Twin-Fish Symbolism and Transcultural Interpretations: Reassessing the Motif at the Royal Tomb of King Suro, Gimhae

Iruthayapandi Selestin Raja
Research Professor, Department of Cogno-Mechatronics Engineering
Pusan National University, Busan, Republic of Korea &
Secretory, Korea Tamil Sangam
Osongseongmyeong 3 ro 31, Cheongju si, Chugcheongbuk-do Republic of Korea
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2952-5551

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ASH-2026-140111108

Volume: 14

Issue: 1

Month: July

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 25.05.2026

Accepted: 26.06.2026

Published Online: 01.07.2026

Citation:
Selestin Raja, Iruthayapandi. "Twin-Fish Symbolism and Transcultural Interpretations: Reassessing the Motif at the Royal Tomb ofKing Suro, Gimhae." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2026, pp. 24-40.

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v14i1.11108

Abstract
This study investigates the cultural and symbolic meaning of the twin-fish motif depicted on the ceremonial entrance gate of the royal tomb complex of King Suro at Gimhae, South Korea. Researchers frequently connect this motif to Queen Heo Hwang-ok and her proposed South-Asian origins. Although the motif is visually prominent, it has not yet been examined in a systematic comparative and historical framework, leaving an important gap in discussions of early transregional cultural interactions. This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, bringing together archaeological, textual, linguistic, and iconographic evidence to trace the evolution of fish symbolism from the Indus Valley Civilization into later history. The analysis revealed that the fish motif bears significance across multiple domains, including trade, kingship, religion, cosmology, duality, auspiciousness, fertility, and protection. A closer examination suggests that the curved twin fish facing a central pagoda-like structure align more closely with religious and auspicious symbolism than with dynastic emblems. Furthermore, this motif represents a secondary symbolic addition from a later period rather than the original material from the Gaya period. While certain parallels with South Asian traditions can be observed, there is no conclusive evidence of direct transmission. Future research combining systematic iconographic comparison, archaeological investigation, and historical linguistic analysis of fish motifs will be crucial for clarifying these connections and reassessing early cultural interactions between the Korean peninsula and the Indian subcontinent.

Keywords: Royal Tomb Complex of King Suro, Queen Heo Hwang-Ok, Twin-fish Motif, Pagoda Stones, Korea.

Introduction

The transmission of cultural and religious practices through maritime exchange has long been a subject of interest in South and East Asia. One of the most frequently cited narratives in this context comes from Samguk Yusa, compiled by the Buddhist monk Il-yeon. It records the arrival, traditionally dated to 48 CE, of Heo Hwang-ok from a distant land, *Ayuta*. According to this account, she undertook a maritime journey to marry Kim Suro, the founding ruler of the Gaya Confederacy in the southern Korean peninsula (Ha 1972). Over time, this narrative has become central to discussions of early cultural connections between the Korean Peninsula and South Asia.

More recent interdisciplinary studies drawing on linguistic, archaeological, and cultural evidence have suggested that *Ayuta* may correspond to a region in South India, particularly in present-day Tamil Nadu (Alagu 2023; Kannan 2020). Although this identification remains debated, scholars have examined various material and symbolic elements linked to her arrival as possible

indicators of long-distance cultural contact. Among these are sacred objects referred to as *pasa* pagoda stones, which are said to have accompanied her (Kannan 2011; Thompson 2008). Our earlier work situated the 'pagoda stones' within South Indian ritual traditions of the early centuries CE, suggesting that they belonged to localized, non-institutionalized ancestral veneration rather than formal systems like Buddhism, Jainism, or Shaivism (Raja and Selvaraj 2026). Additionally, an etymological reading of 'pasa pagoda' interpreted the phrase as 'venerable stones consecrated through ritual practice.'

The second, less explored element is the twin-fish motif found within the architectural and ritual setting of the royal tombs of King Suro and Queen Heo in Gimhae, a location now designated as a Korean Historic Site. Of particular interest is the ceremonial entrance gate, where the twin-fish motif faces the pagoda stones (Figure 1), suggesting that its placement carries a deliberate symbolic intent rather than serving a purely decorative purpose. However, this motif is not explicitly mentioned in the *Samguk Yusa*, requiring its meaning to be inferred from indirect evidence and a comparative analysis.

Figure 1 Premises of the Royal Tomb of King Suro, Gimhae, South Korea (a) Red Spiked Gate (Hongsalmun) at the Entrance to the Sacred Precinct, (b) Tomb of King Suro, (c) Portraits of King Suro and Queen Heo, (d) Ceremonial Entrance Gate within the Complex, (e) Wooden Painting Depicting A Twin-Fish Motif Oriented Toward the Pagoda Stones.(Images courtesy of SPS Royei Ramesh, Gimhae, Korea Tamil Sangam)

From an iconographic standpoint, paired fish motifs are widely understood to convey ideas of duality, balance, and auspicious union across different cultural traditions. Their placement at architectural thresholds further suggests a liminal role, symbolizing the transition from secular to sacred. In this sense, the twin-fish motif can be viewed as a composite symbol that brings together the notions of ritual protection, royal authority, and layered intercultural meanings. These associations have led some scholars to propose a South Asian origin for the motif, specifically linking it to the dynastic emblem of the Pāndhya Kingdom. Others, however, point to the continued use of fish symbolism in North Indian regions, such as present-day Uttar Pradesh (Kannan 2020). Despite these competing interpretations, a systematic and comparative study tracing the transregional distribution and evolution of twin-fish symbols remains absent. In the absence of such a framework, attempts to connect the Gaya twin-fish motif with specific Indian traditions remain largely based on isolated parallels rather than a cohesive body of evidence.

The present study seeks to address this gap by undertaking a diachronic and cross-cultural examination of fish symbolism, with particular attention to the twin fish motif. It aims to place the evidence from Gaya within a broader global and Indian context, thereby allowing for a more grounded assessment of the possible cultural connections. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions: 1) What factors contributed to the prominence of the fish motif in ancient civilizations? 2) How did the meanings and functions of this symbol evolve across domains such as trade, kingship, religion, astrology, and philosophy in different cultural settings? 3) Which of these symbolic frameworks most closely aligns with the twin-fish motif observed in the Gaya royal tomb complex?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to offer a more grounded interpretive framework for understanding the symbolic and cultural dimensions of the Queen Heo narrative. Rather than asserting a direct historical connection, this study seeks to clarify the range of plausible links between South Asian and Korean traditions while refining ongoing

discussions about the possible origins and identity of Heo Hwang-ok.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach to explore the historical development and cross-cultural transmission of fish symbolism, with a particular focus on the twin-fish motif in the Gaya region. It draws on a range of primary sources, including early Indian scriptures and Sangam literature, as well as archaeological evidence such as seals, coins, and architectural features from the Indus Valley Civilization, South Indian polities, and the royal tomb complexes at Gimhae. These materials are further supported by secondary scholarship in archaeology, linguistics and comparative religion.

By combining iconographic and comparative methodologies, this study traces the evolution of fish symbolism across the domains of trade, kingship, religion, and cosmology. Visual representations, specifically single and paired fish motifs, are examined in relation to their specific cultural and functional contexts, while linguistic and etymological perspectives are employed to identify potential semantic continuity across regions. Building on this, a correlative framework is applied to compare Indian and Korean examples of the twin-fish symbol, considering their structural features, symbolic functions, and potential routes of transmission to Korea. This integrated approach allows for a historically grounded and critically balanced interpretation of the observed parallels without assuming direct cultural transmission.

