

Exchange between Korea and South India (Tamil Civilization)

Contents

1. Preface
2. Exchange between Korean Language and Tamil Language
3. Comparison of Vocabulary between Korean and Tamil
4. Comparison of Grammar between Korean and Tamil
5. Conclusion

1. Preface

1) The reason for studying the Tamil language

Among others, migration of iron civilization, rice farming, dolmens, and the Tamil language are important subjects that can prove ancient cultural exchanges through the maritime Silk Road involving Korea. Unlike the others named above, the Tamil language was a subject which had hardly been studied before. That is the reason why Korea Institute of Civilizational Exchange ("KICE") started studying the Tamil language in 2012.

Just as indicated by the name of the institute, we started studying the Tamil language in terms of civilizational exchange. We wanted to know why the Korean language and the Tamil language share a lot of similarities. We made the hypothesis that active exchanges between the Korean language ("Korean") and the Tamil language ("Tamil") occurred during the migration of iron civilization from the 2nd century BC until the 2nd century AD.

Since we have studied Tamil from the view point of civilizational exchange, we have not taken a look, much less a close look, into the origin, cognation and the like of the language. Rather, they are subjects to be studied by experts in other sciences, for instances, linguistics and archeology. We only look into the facts about civilizational exchange in depth.

2) Overview of preceding studies

In 1905, Dr. Homer B. Hulbert became the first to leave a footprint in this area by publishing a book titled "*A comparative grammar of the Korean language and the Dravidian language of India*."¹ Dr. Hulbert made a comparison of grammar and vocabulary between Korean and Dravidian based on Dr. Robert Caldwell's comparative study of South-Indian languages².

¹ *A comparative grammar of the Korean language and the Dravidian language of India*. This book was translated into Korean by Prof. Jeong-woo Kim of Kyungnam University in 1998.

² *A comparative grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian family of languages* (Madras:

In 1984, Prof. Morgna E. Clippinger conducted a comparative study³ between Korean and Tamil by analyzing 408 words that were found in common or in similar forms in both languages. Prof. Clippinger mainly examined medieval Korean vocabulary except for a few of ancient words for his research.

When it comes to Korean scholars, Prof. Kil-woon Kang and Dr. Jung-nam Kim are the forerunners in the study of Tamil. Prof. Kil-woon Kang shows in his research⁴ that there are about 1,800 corresponding word matches between Korean and Dravidian. Dr. Jung-nam Kim⁵ in Canada found as many as 500 corresponding word matches between Korean and Tamil.

2. Exchange between Korean Language and Tamil Language

1) Introduction of iron civilization and exchange

It is neither an easy task to find out how Tamil came into contact with Korean through which channel from the 2nd century BC until the 2nd century AD nor is it one of our targets here. To briefly discuss the issue, one relevant clue may be: according to a majority assumption, it was through northern land routes that iron civilization was practically introduced for the first time in Korea.

However, in our opinion, it is more likely that Tamil came into contact with Korean through southern

University of Madras, 1875)

³ *Korean and Dravidian: Lexical Evidence for an old theory*, Korean studies, 8(1984)

⁴ *A study of ancient history in terms of comparative linguistics*, 2011, Kil-woon Kang, Hankookmunhwasa

⁵ He is studying the relationship between Korean and Tamil in depth while leading the Korean Society of Tamil Studies in Canada.

sea routes. First of all, the Tamil civilization at that time was located in the mid-southern part of the present Indian continent. This geographical fact supports our hypothesis that the contact channel between Tamil and Korean was through southern sea routes. Most of the northern India was then occupied by civilizations speaking Sanskrit and Hindi. The probability is low that the Tamil, the owners of the Tamil civilization, might have traded with our ancestors, Koreans, through the tough land route, when they had an easy access to the sea route. Secondly, many of the civilizational exchanges across the globe since the dawn of history occurred through sea routes. Well-known examples include: Hwang-ok Heo's travel and *Periplus of the Erythraean* (or *the Voyage around the Erythraean Sea*) in the 1st century; Bodhidharma's transmission of Zen Buddhism in the 6th century; seaway routes used by many monks seeking Buddhist canons in Tianzhu in the 5th to 8th century; and the Western missionaries' propagation of religion through sea routes in the 14th century described in *Cathay and the Way Thither*. Lastly, the distribution of the areas where Tamil is still spoken supports our hypothesis. To give you a broad picture of such distribution, Tamil is now spoken in the mid-southern part of India, the northern part of Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

