



Korea's Dolmens

Introduction

It is from the Neolithic Period that tombs, or groups of tombs, first began to be built on the Korean Peninsula. One representative example is the Janghang Site on Gadeokdo, built on the slope of a coastal hill (The Korea Archaeology and Art History Research Institute 2014). However, it is only from the Bronze Age that tombs were constructed as structures and tomb clusters were arranged in groups over a long period of time within a particular landscape. Whether above-ground or below the surface, structures were built to contain the body of the deceased, and tombs that are marked or clearly convey their external form first appear in the Bronze Age. However, it is thought that such tombs and tomb groups were not constructed from the Incipient Bronze Age and that they began to be constructed only at a later stage of the Early Bronze Age (Kim 2008; Bae 2011, 2018; Yun 2021).

Tombs of the Bronze Age can be divided into several types. One recent review suggests that tombs of the Bronze Age can be classified, according to their shape and structure, as dolmens, stone coffin tombs, stone chamber tombs, pit burial tombs, jar coffin tombs, stone-piled wooden coffin tombs, mixed cave tombs, mixed stone-piled tombs, stone coffin tombs with ditches, and stone-lidded pit burial tombs (S. Kim 2015). Among these diverse types, it can be argued that the dolmen, built in exceptionally large numbers over a long period of time and over a wide area, is the most characteristic tomb of the Bronze Age. But because dolmens represent a diverse array of tombs with different forms and structures, it is also very difficult to answer the question of what constitutes a “dolmen.” For example, one may question whether it is justifiable to give the same name to a *takja*-type dolmen built alone on the top of a hill and a cluster of dolmens with platforms located on a floodplain. Nevertheless, it is generally recognized that dolmens share common features in that they make use of stones to form a large-scale structure and are exposed above ground.

To explain the appearance of dolmens in terms of their external form, it

is necessary to understand the background of the period in which they were built. Since the Bronze Age should, of course, be understood by focusing on the production, distribution, and use of bronze, archaeologists once thought that the beginning of this period should be delineated by the first use of bronze. However, as more Bronze Age sites were revealed through full-scale excavations over the past 30 years, researchers began to realize that the characteristic material aspects of this period were agricultural settlements and arable land, dolmens, and settlement ditches. Through the accumulation of archaeological data, more and more researchers have understood that the beginning of the Bronze Age should be explained by focusing not on the production and use of bronze but on the emergence of farming communities highly dependent on agriculture (An 2000; Choi 2011; S. Lee 2015). It is when agricultural societies became established on the Korean Peninsula, populations increased, and large and small villages began to be built in various places in various landscapes that dolmens began to be constructed (Bae 2011; Yun 2021).

Many archaeologists in the past have attempted to explain the appearance of this new material culture, previously unseen on the Korean Peninsula, as resulting from the arrival of new groups bringing with them a new culture. This new culture, which included the construction of dolmens, has been largely interpreted as having its origins outside of the Korean Peninsula, and much research has focused on inferring its origins and development through classification, comparison, and seriation (Shin 2016). However, more recent approaches emphasize that explanations of culture change are also closely intertwined with trends in the subsistence economy, political and social organization, and changes in world view. Efforts are now being made to explain the construction of tombs (and tomb clusters), including dolmens (and dolmen clusters), which first appear a considerable period of time after the Bronze Age begins, in terms of changing socio-cultural processes (Shin 2016). The areas where dolmens are distributed, including Liaodong and parts of Jilin; the entire Korean Peninsula, excluding the Hamgyeong-do area; and the Kiju region of Japan, are all regions that saw transitions from foraging societies to intensive farming societies within similar timeframes, and thus the dolmen can be said to be a product of the development of a sedentary agricultural society throughout this broad area. It is for this reason that an increasing amount of research seeks to understand the social relationships of agricultural groups in this region and their interactions with a given landscape through investigation of the structure,

construction patterns, arrangements of dolmens within the landscape, as well as burial goods associated with dolmens (Lee 2020).

Exterior Form, Platforms, and Clusters

Three Types

From a structural point of view, an individual dolmen can be defined as a tomb equipped with a burial facility and a capstone and/or supporting stones. Focusing on this three-dimensional structure, Heungsoo Han (1935) had already classified the tombs into “northern-style dolmens” and “southern-style dolmens” in the 1930s. Since then, several other schemes have been proposed to classify dolmens, but it was Byeongtae Lim who proposed the most commonly used classification scheme. He avoided the northern and southern classifications that took into account only the geographic distribution of the dolmens and used their structural form to classify them into the *takja*-type and *giban*-type, and he later added a type without a capstone (Lim 1964). This classification method is basically the same as dividing the northern-type and the southern-type first, and then dividing the southern-type further into types with capstones and without capstones (Kim and Yun 1967), or dividing the northern-type, the southern-type, and the *gaeseok*-type (Kim 1974; Choi 1978). If the *wiseok*-type, which is only found on Jeju Island, is further added to the *takja*-type, *giban*-type, and *gaeseok*-type classifications, this scheme becomes the most inclusive classification method based on the three-dimensional structure of the dolmen (Y. Lee 2002, 96-100; Yu 2003, 140-43). Considering that researchers in northeast China, where there are few *giban*-type dolmens, divide dolmens broadly into two types—the *seokbung* (*takja*-type) and the *daeseokgaemyo* (Heo 1985), or *gaeseokmyo* (*gaeseok*-type) (Hwa 2019)—the three categories, *takja*-type, *giban*-type, and *gaeseok*-type, can be generally used to broadly classify all dolmens in Northeast Asia by their three-dimensional structure.

In most classification studies, it is common to primarily classify types according to their overall appearance as described above, and then, to further subdivide types based on more specific attributes. The burial facility is often considered one such attribute, but types are also subdivided based on other characteristics, such as the shape of the capstone, the presence or absence of piled stones, and the location of the burial chamber. The burial facilities

