Women and Femininity in Prehistoric Korea

Kim Jongil
Professor, Seoul National University

Introduction

With the recent explosion of archaeological data in Korea, several new research agendas have been spotlighted, though they have hardly been noticed outside the field. Despite pioneering works by Sarah Nelson (1993), Kim Gwongu (2000), and Kim Seonju (2010), issues of women and gender are still largely ignored by Korean archaeology. There are two discernible reasons for this lack. First and foremost, Korean archaeological data shedding light on gender identity or the role of women remains quite scarce. Second, most research in Korean archaeology tends to focus on a very limited range of subjects, such as the emergence of social hierarchy, the process of forming the early states, and conflict or war. These subjects certainly cannot and should not be fundamentally separated from gender issues. Nevertheless, perhaps because gender issues do not ostensibly seem to be closely related to these issues, Korean archaeology has failed to take women and gender issues into account within its main research agendas.

In addition, another sensitive and debatable issue underlies this situation; namely, who tends to direct the main research agendas within the discipline, both implicitly and explicitly? Simply stated, the field of Korean archaeology is dominated by males with "formal" education and "formal" degrees (PhDs and Masters of Philosophy) who occupy a select number of influential positions at academic institutions, i.e. universities. In such a situation, it is unlikely that female perspectives regarding gender in archaeology can gain wide recognition, or that the past can be actively researched from such a perspective.

For these reasons, in most accounts of prehistoric Korea, women are strangely absent. Or at best, they are relegated to a very restricted role or a passive and subsidiary position in the social change of Korean prehistoric society. This is certainly not a problem that is unique to Korean archaeology, and has been discussed in the archaeologies of Europe and America since the 1970s (Gero and Conkey 1991; Kehoe 1998; Sørensen 2000). Therefore, rather than addressing this issue purely in theoretical terms, I will focus on how to embody women in Korean prehistory and how to aptly describe them amidst the lack of archaeological data. In addition, I will suggest some prerequisite theoretical frameworks for embodying and interpreting these invisible women and examine their applicability to the extant archaeological data.

Theoretical Issues for Gender Studies in Korean Prehistory

In order to use archaeological data to embody and describe these invisible (or periodically visible) women, research should pursue the following topics. First, how might women have constituted their own identity through material culture? Second, the rise of material culture altered social structures and constitutions (i.e., by increasing the division and specialization of labor); how might such changes have affected the identity, as well as the social (and symbolic) role,

of women? And third, how did the changing identity and role of women and the evolving social structure impinge on one another? To better understand women in prehistoric Korea, it seems indispensible to do some preliminary theoretical reviews related to these topics.

Individual Identity & Archaeological Data

With the advent of post-processualism in archaeology, it has been widely accepted that material culture cannot be considered to be a mere reflection or result of past human action. It is now widely recognized that language is inherent to our social life, and the same can be said of our material culture. That is, language and material culture, rather than being mere derivative aspects, actually enable our social existence. Thus, like language, material culture must be considered in terms of its own distinct existence and meaningful constitution. Accordingly, we tend to experience, constitute, and relate ourselves to the world through this pre-existing material culture. Furthermore, we participate in the world by producing, using, and disposing of the material culture, as we simultaneously subjectify ourselves, form our identity, and sense our own personhood (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

In terms of archaeological data, various elements of material culture serve as media and impetus for human subjectification and the formation of individual identity, including body ornaments, settlements, and burials. Body ornaments can be used for various means of self-expression in different situations, while settlements serve to mediate and enable our social relations in the domain of life. Meanwhile, burials allow the living to readjust and reinforce a range of social relationships with their authorities, social positions, and various social norms. In particular, body ornaments, which are closely and directly related with individual bodies, could be good evidence for examining how the female body was gendered, as has been done with the male body and weapons and armory (Kim Jongil 2009; Sørensen 2000; Treherne 1995).

These arguments are built upon the belief that it is possible to use the body (and bodily movement) to forge a relationship with the world through material culture, and that the body itself tends to be objectified and delimited (and thus incarnated) in different ways. For example, people typically believe that they have an external boundary formed by their physical body, i.e. their skin and bones. But such a boundary can be altered according to cultural context. For example, body ornaments like weapons and armor can form a part of the body, and they can also make the body gender specific. Thus, the boundary of such a body has been refined, such that its social and cultural significations extend far beyond a body that comprises only skin, bone, and hair. This example indicates that culture is not simply a passive "extrasomatic" method of responding to an environment, but is actively constituted by the body in many various ways. Accordingly, individuals and communities of individuals, as the subjects of social action, can use material culture to constitute their own social and cultural bodies. And in doing so, they can simultaneously constitute society and culture (or at least a part of culture).

Structuralism & Femininity

Structuralist archaeology accepts the primary arguments raised by structuralism and structuralist linguistics, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Language is a sign system, constituted by the signifier and the signified.
2. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, and a sign can be discerned by the difference represented by binary opposition.
3. The sign's linguistic value is decided by other signs, and in particular, by relative comparison with other signs, rather than its own original value.
4. The signs form a sort of metonymic chain (Barthes 1973; Saussure 1983).

As in language, material culture is also constituted by the signifier, exemplified by material artifacts (e.g. pottery) and the signified, represented by its usage (e.g. cooking or carrying water). Moreover, the meaning and value of material culture can be grasped by binary opposition and relative comparison, and it also constitutes a metonymic chain (Hodder 1990; Kim Jongil 2008). Therefore, material culture is understood as a system of signs and symbols. Notably, however, material culture differs somewhat from language in that the signifier and the signified are not inherently arbitrary. In such case, the slippery relation between the signifier and the signified, and the

"floatation" of the signifier that occurs in the absence of the signified, cannot be completely justified. Such arbitrariness could not possibly be conceptualized in many archaeological contexts, where an object's utilitarian function or suitability for use as a tool is emphasized, thus limiting its possible range of meaning. Yet the arbitrariness between the signifier and the signified could still be conceptualized within some specific contexts, such as a museum exhibition in which the meaning and function of material artifacts are redefined or reinterpreted.