2) Exchange between our ancestors, Koreans, and Tamils

(1) The meaning of 'Gaya' and pair-of-fish design

'Gaya', the name of an ancient Korean confederacy of territorial polities which was formed in the mid-to-late 1st century AD, is transliterated into Chinese characters in more than one way. 'Gaya' has its similar match in Tamil: 'Gayal (கயல்)', which means a type of fish while Gaya is necessarily associated with 'pair-of-fish design'. Apparently, the Tamil word 'Gayal' and Gaya's 'pair-of-fish design' have some close connection.

(2) Exchange by Hwang-ok Heo in the 1st century

Judging from records available today, we presume that the first exchange between Tamil and Korea dates back to the mid-1st century AD. The ancient Korean history book, *Samguk Yusa* (or *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), includes an episode about 'Hwang-ok Heo' in one of its chapters titled *Garakguk-gi*, according to which Hwang-ok Heo arrived from the Ayuta State (阿踰陁國), an ancient state of India, in 48 AD and married King Kim Suro.

We consider the idea plausible that Hwang-ok Heo was able to travel such a long distance in the 1st century, the probability of which is reinforced by a book of travel titled *Periplus of the Erythraean*. The book is a record of an Egyptian merchant's business operations in 57 AD ranging from the Red Sea across Arabia to India, the Southeast Asia, and the southern part of China. It is contemporary with Hwang-ok Heo's travel.

(3) 'Idu', 'Hyangga' and 'Sangam' literature

The correct meaning and origin of 'Idu' ('이두' in Korean, '吏頭' or '吏讀' in Chinese characters) are still unknown. All we do is just interpret or infer from Chinese characters borrowed in this writing system.

'Idu' is an archaic writing system to represent the Korean language which dates from the Silla dynasty. The word order follows the Korean grammar but word endings, postpositions, and adverbs are represented by Chinese characters that are borrowed either for meaning or sound. The literal meaning of 'Idu' is official's reading.

As is shown above, there are more than one combinations of Chinese characters that represent the Korean word '이두/i:du/'. Hence, we infer⁶ that the Korean word '이두' existed before it came to be represented by Chinese characters. The Tamil word 'ஈ(ᄃ)/i:du/' (이두) means reward, bail money, equivalent and the like. The letter 'ஈ/i:/' (이) means 'to give' so the word 'ஈ(ᄃ)/i:du/' (이두) has connotations of 'giving'. Tamil has another similar word: 'இ(ᄃ)/idu/' (이두), which has connotations of 'giving' as well.

There are 25 pieces of Hyangga (or poems written in the Idu system). They have not been perfectly deciphered yet. "That is because some phrases require the quotation of the Tamil language to be interpreted," says Prof. Kil-woon Kang in his book.

The ancient Tamil literature went through several phases, including the age of 'Sangam' literature. Different scholars have different ideas where to fit the Sangam age in the historical timeline. In

⁶ Kil-woon Kang discusses this inference in his book '*New study of decipherment of Hyangga, 2004*' (Ibid. p.8-9).

general, it refers to the period between 200 BC and 300 AD. The period overlaps with migration of iron civilization. There are 2,381 poems from the age of Sangam literature and they may have connections with Hyangga. There has already been discussion of the correlation between the Japanese Manyoshu and the Tamil Sangam literature.

(4) Exchange by Bodhidharma in the 6th century

Oppression of Buddhism in southern India in the 5th to 6th century caused so-called 'Tamil Buddhist diaspora'. In this context, Bodhidharma is the most noticeable and relevant. Bodhidharma is known to have been born in Kang-zhi (香至), the then capital of the Pallava Kingdom, which is now called Kanchipuram.