Traces of the Fish Symbol in Ancient Civilisations

While the fish motif appears widely across ancient civilizations, it is particularly prominent in the Indus Valley Civilization. Its frequent presence on seals, inscriptions, and trade-related artifacts suggests that it had both symbolic and practical significance. As a common, recurring sign in the Indus script, the fish motif offers valuable insights into the cultural identity, economic activity, and possible linguistic affiliations of the Indus populations (Jyothibabu 2023).

Among early riverine civilizations, the Indus Valley is particularly notable for its extensive use of inscribed steatite seals, which typically bear short texts alongside animal motifs, including fish forms. Archaeological evidence from major sites such as Harappa and Mohenjo-daro points to a high level of urban planning and active engagement in long-distance trade, especially with Mesopotamia (Parpola, 1977; Sengupta, 2023). Within this broader context, the repeated appearance of fish symbols, often in varied forms or arranged in sequences, suggests that their use was systematic and meaningful, potentially relating to trade practices, classification systems, or symbolic expression.

Ethnicity

The relationship between the Indus population and later South Asian cultures remains debated; however, several scholars have proposed connections with ancient Tamil populations (often termed proto-Dravidians) (Dey 2026). The Tamil hypothesis, first articulated by Henry Heras, proposes a degree of linguistic continuity between the Indus script and Tamil-family languages. While this view remains contested, it finds some indirect support in genetic studies, including those by David Reich, which point to later Steppe-related ancestry in South Asian populations (Heras 1947; Reich 2009; 2018). Within this context, the continued prominence of fish symbolism in South India offers a meaningful cultural parallel, supporting arguments for continuity in symbolic traditions. Simultaneously, linguistic and genetic evidence indicates complex patterns of population movement and interaction, making direct conclusions difficult. Nevertheless, the recurring importance of the fish motif in both the Indus and later Tamil contexts highlights its role as a persistent cultural and symbolic marker.

Fish Decipherment and Etymology

Early writing systems often developed from pictorial or ideographic forms, and the Indus script still strongly reflects this visual character. Many of its signs appear as slight variations of a basic form, differing only in minor details, and the script is generally understood to be either logosyllabic or morphemographic (Figure 2) (Parpola, 1986; Sengupta, 2023).

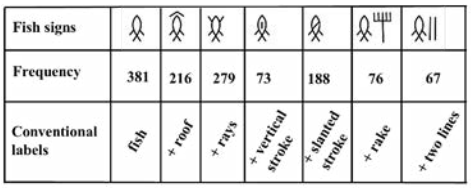

Figure 2 'Fish' Signs of the Indus Valley Script and their Frequency of Occurrence, based on the Concordance by Mahadevan. (Adapted from Sengupta, 2023; Copyright © Studia Orientalia Electronica)

Among these symbols, the fish sign appears most frequently, occurring in more than 417 instances. Variations of this sign were created through systematic modifications of a basic form, and it was not uncommon to find multiple fish signs arranged sequentially within a single inscription, suggesting a structured and potentially meaningful pattern of use (Mahadevan 1977). The prominence of the fish motif can be understood through a combination of ecological, symbolic and semiotic factors. In practical terms, fish are a key food resource for communities living in riverine and coastal environments, which likely contributes to their everyday and symbolic importance. Simultaneously, fish are often associated with qualities such as vitality, endurance, and resilience, particularly because of their migratory behavior, including their ability to move upstream against strong currents. From a visual perspective, the simple form of a fish lends itself easily to stylization, making it well-suited for repeated use within a writing system. In addition, the widespread presence and recognizability of fish across different regions may have further encouraged their adoption as a versatile and meaningful symbol (Frost 1934).

In Tamil linguistics, the word *mīn* refers to both 'fish' and 'star,' reflecting an association with brightness or radiance. This semantic feature is preserved across related languages, where *mīn* denotes luminous objects such as stars, gems and lightning (Mukhopadhyay 2025). Grounded in these cross-linguistic correspondences, Asko Parpola posited that specific fish-sign sequences within the Indus script function logographically to convey astronomical data. For instance, a seal showing seven vertical strokes alongside a fish symbol has been interpreted as *elu-mīn* (seven stars), corresponding to the Ursa Major constellation in the Old Tamil tradition (Parpola 1994). Comparative linguistics also points to broader parallels across Indo-European languages, where fish-related terms appear as *matsya* in Sanskrit and piscis in Latin (Sarami & Mokhtarian, 2015). While these similarities hint at deep-rooted linguistic and symbolic associations, their exact relationship with the Indus script remains uncertain.

Economical Trade

In the context of the Indus Civilization, differentiated forms of the fish sign may have had practical functions, especially in economic or trade-related activities. These variants may indicate quantities, classifications, or standardized units for tracking goods. Some scholars have also suggested a possible link between fish-sign variations and the metrological systems used in Harappan commerce, drawing comparisons with the West Asian weight unit, *mīna* (Bonta, 2010).

Archaeological findings from Chanhu-daro indicate that bead-making was a major industrial activity during the Harappan Period. Excavations have uncovered large numbers of unfinished beads, along with drilling tools and raw materials such as carnelian, agate, amethyst, and crystals (Mackay 1936; 1937; Scurlock 2014). In this context, the semantic overlap found in Tamil-family languages, where mīn can refer to both fish and luminous objects, offers an intriguing perspective. This raises the possibility that fish-like signs in the Indus script may have functioned as sematograms or logograms, potentially encoding meanings related to beads or gemstones (Viswanathan 2023).

The widespread trade networks of the Indus civilization contributed to the diffusion of Indic terminology across neighboring regions. Mesopotamian texts refer to etched carnelian beads— characterized by eye-like patterns—as 'fish-eye stones' (*NA4-IGI-ME-LUH-HA*), linking them explicitly to Meluḫḫa (Indus region) (Vidale 2004). The Akkadian term 'eye-stone' (*NA4-IGI*) may therefore represent a semantic calque of an Indic term such as *mani*, meaning 'bead' or 'gem,' possibly linked to its visual resemblance to the pupil of the eye (Parpola 2015). In later Indo-Aryan

languages, *mani* became semantically restricted to 'gemstones' or 'beads,' although it retained a broader semantic range in Tamil and related Tamil-family languages. It covers not only gemstones but also small spherical objects, seeds, nodules, and beads. Examples include compound forms such as *kunri-mani*, *tāmarai-mani*, and *kārā-mani*, where *mani* denotes seed-like structures (Mukhopadhyay 2025). Lexical records further document meanings such as small rounded objects, net sinkers, and knots in fishing nets, indicating a deep-rooted semantic field centered on geometric morphology and texture rather than material value alone (Fairservis 1992).

Comparative linguistic analysis demonstrates that variants across Asian languages—including the Tamil *manikkam*, Sanskrit *mānikya*, Hindi *mani*, and Malay/Indonesian *manik*—consistently denote beads or precious stones (Francis 2002). This wide distribution suggests that the term may have spread through long-distance trade networks, particularly those linked to early maritime bead exchange, in which Indus merchants likely played a significant role. Supporting evidence appears in the Amarna Letters, where Akkadian *maninnu* necklaces are described as diplomatic gifts containing precious stones, such as lapis lazuli set in gold. These likely correspond to the Indic maṇi-hāra (bead necklaces) (Parpola 2015). This transregional linguistic influence may also extend to later cultural expressions via *mīn*-based roots. For instance, the Persian term *mīnākārī* (enamelling) may reflect a broader semantic continuity in the subcontinent, where the craft's vivid colouration and brightness became conceptually fused with the ancient Tamil root for radiance and luster (Ansumali Mukhopadhyay 2019; 2021; 2023). Classical texts such as the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (1st century CE) mention cities named *Minnagara* in the lower Indus and near Bharuch, further suggesting the prominence of *mīn*-based nomenclature in trade centers (Schoff 1912).

