

## Silla's Skillful Diplomacy under King Nulchi in the Fifth Century

Chizuko T. Allen

University of Hawaii at Manoa

The *Samguk sagi*, the oldest surviving Korean chronicles compiled by the Koryŏ official Kim Pusik in the twelfth century, relates that the Silla state (?-935) in southeastern Korea was ruled by the nineteenth ruler Kim Nulchi between 417 and 458. Nulchi is the first Silla ruler referred to as *Maripkan*, the “head” leader, as opposed to *Isagŭm*, a title with less prestige and authority, in the *Samguk sagi*, and thus he should be treated as an epoch maker (Kim, Pusik 2012, 95). The epoch maker’s position, however, is usually given to Naemul (r. 356-401), the seventeenth Silla ruler and Nulchi’s father, for two reasons. The *Samguk yusa*, compiled by Buddhist monk Ilyŏn in the thirteenth century, identifies Naemul as the first *Maripkan* and refers to preceding rulers as *Isagŭm*. Also, Naemul was the first Silla ruler who successfully dispatched an envoy to the Chinese court in 381, and thus his name is recorded in Chinese annals (Yi, Man-yŏl 1976, 111-112). In fact, many scholars believe that Silla possibly reached a critical stage in its state formation under the leadership of Naemul (Barnes 2001, 40). Although Naemul undoubtedly was an important figure in Silla’s formative period, Nulchi was no less important as he brought about substantial changes to Silla’s political landscape.

This current paper seeks to shed light on Nulchi’s accomplishments particularly in the field of diplomatic and military affairs vis-à-vis Koguryŏ (?-668), Paekche (?-660), and Wa, the states that continued to compete with Silla in the Korean peninsula and across the Korea strait in the fifth century and beyond. To correctly understand Nulchi’s accomplishments during his reign of four decades, we must first take a look at the characteristics of *Isagŭm* and *Maripkan*’s positions in early Silla.

### The Nature of Silla’s Throne

It is known that the Silla leaders referred to as *Isagŭm*, *Maripkan*, and *wang* (“king”) in the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* in fact shared decision-making power together with powerful nobles. The nobles were represented in the Hwabaek, a council, which functioned for centuries as a deliberative body for important state matters. This characteristic of power sharing was probably more acute in the fifth century than in the sixth century when the Chinese title *wang* and Chinese administrative systems were adopted in Silla (Seth 2006, 38). The *Samguk sagi*, with its Confucian bias, often depicts the early Silla rulers as a strong ruler, but this probably was not the case.

Additionally, early male rulers of Silla shared power with royal women. Although royal women’s activities are rarely recorded in the *Samguk sagi*, scholars recognize that women held special importance in Silla’s history. Three of the recorded fifty-six Silla rulers were women while there was not a single female ruler recorded in the histories of Koguryŏ, Paekche, or later Korean kingdoms. Additionally, the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* often supply the names of Silla’s royal women, especially queens and the mothers of kings. As Sarah M.

Nelson has pointed out, a pattern of matrilineal successions to the office of queen clearly existed at least from the tenth ruler Naehae's queen all the way to Nulchi's queen Aro. It appears that the position of queen was passed on from mother to daughter for generations while the position of *Isagŭm* was passed on to a male relative, such as a brother, nephew, or son-in-law in an unpredictable manner. Early Silla was ruled probably by married pairs, but legitimacy to rule rested in women instead of men. The queen was the spiritual leader, and her husband the war leader (Nelson 1991 and 2003).

Male successions leading up to Nulchi demonstrate the male ruler's dependency on his queen's lineage as a source of legitimacy. According to both the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* accounts, Mich'u, the thirteenth ruler, was the first Silla ruler from the Kim clan. His legitimacy apparently originated from his wife Kwangmyŏng, the daughter of the eleventh ruler Sŏk Chobun. After Mich'u's death, the throne moved to Kwangmyŏng's two brothers, Sŏk Yurye and Kirim, and cousin Hulhae. After them, the male rulership went to Mich'u's nephew Kim Naemul, who had married Poban, Mich'u and Kwangmyŏng's daughter. After Naemul's death, the rulership moved to Silsŏng (r. 402-417), Naemul's relative, and the *Samguk sagi* explains that Naemul's sons were still too young for the throne. Silsŏng's accession probably was a matter of course, however, as he was married to Poban's sister Aeryu, another daughter from the union between Mich'u and Kwangmyŏng. After Silsŏng, Nulchi took the throne because he had married Aro, Silsŏng and Aeryu's daughter (Allen 2007).