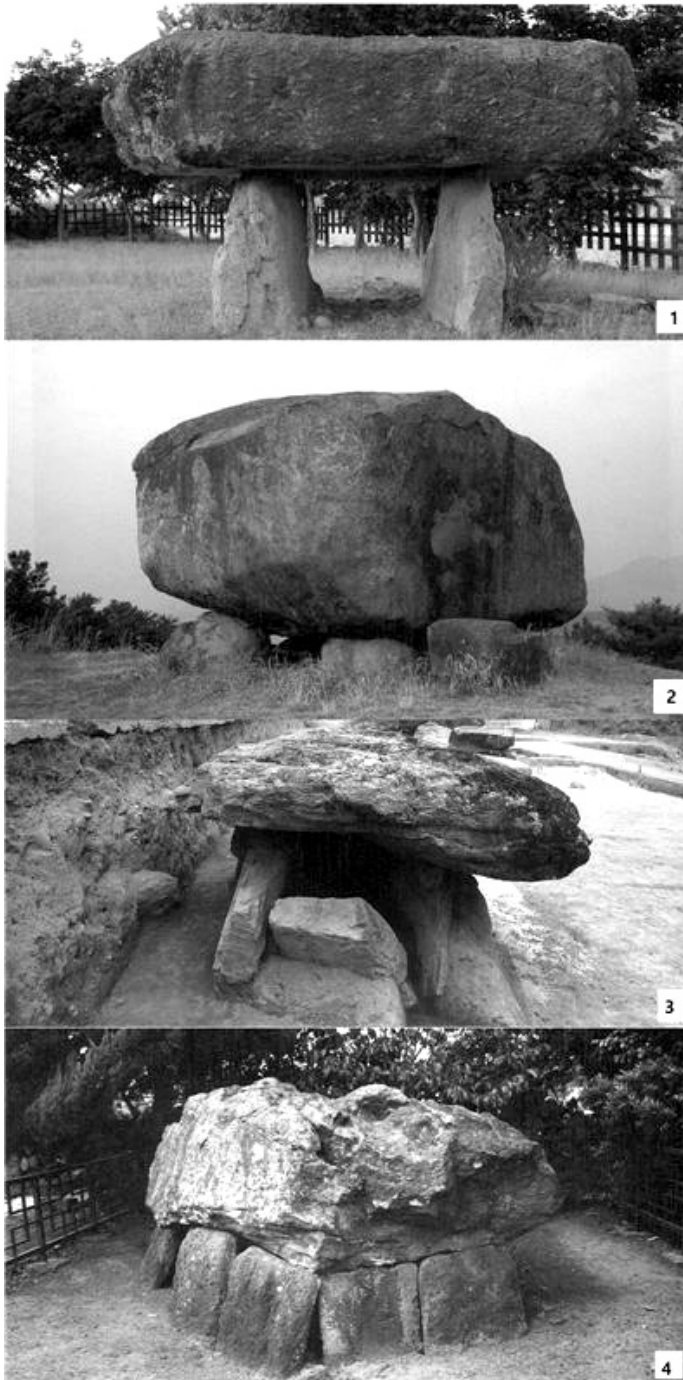


Figure 1. Basic Types of Dolmens (1. *Takja*-type: Yeoncheon Haggok-ri Dolmen, 2. *Giban*-type: Changnyeong Yu-ri Dolmen, 3. *Gaeseok*-type: Hwasun Hyosan-ri Dolmen No. 12, 4. *Wiseok*-type: Jeju Yongdam-dong Dolmen No. 6)

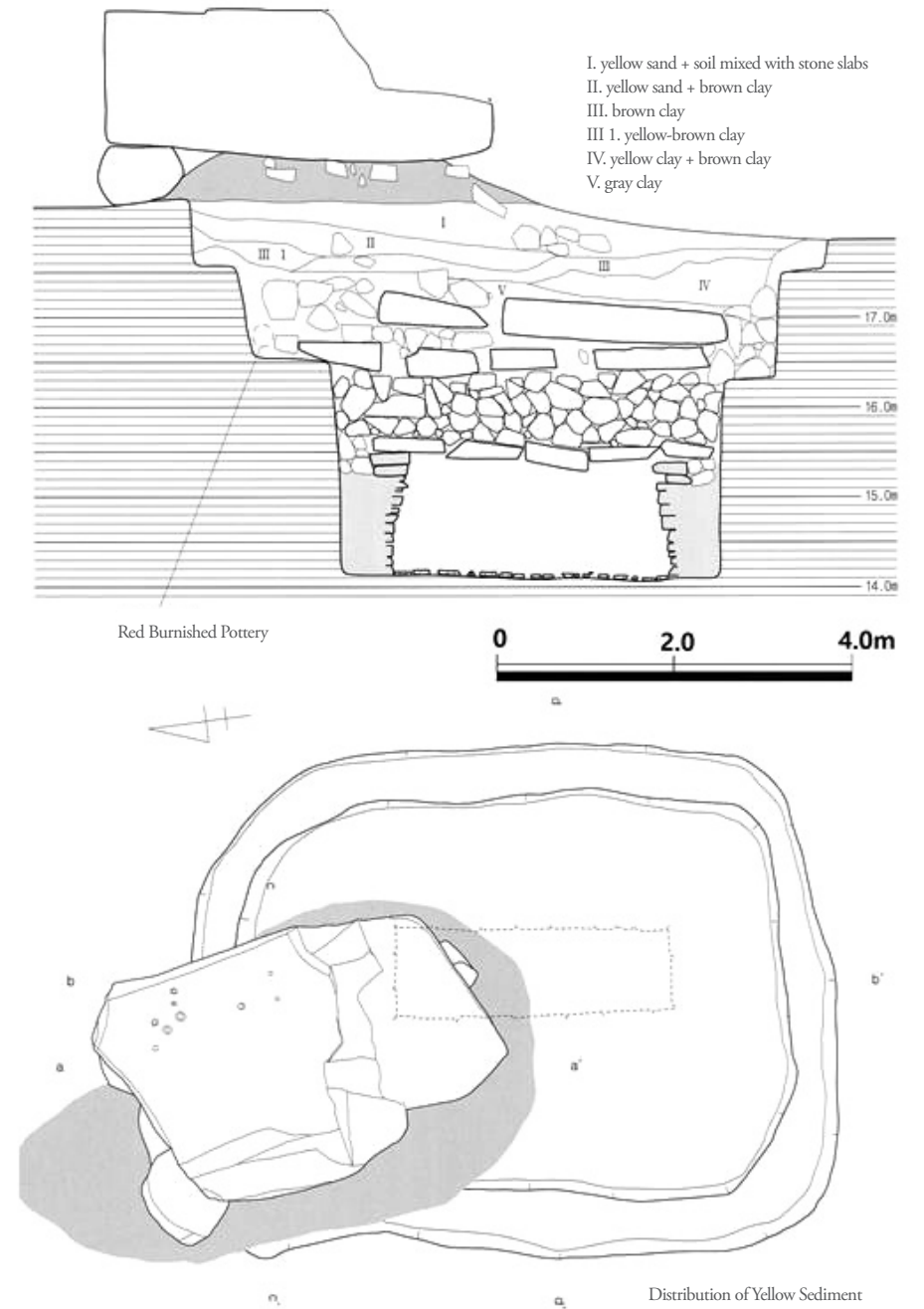


Figure 2. Burial Facility, Support Stones, and Capstone of Changwon Deokcheon-ri Dolmen No. 1

associated with dolmens include stone coffins, stone chambers, and simple pits, but there are also very unique and large-scale burial facilities such as those seen at Changwon Deokcheon-ri (Kyungnam University Museum 2013) and Boseong Dongchon-ri (Gwangju National Museum 2003). In particular, the burial facility of Deokcheon-ri Dolmen No. 1, a *giban*-type dolmen, is a stone chamber built into a 4 m-deep floor constructed in three steps, which was then covered with several layers of stone slabs, after which 2.5 m of the pit above was filled with large stone slabs and irregular stones forming a small mound, above which the capstone of the dolmen was placed. Some burial facilities are large and required a great deal of effort to build, while others have very simple pits or undefined forms. As with the diversity of burial facilities, attributes such as the size and shape of the capstone, the construction location of the burial facility, and the shape and arrangement of the dolmens show a great deal of variability (Y. Lee 2002, 91-158).

