To sum up, the bird patterns shown on Dotaku are actually the expression of the birds worship (the Sun worship) of the rice-growing nation.

In conclusion, the paintings of Dotaku reflect the living environment of the most primitive rice-farming people and convey the lifestyle of "rice and fish as food" and "fishing and hunting", and imply the rice cultivation beliefs of the rice-farming people and their wish for a good rice harvest. The same copper-tin-lead alloy, bronze mirror and bronze sword were basically unearthed as funerary objects of the king. However, Dotaku were not found as personal funerary objects, but as the common objects of the group. The author believes that this is perhaps because Dotaku, as sacrificial vessels, were common items for the group and could not be owned by individuals.



Picture 6: The torii of Kumano Taisha Oyunohara  
Source: The author took the photo in Kumano Taisha Oyunohara

### 3. Dotaku and the Sun Worship

As mentioned above, bird patterns are often seen in Dotaku, which reflects the ancient people's belief in birds (belief in the Sun). In addition, the ancient people's worship of the Sun God can also be seen from the structure of Dotaku. There are many holes in the body of Dotaku. Regarding this, Naosuke Sekiguchi [1987] pointed out that when the vernal or autumnal equinox is approaching, the Sun's rays pass through the holes and connect Dotaku. The people who made Dotaku realized this and made it. In addition, considering the shape of Dotaku, the main function of Dotaku is to estimate the time of the vernal equinox and the time of sunrise and sunset. On the vernal equinox, when the Sun shines directly on the equator, the temperature rises, and the day and night are equal. Good planting time, knowing the time of sunrise and sunset is conducive to the Sunrise and sunset. The ancients explored the benefits of the Sun to human beings through Dotaku, which reflects the ancient people's dependence on and worship of the Sun.

The casting of Dotaku also reflects the belief in the Sun. Kunio Kuno has restored Dotaku by analyzing the bronze pieces excavated from the Karako Kagi site and adjusting the alloy ratio of copper, tin, and lead. Although Dotaku excavated from the current archaeological site appear to be green in color, Dotaku were actually seen to be golden in color in the Yayoi period. In addition, the tin content directly affects the sound of Dotaku; the higher the tin content, the higher the pitch, and the lower the tin content, the longer the sound of Dotaku like a Brahma bell. According to Kunio Kuno, the golden-colored Dotaku were worshiped as a stand-in for the Sun, which was indispensable for a good rice harvest, and the mysterious sound emitted by Dotaku was a revelation from the Gods on the occasion of a ritual for a good rice harvest<sup>2)</sup>. Thus, it can be seen that the belief in the Sun was carried in Dotaku by the ancient rice-cultivating people.

Yukio Kobayashi [1965] also put forward the view that the worship of Dotaku is related to the belief in the Sun. He pointed out in "Ancient Mirror" that the shining golden Dotaku and the mirror with many buttons (多鈕細文鏡) are sacrificial vessels and magic tools with the same purpose, so they were buried together. The mirror with many buttons is a concave mirror, while Dotaku exist like a convex mirror. The unearthed large-scale bronze mirror and the gigantic Dotaku together illustrate the point that the gigantic Dotaku were not used as vocal sacrificial vessels, but as luminous sacrificial vessels. The author fully agrees with Kobayashi's point of view. The largest bronze mirror in Japan with a diameter of 46.5 cm was unearthed from Hirahara ruins in Japan, and the largest Dotaku in Japan with a height of 134.7 cm and a weight of 45.47 kg was unearthed in Koshinohara Ooiwayama, Yasu Shi, Shiga Prefecture. For bronze products, they all tend to be large-scale, and must be based on a common starting point, that is, to use its reflection to realize the worship of the Sun God. The larger Dotaku, the larger the area that reflects sunlight, and the more it can reflect the power of sunlight.

Moreover, Jun Ikeda [2003] also believes that Dotaku were sacrificial vessels for the Sun. He suggested that the Kamo Iwakura site (Kamo-city, Shimane), where a large number of Dotaku were unearthed, and the Kojindani site (Hikawa-city, Shimane), where a large number of bronze swords were unearthed, were in the direction of the sunrise on the winter solstice and the sunset on the summer solstice. Furthermore, an unidentified form of Dotaku was excavated from Oyatsuhime Shrine located in the direction of the summer solstice sunrise at the Otakuroda site in Wakayama City, and when one looks from the Otakuroda site to the direction of the eastern solstice sunrise, you can see Naru Shrine, and

further ahead, you can see Ohiyama.

