Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History

Moon Chang Rho (Mun Ch’angro)*

Introduction

Great qualitative and quantitative achievements have been made in the field of ancient Korean history since liberation sixty years ago. In particular, the volume of studies in the overall field of Korean history has in recent years grown explosively. One of the main themes which have emerged in connection with this phenomenon has been the annual publication of a review of the studies which were conducted on each period, and the outlook for that particular field of Korean history. Therefore, the task of reviewing all the papers published over the last sixty years and uncovering their meaning is an impossible one even when such an undertaking is limited solely to the field of ancient Korean history. As such, it is only natural that for such reasons the scope of this paper and of the arguments developed herein will be limited.

Achievements in the various fields of ancient Korean history have of course periodically been highlighted in a series of studies entitled “review of studies in the field of ancient Korean history and future prospects” published in such journals as Yŏksa hakbo (1963~), Han’guksaron (1977), and Kuksakwan nonch’ong (1989).1 In addition, significant reviews of studies conducted at the individual and academic society level on such topics as the Three Kingdoms, Kaya, Samhan, Unified Silla, and Parhae,

* Professor, Dept. of Korean History. Kukmin University
as well as on era-specific themes such as the Japanese Government of Mimana (Kaya)” or “Mimana Nihonbu”, the Epitaph of King Kwanggaet’o, epigraphs of Silla, and the division of the ancient and middle ages, have also been carried out. In particular, the occasion of the 50th anniversary of national liberation served as a lighting rod for the conducting of reviews of the trends in the field of Korean ancient history over the last fifty years, with special attention being paid to the seminal achievements and the future tasks which lie ahead. More recently, a new trend has emerged in which summaries of studies on ancient Korean history and discussions of relevant current issues have been conducted in a manner that has been designed to foster a new direction for the study of Korean history in the 21st century. These achievements serve as the inspiration for this paper.

Making use of existing studies, this paper presents a summary of the main developments in the field of ancient Korean history over the sixty years which have passed since liberation, the main research achievements, and the future tasks that lie ahead. To this end, a brief summary of the process through which the distortion and damage caused by the colonial perception of history formed during the Japanese colonial era was overcome after 1945 by the advent of empirical studies is presented. Thereafter, as part of the effort to search for an independent perception of ancient Korean history, the studies in the field of ancient Korean history up to this point will be analyzed based on the following division: those studies on ancient Korean history which have been based on the state formation theory and archaeological evidence; those which have been focused on social units and ruling structures; and those which have resulted in a diversification of research topics and the exploration of new historical materials. Finally, future tasks will also be delved into during this process of analyzing the mainstream in terms of the study of ancient Korean history.

However, given the wide range of subjects addressed in this paper some unintended mistakes, such as the omission of important achievements, will inherently emerge. While the author will do his best to insure that such mistakes and errors are redressed in future studies, it is hoped that
readers will nevertheless be indulgent on this point.

**Consolidation of the empirical study trend**

The main challenge that scholars faced after liberation was that of restoring ancient Korean history, which had been distorted by the colonial perception of history that formed during the Japanese colonial era, to its original form. While the great majority of the studies on ancient Korean history that appeared immediately after liberation were published as introductory bibliographies or in book form, individuals such as Chŏng Inbo, An Chaehong, Son Chint’ae, and Chang Topin continued the trend towards a nationalist perception of history begun during the colonial era, by writing essays in newspapers in which they greatly praised the Korean spirit. For instance, Kim Chaewŏn argued in his book, *<New Study of the Tan’gun Myth>* (Chŏngŭmsa, 1947) that the main features of the Tan’gun myth were in keeping with the stone-carved portraits found in the Wu family shrine located in the Shandong peninsula in China, thus weakening the previously accepted position regarding the historical veracity of the Tan’gun myth.

However, the left-right ideological conflict which emerged after liberation and the ensuing consolidation of the division of the two Koreas greatly complicated the task of rectifying the colonial perception of history, and of conducting studies on ancient Korean history. In this regard, North and South Korea approached the study of Korean history from different directions in the aftermath of the Korean War. Under these circumstances, Son Chint’ae’s new nationalist historiography, which promoted democratic nationalism as the shared joy of the entire Korean nation, was highly evaluated as a new framework for the development of Korean history in the modern era. However, his theory never took root in either South or North Korea.

Yi Pyŏngdo, who was a leading force in terms of the studies on ancient Korean history being conducted at that time, delved into the existence of
the ancient council body known as the namdang (南堂), which became the prototype for the unanimous decision-making system (hapjwache, 合坐制) that was eventually put in place, as well as into the origins of the name of the ancient kingdom known as Koguryŏ. Moreover, by detailing the developmental process of Wiman Chosŏn, Yi was also able to prove that the individual known as Wiman had his origins in Kojosŏn. Furthermore, Yi compiled a summary of the studies he had conducted since the 1930s in a work known as <Korean History — Ancient Era> (Chindan hakhoe). As such, Yi was a scholar who contributed immensely to the establishment of the foundation for future of studies on ancient Korean history.

For his part, the scholar Kim Sanggi was able during the process of tracing the movements of the Tongyi tribe (東夷族) to confirm the existence of the Han, Ye, and Maek tribes. Kim also conducted macroscopic-level studies on the cultural exchanges which took place between Korea and China that included work on Paekche’s development of foreign trade and Chang Poko’s marine activities. In addition, Kim interpreted the tribute (chokong) system as having been based on the reception of advanced culture from the Chinese mainland in return.

Meanwhile, Yi Hongjik used knowledge contained in Japanese historical sources such as the Chronicle of Japan (Nihon Shoki) to uncover new historical facts about Koguryŏ and Paekche. In addition, based on a thorough investigation of historical documents, Yi looked into economic and ideological aspects of the Three Kingdoms such as the usage of the character ‘cho (租)’ and Silla’s system of appointing Buddhist monks (sŭnggwan) to government positions and its overall Buddhist policy. What’s more, he also attempted to restore ancient Korean history through an analysis of the history of art.

Although historians from both Koreas were able to solidify the empirical study trend, it remained difficult until the 1950s for scholars in the field of ancient Korean history to completely overcome the research stage reached during the colonial era, which had been based on the notions of heteronomy and identity. Nevertheless, it is evident that
scholars actively sought to develop new research topics and methodologies. This new group of scholars with Kim Ch’ŏłchun, Yi Kibaik, and Pyŏn T’aesŏp as its core, linked the theories of other relevant disciplines such as anthropology and religious studies to the field of ancient Korean history in order to overcome the inherent limitations of the existing studies based exclusively on historical materials. Kim Ch’ŏłchun applied the functional and structural anthropology developed by Western scholars such as Perry, Rivers, and Shirokogoroff to the analysis of the early stages of Silla society. He analyzed the social structure, the Bone Rank System (*Kolp’um*), and the significance of the acceptance of Buddhism. Kim also analyzed the ancient kingdoms’ process of establishing governmental organizations.10

Yi Kibaik analyzed the political implications of the acceptance of Buddhism, which was used as the ideological foundation of the ancient states. Yi also introduced new approaches to the history of ideology and politics by shedding light on the historical significance of such matters as political changes which took place during the reign of Silla’s King Hyekong, of the Koguryŏ administrative districts which produced queens, and of the royal succession process in Paekche.11 Meanwhile, Pyŏn T’aesŏp analyzed the relationship between the government rank (*kwandŭng*) system and the bone rank system in order to prove the hierarchical characteristics of a Silla society that was based on a dual organization structure. Pyŏn also analyzed the existence and significance of the *Kyese sasang* (繼世思想, a belief that a person continues the same lifestyle even after death), and ancestral worship in ancient Korea.12

Such empirical studies on the ancient states and their social structures had the effect of bringing to light new information about their political structures, social status systems, and unanimity-based political management styles. Particularly, the studies conducted on the government rank system (*kwandŭng*), bone rank system (*kolp’um*), and the significance of the acceptance of Buddhism can be said to have yielded important results.13 Some have argued that the research topics adopted by scholars in the field of ancient Korean history at the height of the
Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History

empirical trend during the 1950s, as well as these scholars’ efforts to apply new methodologies, were in essence unsophisticated. However, the independent perception of history that emerged in the 1960s has its origins in the studies conducted by such scholars in the 1950s.

