

## The Ancient Korean Tamil Connection via Heo Hwang-Ok Alias Chempavalam

**Kannan Narayanan**  
Tamil Heritage Foundation,  
Malaysia  
drnkannan@yahoo.com

### ஆய்வுச் சுருக்கம்

கொரியாவின் மக்கள் சரிதம் என்றும் கொரியாவின் விவிலியம் என்று பேசப்படும் "மூவேந்தர் கதை" (Samguk Yusa) ஒரு இந்தியத் தொடர்வைச் சொல்கிறது. இதன்படி இந்தியாவிலிருந்து வந்த ஓர் இளவரசி, கொரிய இளவலான கிம் சுரோவை மணந்து காயா எனும் அரசை நிறுவினாள் என்று வருகிறது. இந்தப் பெண் அயோத்தியைச் சேர்ந்தவள் எனும் தவறான ஒரு கணிப்பு ஒரு சரித்திரப் பிழைக்கு வித்திட்டிருக்கிறது. ஆயின், மொழி ஆய்வு, சரித்திரக் குறிப்புகள், செவி வழிச் செய்திகள், அகழ்வாய்வுகள் என பல தரப்பட்ட தரவுகள் அவள் தென் தமிழ் நாட்டைச் சேர்ந்த ஆய் குலப்பெண் என்று சுட்டுகின்றன. அது பற்றிய தகவல் பகிர்வும், விளக்கமும் இக்கட்டுரையைக் கட்டமைக்கின்றன.

### Abstract

Ilyon's Samguk Yusa narrates a story of an Indian queen indicated as Heo Hwang-Ok marrying King Kim Suro formed a confederation of polities (tribal league) on the southern Korean coast called Garak or Kaya in 48 BCE. It existed until Silla subjugated the confederation between the years of 532-562. Since Heo Hwang-Ok declared herself as the princess of Ayuta, Kim Byung-Mo, an anthropologist from Hanyang University in Korea interpreted it as Ayodhya and established formal connections between India and Korea by erecting a memorial for her in Ayodhya. However, the Indian city now called Ayodhya was called Saketa in the ancient times and never had active maritime history in comparison to the Southern Indian Kingdoms of Chera, Chola & Pandiya. Additionally, the King of Ayodhya Bimlendra Mohan Prasad Mishra, who is otherwise referred to as 'Raja saheb', or sometimes more intimately as 'Pappu bhaiyya traces his roots back to Bhojpur's landlord, Sadanand Pathak in the 17th century. He being a Brahmin denies any connection with Korea, that too in a foregone age. But, Kim Byung Mo without considering an established ancient sea silk road forced his ancestry to Ayodhya and established 'sister-city' connection between Ayodhya and Gimhae in Korea. Though he claims 40 years of tracing this history, one wonders how he missed the real connection with the South. A close observation of the history of Southern India with all possible archeological evidences reveals that it is likely that Heo Hwang-ok sailed from one of the ports of Southern India known earlier to Greeks and Chinese.

**Keywords:** Tamil-Korea Link, Historical Tamil, Ancient Tamil, Tamil Heritage

**திறவுச் சொற்கள்:** தமிழ்-கொரியா இணைப்பு, வரலாற்று தமிழ், பண்டைய தமிழ், தமிழ் பாரம்பரியம்

### Introduction:

The oral history of Korea-India connection narrated by the ancient Koreans had been recorded in Samguk Yusa (1). According to these legends, a damsel from India sailed all the way to Korea drove by a divine dream that she would marry a Korean prince. Ilyon, even registered the exact date of her arrival on Korean soil as 27th day of the 7th month (by the lunar calendar) of AD 48. He records further, "Today a party of red-sailed vessels arrived in Karak (Gaya) at the centre of which is Gimhae. Everybody descended from the boats. From among these one woman presented herself before King Suro and introduced herself. "I am the princess of Ayuta. My family name is Heo, my name is Hwang Ok, and I am sixteen years old."