The idea that legitimacy rested with women is strongly supported by the excavation results from the Great Tomb at Hwangnam in Kyŏngju, the largest of the Silla tombs measuring 120 meters in length and 22 meters in height. The Great Tomb at Hwangnam is comprised of two overlapping mounds for a ruling couple: the southern mound for a man and the northern mound for a woman. What Nelson and others found was that the northern mound, apparently built later, contained many burial goods that illustrated higher status, including a gold crown and a gold belt, while the southern mound contained many weapons and less prestigious goods, such as silver and gilt-bronze crowns. It appears that the interred man was in charge of military and other practical matters while the interred woman was the primary ruler in charge of spiritual matters (Nelson 1991 and 2003). Today, archaeologists regard the southern mound of the Great Tomb as the burial site of Nulchi, based on the male human remains as well as the age and nature of the burial goods (Park 2008, 125). The burial goods from the two mounds suggest that Nulchi was a military leader who also dealt with daily affairs of government, but his legitimacy probably was derived from his queen who served as the spiritual and primary ruler. This finding by no means lowers Nulchi's position as *Maripkan*, but may force us to look at his rule in a broader term of co-rulership.<sup>1</sup> In any event, it is important to understand that the Silla ruler of the early fifth century did not inherit absolute power, bureaucratic support, or unilateral decision-making authority.

### **Nulchi's Diplomacy with Koguryŏ and Paekche**

Prior to Nulchi's emergence in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, Silla was dominated by Koguryŏ, the mightiest of all Korean states at the time. King Kwanggaet'o (r. 391-413) of Koguryŏ attacked its neighboring states, including the Murong by the Liao River and the Yilou in the northeast, and expanded its

territories in all directions. In relation to Silla, the inscription on King Kwanggaet'o's stele boasts of his southward march all the way to Silla's capital as well as Kungwan Kaya in present-day Kimhae, defeating Wa and Kaya soldiers at the two locations (Seth 2006, 33).

The *Samguk sagi* relates Silla's dispatch of two princes to Koguryŏ as hostages: Naemul's dispatch of Silsŏng in 392 and Silsŏng's dispatch of Pokho in 412. Silsŏng remained there for a decade and returned home to take the throne upon Naemul's death. Pokho returned home thanks to his brother Nulchi's dispatch of the special emissary Pak Chesang in 418 (Kim, Pusik 2012, 90-96). Although the *Samguk yusa* does not mention Silsŏng's sojourn in Koguryŏ, it reports that Pokho was sent there by Nulchi in 419 and remained there till the arrival of Pak Chesang in 426 (Ilyon 2006, 45-50). The *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* agree that Pak Chesang, a heroic retainer of Nulchi, not only brought home Pokhe from Koguryŏ but rescued Misahŭn, another brother of Nulchi's, from Wa in the Japanese archipelago, as discussed below. The *Samguk sagi* emphasizes that Silsŏng's resentment about his sojourn in Koguryŏ which allegedly led to his hatred toward Naemul and his sons. Thus, on the basis of his personal vendetta, Silsŏng sent Pokho to Koguryŏ as well as Misahŭn to Wa as hostages, and he even tried to have Nulchi assassinated by a Koguryŏ man. However, according to the *Samguk yusa*, Nulchi dispatched his brother Pokho to Koguryŏ, and Naemul dispatched his son Misahŭn to Wa. Sending princes to Koguryŏ was probably much more than an act of personal retaliation.

Silla at this time still lacked military and political might as compared with Koguryŏ, which had fully developed military and political systems that controlled a vast territory. Thus Silla took a subservient posture to Koguryŏ, as indicated by the inscription on King Kwanggaet'o's stele. To ensure Silla's loyalty, the Koguryŏ king demanded Silla princes to be brought to and remain in his capital. Silla leaders could not afford to refuse the demand and risk Koguryŏ's sanctions. Sending princes to Koguryŏ probably was a matter of necessity and not of personal revenge, and thus it may have been Nulchi, not Silsŏng, who dispatched Pokho to appease Koguryŏ.

The *Samguk sagi* depicts Silsŏng's downfall and Nulchi's rise again from the perspective of personal conflicts. Silsŏng, who still resented Naemul, sought to have Nulchi assassinated by a Koguryŏ man visiting Silla. However, after seeing Nulchi's princely appearance and behavior, the Koguryŏ man quickly changed his mind and deserted Silsŏng's plans. Upon finding out Silsŏng's malice, Nulchi decided to eliminate Silsŏng. The *Samguk yusa's* account is similar except that it refers to Silsŏng's scheme to bring a Koguryŏ army to do away with Nulchi.

These accounts reveal not only the rivalry that existed between Silsŏng and Nulchi but the magnitude of Koguryŏ's influence upon Silla's throne. Silsŏng's accession immediately following his return from his a decade-long sojourn in Koguryŏ as well as his use of a Koguryŏ man, or army, for domestic politics suggests his close ties with Koguryŏ, which was his political asset at the initial stage. In the end, the Koguryŏ man's change of heart led to Silsŏng's demise. Nulchi's ability to convince the Koguryŏ man of his own worth not only saved him but ultimately put him on the throne. He may have projected himself as a man potentially beneficial to Koguryŏ's interests and may have pledged his allegiance in exchange for Koguryŏ's support. Thus it is possible that soon after his accession Nulchi sent his brother Pokho to Koguryŏ to demonstrate his allegiance. Even if Pokho had already been in

