

# **The Koguryo Foundation Myth: An Integrated Analysis**

By

SUN-HEE SONG  
Indiana University

Introduction.

- I. The Koguryo Foundation Myth.
  - II. The Myth as a Cultural Reflector.
  - III. Historical Considerations.
  - IV. Symbolic Meanings of Mythical Elements.
  - V. The Structure and Logic of the Myth.
- Conclusion.

This paper is organized to comprehensively examine aspects of a Korean myth from various points of view prevailing in the study of myth. The Koguryo foundation myth is selected for this analytical purpose because of its mythological and dramatic excellence and its richness in relevant historical data and problems.

In the Introduction, we will review briefly the history of ancient Korea as a background for our later discussion of the Koguryo foundation myth. Various versions of the myth will be compared with the closely related Puyo foundation myth in connection with the historical consideration of the mythologization process. A detailed examination will, however, be reserved for the last, most mythologized version of the Koguryo foundation myth, written in Chinese by a Korean writer in the early thirteenth century. Methodologically speaking, the myth can be analyzed from several different perspectives. Working from the premise that a myth is primarily a cultural institution fulfilling social, religious, and psychological functions, we will, in this paper, deal with the myth from the anthropological point of view. This approach will lead us to

a context-conscious analysis which requires a considerable degree of ethnographic background. The analysis will be further supplemented by comparative considerations of various versions of the myth that are reflected in historical data, for the purpose of resolving intricate historical problems and illuminating the process of mythologization.

In contrast to the assumptions of the above approach, myth is also said to have cross-cultural similarities, or universals, which arise out of the common conditions of human existence and the common experiences of the human psyche (de Waal Malefijt 1968:176). We will investigate these aspects of the myth from a relatively context-free perspective by examining the ways the human mind conceives the sacred and the religious in the profane and temporal world. Lastly the structure and the logic underlying the myth and mythologization will be elucidated. Since myth consists of language, we will also include some linguistic and stylistic analyses in appropriate contexts. The psychological understrata of the myth, as embedded in the individual and collective unconscious, will be touched upon in relation to the discussion of the symbolic meanings and structural make-up of the myth. The psycho-analytic point of view will be avoided here, since it seems largely irrelevant to our discussion of the Koguryo foundation myth. In the Conclusion, we will examine the place of the Koguryo foundation myth among other Korean foundation myths, and will suggest some typical natures of foundation myths in general.

### Introduction

The Koguryo foundation myth consists of stories of the founding hero and characters related to him. The myth dramatizes the ultimate ideal of the peoples who wandered across the vast area of northeastern Asia before the Christian era in pursuit of a better land, a better climate and a better leader. Geographically the myth covers the area ranging from northern Manchuria to northern Korea. Racially, it involves two closely related peoples, the Puyo and the Koguryo. We will first see, in brief, the situation of northeastern Asia shortly before and after the time to which the myth refers.

The occupants of northern Manchuria at the formative time of the myth were a group of tribes collectively known as the Puyo, a branch of the Tungus, which first appeared in historical records while living on the vast fertile plains along the Sungari River. Nothing is known of this group's origins, although Chinese records mention a foundation

myth which indicates that the Puyo people came from even farther north. By dint of their conciliatory policy toward Chinese dynasties, the Puyo could survive many attacks of the latter, but were finally absorbed in 494 A.D. by their neighbouring nation Koguryo, whose power was rapidly expanding into almost the entire area of Manchuria (An 1946 Vol. 2: 7-20; Han 1970: 22-25; Lee, H. C. 1962: 616; Lee, B. D. 1965: 211-24).

In southern Manchuria and northwestern Korea, on the other hand, a dominant group appeared as the leader of the tribes there as early as the fourth century B.C., and formed a tribal league called (Ancient) Choson. This was the bear totem family whose legendary founder was Tangoon, the mythical progenitor of the Korean people. Ancient Choson remained powerful until the end of the third century B.C., but gave way to Wiman and his followers who fled from Yen in the Liao Tung Peninsula at about the beginning of the second century B.C. The power of the newcomers lasted until the emperor Wu Ti of the Chinese Han dynasty conquered and colonized the territory of Ancient Choson by establishing four Chinese countries there in 108 B.C. Because of the persistent resistance of native peoples, however, the Han dynasty was forced to abandon all of these countries within 33 years of their establishment, except for Nangnang in northwest Korea (Han 1970: 12-22; Lee, B.D. 1965: 66-208; Lee, H.C. 1962: 126, 1013-15; An 1946 Vol. 2: 21-38).

Among the native groups most hostile to Chinese colonialism were the Koguryo tribes who lived in the mountain valleys of the Tonga River Basin, to the north of the middle course of the Yalu River. They prospered faster and earlier than the other peoples of the Korean peninsula because of their strategic position on one of the principal routes by which bronze and iron cultures entered the peninsula. The legends of the Koguryo and the Puyo suggest that their origins are similar. The leader of one of the Puyo tribes, Choomong, is said to have come south in ancient times and founded the Koguryo Kingdom. Koguryo continued to grow powerful until about the fifth century A.D., when its territory ranged, at its golden age, from the entire northern half of the Korean Peninsula to northern Manchuria near the Sungari River, including the Liao Tung Peninsula to the west. The Koguryo not only drove out Nangnang in 313 A.D., thus putting an end to the four-hundred-year Chinese rule over the northwest Korea, but also defeated three large scale Chinese invasions in 598 A.D., 612 A.D. and 644 A.D. Because of the internal trouble in the ruling class, however, Koguryo was

forced to surrender, in 668 A.D., to the allied attack of Silla in southeast Korea and the Chinese dynasty Tang (Lee, H.C. 1962: 94-5; Lee, B.D. 1965: 244-52, 292-528; Han 1970: 26-9, 41-50, 75-89).

On the other hand, the area to the south of the Han River before the Christian era was occupied by numerous tribes, which formed three major tribal leagues, Mahan to the southwest, Chinhan to the southeast, and Pyonhan in the southern tip. With the influence of bronze and iron cultures from the north at the dawn of the Christian era, these three Han societies gradually developed into three kingdoms: Paikchae (18 B.C.-660 A.D.) in the territory of Mahan, Silla (57 B.C.-935 A.D.) in Chinhan, and Kaya (42 A.D.-568 A.D.) in Pyonhan. The foundation of each of these kingdoms is also said to be closely related to mythical or legendary heroes (Lee, H.C. 1962: 683-85; Lee, B.D. 1965: 262-324; Han 1970: 29-37; Choy 1960: 478-533).

## I. The Koguryo Foundation Myth.

We will deal with the following version of Koguryo foundation myth in detail.

The Holy King Tongmyung<sup>1</sup>

Till his old age Haeboroo, King of Puyo, had no child born to him and he had a cherished wish to have one. The king visited noted mountains and renowned rivers, performing rituals to offer fervent prayers for a son of his own.

One day he came to the pond called Konyun, when his horse, looking at a big stone by the wayside, shed tears. In great wonder he had the stone rolled over and found under it a boy like a golden frog. It occurred to him that the boy was the son which Heaven had bestowed upon him. He took the boy to his palace, named him Keumwa (golden frog), and made him the crown prince.

A minister, Aranbool, relating his dream one day, urged the king to move the capital. "In my dream," the minister said, "God of Heaven came down and told me, 'I intend to have my descendant found a nation in this land. So you should leave here for Kasupwon near the East Sea. It is a proper place for the capital, for the soil is fertile.'" Following the advice of his minister, the king shifted his capital and called his country Tong-puyo.

Then, Haemosoo, the son of the Heavenly Emperor, descended to the seat of the former capital and founded his own there. Through brilliant five-colored clouds he came down to the Woongshim Mountain in a five-dragon coach, amidst a rendering of beautiful music, with his attendants following him on the backs of white crested ibises. They stayed in the mountain for more than ten days and came to the seat of their capital, wearing headgear made of feathers of crows and swords shining in the colors of the dragon. Thenceforth they descended to the land every morning for the work of the day and ascended to heaven in the evening. People, therefore, called Haemosoo Chunwang (Heavenly King). People of those days believed that heaven was more than two thousand billion 'ri'<sup>2</sup> from the earth, so it was impossible to get there either by a ladder or on wings. It was really wonderful that Haemosoo should have no difficulty at all in travelling between the earth and heaven every morning and every evening.

There was a river, Chung-ha (the present Yalu River), north of the castle. It was a favorite play ground for the three daughters of Habaek, the Sea God. The eldest daughter was Yoohwa, the second Hwunhwa, and the youngest Wihwa. Their faces were beautiful as flowers when they were enjoying themselves swimming in the water with their jewels jingling. King Haemosoo happened to see them when he was out hunting in the area. He

---

1. This is an epic poem dramatizing the foundation of Koguryo. Kyubo Lee (1168-1241 A.D.), a scholar of the Koryo Dynasty, wrote it, based upon the folk beliefs and legends, and listed it in his book *Tongguk Yisanggukchip* in the early thirteenth century. The translation is based mainly upon *The Folk Treasury of Korea: Sources in Myth, Legend and Folktale*, pp. 29-39.

2. One 'ri' is equivalent to four kilometers.

said to his followers, "If I can marry one of them, I shall get a good successor by her."

When they found themselves being watched by King Haemosoo, the three maids hid themselves under the water. The followers asked the king why he would not build a palace and keep the maids in it. Then the king drew a line on the ground with his whip. All of a sudden, there appeared a splendid copper room with three seats in it. In the room were three jars full of fragrant wine. Attracted by the sweet smell, the maids slipped in at a soft pace, drank the wine, helping each other, and soon got intoxicated. When the king appeared in the room, they managed to flee, except Yoohwa, the eldest.

When the Sea God was informed of the incident, he was infuriated, and through a messenger demanded, "Who are you that keep my daughter in confinement?" King Haemosoo replied, "I am the son of the Heavenly Emperor. Now I am going to marry Yoohwa." The Sea God retorted, "If it is true, you ought to have seen to it that your suit for marriage be duly arranged. What an outrage it is to keep my daughter in confinement!" The king was abashed and meant to see the Sea God, but there was no way to reach his palace. He, therefore, offered to set Yoohwa free, but she refused to go back home, having made up her mind to stay with him. She told him that a dragon coach could take him to the palace under the water. The king pointed toward the sky and in no time a five-dragon coach came down. When both of them got on it, winds and clouds arose suddenly and they soon arrived at the palace.

The Sea God greeted the king with proper ceremonies and said to him, "You have disgraced my family by disregarding the due processes of matrimony. If you are truly the son of the Heavenly Emperor, you must have some divine distinction." The king simply answered, "You can put me to the test."

The Sea God transformed himself into a carp and swam in the water. The king lost no time and turned into an otter and in a moment caught hold of him. Now the god changed into a deer and ran away and the king turned into a jackal and soon overtook him. Finally the god transformed himself into a pheasant and flew high up in the sky and the king became a hawk, soared up and caught the pheasant. At last the god was convinced that the king was a divine being, and the wedding took place with due ceremonies.

The Sea God, however, feared that the king should abandon his daughter some day. So the god held a feast and offered many cups of wine to the king until he became heavily drunken. The god put the king and his daughter, Yoohwa, together in a leather-covered dragon coach and sent them off toward heaven. But before the coach came out of the water, the king recovered from his intoxication, pulled off a golden pin from Yoohwa's hair, ripped open the leather wagon, and came out of the hole and went up to heaven, leaving Yoohwa in the coach.

The Sea God was exasperated at the sight of his daughter returning home alone. "You wouldn't listen to me and brought disgrace on our family," he said. He made his subordinates pull her mouth three feet long, and sent her off, accompanied by only two servants, to Woobal-soo, a river south of the Taebaek mountain.

One day fishermen came to King Keumwa and informed him that there was a mysterious animal in the water and that their fish were often stolen.

At the order of the king, fishermen caught the animal with a net, but it tore the net and escaped. They made an iron net and caught a maid with it. When they pulled it up, she came up from the water sitting on a stone.

King Keumwa recognized that she was the queen of King Haemosoo, the son of the Heavenly emperor. He confined her in a royal villa of his. Then the sunlight clasped her and poured down its warm rays upon her body, till she conceived and gave birth to a huge egg from under her left arm. In great wonder, the king took it as an inauspicious sign, and let the egg be cast away in a stable. But the horses would not tread upon it. It was thrown away in a deep mountain. But all sorts of animals came and protected it, with the sun shining on the egg even on cloudy days.

Consequently King Keumwa sent the egg back to its mother to take care of it. In time, there was born out of it Choomong. He was noble and gracious. Under the tender care of Yoohwa, the boy learned to speak within a month of his birth. One day the boy said to his mother, "I can't sleep because of annoying flies. So make me a bow and arrows." She made them for him and he shot unerringly every fly on the spinning wheel. This is why he was called Choomong, as the word "choomong" meant outstanding archer in Puyo. As he grew up, he displayed many more gifts.

King Keumwa had seven sons, none of whom were a match for Choomong. They always hunted together. Once, the seven royal princes together with forty followers killed only one deer, while Choomong caught many a deer by himself. The jealous princes bound Choomong to a big tree, and took his game away with them. But Choomong rooted up the tree and returned with it on his back. Crown Prince Daeso told the king, "Choomong has divine courage, and if you don't get rid of him early we will have great trouble."

King Keumwa put him on trial by making him feed horses. Choomong keenly regretted it and said to his mother, Yoohwa, "My life nowadays is no better than death, since I, who am the descendant of the Heavenly Emperor, am obliged to feed horses for human beings. I have long intended to establish a kingdom in the south, but I couldn't leave you alone." "Do not worry about me, my son," she said in tears, "Leave here at once. You will go a long way, so you must have a steed. I'll choose one for you." She went to the stable and whipped the horses there. The horses dashed out, but one horse only jumped up on his hind legs. Choomong could tell it was a noble steed. He stuck a needle in its tongue so that it could not eat any fodder. It grew emaciated day by day. While looking around the stable one day, King Keumwa was very pleased to see fat horses, and gave the lean gawky horse to Choomong. Then he pulled out the needle and fed the horse well.

At last he made an escape with three followers. When they reached the Umche River northeast of the Yalu River, they found that there was no boat to cross the stream by. The pursuers were close upon their heels. Choomong, heaving a long sigh, pointed his whip toward heaven, saying, "Have mercy upon this grandson of the Heavenly Emperor and son of the Sea God's daughter, and give me a bridge or a boat at once." In a moment, a good many fish and terrapins came upon the surface and strung themselves into a bridge. Thus they could safely cross the river, but when their pursuers put their feet upon the bridge, the fish and terrapins broke up, letting them fall into the water and to their death.

At the time of his departure, his mother had given him the seeds of five cereals. But in his sorrow, he had forgotten to bring the seeds of barley.

Now that he was taking a rest under a big tree after crossing the river, he was reminded of his heedlessness. Then a pair of doves flew into sight. Choomong thought they must be bringing the barley seeds from his divine mother. He shot an arrow, and brought down the two birds at once. He opened their bills and took them out. As soon as he sprinkled water on the doves, they returned to life and flew away.

As soon as he reached the south, Choomong came across a beautiful land and founded his capital there. He decided on the ranks of his subjects and ascended the throne.

The kingdom was called Koguryo and Choomong was called King Tongmyung.

