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## Fabulous Horses out of Water in B.Silā as Depicted in the *Kūshnāma*: A Cultural Encounter between East and West Asia

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In the Iranian epic *Kūshnāma*, there is a rather interesting story that recounts how the inhabitants of B.silā cross-breed their domesticated horses with a magical horse living in the sea in order to obtain fine-bred ones. What is even more interesting is that similar accounts are also seen in many of other classical Perso-Arabic works and Chinese sources. The regions that such events took place in mainly spread over Central Asia and western China while in *Kūshnāma*, the story happens in B.silā, a legendary kingdom with its historical prototype being Silla. By sorting out certain records of how ancient people sought fine horses by cross-breeding domesticated horses with wild horses that inhabited mountains and waters within Chinese sources and classical Muslim works, and comparing these accounts with similar plot lines as depicted in *Kūshnāma*, this paper attempts to elucidate that the story in *Kūshnāma* is a result of flourishing land and maritime exchanges between East Asia and West Asia during ancient and medieval times, rather than a purely literary fiction. It was not only influenced by the horse culture that thrived over the Eurasian Steppe, but the story is also coincidentally in accordance with the fact that the nomadic zone which lies within the central Eurasian continent extends as far as the Korean Peninsula in northeast Asia.

**Keywords:** water horse; fine horse; B.silā (Silla); *Kūshnāma*; Iranian epic

## Introduction

The *Kūshnāma*, an Iranian epic composed at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, tells the story of how the inhabitants of B.sīlā cross-bred their domesticated horses with a magical horse living in the sea in order to obtain a refined horse breed. It is worth noting that similar accounts are also frequently seen in other Iranian literary works, classical Muslim works, and even in Chinese sources. Such events are recorded as happening in regions across West Asia and Central Asia including western China, while in *Kūshnāma*, the story happens in B.sīlā, a legendary territory whose historical prototype is Silla (新羅), an ancient kingdom on the Korean Peninsula. By sorting out similar episodes of horses out of water recorded by people who lived in territories from West Asia to East Asia, this paper attempts to investigate such a remarkable textual case that links the Iranian and northeastern Asian horse cultures.

### 1. Accounts of Horses out of Water in Perso-Arabic and Turkic Literature

#### 1.1 Accounts in the *Kūshnāma*

In Iranian literary tradition, it seems that the earliest account of a horse coming out of water, mating with mares, and producing foals appeared in the *Kūshnāma*. According to this narrative, when Ābtīn, the head of the Iranian royal family, took refuge in B.sīlā, he once went hunting with Ṭihūr, king of B.sīlā. Ābtīn and his clansmen brought along falcons and hounds but got nothing, while Ṭihūr and his men caught a lot of prey by just riding galloping horses cross-bred with a magical horse living in the sea. Ṭihūr then offered an account of how the people of B.sīlā cross-bred their horses with the sea horse in order to obtain refined horses:

Ṭihūr said to him: in spring, I dispatch many men to the seashore,  
bringing those fast horses of Tāzī breed. Their bodies are like wolves and they run  
like the wind.

Everyone grabs the reins of several horses. I send many men to them as guardians.  
A horse comes out of the sea in the dark night. It runs fast and has an imposing  
appearance like Āzargushasb.

When it smells the mares, it comes to them swiftly like the wind.

It goes back to the water after mating. It will regret and come back from the water.

When it rushes over to destroy them, the guardians light fires.

Seeing the fire, it stops there. It will then escape from there.

It goes into the sea from the fires. It hides when it sees bad situation.

.....

In the next spring, foals will be born, from the horse heard of by Khusraw.  
At the age of ten, we saddle them. We get such horses from the sea.  
In the water, they swim just like fishes. On the mountains, they run like leopards.  
No wolves, no lions and no men can overtake them. If the lion appears, it can also survive.<sup>1</sup>

The above story is the most complete and detailed among all similar accounts that I have ever seen. Moreover, the fine horses of the water horse breed and the magical sea horse are mentioned several times elsewhere in this epic. The fine horses of the water horse breed once were sent by Ṭihūr to Kūsh-i Pīldandān, king of Chīn, as precious gifts.<sup>2</sup> This account is echoed by the end of this epic, saying that the horse of Kūsh-i Pīldandān is of the water horse breed and given by Ṭihūr.<sup>3</sup> Such refined horses also appear in the list of gifts to Firīdūn, king of Iran, prepared by Kāram, son of Ṭihūr and the new king of B.silā.<sup>4</sup> The sentences that follow once again describe the features of the magical sea horse: it has a robust and fabulous body and lion-like bravery; it runs like the wind whether in water or over the mountains; Sīyāvash's black horse named Bihzād is one of its descendants.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 Accounts in Other Iranian Literary Works

Firdowsī's *Shāhnāma*, which was composed about one century earlier than *Kūshnāma*, had already recorded "a fabulous horse which emerged magically from water" in the stories concerning Yazdegerd I. To treat a nose bleed, the Sasanian king Yazdgird came to the bank of a vast river named Chishma-yi Sū,<sup>6</sup> which means the spring of Sū, in the region of Tūs. He saw a strong, fierce, and lion-like white horse come out from the river. When he put a bridle and saddle on the horse, the horse kicked him in the head with its hoofs and then immediately submerged, and so the king died.<sup>7</sup> Historical sources offer diverse versions of the death of Yazdegerd I. According to Shapur Shahbazi, "the widely reported native tradition claims that while staying in Hyrcania,<sup>8</sup> he was killed by a fabulous horse which had emerged from a

<sup>1</sup> Īrānshān ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, ed. Jalāl Matīnī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī, 1998 [SH 1377]), 272–273.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 418.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 664.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 447–448.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Kūshnāma*, 448.

<sup>6</sup> In medieval times, the Persian word "daryā" conveyed the meaning of both "big river" and "sea." In cases where a judgement cannot be made by referring to the context, it is translated as "sea" or "water" in this paper.

<sup>7</sup> Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hirmis, 2003 [SH 1382]), 1298.

<sup>8</sup> Gurgān in Middle Persian and New Persian, a historical region composed of the land south-east of the Caspian Sea, covering the whole Golestan Province and the eastern part of Mazandaran Province in modern-day Iran as well as the southern part of Turkmenistan.

spring into which it then disappeared, whereupon people said: ‘the horse was an angel sent by God’ to end the king’s tyranny. As Nöldeke pointed out,<sup>9</sup> this is a myth created by the nobility, who probably murdered the hated king in remote Hyrcania.”<sup>10</sup> The depiction in *Shāhnāma* roughly corresponds with this statement, only the location of the incident is slightly different.