Beyond South Asia, fish motifs occur in ancient Peru and Brazil, often in stylized or geometric forms (Frost 1934). While these examples represent independent cultural developments, their parallel recurrence underscores the motif's universal symbolic and aesthetic appeal.

Fish-Figure Adornment

Fish-Figured Seals

Seals served administrative and identificatory functions in ancient societies. In the Indus context, fish symbols on seals may denote personal names, clan identities, or institutional affiliations. Examples include seals from Kalibangan bearing only the fish sign, and a seal from Mohenjo-daro depicting a realistic fish (Figure 3) (Sengupta 2023). Comparable motifs are also observed in Mesopotamian seals from Ur, suggesting either cultural interaction or parallel symbolic development (Parpola 1977).

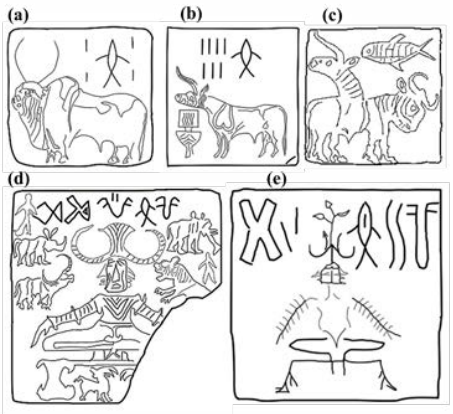

Figure 3 (a) Stamp Seal from Mohenjo-Daro Showing a Humped Bull (CISI: M-1118) (b) Seal with a Unicorn Motif from Harappa (CISI: H-9), (c) Seal from Mohenjo-Daro Depicting a Realistic Fish (CISI: M-298), (d–e) Two Seals from Mohenjo-Daro Depicting Seated Deities with Three Visible Faces (CISI: M-304; M-1181) (Adapted from Sengupta, 2023; Copyright © Studia Orientalia Electronica)

Protective Fish Eye-Patterned Beads

The protective or apotropaic use of fish imagery is widely recognized across cultures. The association between fish and protection from the evil eye may stem from the idea that fish, constantly immersed in water, are not affected by drying or desiccating forces that are symbolically linked to the harmful gaze (Elliott 2017). Over time, this belief appears to have influenced the development of fish-eye motifs on protective beads and amulets (Figure 4). These traditions continue in modern practices, including

drsti and *nazar* amulets. Similar examples appear in Tibetan etched agate ornaments, such as *dzi* beads, where both cultural value and symbolic meaning depend heavily on the number and arrangement of eye-like patterns. Archaeological evidence from Southeast Asia suggests that these bead traditions may ultimately trace back to earlier South Asian prototypes, particularly those associated with the Indus tradition (Ebbinghouse and Winsten, 1988; Reinhardt, 2020). The level of technical skill required to produce such etched beads further supports the idea of cultural continuity across regions and time periods. Objects such as 'fish-eye stones,' lapis lazuli, and carnelian are listed among protective talismans in Mesopotamian medical texts, further illustrating the cross-cultural significance of such motifs (Scurlock 2014).

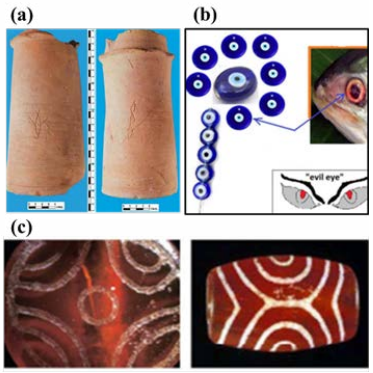

Figure 4 (a) Inscribed Ancient Drain Pipes from an Excavated House at Kalibangan, Displaying Fish Symbols and Eye-Patterned Bead Motifs, (b) Modern Nazar Beads Imitating the Fish-Eye Motif, Traditionally Believed to Protect Against the 'Evil Eye', (c) Eye-Patterned Beads from the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC), (Adapted from Ansumali Mukhopadhyay, 2025)

Fish-Figured Coins

Fish symbols also appear on early coinage, indicating their economic and symbolic importance. The earliest Indian currency, punch-marked coins, often bore multiple symbols without inscriptions. Many examples from Tamil Nadu resemble Mauryan and pre-Mauryan coinage, suggesting an interconnected monetary system (Nagaswamy 1981). Epigraphic sources from Alagarmalai refer to distinct merchant groups (*vanikar*) actively engaged in trading commodities such as salt, iron, and textiles by the second century BCE. Guild structures (*nigama*) functioned with considerable autonomy, enabling interregional trade (Balaji, 2020). Coins from regions such as Udehika and Mathura depict fish alongside deities such as Lakshmi, reinforcing associations with prosperity and abundance (Balaji 2020; Radhakrishnan 2019). Beyond South Asia, fish imagery is also found in ancient Greek and Roman coinage. For instance, coins minted in Cyzicus and Gades indicate the motif's broader symbolic currency throughout the ancient classical world (Frost 1934).

Fish-Figure Carved Tombs

Fish motifs in funerary contexts, such as carvings on tombs or catacomb walls, designate symbolic associations with status, protection, or spiritual identity (Figure 5). Single or paired fish representations may signify authority, sacred roles, or beliefs in regeneration and continuity beyond life. While interpretations vary, the recurring presence of such motifs highlights the enduring symbolic significance of fish in ritual and mortuary practices (Sarami and Mokhtarian 2015).

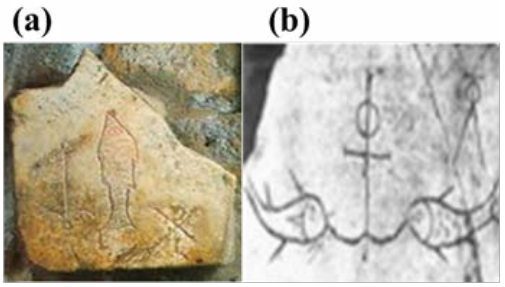

Figure 5 (a) Catacomb of St. Sebastian, Rome, (b) Catacomb of Domitilla (3rd century CE), Rome, (Adapted from Sarami and Mokhtarian, 2015)

Various Representations of Fish-Figured Symbols
Kingship

Although fish symbolism appears widely across ancient cultures, certain polities adopted it more explicitly as a marker of kingship, sovereignty, and auspiciousness. Among these, the Pāndya Kingdom, the Matsya Kingdom, and later the Mughal Empire

played particularly important roles in sustaining and transforming the symbolic legacy of the fish motif.

The Great Pāndya Kingdom

The Pāṇḍyas were one of the three major Tamil polities of the Sangam period (c. 3rd century BCE onward), alongside the Cēras and Cōḷas. The Pāṇḍyan capitals shifted over time, beginning with early coastal centers such as Korkai, which thrived on maritime commerce and pearl harvesting, before Madurai emerged as the definitive political and cultural capital (Devi 2024). This coastal geography and active involvement in long-distance trade strongly influenced the kingdom's royal and symbolic motifs (Raja & Selvaraj 2026).