The reason for classifying basic types of dolmens according to external form and further subdividing types based on various attributes is to examine spatio-temporal correlations among types. For example, in classifying dolmen types according to their three-dimensional structures, researchers discovered a series of changes from the Chimchon-type → Mukbang-type/Odeok-type (Seok 1979, 2002), or the *takja*-type → *gaeseok*-type → *giban*-type (Shim 1986; Oh 2002), and this series of changes was taken into account when defining each type. Subsequent studies that further subdivide types have tried to classify them in order to reveal temporal changes in the forms of burial facilities, supporting stones, capstones, and other features, but it is difficult to find uniform patterns of change among these. Of course, there are differences in the stratigraphic relationships and geographical distribution of many dolmen types, but it is difficult to determine whether each type can be distinguished by their geographical distribution or if one type is replaced by another. In other words, different forms coexisted in the same spaces and time, and this phenomenon demands that researchers consider new perspectives other than spatio-temporal comparisons in trying to explain the observed variation.

Platforms

Among the many characteristics of the dolmen, the platform is perhaps as important an attribute as its three-dimensional structure. The discovery of a

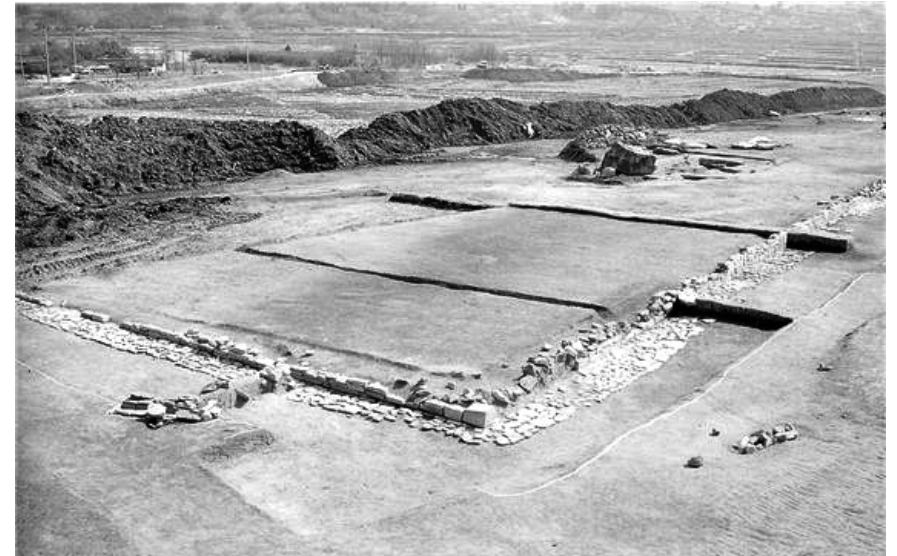


Figure 3. Changwon Deokcheon-ri Dolmen No. 1 with Platform

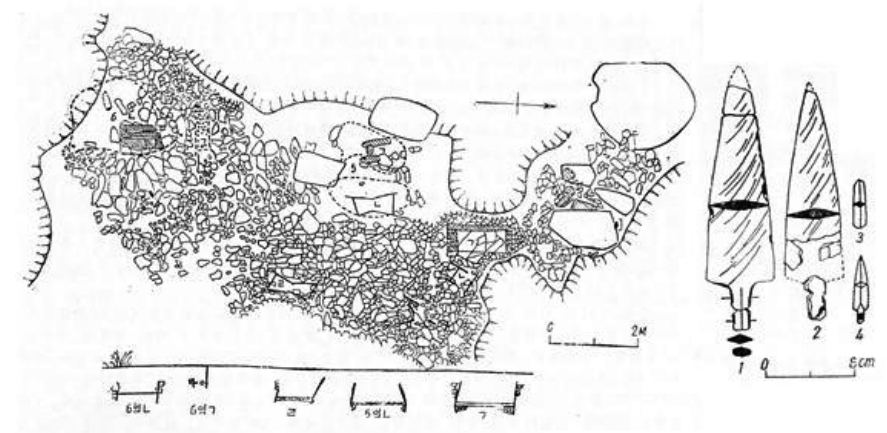


Figure 4. Chimchon-type Dolmen and Associated Artifacts: Chimchon-ri Cheonjin-dong Dolmen

large platform feature with Deokcheon-ri Dolmen No. 1 led to the recognition of the stone platform as an important characteristic of many dolmens. The full-scale excavation of the dolmen group at Changwon Deokcheon-ri uncovered large platforms and associated burial facilities and allowed researchers to observe

relationships among multiple dolmens (Lee 1993). After the excavation of the dolmens at Deokcheon-ri, the exterior form of the dolmen, including the capstone, support stones, and burial facilities, no longer adequately represented the entirety of the dolmen. Large-scale platforms have thus become an essential feature that defines dolmens that exist as monuments in larger and wider space, and some excavators have begun to refer to these as “section tombs” (*“guhoengmyo”*) (Lee 1996, 2006).

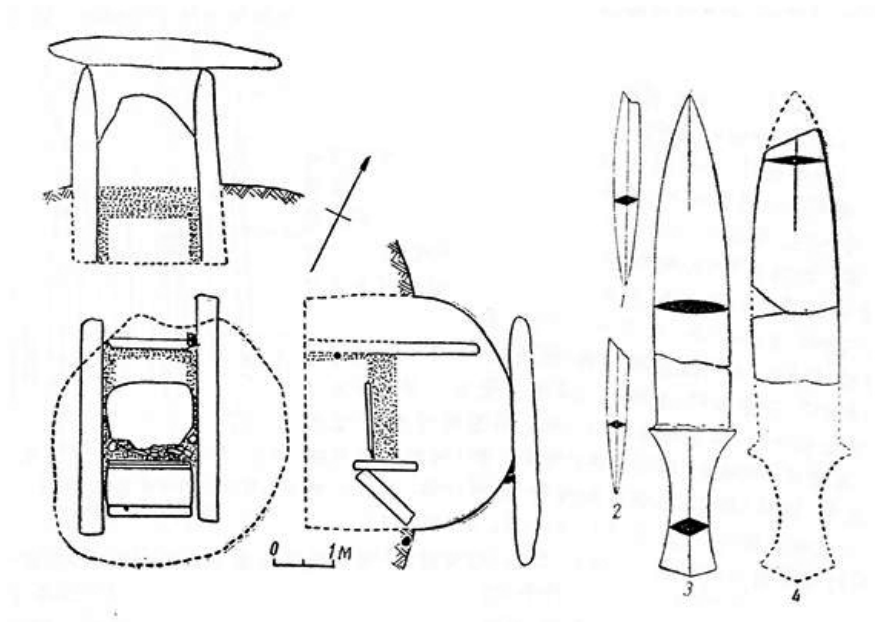


Figure 5. Odeok-Type Dolmen and Associated Artifacts: Odeok-ri No. 10 Dolmen

Although now commonly referred to as “dolmens with platforms” (*“myoyeoksik jiseongmyo”*) (Kim 2006; Yun 2009), there has long been an interest in how stone platforms were used to mark dolmens. The National Museum of Korea’s excavation team, which conducted the first nationwide survey of dolmens, used the presence or absence of piled stones as an important classification criterion in classifying northern-type dolmens, that is, those were not *takja*-type dolmens (Kim and Yun 1967). Discussions over this issue started when Gwangjun Seok (1979, 114), who identified two types of dolmens in northwest Korea—the Chimchon-type and the Odeok-type—said, “The