It should also be mentioned that if the meanings of sites and material artifacts are interpreted solely by binary opposition, then the latent abundance of interpretations, which produces diversity and perhaps even ambiguity, can be ignored. Nonetheless, the meaning and significance of any sites and artifacts should be comprehended and interpreted within a context; namely, in association with other sites and material artifacts. Hence, material culture is constituted by a kind of chain of meanings based upon the principle of binary opposition, and this chain of meanings clearly represents the metonymic chain and metaphoric relation mentioned above. Such a chain could be schematized as:

Male	Female
inner (back)	outer (front)
death	life
wild	domestic
dark	light
west	east

(Hodder 1990, 10 and 27)

Furthermore, based upon Neolithic cases from Anatolia and South Europe, Hodder suggested that males could be associated with burials, hunting, weapons, copper, axes, masks, and stone tool production, while female could be related to homes, furniture, decoration, weaving, spinning, ovens, food storage and preparation, signs, and figurines (69). The chain of meanings constituted by binary opposition could vary depending on the specific historical or cultural context. If we can grasp the existence of women (or material culture associated with women) in relation to a chain of meaning like this, then we may be able to infer and interpret how the chain was formed, how it changed over time, and the significance of the change. This would make it possible to analyze how individuals and communities create and adapt their identities by placing those processes within a symbolic sphere, rather than continuing to attempt to explain social change in simplified socio-economic or political ways.

Structuration & Femininity

Since the 1980s, the theories of Giddens and Bourdieu have deeply influenced the interpretation of material culture (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). While Giddens's theory can be critiqued for interpreting the relationship between human action and material culture through a simplified circular pattern of logic, it has value in that it emphasizes the importance of material culture's active role. For example, according to Giddens, the successive construction of identical or similar types of houses or burial places (and likewise the identical or similar division of the inner space in houses and burial places) is enabled by the human action involved with such construction and division, which is already regulated by various extant social rules and symbolic values. And furthermore, such social rules and symbolic values are maintained by continuous social practices, such as the successive construction of houses and tombs.

Bourdieu's theory of practice, exemplified by the concept of "habitus," tends to focus on incarnate or intrinsic human practices, i.e., those which are considered to be natural and safe. Thus, this theory can help us grasp the meanings of such practices in everyday life (Bourdieu 1977). In particular, habitus makes us aware of the different embodied and habituated activities of women (or men) in the domain of everyday life, in terms of gender issues. Concomitantly, this theory can also elucidate the engendering process of space and time, as well as the various social practices that happen within the spatial and temporal sphere.

Therefore, although structuration and practice theory have some limitations, including a failure to account for social change, they provide an interpretative framework for understanding various social actions of both individuals and communities that occur within spatial and temporal spheres. In particular, they can help us understand how individuals can direct changes to existing social structures, such as material culture, as well as how those structures affect the individuals.

Women in Prehistoric Korea & Archaeological Interpretation

As mentioned, archaeological data from prehistoric Korea that demonstrates individual identity, and especially female gender identity, has rarely been found or reported. Despite some exceptions, such as Okbang 4 district 26 stone cist and Bonchon-ri 2 stone cist, Jinju (Kim Jaehyeon 2002, 139), material artifacts demonstrating gender identity or closely related to gender categorization have rarely been found in conjunction with biological data (e.g. bones) allowing for gender or age identification.

Therefore, instead of simply introducing data or attempting a truncated description of female gender identity based on partial and fragmented data, I will examine the context in which female gender identity was formed or expressed (or suppressed) in prehistoric Korea in terms of the overall formation of individual identity, including male identity, from a comparative perspective.

Formation of Femininity in Korean Neolithic Age

Thus far, the earliest archaeological data found in Korea that directly relates to women is from the Neolithic period. One representative relic is a female figurine found in Sinam-ri #2 site, Seosaeng-myeon, Ulju, Ulsan which was discovered alongside pottery with a fingertip motif and pottery with a comb pattern (Fig. 1). The same type of female figurine was also found in Nongpo-ri site, Cheongjin, Hamgyeongbuk-do province (Fig. 1). In addition, earthenware symbolizing the female sexual organ and anthropomorphic figurines (or faces) of indeterminate sex were found in Yul-ri Shell Midden, Geomgok-dong in Busan, Suga-ri Shell Midden in Gimhae, and Osan-ri site in Yangyang (Fig. 2). Face-shaped ornaments and wrist or ankle bracelets (made of bone or shell) have also been found in many sites, including Seopohang in Gulpo, Sandeung Shell Midden, Yeondaedo and Yokjido in Tongyeong, Suga-ri in Gimhae, and Ando Shell Midden in Yeosu (Fig. 3). In particular, body ornaments were found near the wrist and ankle of a human body in Yeondaedo, Ando Shell Midden, indicating that the ornaments were worn by the tomb occupant (Fig. 4).

