

Indian Traces in Korean Culture

The Legend and Beyond

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Chapter 1

Hazy-Clear Beginnings or a Purpose Beyond the Legend

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1 Hazy-Clear Beginnings or a Purpose Beyond the Legend

Legends and myths, the ancient narratives that shape the beliefs and identities of civilisations, are not merely tales of gods and heroes; they can also serve as powerful evidence of early instances of cultural diffusion. As diverse societies interacted and exchanged ideas, goods, and knowledge, myths became the vehicles through which these cross-cultural interactions were preserved and transmitted across generations, a medium for sharing beliefs, practices, and stories, leading to the emergence of shared motifs and themes across different cultures.

Apart from being a testimony to early instances of cultural diffusion, legends and myths also serve as a medium to transfer knowledge across generations and between different cultures. These stories, passed down orally or through written texts, become a powerful tool for educating and socialising individuals within a community. Myths provide explanations for the mysteries of the natural world, human behaviour, and the origin of customs, giving people a sense of identity and belonging to their cultural heritage.¹

The narratives of events and deeds which occur in these stories and might have or might have not taken place in the past, can be told as an account of literal historical events set within actual history timeline. They are generally known as legends. However, they usually contain traces of truth. Mostly, they tell stories of a hero with superhuman powers, yet are set in real, historical places, which makes them believable, even if hardly ever believed. Nevertheless, in a legend it is not the component of truth that carries the most relevance. It is its intrinsic power to endorse cultural consistency and to teach cultural values, as well as to provide a commentary on a culture from which a given legend originated.

This chapter aims to introduce a segment of the foundation myth of the Kaya kingdom, which revolves around Kim Suro's purportedly Indian wife. Additionally, it explores various interpretations and potential motives behind attributing Indian origins to the first queen of Korea.²

The Legend

It all began in the year 48 AD, when a foreign princess from a faraway land, whose name was Hō Hwang-ok, arrived by sea to the Kaya kingdom

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determined to marry its ruler. She travelled in the company of two courtiers Sin Po and Cho Kuang, their wives Mojong and Moryang, and twenty slaves. As the narrative provided by *Samguk yusa*³ confirms, the princess married Kim Suro and became the first queen known in Korean history. The story reveals that the couple had twelve children (ten sons and two daughters), out of which some inherited the father's family name: Kim, and some the mother's family name: Hō. Apart from her substantial, rich trousseau, filled with Indian silks, gold, and precious stones, the princess brought with her a large stone pagoda, which her father installed on the ship to secure his daughter's safe passage through the rough seas.

The 1972 English translation of *Samguk yusa* provides the reader with a number of details about the princess's place of origin or the circumstances of her arrival:

a ship with a red sail and flying a red flag appeared on the horizon, darting toward the north like an arrow. The Kaya sailors waved torches and made signs for the mysterious ship to come near. When it did so, they found that a beautiful princess was on board. The sailors escorted her to the shore, where a courier mounted a swift steed and galloped off to convey the news to the King. (...) The princess left her ship with her suite, which consisted of the two courtiers (...) and twenty slaves. (...) When she reached the top of the hill, she changed her brocade trousers and offered them as a gift to the mountain spirit. Then she approached the tent and the King rose to meet



Figure 1.1 Pasa Pagoda. Kimhae, Republic of Korea.

her. (...) “I am a princess of Ayuta (in India) (...) My family name is Ho, my given name is Hwang-Ok (Yellow Jade) (...) In May this year my royal father and mother said to me, ‘Last night we had a dream, and in our dream we saw a god who said, «I have sent down Suro to be King of Karak⁴ (...) send your daughter to become his Queen.» (...) It is the command of the god (...) My daughter, bid farewell to your parents and go.”⁵

The legend’s translator made sure the readers are left with not even a trace of doubt about the princess’s roots. The facts stated in the text, made even more precise in translation, could easily be taken as proof enough, with no need of further investigation.⁶ However, J.H. Grayson’s compilation of Korean myths and legends, in “Tale 24. Hō Clan,” provides a slightly different translation of the same *Samguk yusa*⁷ passage:

Suddenly there was a boat with a red sail and flying a red flag moving from the southwestern direction of the sea to the north. (...) The king (...) sent off the nine clan chiefs (...) he commanded them to say that they were to escort (the ship passengers) to the palace. (...) the queen consort (-to-be) tied up the boat, disembarked, and while resting on a high hill, took off her silk trousers which she had been wearing and offered them up to the mountain spirit. (...) Together with her slaves, there were about twenty people. (...) Then the king and the queen consort (-to-be) went inside the tent and she spoke softly to the king. “I am originally a princess from Ayut’a-guk. My surname is Hō, and my given name is Hwangok. (...) In the fifth month of this year (...) my father the king in the presence of his queen said to me, ‘Last night in a dream we both saw Sangje. Sangje said to us, «Suro, the King of Karak-kuk [the Karak state – R.C.] has been sent down (...) by Heaven. (...) Send the princess to him and make her his wife.» (...) You should immediately leave your parents (...) and go.”⁸

Here the translator rather leaves deduction of the princess’s roots to the reader’s imagination and/or knowledge, supported by explanation given in a footnote, “Ayut’a-guk is traditionally associated by Koreans with the ancient Indian city of Ayodhya near Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh State. This reference probably is meant to indicate that the future consort came from a distant place.”⁹

The 2000 compilation, *Myths of Korea*, authored by Seo Dae-seok and Peter H. Lee, in the section titled “Kim Suro” refers directly to the very same excerpt from *Samguk yusa*, yet the translators also in this case pursued their own choices, which resulted with the following version:

Unexpectedly there was a ship with red sails and a red flag sailing from the southwest to the north. (...) Upon hearing the news, the gladdened king sent nine chiefs (...) to welcome the ship and escort the passengers to the palace. (...) The princess (...) walked up to the hilltop to rest, then removed her silk

trousers, and offered them as a gift to the mountain spirit (...) Thereupon (...) the queen calmly said to the king: “I am a princess from the Indian country of Ayodhya. My family name is Hō, my given name Hwangok (Yellow Jade). I am sixteen years old. (...) my father and mother told me of a dream they had. In this dream the supreme deity of heaven appeared and said: ‘The founding king of the state of Karak, Suro, has been sent by heaven. He is truly divine and holy. (...) so, you should send your daughter to be his queen. (...) you should take leave of your parents and go there.’ So, I started my voyage (...)”.¹⁰

In this passage the translators’ interferences are not in any way indicated.

In 2008, the Academy of Korean Studies, in their educational series “The Historic Figures of Korea,” brought out a beautifully illustrated volume, *Suro: The First King of Kaya*. Here the story of princess’s origin may be a little abbreviated, however, it still provides the basic facts:

Suddenly, a ship with red sails and a red flag appeared from the southwest and approached the shore. (...) King Suro was overjoyed and commanded the servants to bring the guest to the palace (...). The lady stepped off the ship and proceeded to a nearby hill. At the top of the hill, she rested for a moment. She then took off the silk pants she was wearing and offered them to the mountain god. (...) She was accompanied by twenty or so of her vassals and servants (...) The lady said with a firm voice, “I’m Princess Heo Hwang-ok from the Ayuta Kingdom (part of today’s India). The king of gods appeared in my parent’s dream and told them that Suro, king of Kaya, is a respectful man, and that they should send me to him to be his companion.”¹¹

Apart from a direct explanation of the princess’s country of birth, this popularised version of the myth leaves the reader in doubt of her roots also through the already mentioned illustrations, where she is portrayed as a Rajput princess, which could almost have come from a school of miniature paintings typical to Rajputana (both geographically and culturally very different from the region of Ayodhya).

