Changing Components of Power among Ancient Chiefs in the Korean Peninsula

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Introduction

The great mounds of the tumuli that dot the landscape of Gyeongju, the ancient capital of Silla, demonstrate the enormous power wielded by the individuals for whom they were constructed. However, that power was anything but simplistic, and for a more detailed understanding of its nature, we must venture inside the tumuli to examine the grave goods buried within them. For example, the amazing quality and quantity of the grave goods excavated from Hwangnamdaechong Tomb—a royal tomb of the fifth century beneath a mound that measures approximately 120 meters in length and 24 meters in height—clearly demonstrates the economic and military power wielded by the Silla kings, who were called *maripgan* at the time.

The substantial political power of the *maripgan* was not something that emerged suddenly, but was the end-product of an ongoing process of state formation that can be traced back to the Bronze Age. One way of investigating this process, which culminated with the Silla Kingdom, may be to consider how the power base of the chiefs within the region changed over time. This may be done by analyzing the grave goods from the burials of chiefs, and particularly by examining how the nature of the grave goods changed over time as the social role of the chief shifted from being a *leader* with *authority* to being a *ruler* with *power* (Lee Heejoon 2002).

Therefore, this article analyzes and compares the grave goods from representative burials of chiefs in the region from the Bronze Age to the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period (which preceded the establishment of the Silla Kingdom). Such an analysis should enhance our understanding of the changing nature of the power of chiefs, and particularly how control based on authority came to be replaced by control through power. So how can grave goods shed light on the formation and intensification of authority or power? One possible approach may be to consider the grave goods in terms of their relationship with the economic, physical, and ideological components of society, which Haas (1982) and Earle (1997) have identified, respectively, as providing the "base" or "source" of the elite's controlling power. An examination of how these three components were established over time, ultimately contributing to the institutionalization of the power of the chiefs, may allow us to judge the degree to which the societies of each period were politically integrated.

Research Approach

Before the mid-1990s, research on the formation of ancient states in the Korean Peninsula tended to take a social evolutionary approach. Central to this approach was the notion of a "chiefdom society," which was believed to have been established in the Bronze Age. However, the concept of a "Korean chiefdom society" is highly problematic, in that it attempts to categorize the social characteristics of the Korean Bronze Age according to a scheme of social develop-

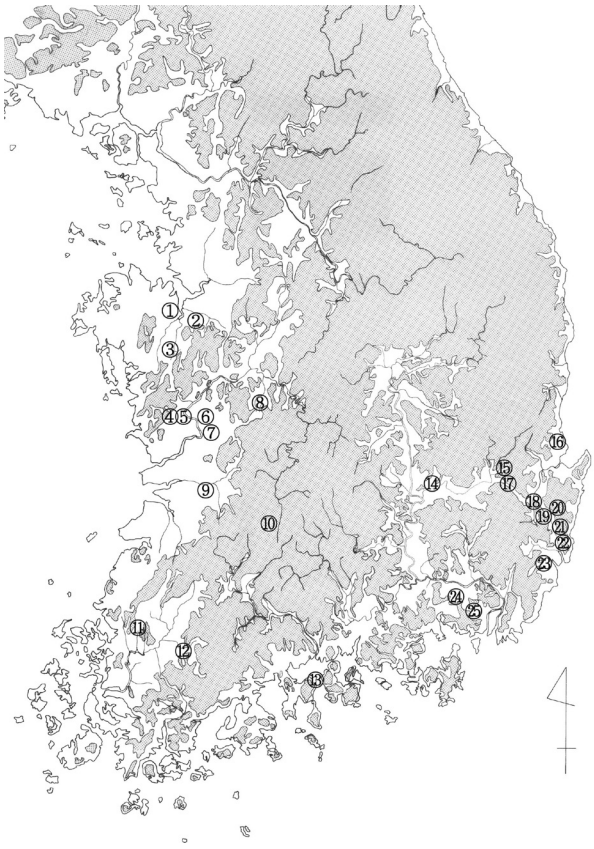
ment previously established by western scholars.

Since the mid-1990s, a number of studies have appeared that address the issue of state formation through a diachronic analysis of the evolution of political power. This new research trend began with Kwon Oyoung's (1996) study on the formation of the guk polities of Samhan. This was soon followed by studies that successively: analyzed the grave goods (i.e., bronze artifacts) of elite burials in the southern regions of the Korean Peninsula in order to consider how the social position of the deceased changed from the Early Iron Age to the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period (Lee Cheonggyu 1998); examined archaeological material from the Yeongnam region in order to trace the area's social development from the Bronze Age through the development of the Jinhan and Byeonhan polities (Lee Jaehyun 2003); addressed the religious role of Early Iron Age chiefs (supplementing previous discussion of their political, economic, and military power), including contemplating how that role may have changed over time (Yi Hyunhae 2003); and showed how the changing nature of political power gradually brought about the integration of regional political units from the Bronze Age (Lee Sungjoo 2007).

Thus, since the mid-1990s, studies on state formation in the Korean Peninsula have focused, either implicitly or explicitly, on the development of political or social power. They have also recognized that the most appropriate method for investigating this topic may be an analysis of artifacts from burial contexts, and have thus acknowledged the need for a more systematic and comprehensive analysis of these artifacts. To date, however, no study of state formation with the clear goal of charting the development of power has provided a detailed consideration of the interpretative methodology required to undertake such an endeavor.

As mentioned, Jonathan Haas (1982), whose research was translated into Korean in the late 1980s, approached the process of state formation and development by looking at how leaders come to exercise power over their dependent population. His method of analyzing this power in terms of the three constituent aspects—economic, physical, and ideological—that form its "base" can serve as the blueprint for constructing a valid interpretative approach.

With this in mind, this paper carries out a systematic analysis of the grave goods from representative chieftain burials, in the belief that such artifacts may reflect the changing nature of the above-mentioned aspects of the power base of chiefs. Analysis and interpretation will particularly focus on identifying how the grave goods represent various aspects of the chiefs' power base, in order to elucidate how those aspects shifted in significance over time.