Independent perception of ancient Korean history

Nationalism and modernization emerged as the main periodic tasks during the 1960s, a period characterized by the so-called ‘April 19th Students’ Revolution’ of 1960 and the ‘May 16th Military Coup’ of 1961. This period also saw efforts to overcome the notions of heteronomy and stagnation inherently contained in the colonial perception of history through the formulation of independent and indigenous development theories pick up steam in the field of ancient Korean history.\textsuperscript{14} In this regard, the fact that the colonial perception of history was first criticized in Yi Kibaik’s \textit{Kuksa sinron} (國史新論) (T’aesŏngsa, 1961) can be seen as having been no coincidence. Yi singled out the problems associated with theories such as ‘geopolitical destiny’, ‘worshipping the great’, ‘factionalism’, and ‘stagnation’ from the standpoints of neo-nationalism and cultural history. Here, Yi was particularly interested in overcoming the ‘stagnation’ theory which had denied the possibility of any indigenous development.

Supplementing Yi Ki-baik’s efforts, Kim Ch’ŏlchun devoted himself to the establishment of independent traditions and a nationalistic identity in the field of ancient Korean history in order to remove the legacy of the colonial perception of history.\textsuperscript{15} To overcome the inherent limitations of existing historical materials, Kim used anthropological methodologies to shed some light on the origins and development of ancient kingdoms. He established a developmental stage theory based on the following progression “tribal state – confederated tribal state – ancient state”, and maintained that statelets (小國, soguk), which he equated with tribal states, had emerged prior to the ancient kingdoms.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, Kim perceived
ancient Silla’s royal genealogy of Pak-Sŏk-Kim as having occurred in a linear fashion, thus creating an opportunity to reanalyze the existing skepticism surrounding the establishment of the ancient kingdoms by advocating the need to review the accuracy of the *<Samguk sagi* (三國史記, History of the Three Kingdoms)*, which placed the origins of Silla in the early period of the 3rd century A.D rather than the 1st century B.C.*

Following the establishment of the perception of the sequential development of Korean history, Yi Kibaik, based on a summary of basic historical materials and historical investigations and corroborative ventures, set out to restore the political and social structure of Silla by focusing on institutional aspects such as the role of the *taedŭng* (大等, extraordinary rank two), *sangdaedŭng* (上大等, extraordinary rank one), and *chipsabu* (執事部, Chancellery Office). Yi also made active use in his studies of the series of biographies (*yŏlchŏn*) found in the *<Samguk sagi>* as well as materials from epigraphs.* In addition, through his focus on aspects of the history of Korean thought such as the acceptance of Buddhism and the emergence of Confucianism-based political ideologies in the aftermath of the establishment of Silla’s bone-rank system (*kolp’um*), Yi was able to uncover that Buddhism emerged during the Three Kingdoms era as the core conception in the formation of a centralized aristocratic state centered on the royal power.* Thus, Yi argued that while Silla society was an ‘aristocratic confederation’ during the early stages, it became an ‘absolutist monarchy’ during the middle stages, before becoming an aristocratic coalition during the final stages. Yi analysis of management styles and of the changes in the central governing structure during the Three Kingdoms era had the effect of bringing to light how the ruling groups’ sphere expanded during every stage of the ancient era.

Meanwhile, against a backdrop in which advances in archaeological research had the effect of increasingly shedding some light on the Bronze Era, Kim Wŏnryong used archeological evidence to confirm the accuracy of the records found in the *<Sanguozhi* (三國志, Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms)* regarding the period in which Samhan existed. Based on this
Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History

In analysis, Kim argued that the veracity of records found in the <Samguk sagi> regarding the onset of the Three Kingdoms era should also be accepted.20 As such, Kim took issue with the skepticism of those Japanese scholars who did not recognize the historical value of the records of the <Samguk sagi> dealing with the early ancient era. Kim’s work went a great way towards strengthening the value of the sections of the <Samguk sagi> dealing with the period prior to the reign of King Naemul. Kim’s work provided post-1970’s researchers such as Ch’ŏn Kwanwu with the opportunity to reinterpret the records of the <Samguk sagi> related to the onset of the Three Kingdoms era, and to suggest more active methods of using historical records.21 In fact, the issue of the reliability of the records of the <Samguk sagi> dealing with the early ancient era has been debated all the way down to the present in conjunction with such matters as the puch’eje (部體制, administrative district system).22 These arguments have their origins in the fact that the descriptions of similar events found in the Tongi (東夷傳) section of the <Sanguozhi > are somewhat different. In this regard, there is a need to seek out reasonable ways of using these two primary historical sources. This need is particularly pronounced in the case of the ancient history field, which is hampered by a lack of related materials. At this point, researchers’ efforts to restructure the ancient societies by minutely analyzing the details of the Tongi section of <Sanguozhi > and breaking down the contents of the early records of the <Samguk sagi> and then combining them together can be regarded as a positive development.23 In addition, the adoption of a detailed approach to the sections of the <Zheng shi (中國正史, Official Dynastic Histories of China)> dealing with Paekche24 and of a thorough analysis of the original copy of the <Samguk sagi>25 can be regarded as means of resolving the problems associated with the veracity of the records concerned with the early ancient era.

Furthermore, by conducting a summary of the existing research on the location of Samhan Kim Chŏngbae was able to shed some light on the relationship between the development of Chin (辰國) and Samhan. In this paper, Kim argued that Chin, which was in fact the predecessor of
Samhan, should be linked to King Chun (準王, (the King of Han (韓王)) of ‘Old Chin (古之辰國)’, but is in no way related to the king of Chin. As such, he concluded that Chin did not occupy the overall area of Samhan but rather was one of the smaller statelets which existed within the territory of what would eventually become Samhan.  

One also finds numerous papers which reveal the progress made in the field of ancient Korean history with regard to the selection of research topics and methodologies. These include a study which perceived Silla’s establishment of the Sŏnggol (hallowed-bone) system after the acceptance of Buddhism as having been based on religious notions; one which argued that the ability of the Kyeru group (pu) to produce iron in the Tumen River area played a decisive role in the growth of Koguryŏ. In particular, in terms of the history of diplomatic relations, one finds a study which argued that hostage diplomacy (sukwi oekyo) played a key role in Silla’s securing of advanced culture from Tang, and another which analyzed the tributary diplomacy between Silla and Tang from an independent standpoint.

As such, the studies on ancient Korean history conducted during the 1960s made it possible to remove the distorted colonial perception of history, and to establish an independent perception of ancient history. Furthermore, these studies expanded the scope of the research on ancient Korean history and brought about the diversification of research topics. In this regard, by raising issues related to the formation of ancient Korean states, these studies facilitated research on, and deepened the understanding of, the developmental process of ancient societies.

**State formation theories and the use of archeological findings**

The major transformation which took place after liberation in 1945 in terms of the field of ancient Korean history can be traced back to the debate over the origins and formation of ancient states which emerged at the beginning of the 1970s. Soon thereafter, scholars began to apply the state formation model first established by Western anthropologists who
advocated the notion of neo-evolutionism to the developmental stages of Korea’s ancient states. This transformation was made possible by the fact that Korean researchers could now systematically apply the results of the research conducted in the field of ancient Korean history since liberation to microscopic-level topics of interest. In addition, this transformation was also facilitated by the advent of activities such as the reevaluation and aggressive interpretation of primary historical documents such as the <Samguk sagi>, the active excavation of archaeological remains, and the advent of a research atmosphere conducive to the reflection of these archaeological results.