Koguryō, contrary to the *Samguk sagi*'s insistence, it is unlikely that Nulchi immediately brought back his brother from Koguryō, his benefactor

Sometime during his reign, Nulchi carefully selected Pak Chesang as a special emissary to Koguryō with the mission to retrieve Pokho. Both the *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* give the impression that Nulchi conducted a statewide search and identified Pak for the assignment, but Pak was no stranger to Nulchi. Pak, according to the *Samguk sagi*, was the lord of Samnyangju, present-day Yangsan city in South Kyōngsang province, and a fifth-generation descendant of an early Silla King, Pak P'asa. According to the *Samguk yusa*'s references, he was married to Ch'isul, Nulchi's queen Aro's sister (Sōn 2001, 258). Thus Pak was an in-law and no stranger to Nulchi.

While the *Samguk sagi* reports that Pak simply traveled to Koguryō and successfully persuaded its king to release Pokho, the *Samguk yusa* accounts depict a carefully planned action involving deception. Pak, under disguise, met with Pokho in Koguryō and had him prepare for a covert flight to head home. Pokho feigned illness to stay away from the king's palace and later met with Pak on the seacoast. When the Koguryō king found out that his hostage had fled, he angrily ordered his soldiers to pursue him to no avail. Pokho, along with Pak, safely returned home to the tearful embrace of Nulchi, but Pak was soon assigned to another task. He was to bring back Misahūn from Wa, and he ended up using a similar scheme to deceive the Wa authorities.

Nulchi's decision to retrieve Pokho was an important step toward asserting its own rights toward Koguryō. If Pak had indeed sneaked Pokho out by deception as the *Samguk yusa* says, the relationship between the two states must have turned sour following this incident. Silla needed to make peace with Koguryō and avoid war at any cost. Perhaps Pak's retrieval of Pokho was done in a peaceful fashion, but still Silla took pains to appease Koguryō. The *Samguk sagi* reports that in 424 Nulchi sent an envoy to Koguryō and the Koguryō king reciprocated with generosity (Kim, Pusik 2012, 96). Thus Silla's subservience to its mighty northern neighbor remained for the time being.

Archaeologists agree that fifth-century Silla was under the influence of Koguryō. The Great Tomb at Hwangnam, the likely burial site for Nulchi and his queen, contained many burial goods created in Silla under the influence of Koguryō craftsmanship. The gilt-bronze stirrups excavated from the southern mound turned out to be particularly similar to those excavated from the Taiwang tomb in Ji'an, north of the Yalu River, which is believed to be the tomb of King Kwanggaet'o (Pak 2008, 125-128).

In 427, the Koguryō king Changsu (r. 413-491) made an important decision to move his capital from the Yalu River region to P'yōngyang at the Taedong River. This southern move by Koguryō came about when its northwestern advance was blocked by the Sino-Turkic states of northern China. The mighty northern kingdom's southward move was threatening enough to prompt Silla and Paekche, previously hostile states, to approach each other (Seth 2006, 33).

The *Samguk sagi* accounts in both the Silla annals and the Paekche annals report that in 433 the Paekche king Piyu (r. 427-454) sent an envoy to Silla and requested peace. Nulchi accepted this proposition. To confirm Silla's intent, Paekche sent two fine horses in spring and a white falcon in autumn in the following year. Nulchi soon reciprocated by sending gifts of fine gold and lustrous pearls. Such gift exchanges convey the enthusiasm felt by Silla and Paekche leaders at this

time. For both states, the alliance proved important in coping with Koguryō's incursions in the next hundred and twenty years.

The Silla-Paekche alliance may have involved a royal marriage. The Paekche annals of the *Samguk sagi* relate that in 553 the Paekche king Sōng sent his daughter in marriage to Silla. As Jonathan W. Best argues, this particular royal marriage in fact may have taken place in 433, when the alliance was signed by Nulchi and Piyu, and Kim Pusik and his team simply ante-dated the account by two sexagenary cycles. King Sōng could not have sent his daughter to marry the Silla king in 553. In that year, Silla betrayed Paekche and took over the lower Han River valley that Paekche had just regained from Koguryō, and in the following year, King Sōng and his son initiated a retaliatory attack on Silla (Best 2006, 280 and 335).

## Relations with Wa

The *Samguk sagi* and the *Samguk yusa* feature Nulchi's younger brother Misahūn's return from Wa as the most important incident involving Silla-Wa relations early in Nulchi's reign. The *Samguk sagi* relates that Silsōng dispatched Misahūn to Wa out of spite to Naemul in 402 while the *Samguk yusa* recounts that Naemul sent ten-year-old Misahūn upon Wa's request in 390. Despite the discrepancies in the details of his dispatch, the two books agree that after decades of detention in Wa Misahūn returned to Silla thanks to Nulchi's decision and Pak Chesang's clever scheme. Pak arrived in Wa, won the confidence of the Wa king by deception, and let Misahūn escape alone. His return to Silla took place in 418, according to the *Samguk sagi*, or in 425 according to the *Samguk yusa*. The angered Wa king proceeded to have Pak burned to death in a remote island (Allen 2003).