Map of important sites mentioned in the text:
① Soso-ri in Dangjin ② Dongseo-ri in Yesan ③ Namseong-ri in Asan ④ Gubong-ri in Buyeo ⑤ Hapsong-ri in Buyeo ⑥ Songguk-ri in Buyeo ⑦ Wonbuk-ri in Nonsan ⑧ Goejeong-dong in Daejeon ⑨ Gal-dong in Wanju ⑩ Namnyang-ri in Jangsu ⑪ Chopo-ri in Hampyeong ⑫ Daegok-ri in Hwasun ⑬ Jeongnyang-dong in Yeosu ⑭ Paldal-dong in Daegu ⑮ Yongjeon-ri in Yeongcheon ⑯ Okseong-ri in Pohang ⑰ Sara-ri in Gyeongju ⑱ Tap-dong in Gyeongju ⑲ Joyang-dong in Gyeongju ⑳ Gujeong-dong in Gyeongju ㉑ Ipsil-ri in Gyeongju ㉒ Jungsan-ri in Ulsan ㉓ Hadae in Ulsan ㉔ Daho-ri in Changwon ㉕ Yangdong-ri in Gimhae

The time period under consideration in this paper comprises the Korean Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, and Proto-Three Kingdoms Period.[1] For the purpose of the current research, each of these periods can be further divided into a number of phases. The Bronze Age can be subdivided into the Early and

1 This follows the widely accepted chronological framework adopted by the Korean Archaeological Society (2010).

Late Bronze Age. The Early Iron Age can be subdivided utilizing the chronological framework established by Takesue Shunichi (2004), which is based on diachronic changes observable in the assemblages of pottery and bronze artifacts from the southern region of the Korean Peninsula (see the map, p. 75), and supplemented by cross-dating the Korean artifacts with material from the Northern Kyushu region of Japan. This division includes the following four phases: Phase I (representative site: Namseong-ri, Asan), dated to around the fourth century BCE, and represented by Korean-type bronze daggers, bronze mirrors, and bronze ritual implements of unknown function found in association with attached-rim pottery with rims that are round in cross section; Phase II (representative site: Chopo-ri, Hampyeong), dated to the early third century BCE, and represented by bronze dagger-axes, bronze spearheads, and bronze bells found in association with attached-rim pottery with rims that are round in cross section; Phase III (representative site: Namyang-ri, Jangsu), dated to the late third century BCE, and represented by iron objects found in association with attached-rim pottery with rims that are round in cross section; and Phase IV, dated to around the second century BCE, and represented by attached-rim pottery with rims that are triangular in cross section. The Proto-Three Kingdoms Period can be roughly divided into the wooden coffin burial phase (first century BCE - second century CE), and the wooden chamber burial phase (second - third century CE). The wooden coffin burial phase can be further subdivided into Phase I (up to first century CE) and Phase II (first century CE and beyond); the wooden chamber burial phase is referred to as Phase III.[2]

2 It should be noted here that the representative sites for the Early Iron Age are in the southwestern region of the peninsula,

Fig. 1. Bronze dagger (left) and stone dagger (right) from Songguk-ri site in Buyeo. Bronze Age. Height (left)- 33.4 cm, (right)- 34.1 cm. (National Museum of Korea).

Phase	Site	Korean-type bronze dagger Excavated number	Bronze mirror	Bronze ritual implement of unknown function	Bronze bell	Bronze spearhead	Bronze dagger-axe	Bronze tool	Other bronze object	Iron tool
I	Dongseo-ri, Yesan	8	5	Split-bamboo-shaped 3 Trumpet-shaped 2 Disk-shaped 1						
II	Chopo-ri, Hampyeong	4	3		Instrument with end bells 2 Composite instrument with end bells 2 Poll-top bell 2 Other type 1	2	3	Axe 1 Chisel 2 Engraver 1	Chinese-type mirror	
III	Burial 4, Namyang-ri, Jangsu	1	1			2		Chisel 1		Axe 2 Chisel 2 Engraver 2
III	Burial Na-1, Wonbuk-ri, Nonsan		1					Axe 1		
IV	Burial 4, Gal-dong, Wanju									Cast axe 2
IV	Burial 90, Paldal-dong, Daegu					1	1			Flat axe 1, Spearhead 1, Sword 1

Table 1. Representative burials and grave goods of each phase of the Early Iron Age.

Artifacts from Representative Chieftain Burials

1. Bronze Age (Fig. 1)

The burials of the Bronze Age consist of dolmens and stone cist burials. In the case of dolmens, the quantity and quality of grave goods are not directly proportionate to the scale of the burial structure, since the grave goods generally consist of either a single Liaoning-type bronze dagger or a set comprising a single stone dagger and several stone arrowheads, with little variation in quality and quantity. It is therefore difficult to determine, based on the grave goods alone, which of the dolmens may be regarded as representative chieftain burials of the Early Bronze Age.

