Mounded Tomb Cultures of Three Kingdoms Period Korea and Yamato Japan:

A Study of Golden Regalia and Cultural Interactions

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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2010

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationships between the Three Kingdoms period Korea (57 B.C.E. to 668 C.E.) and the Kofun period (250-538 C.E.) in Japan. The methodology of this study includes examination of the mounded tombs and grave goods through photographs and English translations of historical texts and various secondary sources. We know that there was contact between the peoples on the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago at this time. This contact consisted of trade, war, and migration of the elite families who wore gold jewelry of the type found in the tombs as well as the importation of skilled laborers. Due to the similarities in tomb construction, visual vocabulary, and identical shamanistic iconography, it is the conclusion of this paper that the people who wore this jewelry were a unified culture of political and spiritual leaders. The elite families from Baekje and Yamato Wa in particular participated in a shared culture, which was shamanistically ruled, with no apparent cultural boundaries between the areas due to intermarriage between Baekje and Yamato Wa families. Establishment of this shared culture offers a new perspective on what have been contentious issues among Korean and Japanese scholars.
This document is dedicated to my family.
Acknowledgments

Many sincere thanks to John Huntington, Susan Huntington, and Tom Kasulis, for helping me develop, edit, organize, and finish this project.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The relationships between Japan and Korea were ongoing for centuries and include periods of war, trade, waves of immigration, and the transmission of various religious, cultural, political, and philosophical ideas. These relationships can be observed through historical texts and the material culture of both countries, particularly during the Three Kingdoms period of Korea (57 B.C.E. to 668 C.E.) and Kofun (250-538 C.E.) and Asuka (538-645 C.E.) periods in Japan. During the fourth through seventh centuries, there were active ruling elite classes in both countries that had the ability to control large populations and accumulate wealth, thus enabling them to build large, elaborate tombs. These “mounded tombs provide copious information on the material culture and status systems”.\(^1\) The size, mounded shape, method of construction, and style of the tombs, as well as all of the artifacts and manner of burial of the dead inside of these tombs varies both by region and date of erection. However, the grave goods in both regions often have strong similarities, which indicate contact and at times, a shared culture. Exactly what kind of contacts and what kind of relationships existed between ancient Japan and Korea is still a significant point of discussion among the peoples of both countries to the present and has

been a subject of scholarly debate. Scholars have examined both the variations and similarities.

Nationalistic views have been especially heated due to recent political controversy between the Japanese and Koreans. During the early twentieth century, Japan used the presence of an ancient Japanese colony in the Gaya area, which they called Mimana, on the Korean peninsula as a rationale for the invasion of Korea. This claim of Japanese colonies or envoys on the Korean peninsula during the Three Kingdoms period is very unpopular in Korea to this day as it seems to support Japan’s weakly justified twentieth-century aggression. The ethnographic “ownership” of Three Kingdoms Korean culture is, therefore, a very sensitive topic in Korea. In 2001, the Korean Deputy Minister of Education and Human Resources Development Kim Sang-gwon demanded changes to official Japanese history textbooks. Such text accounts were seen by Koreans as a blatant attempt to glorify Japan’s twentieth century colonial ambitions and to downplay, or, more commonly, simply omit, the atrocities against the Korean people.² One of the changes demanded was the Japanese claim that Gaya was part of the developing early Japanese kingdom. Great effort has been made by the Korean government, local communities, and various cultural institutions to celebrate and take ownership of the old kingdom of Gaya and its culture. In the Korean city of Gimhae, the old capital of Gaya, the ‘Gaya International Festival of Culture’ takes place in the autumn and locals celebrate and take

Because of this complex of sensitive, nationalistic viewpoints, great sensitivity and objectivity must be exercised when researching or writing about the early interactions between Korea and Japan.

Statement of the Problem

This study explores the exchanges and cultural contacts between the peoples of Three Kingdoms period in Korea and the Kofun culture of the Kofun and Asuka periods in Japan. The goal is to provide a more thorough understanding of these countries’ rich histories and cultural accomplishments, including their early interactions. Historical texts from China, Korea, and Japan give some insight into these issues. The strong similarities of the grave goods found in the mounded tombs of the two regions suggest close contact and possibly even a shared culture at times. Literary sources document a very close relationship between the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula, especially that of Baekje with Yamato Japan, or Wa, as it is sometimes called. An understanding of this relationship is important for several reasons. Analyses of materials from archeological excavations and studies have been, I suggest, influenced by nationalistic ideologies and, to this day, scholars disagree on the nature of the relationships between the kingdom of Baekje and the Gaya states. Japanese and Korean politics of the early twentieth century

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and lingering feelings of mutual distrust by Korean and Japanese scholars have made the issue of cultural ownership of the items is a sensitive topic. Some Koreans feel that the cultural accomplishments of their ancestors have been understated by historians and scholars. Recently, the Japanese Emperor, admitting to his royal Baekje heritage, said: “I, on my part, feel a certain kinship with Korea, given the fact that it is recorded in the Chronicles of Japan that the mother of Emperor Kammu was of the line of King Muryong of Baekje.” He further noted: “I believe it was fortunate to see such culture and skills transmitted from Korea to Japan.”\(^4\) Not surprisingly, his comments were received with dismay by very conservative Japanese nationalists and joy by many Koreans.\(^5\) As a result of the Japanese Emperor’s statements, new, even more emotional books have been printed on the subject, such as *Ancient Korea-Japan Relations: Paekche and the Origin of the Yamato Dynasty* by Wontack Hong.\(^6\)

Scholarship on the relationship between Yamato Japan and the Korean Kingdoms is primarily based on the physical evidence of archeological investigations and Korean and Japanese textual sources that tell the traditional history of each country. These text sources are: the *Samguk Sagi*\(^7\) and *Samguk Yusa*\(^8\) for Korea, and the *Nihon Shoki* or

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\(^5\) Watts, 1.


Nihongi\(^9\) and Kojiki\(^{10}\) for Japan. Despite their value, these texts have limits in helping resolve historical issues. All of these textual sources were written significantly later than the time periods that they describe. Further, all of them glorify the ruling dynasty, thus exhibiting an inherent nationalistic stance in the narration.

The Korean Samguk Sagi was compiled in the twelfth century during the Koryo dynasty, much later than the time periods it describes. This text combines myths, oral tradition, and history, and makes use of auspicious numbers and dates. Thus, historical details therefore cannot always be trusted as completely accurate.\(^{11}\) It has been suggested that the text “brought together the traditions of a number of separate communities and arranged them to fill up a predetermined interval of time”.\(^{12}\) Dates and events in this text do not always match other textual sources, such as those from China. The Samguk Yusa was written nearly a century after the Samguk Sagi by the Buddhist monk Ilyon. The Japanese books, the Nihongi and Kojiki, suffer from the same defects. These books were compiled in the eighth century, much later than the periods they describe. For example, like the Korean Samguk Sagi, the Nihongi uses auspicious numbers for dates, mixes myth and oral tradition with history, and thus cannot be considered an objective or accurate


source. However, these and other texts are important cultural property and, with proper interpretation, can supply substantial insight into Korean and Japanese cultural traditions and history.

Scholarship on Ancient Korean-Japanese Relationships

In 1949, Japanese archeologist Namio Egami (1906-2002) published his famous “The Formation of the People and Origin of the State of Japan”, which has since been nicknamed “The Horse Rider Theory”. When it was originally proposed, the author received much criticism from the academic world. The amount of harsh criticism and damage to his academic reputation forced him to rewrite and publish a revised version nearly ten years later. This ‘Horse-Rider Theory’ was an explanation of what Egami believed to be an abrupt emergence of a unified Japanese state. He based his theory on the similarities between the items in the large burial mounds called ‘kofun’ in Japan and those found in the burial mounds in Korea. Egami divided the Kofun period into two phases: the early phase before the supposed invasion from the peninsula and the late phase afterwards. According to this framework, there was no transitional phase. Egami believed that sudden changes were led by the powerful Korean invaders on horseback,

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who brought not only horses but many aspects of continental culture to shape the emerging Japanese state.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1975, Gari Ledyard modified certain elements and details of this theory in his article, “Galloping along with the Horseriders: Looking for the Founders of Japan”, mainly focusing on the date of the presumed invasion.\textsuperscript{15} Ledyard noted that “many of Egami’s observations and insights into the nature of Japan’s rulers beginning with the time” are “brilliant and valid”.\textsuperscript{16} Further, he notes that Egami uses the “generally accepted view that after 372 the rulers of Baekje were of Puyŏ”, or Buyeo.\textsuperscript{17} This ancient northern Korean state in what is now North Korea and the Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning, flourished from ca. second century BCE to 494 CE. It was subsumed into Goguryeo in 494 CE. Ledyard notes that the “military activities related by the \textit{Nihon Shoki} are not the work of the Japanese but of the Puyŏ”.\textsuperscript{18} Ledyard then imagines an aggressive Puyŏ-Baekje army heading south on the peninsula in the fourth century, thus suggesting earlier contact with Japan than in Egami’s original theory.\textsuperscript{19} Various versions of the Horse Rider Theory have been accepted by other scholars, including Wontack Hong, who has continued to attempt to prove that there is

\textsuperscript{14} Egami, 35-36.


\textsuperscript{16} Ledyard, 225.


\textsuperscript{18} Edwards, 271.

\textsuperscript{19} Ledyard, 227.
validity to the idea that an army on horseback came into Japan and established the first Japanese state.  

In order for the Horse Rider Theory to be true, there needs to be evidence of an invasion and a sudden appearance of continental culture in Japan. Unfortunately for Horse Rider Theory supporters, this is not consistent with the archeological data. At present, there is no archeological evidence for a mass invasion from the Korean peninsula, and the influx of ‘continental goods’ is not sudden but gradual, indicating that the similarities of grave goods represent the “cross flows of material culture embodied long-distance peer contact”.  