In the meantime, the king of Biryoo, Songyang, noticed the distinguished features of Choomong, while he was out hunting. He addressed himself to Choomong, saying, "I am very happy to meet you. Living in this secluded place, I have never met such a noble man as you. But who are you and where have you come from?" Choomong answered, "I am the grandson of the Heavenly Emperor, and the King of Sogook (the west country). I would like to ask you whose descendant you are." Songyang replied, "I am a descendant of superhuman beings, who accomplished great works as kings. This land is too small to divide between two kings. Therefore, you had better obey me and become a subject of mine." King Choomong remarked, "I am of the heavenly lineage, but you are not. Nevertheless you call yourself a king. If you do not follow me, you will be doomed to ruin." Still Songyang was suspicious of his heavenly genealogy, and challenged him to a contest in archery. Songyang drew the figure of a deer and put it in the distance of a hundred paces and shot an arrow, which hit the figure of the deer all right, but off the mark of the navel. Now King Choomong hung his ring a hundred paces away and shot it to pieces, to the great surprise of Songyang.

One day King Choomong told his subjects, "As it is not long since we set up our kingdom, we could not yet provide ourselves with musical instruments, such as drums and trumpets. So we have failed to treat messengers from Biryoo with proper royal ceremonies. It may well be the reason they make light of us." A retainer came up to him and said, "Then I will bring the drums and trumpets of Biryoo for you, Your Majesty." The king asked, "How can you dare to steal properties of another country?" The retainer observed, "They are nothing but gifts sent by heaven and earth. You remember the hardships you went through in Puyo. At that time no one could tell what you would become today. The honor and fame you are enjoying now is heaven's decree. Then what is there that cannot be done?"

Eventually Booboanno and two others went to Biryoo and brought drums and trumpets. Thereupon, the king of Biryoo sent a messenger in vain. The drums and trumpets were unrecognizable, since they had been painted anew and looked as if they were quite old ones. Then the king of Biryoo, Songyang, came out with another proposition that the subordination of one to the other be decided on the basis of chronological precedence of the founding of his capital. King Choomong had a new royal palace built, making use of old trees as its posts. When completed, it looked as if it were a thousand years old. Songyang never insisted upon his proposal again.

Once when King Tongmyung was out hunting in the west, he caught a big white deer. He hung it with its head downward, and chanted a spell, saying, "You shall not be set free, unless heaven pours down rain and sweeps



away the capital of Biryoo. If you wish to save your life, make an appeal to heaven yourself." The deer uttered sorrowful cries, which reached heaven. Soon it began to rain and it lasted for seven days, finally washing away the capital of Songyang. King Tongmyung made a rope and set it afloat on the water. People squirming in the water caught hold of the rope. The king then drew a line with his whip on the water, whereupon it began to run low. At last Songyang was forced to surrender.

It was in July of the same year. Clouds arose around the ridge of Gollyung, so that the mountain was not to be seen and there were only to be heard the sounds of thousands of men working. The king said that heaven so willed that they build a castle there. At the end of seven days, the clouds dispersed themselves and there appeared a brilliant castle on the ridge. The king performed a ritual for the Heavenly Emperor and entered the castle to live in it.

In September, the king ascended to heaven never to return. He was 40 years old then. The crown prince performed a funeral rite at Youngsan where the king's whip was left behind.

The eldest son of the king was Yoori. At an early age, he had already begun to distinguish himself from other boys. He usually enjoyed himself shooting sparrows with arrows. One day his arrow went amiss and broke a round water jar a woman was carrying on her head. She got angry and took him to task. "Look what you've done! You are really a fatherless bastard," she said. Much ashamed, Yoori made a ball of mud and shot it at the hole of the water jar, and the hole was plugged. Returning home, he asked his mother who his father was. She thought he was too young to know the truth, so she said, "You have no father." The boy began to sob, saying, "What a shame it is! I don't think I can meet other persons any longer." And he attempted to stab himself in the neck. His mother, surprised, stopped him and said, "It was only a joke, my son. Your father is the grandson of the Heavenly Emperor and son of the daughter of the Sea God. Since the courtiers of Puyo were jealous of him, your father went south and has established a kingdom there. Do you want to go and see him?" He replied, "If my father is a king, I am his subject, but that is not what one should be ashamed of. Only I don't think I have any gifted talents." "When your father left here," she continued, "he said, 'I have hidden something in the pine tree on a stone in seven valleys in seven hills. He who is capable of finding it is my son.'" From that day, Yoori wandered about mountains and valleys looking for that something, but to no purpose, and returned home exhausted. Then he heard a sorrowful sound coming from a post of his own house. He began to examine the post and found a hole in the post and took out a piece of a broken sword from it. He was really delighted and soon rushed to Koguryo and presented the broken piece to the king. The king brought another piece he had kept with him and put the two pieces together. Dripping blood, they stuck together into a complete sword. "If you are truly my son, show me the divine quality you must have," said the king. Instantly Yoori soared up in the air on a window and intercepted the sunlight with it. When he saw it, the king was quite pleased and made him his crown prince.

## II. The Myth as a Cultural Reflector.

One of the anthropological views of myth sees a myth as a reflection of cultural content or a reservoir of information about the cultural whole (Lessa and Vogt 1972: 249). A critical question which must be asked about this approach is whether a myth can reflect an exact image of the culture to which it refers. The answer may be both positive and negative: a myth speaks about a culture only when it is interpreted in the light of information which it does not supply (Lessa and Vogt 1972: 251). Even the information which myths offer often tends to be fragmentary because myths incorporate elements of culture only selectively. Keeping in mind this aspect of myth, we will now try to draw from the Koguryo foundation myth some cultural and historical information and to interpret it in the light of other recognized facts and data. For the purpose of discussion, we will distinguish six categories of analysis: geographical, economic, political, social, religious, and other cultural.

### 1) Geographical implications.

The Koguryo foundation myth refers to three main geographical locations, Puyo, Tongpuyo and Koguryo. According to the myth the name Tongpuyo derives from the fact that Puyo at one time shifted its capital eastward to Kasupwon near the East Sea. We are not certain exactly where Kasupwon was located. The only inference we can make is based upon the general agreement of Korean scholars that Tongpuyo was located in the area of Nongan and Changchun in northern Manchuria (See Map 1, Lee H.C. 1962: 616). Thus, Kasupwon must have been located in this area, and Puyo in a somewhat farther western or northwestern area. This assumption can be backed up by a linguistic reference: the prefix "tong" of Tongpuyo mean 'east', while the prefix puk of Pukpuyo, another designation of Puyo, means 'north.' The problem here is, then, how to interpret the expression "near the East Sea", because Kasupwon is, according to our inference above, supposed to be in the middle of northern Manchuria, far from the East Sea<sup>3</sup>. This expression may be extremely relative: Tongpuyo (East Puyo) was nearer to the East Sea than Puyo (North Puyo). Why the 'East Sea' is introduced specifically in connection with the shift of the capital is probably related to the tendency for the northeast Asian peoples to orient themselves toward the direction from which the sun rises<sup>4</sup>. This tendency

---

3. The East Sea is the Korean designation of the Sea of Japan.

4. This point will be clarified in our later discussion.

led, in both prehistoric and historic times, to their constant migration toward the east and the south in pursuit of a better land and climate. This is shown, in the myth, in Keumwa's eastward and Choomong's southward movements and in their quests for 'fertile' or 'beautiful' land.

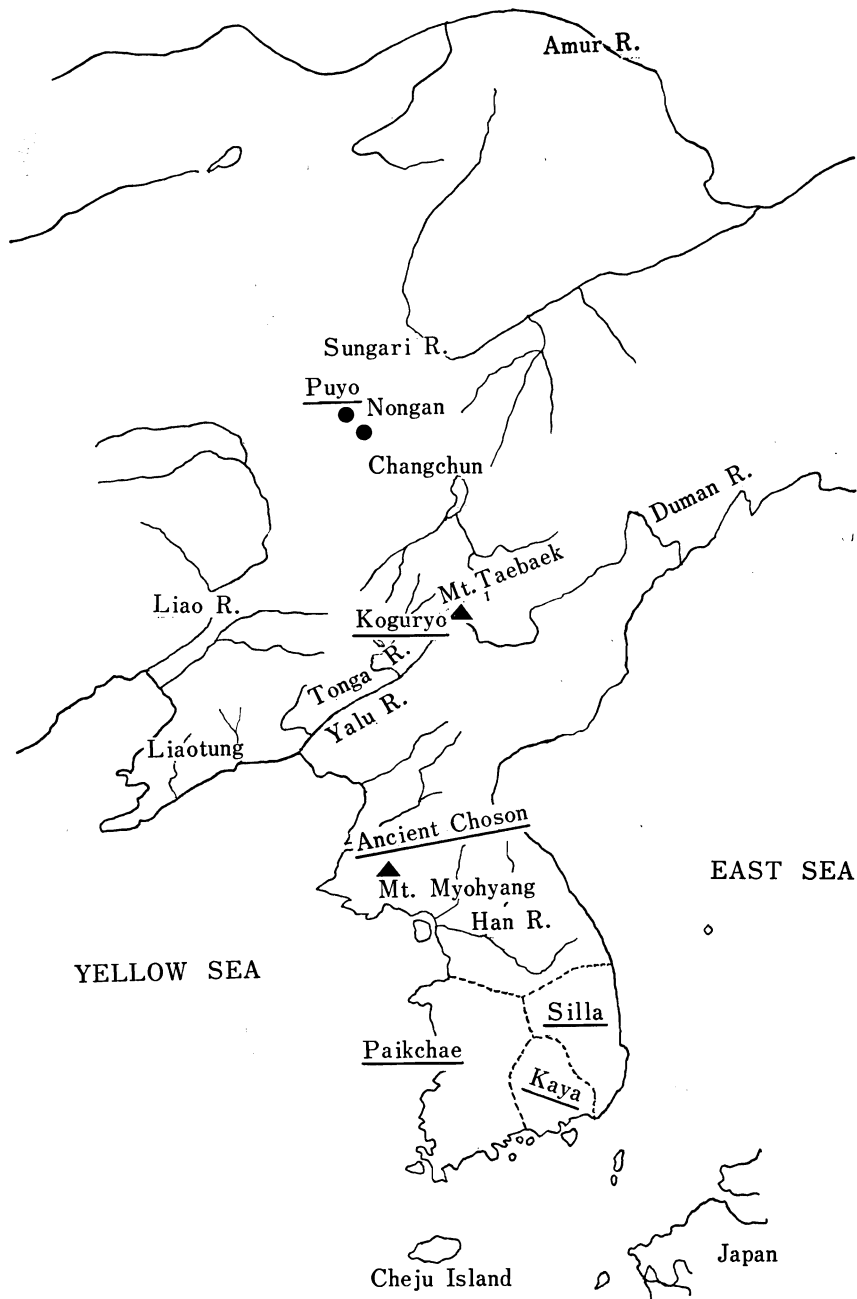
Let us turn our attention to the Umche River which the myth says Choomong crossed miraculously. Many Korean scholars have thought that 'Umche' is the name of a river in Manchuria and have tried to identify that river. Based upon the linguistic evidence that the Chinese 'Umche' is phonetically identical to an old Korean word meaning 'big', H.C. Lee argues that the so-called Umche River is not a specific but a general designation of a 'big' river (1959: 22-23). Following this argument, we may see the Umche River as having been a big river located between the Changchun-Nongan region and the Holbon town (where the hero of the myth is said to have founded the kingdom Koguryo), although we have no idea of which river it was among the many rivers in that vast area (See Map I).<sup>5</sup>

Besides the Umche River, there are two more rivers mentioned in the myth: the Chunggha and the Ubal, where the heroine was found by the son of the Heavenly Emperor and King Keumwa, respectively. According to a footnote given in the foregoing myth, the Chunggha is what is today known as the Yalu River, while the Ubal a river south of Mount Taebaek.<sup>6</sup> The question now is how the Yalu River can be related to the countries farthest north of Puyo, as the myth says (See Map I). Here we should remind ourselves that we are dealing with a myth in which every place is located and identified not on any geographical maps but in mythicizing mind. The Yalu River is the biggest one in Korea and is located close to the first capital of Koguryo, although it is no more than a brook compared with great rivers of northern Manchuria such as the Amur and the Sungari. From the viewpoint of the Koguryo people in particular and of Korean people in general, the Yalu River is the most important of all rivers, and must appear in the holy story of

---

5. Related to this kind of linguistic consideration is the Pond Konyon where King Keumwa is said to have been found. The Chinese character 'kon' means 'big fish', while its pronunciation is very similar to a pure Korean word 'keun' meaning 'big.' The Chinese character 'yon', on the other hand, means a 'pond.' We may therefore infer from the foregoing that the Pond Konyon might not be a specific name but a general designation of a big pond. A Korean scholar of ancient Korean history also sees 'Konyon' as meaning a 'big pond' and identifies it with the big pond Chonji on the top of Mount Taebaek (An 1946 Vol. 2: 36).

6. Since the Yalu River starts from Mount Taebaek, Ubal may refer to a tributary of the Yalu River.



MAP I

their founding ancestor. We will see later how this logic is associated with the mythical conception of 'sacredness' and 'center-orientedness'. Moreover, the Yalu River has as its starting point Mount Taebaek, which has been regarded as the place of origin not only of the Korean people but also of other peoples of southern Manchuria.<sup>7</sup> Even today, Mount Taebaek is an object of worship for many Koreans. Linguistically the Chinese characters 'tae' and 'baek' mean 'extremely' and 'white' respectively. Mount Taebaek, the 'very white' mountain, thus symbolizes the cult of white color among the Korean and other peoples of northeastern Asia. A Chinese historical record (*Weichih*) pays special attention to the fact that the Puyo people loved to wear white clothes (Lee, B.D. 1965: 221-22).

In the myth we encounter three more mountains: Woongshim, Gollyung, and Yongsan. We have no idea of where they were located. What is noteworthy is that all names of these mountains suggest sacred ideas inherent in the cults of northeastern Asian peoples and of peoples influenced by the Chinese culture. Gollyung is phonetically related to the Gollyun mountain range of Sinkiang Province in western China which had been believed to contain a mythical paradise to which the Heavenly Emperor used to descend. Wongshim and Yongsan, on the other hand, mean 'bear heart' and 'dragon', respectively, thereby reflecting the bear cult<sup>8</sup> among north Asian peoples and the dragon cult<sup>9</sup> among the Chinese and the peoples under the influence of the Chinese culture. Therefore, Gollyung and Yongsan, both of which appear in the myth in association with the founder Choomong's ascendance to heaven, can be seen as being ultimately related to the Heavenly Emperor and the most sacred mythical animal, respectively. All the above considerations indicate that geographical names in this myth cannot consistently be identified with any specific localities. We will later see the reason and logic underlying this aspect.

## 2) Political implications.

As we have seen above, the shift of the capital resulted in the two Puyos: North Puyo and East Puyo. This does not mean, however, that

---

7. For example, the myth of Tangoon, the oldest one of the Korean myths, takes Mount Taebaek as the center of the world, where the history of mankind in general and that of the Korean people in particular started.

8. The bear appears in the Tangoon myth not only as the mother of Tangoon but also as the procreator of the Korean people.