A report of the Indian princess’s arrival is given in the tenth volume of the *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism*¹² as well, where it serves as the explanation of the origins of Pasa¹³ Stone Pagoda, which, according to this source, “was brought (...) from Ayodhyā in the western regions, in the twenty-fourth year, *musin*, of the Jianwu era of the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 48) by Queen Heo Hwangok, the consort of (...) King Suro, when this district was Geumgwang Kingdom.”¹⁴ The following explanation, with reference to *Samguk yusa*, is also given in the footnote: “Queen Heo (...) was the consort of the founding king of Kaya, King Suro. It is said that she was originally a princess of Ayodhyā. Her family name was Heo (...) and her given name Hwangok (...). In a dream her parents, the king and queen of Ayodhyā, were

told to send her to be the spouse of King Suro and so she came to Kaya by sea. (*Samguk yusa*, vol. 2, *Garakgukgi*).¹⁵

The quoted versions of translation of the initial part of the legend, which culminates in the royal wedding, show slight differences, however, in most cases, the translators are determined to clearly define, or at least suggest, the “Indianness” of the princess. Also, even though versions may differ in detail, some components are never altered or omitted.

One of these is the scene of the princess making an offering to the spirit of a mountain. A reader could, of course, wonder how a foreign princess was so accustomed to the local traditions, so much different from those in her own country. However, similarly to the story of Pasa Pagoda being a suggestion of a possibility of an early transmission of Buddhism to the Korean Peninsula, also such an extensive and detailed reference to the spirit of the mountain in the legend could be a subtle way of justifying the strong presence of Sansin cult being closely connected with Korean Buddhist traditions as well as its early relationship with Buddhism.¹⁶ Other details of the narrative include pointing out the red colour of the sails and flags on the princess’s ship. Incidentally (or not), in both Korean and Indian cultures, red happens to be the traditional colour of the bride’s wedding gown.

Acting a little against the main principle of legend-reading, and deconstructing the first part of the story, also the details which are not so carefully explained and described become apparent. One of them being a question of the language of communication between the two young monarchs (sentences from their first conversation *Samguk yusa* quotes), meeting somewhere on the Korean shore very soon after the princess’s arrival. Nevertheless, these minor issues would not spoil the future happiness of the royal couple, as their match was – as we already know – literally made in heaven.

The legend of *Samguk yusa*, being in fact one of the Korean foundation myths compiled by the Koryŏ Buddhist monk Ilyŏn (1206–1289) at the end of the thirteenth century, develops the story, allowing the reader to know more about the fortunate royal encounter:

On the first day of the eighth month the King and his Queen entered the royal palace in colorful palanquins, accompanied by courtiers in carriages and on horseback and followed by a long train of wagons laden with the trousseau which the princess had brought with her from India. (...) She was a faithful and true helpmeet to the King, shining like a ruby or a sapphire – and indeed she was an Indian jewel (...) The royal couple lived happily for many years.¹⁷

The perfect marriage of Kim Suro and his “Indian” queen lasted until she died at almost Biblical age, being one hundred and fifty-seven years old. The King’s mourning lasted for ten long years, until he followed his wife, however, the memory of Hŏ Hwang-ok had not died with him. The faithful people of Karakuk “changed the name of the beach where she first landed to Chup’och’on, that

of the hill on which she changed her brocade skirt¹⁸ to Nūngyōn, and that of the seacoast where she waved her red flag at the shore to Kich'ulpyōn, so that her arrival in Karak should always be remembered."¹⁹ However, it would prove futile to search for any Indian names in Korean registers, as the two courtiers "who attended the Queen on her voyage from India, each begat daughters" and "male and female slaves all died of homesickness (...) and left no children"²⁰.

Nevertheless, the memory of Hō Hwang-ok was carried down through at least nine generations and, as *Samguk yusa* informs, "King Kimchil²¹ (...) prayed for the repose of the fragrant soul of Queen Hō, the Princess from India, and (...) he had a Buddhist temple erected at the place where she took her marriage vows to King Suro, calling it Wanghu-sa (the Queen's Temple)"²², which was supposed to have lasted five hundred years – until it has been destroyed and another temple was built nearby. From the Queen's Temple only an obelisk remained with the foundation myth of Karak-kuk inscribed on it.²³

A direct connection between Ayut'a-guk and the Indian city of Ayodhya might not be so easily justifiable, yet most of the quoted sources doubtlessly provide such direct association. The 1972 translation of *Samguk yusa* offers it in the form of an intrusion into the main text, whereas Seo Dae-seok and Peter H. Lee refer to "the Indian country of Ayodhya," and Lee Hyesook in his *Suro: The First King of Kaya* to "the Ayuta Kingdom (part of today's India)." J.H. Grayson's *Myths and Legends of Korea* offer a footnote which points out to a possible metaphorical reading of the passage. In the account of the origin of the Pasa Pagoda, the following explanation of the place of Hō Hwang-ok's origin is given in the footnote: "The term for the ancient Indian state of Ayodhyā, which was located in the middle reaches of the Ganges River, is Ayutaguk (...). However, some scholars believe that Ayutaguk refers to the southern region of China."²⁴ The possible reference to another meaning of the toponym "Ayutaguk" as the region in southern China seems to be the only one among the English language sources directly commenting on the legend. And, as such, it points the reader directly to the area discovered as Princess's Hō probable place of origin by Kim Byung-mo, after decades of thorough research.

Contemporary Criticism of the Legend

A Korean scholar, Professor Kim Byung-mo, during his over forty-year long research, collected historical evidence to determine the route by which the princess came to Korea, trying to verify the historical connection between the Kaya kingdom and Ayodhya, as well as the exact dates of the princess leaving her birthplace and arriving at Kimhae.

Solving the issue of the connection between Ayodhya and the Karak state, Kim Byung-mo discovered that the symbol of twin fish (described in his research as the "Kara-fish"), present on the monuments in Kimhae, is also found in the emblem of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (where Ayodhya is located) and can be frequently seen as a decorative motif on many buildings there as well.



Figure 1.2 The symbol of twin-fish above the entrance to the tomb of Kim Suro. Kimhae. Republic of Korea.



Figure 1.3 The symbol of twin-fish in the official seal of the Government of Uttar Pradesh.

From the writings on the stone placed near the queen's tomb in Kimhae, Professor Kim Byung-mo has learnt that Hō Hwang-ok, being of course the Queen of King Kim Suro of the Kaya kingdom, was also the Empress Dowager of Poju and. This discovery led him to further research, conducted in China, in Sichuan province, where the city of Poju – presently named Anyuexian – is located. Before travelling there, he was able to find the evidence of the symbol of twin-fish being present on props of dishes in the Sichuan region, and in the Yunnan province, where it was engraved on bricks and utensils made of copper. In this way Kim Byung-mo was able to discover the possible connection between Ayodhya and Poju in the Sichuan province. However, the question remained, why, when, and how some people of Ayodhya came to live there.

Additionally, according to Kim Byung-mo's deduction, the families with the name Hō must have fled to Poju, in Sichuan while escaping a Kushans' attack on Ayodhya²⁵. During his visit to Anyuexian, he learned about a remote village where a substantial number of families with the name Hō still remained. He visited the place in 2003 and made the key discovery for his research by finding written evidence of the birthplace and the origin of Hō Hwang-ok. He found a well with the symbol of twin-fish engraved on it, and a few written sentences informing not only that during the early East Han period a beautiful girl known by the name of Hō Hwang-ok lived there, but also that she was born in challenging circumstances, at the time when all families carrying the name Hō left the village due to a severe famine. However, Hō Hwang-ok's immediate family (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents) remained, because her mother was about to give birth to her. When they were facing death from hunger, Hō Hwang-ok's great-grandfather went to the well (known there as the "God's well") and prayed for help. His prayers were obviously heard, for each day he was able to catch two fish, which made it possible to save the family from starvation.

