The Material Culture of the Royal City Identified in the Peripheral Regions of Baekje

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Introduction

In terms of culture, economy, and politics, the difference between the center and the periphery was significant in ancient times, unlike in modern societies where this gap has been bridged, at least to some extent. The distinction maintained between the individuals of the royal city and those of the local regions can be regarded as a symbolic expression of such difference. As the ancient Baekje Kingdom (57 BCE – 660) grew and various relationships were established between the center and the periphery, individuals or groups from the royal city were dispatched to local regions. A significant amount of Baekje royal city culture was transferred to the local regions. Mountain fortresses constructed after the respective areas were incorporated into the Baekje territory during the Hanseong Period (57 BCE – 475), the first phase of Baekje with the capital based in Ungjin, present-day Buyeo. In contrast, indigenous types of ceramic ware traditionally used in local regions are predominantly observed in the power bases for the local elite that had acquired to Baekje central rule. This indicates that the construction, maintenance, and management of the peripheral mountain fortresses were undertaken by the central Baekje authority, as represented by the wanggyeongin ( wanggyeongin ), or individuals dispatched from the royal city (hereafter “wanggyeongin” ) (Jeon Deokjae 2000), who resided mainly in the mountain fortresses and formed the core of the Baekje regional administration. This situation continued into the Ungjin Period (475 – 538), the second phase of Baekje with the capital based in Ungjin, present-day Gongju. This paper considers the lives of the wanggyeongin who moved into and resided in the peripheral regions of Baekje by examining material artifacts they left behind. The temporal focus of the study will be the Ungjin Period and Sabi Period (538 – 660) – the final phase of Baekje with the capital based in Sabi, present-day Buyeo — since the method of regional control during these periods has received limited academic attention compared to the Hanseong Period. In addition, the spatial focus will be on the Honam region ( i.e., Jeolla Province). From the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period onward, the eastern region of South Jeolla Province (centered on Yeosu, Suncheon, and Gwangyang) shared many cultural similarities with Byeonhan ( 604–660 ) and then later with the Gaya ( 562–660 ) sphere, which lay to the east. Cultural elements of Gaya, particularly those of Aragaya ( Aragaya ) (560–660), began to be introduced to the region in the fourth century; by the fifth century, the region had been assimilated into Gaya culture to the extent of being acknowledged as part of the Sogaya ( 7th century ) Confederation. Daegaya ( Daegea ) ( late 3rd century) based in Goryeo also attempted to bring this region into its sphere of influence. Gaya forces were eventually expelled from the region during the reign of Baekje’s King Muryeong of the Baekje region the 25th century, when the region became part of the Baekje territory. It is from this period that Baekje mountain fortresses actively began to be constructed in the eastern region of South Jeolla Province; the locations of these mountain fortresses coincide almost exactly with the core locations of Baekje regional control. In addition, tombs with Baekje grave goods began to appear, indicating rapid assimilation of the region into Baekje society. Only limited academic discussion has focused on what this assimilation actually entailed. Who was responsible for the construction of the mountain fortresses, which took place in such a concentrated manner over a short period of time? The leaders of local groups that had been incorporated into the Baekje Kingdom, the wanggyeongin who had been dispatched from the Baekje center, or the combined efforts of both? Despite the lack of previous research into this issue, the archaeological material thus far accumulated may help ascertain the actual situation of the time, albeit only partially. This paper identifies the legacy of the wanggyeongin in the Honam region that formed the peripheries of Baekje to examine the process and nature of the assimilation of the region into Baekje society.

Residential culture of the Baekje center

Pillar-wall buildings ( wanggyeongin )

The dwellings of the Mahan ( Mahan )-Baekje sphere of the Proto-Three Kingdoms are represented by two types of pit structures, as categorized by floor shape and entrance structure. The first type of pit dwellings ( wanggyeongin ) ( Mahan ) was distributed from the Baekje center, or the combined efforts of both? Despite the lack of previous research into this issue, the archaeological material thus far accumulated may help ascertain the actual situation of the time, albeit only partially. This paper identifies the legacy of the wanggyeongin in the Honam region that formed the peripheries of Baekje to examine the process and nature of the assimilation of the region into Baekje society.