Based upon this archaeological data, we can make several assumptions about women and femininity in prehistoric Korea. First and foremost, it would be premature to assume that these relics serve as

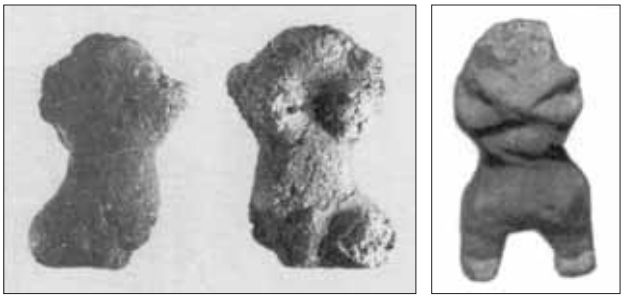

Fig. 1. Female figurines. Neolithic period.
Left: *Sinam-ri II* (신암리 II). 1989. (Seoul: National Museum of Korea), p. 66.
Right: *Joseon Yujeokyumul Dogam: Primitive Society* (조선유적유물도감: 원시편). Reprint 1990. (Seoul: Donggwang Publication Company), p. 133.

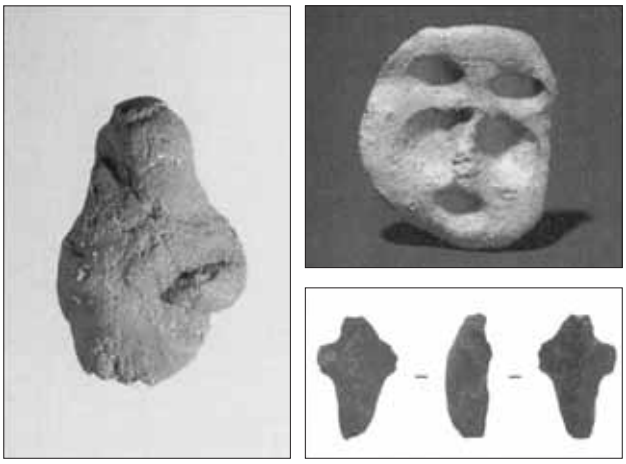

Fig. 2. Anthropomorphic artifacts. Neolithic period.
Left: *Prehistoric and Ancient Culture* (선사와 고대문화). 1996. (Busan: Busan National University Museum), p. 10.
Upper right: Seoul National University Museum. 2007. *Seoul National University Museum Catalogue* (서울대학교 박물관 소장품 도록), 17.
Lower right: *Wando Yeoseo-dong Shell Midden* (완도 여서동 패총), by Kim Geonsu (김건수) *et al*. 2007. (Mokpo: Mokpo National University Museum), p. 421.

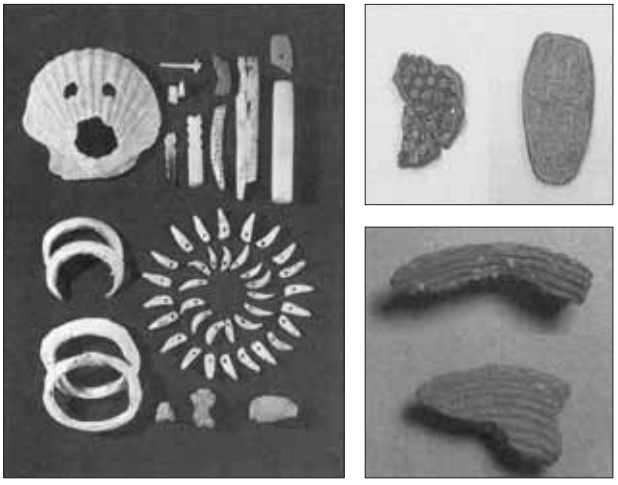

Fig. 3. Body ornaments from various regions. Neolithic period.
Left: *National Museum of Korea*. 1996. (Seoul: National Museum of Korea), p. 26. / Center and right: *Prehistoric and Ancient Culture* (선사와 고대문화). 1996. (Busan: Busan National University Museum), p. 10.

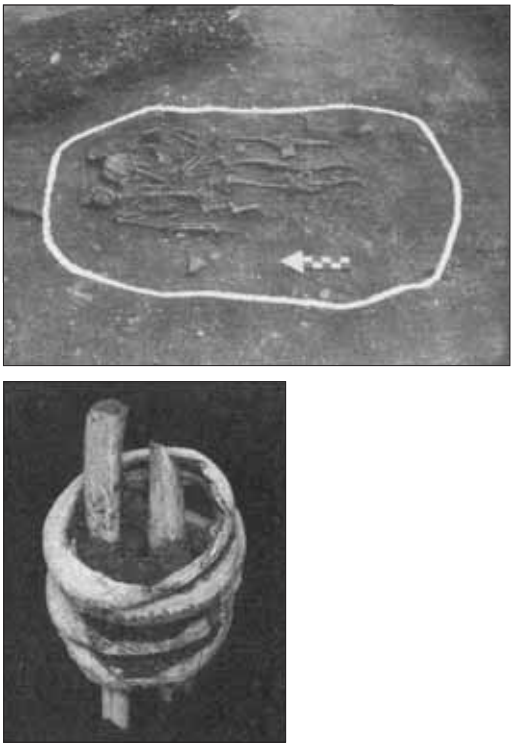

Fig. 4. Bracelet and female bone from Ando Shell Midden I site in Yeosu. Neolithic period. *Ando Shell Midden* (안도패총), by Cho Hyeongjong (조현종) *et al*. 2009. (Gwangju: Gwangju National Museum), pp. 10 and 213.