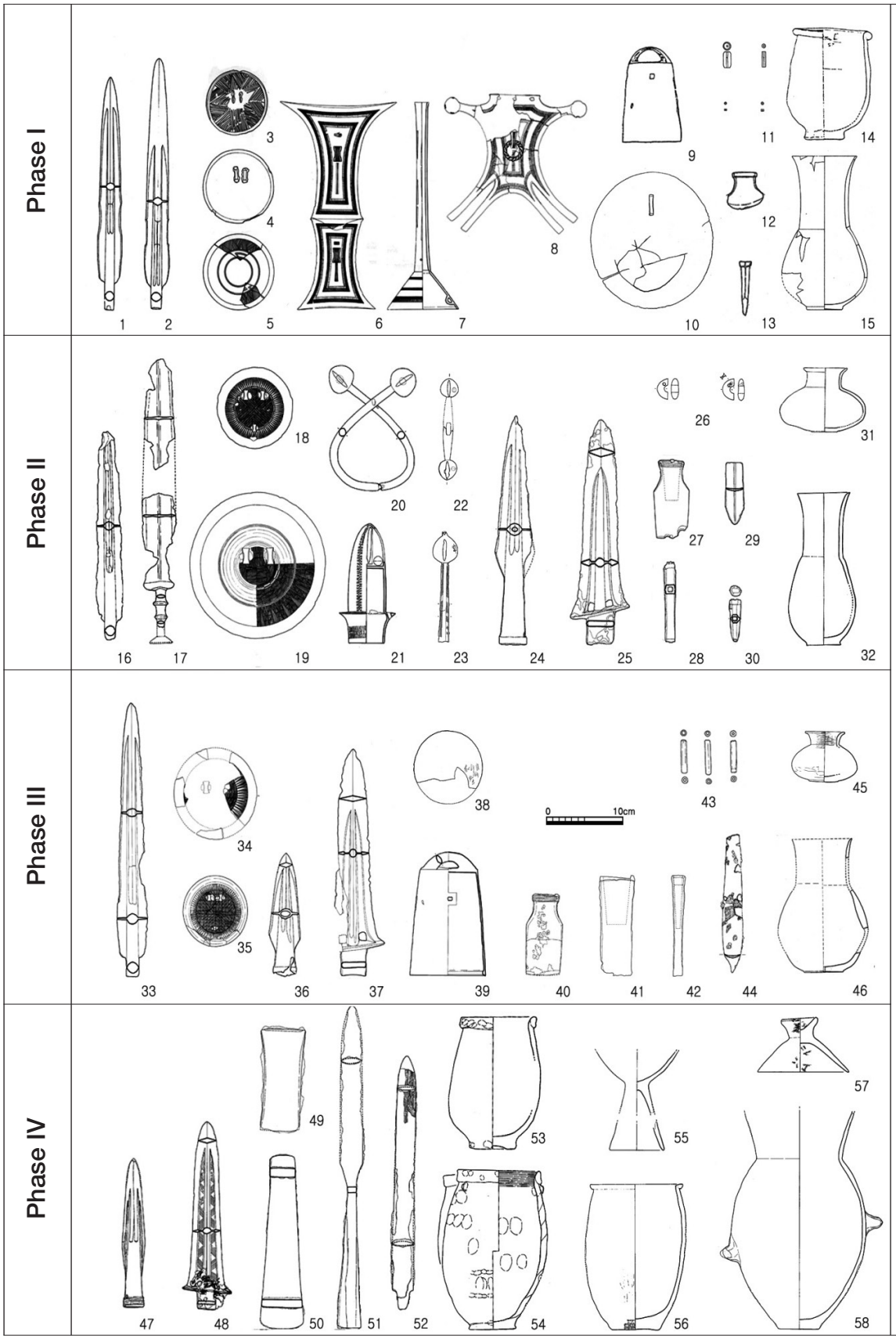
As for the Late Bronze Age, the stone cist burials of the Songguk-ri site in Buyeo can be regarded as the representative chieftain burials. In contrast to the Early Bronze Age, the burials of this phase contain either two stone daggers, or bronze daggers along with either stone daggers or other bronze objects; notably, a few burials contain all three types of these artifacts. However, it cannot be said that bronze daggers became more widely used as grave goods in the Late Bronze Age. In Early Bronze Age burials, a total of two bronze daggers and 11 stone daggers have been excavated; in Late Bronze Age burials, 13 bronze daggers and 191 stone daggers have been excavated, and just four of the burials contained both bronze and stone daggers (Bae Jinseong 2006).

2. Early Iron Age (Table 1 and Figs. 2 and 3)

– Phase I

The representative chieftain burials of this phase come from the sites of Goejeong-dong in Daejeon, Dongseo-ri in Yesan, and Namseong-ri in Asan. Various bronze objects including daggers and mirrors were commonly used as grave goods, and the only types of pottery deposited in the burials were attached-rim pottery and burnished black jars with long necks. The burials of Dongseo-ri and Namseong-ri yielded many Korean-type bronze daggers, but in the Goejeong-dong burial, only one Korean-type bronze dagger was found, in association with

whereas those for the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period are in the southeastern region. This is because the resolution of the archaeological data from the southeastern region is poor prior to the first century BCE, but high for the periods afterwards, and vice versa for the southwestern region.



1-7, 10, 11, and 15: Dongseo-ri

8, 12, and 13: Namseong-ri

9 and 14: Goejeong-dong

16-30: Chopo-ri

31 and 32: Gubong-ri

33, 34, 37-39, and 41-43, 46: Hapsong-ri

35, 40, 45: Burial Na-1, Wonbuk-ri

36: Burial 1, Namyang-ri

44: Burial 4, Namyang-ri

47, 48, 50-52, and 55-58: Burial 90, Paldal-dong

49 and 53-54: Burial 4, Gal-dong

Fig. 2. Grave goods from the burials of Phase I to IV of the Early Iron Age (Scale: 1/8, except for pottery and Artifact 18 [1/10], and beads [1/4])

Fig. 3. Shield-shaped bronze implement from Namseong-ri site. Early Iron Age. Length- 17.6 cm. (National Museum of Korea).

bronze horse bells. In addition, bronze axes and chisels were also deposited as grave goods at the chieftain burial of Namseong-ri.

– Phase II

The representative chieftain burials of this phase come from the sites of Gubong-ri in Buyeo, Daegok-ri in Hwasun, and Chopo-ri in Hampyeong. Bronze axes and chisels were used as grave goods; notably, bronze engraving tools are commonly found in the burials of this phase. In addition, bronze bells seem to have replaced the bronze ritual implements of unknown function from the previous phase. A relatively large number of Korean-type bronze daggers were found, and interestingly enough, one Chinese bronze dagger was deposited at one of the Chopo-ri burials.

