

Kaya's Rise and Trans-border Activities in Fifth-century Southern Korea

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Introduction

The history of the Kaya states (?–562) had long been shrouded in mystery until recently. The oldest extant Korean history books, the *Samguk sagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms) and the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), compiled respectively in twelfth and thirteenth centuries, provide only passing references to Kaya, and the accounts concerning Kaya in the *Nihon shoki*, Japanese chronicles compiled in the early eighth century, supply information often twisted with Yamato-centered biases. In modern times, much of discussions concerning Kaya were centered on two polarized theories: the theory of Japanese dominance over southern Korea centered on Mimana Nihonfu and the theory of northeast Asian horse-rider conquest of Japan. In the first theory, pre-war Japanese scholars argued that the early Yamato state of Japan militarily dominated the southern Korean peninsula and ruled there through its agency Mimana Nihonfu, located in Kaya, for approximately two centuries until Kaya's fall to the Silla kingdom (57 BC-935) in 562.¹ In the second theory, proponents of the horse-rider theory hypothesized a conquest of the Japanese islands by equestrian tribes that had used Kaya as their stepping stone.² Although these theories asserted opposite conclusions in terms of who had conquered who, they both assigned to Kaya only a passive role in early Korean-Japanese relations. Additionally, both theories gave scholars and non-scholars opportunities to approach history from hierarchical and nationalistic viewpoints rather than from balanced academic perspectives.³

Recent decades saw an increasing number of studies identifying Kaya as an important part of the political development of the Korean peninsula, aided by new archaeological finds from the former Kaya region. Scholars now consider Kaya not only viable states with cultural sophistication but a fourth player in Korea's Three Kingdoms' period (57 BC-668 AD) (Rhee 1999). They agree that Kaya had roughly two periods of prosperity: the time when the Kūmgwan Kaya state in present-day Kimhae at the mouth of the Naktong River led the Kaya states and the time when the Tae Kaya state in present-day Koryōng near the middle reaches of the Naktong grew and dominated much of Kaya. Dealing with the second period characterized by Tae Kaya's prosperity, this paper sheds light on the Kaya states' trans-border activities particularly with the Japanese islands from the middle of the fifth century to the middle of the sixth century. This period of nearly a century saw Kaya's dramatic rise centered on Tae Kaya in the first half and its struggle with the neighboring kingdoms Paekche and Silla's encroachments and resultant decline in the second half.

How did Tae Kaya, situated at the northern end of the Kaya region, managed to grow into a state that interacted with states and polities outside of Kaya? Scholars point out that its iron industry was probably the most important factor that contributed to the growth of the Kaya states. If so, their mechanism to supply iron products to where demands were, regardless of distance, may be the key to understanding Kaya's economic and political strength.⁴ Who were Tae Kay's trade partners, and how did they interact? What trade routes existed, and who were middlemen? And how did Tae Kaya respond to the changing political circumstances in the southern Korean peninsula? This paper addresses these questions and at the same time seeks to present a new framework for understanding Kaya's development and decline from a perspective of long-distance trade particularly across the Korea strait.

Early Relations between Kaya and Proto-Japan

The Kaya states grew out of agricultural settlements along the Nakdong River and its tributaries, stretching from the southern coast to Mt. Kaya in the north and Mt. Chiri in the west, occupying much of present-day South Kyōngsang province. While sharing common culture and language, these settlements formed autonomous small polities separated by hills and mountains that served as natural boundaries. They first appeared as a dozen “Byōnhan” polities, characterized by prosperous iron production, in the *San guo zhi*, the Chinese annals from the third century. The polity of Kuya at the mouth of the Nakdong was the most prosperous of all the Kaya polities, blessed with a natural harbor serving as a point of connection for sea lanes from the eastern coast and western coast of the peninsula as well as the Japanese islands across the Korea strait. Peoples from the Chinese Commanderies in the northern peninsula, Koguryō, Mahan in the southwest, and Chinhan in the southeast, as well as the Japanese islands came and obtained iron products in Kuya, and thus Prof. Yi Hyun-Hae thinks that Kuya served as a “gateway community,” or a central place for market exchange, where those coming from the outside were given easy access to iron products produced in Kūmgwan and other Kaya polities (Yi, Hyun-Hae 1998, 298-299; 2001, 254-255). Kuya developed into Kūmgwan Kaya, literally the “gold crown” Kaya, occupying the key position in the confederation of the Kaya states, until around 400. In addition to Kūmgwan, there were other competitive polities, such as Alla in present-day Haman, which kept its own identity as seen from its refusal to follow Kūmgwan’s pottery style (Sin 2011).

