

## **THE SILLA KINGDOM: WHAT WAS IMPORTANT TO THE PEOPLE OF KOREA DURING THIS GOLDEN AGE?**

**GRADES:** 9-10

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**SUBJECT:** Global History

**TIME REQUIRED:** One to two class periods

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Read myths from the Silla Kingdom in Korea.
2. Discuss and explain what was important to people during the Silla Kingdom in Korea.
3. Understand that myths and stories reflect what is important to a society.
4. Work successfully in a group setting.

### **STANDARDS:**

Common Core:

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

RH 2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source

RH 3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text

WHST 2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Myths: The Birth Myth of Silla Kingdom, The Birth Myth of King Suk Talhah, The Birth Myth of Gim Alji, The King who became a Sea Dragon
- Drawing paper
- Markers

### **BACKGROUND:**

In Global Studies we often studied civilizations at their peak – when their contributions and achievements are many. The Silla Kingdom in Korea is considered to be a golden age by many. It is one of the longest lasting dynasties in history. Silla was founded in 57 BCE by King Park Hyeokgeose, and lasted through 935 CE. Silla played an intricate and important role in unifying the Korean peninsula. This kingdom had a detailed system of law and government. It had a rigid social class system and hierarchy. The Silk Road and Buddhism both played a role in the development of this kingdom and its' culture.

In Global Studies we read myths from all cultures and civilizations with our students to learn about life and people during specific time periods. This lesson is designed to introduce students

to Korea through their myths and stories. This lesson was also created to appeal to many different learning styles. It has a reading, writing, drawing and presentation aspect.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. The class will begin with a whole class discussion about myths in America and what we learn about America from these myths. The students will be asked for examples.
2. The students will then be broken up into four groups.
3. Each group will be given: a different myth, an instructional handout, markers and paper.
4. Each group must assign the following roles: writers, illustrators, and presenters.
5. Each group must read their myth and discuss what they have learned about the Silla Kingdom in Korea from their reading.
6. Each student must write a paragraph summarizing what they have learned about the Silla Kingdom in Korea.
7. Each group must create drawings illustrating what they have learned about the Silla Kingdom in Korea. The drawings will be posted in the classroom.
8. The students will do a “Gallery Walk” around the room to view the drawings that were created.
9. Each group will present what they learned in a whole class discussion.

**EVALUATION:**

The students will be evaluated on the individual paragraphs that they write. They will also be evaluated on the level of discussion and discourse that takes place during the presentations.

**RESOURCES:**

Iryon, Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea. Translated by Ha Tae-Hung and Grafton K. Mintz. Denver: Silk Pagoda, 2006.

The Korea Society. Silla Korea and the Silk Road: Golden Age, Golden Threads. Yong Jin Choi, Project director. New York: The Korea Society, 2006.

[www.crystalinks.com/koreacreation.html](http://www.crystalinks.com/koreacreation.html)

## **The Birth Myth of Silla Kingdom**

About 2000 years ago, in Kyungju Korea, there were six villages, each of which were governed by its own chief.

The six village chiefs were sitting on a levee and holding a discussion session on March 1st, 66 B.C.

"Our people are lawless because we have no king. It's a great problem. Let's find a virtuous man and appoint him king and build a strong country." Then they prayed for the heaven to deliver them a virtuous man.

One day, Sir Sobuldori, the Gohuh Village chief, climbed Mt. Nom and had a distant view of the east. At that time, he saw a brilliant light between clouds shining on a well called Nah and a white horse by the well bowing toward the well. Sir Sobuldori approached the well and, at this, the horse flew up in the air crying "Hi-hi-hing" and disappeared between the clouds. When Sir Sobuldori turned his eyes to the place where the horse had been, he saw a red egg glittering like the sun. When Sir Sobuldori raised the egg carefully with his two hands, the egg broke in two and a radiant male baby was smiling in it. At this time, leaves on the trees sparkled and fluttered animals such as hares, squirrels and deer came to dance and various birds sang, blessing the birth of the baby. Sir Sobuldori brought this baby home and raised him to be a clever boy. They called this baby "Bok Heukgasaih", which means "Enlightened Reign". One day that year, by Olyeung Well in the neighboring village, a big hen dragon (a dragon with a hen's head and the body of a snake) suddenly appeared from behind the black clouds, gave birth to a female baby from the waist after writhing in agony and flew up in the air. An elderly lady who lived nearby had seen what was happening. She came and wrapped the baby in a blanket. At first the baby had a bill. However, when the elderly lady washed her face with some stream water, the bill fell off and she became a pretty baby. The elderly lady brought the baby home and raised her to be a pretty, generous and clever girl. They called her baby Olyeung, after the name of the well she was born

near. In 57 B.C., the chiefs of the six villages appointed Bok Hyukguseh as their king and named their country Surobul (the previous name of Silla). 5 years after becoming King, Bok Heyukguseh married Olyeung by accepting the recommendations of his ministers. The two saints had successfully governed Surobul for 56 years and magically vanished. Their son, Bok Nomhah, ascended to the throne.

## **The Birth Myth of King Suk Talhaih**

Once upon a time in Korea, there lived an elderly lady named Ojineuisun on the east coast of Surobul. One morning 39 years after Bok Heukgasaih becoming King, Ojineuisun awoke at the sound of chirping of magpies.