This view is crucial to debunking the Horse Rider Theory and was thoroughly explained in 1983 by Walter Edwards in his paper, ‘Event and Process in the Founding of Japan: The Horserider Theory in Archeological Perspective’.  

After compiling the available information from archeological excavations, Edwards created a chart from 137 different tombs in which he listed the date of tomb, the artifacts inside, and architectural features, among other things. Although there are thousands of large tombs in Japan, most of them have not been excavated. However, Edwards claims that this is a large enough sample from different time periods to determine trends. His conclusion was that the similar artifacts, which indicate a shared culture or contact “can be better understood as resulting from longer term process of”

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20 Wontack Hong, Relationship between Korea and Japan in Early Period: Paekche and Yamato Wa. (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 1988).

21 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 148.

22 Edwards, 271.
cultural interaction between an emerging indigenous Japanese state and the more advanced cultures of China and Korea” than of an invasion.23

Regarding the formation of the Japanese state, Gina Barnes argues that “there is no archeological evidence for conquest at any time in the Kofun period.”24 She notes that there was a Japanese state naturally developing in “the mid-to late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD and that the emergence of regional elites was signified in both areas by the construction of large mounded tombs.”25 Further, “the Mounded Tomb Cultures of the Three Kingdoms period in Korea (AD 300-668) and the Kofun period in Japan (AD 250-710) can thus be considered as constituting the periods of state formation in the region.”26 Barnes carefully notes the difference between the smaller, rounded mound burials before the Kofun period in Japan and the larger, keyhole-shaped ones built during the Kofun period which mark “social stratification” but not “state formation”.27 The later, larger tombs contained items from several regions and mark the emergence of a ‘supra-elite’ and the material evidence of a horse-riding culture that signifies “the migration of skilled craftspeople, scholars and elites from the peninsula.”28

It is not the objective of this paper to promote a political ideology but rather create a clearer understanding of the relationship of the Korean kingdoms and Japan

23 Edwards, 266.
24 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 18.
26 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 18.
27 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 18.
28 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 18
during this time period as revealed by a close study of these materials. The main subject for this paper is the gold jewelry such as crowns and earrings found in the large burial mounds Korea and Japan. I have selected the gold jewelry among other artifacts because the details of these attested documents accurately reflect the religion and culture of the elite families in Korea and Japan with their iconographical details. Unlike the written historical documents from Korea and Japan that describe the period in which these items were created, they were created for the people who lived and died during this period rather than their descendants hundreds of years later. This paper looks at variances and similarities to see how the changes of tomb style and artifacts indicate a relationship between cultures. Further, this study seeks to determine how the connection between these two areas is revealed by the burial goods of these large tumuli. The majority of the golden regalia from the tombs are considered to be important cultural properties, and are located in museums in Korea and Japan. My observations are based on photographs. In addition to the photographs of the artifacts, I cite related historical texts that have been translated into English and various secondary sources on the archeological findings of the excavations of tombs in Korea and Japan.

My conclusions show that, due to the lack of evidence, we cannot assume that there was a mass military invasion of the Japanese islands by the horse-riding people of Korea. The influx of continental goods seems to arise from a combination of migration or “gifting” of skilled craftsmen, trade, and gifts from the peninsula. The Korean kingdom of Baekje sought political alliance with the developing Japanese state during this time period, and, in order to solidify their relationship, most likely intermarried with Japanese.
According to the *Nihongi*, possession of certain symbols and rare, expensive objects is considered proof of elite family status in Japanese culture at this time. On this basis, I suggest that these golden grave goods may have served as family markers as well as class markers. In this paper, I intend to prove that the similarities in the elite status markers of golden jewelry and crowns document intermarriage between Baekje and Yamato elite. A comparative study of the religions of these regions through the iconographical details on the golden jewelry from these tombs shows that the elite families of Baekje and Yamato intermarried and participated in a shared culture. I hope that the conclusions of this study shed light on the ancient Korean and Japanese relationship.

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Chapter 2: Mounded Tomb Culture from Central Asia as a Source for Korea and Japan

The early mound burial culture in Korea and Japan is a continuation of the mound burial culture of the horse-riding peoples of central Asia throughout the first millennium BCE. This has been documented by the similar cultural traits such as warfare on horseback and the trait of burying religious and political leaders in mounded tombs.30 In addition to these cultural traits, I argue that the nearly identical details on the jewelry in the mounded tombs are an indicator of ancient Korea and Japan’s linked cultural heritage. The mound burial culture of the nomads of Central Asia was widespread, covering most of the Eurasian continent and making an imprint on the landscape with large, mounded tombs called kurgans. Some of these mound burials can be quite large, demonstrating the ability of the nomads to control and gather the manpower and resources needed for large construction projects. The work force needed for construction and the valuable grave goods inside indicate that the monuments were built for individuals of a high social status, perhaps military, political, and spiritual leaders. The grave goods and sacrificial offerings found inside these mounded tombs allow an understanding of this nomadic culture and religion. Some of these grave goods bear a strong resemblance to the much later grave goods in Korea and Japan (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Pendant. Fillippovka, Kurgan 17, Grave 1, Russia. Ca. 400 BCE. Gold, enamel, amber. Diameter: 4.1 cm. Archeological Museum, Ufa.
The makers and wearers of the pieces of jewelry shown in Figures 1 and 2 were separated by hundreds of years and thousands of miles. However, the basic forms were very similar. The leaf or almond shaped pendant dangling from a gold chain, the shaman’s tree of life and comma-shaped bead appear to have originated in the Central Asian nomads’ jewelry. The tree of life is part of the crowns found in Tillya Tepe and Korean crowns, which I will point out later. By the time this visual vocabulary entered Japan by way of Korea in the fifth and sixth centuries, I believe that they had become symbols of royal family status. The use of gold and the amount of hours put into this jewelry already place it as personal ornamentation for elite classes but I argue that the similar motifs had a cultural significance due to the continuity of certain shapes of beads and pendants. It is highly unlikely that the similarities between these examples of jewelry
are coincidental. The stability of design and the transmission of method of creation indicate that this type of jewelry had significance but the exact meaning is lost.

The Central Asian horse-riding culture had a shamanistic religion. A shaman, who may be a man or woman, is the person who acts as the intermediary between the physical and spiritual world. Contact with the spiritual world may be accomplished through meditation and trance. To enhance these practices, the use of cannabis and other mind-altering substances was widespread by shamans both in the past and in modern times. Although there were undoubtedly different regional variations of Central Asian shamanism, some themes were pervasive. Central Asian shamanistic motifs, such as the famous ‘Tree of Life’ and comma-shaped beads called goguk in Korea and magatama in Japan, occur in the golden jewelry in Korea and Japan as well, suggesting a continuation of Central Asian shamanism. Figure 3 is a tapestry from the Pazyryk site, currently located at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. A seated woman, presumably a shaman, holds a tree of life staff while a man approaches on a horse. This scene shows that the Central Asian nomads, who are the cultural ancestors of the Koreans and Japanese, were possibly shamanistically ruled. I believe that this trait was passed down to Three Kingdoms Korea and Kofun Period Japan and can be observed through the golden regalia found in the tumuli.


The horse-riding warlike culture of the Central Asian nomads was introduced to Korea by the war-like Goguryeo people, who “developed out of the tribes of Manchuria”. Goguryeo tomb paintings depict Goguryeo warriors on horseback, wearing a style of armor that can be traced back to the nomadic horse-riders of Central

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Asia. Goguryeo warriors were skilled at archery on horseback including the use of the so-called “Parthian Shot”, as illustrated in the Goguryeo tomb painting in Figure 4.

![Wall Painting. Tomb of Dancers, Goguryeo. 4th Century. Ji’an, Jilin Province, China.](image)

Archeological and Chinese historical sources indicate that the common activities of the early Goguryeo were conducting raids on horseback and generally being a nuisance and danger to their neighbors. 

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Gardiner, 31.
people did eventually settle down and build a powerful kingdom, but retained many aspects of their Central Asian cultural heritage, such as warfare on horseback, love of golden jewelry, the shamanistic religion, and building large, mounded tombs. These Central Asian cultural aspects were transferred down the Korean peninsula and eventually to Japan.

Korean and Japanese material culture as a reflection of the religion of the Fifth and Sixth centuries

Material culture comprises the products of a specific society at a given time and place. The material culture forms a series of “attested documents” by the people, for the people, and of the people of the culture. The fundamental problem is the interpretation of those documents. In general, material culture objects are made in response to the needs of many aspects in daily life, and commonly emphasize religious beliefs and practices. Thus, study of material culture can provide an understanding of the daily life of the people who used these items that is inaccessible through other means. Manner of dress and personal ornamentation were details of everyday life and patterns, subtly reflecting not only the fashions of the time and personal tastes of the individual, but also class, social status, and family connections. The change or the stability of material culture allows an explanation of how a society changes through time. In the case of this study, the similarities in material culture between Korean and Japanese societies can have many causes, such as trade, immigration, diplomacy or lack thereof between nations, among other reasons, and can also be a significant cultural marker.
Widely accepted archaeological evidence has demonstrated that by the sixth and seventh centuries both shamanism and Buddhism were both practiced by the elite class in Korea and Japan. Physical remains from the shamanistic tradition demonstrate the presence of objects such as crowns, other personal ornamentation, and ritual objects, and, in the case of Buddhism, metal images of the practice. Shamanism as practiced in Three Kingdoms Period Korea was introduced through the cultural descendants of the Central Asian nomads as amply demonstrated by similar motifs such as the Tree of Life and emphasis on horse riding warfare. Despite these similarities, there is great variety in the “beliefs, rituals, and artifacts of shamanism according to time and place”. The golden crowns and other ornamentation found in the mounded tombs of Korea are markers of the shaman, “a person who intermediates between spirits and humans” and may have been used in ritual contexts. In addition to this intermediary role between the mundane and spiritual world, they were also “protectors of the community’s welfare”, including the state and, as such, sometimes “appear in historical documents”.

