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Commercial Activity between Korea and Southern Arabia in the Medieval Ages

Seong Min Hong

(RIES)

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1 Seong Min Hong (Ph.D. in Economics) is the President, Research Institute of the East-West Economy & Society (RIES)
**I. Introduction**

Historically Muslim activity has put down roots in Korean society. Arab Muslim merchants and sailors played the great role in East Asian trade in the middle ages. That was the time when Arab sailors established the first commercial routes around Southeastern Asia and settled sea trade route in China. Today many residents of the ancient period are living in China as a Chinese Muslim.

Muslims arrived at Korea during Unified Silla dynasty (668 CE – 935 CE) according to Korean history. However the activity vanished completely from the change of Korean society and declined of Muslim's ruling the sea from the 12th century. Muslim immigrants were gradually assimilated by the Korean society, and Muslim group dissolved into Korean society.

Considering the long history, it is believed that the historical contact between Korea and Southern Arabia goes back to pre-medieval history. Whenever I visit to Yemen, the mysterious country continues to stimulate my new curiosity. I have been interested in Chinese pottery at Aden Museum since the first of 1991. The Chinese pottery gave me a momentum to trace the commercial history between Korea and Yemen.

My concern about the contact between Korea and Southern Arabia began from the curiosity of Yemeni 'porcelain trade' which had developed in the Silk Road. Along with porcelain, my concern moved to Firind (decorated knife) and frankincense. In Korea, three packets of frankincense (乳香) as the Southern Arabian products was found at Seokgatap of Bulguksa in 1966. Frankincense, called 'Divine Food', was used in the Southern Arabia around 5000 BC. The western frankincense was known to China via Oasis road and handed down to Korea (Silla).

In this respect, the commercial activity between Korean and Muslim in history can guide the future study. Therefore this paper places emphasis on the introduction of the historical fact and suggestion of some hypotheses to induce the further study.

**II. Silla and Southern Arabia in the Medieval Age**

1. Korea was known for Silla to the Islam world

   Viewing an aspect of commercial activity, Yemeni merchants would have kept in contact with the Korean people through commercial activity in ancient times. The geographical location of ancient trade routes, especially ‘Spice Road’, in Yemen has a key to solve it. The Port of Aden and Mukalla of Hadramawt were possible place to meet with the commodities of frankincense, glassware, ginseng, pottery, silver-decorated knife, hawk, etc. Now is the time to trace the historical result back in long history. Korea and Yemen have a long history over 3000 years. Considering the historical materials, the possibility of contact between two countries goes back to the medieval ages.

   The famous geographer Ibn Khordadbeh (820–912 AD) mentioned in his book, *Kitab al-masālik wa’l-mamālek* that the Arabs settled in the Korean peninsula and they were Sh'iatl Ali. This fact has been verified by the descendants of 'Alawi Sayyides, who had come to Southern Arabia, which is Hadramawt, from Basra of the southern part of Iraq in 931 AD. Really the “Tomb of 'Alawi” exists in the middle of Tarim and Seiyun in Hadhramawt region.

   Viewing the fact that Arab-Muslims came to Silla(now Korea) and the Arab-Persian materials recorded it in their history, that's quite possible that Koreans and Yemeni would meet through commercial activity in the trade route. The first record written by the famous historian about Muslim's travel to Korean Peninsula is found in Ibn Khordadbeh's book.

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2 Here I deal with Southern Arabia mainly concerning Yemen.
3 Bulguksa is a Buddhist temple that is home to seven National treasures of South Korea, including Dabotap and Seokgatap stone pagodas, Cheongun-gyo (Blue Cloud Bridge), and two gilt-bronze statues of Buddha. The temple is classified as Historic and Scenic Site No. 1 by the South Korean government. In 1995, Bulguksa was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulguksa).
4 Ibn Khordadbeh(c. 820 – 912 CE) is the first geographer to write in Arabic. *The Ketāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālek*(Book of Roads and Kingdoms) has its importance in the development of the science of geography in the Islamic world. He is Abu'l-Qasim Ubaydallah ibn Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh, better known as Ibn Khordadbeh or Ibn Khurradadbih.
"... The place where across the far edge of China has a great deal of mountains and kings, and this place is very Silla. The country has a lot of gold, and if Muslims entered into there once, Silla's fascination made them settles and do not know after it ...