The wider debate over state formation began with the academic deliberations as to whether the terms and concepts ‘pujok kukka (tribal state) and pujok yŏnmaeng (tribal confederation)’ tacitly used to explain the statelets (soguk) which existed prior to the advent of the ancient states, were truly reasonable or based on the influence of Morgan’s concept of tribal confederations. As part of their efforts to analyze the issues related to the origins and developmental process of ancient states, researchers’ undertook the quest for new terms and concepts which could be used to replace existing ones.30 Here, Ch’ŏn Kwanwu maintained that the statelets (soguk) found in the Hanjŏn section of the <Sanguo Zhi>, which had previously been regarded as having been tribal states, should be perceived as sŏngŭp kukka (城邑國家, walled-city states).31 In accordance with an aggressive interpretation of the <Samguk sagi>’s description of the early period which was based on the postulation of a progression from sŏngŭp kukka – yŏngvŏk kukka’ (領域國家, territorial state), Ch’ŏn argued that ancient states, in the form of yŏngvŏk kukka, had already been established by the reigns of King Onjo of Paekche and King P’asa of Silla. In addition, based on the supposition of the existence of Kija Chosŏn (箕子朝鮮) Ch’ŏn utilized the Samhan idongsŏl (theory that a Mahan tribe migrated to the Korean peninsula) to explain the establishment of Samhan and the location of the assorted statelets.32 His work opened the door for future studies on Kaya, Silla, and Paekche history.
Meanwhile, Kim Chŏnbae used the ‘band-tribe-chiefdom-state’ framework of state development first suggested by western neo-evolutionist Elman R. Service to explain the formation of the ancient states. Kim equated the bronze-culture era Kija Chosŏn with Yemaek Chosŏn, and regarded this entity as having been a chiefdom which existed at the quasi-state level. Meanwhile, he maintained that Wiman Chosŏn’s wars of conquest had allowed it to reach the state level of development. Furthermore, based on his analysis of the various states (國) which existed in the Samhan area, Kim reached the conclusion that Samhan society possessed the basic characteristics of a chiefdom. As a result, he dated the origins of ancient Korean states back to Kojošŏn, and moved the period in which the Three Kingdoms were established backwards.

However, one of the most outstanding developments during the 1970s revolved around the fact that the advent of archeological data allowed scholars to overcome the inherent lack of written materials pertaining to the formation of ancient states. Here, one can cite Yun Yongjin’s study on state formation in the Taegu area, in which he used the pattern of distribution of ancient tombs, such as the stone-lined tombs (sŏkkwanmyo) excavated in the Sinch’ŏn area of Taegu, to establish a hierarchy, as a salient example of this trend. Meanwhile, Ch’oe Mongryong analyzed the Mahan statelets and their capitals based on the remains excavated from the dolmen burial sites found in the Yŏngsan River basin. Furthermore, he conducted studies on state formation that involved the linking of archeological findings to neo-evolutionism. These trends paved the way for studies which employed archaeological materials to resolve the issues surrounding the formation of Samhan society and the Three Kingdoms.

Although scholars from the fields of history and archaeology applied neo-evolution theories to issues related to state formation, major disagreements emerged with regards to the use of the term ‘chiefdom’ and to the periods in which such a term was applicable. While the fact that scholars from the fields of history and archaeology attempted to incorporate anthropological evidence into their work in order to overcome
the inherent limitations of the historical documents pertaining to ancient Korean societies was originally regarded as representing a marked advance in methodologies, the usage of neo-evolutionist notions in the study of state formation began to be assailed in the middle of the 1980s.  

In this regard, the lack of understanding and imprudent use of neo-evolutionism, the usage of overly-schematic approaches, and the lack of criticism of historical materials were pointed out as some of the main problems. These criticisms were for the most part accepted by scholars in the field of ancient Korean history, and the application of neo-evolutionist notions to the issues related to state formation began to wane from the mid-1990s onwards. Nevertheless, the fact that issues related to the puch’ewe, or structure and political management of early ancient states, continue to be debated to this day can be seen as the continuation of the debate over state formation theories. Although steps should be taken to guard against the appearance of uncritical theories, equal caution should also be given to ensuring that negative prejudices about specific theories are also avoided.

Archaeology scholars have recently begun to focus their interest on the application of various anthropological views to those eras for which few written documents exist. Based on archaeological findings, including dolmens, these researchers have sought to shed some light on the establishment and development of political bodies during the ancient era, including delving into how these bodies were organized and stratified.

This trend towards analyzing the state formation process based on archaeological findings has made it possible to expand the basic data by complementing historical documents, and established the foundation for new methodologies. While most historians have used archaeological evidence to make up for the lack of historical documents, archeologists maintain that in some instances, inappropriate conclusions have been reached that have been based on arbitrary conclusions about relics and remain that archeologists have yet to formulate an official position on. Conversely, archaeologists have also exhibited a tendency to ignore historical documents in that rather than analyzing, cataloguing, and
arranging the uncovered archaeological materials in a chronological manner, they have simply used fragmented documentary evidence to support their findings.45 As sound criticism of each other’s disciplines has been the bedrock of the exchanges between the fields of ancient Korean history and archaeology,46 the two fields were able in the 1990’s to overcome what had long been an adversarial relationship to forge complementary relations. At this point, the previous practice of mutual exclusion which long marked the relationship between the two fields, despite their common goals of restoring ancient history, has all but been eliminated. This can be regarded as one of the results of the efforts to recreate the philosophical framework of ancient Korea in accordance with the state formation theory.

Analysis of social units and ruling structures

The new structure for ancient Korean history studies established from the 1960s onwards by prominent scholars such as Yi Kibaik and Kim Ch’ŏlchun was further expanded upon by the new generation of scholars who entered the field from the 1970s onwards.47 Yi Kidong’s analysis of Silla’s royal kinship group and hwarangdo using a social anthropology approach contributed to the development of a better understanding of Silla’s bone-rank system (kolp’um).48 Ch’oe Pyŏnghŏn analyzed the close relationship between Zen Buddhism (sŏnjong) and local power groups (hojok) during the late period of Silla from the standpoint of the history of Korean thought.49 Kim Tujin revealed the existence of a detailed relationship between social structure and local power groups during the final stages of Silla and the onset of Koryŏ that was based on the Zen (sŏn) thought of monks Nanghye (朗慧) and Sunji (順之).50 These scholars helped to complement theories related to the transition between Silla and Koryŏ and to establish a framework for the study of Buddhist history. For his part, Yi Chongwuk furthered the understanding of the management of political systems during the Three Kingdoms era, as well as the changes
to these structures, by conducting studies on Silla’s local ruling system that were based on the monument commemorating the construction of the new fortress in Namsan (Namsan sinsŏngbi, 南山新城碑); on the position of chawp’yŏng (minister) in Paekche; and on the chwa, ubo, and kuxsang (prime minister) positions in place during the early period of Koguryŏ.\(^{51}\) Based on his studies of the structure of the pu (administrative districts) and of social status during the Three Kingdoms era, Rho T’aedon introduced the puch’eje system as an alternative to the notion of tribal confederation (pujok yŏnmaengnon). Rho’s seminal study shed some much-needed light of the national and social structures of the three kingdoms.\(^{52}\)

While issues related to the formation of the three kingdoms have been continuously debated, researchers have also begun to focus on themes related to the internal structures of these ancient societies, such as their social structures and units.\(^{53}\) A new trend began to emerge in the 1980s in the field of ancient Korean history in which a wider variety of topics were delved into in a more comprehensive fashion as a result of the limitation of the scope of studies to certain specific periods. For example, researchers conducted studies dealing with subjects such as the development of the kukŭp (國邑 capital area) of Samhan;\(^{54}\) of the villages perceived as representing the basic component units of Samhan society;\(^{55}\) the relationship of the pyŏlŭp sahoe (別邑社會) to the sodo (蘇塗, sacred place);\(^{56}\) and the true nature of the states (國)\(^{57}\) and statelets (小國)\(^{58}\) which had long been a focal point of studies on the establishment of the early states. These latter studies dealt with such aspects as the characteristics, scale, and changes which each state and statelet underwent. In addition, other studies which were conducted included a comparison of the structure and characteristics of Samhan society with that of Puyŏ and Koguryŏ and an analysis of the differences between Chinhan and Pyŏnhan.\(^{59}\) What’s more, one also finds studies on the composition of the states, as well as on the internal structure and functions of central villages (國邑 kukŭp).\(^{60}\) Scholars also argued that the haho (下戶, tenants), which were regarded as the basic members of society during the establishment
of the three kingdoms, became commoners following the formation of a state system.\textsuperscript{61} Other scholars focused on the divisions which existed within the *haho* class and the presence of slaves to suggest the existence of a hierarchical society.\textsuperscript{62} In particular, studies were conducted on the role of the *ka* (加) during the early stages of Koguryŏ, a class which had played the role of chiefs within village societies but were eventually transformed to become the aristocratic class during the expansion of Koguryŏ. Studies were also carried out on the subject of Puyŏ’s *homin* class which existed at the village level (*ŭmnak sahoe*) during the confederated kingdoms stage.\textsuperscript{63}