9. In Korea the dragon has been believed to be able to ascend to the heavens.

the two can be regarded as heterogeneous states of two different peoples. Rather, this fact should be interpreted as follows: north Asian peoples had continuously migrated eastward and southward under their leaders in order to find a better land and climate, as is exemplified by the Keumwa's eastward and the Choomong's southward movements. Here legends of the heroes of migrating groups came to play an important role not only in strengthening the unity of each group but also in enhancing its prestige as a 'chosen' people. Those peoples who had already settled down tended to find their heroes among the later immigrating groups, if the latter were culturally or militarily superior to the former. The Koguryo foundation myth reflects this ecological and political environment confronted by peoples of northeastern Asia before the Christian era: the native peoples of Holbon area in southern Manchuria finally found their leader among one of the immigrating groups, i.e., Choomong and his followers. The eastward and southward movement of northeastern Asian peoples, mounted on horseback and enjoying the iron culture via Chinese influence, is considered to have played a critical role in the formation of ancient states among the aboriginal peoples of Manchuria and the Korean Peninsular who as yet had neither horses nor any iron culture (Chun 1972: 220). Puyo in northern Manchuria, Koguryo in southern Manchuria and northern Korea, and Paikchae in southwestern Korea can be directly related to this movement, as reflected in their foundation myths of immigrating heroes from the north. This movement also influenced, directly or indirectly, not only all other peoples of the Korean Peninsular but probably also those of Japan.<sup>10</sup>

Besides ecological conditions, one of the reasons for such a migration is also seen as having lain in conflicts among leaders of various groups which resulted from their competition for hegemony. In the myth this situation appears implicitly in the Haebooroo's shift of the capital and explicitly in the Choomong's migration to the south. Haebooroo, who was the leader of the Puyo people, lost his power to Haemosoo, the newly emerging leader of some other Puyo groups; the legend came into play in order to glorify Haebooroo's moving away, by dint of the episode of the dream. This competition for hegemony implies that Puyo was not yet firmly established as a kingdom; it was no more than a tribal

---

10. A Japanese historian has proposed the plausible theory that the Japanese imperial family was part of a group of mounted people who came from the Korean Peninsular. This theory has, however, been deliberately ignored by most Japanese scholars, who, because of their colonialistic ideology, probably fear that such a theory could damage the Japanese national prestige.

league which consisted of several powerful tribes. This fact can be supported by the Chinese historical record *Weichih*: the Puyo political system consisted of the king and the four 'Ka's—the king ruled the capital, while each 'ka' governed peoples of one of the four cardinal directions from the capital (Lee, B.D. 1965: 212–14). It seems, therefore, that Puyo was a city state whose central power depended upon the support of major chiefs in surrounding tribal groups. The title 'king', which was accorded one of the tribal leaders, must have been nominal and used only out of deference to the Chinese. For domestic purposes the title had no special significance because the person so designated had neither administrative machinery nor controlling power over his fellow tribal leaders (Han 1970: 24). Keumwa's adoption into the Haebooroo's family and his subsequent ascension to the throne, as implied in the myth, suggests the custom of electing the most influential among the tribal leaders as the 'king' (Chun 1972: 227). It was not until the reign of King Daeso, who appears as the Crown Prince in the myth, that Puyo grew out of the tribal league into a full-fledged ancient kingdom (Chun 1972: 227–28; Han 1970).

Likewise, Choomong's migration to the south reflects the struggle between the newly emerging power represented by Choomong on the one hand and the existing royal family represented by Daeso on the other. Choomong's immigration into the Holbon area of southern Manchuria tells a part of the story of how the immigrating group overcame the resistance of the native groups and came to dominate. The long struggle between Choomong and Songyang in the myth can be thus interpreted as an example of competition for hegemony between the pre-existing group and the invading group during the formative period of the ancient kingdom. It is possible that this power struggle was based upon the support of existing major tribes. A Chinese historical record (*Weichih*) shows that Koguryo, in its early times, consisted of five tribes,<sup>11</sup> suggesting that Koguryo, like Puyo, started as a tribal league (Chun 1972: 229–30; Lee, B.D. 1965: 226–235; Lee, H.C. 1962: 95). The word denoting one of the five tribes, 'Sono', is considered to be linguistically related to the word 'Songyang' which occurs in the myth<sup>12</sup> (Lee, B.D. 1965: 227). It follows, therefore, that Songyang, who was probably the leader of the Sono tribe, had led the tribal league in the Holbon area before Choomong came down from the north. In order

---

11. Sono, Chulno, Sunno, Kwanno, and Kaeru.

12. Songyang, as a name of a tribe, was also called Biryoo, as shown in the myth.

for Choomong and his followers to weaken the power of Songyang, they must have relied upon the power of other existing tribes. The support might have come from the Kaeru tribe, as the Chinese record *Weichih* suggests: "At first the kings were from the Sono tribe, but later the Kaeru tribe replaced the Sono as the latter became weak."<sup>13</sup> From this description, Korean scholars generally see the above-mentioned shift of power as indicating Choomong's seizure of political power from Songyang and his founding of Koguryo (Lee, B.D. 1965: 226-35). Therefore, the formation of the national basis of Koguryo must have occurred much earlier than Choomong's formal founding of the kingdom Koguryo, which was still, in fact, no more than a tribal league.<sup>14</sup> At this time the myth came into play in order to glorify the hero and his followers who had immigrated and taken over the political power through the introduction of more advanced culture and the strategic manipulation of pre-existing powers.

Linguistic considerations may elucidate some of the more detailed aspects of political ideology among ancient northeast Asian peoples. The myth shows that Haebooroo, the king of Puyo, and Haemosoo, an alleged heavenly son, share a common surname, 'Hae'. In Korea 'hae' means the 'sun'. To put it differently, the Chinese 'hae' may have been a phonetic transcription of the purely Korean word 'hae', which means the 'sun'. In spite of the fact that the surname of the Koguryo royal family was 'Ko'—a name taken by Choomong and modelled after the national name Koguryo—the word 'hae' also appears as appended to the names of kings in the early period of Koguryo, indicating some relations between the Koguryo royal family and the Puyo counterpart. The foregoing consideration leads us to the inference that the word 'hae' was a general honorific prefix attached to a certain person in power rather than a surname of a specific family. The practice of identifying the sun with the person in power suggests not only political but, more fundamentally, religious significance, i.e., sun-worship among the northeast Asian peoples.

In connection with the above consideration, the name of the founder of Koguryo also attracts our attention. In addition to 'Choomong' and 'Tongmyung' which are shown in the myth, his name

---

13. From the Chapter of Koguryo in *Weichih*.

14. The development of Koguryo from a tribal league into a full-fledged ancient kingdom is believed not to have occurred until the reign of the sixth king Taeso (57-146 A.D.), 90 years after Choomong's founding of Koguryo (Chun 1972: 229; Lee, B.C. 1965: 236-37).



appears in other historical records as 'Choomo', 'Domo', 'Choongmo', and 'Sanghae' to mention only a part (Lee, H.C. 1962: 344, 1959: 23). What is noteworthy is the phonetic similarity among those names: *Choomong Choomo, Choongmo, Domo*, etc. One Korean scholar of ancient Korean sees these names as corresponding to the ancient Korean word 'jum' which, in Korean records of ancient times, appears to mean 'god', 'king' or 'powerful man' (Yang 1953: 38, 389, 455). A Chinese historical record (*Weishu*) says, on the other hand, that choomong means, in Puyo language, "the person who shoots arrows well"; the myth also refers to Choomong in the same sense. From this coupling of the concept of 'god' or 'king' with that of 'good shooter' we may safely say that in ancient times, when hunting played a critical role in subsistence economy, political leadership depended upon the personal qualities of an individual as a good hunter or a good shooter, and that religious significance was also accorded to such a person.

Our question is now directed to another name of the founder, Tongmyung. There are several interpretations of this name: 1) 'Tongmyung' is, like 'Choomong', a phonetic transcription of the ancient Korean word 'jum' or 'gum', which means 'god' or 'king' (Lee, H.C. 1959: 24-26)<sup>15</sup>; 2) 'Tongmyung' indicates the 'son of the sun' because this word corresponds to the meaning of the ancient Korean word 'saebalk', which means 'east sun', 'new sun' or 'morning sun' (Yang 1953: 38, 389, 455)<sup>16</sup>; 3) 'Tongmyung' is the name of the founder not of Koguryo but of Puyo (An 1946 Vol. 2).<sup>17</sup> There is no evidence to strongly back up any of the first two interpretations. I personally agree to the interpretation of Tongmyung as the 'son of the sun', but it is also quite possible that 'Tongmyung' means the 'son of heaven', i.e., the sun, since the Chinese record *Lunhêng*, which was the first to mention Tongmyung, relates him to heaven (See p. 59). It was fundamental to Chinese political ideology that the king or emperor was endowed with heavenly power: the Chinese emperor had been called the 'son of heaven'. At any rate we can find some similarity between the first two interpretations above: Whether 'Tongmyung' is a Chinese phonetic transcription of the ancient

---

15. This argument is based upon a) the phonetic similarity between 'tongmyung' and 'jum', and b) the association of 'Tongmyung' with a good shooter as reflected in *Lunhêng*, a Chinese historical record.

16. In other words, 'tongmyung' is a Chinese phonetic description of the Korean word 'saebalk'.

17. Many Chinese historical records say that the founder of Puyo was Tongmyung.

Korean word or a transcription of its meaning, it indicates a special category of people: 'king', 'god', 'powerful man', etc. In this sense the word 'tongmyung' can again be compared with the word 'hae', that is, the sun. Whether Tongmyung was the founder of Koguryo or not is a controversial problem which we will discuss later.<sup>18</sup> What should be said in this context is that 'tongmyung' can be regarded as having been a general designation of either the man in power, or god, rather than a personal name indicating a specific individual. The conclusion is that the words, 'hae', 'choomong', and 'tongmyung', all imply the political ideology of ancient times, i.e., emphasis upon individual qualities of the leader and identification of political power with religious power.

Lastly we will briefly consider the name of the kingdom, 'Koguryo'. In addition to 'Koguryo' which the myth relates, Chinese historical records present some other names, such as 'Kuryo' and 'Koryo'.<sup>19</sup> These names must have been Chinese phonetic transcriptions of the Korean word 'gour' or 'kour' which means 'county', 'village', or 'town'. Since the Chinese prefix 'Ko' of 'Koguryo' means 'high', the name of Kingdom Koguryo can be interpreted as a 'high village', 'high town', or 'high county' (Lee, B.D. 1965: 228-29; Lee, H.C. 1959: 26-32). The national name 'Koguryo' is quite indicative of its physical characteristics: the kingdom Koguryo started as a small-size citadel state located on a high plateau and had an advantage for defensive strategy.<sup>20</sup>

### 3) Implications for economy and subsistence.

Economic implications of the myth are far from being explicit. The myth, however, gives us some idea of the kinds of subsistence activities of the Puyo and the Koguryo people.

The myth suggests that the land of Puyo was good for horse-raising and hunting. The Puyo people appear, in fact, to have been engaged to a considerable degree in stock-raising, indicating a relationship with the nomadic tribes of northern and central Asia. One good example of their dependence on domesticated animals is found in the titles of tribal leaders. Besides the common designation 'Ka' which indicates 'big man', each tribal leader had his own distinguishable suffix, such as 'ma' (horse),

---

18. As a *personal* name, 'Tongmyung', who was the founder of Puyo, should be distinguished from 'Choomong' who was the founder of Koguryo.

19. These names are found in *Weichih* in *Sankuochih*, *Nanch'ishu*, *Liangshu*, *Weishu*, *Peich'ishu*, *Choushu*, *Suishu* & *Hsint'angshu*.

20. This high plateau was called 'Holbon' or 'Huelsinggoul', as seen in *Samguksaki* and *Samgukyusa*.

'u' (cow), 'choe' (pig), and 'ku' (dog) (Han 1970: 24; Lee, B.D. 1965: 212-14; Lee, H.C. 1962: 616). We can here see that the names of the animals which were vital to the tribes' survival were embodied in the titles of their leaders. Although the Puyo people seem to have depended to some extent on stock-raising, agriculture must also have been firmly established among them. As mentioned in the myth, five cereals were grown by them (*Weichih* in *Sankuochih*; Lee, B.D. 1965: 211). The special treatment of barley in the myth may be said to be indicative of the importance of that crop for their subsistence in the harsh environment of northern Manchuria. Their annual harvest festival, called 'Muchon', which was held in every October, indicates the degree of their agricultural development (Han 1970: 23; Lee, B.D.: 220).

On the other hand, Koguryo in its early period, as the myth relates, developed warfare as a way of life, becoming at least partly dependent on conquest for daily necessities (Han 1970: 27). The preoccupation of the Koguryo tribes with war and conquest is reflected in their social structure. The leader of the tribal league, tribal leaders and clan patriarchs functioned like a military chain of command, with the clan forming the basic military unit (Han 1970: 28-9). Agriculture, however, seems to have also been well established as shown by their annual harvest festival called 'Tongmaeng'.

In sum, the frequent appearance in the myth of the whip as a token of magical power backs up the importance of stock-raising, hunting, and warfare on horse-back in the daily life of the northeastern Asian peoples like the Puyo and the Koguryo.

#### 4) Implications for social customs and culture.

The myth does not suggest anything about social organization of the Puyo and the Koguryo. Our discussion above, however, shows that both the Puyo and the Koguryo in their early period formed tribal leagues which consisted of major tribes based on numerous clans. Both societies seem to have been fairly well stratified: besides nobility, there was slavery in Puyo and, in Koguryo, 'Haho', the lowest social class (Lee, H.C. 1962: 96; Han 1970: 28).

Keumwa's taking Yoohwa as a wife, implicit in the myth, suggests polygamy among the ruling families. The Puyo people, in actuality, practiced not only polygyny, but also the levirate, which was common among north and central Asian peoples (Lee, B.D. 1965: 219; Han 1970: 25). While Koguryo society was thoroughly patriarchal by historical times, its marriage customs are seen as having retained vestiges of an

earlier matriarchal, or at least matrilocal practice.<sup>21</sup>

The worship of a goddess among the Koguryo people is also indicative of matriarchal authority that might have been strong in its earlier times. Chinese historical records<sup>22</sup> say that the Koguryo people built two shrines at the capital, one of them being dedicated to the daughter of 'Habaek' ("Lord of Water"), who was called the 'Goddess of Puyo', and the other to the founder of Koguryo, who was called the 'God who ascended on high'. The former refers to Yoohwa, the mother of the founder, and the latter to Choomong, the founder himself, who, the myth relates, ascended to heaven. This fact demonstrates the presence of a national cult of the founding hero and heroine. The Chinese record *Weichih* also talks about the Koguryo's worship of the cave goddess: "there was a big cave east of the country and the people of Koguryo annually offered sacrifices to the goddess of that cave on the eastern river" (The Chapter of Eastern Barbarians in *Weichih*; Lee, B.D. 1965: 250-51). We may safely relate this worship to that of Yoohwa, who is portrayed in the myth as the daughter of the Sea God or the Lord of Water. Whether the goddess was Yoohwa or not, the cave cult can be interpreted as a cult of the female organ which is related to procreation and fertility.