The above mentioned records between Korea and Arab tell us that many Arab-Muslims visited 'Silla' and this fact also recorded in Arab literatures. We can find the word of 'Silla' in Ibn Khordadbeh's writings (Seong Min Hong, 1991, The Economics for the Middle East: 470).

Particularly Rashduddin Fadallah (1247-1813) called the exact country name of "Koryo" for the first time in his book, General History (Jami'al-Tawarikh) among the Middle Eastern scholars. In accordance with Dimashki's mention as if the believers of Allittes had taken refuge to Silla, Ahmadu'l Nuwayri (?) -1332) who was the greatest author in Egypt, also analogized that the inhabitants of Silla or some of them were descendants of Ali from the Arabs. I don't know for certain that the expression, which they were descendants of Ali, is exaggerated conjecture. But otherwise it is considered as a kind of suggestion to support the fact that Muslim had gone to Silla is true historically.

These facts can be more precisely proven by W.C. Brice's historical map. According to his 'A Historical Atlas of Islam Maps', we can find the name of SILLA in the Map of Muslim Expansion until AD 661. Again, we can find the same name of SILLA in the Map of the Umayyad Empire c. 750 AD. Its name changed into KAOLI in the Map of the Late Abbasid Caliphate c. 900 AD and the Map of Almoravid, Saljuk, and Ghaznavid Expansion c. 1100 AD. In the Map of the Muslim World c. 1300 AD, the name of KAOLI changed into KORYO (高麗), which means KOREA. These records are well-grounded sources that Muslims had already known about Korea and contacted with Korean people in those days.


Of course, there is material evidence like lotus flower on the exchange between Korea and Western countries in Goguryeo era. However Arab literatures tell us only about trade between Korea and the Middle East in the medieval ages. For example, an Arab geographer, Al-Idrisi (1100-1165) mentioned in his book, Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq (1154) that "the travelers who visited Silla settled there and do not want to leave Silla. --- Silla people made of gold, even collar of dog and monkey". Al-Maqdisi, Arab geographer said that Silla people was decorating house with good stuff embroidered with silk fabrics and gold threads and using vessel made of gold.

Here again, when the name of Silla appeared is important, however, the most important thing is that the name of Silla already had known to the Western world and this fact is valuable material that

5 Some records indicate that many of these settlers were from Iraq. Other records suggest that a large number of the Alawi Shia faction settled in Korea.
proved exchange between Korea and Muslim world or Western world. Moreover the time when the name of Korea was known to Western or Muslim World will go back to ancient times. Considering W.C. Brice's historical map until A.D. 661, the contact with Korean and Muslim would be realized before Islam. This raise us an interesting subject that Koreans would met in the road of ‘Caravan Route’ of ancient ‘Silk Road’.

The map suggested by Jung Un Ju (2005) shows the high possibility of trade between Korea and South Arabia, especially now in Yemen. Separately the map in the book, I cannot vouch for the truth of map in the book. Nevertheless I can say the possibility of trade between two countries. Considering the importance of Aden port and record of ‘Alawi Sayyides in Hadhramawt, I think that the possibility of trade with commodity between Korea and Yemen is very high.

Sources: National Museum of Gyung-Ju, Korea

2. Yemen as the place of departure in caravan routes

Maritime contacts between Mesopotamia and India through Gulf waters go back to the very beginnings of urban civilization in the third millennium BC, when Sumer on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers was in touch with Harappa on the Indus. While the shores of the Red Sea were sparsely inhabited and almost waterless, the headwaters and eastern shore of the Gulf were home to ancient civilizations. Along its coasts have been found the scattered evidence of some five millennia of trade: fragments of pre-Sumerian al-‘Ubaid pottery from the third millennium BC, Chinese celadon and early Islamic glazed jars, Indian bangles, Gujarati carnelian beads, 19th-century coffee cups, Roman coins and the occasional Chinese cash(Paul Lunde, The Seas of Sindbad).