In Kim Byung-mo's opinion, this discovery was a proof of the presence of people of Indian descent in China. However, he conducted further research in Chinese archives, to find out as a result that the Hō families, living in the Chinese province of Sichuan, were (therefore, they still are) the descendants of one of the sons of the great Indian emperor Aśoka (r. 268–232 BCE). Kim Byung-mo believes that the emperor, who is said to have had approximately seventy sons, sent most of them to several distant lands to avoid brotherly wars over the inheritance. One of them was sent to China, where he married a local princess. In this way, the grandson of Aśoka became a local king, and Hō Hwang-ok was his great-great-granddaughter. Due to this finding, Kim Byung-mo claims that it is justified to call Hō Hwang-ok an "Indian princess," even though she was born away from her great grandfather's kingdom.

To sum up, the scholar proposes the following reading of the facts established by him: Hō Hwang-ok was born around the year 32 AD, in Poju (now Anyuexian, in Sichuan province, China). Her family came from India, most probably from the Ayodhya kingdom (nowadays a city in Uttar Pradesh). The

reason for them leaving India might have been a Kushans' invasion, but it is also probable that Hō was a great-great granddaughter of the Indian emperor Aśoka's son, who was sent away to China by his father. In case of both the possibilities, according to Kim, the migrants from India brought with them and kept some elements of their religious tradition as well as the symbol of twin-fish.²⁶

Alternatively, another view on the legend is expressed by an Indian expert in Korean Studies, engaged also in researching India-Korea historical connections, Professor Pankaj Mohan. Following the line of thought of the Korean historian, Kim T'ae-sik, who claims that "the legend of Hō Hwang-ok was invented in the Middle Period of Silla," Mohan argues that "the myth in its oral tradition may have been invented during the reign of Queen Chindok as a folk explanation of the power of Kim Yusin as well as to further dignify his genealogical root."²⁷ In his opinion, therefore, "Apotheosis of Hō Hwang-ok, consort of Kim Suro, as a princess of Ayodhya appears to have been a rhetorical strategy aimed at equating her with Queen Chindok (r. 647–654) in terms of sacrality and prestige and claiming priority for the former."²⁸ One of Mohan's key arguments here is that of the princess's name, for, as he states, "Queen Chindok's birth name was Sungman (Srimala, Chinese, Shengman), derived from the *Shengman Jing* (The Srimaladevi Sutra)."²⁹ The scholar also indicates that "the text of *Shengman Jing* describes Srimala as a wise and powerful queen of Ayodhya" and that "Ayodhya enjoyed a prominent position in the imagined geography of Buddhism in East Asia during the 7th-century."³⁰

In search for justification of an Indian lady's appearance on Korean soil, Mohan refers to another, perhaps slightly less far-fetched story, and recalls a reference from a Jain text written in Prakrit (*Jnatadharma kathanga Sutra*) to India's trade connections with a state of the name Kaliya (or, as Mohan has it, "Kalik in Sanskrit pronunciation"), located somewhere in present-day Indonesia. In the text, according to Mohan, there is a passage about a ship blown off course, reaching the "Kalik" state where much gold and precious stones were found, as well as a particularly impressive, unknown breed of horse – one of the acknowledged trademarks of the ancient kingdom of Kaya. This journey, according to Mohan, might have taken place in the second or third century AD, "and there is a good probability that Kalik referred to Karak." The scholar also adds that the identification of Kalik with Karak is of course tentative, but he believes in a possibility that some Indian merchants' ship was blown there, and "a woman from the Kosala region, Saket (known as Ayodhya from the 5th century onwards) and Sravasti was part of the crew."³¹

A sober and direct interpretation of the legend is provided by Vladimir Tikhonov, who states clearly that,

The legend of Hō Hwang'ok's marriage to Kim Suro (...) is unmatched in Korea's ancient mythology, as it links the founder of a Korean proto-

state with the glorious Indian city of Ayodhyā, about which the seventh-century Silla inhabitants could at best learn only from the Buddhist writings and travelogues (...) and it is most likely that the legend about Kim Suro's wedding to an Ayodhyā princess took shape at that approximate period. Since that era marked the most intensive contacts between Silla and Tang China, Suro's presumably "Indian" wife is predictably depicted in *Karak kuki* as a *Chinese* princess instead. Her name (...) exhibits no traces of Indian influences, and the names of her two chief retainers, Sin Po (...) and Cho Kwang (...), display no Indian flavour either.³²

On the basis of the names of also other companions of the princes Tikhonov points out to strong Confucian references and concludes his remarks on the legend of Kim Suro's foreign queen by stating that

Karak kukki's myth of Suro and Hō Hwang'ok's marriage mixes up two models against which the late sixth to eighth-century Silla ruling class was prone to measure itself, namely a largely symbolic "India" as the world's Buddhist homeland, and the Tang Confucian culture as the pattern Silla society was ideally to follow. (...) the compiler of *Karak kukki* adorned this basic pattern with Indo-Buddhist ornamentation.³³

Another view on the legend of Kim Suro's "Indian" wife is to be found in the doctoral thesis, *Our Country: Changing Images of the Foreign in Korean Literature and Culture*, written by John Mark Frankl, accepted at Harvard University in 2003.³⁴ Since the author proposes a comparative view, he points out to the "Indian" reference in one of the Korean early literary sources in the light of his prior discussion on China. The scholar claims that it was not only the Chinese civilisation that was a source of influence on the Korean Peninsula, for according to him, for hundreds of years the people of the Korean Peninsula regarded India and specifically Buddhism as cultural and religious examples worth following. Frankl also asserts that textual and archaeological, as well as anecdotal, evidence available to us suggests that from the beginning of the Three Kingdoms Period (18 BC-668), if not earlier, the Korean people already exchanged cultural as well as material commodities with regions beyond China. As an example of such exchange Frankl quotes the very myth of King Suro's "Indian" wife, stating that even though "much of the *Samguk yusa* is usually not taken as fact"³⁵, the passage where the first conversation between the royal couple is quoted, and where the princess reveals the place of her origin, deserves special attention, for

To this day in South Korea, members of the Kimhae Kim clan and the Kimhae Hō clan are forbidden to marry under the law that prohibits marriages between people with the same surname and same geographical origin. Thus, the entirety of the events outlined in the passage quoted above can hardly be dismissed as merely being the stuff of legend.³⁶

A significant portion³⁷ of the chapter *Indo-Korean Contacts in Early History* – included in Lee Kwangsu's already mentioned monograph, *Buddhist Ideas and Rituals in Early India and Korea* – brings a strikingly bold interpretation of the myth of Kim Suro, delving into both the presumed Indian elements within the narrative and the potential Indian influences on the myth's structure. Drawing on Mircea Eliade's view, the author suggests that the ancient Korean concept of egg-birth, particularly in the case of Kim Suro, may be a transformed idea of Indian origin. Lee Kwangsu notes that in the story of Kim Suro's birth, the presence of an egg which is made of gold, contrary to Chinese and Korean traditions where jade was considered most precious, is likely an incorporation of Indian traditional belief, specifically associating gold with great value. The scholar points out that some characteristics of Surya, according to him incorporated in passages portraying Suro as a priest-king possessing divine attributes, can be seen as evidence of Indian influence.³⁸ Furthermore, the author proposes that the name "Suro" may have roots in the Sanskrit word *śūra*, signifying rulership, supreme power, or divine attributes, further linking it to brave and divine kings or warriors.³⁹ Lee Kwangsu also points out the use of thread in the Suro myth, which he relates to Indian traditions, as according to him, in the story of Suro's birth the thread holds sacred significance, acting as a connecting chain "between the sacred (egg containing the king) and the secular (people of the world)."⁴⁰ Similarly, the event of the descending egg "on the day of the Bathing-festival in the case of Suro"⁴¹, Lee Kwangsu associates with Indian beliefs in the purificatory powers of water, suggesting a transfer of this idea from India to Korea in Kim Suro's times.