In addition, Rustam’s horse Rakhsh, according to the *Shāhnāma*, was born of ordinary horses, but since the sea horse represents a fabulous and fast horse, Rustam’s horse is gradually said to be of the sea horse breed in various Iranian folkloric accounts: a. Rustam’s horse came out from the sea together with a mare; b. a pregnant mare came out from the sea and the foal this mare gave birth to became Rustam’s horse;<sup>11</sup> c. Rakhsh was born by a mare at the seashore that mated with a horse that came out of the sea.<sup>12</sup> Considering that the plot of magical sea horses already appeared in Persian epics such as the *Shāhnāma* and the *Kūshnāma* composed in the distant past on the basis of prose works, Sajjād Āydinlū, an Iranian researcher, lands on the conclusion that profuse later folkloric repetitions of the “hero’s horse of sea horse breed” motif should not eclipse its ancient originality.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.3 Accounts in Classical Muslim Works and Turkic Folklore

Similar legends have also found their way into classical Muslim works. According to *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, written by Ibn Khurdādhbih in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Khuṭṭalān in Central Asia had one thousand springs and produced a fine horse breed. There were many horses hiding in a very big spring and sometimes they came out quietly. Among the spring horses, a particularly tall and fabulous stallion once mated with the mares bred by a herdsman for the king. When men rode the descendants of the spring horse and the mares, they ran at full gallop between the sky and the earth and were easy to steer. Later, all these fabulous horses plunged into the spring and never came out again.<sup>14</sup> In another part of this book, an island named Barṭāyl<sup>15</sup> in Rābīj of India<sup>16</sup> is said to have had horses jumping out from the sea. Such horses were just like domesticated horses, except for their floor-length manes.<sup>17</sup> The *Kūshnāma* story in which B.sīlā people made good use of a sea horse to produce a refined horse breed may well have

<sup>9</sup> Tabari, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, trans. and annot. TH. Nöldeke (Leyden: Brill, 1879), 77 note 1 cont. at 78.

<sup>10</sup> A. Shapur Shahbazi, “Yazdegerd I,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, article published July 20, 2003, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/yazdegerd-i>.

<sup>11</sup> Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Anjāvī Shīrāzī, *Firdawsināma: Mardum va Shāhnāma* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī, 1990 [SH 1369]), 92.

<sup>12</sup> Jalāl Khāliqī Muṭṭlaq, “Yikī Dāstān Ast Pur Āb-i Chashm,” in *Gul-i Ranj-hā-yi Kuban*, ed. ‘Alī Dihbāshī (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1993 [SH 1372]), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Sajjād Āydinlū, “Asp-i Daryāyī dar Dāstān-hā-yi Pahlavānī,” *Muṭālī‘āt-i Irānī* 7, no. Bahār (2005 [SH 1384]): 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Khordādhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l-Mamālik*, ed. M.J. De Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 180-181.

<sup>15</sup> Also Būṭāyl or Zūṭāyl.

<sup>16</sup> Also Zāmīj.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khordādhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l-Mamālik*, 68.

been inspired by these two accounts.

The *‘Ajāyibnāma*, written by Hamadānī in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century contains the following account: “It is said that a village named Sū is situated between Nīshābur and Tūs. There is a spring called the Sū Rūd (river). It is said that there is a sea horse (asp-i baḥrī) in it. The emir there has a mare. The sea horse mates with it and the mare gives birth to a mottled foal. When the foal grows up, it goes into the spring.”<sup>18</sup> This piece shares the plot of the one in *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādbih, whereas its setting is the same as that in the *Shāhnāma*.

Among the Turkic epics, *Dede Korkut* mentions that a hero named Qarabūdāq had a fine horse of the sea horse species.<sup>19</sup> The stories of *Koroghlu* (Köroğlu), circulating mainly in the region of Azerbaijan, begin with a water horse coming out from Amu Darya (Jayhūn), mating with ordinary horses, and giving birth to foals.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, a piece of folklore collected by Husayn Seçmən in the region of Urfa in South Anatolia tells such a story. A farmer once witnessed a stallion emerging from a lake and mating with his mare. Then the stallion went back to the water and a foal was born later. To obtain such a foal again, the farmer once again brought his mare to the lakeside to entice the water horse. But this time, when the fabulous horse came out, it took the newborn foal into the lake and killed it.<sup>21</sup>

#### 1.4 Tracing the Sources of the Story of the Horse out of Water in the *Kūshnāma*

The prototype of fabulous horses out of water depicted in the abovementioned sources may be wild horses wandering by wild waters, and the attribution of the ancestry of fine horses to water horses is almost a worldwide motif. Āydinlū even concludes that the motif of fine horses of the sea horse breed exists in the literary canon, folk tales and everyday belief of Iranians, Muslims (Arabs), Armenians, Kurds, Azerbaijanis, Turks, Mongols, and the inhabitants of regions of Khuttalān, Tukhāristan, Urfa, and around the Amu Darya River.<sup>22</sup> According to the Turkish historian Z. V. Togan, the Turkic people believed that Allah, in giving them unparalleled horses descended from the stallions living in seas, lakes, or mountains, preferred them to the people of other nations and ethnic groups.<sup>23</sup> After a close scrutiny of the relevant sources mentioned above, I tend to agree with his opinion.

Among the aforementioned references, *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādbih is the earliest in terms of composition, and it records the event of a stallion from a spring

<sup>18</sup> Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd Hamadānī, *‘Ajāyibnāma*, ed. J. M. Şādiqī (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1996 [SH 1375]), 236.

<sup>19</sup> Parvīz Zāri’ Shāhmīrsī, *Kitāb Dāda Qorqud* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Takdirakht, 2013 [SH 1392]), 39.

<sup>20</sup> Raḥīm Ra’īs Niyā, *Kūr-ūghlū dar Afsāna va Tārīkh* (Tabriz: Intishārāt-i Nīmā, 1989 [SH 1368]), 231.

<sup>21</sup> Ra’īs Niyā, *Kūr-ūghlū dar Afsāna va Tārīkh*, 200.

<sup>22</sup> Āydinlū, “Asp-i Daryāyī dar Dāstān-hā-yi Pahlavānī,” 30.

<sup>23</sup> Ra’īs Niyā, *Kūr-ūghlū dar Afsāna va Tārīkh*, 199.

mating with mares that give birth to fine horses. In *Masālik al-Mamālik* (Roads of the Kingdoms),<sup>24</sup> written by another Iranian geographer Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Iṣṭakhrī in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Khuttal,<sup>25</sup> together with Tukhāristān, Panjshīr, and Badakhshān, is one of the regions adjacent to Balkh.<sup>26</sup> The horses there were fine and strong. Due to their outstanding quality and considerable quantity, these horses were traded to places all over the world.<sup>27</sup> *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam: Min al-Mashriq ilā al-Maghrib*, a geographical work written in the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Persian, also records that “great numbers of good horses come from Khuttalān.”<sup>28</sup> These examples show the coherence and thus authenticity of records concerning Khuttalān in early Muslim geographical works. Therefore, the plots of water horses in the Iranian narrative tradition may have been influenced by relevant passages from early Muslim geographical works such as *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādbih. In medieval Islamic times, Khuttalān was a province on the right bank of the upper Oxus River, located between the rivers of Vakhshāb and Panj (Jariyāb), 125 km from Dushanba in the southeast of present day Tajikistan.<sup>29</sup> From the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the process of Turkification began in Transoxiana, so the tale of spring horses in Khuttalān most likely has a Turkic origin.

In the *Shāhnāma*, composed in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, the story involving a water horse takes place at Chishma-yi Sū (spring of Sū) near the city of Tūs. Firdawsī, who was an inhabitant of Tūs, adopted eastern Iranian folklore in composing the epic and may have picked up the story of the water horse from his hometown.

In the *Kūshnāma*, composed at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a well-developed story of a sea horse is grafted onto Silla as a result of literary fiction. The author was most likely a resident of Ray.<sup>30</sup> Prior to the Mongolian invasion, Ray was an important city on the main road linking Khorasan and Anatolia. In addition, the *Kūshnāma* was composed in the days when the creation of poetry in Persian spread from Transoxiana to the central and western part of greater Iran. Hence, such a story as contained in the *Kūshnāma* might find its root in the east.

<sup>24</sup> *Masālik wa Mamālik or Mamālik wa Masālik* in Persian.