As for the caravan routes, one ran from Arabia Felix (Yemen) to Damascus via Petra. From Petra caravans also went west to Rhinocolura, northwest to Gaza and north to Jericho. The people of Gerrha (on the coast opposite Bahrain) sent goods by caravan to Yemen. In this period, the objects of trade from East to West were Indian and Chinese goods, the products of Iraq and Iran, and those of Yemen and Hadhramawt. The first included live animals and birds, furs and hides, Kashmir wool, musk, ivory (but most came from Abyssinia), pearls, mother of pearl, precious and semi precise stones, lac (red dye), and most important of all, silk. Among vegetable products were pepper (very important), ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, spikenard, nutmegs, indigo, a little cotton, and precious woods (ebony, rosewood, sandalwood). All these were high-priced luxury articles, which would carry heavy transport charges and tariffs. Much went by long sea (by a direct voyage from Aden to Malabar of Ceylon and vice versa), but much was brought to Gerrha or Spasinou Charax and traveled thence by caravan (A.H.M. Jones, 1970: 3-4).
4,000 years ago, Arabia Felix was the source of the world’s supply of great riches in the form of spices and incense. The road from Yemen to the Mediterranean was the first great trade route, passing through terrible deserts, lush forests, dangerous bandits and exotic oases with palaces of potentates that guarded the way. The increasing demand for spices and perfumes in the ancient world led to the development of an extensive network of trade routes, connecting the West to the East by land and by sea. These routes connected India and Arabia to Mesopotamia, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Greece and Rome.

The trade with Arabia Felix, India and China has excited more interest owing to the exotic character of goods, which it handled, the high prices paid for them, and the romantic lands which it penetrated. Its volume, however, must have been small, since it created for a minute, very wealthy minority. It was of sufficient importance to make Palmyra, which had no other economic resources, a wealthy city during the 1st, 2nd and early 3rd centuries. It also no doubt accounts for the wealthy of Petra, which again had no other economic resources, but was certainly a rich city in the early centuries of our era. It was no doubt contributed to the wealth of Alexandria. But Alexandria had many other sources of wealth, papyrus, glass and linen. The international trade of the empire, however, was probably more important, since it dealt with objects commanding a wider market, wine, oil, papyrus, glassware, fine linen fabrics, and even cheap linens for the working class (Ibid: 10).

The western country's glass wares were imported to Korea by the foreign trade. The western relics during the 5th-8th century AD were found in Korea. (Source: National Museum of Korea)

Baghdad, capital of the Abbasids since 762, or Samara, which took its place between 838 and 883, was international cities. Their population was mixes; besides the Arabs and Arabicized Aramaeans, there were Christian of different denomination, Jews, Persians and Turks. The commercial activity of
the later, which mostly belonged to the military, was practically zero. As to the Arabicized Aramaean and the Christians, who were differentiated primarily by their religion, their preference was not the international trade, yet the local Aramaean population may have engaged in retail trade. The few Greeks living there were important, if at all for trade relations with Byzantine Empire.

The Arabs of pure descent, who retained their racial consciousness until the 9th or even 10th century, descendants not so much of the Meccan and Medinese commercial aristocracy but rather of Bedouins, who had become soldiers and later on settlers, were to a large extent not interested in trade. This kind of activity was little esteemed under the Umayyad until A.D. 750. Of course, one cannot say that the Arabs of pure descent did not participate in commercial life, but it was not their preference. However, the Arabs were more and more assimilated to the local population that had become Muslim. Thus in the 9th century and, perhaps, the 10th century and after, a differentiation between Arabs and Arabicized citizens is senseless, because impracticable.