The Otakuroda site has excavated many wells, ditches, mound tombs, and urns, which are thought to reflect the slow transition from life in the Jomon period to life in the Yayoi period. In the northeastern part of the village, a Dotaku and its "tongue" were found, which are considered to be "Dotaku for hearing" used in village rituals. Naru Shrine, which can be seen from the Otakuroda Ruins looking east to the direction of sunrise, is dedicated to the Gods of Hayaakitsuhiko, Hayaakitsuhime, and Amenofutodama. Hayaakitsuhiko and Hayaakitsuhime are the male and female Gods born of Izanagi and Izanami, and they are the Gods of Minato. It is recorded in the "Nihon Shoki" as the "God of Water Gate", and it is recorded in "Kojiki" that they are the Gods of Awanagi, Awanami, Tsuranagi, Tsuranami, Amenomikumari, Kuninomikumari, Amenokuhizamochi, and Kuninokuhizamochi. These four pairs of eight-pillar Gods are all Gods related to water. The God of water is the God of snakes, so it is clear that the ancient people at the Otakuroda site worshipped both the Sun God and the Snake God if they worshipped Dotaku in the direction of the east to the Sunrise.

As for the sacrificial offerings of Dotaku, Iwao Oowa believes: on the day of the offering of Dotaku, it is not just one but a lot of Dotaku gathered together to hold a "competition of light". Dotaku on the ground receive the Sun's rays and reflect light, expressing that Shining on the God who lives in Takamagahara and Shining on the God who lives in Ashihara no Nakatsukuni. So why are Dotaku used for sacrifices buried finally? Iwao Oowa [2012] believes that burying the old Dotaku and making new large Dotaku are a cycle of death and life, whereby Dotaku as a divine generation can exert its divine power and spiritual power even more.

Based on the viewpoint of Iwao Oowa, it occurs to me that the unburied Dotaku are equivalent to the day and the buried Dotaku are equivalent to the night, and the process from being unburied to being buried is also a symbol of the alternation of day and night. Even so, the ancient Yayoi people wanted Dotaku to emit light at night. In the "Fusō Ryakuki", it is written that in the first month of the seventh year of Emperor Tenchi's reign, a Dotaku, height about 165cm, was unearthed in Omi Shiga-gun, and a strange white stone, five inches long, was unearthed at the same time, which could glow at night. It can be seen that the ancient people took great pains to make Dotaku glow at night. For example, a Dotaku with a vermilion coating was unearthed in Shimoinagi-cho, Ihara City, Okayama Prefecture; a flat-buttoned Dotaku with a vermilion coating was unearthed at the Myoudou

site in Tokushima City, Tokushima Prefecture; and a red-painted Dotaku trolley-shaped clay object was unearthed at the Sibun site.

Based on this, I believe that the rising sun and the setting sun are all bright red. Dotaku at night cannot reflect sunlight, and Dotaku covered with vermilion can be like the morning sun or sunset at night. When we talk about "Zhu", it is easy to think of cinnabar. "Gishi-wajin-den (魏志倭人伝)" records that "there are pills (丹) in its mountains", and that the state of Wei gave Himiko a hundred bronze mirrors, as well as 50 catties of Minium, etc. In the late Yayoi period in Japan, cinnabar was used in the tombs of those in power, and cinnabar also carried the meaning of a symbol of power. Based on this, the author infers that the cinnabar color in Dotaku is likely to be stained with cinnabar.

In addition, in terms of the distribution of Dotaku, although a certain number of Dotaku have been excavated in the Izumo region and the Kitakyushu region, their centers are still in the Shikoku region and the Kinki region. Twenty-four Dotaku including the largest Dotaku in Japan were unearthed from the Ise site in Moriyama City, Shiga Prefecture, 8 km east of the Oiwayama Site in Yasu City. I believe it is not a coincidence that the Ise Jingu Shrine, where the Sun God Amaterasu Ōmikami was worshipped, is the same as the "Ise" in the Ise site. According to the "Kojiki" and the "Nihon Shoki", the Yamatohime set out from Yamato, passing through Iga, Omi (present-day Shiga Prefecture) and Mino, to enter the country of Ise in search of the most suitable place to worship Amaterasu Ōmikami. The separate pillar-holding building excavated from the Ise site is similar to the form of the Ise Jingu Main Hall Shinmei tsukuri (the style of shrine architecture based on that of Ise-jingu Shrine). Based on this, it is inferred that there was also a belief in the Sun God in the former Omi country. In addition to the distribution of Dotaku, the geographical location of the Kinki area is located in the east, where the Sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and the Sun rises earlier in the east than in the west, so I guess this factor was also used for reference in the selection of the casting site of Dotaku.