Chimchon-type dolmens are distinct from the Odeok-type dolmens in that there is a burial section made of stone in the vicinity of the tomb’s chamber.” When he divided the Chimchon-type dolmens with stone platforms into five types, the primary classification criterion was how many burial facilities were associated with each platform. It seems that he misunderstood the relationship between the platforms and assumed that each stone platform was associated with several burial facilities covered with capstones. Nevertheless, he understood that dolmens with a single platform were a developed form and suggested that their emergence may have been related to increased social complexity in a patriarchal or hierarchical society (Seok 1979). Considering that it is now known that dolmens with single platforms unconnected to other stone platforms belong to the earliest period, he was able to justify this erroneous proposition, but it is clear that he was the first researcher to give special meaning to the platform phenomenon. Later, South Korean researchers also came to interpret the burial facility as the center of the piled-stone platform features. Identifying these as “piled stone facilities” (Ji 1982; Noh 1986), researchers have suggested that one of its many functions was to demarcate the boundaries of the tomb (Y. Lee 2002, 128).



Figure 6. Sancheong Maechon-ri Stone-platform Dolmen Group (circular: dolmen with platform, rectangular: “altar” platform without burial facility)

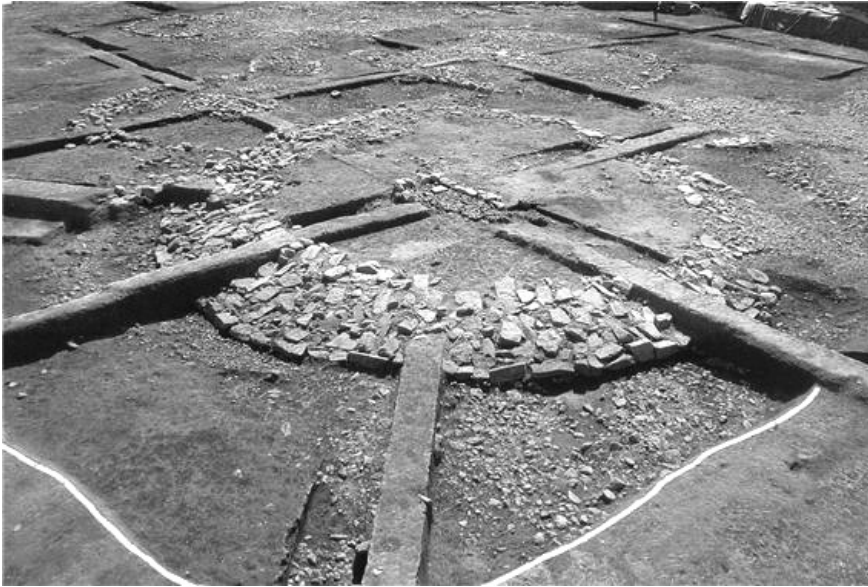


Figure 7. Dolmen with Platform and Mound, Changwon Jindong-ri Zone A No. 1

The most developed form of the dolmen with platform is distributed in the southern part of the Yeongnam region. Among large-scale tombs, the largest are No. 2A-1 at Gimhae Gusan-dong (Choi 2010) and Changwon Deokcheon-ri Dolmen No. 1 (Kyungnam University Museum 2013). At the Gimhae Yulha-ri site and Changwon Jindong-ri site, large-scale dolmens with platforms, as well as other types of dolmens and stone coffin tombs, were arranged in rows, resulting in tomb groups that may be described as large-scale Bronze Age burial complexes (Y. Lee 2006; Ha 2008). From the excavation reports published so far, it is clear that these dolmens with platforms are among the largest known and that sites consisting of a large-scale cluster comprising various types of tombs are distributed around the southern coast of South Gyeongsang Province. In addition, dolmens with platforms continued to be constructed in the southeastern part of the Yeongnam region, including Gyeongju, into the latest stages of this period. The enlargement of the capstone and burial facility as well as the construction of large-scale stone platforms may have been a unique development of dolmens in the southeastern part of the Korean Peninsula, but it is more likely that various ideas of construction were combined and adapted in various ways to produce these unique examples.

At the Sancheong Maechon-ri site, there is a cluster of round and rectangular dolmens with platforms made of piled stones. Among these, burial facilities were found only in the circular stone platforms and not in the rectangular ones, indicating that the rectangular platforms were not tombs (Woori Cultural Heritage Research Institute 2011). Such features have sometimes been called “altar platforms” (Kim 2009; Woo 2016), and, despite lacking a tomb, it is likely that they were constructed to reveal the materiality of both the stone platforms and tombs. On the other hand, among dolmens with platforms, some were constructed in such a way that a burial facility surrounded by stones was placed on a circular mound, which can be considered a mound-type variety. The Group A No. 1 tomb at Jindong-ri is known as the first discovery of this type of tomb (Gyeongnam Development Institute and History and Culture Center 2008), and other mound-type dolmens with stone platforms can also be seen at the Gaho-dong and Chojang-dong sites in Jinju (Dong-Seo Cultural Research Institute 2011, 2017).



Figure 8. Individual *Takja*-type Dolmen: Yonyeonseong Gaeju-si Seokbulsan Dolmen

The Dolmen Tomb Cluster

Although some dolmens were constructed as a single feature, it is common for them to form clusters. A representative example of a single dolmen is the *takja*-type dolmen built on the top of a hill, and these are mainly distributed in

Liaodong and the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. Although some question whether these *takja*-type dolmens were actually built to be used as tombs (Lee 2012), among the *giban*-type dolmens distributed in the southern region, there are instances in which they were built alone on hillsides, such as the Changnyeong Yu-ri Dolmen. The most impressive single-tomb dolmen built on a hill is in the Gimhae Basin. Although it has been confirmed that a dolmen with platform was built on a hill to the south of Bonghwangdae, a burial facility has been excavated in the middle of the top of the hill at Daeseong-dong to the north (Daeseong-dong Tombs Museum 2016). It is thought that its capstone and stone platform may have been removed as a result of the construction of later tombs, but two layers of irregular stones that fill the pit of the burial facility remain, much like Dolmen No. 1 at Changwon Deokcheon-ri. The site appears to have been left undisturbed for a long period of time following the construction of the dolmen, and afterwards wooden coffin tombs from the Proto-Three Kingdoms Period appear to have been built as if surrounding the hill where the dolmen is located. It can be inferred that the arrangement of these later tombs was planned in such a way, as the memory of the individual interred beneath the dolmen may have been passed down for centuries after it was built.