Historically, all across central Asia, from Tillya Tepe in Afghanistan to Japan, Shamans were often both political leaders as well as religious leaders and, as a result, were often heavily decorated during ritual and in death. It seems probable that the details


39 Hogarth, 159.

40 Hogarth, 164.
of the personal ornamentations found in the mounded tombs in both Korea and Japan are residue of a shamanistic religious tradition and were meant to invoke imagery of a shaman. Thus, by invoking shamanistic imagery in one’s personal ornamentation, one not only displays political power but spiritual as well. Therefore, we know that in both Korean and Japanese societies, a Shaman's personal ornamentation was understood to have a very deep meaning in dealing with life and from the tomb accoutrements in death as well, and, as such, was very likely to have been far more significant than just the preferred fashion at this time.

This also allows insight into these cultures’ view of the afterlife. By dressing the deceased in their ritual accoutrements, shamans continued to fulfill their duties as intermediaries between the physical and spiritual world after death. This is further expressed by the theory that these mounded tombs were sacred space markers as well as tombs, which I shall discuss further later.

Shamans were not just religious leaders but frequently also held political power. Despite the fact that the Chinese character for shaman, wu, could be used for either males or females, a second character “was used for male shamans”, which “suggests that the first shamans were women, since the unmarked member of the pair is female”.41 Although the idea of women holding both political and religious power in old Korean society is one that seems incompatible with the idea of a fully developed and functioning state in “both Chinese and Western cultures”, feminine power was recorded especially in Silla, a state in which shamanism was a major religious methodology. Paramount among

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the direct evidence for shamanism, are the golden tree of life crowns found in Silla tombs.\textsuperscript{42}

In addition to having females as political and spiritual leaders, males and females could also be leaders either separately or as a pair, in Korean and Japanese myth.\textsuperscript{43} Male and female rulers were depicted as a pair in Goguryeo tomb paintings “with no suggestion that the man is superior to the woman”, possibly indicating shared rule.\textsuperscript{44} The shamanistic iconography such as comma shaped beads and the tree of life, in Gaya jewelry also indicates that gender stratification may have been absent among the elite families in Gaya but “there is little to indicate whether or not Baekje shared” this practice of equality between the sexes.\textsuperscript{45} Because of this apparent lack of gender stratification among spiritual and political leaders at this time, it has been assumed that the golden jewelry featured in this paper was worn by both men and women.\textsuperscript{46} While it is uncertain, it has been suggested that regional shamanism in Japan may have had similar practices to those in Korea due to that “developing elites” some of whom may have been immigrants from Korea, that “may have intermarried with native Shamans, thus blurring ethnic


\textsuperscript{44} Sarah Milledge Nelson, \textit{The Archeology of Korea}. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 261.

\textsuperscript{45} Nelson, \textit{The Archeology of Korea}, 260-261.

\textsuperscript{46} Nelson, \textit{The Archeology of Korea}, 254.
divisions” and developing wider constituencies blended with other regionally diverse ideologies.⁴⁷

Shamanism was (and still is) extremely adaptable, evolving to fit the resident culture, as it moved across Asia. It is still practiced in Korea today and is a key element in modern Korean culture. Similarly, due to its adaptability, Buddhism was also easily adapted to Korean culture and later, through Baekje to Japan. Baekje adopted Buddhism in the late fourth century under the reign of King Chimnyu (reigned 384-5), which the *Samguk Yusa* states was brought to Baekje by “an Indian monk named Marananta” who was “warmly welcomed by the King’s court with due respect”, which marked “the beginning of Buddhism in Paekje (Baekje)”.⁴⁸ But its florescence was later under the reign of King Song (reigned 523-54).⁴⁹ Contemporaneous Japanese histories testify that it was at this time when “the king of Baekje formally transmitted Buddhism to the Yamato court”.⁵⁰ Like shamanism, Buddhist “ritual and magic were thought to protect states against military enemies and natural disasters”, so this sharing of Buddhism may have been an attempt to protect its political ally during a time in which Baekje and Silla were at odds.⁵¹

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⁴⁸ Ilyon, 154.

⁴⁹ Portal, 66.


⁵¹ Schirokauer, Lurie, and Gay, 27.
Not much is written by early texts about Japanese spiritual life before the formal introduction of Buddhism to the Yamato court. Japanese tradition states that Shinto is the native religion of Japan and is based on worship and respect for the kami, or nature-spirits. However, literary evidence on Shinto’s origins in Japanese culture are still rather murky.\(^5\) Pre-Buddhist Japan is believed to have had a religion that was animistic in nature, but definitely not particularly similar to the revitalized and highly formalized Shinto of today, which is largely a product of the Meiji restoration process. Because shamanism is still practiced in Japan “on a national scale and exists today both in rural areas and in cities” and is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture, it is very likely that shamanism was practiced in the past.\(^5\) Not much is known about spiritual leaders, beliefs, or ritual in pre-Buddhist Japan but it seems likely that “as with other preliterate peoples, no conception was made of a “religious” realm strictly divorced from the “secular” or political.”\(^5\) However, there does seem to be evidence for a shamanistic religion similar to that from Korea with female rulers, who could rule on their own or as part of a male-female pair.\(^5\)

This practice of being shamanistically ruled by a male-female pair in ancient Japan has been described by the Chinese historical text, *The Records of Wei*, giving


\(^5\) Havens, 20

modern scholars one of “the earliest images of rulership in the Japanese archipelago”.

If the Wei travelers’ records are to be trusted as accurate descriptions of ancient Japan, the legendary Queen Himiko (Pimiko) was a shaman. Queen Himiko’s historical existence has sometimes been questioned by historians who doubt the reliability of the Wei travelers’ records. The objective of the Wei travelers seems to have been simply to record the countries and people they encountered, so it seems unlikely that there is any inherent nationalism in this text. Recently, some Japanese historians and archeologists argue that one of the oldest keyhole-shaped tombs that dates from the mid-third to early-fourth century in the Nara region, may have belonged to the legendary Queen Himiko.

The Records of Wei describes the shamanistic rulership of the kingdom of ‘Yamatai’ as such: “The country had a king [wang], but then for some seventy or eighty years there was war, and the people agreed upon a queen [nii-wang] as their ruler. Her name was Himiko. She was skilled at theurgy and enchanted the people. Though mature in age, she remained unmarried. She had a younger brother who helped rule the country. After she became queen, few saw her. She was served while one man gave her food and drink and acted as her steward. She lived in a palace with towers and stockades where there were always armed guards in attendance.”

Queen Himiko and her brother ruled jointly but

56 Piggott, 15.

57 Piggott, 17.


59 L. Carrington Goodrich, Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories. (South Pasadena, CA: D. and Ione Perkins, 1951), 8-16.
may not have shared power equally, since her brother had contact with the outside. This situation may be the source of later Japanese traditions of Shinto shrine *miko* which can still be observed today.

In addition to the practice of having political and/or spiritual rulers of either gender, both Korea and Japan at this time utilize similar objects in ritual, such as “bronze artifacts-especially mirrors and bells, which are often attributed to shamanistic rites.”

This material evidence of the spiritual connection between the Korean Peninsula and Japanese islands can be considered further proof, along with the literary evidence mentioned in the first chapter, of the mingling of royal families residing in both areas.

The nature of Buddhism and a nature-spirit based animistic spirituality allow for multiple religions to be understood and practiced. When Buddhism was first introduced to Japan, “attempts to understand the newly arriving buddhas within the local idiom as ‘visiting kami’ or ‘foreign kami’ -and thus not essentially different in nature from the routine powers found locally.”

The adoption of Buddhism by the Yamato court was not entirely religiously based. The Yamato court had much to gain by having a shared religion with the more technologically and socially advanced Korea and China. However, “the introduction of Buddhism provoked internecine conflict between those clans desiring closer ties to the cosmopolitan culture of the continent and those wishing to preserve local traditions and estates of power.”

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61 Havens, 20.

between the Soga and Mononobe clans. The Buddhism-favoring Soga clan was eventually victorious and “placed a woman of Soga lineage on the throne in 592.” It is possible that the placement of a woman on the throne was a nod to the old religion and traditions in which females were also considered worthy of leadership. A *miko*, a Japanese female shaman, acts as an intermediary between the spirit world and physical world through trance and prayer. Throughout Japanese history, *miko* act both “within the shrines and outside the shrines”, meaning that their power was not limited to the religious technical sacred spaces but universal over the whole of the landscape of Japan was itself sacred. However, the role of a *miko* in Japanese society has changed over time. It should be noted that in modern Japan, in spite of the presence of shrine priestesses and *miko*, women are not allowed to participate in a variety of festivals. Today, men portray women in the ceremonies, which suggest that in the past females may have been active in these festivals. The tradition of creating a double-gender shaman through the practice of men wearing women’s clothes for ritual purposes was and still is practiced today in Korea, which is perhaps where Japan acquired this ritual

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64 Tamura, 29.


66 Fairchild, 61.

This situation appears to be yet another close tie between the shamanism of Korea and Japan, dating from as early as the history of the practices can be traced.