Kim Byung-Mo, an emeritus professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at Hanyang University, Korea had interpreted the text "Ayuta" mentioned in Samguk Yusa as Ayodhya in North India based on phonetic similarity in an article entitled "Indian Ayodhya's twin-fish motif as evidence of its marriage-based relationship with Gaya" (2). Though Kim Byung-Mo explored the historical meaning of twin fish from Iran to Korea in his research, he simply ignored the long lasted kingdom of India namely Pandiya with twin fish as their royal emblem. He ignored the well-known sea trade route called "Silk Route" which connected the Roman Empire to Japan via India. Additionally, one derives the following message from his personal blog which explains the personal motivation behind this initiative. He states that he belongs to Gimhae Kim clan. In his youth because of his unusual black skin colour he had a psychological complex.

But when he learned in the school about the story of Kim Suro's international marriage with an Indian woman his sufferings disappeared without a trace. Though his skin was black, he surpassed his inferiority complex by knowing that it was due to a royal connection with India (2). Unfortunately, against his true wish he wasted his research, tracing his roots on a white skin belt in India instead of a black skin belt. The skin colour of people who live in northern hemisphere from Iran to Northern India to China and Korea is white or fair skin. On the other hand the maritime people who mastered the art of sea travel from time immemorial from Southern India are dark coloured. He should have focused on Silk route on Sea instead of Silk route by land.

### **Twin fish that connects worlds apart**

Kim Byung-Mo further observes that “between India and Korea, the kingdoms of Ayuta and Karak, there is a definite connection of a cultural sort from the symbol “Ssangeomun”. The Ssangeomun refers to a design of two fish looking at each other. The paintings of a pair of fish drawn on the three gates standing before King Suro's tomb are such motifs. Not only at King Suro's tomb, but the motif also decorates Mt. Sineo's Eunha temple located in Gimhae city, the stone pagoda's of Hapcheon's Yeongam temple and remains in countless other ancient temples within the Karak kingdom's ancient territories. On the other hand, in other regions of the Korean peninsula, namely those formerly occupied by Goguryeo, Baekje, or Silla, there have been almost no such discoveries. Heo Hwang Ok announced that her national symbol was twin fish. Unfortunately, Kim Byung-Mo concluded that the queen came from Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh because “some hundreds of fish symbols were engraved on the gates of Hindu temples, the gates of academies, government offices, military ranks, law enforcement helmets, transportation registration centres and the like were observed. At the heart of Ayodhya the paired fish motif was a defining symbol of the Uttar Pradesh region. Hence, Ayodhya, must be the country of Heo Hwang Ok”. Unfortunately, he failed to notice the date of those twin fish symbols in Ayodhya. For comparison see Fig.1 where twin fish symbols in Ayodhya are compared with that of Korea.



Figure 1. Kim Byung-Mo's fish similarities

Except for the phonetical similarity, Ayodhya might not have been the birth place of Heo Hwang OK because the name Ayodhya never existed at the time of her travel to Korea in 48 BCE. Instead, that city was referred as Saketa in those days and obviously no phonetical similarity can be traced (Ayuta vs Saketa). On the other hand, an ancient map of India of that period identifies a kingdom called “Kaya” in the south similar to the one established in Korea and Ayodhya was nowhere to be seen in the map [3].