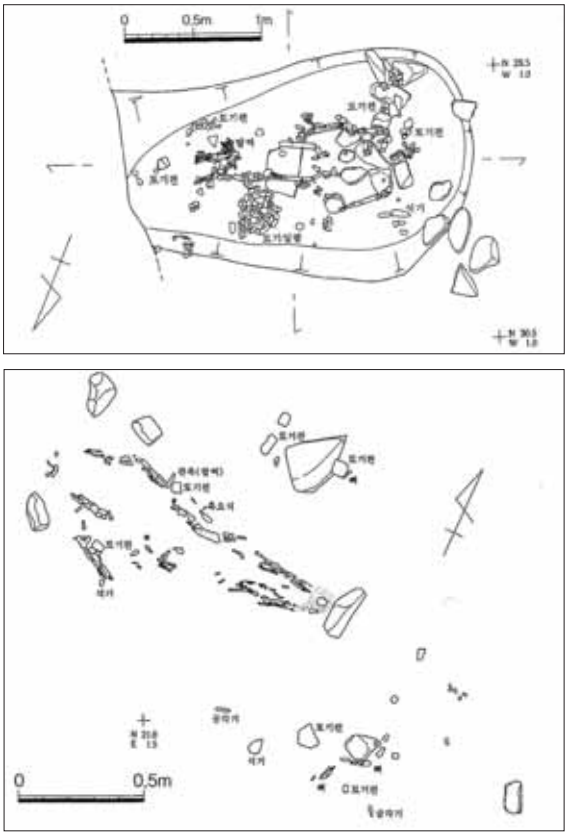

Fig. 5. Burial sites from Yeondaedo
Top: #7 burial / Bottom: #14 burial. *Yeondaedo I* (연대도 I), by Han Yeonghui (한영희) and Im Hakjong (임학종). 1993, (Jinju: Jinju National Museum).

evidence that symbols of fertility and fecundity were inherited from the Paleolithic period, or that they represent some ancestral god of the tribe or the phylogeny of matrilineal clan society (Kim Wonyong 1982, 1-18; Archaeological Institute of Academy of Social Science 1977, 12). Nevertheless, this data suggests that femininity, symbolized by fertility and fecundity, was an important social value in the society, in relation with hunting and the inception of agriculture (Hodder 1990, 60-70; Gimbutas 1989, 141-159).

Second, these findings allow us to conceive a possible chain of meaning centered on women (or female values), that is, the possibility that various body ornaments were used by women as a form of self-expression. For example, at Yeondaedo, #1 and #7 burials (Fig. 5, left) are assumed to be male, due to the presence of stone axes, while the #2A and #14 burials (Fig. 5, right) are assumed to be female, based on the presence of shell or jade (Table 1).

Table 1 - Grave goods from burials at Yeondaedo site

Tomb	Sex	Excavated Artifacts
1	M	Pottery, stone axe
2	F(A)	Shells, bracelet
3	?	?
4	M	Obsidian, pottery, harpoon
5	F	Fish hook, pottery
6	?	?
7	M	Stone axe, pottery, ankle bracelet, ornaments
8	?	Pottery
9	M	Pottery, stone tool
10	M?	Pottery, stone tool
11	M	Pottery, obsidian
12	F	Pottery, fish hook
13	F?	?
14	F	Pottery, obsidian, jade (bracelet)
15	F?	Pottery

It can be safely assumed that, in the construction of these tombs at Yeondaedo Shell Midden, the individual identity would be expressed by the various body ornaments buried with the body, and that gender identity can be at least hypothesized based upon the presence of certain types of items, such as stone axes or bracelets. This phenomenon is also observed at the Ando Shell Midden site in Yeosu, where two bodies were found in the #1 tomb. One of the bodies was about 159 cm tall and had five shell bracelets on its arm, and was thus assumed to be female (Fig. 4). Based on these observations, a possible chain of

meaning can be formed regarding women (or men) in the Korean Neolithic period:

Female	Male
shell bracelet	stone axe
female figurine	?
pottery	pottery
obsidian tools	obsidian tools

Although this assumption cannot be generalized to apply throughout the Korean Neolithic period, it seems reasonable to assess that at least some Korean Neolithic people emphasized their individuality (as a kind of individual identity) and constituted their gender identity through burial rituals, specifically the use of burial goods and their chain of meaning, and that such gender identity would be socially acknowledged within the community. Nonetheless, this expression of gender identity would not necessarily be stressed or accepted in relation to social change based upon the subsistence economy of that time, because, just as in Europe, there is no clear evidence that the acceptance of such female value would be directly and closely related to the introduction and diffusion of agriculture.

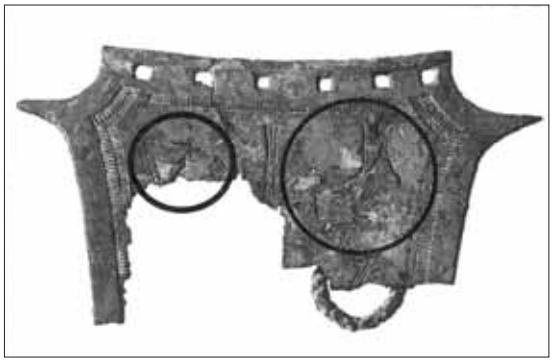

Fig. 6. Bronzeware from Daejeon, featuring a male tilling a field and a female carrying a pottery vessel. *National Museum of Korea*. 1996. (Seoul: National Museum of Korea), p. 45.

Fig. 7. Bangudae Rock art from Ulju, featuring a male image. *Bangudae: Fragments from Rock Art of Ulju* (반구대: 울주암벽조각), by Hwang Suyeong (황수영) and Mun Myeongdae (문명대). 1984. (Seoul: Dongguk University Museum), p. 110.