The importance of the Wa, or the people of the Japanese islands, as trade partners to Kūmgwan Kaya increased after the demise of the Chinese Commanderies early in the fourth century. Naturally, Kūmgwan Kaya’s first partners in the Japanese islands were in northern Kyushu, immediately south of the Korea strait. Kūmgwan Kaya’s iron ingots and metal objects unearthed from many Kyushu sites as well as Kyushu-style pottery found from Kimhae and Pusan sites in the third and first half of the fourth centuries. In the second half of the fourth century, however, the primary partners of Kūmgwan Kaya’s ruling class shifted to Yamato elites and their allies in present-day Nara and vicinity. Kūmgwan Kaya’s elite goods such as armors and bronze items appeared in Yamato’s elite tombs while Yamato’s prestige goods such as stone products are unearthed from Kimhae’s elite tombs. Scholars suspect that Yamato was able to increase its influence on the other polities on the islands through its successful long-distances trade and control of the flow of iron and prestige goods (Pak, Ch’ōn-su 2007b, 32-34). Still, the people and polities in Kyushu apparently played important roles in the Kūmgwan Kaya-Yamato alliance as numerous pieces of Kyushu-style pottery have been excavated from many sites in the lower Nakdong River valley. As pots and other artifacts were obviously created and used locally, we can presume that some people from Kyushu settled in southern Kaya and played the role of a mediator in the interactions between the peninsula and the islands, thus making a precedent for a later period (Hong, Po-sik 2006, 32-34).

The close trade ties between Kūmgwan Kaya and Yamato resulted in the latter’s participation in Kaya’s battles against Koguryō as recorded in the inscription on King Kwanggaet’o’s stele. This war experience in the southern peninsula possibly stimulated proto-Japanese military men to continue crossing the Korea strait and taking part in armed struggles in the southern peninsula (Allen 2003, 91-92). As for Kūmgwan Kaya, its prosperity abruptly ended with Koguryō’s incursions (Tikhonov 2000, 3). Kūmgwan’s eastern half, east of the Nakdong, came under Silla’s strong influence, while the remaining half became too weak to carry on its role as Kaya’s leader and gateway (Sin 2011).

Tae Kaya’s Rise and Expansion along the Rivers

After decades of division and confusion in Kaya following Koguryō’s invasion, Tae Kaya rose to prominence in the international stage, as related in historical records.⁵ The Chinese

annals notes that the Kaya king Kaji sent tribute to the southern Chinese dynasty Southern Qi (479-502) and received the title king of Kaya in 479, the very first year of the rule by this southern Chinese dynasty. This was an impressive feat especially when compared with Silla's lack of tribute missions to China until its 521 mission to the Liang court (502-557). In addition, according to the *Samguk sagi*, Tae Kaya maintained close diplomatic and military ties with Silla in the next decades. In 481, when Silla was under Koguryo's attack, Kaya, along with Paekche, sent relief troops, assisting Silla's fight against the Koguryo army. Later, in 496, the Kaya king cemented his alliance with the Silla king by sending a white pheasant. As the Kaya state appearing in these records cannot be none other than Tae Kaya, these activities attest to Tae Kaya's ability to mobilize human and economic resources from many polities and thus becoming a candidate for early state formation (Tikhonov 2000, 21; *Samguk sagi* I, 78-79).

Archaeological finds speaks even more clearly about Tae Kaya's rise. The splendor of Tae Kaya's royal tombs in Koryong's Chisang-dong surpassed those of any other contemporary tombs in Kaya, testifying to its prominence centered on hereditary kings by the late fifth century. In the Japanese islands, Tae Kay goods, particularly its prestige goods represented by gold dangle earrings, began appearing among burial goods from elite tombs encompassing not only western Japan from Kyushu to Yamato but central Japan and parts of eastern Japan. Thus Tae Kaya came to monopolize the proto-Japanese market for prestige goods in the second half of the fifth century (Pak, Ch'on-su 2007b, 55).

Scholars discuss a number of factors that contributed to the growth of Tae Kaya. The Koryong area provided fertile land for agriculture as well as rich iron ore near Mt. Kaya. It occupies a crossroads of inland traffic and is accessible by the Hoe, Soga, and Allim Rivers linked to the middle reaches Naktong. Tae Kaya not only avoided the Koguryo army's attack that devastated Kungwan but absorbed fleeing Kungwan residents, including elites and artisans (Kim T'ae-sik 1993, 91-94; 2010, 223). The political climate of the middle of the fifth century was favorable because Koguryo's southward encroachment was contained by the Paekche-Silla alliance. Additionally, Tae Kaya's successful trade with the Japanese islands is now seen an important factor contributing to its prosperity (Pak, Ch'on-su 2008, 137).