III. Muslim Trade and Yemeni Frankincense

1. Caravan trade and Muslim in Korean society

Some of the Arabs lived a nomadic life to breed camel, horse, sheep and livestock, others carried on commerce and their caravans started regularly to the East and West. We can see it in Surah (105:1-4);

In prophet age, the western caravan route generally used as a trade route. Really Hashim, his great-grandfather died in Gaza when he went on a commercial expedition to Syria. As becoming generally known, Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was engaged himself in business for several years. The mention of which this subject about lawfulness of business was recognized well by the Prophet appears in several phrases and clauses of Quran. Here the Prophet taught an honest attitude about business (Seong Min Hong, 1999: “Islamic Banking and Finance”: 277-278).

In other words, Quran mentioned Yemen as the point of caravan's departure. In that manner Yemen played a central role for caravan trade. In the course of caravan trade, the exchange possibility of Korean ginseng or silver-decorated knife (Firind) and Yemeni frankincense is very high.

In addition silver-decorated knife, the decorated sword of honor, would be exchanged each other in the course of ancient trade. Of course, a clear evidence needs to prove the historical fact. Considering the export of Korea’s silver-decorated knife to the Western world, however, the above mentioned fact has tremendous persuasiveness about exchange possibility of Korean silver-decorated knife and Yemeni Jambia.

In case of Korean literature, Cheyong's tale in Samguk Yusa (三國遺事)⁶, Golden crown (金製冠飾), national treasure No. 154 and Queen's earring (No. 157) and glass bead in Baekje royal tomb is clearing the inflow of western culture into Korean society one after another. It is well known fact that the record about 100 number of western businessmen's coming and going to Korean peninsula in Goryeo history. In Yuan (Mongol) dynasty, 'Ssangwhajum' means Muslim's activity was written as a tale and Soju⁷ that had made by Sumerian in Mesopotamia in ancient times was transmitted by Mongol and settled Korean traditional wine now. During Joseon dynasty, Muslim activity was mentioned in Annals of Joseon Dynasty (朝鮮王朝實錄) and other various literature mentioned as well. But King Sejong published 'foreign custom prohibitory decree' to prohibit strange Muslim custom in 1427.

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⁶ Samguk Yusa, or Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms, is a collection of legends, folktales, and historical accounts relating to the Three Kingdoms of Korea (Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla), as well as to other periods and states before, during, and after the Three Kingdoms period.

⁷ Soju, Korea’s famous wine was first distilled around A.D. 1300 during the Mongol war with Korea. The Mongols had acquired the technique of distilling arak from the Persians during their invasion of Central Asia/Middle East around 1256, then it was subsequently introduced to Koreans and distilleries were set up around the city of Kaesong. Indeed, in the area surrounding Kaesong, soju is known as arak-ju (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soju).
This caused one of reasons why Muslim activity declined in Korea society. Accordingly the change of political situation in 16th century is also one of the reasons on the decline of Muslim activity in Korea. However the question is how to prove it with a academic study and investigation. It has a problem awaiting solution how Korean historical school prove the fact. Besides it is necessary to investigate by academic circle relating Korean literature, architectonics, the science of religion, economics, folklore, culture, art and etc.

At any rate the first verifiable presence of Islam in Korea dates back to the 7th century during Silla period with the arrival of Arab and Persian navigators and traders. According to numerous Arab geographers, including the 9th-century writer Ibn Khordadbeh, many of them settled down permanently in Korea, establishing Muslim villages. Further suggesting a Middle Eastern Muslim community in Silla are figurines of royal guardians with distinctly Persian characteristics. In turn, later many Muslims intermarried with Korean women. Some assimilation into Buddhism and Shamanism took place, owing to Korea's geographical isolation from Arabia influence. Small-scale contact with predominantly Muslim peoples, particularly the Uyghurs, continued on and off. One word for Islam in Korean, hoegyo (回敎) comes from huihe (回紇), an old Chinese name for the Uyghurs. In the late Goryeo period, there were mosques in the capital Gaeseong. During Mongol rule in Korea the Mongols relied heavily on Uyghurs to help them run their vast empire because of Uighur literacy and Uighur experience in managing extended trading networks. At least two of those Uyghurs settled down in Korea permanently and became the progenitors of two Korean clans influence.