<sup>25</sup> Etymologically, Khuttal may originate from Hayṭal, i.e. Hephthalite, in the early Muslim historical works. Khuttalān is the plural form of Khuttal in Persian, which means the Khuttal people. It can also refer to the land inhabited by those people.

<sup>26</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Iṣṭakhrī, *Mamālik wa Masālik*, trans. Muḥammad ibn As‘ad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Tustarī, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Duktur-i Muḥammad Afshār, 1994 [SH 1373]), 289.

<sup>27</sup> Iṣṭakhrī, *Mamālik wa Masālik*, 290.

<sup>28</sup> Manūchihr Sutūda, ed., *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam: Min al-Mashriq ilā al-Maghrib* (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Tahūrī, 1983 [SH 1362]), 118–119; V. Minorosky, trans. and ed., *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam: The Regions of the World* (London: Luzac & Co., 1937), 119, 359. This proper name is transliterated by V. Minorosky as Khuttalān, though readable in the Persian version with the phonetic notation as Khatulān.

<sup>29</sup> Clifford Edmund Bosworth, “Kottal,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater, article published April 20, 2009, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kottal-province-of-medieval-islamic-times-in-modern-tajikistan>. Xuanzang, and Bianji, *Datang Xiyuji Jiaozhu*, annot. Xianlin Ji et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985), 111.

<sup>30</sup> Raḥīm ‘Alfīfī, “Pishguftār,” in Īrānshāh ibn Abī al-Khayr, *Bahmannāma*, (Tehran: Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī va Farhangī, 1991 [SH 1370]), 15.

The water-horse episode from the *ʿAjāyibnāma*, composed in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, is set in the same place as in *Shāhnāma*, Chashma-yi Sū. The relevant record in *ʿAjāyibnāma* is well-developed, mentioning a water horse mating with an ordinary mare and giving birth to a foal. The author of this book was a resident of Hamadan, a city situated to the west of Ray.

When the tale collected in Urfa formed and began circulation there can hardly be traced, but it may have a direct relationship with the story in *Kūshnāma*, as these two stories almost completely correspond to one another. Among the aforementioned sources, the plot that men deliberately entice the water horse by bringing mares to the waterside and the water horse reappears to kill its offspring is only seen in these two stories.

Considering all of the above, we can hypothesize that the accounts of fabulous horses coming out of water and mating with ordinary horses originated in Khuttalān of Transoxiana, and approximately from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, such stories spread westwards even to Urfa of southern Anatolia via Tūs in Khorasan, Ray and Hamadan on the Iranian Plateau. This process with such a route coincides with the Turkic migration from Central Asia to West Asia during the Samanid, Ghaznavid, and Seljuk dynasties. Therefore, we can at least propose that in the Islamic era, stories concerning the water horse transmitted in Perso-Arabic literature may trace their roots to the statement in one of the *Farasnāmas* that the prototypes of the horse were created by Allah in the sea,<sup>31</sup> or to the Iranian heroic stories derived from the pre-Islamic era, but they are most likely the by-products of the westward migration of the Turks. Moreover, Sū means “direction” in Persian and “water” in Turkic. Thus, Chashma-yi Sū in *Shāhnāma* and *ʿAjāyibnāma* is probably a water-related geographical name of Turkic origin. This could be supporting evidence for the abovementioned hypothesis.

## 2. Similar Records in Chinese Sources

Conflicts between and integration of the agricultural zone of the central plain and the nomadic zone of the northern steppe was long existing in ancient China. For the central-plain dynasties, the horse was of strategic importance. Consequently, the quest for fine horses is frequently recorded in Chinese sources. Among these records, profuse references to horses out of water call for our attention.

### 2.1 Horse-like Mythical Creatures Living in the Water

Among the Chinese sources, *Shanhai Jing* [山海經] (The classic of mountains and seas),

<sup>31</sup> ʿAlī Sulṭānī Gurd Farāmarzī, ed., *Du Farasnāma: Manṣūr va Manẓūm dar Shinakht-niẓhād va Parvarish va Bimārī-hā va Darmān-i Ashb* (Tehran: The Institute of Islamic Studies McGill University, 1987 [SH 1366]), 13.



composed in the pre-Qin (先秦) period, describes many horse-like mythical animals living in the water, such as taotu (騊駼) in the northern sea,<sup>32</sup> the water horse in Huashui [渭水] (Hua River),<sup>33</sup> boma (駃騠) in Maoshui [旄水] (Mao River) and Qiongze [邛澤] (Qiong Lake).<sup>34</sup> Verses about water horses are seen in *Shi Jing* [詩經] (Classic of poetry) as well: “Oaks grow in the mountains and six bo (駃) in the waters.”<sup>35</sup> These works merely tell of the existence of such mythical animals and emphasize that they are fearsome creatures comparable to the kelpie or Each Uisge in the Celtic mythology, which is said to bring men to the water and devour them, when men ride these horse-like mythical creatures.<sup>36</sup> However, such accounts by and large refer to wild horses witnessed by ancient people. For instance, the taotu living in the northern sea is explained as wild horses in *Erya* (爾雅), the oldest Chinese dictionary dated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.<sup>37</sup> Bo as explained in *Erya* has a horse-like look with curved teeth, and preys on tigers and leopards. Similarly, according to an annotation of *Erya* by Yingda Kong (孔穎達), a great scholar of the early Tang (唐) period, “bo is also the name of wild horses.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, *Li Ji* [禮記] (The book of rites), compiled in the Western Han (西漢) dynasty, records that the Matu (馬圖), a chart of magic square borne by a horse once sprang forth from the Yellow River.<sup>39</sup> In Yingda Kong’s annotation of *Li Ji*, *Shangshu zhonghou* (尚書中候) is quoted: “during Fuxi’s (伏羲) reign, a longma [龍馬] (dragon horse) bearing the chart of magic square emerged from the Yellow River; then Fuxi arranged bagua [八卦] (the eight trigrams) modelled on the chart.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, the Matu emerging from the Yellow River has been considered one of the roots of Sinic civilization.

Some accounts of the mythical creatures living in foreign waters are also seen in Chinese sources. According to “The Records of the West Regions” in *Bei Shi* [北史] (History of the northern dynasties), the state of Fuluni [伏盧尼國] (Byzantine Empire) was located to the north of Persia. There was a big river flowing southwards with winged creatures living in it. Some of them looked like camels and horses, and if they left the water, they died.<sup>41</sup> According to *Zhufan Zhi* [諸蕃志] (Records of foreign nations), [in the state of Wusili (勿斯里國)] there were water camels and water horses living in the river. They hid in the water if they saw people.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, not all the water horses recorded in Chinese sources are wild

<sup>32</sup> Pu Guo, annot., *Shanhai Jing*, revised by Yuan Bi (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1989), 87.

<sup>33</sup> Guo, *Shanhai Jing*, 34-35.

<sup>34</sup> Guo, *Shanhai Jing*, 39.

<sup>35</sup> Xueqin Li, ed., *Shisanjing Zhushu: Maoshi Zhengyi* (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1999), 430.

<sup>36</sup> Carol Rose, *Spirits, Fairies, Gnomes, and Goblins: An Encyclopedia of the Little People* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1996), 97, 178.

<sup>37</sup> Xueqin Li, ed., *Shisanjing Zhushu: Erya Zhushu* (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1999), 334.

<sup>38</sup> Li, *Shisanjing Zhushu: Erya Zhushu*, 334.

<sup>39</sup> *Shisanjing Zhushu* Zhengli Weiyuanhui, ed., *Liji Zhengyi (Shisanjing Zhushu)* (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2000), 832.