Woman & Identity in Korean Bronze Age

Archaeological data pertinent to gender identity (particularly female) from the Early and Middle Bronze Age of Korea is quite limited, but some well known artifacts have been found, such as the bronzeware from Daejeon, featuring a man tilling his field (Fig. 6) and the Bangudae rock art from Ulju (Fig. 7). Notably, the surface of the Daejeon bronzeware shows a man using a small plow to till a field and a woman who is putting something into a pot. The images seemingly allow us to infer that men usually worked in the field, which generally requires more strenuous physical labor, while women performed domestic tasks, which generally require less strenuous physical labor. Also, the rock art from Bangudae includes a male figure with exaggerated genitalia, suggesting that masculinity and the male body was emphasized in terms of gender differentiation and gender roles, in accordance with the labor division and specialization that marked this period.

A similar phenomenon has been observed in the diffusion of agriculture from Central to Western Europe and the pertinent social change in the middle phase of European Neolithic Society. For example, in the case of European Neolithic Society, as agriculture spread from Central Europe to more peripheral areas, new agricultural techniques were adopted, such as animal traction and plowing, which required significantly more physical labor and strength. In addition, more conflicts arose between groups over arable land, so that masculinity would likely have gained more precedence in society over femininity. At the same time, a specific patrilineal group began to construct communal burials, including their own ancestors, in order to justify and legitimize their land rights (Hodder 1982, Sherratt 1990). Notably, this rising emphasis on male symbolic value and its chain of meaning, rather than female symbolic value, is associated with the increasing significance of ancestry and community (and, of course, communal value). With this inference in mind, the spatial structure and placement of settlements and burials might be used to examine how female gender identity was constituted and maintained.

It has been suggested that long houses dated from

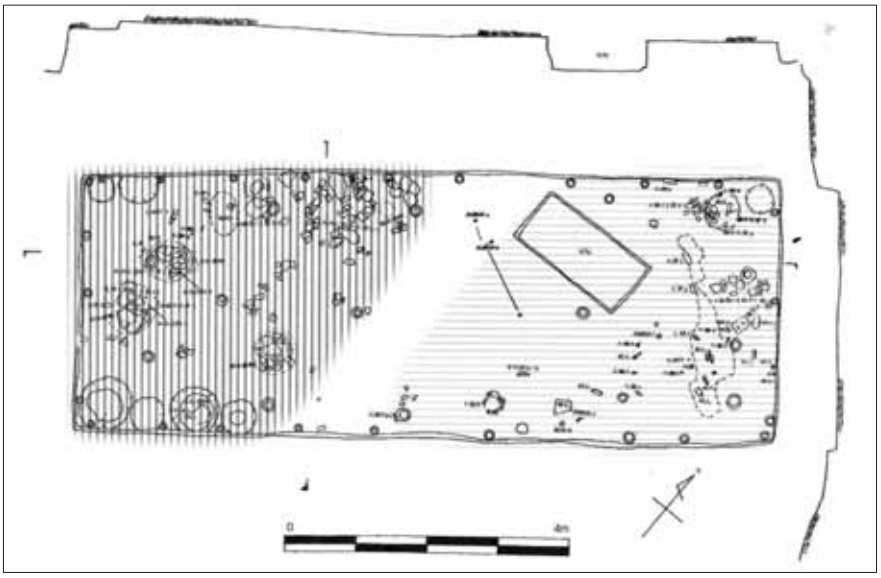

Fig. 8. Inner space of #12 house, Heunam-ri site, Yeoju. In the area on the left, pottery likely used for storage was found, while stone tools were found in the area on the right. *Heunam-ri Settlement 4* (흔암리 주거지 4). 1978. (Seoul: Seoul National University Museum), image 26 (modified by the author).

the Early or Middle Bronze Age were divided into two or three sections with particular reference to the location and number of hearths, and that these compartments were related to a household community (An Jaeho 2006, 54-59). However, the distribution pattern of artifacts in houses from the period indicates that the inner domestic spaces were actually divided and structured rather differently. For example, the inner space of the #12 house from the Heunam-ri site (Fig. 8) is divided into two areas: one area where pottery was used or stored, and one area where mostly stone tools were discovered. A similar spatial division was noted in Linear Pottery Culture (generally abbreviated as LBK) houses from the early European Neolithic period. Granted, more precise and detailed information about the excavation and post-depositional process is required before any solid inferences can be made regarding the original distribution pattern and its context. But still, the fact that artifacts were found within the house, with no evidence of distortion or alteration of the space by either natural or cultural transformation, tentatively suggests that the distribution pattern of artifacts can provide *in situ* contextual information about daily life during the period. Accordingly, we can infer that the inner space of houses was divided into at least three areas: an area for storage or cooking, an area for producing or storing stone tools, and an area for sleeping or rest.

Recently, a similar assumption has been made in reference to the spatial division of a long house from Sosa-dong in Pyeongtaek. The inner space of this house is assumed to have been divided into two areas: an area for women and children, where the hearth was located and domestic tasks were performed, such as weaving, simple woodwork, preparation of the fire, cooking, and storage; and another area for men, where tools and weapons were made for hunting and war (Kim Byeongmo *et al.* 2008, 142-143). This observation indicates that the division of inner space by function seems to be closely related to gender differentiation. It has been widely accepted, according to various archaeological analogies, that areas for food storage and pottery can be associated with women, while areas for making stone tools can be associated with men, though such an assumption seems quite contentious and problematic.