It has been confirmed at most sites that dolmens tend to be clustered, and it appears that dolmen clusters were the result of sequential construction processes. When a later tomb is added after the first tomb has been built, the builders took into consideration the arrangement, the location, and the direction of earlier constructed tombs. Dolmen clusters, which are thought to have been built over a fairly long period of time, show their own unique arrangement patterns due to the repetition of sequential decisions. If new features were simply added over time, this would likely result in a linear arrangement of features. However, the arrangement of dolmens is usually clustered in very complex patterns. One view suggests that the clustering of dolmens or burial facilities be classified as linear, ring-shaped, and irregular arrangements (Jo 2016). Such classifications may be valid if only the arrangement of dolmens itself is observed, however, it is not easy to apprehend the complexity of the tomb cluster by taking into consideration only processes of arrangement and the arrangement itself. In the case of linear arrangements, the features may be arranged in multiple rows rather than a single row, or they may change direction or branch off after being arranged in a row. There are dolmen clusters formed by a single arrangement process, but there are also clusters that are divided into



Figure 9. Daegu Sinseo-dong Zone B-1 Dolmen Group: Dolmen Group with Clustered Burial Facilities (Note that there are only four examples of dolmens with capstones and burial facilities.)

several subgroups, which complicates understandings of the arrangement types of dolmen clusters.

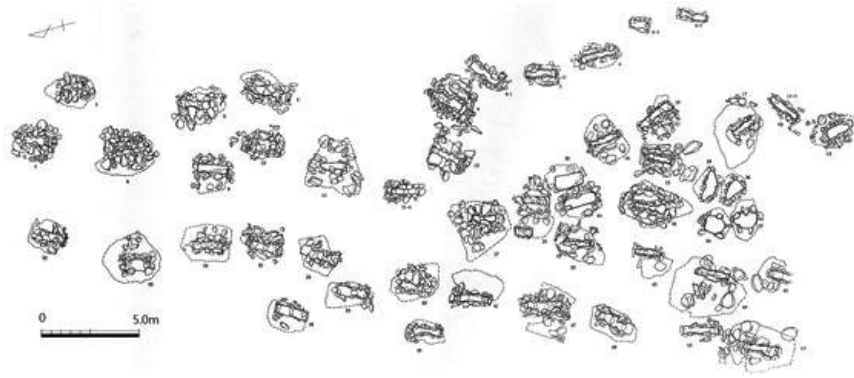


Figure 10. Suncheon Usan-ri Naeu Dolmen Group: Dolmen Group with Cluster of Dolmens

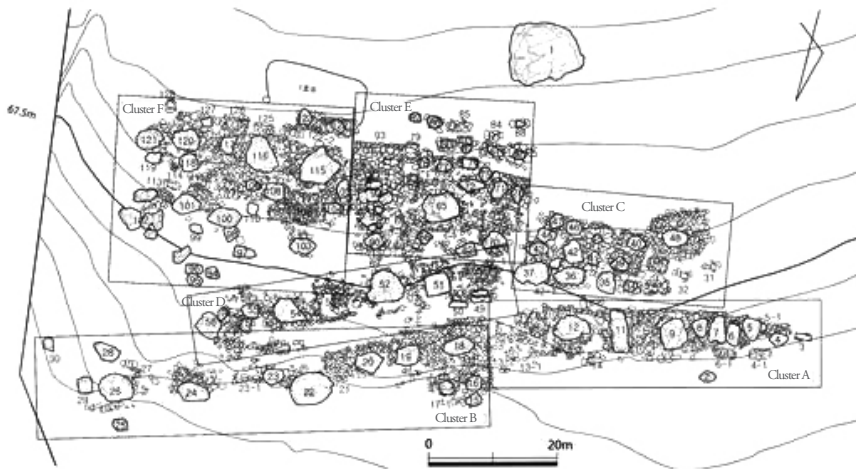


Figure 11. Yeosu Wollae-dong Sangchon Dolmen Group: Dolmen Group with Cluster of Dolmens with Platforms (Multiple dolmen groups can be distinguished based on the connectedness and separation of platforms.)

In order to understand the formation processes of the dolmen cluster, the following characteristics should be taken into consideration beyond the simple arrangement of the features. Perhaps the most important point to consider is what kinds of features make up the dolmen cluster. There are three main categories: first, burial facilities, such as stone coffins; second, capstones with burial facilities or support stones combined; and third, dolmens with stone platforms. Examples of stone coffins or stone chambers without capstones include the Daegu Daebong-dong (Kyungpook National University Museum

2004), Sang-dong (Daegu National Museum 2000), and Sinseo-dong dolmen clusters (Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation 2012). In the area where stone coffin tombs are clustered, some capstones have been located, some of which were placed on top of burial facilities, but there are far more burial facilities without capstones. Second, among sites with dolmen clusters characterized by capstones combined with burial facilities, the Gochang Jukrim-ri dolmens provide a representative example. Finally, the third refers to cases in which dolmens with stone platforms form a cluster. There are two methods of arrangement for dolmens with stone platforms that form a cluster. In the first, the tombs were arranged at regular intervals without connecting them. These include the Chuncheon Jungdo dolmens and the Geochang Mureung-ri Sanpo dolmens. On the other hand, the Sacheon Igeum-dong dolmens and Jinan Yeoui-gok dolmens are connected with one another to form a single, large platform. However, even if the platforms are connected, spacing at certain points allows them to appear to be divided.



Figure 12. Sacheon Igeum-dong Dolmen Group: Dolmen Group with Cluster of Dolmens with Platforms (Square and rectangular platforms connect to form dolmen group.)

As described above, there are dolmen clusters in which burial facilities, dolmen tombs, and dolmens with platforms form distinct clusters with only one type, but in some cases, different features are combined to form a large-scale complex of dolmens. The tombs at Gimhae Yulha-ri and Changwon Jindong-ri provide such examples. Although it is an archaeologically important task to understand the formation processes of dolmen clusters by identifying arrangement types, it is not easy to interpret the temporal processes of their

arrangement. In many cases, no artifacts have been excavated from features within the cluster, so it is difficult to understand the chronological relationships between the features and to infer arrangement processes only by observing the overall arrangement alone (Kim 2006; Jo 2008; J. Lee 2015).