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Chapter 3: Three Kingdoms Korea Overview

Although the period 300-668 CE is commonly called the Three Kingdoms period in Korean history, the peninsula was actually politically divided into four political regions: Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla and the States of Gaya.69 During this time, there was “rapid centralization” of governments, resulting in militarily and politically powerful leaders who often warred with each other over territory.70 These kingdoms owed much of their culture to China and regularly participated in “tributary diplomacy” with China, in which there was a “formal recognition that China’s power was superior.”71 However, this does not mean that any of these Korean kingdoms were “colonies of China”.72 Relations with the Yamato Japanese, sometimes called ‘Wa’ or ‘Wae’ in Chinese texts, were also frequent and had a long-lasting impact on the history and culture of both regions.73 The history, traditional dates of establishment, and myths relating to the so-called Three Kingdoms are written down in the Samguk Yusa and Samguk Sagi. The territories of

69 Portal, 43.
70 Mary E. Connor, The Koreas. (Santa Barbara, California: ABC CLIO Publications 2009), 178.
71 Connor, 14.
72 Connor, 14.
73 Portal, 44.
these kingdoms as they existed during the mid-sixth century are shown on the maps in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Map of the Political Territories of Goguryeo, Baekje, Sillas and Gaya. By John Huntington

Goguryeo
The oldest of the Korean “Three Kingdom” states is Goguryeo. With an official date of establishment of 37 CE, Goguryeo “is the earliest clearly non-Chinese state to emerge in Korea,” although it may have come into being decades earlier. Goguryeo’s geographic closeness to China allowed the importation of various technological advancements, and many Chinese cultural elements can be clearly observed in Goguryeo artifacts, tomb paintings, and borrowed Chinese words. Chinese sources state “by the first century C.E. they were already using the Chinese term for king, wang.” In the late fourth century, the Goguryeo leader, King Sosurim (371-384) set up Chinese style bureaucratic system of government, Buddhist temples, and a Confucian Academy. These elements of Chinese culture spread to the Kingdoms and other states on the rest of the Korean peninsula through contact with Goguryeo and direct contact with China.

Trade was a strong element of Goguryeo culture. Horse riding was useful not only for warfare but also allowed travel over long distances for trade and other purposes. According to Chinese historical sources, the Goguryeo were at times “a threat to the Chinese and there were constant skirmishes between the two” but at times peaceful trade was also carried on between China and Goguryeo. Goguryeo relations with the Chinese state of Wei were apparently peaceful. During the middle of the third century, “Wei ambassadors obtained permission to travel through Goguryeo territory” and visit the

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74 Gardiner, 29.
75 Peterson and Margulies, 8.
76 Peterson and Margulies, 14.
77 Portal, 45.
southern part of the Korean peninsula. During these travels, the Wei ambassadors wrote down their experiences and it is from these texts that some knowledge about pre-literate early Korea is derived. The Goguryeo traders imported various manufactured luxury goods from China and exported raw materials, such as furs and precious metals. Such exports were easily obtained from the mountain valleys by laborers who were most likely captives from the raids on neighboring communities. The control of the distribution of rare imported valuables made Goguryeo leaders quite wealthy, allowing them to expand their territory and undertake military campaigns. At its height, the Goguryeo Empire controlled extensive terrain, as indicated in the maps on Figure 5.

While Goguryeo was becoming an established state in the north, Baekje and Silla had not yet developed into kingdoms with centralized governments and organized militaries. The tribal communities in the southern part of the peninsula were called the Samhan, or Three Greats, by the Wei travelers. According to the Wei travelers’ records, there were dozens of tribes in the Mahan, Pyonhan, and Chinhan regions, which eventually developed into the Baekje, Gaya, and Silla regions. These texts also describe the culture of the Samhan people, which is very similar to the culture of Korea in modern times. People of the Samhan tribes “enjoyed drums and dancing as well as drinking and

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78 Peterson and Margulies, 11.
79 Peterson and Margulies, 11.
80 Portal, 45.
81 Peterson and Margulies, 11.
82 Peterson and Margulies, 11-12.
singing” and were described as wearing white clothes, which is even today a traditional Korean style of clothing.83

The earliest known tombs of the Goguryeo were extremely simple mounds of stones, similar to those built by the Central Asian horse-riding nomads. By the fourth century, stacked cut stone blocks with “elevated burial chambers” were built instead of piles of stones and the outline of the tomb began to take on a more geometric shape.84 There are about ten thousand tombs known to be of Goguryeo origin, and, of these, seventy-six have painted murals on the walls of the inner chambers.85 Unfortunately, the construction methods of Goguryeo tombs allowed easy access by looters to the grave goods inside and, as a result, not many goods have been recovered. However, two gilt bronze crowns and some earrings have been discovered.86 While the lack of grave goods is problematic, “it is apparent that both the Goguryeo-type stone chamber tomb and the practice of painting murals spread from Goguryeo to Japan, possibly taken there by emigrants who may have taken refuge in Japan around the fall of Goguryeo in 668”.87 The practice of painting murals was also transmitted to the other kingdoms on the peninsula as well.88

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83 Peterson and Margulies, 12.
84 Portal, 45-46.
85 Portal, 46.
86 Portal, 49.
87 Portal, 49.

The earring in Figure 6 exhibits basic traits that will be observed in later earrings and those from the other kingdoms in Korea and Japan. The thick main ring, with a dangling, flatter pendant and decorated central bead, are all characteristics of later earrings found further south on the peninsula and on the Japanese islands.
The piece in Figure 7 displays very intricate metal cutting. The form, perhaps a stylized three-piece leaf, is similar to the common heart-shaped leaf. Unfortunately, the exact location of discovery of this piece is unknown. However, due to similarities with other pieces found at Jian-si in Jilan Province in China, it is believed to be from this area. The cut-out details are similar to those on later gilt-bronze helmets from Baekje, Silla, Gaya, and the Japanese areas.

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Figure 8 shows a diadem ornament. The exact manner in which these tall, thin crown pieces were arranged on the head is unknown. The National Museum of Korea describes the twisted metal edges as featherlike, but the three pieces are also similar to the shaman king crowns in Silla with the tree of life in the front and center and deer antlers on either side. The tree of life and deer imagery are reminiscent of Central Asian shamanism as both motifs were common in Central Asian shamanistic implements. Shamanistic qualities would seem appropriate since “according to Chinese sources”, the
Goguryeo were direct descendents of the horse-riding peoples of Mongolia.\textsuperscript{90} The decorative leaf or heart perforations down the center of these metal pieces are a theme that is also seen on many earrings and crowns from regions further south.

\textbf{Baekje}

The kingdom of Baekje developed out of the tribes of Mahan sometime during the first century CE; the \textit{Samguk Sagi} puts the official date for Baekje’s founding at 18 CE.\textsuperscript{91} Unlike the kingdom of Silla and confederation of Gaya, Baekje was conquered and unified by the people of Puyŏ. By the late fourth century, Baekje had become “the most powerful of the Three Kingdoms”.\textsuperscript{92} It was at this time that Baekje started its close relationship with the “Yamato/Wa” in Japan. This military alliance lasted until Baekje eventually fell to Silla and was used both against Silla during the early fifth century and against its aggressive Goguryeo neighbor to the north.\textsuperscript{93} The leaders of Baekje are credited with introducing many elements of Chinese culture to the Japanese islands, including Buddhism and literacy. The Baekje royal family gave the Yamato gifts of skilled laborers, such as metalworkers and painters for their court, as well as finished

\begin{footnotesize}\textsuperscript{90} Portal, 45. \\
\textsuperscript{91} Portal, 50. \\
\textsuperscript{92} Peterson and Margulies, 17. \\
\textsuperscript{93} Peterson and Margulies, 18.\end{footnotesize}
goods. The specific reason for this close alliance is unknown but it has been hypothesized that there was “a desire to secure an alliance” against Silla. It would have been a good strategy to have a powerful enemy on both sides of Baekje’s borders in order to solidify a political and military alliance. Baekje royal families most likely intermarried with those of the Yamato Wa royalty in addition to giving the Yamato Wa gifts of artisans and scholars among other things.

Tombs from the Baekje kingdom vary greatly in size and style depending on region, date of erection, and social class of the deceased buried within. Some tombs in the north reflect influence with Goguryeo by making use of a pyramid shape made of brick and stone, such as the one in Figure 9.

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94 Peterson and Margulies, 28-30.
95 Peterson and Margulies, 28.
96 Portal, 50.
Many of the tombs with the horizontal style chamber, like the pyramid style tomb, have been looted like those in Goguryeo. Despite these losses, the trend of painting murals in the tombs provides important information. The practice of painting murals in burial chambers and some of the regalia found within some tombs suggest alliances between the leaders of some tribes, trade, intermarriage, and/or perhaps imitation. Because clans of the Goguryeo and Baekje kingdoms shared a geographic proximity and warred with each other on a frequent basis, cultural exchange is not surprising.

Social status of the dead seems to be indicated by the style of tomb, since “the larger scale and exceedingly restricted number of Baekje’s stone-mounded tombs of the

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97 Barnes, China, Korea and Japan: The Rise of Civilization in East Asia, 224.
distinctive step-pyramid design support the interpretation that this particular type of grave was associated with the very highest social status”.98 In addition to the variance of tomb styles, different types of coffins used in Baekje tombs also vary but jar-style coffins were common in the southern part of Baekje territory. This style of coffin also appears in areas in which square shaped and keyhole shaped tombs were built.99 There are thirteen keyhole shaped tombs in Korea, all of which are in the modern South Cholla province.100 This is at the very southern tip of the peninsula as indicated by the map in Figure 10, and thus closest to Japan.101

98 Best, 98.
99 Portal, 50.
101 Peterson and Margulies, xi.
Figure 10. Map of the Modern Provinces of North and South Korea. By John Huntington.
The keyhole shape of the Baekje tombs is significant because it was once thought to be unique to Japan.\textsuperscript{102} However, its appearance on the Korean peninsula has led some scholars specializing in Korean art and archeology, such as Jane Portal, to believe that this shape originated in Baekje.\textsuperscript{103} At the same time, the Korean tombs all date from the latter half of the fifth century to the first half of the sixth century. Which is later than the Japanese type, therefore, the case cannot be made that the keyhole shape originated in the South Cholla province because tombs of this shape are found in Japan as early as the third century.\textsuperscript{104} In addition to the keyhole shape, the Baekje tombs have other Japanese characteristics, such as a surrounding moat on all four sides, stone corridors painted red like those in North Kyūshū of the same era and haniwa-like pottery.\textsuperscript{105} Because Japanese keyhole shaped tombs contain grave goods from many places and the keyhole shape is believed to be related to indigenous Japanese religious traditions, the Korean keyhole shaped tombs were either built for a person or persons of Japanese origin or the Baekje culture may have been adopting Japanese forms. The location of these keyhole-shaped tombs in Korea is also significant. Japanese keyhole-shaped kofun tend to be built on arable land, and thus can be viewed as a sign of power over both people and the land itself. This was also the case with the location of the South Cholla keyhole-shaped tombs.