Of course, our assumptions about these individual residences certainly cannot be generalized and extended to all other houses and settlements from the period. Still, it seems quite possible to consider the division of the inner space of houses according to a chain of meaning based on labor division by gender. This gendered spatial division conditioned and enabled the everyday activities of individuals, and

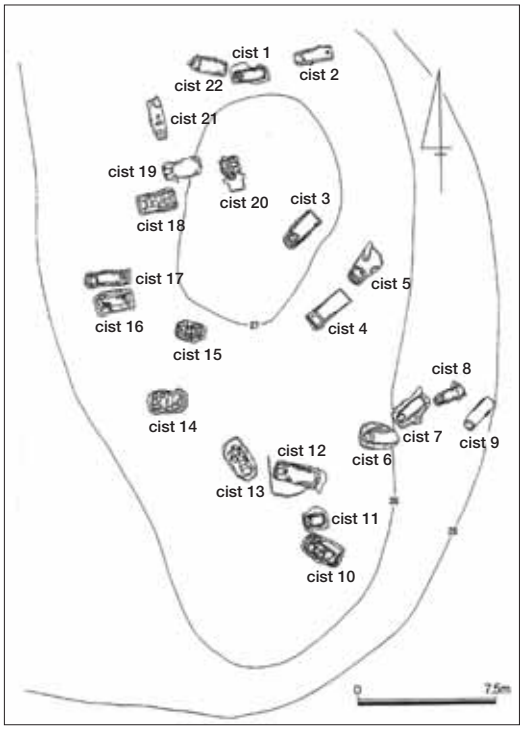

Fig. 9. Burial placement at Oseok-ri site.
Oseok-ri Site (오석리 유적), by Yi Namseok (이남석). 1996. (Gongju: Gongju National University Museum).

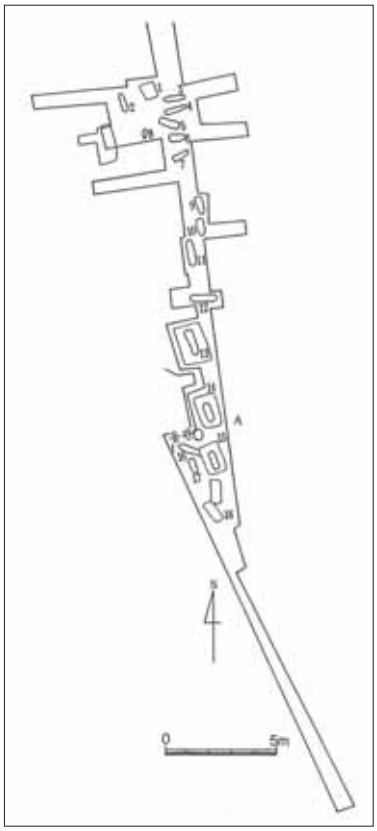

Fig. 10. Burial placement of stone cist burial group at Namsan-ri site.
"Prehistoric Burial Group from Namsan-ri, Tancheon-myeon, Gongju," by Yun Mubyeong (윤무병). 1987. *Essays written to commemorate the retirement of Prof. Sambul Kim Wonyong I* (삼불 김원룡 교수 정년 퇴임 기념 논총 I), p. 57.

served to maintain and institutionalize the existing gender differentiation as a medium in everyday life.

This gender differentiation was also exemplified in another way, apart from everyday life, in the burials and burial groups, which were constructed beginning in the Middle Bronze Age. For instance, the Songguk-ri culture, which is representative of the Middle Bronze Age of Korea, employed two types of pattern for the inner placement of burial groups (those consisting of more than five burials): concentric and linear. For the concentric pattern, exemplified by burial groups at Sanui-ri and Oseok-ri, two or three central graves are encircled by several other graves. In contrast, the linear pattern, observed in burial groups from Songguk-ri, Namsan-ri and Majeon-ri C district, consists of linear rows of graves.

Since no notable burial goods have been found at the Sanui-ri and the Oseok-ri sites, it is difficult to discern the relation between the central and peripheral burials. Even so, the burials at the center were clearly referenced in the placement and construction of the outlying burials (Fig. 9). In addition, the fact that most of the burials (with two or three exceptions) do not include any burial goods suggests the existence of some doctrine restricting the use of burial goods as a means of expressing individual or communal identity, such as one's specific lineage group within the community. And inhibiting the use of burial goods for individual expression implies an emphasis on collectivity and equality between the members of the community, rather than an endorsement of differentiation and distinction.

While emphasizing equality between community members, the custom of having two or three central burials also serves to legitimize the symbolic power or authority of those central individuals, more so than a common ancestral burial. In contrast, in the linear burial groups, several of the graves have stone daggers or stone arrowheads located at one end or the other (Fig. 10). It is not currently clear whether this placement of daggers or arrowheads indicates the temporal sequence of burial construction or if it is a reference for the overall construction and placement of burial groups. However, looking at the Majeon-ri C district burial group, the daggers or arrowheads are present in 12 out of the 27 total burials (not including five burials that are only 1 m. in length, assumed to be infant or child burials). Considering the near 1:1 ratio between burials with and without