The fish emerged as the principal royal emblem of the Pāṇḍyas, reflecting both the ecological context and economic specialization. The rulers were sometimes referred to as *Mīnavan* (fisher or lord of the fish), indicating a direct association between kingship and the marine identity. The goddess *Mīn-ā□ci* (Sanskrit: *Mīnākshi*), revered from antiquity to the modern era, literally means 'fish-eyed,' while simultaneously carrying the conceptual meaning of 'rule of the fish.' This dual meaning reflects the deep integration of fish imagery into religious symbolism and political thought. In classical Tamil poetics, fish-shaped eyes are associated with beauty, alertness, and divine protection based on the belief that fish never close their eyes (Mahadevan 2011; Rangarajan 2026; Sengupta 2023). This symbolic importance is also reflected in the numismatic evidence. Pāṇḍyan punch-marked coins often feature single or paired fish motifs alongside other emblems, such as the sun, conch, bow, or discus (Figure 6). Coin hoards, including those discovered at Bodinayakanur, display a stylized fish on the reverse and multiple auspicious symbols on the obverse. Their format and design are directly comparable to Mauryan coinage, suggesting established patterns of monetary interaction and long-distance exchanges (Balaji 2020). Literary sources also preserve the cosmological associations of the fish symbol. In the Sangam anthology *Paripātal*, a structural parallel is drawn between earthly rivers laden with fish and the star-filled celestial sky. Because both entities share the identical Tamil designation *mīn*, this literary juxtaposition underscores a sophisticated conceptual alignment between aquatic environments and the astral plane (Parpola 2013).

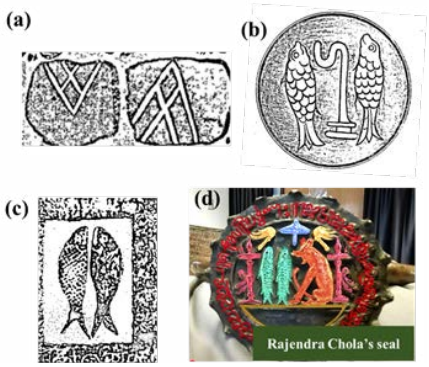

Figure 6 (a) Copper Line-Drawn Coins Depicting a Single Fish Motif, attributed to the Ancient Pāndya Period and Discovered at Korkai, (b) Personal Seal of the Pāndyan Prince Abhirama Athiveera Rama Pāndyan (16th century), Displaying the Characteristic Twin-Fish Emblem Flanking a Royal Sceptre, (c) Pāndya Royal Flag Engraved at Trincomalee by Jatavarman Veera Pāndyan II (r. 1253–1275 CE) Following his Conquest of Sri Lanka, (d) Representation of the Pāndya Twin-Fish Emblem Incorporated into a Chola-Period Royal Seal, Visible on a Ring Connecting Copper Plates Documenting a Land Grant Issued under Rajendra Chola, ((a–c) Adapted from Raghavan, Ko Nagar Korkai, 2005; Tamil Digital Library; (d) Adapted from Visual Material in Anaimangalam Copper Plates | Leiden, Research-based Video by Ungal Anban Hemanth, 2025)

Matsya Kingdom

The Matsya (fish) Kingdom of early Indian traditions is generally located in the northwestern subcontinent and is associated with modern Rajasthan. It emerged during the broader phase of urbanization in northern India from the late second millennium BCE onward, making it chronologically later than the mature phase of the Indus Valley Civilisation (Macdonell and Keith 1912). Within this landscape, the kingdom's explicit association with fish motifs likely signals both an ecological dependency on local riverine resources and a symbolic heritage

linking marine life to concepts of cosmic abundance and imperial protection. In later texts and myths, the region became linked to the Matsya avatāra (the fish incarnation of Vishnu). However, this was a later theological development and should not be projected back onto the kingdom's earlier historical identity. Similarly, linguistic interpretations that connect the term Matsya to the Tamil word *mīn* (fish) must be treated with caution. While interactions between ancient Tamil and early Indo-Aryan languages are plausible, a direct etymological relationship remains unproven and is better regarded as a working hypothesis rather than a firm conclusion (Sengupta, 2023).

On the cultural front, historical continuity is suggested by communities like the *Mīna* tribe in modern-day Rajasthan, who preserve cultural memories linking them to the ancient Matsya region (Chaudhury 2009). This continuity supports the persistence of regional identity and symbolic traditions over time, although it does not necessarily confirm linguistic or ethnic continuity with earlier populations in the region.

Mughal Period to Present Lucknow

In the Mughal Empire, fish symbols carried significant political and ceremonial weight, particularly in Awadh (now Lucknow). A widely cited tradition associates the fish emblem of Lucknow with Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, who adopted the fish symbol after an auspicious encounter near the Ganges River (Patel 2022). While partly legendary, this narrative reflects the symbolic attribution of prosperity and fortune to fish imagery in Japan.

Under Jahangir, zodiacal motifs, including fish representing Pisces, appeared on certain coins, demonstrating the integration of astrological symbolism into the imperial iconography. The *Mahi-Maratib* (fish of rank), formalized under Shah Jahan, became a prestigious insignia awarded to nobles. Depicted as a stylized fish mounted on a pole, this emblem signified high status and valor. Later Awadh rulers, such as Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar, incorporated twin fish motifs into royal insignia and coinage (Patel 2022). These typically feature two fish facing each other, often accompanied by additional heraldic elements such as crowns. This visual grammar persists in the civic emblem of Lucknow, where the twin fish symbolize continuity, prosperity, and regional identity (Figure 7).

Figure 7 Twin-fish Decorated Walls in Present-day Lucknow: (a) Bahu Begum ka Maqbara, (b) Naubatkhana on Husainabad Road (Adapted from Patel, 2022)

Religious Values and Auspiciousness

Beyond being an auspicious symbol, the fish holds a sacred place in many religious traditions. It appears in divine iconography, cosmological symbolism, and mythological narratives across cultures.

Fish-Figured Deities

In early South Asian iconography, the ideas of rulership, cosmology, and divinity are often expressed through symbolic imagery. One well-known example is the so-called 'Proto-Śiva' seal from Mohenjo-daro, first identified by John Marshall, which depicts a horned human-like figure seated in a yogic posture (Petray Jr,. 2021). Although it has traditionally been interpreted as an early form of Shiva, alternative readings suggest a more complex symbolic meaning, possibly connected to fertility, authority, or a central cosmological role (Figure 3). Some scholars have even proposed that the figure may represent a multi-faced deity, comparable to later forms such as the *caturmukha-linga* or even Brahma, associated with the cosmic center or axis mundi (Parpola 2013). While the seal does not explicitly depict a fish, it reflects a broader symbolic system in which aquatic and fertility motifs likely played a role in Indus religious thought.

Beyond South Asia, fish symbols and fish-associated deities appear in several ancient civilizations. In Mesopotamia, for example, the Semitic deity Dagon is occasionally linked with fish symbolism. Similarly, the iconographic traditions of ancient Egypt, Phoenicia, and Assyria include

aquatic or fish-associated divine forms. Assyrian bas-reliefs from Nimrud depict figures with fish-like attributes, often interpreted as protective or priestly beings (Frost, 1934).

Fish Incarnation

Fish are most explicitly articulated in Hindu mythological literature as divine incarnations through the concept of *avatāra*.

Matsya is the earliest incarnation of Vishnu and features prominently in the primordial flood narrative. This deluge myth, preserved in the Matsya and Bhagavata Purana, details the appearance of a small fish to the righteous king Manu. As the fish grows in size, it reveals its divine nature and cautions against an impending cosmic flood. Manu is instructed to construct a vessel, which is subsequently guided to safety by the deity in his horned fish form. This account corresponds to deluge traditions across various ancient civilizations, reflecting a universal mythological archetype (Whitney 1905).