Furthermore, the arrival of princess Hō from the sea, could be in view of this author interpreted as an emergence of a goddess of water, essential to fertility cults, for "[i]n the Indian tradition the sea is the source not only of eternal life but sovereignty and sanctity. (...) Therefore, Princess Ho should be considered to be the mother goddess of the sea with fertility power as well as sacred powers for the throne."⁴² Further on, Lee Kwangsu interprets the act of princess Hō dedicating her red brocade trousers to the spirit of the mountain as "nothing but a metaphor for the rite or ceremony of sexual intercourse as a kind of fertility cult."⁴³ Also, the red-coloured flag and sail on the princess's ship are seen here as proof of Indo-Korean connection, with red being a symbol of life-giving power used in marriage rituals in India and Korea. Lee Kwangsu draws a parallel between the princess's place of origin mentioned in the *Samgukyusa* legend and Ayodhya, the capital city of considerable antiquity mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, suggesting that princess Hō might be reminiscent of Sita from the *Rāmāyaṇa*.⁴⁴

In his analysis of the legend, Lee Kwangsu highlights the parallels between Korea and India in understanding the symbolic significance of the numbers nine, seven, and three in the Kim Suro myth, as well as suggests that the India-born concept of non-violence is introduced in the story when Suro fights against T'alhae.⁴⁵

A critical view of the legend was also provided by Skand R. Tayal⁴⁶ in his insightful monographic survey, *India and the Republic of Korea. Engaged Democracies* (2014). According to Tayal's study,

[h]istorians (...) believe that the princess of Ayodhya is only a myth. Some historians are of the view that the princess perhaps came from Ayutthaya, the ancient capital of Siam (Thailand). On the other hand, it had been noted that Ayuta mentioned in *Samguk Yusa*, could not be the ancient capital of Thailand as Ayudhaya came into prominence in 14th century, whereas *Samguk Yusa* is believed to date back to the 13th century.⁴⁷

In some sense understandably agreeing with the "historians," Tayal also points out the fact that, even if not as early in first century AD, the contacts between Korean Peninsula and India developed early enough due to the influence of Buddhism. Therefore, he also mentions the fact that between the third century BC to the fifth century AD the North Indian ancient city of Ayodhya was an important centre of Buddhism, visited for instance by the Chinese monk Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century, who noted in the records of his travels that in Ayodhya he saw a number of Buddhist monasteries. These observations lead the author of *India and the Republic of Korea...* to a general conclusion that "Often, beliefs are more significant for people than facts. It is not possible to peep into distant past and definitively establish whether an incident occurred. There is no reason not to accept the deeply held belief of the Kimhae Kims that Queen Heo was a princess from Ayodhya."⁴⁸

Practicalities of the Legend

As correctly observed by both Frankl and Tayal – the legend still influences lives of some Koreans⁴⁹, but it also has an effect on India, for in both countries' efforts are made to keep the story alive, in some ways continuing the traditions already set when *Samguk yusa* was written. "Ever since the heyday of Karak," the source claims,

the inhabitants of the region (modern Kimhae and vicinity) have celebrated the 29th of July each year by climbing Sŭngchŏm Mountain, where they pitch tents on the east and west. There are singing, dancing, athletic contests, and many a bottle of wine. The strong young men are divided into right and left teams and gallop their horses from Mangsan-do (Mountain-Viewing Island) toward the shore, while gaily decorated boats with red sails carry beautifully dressed maidens toward the old landing-place. This festival celebrates the arrival of the Princess of India (Empress Hō) and the setting off of (...) the two Karak chiefs, to bring the news to the King.⁵⁰

Modern day administration of the city of Kimhae, the ancient capital of the Kaya kingdom, also makes sure that the legend of Kim Suro having an

Indian wife is kept very much alive. The burial places of both royal figures provide information about the amazing circumstances of their blessed union. The origins of the Pasa Pagoda are also explained to visitors in detail. To add to its historical sites, the city offers an entertainment-cum-education experience at the “Kaya Theme Park.” Some of the attractions prepared for visitors include a “ride” in a ship with red sails or a visit in an Indian art gallery located in a Taj Mahal-like looking structure. There are also frequent references to the symbol of twin fish, as well as to the heavenly powers involved in bringing about the union of Kim Suro and the princess from the Indian kingdom of Ayodhya. Every day, the visitors of “Kaya Theme Park” can also enjoy a musical, *The Miracle of Love*, based on the love story of the Korean king and the Indian princess.

According to Tayal, the

Karak Society of Kimhae is the torchbearer of this venerable heritage. (...) Kimhae Kims believe that they are descendants of Queen Heo and have an ancient genealogical link with India. The Kimhae Kims are proud of this lineage and invariably mention this fact whenever they meet Indian visitors. Former President Kim Dae-jung, former Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil, Madam Kim Yoon-ok, wife of the former President of the Republic of Korea (...) Lee Myung-bak (...) are some important Koreans with this strong emotional connection with India.⁵¹

The city of Kimhae, with the enticement of Kimhae Kims, celebrates the “first Indo-Korean royal marriage” regularly. Festivities, organised yearly by the city council in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of India in Seoul, create yet another opportunity to commemorate and popularise the ancient union between the two countries. Also, as *The Korea Post* informs, “Mayor Huh (Heo) Sung-gon of the Kimhae City today is viewed to be one of the descendants of King Kim Suro of the Kaya Kingdom as the King married Princess Heo Hwang-ok from India.”⁵²

Moreover, the Korean descendants of queen Hō, by their joint efforts, symbolically brought her back home, erecting a memorial stone in Ayodhya in 2001⁵³. The monument – a three-metre high block of stone weighing 7,500 kg, specially shipped from South Korea – was founded to mark the birthplace of the mother-foundress of the Korean state.⁵⁴ Apart from making sure that origins of the great matriarch are never forgotten, its presence adds another dimension to the role of the legend in present days as well. According to Indian media, “hundreds of South Koreans every year (...) come to pay their tributes to the legendary queen”⁵⁵.

In March 2016, a South Korean delegation of thirty-eight persons made a proposal to develop the memorial further, the proposal was accepted by the Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav, and on November 4, 2021, the Queen Hō Hwang-ok Memorial Park (also known as Korea Park) was opened in Ayodhya. The park comprises Queen and King pavilions (built

respectively in Korean and Indian architectural styles), a pond – to represent the princess’s sea voyage, and a small bridge – a symbol of connecting the two distant cultures and the people. Visitors to the park can also learn a little about the supernatural birth of Kim Suro, as a large-size granite egg⁵⁶ is one of the attractions provided.⁵⁷ The activities undertaken by government of Uttar Pradesh, in cooperation with the Republic of Korea administration, would certainly secure the inflow of Korean visitors to Ayodhya, perhaps also facilitating a welcome change in the image of the city, for many years now associated mainly with Hindu-Muslim conflicts, and especially one of its gravest effects – the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992.⁵⁸

Another instance of the developing Indian interest in the legend is the work of N. Parthasarathi, the Indian ambassador to South Korea in the years 2005–2007, consisting of two narrative pieces, created on the basis of Kim Suro and Hō Hwang-ok story – a novel, *The Legend of Ayodhya Princess in Korea*⁵⁹ of 2011, as well as a visual novel *Sriratna & Kim Suro: The Legend of an Indian Princess in Korea*⁶⁰ published in 2015, in the series ‘Young Library of India’. In Parthasarathi’s narrative the legend is developed far beyond the lines set by *Samguk yusa*, and many originally existing gaps are filled with the power of imagination of the author, who candidly states that “(m)any a time faith and trust are much stronger and have more influence on our lives than hard facts.”⁶¹

