

## Editorial Note

### The Unique Characteristics of Gaya Culture

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#### Misconceptions of Gaya

Gaya (42–562)<sup>1</sup> competed with Silla (57 BCE–935 CE) for hundreds of years in the area that is now known as the Gyeongsang region of South Korea but eventually succumbed in the late sixth century. Silla’s unique historical perspective solidified over its process of unifying the Three Kingdoms and incorporating Baekje (18 BCE–660 CE) and Goguryeo (37 BCE–668 CE) in the late seventh century, which influenced its writing of history. Gaya’s history was resultingly disparaged because, from the victorious point of view, it had always been part of Silla. This is why *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記, History of the Three Kingdoms), the oldest canonical text on ancient Korean history, focuses mainly on Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. Gaya is rarely mentioned, and in the few instances when it is, it is described as a trivial polity that came to be annexed by various means in the early period of Silla’s history. This has meant that Gaya’s validity as a polity remained unacknowledged for over a thousand years.

On the other hand, Gaya appears under the name “任那”, “Imna” in Korean and “Mimana” in Japanese in the *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀, The Chronicles of Japan), which relates the

history of ancient Japan. Its descriptions seem to imply that Gaya’s territory was actually part of Yamato Japan and that an institution for its governance—“Imna Ilbon-bu” (任那日本府)—was maintained. It should be taken into account, however, that these passages on “Imna” reflect the historical perspective of aristocratic Baekje refugees who had fled to Japan following the demise of their kingdom. They were also products of Japanese attempts to compensate for their defeat at the hands of Silla, which had crushed the Japanese forces that came to the aid of the Baekje Revival Movement in the seventh century. Japan’s sense of superiority over Korea following its colonization of the peninsula in the twentieth century led heavily biased accounts on “Imna” to be accepted as straightforward history. Burdened by the tag of “Imna,” Gaya territory came to be regarded as a source of embarrassment for Koreans.

In 1945, the military government, led by General Douglas MacArthur in Japan and the American Military Government in Korea, undertook the task of reviewing and editing Japanese and Korean history textbooks. The first phrases to be deleted were those concerning the legend of the ancient Japanese Empress Jingu’s conquest of Samhan and the “Imna Ilbon-bu” theory. These phrases were found to promote an aggressive

nature on the part of the Japanese and their discrimination against Koreans. However, rather than the restoration of its history, only silence followed on Gaya. This was exacerbated by the fact that Korean historians possessed little information on the ancient polity. The situation changed markedly in the 1970s with the excavation of Gaya tombs by Korean archaeologists, however. The nature of the artifacts recovered from these tombs, especially their quality rivaling that of artifacts from Silla, came as a welcome surprise to all. Data produced by archaeological excavations have since provided a foundation for Gaya research and have been used to address the errors found in previous studies that had been based only on textual research. As a result, it has now become possible to present new knowledge of Gaya's history and culture.

## Brief Summary of the Special Articles on “Gaya”

“Gaya History and Culture” provides an overview of the papers I published over roughly 30 years since 1985. Gaya history can be divided into Early Gaya history (from the first century BCE to fourth century CE) and Late Gaya history (from the fifth to sixth century CE). Gaya existed as a confederation of ten to twenty statelets. Early Gaya history was centered on Gayaguk (加耶國), a polity based in Gimhae, while Late Gaya centered on Dae Gayaguk (大加耶國) in what is now Goryeong. This provides a basic framework for a new history of Gaya.

Gaya history began with the influx of refugees from Wiman Joseon (194–108 BCE) into the Gyeongsang region in the first century BCE. By the second century, approximately ten Gaya statelets (國, *guk*) had come to be established around Gimhae and other areas. In the third century, Gayaguk in Gimhae emerged as the head of the twelve Byeonhan statelets and began to organize the Early Gaya Confederacy. In the fourth century, a confrontation took place between Gayaguk and Silla. Gayaguk originally gained the upper hand but suffered great losses when Goguryeo forces came to Silla's defense.