<sup>40</sup> *Shisanjing Zhushu* Zhengli Weiyuanhui, *Liji Zhengyi (Shisanjing Zhushu)*, 833.

<sup>41</sup> Yanshou Li, *Bei Shi*, vol. 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 3223-3224.

<sup>42</sup> Rukuo Zhao, *Zhufan Zhi Jiaoshi*, annot. Bowen Yang (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1996), 120-121.



horses. For example, the water horses of Wusili may be hippopotami in the Nile rather than real horses, for Wusili is the phonetic transcription of Miṣr in Chinese, namely today's Egypt.

## 2.2 Wild Horses out of Water

During Han Wudi's [漢武帝] (Emperor Wu of Han) reign, due to wars against the Huns and the personal interest of the emperor, Chinese people's pursuit of fine horses reached a climax. At that time, rare horses found in the wild were called tianma [天馬] (heavenly horse). According to "The Records of Wudi" in *Han Shu* [漢書] (The book of Han), "in the autumn [of the fourth year of the Yuanding (元鼎) era (113 BCE)], a fabulous horse came out from Wowa Lake (渥洼水) [in Dunhuang (敦煌)]."<sup>43</sup> The imperial edict issued by Wudi in the third month of the first year of the Taishi (太始) era (96 BCE) also says that "Wowa Lake sent forth a heavenly horse."<sup>44</sup> The Han court composed "Tianma Ge" [天馬歌] (the song of the heavenly horse) to celebrate this event and defined it as one of the hymns for state offerings,<sup>45</sup> as recorded in "The Records of Music" of *Shi Ji* [史記] (Records of the grand historian),<sup>46</sup> and in "The Records of Rites and Music" of *Han Shu*.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, "The Records of Wudi" in *Han Shu* offer a similar account that "in the summer [of the second year of the Yuanshou (元狩) era (121 BCE)], a fabulous horse came out from the Xuwu River [余吾水] (the Tola River in central and northern Mongolia)."<sup>48</sup>

The account that a fabulous horse came out from Wowa Lake is also collected in *Zizhi Tongjian* [資治通鑑] (Comprehensive mirror in aid of governance): "[In the third year of the Yuanshou (元狩) era (120 BCE)] a fabulous horse was got from the Wowa Lake." Sanxing Hu (胡三省) annotated this event: "According to Fei Li (李斐), Lichang Bao (暴利長), a resident in Xinye [新野] (county) of Nanyang [南陽] (province), was sent to Dunhuang for penal servitude. He saw wild horses by a lake several times and noticed that a fabulous horse different from ordinary horses usually came to the lake to drink water. Lichang made a fake man with mud who held a rope and stood by the water. Later, when the horse was accustomed to the mud man, Lichang himself took the rope in his hands and caught the fabulous horse. When he sent the horse to the emperor as a present, he said that it came out from the water in order to make it miraculous."<sup>49</sup>

According to *Huayang Guozhi* [華陽國志] (Chronicles of Huayang) written in the Eastern Jin (東晉) dynasty, four magical horses came out from the Dianchi River (滇池河) during Han

<sup>43</sup> Gu Ban, *Han Shu*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962), 184.

<sup>44</sup> Ban, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, 206.

<sup>45</sup> The ceremonies held by the house of Han offering sacrifices to heaven and earth.

<sup>46</sup> Qian Sima, *Shi Ji*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 1178.

<sup>47</sup> Ban, *Han Shu*, vol. 4, 1060-1061.

<sup>48</sup> Ban, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, 176.

<sup>49</sup> Guang Sima, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1956), 636.

Zhangdi's [漢章帝] (Emperor Zhang of Han) reign.<sup>50</sup>

These records in the authentic history can be summarized as, in short, wild horses coming out of the water. "Water" here shall be deemed as places with abundant water suitable for wild horses to live.<sup>51</sup>

### 2.3 Seeking Fine Horses by Utilizing the Water Horse

As depicted in *Kūshnāma*, as well as classical Muslim works such as *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdābih and the *ʿAjāyibnāma* by Hamadānī, Chinese sources, especially those written from the Han dynasty, also mention that people made good use of the water horse for a refined horse breed.

According to *Huayang Guozhi*, "a rumour among the elders living by the Dianchi [滇池] (lake of Dian) says that there are magical horses in the lake and sometimes they mate with mares and give birth to gallant colts known as Dianchiju (滇池駒), which can cover five hundred li [里] (Chinese mile) in a single day."<sup>52</sup>

Another account in "The Records of Tuyuhun" (吐谷渾) in *Bei Shi* calls for attention: "The circumference of Qinghai Lake (青海) is more than one thousand li and there is a hill in it. After the lake freezes over in winter, people send healthy mares onto the hill. When people get them back the next spring, the mares are all pregnant. The foals born of these mares are called 'descendants of dragon' and many of them are fabulous. The people of Tuyuhun once got Persian (波斯) mares and sent them into the lake, and hence fine horses were foaled by the Persian mares. These horses could cover a thousand li in a single day and were famous by the name of Qinghaicong (青海驄) in the world."<sup>53</sup> This is a well-developed account and very similar to that depicted in *Kūshnāma*. This account even speaks of Persian horses, exhibiting their recognition as fine horses by the ancient Chinese people. It is also a strong piece of evidence that China and Iran had close ties and actual exchanges of horse culture in history. Similar accounts are also seen in *Wei Shu* [魏書] (The book of Wei),<sup>54</sup> *Zhou Shu* [周書] (The book of Zhou),<sup>55</sup> and *Sui Shu* [隋書] (The book of Sui)<sup>56</sup> compiled earlier than *Bei Shi*, and these accounts were collected into *Tongdian* [通典] (Comprehensive institutions),<sup>57</sup> *Taiping Yulan* [太平御覽] (Readings of the Taiping era),<sup>58</sup> and *Wenxian Tongkao* [文獻通考]

<sup>50</sup> Qu Chang, *Huayang Guozhi Jiaozhu*, annot. Lin Liu (Chengdu: Bashu Shushe, 1984), 347.

<sup>51</sup> Chengxia Xie, *Zhongguo Yangma Shi* (Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1959), 99.

<sup>52</sup> Chang, *Huayang Guozhi Jiaozhu*, 396.

<sup>53</sup> Li, *Bei Shi*, vol. 10, 3186.

<sup>54</sup> Shou Wei, *Wei Shu*, vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 2240-2241.

<sup>55</sup> Defen Linghu et al., *Zhou Shu*, vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1971), 913.

<sup>56</sup> Zheng Wei and Defen Linghu, *Sui Shu*, vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973), 1842.

<sup>57</sup> You Du, *Tongdian*, ed. Wang Wenjin et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1988), 5164.

<sup>58</sup> Fang Li et al., *Taiping Yulan* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1960), 3974.