But how did Tae Kaya overcome the disadvantage of the inland location and become successful in long-distance trade? The key to Tae Kaya's success lay in its southward expansion all the way to the southern coast that served as a stepping stone for further travel to distant lands. There are two major river systems that encompassed the north-south length of Kaya: the Naktong River originating from the Taebak Mountains and the Sömjin River originating from the Sobaek Mountains linked to mountains. There are also east-west river flows since the lower Naktong winds from west to east, and its tributaries, such as the Hwang and Nam Rivers, flow from east to west. Thus the rivers covered the entire Kaya region, providing not only much needed water resource to sustain agriculture and iron industry but communication and transportation routes between northern and southern Kaya as well as eastern and western Kaya. At the river mouth in southern Kaya are harbors and communities that provided further water transportation. The importance of access to and control of rivers cannot be overemphasized when discussing the development and prosperity of Tae Kaya.⁶

Based on the distribution of Tae Kaya pottery and prestige goods, we now know that Tae Kaya first expanded along the Hwang River and then the Sömjin River. It first forged a close relationship with its southern neighbor Tara in present-day Hapch'on on the Hwang River and then moved further west along the Hwang to and Köch'ang. Tae Kaya took over Hamyang by the upper Nam River beyond Mt. Tögyu, and then continued on to polities along the Sömjin River in present-day Namwön, Koksöng, Sunch'ang, Kurye, and finally reached Hadong at the mouth of the Sömjin. At Hadong, Tae Kays obtained both river transportation and a harbor to sail out to

the sea, the two indispensable elements for long distance trade. Tae Kaya's diplomatic mission to southern China must have used this route to get to the southwestern coast before crossing the East China Sea (Yi, Yōng-sik 1997, 90; Takada 2006, Sin 2011). Tae Kaya's use of the Naktong River is also attested by archaeological finds. Silla's increasing influence, the use of this important river was not an issue to Tae Kaya until the sixth century (Takada 2006, 28).

It appears that Tae Kaya co-existed with southern Kaya dominated by Alla and So Kaya (Sin 2011, 117-120). Alla occupied a strategic location in present-day Haman just south of the confluence of the Naktong and the Nam, and had formed its own sphere by the fourth century. Alla enjoyed easy access to the southern coastal region: Masan Bay lying approximately ten miles southeastward and Chindong Bay about the same distance southward. The bays provided natural harbors, which in turn were short distance away from the harbor of So Kaya in present-day Kosōng (Nam 2003, 74). So Kaya occupied a central position among the southern Kaya states located west of Alla, but unlike Tae Kaya, it Kaya never formed a hierarchical structure of its own (Sin 2011, 118). Archaeologists point out that So Kaya came under Tae Kaya's influence at the end of the fifth century (Pak, Ch'ōn-su 2007b, 50-52). We can surmise that Masan Bay and Chindong Bay south of Alla as well as many natural harbors at So Kaya served as gateway communities for Tae Kaya and the rest of Kaya, as they provided an ideal start point to cross the Korea strait to sail to Tsushima, Iki, and northern Kyushu

As mentioned above, Kūmgwan Kaya up to the early fifth century not only served as a gateway community but sustained central-place market exchange for traders from others parts of the peninsula and the Japanese islands. By contrast, Tae Kaya, though the center of production and administration, could not possibly play the role of a gateway or a center for market exchange due to its inland location at the northern end of Kaya. Ideal candidates for gateway communities were settlements by harbors on the southern coast. Tae Kaya had no choice but to depend on these southern Kaya communities for their intermediary roles and thus sought to incorporate them in its sphere.

While many Tae Kaya artifacts were unearthed from elite tombs in the Japanese islands, proto-Japanese artifacts, such as pottery, mirrors, and shell products, have been uncovered from Kaya sites from the late fifth to the early sixth centuries. These archaeological sites with proto-Japanese burial goods include Koryōng, the seat of Tae Kaya, Chinju by the middle Nam River, Ūiryōng across the Nam River from Haman, and the southern coast locations such as Sach'ōn, Kosōng, and Kōje, protruding to the South Sea and blessed with bays and natural harbors. The presence of proto-Japanese artifacts in Kaya may be the result of Kaya traders' visits to the islands. Yet, what is noteworthy is that five elite tombs located in Ūiryōng, Sach'ōn, Kosōng, and Kōje, where gateway communities likely existed, are known to bear close resemblance to tombs in the Japanese islands. Some of these tombs are located alongside indigenous local-style tombs while others are removed from local elite tombs. Although these tombs are covered with mounds similar to native Kaya elite tombs, they exhibit features unique to those of the Japanese islands, such as certain coffin shapes, red paint on burial chambers, and burial mound figurines *haniwa*. Archaeologists agree that these features specifically represent northern-central Kyushu burial styles. Furthermore, the burial goods in these tombs include not only artifacts from the Japanese islands but goods that originated from Tae Kaya and So Kaya but other states of the Korean peninsula, such as Paekche and Silla. More weapons and armors appear from these tombs than from native elite tombs (Hong, Po-sik 2006 38-39, Pak, Ch'ōn-su 2008, 144).

Although some Korean scholars discuss the possibility that Kaya elites adopted the burial styles from their trade partners in the Japanese islands, many think that the interred of these tombs in fact had migrated from the islands and settled in southern Korea (Hong, Po-sik 2006, 41). This means that there were elites who had originated from the Japanese islands but moved to

Kaya permanently. Who were these men? Some scholars point out that the Kaya states, particularly Tae Kaya, employed mercenaries originated from the Japanese islands in peninsular military struggles (Pak, Ch'ŏn-su 2008, 145; Tikhonov 2000, 12). Others conjecture that the interred in the proto-Japanese-style tombs were diplomats who came to represent the proto-Japanese polities particularly from Kyushu (Pak, Sang-ŏn, 229). It is possible that proto-Japanese elites came and participated in political and military affairs in southern Kaya.