In the fifth century, Banpaguk (伴波國) developed rapidly in Goryeong, which had originally been a more backward area. Later renamed “Dae Gayaguk” or “Garaguk (加羅國),” it played a central role in establishing the Late Gaya Confederacy. In the late fifth century, Dae Gaya presented an offering of tribute to the Southern Qi Dynasty (479–502) court. It even

sent reinforcements to Silla when that kingdom faced a threat from Goguryeo. In this way, Dae Gaya made its presence known on the international stage. However, a number of statelets based in the eastern Jeolla region were lost in the wake of a conflict with Baekje in the early sixth century.

Dae Gaya subsequently lost the statelets composing the southeastern part of its territory to Silla, which annexed them by abusing a marriage alliance between Silla and Dae Gaya. This further weakening of Dae Gaya created an opening for Baekje to attack, and the statelets that formed the southwestern part of Dae Gaya territory took this opportunity to escape from Dae Gaya's influence. These circumstances resulted in the weakening of Dae Gaya's hegemony. Amidst the division of the Late Gaya Confederacy into northern and southern factions in the mid-sixth century, great effort was put into resisting Baekje and Silla attacks and maintaining independence. However, its conquest by Silla was completed in 562 CE.

The economy was well developed in Gaya territory, with fishing, farming, iron production, and trade being the most prominent activities. The development of iron deposits and favorable conditions for maritime transport led to the establishment of long-distance trade, which fueled Gaya's cultural progress. Numerous Buddhist legends are set in Gaya territory, some of which have been used to suggest links with Indian Buddhism. However, these legends appear to date back only to the waning stages of Gaya history or even to the period after Gaya's demise. Human sacrifices as components of burials were more prevalent in Gaya compared to other regions. This is considered to be associated with the fact that Gaya remained in a transitional state and never fully emerged as an ancient state.

“Gaya Armor: The Culmination of Gaya Iron Crafting” was written by Kim Hyuk-joong, a curator at the Gimhae National Museum. Made by connecting long vertical plates, vertical plate armor first came to be used around the fourth century in southern region of Korean peninsula, when social tension increased due to warfare and the development of weaponry accompanied by improvements in iron production technology. The vertical plate armor appeared in the similar time in both Silla and Gaya. Gaya armor with its distinctive bird- and fern-shaped decorations is believed to have been worn to display social standing.

Helmets made with vertical plates, which were the main type of helmet in this period, were common throughout the Three Kingdoms with little regional variation observed. Examples from Gaya were fitted with sun-shades or cheek-covers with fern-design, and these greatly influenced helmets

worn on the Japanese Archipelago.

The infantry played a central role in the military tactics of the period in which iron armor first came into use in Gaya. The presence of lamellar armor, horse armor, horse helmets, saddles, and stirrups in Gaya tombs dating to the fifth century onward seems to indicate the adoption of heavy cavalry to a certain extent. However, it is likely that Gaya's heavy cavalry was not equal in number to that of Goguryeo or Baekje.

Upon its transmission to the Japanese Archipelago, Gaya armor developed into "Wa-style armor" starting in the fifth century. Such Wa-style armor has been found in several parts of the Gaya region, leading to the proposal of the "Imna Ilbonbu" theory. However, it has more recently come to be regarded as the result of exchanges between Gaya and Wa (倭) in Japan or of other interactions that took place over a long period of time.

Kim's paper presents a fairly objective overview of the nature of the research that has been undertaken on Gaya iron armor to date. Unfortunately, neither Gaya's advanced iron production technology, a key element in Gaya's iron culture, nor its iron farming tools, weapons, or horse gear were fully addressed in this paper. This is due to the fact that Gaya archaeological research has branched out in numerous channels, making it difficult for a single researcher to possess a specialist's knowledge and insights on all topics. The page limit for the articles also restricted a broader overview.