One of those Central Asian immigrants to Korea originally came to Korea as an aide to a Mongol princess who had been sent to marry King Chungnyeol. Goryeo documents say that his original name was Sampa but, after he decided to make Korea his permanent home, the king bestowed on him the Korean name of Jang Sunnyong. Jang married a Korean and became the founding ancestor of the Deoksu Jang clan. His clan produced many high officials and respected Confucian scholars over the centuries.

Twenty-five generations later, around 30,000 Koreans look back to Jang Sunnyong as the grandfather of their clan. They are aware that he was not a native of Korea. Many believe that he was an Arab Muslim. However, there is no evidence of Islamic influence on Deoksu Jang family traditions. The same is true of the descendants of another Central Asian who settled down in Korea. A Central Asian (probably a Uyghur) named Seol Son fled to Korea when the Red Turban rebellion erupted near the end of the Mongol’s Yuan dynasty. He, too, married a Korean, originating a lineage called the Gyeongju Seol that claims at least 2,000 members in Korea today but shows no special signs of Muslim influence.

2. Yemeni frankincense and Korean silver knife

Judging from the historical facts, it is believed that ginseng, silver-decorated knife and perfume would be exchanged and the estimated area would be the Aden port or Mukhalla in Hadhramawt. Thus the historical relationship between Korea and South Arabia (now Yemen) has to be studied as going beyond modern history to ancient history. (Seong Min Hong, 2006, Yemen: 252).

In the medieval age, Ulsan, near Gyung Ju district that was the capital of Silla, was the center of industry and commerce and the political center in Silla. Ulsan had the harbor with natural advantages: It's harbor had merits as an important place of island traffic, and optimum conditions as an international trade harbor. Hence Japan and T'ang (China), which had trade relations and frequent traffic with Silla, made use of Ulsan harbor as an international trade port. At that time Japanese and Chinese as well as Muslims, who acted as the middle man in the east-west trade, used this port.

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8 In this context, the text, pp. 343-357 of Jung Un Ju writing (2005) is the only hypothesis not a fact proved. This needs of more successive study to prove the fact.
9 Though Wikipedia recorded it as 9th century, I insist it is 7th century according to verified materials.
10 During the Koryo period (918-1392) Kaesong, then the nation’s capital, was home to a thriving Muslim community, and there was a mosque as well. Members of one of the country’s clans, the Changs of Toksu, still recall that the clan’s founder was a Muslim who came to Korea during the Koryo era. (The Korea Times, 11-22-2002).
without exception. Here Silla's exports items like ginseng, gold or silver pocketknife, silk and pottery etc. arouse our concerns.

Nowadays the fact that trade had been carried out between Silla and the Middle East has a special meaning in the historical respect. Particularly I have a special interest in the trade with Firind, a kind of sword that Silla had exported to the Middle East. It was Ulsan's famous special product from ancient times. Traditionally Arab-Muslims considered the sword as a means of main weapon in War and preserved it as a personal ornament for respect and self-protection. Even nowadays Yemenis and Omanis in the Gulf region are wearing a knife (Jambia) as a personal ornament. Therefore Muslims cannot help stirring up their curiosity for Silla's sword of a good quality and being in the spotlight of their imported goods. (Ibid: 31).

According to Jung Su-il's writing, the sword was a special product of Ulsan, which was Silla's international trade port at that time and Ulsan's silver-decorated knife was one of the Muslim merchant's imports as a special sword of honor. Accordingly, Dr. Jung Su-il in his book of Silkroadhak (2003) insists that three packets of frankincense found at Seokgatap of Bulguksa in 1966 are Arabian products.

Here, my greatest concern is Firind (decorated knife) and frankincense. Dr. Jung insists the frankincense was the product of Southern Arabia. If Dr. Jung's suggestion verifies the frankincense as an Arabian product, it would be true that the frankincense was the product of the Southern Arabia, exactly Yemen. As far as the production of frankincense at that time is concerned, Yemen was the sole country that produced frankincense in the Middle East. In this aspect, Korea's frankincense in Seokgatap correctly coincides with Yemen, the place of frankincense production. All things considered, there is no doubt that relations between Korea and Yemen goes back to the 7th century at least, estimating conservatively.