Did the proto-Japanese men participate in Kaya's trade network? As pointed out by Western anthropologist Colin Renfrew, long-distance trade in early times often required intermediaries who helped overcome geographic and cultural distances. These middlemen could be freelance men, or agents or emissaries employed by one of the trade partners. The trade between the Korean peninsular states and the polities in the Japanese islands may have required many intermediaries due to their distance across the sea as well as their cultural and linguistic gap. For Tae Kaya, an inland state, the need for middlemen was always acute. If the men from northern-central Kyushu who left their tombs in southern Kaya probably served as intermediaries for Tae Kaya's trade system, did they formed "trade diaspora," a community of merchants living among aliens? As Philip D. Curtin pointed out, in many instances of early cross-cultural trade, traders often migrate from their home and settle down in the middle of their host community, forming trade diaspora, so they could serve as trade brokers. After learning the language, customs, and ways of their hosts, they also came to serve as cross-cultural negotiators assisting interactions between the host society and people of their own origin. Multiple settlements of this nature could be formed along the trade routes. Some traders settled down in the host society while others moved back and forth between their home and host communities (Curtin 1984, 2).

The Identity of the Proto-Japanese Traders

Were the men interred in the proto-Japanese-style tombs part of the trade diaspora associated with Tae Kaya's trade network? We now turn to the *Nihon shoki* accounts that portray proto-Japanese elites' activities in southern Korea. Despite its strong Yamato-centered biases and often inaccurate dates and information on early periods, the *Nihon shoki* accounts offer useful information on occurrences between the southern Korean peninsula and the western Japanese islands beginning in the fifth century. Extra caution is due, however, when the descriptions of overseas activities revolve around the Yamato state, which was merely the strongest of many proto-Japanese polities in the period under discussion. It is likely that many activities were in fact initiated by powerful regional clans outside of Yamato and possibly Kaya (Kim, Ūn-suk 1992).

While the *Nihon shoki* references to Kyushu's overseas activities are scarce, there are numerous accounts referring to overseas activities of the fifth and sixth centuries done by two clans: the Kibi and Ki clans. The Kibi clan was based in Kibi in present-day Okayama prefecture and the eastern half of present-day Hiroshima prefecture while the Ki clan was based in Ki in present-day Wakayama prefecture just south of Osaka. Occupying the northeastern and the southeastern shores of the Inland Sea, the two regions served as two parallel Inland Sea corridors between Yamato and northern Kyushu, which in turn served as a gateway to the Korea strait. Shipbuilding and seafaring prospered in both regions from earliest times. Kibi elites left numerous mound tombs from the early Kofun period, and two of its fifth-century tombs are comparable to Yamato royal tombs in size. Archaeologists have found in Kibi and Ki Kaya iron tools and gold jewelry that suggest close ties with Kaya. Kibi is known to have successfully launched iron smelting by the late fifth century, early than the rest of the Japanese islands (Gorman 1999; Fujii 2000; Fujimoto 2003; Ōyama 2004).

The *Nihon shoki* relates a fascinating account of Tasa no Omi of upper Kibi (Tasa in charge of eastern Kibi) as an occurrence at the time of the Yamato king Yuryaku in the late fifth century.⁷ According to this account, Yuryaku sent Tasa away as governor of Imna (J: Mimana) and took his beautiful wife during his absence. Tasa, naturally angered, resided in Imna and visited Silla. Soon, Yuryaku sent Tasa's son Otokimi to chastise Silla for not sending tribute to Yamato. But Otokimi went to Paekche instead to obtain artisans requested by Yamato. In the meantime, Tasa remained in Kaya and told Otokimi, via a messenger, to ignore Yamato's orders and remain in Paekche (*Nihongi* I, 348-349). While this story provides insights into Kibi-Kaya relations, it sparks many questions. The problems include the identity of "Imna" and Yamato's authority to appoint its "governor." The term Imna, appearing in the Samguk sagi and the inscription on the Koguryō king Kwanggaet'o's stele, originally meant Kūmgwan Kaya, as the older form "Nim-na" meant either the land or harbor of the lord (Inoue 1973, 107; Kang 2002, 35-38). The place referred to as Imna in this account, however, was not Kūmgwan itself but Kūmgwan's replacement from the view point of those in the Japanese islands, and therefore was probably the southern coastal region of Kaya. Yamato had no authority to appoint "governor of Imna," so Tasa probably went on his own accord, accompanied by his men, to an area where proto-Japanese people had already settled. It is noteworthy that two generations of the Kibi men traveled, or attempted to travel, from Kaya to Silla and Paekche to Silla. One of them moved to Kaya permanently while the other brought home Paekche's skilled artisans.