First, therefore, we learn more about the princess’s lineage, get to know her as the daughter of “King Padmasen,” and a sister of a prince of the name Buddhisen, also as a girl who receives proper education in an ashram of a Hindu sage. Besides the readers can find out the origins of Pasa Pagoda, which in its locality is described as “a seven storey Stupa (...) on the front of a Buddhist monastery near Ayodhya, capital of the ancient Kosala kingdom in India,” however, since after it reached Korea its fame of being a protective amulet against winds spread far and wide, “every sailor wanted to have a small piece (of it) on his ship.” Therefore, the stupa was “chipped away piece by tiny piece” becoming in result “an incomplete skeleton of (its) former self.”⁶² Also, a number of symbolic images from Indian aesthetic tradition was included in the story. For example, the report of the divine intervention which brought the princess into Suro’s life begins with a vividly described peacock dance, a motive often used in Sanskrit classics to evoke a nearing possibility of a lovers’ union. Furthermore, in Suro’s dream, where the dance takes place, the peacock transforms into a beautiful young woman, who introduces herself with words almost taken out of *Samguk yusa*, “I am the princess of Ayodhya, from the central kingdom of Kosala, a faraway land, and I will be your queen.”⁶³ Many pages later, after a long sea voyage filled with adventure, the princess finally reaches the shores of the Korean Peninsula, and meets Kim Suro in the flesh. They are married by the authority of Sansin, whose inseparable companion, the tiger, recognizes the princess’s greatness and volunteers to become her steed⁶⁴.

This symbolic image created in Parthasarathi’s version of the story⁶⁵ is an impressive instance of a merger between the Indian and Korean cultures, as

both seem to have ascribed a special significance to a tiger, due to its majestic beauty and the power it represents. Through the ages the people of both India and Korea seemed to have had at least one thing in common: they respected the animal even more greatly than they feared it. In both the cultures tigers are portrayed as noble symbols of superiority, as well as auspicious creatures that ward off evil spirits. And even though the Royal Bengal tiger of India became almost completely extinct during the period of British rule⁶⁶, and the Siberian tiger, mainly due to the actions of the Japanese occupants, has not been seen in South Korea for about one hundred years, it can quite safely be assumed that in popular imagination the special powers of a lady who by her sheer appearance was able to tame a tiger, would be recognised with equal respect both in India and Korea.⁶⁷

The growing awareness of the legend in India – boosted up by political as well as commercial reasons has been reflected also by one of the established practices all over the world to commemorate the most eminent persons or most noteworthy events. In 2019, India Post has issued two stamps honouring the legendary princess in both her manifestations – as the heroine of a Korean legend and the impersonation of this legend created in modern-day India. The stamp dedicated to Princess Suriratna carries a reference to another Indian element of the legend – the Pasa Pagoda which secured her a safe sea passage, whereas the other, portraying Queen Hō, also brings associations to her long voyage, however, with a tenaciously Chinese-looking vessel in the background. Neither the fact that the shape of the Pasa Pagoda does not bring an instant association with Indian Buddhist stupas, nor the foreign look of the dragon's head adorning the bow of the vessel, seemed to have been an issue here.⁶⁸

The story of the Ayodhya princess, Suriratna, known in Korean history by the name of Hō Hwang-ok⁶⁹, who in the first century AD became the queen consort of the legendary ruler Kim Suro, keeps also reappearing in Indian and Korean newspapers quite frequently, for some years now. The apogee usually happens in the outset of any state visit by Indian or Korean high-level politicians⁷⁰, as for instance in 2015, when for several weeks the Indian media were full of news about the ancient kinship between India and Korea, owing to the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Seoul. During the visit, PM Narendra Modi referred to this early connection, stating at the India-Korea CEOs Forum that

(t)he relationship between the two countries goes back to the first century when an Indian Princess travelled from the kingdom of Ayodhya to Korea by a boat. She married the Korean King Suro and became the first queen of the South Korean kingdom. Several million Koreans trace their lineage to her.⁷¹

After the visit, Indian journalists did their best to make the story even better known. They found support outside the sphere of media as well. For example, an official statement issued by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations “pointed out that Suriratna had travelled for three months from Ayodhya to Korea by sea and married the Korean king, thus marking the beginning of

the Garak clan in Korea,”⁷² whereas the ICCR President, added that “(i)f there is any country that is closer to India in terms of the shared history, the language, it is Korea,”⁷³ emphasising the importance of the legend in strengthening Indo-Korean relations. Korean media available in English occasionally bring out articles⁷⁴ which serve very well the purposes of cultural diplomacy, just like the ones published in India.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations tried to indicate the ancient history of Indo-Korean cultural ties by organising a conference dedicated exclusively to this theme. The International Conference on “Shared Heritage as New Variable in the Indo-Korean Relations: Historicising the Legend of Princess of Ayodhya and its Legacy” took place on July 14–15, 2015, at India International Centre in New Delhi. According to the press release issued afterwards, scholars from the Republic of Korea and India participated in the Conference, however, the fact cannot be ignored that among participants there was also a large number of diplomats. The event was presided over by Lokesh Chandra, the President of ICCR, who “in his Inaugural Address emphasized on the importance of Indo-Korean cultural relations and highlighted the importance of the legend of Ayodhya Princess Suriratna in strengthening Indo-Korean relations.”⁷⁵ The organizers were also convinced that such a conference

deserves importance and urgency for multiple reasons. The ‘past’ can work as prelude to the ‘future’ and has the enormous potential to galvanize bilateral cooperation between two Asian civilizations. (...) By linking a shared cultural past with the present, the conference intends to provide a powerful cultural variable that can help in forging much closer partnerships between India and Korea.⁷⁶

Another, relatively recent interpretation of the legend has been developed by the Tamil community in India and abroad. The year 2016 brought a collection of ten essays, written by both academics and enthusiasts of the idea of the ancient India-Korea connection. The book, *Historical, Archaeological, Linguistic, Cultural and Biological Links Between Korea and India. Kaya and Pandiya*, was edited by Narayanan Kannan⁷⁷ and published (partly in English partly in Tamil) by Tamil Heritage Foundation.

In the opening essay, the editor of the volume attempts to justify the legend based on the maritime history of Tamils, numismatics, stone inscriptions, archaeological findings, and parallel cultural traits, making the discoveries of Korean molecular biologists the departure point for his study.⁷⁸ Additionally, Kannan gives considerable attention to similarities between the Tamil and Korean languages as well as to the parallels in the graphic form of the Tamil script and *Han’gŭl*.⁷⁹ The authenticity of the Tamil origins of Princess Hō has been scrutinised by the other authors of the discussed volume⁸⁰, who strongly object to the “Ayodhya connection” claiming that all evidence discovered until now, supported additionally by Tamil legends and folk tales, proves the South Indian genealogy of the first Korean queen.

Due to all these activities taking place, the legend became popular enough in India to trigger controversies and add to animosities between the North and the South. For instance, an amateur YouTube video “Is Korean Iron Queen Heo from Tamil Nadu? – Pandya Twin Fish Symbol resemblances to Korea symbols”⁸¹ served as a pretext to a long discussion depicted in numerous comments of the viewers which show not only their deep emotional involvement in the issue, but also the importance they attach to the legend being justified as a historical fact. The viewers make a definite claim that it is the politics of Northern India aiming to deprive the Tamil people of the South of their great past which is the cause of misunderstandings in interpretation of the Korean legend. Apparently, as children they were told a bedtime story about a Tamil princess “Sem-pavalam known as (Heo Hwang-ok)” who was “married to King Suro of Geumgwan Kaya in the year 48CE (...) and became the first queen of the Korean Kingdom (...) She was from Ay kingdom of Kanyakumari (Tamilnadu). When she went to Korea an entire village of skilled workers were transported with her (...)” Others claim that Ayuta-guk refers not to Ayodhya, the city in modern-day state of Uttar Pradesh, but to the old name of Kanyakumari.⁸² Also, the material provided in the amateur video proves the frequent occurrence of the symbol of twin fish in art and culture of Tamilnadu.