When she went to the beach where the chirping sound was coming from, she saw a strange ship and the magpies surrounding it and chirping. She went aboard and found a large box containing a large egg. Just then, the egg broke and she found a healthy male baby in it. This woke up the lady attendants who had been taken care of the egg and were sleeping beside it, and they were delighted with the baby. They told Ojineuisun the following story:

The King Homdolpah of Daponah, a nation located about 400 km north east of Waih (the former name of Japan), married the daughter of the king of Juknye. The queen laid a big egg after eagerly awaiting a baby for 7 years. The King Homdolpah was very disappointed and commanded to throw the egg away into the sea. Weeping sadly, the queen enclosed the egg with a silk kerchief, put it into a big box and put the box aboard a ship. She had several lady attendants aboard the ship to take care of it. She said,

"A prince will hatch from this egg without fail. When you reach a destined nation, build a house and construct a nation." The first place the ship reached was the south beach of Gorok. When King Gim Suro of Gorok was about to welcome the ship, she floated back out to the East Sea with the falling tide. Finally, the ship arrived on a beach of Surobul. The lady attendants implored Ojineuisun to raise the baby together and she gladly accepted. Ojineuisun named the babe Suk Talhaih, which means 'hatched by the magpies'.

Suk Talhaih grew intelligent and strong. The boy also showed talent in archery and swordsmanship. King Bok Nomhaih loved him for his talents and had him marry the princess. Later, Suk Talhaih ascended to the throne after King Bok Yuri, the son of King Bok Nomhaih, and governed Surobul successfully for 23 years.

## **The Birth Myth of Gim Alji**

One early spring morning of the 9th year of reign of Suk Talhaih (AD 60), Hogong, the premier, awoke at the sound of a rooster crowing. When he looked out the window, he saw a mysterious bright light from the sky shine on the Original Forest, located to the North West of the Bonwon Castle and heard a rooster crowing in the forest.

Hogong walked carefully into the forest. There, a white rooster was crowing at an old tree and a brilliant golden box hung on the main branch of the tree. The mysterious light was shining on the box.

Hogong thought that it was not a usual thing, ran into the Bonwol Castle and informed it to King Suk Talhaih.

King Suk Talhaih said, "The Original Forest is the holy place which the sun shines on for the first time of day and it was considered as sacred from before the beginning of the kingdom. The rooster is a divine animal which sweeps the dark and brings the right. This is an omen that the right comes to this kingdom. I should go to see it."

When the king arrived at the place, the sun was about to rise over Mt. Nom. The golden box was brilliant and the white rooster kept on crowing while fluttering wings and raising a crest. The king bowed the sky and brought down the box carefully. There was a pretty male baby smiling. At this time, all kinds of animals and birds in the forest sang and danced and the leaves of the forest shook merrily. The king named the baby as Gim Alji meaning a baby out of a golden box. The king appointed the baby crown prince and named the kingdom Guereem meaning the forest of a rooster. AD 80, King Suk Talhaih died and Gim Alji conceded the throne to Bok Pasaa, the son of King Bok Yuri.

After hundreds of years, Gim Michoo, a descendant of Gim Alji, became the king of Guereem.

## **The King who became a Sea Dragon**

About 1300 years ago on the Korean peninsula, the three kingdoms, Kogurye, Baekjae and Silla were frequently at war with each other. In addition to that, Dong Empire from the mainland China and Wai, the Japanese islanders often participated in the war. This made it terrible for the people of Korea.

During that time, Mooyeol, the Silla king forged a military alliance with Dong and vanquished Baekjae, then he died the following year. After the passing of the King, the prince Bubmin ascended to the throne and became King Moonmu. King Moonmu maintained the military alliance with Dong, vanquished the Baekjae-Wai alliance and even occupied Kogurye. After that, he was victorious against the war with Dong and its attempt to occupy Korea. For the first time, there was peace on the Korean peninsula and Wai, which changed its name to Nippon, was fearful of Silla and paid tribute to Silla. However, 5 years after the war, King Moonmu was ill and about to die. He left his last will, "A country shouldn't be without a king at any time. Let's have the Prince receive the crown before my coffin. Cremate my remains and scatter the ashes in the sea where whales live. I will become a dragon and thwart the Japanese invasion.

King Sinmun, who inherited the throne, cremated the remains of King Moonmu and scattered the ashes at Daiwong Rock in the East Sea. Moreover, the King Sinmun built and dedicated Gomun Temple (the Temple of Appreciated Blessing) to his father, King Moonmu and built a water way for the sea dragon to come to and from the sea and land. King Sinmun also built a pavilion named Eegun, overlooking Daiwong Rock (Rock of the Great King), so that the succession of kings could pay their respects to King Moonmu from there. A year after the death of King Moonmu, there was a rebellion of the aristocracy. This troubled King Sinmun, but in a dream, King Moonmu who turned into a sea dragon appeared with the former general Gim Yusin who turned into a god, and told him, "Blowing on a bamboo flute will calm the heavens and the earth." King Sinmun awoke from the dream and rode out to the sea and received the bamboo flute. It is said that blowing of the bamboo flute (called Monposikjuk) embodying the spirit of

King Moonmu and the General Gim Yusin pushes back enemy troupes, cures illnesses, brings rain during drought and halts the rains in floods. The reliefs found in two charteristic Silla bells, Sungduk Daiwong Sin Jong (the Bell of the Great King Sungduk, also known as Emilaih Bell) and Songwon Temple Bell are there because of this legend.