

A Hypothesis on the Hen-Dragon (*Gyeryong*) of Silla*

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In a field such as Korean Studies, where Gyeongju is considered by many the eastern arrival point of the various “Silk Roads” (both land and maritime), and a “multicultural” approach to the various topics is strongly encouraged (although still extremely rare are the scholars able to follow this encouragement), this article is an invitation to consider the possibility, hitherto never explored, that elements of European/Mediterranean derivation may have influenced Korean mythology. In particular, the author examines the myth of the birth of Aryeong, the female progenitor of Silla, and, above all, the figure of the hen-dragon (*gyeryong*), whose existence in Korea seems absolutely episodic and limited to the cultural context of Silla only. Taking the cue from the fact that the hen-dragon is instead very well known in the West, where indeed it has a long history, both on a literary and an artistic level, the author therefore hypothesizes, on the basis of the concordance of various elements, that the basilisk of the Western tradition may have influenced the Korean myth of the hen-dragon, ending up creating a new version to be added to the indigenous ones.

Keywords: Trusteeship, Korean mythology, Kingdom of Silla, Aryeong, hen-dragon (*gyeryong*), basilisk, East-West cultural exchanges

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