Distribution and Age

The Distribution of Dolmens and Regional Variation

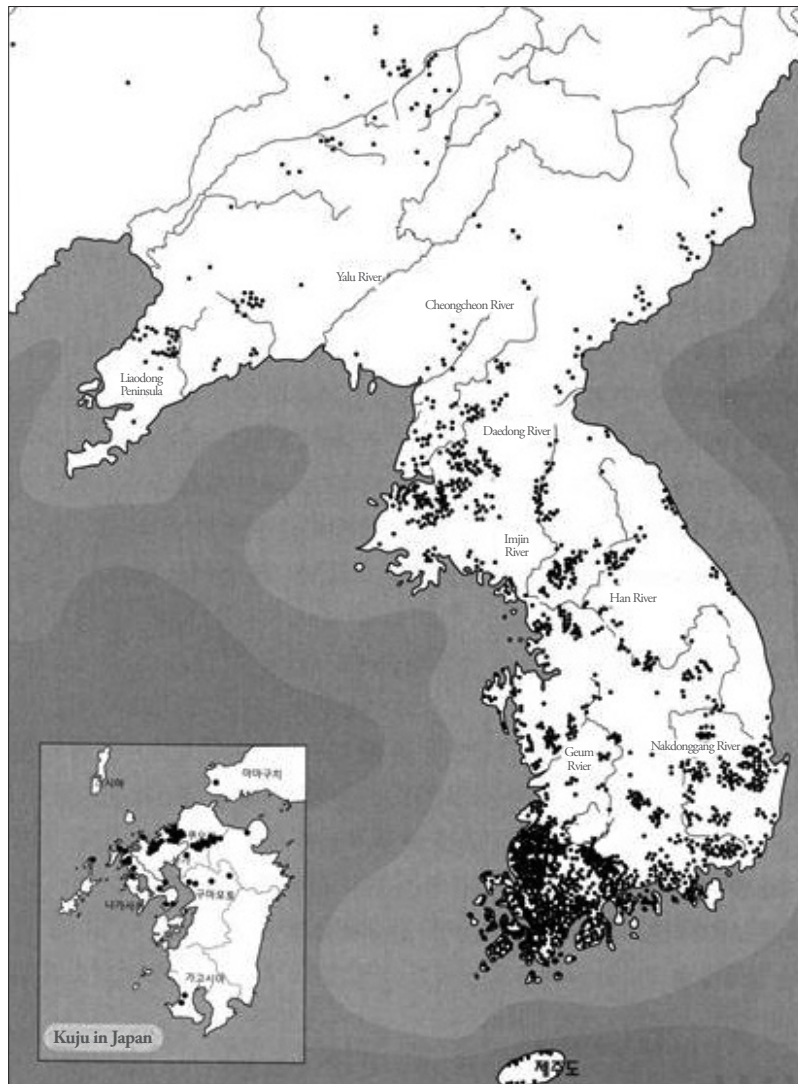


Figure 13. The Distribution of Dolmens in Northeast Asia

With the exception of North Hamgyeong Province, dolmens are distributed all over the Korean Peninsula, and they are particularly concentrated in the South Jeolla Province. To the south of the Korean Peninsula, the distribution extends to the northern region of Kuju in Japan, and to the north, it encompasses the eastern Liaohe River basin and the southern Songhwa River basin, excluding the southern part of the Liaodong Peninsula. As such, the distribution of basic types of dolmens, widely distributed in Northeast Asia, show clear differences according to region. The reason why dolmens were largely divided into northern-type and southern-type by researchers in the early years is because they were already aware of regional differences in dolmens. However, before discussing regional differences, the first problem that must be considered is that conceptual categories and basic types of dolmens differ from one researcher to another. For example, to Chinese archaeologists, the dolmen refers to those classified as *takja*-type, or *seokbung*. Early research distinguished *seokbung* and *daeseokgaemyo*, considering them to be separate tombs (Heo 1985). However, a later review has argued that *daeseokgaemyo* should be regarded as a *gaeseok*-type dolmen rather than a tomb that is distinct from the dolmen (Oh 2011), and recent Chinese studies have included *gaeseokmyo* in a broad sense with *seokbung* (Hwa 2019, 49). Interestingly, North Korean scholars seem to classify and define basic types of dolmens according to their purported stage of social development, which likely arose from a tendency of distinguishing between the Chimchon-type, which shares a single platform, and the Mukbang-type, which has an individual platform, or Odeok-type, which refers to the *takja*-type dolmen. This interpretation suggests that as stratified societies developed, there was a change in dolmen types from communal tombs to individual tombs, a classificatory scheme that differs dramatically from the *takja*-type, *giban*-type, and *gaeseok*-type scheme used by scholars in South Korea.

Judging from the geographical distribution, the *takja*-type dolmen is distributed only from the Liaodong region to the Han River basin. There are examples found in south of the Han River basin, but these are quite rare. *Giban*-type dolmens are mainly found in the region south of the Han River, and their distribution extends to the Kuju region of Japan. The *wiseok*-type dolmens of Jeju Island also have much in common with the *giban*-type dolmens. On the other hand, the type widely found from northeast China to the Korean Peninsula as well as the Kuju region of Japan is the *gaeseok*-type dolmen. If so,

what of the distribution of dolmens with platforms? As already mentioned, the most developed form of this type is reported from the coast of the Gyeongnam region. However, dolmens with platforms are found throughout the Korean Peninsula, and examples have been reported in the Liaodong and Jilin regions (Ha 2010). Among North Korean scholars, dolmens with interconnected platforms are called the Chimchonri-type, and they are also found in the Liao region, with the Bongye Sinseong site providing a representative example. Looked at this way, dolmens with platforms are widely distributed from northeastern China to the southern Korean Peninsula. Characteristics of the dolmens, such as whether they are *gaeseok*-type, dolmens with platforms, or cluster types, may differ in terms of form and frequency according to region, but they are widely distributed across the Liao River basin and the Korean Peninsula (Oh 2002).

The dolmens of Northeast Asia can be said to be a kind of monumental megalithic tomb. Megalithic structures resembling the monuments of Northeast Asia seem to have been built at different times and in different parts of the world. For example, the structure of the *takja*-type dolmen is very similar to the so-called “Portal Dolmen,” which is mainly distributed in western England and Portugal. Further examples are also found in Ethiopia, the Near East, and the Caucasus (Joussaume 1985). Relatively closer to Korea, their distribution also extends to India and Indonesia. Whether or not they were used as tombs, these morphologically similar monumental structures exhibit a worldwide distribution, leading some to suggest a need for regional comparisons. Such comparative approaches focus on interpretations of the origins/diffusion of these features and attempt to address the issue of where they originated and how they spread throughout Northeast Asia. It has even been suggested, based on similarities in morphology, that Korean dolmens and Southeast Asian megaliths were historically related (Kim 1981).

Beyond simple comparison and origins/diffusion approaches, there are also interpretations that focus on whether such structures were built at similar levels of social complexity. For example, monumental megalithic tombs can be compared from the point of view of whether they appeared in societies with similar degrees of social complexity or at a particular evolutionary stage without sharing any historical connection with one another. In fact, much recent research accepts the assumption that such monumental structures emerged as social complexity and class differentiation increased.

The Emergence and Decline of Dolmens

It is only with the arrival of the Bronze Age that structural features began to be constructed in the process of funerary rites. In South Korea, dolmens appear by the latter half of the Early Bronze Age (Bae 2011), a period in which the number and scale of agricultural villages increase and their distribution expands from river basins to more diverse topographies, including hills and slopes. Researchers of the Bronze Age have suggested the development of agricultural management led to an increase in population, and consequently changes in social relations (Bae 2011; Yun 2021). Tombs constructed during the Early Bronze Age include pit tombs, stone coffin tombs, dolmens, tombs with ditches, and jar coffin tombs (Lee 2011), but among these it is thought that dolmens and tombs with ditches appear slightly later than other types (Bae 2011).