\textsuperscript{102} Yoshii, 1. \\
\textsuperscript{103} Portal, 50-51. \\
\textsuperscript{104} Barnes, \textit{State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite}, 104. \\
\textsuperscript{105} Yoshii, 1.
Baekje was located in “Korea’s most fertile land” and much Baekje territory was used for agricultural purposes.\textsuperscript{106}

The artifacts in the South Cholla province keyhole shaped tombs are not just from Japan but also from Gaya and Baekje as well. This has led to some academic disagreement of the nationality of dead inside and the builders of these tombs.\textsuperscript{107}

The Baekje kingdom “is generally regarded as embodying the greatest artistic refinement and sophistication” but, unfortunately, due to wars during the Baekje era and looting over the centuries, artifacts available for study are not as numerous as those of Silla tombs.\textsuperscript{108} This makes the further comparison of Japanese and Baekje material goods from this era difficult. However, since it is known that the kingdom of Baekje imitated Goguryeo culture and traded extensively with Gaya and sometimes Silla as well, one can assume that Baekje grave goods had similarities with goods from these kingdoms.


\textsuperscript{107} Yoshii, 2.

\textsuperscript{108} Portal, 50.
The two earrings in Figure 11 from the Baekje region have interesting features. According to the National Museum of Korea, the glass bead on the earring on the left may have been imported from Goguryeo or Baekje, and the decorative center bead on the right earring displays the granulation technique used frequently in Silla and Gaya. The shape of the dangling pendants is unusual, as many earrings from the southern part of the Korean peninsula, like Gaya or Silla, have leaf-heart or round shaped pendants. These personal ornamentations were the product of a ritual symbolism of the elite. The shape of the dangling pendants on these earrings is unlike all other surviving examples, which have a leaf or heart shape. The round shape at the top half and a longer protruding end is very similar to the ‘keyhole’ shape of Japanese kofun. Scholar Jonathan Best believes that if one considers “both the antagonism that long characterized Baekje’s interactions with
Goguryeo and the bias long shown by the kingdom for official intercourse with southern China, it is remarkable that a substantial percentage of the sparse remains of Baekje’s elite material culture dating to the fourth and fifth centuries bears the stylistic imprint of Goguryeo and northern China. However, it seems probable that these stylistic similarities may be simply the products of trade or imitation of a stronger power. In addition to stylistic similarities to Goguryeo and northern China, there are strong similarities to metalwork found in Japan.

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109Best, 97.
The golden ornaments in Figures 12 and 13 date from the sixth century. Exactly how they were arranged on the head is unknown. These golden headpieces bear both Buddhist and shamanistic iconography. The lotus motif in the center reflects Baekje’s early adoption of Buddhism, which was later transmitted to Japan in the early sixth century.110 These head pieces also reveal Three Kingdom period Korea’s Central Asian cultural heritage. The general tree shape with dangling golden ‘leaves’ or ‘fruit’ on

110 Best, 138.
golden twisted wire is very similar to Central Asian headgear in Figure 14 from the Tillya Tepe excavation in both design and construction. Figure 15 is a detail of Figure 14. These Central Asian crowns do not display the Buddhist lotus as the diadems in Figures 12 and 13 do but the similarities in shape, tree design, and dangling golden leaves are apparent.

Figure 14. Crown. Tillya-Tepe. 1st Century BCE to 1st Century CE. Gold. Length: 45 cm, Height: 14.0 cm. Current Location Unknown.
Elements of this western Central Asian design can be observed in the artifacts from all of the Korean kingdoms and the confederation of Gaya during the fifth and sixth centuries. This style of crown also appears in Japan, as displayed in Figure 15. The Japanese crown made out of bronze and gilded at the time in which it was made based on the fact that most of the crowns and personal decorations in these tombs were also either gilt bronze or gold. The theme of a tree design and dangling round golden ‘leaves’ is present but there does not appear to be any sign of a lotus. The crowns from the different regions that bear similar iconography suggest a shared or very similar cultural tradition.
The presence or trace of shamanism can be observed in the details of the Baekje earrings in Figure 17, such the dangling gold leaves and comma-shaped dangling pendants made of jade or gold (Kr. Goguk, Jp. Magatama), which are “most likely stylized bear claws or tiger claws.” This is an extremely important detail because this comma-shaped bead later becomes one of the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan (Jp. Sanshu no Jingi) and Japanese imperial regalia. They are described in the Nihongi as gifts from the sun goddess to the imperial family of Japan:

“Therefore Ama-terasu no Oho-kami gave to Ama-tsu-hiko-hiko-ho-no-ninigi no Mikoto the three treasures, viz. the curved jewel of Yasaka gem, the eight hand mirror,

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111 Peterson and Margulies, 23-27.
and the sword Kusangi, and joined to him as his attendants Ame no Koyane no Mikoto, the first ancestor of the Naka-tomi.”

The comma-shaped bead’s presence on Korean crowns and earrings indicates that it likely has shamanistic as well as royal roots. Comma-shaped beads are very common on Gaya and Silla jewelry too, further proving that they had shamanistic meaning or source at one point. Many of the items were worn by both men and women, before death perhaps during rituals or processions, and some were made specifically for the afterlife, such as the gilt bronze shoes shown in Figure 18 which were found in a tomb. The flat, dangling, pendant with another flat pendant that lies on top is a style that is also found in Japan. Silla jewelry too, further proving that they had shamanistic meaning at one point. Many of the items were worn by both men and women, before death perhaps during rituals or processions, and some were made specifically for the afterlife, such as the gilt bronze shoes shown in Figure 18.

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112 Aston, Book 1, 76.
Figure 17. Earrings. Tomb of King Muryeong, Baekje. 6th Century. Gold and jade. Length: 8.3 cm. Gongju National Museum.

Figure 18. Queen’s shoes with spikes. Tomb of King Muryeong, Baekje. 6th Century. Gilt Bronze. Gongju National Museum.

Role of Baekje Be
In the late fifth century, immigrants from Baekje called *be* were an important part of the Yamato court.\textsuperscript{113} The word *be* is believed to be a loanword from Korean to Japanese and is applied to many different kinds of skilled laborers. Some *be* were educated scribes, responsible for keeping court records. Others were skilled laborers who introduced among other things, “brocade weaving, horse breeding, saddle making, gold working and Sue ware production, all of which became important to the Yamato court”.\textsuperscript{114} Because these skills were highly valued and profitable, *be* eventually became some of the higher ranking clans in Japan.\textsuperscript{115} This influx of skilled immigrant laborers during the mid to late 5\textsuperscript{th} century to Japan from Baekje was responsible for many of the grave goods found in these *kofun*. Because the skilled laborers were from Baekje, it is not surprising that methods of creation as well as aesthetic qualities of these status markers are almost identical to the items found in the Korean peninsula. Other earlier grave goods, exhibiting strong resemblances to Korean grave goods may have been imports.

Gaya

Gaya, sometimes called Karak, was located at the most southern tip of the Korean peninsula in between the more powerful Baekje and Silla as displayed in Figure 5.

Scholars disagree over whether Gaya can be called a ‘kingdom’ in the same sense as

\textsuperscript{113} Gina L. Barnes, “The role of the *be* in the formation of the Yamato State,” in *Specialization, Exchange, and Complex Societies*. Edited by Elizabeth M. Brumfiel and Timothy K. Earle. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987),86.

\textsuperscript{114} Barnes, “The role of the *be* in the formation of the Yamato State”, 87.

Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla or was really more a loose confederation of tribes. When Gaya was conquered by Silla, “it fell in sections” rather than as one united kingdom, thus supporting the confederation theory. However, some argue that Gaya’s use of the borrowed Chinese term, *wang*, meaning ‘king,’ for its rulers indicates that it was in fact, an actual kingdom since the use of this term denotes such respect. The exact nature of the relationship between Gaya and Japan is still heatedly debated today. As indicated above, the invasion of Korea by Japan in the early twentieth century was justified by “an early Japanese record, the *Kojiki* (712 C.E.), which mentions a place on the peninsula called Mimana”.

Textual sources describing the relationship the Gaya and the Japanese seem to support the theory of a loose confederation of tribes. While Gaya may not have been a politically unified kingdom, it was wealthy, and the elite class was able to have large tombs with rich grave goods. Large quantities of tomb pottery are a characteristic of Gaya tombs and a feature that was adopted by Silla after its absorption of the smaller and weaker Gaya. Gaya also traded extensively with the Japanese islands, especially Kyushu, bringing valuable iron and armor. The iron armor and painting in Gaya tombs is very similar to that of Goguryeo and like the Goguryeo, the shape of Gaya tombs was

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116 Peterson and Margulies, 19-20.
117 Peterson and Margulies, 22.
118 Best, 70.
119 Portal, 55.
120 Portal, 55.
either rectangular or oval shaped.\textsuperscript{121} In addition to armor, Gaya craftsmen were also talented goldsmiths, a skill possibly learned from their stronger neighbor, Silla, and trade with Baekje and the Japanese Yamato Wa.