The negative exchanges are not limited to the incident surrounding Misahūn's detention and return. The *Samguk sagi* contains numerous accounts of Wa attacks of Silla from earliest times through the end of the fifth century, and the time of Nulchi was no exception. During his reign, Wa troops made four major invasions of Silla: an encircling of Myōnghwal Fortress via the eastern region in 431, a raid of the southern region and another raid in the eastern region in 440, and an encircling of the Silla capital for ten days in 444. In the last incident, Nulchi made a strategic mistake of pursuing retreating Wa soldiers and lost half of his troops in a battle outside of Kyōngju.

Such records contradict material evidence observed by archaeologists today, represented by Pak Ch'ōn-su. Pak points out that there existed significant exchange between Silla and Japan particularly in the first half of the fifth century. The Japanese archipelago always depended on southern Korea as suppliers of iron, and prior to the fifth century iron ingots excavated from large tombs in western Japan always came from the Kimhae region, the center of the Kaya states clustered along the Naktong River. But, in the first half of the fifth century, iron ingots imported to the archipelago were clearly manufactured in Silla. In return for iron, Silla apparently imported from Japan numerous curved jade beads, which are excavated from the Great Tomb at Hwangnam and other royal tombs of Silla. Many jade beads of the highest quality, in fact, were found attached to the gold royal crowns, including seventy-seven pieces in the northern mound of the Great Tomb at Hwangnam, the likely burial site for Nulchi's queen. The manufacture of the jades excavated in Silla and Kaya regions have been traced to Itoigawa in Niigata prefecture in Japan.

One may argue that goods could migrate through forceful actions such as plunder. However, Pak explains that both Silla-produced gilt bronze ornaments excavated in Japanese tombs and archipelago-produced jades found in Silla tombs were prestige goods, meant to demonstrate the royal power as distinguished from regional powers. Even Silla's military implements, such as iron spear heads, armor, and gilt bronze quivers, were introduced into the archipelago and influenced the craftsmanship of armor found among royal burial goods in Japan. Based on such significant evidence, Park concludes that the Silla-Wa exchanges must have included political relations between the royal authorities (Park 2008, 128-134). Then, how do we reconcile this material evidence for intimacy with the Silla-Wa hostility recorded in the *Samguk sagi*?

The *Nihon shoki*, one of the two oldest surviving books of Japanese history compiled in the early eighth century, provides information that suggests a cordial relationship between the Japanese Yamato government and the Silla authorities. The *Nihon shoki* accounts of the early fifth century make four separate references to Silla's "tribute" to the Yamato government: the thirty-first year of King Ōjin, and the eleventh, seventeenth, and fifty-third years of King Nintoku. According them, in Ōjin's thirty-first year, a fire that started at Silla tribute envoys' lodging spread and burned many ships that had gathered from Japanese provinces at Muko Harbor, present-day Hyogo prefecture. To make up for the loss, the Silla king offered to send a team of skilled workers to build new ships for the Yamato government (*Nihongi* 1956, I 282). Next, in Nintoku's eleventh year, Silla men arrived at the Yamato court with tribute and remained to work on the construction of a river bank in Yamato (*Nihongi* 1956, I 282). In Nintoku's seventeenth year, the Yamato government, upon reproaching Silla for failure to send tribute, received eighty ship-loads of tribute including luxury items (*Nihongi* 1956, I 284). These accounts suggest that Silla envoys regularly visited Yamato with coveted goods and skilled workers that helped strengthen the power of the Yamato government. The *Nihon shoki*'s use of the word "tribute" only reveals the *Nihon shoki* compiler's disdain for Silla and not the reality of the Silla-Yamato relationship. Although Yamato's gifts to Silla are not mentioned, Yamato undoubtedly sent goods to Silla to maintain reciprocal relations.

Nevertheless, the *Nihon shoki* account of Nintoku's fifty-third year conveys the Yamato government's belligerence to Silla. It recounts that Yamato not only rebuked Silla for failure to send tribute but made a punitive attack with an army invading Silla villages and bringing back Silla people as prisoners (*Nihongi* 1956, I 295-296). This account may suggest that the friendly relationship could easily turn sour and the Yamato king resorted to outright military attacks at times. At the same time, we must consider the possibility that the *Nihon shoki* accounts incorporated surviving records of piratical Silla invasions by Japanese regional powers but attributed such acts to the Yamato authorities instead. This is because the *Nihon shoki* accounts were compiled under the premise that the Yamato had monopolized all relations with the Korean peninsula (Kim, Ūn-suk 1992).