Fig. 1. Pillar-wall building at Mt. Jeongi (Photograph by Lee Hango)

Fig. 2. Pillar-wall building at Dongnam-ri in Buyeo. The Site of Dongnam-ri (172-2 Buyeoleul) at the Place Marked for Sengdok Park in Buyeo (193-181 Buyeoleul) (Photograph by Chungsung Institute of History and Culture, 2007, p. 9).
trench to be a requirement for a pillar-wall building (Aoyagi Taisuke 2002). However, a broader, alternative definition of this building type can be proposed as a “single-storied, square or rectangular structure set above ground in which the superstructure is supported solely by walls consisting of densely spaced pillars that are sometimes set within a trench.” According to this definition, structures without trenches can be categorized as Type I pillar-wall buildings and those with trenches as Type II buildings (Kwon Ohyoung 2008a).

A large number of cylindrical ceramic pieces—some with holes through which smoke could escape (Kim Yongmin 1998; 2002). The discovery of such decorated chimney caps has been limited to the Wanggung-ri site in Iksan and the following sites in Buyeo: Neungsan-ri Temple site (農山里寺址), Jeongrim Temple site (正琳寺址), Buso Mountain Fortress (扶蘇山城), Mt. Hwaji, Gwanbak-ri, Dongnam-ri, and Ssangbuk-ri (Fig. 6). In fact, this type of artifact is not generally associated with areas outside of the Baekje center. The recent discovery of fragments of a chimney cap at Mongchon Earthen
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Roof tiles were typically used in Baekje architecture. Roof tiles with stamped inscriptions found at peripheral sites likely were fired at kilns located in the core settlements of the region. Those craftspeople probably would have been involved with craftpeople of the Baekje center, or involved craftspeople of the Baekje center in their production. The presence of numerous roof tiles with stamped inscriptions at sites in the eastern South Jeolla region (e.g., Gorak Mountain Fortress in Yeosu) indicates that the central authority and craftpeople of the Baekje center were involved in the construction of the mountain fortresses of this region. Those craftpeople probably would have been dispatched to the peripheral regions of Baekje territory by the central authority.

Fig. 8. The inner surface of a concave roof tile from Gorka Mountain Fortress in Yeosu. Suncheon National University Museum (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 9. Roof tiles with stamped inscriptions from the eastern region of South Jeolla Province. Suncheon National University Museum (Author’s photograph)

Fig. 10. Roof tiles with stamped inscriptions from Baengnyeo Mountain Fortress in Geumansa, Buyeo National Museum (Author’s photograph)

Aristocratic high culture

Green-glazed ceramics

The ruling elite of Baekje imported a significant
amount of Chinese ceramics during the Hansong Period. This group consisted of the aristocracy and royalty of the Baekje center as well as leaders of such local communities as Suchon-ri in Gongju and Beomcheon-ri in Wonju. The use of Chinese ceramics as grave goods in the tombs of the leaders of the regional elite (e.g., Ijeon-ri Tomb 1 in Iksan; Yong-won-ri Stone Chamber Tomb in Cheonan; Bongdeok-ri Tomb 1 in Gochang) as well as in the Tomb of King Muyeqeong indicates that Chinese ceramics continued to be greatly appreciated by both the royalty of the Baekje center and the highest echelons of local society during the Ungjin Period.

Baekje craftsmen attempted to produce localized versions of imported Chinese ceramics, which resulted in the continuous appearance of new ceramic types that emulated the type and form of Chinese ceramic and bronze vessels. For example, the lid with jewel-shaped knob, tripod, and pedestal dish (高足帶獅頭蓋) soared to popularity during the Hansong Period, and the long-necked bottle (Park Soonbal 2006) and pedestal bowl — the representative vessel type in the subsequent period. Pedestal bowls with lids adorned with jewel-shaped (or lotus-bud-shaped) knobs were widely used as tableware by Baekje royalty of the Baekje center.