In certain Purāṇic traditions, the flood hero is identified as Satyavrata, a ruler often associated with the ancient Tamil region of South India. Some interpretations link him to the Pāndya Kingdom, referring to him as *Dravideśvara* (Lord of Dravida land). However, the identification of Satyavrata with Vaivasvata Manu, the progenitor of the solar dynasty, varies across textual sources and is better understood as part of an evolving mytho-historical tradition rather than as a fixed historical claim. Geographical references in Purāṇic literature, such as the Malaya mountains of South India (commonly associated with the Western Ghats), further place the narrative within a southern landscape, reinforcing regional associations. Texts such as the *Skanda Purāna* also mention a region called *Matsyadesha*, although its precise historical boundaries and geographical location remain uncertain. In some versions of the tradition, the fish form is even linked to other deities, including Brahma, as noted in sections of the Mahabharata (Sengupta 2023). This variation reflects the fluid and adaptive nature of early mythological frameworks. Simultaneously, archaeological evidence offers some support for the symbolic importance of the fish incarnation. For example, seals from Bhita bearing fish motifs have been interpreted as early expressions of Vaishnavite symbolism (Griffiths and Nasir 2016).

Impact in Śramana Religions

Symbolism plays a central role in mediating ascetic ideals and cosmological authority in the religious traditions broadly categorized under the Sramana traditions, including Jainism, Buddhism, and Ajivika. In the early phases of these traditions, symbolic and aniconic representations were more prevalent, with anthropomorphic depictions of divine or enlightened beings becoming more prominent in later periods (Gómez 2013). Within this symbolic system, royal insignia and courtly metaphors were frequently appropriated to express the spiritual sovereignty. Titles such as Mahavira (great hero) and the designation *Jina* (conqueror) elevate ascetic figures to the status of universal rulers (Cakravartin), not in a political sense but in a metaphysical one (Krüger 2024). Thus, when royal symbols are associated with ascetic figures, they function metaphorically, transforming renunciation into a higher form of royal authority.

Alongside emblems like the parasol and fly-whisk, the fish motif is one of the eight auspicious symbols known as *Ashtamangala* (Figure 8) (Krüger 2024). This is illustrated by an early century CE votive tablet (*āyāgapata*) from Mathura, where a meditating Jina is depicted alongside a pair of twin fish (Kadgaonkar 2015). Similarly, Buddhist traditions interpret the twin fish as the compassionate gaze of the Buddha and a symbol of freedom from suffering, mirroring the way fish move freely through water (Namgyal, 2016). In Vajrayana Buddhism, wealth and fertility deities, such as Vasudhara, are frequently depicted holding auspicious emblems, including twin fish. The persistence of the twin fish motif in ornaments such as marriage pendants further indicates its integration into the lived ritual culture as a sign of auspiciousness, fertility, and well-being (Kadgaonkar 2015).

Figure 8 Sihanamdika Āyāgapana from Kankali Tila, (c) 1st Century CE (National Museum, New Delhi) The Twin-fish Motif is Highlighted within the Rectangular Box (Adapted from Krüger, 2024)

Figure 9 Licinia Amias Epitaph Depicting Two Fishes Flanking an Anchor, Accompanied by the Greek Inscription IXΘYΣ ZΩNTΩN. Dated to 150 CE by Dolger (Adapted from Baldwin, 1915, American Numismatic Society)

Christ and Followers

Fish emerged as one of the earliest and most enduring symbols in early Christianity, functioning both as a theological sign and a hidden marker of group identity. In this context, its significance is grounded in the Greek term Ichthys (IXΘYΣ), meaning fish, which was later interpreted as an acronym for Iēsous Christos Theou Yios Sōtēr (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour), thereby transforming a simple aquatic image into a concise theological expression (Baldwin 1915; Frost 1934). Archaeological evidence from Rome, particularly the catacombs, demonstrates the widespread use of fish imagery in early Christian material culture. Artifacts such as rings, seals, funerary inscriptions, and gold-glass objects frequently depict fish alongside anchors, bread, or Eucharistic motifs. A notable example is the epitaph of Licinia Amias, which features two fish flanking an anchor beneath a Greek inscription often translated as a 'declaration of faith among the living.' This visual pairing carries layered meanings: the fish represents Christ, the anchor symbolizes hope or salvation, and the inscription reflects a shared communal identity (Figure 9) (Baldwin 1915).

In Christian theology, fish gradually acquired deeper layers of meaning through its association with scripture and liturgical practices. It is closely linked to well-known narratives such as the feeding miracles and the calling of the apostles as 'fishers of men,' which emphasize themes of spiritual nourishment and evangelism (Smith 1959). In early Christian texts, fish became a metaphor for sacred sustenance; when paired with the bread and wine of the Eucharist, it symbolized Christ and divine grace (Baldwin, 1915). Later patristic and apocryphal traditions expanded this symbolism, associating the fish with purity and divine origins, at times even calling it the 'pure one' drawn from a sacred source. In certain allegorical interpretations, this imagery is even linked symbolically to the Virgin birth, although such readings are best understood as theological reflections rather than formal doctrinal positions (Eisler, 1919).

Symbolising the Watery Realm

Beyond its association with auspiciousness, the fish motif carries a broader cosmological meaning, particularly in relation to aquatic or chthonic (subterranean) realms. In Indic thought, for example, the universe is imagined as a threefold structure (*triloka*) consisting of heavenly, terrestrial, and subterranean or aquatic domains. At sites such as Rampurva, some scholars have interpreted symbolic

programs in this light, suggesting that animal motifs, such as lions, fish, and birds, may represent different layers of the cosmos: celestial authority, aquatic or underworld realms, and the intermediate terrestrial sphere (Harry 2025). Although such interpretations remain partly speculative, they fit within the wider patterns seen in ancient symbolic systems. This association between fish and the watery domain is also reflected in Mauryan-period contexts, particularly during the reign of Ashoka. The rock-cut chambers at the Barabar Caves, which were dedicated to Ajivika ascetics, contain inscriptions that hint at ritualistic and spatial symbolism. Terms such as *jalūtha*, often understood as 'arising from water,' suggest a conceptual link between sacred space and aquatic origins. Simultaneously, the direct presence of fish symbolism in this setting remains uncertain and should be interpreted with caution (Harry 2025). Scholars such as Iravatham Mahadevan have proposed that fish signs in the Indus Valley script represent aquatic or celestial beings, potentially analogous to water nymphs (*apsarās*) (Mahadevan 2011). While this remains a hypothesis, it is consistent with the recurring association of fish imagery with water, fertility, and liminal spaces between worlds in Christian art.

Comparative evidence from the ancient Egyptian civilization further reinforces this symbolic pattern. In Egyptian tomb paintings, fish are commonly depicted in riverine scenes, reflecting both the Nile's ecological setting and deeper symbolic meanings. They often convey ideas of regeneration, sustenance, and human engagement with nature. In some contexts, fish imagery may also suggest control over aquatic life or the integration of different ecological zones within a unified worldview (Jurgielewicz, 2020).