What is striking is that the *Nihon shoki* accounts of King In'gyō, who reigned approximately from 440 to 460, report Silla-Yamato relations in an extremely positive light. In'gyō's reign corresponds to the second half of Nulchi's reign in Silla.<sup>2</sup> They relate that because In'gyō had suffered from a certain illness the Yamato government, upon his accession, sent an envoy to Silla to procure a physician. A capable physician arrived from Silla, and his treatment promptly

healed In'gyō (*Nihongi* 1956, I 315-316). The *Kojiki*, the other book of classical Japanese history compiled in the early eighth century, rarely refers to Korean peninsula affairs, but it reports the same incident with differing details. The *Kojiki* account says that the Silla physician who successfully treated In'gyō was the chief envoy of Silla's tributary mission that brought eighty ship-loads of goods to Yamato (*Kojiki* 1968, 332).

Although there is no mention of Silla envoys subsequent to this incident, the following *Nihon shoki* account of In'gyō's funeral confirms close interactions maintained by the two states. When In'gyō died, the grieving Silla king sent eighty tribute ships and eighty musicians carrying various musical instruments. When the Silla ships arrived at Tsushima Island in the strait, Tsukushi in northern Kyushu, and finally Naniwa near Yamato, the envoys and musicians, all dressed in plain white garments, wailed. During their procession from Naniwa to Yamato, they wailed, sang, danced, and played musical instruments, expressing their sorrow for the Yamato king's passing. But the account also suggests that the Silla-Yamato friendship cooled after the funeral was over. The Yamato officials who misunderstood that the Silla men had had affairs with Yamato palace women threw them into prison. Even though they were later vindicated and released, Silla resented Yamato for this and subsequently reduced the number of ships and the kinds of goods to be sent (*Nihongi* 1956, I 325-326).

In sum, the *Nihon shoki* accounts clearly convey friendly exchanges officially and regularly conducted between Silla and Yamato in the first half of the fifth century, and this is confirmed by the archaeological studies as discussed above. Then, how do we explain the *Samguk sagi*'s many references to Wa troops and their incursions of Silla villages and capital? The key to answering this question lies in the complex political conditions of the Japanese archipelago, which the Korean annals simply refer to as Wa (Korean: Wae).

Japanese scholars often discuss the Yamato state's growing control over the archipelago in the fifth century, emphasizing the kings' ability to send tribute to the Song court in southern China and the excavation of late-fifth-century iron swords that suggest loyalty of remote regional lords to the Yamato king.<sup>3</sup> An increasing number of Japanese scholars, however, contend that fifth-century Yamato was not a centralized state, but rather an alliance with regional polities located in many parts of the archipelago. It appears that some of these polities maintained their own relations with Korean peninsula states. First, in the 1970s, Inoue Hideo suspected that the Kaya states from the beginning had interacted with the archipelago's regional chiefs rather than the Yamato hegemon (Inoue 1973, 109). Then, scholars began pointing out the Iwai Rebellion of 530 attests to the autonomy maintained by regional powers.<sup>4</sup> The chiefly Iwai clan not only stretched its influence from northern to central Kyushu but interacted with Silla, as the *Nihon shoki* accounts refer to its receiving "bribery" from Silla.<sup>5</sup> The rebellion is now understood as a clash between Yamato's search for hegemony and Iwai's persistence on its autonomy in both domestic and overseas dealings in the long process of Japan's state formation. It was only after the suppression of the rebellion when Yamato was able to directly control Hakata Bay facing the Tsushima strait (Yamao 1999, 56-60; Sato 2005, 283)

Ōyama Seiichi advanced the concept of a dual structure in interpreting the Japanese archipelago's international relations in the fifth-century. According to this theory, while the Yamato government pursued diplomatic contacts with the Paekche kingdom and the Southern Chinese dynasties, Japanese regional powers maintained

their traditional relations with Silla and Kaya (Ōyama 1999, 76-80). Yōn Min-su agrees with this theory and thinks that the dual structure remained intact well into the sixth century (Yōn 1998, 528).

Based on the above studies, we can surmise that the Wa troops that made frequent attacks to fifth-century Silla originated not from Yamato but from outer regions of the Japanese archipelago. Mori Kimiyuki assumes that the invaders sailed from the archipelago to the southern and southeastern shores of the peninsula, noting that they arrived in spring and summer months when the sea was calm (Mori 2010, 147). Jonathan Best also sees piratical nature in the assailants and suspects that the attacks were made without the authorization of the Yamato government (Best 2006, 90).

The Yamato government, located at the northeastern end of the Seto Inland Sea, needed to sail to northern Kyushu at the western end of the Inland Sea before traveling to southern Korea via the Tsushima strait and the Korea strait. There existed two Inland Sea routes to travel from Yamato to northern Kyushu: the route simply to sail westward via Kibi, present-day Okayama, along the shores of the Chūgoku region and the route to first sail southwest to Kii, present-day Wakayama, and then along the northern shores of Shikoku. Kibi and Kii produced clans actively engaged in salt making, ship building, and sailing particularly to the Korean peninsula, and in fact many individuals of the Kibi and Ki(i) clans appear in the *Nihon shoki* accounts concerning overseas affairs. These powerful clans were important allies, but sometimes contenders, to Yamato (Kishi 1966, 117-119).