Meanwhile, scholars also wrote papers on a variety of subjects such as the characteristics of individual statelets (*soguk*) of Samhan, such as Mokchi (目支國)\textsuperscript{64}; conducted more extensive analyses of the formation process of Samhan; advanced the hypothesis that Mahan, Chinhan, and Pyŏnhan were the predecessors respectively of Paekche, Silla, and Kaya, thus linking the three Hans to the three kingdoms. Recognizing the independent development of culture which took place in the Samhan area, Yi Hyŏnhye conducted studies on the formation of statelets such as those of Mahan, Chinhan, and Pyŏnhan, as well as on the cultural background, organization, and political and social characteristics of these statelets. As a result, Yi shed some light on the formation of confederated statelets and on the eventual separation of Samhan.\textsuperscript{65} Rho Chungguk conducted an analysis of Mahan that was based on the viewpoint that Mahan was in fact the predecessor of Paekche.\textsuperscript{66} Yi Chongwuk argued that the Chinhan which developed with Saro (斯盧國) at its core was the direct predecessor of Silla.\textsuperscript{67} Meanwhile, Kim T’aesik maintained that the Pyŏnhan that developed around the Kusa statelet (狗邪國) in Kimhae was in fact the direct predecessor of Kaya.\textsuperscript{68} These scholars analyzed Samhan society from the standpoint of the establishment of the Three Kingdoms, and examined the developmental stages through which Mahan, Chinhan, and Pyŏnhan became the ancient states. Meanwhile, other scholars analyzed the developmental process of Silla based on the formation and integration of neighboring statelets such as Isŏ (伊西國).\textsuperscript{69}
Detailed studies on the ruling structure of the ancient states which were established through the confederation and integration of statelets were also conducted. In this regard, while Kim Sut’ae analyzed the trends in terms of the absolute monarchy and the *chin’gol* (true-bone) aristocracy during the middle period of Silla, Chŏn Tŏkchae examined the establishment of the six-administrative districts (*pu*) system in Silla and its changes. For their part, Yi Wut’ae and Kang Pongryong delved into the nature of local power groups and the changes in the local control system. Yi Mun’gi’s study on Silla’s military system facilitated the development of a better understanding of the military foundation and management of ancient states. Rho Chungguk analyzed the formation of Paekche and the changes which its ruling system underwent over time, thus furthering the general awareness of Paekche’s ruling structure. Moreover, his study spurred on further studies such as those conducted by Yang Kisŏk, Kim Chusŏng, and Yi Tohak. Scholars also conducted studies on topics related to the ruling structure of Koguryŏ, including on the development of Koguryŏ and the organization of its ruling structure, the expansion of Koguryŏ’s territory during the 4th century, and the establishment of its political management and local control system. In other words, detailed analyses of topics such as the nature of the three kingdoms’ ruling groups; the establishment of central and local control mechanisms; management of the military structure; and on the means used to incorporate the general population within a hierarchical state; paved the way for the formulation of a structural perception of ancient societies.

Efforts to classify ancient tombs and to reveal the hierarchical structure of the society which existed at the time the tombs were constructed were also carried out in the field of archaeology. Building on Yun Yongjin’s seminal study on the regional hierarchy displayed by the tombs excavated in the Taegu area, some scholars began to advance the hypothesis that various classes existed within the ruling groups which controlled Silla’s six villages (*ch’on*). This theory was based on the linking of the tomb groups excavated in Kyŏngju area to Saro’s six villages. Furthermore,
based on his study of the tombs excavated in the Taegu and Kyŏngsan areas, Kim Yongssŏng analyzed the internal hierarchical structure of societies during the Three Kingdoms era as well as the scale of regional groups. Meanwhile, by focusing on the hierarchization of ancient tombs, Ch’oe Chonggyu was able to analyze the structure and characteristics of Samhan society. Ch’oe Pyŏnghyŏn focused on Silla-era tombs in order to establish a link with the bone-rank (kolp’um) system. In particular, in accordance with the hierarchical structure of the wooden chamber tombs with stone mounds uncovered in the Kyŏngju area, a hypothesis was formed which connected these wooden chamber tombs with stone mounds to a rank system which exhibited a certain degree of political organization and decision-making processes. These studies contributed greatly to the development of a better understanding of the structure of ancient societies.

**Diversification of research subjects and the exploration of new materials**

The diversification and in-depth approach to research topics caused by the emergence of many new researchers since the 1980s has had the effect of further solidifying the basic organizational structure of the field of ancient Korean history. In terms of the subfield of early ancient history, the role of Tan’gun, and the link between the history of Kojosŏn and the formation of the Korean nation, rapidly became some of the main topics of discussion. Some of the research topics have included: the formation of the nation, beginning with the establishment of the first ancient state; the characteristics and nature of the Tongi as described in Chinese historical records; and the close cultural relationship between the lute-shaped bronze dagger culture which developed in the Liaoshi area and the Yemaek tribe which eventually formed the ancient state of Chosŏn. In addition, further studies have been conducted on the topic of how to approach the actual existence of the perceived founder of Kojosŏn
Tan’gun, and the Tan’gun myth. Based on analyses of archaeological evidence, scholars were able to ascertain that Kojosŏn exist from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

The central theme in terms of the studies on Kojosŏn, which is believed to be the first state in Korean history, has been the location of its capital area. Three schools of thought have emerged with regard to the location of capital area of Kojosŏn. These can be identified as the Liaodong, Taedong River basin, and relocation theories. The recent expansion of interest in Kojosŏn to include issues related to the formation of Kojosŏn as a state; the confirmation of the existence of Kija Chosŏn using excavated relics and remains; and the state characteristics of Wiman Chosŏn; has helped foster a better understanding of Kojosŏn society.

The studies conducted on Silla and Paekche from the 1980s onwards were naturally extended to the history of Koguryŏ following the normalization of diplomatic relations with China in the 1990s. This period saw the introduction of the Koguryŏ relics and remains uncovered in China, and of related studies conducted by Chinese scholars. Korean researchers’ ability to finally gain access to the actual sites had the effect of expanding the scope of research into Koguryŏ to the investigation of historical sites such as the Koguryŏ fortresses and mural paintings in Manchuria. Pertinent examples of such studies include Sŏ Kilsu’s \textit{Koguryŏ Fortress} (1994), Sin Hyŏngsik’s \textit{Koguryŏ Relics in the Jian area} (1996), Yŏ Hogyu’s \textit{Koguryŏ Fortresses I · II} (1998, 1999), and Chŏn Hot’ae’s \textit{Koguryŏ History as Reflected in its Mural Paintings} (1999).

The launching of China’s Northeast Asia Project in 2002 had the effect of catapulting the issue of Koguryŏ history into the mainstream of Korean society. In this regard, academic conferences were held to discuss issues related to China’s distortion of Koguryŏ history. In addition, the number of studies on Koguryŏ increased tremendously following the establishment of a central institution to collect relevant historical materials in the form of the Koguryŏ Research Foundation in 2004. The formation of such a research support system will help to strengthen the study of Koguryŏ.
history, which had been relatively disregarded when compared with the progress made in the subfields of Silla history (The Research Institute for Silla Culture in Tongguk University), Paekche history (Institute of Mahan-Paekche Cultures in Wŏn’gwang University; Paekche Research Institute, Ch’ungnam National University), and Kaya history (Institute of Kaya Culture, Inje University) through such means as the holding of university research center-organized academic conferences, and the work of research institutes and local autonomies. This denouement will contribute to the deepening of research topics pertaining to the three kingdoms, and to the eventual establishment of a more systematic understanding of the study of ancient Korean history.