![Southern Arabia's frankincense was found in Seokgatap, the Buddhist pagoda in Korea, when it was demobilized in 1966. I think the frankincense would be a Yemeni product.](image)

**VI. A hypothesis on the Historical Contact between Korea and Southern Arabia**

1. A Possibility of the Commercial Relation between Korea and Yemen

In my previous book and other articles, I suggested trade items, which is believed to show trade between Koreans and Muslims. Among the import items from China to Islamic countries, there were perfume plant, sword, silk, porcelain, pottery, paper, ink stick (songyunmuk), rhubarb, saddle, felt, cinnamon, hawk and spices etc. Among the common trade items between Korea (Silla and Koryo) and China (T’ang and Sung), there were white paper, ginseng, porcelain, gold or silver pocketknife, ink stick and hawk etc. Especially among Koryo's import items from Sung, the items of Ta'sik\(^\text{11}\) were

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\(^{11}\) Ta'sik (大食) in this paper means all the Muslims containing both Arabs and non-Arabs. I think that the term of Ta'sik stemmed from Ta'jir in Arabic that means merchant. In those days, Arab merchants were engaged in Chinese trade actively and known for famous merchant. Thus Chinese would call them Ta'jir in the same
medical plant, East-Indian spice, rhinoceros horn, ivory, parrot and peacock etc. In those days Ta'sik, meaning Muslim merchant, engaged in the intermediate trade between Korea and the West.

On the other hand, historian and Arabist, Paul Lunde suggested in his article of “The Seas of Sindbad” that Ta-shih\(^\text{12}\) is derived from the Aramaic name of the Arab tribe of Tayy, which must have reached China via Aramaic-speaking Nestorian merchants from the region of al-Hira, where this tribe was dominant.

Considering the circumstances, it is believed that Korea exported its products to the Middle East and the items had consisted of paper, ginseng, gold or silver pocketknife, ink stick and hawk etc. According to Ibn Khordadbeh's record, the possibility of trade between Silla and the Muslim World is nearly certain.

As matters stand, it is historical fact that Korea's ginseng, sword, silk cloth, ceramic ware, hawk had exported to Islamic countries. At the same time Islamic countries had imported many Chinese products such as aromatic plants, sword, silk fabric, porcelain, paper, ink, cinnamon and spice. It means that Korean (Silla) products would have been exported to the Islamic world via China at that time. In ancient times, the Kingdom of Sheba lived in luxury with the great amount of wealth as a 'country of spice' and exchanged with King Solomon in the Mediterranean area. This fact raises the high possibility of relationship between Korean silver-decorated knife (Firind) and Yemeni Jambia beside the frankincense.

As I stated earlier in my book, Yemen: Arabia Felix (2005), the reason why the Kingdom of Sheba prospered in ancient times was securing the command of trade route to supply Sabean frankincense to ancient Egypt and Israel in the Old Testament era. Frankincense particularly was considered as necessities to pray for the repose of God in the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt in special. In addition to silver-decorated knife, the decorated sword of honor (Jambia), would be exchanged with each other in the course of ancient trade. Of course, the reliable result needs to prove the historical fact about it. But the above mentioned fact has tremendous persuasiveness about the exchange of Korean silver-decorated knife and Yemeni Jambia\(^\text{13}\). This matter will be solved when the study of ‘Silk Road’ advances in the future\(^\text{14}\).

2. A Cultural Influence of the Historical Exchange: The Symbol of Taegeuk

I was surprised at the pictures of an artist in Yemeni exhibition in 2008. I found the most interesting symbol among many pictures, exhibited in the hall at Sana'a Arab Fine Arts Forum. My heart almost stopped beating when I saw the Taegeuk symbol\(^\text{15}\).

The picture bears some resemblance to the shape of the flag of South Korea, Taegeukgi. The Taegeukgi is similar to the Chinese design of the "yin" and "yang" symbol and has three parts: a white background; a red and blue Taegeuk ("Taijitu" or "Yin and Yang") in the centre; and four black trigrams, one in each corner of the flag.