Every October, as mentioned before, the Koguryo held the national harvest festival 'Tongmaeng', and offered sacrifices to heaven. What is noteworthy is that the name of the festival, 'Tongmaeng', is phonetically very similar to the alleged name of the founder, 'Tongmyung'. According to one of the Chinese historical records, *Liangshu*, the festival was, in actuality, called 'Tongmyung'. These names of the festival can also be said to be related to the Koguryo's worship of the heavens, especially the heavens of the east, or the heavenly god, i.e., the founder, who was believed to have ascended to heaven.

According to Chinese historical records such as *Weishu* and *Chou-shu*, the nobles of Koguryo wore a headgear with feathers and a silver belt with swords. This peculiar costume is well shown in the myth in its description of Haemosoo's appearance.

---

21. *Weichih* mentions the Koguryo marriage custom as follows: "After the wedding, the bride would remain with her family and the groom would visit her each night, after securing her parents' consent. Only after the wife had produced a son and the son had grown to maturity did she leave her family and join her husband's clan" (Han 1970: 28-29; Lee, B.D. 1965: 252).

22. The Chapter of Eastern Barbarians in *Weichih*, and the Chapter of Koguryo in *Peishih*.

In the myth we come across three kinds of color description: white, five-colors, and dragon-colors. As noted earlier, the appearance of white color in the description of animals and mountains in the myth reveals the white-color-cult prevalent among the Puyo in particular and among the northeastern Asian peoples in general (Lee, B.D. 1965: 222). Until very recently Koreans used to take pride in calling themselves the 'People in white clothes'. While the cult of white color was an influence of north Asian nomadic culture, that of five-colors<sup>23</sup> and dragon-colors reflects the influence of Chinese culture: the number 'five' and the animal 'dragon' have mythical implications for the Chinese and for those under the influence of Chinese culture. The number five frequently implies not just 'five' but 'all', all the basic and essential things in the world. On the other hand, the dragon has always been related to imperial authority by the Chinese.<sup>24</sup> The 'five-dragon coach' shown in the myth is one example of the Chinese symbolization of imperial authority. In addition to the dragon, in the myth there appear favorite animals, fish, birds and trees of East Asian peoples.<sup>25</sup> These animals and plants reflect not only culture-bound meanings of East Asian peoples, but also, as we will see later, universal meanings of the mythical mind.

It will be noted that the myth lays stress on the performance of musical instruments as one of the prerequisites for royal authority. This suggests another influence of Chinese culture: music was regarded as one of the 'six arts' indispensable for general education.<sup>26</sup> Archery competition shown in the myth also reflects Chinese influence: archery, as one of the 'six arts', was one of the most common practices among East Asian peoples. Lastly, in the myth there are found some Chinese idiomatic expressions and ideas, which we frequently come across in the classical literature of East Asian peoples: "fish and terrapins form a bridge"; "shooting two birds with an arrow"; "shooting at a distance of one hundred paces"; "one thousand years of the State", to mention only a part.

All the considerations above lead us to the conclusion that the myth reveals characteristics of both North Asian culture and Chinese culture. In other words, the culture of Puyo and that of Koguryo had mixed both

---

23. 'Five' colors refer to blue, yellow, red, white, and black.

24. For example, the face of emperor and kings was called the "face of dragon", and their chair, the "dragon chair".

25. To give examples: deer, terrapin, carp, pheasant, dove, ibis, pine, etc.

26. The 'six arts' refer to etiquette, music, archery, horse-riding, calligraphy, and arithmetic.

traditions to a considerable extent. What should be noted here is that the myth reflects more features of Chinese culture than of North Asian culture, because the myth we have discussed was written under the paramount influence of Chinese culture, more than 1200 years later than its formative times. Thus, myth can be said to reveal cultural aspects, not only of the time it is formed, but also of the time it is written.

We have seen above what the myth as a cultural reflector tells us and what it does not. Our discussion above suggests that the information a myth gives us should be supplemented through other sources, since such information tends to be very segmentary and selective. As we have presupposed, myth does not speak for itself: myth needs supplements and interpretations before it is able to reflect a culture in a coherent, comprehensive manner.

### III. Historical Considerations.

Mythical time is said to be timeless. It is, Shelling says, "not a sequence of time but only One Time" (quoted from Cassirer 1971: 106). This means that myth abolishes profane time, duration, and history, and by doing so, it can explain the present and the future as well as the past (Eliade 1972: 34-48; Lévi-Strauss 1967: 205). If myth has any historical implications, it is, according to Eliade, only as an 'exemplar history' which can be repeated and modeled because it took place "in illo tempore" (1972: 430).

In spite of its timelessness, however, a myth always refers to specific events alleged to have taken place at a certain time in the past. In this sense, myth presents a dual time structure—historical and ahistorical. It is on the assumption of the historicity of myth that we have discussed socio-cultural implications of the Koguryo foundation myth. A myth's shift from its historical to ahistorical aspect is well exemplified in the process of the mythification of the founder of Koguryo. Confusion, or "disease of language", and religious understanding of natural phenomena, both of which are inherent in human mind, come into play in this process. We will see this process of mythification by using historical data, both Chinese and Korean.

In the Korean historical society there has been a long controversy over who was the founder of Koguryo: the confusion has arisen, because whereas most Korean records identify both Choomong and Tongmyung with the founder of Koguryo, all Chinese records see the two as different persons, i.e., Choomong as the founder of Koguryo and Tongmyung as

the founder of Puyo. It has been admitted for the last ten years as a general theory by the Korean historical society that Choomong must be identified with Tongmyung, and that legends of the latter shown in Chinese records must be in reality those of Choomong. According to this argument, the confusion has been due to the Chinese ignorance of the identity of Choomong with Tongmyung (Lee, B.D. 1965). As well will see later, this argument has been further backed up by the similarities between the two kinds of legends. Another argument says, however, that stories of Choomong and Tongmyung should be treated separately, the former as referring to the founder of Koguryo (Koguryo foundation myth) and the latter as referring to the founder of Puyo (Puyo foundation myth), as Chinese records suggest (Lee, H.C. 1959: 1-33). We will first review the legends of Tongmyung listed in Chinese records in order to clarify these arguments.

The first Chinese record that deals with Tongmyung's legend is *Lunghêng*<sup>27</sup> written in the first century A.D. Its content is as follows:

To the north, there was a barbarian kingdom called Kori. A maid-in-waiting of the king became pregnant, and according to custom the king would kill her. Then she said, "a spirit as big as an egg came down to me from heaven. And I conceived a child." After a boy was born, he was abandoned in a pig pen. The pigs breathed upon him but he did not die. He was again put into a horse stable, but the horses did not trample him nor even breathe on him. The king suspected that the baby was a son of Heaven and allowed the mother to bring the boy with her. The maid fed him and called him Tongmyung. He was told to tend the cows and horses. The boy shot the arrow so well that the king was afraid of his usurping the kingdom and planned to kill him. Tongmyung ran away to the south and reached the Umche River. He stroke the water with the bow, and then fish and terrapins came to the surface to form a bridge. As soon as Tongmyung crossed the river, the fish and terrapins scattered, so that the pursuing soldiers could not cross. He thence decided to locate his kingdom at Puyo. Thus we came to have the Puyo Kingdom to the north.

An almost identical story appears in another Chinese historical record, *Sankuochih*<sup>28</sup>, about two hundred years later. Differences between the two are no more than substitutions of one synonym for another. The only conspicuous difference I found is that *Sankuochih* says "there was a spirit like an egg coming down to me", instead of "a spirit as big as an egg".

27. *Lunghêng* was written by Wang Ch'ung (A.D. 27-A.D. 89? 104?) in early Late Han Dynasty.

28. *Sankuochih* was edited by Ch'ên Shou (A.D. 223-297) in early Chin Dynasty.

The historical record of Sui<sup>29</sup>, which was written in the early seventh century, lists a very similar story:

The king of Koryo had a maid-in-waiting who suddenly conceived. He intended to kill her, but the latter said, "Something like an egg came down to touch me, so I conceived." The king thus forgave her. As she gave birth to a boy, the king ordered her to abandon him at a stable, but the boy did not die even after a long time. The king suspected him to be a "god" and allowed his mother to feed him. The boy was called Tongmyung. As he grew up, the king of Koryo became jealous of him. Tongmyung was afraid of the king, and fled across the Um River. The Puyo people accepted him as their leader. . . .

A very brief account of Tongmyung is also given in a historical record of T'ang Dynasty called T'ungtien.<sup>30</sup>

Once upon a time the king of the northern barbarian nation Kori had a son named Tongmyung. Tongmyung grew up and shot arrows so well that the king became jealous of his bravery and intended to kill him. Tongmyung ran away to the south and came to the Umche River on the way. At last he reached Puyo and became the first king there. . . .

From the above four stories about Tongmyung, all of which are shown in Chinese historical records, we can systematize their features as follows:

CHART I.

	Lunheng	Sankuochih	Suishu	T'ungtien
Tongmyung's native place	Kori	Kori	Koryo	Kori
Tongmyung's mother	maid-in-waiting	maid-in-waiting	maid-in-waiting	no comment
Tongmyung's father	a spirit as big as an egg	a spirit like an egg	something like an egg	King of Kori
Treatment after birth	abandoned	abandoned	abandoned	no comment
Initial suspicion of Tongmyung	son of Heaven	son of Heaven	God	no comment
The name accorded to the baby	Tongmyung	Tongmyung	Tongmyung	Tongmyung
Tongmyung's job	tending cows and horses	tending cows and horses	no comment	no comment
Tongmyung's talent	arrow-shooting	arrow-shooting	arrow-shooting	arrow-shooting

29. *Suishu* is the formal historiography of Sui Dynasty written by Wei Chêng, Chang Sun Wu Chi in T'ang Dynasty according to the imperial decree. It is completed in A.D. 636.

30. *T'ungtien* is a historical description of Chinese institutions written by Tu Yu in A.D. 801.



Direction of Tongmyung's migration	south	south	no comment	south
The river Tongmyung crossed	Umche	Shium	Um	Umche
Means of crossing the river	The bridge formed by fish & terrapins	The bridge formed by fish & terrapins	no comment	no comment
The kingdom Tongmyung founded	Puyo	Puyo	Puyo	Puyo

We will now then compare the above features with stories identifying Choomong with Tongmyung or the founder of Koguryo. The first story is seen in the monument inscription of King Kwangeto, written in the early fifth century.<sup>31</sup>

The founder King Chumo came from North Puyo. He was the son of the Heavenly Emperor, and his mother was said to be the daughter of Habaik, the Lord of the Water. He was hatched from an egg and was extremely virtuous. Later he drove the cart to the south and reached the great river of Umri of Puyo. The king said on the ferry, "I am King Chumo, the son of the Heavenly Emperor and the daughter of Habaik. May fish and terrapins rise to the surface for me!" The fish and terrapins immediately rose to the surface, so that he crossed the river. He reached a mountain south of Holbon in the valley of Biryoo where he established his kingdom. . . .

The earliest Chinese record that lists Choomong's story is *Weishu* written in the sixth century. It presents us with a much more detailed story.

Koguryo originated from Puyo. It is said that their forefather is Choomong. Choomong's mother, the daughter of Habaik, was exposed to the sun while being confined in a room by the king of Puyo. She tried to escape the sunlight, but it followed her. Thereafter she became pregnant and produced an egg as big as five soengs (one soeng = 1.8 liters). The king of Puyo abandoned it to a dog, but the dog did not eat it. He gave it to a pig, but the pig did not eat it, either. When it was thrown away on the road, cows and horses avoided it. Later it was cast away in the field, but a flock of birds protected it with their feathers. The king of Puyo tried in vain to break it. At last he returned it to the mother, who wrapped and left it in a warm place. A baby boy hatched from the egg. As he grew, he was called Choomong. According to the Puyo custom, "choomong" means "the person who shoots an arrow well". The Puyo people asked the king to get rid of Choomong because Choomong was not a mortal and would have some secret will. But the king did not heed them and let Choomong tend the horses.

31. This stone monument was built in A.D. 414 in order to commemorate the achievements of King Kwangeto of Koguryo.

Choomong always examined horses to see their quality. He gave less food to good horses to make them thin and more food to bad ones to make them fat. The king of Puyo rode a fat horse and gave a thin one to Choomong. Later in hunting Choomong was given only one arrow because he shot well. Though he had few arrows, he killed much game. As soon as Choomong's mother recognized that subjects of the king of Puyo had plotted to kill Choomong, she said to her son, "The people will kill you. Please leave for some other place because you are gifted." Choomong thus left Puyo for the southeast with Oin and Owi. On the way they came to a big river. They wished to cross it but could not find a bridge. In the meanwhile Puyo's pursuers came very close to catching them. Choomong said to the water, "I am the son of the Sun and the grandson of Habaik. Now I am running away, but my pursuers are just behind me. How can I cross you?" Immediately all the fish and terrapins rose to the surface and formed a bridge. As soon as Choomong crossed, they scattered, so that the pursuers could not cross. When Choomong reached a Bosool River, he met three persons. One of them wore a cloak made of taro, the second one, the clothing of a monk and the third one, the clothing made of dried weed. Choomong was accompanied by them and arrived at Hulseunggolsong, which he occupied and called Koguryo, thus naming himself "Ko" by surname.

Records of Koguryo listed in both *Samguksaki*<sup>32</sup> and *Samgukyusa*<sup>33</sup> tell us some more details of the legend of Choomong which are very similar to those from *Weishu*. The two records here make clear that the king of Puyo was Keumwa, and that the big river which Choomong crossed was the Umche River. The two records add a new story that Yoohwa, the mother of King Tongmyung, had met Haemosoo, the alleged son of Heaven, before she was taken by Keumwa, the king of Puyo. More important is that the two records identify Choomong with Tongmyung.

The forefather of Koguryo is Holy King Tongmyung. His surname is Ko, and his given name Choomong or Choomo or Sanghae. In ancient times, there was a king in Puyo called Haebooroo, who though he had reached an advanced age, was yet without an heir. He therefore prayed constantly to the god of the mountains and rivers that he might be granted a son. He was out riding one day, and when he came to a pool called Konyon, his horse stopped, and neighed mournfully at a big stone. He ordered his attendant to turn the stone over, when there appeared beneath it a little boy in the form of a golden frog. The King was overjoyed to find the boy, and, thinking that he must be a gift from Heaven, he adopted him as Prince. And he called him Keumwa (Golden Frog).

One day one of the King's ministers, Aranbool by name, came to the

---

32. *Samguksaki* was compiled by a Korean historian, Kim Pu-sik in 1145 A.D.

33. *Samgukyusa* was written by a Korean monk, Ilyon, about a century after the compilation of *Samguksaki*.

king and told him that Heaven had appeared to him in a dream and advised him that they should move to a more fertile land, called Kasupwon, near East Sea. So the King moved his kingdom thither, and renamed it Tong-Puyo (East Puyo). And after his death the Prince, Keumwa, succeeded him, but in his former territory a pretender called Haemosoo took the throne, claiming that he was a son of the Heavenly Emperor.