Bodhidharma travelled from Tamil Nadu to China in the 6th century. In the course of this travel, he had the famous Zen dialogue with Emperor Wu of Liang, which is written in the *Blue Cliff Record*.

Bodhidharma's Zen Buddhism had a significant influence on Korea as well as China. It is assumed that, if Bodhidharma's sermons were mainly in Tamil, it (Tamil) should have had a considerable influence on Korea(n).⁷

⁷ There was a monk named '무루/muru/' (無樓) in the ancient Korean kingdom of Silla. His Buddhist name is interpreted as meaning 'a monk who reached the highest level of spiritual excellence'. The Tamil word 'முழு/muru/' means matured or absolute. The possibility cannot be ruled out that his name was borrowed from Tamil.

The Korean word '승가/suhga/' (僧伽) is known to have been derived from the Sanskrit word 'saṃgha-ārāma/saṃgha arama/', which was transliterated in Korean as '승가람마/suhgaramma/' and then contracted to '승가/suhga/' (僧伽) meaning monk's temple.

The ancient (pure) Tamil had in its vocabulary the following words: 'சாங்கம/saṅgam/' and 'சாங்கம்/sa:ṅgam/'. They mean association, society or all the members. They share the same meaning with the Sanskrit word 'Samgha/saṅgha/'. It seems that a gathering of people (or trainees) with a specific purpose was referred to as words sounding like /saṅga/ or /sa:ṅgam/.

3) General similarities between the languages

The two languages have a lot of similarities but I will discuss just 7 out of them here.

(1) The word order of both languages is: Subject – Object – Verb (SOV).

Korean: 나는 소를 좋아한다.

(I) (caw) (like)

(S O V)

(S-TC O-AC like-do-IN-DC).

Tamil: நான் பசுவை விரும்புகிறேன்.

(S O V)

(S O-AC like-PNG).

(2) Agglutinative language

Both Tamil and Korean are agglutinative languages which use affixes and postpositions. Both have prefixes, suffixes and case postpositions. Some examples are as follows:

① Subjective case postposition

	한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)
조사(affix)	은/는, 이/가	없음.

It requires a close examination into old books to find out whether the origin of words that sound like /sɑŋgɑ/ or /sɑ:ŋgɑm/ is Sanskrit or Tamil. What is clear is that those Buddhist words were exchanged and shared among Tamil, Sanskrit, Chinese and Korean.

② Objective case postposition

	한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)
조사(affix)	을/를	아이ஐ(와이வை, 야이யை)

③ Locative case postposition

	한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)
조사(affix)	에/에게, 에서	ஏக்குக்கு, 일இல், 이룬துஇருந்து

(3) Both Korean and Tamil have a system of honorific affixes. In both, affixes indicating honor are attached to subjects and verbs.

Honorific affix

	주어	서술어
한국어(Korean)	-께서, -님	-시-, -십-
타밀어(Tamil)	-கள்	-கள்

(4) Korean and Tamil are languages dependent on context (or situation). Both can omit a subject or object depending upon the context or situation.

(5) Korean and Tamil have the same word-formation. Basically, they form a word by combining a consonant and a vowel.

	자음	모음	완성
한국어(Korean)	ㄱ	ㅏ	가
타밀어(Tamil)	க்	அ	க

(6) Both Korean and Tamil distinguish between short vowels and long vowels. Tamil strictly comply with the rules about long and short vowels while, in Korean, such differences can be detected only when it is spoken.

- (7) Korean and Tamil also share the same characteristic that word orders may be freely changed. In a daily conversation, no matter how the speaker changes the word order due to his intention or habit, it will not affect the whole context of meaning.

3. Comparison of Vocabulary between Korean and Tamil

Basic studies have revealed some characteristics of the common words found in both languages. First, Korean-Tamil common word pairs, in general, show correspondence in terms of consonant, vowel and part of speech. Second, in many cases, the relationship between the stem and derivatives of a word is analogous, which evidences that the two languages not only had a superficial exchange but also had an extensive exchange throughout everyday life. Third, some of the common words date from Gojoseon, the ancient Korean kingdom, or the era of the Three Kingdoms, so it can be inferred that the two languages had very extensive and in-depth exchanges during certain periods of the ancient times. I will discuss here just a few of corresponding word pairs at an elementary and basic level. Once a more complete list of word correspondence is compiled, it will allow a more precise analysis.