Binary Characteristics

Archaeological and symbolic evidence suggests that fish motifs are often connected to ideas of duality or polarity. Some early interpretations of Paleolithic fish figurines propose that opposing engravings reflect cyclical concepts such as life and death. Although such readings remain speculative, they fit within a broader pattern in which fish imagery conveys complementary opposition. This kind of bidirectional structuring reflects a common symbolic principle, the expression of paired contrasts such as light and dark, fortune and misfortune, or life and death, which are typically understood as interdependent rather than strictly opposing forces (Sarami & Mokhtarian, 2015). A more formal expression of this idea can be seen in the East Asian concept of Yin and Yang, where contrasting elements, such as dark and light, passive and active, work together to sustain cosmic balance, reflecting a wider tradition in which dual forces form parts of a unified whole (Beck 2008; Busenbark 1997). Astrological traditions further reinforce this duality. In medieval Islamic astrology, manuscripts attributed to Abu Ma'shar depict paired fish in contrasting orientations to represent benefic and malefic planetary influences such as Jupiter and Saturn. Similarly, in Greco-Babylonian zodiac systems, the constellation Pisces is represented by two fish connected yet facing different directions, visually expressing both tension and interdependence (Sarami and Mokhtarian, 2015).

In certain contexts, fish take on a liminal role, acting as mediators between different realms, such as water and land or life and death. Instead of belonging to one side of a binary, it marks the threshold or transition between opposites (Frost, 1934). This quality of liminality further strengthens the association between the fish motif and transformation, continuity, and cyclical renewal.

Symbol of Love and Conception

Across many ancient cultures, fish are closely linked to ideas of fertility, sexuality, and reproductive abundance. Its high reproductive capacity and life in water make it a powerful and intuitive symbol of generative force and renewal. In South Asian traditions, fish are associated with themes of desire and generative power. The god Kamadeva is sometimes linked with aquatic imagery, and epithets such as *Mīna-ketana* (he whose banner bears a fish) reflect this connection (Karmarkar, 1942). In a broader symbolic sense, conception is occasionally expressed through aquatic metaphors, such as the idea of 'catching a fish' to represent the acquisition of life. These associations are also reflected in the ritual practices. In some South Indian wedding traditions, playful customs, such as retrieving a ring from water,

symbolically convey the themes of union, fertility, and shared destiny. Comparable practices have been documented in parts of Europe, including England and Italy, suggesting that such symbolic patterns may be more widely shared across cultures (Eisler, 1919).

In Jewish tradition, fish are closely linked to the ideas of blessing and fertility. Rabbinic texts such as the Talmud connect fish with divine abundance, particularly through the command to 'be fruitful and multiply,' which is first associated with aquatic life. As a result, fish became part of matrimonial symbolism, appearing at weddings as ritual food and symbolic gifts. Similar associations have been found in other cultures. In Chinese tradition, for example, goldfish motifs are often used in bridal symbolism to represent prosperity and fertility, indicating a wider cross-cultural pattern (Eisler 1919).

In Mesopotamian traditions, aquatic figures such as Oannes are linked to creation, knowledge, and life-giving forces, reinforcing the association between fish and the generative power. Another compelling parallel is found in New Kingdom Egypt, where tilapia fish were frequently associated with the lotus blossom as a symbol of regeneration. This motif drew upon the species' distinct biological habits and the broader cyclical renewal of the Nile River (Frost 1934).

Early Christian texts also draw on fish imagery in symbolic ways related to life and origins. The epitaph of Abercius, for instance, refers allegorically to a 'pure fish' of divine origin, which has been interpreted within theological frameworks as a symbol of spiritual conception and purity (Eisler 1919).

Analytical Approach

The comparative and interpretive approach of this study examines how the fish motif, both as a single figure and in paired forms, appears, evolves, and acquires meaning across different contexts, including ancient civilizations, languages, political systems, religious traditions, and economic trades. By bringing together archaeological, textual, and iconographic evidence, the analysis shows that the fish symbol was not limited to royal emblems or state ideology but was also deeply rooted in everyday cultural, economic, and ritual life. Therefore, the fish motif serves as a dynamic cultural symbol across both elite and popular spheres, carrying the core meanings of auspiciousness, protection, fertility, and cosmological significance.

Before drawing a direct connection between the twin fish motif on King Suro's tomb gate and early transoceanic cultural links, one must first consider the structure's chronology and material context. Existing research, including site-based studies in Gimhae, indicates that the present shrine gate and its associated pathways were constructed during the restoration phases of the Joseon Dynasty, within a funerary landscape shaped by Confucian principles (Horlyck 2008; Yang 2021). The site underwent further modifications in the 20th century. Currently, there is no reliable archaeological or architectural evidence to suggest that the original wooden structures from the Gaya period (1st century CE) have survived at this location. Materials securely linked to the Gaya Confederacy are largely limited to iron artifacts, ceramics, and burial goods, with no clear evidence of painted wooden iconographic panels (Moon 2023; Park 2012). Moreover, the inner shrine gate at Gimhae features a visually complex layered design that stands in sharp contrast to the standardized and austere gate systems of Joseon-period royal tombs in the Seoul area. The specific motif of paired fish facing a central pagoda-like structure is unique to Gimhae and is not widely found elsewhere in Korea. Taken together, these observations suggest that the twin-fish and pagoda imagery visible today is likely a later symbolic addition rather than representing the original Gaya-period material linked with the Queen Heo narrative.

A comparative iconographic perspective clarifies how this motif differs from its proposed South Asian counterparts. In the Pāndya Kingdom, the twin-fish emblem is typically identified as two vertically aligned fish flanking a central scepter, serving as a dynastic symbol that conveys sovereignty, authority, and royal power. Its structure and meaning are closely tied to political identity. In contrast, in Sramana religious contexts, the twin-fish motif adopts a different form and meaning. It is often depicted as a pair of curved or inward-facing fish and appears as part of the *Astamangala* (Eight

Auspicious Symbols), representing liberation, abundance, and spiritual well-being. The motif seen at the tomb of King Suro, with its curved twin fish oriented toward a central pagoda-like structure, aligns more closely with this religious-symbolic form than with a dynastic or political emblem. Ethnographic and ritual parallels further support this interpretation in the study. Local practices observed in coastal and temple regions, such as stacking stones for protection, prosperity, or votive offerings, reflect long-standing, non-institutionalized forms of sacred tradition. Raja and Selvaraj argue that the connection between these practices and the 'pasa stones' of the *Samguk Yusa* points to evolving local traditions rather than the direct import of a formal religious system (Raja and Selvaraj 2026). Although Buddhism entered the Korean peninsula via China during the early centuries CE and incorporated the twin-fish motif within its broader framework of auspicious symbols (Kannan 2020), the pagoda or stacked-stone element revered by the Gimhae people is not part of the canonical *Astamangala* system. Likewise, Neo-Confucianism in the Joseon Dynasty formalized funerary architecture through ceremonial gates, axial pathways, and structured spaces, but its orthodox framework never accommodated these types of symbolic systems.