In the Kibi region, there remain fifth-century tumuli that are just as large as the largest royal tumuli located in Yamato and Osaka. One of the Kibi tumuli was built in the early fifth century, and it probably was the largest tomb in the archipelago at the time. A popular view in Japan is that Yamato and Kibi together as allies formed the Yamato government (Takahashi 1992, 74-75). The Kibi clan, as well as the Ki(i) clan and the clans in Kyushu, maintained their relations with southern Korean states and communities, independent of the Yamato authorities (Gorman 1999, 48). The archipelago's multi-lateral relations with Silla, as well as with the Kaya states, via the regional powers, are archaeologically attested (Pak 2007, 145-146). These regional powers of the archipelago possibly resorted to invasions and plunders when they were unable to obtain coveted goods and workmen through peaceful means.

As mentioned above, for decades, Japanese scholars have studied the Five Kings of Wa, mentioned in the Chinese annals *Song shu*, as evidence of a powerful Yamato state, and attempted to link them to Yamato kings who appear in the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*. In fact, the Yamato kings' dispatch of envoys to the Chinese court to receive Chinese military titles may testify to the nature of the Yamato government as the head of a broad alliance. Between 421 and 478, Wa envoys arriving in the Song court requested Chinese military titles for the Wa king as well as his generals. For instance, in 438, Wa envoys insisted on two requests: a higher military title for King Chin (Chinese: Zhi) to take command of southern Korea, including Silla, Paekche, and Imna-Kaya, as well as additional titles for thirteen of Chin's generals. In 451, Wa envoys again requested a similar title associated with southern Korean states for King Sai (Chinese: Ji) as well as lower titles for twenty-three of his generals.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the Wa kings requested their own titles to be only slightly higher than their generals' titles indicates that the Yamato king's position was not extraordinarily higher than that of his allies, the regional lords

(Chu 2005, 164-165; Yang 2005, 109). The kings' insistence on titles to command southern Korean states, regardless of its nominal nature, also suggests their need to impress their superiority upon the regional lords as far as overseas affairs were concerned (Mori 2010, 135; Kim, Ŭn-suk 1997, 144).

Silla, therefore, dealt with both the Yamato government and the archipelago's regional powers at the same time. Nulchi confronted and countered the Wa troops coming from the archipelago's regional powers that devastated Silla villages and capital. Concurrently, he maintained friendly relations with the Yamato court, supplying goods and workers requested by Yamato and receiving goods useful to heighten his authority in Silla. He clearly distinguished Yamato envoys from piratical bands, although they both came from Wa, the Japanese archipelago. However, it is questionable if Kim Pusik distinguished them when compiling the *Samguk sagi* in the twelfth century. As both the Yamato government and outer regions were simply referred to as Wa, it was easy for later historians to lose track of the multi-lateral relations that Silla was engaged in.

### **Finding Silla's Own Path**

The *Samguk sagi* conveys brief but important information regarding Silla's domestic developments under Nulchi's leadership. In 429, Sije dike, as long as two miles, was constructed, to prevent flood. In 435, Silla royal tombs of many generations were repaired. In 438, the use of ox carts was taught and promoted to increase agricultural production (Kim, Pusik 2012, 96-97; Yi, U-t'ae 1997). Silla enjoyed peace, except for sporadic Wa invasions, and took advantage of this stability to strengthen its control over land, resources, and people.

Silla's territory continued to grow as it reclaimed new land and absorbed adjacent settlements. By 450, Silla placed its northernmost fortress in Hasŭlla, present-day Kangnŭng, thus directly bordering with Koguryŏ in the north. In that year, according to the *Samguk sagi*, a Koguryŏ border general happened to go hunting in the plains of Silchik, present-day Samch'ŏk, which is approximately thirty miles south of Hasŭlla in the Silla territory. Perhaps he looked down on Silla as an inferior state and assumed that its troops would not harm him. The Silla fortress chief Samjik, however, took this action as an offense and thought that it was his duty to defend the border at Hasŭlla. He did not hesitate to attack and kill the Koguryŏ general and his entourage. When King Changsu of Koguryŏ found out what happened, he raised troops and invaded Silla's western region, which also bordered Koguryŏ (Kim, Pusik 2012, 98-99).

According to the *Samguk sagi*, Nulchi immediately sent his apology with humble words, and Changsu withdrew his troops as a consequence. Clearly, Nulchi was not ready for war with Koguryŏ and thus employed diplomacy to avoid it. This was the beginning of a series of Silla-Koguryŏ border conflicts that went on all the way till the seventh century. Four years later, Changsu's army attacked Silla's northern border, the very same area of conflict, signaling Koguryŏ's shift from tolerance to contention concerning Silla's northward expansion. Koguryŏ no longer overlooked Silla's northward expansion and instead began attacking the northern border areas regularly. The *Samguk sagi* is silent about Silla's reaction, but the conflict did not escalate into all-out war at this time. It is possible that Nulchi again used diplomacy to avoid further confrontation.