To sum up, Dotaku are not only ritual instruments used by the ancients, but also the repository of spiritual beliefs. The casting of Dotaku also reflects the wisdom of the ancients. Because Dotaku can reflect the Sunlight, it has become the carrier of the rice farming people's belief in the Sun. The copper mirror that can be used as a convex mirror is better than Dotaku. This is also the reason why Dotaku disappeared and the status was gradually replaced by the bronze mirror.

#### 4. Dotaku and the Snake Worship

The surfaces of Dotaku are rich in patterns, mostly decorated with horizontal belt inscriptions, flowing water inscriptions, scroll patterns, and wood leaf inscriptions; the outer edge of the button also has zigzag inscriptions. I would like to focus on explaining the zigzag inscriptions. The zigzag inscriptions are a continuous triangular pattern as shown in Picture 7. I believe that the triangular pattern is related to sacrifices and reflects the belief in snakes. Kunio Yanagita [1997] believes that the cursed objects are mostly triangular in shape. Masahide Ishizuka [2013: 196-197] pointed out in the article "記号・図像の社会史—△卍からロゴマークまで—" that the triangular patterns are the scales of the Snake God, the God of agriculture, and the continuous triangular patterns are the body of the snake. There are also many chanting triangles in the song "rice-planting song" hummed when farming in Japan. Michio Ushio [1968:96] pointed out in his monograph "Ootae and Taeuta" that the fields of the Triangle Pit are the place where God descends. In short, the triangular pattern is related to rice farming and should be a symbol of the Snake God and the guardian of the rice fields.

The triangular pattern on the surface of Dotaku is reminiscent of the Sankakubuchi Shinjukyo (三角縁神獸鏡). The back of the Sankakubuchi Shinjukyo Mirror is also decorated with triangular patterns as shown in Picture 8. Japanese environmental archaeologist Yoshinori Yasuda [2015] believes that the triangular pattern on the Sankakubuchi Shinjukyo Mirror unearthed in the early Kofun period represents the head of a snake. Yuko Yoshino [2007] believes that the triangular pattern mostly symbolizes the back of the snake, and sometimes symbolizes the head of the snake. In the article "Sun Worship and Serpent Worship: An



Picture 7: Dotaku



Picture 8: The Sankakubuchi Shinjukyo

Picture 7 and Picture 8 Source: The author took the photo in Shimane Prefecture Ancient Izumo History Museum

Analysis of the Japanese Mirror and the Mirror of the Hmong in China", based on Yuko Yoshino's suggestion that the pronunciation of "kagami" is derived from the kakanome of the snake, I believed that "the belief in the Sun symbolized by the bronze mirror in Japan already includes the belief in the snake", and that the Sankakubuchi Shinjukyo Mirror is not only the incarnation of the Sun, but also the incarnation of the snake".

I had the opportunity to see the snake up close at the Iwakuni White Snake Museum in Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture. It is true that the head of the snake is triangular in shape, but the body of the snake is more like a Lozenge pattern than a triangular pattern. As for the snake with its mouth wide open, the author thinks it is closer to the triangular pattern. The jaws of the snake's mouth can be adjusted according to the size of the food, and the jaws are divided into two sections by ligaments, left and right, and because the ligaments are very stretchable, the jaws can also be separated left and right, so they can eat things many times larger than themselves. It is recorded in the "Shanhaijing-Hainei Nanjing": "The Ba snake eats the elephant at the age of three". From this, we can know the swallowing ability of snakes.

The early Jomon people worshipped the snake because they were afraid of it, and later, with the introduction of the rice culture, the snake became the Snake God. The author thinks that the snake eats rats and brings water, which is essential for the growth of rice. The local name for the white snake in Iwakuni is "Tsuyuzamon", and it is written in the "Kugagun Shi · Kishine Mura" that the white snake comes out of the wall of the solid house in Iwane and lives on top of the rocks during the rainy season, and this has never changed year after year<sup>2)</sup>. In addition, it is also written in the "Kugagun Shi" that there is a large rock in the village of Zusonaka and that snakes appear in the cracks of the rock during the rainy season. If a prank is played by putting wood or bamboo into the rock cracks, there will be a violent storm<sup>3)</sup>. It can be seen that the Snake God is the God of rain and can control rainfall.