![Earrings](image)


The gold earrings shown in Figure 19, with dangling leaf-shaped pendants and chains, are common in Gaya. The wearer’s movements must have generated an interesting effect as these earrings, paired with a crown with dangling flat leaves, were worn. They range from fairly simple, such as the one in the top left corner, to fairly complicated. The pair of earrings, third from the left in the bottom row in Figure 19, are

\textsuperscript{121} Portal, 56.
very similar to those on the right in Figure 20, with long gold chains and flat leaf-shaped pendants. In addition, the last two pair of earrings, in the top row of figure 20, display features very similar to the Japanese earrings in Figures 21 and 22.

The flat, round pendant with a smaller one of the same shape on top is also seen in Silla, although it is much more intricate perhaps due to Silla goldsmithing skills and perhaps the taste of Silla elite families. The popularity of the almond or round leaf-shaped pendant on earrings may have been used to further the Central Asian “Tree of Life” theme on crowns by matching the traditional features.

Figure 20. Earrings. Funayama Tumulus, Nagomi-machi, Kumamoto, Kofun era Japan. 5-6th Century. Gold. Left: Length 14.9 cm, Right: Length 6.7 cm. Tokyo National Museum.


The Central Asian tradition of using tiny, golden leaves connected by twisted gold wire on shamanistic crowns was present in the Gaya region as well, evidenced by the earrings in Figure 23.
The similarities among Gaya Korean and Yamato Japanese jewelry have led some scholars to believe “that some of Korea’s Gaya people must have crossed the waters to settle in Japan.” 122 Others take the position that this metalwork was the work of the people on Kyushu and it was imported to Gaya. The possibility of people from Kyushu living on the southern tip of the peninsula is further supported by recent linguistic studies that indicate similar spoken languages. 123 I suggest that the similarities between Gaya and Yamato Japanese grave goods and metalworking resulted from immigration from Gaya to Japan and trade between the two areas. Early Chinese sources suggest that “the Yamato

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122 Peterson and Margulies, 22.

rulers exercised some influence in the Gaya region throughout much of the fifth century, but that it waned precipitously thereafter.” It is also entirely possible that there were both people of Gaya descent on Kyushu and people from Kyushu living in Gaya since there was so much travel and trade at this time. Silla qualities may have been transmitted to Japan through Gaya metalworkers, as evident from the jewelry as well the armor. Thus, although Gaya was not a political superpower during its time, the superior metalworking skills of Gaya craftsmen and its location between Yamato Japan and the rest of the Korean peninsula allowed for trade and growth as a fairly wealthy group of states.

Silla

According to the *Samguk Sagi*, the kingdom of Silla is the last of the Three Kingdoms to come into being. Its official foundation date is 57 CE. Silla grew into an extremely wealthy and powerful state, eventually conquering and unifying the rest of the peninsula. Geographically isolated by mountains and, Silla was thus protected from its aggressive neighbors. Silla was the last of the kingdoms to accept Buddhism. Pre-Buddhist shamanistic motifs therefore appear extensively in the vast amount of surviving golden jewelry, as shown in Figure 25 and Figure 26. The tree of life theme is especially prominent in Figure 25.

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124 Best, 71.
125 Portal, 53.
126 Portal, 58.
Figure 25. Crown. Tomb No. 98 in Hwangnam-dong, Gyongju, Silla. 5th Century. Gold and jade. Height: 27.5 cm. Gyongju National Museum.
There were numerous tombs in the Silla kingdom, some of which were large round pits covered in rocks and grass. The inside of the pit was lined with clay and stones. The heavy coverings made for difficult re-entry so many of the items buried in Silla have been preserved, allowing insight into the religious and material culture of the Silla elite. Silla gold work is extremely famous and it “was technologically related to that of the Han Dynasty as evidenced at Lelang”. Some of the gold objects appear to have “influence from China and possibly came to Silla via Baekje” such as the “gold

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127 Peterson and Margulies, 23.

128 Portal, 60.

129 Barnes, China, Korea and Japan: The Rise of Civilization in East Asia, 229.
belts with pendant objects” as shown in Figure 27, which also makes use of the comma-shaped bead.¹³⁰

![Figure 27. Girdle with Waist Pendants. Gungwan-ch’ong Tomb, Silla. 5th Century. Gold. Length of girdle: 162.6 cm, Length of longest pendant: 54.5 cm. Gyongju National Museum.](image)

Even after the acceptance of Buddhism by the state, this shamanistic iconography was still used in making the crowns. This may have been because the kings and/or queens still practiced shamanism and that this religion had a strong hold on Silla culture.¹³¹ Some of these iconographic details made their way to the Japanese islands and can be observed in some of the artifacts found there probably as a result of religious parallels of

¹³⁰ Portal, 62.

¹³¹ Portal, 59.
even strict continuity. The presence of Shamanistic details on Silla regalia indicates that there were no clear distinctions between political and religious life in Silla Korea. Experts on ancient Korean culture argue that Shamanistic ruling in Silla is further exemplified by the tradition of female leadership, since Korean shamans were typically female.\textsuperscript{132} The integration of political and religious leadership of Silla royalty is further exemplified by the linguistic evidence, as the title for ‘king’ “means “shaman” in the old Silla language”.\textsuperscript{133}

The territory that Silla controlled was rich in natural resources, including iron and gold,\textsuperscript{134} thus providing materials for the talents of the Silla gold and metal smiths. Many of their fine works are popular in Korea today, and Silla-style replicas have been created for sale as a source of nationalistic pride.\textsuperscript{135} Examples of the richly detailed and complicated earrings of the Silla Kingdom are illustrated in Figure 28, which makes use of the leaf shape although it has been further elaborated by the use of granulation and dozens of smaller leaf shaped pendants.


\textsuperscript{134} Portal, 59.

In addition to the fine gold work for which Silla is famous, the Silla elite also favored other fine goods such as “silk, cotton, hemp and ramie fabrics, wool blankets, leather products, tables, wooden containers, willow and bamboo products, ceramics and tiles, clothes and embroideries, tents, lacquer and metal weapons and tools”. Silla traded extensively with Tang China for other fine luxury goods in exchange for precious metals, finished products and other natural resources and eventually made “increasing

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136 Portal, 59.
military, political and cultural ties with Tang China…the outcome was Silla’s unification of the Korean peninsula in 668 C.E.\textsuperscript{137}

The style of tombs in both Silla and Gaya made grave robbing difficult and allowed the metalwork from these areas to survive to the present day. The few pieces that are available from Goguryeo and Baekje show similarities to those from Gaya and Silla, it can be assumed that the elite classes from all of these areas had interactions. Because of the active trade and immigration on the Korean peninsula, the study of the surviving metal work allows insight into the material cultures of Baekje and Goguryeo as well. The similar structure and appearance of gold ornamentation on the peninsula has even led to some confusion as to the origins of some items, such as the case with the earrings in Figure 29, which are either of Gaya or Silla origin, but it seems likely that they were created near the area in which they were discovered, namely the southern area of the peninsula.

\textsuperscript{137} Portal, 59.
Figure 29. Earrings. Silla or Gaya. 6th century. Gold. Length: 10.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Chapter 4: Japan: Kofun Period Brief Overview

The early third to early seventh centuries in Japanese history are known as the Kofun period, named after the mounded tombs which were built during this time. Goods and services, such as agricultural methods and iron tools, were imported to the three main Japanese islands from China and the Korean peninsula. This helped with plowing the land and better irrigation, resulting in large-scale food production and a corresponding growth of the population.\(^{138}\) In addition to new goods and services, there was some immigration from the peninsula which also may have been vital to the creation of an organized state. From the early third to early seventh centuries, during the Kofun period, all over the three main Japanese islands, Kyūshū, Honshū, and Shikoku, enormous mounded tombs, or *kofun*, were erected. These islands and their geographic proximity to the Korean peninsula can be seen on the map in Figure 30.\(^{139}\)

\(^{138}\) Schirokauer, Lurie, and Gay, 15.

\(^{139}\) Schirokauer, Lurie, and Gay, 4.
There are over 150,000 Kofun-period tombs in Japan. They vary greatly in size, shape, and method of construction depending on both the date and location of the
monument. The first of the mounded tombs in Japan were created in the first century for local leaders. These were round, simple mounds. The keyhole-shaped tombs built during the third century and later signify “the creation of a new, supra-regional elite grouping, tying together…local rulers together in a socio-cultural network of peer polities”. These later tombs were much more complicated and required an enormous amount of raw materials and the cooperation of a much bigger population. Mizoguchi, Barnes and other scholars have long argued that the keyhole-shape of these tombs may have been for religious rituals and the outlining border for creating a sacred space. This would be consistent with a society that was shamanistically ruled. Mizoguchi argues that this created an “elite discursive space” for esoteric rituals which only a few shamans would know how to perform properly. Thus, during the Kofun Period, these tombs served a dual purpose, as both a sacred space for religious ritual as well as reminders of deceased political and/or religious leaders. Mizoguchi also claims that this marks a social shift in Japanese culture. That these larger tombs “marked the moment when the elaboration of the technology of the self and self-identification reached its peak and when the character of the elite began to transformed from the representative of communal interests to rulers with a naturally given right to rule”. In fact, in modern Japan, many

141 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 104.
142 Kōji Mizoguchi, An Archeological History of Japan 30,000 B.C. to A.D. 700. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 214
143 Mizoguchi, 215-216.
Kofun which are claimed by the imperial family are still considered to be sacred spaces and marked by Shinto shrines.