1) Comparison of words describing natural environment

한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)	영어(English)
보름/purum/	파룸பரும்/pharum/	Fullness
마루/maru/ 뫼/moi/ 말랭이/malrangi/	마루ம루/maru/ 매-두메டு/me-du/ 마라이말லை/malai/	Top / mount / mountain or hill
비/pi/	페이페ய/pei/	Rain
물/mul/	마라이말ழை/marai/	Water
밭/pat/	바알வயல்/vayal/ 파랴ப்பு/pharappu/	Cultivated field without water
곶/kot/ 코지/koji/	코:디코டி/ko-di/	Gulf, bay
물/mut/	물투முட்டு/muttu/	Hillock, a rising ground, Joint
굴/kul/	구리குழி/kuri/	Cave, hollow
가/ka/	가라이카라이/karai/	Edge, border

2) Comparison of words describing body parts

한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)	영어(English)
대가리/tekari/	다라이தலை/talai/	Head
코/kho/	묵쿠மூக்கு/mwuk-kwu/	Nose
궁둥이/kungdunggi/	군디குண்டி /kwundi/	Heap, buttocks
마디/madi/	마디மடி/madi/	Joint, lap
맘/mam/	마남மனம்/manam/	Heart
무릎/murup/	무랑갈:முழங்கால்/muranggal-/ 물티முட்டி/mutti/	Knee
이빨/ipal/	팔பல்/phal/	Teeth
아가리/akari/	아갈 அகழ்/akari/	Mouth
가랑/karang/	갈:கால்/khal-/	Leg

3) Comparison of words describing family relationship

한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)	영어(English)
아빠/appa/	앞파:அப்பா/appa/	Father
엄마/emma/	엄마:அம்மா/amma/	Mother
아내/amae/	안나이 அன்னை/annai/	Wife
언니/enni/	안나이 அன்னை/annai/	Elder sister or brother
마님/manim/	마나이비 மனைவி/manaivi/	(house) wife

4) Other everyday words

(1) Verb

한국어(Korean)	타밀어(Tamil)	영어(English)
가르-/kar/	가라이கலை/kalai/	Teach
달-/tar/	다람தரம்/taram/	(Weigh), rate, grade
부르-/pur/	비리விளி/vili/	call
싸우-/ssaw/	싼다이சண்டை/sandai/	Fight
돋-/tot/	도:트람தோற்றம்/to:tram/	Sprout, coming up
도드-/tod/	도:트람தோற்றம்/to:tram/	Feature
무르-/mur/	물루முற்று/mwurrwu/	Grow ripen, absolute
무른-/murun/	무루முழு/mwurwu/	ripen