"Developments in the Pottery Culture of Gaya," by Lee Jeonggeun, Chief Curator at the Gimhae National Museum, examined issues such as the emergence of grayish-blue stoneware, the Gaya pottery production system, the mass-production and distribution of jars, the diversity of Gaya pottery, and the influence of Gaya pottery technology on Japanese stoneware.

Grayish-blue stoneware began to be produced around the fourth century CE. There are two hypotheses on its origins: One is that it can be traced back to the two-lugged jars of the Northeast region of China. The other is that it was an independent invention that occurred following indigenous technological innovation.

Gaya pottery is generally divided into an early (the fourth century) and a late phase (the fifth to the sixth century). In the early phase, Gimhae and Haman were the main centers of pottery production, and a key product was jars used as containers for liquids. During this phase, a system for the mass-production of pottery that took advantage of nesting two or three vessels in the kiln was well established in the Haman area.

Such mass-produced jars were used in Gaya, Silla, Baekje, and Japan.

The late phase witnessed the spread of grayish-blue stoneware production techniques from the Gimhae and Haman regions to other areas within Gaya territory, as well as to the neighboring kingdoms of Silla and Baekje. Following the diffusion of this technology throughout Gaya territory, vessels used for grave goods, such as mounted dishes, lids, and vessel stands, came to be produced in large quantities and jars lost their predominance. In addition, the diversity of Gaya pottery increased with the production of figurative vessels in the form of birds, houses, boat, wagons, mounted warriors, and more.

*Sue* ware (須惠器, Jp. *sueki*), characterized by firing at high temperatures to produce hard, dense walls with good water retention, came to be produced in Japan from the fifth century. It is considered to represent a new technological system distinct from the existing pottery production methodology in Japan.

Suemura in Osaka, the largest pottery production site of the era discovered so far in Japan, is a type site for early *sue* ware kilns. A strong influence of Gaya pottery can be observed at this site where ceramic artisans presumably crossed over to the Japanese Archipelago around 400 CE and created wares.

Lee proposes that the Haman region supported an advanced pottery mass-production system in the fourth century and was the center of a large-scale distribution network for jars. This is significant because, until now, research on Allaguk (安羅國), an Early Gaya statelet that emerged in Haman from the third to the fourth century, had been based mainly on textual evidence due to the lack of burial sites and other forms of archaeological evidence. This study sheds light on how Allaguk could have developed into the second greatest power in Early Gaya.

Professor Hong Bosik's contribution to this volume was "The Ancient East Asian World and Gaya: Maritime Networks and Exchange." Geumgwang Gaya was located around the natural harbor of the Gimhae Bay of the time, which had provided a major hub for goods flowing in from China and on to the Japanese Archipelago since the Samhan period.

The importance of Old Gimahe Bay in ancient trade networks lasted into the fourth century. This is illustrated by the presence of artifacts from Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla, Wa-type goods, items from China's central plain region, and Xianbei-style artifacts at the burial complexes in Daeseongdong and the Bonghwang-dong sites, both located in Gimhae. Advanced weapons and protective gear from Goguryeo and Xianbei appeared in the early fourth century in the Gimhae

and Busan areas. This indicates that Geumgwan Gaya had established trading networks with groups to the north. Furthermore, Geumgwan Gaya artifacts dating to this period have been recovered from the southwestern coastal areas of the Korean Peninsula, as well as the Kinki region and northern Kyushu in the Japanese Archipelago.