What did Kibi and other regions of the Japanese islands supply to Kaya and other southern Korean polities in return for iron goods and technology? As the pottery, jade, and shell products from the Japanese islands, found in Kaya burials, are not equivalent in value to iron and gold products from Tae Kaya, fragile goods must have been shipped from the islands to the southern peninsula. Lumber is a good candidate as seen in the excavation of a Kaya coffin made of Japanese camphor (cinnamon camphora) in 2006 (*Asahi shinbun* 2006). Just as Paekche imported timber from Japanese umbrella-pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*), a tree unique in the region of Ki, for the coffin of King Muryōng's (r. 501-523), specialized lumber from the Japanese islands was exported for the use of Kaya elites (O 2004). Food stuff, such as grains, salt, and salted fish, abundant in the Inland Sea, are also candidates for exports.

The most important item possibly exported to Kaya was manpower, particularly in the form of soldiers. The *Nihon shoki* relates, as an occurrence in the eighth year of King Yuryaku that, upon Silla's request, the king of "Imna" dispatched four proto-Japanese generals, "war generals (*ikusa no kimi*) of Nihonfu," including Kibi no Oyumi, to assist Silla's fight against Koguryō (*Nihongi* I, 352). It is noteworthy that this account makes no reference to Yamato and simply states that the "Imna king" dispatched the four generals to Silla. For the following year, the *Nihon shoki* relates Yamato's military deployment to attack Silla. King Yuryaku ordered several generals including Ki no Oyumi as well as the Yamato elites Soga no Karako and Otomo no Katari to cross the sea and attack Silla for its "lack of tribute." The generals went and sacked T'ak, a Silla town, but their expedition soon turned into infighting. When Ki no Oyumi died of illness, his son Ki no Oiwa went to take his father's place (*Nihongi* I, 353-354). Then, after twenty years of absence, Ki no Oyumi reappears in the *Nihon shoki* account of King Kenzō, as an ambitious strongman in Kaya. He attempted to "carve out his own sphere of influence, calling himself a divine and setting up his base, based in Kaya and in communication with Koguryō. He and his colleagues Saro and Nakit'a kappae of Kaya countered Paekche's encroachment on western Kaya, but were ultimately outnumbered by Paekche's army (*Nihongi* I, 392). In sum, these accounts suggest the migration of multiple generations of Ki elites to Kaya and their involvement in the ongoing military conflicts there.

The proto-Japanese-style tombs in southern Kaya were modeled after the tombs in Kyushu, and not those in Ki or Kibi. The *Nihon shoki*'s lack of references to Kyushu strongmen's overseas activities may be an indication of Kyushu's semi-independent status outside of Yamato's influence in the late fifth century. What the *Nihon shoki* does discuss is the Iwai Rebellion of 529, the powerful north-central Kyushu clan Iwai's war against Yamato and temporary blockage of the sea routes, as well as Iwai's possible receipt of bribery from Silla. Although details cannot be known, north-central Kyushu's intense exchange with southern Korea is obvious since elite tombs of the region, particularly Etafunayama Tomb in Kumamoto prefecture by Ariake Bay, contain many Kaya prestige goods (Pak, Ch'ön-su 2007a, 338).

The *Nihon shoki* account of a high-ranking Paekche official (rank of *Talsol*) named Illa also sheds light on Kyushu's close ties with Kaya. When he came to work for the Yamato government in 583, he revealed that his father, originally of Ashikita village in present-day Kumamoto prefecture, had moved to Kaya under the leadership of the Yamato elite Otomo in the 530s, and married a local woman. Illa, born of a union between a Kyushu elite and a Kaya woman, work for Paekche and then moved to Yamato, maintaining ties with Kyushu, Yamato, Paekche, and possibly Kaya (*Nihongi* II, 98). It is possible that a number of Kyushu elites and their men settled in southern Kaya, had hybrid descendants with local women, and worked as negotiators for the ongoing exchange between Kaya and proto-Japanese polities, in cooperation with the Kibi, the Ki or Yamato aristocrats (Tanaka 1997, 215). They could be the ones who resided in the center of trade routes in southern Kaya, such as Sach'ön, Kosöng, and Köje, where the proto-Japanese style tombs remain.

Illa was not the only man of proto-Japanese descent who joined the Paekche officialdom at this time. According to the *Nihon shoki*, several Paekche officials bearing Japanese names, visited Kaya and Yamato on their diplomatic missions in the early sixth century (Yi, Chae-sök. 2000). It appears that Paekche eagerly employed elites who had originated from the Japanese islands but were residing in the southern Korean peninsula. It is unclear how the Tae Kaya government took advantage of proto-Japanese elites and their descendants for its political gains. The fact that proto-Japanese elites were interred in tombs in their own native fashion suggests, however, that they were able to maintain reciprocal interactions with the local authorities and built symbiotic relations, by supplying specialized lumber and manpower in exchange for iron products and metallurgy. In addition to being traders, they were shipbuilders, navigators, interpreters, cultural brokers, and generals when necessary (Chöng 2005, 394; 2007, 501).