In addition to Hokkaido and Ogasawara Islands, the plum rain is a meteorological phenomenon unique to Japan and a wide range of East Asian regions such as the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, south of the Huai River in China, and Taiwan. It is well known that rice needs a lot of water to grow, and the plum rain period provides sufficient water for rice growth, so the rice can grow rapidly during the plum rain season. After the rice is ripe for harvest, it needs the protection of the Snake God. Rats feed on rice and snakes feed on rats, in other words, snakes have the role of protecting the granary. In the "Nishikigawa Shi", it is written that two white snakes were living in the rice warehouse to the west of the

dormitory where the officials lived in Imatsu. The white snakes, which fed on rats, were highly valued as protectors. From the above, it can be seen that the Snake Gods can not only bring water for the growth of rice but also protect the rice when it was ripe. Therefore, the Snake God has become the God of belief in the rice-growing nation.

In addition to the triangular pattern, I would like to discuss the flowing water pattern and the oblique cross pattern carved on the surface of Dotaku. According to Dairoku Harada [1980], the flowing water pattern is a symbol of a water snake, and the cross pattern is related to the Kushinadahime. However, I believe that the cross pattern is actually an "×" pattern, and the button part of Dotaku unearthed from the Kamo Iwakura site in Unnan City, Shimane Prefecture is engraved with the character "×".

More than 50 Dotaku have been excavated in the Izumo area, accounting for nearly one-tenth of the number excavated in Japan. 358 copper swords were unearthed from the Kojindani site in the Izumo area, 344 of which had an "×" pattern, and 39 Dotaku from the middle to late Yayoi period were unearthed from the Kamo Iwakura site not far to the southeast of the site. 13 of the 39 Dotaku are engraved with the pattern of "×". The shape of the pattern "×" is similar to that of "Chigi" as shown in Picture 9. The original Japanese meaning of "Chigi" is "the wood of the Snake God", which expresses the belief in snakes. Although there is no clear explanation in academic circles about the meaning of the pattern "×", from the traditional patterns of the Yangtze River Valley, the "×" pattern represents the fire spirits and the intercourse of the Snake Gods.

Generally speaking, the Snake God is the God of water, and the worship of



Picture 9: The Chigi of Izumo Taisha  
Source: The author took the photo in Izumo Taisha

Dotaku is related to the God of water. In archaeological excavation sites, it is common to find small Dotaku or Dotaku-shaped pottery products unearthed in sites related to water. For example, a small Dotaku was unearthed at the shimoichinose ruins in Maniwa City, Okayama Prefecture, located next to a well. As for Dotaku, Biten Yasumoto and others believe that it is a symbol of Okuninushinomikoto who is the mountain God and the Snake God of Miwayama Mountain. According to "Kojiki", "Nihon Shoki" Biography, and "Shinsenshoujiroku", it is recorded that Okuninushinomikoto is the sixth grandson of Susanoo-no-Mikoto. In "Nihon Shoki", Okuninushinomikoto is the son of Susanoo-no-Mikoto. Okuninushinomikoto is enshrined in the Izumo area, and its imperial envoy is Dragon Snake God. There is also a legend in Itoigawa City, Niigata Prefecture, Japan. It is rumored that Okuninushinomikoto and the child of Nunak-awahime's child Takeminakata God is a Snake God. Based on this, it can be inferred that Okuninushinomikoto is also a Snake God.

"Kojiki" records that Okuninushinomikoto often visits Ikutama yoribime at night, and later Ikutama yoribime becomes pregnant. But Ikutama yoribime did not see the face of the Okuninushinomikoto in the middle of the night. Ikutama yoribime was curious, so she listened to her parents and spread red soil in front of the bed and spun hemp needles to wear the clothes of the Okuninushinomikoto, then she followed the red soil on the ground to Miwayama Mount during the day, and saw the snake-shaped Okuninushinomikoto.

About the love affair between the Okuninushinomikoto and the Yamatotohimomosohime, it is written in the Nihonshoki as follows.

是後倭迹迹日百襲姬命爲大物主神之妻。然其神常昼不見而夜來矣。倭迹迹姬命語夫曰、君常昼不見者、分明不得視其尊顏。願暫留之。明旦仰欲觀美麗之威儀。大神對曰、言理灼然。吾明旦入汝櫛笥而居。願無驚吾形。爰倭迹迹姬命、心裏密異之、待明以見櫛笥、遂有美麗小蛇。其長大如衣紐、則驚之叫啼。時大神有恥忽化人形、謂其妻曰、汝不忍令羞吾。吾還令羞汝。仍踐大虛登于御諸山。爰倭迹迹姬命仰見而悔之急居。急居、此云菟岐于。則箸撞陰而薨。<sup>4)</sup>

The author visited the site and found that the Hashihaka Kofun site is very close to Mount Miwa, and the Yamatotohimomosohime is buried in the Hashihaka Kofun site. Near Miwayama Mount is Oomiwa Shrine, which is sacrificed to the Okuninushinomikoto. The sacred tree of the Oomiwa Shrine is Minokamisugi. Legend has it that Okuninushinomikoto was incarnated as a white snake and once lived on it. I believe that the Minokamisugi is straight and strong, with the image of a big snake. In addition, a chicken-

shaped wooden product was unearthed on the west side of the Makimukuishidukakofun (纏向石塚古墳) near Mount Miwa, and an earthen chicken head was also unearthed at the Karako Kagi site in Nara Prefecture.