(Comprehensive studies in administration)<sup>59</sup> compiled after *Bei Shi*. *Sui Shu* even records a related event: “In the autumn of the fifth year of the Daye [大業] era (609CE), when Sui Yangdi [隋煬帝] (Emperor Yang of Sui) made his imperial inspection tour to the western part of the empire, he ordered that people graze the horses on the islet to find the dragon horse breed. The action ceased as it didn’t work.”<sup>60</sup> This event happened in the seventh month of the Chinese traditional calendar in autumn, but the wild horses were generally in heat from March to June in spring. Although Sui Yangdi did not succeed in finding the dragon horse breed, the islet situated in the center of Qinghai Lake has long been famous for its name Longjudao [龍駒島] (island of the dragon foal). In “The Records of Han Geshu” (哥舒翰) and “The Records of Jian Hun” (渾瑊) in *Jiu Tang Shu* [舊唐書] (The old book of Tang), the name Longjudao is mentioned,<sup>61</sup> and “The Records of Han Geshu” in *Xin Tang Shu* [新唐書] (The new book of Tang) commends the place as suitable for stockbreeding.<sup>62</sup> Even nowadays, the rumor that fine horses used to be born on this island still circulates among the locals.<sup>63</sup>

Chinese historical works even contain accounts of events analogous to the abovementioned records that took place in foreign lands. As Huan Du (杜環) describes Dashi guo [大食國] (the Arab caliphates) in his *Jingxing Ji* [經行記] (Record of travels): “Its horses, it is said that, were given birth by the dragon mating with mares living by the shores of the western sea. They have small bellies and long legs and fine horses among them can cover one thousand li per day.”<sup>64</sup>

Some accounts of seeking fine horses by utilizing mountain horses can be seen in Chinese historical works as well. According to “The Records of the Western Regions” (西域) in *Sui Shu*, “there are magical horses living in the mountain caves [of Tokharistan]. Every year, people bring mares to graze near the caves and then fine horses are born.”<sup>65</sup> This account of Tocharian’s obtaining fine horses by cross-breeding their domesticated horses with wild horses is repeated in “The Records of the Western Regions” in *Bei Shi*<sup>66</sup> and *Xin Tang Shu*.<sup>67</sup> These records indicate that in the Northern dynasties (北朝) as well as in the Sui and Tang era, in which the inhabitants of China’s central plain had frequent exchanges with western ethnic groups, the practice of using wild horses to improve domesticated horse breeds was known to the Chinese people on the central plain. Down to the Song (宋) dynasty, another similar event in Guangxi (廣西) was recorded. According to *Lingwai Daida* [嶺外代答] (Representative answers from the region beyond the mountains), “in the mountain of Tianma shan [天馬山]

<sup>59</sup> Duanlin Ma, *Wenxian Tongkao* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), 2621.

<sup>60</sup> Wei and Linghu, *Sui Shu*, vol. 1, 74.

<sup>61</sup> Xu Liu et al., *Jiu Tang Shu*, vol. 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975), 3212-3213. Liu, *Jiu Tang Shu*, vol. 11, 3703.

<sup>62</sup> Xiu Ouyang and Qi Song, *Xin Tang Shu*, vol. 15 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975), 4570.

<sup>63</sup> Xie, *Zhongguo Yangma Shi*, 130.

<sup>64</sup> Jianxin Yang, ed., *Gu Xixing Ji Xuanzhu* (Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin Chubanshe, 1987), 134.

<sup>65</sup> Wei and Linghu, *Sui Shu*, vol. 6, 1853-1854.

<sup>66</sup> Li, *Bei Shi*, vol. 10, 3236.

<sup>67</sup> Ouyang and Song, *Xin Tang Shu*, vol. 20, 6252.

(mountain of heavenly horse) in Qiyuanzhou [七源州] (Thất Nguyên châu in today's Vietnam) of Yongzhou (邕州), there were a dozen wild horses running fast like flying and no man could approach them. During the Xining (熙寧) era (1068-1077), the governor of Qiyuanzhou released some mares in the mountains and then got fabulous foals. People did it in this way many times, but up to now, they have never succeeded again.”<sup>68</sup> Such accounts show ancient Chinese people's efforts to pursue fine horses by cross-breeding domesticated horses with wild horses.

## 2.4 Exchanges in Relation to Horses between the Central Plain of China and the Western Regions

In the eyes of ancient Chinese people, the northwestern grasslands possessed good conditions for horse-breeding and the western regions abounded in fine steeds. According to *Lingwai Daida*, the further one went to the northwest, the better horses he would see.<sup>69</sup> Ancient Chinese people used to look for horses from the western regions. According to *Sbi Ji* and *Han Shu*, during Han Wudi's reign, the emperor received fine horses from Wusun (烏孫) and Dayuan (大宛), states in the western regions perhaps established by the Indo-Europeans.<sup>70</sup> According to *Luoyang Qielan Ji* [洛陽伽藍記] (The monasteries of Luoyang), Chen Yuan (元琛), a member of the royal house of the Northern Wei (北魏), “sent emissaries to the western regions as far as Persia to seek fine horses. He got a horse that runs a thousand li per day named ‘the red steed of wind chaser’ and more than ten horses that run seven hundred li per day, each bearing a special name.”<sup>71</sup> In *Sui Shu*, “there are many fine steeds and strong donkeys on the lands [of Persia].”<sup>72</sup> Concerning other places in the western regions, there are similar accounts in Chinese sources as well. *Zhufan Zhi* reports that the state of Ghazni (吉慈尼國) “abounds in camels and horses;”<sup>73</sup> the state of Kish (記施國) “puts out pearls and fine horses;”<sup>74</sup> [the state of Oman] (甕蠻國) “has numerous horses breeding in the mountains. Merchants of other places merely purchase horses, pearls and dates from here for reselling.”<sup>75</sup> Kish is a small island in the Persian Gulf unsuitable for large-scale horse-breeding, but it has long been one of the pivots of trade in the Persian Gulf. Thus, in fact, “the steeds there are probably raised in other places of Arabia and Persia rather than locally raised in Kish. The horses from the regions of Arabia and Persia were transported to Kish and Hurmuz. They

<sup>68</sup> Qufei Zhou, *Lingwai Daida Jiaozhu*, ed. Wuquan Yang (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1999), 348-349.

<sup>69</sup> Zhou, *Lingwai Daida Jiaozhu*, 349.

<sup>70</sup> Sima, *Sbi Ji*, vol. 10, 3170, 3172, 3177; Ban, *Han Shu*, vol. 9, 2693-2694, 2702.

<sup>71</sup> Xuanzhi Yang, *Luoyang Qielan Ji Jiaoshi*, ed. Zhou Zumo (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1963), 164.

<sup>72</sup> Wei and *Linghu*, *Sui Shu*, vol. 6, 1857.

<sup>73</sup> Zhao, *Zhufan Zhi Jiaoshi*, 112.

<sup>74</sup> Zhao, *Zhufan Zhi Jiaoshi*, 108.

<sup>75</sup> Zhao, *Zhufan Zhi Jiaoshi*, 107-108.

were purchased there by the merchants and then delivered to other places such as India for reselling.”<sup>76</sup> As for Oman, it is located on the Arabian Peninsula, and in the minds of both the ancient Iranians and Chinese people, the territory of Tāzī [大食] (Arabia) abounded in fine horses.