The lack of historical materials and permeating nature of the colonial perception of history meant that until the 1970s very little research was done on the topic of Kaya history. Those few studies which were conducted on Kaya history mainly consisted of efforts to overcome the so-called ‘Mimana Nihonbu’ theory. While the history of Kaya became an important issue for scholars whenever Japan attempted to distort history by including this Mimana Nihonbu theory in its textbooks, until the 1980s, the study of Kaya was mainly undertaken as part of a wider focus on the foreign relations of ancient states, and the kingdom was treated as a vehicle which could be used to further the understanding of Paekche and Silla. However, as a result of the archeological excavations conducted in former Kaya areas since the 1980s, the old trend of basing Kaya-related studies on historical documents was altered in favor of a new outlook based on the active use of archeological materials. Although limited in their scope, this period also saw the appearance of studies on Kaya in which the historical records relating to Kaya found in the <Nihon Shoki> were analyzed and criticized. The advent of studies on Kaya history had the effect of severely weakening the credibility of the Mimana Nihonbu theory based on the colonial perception of history, and also resulted in the establishment of the general flows of Kaya history.90 In the 1990s, the scope of research into Kaya was extended to include various topics such as the political characteristics of Kaya, its territory and ruling structure,
political thought and culture, establishment and development, and foreign relations.91 The recent focus on the individual statelets which made up the Kaya Confederation has helped to shed some light on the history of Kaya.

The study of Parhae history rekindled by Yi Yongbŏm during the 1960s was originally conducted as part of summaries of existing studies, or focused on its role within Korean history.92 As such, researchers’ linking of the royal family of Parhae to the Kyeru clan of Koguryŏ had the effect of focusing subsequent research on the structure of Parhae society and the fate of refugees following the fall of Koguryŏ. Studies on Parhae history began to be actively conducted during the 1980s as the previous focus on placing Parhae within Korean history was abandoned in favor of a more Parhae-specific approach that included research into the political history of Parhae; the development of its foreign relations, its social structure, and its local control system.93 This denouement was made possible not only by the above-mentioned increase in the number of researchers, but also by access to Parhae historical sites and the use of archeological materials.

The scope of ancient Korean studies was further extended to include such topics as the reanalysis of the Lolang and Daifang Commanderies established after the collapse of Kojosŏn; the relationship between political power groups and jar coffin tombs uncovered in the Yŏngsan River basin area; Samhan’s growth and foreign relations, and the development of Puyŏ history. Such studies have gone a long way towards shedding some light into fields in which little research was conducted in the past.

The number of studies related to rituals and foundation myths has gradually increased.94 This field of studies, which originally focused on ch’ŏn’gun (heavenly prince) and sodo (sacred place) beliefs, was at the outset a combination of religious and folklore studies.95 This is in all likelihood because the documents related to the sodo evoke thoughts about Shamanism. Later on, studies which analyzed the role of the sodo within the political and social structure were conducted. As historians viewed these sodo formed during the Bronze Age as having been the
result of the conflicts between the old and new cultures that emerged during the transition to the iron culture, some scholars have argued for the existence of a political relationship between these *sodo* and the rise of chiefdom society. Meanwhile, other scholars assumed that the *sodo* were established as part of the social development process in the Samhan area, and conducted a detailed analysis of the *sodo* belief by comparing it with the rituals of Koguryŏ and Puyŏ.\(^96\)

In addition, the scope of research topics was eventually extended to include the foundation myths; ritual types, such as ancestral worship and sacrificial rites to the heavens conducted at altars; and the national rituals of the three kingdoms. Furthermore, the historical significance of the foundation myth was analyzed as part of studies dealing with its relationship to shamanism (folk belief) before the acceptance of Buddhism; the establishment of early states and the political and social functions of rituals; the relationship between the founders’ tomb, the *sin’gung* (place where the ritual ceremonies were held), and the royal family. These studies related to the rituals and foundation myths helped to shed some light on the governance principles and concepts which were used during the process of establishing the ancient states and to a restructuring of ancient Korean history.\(^97\) Recently, some scholars have taken the position that the ancient states should be approached using socio-cultural methodologies in which the ritual ceremonies of ancient states are regarded as having been closely related to wars, and the rulers of the ancient states are perceived as having been able to establish the state structure by maintaining a balance between the ritual and military forces.\(^98\)

The consolidation of democracy and increased role of women within the Korean society has resulted in the activation of the study of Korean history as it relates to women. In keeping with this trend, the study of the history of women during the ancient era has begun to show signs of invigoration. The study of ancient women, which used to be conducted as part of studies on the history of Shamanism, began in the 1990s to be treated as a separate research subject. Historians originally focused on the
social status of those ancient women who were regarded as female priestesses. However, research topics were eventually expanded to include the processes through which women’s status was changed, women’s activities after the acceptance of Buddhism and Confucianism, and women’s everyday life and perceptions of morals. However, there remains an overall lack of interest in the field of women in ancient history, and the field is still in its infancy. Given the shortage of relevant materials, there is a need to supplement this research with the results and theories developed in neighboring fields such as anthropology, folklore, and family studies, and to make use of the work conducted by scholars in the West, where the field has already reached an advanced stage of development.

Studies on agricultural production and trade in the ancient era conducted as part of the analysis of the background of social change have contributed greatly to the search for new and diverse research topics. From the late 1980s onwards interest in production and trade in ancient Korea grew significantly. Examples of studies conducted during this period include one on the role of the development of agricultural productivity in bringing about social change, and another on how the changes in the main actors in trade and the redistribution of products affected political power groups. The recent holding of academic conferences on various themes such as ‘Ancient East Asia and Paekche’, ‘Shedding New Light on the Korea-China relationship during the Ancient Era’, ‘Lolang in East Asia’, and ‘Logistics System and International Trade of Paekche during the Hansŏng Period’, has resulted in a sluice of new analysis of the political order and cultural exchanges which took place in ancient Northeast Asia.

Other research topics which attracted attention during the 1990s included the division of the periods associated with the ancient and middle ages; the analysis of ancient Korean states’ foreign policies towards China and Japan; the relocation of the three kingdoms and the structure of their capitals; detailed studies on Buddhist thought; the reanalysis of the land system during the unified Silla era based on
historical documents related to villages; studies related to Chang Pogo and local power groups (hojok); the establishment of the Post Three Kingdoms era at the end Silla and beginning of Koryŏ; and on the authenticity of the <Hwarang segi> manuscript.

The excavation of new epigraphs has also greatly helped to activate the field of ancient historical studies characterized by a lack of written documents. For example, the excavation of the King Munyŏng’s Tomb (1971) and Heavenly Horse Tomb (Ch’ŏnmach’ŏng) (1973), and the discoveries of the Ch’ŏnjŏnni Petroglyphs in Ulju (1970), Tanyang Chŏksŏngbi (1978), and the Chungwŏn Koguryŏ Monument (1979) created opportunities to advance the field of ancient Korean history in their capacity as new historical materials of a complementary nature. These materials provided useful and varied information related to the reliability of the Paekche pon’gi section of the <Samguk sagi>; helped increase the general understanding of Paekche culture; shed light on the central politics of Silla and the ruling structure of conquered territories; further the understanding of the social status system; and increase the pool of knowledge about foreign relations between Koguryŏ and Silla during the 5th century.\textsuperscript{108} The discovery of the Silla Monument in Pongp’yŏng, Ulchin (1988) resulted in a treasure trove of information about such topics as the legal system during the reign of King Pŏphŭng; the status of the king and royal power; the establishment of Silla’s 17-rank system; the local ruling structure and village organization; and the policies towards subjugated peoples.\textsuperscript{109} In addition, the Silla Monument uncovered in Naengsuri Yŏngil (1989), which is widely regarded as the oldest Silla monument, has been perceived as an important document which summarizes the political, economic, and institutional history of Silla during the 5th-6th centuries, and is complementary to the information contained in the Silla Monument uncovered in Pongp’yŏng.\textsuperscript{110} These archaeological findings resulted in the further development and interpretation of the related epigraphs during the 1990s.\textsuperscript{111} Papers dealing with Silla politics and its labor mobilization system during the 6th century that were based on these epigraphs have recently been published.\textsuperscript{112}
Furthermore, a comprehensive index of 600 Korean ancient epigraphs created from the 2nd century B.C- 10th century A.D., over nearly 1200 years, was recently published in the form of a guidebook for ancient history students.\textsuperscript{113}