– Phase III

The representative chieftain burials of this phase come from the sites of Hapsong-ri in Buyeo, Soso-ri in Dangjin, and Namyang-ri in Jangsu. Bronze bells were no longer used as grave goods, and the deposition of iron tools (e.g., axes, chisels, engravers) began. Korean-type bronze daggers and bronze mirrors continued to be deposited, but no longer in multiple numbers. Bronze dagger-axes and spearheads were still used as grave goods, but were never deposited together in the same tomb. Fragments of bronze mirrors and daggers were also used as grave goods (e.g., the earth-cut burial from the site of Wonbuk-ri in Nonsan). The standard set of grave goods, consisting of a single Korean-type bronze dagger with the addition of another type of bronze object (such as a bronze mirror), was no longer maintained in this period, as can be seen in the cases of Burial Na-ı in Wonbuk-ri and the burials of Gal-dong, Wanju.

– Phase IV

In this phase, Korean-type bronze daggers and

bronze mirrors no longer appear to have been used as grave goods in the chieftain burials of the southwestern region of the peninsula. However, in the southeastern region, Korean-type bronze daggers and bronze mirrors with multiple knobs continued to be used as grave goods, in association with bronze engravers, spearheads, and bells. This can be observed at the burials of Ipsil-ri and Gujeong-dong, both located in Gyeongju. Notably, in Phase IV, bronze spearheads and dagger-axes were still used as grave goods in the southeastern region (for example, in Burial 90 at Paldal-dong in Daegu), whereas in the southwestern region, their use was already experiencing a decline in Phase III. This fact may reflect a difference in the degree of cultural development between the eastern and western parts of the southern region of the peninsula, which has previously been posited.

3. Proto-Three Kingdoms Period (Table 2 and Figs. 4, 5, and 6)

– Phase I (Wooden coffin burials of the first century BCE)

The representative chieftain burials of this phase are Burials 5 and 38 of Joyang-dong in Gyeongju, Burial 1 of Daho-ri in Changwon, and the wooden coffin burial of Yongjeon-ri in Yeongcheon. In this phase, the Korean-type bronze dagger was replaced by the iron dagger. Flat iron axes were commonly used as grave goods (but usually no more than two or four in a single grave), and iron sickles and iron knives with a ring-shaped hilt began to be deposited together as a set. Joyang-dong Burial 5, which is a relatively early burial, contains a bronze mirror with multiple knobs, but in the later burials of this phase, that type of mirror was replaced by Han bronze mirrors, thus bringing an end to the use of the former as a grave good. Notably, bronze horse bells were found in the majority of these burials. Also of interest is the deposition of weapons (e.g., iron spearheads) and farming and construction tools (e.g., iron axes) as grave goods in the wooden coffin burial of Yongjeon-ri.

– Phase II (Wooden coffin burials of the late first century CE)

Burial 130 of Sara-ri in Gyeongju is the representative chieftain burial of this phase. Notably, this burial represents the last known instance of the Korean-type bronze dagger being used as a grave good. Also deposited in the burial were iron arrowheads, which became a popular grave good from this period; many iron axes; various bronze objects; four Korean imitations of Han mirrors, effectively replacing the Han mirrors of the later stage of Phase I; and crystal beads, which indicate the existence of a long-distance exchange network. The last three types of artifact are of particular note for this study, since they seem to have been used to emphasize the social and political status of the deceased.

– Phase III (Wooden chamber burials of the mid-second to early third century CE)

A representative chieftain burial of this phase is Burial 162 of Yangdong-ri in Gimhae. A greater

Phase	Site	Korean-type bronze dagger	Bronze mirror	Other bronze objects	Bead ornament	Iron sword	Iron spearhead	Iron arrowhead	Cast iron axe	Flat iron axe	Wrought iron axe	Other iron objects
I	Burial 38, Joyang-dong, Gyeongju		Early Han mirror 4	Ring-shaped object	Glass beads, Agate beads	Dagger 1			2	8	3	Hand knife 3 Engraver, Scythe, Chisel
II	Burial 130, Sara-ri, Gyeongju	2	Korean imitation mirror 4	Tiger-shaped buckle 2, Horse gear	Glass and crystal earring 1	Dagger 1	2	24		70	4	Small knife 4 Caldron, Scythe, Horse bit
III	Burial 162, Yangdong-ri, Gimhae		Late Han mirror 2, Korean imitation mirror 8		Glass and crystal earring 1	6 (Including a sword)	18	60		40	8	Plow, Caldron, Scythe
III	Burial 78, Okseong-ri, Pohang				Crystal beads	Sword 3	105	64	2		9	Shovel, Object of unknown function with scale-shaped protrusions, Hand knife, Scythe

Table 2. Representative burials and their grave goods of each phase of the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period.