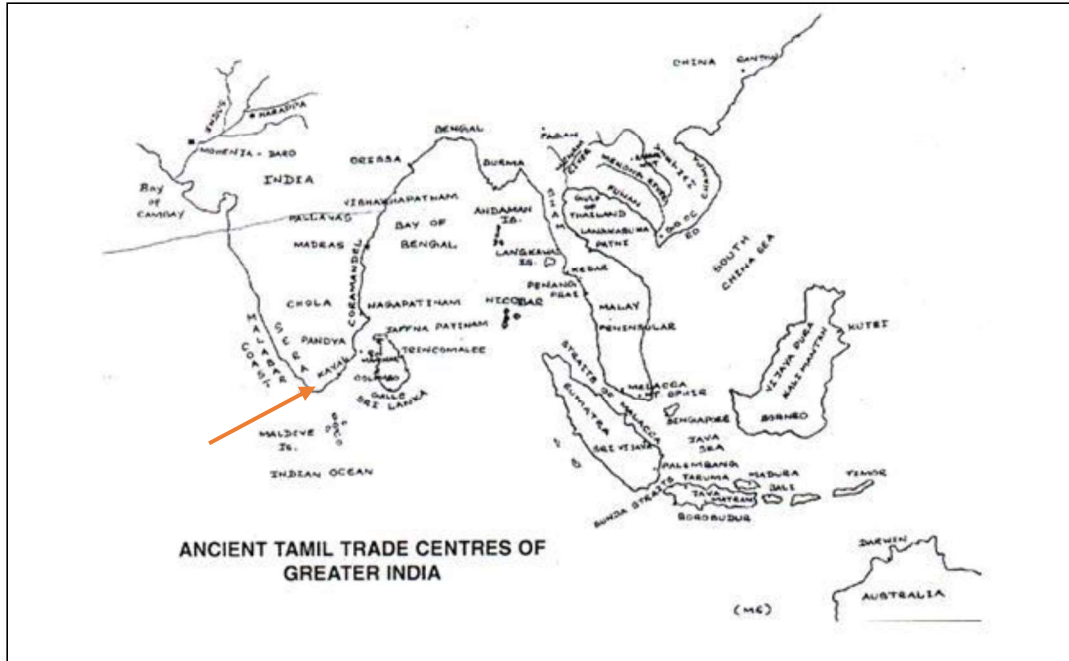


Figure 2: Ancient map of Tamil trade centres of greater India

In fact, one finds similarity between Ssangeomun of Gimhae, Korea and twin fish of Pandiyas of Southern India. Twin fish had been the official symbol of Pandian kingdom for time immemorial (4). Instead of registering the obvious connections, Kim Byung-Mo went on to search twin fish symbols in the middles east and in Christianity (2).

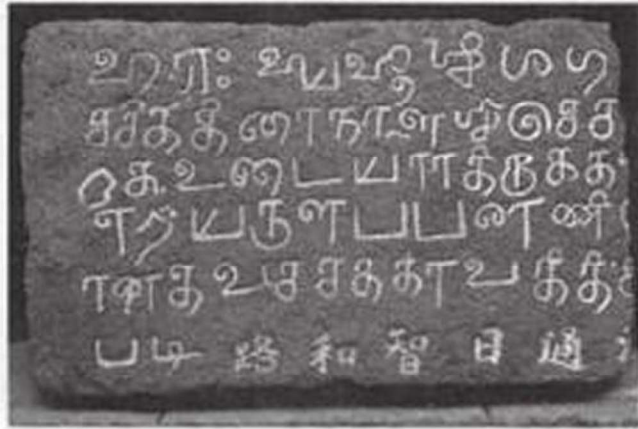


Figure 3: Fish symbols of Kaya compared with that of Pandiyas

Kim Byung-Mo writes further that fish motif could be seen at various locations in the broad expanse of land between India and Korea. He quotes, countless examples in Bangladesh's Dhaka, along the border between Myanmar and China, Yunnan's Kongmyeon, Sacheon's Anak, and along the Yantze River. He

simply, failed to date those symbols with reference to Heo Hwang Ok's arrival in Korea. Buddhism with its fish symbols has travelled far and wide (west and east), but much later than 48 BCE when Heo Hwang Ok landed in Korea. Most importantly, the fish symbols found in Uttar Pradesh was introduced by Muslim and British rulers at much later time (5). On the other hand, Pandiyas with twin fish as their national emblem had been mentioned even in the epic Ramayana to cite the antiquity (6).

Kim Byung-Mo constructs a complicated land route connecting Ayodhya with Korea via China, as if Chinese were any strangers to Tamils. Tamil inscriptions were found in China as sea trade partners of ancient connection (7-8). Thus Kim Byung-Mo's conclusion that Heo Hwang OK was from Ayodhya and she reached Korea through land route is false.