One day the new King, Keumwa, was travelling in the land of Ubalsu, south of Mount Taebaik, when he happened to meet a woman, by name Yoohwa, daughter of Habaik (Lord of Water). The King asked her about herself, and she answered, "I once met a man called Haemosoo. He said he was the son of the Heavenly Emperor. We stayed one night together in a house by the Yalu River, near Mount Ungshim, but after that he never came back. And for this illicit affair my parents cast me out."

The King was deeply moved, and took her and confined her in a room. Sunbeams came streaming in towards her. Though she tried to avoid them she could not, they still fell directly upon her. She soon became pregnant, and in the end she gave birth to an enormous egg, as big as five *soengs*.

The King was displeased by the birth of an egg, and threw it to the dogs and the pigs, but they would not eat it. He cast it out on the streets, but the cows and horses avoided it. He had it taken out into the fields, but the birds tended it under their wings. So he took it back and tried to break it, but it was not to be broken, and so finally he returned it to the mother. She wrapped it in soft cloth and placed it in a warm part of the room. Before long it hatched and a boy was born from it. He appeared from birth to be very bright and strong.

When the boy was seven years old, he could already make arrows and bows and shoot with them so skillfully that he was given the name of Choomong, because from the earliest times the excellent archer had been called so by the Puyo people.

The King Keumwa had seven sons. The eldest, Daeso, was jealous of Choomong, and said to his father, "Choomong was born from an egg. I think he is a dangerous character. I advise you to get rid of him at once, for if you do not he may sow seeds of trouble." But the King ignored his suggestion, and appointed Choomong to the care of his horses. Choomong fed the better horse sparingly, in order that it might become thin and weak, and on the other hand he fed the other lavishly that it might become fat and appear to be strong.

One day the King decided to go hunting, and, riding the fat horse himself, bade Choomong ride the thin one. In the field Choomong was given only a few arrows, because he shot well, but he hunted very much game.

Other princes and many ministers again plotted to kill him. Choomong's mother Yoohwa guessed this evil intention, and said to her son, "The nation will kill you. Since you are gifted, you must go to some other place." Choomong fled with three followers, Zoi, Mari, and Pyobbu, and came to the river Umche. But there was no bridge, and they were hotly pursued by the King's men. So Choomong prayed to the River, "I am the son of the God and of the daughter of Habaik. I am now running away, but the pursuing soldiers are just behind me. What shall I do?" Then, there came swimming in the river a great crowd of fish and terrapins, and they formed a bridge with their backs. So they crossed the river, but their pursuers could not follow, for the fish and terrapins immediately swam away.

Choomong and his followers went on their way and came to the valley

of Modun, where they met three wise men, Zesa, Mugol, and Muggo. He asked them to assist him in founding a new kingdom. The three wise men agreed and followed him, and he bestowed on them the family names of Gugsil, Zungsil, and Sosil respectively.

So Choomong went to Cholbonchon with his three followers and the three wise men, and founded a new capital there, for it was a fertile spot, surrounded by steep mountains and traversed by a beautiful river. Until such time as he might be able to build himself a palace he built temporary dwellings of thatched houses on the banks of the Bullyu River. His kingdom he called Koguryo, and took as his family name the first syllable Ko.<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, the chapters of Paikchae in *Samguksaki* and *Samgukyusa* tell us another quite different story about Choomong. They say that Choomong was from North Puyo and had run away to avoid a plot on his life.

The forefather of Paikchae is Oncho whose father is called King Chumo or Choomong. Choomong came down from the north to Cholbonpuyo. The king of Cholbonpuyo had no son but three daughters. The king recognized that Choomong was gifted, and let him take his second daughter as his wife. Sooner or later the king of Puyo (Cholbonpuyo) passed away. Choomong succeeded him and came to have two sons. The elder is Biryu and the second Oncho. . . .

The important thing in this story is that this account entirely excludes any conflict between the newcomer Choomong and the established king of Cholbonpuyo, who was probably Songyang, as suggested in the myth we have discussed in detail. We have no evidence to back up either of the two possibilities, i.e., the establishment of Koguryo 1) by Choomong's own struggle against, or 2) through Choomong's succession of, the existing power. What is certain is that in either case Choomong must have needed the support of native people, whether it came from Songyang's tribe or from the Kaeroo tribe.

The last story about Choomong is an epic poem composed by a famous writer on the basis of legends prevailing in the early thirteenth century. It is this version that we have already discussed in the first chapter of this paper and will discuss later in some more detail. I will not repeat the story here again.

From the four versions of Choomong's legend introduced above, except for the last epic poem, we can group their major similarities and differences as follows:

---

34. From *Samguksaki* Vol. 13. The above translation is based on *Folktales from Korea* (by Zong, Insob), pp. 4-7.

## CHART II.

	Inscription of King Kwang- geto's Monument	Weishu	Samguksaki & Samgukyusu (Ch. of Koguryo)	Samguksaki & Samgukyusu (Ch. of Paikchae)
Choomong's native place	North Puyo	Puyo	East Puyo	North Puyo
Choomong's mother	Daughter of Habaik	Daughter of Habaik	Yoohwa, daugh- ter of Habaik	no comment
Choomong's father	Heavenly Emperor	Sunlrgh	Haemosoo (son of the Heavenly Emperor & Sunlight)	no comment
Choomong's step-father	no comment	unknown	Keumwa (King of Puyo)	no comment
Choomong was born as:	egg	egg	egg	no comment
Treatment after birth	no comment	abandoned	abandoned	no comment
Name of the baby boy	Choomong	Choomong	Choomong & Tongmyung	Choomong
Choomong's job	no comment	arrow-shooting	arrow-shooting	no comment
Direction of Choomong's migration	Southeast	Southeast	South	South
The river Cho- omong crossed	Umri or Big river	Big river	Umche	no comment
Means of cross- ing the river	bridge formed by fish & ter- rapins	bridge formed by fish & ter- rapins	bridge formed by fish & ter- rapins	no comment
The name of the nation Cho- omong founded	Koguryo	Koguryo	Koguryo	Cholbonpuyo

We are now in a position to compare the two charts we have drawn above (See Chart 1 & 2 above). First of all it is noteworthy that the two kinds of legends, those of the founder of Puyo (Tongmyung) and those of the founder of Koguryo (Choomong), are very similar: (1) both Tongmyung and Choomong were abandoned after their birth, but did not die; (2) both were told to tend horses; (3) both shot arrows very well; (4) both ran away to the south because of the jealousy of the king or the royal family; (5) both crossed a river whose names are phonetically very similar; (6) in both cases, fish and terrapins formed a bridge for the hero.

The question is then what implications these similarities have for both myth and reality. First, the episodes in which Tongmyung and Choomong were abandoned but did not die (1) may safely be inter-

preted to be related to the mythical mind, which tends to express holiness or sacredness in unusual or inconceivable events in reality. This is also the case in (6) above. As we have discussed before, the idea that fish and terrapins form a bridge has been idiomized and appears not infrequently in Chinese literature to glorify heroes. The similarities shown in the rest of the above episodes, on the other hand, can be related to the ecological and socio-cultural situations of northern Manchuria at that time: the second episode is related to stock-raising subsistence; the third to the cultural values accorded to hunting and archery; the fourth to the political insecurity and competition for hegemony among the tribal leaders; and the fifth to geographical features of Manchuria, an area traversed by big rivers and their tributaries. It follows, in short, that north Asian peoples must have created similar legends either independently, or by borrowing from one another, as they moved toward the east and the south.

There are several distinctive differences between the two kinds of stories: (1) the native country of the hero is Kori in the case of the Puyo foundation myth, while it is Puyo in the case of the Koguryo foundation myth; (2) the hero was named, at first, Tongmyung in the former case, and Choomong in the latter case; (3) the mother of the hero is an anonymous maid-in-waiting in the former, while she is specified as a daughter of Habaik, i.e., Yoowa in the latter; (4) she is said to have been impregnated by a spirit or "something as big as, or like, an egg" in the former, but by heaven, or the sun, or the heavenly son in the latter; (5) Tongmyung was first born as a human, but Choomong as an egg; (6) Tongmyung became the king of Puyo, while Choomong the king of Koguryo. The first episode above suggests that there must have been a kingdom called Kori or Koryo north of Puyo. The name of the kingdom described in diverse Chinese characters, must have been Chinese phonetic transcriptions of a certain Asian word. The sound 'kori' or 'koryo' is very similar to the pure Korean word 'gour' or 'kour' which, as we have noted, means 'village', or 'country'. It is also very similar, or almost identical with, the name of the Kingdom, *Koguryo* or sometimes just *Kuryo* or *Koryo*. This similarity between the names of the kingdoms, Kori and Koguryo, has confused Chinese historians and Korean historians as well.<sup>35</sup> Since there is no information about Kori,

---

35. The author of *T'ungtien* notes:

"According to the two historical records of Late Han and Wei, Puyo was located north of Koguryo. According to historical records of Late Wei and Sui, Koguryo was located south of Puyo. . . . It (*Suishu*) also says that

many Korean scholars have argued that Kori refers to Koguryo and that the Puyo foundation myth was a reworked version of the Koguryo foundation myth (Lee, B.D. 1965: 216–17). We should note, however, that 'kori' or 'koryo', just as 'koguryo', is not a proper noun but a common noun indicating general localized political groups of northeast Asia. It follows, therefore, that some northeast Asian peoples once formed tribal groups called something like 'kour' (which implies a kind of small city state), while moving continually eastward and southward: Kori and Koguryo must be two outstanding examples of this pattern. We can now establish a geographical hierarchy of the three kingdoms which appeared in the course of the southeast movement of north Asian nomadic peoples, as reflected in both the Puyo foundation myth and the Koguryo foundation myth: Kori lies farthest north, Koguryo, farthest south, and Puyo, between Kori and Koguryo. This hierarchy also indicates their relative order of establishment: Kori was first, followed by Puyo, and then Koguryo.

The identification of Choomong with Tongmyung in some Korean records has been another reason for Korean scholars' insistence upon the primacy of the Koguryo foundation myth over the Puyo foundation myth. We note from the two kinds of legends considered above that the hero of the Puyo foundation myth was named at birth as Tongmyung because of his suspected relationship with heaven or god, whereas the hero of the Koguryo foundation myth was called Choomong only after he showed an unusual talent in shooting arrows. Furthermore, it was not until Choomong became the king of Koguryo, nor until about 1100 years later than his death that Choomong was identified with Tongmyung. The reason for later Korean writers' identification of Choomong with Tongmyung, in spite of the distinction drawn by earlier Chinese and Korean records, must lie in the fact that the term 'tongmyung' implied something more holy than the term 'choomong', as illustrated by the Chinese characters 'tong' ('east') and 'myung' ('brightness'), whose meaning points to the sun of the east, and symbolically embodies the two main cults of northeast Asian peoples—the sun and the east. The designation, "Holy King Tongmyung", rather than just 'Choomong', could glorify the founder of the kingdom Koguryo, whose invincible

---

Koguryo is called Kori or Koryo. Puyo must be, therefore, in the south of Koguryo. Although we have examined several theories, we are still not sure if Kori, which was located north of Puyo, is an independent state or not. . . ."

This statement shows the confusion that exists concerning geographical locations of the nations in Manchuria before the Christian era.

power extended into almost the entire area of Manchuria and north Korea. It was through the working of mythifying mind that Choomong became identified with Tongmyung, but it is through historical evidence that Choomong is demythified.<sup>36</sup>

Although it is quite certain that the Koguryo foundation myth is distinct from the Puyo foundation myth, there is every possibility that the former was modelled after the latter to a considerable extent, since the similarities between the two are attributable not only to their racial, ecological, and socio-cultural unity, but also, more significantly, to borrowing from one another. Aside from structural characteristics which we will discuss later, the various versions of the two kinds of myths show obvious mythologization beginning with the Puyo foundation legend and ending with the last version of the Koguryo foundation myth. For instance, the mother of the hero is transformed from a maid-in-waiting, to a daughter of Habaik, and finally into a daughter of the Sea God. It was through the functioning of the "disease of language" that "a spirit as big as an egg" became "a spirit like an egg", and then was bisected into the sun, or the son of the Heavenly Emperor, and the egg. Within the Koguryo foundation legends, Habaik was mythologized as the Sea God, and Haemosoo as the son of the Heavenly Emperor. Through the enormous elaboration of the story over time, dramatic elements and tensions were added: the combination of Keumwa's legend with Choomong's, the competition between Choomong and Daeso (Crown Prince of Puyo), the struggle between Choomong and Songyang, and so on. In the next part of this paper, we will examine, therefore, the symbolic meanings, universal and cultural, of the added mythical elements shown in the last version of the Koguryo foundation myth.

#### IV. Symbolic Meanings of Mythical Elements.

The Koguryo foundation myth centers around the idea that it was heaven's will for the kingdom to be founded. The greater part of the story is thus devoted to showing how its founder is related to the heavenly genealogy. It is one of the most common themes in myth that heroes

---

36. One Chinese historical record, *Liangshu*, says:

"Koguryo originated from *Tongmyung* who was a son of the king of north Kori. During the absence of the King, his maid-in-waiting conceived. . . . *Tongmyung* reached Puyo and became the king there. Later one group of his people formed the (Ko)guryo people." (From *Liangshu*, Vol. 54).



claim their heavenly relationship in order to prove their divinity, and thereby their "supremacy" and "sovereignty" which the symbolism of heaven or the sky implies. The term "Heavenly Emperor" shown in various versions of the myth, for instance, indicates heaven's supremacy and sovereignty. It is neither heaven nor the Heavenly Emperor himself, however, that we find heavenly manifestation in the Koguryo foundation myth: Haemosoo claims to be the son of the Heavenly Emperor; Choomong is thus the grandson of the Heavenly Emperor. This aspect points to the phenomenon of "otiose" gods who, because of their transcendency and passivity, separate themselves from mundane human welfare, generally remaining as symbols of the cosmic order (de Waal Malefijt 1968: 152). Although heaven or the god of heaven is the Creator Ruler of the cosmos, in myth these tend to delegate their power to more concrete, dynamic, and fertile divinities or religious forces such as "sun", "thunder", "rain", etc.: heaven and the god of heaven are too far removed from man to satisfy man's innumerable religious, economic and other vital needs (Eliade 1972: 46-62). In the case of the Koguryo foundation myth, it is certain that Choomong, as a historical figure who lived in a certain period of time and in a certain place, cannot claim to be Heaven itself: the heavenly relationship was reason enough for him to be the ruler on earth.

The mother of the hero, Yoohwa, appears in the myth to be a daughter of the Sea God or the Lord of Water. This suggests that the hero has not only "heavenly" but also "earthly" relationship, specifically with water. With its supreme fluidity water in myth symbolizes the primal germinative substance containing the potentiality of all forms in their unborn unity (Eliade 1972: 188-89). As a symbol of life and growth, water is inevitably related to the moon, both giving a cyclic form to the development of things and leading to the orbit of fertility formed by water, moon, and woman (ibid.). The sea is an outstanding epiphany of water, but the water is in turn correlated to the earth as an epiphany. The Earth or the "Whole Place" appears in myth to be the Earth-Mother or the Great Mother because of its capacity to give birth to all living things (Eliade 1972: 239-62). Just like heaven, however, the supreme goddess of the earth tends to delegate its power to other lesser "hierophanies" such as sea, water, stone, as exemplified in the Koguryo foundation myth.