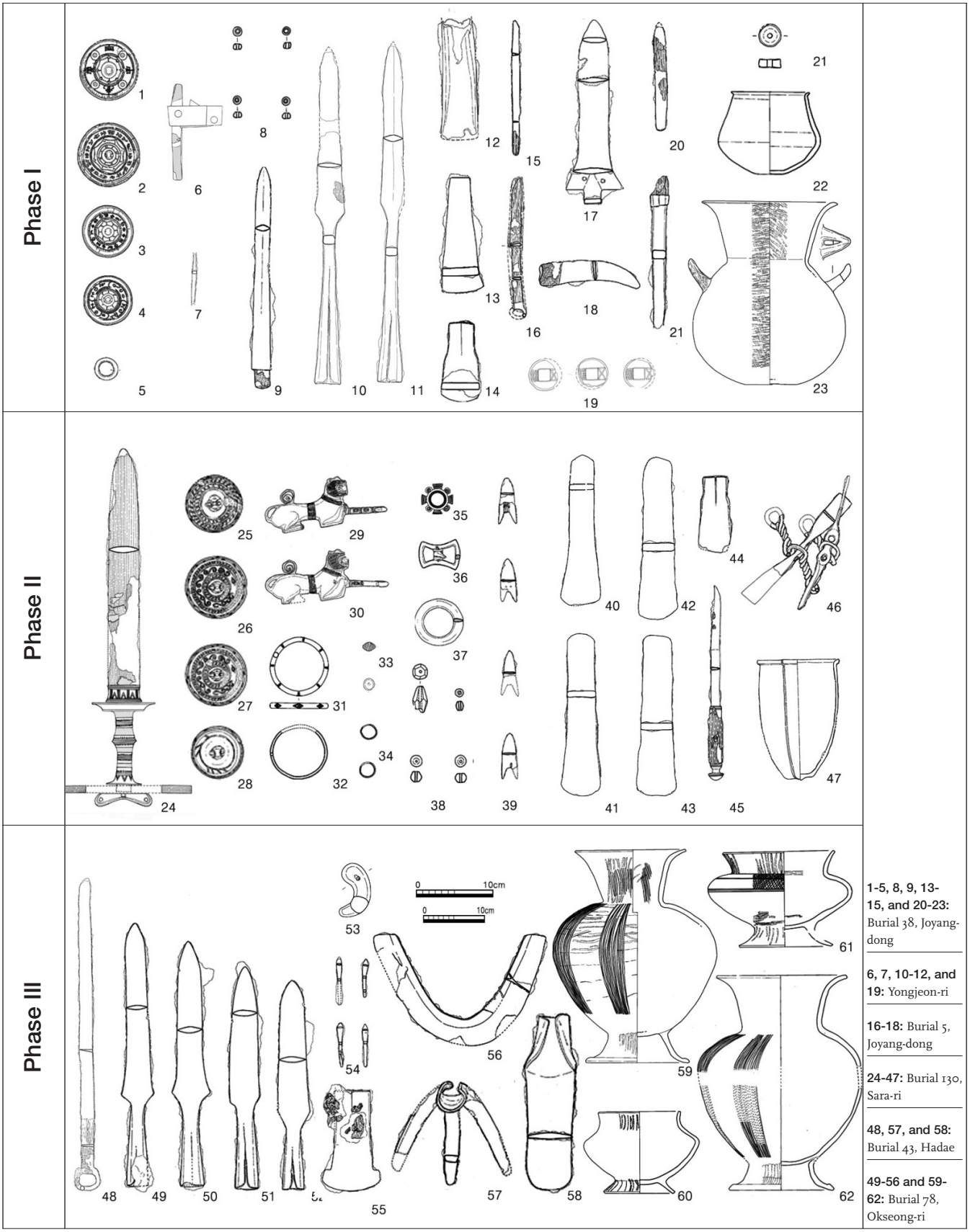


Fig. 4. Grave goods from the burials of Phases I - III of the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period (Scale: 1/8, except for pottery [1/10], beads [1/4], Artifact 47 [1/20], and Artifact 48 [1/15]).

Fig. 5. Animal-shaped buckles from Eoeun-dong site in Yeongcheon. Proto-Three Kingdoms Period (1st century). Length (above)- 19.4 cm, (below) 22.4 cm. (Gyeongju National Museum).

Fig. 6. Necklace from Sara-ri site in Gyeongju. Proto-Three Kingdoms Period (1st century). Diameter of each bead - 0.3-0.4 cm. (Gyeongju National Museum).

number of iron arrowheads were used as grave goods, and the presence of many iron spearheads is also of interest. The deposition of a large number of flat iron axes and Korean imitations of Han mirrors (in addition to some authentic Han mirrors) continued as well. Another representative site is Burial 78 of Okseong-ri in Pohang, which dates to the later stage of this phase, and is most interesting for the presence of a large number of iron spearheads and arrowheads. Overall, weapons, rather than farming implements and other tools, were more widely used as grave goods. Flat iron axes were no longer deposited, except in the earliest stage of this phase, and the importance of general farming tools (such as iron sickles) appears to have diminished, being largely replaced by shovels. In the other representative chieftain burials of this phase, such as Burial 43 of Hadae in Ulsan, pitchforks and small plows were deposited along with shovels. It should be noted that these three types of farming tools (which are all plowing tools) only appear with any frequency in the large-scale burials of this phase, often in association with swords with ring-shaped pommel end decorations and quartz beads.

Diachronic Change in the Power Base of Chiefs from the Bronze Age to the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period

1. Power Base of Bronze Age Chiefs

There has been much debate regarding the nature of the society of the Korean Bronze Age. It is considered by some scholars to have been a stratified society, as exemplified by those participating in the 2006 conference "Stratified Society and the Emergence of Leaders." However, in the English archaeological and anthropological literature, "stratified society" generally refers to highly complex societies, and therefore must be used with care. For example, Morton Fried (1967) regards "stratified society" as a social stage that follows egalitarian and ranked society, and precedes the state. In addition, Kristian Kristiansen (1991) has used "stratified society" to refer to a social stage in between chiefdom and state. Thus, in the archaeological record, stratified societies may not easily be distinguished from state-level societies.

In the Korean Bronze Age, members of society no longer maintained an egalitarian relationship, but the precise nature of that social inequality requires much consideration. The issue becomes even more complicated if we accept that social differentiation may be observed even within egalitarian societies. Brian Hayden (1995), for example, has proposed the concept of "transegalitarian communities," which are additional social categories lower than chiefdoms, and characterized by a degree of social inequality. Therefore, while the Bronze Age in Korea clearly witnessed the emergence of social inequality, the precise nature and meaning of that inequality has yet to be fully explored.

Significantly, the grave goods of the chieftain burials of both the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age generally consisted of a *single* dagger—a stone dagger for the Bronze Age, and a bronze dagger for the Early Iron Age (along with other bronze objects). This concurrence indicates that the dagger likely symbolized the political authority, rather than the military power, of the leader. In addition, the fact that only a single dagger was deposited makes it unlikely to be a concrete expression of economic power or individual wealth. Thus, of the aforementioned three aspects of the power base of chiefs, the dagger would seem to represent the ideological component. While the labor involved in the construction of dolmens may also be regarded as a strong indicator of the authoritative nature of chieftain power, labor expenditure also represents, to a degree, the economic component of that power base. However, this economic aspect does not appear to have been controlled by the deceased individual alone.