The shape of a circle attached to a trapezoid creating what has come to be known as a keyhole is unique to the mounded tombs made in Japan. This form came about in the third century, during the transition into the Kofun period.\textsuperscript{144} Examples of this type of tomb style are seen in Figure 31, an aerial view of the Nara area.

\begin{figure}[ht]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure31.png}
\caption{Keyhole shaped Kofun, Nara prefecture, Japan. 34° 41'59.01" N and 135° 48' 23.46" E. Google Earth. Feb. 21, 2005. March 20, 2010.}
\end{figure}

The only other known examples of a mounded tomb of this shape are the thirteen in South Cholla province, which appear to also be Japanese in origin and were built later.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{144} Barnes, \textit{State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite}, 104.}
The tombs’ immense size, the surrounding moats, and the transportation of the stones that was necessary for the creation of these tombs required the control of a large population by a wealthy, powerful governing state. The keyhole-shaped tombs in particular are “assumed to be associated with the ruling class due to the vast resources demanded by their monumental size and rich grave goods”. This unique shape is believed to have religious or ritual meaning as well as being a signifier of “the ultimate elite identifier in the Kofun period”. The eventual adoption of the keyhole shaped tomb throughout the Kofun period in Japan may have been facilitated by “close personal relationships” between ruling families although “pure emulation cannot be ruled out”.

Kofun were built away from settlements. Until the “beginning of the fifth century, mounds were often placed on slopes, or atop preexisting hills, which made them look larger.” During the fifth century, they began to be constructed on the valuable arable land. In addition to the changes in shape and location of the Kofun, the coffin chambers and coffins also evolved perhaps due to the influx of immigrants and ideas from China and Korea. Large stone sarcophagi took the place of the previously favored wooden coffins and “early mounds were topped by shallow grave chambers, one for each burial, but later tombs were built on top of room-like chambers made of huge stones.” This

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148 Schirokauer, Lurie, and Gay, 14.
149 Schirokauer, Lurie, and Gay, 14.
allowed for reopening for the purpose of religious ceremonies and multiple burials. These sarcophagi and the chambers required highly developed stone masonry skills. The stone masonry and chamber construction methods used for the monuments developed in China for tomb and sarcophagi building practices used there. These were then adopted by the Korean states and then brought to the Japanese islands.

Like the rounded mounded tombs of earlier period, kofun-style tombs contain a wide variety of ceramics. According to ceramic testing, archeologists have argued that some pottery was non-local in origin, signifying extended contact and trade with the other Japanese islands. In addition to Japanese ceramics from other areas, many of the items found in the mounded tombs show strong relationships with the Korean peninsula, such as horse trappings, gold jewelry and regalia, mirrors, armor, and swords. Examples of these similar grave goods are the caps seen in Figures 32 and 33. Recent archeological excavations suggest that this design of gold cap might actually be of Baekje origin, although the National Museum in Seoul identifies it as Silla. Similar styles of gilt bronze caps worn by the elites of both Baekje and Yamato gives further evidence for a strong relationship between the elites of both regions.

150 Schirokauer, Lurie, and Gay, 14.
151 Barnes, State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4th-Century Ruling Elite, 118-124.
152 Edwards, 274-279.
In addition to a close relationship with Korean states, Chinese sources also describe Chinese contact with the Yamato Wa, meaning that the Korean peninsula was not the only source of continental culture for the emerging Japanese state. However,
during the mid-third to early fourth centuries, a shift in grave goods can be observed where there seems to be closer ties with the Korean peninsula than China. Barnes observes that “thus, there was a critical change in elite interaction patterns in mid-fourth century, resulting in Kofun elites’ turning away from China towards the Korean Peninsula”. It should be noted that during this time in China, the Northern Wei and their successors were in power. The Northern Wei were not of Han heritage and were in fact “a nomadic proto-Mongol people known as the Xianbei”. The Central Asian ancestry of the Wei and their successors suggests that they may have been conduits of transmission of some of both the styles and iconographies of shamanism into Korean and then from there to Japan.

Relations between Baekje and Japanese Yamato Wa

Archeological and textual sources indicate that, among the Korean kingdoms, Baekje had one of the closest relationships with the Japanese Yamato, or Wa. Unfortunately, “the editors of the Samguk Sagi had minimal access to Korean records relating to Baekje.” Jonathan Best’s translation of the Baekje Annals describes the relationship between Baekje and Yamato rulers as fairly amicable for the majority of the

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156 Gardiner, 47.

157 Best, 64-65.
time. 158 Passages in the ancient Japanese *Nihon Shoki* describe this special relationship in detail, specifying that in 367 C.E, “King Kūnch’ogo opened diplomatic intercourse with the Yamato by sending an embassy to their court” and that “envoys from Silla accompanied the Baekje mission and perpetrated such outrageous offenses against the later party that the Yamato felt justified in sending troops to join Baekje in chastising Silla two years later”. 159 This particular transaction is described in Aston’s translation of the *Nihongi* as such:

“The King of Pekche sent Kutyo, Mi-chu-nyu and Ma-ko with tribute. Now a tribute envoy from Silla came along with Kutyo. Hereupon a Grand Empress and Prince Imperial Homuda wake no Mikoto were greatly delighted and said:—“People from the countries wished for by our late Sovereign have now come to Court. Alas! That they cannot meet the Emperor!” There was not one of all the ministers who did not shed tears. But when the articles of tribute of the two countries were examined, the Silla tribute was of rare objects in very great number, while the Pekche tribute articles were few and mean, and of no value. So inquiry was made of Kutyo and the others saying:—“How is it that Pekche tribute is inferior to that of Silla?” They answered:—“We lost our way and arrived at Sabi. Here thy servants were captured by men of Silla and confined in a gaol. After three months had passed, they wished to kill us. Then Kutyo and the rest looked up

158 Best, 64-65.

159 Best, 67.
towards Heaven, and pronounced a curse. The men of Silla, fearing this curse, refrained from killing us, but robbed us of our tribute.”\textsuperscript{160}

After this incident, the \textit{Nihongi} describes Baekje envoys regularly trying to court the Yamato, most likely in an attempt to gain a powerful ally against Silla.

According to both the \textit{Samguk sagi} and the \textit{Nihon Shoki}, Japanese Yamato also “exercised significant influence in southern Korea from late in the fourth century to the end of the fifth” and that the balance of power in the Baekje-Yamato relationship was not always equal.\textsuperscript{161} In addition, passages in the \textit{Nihon Shoki} describe the common presence of Baekje envoys and royalty in the Yamato court.\textsuperscript{162}

According to the Japanese \textit{Nihon shoki} and the Korean \textit{Samguk Yusa}, during the late fourth to early fifth centuries, Japanese relations with Silla were aggressive, in contrast to relations with Baekje, whose “rulers were closely and, largely, amicably connected to the Yamato.”\textsuperscript{163} The Yamato armies helped protect Baekje from the armies of Goguryeo and Silla at times and, in return, received tribute from Baekje in the forms of goods and services. However, it does not appear that Baekje was a Yamato-controlled state as throughout the early fifth century it continued to “maintain its independent tributary ties to the dynasties of southern China”.\textsuperscript{164} In 391 C.E, the Yamato demanded a

\textsuperscript{160} Aston, Book 1, 247-248.

\textsuperscript{161} Best, 68.

\textsuperscript{162} Best, 67.

\textsuperscript{163} Best, 85.

\textsuperscript{164} Best, 89.
Silla prince as hostage and kept him for nearly thirty years. In addition, Silla sent tribute to Japan at times, which would certainly explain many Silla features of golden jewelry found in Japan. It seems likely that the Silla prince was accompanied by Silla servants and craftsmen. It is also possible that this jewelry or goldsmiths were simply taken from Silla as an assertion of Yamato power.

As has been noted earlier, there was most likely intermarriage between the Baekje and Japanese royal families providing another way in which golden jewelry and styles made their way to the archipelago. During the last decades of the fifth century, “it appears that Silla felt increasingly less obliged to send the gifts expected by the Yamato, while Baekje maintained a cordial, though increasingly less reliant affiliation with the government in the archipelago.” According to the *Nihongi*, Baekje continued to send gifts and skilled laborers. In the late fifth century and early sixth, there were “important changes in the political structure and cultural character of the royal court” which “evidently not only enabled Paekche (Baekje) to weather the immediate crisis but, eventually, to flourish”.

Goguryeo continued to be a threat to the Baekje kingdom and the capital of Baekje was moved to the southern city of Sabi, near the Kǔm River from Ungjin. Yamato continued to support Baekje by sending soldiers to protect Baekje from Goguryeo and Baekje continued to send gifts to Yamato. Baekje and Silla had a

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165 Best, 85.
166 Best, 93.
167 Best, 102.
168 Best, 102-4.
short-lived alliance in which they defended themselves from the Goguryeo. This alliance was solidified by the marriage of Silla and Baekje royal families and was to last for several decades.169

In the last part of the Three Kingdoms period in Korea, Silla expanded its territory and eventually took over the peninsula, bringing in the Unified Silla age in 668 CE. When Silla attacked Baekje, Baekje asked for help from Japan, and when Baekje eventually fell, according to the *Nihongi*, Japan mourned: “Chyu-yu has fallen; there is nothing more to be done; this day the name of Baekje has become extinct. Shall we ever again visit the place where the tombs of our ancestors are?”170

There are a number of possible interpretations of this emotional response to Baekje’s demise. Wontack Hong interprets this statement as Yamato royals being Baekje rather than Japanese. As a proponent of the Horse Rider theory, Hong does not believe that these were two different clans but were one family originating from the Korean peninsula. However, due to the lack of evidence of a military invasion from the Korean peninsula, it also seems likely that the Yamato royal family and Baekje royal family were two different clans and there was intermarriage and friendship between the royal families of Baekje and Yamato Japan. This except from the *Nihongi* indicates that there was a direct line of ancestors, grandparents, and their predecessors in the Baekje kingdom, and thus this would be a statement of familial continuity.