Meanwhile, the discovery of wooden slips (mokkan) has also helped to advance the field of ancient history. While the first wooden slips were excavated at Anapchi Pond in Kyŏngju in 1975, by 2004 approximately 340 wooden slips have been excavated from 14 locations nationwide. Although the number of wooden slips uncovered to date cannot be compared to that of China or Japan, this number has increased to the point where wooden slip-related materials have been included amongst the lists of excavated artifacts almost every year since the 1990s. Comprehensive discussions on the contents and characteristics of the wooden slips excavated from the Sŏngsan Fortress in Haman have been carried out during international conferences on ancient materials in which scholars from China, Japan, and Korea took part. As a result, despite differing opinions as to how these wooden slips should be utilized and interpreted, a general consensus has been reached that these wooden slips represent historical materials which shed some much-needed light on the history of Silla during the mid-late period of the 6th century.\textsuperscript{114} These wooden slips have helped to recreate the taxation system and local institutions which existed during the mid-ancient Silla period. In particular, the publication of research materials in which the ancient wooden slips compiled to date are analyzed using infrared photography is expected to greatly invigorate research activities in this particular field.\textsuperscript{115} The number of wooden slips uncovered is expected to increase as archeological excavations expand. As such, there is hope that by conducting detailed analyses of the excavated wooden slips and accumulating diversified study results on the topic the study of wooden slips can in the future be established as an independent field, as is the case in China and Japan. In addition, the need to analyze inscriptions found on pottery pieces and roof tiles has increased as the number of such items excavated has risen.

The field of ancient Korean history has also been positively affected by
the growing use of computers since the 1990s. The data-basing of the original texts of the *<Samguk sagi>* and *<Samguk yusa>* has now made it possible to rapidly search through these texts. The digitalization of epigraphy-related materials has now reached the point where organizations such as the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (NRICP) have started to provide access to such documents as part of the web services they offer on their homepages.\(^{116}\) Furthermore, the efficiency of research activities has been tremendously improved as a result of the fact that it is now possible to access Chinese historical records, including the Chinese official dynastic histories (*Zhengshi*, 正史) through the Internet.\(^{117}\) However, there is a need to avoid quoting the wrong version or using mistaken translations as a result of simply citing the materials found on the Internet without comparing them to the original texts.

The excavation of ancient tombs in the lower reaches of the Nakdong River during the 1990s invigorated research into Silla and Kaya history. Later on, based on the keyhole shaped tombs and Japanese artifacts excavated from the Yŏngsan River basin, the focus began to shift towards the study of Mahan and Paekche history. More recently, studies on relations between early Paekche and Lolang have been conducted in accordance with the P’ungnap Earthen Fortress and Lolang-related relics found in the Kyŏnggi area.\(^{118}\) In addition, the uncovering of artifacts from ancient tombs in the upper reaches of the Nakdong River, Namhan River, and Kŭm River during the construction of the Chungbu Naeryuk Expressway resulted in an expansion of interest in the issues related to the influence of the three kingdoms as they competed with each other for power. Specifically, the establishment of archeological institutions at the national level from the mid 1990s onwards has resulted in a tremendous increase in the number of materials excavated and available to those in the field of ancient historical studies. Therefore, the number of studies on ancient history which make use of archeological materials is expected to further increase in the future. In this regard, the proper interpretation of new archeological materials will require close cooperation between the
fields of history and archeology.

**Conclusion: future tasks and prospects**

Over the last sixty years, or since liberation, the field of ancient Korean history has striven to overcome the damages caused by the colonial perception of history and to establish a systematic structure for the study of ancient history. This has resulted in so many achievements in the field of ancient history that it impossible to enumerate them all individually. All of this was made possible by the 1st generation of researchers who overcame difficult conditions to establish the basic framework for the study of ancient history, and the efforts of the 2nd and 3rd generations who accepted this framework and expanded on their predecessors’ studies. In addition, the increased number of researchers, growth of related materials, development of new methodologies, as well as the advent of various research topics, have all been vital components in terms of the great development which has occurred in the field of ancient Korean history.

Nevertheless, there remain many tasks which must be addressed in the future. These include the identification of the periods in which the ancient states were established and the establishment of related concepts; the details and characteristics of ruling structures; as well as the issues related to the transition to the middle ages. There is also a need to pay more attention to the history of regular people and cultural history, both of which have been largely neglected to date. Although this problem is not only limited to the study of ancient history, there is a need to consider the publication of study results for those generations who learned only Hangŭl and are accustomed to the use of moving images. It is particularly essential for researchers to participate in the compilation of the textbooks that will be used in the actual historical education field. For example, those interested in the question of ‘how history should be taught’ should seriously think about ‘how the textbooks should be compiled and what they should contain’.
Although studies on ancient history have become more diversified and a wider range of topics have been addressed as a result of the increase in the number of researchers, several problems have also come to light during this process. Papers dealing with the same materials and which had developed the same theories were submitted as a result of the fact that researchers focused on a limited number of subjects, and uncreative papers were published as a result of the duplication of research themes. These are some of the problems which have been identified over the last 10 years. In addition, some have drawn attention to the fact that a large number of the papers which are written go unread as a result of what they call a ‘poverty of riches’. This has prompted scholars to call on researchers to produce higher quality studies in their own retrospectives of the work conducted in the field of ancient Korean history. Although research themes have been diversified, it remains necessary to further extend the width of the perception of ancient history by including studies from other academic fields. Furthermore, there is a need, based on a comparison with the studies conducted in Japan and China, to carry out discussions on how to derive the universality and uniqueness of ancient Korean history.120

Recently, many academic conferences have been hosted by academic and research institutions on a variety of themes. In addition, specific conferences such as those between North and South Korea, Korea-Japan, and Korea-China, have also been held to discuss important issues. Despite the fact that significant results have been produced due to the selection of varied and creative themes during these conferences, certain researchers continue to take part in these conferences while presenting the same old papers. Therefore, as it will be difficult to search for alternatives or to advance the field further without a thorough self-consideration and review, a system through which studies can be properly evaluated should be put in place.

Lastly, it is necessary at this point in time where we commemorate the 60th year of liberation, for researchers in the field of ancient Korean history to listen to the advice of those searching for a new direction for
the field of ancient history in the 21st century, to conduct an internal and external reconsideration of the study of ancient history, and to pursue cooperation with all those involved in the field.121

**Key Words:** ancient Korean history studies, the colonial perception of history formed during the Japanese colonial era, the empirical study trend, an issue with the early states formation, archeological findings

---

**Notes:**


3 Sin Hyŏngsik, “In search of a direction for the study of Korean history in the

Sin Hyŏngsik, ibid, 2000, p.71.


Kim Sanggi, “The migrations of the Han, Ye, and Maek tribes (Han, Ye, Maek yitonggo)”, Sahae, 1948.

Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History

chŏngch’ae kūi chemunje”, Collection of Buddhist Essays to Commemorate the 80th Birthday of Paek Sŏnguk, 1959; sometime thereafter, Ancient Korean History (Singu munhwasa, 1971) was published in book form to commemorate his achievements.

Kim Yŏngha, ibid, 1996, pp.50-53.


“The foundation of the aristocracy in Silla (Silla kwichok seryŏkū kipan)”, Inmun kwhak, Institute of Humanities at Yonsei University.


Yi Kidong, “Future direction for the field of ancient Korean history and related tasks (Han’guk kodaesa yŏn’guŭi panghyanggwa kwacha)”, Summary of the Papers Presented during the 30th Nationwide Conference of Historians, 1987; The Field of Korean History during the Transitional Period (Chŏnhwagiŭi han’guk sahah), Ilchogak, 1999, p.253.

Kim Yŏngha, ibid, 1996, pp.52.