When Koguryō attacked Paekche in 455, Nulchi made a critical decision to send his troops to rescue Paekche (Kim, Pusik 2012, 99). Thus, for the first time after signing the alliance with Paekche, Nulchi took military actions to assist his ally in its fight with Koguryō. Unprepared for a two-front war, Koguryō troops were forced to withdraw.

In the final analysis, Nulchi enhanced Silla's growth in a number of ways. He initially acquiesced in Koguryō's authority over Silla's domestic affairs so he could eliminate Silsōng and take the throne. Following his accession, however, he slowly steered Silla away from Koguryō's influence. His retrieval of his brother Pokho from Koguryō was the first step in his attempt to establish Silla's autonomy. A decade later, the dice was cast for the future of Silla when Nulchi signed the Silla-Paekche alliance in response to Paekche's proposal. Silla and Paekche continued to assist each other in blocking Koguryō's southern encroachment for over a century. During the reign of Nulchi, however, Silla did not require Paekche's direct military aid. He employed his diplomatic skills, perhaps using the Silla-Paekche alliance as a deterrent, to prevent Koguryō's large-scale invasions. He in fact delayed Silla's military confrontation with Koguryō until very late in his reign and received Koguryō goods and technology, as attested by archaeological finds.

Nulchi navigated through Silla's complex relations with Wa throughout his reign. First, he dealt with piratical troops from the archipelago's regional forces that specialized in shipbuilding and seafaring. These Wa troops seasonally came and plundered at Silla villages near the shores and even ventured to the Silla capital. Nulchi's troops fought hard to defend Silla land and people. Second, Nulchi interacted with the Yamato government that led the alliance of regional powers and even sent envoys to the southern Chinese court. Soon after his accession, Nulchi had his in-law Pak Chesang bring back his brother Misahūn from Yamato, risking a rift with the Yamato government. The rift proved to be temporary as Yamato needed Silla as a trade partner and supplier of advanced goods and technology. Especially after the Yamato king In'gyō recovered from illness thanks to a Silla physician, the two states exchanged diplomatic missions on a regular basis. These missions accompanied exchange of goods, such as iron from Silla to Yamato and jades from Yamato to Silla, as well as migration of skilled workers from Silla to Yamato. Following the demise of the two rulers in the middle of the fifth century, however, Silla-Yamato relations declined, and Yamato looked for iron and advanced goods elsewhere in the Korean peninsula.

Nulchi's authority may not have surpassed that of his queen Aro, the spiritual leader who held legitimacy for this couple to rule. Yet, his many achievements particularly in the diplomatic sphere clearly uplifted his status and the status of male rulers in general. The use of the title *Maripkan* and his son Chabi's immediate succession testify to his enhanced status thanks to his accomplishments. Although Chabi's accession appears to represent a switch to a patrilineal royal succession and thus the rise of male rulers, a closer look reveals a more complex picture. Chabi's queen in fact came from the lineage of hereditary queens because she was born of the union between Misahūn and the daughter of Pak Chesang and Ch'isul, who in fact was Aro's sister. Therefore, Chabi and his queen were both hereditary rulers from the tradition of patrilineal and matrilineal successions and should be considered co-rulers. If it was Nulchi who made such marriage arrangements, he indeed was a man of political skills.

## Notes

1. Many studies exist regarding early Japanese co-rulership by a woman in charge of sacral matters and a man in charge of administrative and military duties (Allen 2007).
2. Although scholars continue to debate on the identity of the first two of the Five Kings of Wa, they agree that the last three of them are Kings In'gyō, Ankō, and Yūryaku of Yamato. The third king Sai, or In'gyō, sent envoys to the Song court in 443, 451, and 460, and therefore his reign probably began around 440 and ended around 460. The second king, Sai's predecessor, sent an envoy in 438, and the fourth king, Sai's successor, sent an envoy in 462. See Yamao 1989, 214.
3. The swords were excavated from the Inariyama tomb in Saitama, north of Tokyo, and the Eta-Funayama tomb in Kumamoto, central Kyushu. See Kumagai 2002, 123.
4. The original date in the *Nihon shoki* is 527.
5. See *Nihongi* 1956, II, 15. The *Nihon shoki's* interpretation is that the Iwai Rebellion was incited by Silla, which sought to prevent Yamato from rendering military aid to southern Kaya that faced Silla's encroachment.
6. By comparison, the Chinese title that the Paekche king Kaero received in 457 was much higher than the titles received by his eleven retainers. See Yang 2005, 109.

## Bibliography

Allen, Chizuko T. 2003. Prince Misahūn: Silla's hostage to Wa from the late fourth century. *Korean Studies* 27 (2003): 1-15.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2007. Early Korean Women Seen in Royal Successions of Silla. 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast, University of Hawaii at Manoa, July 17.