From the above consideration, we note that the marriage of the daughter of the Sea God or the Lord of Water to the son of the Heavenly Emperor is preceded by the marriage of the divine pair, the Heaven-

Father and the Earth-Mother, which is the model for all marriages of lesser gods and men. What is implied is that the human custom of marriage is consecrated by the divine marriage, "hierogamy", in primordial times (Eliade 1972: 239). In the Koguryo foundation myth, the hierogamy is intended to give birth to the founder of Koguryo, thereby not only deifying the founder but also imparting sacredness to the nation he founded. It is suggested in the myth that the people of Koguryo are linked to both heaven and earth through their founder: the myth validates the claim of this "chosen people".

In connection with the discussion of the hierogamy in the myth, we must take into account the fact that it was the sunlight that caused the daughter of the Lord of Water to conceive. The question is then whether or not, and if so, how, the son of the Heavenly Emperor is related to the sun. As we have discussed earlier, the surname of the alleged son of the Heavenly Emperor, "Hae" (mosoo), means the "sun" in Korean. The mythological implication of the relationship of heaven to the sun is, first of all, found in the general withdrawal of the heavenly god from human daily affairs, giving way to atmospheric and fecundating gods who are more directly connected with "Life". It is quite probable that the first and the most dynamic epiphany of heaven, the sun, takes the place of heaven. Such a transfer leads in myth to the idea of filiation, a father-son relationship between heaven and the sun (Eliade 1972: 126-28). What is certain here is, then, that the two figures, the son of the Heavenly Emperor and the sun, both of whom are related to the birth of the hero in the myth, are mythologically identical with one-another, and that the hero is the son of the sun, the most vital force to human daily life in an agricultural society. Generally speaking, sun-worship was common to mankind and closely related to the spread of ancient civilizations carried out by so-called "children of the Sun", mythological migratory figures (Eliade 1972: 124). According to this theory, though it is a controversial one, Choomong appears to have been a "child of the Sun", who was charged with the mission of the spread of civilization.

Let us turn attention to another crucial aspect of the birth of the hero, the episode of the hero's birth from an egg.<sup>37</sup> The simplest, but mythologically plausible, explanation is that the unusual, extraordinary

---

37. Two other Korean foundation myths, the Silla foundation myth and the Kaya foundation myth, also relate their heroes to the egg.

birth of the hero tends to bear witness to his claimed divinity.<sup>38</sup> We note that holiness is always accompanied by such rudimentary feelings as strangeness and inconceivability, and that it is upon such feelings that myth is based. Beyond this elementary level, the egg in myth has a cosmogonic meaning<sup>39</sup>: it “represents a manifestation of creation—in the framework not of empirical and rational but of hierophanic experience—a summing up of the cosmogony.” (Eliade 1972: 416). In other words, the egg symbolizes the archetypal birth of the cosmos, guaranteeing the possibility of repetition of the primeval act of creation (Eliade 1972: 414–16). That man is born out of an egg implies that the creation of man mirrors and repeats that of the cosmos (Eliade 1972: 414). According to this view, the man who is born out of an egg is the First Man who brings order to his chaotic cosmos in a primordial state: in the eyes of the Koguryo and the Korean, Choomong was the first man who put an end to the barbarian rivalries among the peoples in southern Manchuria and northern Korea at that time.

On the other hand, we can relate the egg to water, the prime force of giving “life” in myth<sup>40</sup>: the producer of the egg, Yoohwa, was the daughter of the Lord of Water. It is quite probable, therefore, that it was out of the primeval water contained in the heroine that the egg was generated. The relationship of the cosmic egg to the primeval water is a frequent theme in myth: in the Egyptian story of the creation, the first act of creation begins with the formation of an egg which rises out of the primal water, and from which Ra, the God of Light, is issued (Cassirer 1971: 96).

In the Koguryo foundation myth we note that stone appears two times associated with a baby boy, King Keumwa, and with a woman, Yoohwa. While stone symbolizes existence, power, and continuance by dint of its strength, permanence, and size, it is also associated with phallic symbolism, and believed to have some power of fecundating sterile women and of giving birth to a boy<sup>41</sup> (Eliade 1972: 220–25). It

38. The episode of animals and birds protecting the abandoned hero is also related to this aspect.

39. The motif of the cosmogonic egg is common to Polynesia, ancient India, Indonesia, Iran, Greece, Phoenicia, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, the Pangwe of West Africa, Central America, and the West coast of South America (Eliade 1972: 413).

40. The life-giving power of water is also indicated in the Koguryo foundation myth by the episode of the hero sprinkling water to the dove in order to make the latter alive.

41. In many parts of Korea, there are some big stones which are still thought to be related to the impregnation of women.

is in this symbolic implication that we can relate the woman and the boy to the stone. As we have discussed before, the appearance of the five cereals in the myth points to the agricultural life. What is noteworthy is that the five cereals are related to the mother of the hero in the myth. Symbolically it indicates that agriculture is embraced by the Earth-Mother, revealing an agricultural mentality which connects the fertility of the soil with the creative force of woman (Eliade 1972: 331-33).<sup>42</sup>

The trees appearing in the Koguryo foundation myth do not explicitly show the cosmic significances of the mythological tree as the image of the cosmos, symbol of life, and supporter of the universe.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless we cannot overlook the importance and special treatment accorded to the tree, especially the pine tree.

It is recognized that every place, position and direction mentioned in myth is endowed with a particular sacred coloring. To put it differently, mythical space is heterogeneous, in contrast to the homogeneity of non-mythical, profane space<sup>44</sup> (Cassirer 1971: 85). The spatial conceptualization of the universe by the mythical mind sheds light upon the cult of the cardinal direction of the east and, to a lesser extent, the south, among the northeast Asian peoples as indicated in the Koguryo foundation myth: the east, where the sun rises, symbolizes the eternal return of life, whereas the west, where the sun sets, symbolizes the terrors of death; it is to the south that the sun burns and to the north that it cools (Cassirer 1971: 98). The cult of the "east" and the "south" therefore inevitably involves sunworship. Furthermore the universe in myth breaks down into four parts: a hither part in the south, a nether part in the north, a left part in the east, and a right part in the west (Cassirer 1971: 150). It is no wonder, therefore, that the heroine of the Koguryo foundation myth gives birth to an egg from under the *left* arm. The veneration of the "east" and the "left" derives from such a mythological conceptualization of space. And such a conceptualization is also fundamental to Chinese metaphysics.

As we have discussed before, the mountains and rivers shown in the myth lack the geographical concept of space, and imply sacredness in

---

42. It is not clear whether the special treatment of barley in the myth indicates a totemic belief or not. It is in the Tagoon myth of Ancient Choson that we find the totemic plants garlic and mugwort.

43. It is in the Tagoon myth that we can find these aspects of the Cosmic Tree, the sandalwood.

44. It is so because mythical space distinguishes itself from profane space.

this spacelessness. This is the very nature of mythical space—it exists as an “extraterrestrial archetype”<sup>45</sup> on a higher cosmic level. Most mountains mentioned in the myth, e.g., Taebaek, Gollyong, Youngshan, suggest the archetypal Sacred Mountain situated at the “center of the world”, where heaven and earth, and by implication god and man, meet (Eliade 1965: 6–16). The concept of the extraterrestrial archetype is also applicable to the rivers and ponds which appear in the myth associated with the god.

Just as the Sacred Mountain and the Cosmic Tree connect man to heaven, so do some animals which are regarded as sacred. The white deer crying to heaven and the dragon carrying a coach between heaven and earth are examples appearing in the Koguryo foundation myth. These are cosmic animals linking earth to heaven. In addition, the dragon is not only an emblem of heaven but also of water, frequently governing sea, rain and flood (Eliade 1972: 207).<sup>46</sup>

Certain numbers are believed to have special mythico-religious power, imparting their essence to everything subsumed under them. In the Koguryo foundation myth we note such numbers as three (e.g., three feet long), five (e.g., five-colored, five-dragon-coach, five cereals), seven (e.g., seven princes, seven days, seven hills, seven valleys), nine (e.g., September), and ten (e.g., ten days). These numbers indicate the veneration of odd numbers by the East Asian peoples. The odd numbers are related to the number one, and by implication, to heaven, sun, man, and left, in contrast to the number two, which implies earth, moon, woman, and right. In Chinese cosmology, the first belongs to the Yang or plus ether, and the second to the Yin or minus ether. Although both principles are essential to cosmic movement, the Yin ether tends to be complementary to the Yang ether. The primacy of Yang over Yin explains the primacy of the number one over the number two, and the odd numbers over the even numbers. Typical of the East Asian conception of numbers is the cult of the numbers three and five. The number three has cosmic and existential implications: it derives from the triad of heaven, earth, and man—a formula which assigns to man's existence a

---

45. This refers to the sacred place which was consecrated as a hierophany in primeval times, and which reappears in myth and ritual, bestowing its sacredness to profane places (Eliade 1965: 9, 1971: 368).

46. In East Asia the sea was believed to be ruled by the “Dragon King”.

significance equal to that of heaven and earth.<sup>47</sup> The veneration of the number five, on the other hand, is related to the spatial-temporal conceptualization of the cosmic process: the universe is divided into the four cardinal points and the center. According to Chinese metaphysics, the four cardinal points, east, south, west, and north, are correlated with the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, respectively, and, together with the center, correspond to the "Five Elements" of the cosmos: wood, fire, metal, water, and earth (Fêng 1953: 23–30). Veneration of the number seven is linked with the cult of seven planets, and also with the spatial and temporal organization of the cosmos (i.e., the number seven results from the division of one month of the lunar calendar [28 days] by the four cardinal points.) (Cassirer 1971: 149). Finally, the number nine has a special significance because of its closeness to the number ten, which in East Asia tends to be considered as a "full" number.

The mythical time, like mythical space, is said to be heterogeneous in contrast to profane time, which is characterized by homogeneity. In this sense the months of July and September, mentioned in the Koguryo foundation myth, can be understood as pointing to "sacred" time, rather than to historical time.

#### V. The Structure and Logic of the Myth.

Kluckhohn says there are several consistent tendencies in myth-making: "1) duplication, triplication, and quadruplication of elements; 2) reinterpretation of borrowed myths to fit pre-existing cultural emphases; 3) endless variations upon central themes; 4) involution-elaboration" (in Dundes 1965: 168). As we have seen earlier, all these tendencies appear to be characteristic of the last version of the Koguryo foundation myth. What should be noted here is that through these processes the myth acquires coherent patterns, both stylistic and structural. In this part we will analyze these stylistic and the structural patterns of the myth.

1. The Koguryo foundation myth consists basically of the life history of its hero, comprising the hero's birth, growth, and founding of the

---

47. The idea of the heaven-earth-man triad is fundamental to Chinese philosophy. Cassirer seeks the veneration of the number three in the relation between I, thou, and he, and in the natural triad of father, mother, and child (1971: 150–51).

kingdom. It is well recognized, however, that heroes' life-histories tend to be patterned into formulaic cycles which are found in most hero stories (Dundes 1965: 142-44). Among many recognized sets of hero patterns, most of which are similar to one another, the following features are noted: the parents of the hero are of royal or divine origin; the circumstances of his conception are unusual; there is something special about the birth of the hero; he is reputed to be the son of a god; after birth an attempt is made, often by his father, to kill him; animals frequently helps him; a separation from one or both parents occurs at an early age; there is antagonism and violence toward near kin, mainly toward siblings or father-in-law; he is deposed and driven into exile; there is eventual return of the hero and recognition of his achievement; the manner of his death is extraordinary.<sup>48</sup> The story of Choomong fairly neatly fits into these formulae: his father, Haemosoo, is the son of the Heavenly Emperor, and his mother, Yoohwa, the daughter of the Sea God or the Lord of Water; Yoohwa conceives him by being exposed to the sunlight; he is born out of the egg which Yoohwa produces; he is abandoned to animals, but they protect him; he shows unusual talents, and his step-brother, Daeso, tries to get rid of him; he runs away to the south, and there he establishes Koguryo; he ascends to heaven. It is due to the similar formulaic pattern of hero cycles found in most hero stories that the historicity of the hero stories is frequently denied (Dundes 1965: 142). This is no exception in the case of the Koguryo foundation myth. What can be noted from the patterns of hero cycles is their unusual, unbelievable, and dramatic qualities. These unrealistic, extraordinary, and dramatic factors, typical of human fantasy, are essential to mythologization of reality, to ritualization of myth, and to dramatization of ritual, although to a varying degree.

To turn attention to the last version of the Koguryo foundation myth, we note that this version contains three hero stories: the story of Choomong himself, the story of King Keumwa, the step-father of Choomong, and the story of Yoori, the eldest son of Choomong. The last two are loosely related to the first, the main part. The stories of Keumwa and Yoori, though very simple, also reflect extraordinary and dramatic features of the hero pattern.

2. In addition to the stylistic content analysis considered above, the

---

48. This set of the hero pattern is reconstructed based mainly on K. Spencer (*Mythology and Values*) and L. Raglan ("The Hero of Tradition" in *Folklore* Vol. 45).

myth can also be analyzed in terms of the structural components rooted in the layers of human consciousness and in the unconscious. Lévi-Strauss sees myth as a “science of the concrete” providing a logical model capable of overcoming contradictions between religious world views and secular experiences (1967: 202–28). Likewise, Leach views the structure of binary oppositions shown in myth as reflecting oppositions intrinsic to the process of human thought (cf. Lessa and Vogt 1972: 302–13). Accordingly, the Koguryo foundation myth can also be seen as having deeper structures hidden from its surface form and content.

It is noted that the stage of the Koguryo foundation myth shifts from North Puyo, to East Puyo, and then to Koguryo. Symbolically this implies a shift in the “center of the world”, and the recognition of Koguryo as the final, true center of the world. In each stage we note two opposing forces: Haebooroo (the king of North Puyo) versus Haemosoo (the son of the Heavenly Emperor) in North Puyo; Daeso (the crown prince of East Puyo) versus Choomong in East Puyo; Songyang (the king of Biryoo) versus Choomong in Koguryo. The first set, Haebooroo, Daeso, and Songyang, represent the pre-existing forces, which are challenged by the second set, the newly emerging forces, Haemosoo, Choomong, and Choomong again. These power struggles between the two opposing forces are resolved through the eastward and southward migrations of one force. The stage of the story shifts along with these movements. The oppositions and the resolutions of oppositions through migrations, which characterize each stage, reflect a dialectic process directed toward the foundation of Koguryo. This aspect in myth is recognized as a “process of opposition and correlation generated by a series of mediating devices” (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 223). The surface dialectic process, moreover, is underlain by a deeper structure: a human king (Haebooroo) versus a son of the Heavenly Emperor (Haemosoo); a human crown prince (Daeso) versus a grandson of the Heavenly Emperor (Choomong); a superhuman king (Songyang) versus a grandson of the Heavenly Emperor (Choomong). Here we can note the opposition inherent in the relationship between man and heaven, and the final recognition of the primacy of heavenly power over human power.