Terracotta artifacts, along with roof tiles with stamped inscriptions, make it possible to assume the presence of a strong association of this region with artifacts, along with roof tiles with stamped inscriptions. The discovery of a headrest and green-glazed wares found at sites outside of Buyeo are limited to Bogam-ri Tomb 1 in Naju (Fig. 11), Geomdan Mountain Fortress in Suncheon, and Goryeok Mountain Fortress in Yeosu (Fig. 12).

The green-glazed cup and saucer and the lidded containers from Bogam-ri Tomb 1 (Kim Jongman et al. 1999) imitate the form and function of the silver cup and bronze saucer from the Tomb of King Muyeqeong (Fig. 13), with the addition of linear decoration that suggests the appearance of a bronze vessel. Relics from Bogam-ri are believed to have been produced at the Baekje center and presented to an individual of the local community, since it is unlikely that regional workshops suddenly were able to produce the technically sophisticated green-glazed wares. Very few local craftsmen would have had the opportunity directly to observe and copy the tea set consisting of the green-glazed cup and saucer and the lidded containers. The inscription of a reversed Buddhist swastika on the cup and saucer also supports this likelihood. The presence of a stone headrest at Tomb of King Muryeong, where wooden headrests are limited to Bogam-ri Tomb 1 in Naju (Fig. 11), the inkstone and pedestal bowl must have been produced at the Baekje center and carried to these mountain fortresses.

Bogam-ri Tomb 1 is located at the Bogam-ri Burial Ground, which was a cemetery for the highest-ranking local leaders of the Yeongsan River region in the sixth century. Given that the Baekje central government’s direct rule over this region commenced upon the completion of tomb construction at this burial ground, the green-glazed ware from this tomb reflects the strong influence of the Baekje center in this region. The same holds true for the green-glazed pedestal bowl from Goryeok Mountain Fortress. Such artifacts, along with roof tiles with stamped inscriptions, make it possible to assume the presence of individuals of high political status from the Baekje center.

Chamber pots

Tiger-shaped ceramic chamber pots used by men are generally termed hoja (호자, Ch. hug). The production and practice of placing tiger-shaped chamber pots within tombs as grave goods first began during China’s Spring and Autumn Period (春秋時代, 771 – 475 BCE) and Warring States Period (戰國時代, 475 – 221 BCE) (Fig. 14), but it was during the Wei (Wei, 220 – 265), Jin (晋, 265 – 420), and Northern and Southern Dynasties (隋唐五代, 420 – 989) that tiger-shaped chamber pots became popular. A Chinese tiger-shaped chamber pot has yet to be discovered through proper excavation from a Baekje site, but the example from the National Museum of Korea deserves special attention. This celadon-glazed, tiger-shaped chamber pot, said to have come from Gaesong (開城, is believed to date to the Western Jin (西晉, 265 – 317) or early Eastern Jin (東晉, 317 – 420) Period, based on the color of the glaze and the form of the pot (Eun Hwasoon 1998). This indicates that, at the latest, Chinese tiger-shaped chamber pots were introduced to Baekje during the first half of the fourth century CE. Baekje imitations of the Chinese imported celadon tiger-shaped chamber pots may have been produced later, but material evidence dating to the Hansong and Ungjin Periods has yet to be discovered. The numerous discoveries of Baekje-produced tiger-shaped chamber pots from sites in Buyeo and Iksan dating to the Sapi Period demonstrate that this ceramic type had become firmly rooted in Baekje society in these periods (Kwon Ohyoung 2008b).

The tiger-shaped chamber pot from Gunsu-ri in Buyeo (Seo Seonghun 1979) is similar in form to Chinese examples in that it features a short-legged tiger with a wide-open mouth (Fig. 15) and a handle that extends from the head to the middle of the back. The characteristic Baekje features of this tiger-shaped chamber pot, such as the straight, unfeathered front legs and the slight turn of its head to the left; these elements do not appear in Chinese examples. Simplified versions of the tiger-shaped chamber pot, which claim only the form of the body, the legs and a handle, have been found at such sites as Gwanbuk-ri in Buyeo and Goryeok Mountain Fortress in Yeosu. It is likely that Chinese celadon tiger-shaped chamber pots inspired these simple male chamber pots, as in the case of the Gunsu-ri example. A female chamber pot, with a flat base, wide oval mouth, and band-shaped handles, was also discovered at the Gunsu-ri site. A chamber pot of a similar shape but with additional features that enhanced its function was recovered from the Wanggung-ri site in Iksan (Fig. 16).