Barnes, Gina L. 2001. *State formation in Korea: Historical and archaeological perspectives*. Richmond: Curzon.

Best, Jonathan W. 2006. *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Chu, Po-don. 2005. 5-segi Koguryō Silla wa Wae ūi kwan'gye . In *Wae 5-wang munje wa Han-II kwan'gye*, ed., Han-II kwan'gyesa yōn'gu nonjip p'yōnch'an wiwōnhoe. Seoul: Kyōngin munhwasa.

Gorman, Michael S. F. 1999. *The Quest for Kibi and the True Origins of Japan*. Bangkok: Orchid Press.

Ilyon. 2006 (reprint). *Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea*. Trans., Ha, Tae-Hung and Grafton K. Mintz. Pittsburgh: Silk Pagoda.

- Inoue, Hideo. 1973. *Mimana Nihonfu to Wa*. Tokyo: Azuma shuppan.
- Kim, Pusik. 2011. *The Koguryō Annals of the Samguk sagi*. Trans., Shultz, Edward J. and Kang, Hugh H.W. Seongnam: Academy of Korean Studies Press.
- Kim, Pusik. 2012. *The Silla Annals of the Samguk sagi*. Trans., Shultz, Edward J. and Kang, Hugh H.W. Seongnam: Academy of Korean Studies Press.
- Kim, Ŭn-suk. 1992. Ilbon sögi Imna kisa ui kich'ojök kömt'o. *Han'guksa simin kangjwa* 11, 17-42. Seoul: Ilchogak.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. Waeguk kwa ũi kwan'gye. In *Han'guk sa 7 Samguk ũi chōngch'i kwa sahe III-Silla Kaya*, ed., Kuksa py'ōnch'an wiwōnhoe, 139-160. Seoul: T'amgudang munhwasa.
- Kishi, Toshio. 1966. *Nihon kodaishi kenkyū*. Tokyo: Haniwa shobō.
- Kojiki*. 1968. Trans., Philippi, Donald L. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.
- Kumagai, Kimio. 2001. *Ookimi kara tennō e* (Nihon no rekishi 3). Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Mori, Kimiyuki. 2010. Kodai ōken no seichō to Nicchō kankei. *Nikkan rekishi kyōdō kenkyū hōkokusho* II. <http://www.jkcf.or.jp/projects/kaigi/history/>
- Nihongi*. 1956 (reprint). Trans., Aston, W.G. London: Bradford & Dickens.
- Nelson, Sarah M. 2003. The queens of Silla" Power and connections to the spirit world. In *Ancient Queens*, ed. Sarah M. Nelson, 77-92. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. The statuses of women in Ko-Shilla: Evidence from archaeology and historic documents. *Korea Journal* 31 (Summer): 101-107.
- Ōkyama, Seiichi. 1999. *Nihon kodai no gaikō to chihōgyōsei*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan.
- Pak, Ch'ōn-su. 2007. *Saero ssūnūn kodaie han-il kyospsa*. Seoul: Sahoe p'yūngnon.
- Pak, Cheun Soo (Pak, Ch'ōn-su). 2008. Kaya and Silla in *Archaeological Perspectives*. In *Early Korea: reconsidering early Korean history through archaeology* I, ed., Byington, Mark E., 113-153. Seoul: Korea Institute Harvard University.
- Sato, Shin. 2005. 6-seki no Wa to Chōsen hantō shokoku. *Nikkan rekishi kyōdō kenkyū hōkokusho* I 2003-2005.

- Seth, Michael J. 2006. *A concise History of Korea: From the Neolithic Period through the Nineteenth Century*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sön, Sök-yöl. 2001. *Silla kukka sŏngnip kwajŏng yŏn'gu*. Seoul: Hyeon.
- Takahashi, Mamoru. 1992. Kibi to Kodai ōken. In *Kofun to chihō ōken*, ed., Kobayashi, Saburō, 47-84. Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu ōraisha.
- Yamao, Yukihiisa. 1989. *Kodai no Nicchō kankei*. Tokyo: Hanawa shobō.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. *Tsukushi kun Iwai no sensō*. Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha.
- Yang, Ki-sok. 2005. 5-seki Paekche aw Wae ui kwan'gye. In *Wae 5-wang munje wa Han-II kwan'gye*, ed., Han-II kwan'gyesa yŏn'gu nonjip p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 49-118. Seoul: Kyŏngin munhwasa.
- Yi, Man-yŏl. 1976. *Samguk sidaesa*. Seoul: Chisik sanŏpsa.
- Yi, U-t'ae. 1997. Silla ũi yungsŏng. . In *Han'guk sa 7 Samguk ũi chŏngch'i kwa sahe III-Silla Kaya*, ed., Kuksa py'ŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, 61-122. Seoul: T'amgudang munhwasa.
- Yŏn, Min-su. 1998. *Kodae Hanil kwan'gyesa*. Seoul: Hyeon.