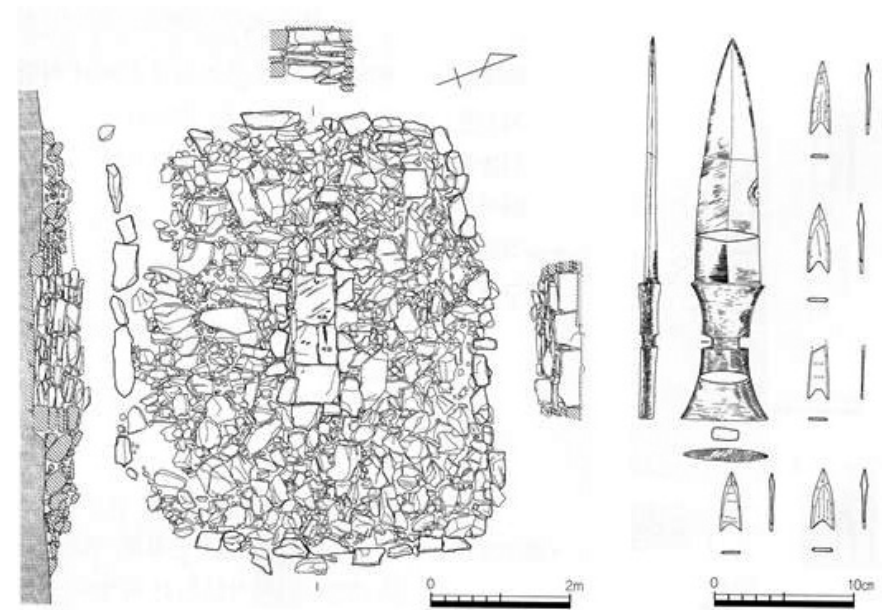


Figure 14. An Early Dolmen: Jinan Samrak-ri Anja-dong No. 1 Dolmen

The emergence and development of agricultural society in the Bronze Age on the Korean Peninsula is closely related to northeastern China, and it is often

presumed that the same is the case for dolmens. Recently, Chinese scholars have suggested that the earliest known dolmens include the *takja*-type dolmen, Hwagawabo No. 3, and the *gaeseok*-type dolmen at Wangdun in the Biliu River basin in the northern Liaodong Peninsula, which they have defined as the “Hwagawabo type.” It has been suggested that the Hwagawabo type is related to the Ssangtaja 2 culture in the southern Liaodong Peninsula and is thought to date to the 16th to 15th centuries BCE (Hwa 2019, 351). On the other hand, while agreeing that the earliest dolmens originated in the Biliu River basin, another view suggests that the Hwadonggwang Dolmen is the earliest example in the Liaodong Peninsula (Oh 2017). According to this opinion, the *ssangbang*-type dolmen relates to the emergence of a new culture in this region, and its origins can be linked with the Ssangtaja 3 culture with earliest dates around the 10th century BCE (Oh 2017, 365). If this is indeed the case and we assume that dolmens first appear in the Liaodong region no earlier than the 10th century BCE, there is little difference in the age of these tombs compared to the those in the Korean Peninsula.

Although there are diverse opinions regarding the timing of the appearance of dolmens in northeastern China, there is general agreement regarding the timing of their decline. However, few artifacts have been discovered in *takja*-type dolmens, so it is difficult to determine the timing of their decline. It has been suggested that with the establishment of Jeonggawajeong type in the Shenyang area, and the spread of the Yan culture in the Warring States period, the construction of dolmens in the Liaodong region gradually declined beginning from about 400 BCE, and in the southeastern Jilin Province, dolmens appear to have remained until about the 2nd or 1st century BCE (Oh 2017, 380).

In the Korean Peninsula, the construction of dolmens was popular during the Songguk-ri culture period, but they gradually declined with the spread of pottery with clay band rims. Nonetheless, dolmens in South Korea do not seem to have disappeared rapidly with the spread of the Early Iron Age culture. In the Honam region, dolmens were built continuously until the later stages of the Early Iron Age (Y. Lee 2006; Jo 2006). Rather, it has been pointed out that in this region, groups associated with the slender bronze dagger remained on the periphery of dolmen builders before the disappearance of dolmens (Kim 2007). In other words, in this area, the indigenous group that built dolmens may have been culturally integrated after the Proto-Three Kingdoms period. In the southeastern part of the Korean Peninsula, impressive large-scale dolmens

with platforms, such as Gimhae Gusan-dong No. 2A-1, were built up to the Early Iron Age, and in Gyeongju and Ulsan, the dolmen culture continues up to the pottery with triangular clay band stage (Lee 2020a). Of course, from the Liaodong region to the Korean Peninsula, the disappearance of dolmens is related to the spread of iron culture that begins with the advancement of Yan during the Warring States period. Direct interaction between societies throughout Northeast Asia, including in the Korean Peninsula, with the Chinese empire would have changed the traditional worldview of indigenous societies, but indigenous inter-group relationships would have also been completely reestablished (Lee 2020b; Yun 2020; Lee 2017). As the relationships, rituals, and ideas between individuals or groups that maintained and reproduced the society that built dolmens changed, the construction of dolmens would have ceased.

Grave Goods and Identity

The Bronze Age was the period in which structural tombs were first constructed, and it was also the period in which certain items were prepared as grave goods and dedicated in burial rites. It seems that not only were certain types of grave goods categorized by this time, but also the ways in which they were dedicated for use in burial rites were materially institutionalized. It is presumed that the offerings were specially made for use as grave goods and that certain techniques were organized for the production of these items, and it is likely that specialized craftspeople, who were trained to some extent, participated in their production in order to maintain quality. Of course, the acts involved in the offering of items were carefully elaborated, and even if the items used were the same, the act of offering and enshrining them seems to have been organized differently depending on the region, period, or group. Even if it was the same polished stone daggers or burnished pottery that were being offered, the location of their placement within the burial facility differed. Considering this, it may be correct to suggest that the same grave goods were imbued with different meanings when they were offered or used in burial rites (Lee 1997; Lee 1999; Yun 2013; Choi 2010; Pyeonggun 2008, 2013).