Kim Ch’ŏlchun, “The basis of the power of Silla’s aristocracy (Silla kwijok seryŏkū kipan)”, Inmun kwhak, Institute of Humanities, Yonsei University, 1962; “Ancient society and the origins of Silla (Silla sanggo sekyewa kü kinyŏn)”, Collection of Essays to Commemorate the 61st Birthday of
Professor Kim Sanggi (Kim Sanggi kyosu hwagap kinyŏm sahak nonch’ong), 1962; “Development of ancient Korean kingdoms (Han’guk kodae kukka paltalsa)”, Korean History and Culture (Han’guk munhwasa taegye), Institute of Korean Culture, Korea University, 1964; “The characteristics of the ruling group during the Post-Three Kingdoms era (Husamguk sidaeŭi chibae seryŏkūi sŏnggyŏke taehayŏ)”, Collection of Essays to Commemorate the 60th Birthday of Dr. Yi Sangbaek (Yi Sangbaek paksa hoegap kynyŏm nonch’ong), 1964; “The characteristics of ancient Korean politics and the establishment of political thought during the middle ages (Han’guk kodae chŏngch’iŭi sŏnggyŏkkwa chungse chŏngch’i sasangŭi sŏngnip kwajŏng)”, Summary of Research Projects (Yŏng’gu pogos), Ministry of Education, 1968; “The characteristics of ancient Korean society during the transition from Silla to Koryŏ (Han’guk kodae sahoeŭi sŏnggyŏkkwa namal yŏch’ŏŭi chŏnhwan’gie taehayŏ)”, The Division of Korean History by Period (Han’guksa sidae kubunron), Association of Korean Economic History, 1970; Korean Cultural History (Han’guk munhwasa ron), Publishing Department of Seoul National University, 1990.

19 Yi Kibaik, “The social significance of the acceptance of Buddhism during the Three Kingdoms era (Samguk sidae pulkyo suyongkwa kŭ sahoejŏk ŭimi)”, Yŏksa hakbo, Vol. 6, 1954; “The thought of Wŏn Kwang and (Wŏn
Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History


25 Yi Kangrae, “Study of historical sources found in the <Samguk sagi> (Samguk sagi chŏn’gŏron yŏn’gu)”, PhD dissertation, Korea University, 1994; Chŏng Kubok et al., Reanalysis of the Original Copy of the <Samguk sagi> (Samguk sagiŭi wŏnjŏn kŏmt’o), The Academy of Korean Studies (Han’guk chŏngsin munhwa yŏn’guwŏn), 1995.

26 Kim Chŏngbae, “Analysis of the original location and cultural characteristics of Samhan (Samhan wich’ie Taehan chongnaesŏlgwa munhwa sŏnggyŏkŭi kŏmt’o)”, Sahak yŏn’gu Vol. 20, 1968; “Analysis of Chin and Han (Chingwa hane taehan koch’al)”, Sach’ŏng, Compilation of Vols. 1, 2, and 13, 1968; “Comparison of the characteristics of Korean funeral culture with those of China and Japan (Chung · Ile pihae pon han’gukŭi sunjang)”, Paeksan hakbo, Vol. 6, 1969.


30 Sindong-A Symposium, “The formation of states and city-states (Kukatŭi hyŏngsŏnggwa tosi kukka)”, (Sindong-A, May 1971; Ch’ŏn Kwanwu, Issues Related to ancient Korean history (Han’guk sanggosaŭi chaengjŏm), 1975

31 Ch’ŏn Kwanwu, “Ancient states in North and South Korea (Nam·bukŭi kodae kukka)” Sindong-A, September, 1972.


of chieftoms (Kunjang sahoeũi palchũn kwajǒng siron”), Paekche munhwa, Vol. 12, 1979.


Yun Yongjin, The ancient state formation process in Taegu –with a special focus on archaeological materials (Taeguũi ch’ogũi kukka hyŏngsŏng kwajǒng–kogohakjŏk charyorrul chungsimũro)”, Tongyang munhwa yŏn’gu, Vol. 1, 1974; Collection of Korean History Essays (Han’guksa nonmunjip), Vol. 2, Korea University, 1976.

The prehistoric culture which existed in the Yŏngsan River basin was characterized by its dolmens and undecorated pottery culture. The 50 statelets of Mahan, each of which contained anywhere from a few thousand to ten thousand people, were situated in what is now Paeksu myŏn in Yŏnggwang, Taejŏn myŏn in Tamyang, Togok myŏn in Hwasun, Sijong myŏn in Yŏngam, and Sŏsam myŏn in Changsŏng. Ch’oe Mongryong, “Prehistoric relics and remains in the Yŏngsan River area (Yŏngsan’gang yuyŏkũi sŏnsa yujŏk · yumul)”, Yŏksa hakbo, Vol. 59, 1973, pp.67-87.


43 Ha Ilsik, “Main issues in the studies of ancient Korean history and future tasks (Kodaesa yŏn’guŭi chuyo chaengjŏmgwa kwaje)”, *50 Years of Studies in the Field of Korean History*, Hyean, 2005, pp.97-98.


47 During the 1970s, both Yi Kibaik and Kim Ch’ŏlchun published restorpectives of their previous achievements. Yi Kibaik, *The Political and Social History of Silla (Silla chŏngch’I sahoesa yŏn’gu)*, Ilchogak, 1974; *Ancient Korean History (Han’guk kodaesaron)*, 1975; *Buddhism as the State Religion*
during the Silla Era and Confucianism (Silla sidaeui kukka pulkyowa yugyo), 1978; Kim Ch’ŏlchun, Ancient Korean Society (Han’guk kodae sahoe yŏn’gu), 1975.


49 Ch’oe Pyŏnghŏn, The establishment of the nine mountains school of Zen Buddhism during the late period of Silla (Silla hadae Sŏngjong kusan’ta’ŭi sŏngnip), Journal of Korean History (Han’guksa yŏn’gu), Vol. 7, 1992; “The social roles of Zen Buddhism during the final stages of Silla and onset of Koryŏ (Namal · yŏch’o sŏnjongŭi sahoejŏk sŏnggyŏk)”, Sahak yŏn’gu, Vol. 25, 1975.


52 Rho T’aedon, “The pu system during the Three Kingdoms era –with a special focus on its establishment process and structure (Samguk sidaeui pue


57 Paek Namuk, “Analysis of ‘kuk’ as described in the Han section of the <Sanguozhi> (Samgukchi hanjŏnŭ kuke kwanhan munje)”, Paeksan hakbo, Vol. 26, 1981.


Moon Chang Rho (Mun Ch’angro) 39

60 Kwŏn Oyŏng, “The structure of kuk during the Samhan era (Samhan kukŭaksŏng Taehan koch’al)”, Journal of Ancient Korean History (Han’guk kodaesa yŏn’gu), Vol. 10, 1995; “The functions and internal structure of kukŭp during the Samhan era (Samhan kukŭpŭi kinŭnggwa naebu kujo)”, Pusan sahak, Vol. 28, 1995; “Study of the Kuk during the Samhan era (Samhan kuke Taehan yŏn’gu)”, PhD dissertation, Seoul National University, 1996.

61 Hong Sŏnggi, “The social structure during the 1st -3rd centuries – with a special focus on the haho (1-3 segi minŭi chonjae hyŏng’t’ae Taehan ilgoch’al – sowi hahoŭi silch’eva kwallyŏnhayŏ)”, Yŏksa hakbo, Vol. 63, 1974.


68 Kim T’aesik, History of the Kaya Confederation (Kaya yŏnmaengsa yŏn’gu), Ilchogak, 1992.
70 Kim Sut’ae, “The absolute monarchy and chin’gol aristocracy during the middle period of Silla (Silla chungdae chŏnje wangsŏng’wa chin’gol kwijok)”, PhD dissertation, Sŏgang University, 1991.
72 Yi Wut’ae, “Local power groups during the middle period of Silla (Silla chunggogi’ŭi chibang seryŏk yŏn’gu)”, PhD dissertation, Seoul National
University, 1994; Kang Pongryong, “Silla’s local ruling structure (Silla chibang tongch’el che’je yon’gu), PhD dissertation, Seoul National University, 1994.

73 Yi Mun’gi, “Silla’s military structure during the middle period (Silla chunggogi kansa chojik yon’gu), PhD dissertation, Kyongbuk National University, 1991.