According to Iwao Oowa [2012], on the winter solstice, the place where the earthen chicken head was excavated was the place where the Sun rises from Mount Miwa. Therefore, he believed that this place was the place where the Yayoi people visited Asahi on the day of the winter solstice, and the earthen chicken head played a role in heralding the Sunrise. In addition, he also pointed out that Mount Miwa and the Asahi rising from Mount Miwa are equivalent to the calendar of the Yayoi people. Mount Miwa itself is a symbol of the snake. The combination of the morning sun and Mount Miwa on the winter solstice is the combination of snakes and the Sun, which also reflects that for the Yayoi people, the Snake worship and the Sun worship are indispensable.

In addition, there is also a record in "Kojiki" that the Yachihokonokami (Okuninushinomikoto) once proposed to Nunagawa Hime with a song, and "bird" appeared many times in the song. In this regard, Atsuhiko Yoshida [2012] pointed out that the Yachihokonokami, as the name suggests, brought spears to Expand territory. Giichiro Watanabe [2018] added that he believed that Yachihokonokami (Okuninushinomikoto) was dressed in a bird costume to expand territory and popularize rice farming culture. Judging from the Yayoi earthenware unearthed from archaeological excavations, the worship of bird costumes did exist in the Yayoi period. Picture 10 shows the earthenware with a human dressing in a bird costume unearthed at the Karako Kagi site. In addition, the architectural patterns of pavilions containing bird patterns were also unearthed in the Karako Kagi site. The Yayoi people worship birds very much, and the bird element is indispensable in the sacrificial scenes praying for a good rice harvest.

In addition, both "Kojiki" and "Nihon Shoki" describe that the Great Lord God is a luminous God from the sea. "Engishiki (延喜式)" Volume 8 describes that Okuninushinomikoto called the place ruled by the emperor and grandson the Great Japanese Kingdom (yamatonokuni), and entrusted his own soul in the "Yatanokagami (八咫鏡)", which was called Mimoronoyamanouenimasukami (倭大物主栲毘魂命)<sup>5)</sup>. The "Yatanokagami (八咫鏡)" is a symbol of the Sun God, and the Sun God also has the soul of the Snake God, which is the unity of the Sun worship and the Snake worship. Based on the above, it can be seen that the Okuninushinomikoto embodies the Snake worship and Bird worship (Sun worship) of the rice-farming nation. In this way, Dotaku as Okuninushinomikoto's divine body must also be a combination of these two



Picture 10: Yayoi Earthenware

Source: The author took the photo in Karako Kagi Archeological Museum

beliefs.

To sum up, Dotaku are sacrificial instruments for the Yayoi people to pray for a good rice harvest, and the surface painting is the reproduction of the life scene of the Yayoi people. Although the Dotaku became larger and more beautiful, and have the meaning of state power, the patterns still maintain the characteristics of the rice farming people and express the worship of the Sun God and the snake God. It can be said that the Dotaku embody the unity of the Snake worship and the Sun worship unique to the rice farming people. The author will further investigate what kind of cultural exchange is contained in Dotaku under the background of rice farming culture.

#### Notes

- 1) [http://www.hyogo-c.ed.jp/~shabun-bo/gyouseisituhp/top/kihonkousou/6\(4\).pdf](http://www.hyogo-c.ed.jp/~shabun-bo/gyouseisituhp/top/kihonkousou/6(4).pdf) Accessed 6 June 2022.
- 2) The Museum, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture. 2009. Dotaku: Bronze Production in the Yayoi Period. Nara: The Museum, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture, p.29.
- 3) It is recorded in "Iwakuni Shirohebi Museum" in Iwakuni city, Yamaguchi Prefecture.
- 4) Noriyuki Kojima, Koujiro Naoki, Kazutami Nishimiya, Susumu Kuranaka, Masamori Mouri 1994. Nihon Shoki ①. Tokyo: Shogakukan, p. 284.
- 5) Shintō Taikei Hensankai. 1991. Shinto Taikei Kotenhen 11 Engi Shiki. Tokyo: Seikosha, pp. 275.

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