It is unlikely that commoners would have used such chamber pots; rather, the use of male and fe-
male chamber pots surely was a feature of aristocratic high culture as well as an important indicator of the extent of urbanization. In ancient societies, toilet facilities would have been limited to palaces, administrative offices, and temples. The only extant example of Three Kingdoms-Period toilet facilities came from the Wanggung-ri site; therefore, it can be ascertained that the use of toilet facilities and chamber pots was limited to members of the highest echelons of society, even among the wanggyeongin.

Interestingly, a chamber pot was excavated at Goryeong Fortress in Yeosu, which is not included among the locations of high status where the discoveries of chamber pots are typically concentrated (Fig. 17). This indicates that wanggyeongin of high standing resided there or at least wanggyeongin culture had been transplanted there. The leg-shaped fragment excavated from Geomdan Mountain Fortress in Suncheon, which likely came from a tiger-shaped chamber pot, also supports this possibility.

The existence of intellectual-bureaucrats

Inkstones, brushes, wooden tablets, and documents are concrete evidence of literacy, and reflect the presence of literate bureaucrats and the creation of administrative documents (Yoon Seontae 2007). The discovery of a Chinese celadon-glazed inkstone at Mongsan Eorhan Fortress in Seoul (Kim Wonyong et al. 1989) demonstrates that the use of inkstones in Baekje dates at least to the Hanseong Period. Numerous inkstones were recovered from Gong Mountain Fortress in Gongju (Ahn Seungsoon and Lee Namseok 1987); most date to the Sabi Period, but it is highly likely that one tripod of the Chinese Southern Dynasties style dates as early as to the Ungjin Period (Yamamoto Takafumi 2006).

In contrast to the inkstones of the Hanseong and Ungjin Periods, which are either imports from the Eastern Jin or Southern Dynasties or are imitations of Chinese examples, inkstones of the Sabi Period feature a distinctively Baekje flavor, which indicates that the inkstone had become firmly established as an element of the Baekje ceramic repertory. In the Sabi Period, a variety of inkstone forms coexisted, including simple inkstones without legs, inkstones with multiple legs, and footed inkstones. Among inkstones with multiple legs, those with teardrop-shaped legs (隅足形足) and those with animal leg-shaped legs (隅足形足), also termed cabriole legs, were made in imitation of Chinese celadon-glazed inkstones from the Sui (581 – 618) and Tang Dynasties (618 – 907) (Figs. 18 and 19). However, the ceramic inkstone with animal leg-shaped legs from Mt. Geumseong in Buyeo features a distinctively Baekje style.

Discoveries of inkstones in Baekje territory have been limited to capital cities (present-day Seoul, Gongju, and Buyeo) and Iksan; therefore, the inkstone from the Naju area is of interest, as Naju was a key foothold for the indigenous local elite in the Yeongsan River region. Excavations conducted in the Bogam-ri area, where the sixth-century tombs of the highest-ranking leaders of the local community are concentrated, revealed the presence of a ceramic inkstone with multiple legs similar to that from Buyeo. In addition, three inkstones were discovered at the Nang-dong site located in close proximity to Bogam-ri; one inkstone was recovered from the District Ga artifact layer and the other two came from the District Na artifact layer (Choi Seongrak et al. 2006). Found in close proximity around Bogam-ri, these four inkstones indicate the presence of a bureaucratic group that produced administrative documents associated with governmental control of local regions. The inkstones are evidence of officials deployed from the Baekje center or of a literate class within the local society that maintained links with the Baekje center.

Other finds from this area, including the iron production facilities, wooden tablets, and ceramic vessel inscribed with “宮内用” (meaning “for use within official buildings”) together suggest that this area, where the tombs of the leaders of the indigenous local community had been concentrated, was subsequently transformed into an administrative center for regional control. It is very possible that this process was accompanied by the migration of the wanggyeongin into this region.