These claims, otherwise impossible to fully verify, find a convincing support in linguistic studies of plausible relationship between Korean and Dravidian languages. The examples of similarities and parallels between the two languages provided in those studies indicate a reasonably high probability of cultural contacts between the southern parts of ancient India and the Korean Peninsula.⁸³

A Purpose of the Legend

As rightly pointed out by Pankaj Mohan, even though the possibility of an Indian woman arriving by sea to the Korean peninsula in the third or fourth century cannot be ruled out,

the process of apotheosis of the woman as a princess commenced later. In order to form a correct perspective of the process of embellishment and elaboration of the myth, we need to understand the circumstances of the former royalty of Kaya in the state of Silla which absorbed them. Kaya was annexed by Silla in the mid-sixth century, and its ruling elites were integrated within the ruling stratum with the rank of Chingol (True Blood). In the latter half of the seventh century, particularly when the highest rank of blood lineage (...) became an ineffective institution, the Kaya aristocracy rose in political prominence. (...) The growing political and military influence of the “New House of Kim” and the political supremacy of heroic personalities from its ranks (...) could well have risen to a need to compose a hagiographical account of the former Kaya royalty and rewrite a history on which a mirror-image of the past could be imposed. The egg-birth of the founder-ruler of the kingdom of Kaya (...)

and his linkage with the kingdom of Ayodhya in India are examples of retrospective sacralisation.⁸⁴

Another scholar whose interest the legend caught, already quoted Vladimir Tikhonov, is of a parallel view. According to him

An ideological agenda (...) eventually converted the myth of Suro's divine marriage (...) into the legend of Hō Hwang'ok's arrival from India, and defined Suro as a miracle-making preacher of Buddhism (...) The legend (...) became an element in the mythic-historical consciousness of Korea's pre-modern intellectuals and also a part of the local folklore.⁸⁵

Outside the scholarly interest, in recent years also some private websites⁸⁶ and newspapers⁸⁷ have picked up the matter and keep developing possible interpretations of the story from the Indian perspective. On the occasions of meeting their Korean counterparts, the story is also frequently recalled by Indian politicians.⁸⁸ A closer look at the development of such an attitude would allow one to believe that as far as chronology is concerned, the name Suriratna (Jewell of the Sun) appears to have been coined much later, to correspond with the one by which the princess was named in *Samguk yusa* – the Yellow Jade. On the one hand, the “original” Indian form of the name makes the argument of “authenticity” stronger, on the other – the reference to “*surya*,” the sun, in the princess's name, apart from indicating the yellow colour of the gem, also allows for a direct association to the legendary Indian Solar Dynasty⁸⁹ to which many great heroes and kings belonged, including Rama as well as prince Siddhartha Gautama – the Buddha⁹⁰.

Furthermore, since Ayodhya is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, the scope of associations could most probably be inexhaustible. One of the most convincing reasons why so much attention was given to making sure that the princess's place of origin would be figured out as the Indian kingdom of Ayodhya might be a crucial point of the history of Korean encounters with Buddhism. In “Tale 67” of *Myths And Legends of Korea...*⁹¹, entitled “The Advent of Buddhism in Kaya,” the following story is told:

At the time when the city of Kūmgwan was the capital of the Kingdom of Kūmgwan, the Pasa stone pagoda of Hōgye-sa temple was brought from Ayut'a-guk by Hō Hwangok, the queen consort of the founding king, King Suro. (...) Because Buddhism had not been transmitted at this time and none of the people of this region believed in Buddhism, the *Karakkuk pon'gi* (Record of the Kingdom of Karak) does not mention the building of any temples. In the year *Imjin* (corresponding to 452 AD) (...) a temple called the Wanghu-sa (Temple of the Queen Consort) was erected (...) and petitions for blessing are still being offered (there) until today.⁹²

Whereas in the commentary to the quoted story, J.H. Grayson claims: “Although Ilyōn the compiler of the tale sees this story as recording the first

transmission of Buddhism to Kaya, he does admit that the appearance of a 'Buddhist' princess did not lead to the development of Buddhism within the kingdom at that time."⁹³ However, he also refers to two stories, according to him still prevailing in modern-day Kimhae, which try to justify the assumption of the arrival of Buddhism to the Korean Peninsula in the first century AD.

According to one of these stories, the Changyu-sa, on Kimhae's Pulmo mountain "was founded by Hō Hwangok's older brother Hō Po'ok, a Buddhist monk who had accompanied his sister on her journey to Kaya." In the second story a claim is made that "the seven sons of Hō Hwangok referred to her as 'pulmo' (Mother of Buddhism, or Buddhist Mother)."⁹⁴

Indian sources also like to follow a similar line of speculation linking the princess directly with Buddhism and claiming for instance that her true descendants, belonging to Kim and Hō clans, "have for generations followed the advice of Queen Heo religiously and they continue to contribute five percent of their earnings to charity. It is kept as a family secret, and they shun publicity for such acts."⁹⁵

The fact that the legend serves political purposes of the modern day is one thing, another is the question why it could have been important to suggest the Indian origin of the princess, even though the name as well as the possible initial communication problems between the royal couple, shape of the pagoda, location of Ayodhya away from the sea etc. would indicate the impossibility of the whole story. Nevertheless, the story of the princess bringing a stone "pagoda" directly from India⁹⁶ and, as some versions say, even coming with several Buddhist monks, was a chance to suggest that Buddhism came to Korea directly from India first, which could have had a diminishing effect on the claims of Korea's strong cultural dependency on China, making Korean Buddhism a direct derivative of Indian Buddhism.

The author of *Samguk yusa* was after all a Buddhist monk, who by "emphasizing the idea that Korea had already been a Buddha Land in the time of the Buddhas that had preceded Śakyamuni Buddha (...) was asserting the superiority of Goryeo culture over that of the invading Mongols."⁹⁷ It is therefore quite obvious that his idea was to enrich the already existing chronicles of the Korean state by adding materials focused on its Buddhist past by providing "a spiritual basis with which to overcome such social contradictions in the context of a cultural trend spreading throughout Goryeo society in which people were seeking to discover a new understanding of the traditions of the past."⁹⁸ To achieve his aim, "Iryeon correctly describes the transmission of Buddhism as beginning with Goguryeo followed by Baekje and then Silla. In other sections he also included materials he had uncovered about Buddhism in Kaya."⁹⁹

The description of the princess's arrival with the stone Pasa Pagoda on board of her ship, provided by *Samguk yusa*, ends with a panegyric composed in praise of the auspicious pagoda. It conveys firstly the anticipation and preparations for the journey, seeking divine assistance to calm the waves, as well as poses a question which reflects a sense of uncertainty about whether

“the spirits” can calm the “angry waves,” and aid the princess in safely reaching the shore.¹⁰⁰

The legend being still alive almost two thousand years later, does not bring an answer to the question of “how,” yet it almost certainly proves that even though we do not know how, “the spirits,” nevertheless, managed their task to perfection.