76 Kim Kwangsu, “The establishment of Koguryo as the main power during the ancient era (Koguryo kodae chipkwon kukkaui sognipe kwanhan yon’gu),” PhD dissertation, Yonsei University, 1983; Kong Sokku, “Koguryo’s territorial expansion (Koguryo yongyok hwakchange Taehan yon’gu),” PhD dissertation, Ch’ungnam National University, 1991; Im Kihwan, “Study of the establishment of Koguryo’s ruling structure (Koguryo chipkwon che’je sognip kwajong yon’gu),” PhD dissertation, Kyonghui University, 1996.

77 Kim Yongha, ibid, 1996, pp.57-58.


79 Kim Yongsoong, Hierarchical structures and regional groups in the Kyongsan and Taegu area during the Three Kingdoms era (Kyongsan · taegu chiyok sanguk sidae kyech’unghwawa chiyok chipantan), Journal of Yongnam Archaeology (Yongnam kogohak), Vol. 6, 1989.


81 Ch’oe Pyonghyun, Ancient Tombs of Silla (Silla kobun yon’gu), Ilchisa, 1992.

82 Pak Pohyon, “The hierarchical structure of wooden chamber tombs with stone mounds (Choksok mokkwakpunui kyech’unghsông siron), Ancient
Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History

87  Ch’oe Sŏngrak, “Kojosŏn as viewed through its iron culture (Ch’ŏlgi munhwarŭl t’onghae pon Kojosŏn), Kuksagwan nonch’ŏng, Vol. 33, 1992; Yi Ch’ŏnggyu, “Kojosŏn as viewed through its bronze culture (Ch’ŏngdonggirŭl t’onghae pon Kojosŏn), Kuksagwan nonch’ŏng., Vol. 42, 1993; Kim


Achievements and Future Tasks in the Field of Ancient Korean History


Kim T’aesik, “The present state of studies on Kaya history (Kayasa yŏn’guŭi hyŏnhwang)”, Public Lectures on Korean History, Vol. 11, 1992; Rho Chungguk, “The past and present in the study of Kaya history (Kayasa yŏn’guŭi ājewa onul)”, Kaya and Ancient Korean History (Han’guk kodaesa sokŭi kaya), Hyean, 2001.

Yi Yongbŏm, The History of Northeast Asia during the Middle Ages (Chungse tongbuk asiasa), Asea munhwasa, 1976.

Ch’oe Kwangsik, “Rituals during the ancient Korean era (Han’guk kodaеui cheui yon’gu)”, PhD dissertation, Korea University, 1989; Ancient Korean States and Rituals (Han’guk kodaеui kukkanwa chesa), Han’gilsa, 1994; Sŏ Yongdae, “The notion of god during the ancient Korean era (Han’guk kadae sin kwannyaе kwanhan yon’gu)”, PhD dissertation, Seoul National University, 1992; Kim Tujeun, The Foundation Myths and Rituals of Ancient Korea (Han’guk kodaеui kon’guk sinhwawa cheui), Ilchogak, 1999; Na Huira, The National Rituals of Silla (Sillaui kukka chesa), Chisik sanopsa, 2003.


A reanalysis of the foundation myths and rituals of Three Kingdoms and Kaya has recently been carried out. The 18th Comprehensive Discussions on Ancient Korean History: The foundation myths and rituals of ancient Korea, February 17-18, 2005.

Park Taejae, Rituals and Wars – A new perception of the ancient states (Ŭisikkwa chŏnjaeng –kodae kukkarŭl parabonŭn saeroun sigak), Ch’akespeare, 2003, pp.43-61.


100 Ch’oe Sukkyŏng, “The establishment of the study of Korean women’s history and future tasks (Han’guk yŏsŏngsa yŏn’guŭi sŏngnipkwa kwaje), *Public Lectures on Korean History*, Vol. 15, 1994, p. 18; Ha Ilsik, ibid, p. 115

101 Ha Ilsik, ibid, pp. 109-110.


103 The 11th International Academic Conference on Paekche, hosted by the Paekche Research Institute of Ch’unghnam National University, (October 25-26, 2002).

104 The 16th Comprehensive Discussions, hosted by the Society of Ancient Korean History (February 20-21, 2003).

105 The 5th Summer Seminar, hosted by the Society of Ancient Korean History (July 24-25, 2003).
106 The 1st International Academic Conference, hosted by the Hansin Academy, Hansin University (September 26, 2003).
112 Chu Po’don, Epigraphy and Silla History (Kumsǒkmun’gwa sillasa), Chisik sanôpsa, 2002
115 Ch’angwŏn National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, Ancient Korean
wooden Slips (Han’gukŭi kodae mokkan), 2004. This compilation can also be downloaded by researchers in pdf format from the homepage of the research institute.

116 One of the services provided on the homepage of the NRICP (www.nricp.go.kr/korean) involves access to images of Korean epigraphy (http://gsm.nricp.go.kr).

117 Chinese historical records, including the Twenty-five Official dynastic histories, can be accessed through Academia Sinica in Taiwan or the Chinese Cultural Network (ef.cdpa.nsysu.edu.tw/ccw).


120 Sŏ Yŏngdae, ibid, 1996, p.164.

121 Sin Hyŏngsik, ibid, 2002, pp.100-101 “The field of ancient Korean history should not be controlled by specific researchers and research institutions, but should be a sphere shared by all. It should not cause a gap between generations or conflicts between the conservatives and progressives, but rather serve as a sphere in which cooperation rules. In addition, North and South Korean researchers should seek out common ground and pursue a change in their research outlook by accepting each others’ studies, and overcome their ideological differences in order to focus on the true contents of Korean history within the general framework of history.

《국문초록》
한국고대사연구의 주요성과와 과제
문 장 로 (국민대학교)


1980년대 이후 연구자들의 증가, 다양한 주제와 연구내용의 심화로 고대사의 체계적 구성은 더욱 틀림없이졌다. 실제로 민족의 형성문제와 함께 단군 및 고조선사와 관련된 논의가 구체화되었고, 신라와 백제사에서 축적된 연구성과는 가야와 고구려사 분야로 확장되었다. 발해 또한 귀족문서에서 점차 발현자 자체에 대한 연구로 이어졌으며, 이 밖에 남·북대방간의 재검토, 부여사의 전개과정, 삼한의 성장과 대외관계, 영산강유역의 원관고분과 그 축조세력을 둘러싼 논의 등으로 연구의 지평을 넓혀갔다. 1990년에 접어들어 전국신화 및 제, 고대 여성사와 관련된 문제, 농업생산 및 교역에 관한 접근 등도 다양한 연구주제의 모색에 일조하였다. 이와 함께 고대 동아시아의 정치적 국제질서나 문화적 교류에 대한 이해를 더하였다. 나아가 고대와 중세의 시대구분 문제, 삼국의 천도 및 도성제도에 대한 접근, 불교사상사 연구의 심화, 천학문서 및 통일신라의 토지제도에 대한 재검토, 장보고와 칭해진을 중심으로 한 해상활동, 나팔여초 호족의 동향과 후삼국의 성립, 필사본 "화량세기"를 둘러싼 진위논쟁 등의 문제도 부각되었다.

한편 고고학적 성과와 새로운 금석문의 발굴은 고대사연구에 활기를 주었는데, 실험이 백제본기의 신빙성 확인, 백제문화사의 이해증진, 삼국의 중앙정치 및 접경지통
치방식, 민의 존재양태, 고구려-신라의 대외관계, 신라의 정치·경제·제도사 정리에 유익한 정보를 제공하였다.

이처럼 한국 고대사학계는 식민사학의 폐해를 극복하고 고대사의 체계화를 위해 부단히 노력한 결과, 새로운 방법론의 모색, 연구주제의 다양한 접근, 관련자료의 발굴 등을 통해서 큰 진전이 있었다. 이는 전적으로 어려운 여건을 다투고 고대사연구의 다담들을 마련했던 1세대 연구자들, 그리고 이들을 발전적으로 계승한 2-3세대 연구자들의 노력과 구체적인 성과물의 축적을 바탕으로 한 것이다.

주제어: 한국고대사 연구, 식민사학, 실증적 연구풍토, 고대국가 형성 문제, 고고학적 성과