Official exchanges between empires on China’s central plain and the states in the western regions occurred in the Western Han period. Part of these exchanges was related to fine horses, since the western regions had long been producing fine steeds and enjoying prosperity in stockbreeding. Importation of lucerne and Dayuan horses from the western regions even affected China’s stockbreeding.<sup>77</sup> In the Tang period, exchanges in relation to horses between the central plain of China and the western regions further thrived. According to *Wenxian Tongkao*, “later, the Turks came to the border with goodwill and Yuanzong [元宗] (i.e. Tang Xuanzong [唐玄宗], Emperor Xuan of Tang) gave favorable conditions including permitting the Turks to trade with the Tang [once] every year in the cities situated to the west of Shuofang jun [朔方軍] (army of Shuofang). The Tang bought horses from the Turks with gold and silk, and grazed the horses in Hedong [河東] and Shuofang. Local horses then became stronger after having cross-bred with the foreign horses.”<sup>78</sup> In addition, according to the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, “Kottal (Khuttal, Kottalan) was a region of lush pastures, famed for horse-breeding. Its inhabitants were also renowned for their skills in farriery, veterinary science, and in the production of saddlery and horse accoutrements. In Mongol and Timurid times, Kottal horses were exported as far as China.”<sup>79</sup> It is thus evident that fine steeds from the western regions were continually imported into China for a very long period. Stories of seeking fine horses by utilizing water horses reveal that Central Asia, especially Khuttalān, was pivotal for exchanges of horse culture between East Asia and West Asia. In *Da Tang Xiyu Ji* [大唐西域記] (Record of the regions west of the Great Tang [empire]), Khuttalān is recorded as Keduoluo (珂咄羅),<sup>80</sup> also transcribed as Keduo (珂咄) and Guduo (骨咄) in *Sui Shu* and *Xin Tang Shu*. *Xin Tang Shu* reports that Guduo, or Keduoluo, abounded in fine steeds and red leopards.<sup>81</sup> Another piece of information about Guduo is also worth noticing. In the first year of the Longshuo (龍朔) era (661), the Tang court dispatched Mingyuan Wang (王名遠) to Tokharistan to set up Jimifuzhou (羈縻府州), and among the 16 dudu fu [都督府] (protectorates) established to the west of the Pamirs, there were Tianma dudu fu [天馬都督府] (the protectorate of Tianma [the heavenly horse]) in Shuman city (數曠城) in the state of Jiesu (解蘇國) and Gaofu dudu fu [高附都督府] (the protectorate of Gaofu) in Shiwosha city

<sup>76</sup> Zhao, *Zhufan Zhi Jiaoshi*, 109.

<sup>77</sup> Xie, *Zhongguo Yangma Shi*, 98. See also Chengxia Xie, “Erqian Duonian Lai Dayuan Ma (Aha Ma) he Muxu Chuanru Zhongguo ji Qi Liyong Kao,” *Zhongguo Xumu Shouyi Zazhi*, no. 3 (1955): 105-109.

<sup>78</sup> Ma, *Wenxian Tongkao*, 1387.

<sup>79</sup> Bosworth, “Kottal.”

<sup>80</sup> Xuanzang and Bianji, *Datang Xiyuji Jiaozhu*, 111.

<sup>81</sup> Ouyang and Song, *Xin Tang Shu*, vol. 20, 6256.

(施沃沙城) in the state of Guduo (骨咄國).<sup>82</sup> The location of Guduo, i.e. Khuttal as mentioned above, is approximately the Khatlon region located in the southwest of Tajikistan in the Vakhsh River basin. Shuman city in the state of Jiesu is the state of Yuman (榆漫國) in *Da Tang Xiyu Ji* and is recorded in Muslim geographical works as Shūmān. It is located in the vicinity of Dushanbe, adjacent to the Khatlon Region.<sup>83</sup> That means that in the light of the administrative divisions of Jimifuzhou established by the Tang court, though Khuttal was not Tianma dudu fu (the protectorate of the heavenly horse), these two regions were adjacent to each other. Furthermore, Tianma dudu fu of *Xin Tang Shu* is recorded as Dama dudu fu [大馬都督府] (the protectorate of Dama [the big horse]) in *Jiu Tang Shu*.<sup>84</sup> Whether it is a scribal error or not between naming this dudu fu “the heavenly horse” or “the big horse,” the Tang people appear to have been deeply impressed by the fine horses bred in this region. As for the fine steeds of Khuttalān, Z. V. Togan even proposes that according to popular belief, they were descendants of sea stallions. The Chinese heard about them in the early centuries of the Common Era, and then made efforts to get such horses.<sup>85</sup> In the light of Chinese sources, from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Chinese dynasties of Han and Jin obtained fine horses from the ancient kingdom of Dayuan in the Fergana Valley.<sup>86</sup> Such records seem relevant to Togan’s opinion. As the lingua franca of Central Asia during the first millennium CE, Sogdian exerted a civilizing influence on the Turks of Central Asia, and the motif of fine horses of the sea horse breed may find its origin in Sogdian legends transmitted in the pre-Islam era. The Iranian scholar Daryoosh Akbarzadeh also holds similar views. In addition, since the commercial activities of the Sogdians long thrived along the land Silk Road between Samarkand and Chang’an [長安] (Khumdān in Muslim works) and “the language (Sogdian) was, indeed, instrumental as a medium of civilization between West and East of Asia,”<sup>87</sup> legends concerning horse culture could easily have been exchanged between East Asia and Central Asia.

Generally speaking, in ancient and medieval times, exchanges between the central plain of China and the western regions, namely the vast territory that stretched from Xinjiang in China to Central Asia and West Asia and mainly inhabited by Iranian and Turkic peoples, were frequent and flourishing, and the importation of horses from the western regions even affected stockbreeding on China’s central plain. It is thus within our expectation that accounts of people seeking fine horses by taking advantage of water horses are frequently seen in Chinese sources.

<sup>82</sup> Ouyang and Song, *Xin Tang Shu*, vol. 4, 1136.

<sup>83</sup> Xuanzang and Bianji, *Datang Xiyuji Jiaozhu*, 107-108; Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam: the Regions of the World*, 353.

<sup>84</sup> Liu, *Jiu Tang Shu*, vol. 5, 1649.

<sup>85</sup> Raʿīs Niyā, *Kūr-ūghlū dar Afsāna va Tarikh*, 199-200.

<sup>86</sup> Ban, *Han Shu*, vol. 1, 202; Xuanling Fang et al., *Jin Shu*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 60; Fang, *Jin Shu*, vol. 9, 2904.

<sup>87</sup> B. Gharib, *Farhang-i Sughdi: Sughdi-Fārsi-Ingliši* (Tehran: Farhangān, 1995 [SH 1374]), xviii.



### 3.The Horse Culture and Written Accounts Concerning Horses out of Water on the Korean Peninsula

#### 3.1 The Horse Culture on the Korean Peninsula

In accounts written by the Chinese people, events that relate to refining horse breeds usually happen in western China and the western regions in a broad sense. On the contrary, the story of seeking fine horses by utilizing a fabulous sea horse in *Kushnāma* takes place in B.silā, the historical prototype of which is Silla. It is possible that the narrator merely grafted a relevant episode that circulated in ancient Iran or a similar account in Muslim historical and geographical works onto his epical narrative. However, the nomadic culture on the Eurasian Steppe did exert its influence on the Korean Peninsula located in northeast Asia, and we find ancient records of fine horses being produced on the Korean Peninsula. According to “The Memoir on the Eastern non-Han Tribes” [東夷列傳] in *Hou Han Shu* [後漢書] (The book of the Later Han), “[Hui 濊 (Yeguk 濊國)] produces Guoxiama [果下馬] (Kwahama). Such horses are further annotated to be 3 chi high and people can ride them striding under fruit trees.<sup>88</sup> The tradition of using domesticated horses in hunting wild animals existed for a very long time on the Korea Peninsula. Hunting scenes with warriors on horseback are portrayed on the mural Suryōpto [狩獵圖] (hunting painting) inside the Koguryō [高句麗] dynasty’s Muyongch’ong [舞踊塚] (tomb of the dancers), as well as on the folding screens of Horyōpto [胡獵圖] (painting of a barbarian hunting scene) popular during the Chosōn [朝鮮] dynasty.<sup>89</sup> In addition, both Kyōkku [擊毬] (Korean polo) and Masangjae [馬上才] (equestrian skills) also have a long-standing tradition, and are ranked among the “twenty four fighting methods” with a detailed elucidation in *Muye Tobo T’ongji* [武藝圖譜通志] (Comprehensive illustrated manual of martial arts).<sup>90</sup> In 1973, two pieces of ch’ōnmado [天馬圖] (painting of the heavenly horse), painted on birch bark and hung on either side of a saddle, were unearthed in a royal tumulus at Taerūngwōn (大陵園) in Kyōngju (慶州), which was later named Ch’ōnmach’ong (天馬塚). The two paintings of the heavenly horse that date back to around the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE were the only paintings of the Silla period discovered up to that point. Therefore, they were designated No. 207 in the list of national treasures of the Republic of Korea in November 1982.<sup>91</sup> As reported on the website of the *Chosun Ilbo* on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a new ch’ōnmado

<sup>88</sup> Ye Fan, *Hou Han Shu*, vol. 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), 2818.

