

This is an article to describe Toyotomi Hideyoshi's plan to administrate China after his military campaign is successfully completed.

Answer the following questions.

1. What does the “three kingdoms division” mean?
2. Where will the emperor of Japan and his Kampaku be relocated?
3. Who will be appointed as a ruler of Japanese islands?
4. Who will administer local governments of the three-state empire?
5. What is the role of Kyushu Island in the entire plan?
6. What is the fatal flaw of the “Three Kingdoms Division” plan?

After the fall of Hanseong (Seoul), Hideyoshi regarded Korea as having been subjugated and issued instructions for methods of governing the occupied territories. Then, on May 18, Tenshō 20 (1592), he issued a 25-article memorandum addressed to Kampaku Hidetsugu (known as the “Sungeki-kaku Kobunsho San: Seikan Bunsho”). This is called the “Three Kingdoms Division Plan” (Sangoku Kuniwari Keikaku), and it set forth a vision for dominating the entire East Asia region as the next step toward the conquest of Ming China.

Hideyoshi planned, after conquering Ming, to relocate Emperor Goyōzei and Kampaku Hidetsugu to Beijing, appointing them respectively as the Emperor and Kampaku of the Ming state. Emperor Goyōzei was to be granted ten provinces around Beijing, and Hidetsugu one hundred provinces around Beijing; among the court nobles, some were expected to receive territories more than ten times larger than their previous holdings.

This relocation of the capital was to take the form of an imperial “progress” (gyōkō) by the emperor and was scheduled for two years later. The plan essentially intended to transplant Japan's domestic political structure—centered on the emperor and the military kampaku, embodying a fusion of imperial court and warrior government (kōbu ketsugō)—directly into Ming territory.

Within Japan proper, the plan was to install either Crown Prince Yōnin-shinnō (the eldest son of Emperor Goyōzei) or Prince Chijinin-shinnō (the Emperor's younger brother) as the new Emperor, and to appoint either Toyotomi Hideyasu (Hideyoshi's nephew) or Ukita Hideie (husband of Hideyoshi's adopted daughter)

as the new Kampaku. In this way, the political system in Japan would maintain the public-military fusion centered on the Emperor and warrior kampaku, while being supported by Hideyoshi's direct lineage or by loyal daimyo.

It was planned to station either Toyotomi Hidekatsu (Hideyoshi's nephew) or Ukita Hideie in Korea, where they would effectively govern as the "Kampaku of Korea." Since the Korean king's person had been secured, it is thought that the plan envisioned installing a Korean prince as the nominal king while a kampaku appointed by Hideyoshi exercised actual control. District magistrates (daikan) were to be placed in each of Korea's eight provinces (hachidō), with the introduction of Japanese-style regional administration. Separately, stewards (rusui) were to be stationed at the Kyoto Imperial Palace and Jurakudai; among them, Miyabe Nagaharu—one of Hideyoshi's most trusted vassals—was scheduled to serve as the director in Korea.

In Kyushu, Hashiba Hidetoshi (nephew of Hideyoshi's wife, later known as Kobayakawa Hideaki) was to be stationed and serve as the director of Hizen Nagoya Castle (contemporary Karatsu City). Nagoya functioned as the forward base for the Bunroku campaign, serving as the hub for supply and military operations; Kyushu was emphasized as the critical rear support base for the invasion of Korea. Hideyoshi positioned Kyushu as a bridgehead for dominating Korea, intending to utilize it as a key military and logistical stronghold.

In this way, Hideyoshi's "Three Kingdoms Division Plan" represented an attempt to extend Japan's domestic political structure as a model across the entirety of East Asia. Hideyoshi showed no understanding whatsoever of the difficulties involved in ruling foreign lands and different ethnic groups, and he optimistically believed that the methods he had used to unify Japan would apply equally well to the "conquest of China".