Synthesizing these findings, the curved twin fish motif facing a central pagoda-like structure is more accurately classified as a religiously infused and regionally specific symbolic composition than a direct continuation of a dynastic emblem. Instead, it represents a later addition from the Joseon or post-Joseon era, maintaining localized traditions that point to deeper indigenous roots within the Gaya region. This distinction highlights the importance of separating primary archaeological evidence from later symbolic reinterpretations and evaluating the claims of transregional cultural transmission.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, as there is no clear textual reference linking the twin-fish motif to the Queen Heo narrative in Samguk Yusa, the analysis relies largely on indirect and comparative evidence. Therefore, the interpretations offered here are mostly inferential, based on iconographic patterns and cross-cultural comparisons, rather than firm historical documentation. Second, Gaya-period material evidence remains limited, especially because no wooden architecture from that era has survived archaeologically. The present ceremonial gate and its painted motifs are the result of later reconstructions, most likely carried out during the Joseon Dynasty, creating a chronological gap between the original Gaya context and the current visible context. Third, although a broad comparative framework spanning the Indus Valley civilization, South Indian polities, and broader Eurasian traditions offers useful insights, it risks overstating structural similarities in the absence of documented cultural transmission pathways.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research can address these limitations by adopting more integrated and evidence-driven approaches. Archaeological work in the Gimhae region, particularly detailed stratigraphic studies and material analyses, could help clarify the chronology of the tomb complex and the development of its iconographic features. In addition, a more systematic comparison of twin-fish motifs across South and East Asia, supported by digital databases and pattern-based analyses, offers a stronger basis for identifying meaningful structural and functional similarities. Advancements in historical linguistics and archaeogenetics could also shed light on patterns of population movement and cultural interaction relevant to the Queen Heo narrative. Simultaneously, a closer examination of early maritime trade networks between South Asia and the Korean Peninsula may help assess the likelihood of long-distance symbolic exchange. Taken together, such approaches would allow future studies to move beyond broad equivalents and toward a more decisively grounded understanding of early transregional cultural connections in the ancient world.

Conclusion

This study explores the cultural, historical, and symbolic significance of a painted wooden structure depicting twin-fish motifs facing pagoda-like stones at the ceremonial gate of King Suro's tomb in Gimhae. The analysis adopts a broad diachronic

approach to understanding fish symbolism across ancient India and other regions, considering the long-standing association of Queen Heo Hwang-ok with this site and the continuing scholarly interest in her possible South Asian origins.

These findings demonstrate that the fish motif has deep historical roots and a wide range of meanings. In the Indus Valley Civilisation, it appears prominently in writing, trade systems, and symbolic contexts, and it continues to play important roles in later South Asian traditions. Evidence from archaeology, linguistics, and material culture highlights its use in economic exchange, identity formation, and symbolic communication. Objects such as beads, coins, and seals further illustrate its practical functions and role as a protective symbol. Over time, the fish motif has transitioned across diverse socio-political domains. It functioned as a potent dynastic emblem of power and prosperity within the Pāṇḍya Kingdom and, later, in Mughal-Awadh traditions. In religious contexts, it functions as an auspicious and sacred symbol, appearing in Hindu mythology (for example, the Matsya incarnation), Śramaṇa traditions (as part of the Aṣṭamaṅgala), and early Christian symbolism (as Ichthys). More broadly, the motif came to express ideas such as duality, fertility, regeneration, and transition, demonstrating its ability to adapt across cultural and symbolic systems.

Building upon this contextual foundation, this study critically analyzed the twin-fish motif at the Gimhae site. The curved twin-fish design facing a central pagoda-like structure aligns more closely with religious and auspicious symbolism than with royal or dynastic emblems of the time. Architectural and historical analyses revealed that the painted wooden gate dates to later reconstruction phases, likely during the Joseon Dynasty, rather than the Gaya period. In this light, the twin-fish motif is best seen as a regionally adapted, religiously inflected symbol that reflects local cultural practices in the Gimhae area. Although it shows similarities with broader Asian traditions, there is currently no firm evidence to support a direct or linear transmission from the Indian subcontinent to Gaya. Instead, the motif likely reflects a convergence of symbolic ideas shaped by historical memory, regional identity, and evolving ritual practices in the region.

Future research encompassing archaeology, iconography, linguistics, and religious studies will be important for refining this interpretation. Comparative work across South and East Asia may help determine whether these similarities result from cultural diffusion, independent development, or shared symbolic tendencies, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of the Queen Heo narrative and early transregional connections.

Acknowledgments

The author expresses sincere gratitude to the members of the Korea Tamil Sangam (KTS) for their support and encouragement during the preparation of this manuscript. ChatGPT (OpenAI, San Francisco, CA, USA) was used under the authors' supervision solely for grammatical refinement. All intellectual content, analysis, and interpretations were developed entirely by the authors.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

References

Ansumali Mukhopadhyay, B. 'Interrogating Indus Inscriptions to Unravel Their Mechanisms of Meaning Conveyance.' *Palgrave Communications*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-37.

Ansumali Mukhopadhyay, B. 'Ancestral Dravidian Languages in Indus Civilization: Ultraconserved Dravidian Tooth-Word Reveals Deep Linguistic Ancestry and Supports Genetics.' *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-14.

Ansumali Mukhopadhyay, B. 'Semantic Scope of Indus Inscriptions Comprising Taxation, Trade and Craft Licensing, Commodity Control and Access Control: Archaeological and Script-Internal Evidence.' *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1-38.

Ansumali Mukhopadhyay, B. 'Indus Script's Gemstone and Precious Shiny Commodity Related Fish-Signs, and Indus Gemstone-Word 'Maṇi': Ancestral Dravidian Symbolism in Indus Logograms and Language (s)?.' In

Proceedings of the International Conference titled'Discovery of Indus Civilization, Centenary'. Organized by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu and Roja Muthiah Research Library. 2025.

Alagu, V. R. A., and Priyalakshmi, G. 'Similarities between South Korea and Tamil Nadu: The Unknown Link.' *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2023, pp. 23-32.

Balaji, G. 'Significance of Symbols in Sangam Age Coins of Tamilnadu.' Proceedings of Indian Art History Congress XXVIII Session 2019, Patiala, 2020.

Baldwin, A. 'Symbolism on Greek coins.'*American Journal of Numismatics (1897-1924)*, vol. 49, 1915, pp. 89-194.

Beck, R. *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Bonta, S. 2010. The Indus Valley Script: A New Interpretation.' *Pennsylvania State University*, Altoona, 2010.

Busenbark, E. *Symbols, Sex, and the Stars*, Book Tree, 1997.

Chaudhury, S. K. *Emerging Tribal Identity: A Study of Minas of Rajasthan.* 2009, pp. 439-441.

Devi, V. V. 'The Art of Sculptures and Paintings Under Pandya Rule.' *Nilam International Research Journal of Arts and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2024.

Dey, A., Pal, et al. 'Reconstruction of the Genetic History of the Austro-Asiatic-and Dravidian-Speaking Tribal Populations of South Asia.' *Iscience*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2026.

Ebbinghouse, D. and Winsten. M. 'Tibetan dzi (gzi) Beads.' *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1988, pp. 38-56.

Eisler, R. 'The Fish as Sexual Symbol.' *The Psychoanalytic Review (1913-1957)*, vol. 6, 1919, p. 450.

Elliott, J. H. 'Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World: Greece and Rome.' 2016, pp. 1-370.

Fairservis, W. A. The Harappan Civilization and Its Writing: A Model for the Decipherment of the Indus Script. Brill. 1992.

Francis P. *Asia's Maritime Bead Trade: 300 BC to the Present*. University of Hawaii Press. 2002.

Frost, S. W. 'Ancient Fish Admirers.' *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 38, no. 6, 1934, pp. 574-578.

Gómez, L. O. 'Buddhism in India.' In *The religious traditions of Asia*, pp. 41-95. Routledge. 2013.

Griffiths, A. and Nasir, N. 'Sealings from Puṇḍravardhana.' *Pratna Samiksha: A Journal of Archaeology*, 2016, pp. 37-41.

Ha, T-H. 'Samguk Yusa: Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea.' *Yonsei University Press*, 1972.

Harry, F. A. L. K. 'Triratna and Triloka: A Dabber, the Fish of Aśoka, and the Visit of Indra.' 2025.