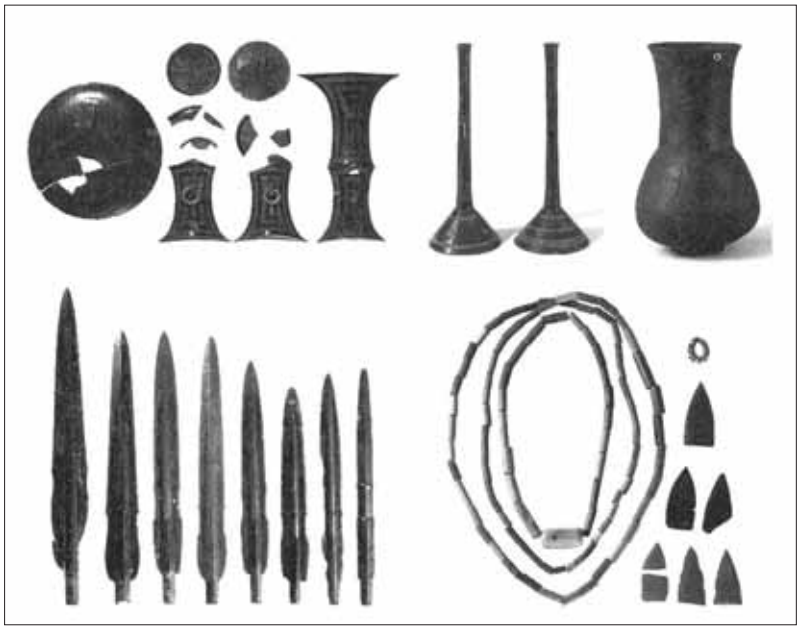

Fig. 11. Burial goods from the burial site at Dongseo-ri, Yesan.
The Bronze Age Culture in Korea (한국의 청동기 문화). 1992. (Seoul: National Museum of Korea; Gwangju: Gwangju National Museum), pp.30-31.

daggers or arrowheads, and the wide acceptance that daggers and arrowheads are largely associated with men, it is possible to infer that those objects are symbols of men or masculinity, rather than status symbols or prestige goods signifying social hierarchy. If this supposition were true, and if the burials with daggers and arrowheads were in fact referenced in the construction and placement of the other burials, then those individuals were probably males who played an important role in the community, rather than people who held a high rank or status within the community.

This emphasis on equality and collectivity is also evidenced by the emergence of wooden wall or enclosure sites or storage facilities, possibly for surplus goods, which began in the later phases of the Early Bronze Age. In the Early Bronze Age, consumption of domestic goods, food preparation, and storage of surplus produce was typically restricted to the individual household level. However, in the Middle Bronze Age, some activities developed which indicate a shift towards the group or community level. Foremost among these is the storage of surplus goods, since it seems likely that such goods were somehow distributed to the larger group. Furthermore, the enclosures and wooden walls would have acted as boundaries and defensive facilities, indicating a distinction between community insiders and outsiders, also contributing to the emphasis and augmentation of communality.

In light of these inferences, it could be argued that female gender expression was made and maintained by engendering space in the context of everyday domestic life. But at the same time, such expression would seem to have been stifled through the burial practices and the emergence of communal storage facilities, which seem to stress collectivity and equality.

As for the men, the presence of the stone daggers and arrowheads indicates that their individual identity was at least somewhat acknowledged by a community. Certainly, even in a period when individual expression is restricted, it seems plausible that some power relationships would be constituted and sustained between members of a community. But in this period, an expression of power or a power relationship could perhaps have been executed by emphasizing equality and community, rather than by displaying individual wealth or distinction. In such case, the symbolic privilege bestowed on women and femininity, as well as the chain of meaning centered on female identity, that had been maintained since

the Neolithic period would have gradually lost its integral social value and been indirectly replaced by other alternatives.

Paradoxically, however, amidst this apparent emphasis on equality, the use of bronze objects expressing individual identity and masculinity emerged.

Use of Bronze Objects & Appearance of Masculinity

Bronze ritual objects dating from the 5th-4th Century BC have been found in burials all over the Midwestern part of the Korean Peninsula, including the Daegok-ri site, Hwasun in Jeollanam-do province and the sites at Dongseo-ri, Yesan, Namseong-ri, Asan, Goejeong-dong, Daejeon, Nonsan, and Deoksan in Chungcheongnam-do province. These bronze ritual objects, which include hilt-shaped objects, trumpet-shaped objects, a bullet-shaped bronze bell, a two-headed bronze bell, and an eight-headed bronze bell, have been found alongside slender bronze daggers, bronze mirrors, and black burnished pottery (Fig. 11). However, most burials from this period do not contain such bronze ritual objects; often the burials contain some combination of bronze daggers, mirrors, and black pottery, or else single bronze objects like daggers or spearheads.

These burials were likely independently or exclusively placed, as the number of settlements from this period is much lower than previous periods. The emergence in this period of independent burials with bronze ritual objects seems to indicate that individuality and masculinity could now be emphasized as a means for displaying and executing power, rather than the values of equality and communality which marked earlier periods. If so, what caused this change? Perhaps rituals of burying individuals with particular bronze objects became socially and symbolically acknowledged and accepted within communities. We still do not know if these bronze ritual objects originated from elsewhere, such as in Manchuria or maybe even somewhere outside the Korean peninsula. However, the introduction of such rituals mediated and even propelled the transition from the Middle Bronze Age, with its emphasis on the social value of community, to the Late Bronze Age, when individuals were socially legitimized, as exemplified by the manner of burial construction.

As yet, no direct data exists to show how these bronze objects, such as armor and mirrors, were associated with the buried body, and the masculine body in particular. In fact, it may not be possible to ever determine with certainty the exact nature of the relationship between the masculine body and the bronze objects. Nonetheless, the mere presence of the objects is significant, in that it demonstrates that those who constructed the burials somehow interpreted the identity of the dead through the objects and recognized them on some symbolic level. In other words, the masculine body was socially symbolized by burying the male body in conjunction with bronze armor, thus emphasizing the masculinity of the deceased.

Considering that bronze armor is primarily associated with violence, the possible constitution of masculinity and the male body as a warrior is of great significance as a concrete reference to serve as the foundation for a symbolic value and structure. Such a foundation would have been indispensable as the social hierarchy began to privilege more coercive and physical forms of power, and as more complex societies began to form, such as ancient states. The developing conception of a warrior's beauty, and the symbolic value of such a conception, would be closely related to significant changes in the structural principles maintaining the society or community, not to mention its implication for the overall perception of the masculine body.