<sup>89</sup> Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, trans. Edward W. Wagner with Edward J. Shultz (Seoul: Ilchokak, 1984), 64 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> illustration in front of the main text; Sebastian Veg, ed., “Preservation of the Koguryo Kingdom Tombs,” accessed May 27, 2019, <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-275-1.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> Wihyōn Kim, trans., *Kukyōk Muye Tobo T’ongji* [A Korean translation of comprehensive illustrated manual of martial arts] (Seoul: Minjok Munhwasa, 1984), 351-370.

<sup>91</sup> Munhwachaech’ong [Cultural Heritage Administration], “Kukpo che 207 ho: Kyōngju Ch’ōnmach’ong changni ch’ōnmado (慶州 天馬塚 障泥 天馬圖)” [National treasure no. 207: the paintings of the heavenly horse on the plates shielding from the dust unearthed at Ch’ōnmach’ong in Gyeongju], accessed June 14, 2018, <http://www.>



was discovered among the relics unearthed in Ch'ŏnmach'ong. The director of Gyeongju National Museum said that they had just discovered a pattern of a heavenly horse on a gilded bronze statue that decorated a bamboo plate hanging under the saddle. Consequently, the number of ch'ŏnmado increased to three.<sup>92</sup> There has been dispute among historians of Korean art over the question that whether the ch'ŏnmado is patterned on a horse or 麒麟 (qilin in Chinese, kirin in Korean).<sup>93</sup> This controversy became heated again because Gyeongju National Museum announced the presentation of the third ch'ŏnmado in an exhibition of Ch'ŏnmach'ong in 2014. According to the report on the website of the *Chosun Ilbo* on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, academics agreed that the “horn” on the head of the animal should be a horsehair knot, so the ch'ŏnmado is patterned on a horse rather than a kirin. The report also quotes Chaesŏ Chŏng (鄭在書), a mythologist and professor of Chinese literature at Ewha Womans University, who says that “it is important that the pattern is painted on birch bark, as the birch serves as a shinmok [神木] (sacred tree) in the shamanistic belief of the northern peoples. This issue is in close relation to the culture of nomadic peoples who worshipped heaven and horses.” The opinion of Sŏncha Kim, a researcher of Chinese mythology, is also mentioned in the report that “it (the pattern) is a white horse painted on birch bark, which acts as a messenger leading the dead to the sky/heaven.”<sup>94</sup> There is no doubt that the ancient civilization on the Korean Peninsula was influenced by nomadic culture. The elements of nomadic culture on the Korean Peninsula are even seen in some classical Muslim geographic works. For instance, *Akbbār al-Šīn wa al-Hind* (An account of China and India) by Sulaymān claims that Silla produced white hawks,<sup>95</sup> and *‘Ajā’ib al-Makblūqāt wa Gharā’ib al-Manjūdāt* (The wonders of creation) by Zakariyā Qazvīnī recounts that it produced falcons.<sup>96</sup>

Similar to the presentation of fine horses of the sea horse breed by the king of B.sīlā to the king of Chīn, the horses bred on the Korean Peninsula were sent to Chinese emperors by Korean monarchs as gifts. According to “The Memoir on Wuwan, Xianbei and the Eastern non-Han Tribes” (烏丸鮮卑東夷傳) in “The Book of Wei” (魏書) in *Sanguo Zhi* [三國志] (The records of the Three Kingdoms), “Hui (濊) is bordered to the south by Chenhan [辰韓]

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heritage.go.kr/heri/cul/culSelectDetail.do?VdkVgwKey=11,02070000,37&pageNo=5\_2\_1\_0#.

<sup>92</sup> Yunhŭi Hŏ, “Chamjadŏn Kŭmdong Ch'ŏnmado... 1500 Nyŏn Mane Mosŭp Tŭrŏnaeda,” *Chosun Ilbo*, March 4, 2014, [http://srchdb1.chosun.com/pdf/i\\_service/pdf\\_ReadBody.jsp?Y=2014&M=03&D=04&ID=2014030400007](http://srchdb1.chosun.com/pdf/i_service/pdf_ReadBody.jsp?Y=2014&M=03&D=04&ID=2014030400007).

<sup>93</sup> Yunhŭi Hŏ, “(Onŭrŭi Sesang) Ch'ŏnmato ‘1500 Nyŏnŭi Ohae’: Mali Anira Kiriniŏnne!” *Chosun Ilbo*, Sept. 28, 2009, [http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2009/09/28/20090928000044.html](http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/09/28/20090928000044.html).

<sup>94</sup> Yunhŭi Hŏ, “Malin'ga Kirinin'ga... Tashi Pulbut'ŭn Ch'ŏnmado Nollan,” *Chosun Ilbo*, April 14, 2014, [http://premium.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2014/04/14/2014041400140.html](http://premium.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/04/14/2014041400140.html).

<sup>95</sup> Genlai Mu, Jiang Wen, and Zhuohan Huang, trans., *Zhongguo Yindu Jianwenlu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 25.

<sup>96</sup> Zakariyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd Kamūnī Qazvīnī, *‘Ajā’ib al-Makblūqāt wa Gharā’ib al-Manjūdāt*, eds. Mas‘ūd Ghulāmiya and Yūsif Bayg Bābāpūr (Qum: Majma‘-i Zakhā‘ir-i Islāmī, 2012 [SH 1390]), 212; Zakariya Ben Muhammed Ben Mahmud el-Cazwini, *Kosmographie: Die Wunder der Schöpfung (Kitāb ‘Ajāyib al-Makblūqāt)*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Im Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1849), 109.

(Chinhan), to the north by Gaogouli (Koguryō) and Woju [沃沮] (Okchō), to the east by the sea ... It produces Guoxiama (Kwahama) and such horses were sent to Han Huandi [漢桓帝] (Emperor Huan of Han) as gifts.<sup>97</sup> In addition, according to the term of “Chema” [濟馬] (the horse of Cheju 濟州) in *Sōngbo Sasōl* [星湖僊說] (A collection of essays of Sōngho) by Ik Yi (李瀾), “during the reign of King T’aejong [太宗] (1400-1418, in the Chosōn dynasty), a horse was sent to the Myōng [明] (Ming in Chinese) court as a tribute. The Myōng emperor Sōngio [成祖] (Chengzu in Chinese) said that this is a heavenly horse and your king loves me so much that he presents it.”<sup>98</sup> The term “Yongdamma” [龍潭馬] (the horse of Yongdam county) in *Nansbil Tamch’ong* [蘭室譚叢] (The notes written in the room of orchids) by Haeūng Sōng (成海應) records a similar event, in which a fine horse was found in Yongdam county.<sup>99</sup> What is even more interesting is that Yongdam means the dragon lake.