Notes

- 1 The subject of myths as testimony to early instances of cultural diffusion as well as the means of transferring knowledge is a popular topic of research in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as Political Studies. Some prominent scholars who have explored this subject include Joseph Campbell, Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Wendy Doniger, or Joseph Fontenrose.
- 2 The chapter is a revised and substantially extended version of a conference paper, see: Renata Czekalska, “An Indian Princess in Korea: Some Remarks about the Past and the Present of One Legend,” in Meandry Koreanistyki, ed. Paweł Kida and Grażyna Strnad (Poznań: Wydawnictwo UAM, 2018), 105–18.
- 3 For the purposes of this book the English translation of the work has been used. See: Ilyön, *Samguk Yusa*.
- 4 Alternative name of the ancient kingdom of Kaya.
- 5 Ilyön, *Samguk yusa*, 141–142.
- 6 I am grateful to Dr. Jakub Taylor for bringing justification to my doubts and providing me with the reference to the original text of *Samguk yusa*.
- 7 Tale 24, “Hö Clan,” in: James H. Grayson, *Myths and Legends from Korea: An Annotated Compendium of Ancient and Modern Materials* (Routledge, 2012), 110–116, source given as: *Samguk yusa*, Part 2.23, “Karak kukki.”
- 8 Grayson, *Myths*, 111.
- 9 Grayson, 113, footnote 4.
- 10 Dae-seok Seo, *Myths of Korea*, ed. Peter H. Lee, Korean Studies Series No.4 (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2000), 21–22.
- 11 Hyesook Lee, *Suro: The First King of Kaya* (Seoul: Seoul Selection, 2008), page not numbered.
- 12 Roderick Withfield, ed., “Korean Buddhist Culture: Accounts of a Pilgrimage, Monuments, and Eminent Monks,” in *The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism: 文化 Korean Buddhist Culture: Accounts of a Pilgrimage, Monuments, and Eminent Monks*, Vol. 10, trans. M. Wegehaupt, M. Finch, and S. Vermeersch (Seoul: Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2012), 196–202. I am grateful to Professor Michael Finch for pointing this reference out to me and for providing the source materials.
- 13 “The Chinese characters in the name Pasa mean the undulating motion of waves or the sound of leaves rustling in the wind. The characters are also used to transcribe the Sanskrit word *vasa*, which means ‘to stay.’ See: Withfield, *Korean Buddhist Culture*, 197, f. 55.
- 14 See: Withfield, 197–198.
- 15 Withfield, 197, f. 61. Here it is also worth noting that in the *Introduction* to the account of “The Pasa Stone Pagoda at Geumgwan Fortress” it is clearly explained that “the pagoda’s shape differs from that of Indian stūpas,” however, “(t)his stone pagoda (...) is made of stone that is not found in Korea, and because of its unusual shape the opinion that it was made in another country has persisted.” See: Withfield, *Korean Buddhist Culture*, 196.
- 16 In Korean Buddhist temples, there is always a shrine, located at some distance from the main temple buildings, dedicated to Sansin, the guardian spirit of the mountain.

- 17 Ilyön, *Samguk yusa*, 162–164. On page 162 the translators also provide us with the following information regarding the princess' home of Ayuta: "It is interesting to note that the city of Ayuthia was at one time the capital of the kingdom of Thailand." However, Ayuthia city dates to only about 14th century AD, so the relevance of this reference is doubtful. Ayutthaya, in full Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Ayutthaya also spelled Ayudhya, Ayuthia, or Ayuthaya, town and former capital of the Tai state of Ayutthaya (Siam) located in central Thailand, about 90 km north of Bangkok. The town was founded by Ramathibodi I, about the year 1350 AD. See: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Ayutthaya," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ayutthaya-Thailand>.
- 18 In all other instances (also in the same translation) not "skirt" as here, but "trousers".
- 19 Ilyön, *Samguk yusa*, 164.
- 20 Ilyön, 164.
- 21 Also: Kimjil, (r. 407–421).
- 22 Ilyön, *Samguk yusa*, 168.
- 23 Ilyön, 168–169.
- 24 See: Withfield, 197, f. 58.
- 25 Kim Byung-mo does not specify the probable dating (given usually as the early first century AD) as well as the nature of the attack. It is, however, not likely that the Kushan's, who adopted Buddhism as their state religion, would have targeted a Buddhist community.
- 26 The given account of Kim Byoung-mo's research is based on: Choong Soon Kim, *Voices of Foreign Brides: The Roots and Development of Multiculturalism in Korea* (Rowman Littlefield, 2011), 15–47, as well as on the author's minutes taken during her meeting with Professor Kim on August 28, 2016, at the Korea Institute of Heritage, in Seoul.
- 27 Mohan, *Buddhist Elements*, 70.
- 28 Mohan, 70.
- 29 Mohan, 70.
- 30 Mohan, 70.
- 31 Mohan, 68–69.
- 32 Vladimir Tikhonov (Pak Noja), "India as Viewed by Ancient and Medieval Koreans – Focussing on the 'Karak Kukki' (Records of Karak State)," in *Key Papers on Korea: Essays Celebrating 25 Years of the Centre of Korean Studies, SOAS, University of London*, ed. Andrew David Jackson (London-Boston: Global Oriental, 2014), 51–53.
- 33 Tikhonov, *India as Viewed...*, 53.
- 34 John Mark Frankl, "Our Country: Changing Images of the Foreign in Korean Literature and Culture" (Doctoral Thesis (unpublished), Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 2003), 19–20.
- 35 Frankl, *Our Country*, 20.
- 36 Frankl, 20.
- 37 Kwangsu Lee, *Buddhist Ideas and Rituals*, 33–43.
- 38 Lee, *Buddhist Ideas*, 36.
- 39 Lee, 36.
- 40 Lee, *Buddhist Ideas and Rituals*, 37.
- 41 Lee, 37.
- 42 Lee, 34.
- 43 Lee, 35.
- 44 Lee, 38.
- 45 Lee, 46 and 41.
- 46 Indian scholar specialising in East Asian Studies as well as the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Korea in 2008–2011.

38 *Hazy-Clear Beginnings or a Purpose Beyond the Legend*

- 47 Tayal, *India and the Republic of Korea*, 2.
- 48 Tayal, 4.
- 49 For instance, in 2016, the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare started a campaign to raise social awareness about tolerance and acceptance. On their official website, visual and verbal references were made to princess Hō – the first queen of Korea, who was a foreign bride, and yet whose blood is still running in the veins of many hundreds of Korean people. (See: <https://www.korea.kr/multi/visualNewsView.do?newsId=148823215&pageIndex=1>).
- 50 Ilyōn, *Samguk yusa*, 167–168.
- 51 Tayal, 2.
- 52 Kyung-sik Kim, “Princess Suriratna of India Marries King Suro of the Gaya Kingdom Nearly 2,000 Years Ago,” *The Korea Post*, September 8, 2020, <http://www.koreapost.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=21413> (Retrieved July 15, 2023).
- 53 In the same year, the mayors of the city of Ayodhya and the city of Kimhae in South Korea had signed a “sister city” agreement in March 2001.
- 54 See for example: Piyush Srivastava, “Ayodhya’s New World Heritage Site Will Remember Korean Queen,” *Daily Mail*, March 8, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2985499/Ayodhya-s-new-world-heritage-site-remember-Korean-queen.html>. (Retrieved May 1, 2023); IANS, “Adityanath: UP Planning Memorial for South Korean Queen in Ayodhya,” *Mid-Day*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.mid-day.com/news/india-news/article/adityanath-up-planning-memorial-for-south-korean-queen-in-ayodhya-19291159>. (Retrieved May 5, 2023).
- 55 Tanaya Singh, “Hundreds of South Koreans Visit Ayodhya Every Year. This Is Why!,” *The Better India*, March 5, 2016, <https://www.thebetterindia.com/48519/ayodhya-south-korea-queen-hur-hwang-ok/>. (Retrieved May 5, 2023).
- 56 Many instances of Indian online media explain the presence of the egg by adding to the original legend a non-existent aspect and stating that one of the objects carried by the princess on her voyage to Korea was a golden egg.
- 57 See i.e.: Suanshu Khurana, “Explained: Queen Heo Hwang-Ok of Korea, and Her Ayodhya Connection,” *The Indian Express*, October 26, 2021, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/korean-queen-heo-hwang-ok-ayodhya-connection-7590627/>. (Retrieved May 19, 2023).
- 58 South Korea’s reasons for marketing the Ayodhya connection, other than tourism, are connected mainly with attracting young people to come and study and in the country which has the second best education system in the world and whose citizens feel greatly connected with India, for about 22 percent of them could be decedents of the princess from Ayodhya. See: Statesman News Service, “South Korea Using Historical Connection with India to Woo Tourists,” *The statesman*, July 19, 2017, <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/south-korea-using-historical-connection-with-india-to-woo-tourists-1500475425.html>. (Retrieved May 19, 2023).
- 59 N. Parthasarathi, *The Legend of Ayodhya Princess in Korea* (Seoul: Tagore Society of India, 2011).
- 60 N. Parthasarathi, *Sriratna & Kim Suro: The Legend of an Indian Princess in Korea*, illustrated by Soumitra Dasgupta (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2015).
- 61 Parthasarathi, *The Legend*, 14.
- 62 Parthasarathi, 11.
- 63 Parthasarathi, 77.
- 64 Parthasarathi, 214–216.
- 65 For Indian readers it also carries an immediate association with the image of goddess Durga riding on the back of a tiger.
- 66 The estimated number of tigers in India in 2022 was 3,167. See: “Tiger Census 2022: India’s Tiger Population Increased by 200 in Last Four Years,” April 9, 2023, “Tiger Census 2022: India’s Tiger Population Increased by 200 in Last