Just as Tae Kaya required many intermediaries, Yamato, due to its location at the far eastern end of the Inland Sea, required many intermediaries, such as Ki, Kibi, and Kyushu elites as well as many residents of Kaya origins, for its overseas trade (Takada 2006, 34). Archaeologists pointed out that Yamato's power declined and the power of Kyushu elites grew in the late fifth to the early sixth centuries (Wada 2011, 49). This could be a result of Kaya's trade networks with regional powers of the Japanese islands.

Tae Kaya's Decline in the Sixth Century

Just as Tae Kaya's rise came with its control of rivers, its decline was foretold by its loss of access to rivers and southward routes. First, the Sömjin River and its region came under Paekche's attack early in the sixth century. According to the *Nihon shoki*, in 512, Hozumi no Oshiyama, "governor" of Tari, requested Keitai's approval for Paekche's annexation of the four "Imna" villages of Upper Tari, Lower Tari, Sada, and Muro, adjacent to Paekche territories. In the following year, Paekche made further eastward advance to Kimun and Taesa and sought Yamato's consent by sending generals and a Confucian scholar. The *Nihon shoki* clearly exaggerates Yamato's authority since the territorial issues in the southern Korean peninsula had

little to do with Yamato except that small settlements of proto-Japanese men may have existed in the region. Today's scholars agree that Taesa was the port town in present-day Hadong at the mouth of the Sōmjŏn River and the other places such as Tari and Kimun were west of the Sōmjŏn River (Pak Ch'ŏn-su 2007b, 64-65; Kim T'ae-sik 2010, 240-241). The loss of Taesa in particular must have been a heavy blow to Tae Kaya, as Tae Kaya not only protested against Yamato's siding with Paekche but bitterly attacked a Yamato official en route to Paekche via Taesa, as recorded in the *Nihon shoki* account of 514 (*Nihongi* II, 13).

To make up for its loss of the Sōmjŏn River region and the use of the river as transportation, Tae Kaya turned eastward to secure the Naktong River, which was under Silla's growing influence. This must be reason why Tae Kaya approached the Silla king Pōphŭg (r. 514-540) for a marriage alliance. According to the *Samguk sagi* account of 522, Silla responded by sending the sister of *Ich'an* Pijobu to be wed to the Tae Kaya crown prince. Two years later, the Silla king went out to "inspect the newly opened land in the southern boundary and met with the king of Tae Kaya (*Samguk sagi* I, 118). It is possible that the Tae Kaya and the Silla kings as allies discussed their territorial boundaries and shared use of the Naktong for agriculture and transportation. According to the *Nihon shoki*, however, Silla's plan to infiltrate Kaya soon came to light, as its hundred retainers who had come with the bride were spread in many Kaya regions and causing Kaya elites to adopt Silla clothing. When Arishito, a southern Kaya leader, forced the Silla retainers to return home in 529, the Kaya-Silla alliance broke up, and Silla demanded the bride back. No longer considered Tae Kaya an ally, Silla captured three Kaya villages at this occasion (*Nihongi* II, 18).

Kaya's loss of the lower Naktong region to Silla became clear when the Kimhae-Ch'angwŏn region came under Silla's direct control. The *Samguk sagi* simply states that Kŭmgwan Kaya's ruler Kim Kuhae, along with his wife and three sons, came to Silla with their country's treasury and surrendered in 532. The *Nihon shoki*, however, refers to complex situations following Silla's takeover of the lower Naktong, suggesting the increasing importance of Alla. Hearing the fall of Kŭmgwan Kaya, T'akkit'an, and T'aksun, the Yamato sought to send an emissary to "restore Imna," but this effort was delayed for a year due to the Iwai Rebellion. When Omi no Kena, a powerful man from present-day Shiga prefecture, was finally dispatched along with his troops, he went straight to Alla, discussed the situation with Alla leaders, and stayed at a nearby Proto-Japanese community, Kusamura, for two years. Although Yamato's stated goal was to restore Kŭmgwan Kaya, its actual motive appears to be securing a gateway to southern Kaya. Kena attempted to put the Kusamura residents under his control, using the proto-Japanese method of exposing people to boiling water to determine their truthfulness. As many of the residents were hybrid, born of unions between local mothers and fathers from the Japanese islands and mothers, Kena's attempt to rule them proved unpopular and futile. The Yamato government summoned him back, and this was the end of Yamato's direct involvement with in southern Kaya (*Nihongi* II, 20-22).