The process leading to the birth of the hero Choomong reflects another aspect of the deeper structures of the Koguryo foundation myth. The myth relates that: 1) Haemosoo, the son of the Heavenly Emperor, marries Yoohwa, the daughter of the Sea God or the Lord of Water; 2) the sunlight impregnates Yoohwa; 3) Yoohwa gives birth to an egg; 4) Choomong, the founder, hatches out of the egg. On the nominal,



surface level, we note merely the marriage of a man named Haemosoo to a woman named Yoohwa, which leads to the birth of a boy called Choomong. The story, viewed on the symbolic level, however, reveals increasingly deeper abstract structures. If the symbolic nature of Haemosoo and Yoohwa is taken into account, it appears to be the union of the sun and water that gives birth to an egg. On a higher level of symbolism, this union contains a further cosmological implication: the first man, the founder, is born through the union of heaven (represented by Haemosoo) and earth (represented by Yoohwa), a repetition of the first marriage, that of the Heaven-Father and the Earth-Mother in primordial times. Chinese metaphysics elucidates the ultimate logic of the human mythical mind operating in the making of the myth: it is through the combination of the Yang (which is represented by heaven, sun, and man) with the Yin (which is represented by earth, water, and woman) that produces a significant form of "life".

Level	Structure	Father	Mother	Child
non-symbolic	nominal structure	Haemosoo	Yoohwa	Choomong
	functional structure	sun	water	egg
symbolic	cosmological structure	heaven	earth	man
	logical structure	Yang (+)	Yin (-)	"life" (living thing)

As we have discussed earlier, the egg, which is produced through the union of the sun (an emblem of heaven) and water (an emblem of earth) has a cosmogonic significance: the hatching of a man out of an egg symbolizes the creation of the universe, and bestows on man his ontological significance in the universe. In the case of the Koguryo foundation myth, the hatching of Choomong from an egg means, in retrospect, the creation of the cosmos, and, in prospect, the foundation of the Kingdom Koguryo. Since the egg, Choomong, and the founder are identical in the myth, the relationship of these three can be expressed by the following formula:

egg: creation of cosmos = Choomong: birth of human being =  
founder: foundation of kingdom.

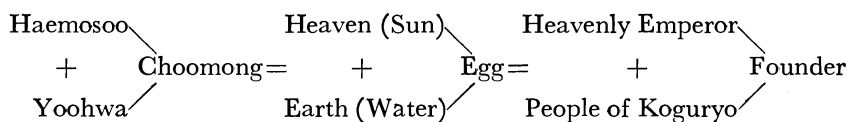
To simplify this:

creation of cosmos = birth of human being = foundation of

kingdom.

In an existential sense, therefore, the creation of the cosmos, the foundation of a nation, and the birth of a human being, are all more or less identical. As to the Koguryo people in particular, the foundation of their kingdom can be identified with the creation of the cosmos by means of their myth: the myth validates their primacy and superiority over any other peoples in the world.

The above consideration reveals that the founder Choomong is the mediator between the creation of the cosmos and the foundation of Koguryo. Choomong, as a human child, links a man (Haemosoo) with a woman (Yoohwa), but in the form of an egg he connects the sun to water, and heaven to earth. This heaven-earth linkage through the founder has a particular significance for the people of Koguryo:



The people of Koguryo are related to the Heavenly Emperor, their Supreme Being, by virtue of their founder, or more exactly speaking, by virtue of the heavenly genealogy of their founder. Just like the Cosmic Tree and the Sacred Mountain, the founder, a delegate of both heavenly and earthly powers, serves as the supporter of his people's claim to be the "chosen" people living at the "center of the world." The Koguryo foundation myth reflects, therefore, the highest ideals envisaged by the Koguryo people's wisdom, pride, and faith. Existentially, the myth sheds light upon the "ultimate concern" of a people living in a finite world as finite beings. In this sense the myth has a religious significance.

### Conclusion

1. We are now in a position to examine, in general, the place of the Koguryo foundation myth among four other Korean foundation myths.

The Tangoon myth of (Ancient) Choson is regarded as the national myth of Korea, and as the archetype of Korean myths, since it is the oldest and most mythologized of all the Korean myths (See Appendix I). The myth reveals the bear-cult, a totemic practice of tribal hunting groups living in the Stone Age culture in the areas of north Asia and

northern Europe. It tells of the unity of heaven, man, and animal—man's "genetic" sharing with heaven and animal (the bear). In addition, the myth contains rich symbolic elements: the heaven symbolism; the delegation of heaven's power to a heavenly descendent<sup>49</sup> and to lesser gods (e.g., wind, rain, cloud gods); the sacred animal (the bear) and sacred plants (the garlic and the mugwort); the Cosmic Tree (the sandalwood); the Center of the World (the Sacred City); and the veneration of the number three.

Compared with the foundation myths of northern Korea and Manchuria, the foundation myths of southern Korea are rather static in nature. In relation to the founding of the kingdom, the Silla foundation myth tells of the historical six-tribe council, and the Kaya foundation myth, of the ten-tribe conference (See Appendix II and Appendix III). Furthermore, the Kaya foundation myth and the Three-Family foundation myth of Cheju Island (See Appendix IV) reveal, for both prehistoric and historic times, some relationships between the peoples in the southern tip of Korea and peoples in south Asia (India in the case of the Kaya foundation myth, and Japan in the case of the Cheju Three-Family foundation myth). The Silla foundation myth contains such symbolic elements as the cult of heaven, the cosmogonic egg, the veneration of the five directions (the four cardinal points and the center), and the dragon and serpent cults. In the Kaya foundation myth we also note the cult of heaven and the cosmogonic egg, and, in addition to these, the Sacred Mountain ('Turtle Mountain') and the veneration of the number nine. What is common to all foundation myths in the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria, including the Koguryo and the Puyo foundation myths, is the veneration of heaven as the ultimate source of the foundation of a nation. In contrast to this, the Cheju Three-Family myth seeks the origin of the three founding families in the earth, the Earth-Mother. In addition to the cult of the number three, this myth suggests the veneration of agriculture as a sacred form of life, by rendering importance to the cultivation of the 'five cereals' and domestication of animals. This reflects the earth-oriented ideal envisaged by this island-dwelling hunting and fishing people.

The Koguryo foundation myth shares with other Korean foundation myths such major symbolic aspects as the veneration of heaven, the cosmogonic egg, "otiose" gods, the Sacred Mountain, the cult of the numbers three, five, and nine, and so forth. However, since the Koguryo

---

49. Tangeon is said to be the grandson of the Heavenly Emperor.

foundation myth emerged from the hardships experienced by migratory peoples living under unfavorable circumstances on the vast continent of north Asia, it significantly differs in style from the foundation myths of the peoples in southern Korea, who led a peaceful sedentary life in a favorable environment: the former is far more dynamic in nature, wider in scale, and more dramatic in form and content.

2. We have discussed various aspects of the Koguryo foundation myth: its reflection of the socio-cultural background, its historical reality, and its symbolic meanings and structures. Our discussion has shown that all these aspects complement, rather than exclude or contradict, one-another in our attempt to reach a better understanding of the myth and its reality.

(1) The Koguryo foundation myth reflects an amalgamation of the two cultural forces, north Asian and Chinese, in the area of Manchuria and northern Korea, but its ecological, political, economic, and socio-cultural implications can be elucidated only when they are supplemented by other historical data. What has been demonstrated is the truism that myth reflects culture and society, but only in a very selective and fragmentary manner.

(2) The Koguryo foundation myth shows certain elements borrowed from the Puyo foundation myth. Over time the Koguryo foundation myth has increasingly been mythologized and dramatized, retaining only a few historical vestiges. We may say that myth has some historicity, but this is cloaked in the highly patterned, and basically fictional form of the myth.

(3) The Koguryo foundation myth reflects, explicitly and implicitly, many universal elements of mythical-religious symbolism—heaven and earth symbolism, sun and water symbolism, stone symbolism, “otiose” gods, the cosmogonic egg, the Sacred Mountain, the Center of the World, mythical conceptualization of space and time, and magical understanding of numbers. Many of these symbolic aspects, however, also have culture-bound meanings as shown in our discussion over sun-worship, the cult of the east, the veneration of the numbers three and five, the dragon cult, etc. This tells us that myth contains not only universal but also cultural meanings and significance.

(4) The Koguryo foundation myth shows a hero life-cycle pattern common to many hero stories. On the factual level, it tells of the marriage between a man and a woman and of the achievements of their child. On the more deeply embedded structural layers of the myth, the myth involves the cosmological logic of the world process as conceived by

ancient peoples, and reveals an ultimate clue to the "meaning" problem inherent in human existence. It must be said, therefore, that myth has stylistic, surface, and embedded structures, and each of these structures deserves an analysis in its own right.

Our investigation of the Koguryo foundation myth leads to the following general conclusion: since myth, especially in the form of a foundation myth, is Janus-faced, with one face toward the world of reality and consciousness and the other toward the world of phantasy and the unconscious, myth must be understood from both perspectives, context-conscious and context-free, cultural and cross-cultural, and must be analyzed as such.

#### Appendix I

##### Tangoon, The National Founder of Korea<sup>50</sup>

There was once a wise and brave Prince, Hwanung by name, son of the Heavenly Emperor. The Prince asked his father to grant him the beautiful peninsula of Korea to govern. The Emperor granted his wish, and he was dispatched to the Earth, bearing three Heavenly Seals, and accompanied by three thousand followers.

The Heavenly Prince arrived under the sacred sandalwood tree on the Taebaek Mountain, and ascended the throne. There he established the Sacred City. There were three ministers to carry out his orders. Pungvaek (Earl Wind), Usa (Chancellor Rain), and Unsa (Chancellor Cloud), who were charged with the supervision of about three hundred and sixty officials, who controlled all things, such as grain, life, sickness, the determination of good and evil.

At that time a bear and a tiger were living in a big cave near the sandalwood tree. They wished ardently that they could become human beings. Every day they prayed so earnestly before the tree that the Heavenly Prince, who was now the ruler of the land, was moved by their sincerity, and, giving them twenty bulbs of garlic and a bundle of mugwort, he said to them, "Eat these, and confine yourselves deep in your cave for one hundred days, and then you will become human."

So the bear and the tiger took the garlic and the mugwort and

---

50. From *Samgukyusa* and *Ondoruyawa*. The translation is based on Zong, Insub (*Folk Tales from Korea* pp. 3-4).

went into their cave. They prayed earnestly that their wish might be granted. The bear patiently endured weariness and hunger, and after twenty-one days became a beautiful woman, but the tiger ran away, for it could not tolerate long days sitting quietly in the cave.

The woman was overjoyed, and visiting the sandalwood again she prayed that she might become the mother of a child. Her ardent wish was appreciated, and before long she became Queen, and gave birth to a prince, who was given the royal name Tangoon, or the Sandalwood King.

The people of the country rejoiced at the birth of the prince, Tangoon, who reigned afterwards as the first human king of the peninsula. When he came to the throne he established a new capital at Pyongyang, and gave the kingdom the name of Choson (Land of Morning Calm). This was four thousand two hundred and eighty three years ago. As the King's real name was Wanggum, the capital was also known as the Castle of Wanggum.

He later removed the capital to Mount Asadal, where there is now a shrine called Samsong (Three Saints, Hwanin or the Heavenly Emperor, Hwanung or the Heavenly Prince, and Tangoon or the first human King). It is said that when Tangoon abdicated and left his throne to the next king he became a Sansin (Mountain God).

In the Taebaek Mountains, now called Myohyang, where the Heavenly Prince descended and the first king was born, there is even to this day a cave, known as the cave of Tangoon. There are historical relics of Tangoon on Mt. Mai, in Island Kanghwa, near Seoul, also.

## Appendix II

### King Hyukkuse, the Founder of Silla<sup>51</sup>

There were six villages in the land of Old Silla. The chieftains of the villages had all descended from heaven.

The chieftains, with their sons, got together at the riverside of the Alchun on March 1, 69 B.C., and discussed the need of founding a kingdom on the land.

They agreed, "Since we have no king to rule over the people, they are "self-indulgent and arbitrary. A kingdom, therefore, must be estab-

---

51. From *The Folk Treasury of Korea: Sources in Myth, Legend and Folk-tale* pp. 40-42.

lished with a virtuous man as king, and the capital founded as soon as possible.”

After the meeting, they went up to the heights and from there they were viewing the plain when a strange ray shot to the ground, like a lightning, near the well named Najung at the foot of the Yang-san mountain in the south, and there was seen a white horse on its knees making bows. The chieftains went down to the place and found a huge red egg. When they approached, the white horse gave a long neigh and went up to heaven. The chieftains broke the egg and saw in it a boy, noble and gentle. They were struck with wonder. They gave the baby a bath at a spring in the east. Then, lo and behold! there emanated a brilliant light from the boy baby, while birds and animals danced in unison, with heaven and earth palpitating. Thenceforth, the sun and moon shone brighter than ever before. Hence, the boy was eventually called King Hyukkuse (the king who rules over the world brightly).

The chieftains of the six villages were all awed and delighted, and said in unison, “Now that the heavenly son has descended to reign over the country, he may well get a virtuous woman for the queen.”

On the same day, a hen dragon appeared at the well, Alyungjung, in Sayang-ri, and gave birth to a girl baby from between its left ribs. The girl’s face and figure were extraordinarily beautiful, but her lips were protruding like the beaks of a hen. The girl was taken to a stream north of Wolsung and bathed there. Then her lips like the beaks dropped off. That is why the stream has been called “Balchun.”

The people of the six villages built a royal palace at the western foot of the mountain, Namsan, and brought up the divine children with deferential care. The boy was given the surname of “Pak” since he was born of an egg like a gourd (in Korean, the word gourd is homophonic with Pak), and the girl was named Alyung after the well where she was bathed.

When the two children reached the age of thirteen, the boy ascended the throne and the girl became his queen. And the country was designated as Surabul or Silla. (The kingdom is sometimes called “Saro.”)

Sixty one years after ruling over the country, King Pak Hyukkuse went up to heaven. But seven days later, his body dropped down in pieces and was scattered in all directions. It was not long before the queen also passed away. The people of the kingdom were going to gather together the pieces of the king’s body so as to perform a funeral for their king and queen, but a giant serpent appeared and prevented them. The people, therefore, conducted a separate funeral for each of the four limbs

and the head, and buried them in five different tombs. The tombs, which still remain in Kyungjoo, are also called "Sa-neung," the serpent tombs.

### Appendix III

#### King Sooro, the Founder of Kaya<sup>52</sup>

Since the beginning of the universe, no kingdom had ever been established on the land. Nine chieftains were ruling over 75,000 people, who were living scattered in some one hundred groups.

Their mode of existence was very simple. They gathered together in mountains and plains, and lived on farming, drinking from wells.

It was on a day in March, around A.D. 40, when—after their custom—they were washing themselves to prevent misfortunes from befalling them. About 300 of them were gathered at a stream to perform the ritual. They heard a strange roaring voice calling them from the turtle-shaped mountains of Kooji-bong north of the stream. Only the sound like a voice of a human being was heard. The speaker was not to be seen.

"Who is there?" the voice asked.

"We are the nine chieftains and other residents of this land," answered the chieftains.

"What do you call this land?"

"This land is called Kooji."

Then the voice said again, "I am ordained by Heaven to come down here and rule over the land as your king. Now listen carefully. You are to dig into the ground of Kooji-bong mountain, dancing and chanting the incantation, "Turtle, turtle, stick out your head. If you don't, we'll roast and eat you.' Then you shall greet your great king."