- Four Years,” April 9, 2023, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wild-life-biodiversity/tiger-census-2022-india-s-tiger-population-increased-by-200-in-last-four-years-88673>. (Retrieved May 23, 2023).
- 67 More on the parallels regarding the place of a tiger in Indian and Korean culture, see: Renata Czekalska, “‘What Immortal Hand or Eye Dare Frame Thy Fearful Symmetry?’ The Image of the Tiger in Indian and Korean Culture: Cases of Gond and Minhwa Traditions,” in *In Werge Durchs Labyrinth*, ed. Carmen Brandt and Hans Harder (Heidelberg: CrossAsia-eBooks, 2020).
- 68 For the depictions of both the post stamps, see: Source: Contributors to Wikimedia projects, “Memorial of Heo Hwang-Ok, Ayodhya,” Wikipedia, February 17, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_of_Heo_Hwang-ok,_Ayodhya#/media/File:Suriratna_2019_stamp_of_India.jpg; Contributors to Wikimedia projects, “Memorial of Heo Hwang-Ok, Ayodhya,” Wikipedia, February 17, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_of_Heo_Hwang-ok,_Ayodhya#/media/File:Queen_Heo_2019_stamp_of_India.jpg. (Both retrieved: 21 January 2023).
- 69 The meaning of the name Hwang-ok, translated as “yellow jade,” is similar to the semantic connotation of Suriratna, meaning “the sun-like (golden) gemstone.”
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- 78 “The Korean researchers identified the stone balls supposedly brought by Heo Hwang-ok belonged to India. Hence its composition needs to be compared with South Indian rocks.” See: Kannan, 11.
- 79 Kannan, 22.

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- 80 According to the editor of the volume, the articles provided in the book “demystify” the myth that Queen Heo Hwang-Ok belongs to Ayodhya on the basis of maritime trade routes (paper by V. Narayanan), underline the Tamil (Pandya Dynasty) origin of the symbol twin fish (paper by Thenkasi Subramanian), examine links between Korea and Tamilnadu based on language, food, drinks, culture, art and craft, housing and feminine life style etc. (paper by Sindhia Lingusamy) as well as a possibility of the princess belonging to Tamilnadu (Pandya Kingdom, Kongu etc.; papers by Malar Mangai, Pavala Sankari).
- 81 Chitra Hong Kong, “Is Korean Iron Queen Heo from Tamil Nadu? – Pandya Twin Fish Symbol Resemblances to Korea Symbols,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2JHX73Ag8M>. (Retrieved January 23, 2023).
- 82 See: commentaries to Chitra Hong Kong (Retrieved January 23, 2023)
- 83 See for example: Morgan E. Clippinger, “Korean and Dravidian: Lexical Evidence for an Old Theory,” *Korean Studies* 8 (1984): 1–57, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1353/ks.1984.0011>; Homer Bezaleel Hulbert, *A Comparative Grammar of the Korean Language and the Dravidian Languages of India* (Seoul: Methodist Publishing House, 1905); Homer Bezaleel Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea: Illustrated from Photographs* (New York: Doubleday, 1906); Ki-Moon Lee and S. Robert Ramsey, *A History of the Korean Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Ho-Min Sohn, *The Korean Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).
- 84 Mohan, *Buddhist Elements*, 69–70.
- 85 Tikhonov, *India as Viewed*, 56.
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- 87 See for example: “The Missing Links of Asian History,” *THEAsiaN*, <http://www.theasian.asia/archives/82632> (the article contains an extreme claim of princess Hō being an elder (sic) sister to Rama, the Hindu deity and the hero of the *Ramayana* himself!); Jansatta, “Koriyā Kī Rānī ‘Ho’ Kā Ayodhyā Mem Banegā Smārak,” *Jansatta*, March 2, 2016, <https://www.jansatta.com/rajya/up-build-south-korean-queen-huh-memorial-in-ayodhya/73563/>; Krantidoot, “Kyā Ayodhyā Kī Rāj Kumārī Thī Koriyā Kī Pūrv Mahārānī Surīratnā?,” *Blogger*, June 2, 2015, <http://www.krantidoot.in/2015/06/Surirtna-Korea-former-Queen-or-princess-of-Ayodhya-.html>; ABP News, “Sīem Yogī Ne Kī Ghosṇā – Ayodhyā Mem Banegā Dakṣiṇ Koriyā Kī Rānī Kā Smārak,” *ABP News*, April 7, 2018, <http://abpnews.abplive.in/uttar-pradesh/up-planning-memorial-for-south-korean-queen-in-ayodhya-adityanath-827231>. etc. (All retrieved May 23, 2023).
- 88 See for example: Dipak K Dash, “India Supports Peace and Stability in Korean Peninsula: VP Naidu,” *Times Of India*, March 8, 2018, <https://timesofindia.india.com/india/india-supports-peace-and-stability-in-korean-peninsula-vp-naidu/articleshow/63223850.cms>; March 8, 2018, http://164.100.47.5/newcommitee/press_release/Press/Media%20Unit/Korean%20Delegation%20Press%20Release%2008-03-2018.pdf. etc. (Both retrieved May 14, 2023).

- 89 Suryavamsha (also known as Ikshvaku or Aikshvaka) – a dynasty established by Ikshvaku, the grandson of Surya (the sun god); the *Ramayana* mentions the genealogy of the Ikshvaku dynasty to Rama.
- 90 According to Buddhist tradition, the origin of the Shakya clan, to which Buddha belonged, can be traced to king Okkaka, the Pali version of the Sanskrit name Ikshvaku.
- 91 Grayson, *Myths*, 193–195; (source given as: *Samguk yusa*, Part 4.3, “Kūmgwan-sōng Pasa sōkt’ap.”).
- 92 Grayson, 193–194.
- 93 Grayson, 194.
- 94 Grayson, 194.
- 95 *Indian Horizons*, 95.
- 96 The reverential treatment the consulted sources give to the preserved stone monument of Pasa Pagoda, rules out a possibility of a metaphorical interpretation of the action of bringing a “pagoda” from India, which otherwise could suggest bringing only the words of a special prayer which could then be placed in a pagoda. I am grateful to Professor Ewa Rynarzewska for suggesting this possibility.
- 97 Withfield, *Korean Buddhist Culture*, 60.
- 98 Withfield, 40.
- 99 Whitfield, 57.
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