Thus, Alla, located at the most strategic point at this time, became the focus of attention from all the parties concerned, now that the Sōmjŏn and the Nakton Rivers were under control of Paekche and Silla respectively. For Tae Kaya, Alla was a critical link between northern Kaya and southern Kaya and an access point to the southern coast. Alla also provided a link to other Kaya polities and settlements along the Nam River. According to the *Nihon shoki*, "Kwi-neung-mata Kanki, King of Imna" came to Yamato and appealed for the Yamato government's assistance to block Silla's invasion of Kaya while Kena was still in Alla (*Nihongi* II, 19). Although this individual was probably not the Tae Kaya king Kasil, the desperation of the Kaya states is fully conveyed in the account. Eager to block further encroachments by Paekche and Silla, King Kasil had Urŭk, a gifted musician, to compose songs representing twelve of the Kaya states (No 2012).

For Paekche and Silla, Alla represented the next Kaya location to be conquered. Both Silla and Paekche troops marched to Alla more than twice, and they met but broke up with Kena. Silla indeed resorted to its military power and took over small Kaya villages twice even during Kena's stay in Alla. Paekche also responded by building fortresses, and apparently succeeded in building a fortress near Alla not long after this. Avoiding direct military confrontation with Silla or Kaya, however, Paekche in the 540s sought to place the Kaya states under its sphere of influence through negotiation and appeasement, as reported by the *Nihon shoki* accounts concerning Imna Ilbonbu (J: Mimana Nihonfu). As many Korean and Japanese scholars agree today, Imna Ilbonbu was not an agency or outpost of the Yamato government; it was a group of Kaya residents of proto-Japanese origins, who were actively involved in Alla politics at this time.⁸

In 541 and 544, King Sōng of Paekche invited representatives from the Kaya states as well as a Kaya elite of proto-Japanese origin, Kibi no omi, to his capital to induce their subordination his authority. The fact that the Kaya delegation included multiple Alla leaders (three in 541 and two in 544) as well as Kibi no omi also from Alla demonstrates the importance of Alla in the eyes of Paekche. Control over Alla in addition to the Sōmjīn River region would have enabled Paekche to take much of the southern coast except for the lower Naktong River region that Silla had already annexed. His attempts to win over the Kaya leaders did not prove successful, as Alla, assisted by its proto-Japanese residents, not only negotiated with Silla but allured Koguryō to attack Paekche (*Nihongi* II, 42-62). Yet, Paekche managed to ward off the Koguryō army with Silla's assistance, and Alla probably lost its autonomy. Losing its major trade routes and autonomous trade brokers, Tae Kaya must have been weakened considerably. Their fate came to rest on the balance of power between Paekche and Silla. When Paekche and Silla went to war in 554, Kaya sided with Paekche to check the growing power of Silla. As related in the *Samguk sagi*, the Paekche-Kaya forces were defeated, and Tae Kaya and the rest of Kaya were annexed by Silla by 562 (*Samguk sagi* I, 96)

Concluding Remarks

Long-distance trade is a key to understanding the development and prosperity of the Kaya states from the second half of the fifth century to the first half of the sixth century. Tae Kaya possessed resources and advanced technology to produce iron products and precious metal goods coveted by many polities including those across the Korea strait. Unlike Kūmgwan Kaya of the earlier period, Tae Kaya, located inland and surrounded by mountains, required southward routes to access harbors for long-distance trade. Tae Kaya's expansion to the southern coast by way of rivers, the Sōmjīn, the Nam, and the Naktong made its interactions with distant lands possible. Tae Kaya's 479 envoys sent all the way across the East China Sea to the southern Chinese court and its near monopoly of the Japanese islands market for iron and prestige goods in the Japanese islands from the middle of the fifth century testified to the strength of Kaya as a trade power that transcended many borders. Unlike Kūmgwan Kaya that maintained trade through its close ally, the Yamato government, Tae Kaya exported its products to many parts and regions of the Japanese islands, and Yamato was only one of its many partners.

Tae Kaya allowed the southern Kaya states, particularly So Kaya and its neighbors along the southern coast, to play the role of semi-autonomous middlemen linking northern Kaya to trade partners via the sea. Serving as gateway communities, these coastal communities not only traveled east, west, and south, including Paekche along the coast and the Japanese islands across the Korea strait, but received traders from the same regions. They were frequented particularly by elites from polities in the Japanese islands, such as Kyushu, immediately across the Korea strait, as well as Kibi and Ki, the powerful Inland Sea regions that linked Yamato with Kyushu. When Tae Kaya's trade grew to its height in the late fifth and the early sixth centuries, these

southern Kaya gateway communities allowed men from the Japanese islands to reside and form their own communities there. These men, accompanied by their men, obtained Tae Kaya goods and artisans in exchange for their local products and military service. Acting as navigators, traders, cultural-linguistic brokers, and generals, these settlers maintained their autonomy as well as symbiotic ties with the local Kaya and Tae Kaya leaders. The autonomy and freedom of movement enjoyed by alien population within Kaya exemplifies the openness of the Kaya states filled with diverse cultures and population.