A tablet in Tamil was found in China (7)

### **Korean Buddhism and Tamil connections**

According to the Korean historical sources Buddhism was first introduced to Korea when Fuchien, ruler of the former Chin dynasty of China sent in the year 372 BCE a monk namely Maranatha (n) together with an image of Buddha and other southern and northern Indian Buddhist scriptures to the kingdom of Koguryo when king Sosurim ruled. Koguryo is an ancient earlier to the three kingdoms of Korea. The monk Maranatha (n) and another monk popularly called Sundo (Sundhar) came from the Pandiya country of Tamil Nadu. Another interesting literature from Tamil country went to Korea was Kung i.e. Nikandu which is nothing but epistemological collection of words [10] It is a well-known fact that Zen Buddhism was spear headed to the east by a Tamil monk called Bodhi dharma of Pallava dynasty. Modern scholarship dates him to about the early 5th century. Buddhism flourished until the Choson dynasty (1392 – 1910), when Neo-Confucianism became the state ideology [9]. Bodhi dharma is referred as “Thalma” in Korea with respect. Obviously, Tamil was not alien to nations that followed Zen, especially Korea and Japan. In fact, the arrival of Maran Anantan (Maranaten) who was originally sent to China to teach Buddhism but was then transferred to Korea, made a great influence on Korean language and culture along with Buddhism, notes Raju Poundurai [10].

### **Linguistic similarities**

Chinese writing has been known in Korea for over 2,000 years. It was used widely during the Chinese occupation of northern Korea from 108 BC to 313 BCE. The Korean alphabet was invented in 1444 BCE and promulgated it in 1446 BCE during the reign of King Sejong (r.1418-1450), the fourth king of the Joseon Dynasty. The alphabet was originally called Hunmin jeongeum, or "The correct sounds for the instruction of the people", but has also been known as Eonmeun (vulgar script, like கொண்டுந்தமிழ்) and Gukmeun (national writing). The modern name for the alphabet, Hangeul, was coined by a Korean linguist called Ju Si-gyeong (1876-1914). [11] Anybody familiar with Tamil (Indian) alphabetical system will not fail to notice that Hangeul is similar to Tamil in making a combination of vowel and consonant to derive a

letter. History tells that King Sejong gave a phonetical writing system to Korean language under secrecy for political reasons.

The Hangeul alphabetical system has even used the concept of zero developed by ancient Indians in an ingenious way. When 0 is added before a vowel, it has no sound, except that it's being used as a 'spacer' or 'white space'. However, when 0 is added after a vowel, then it gains a sound 'ang', in a way similar to its mathematical usage (0 has no value before a number but gains value after a number). Considering the close cultural ties between India and Korea, it is just anybody's guess that Tamil scholars (Buddhist monks?) being consulted in developing a phonetical lettering system for Korean language. Similarities between Tamil and Korean languages has been spoken by Christian missionaries in early twentieth century [12]. Recent proof is that thousands of Korean employees in Tamilnadu hired by various Korean companies, including Hyundai in Sri Perumpudur who vouch for the similarities. In an interview, a Korean employee reported to the press [13] that he has discovered 800 words similar between these two languages and his Korean wife could speak Tamil fluently. They also reported that Koreans feel comfortable in Tamilnadu than in the USA due to oriental mindset.

Tamil and Hangeul have several similarities. For example, there is no clear demarcation between sounds of 'cha' 'sa' 'sha' 'ja' – these sounds are marked by the same alphabet. This is true of 'ga' and 'ka' sounds as well. These observations along with the words for mother as 'amma' and father as 'appa' or 'come here' as 'idu wa' makes one to wonder about the linguistic links between Tamil and Korean. It is plausible that Buddhist monks from Tamilnadu or Korean monks familiar with Tamil were consulted during the development of Hangeul. There is an unspoken belief that Hangeul was developed essentially to accommodate proper rendering of Buddhist scripts, which were essentially derived from ancient Tamil lands.

It is important to look at closely the relationship between Tamil and Korea including historical, cultural, linguistic ties for a better appreciation of these apparently far too distant countries yet amazingly close to each other (14-15). This paper encourages scholars to do such a critical analysis.

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