Therefore, the emergence of burial practices utilizing ritual objects indicates the appearance of some sort of fundamental symbolic value, which was a prerequisite for constituting and maintaining the society. This value would have been compromised and accepted by the community members, unlike the advent of high social status reflected by prestige burial goods. This symbolic value would be the bedrock on which various future social changes could be constructed.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to examine the limited archaeological data that embodies the existence of women and the process by which concepts related to femininity and female identity formed in prehistoric Korea. In addition, I have discussed the reasons why the self-expression of the female identity was not clearly visible or highly mediated through the material culture in certain periods.

According to the earliest relevant archaeologi-

cal evidence, from the Neolithic period, women, female identity, and femininity were expressed in the form of figurines symbolizing abundance and fecundity, indicating that such values were approved and validated as important social values within the community. In addition, the Neolithic period seems to have featured social categorization between male and female (i.e., chain of meaning), as mediated by body ornament or stone axe. In other words, it might be inferred that, during this period, men and women expressed their own identity through body ornamentation and that such self identity and its expression was acknowledged within the society.

In contrast, during the Early and Middle Bronze Age, that type of individual self expression likely became restricted by the increasing division and specialization of labor caused by the rise of agriculture, which in turn led to a greater emphasis on equality and community as social values. This emphasis would have been implemented by the reproduction of these symbolic values as structural principles for the society, and then maintained by the members of the society. This emphasis on equality then saw a significant shift in the Late Bronze Age, as males began to more actively express their individuality and masculinity, as evidenced by burial practices. This change was enabled by a new conceptualization of masculinity and the masculine body, represented by an increasing reverence for the image of a warrior. JK AA

This paper is a revised version of "Women and Femininity in Prehistoric Korea (한국 선사시대 여성과 여성성)," which was previously published in 2011 in *Journal of Korean Archaeological Society* (한국고고학보), 78.

Selected Bibliography

An, Jaeho (안재호). 2006. *Cheongdonggi sidae chwirak gyeongu* (청동기 시대 취락연구, *A Research on Bronze Age Settlements*). Ph.D. dissertation in Department of Archaeology, Busan National University.

Barthes, Roland. 1973. *Elements of Semiology*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gero, Joan M. and Margaret W. Conkey, eds. 1991. *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. London: Polity Press.

Gimbutas, Marija. 1989. *The Language of the Goddess*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Hodder, Ian. 1982. "Burials, Houses, Women and Men in the European Neolithic." *Ideology, Power and Prehistory*, edited by Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley, 51-68. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1990. *The Domestication of Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Institute of Archaeology of Social Academy (사회과학원 고고학연구소). 1977. *Joseon Gogohak Gaeyo* (조선고고학개요, *Introduction to Korean Archaeology*). Pyeongyang: Gwahak Baekgwasajeon Chulpansa.

Kehoe, Alice Beck. 1998. *The Land of Prehistory*. London: Routledge.

Kim, Byeongmo (김병모) *et al*. 2008. *Pyeongtaek sosadong yujeok* (평택 소사동 유적 I, *Pyeongtaek Sosa-dong Site I*). Hanam: Korea Institute of Heritage.

Kim, Gwongu (김권구). 2000. "Seonsasidae uirye wa sahoejeok seong ui gochal (선사시대 의례와 사회적 성의 고찰, Prehistoric Ritual and Review on Gender)." *Gogoyeoksahakji* (고고역사학지) 16.

Kim, Jaehyeon (김재현). 2002. "Ingollo bon namgang daepyeong saramdeul (인골로 본 남강 대평사람들, The People of Namgang Daepyeong Region Seen from Human Bone)." In *Cheongdonggi sidaeui daepyeong • daepyeongin* (청동기 시대의 대평• 대평인, *Daepyeong and Daepyeong People in the Bronze Age*). Jinju: Jinju National Museum, 132-140.

Kim, Jongil (김종일). 2008. "Gogohakjeok beomjuhwa ui cheolhakjeok tamgu (고고학적 범주화의 철학적 탐구, Philosophical Investigation and Archaeological Categorization)." *Gogohak* (고고학) 7-1.

_____. 2009. "Hanguk cheongdonggi sidae namseong momgwa namseongseong ui hyeongseong (한국 청동기시대 남성 몸과 남성성의 형성, Masculine body and masculinity in Korean Bronze Age)." In *Muljil munhwa wa nongmin ui sam* (물질문화와 농민의 삶, *Material Culture and Life of Peasant's Life*) edited by Committee of publication for commemorating the retirement of Prof. Yi Taejin (이태진), 21-52. Seoul: Taehaksa.

Kim, Seonju (김선주). 2010. *Silla ui gobun munhwawa yeoseong* (신라의 고분문화와 여성, *Tumulus Culture of Silla and Women*). Seoul: Gukhak Jaryowon.

Kim, Wonyong (김원룡). 1982. "Hanguk seonsa sidae ui sinsang e daehayeo (한국선사시대의 신상에 대하여, On ritual figurines of Prehistoric Korea)." *Yeoksa hakbo* (역사학보) 94/95.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge.

Nelson, Sarah M. 1993. "Gender Hierarchy and the Queens of Silla." In *Sex Roles and Gender Hierarchies* edited by Barbara Diane Miller, 273-296. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1983. *Course in General Linguistics*. London: Duckworth.

Sherratt, Andrew. 1990. "The Genesis of Megaliths: Monumentality, Ethnicity and Social Complexity in Neolithic North-West Europe." *World Archaeology* 22: 147-167.

Sørensen, Marie Louise Stig. 2000. *Gender Archaeology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Treherne, Paul. 1995. "The Warrior's Beauty: the Masculine Body and Self-Identity in Bronze-Age Europe." *Journal of European Archaeology* 3(1): 105-144.