The sixth century saw the development and expansion of both Paekche and Silla as territorial states centered on their respective kings. Paekche advanced southeastward and quickly took over the Sŏmjŏn River region including the harbor at its mouth while Silla expanded southeastward to finally annex Kŭmgwan Kaya and adjacent polities by the lower Naktong. By the middle of the sixth century, Paekche and Silla collided with each other in Alla, a strategic Kaya state that linked the southern coast to the polities along the Nam River and further up along the Naktong River. Alla's importance as part of the transportation route is attested by the Yamato government's dispatch of its general to maintain its connection there. After Alla lost its autonomy to Paekche and later to Silla, it was no longer possible for Tae Kaya to sustain its exchange-based economy.

Kaya's demise can be ultimately attributed to its failure to form a centralized unified kingdom, the path that Silla successfully took in the sixth century. Nevertheless, Tae Kaya maintained its dominance and prosperity for nearly a century, thanks to its resources, technology, and ingenuity as well as its trade network extending beyond cultural, geographic, and political borders. Kaya presents an important precedent for us to reflect on.

NOTES

1. In postwar Japan, Suematsu Yasukazu's 1956 book *Minana koboshi* (History of the rise and fall of Imna) confirmed this view that the early Yamato state had invaded southern Korea and maintained its dominance from the late fourth century to the demise of Kaya in the sixth century. Needless to say, the notion of ancient Japanese control over southern Korea was politically exploited when the Japanese sought to justify its colonization of Korea in the first half of the twentieth century. Following this theory, Western scholars of Japan, such as G. B. Sansom and Edwin O. Reischauer, reiterated that the early Yamato state had controlled the southern tip of Korea till 562, and their publications up to the 1960s in turn affected descriptions in many college-level world history textbooks in the United States published as late as the 1990s.

2. The horse-rider theory was advanced by Egami Namio in postwar Japan. Although his theory was countered by many archaeologists and historians and largely lost its academic validity, it impacted on academic circles in two important ways. First, scholars outside of Japan, especially Korean scholars, took interest in the theory and espoused their versions of the invasion theory. Second, many scholars who rejected the invasion theory still accepted the notion that advanced culture, technologies, and elites had migrated unilaterally from the peninsula to the islands in ancient times (Farris 1998: 122). [North Korean scholar Kim Sŏk-hyŏng's assertion in the 1969 that peoples of The Three Kingdoms of Korea built their respective satellite states within the Japanese islands is an example of a variation of the horse-rider theory. Revised horse-rider theories were prominently advanced by Gari Ledgard and Wongtack Hong, who argued that Puyŏ

or Paekche aristocrats, not Kaya, had conquered western Japan and founded the Yamato government.

3. Both the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands were occupied by competing early states and chiefdoms until the seventh century when the dominance of Silla in the peninsula and Yamato in the islands became apparent. It is inappropriate to separate the peninsula from the islands as “Korea” and “Japan” for the time period discussed in this paper. To remove itself from nationalism, the undercurrent of many studies of Korean-Japanese relations in the past, this paper refrains from using terms Korea(n) and Japan(ese) when possible. The term Wa (K: Wae), generally referring to the early people of the Japanese islands in the Chinese annals and the Korean chronicles, is translated as Proto-Japan(ese) in this paper.

4. According to Gina L. Barnes, one tangle source of power is controlling the production and circulation of precious goods (Barnes 2001, 32).

5. In the interim, polities in western Japan filled their needs for iron products and advanced technology by way of various peninsular polities, including the Alla and So Kaya states as well as the east of the Naktong, now under Silla’s influence, and the Yōngsan River region in the southwestern corner of the peninsula. Goods from these diverse peninsular areas have been found from proto-Japanese tombs (Hong, Po-sik 2006, 38).

6. The Naktong, 325 miles long, was navigable for only over 30 miles from its mouth in the early fifteenth century (Inoue 1973, 208). Today, it is navigable for 215 miles (Naktong River 2014). It is difficult to know how far the Naktong and other rivers were navigable in ancient times, but both the river and the river banks may have served as important routes of transportation.

7. As the *Nihon shoki* dates before King Keitai’s time are known to be not very reliable, King Yuryaku’s reign (456-479) should be simply considered the 460s to 480s. See Tōma 1968.

8. Scholars agree that the expression “Wa subjects in Alla” appearing in the *Nihon shoki* account of 554 was the original term, which simply was converted by the compilers to Mimana Nihonfu, literally “Japanese office of Imna.” Neither term, “Nihon” or “fu,” was in use in the sixth century. The men affiliated with the Nihonfu included Ikuha no omi, Kibi no omi, and Kawachi no atai, Ahyōn inasa, and Jwaromado, and the accounts reveal that the last three had descended from Nakit’a kappae of Kaya, who had rebelled against Paekche together with Ki no Oiwa in the late fifth century. Although the origins of the first three are unclear in the accounts, their lack of communication with Yamato and collaboration with Alla and Kaya leaders in general testify that they were independent from Yamato and in fact worked closely with the local leaders (Yi Yong-sik 2009, 78-93; Kim T’ae-sik 2010, 261-263; Mori 2010, 170).

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