When they heard this, the chieftains and their congregation dug into the ground, dancing and chanting as they were told. Then they looked up toward the sky and saw a purple rope descending to the earth from Heaven. They went to it and found on the end of the rope a golden chest wrapped in a scarlet cloth. They opened the chest to find six golden eggs round as the sun. They were struck with delightful wonder and

---

52. From *The Folk Treasury of Korea: Sources in Myth, Legend and Folk-tale* pp. 43-50.



made a respectful bow to the eggs. They wrapped the chest again and took it to the house of one of the chieftains, Ahdokan, and placed it on a wooden bench. And they dispersed to their houses.

After twelve hours, at dawn the next day, the people gathered together again and opened the golden chest and, lo and behold! the six golden eggs had turned into six boys, gentle and noble. They seated the boys on chairs and bowed low before them, and took care of them with awe and affection.

They grew noticeably fast, day by day. At the end of no more than ten days, they were as tall as giants.

One of them ascended the throne on the fifteenth of the same month. He was called King Sooro, which means the first king of the country, and the kingdom was called Dae (Great)-karak or Kaya. The other five egg-born descendants from Heaven also became kings to rule over the other five Kayas respectively.

King Sooro marked as the boundaries of his kingdom: the Hwang-san River to the east, the sea to the southwest, Chiri mountain to the northwest, and Kaya mountain to the northeast. He built a simple, temporary palace and resided there.

In January, two years after his accession to the throne, King Sooro made a tour of the country to decide on the site of his capital. When the king got to Shintappyung, he found it to be an auspicious location and decided to set up his capital there. Then he erected outer walls encompassing the capital area and built a magnificent palace. He then had an auspicious day chosen and moved to the new capital to take over the affairs of the state and rule the people.

At that time, the queen of King Hamdal of Wanha became pregnant and gave birth to an egg. From the egg came a boy, who was called Talhae, so-called since he was born from an egg. Soon he set out on a journey by sea and reached the Karak Kingdom. He was then three feet tall and his head was one foot round. He entered the palace of King Sooro and said, "I've come to take your throne." In reply, King Sooro said, "Heaven has ordained me to sit on the throne in order to bring about peace and prosperity for the people of this land. I, therefore, cannot dare to disobey the Heaven's decree and turn the throne over to you. Moreover, I have not the slightest intention of entrusting my subjects to you."

Talhae said, "Then I challenge you to make a decision on the matter by means of a contest." King Sooro answered, "All right, I accept your challenge." In a flash, Talhae turned into a hawk and soared up.

Then King Sooro transformed himself into an eagle and followed the hawk. Now Talhae changed into a sparrow again and King Sooro turned into a hawk and followed the sparrow. All these feats were performed one after another, without an interval of time.

Finally Talhae reverted to himself, and then did King Sooro. Talhae prostrated himself before the king and said:

“You transformed yourself into an eagle and a hawk, but then did not kill the hawk and the sparrow. It goes to prove that you are a saint of high virtue, who loathes to kill. Now I cannot dare to compete with you for the throne.”

With the words, Talhae was ready to leave for the coast. King Sooro soon dispatched five hundred ships with warriors aboard, since the king was afraid that he should plot any revolt against him in the country. Talhae took flight to Silla, and the warriors returned to the king.

On the 27th of July, about A.D. 50, the nine chieftains said to the king during their morning meeting, “It is long since you descended to the earth, but still you have no spouse. Please choose the most beautiful from among the maidens under our care, and take her to be your queen.” The king answered, “I have come to this land in accordance with the order of Heaven. I am also supposed to take a queen as Heaven wills. So you do not have to worry about the matter.”

Then he made preparations to greet his queen. He gave a light ship and a steed to one of the chieftains, Yoochungan, and sent him to Mangsan Island, and another chieftain, Singwigan, to a place called Seungchum.

Suddenly there emerged on the south sea a ship with a red sail swelling and a red flag fluttering. At the sight, Yoochungan lighted a beacon on Mangsan Island, and Shingwigan, seeing the signal fire, rushed back to the palace and reported the approaching ship to the king. He ordered the chieftain to go out in a fine ship and usher them to the palace. But the woman aboard the ship with a red sail said, “You are entire strangers to me. How do you think I could be so indiscrete as to follow you?” The chieftain returned to the king to report to him what she had said. The king thought she might well say so, and he had a temporary tent pitched at the foot of the mountain near the palace and waited for her there with his subordinates.

The woman brought the ship to anchor at Byulpojin, landed, and took her rest on a hill. Then she took off an under garment of brocade and offered it to the spirit of the mountain.

She was accompanied by more than twenty retainers and servants. She had brought with her numerous brocades and cloths, personal ornaments and precious stones, such as gold and silver, and pearls and jades.

When the woman and her party came near the tent, King Sooro went out to greet her and ushered her into the tent. Thus the woman became his queen. The subordinates retreated from the tent, made a bow to the king and queen, and withdrew themselves immediately.

King Sooro then had his subordinates take care of the retainers and servants who had accompanied the queen and saw to it that their residence was closely guarded by warriors.

The king and queen retired to their room. Then the queen said in a quiet voice, "I am a princess of the country of Ayooda in India. My surname is Hu and my first name is Hwangok, and I am sixteen years old. In May this year, the king and the queen, my parents, said to me, 'Last night we saw the Heavenly King together. The Heavenly King said, <King Sooro of Kaya is a divine man whom Heaven has sent to the earth to ascend the throne. Though it is long since he began to rule over the country, he has not found his spouse yet. I, therefore, want you to send your princess to become his queen.> So saying, the Heavenly King went up to heaven. Now that we have awaked, the words of the Heavenly King still linger in our ears. So take your leave and set out for the land of Kaya at once.' I, therefore, obtained steamed dates from beyond the sea and plums from the fairy land, and now here I am received in audience by your Majesty."

King Sooro answered, "Since I was born a divine being, I foresaw that you would come to me. That is why I refused the suggestion of my subordinates that I take a queen from among the maidens under their care. It is fortunate for me, indeed, that you, a graceful and virtuous woman, have come to me." Then they finally went to bed.

After two nights and one morning, the ship that had brought the princess was ready to depart. The fifteen boatmen were presented with ten bags of rice and thirty *pil* of hemp cloth each. Then they left for their home country.

The king and queen returned to the palace in a royal carriage, at noon on the first day of August. The retainers, who had escorted the queen to the land of Kaya, also followed the royal couple, taking with them the treasures they had brought. When they arrived at the palace, the retainers of the queen were given their residence and well entertained. And the foreign treasures were stored away in an inner store-house for the use of the queen.

One day, King Sooro said, "The official titles of the nine chieftains all sound base and vulgar. They are not the designations of noble men. If they go to a foreign country, their titles will invariably induce laughter." New elegant titles were bestowed on his courtiers in accordance with their positions.

Then the hierarchy of the kingdom was established on the model of Silla, and thereby the sovereignty of the king was further consolidated. Thus, a new order was obtained across the land. The king loved the people as if they were his own children. His instructions, therefore, were dignified even if they were not solemn, and he was a brilliant ruler even when he was not rigorous.

The conjugal harmony of the royal couple was like that of heaven and earth, the sun and the moon, and light and shade. In the year of their marriage, they had a dream of conception and they found a prince born to them.

The queen passed away at the age of 157. The people mourned over their loss as if the earth itself crumbled. They gave her a decent funeral and buried her on a hill northeast of the Kooji-bong mountain. Then, in memory of her gentle virtue, people gave the village of Dodoochon, where she first landed, the new name of Joopochun; the hill, where she offered her under garment to the mountain spirit, the name of Neunghyun; and the seashore, where the queen's ship with a red flag was first seen, the name of Kichool-byun.

After the death of the queen, King Sooro often spent his days and nights in lonely sorrow. Ten years later, the king also departed this life at the age of 158. The entire people were grieved as if they lost their own parent. They conducted a solemn funeral for him and he was laid to rest in a tomb northeast of his palace. The tomb was named Soorowang-myoo, the tomb of King Sooro.

## Appendix IV

The Founders of the Three Families in the Island of Cheju<sup>53</sup>

At the beginning of the world, three god-men emerged from a cave at the northern foot of the mountain of the uninhabited island of Cheju.

The eldest of them was Eulna Yang, the second Eulna Ko, and the youngest Eulna Boo.

The three brothers, wearing clothes made of hide, spent their days in hunting, and lived on the meat of wild animals.

One day they discovered a wooden chest at the eastern beach of the island. They opened it and found in it another stone chest attended by an emissary in purple with a crimson belt. When the stone chest was opened, behold! there were three maids in blue together with the seeds of five cereals and domestic animals.

The emissary told the godmen, "I am an emissary from an Eastern country. Our king had three daughters born to him and said, 'Three sons of God have come down on the mountain of an island of the west sea for the purpose of founding a nation. They are yet to find spouses.' He bade me to escort his three daughters to you. I hope you will marry these three maids duly and accomplish your great task."

Upon thus giving the account, the emissary took to a cloud and went out of sight.

The three god-men married the maids in the order of age. They shot each an arrow thereby to demarcate the area of their own, and dug wells, and made their dwellings in lands, rich and fertile.

The place of Eulna Yang's choice was named the First Capital, that of Eulna Ko's choice the Second Capital, and finally that of Eulna Boo's choice the Third Capital.

Then they began to sow the seeds of five cereals and breed calves and colts. They grew ever better off and their offspring prospered, increasing in number.

---

53. From *The Folk Treasury of Korea: Sources in Myth, Legend and Folk-tale* pp. 51-52.

## Bibliography

- I. (Korean)
- II. (Chinese)
- III. (English)

## I

- An, Chae-hong, 1946. *Choson Sanggo Sagam* Vol. I & II. (Korean Ancient History), Minwoosa, Seoul
- Chang, Duk-soon (ed.), 1970. *The Folk Treasury of Korea: Sources in Myth, Legend and Folktale*. Translated by Tae-sung Kim. Society of Korean Oral Literature, Seoul
- Choy, Tong, 1960. *Choson Sanggo Minzoksa* (Ancient History of Korean People), Tonggukmoonhwasa, Seoul
- Chun, Kwan-woo, 1972. "Nambukoe Kodae Kugga" (Ancient States of North and South Korea), in *Shintonga* (New East Asia) 1972, Vol. 9, pp. 210-44.
- Han, Woo-keun, 1970. *The History of Korea*. Eul-Yoo Publishing Co., Seoul
- Illyon, 1965, (1267). *Samgukyusa*. Edited and translated by Byung-do Lee Tonggukmoonhwasa, Seoul
- Im, Pang & Ryuk Yi, 1963. *Korean Folk Tales: Imps, Ghosts, and Fairies*. Translated from the Korean by J. S. Cule. Rutland, Vt., C. E. Tuttle Co.
- Kim, Pu-shik, 1145. *Samguksaki* (Historical Record of Three Kingdoms). Especially Chapters of Koguryo and Paikhae
- Kim, Chung-hak, 1948. "Hanguk Sinhwae Kwahakzok Kochal" (Scientific Considerations of Korean Myths), in *Sahae* Vol. I
- ? —, 414. *Inscription of the Monument of King Kwanggeto*
- Lee, Byong-do & C. W. Kim, 1965. *Hanguksa* Vol. I. (The History of Korea Vol. I: Ancient Period), Chindanhakhoe, Seoul
- Lee, Hong-chik, 1959. "Koguryooe Huenggi I." (The Rise of Koguryo I), in *Kuksasangoe Chemoonche* (Problems of Korean History), Vol. 4, 1959, pp. 1-33
- , 1962. *Kuksa Dae Sachun* Vol. I & II. (Dictionary of Korean History), Chimoonkak, Seoul
- Lee, Kyu-bo, 1241. *Tongguk Yisanggukchip*. Especially the Chapter of King Tongmyung
- , 1955. "King Tongmyung", in *Hundae Moonhak* (Modern Literature), Vol. I, pp. 234-41. Translated from the Chinese into Korean by Chae-yon Yang
- Lee, Sang-ok, 1964. *Solhwa Hangukoe Yuksa* Vol. I. (Korean History in Folktales), Kyomoonsa, Seoul
- Moon, Chung-chang, 1966. *Tangoon Choson Saki Yongu* (A Study in Historical Records of Tangoon Choson), Seoul National University Press, Seoul
- Son, Chin-tae, 1966. *Chosen no Minwa* (Folktales of Korea), Folklore Series 7, Tokyo, Japan
- Yang, Chu-dong, 1953. *Koga Yongu* (A Study in Ancient Poetry), Ilchosa, Seoul
- Zong, Insub, 1953. *Folk Tales from Korea*. The Grove Press, New York

## II

- Liangshu*, Vol. 54  
*Lunhêng*, Vol. 30  
*Peishi*  
*Sankuochih*, Vol. 30  
*Suishu*, Vol. 81  
*T'ungtien*, Vol. 185  
*Weichih*, in *Sankuochih*  
*Weishu*, Vol. 100

## III

- Cassirer, E., 1946. *The Myth of the State*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London  
 ———, 1971, (1955). *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Translated by R. Manheim, Yale University Press, New Haven  
 Chang, Duk-son (ed.), 1970. *The Folk Treasury of Korea: Sources in Myth, Legend and Folktales*. Translated by Tae-sung Kim. Society of Korean Oral Literature, Seoul  
 de Waal Malefijt, A., 1968. *Religion and Culture: An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion*. The Macmillan Company, New York  
 Dundes, A. (ed.), 1965. *The Study of Folklore*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J.  
 Eliade, M., 1965, (1954). *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*. Translated from the French by W.R. Trask, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J.  
 ———, 1959, (1957). *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, Translated from the French by W.R. Trask, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York  
 ———, 1972, (1958). *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Translated from the French by R. Sheed, World Publishing, New York.  
 Fêng, Yu-lan, 1953. *A History of Chinese Philosophy* Vol. 2. Translated by D. Bodde, Princeton University Press, Princeton  
 Kluckhohn, C., 1965, (1959). "Recurrent Themes in Myths and Mythmaking", in A. Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*, pp. 158-168  
 Leach, E.R., 1972, (1962). "Pulleyar and the Lord Buddha: An Aspect of Religious Syncretism in Ceylon", in W.A. Lessa & E.Z. Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 1972, (1965), pp. 302-13  
 Lessa, W.A. & E.Z. Vogt (eds.), 1972, (1965). *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*. Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London  
 Lévi-Strauss, C., 1967, (1963). *Structural Anthropology*. Translated from the French by C. Jacobson and B.G. Schoepf, Anchor Books, Garden City, New York  
 ———, 1970, (1964). *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to Science of Mythology* Vol. I. Translated from the French by J. and D. Weightman,

- New York and Evanston
- Raglan, L., 1965, (1934). "The Hero of Tradition", in A. Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*, pp. 144-157, and also in *Folklore*, Vol. 45 (1934), pp. 212-31.
- Sebeok, T.A. (ed.), 1955. *Myth: A Symposium*, American Folklore Society, Philadelphia
- Spencer, K., 1957. *Mythology and Values*. American Folklore Society, Memoir 48, Philadelphia
- Zong, Insub, 1953. *Folk Tales from Korea*. The Grove Press, New York