Allaguk in Haman and Garaguk (i.e., Dae Gaya) in Goryeong emerged as the cultural centers of Late Gaya. The Late Gaya statelets were generally quite active in adopting elements of Baekje culture, and associated sites have also yielded Silla and Goguryeo artifacts. Silla prestige goods dominate the Okjeon burial ground at Hapcheon, whereas Baekje prestige goods are common in the burial grounds of Wolsan-ri and Durak-ri in Namwon. This indicates that although the statelets of the Gaya Confederacy acknowledged the authority of the Dae Gaya ruler, their diplomatic authority had not been subsumed by Dae Gaya. Objects from Dae Gaya, Silla, and the Yeongsangang River system, as well as Wa items from Kyushu have been found in the areas of Uiryong along the Namgang River drainage, Sancheong, and Goseong in the southern coastal region. The people interred in Wa-style tombs in these areas are presumed to have been individuals from Wa that settled in Gaya to serve as traders obtaining advanced technologies and goods from Gaya and conveying them to Wa.

Hong identifies Gimhae and Busan as the centers of trade in the fourth century and Goryeong and Haman as the centers of trade from the fifth century onwards. It also recognizes Hapcheon, Namwon, and Goseong as possible sub-centers of trade, respectively, for the eastern, western, and southern regions of Gaya. This provides a case of archaeological evidence being applied to illustrate Gaya's nature as a confederacy of statelets in great detail.

The three articles examined above demonstrate how the archaeological discourse on Gaya culture has mainly been limited to the period of the fourth century and beyond. This is because the period prior to the third century has been commonly regarded as the "Samhan" era and distinct from the era dominated by the four ancient states of Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla, and Gaya. However, such a chronological framework is inappropriate for research on ancient history since, for example, the territorial boundaries of Samhan and Goguryeo are entirely exclusive, invalidating any temporal sequencing of Samhan followed by Goguryeo. The ways in which researchers have endeavored to construct and adopt a strict chronological framework are, of course, highly laudable. It is to be expected that the fourth to sixth centuries would be regarded as the key

period for Gaya culture, and the manner in which the iron objects, pottery, and international exchanges of this period were examined in detail in the articles is to be applauded.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of the author, whose research has focused on revealing the continuity of Gaya history, the fact that the area's culture prior to the third century went unexamined leaves much to be desired. The nature of trade and the metal and pottery culture of Byeonhan, one of the three pillars of Samhan, should also be addressed in order to provide a richer and more multi-dimensional portrait of Gaya culture. Just as the development from Jinhan to Silla must be examined as an element of Silla history, the history of Byeonhan prior to the third century must be included to provide a proper overview of Early Gaya history.

## An Ordered, Diverse, and Advanced Culture

What are the cultural characteristics of Gaya and the Three Kingdoms, the major players in ancient Korean history?

Based in the vast lands of Manchuria and the northern reaches of the Korean Peninsula, Goguryeo grew into a center of trade in Northeast Asia. This led to the clear confidence that is reflected in Goguryeo's grand and dynamic culture manifesting cultural elements from China and the steppe people of Central Asia. Baekje was heavily influenced by Nangnang (108 BCE–313 CE, Ch. Lelang) culture due to its geographical position in the northernmost portion of Mahan territory, but it also adopted and developed Goguryeo cultural elements such as stone-piled tombs. From the fourth century onward, influences from the aristocratic culture of China's Southern Dynasties were steadily adopted, contributing to the elegant and sophisticated nature of Baekje culture. Silla's culture emerged out of a convergence of the plain pottery culture indigenous to the southern regions of the peninsula and the Korean-type Bronze Dagger Culture of the northwestern region, which formed the common basis for Jinhan and Byeonhan culture. However, the wide-ranging social transformations that took place around the period of Silla's emergence as an ancient state based on aid from Goguryeo led to a transition to a simpler, more utilitarian culture.