Another site in the Honam region that yielded inkstones is Geomdan Mountain Fortress in Suncheon, where four inkstones were discovered. One inkstone with a short foot was discovered at the North Gate, and one with legs was found within the water reservoir. Building 2 and Building 3 (a pit structure) each yielded a single inkstone with a flat base. The example from Building 3 is in fragmentary
condition, making it difficult to identify its original shape. Building a belongs to the category of Type I pillar-wall building defined above. The discovery of ink- stones at this building site is especially significant because pillar-wall buildings have a close association with the Baekje center. The legs are missing from the green-glazed inkstone recovered from the water reservoir (Fig. 20); even so, the remaining fragments suggest that the inkstone originally had legs of either square or animal-leg form. The pillar-wall building and the green-glazed inkstone from Geomdan Mountain Fortress (Suncheon) along with the roof tiles with stamped inscriptions and the green-glazed pedestal bowl from Gorak Mountain Fortress (Yeosu) are, despite evidence of the presence of the wanggyeongin in these regions. In particular, the green-glazed ceramics from these mountain fortresses are believed to have been used by the wanggyeongin, since artifacts of this type from the eastern region of South Jeolla Province are mainly discovered in the mountain east, and from the fifth century, it became a part of the Sogaya Confederation that was later politically influenced by Baekje. It is only in the early sixth century that Baekje was able to completely eradicate the influence of Sogaya and absorb this region into Baekje territory. Therefore, the eastern region of South Jeolla Province represented the front line of defense for the Baekje center against Gaya and Silla. Given such strategic importance, the construction of defensive mountain fortresses unseen in the Yeosangun region took place at an extremely fast pace over a short period of time. Cooperation from the leaders of local indigenous communities would have been essential for the construction of mountain fortresses as well as for the regional defense; consequently, the wanggyeongin and craftpeople may have been dispatched by the Baekje center to ensure such cooperation. Unfortunately, it is not easy to prove this possibility based on archaeological evidence from burials. In general, the green-glazed ware discovered thus far in the eastern region of South Jeolla Province mostly consist of stone-lined burials with horizontal entrances. As in the case of mountain fortresses of this region, roof tiles with mat patterns on their inner surfaces were found covering the entrances of certain tombs in Gwangyang and Suncheon. This means that typical tombs of the Baekje central style have yet to be identified in this region. Investigating the possible existence of such tombs in the region remains a task for future research. This paper is an abridged and revised English version of "The Material Culture of the Royal City Identified in the Peripheral Regions of Baekje," previously published in 2010 in Journal of the Korean Ancient Historical Society (한국고구려학회지) 9: 67.

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A Sixteenth-century Arhat Painting Commissioned by Queen Munjeong: Deoksewi, 153rd of the 500 Arhats, in the Collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

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Introduction

The Buddhist pantheon comprises such deities as Buddhas, bodhisattvas, disciples, and guardians. Known as ruhan in Korean and as luohan (羅漢) in Chinese, arhats (a Sanskrit name) are disciples of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni; they are human beings who have achieved enlightenment but have deferred entry into nirvana until the Buddha Maitreya finally appears. Possessing the supernatural powers of Bodhizatvas, they remain on earth to protect the Buddhist law and to guide the spiritual progress of all sentient beings. They are worshiped as groups rather than as individuals; those groups sometimes include sixteen, sometimes eighteen, and other times even five hundred arhats.

Monks of the terrestrial realm, arhats differ from monks of the terrestrial realm, arhats differ from those of the cosmic realm in that they are crucial to understanding the development of East Asian art. Arhat iconography is relatively uncodified, and paintings of arhats typically represent figures with naturalistic human features set in realistic environments. The need for paintings of arhats developed rapidly in China late in the Tang Dynasty (618–907) in accordance with the growth of arhat iconography. In this regard, paintings reflect both the reverence for arhats inferred entry into nirvana until the Buddha Maitreya and the need for paintings to guide the spiritual progress of all sentient beings. Arhats are worshiped as groups, sometimes including sixteen, eighteen, or even five hundred arhats.

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