너-/ne/	누리 ^이 நுலை/nwulai/	Put into, logon
싸-/ssa/	싸:니 ^{சாணி} /sa:ni/	Cow-dung
마려-/malye/	마람 ^{மலம்} /malam/	Excretion of the body
뚫-/ddurh/	두라이 ^{துறை} /twurai/	Any passage into
발-/par/	와랑 ^{구வழங்கு} /varanku/	Speak
드러내-/trenae/	디라 ^{திற} /tira/	Open, reveal
그리-/kuri/	구리 ^{குறி} /kuri/	Draw, aim
문-/mut/	물투 ^{முட்டு} /mwuttwu/	Dash against
문-/mut/	무:두 ^{முடு} /mwu:dwu/	Cover, shut
나-/na/	나:트 ^{람நாற்றம்} /na:tram/	Smell
피-/pi/	피라 ^{பிற} /pari/	Be born
드리-/dri/	두리 ^{துளி} /twuli/	Rain-drop
쏟-/ssot/	솔투 ^{சொட்டு} /ssottwu/	Fall in drops, drizzle
맞추-/matchwu/	말 ^{தம்} மட்ட ^{ம்} /mattam/	Measure, conjecture
삼-/sam/	사 ^{மை} 마이 ^{சமை} /samai/	Cook, make
안-/ahn/	아 ^ண 나 ^이 அ ^ண /anai/	Accompaniment
꽃-/kkot/	꼭 ^{கு} 쿠 ^{கொக்கு} /khokkwu/	Crane, stork
우리-/uri/	우 ^{ரு} 린 ^{சு} 주 ^{சு} உ ^{ரு} றி ^{சு} /wurincwu/	Sip, suck up
비틀-/pitul/	피 ^{டு} 둑 ^{கு} 쿠 ^{பிதுக்கு} /phidukkwu/	Squeeze
캐-/kae/	카 ^{டை} 다이 ^{கடை} /khadai/	Excavate
돌-/tol/	도 ^{லை} 라이 ^{தொலை} /tolai/	Going around
돌-/tol/	돌 ^{லை} 라이 ^{தொல்லை} /tollai/	Puzzled
반갑-/vangap/	바 ^ண 낙 ^{கம்} க ^{ம்} வ ^ண ண ^{கம்} /vnakkam/	Hello
싫-/sirh/	시:루 ^{சீறு} /si:rwu/	Hate, being angry
알-/ar/	아 ^{ரு} 리 ^{வு} 부 ^{அறிவு} /arivwu/	Know, understand
가두-/kadwu/	갈 ^{து} 투 ^{கட்டு} /khattwu/	Bandage
닫-/tat/	다 ^{டை} 다이 ^{தடை} /tdai/	Obstacle, bar
자라-/jara/	다 ^{ழை} 라이 ^{தழை} /tra/	Sprout, spray
갈-/kal/	가 ^{ப்பை} 랴 ^{பை} 파이 ^{கலப்பை} /khalappai/	Plough
나타나-/natana/	나 ^{தை} 달 ^{தை} 타 ^{தை} 이 ^{தை} ந ^{தை} ட ^{தை} த் ^{தை} தை/nadattai/	Influence
늘어난-/nulenani/	니:리 ^{ளி} ளி/ni:li/	Grow long
늘어나-/nulena/	니:루 ^{ளு} ளு/ni:lwu/	Lengthen
(기)다리-/tari/	다 ^{ரி} 리 ^{தரி} /tari/	Stop, remain
(정신) 팔-/par/	파 ^{ரி} 리 ^{பரி} /phari/	Affection
줄어-/cwure/	수 ^{ரு} 룩 ^{ரு} 쿠 ^{ரு} சு ^{ரு} க்கு/swurwukkwu/	Contraction

담-/tam/	தட்டு/tattwu/	Shelf, deck
따르-/ddaru/	துரத்து/twurattwu/	Chase
(내)비두-/vidwu/	விடு/vidwu/	Let
말-/mar/	마리/vari/	Forbid
마-/ma/	마று/maru/	Ban
칼칼-/kharkhar/	காழ்/khar/	Be pungent
발(광)-/val/	வால்/va:l/	Lustre, light
와/wa/	와/wa/	Come

(2) Noun

승가/sungga/	சங்கம்/sa:ngkam/	Community
굴/kwur/	குழி/kwuri/	Cave
칼/khal/	கத்தி/khatti/	Knife
이-두/i:dwu/	இ-ஈ/du/	Equivalent
저야/ceya/	சுய/swuya/	Self
말랑/mallang/	மெல்லு/meyllwu/	Soft
구라/kwura/	குரல்/kwural/	Voice, vocative
벨/ber/	வேர்/vay:r/	Root
발-/val/	வால்/va:l/	Shield
우람/wuram/	உரம்/wuram/	Chest, strength
왈/wal/	வல்/wal:/	Strong
수많-/swumanh/	சுமந்த/swumanda/	Numerous
꼴랑/kkollang/	குள்ளம்/kwullam/	Shot
술/swur/	சூடு/swu:ru/	Scoop out
곁에/kyette/	கிடை/khitta/	Near
꼭꼭-/khokkhok/	கொக்கு/khokkwu/	Pick
꼬챙이/kkocheng/	குச்சி/khwutchi/	Stick
꼭기/kkekki/	கொக்கி/khokki/	Hook,
빨리빨리	பரபர/parapara/	Move in haste
새-/say/ 시-/si/	செ-/sey/, சி-/si/	Red
소리/soli/	ஒலி/oli/	Sound
다른/tarun/	தவிர/tavira/	Else
맞춤/mattwum/	மட்டம்/mattam/	Fitness
하나/hana/	கன/hana/	full