The presence of Liaoning-type bronze daggers in Bronze Age burials is widely considered to be a strong indicator that the deceased were part of a local elite group. For example, Takesue Shunichi (2002) attempted to attribute Stone Cist Burial 1 from Section 52 of the Songguk-ri site to a local elite group, based on the presence of a Liaoning-type bronze dagger and a stone dagger, along with the fact that the graves form a cluster with other neighboring burials. This understanding of dagger burials is based in part on the interpretation of the Sangjeok dolmen cluster from the Jeoknyang-dong site in Yeosu, which yielded many bronze artifacts, including seven Liaoning-type bronze daggers and one Liaoning-type bronze spearhead. Takesue divided these dolmens into seven groups, with each group containing a dolmen with a bronze dagger (Fig. 7), and it was suggested that

the seven dolmen groups represented seven social groups of equal social standing.

Woo Jeongyeon (2010) has suggested that the bronze dagger dolmens may be the graves of the founding ancestors of local groups, and that the dolmens later constructed nearby may have also been imbued with the symbolic meaning of the bronze daggers by virtue of their close proximity to the dolmens containing them, which might explain why there were no grave goods in many of those later burials. Given this interpretation, then it is possible to argue that burials with bronze daggers were not necessarily superior to those without. Notably, the bronze objects that were deposited as grave goods in Early Bronze Age burials most likely came from outside the Korean Peninsula and, as they have mostly been found at coastal sites, they may have been acquired through long-distance sea routes. Therefore, the individuals buried with these bronze daggers may have been involved in long-distance trade, which contributed to the accumulation of economic wealth by the community.

The grave goods found in the Late Bronze Age stone cist burial from Songguk-ri are particularly fine, including a Liaoning-type bronze dagger, a stone dagger, 11 stone arrowheads, and many jade beads. It has been suggested that the individual in this burial and the occupants of other burials in the Songguk-ri cemetery were members of the local elite (Choi Jonggyu 2004).

One way to explain the disproportionate amount of labor involved in the construction of Bronze Age burials vis-à-vis the relatively modest grave goods deposited within, as well as the fact that the burials of the ensuing Early Iron Age consisted of single interments accompanied by a rich array of grave goods, may be to adopt Colin Renfrew's (1974) distinction between group-orientated chiefdoms and particularizing chiefdoms. In applying this distinction to the Korean data, however, it must be noted that Renfrew's model was based on European prehistoric societies, which were similar to Korean societies in terms of the degree of social complexity, but drastically different in terms of their mode of organization (Feinman 2001).

The preceding evidence indicates that, during the Bronze Age, the ideological component seems to have been the predominant factor of the power base

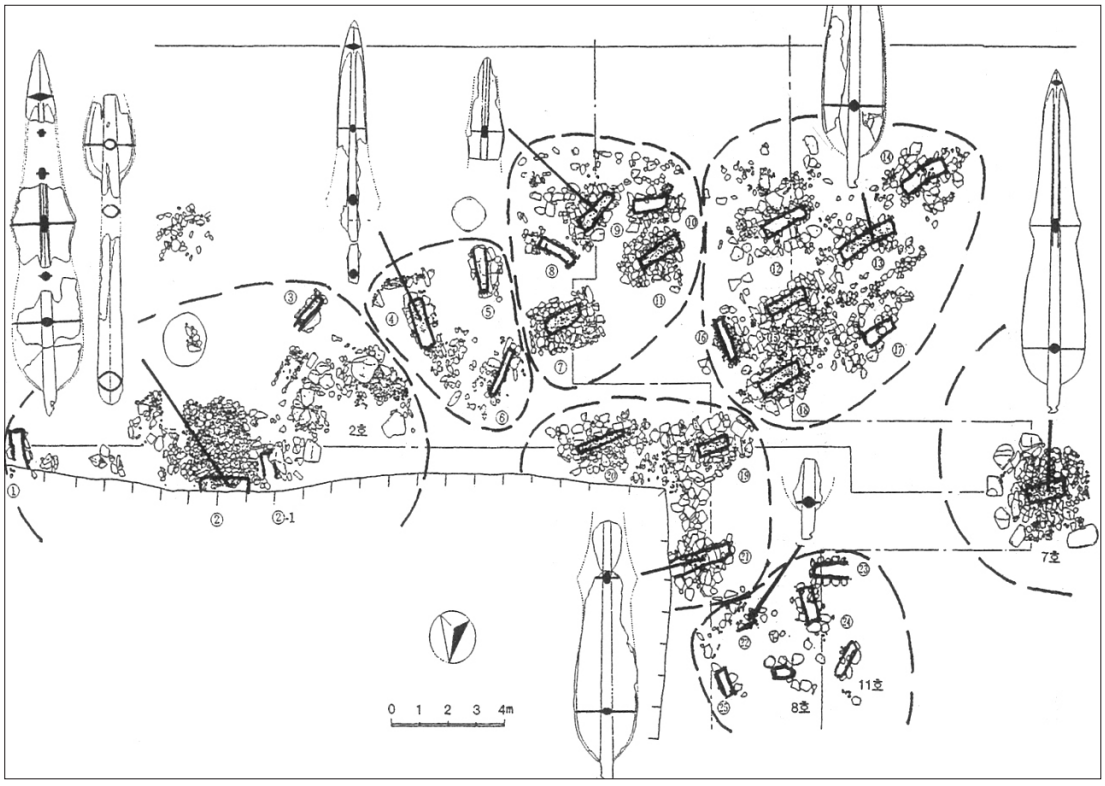


Fig. 7. Distribution of Liaoning-type bronze daggers from the dolmens of the Sangjeok group of the Jeokryang-dong site in Yeosu (Takesue Shunichi, 2004, p. 31).

of chiefs on the Korean Peninsula, rather than the economic or physical component.