The four trigrams originate in the Chinese book of I Ching (易經), representing the four Taoist philosophical ideas about the universe: harmony, symmetry, balance, circulation. The general design of the flag also derives from traditional use of the tri-color symbol (red, blue and yellow) by Koreans starting from the early era of Korean history. The white background symbolizes "cleanliness of the people."

The Taegeuk (太極) represents the origin of all things in the universe; holding the two principles of pronunciation of Arabic language. Of course, Ta'jir would be pronounced as Ta'sik (大食) in Chinese pronunciation in those days.

\(^\text{12}\) There were Arab and Persian merchants domiciled in Chinese ports in the immediately pre-Islamic period is indicated by the words used to refer to them in Chinese annals. Persians were called Po-ssu, Arabs Ta-shih. Po-ssu is obviously an attempt to render the word Pars, which gave rise to the Greek Perses, the Latin Parthia and the Arabic Fars.

\(^\text{13}\) Jambiyas are worn as a sign of patriotism and tribal loyalty.


\(^\text{15}\) I would like to know where or what the idea originated from.
"Yin (陰)", the negative aspect rendered in blue, and "Yang (陽)", the positive aspect rendered in red, in perfect balance. Together, they represent a continuous movement within infinity, the two merging as one (Wikipedia). Here in the picture, Taeguk and the Ba Gua arouse my special concern. You will find the symbols below the picture and the Korean flag; these two leaves resemble each other.

Once I had been shocked to find "Mugunghwa (無窮花)", the national flower of South Korea, at a front garden of the archeological museum of Istanbul, Turkey and the street in Shiraz, Iran. Exactly those color and shapes were a resemblance to the Korean flower.

The symbols of the Yemeni picture and the Korean national flag leave resemble each other. The historical study on the symbols has the key to solve the contact's period between Korea and Yemen, Southern Arabia.

The most remarkable incident occurred at the Shiraz, Iran. Mr. Ali, an Iranian historian, explained about Taeguk and the Ba Gua in Iranian remains and I showed a great interest in them.

After several years had passed, however, I found similar symbols in the pictures of the Yemeni exhibition hall again. The pictures brought back my memory of the symbols, Taeguk and the Ba Gua. To find out the academic results lies beyond the boundaries of our knowledge because I am not an archaeologist or historian. However I am convinced that whoever solves the matters and the contact period between Korea and Yemen will go back to the earlier days than the 7th century, which is the result of my study.

V. Concluding Remarks

Many materials and historical relics between Korea and Southern Arabia have proved the early relation in 7th century or the before. Ibn Khordadbeh and other materials including Korean history mentioned Muslim’s activity and settlement in Korea.

The origin of commercial relations between Korean and Muslim goes back to Silla era in the medieval ages. As for the discontinuation of it, Islam fallen into a decline before and after 12th century and, in return of that, Western Empires became to get the command of the sea. After that, Korean relation had faced with the boundary of their activity till the Second World War.

Anyway Arab Muslim had played a role to promote international trade and spread strange cultures into Korean society. But their community was melted by Korean society and assimilated into Korean culture not like China till now. This can be owed to characteristics of Korean society.

It would be true that the frankincense was the product of the Southern Arabia, exactly Yemen. As far as the production of frankincense at that time is concerned, Yemen was the sole country that produced frankincense in the Middle East. In this aspect, Korea's frankincense in Seokgatap correctly coincides with Yemen, the place of frankincense production.

The silver-decorated knife would be exchanged with each other in the course of ancient trade. Of course, the reliable result needs to prove the historical fact about it. However the above mentioned fact has tremendous persuasiveness about the exchange of Korean silver-decorated knife and Yemeni Jambia. Also the symbols of the Yemeni picture and the Korean national flag leave the possibility of relations with each other. The historical study on the symbols has the key to solve the contact's period between Korea and Yemen, Southern Arabia. This subject will be solved when the study of ‘Silk Road’ advances in the future.
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