크나(큰)/khuna/	காநாகன/khana/	Big, great
우/wu/, 위/wi/	உஉ-/wu/	Upper, top
뽀루지/ppyorwuci/	பாருபரு/pharu/	Boil, pimple
순-/swut/	சுதம்/swuttam/	pure
아싸리/assail/	அசல்/asal/	Original
풋-/phwut/	புது/phudu/	New, fresh
바람/varam/	வாங்கு/varangkwu/	Wish, want
(벗)가리/kari/	காழி/khari/	Rod, pole
울/wur:/	ஊர்/wur:/	Town, village
우물/wumwur/	ஊற்று/wu:rrwu/	Well
부락/purak/	புரம்/phuram/	Town
별/per/	புரி/phuri/	Town
마른/malun/	மெலிந்த/meylinda/	Lean

4. Comparison of Grammar between Korean and Tamil

1) Tense

Korean and Tamil use similar word endings to indicate tense.

	과거(past)	현재(present)	미래(future)
한국어(Korean)	ㅅㅅ/ss, dd, tt/	ㅂ/b, v/, ㄴ/n/	ㄹ/r, l/
타밀어(Tamil)	த்த/dd, tt/, ந்த/nd, nt/	கிற்/kir/	வ/v/, ப/p/

(1) Past tense

In Korean, the affix that indicates past tense sounds like /d/ or /t/, similarly to its corresponding Tamil affixes. The Tamil past-tense affix 'ந்த்/nd, nt/' left its phonetic trace in Korean: 'ㄴ/n/', which appears when a Korean verb is conjugated into a past relative particle. The past relative particle of the verb '보다' (see) is '본/bon/' (saw) in which the consonant sound 'ㄴ/n/' indicates past tense.

(2) Present tense and future tense

Put the Korean present-tense affix next to the Tamil future-tense affix and the Korean future-tense

affix next to the Tamil present-tense affix and you will get a meaningful table with corresponding matches. In Korean, the consonant sound 'ㄹ/r, l/' indicates future tense while the Tamil present-tense affix 'கிற்/kir/' (ㄱ) includes the consonant sound 'ㄹ/r/'. The same applies to the tense affix 'ஃ/b,v/'.

2) Comparison

Tamil has various ways to indicate comparison. One of them is similar to the Korean way of comparison: by using the comparative postposition '보다/boda/'.

எனக்கு இதையை விட அதை பிடிக்கும்.

(/bida/)

나에겐 이것을 보다 저것을 좋아한다.

(to me) (this) (more than) (that) (like)

Korean indicates comparison by attaching the comparative postposition '보다/boda/' to a noun while Tamil puts the comparative postposition 'விட/bida/' after the objective case of a noun.

5. Conclusion

Korea and South India (Tamil civilization) started extensive and in-depth exchanges at least 2,000 years ago, around the time of the migration of iron civilization. Korean and Tamil share a lot of similar or identical words, which are found from various historical phases of the Korean language, ranging from ancient Korean to modern Korean. That is one of the convincing evidences of the above-mentioned provisional conclusion.

Because Korea and South India got involved in exchanges through the ancient maritime Silk Road, many discoveries have been made to reveal multi-national exchange among languages (Korean-Tamil-Chinese-Japanese) as well as bilateral exchange between Korean and Tamil. That brings about

the need for researches into multi-national exchange.

In addition, exchange needs to be studied from the perspective of different fields than religion like Buddhism, more specifically, in various academic sciences including folklore and anthropology.