169 Best, 106-108.

170 Aston, Book 2, 280.
Most important for this study, one could also make the argument that the tombs of the ancestors that were being mourned were the keyhole-shaped ones in South Cholla province. The fact that Japan came to Baekje’s aid and lamented over the fall of their former ally suggests a relationship that goes beyond that of a trading partner because there does not appear to be this sort of emotional reaction for the fall of the Gaya states. The *Nihongi* simply states: “Silla destroyed the Miyake of Imma (Gaya)”\(^1\).  

Although the exact nature of the relationship between the Gaya states and Yamato Japan is still unclear, this reaction and lack of desire to offer military aid to Gaya that the elite families of Yamato Japan did not share the closeness with Gaya that they did with Baekje. This lack of emotion over the demise of Gaya seems to indicate that elite Gaya and Yamato families did not intermarry.\(^2\) The similarities between Gaya and Yamato Japanese grave goods and metalworking is most likely the result of trade and immigration from Gaya to Japan. The Silla qualities inherent in Japanese jewelry may have been transmitted to Japan through Gaya metalworkers.  

In conclusion, the relationship between Yamato Wa Japan and Baekje remained a constant amicable one although the power dynamics were not always equal. Baekje’s motive for a solid alliance with the Japanese seems have been defensive due to Yamato Wa’s location directly next to Baekje’s enemy. Yamato’s vested interest in the survival of the Baekje royal family seems to go beyond that of a trading partner. Because Yamato had the maritime skills and contacts for direct trade and contact with China, Baekje was

\(^1\) Aston, Book 2, 80.  
\(^2\) Hong, *Relationship Between Korea and Japan in Early Period: Baekje and Yamato Wa*, 245-247.
not needed as a trading intermediary. This suggests a family tie between the elite classes of both societies. The newfound evidence of a kofun in Japan for an exiled Baekje king further indicates these close ties. The kofuns in South Cholla province also indicates political and familial ties, as these large tombs created in the native Japanese style not only show the observation of the deceased’s culture and religion but also required an extraordinary amount of resources. Therefore, this close relationship is likely the product of family ties, rather than one based on the forced submission of another through invasion.

Chapter 5: Objects as Proof of Royal Heritage in Japanese Culture

The lovely and auspicious grave goods in Japanese tombs were not just for decorative purposes. Mirrors, comma-shaped beads, and certain types of crowns, jewelry and swords were not only elite status markers, but also family markers.\textsuperscript{174} According to certain passages in the \textit{Nihongi}, at this time in Japanese culture, sacred objects and “material goods belonging to elite persons might be used to identify members of the same class and the same family, even when not known face-to-face”.\textsuperscript{175} This is demonstrated in one of the stories in the \textit{Nihongi} in which the emperor demands proof of a man’s claim of divine heritage:

“The Emperor said: If he whom thou has taken as thy Lord were truly a child of the Heavenly Deity, there would surely be some object which thou couldst show to us by way of proof.” In response, the questioned pulls out a feathered arrow and quiver and “The Emperor examined them, and said “These are genuine.”\textsuperscript{176}

This aspect of the Japanese elite culture could be used to identify the fleeing Baekje families after the Silla overthrew their kingdom when they were looking for asylum. Although it appears that communications between Baekje and Yamato Wa may have slowed down during the last few decades of Baekje rule, as relatives, the exiled

\textsuperscript{174} Barnes, \textit{State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4\textsuperscript{th}-Century Ruling Elite}, 170.

\textsuperscript{175} Barnes, \textit{State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4\textsuperscript{th}-Century Ruling Elite}, 153.

\textsuperscript{176} Aston, Book 1, 128.
Baekje kings must have been welcomed and protected in Japan. A recent excavation of a very late Kofun-period tomb in Nara, Japan, was for an exiled Baekje King named Changseong, who fled to Japan with his father, Seongwang after the fall of the Baekje kingdom.\textsuperscript{177} As I have noted above, the monetary and natural resources and manpower required for construction of a large tomb are great, so this tomb of a foreign king in exile by the Japanese rulers suggests a strong political or familial alliance.

Leaf shaped pendants and pendants that dangle from chains are common themes for earrings. The late Kofun Japanese earrings display leaf shaped pendants and dangling chain pendants and look remarkably similar to those Korean designs. I argue that the continuation of certain visual vocabulary is how family ties and relations were displayed through personal ornamentation.

The comma-shaped bead, found in both Gaya and Silla in Korea and throughout Japanese personal ornamentation is also common, and most likely a symbol of royal or elite status. This royal symbolism of the comma-shaped bead continued in Japanese culture at least through the Nara Period, as shown in the Bodhisattva Fukukensaku’s crown in Figure 34. In Buddhism, bodhisattvas are thought of and depicted as high ranking princes, so the use of comma-shaped beads in this context demonstrates they were the prerogative of his royal status. That these jewels carried over and co-existed in both Korea and Japan is an obvious example of both an idea and a specific design existed between the two regions with both content and intention intact.

\textsuperscript{177} “Ancient Tomb of Exiled Korean King Found in Japan,” 1.
Figure 34. Crown of Bodhisattva. Nara Period. Mid. 8th Century. Todaiji, Nara, Japan.

Figure 35 is a detail of Figure 34 and shows the comma shaped bead in detail.
Figure 35. Detail of Figure 34.
Chapter 6. Conclusions

In this paper, I have attempted to determine the nature of the relationship between the Korean Kingdoms and Yamato Japan by using textual sources and golden grave goods. The similarities of the construction and design of the burial objects in Korea and Japan are easily visible. As stated earlier, this mounded tomb culture derives from the Central Asian nomads. Many pieces of the golden regalia from both Central Asia and Korea, and later Japan, have similar, if not identical, decorative details, such as the shape of pendants and the style of having a pendant hanging from a gold chain. Because the design of earrings and crowns and the motifs, such as the comma-shaped pendant, remained constant for several hundred years, these designs and decorative details were likely significant to the people in the cultures that wore them.

Although the meaning of these decorative details and designs has been lost, their prominence on religious and political leaders’ personal ornamentation signifies that they were important and were reserved especially for elite families. Because this type of jewelry most definitely had a significant social implication, there was likely a shared understanding of the significance of these symbols as they were transmitted to other cultures. Status markers like gold jewelry and other personal decorations are a way to “gain acceptance by other elites”, so it is possible that the stylistic similarities between the gold jewelry and decoration between political enemies may have been due to
imitation.\textsuperscript{178} This may be the case with Goguryeo and Baekje. From the \textit{Nihongi}, we know that in Japanese culture at this time certain objects were markers of high status or membership of a royal family. The shared stylistic attributes of the golden jewelry in Japanese tombs suggests intermarriage or a shared ancestor with the Baekje elites or royal family. Because Japanese historical texts record that the Japanese elite bemoaned the loss of Baekje because they could not visit the tombs or their ancestors, it is likely that the elite of Baekje intermarried with the elite Japanese families in order to secure political alliances. Because no evidence has been found of a military invasion from the Korean peninsula and there was already a developing state in Japan at the beginning of the Kofun period, the distribution of these status markers with auspicious symbols may have been controlled not only by their most likely expensive price but also as family markers, not everyone would be able to acquire or wear them. The presence of Japanese-style keyhole-shaped tombs in what was once Baekje territory indicates a stronger relationship with Baekje than any of the other Korean states. Unfortunately, without further study of the items from the keyhole-shaped tombs in the South Cholla province in Korea, we cannot be completely certain of the origin of the dead buried within. However, by using textual sources and photographs of the tomb artifacts from this era and knowing the architectural preferences of each kingdom for tombs, these are most likely tombs of Japanese royalty. However, more research on the subject is needed.

Although there is a general lack of surviving Baekje golden regalia available for study today, the few pieces available bear very strong resemblances to the pieces from

\textsuperscript{178} Barnes, \textit{State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4\textsuperscript{th}-Century Ruling Elite}, 169.
the other Korean kingdoms of this time period. Therefore, one can speculate that the other Baekje pieces were also similar to the ones from Gaya and Silla origin. It is conceivable that Baekje jewelry may even have been made by Gaya or Silla craftsmen since trade and immigration existed among the Korean nations. This assumption would allow for the transmission of certain stylistic attributes and jewelry making methods throughout the peninsula and eventually to Japan.

Textual sources state that the trade of goods and services from Korea to Japan was not limited to material culture and that diplomats and members of the Baekje royal families regularly visited the Yamato court. Such visitors would undoubtedly have brought luxury gifts for their hosts. For example, we know that they introduced many cultural elements such as Buddhism and the Chinese system of writing. I assume they also brought some of this jewelry symbolic of both their own royalty and, by virtue of familial relations, that of their Japanese cousins as well.

Thus, it is my conclusion that the similarities of the golden regalia from mounded tombs in both Korea and Japan show that elites of Baekje Korea and Yamato Japan had a blended culture. The elite families of Baekje Korea and Yamato Japan likely created political alliances through intermarriage and practiced a very similar set of religious beliefs due to the presence of the same shamanistic iconography on the ritual regalia. The gold jewelry is so close in design and type that it is indeterminable as to origin. Multiple factors have led to the direct cause of the uniformity of iconography on the jewelry and other regalia, including migration of the wearers, the artisans, and the pieces themselves, which traveled as they were sometimes given as gifts and tribute. Cultural continuity
maintained design characteristics across Asia from Central Asia to Japan. An underlying reason may have been the potency of power and iconographical correctness of the design on behalf of the wearers.
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