Moreover, since the Korean Peninsula is surrounded by the sea in three directions with many neighboring islands, breeding horses on islands in the sea is a distinguishing feature of Korean horse culture from inland horse culture. As the term “Madao” [馬島] (the island of horse) in *Xuanbe Fengshi Gaoli Tujing* [宣和奉使高麗圖經] (The illustrated account of Koryō according to the diplomatic corps sent by the [Song 宋] emperor during the Xuanhe era) written in 1124 demonstrates, “the island is probably situated in Qingzhou [清州]. The spring water is sweet and the grass flourishes. The state-owned horses of the [Koryō 高麗] kingdom usually graze here in groups, hence the name [of the island being Madao, which means the island of horse].”<sup>100</sup> Such an account parallels the description in *Kūshnāma* that B.silā was an island in the sea and abounded in fine horses.

In ancient times, polo was a popular sport in many places such as Iran, China and the Korean Peninsula, and both China and the Korean Peninsula produced Guoxiama (Kwahama). Scholars have probed into the spread of horse culture on the Eurasian continent and possible exchanges between different regions in this regard.<sup>101</sup> Now let’s get back to historical records on the Korean Peninsula concerning “fine horses out of water.”

### 3.2 Accounts Concerning Horses out of Water in Korean Literature

The accounts of horses out of water in Korean literature can be roughly divided into two categories: a. accounts influenced by Chinese literature; b. the records made by ancient Koreans in the light of what they saw and heard.

<sup>97</sup> Shou Chen, *Sanguo Zhi*, annot. Songzhi Pei, vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 848-849.

<sup>98</sup> Ik Yi, *Sōngbo Sasōl*, vol. 2 (Seoul: Minmun’go, 1989), 92 of the Hanja part.

<sup>99</sup> Haeūng Sōng, *Han’guk Munjip Ch’onggan*, vol. 278: *Yōn’yōngjae Chōnjip*, vol. 4 (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch’ujinhoe, 2001), 84-85.

<sup>100</sup> Jing Xu, *Xuanbe Fengshi Gaoli Tujing*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985), 130.

<sup>101</sup> See Tong Cheng, “Gudai Yilang yu Zhongguo Maqiu Yundong Wenxian, Wenwu zhi Bijiao,” *Yuanshi ji Minzu yu Bianjiang Yanjiu Jikan* 29, no. 1 (2015): 180-195; Wentong Hou, “Woguo Aima Yuanliu Jianxi,” *Nongye Kaogu*, no. 1 (1990): 340-344.

The Korea Peninsula has long been intertwined culturally and historically with China. Written Chinese was used as the official and literary language by the Korean people up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Confucianism deeply influenced Korean culture for about two millennia. Consequently, accounts of “a chart of magic square on the body of a Longma emerged from the Yellow River” which originate from the Confucian classics can be seen in the works written and compiled by the Korean literati. The event of “a fabulous horse coming out from the Wowa Lake” recorded in Chinese official histories is even frequently mentioned in Korean poetry, for example, in “Ch’õnmaga” (天馬歌) by Inhu Kim (金麟厚),<sup>102</sup> “Ch’õnma” (天馬) by I Yi (李珣),<sup>103</sup> and “Chapshi” (雜詩) by Tosu Kim (金道洙).<sup>104</sup>

Among works written by ancient Korean people concerning finding fine horses near rivers or seas on the Korean Peninsula and northeast China, *Samguk Sagi* [三國史記] (History of the Three Kingdoms) written by Pusik Kim (金富軾) in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century shows probably the earliest record: In the third year of Taemushinwang’s [大武神王] (King Taemushin of Koguryō) reign (20 CE), the king went hunting at Kolguch’õn [骨句川] (Kolgu River), captured a fabulous horse, and named it Kõru (駟騶).<sup>105</sup> Centuries later, Ik Yi wrote a poem titled “Kõruhaeng” [駟騶行] (A song of Kõru) to recount this event.<sup>106</sup> Actually, kõru (kæru) in the Korean language means “wild horse” and might be etymologically akin to khulan (呼蘭) in Mongolian and kulan (呼蘭) in Turkic languages such as Chagatai, an ancient Uyghur language sometimes recorded as 回紇語 in Chinese sources.<sup>107</sup> Besides, *Nanshil Tamch’ong* also reports under the subtitle of “Udoma” [牛島馬] (the horse of Udo): “Udo [牛島] (the island of the cattle) is located in the east of Cheju. There is a cave in the southwestern part of this island and it is said that a dragon hides in this cave. One of the governors of Cheju once got a horse there that looked like carp and had a low head and wide belly, as well as a fierce temper. With hoofs kicking and teeth biting, it could be approached by no one, and hence it was released on the island. It was probably of the dragon’s stock.”<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusion

Perhaps because both water and horses are important factors in the formation of human civilization, “horses out of water” is a shared motif in world literature. The *Kushnāma* tale of B.sīlā people utilizing a sea horse to breed fine horses links the horse cultures of Iran and

<sup>102</sup> Inhu Kim, *Han’guk Munjip Ch’onggan*, vol. 33: *Hasõ Chõnjip* (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch’ujinhoe, 1989), 64.

<sup>103</sup> I Yi, *Han’guk Munjip Ch’onggan*, vol. 44: *Yulgok Chõnsõ*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch’ujinhoe, 1989), 20.

<sup>104</sup> Tosu Kim, *Han’guk Munjip Ch’onggan*, vol. 219: *Ch’unju Yugo* (Seoul: Minjok Munhwa Ch’ujinhoe, 1998), 12.

<sup>105</sup> Fushi Jin [Pusik Kim], *Sanguo Shiji*, ed. Wenfan Sun et al. (Changchun: Jilin Wenshi Chubanshe, 2003), 183.

<sup>106</sup> Ik Yi, *Han’guk Munjip Ch’onggan*, vol. 198: *Sõngbo Chõnjip*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Kyõngin Munhwasa, 1999), 170-171.

<sup>107</sup> Ûnyong Pak, “Han’gugõwa Manjuõwau Pigo Yõngu (sang),” *Hyodae Nonmunjip* 14, no.1 (1974): 101-282.

<sup>108</sup> Sõng, *Yõn’gyõngjae chõnjip* (vol. 4), 84.

Silla, and it also accords with the limited knowledge of the Islamic world about the Korean Peninsula at that time. This paper surveyed references to cross-breeding domesticated horses with water horses made by the people living in the vast territory between the Anatolian plateau and the Korean Peninsula. In comparison with the *Kūshnāma* story, these references lead to the following conclusions. First, although the *Kūshnāma* story is a result of literary grafting, it is not a pure fiction but derived from flourishing exchanges between East Asia and West Asia during ancient and medieval times. Second, the composition of *Kūshnāma* was not only influenced by the horse culture that thrived over the Eurasian Steppe, but also accords with the fact that the central Eurasian nomadic zone extends as far as the Korean Peninsula. Finally, in the composition and transmission of such stories as fabulous horses out of water, Khuttalān is a key point whose horse culture influenced relevant tales circulating in both East Asia and West Asia. Such an investigation sheds light on the important role played by Central Asia in facilitating material and cultural exchanges between East Asia and West Asia in the past, as a result of its prosperity in stockbreeding and trades.

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