2. Power Base of Early Iron Age Chiefs

In Phases I and II of the Early Iron Age, the grave goods assemblage came to consist of Korean-type bronze daggers accompanied by a variety of other bronze objects. As noted above for the Bronze Age, these daggers can be seen to symbolize the political authority of the deceased (Yoon Taeyeong 2010), and thus may also be regarded as representing the ideological component of chieftain power. As for the other types of bronze objects deposited in Early Iron Age burials, Yoon has interpreted the bronze ritual implements of unknown function and bronze bells as ritual symbols; bronze spearheads and dagger-axes as symbols of military power; and bronze axes, chisels, and engraving tools as economic symbols. The latter were attributed with an economic meaning because they were regarded as tools involved in the production of *mokgan* (wooden strips for writing), which were seen to reflect the deceased's control of the long-distance exchange networks that may have provided the economic base of chieftain power. The imported Chinese-type bronze dagger found at the Chopo-ri burial may also serve as an indicator of such a network.

Bronze mirrors, as sacred objects that symbolized interaction with the sun and the gods, have been interpreted as the highest class of ritual object owned by the high priest. Since the high priest was also a chief, such mirrors can be regarded as the representative ritual objects of a theocratic society. Ethnographic studies have shown that mirrors are seen to imbue their owners with absolute spiritual power, so it has also been suggested that those buried with bronze mirrors were believed to possess such power (Yi Hyunhae 2003). These interpretations demonstrate that bronze mirrors may also be regarded as symbols of the deceased's ideological and political status.

The bronze ritual implements of unknown function deposited in the burials of Phase I of this period may have represented the common wishes of the entire community. For example, the shield-shaped bronze implement from Namseong-ri site (Fig. 3) featured an image of a grain god, who may have ensured agricultural bounty, while the bronze implement in the form of a split bamboo is thought to have been involved in rituals of worship. The practice of depositing these implements, which had a strong communal element, may have provided an ideological focal point for the community, helping to unify them into a single political unit (Yi Hyunhae 2003). Thus the bronze ritual implements of unknown function may have provided political leaders with an additional priestly role, and consequently, an ideological power base. The use of these bronze ritual implements of unknown function as grave goods came to an end in Phase II, possibly because such symbols were no longer needed to assert the priestly role of the chief. Indeed, this may also explain the subsequent deposition of bronze bells, which were ritual implements used to call upon the gods (Lee Cheonggyu 1998).

One of the most distinctive features of the Phase I burials of the Early Iron Age is the use of multiple daggers as grave goods. Given that different styles of daggers have been found in a single burial, they do not appear to have been deposited as weapons. As mentioned, the daggers likely functioned as symbols of the political authority of the deceased, but they may also have symbolized the deceased's role in controlling long-distance exchange networks, and thereby represented the economic aspect of chieftain power. It should also be mentioned that the bronze spearheads and dagger-axes from Phase II and III burials may also be understood this way: although they are often associated with the physical element of chieftain power, they were not generally used as actual weapons, at least in the southwestern region of the Korean Peninsula. Given that such objects were probably obtained through long-distance exchange networks, they may have symbolized the deceased's control of those networks. The fact that these objects—including the bronze engraving tool, as discussed above—were deposited in Early Iron Age burials from the earliest phase onwards may suggest that the economic component of chieftain power began to emerge from the beginning of this period.

Then how can we understand the increased ideological component of the power base of chiefs, as represented by the deposition of bronze ritual implements of unknown function from the beginning of the Early Iron Age? One possibility is to consider Stephen Shennan's (1982) distinction between the group-oriented ideology of European Neolithic societies and the particularizing ideology of the early

chiefdom societies of the Bronze Age, assuming that the latter might also be applied to the Korean Early Iron Age. Of course, the grave goods of the European Early Bronze Age and the Korean Early Iron Age are different in nature; the former consist mainly of individual prestige items, while the latter include bronze ritual implements of unknown function, which were strongly communal in nature. This indicates that some of the communal elements of the funerary practices of the previous period were retained into the Early Iron Age.

The most distinctive feature of Phase III is the clustering of burials, which was accompanied by the use of iron objects as grave goods. The burial clusters of the southern regions of the peninsula seem to have been established around the same time that iron objects first appeared in the area. However, it is difficult at present to pinpoint the precise date that these changes occurred or to identify the nature of the causal relationship—which clearly existed—between the two.

The early iron artifacts found in the burials of the southwestern region are cast iron products that came from Warring States China, and they consist solely of a limited range of farming tools (Lee Sung-joo 2007). Therefore, in interpreting these artifacts, their practical function would seem to be subsidiary to their signification of economic power, representing the deceased's ability to acquire such implements through long-distance exchange. This interpretation is supported by the fact that these iron farming tools replaced the bronze counterparts of the previous period. Thus, the early iron artifacts can be regarded as indicators of a significant increase in the economic basis of chieftain power, which was generated by long-distance exchange. Given this possible scenario, the clustering of burials may be understood as the result of economic stratification in society, which led chiefs and associated individuals to come together according to lineage.

It should be mentioned that, while the brush and engraving tool from Burial 1 at Daho-ri are generally regarded as the earliest evidence for writing in the southern regions of the Korean Peninsula, the engraving tools deposited in Early Iron Age burials might have been used to make wooden strips for writing (Yoon Taeyeong 2010). If so, that could mean that long-distance exchange was actively taking place as early as Phase II of the Early Iron Age, contributing greatly to the increase in the economic basis of chieftain power.

The evidence from the Phase IV burials is of poor resolution, making it difficult to interpret the archaeological data. However, one clearly noticeable feature of the grave goods assemblage is the presence of a wider range of ceramic vessels. This diversity of ceramic vessels may suggest the development and sophistication of libation ceremonies and ritual offerings, which in turn may indirectly reflect the close relationship between the deceased and the mourners. The ritual confirmation of that close relationship through libations and offerings may have been a means by which the living inherited the social position of the dead. Thus, the variety of ceramic vessels may also be regarded as an indicator of the strengthening ideological component of chieftain power.