Heras, H. 'The Dravidian Tribes of Northern India.' In *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 10, pp. 75-84. Indian History Congress, 1947.

Horlyck, C. 'Confucian Burial Practices in the Late Goryeo and Early Joseon Periods.' *The Review of Korean Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2008, pp. 33-58.

Jurgielewicz, A. 'The Iconography of Fish in the Nagada Culture.'*Ägypten und Levante/Egypt and the Levant*, vol. 30, 2020, pp. 399-414.

Jyothibabu, C. 'Iravatham Mahadevan's Reading of Indus Script: A Critical Review.' *Studia Orientalia Electronica*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1-63.

Kadgaonkar, S. B. 'Aquatic Animals in Ancient Indian Art–A Preliminary Study.' *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute*, vol. 75, 2015, pp. 121-124.

Kannan, N. 'Tamil–Korean Relationship.' In Proceedings on the International Seminar on the Contributions of Tamils to the Composite Culture of Asia. 2011.

Kannan, N. 'The Ancient Korean Tamil Connection via Heo Hwang-Ok Alias Chempavalam (ஹியோ·ஹ்வாங்-ஓக்அலியாஸ்செம்பவலம்வழியாகபண்டையகொரியதமிழ் இணைப்பு).' *Journal of Indian Studies (இந்திய ஆய்விதழ்)*, vol. 13, 2020, pp. 60-65.

Karmarkar, A. P. 'Some Nude Gods In Hindu Pantheon: (Their Proto-Indian origin and Development).' *Annals of the Bhandarkar*

Oriental Research Institute, vol. 23(1/4), 1942, pp. 214-223.

Krüger, P. F. 'Metaphors of Kingship in Ancient Jain Literature and Art.' *International Journal of Jaina Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2024, pp. 1-21.

Macdonell, A. A. and KeIth, A. B. Vedic Index of Names and Subjects, Vol.-1. Vani Prakashan, 2024.

Mackay, E. 'Excavations at Chanhu-daro by the American School of Indic and Iranian Studies and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Season 1935-36.' *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, vol. 34, no. 205, 1936, pp. 83-92.

Mackay, E. J. A. 'Excavations at Chanhu-daro.' *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 85, 4405, 1937, pp. 527-545.

Mahadevan, I. 'The Indus Script: Texts, Concordance, and Tables.' New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1977.

Mahadevan, I. 'The Indus Fish Swam in the Great Bath: A New Solution to an Old Riddle.' *Bulletin of the Indus Research Centre*, vol. 2, 2011, pp. 1–73.

Moon, D. H., et al. 'Characterization of Iron Oxides-based Red Pigments in the Ancient Gaya Region, South Korea.' *Journal of Radioanalytical and Nuclear Chemistry*, vol. 332, no. 12, 2023, pp. 5175-5184.

Nagaswamy R. *Tamil Coins, Madras: Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology*. 1981.

Namgyal, T. 'Significance of 'Eight Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Auspicious Symbols/ Emblems' (bkra shis rtags brgyad) in Day to Day Rite and Rituals.' *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2016, pp. 29-51.

Park, J-S. 'A Preliminary Study on the Role and Implication of Plate-type Iron Artifacts in the Ancient Iron Technology of Korea.' *Journal of Archaeological Science*, vol. 39, no. 7, 2012, pp. 1925-1932.

Parpola, A. 'The Indus Script: A Challenging Puzzle.' *World Archaeology*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1986, pp. 399-419.

Parpola, A. *Deciphering the Indus Script*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Parpola, A. 'Beginnings of Indian Astronomy with Reference to a Parallel Development in China.' *History of Science in South Asia*, vol. 1, 2013, pp. 21-78.

Parpola, A. *The Roots of Hinduism: The Early Aryans and the Indus Civilization*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Parpola, S., Parpola, A., and Brun SwIg, Jr. R. H. 'The Meluḫḫa Village: Evidence of Acculturation of Harappan Traders in Late Third Millennium Mesopotamia?' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1977, pp. 129–165.

Patel, N. 'The Impact of Architecture Embellishment on Traditional Motifs: A Study.' *International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology*, vol. 10, no. 12, 2022, pp. 1766-1773.

Petray Jr, T. E. 'Parallels of Gundestrup Cauldron Interior Art with Indic Motifs.' *Indian Journal of History of Science*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2021, pp. 93-108.

Radhakrishnan, P. V. 'Significance of Religious Symbolism on 'Coined Money' with Special Reference to South Indian Coinage.' *Studies in South Indian Coins*, vol 29, 2019.

Raja, I. S. and Selvaraj, A. R. 'Tracing the Sacred Legacy: Queen Heo Hwang-ok's Pagoda Stones and Their Cultural Relevance in Ancient Tamil Nadu.' *Shanlax International Journal of Arts Science and Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2026, pp. 43-61.

Rangarajan, P. 'South Indian Rural Female Folk Deity–Marriamma.' In *Representation*, 2026, pp. 138-152, Routledge.

Reich, D., Thangaraj, K., Patterson, N., Price, A. L. and Singh, L. 'Reconstructing Indian Population History.' *Nature*, vol. 461, no. 7263, 2009, pp. 489-494.

Reich, D. *Who We are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Reinhardt, A., et al. 'Exploring the Dzi Bead with Synchrotron Light: XRD, XRF Imaging and μ-XANES Analysis.' *Heritage*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2020, pp. 1035-1045.

Sarami, A. and Mokhtarian, B. 'Pisces and Iranian Two-Symbolic-Fish Pattern, Herati: A Structural Analysis of Iconographic Symbols

and Metaphorical Expressions of Bicorporal Fish Pattern.' *Studies in Visual Arts and Communication: An International Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2015.

Schoff, W. H. *The Periplus of the Erythræan Sea*. London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1912.

Scurlock, J. *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*. Society of Biblical Lit, 2014.

Sengupta, S. 'Fish Symbolism in Indus Valley Epigraphy and Protohistoric Accounts.' *Studia Orientalia Electronica*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2023, pp. 86-102.

Smith, C. W. F. 'Fishers of Men: Footnotes on a Gospel Figure.' *HarvardTheological Review*, vol. 52, no. 3, 1959, pp. 187-203.

Thompson, J. M. 'The Tower of Power's Finest Hour: Stupa Construction and Veneration in the Lotus Sutra.' *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, vol. 30, 2008, pp. 119-36.

Vidale, M. 'Growing in a Foreign World: For a History of the 'Meluhha Villages' in Mesopotamia in the 3rd Millennium BC.' In Schools of Oriental Studies and the Development of Modern Historiography. Melammu Symposia IV; Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project, pp. 261-280. MImesis, 2004.

Viswanathan, V. T. 'Proto-historic Astronomy in India: A Review.' *Aspects of Science and Technology in Ancient India*, 2023, pp. 71-109.

Whitney, W. D. *Atharva-Veda Sa-hitā, Second Half*. (Harvard Oriental Series VIII) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. 1905.

Yang, H. R., et al. 'Analysis of Pigments and Damages for the 19th Century White-robed Water-moon Avalokitesvara Painting in Gongju Magoksa Temple, Republic of Korea.' *Heritage Science*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-18.

Author Details

Iruthayapandi Selestin Raja, *Research Professor, Department of Cogno-Mechatronics Engineering, Pusan National University, Busan, Republic of Korea & Secretory, Korea Tamil Sangam, Osongseongmyeong 3 ro 31, Cheongju si, Chugcheongbuk-do Republic of Korea,* ***Email ID****: selestin101@gmail.com*