There have been suggestions that Gaya was subject to the authority of Wa for hundreds of years, or alternatively, that it was controlled by Baekje for a period of time, or even that

it had been annexed by Silla early in its history. It must be remembered that Gaya territory once covered approximately one-third of the southern portion of the peninsula, and its existence spanned seven hundred years from the first century BCE to the sixth century. During this time, Gaya fostered a culture that was distinct from that of Goguryeo, Baekje, or Silla. Although Gaya shares a common cultural foundation with Silla (i.e., Jinhan and Byeonhan culture), its geographic position was more fortuitous for the development of maritime activities. Gaya, therefore, played a major role in trade with Nangnang, which influenced Gaya culture to a greater extent compared to Silla. Chinese culture during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) focused on harmoniously merging the philosophy of the Hundred Schools of Thought (諸子百家) with the notion of Yin-Yang and Five Agents Theory (陰陽五行) within the framework of Confucianism. Having adopted this philosophical position, Nangnang material culture is characterized by a rational and ordered appearance. Following the successful adoption of this aspect of Nangnang, Gaya did not actively absorb other foreign cultural elements and instead independently developed its indigenous culture over a long period of time. This resulted in a culture that was orderly and conservative in nature.

As discussed in the archaeological research described above on Gaya iron, pottery, and foreign objects, Gaya culture is diverse. The Nakdonggang River system flows through Gaya territory, which faces out towards the Korea Strait, allowing maritime trade to flourish. Therefore, not only did exchanges take place with neighboring Baekje and Silla, but diverse channels of exchange could also be established with Nangnang through which objects from China and the horse-riding peoples of Northeast China could be obtained. Furthermore, contact could be maintained with various Wa groups. In comparison, Baekje's location along the southwestern coastline facilitated exchange with China's Southern Dynasties. Silla's position was isolated along the southeastern region of the peninsula, only facilitating exchanges with Goguryeo. Under these circumstances, Gaya's cultural diversity can be understood in terms of the international nature of its trade networks. Gaya did not prioritize elevating its political standing, but rather was open to adopting in groups from various regions and trading in their goods. Gaya was renowned for its iron ingots, which were also used as a form of currency, and the confederacy's international orientation is reflected by the fact that they actively traded with the peoples of Nangnang, Daebang (early 3rd century–314, Ch. Daifang), Han, Ye, and

Wa, and supplied them all with iron.

What was the basis of driving Gaya to become an active leader of maritime trade? The key factor was the markets of the Japanese Archipelago (which had a large population even at the time) located at the opposite end of the maritime route that began at the mouth of the Nakdonggang River. The Japanese had to pass through Gaya if they wished to overcome the isolation of their surroundings. In addition, the Japanese Archipelago only became self-sufficient in iron from the sixth century onwards. Given that iron was a key factor in the establishment of ancient civilizations, the Japanese had no other option but to import iron from Gaya. In addition to iron, Gaya provided the communities on the Japanese Archipelago with other needed advanced cultural elements. By exporting them, Gaya obtained great economic benefits. It is possible to maintain that the elements of ancient material culture such as metal weapons, armor, horse gear, *sue* ware, and gold and silver decorations were mostly introduced into the Japanese Archipelago via Gaya. In order to reach the profitable Japanese markets, Wiman Joseon in the second century BCE, Nangnang from the first century BCE to the third century CE, and Baekje in the fourth to fifth centuries CE all had to depend on Gaya intermediaries. This is the reason why, at least up until the late fifth century, Gaya was able to maintain its cultural superiority over Wa on the Japanese islands.

However, with the commencement of iron production in the Kinki region of Japan in the sixth century and Baekje's efforts to interact directly with the communities of the Japanese Archipelago for their own political purposes and exclude Gaya, a sudden decline in power occurred. One reason for this can be found in the fact that Gaya did not provide the philosophical culture, such as Confucianism or Buddhism, that communities of the Japanese Archipelago needed to stabilize their institutions. Gaya's growth had been based on flourishing trade, and centralized political power was a secondary concern. It is this aspect of Gaya society that was the key factor in the confederacy's ultimate fall to Silla.

1 This journal notes the Gaya begun in 42 CE according to the records of *Samguk yusa*. Various academic views set the founding year of Gaya different based on the archaeological data.