Thus, the ideological component of chieftain power seems to have been further strengthened in the Early Iron Age, and the economic component was established. By Phase III, the ideological component was so firmly cemented that, for the most part, it no longer needed to be expressed through grave goods. In addition, lineage groups with strong economic foundations came to form separate status groups within society. However, the physical component of chieftain power had yet to emerge.

3. Power Base of Proto-Three Kingdoms Period Chiefs

The wooden coffin burials of the southeastern region of the peninsula first came to form clusters around the late second century BCE, and by around 100 BCE, such burial clusters were firmly established. The earliest of the burial clusters are represented by the sites of Ipsil-ri and Gujeong-dong in Gyeongju. Artifacts recovered from these sites (which were not formally excavated) include bronze objects that date to Early Iron Age Phase IV, and cast iron axes. The bronze bells and horse bells from Ipsil-ri can be seen to represent the last traces of the use of ritual objects as grave goods, along with the bronze mirror with multiple knobs from Joyang-dong Burial 5 (one of the earliest burials securely dated to Phase I of the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period). It therefore appears that the priestly role of the chief had all but ended by this time.

In this period, the Han mirror came to replace the bronze mirror with multiple knobs (e.g., Burial

1, Daho-ri). Considering Takakura Hiroaki's (1993) interpretation of their use as grave goods in Northern Kyushu, the Han mirrors can be understood as prestige items that symbolized the ideological component of chieftain power. The Han mirrors and other prestige items acquired through long-distance exchange networks, which represent the majority of bronze artifacts found among the grave goods in the Phase I burials, can also be seen to reflect the economic component of chieftain power.

The fact that, in the southeastern region of the peninsula, cast iron and flat iron axes appeared around the same time that the wooden coffin burials began to be clustered indicates an increase in the economic component of chieftain power. The production of iron and iron objects was closely associated with long-distance exchange—it has even been suggested that demand from the Chinese commandery of Lelang (established in 108 BCE) played a key role in generating iron production (Lee Sungjoo 1998)—and therefore economic power. The marked presence of iron tools and farming implements (e.g., iron sickles, cast iron hoes, flat iron axes), along with wrought iron axes, in the Phase I Proto-Three Kingdoms burials is indicative of the active participation of chiefs in the production and distribution of iron (Yi Hyunhae 1998). This represents a change from the Early Iron Age Phase III and IV burials, in which only one or two iron objects were symbolically deposited.

Therefore, the presence of various bronze and iron artifacts in Phase I Proto-Three Kingdoms burials, symbolizing both the control of long-distance exchange networks and the existence of a secular form of political authority, indicates that the ideological base of chieftain power had been firmly established, and that the chief no longer acted as a high priest. In addition, the economic foundations of chieftain power also came to be firmly established through a synergistic relationship between increased production (as represented by iron tools used for farming and other purposes) and the development of long-distance exchange (as represented by foreign prestige items symbolizing connections with far-off lands) (Yi Hyunhae 1998). However, except for a few arrowheads, iron weapons were not yet being deposited as grave goods (with the exception of the site of Yongjeon-ri in Yeongcheon), suggesting that the physical power base of chiefs had yet to be properly established at this time.

The representative burial of Phase II of the Proto-Three Kingdoms, Burial 130 Sara-ri, was found to contain 70 flat iron axes, a rare and dramatic reflection of the growth of economic power. The various bronze objects excavated from this burial can be regarded as prestige items that represented the political authority of the chief, as well as the chief's involvement in networks of long-distance exchange. Also of importance at this site is the presence of a large number of iron arrowheads, although these were not accompanied by other weapons. This feature began to change during Phase III of the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period, when weapons were increasingly deposited as grave goods, implying the emergence of chieftain power based on physical force (Lee Jaehyun 2003). This is particularly noticeable in the early burials of this phase, such as Burial 162 in Yangdong-ri and Burial 78 in Okseong-ri. Iron spearheads came to be used as the dominant grave good of the period, along with the iron arrowheads of the previous phase. The presence of 48 spearheads in Burial 2 at Hadae and 120 spearheads in Burial 58 at Okseong-ri indicates that this was a general trend for the large-scale burials of this phase.

At Burial 162 in Yangdong-ri, the 40 flat iron axes, as well as mirrors (one Late Han mirror and eight indigenous imitations), can be seen to represent both the economic and ideological components of chieftain power. However, this direct expression of economic wealth soon came to an end, as can be seen in Burial 78 at Okseong-ri, where social status was expressed solely through a sword and crystal beads. Overall, the increasing presence of ceramic vessels in burials of this period likely reflects the standardization of funerary practices, while also being a material expression of notions of social differentiation, which had become more concrete in this phase.

It must be noted that the increased deposition of weapons was accompanied by the use of iron pitchforks, small plows, and shovels as grave goods. These farming tools were used to till the earth and are therefore directly associated with the expansion of agricultural lands and increased production. The fact that these farming tools were limited to large-scale wooden chamber burials indicates that their manufacture and use may have been monopolized by the chiefs of this phase, which could possibly have provided the economic foundations needed to maintain the military force that the chiefs controlled.

Hence, the above process may explain how the ideological and economic components of the political power base of chiefs, which had developed over a long time in the southern regions of the peninsula, came to be complemented by the physical component that was established with the appearance of wooden chamber burials.

Conclusion

The process by which the power base of chiefs in the southern regions of the Korean Peninsula emerged and developed, from the Bronze Age to the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period, can be summarized in the following way. The power base of Bronze Age chiefs, whose leadership was based on *authority* rather than *power* per se, consisted only of an ideological component. The beginning of the Early Iron Age (around the fourth century BCE) witnessed the strengthening of the ideological basis of chieftain power, as well as the gradual establishment of its economic component. Based on these developments, the chief and associated individuals came to form an elite group in the late third century BCE, as evidenced by the clustering of burials. The economic basis of chieftain power was further strengthened with the beginning of the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period in the first century BCE, and by the second century CE, the military component of the power base of chiefs became firmly established, ultimately resulting in the institutionalization of chieftain power.

Translated by Ko Ilhong

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