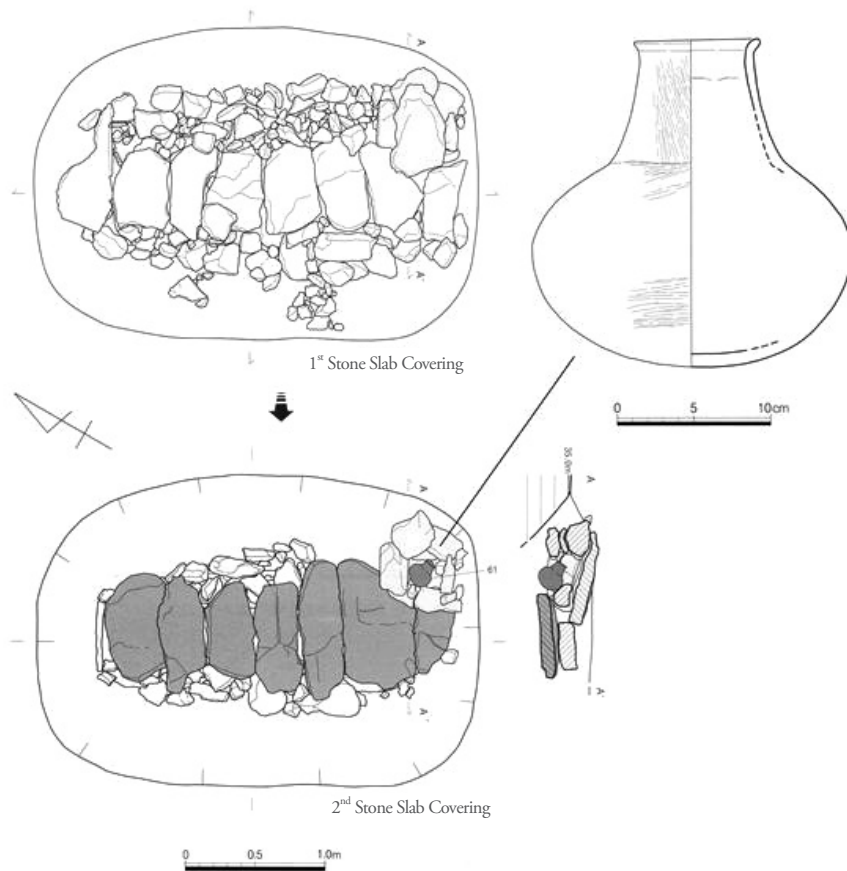


Figure 15. Red Burnished Pottery Deposited in Miryang Jeonsapo-ri No. 26 Dolmen

The types and forms of items buried in tombs in the Bronze Age were established by around 1000 BCE, and these remained until around 200 BCE. Items that were formalized as grave goods during the Bronze Age in South Korea are polished stone daggers and arrows and burnished pottery. In addition, there are also many examples of jade *gogok* and beads, spindle whorls, and bronze daggers and arrows from a limited number of tombs. The polished stone dagger is among the earliest Bronze Age tomb grave goods and perhaps the most characteristic. Types of polished daggers underwent changes over a long period of time, and in any given dolmen cluster, they are found in roughly 20% of tombs. Regarding the origins of the polished dagger, one persuasive explanation

suggests that it was first produced to mimic bronze daggers, such as the bipa-shaped bronze dagger, but this idea is difficult to prove with certainty (C. Lee 2002). This is because there are many cases in which people who had never seen metal daggers started making stone daggers using the same stone-working technologies passed down by their predecessors (Frieman and Eriksen 2015).

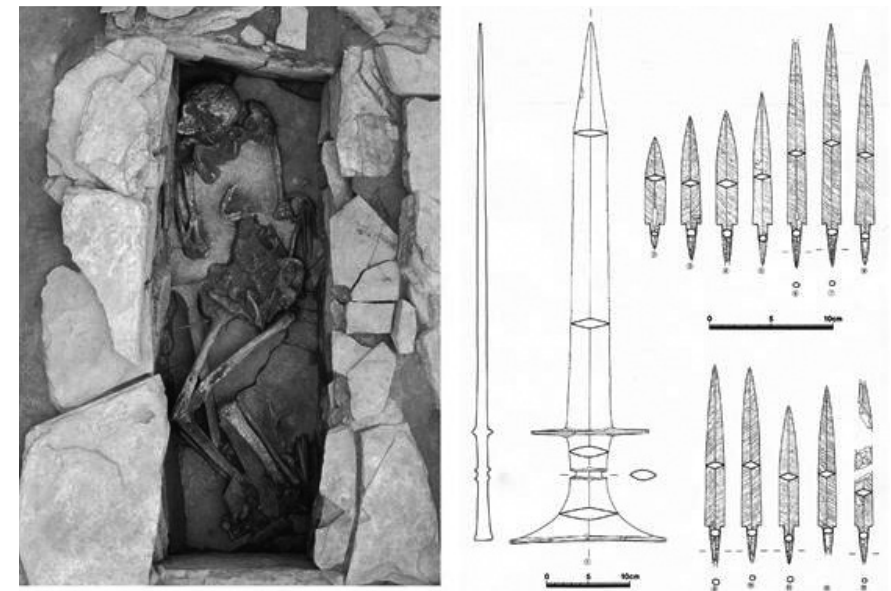


Figure 16. Interred Individual Wearing Polished Stone Dagger and Polished Stone Dagger and Arrows Excavated from Dalseong Pyeongchon-ri Tomb No. 20

The double-pommeled polished stone dagger was first in a relatively wide and short form. This first stone dagger gives the impression of a practical weapon that could be used with cloth or string wrapped around its hilt. The stone arrow, which is among the first grave goods to be found alongside the polished stone dagger, also appears to have been used as a practical arrowhead with a short stalk and strong stem or triangular indentations on its tang. In other words, it can be said that the polished stone dagger and arrow were the first stone tools to be institutionalized as grave goods. Major regional differences have been observed in the grave good assemblages of dolmens in the northeastern region of China, which largely comprised agricultural tools and earthenware pots and jars. The interpretation that weapon-type stone tools used as grave goods, such as the stone dagger and stone arrowheads, are related to the identity of the deceased

is persuasive. Although there are only a few cases in which human bones have been excavated from dolmens, with one exception, the polished stone dagger was found along with male human bones (Shin 2017), so these may symbolize the burial of a male warrior. The stone dagger was likely used as grave goods in burial rites to remember and commemorate leaders of battles or leaders of the community, and therefore the stone dagger represents a society that was maintained by the power it symbolized (Bae 2006, 2011).

However, in a study that systematically analyzed the location of polished stone daggers buried within tombs, it has been suggested that their meaning in the context of burial rituals can be divided into two categories (Pyeonggun 2008; 2013, 96-98). There are instances in which polished stone daggers were excavated worn by the deceased and those in which the daggers were placed in a corner of the stone coffin; in the former instance, it has been argued that the stone dagger was a personal item of the deceased, and in the latter, the polished stone dagger is thought to have been used as an item to protect against spirits. Therefore, various acts performed in the burial ceremony will take on different meanings depending on whether or not polished stone daggers were placed in the graves, and if so, whether they were worn by the deceased and where they were placed in the grave. Variations in grave goods, their burial behaviors, and the types of behaviors would have, of course, been institutionalized differently according to the social identity of the person interred in the tomb, but there would have also been major differences in the elements of the rituals carried out in burial rites and the stories they conveyed. However, the dagger itself must have been deeply entwined with people's beliefs and ideologies as it was used continuously over a long period time in the rituals of Bronze Age societies throughout Northeast Asia (Bale 2014).

In studies of the changing forms of Bronze Age grave goods, it has been recognized, particularly with the polished stone dagger and polished stone arrows, that there was a trend first from practical forms to elongated blades and arrow tips or overly exaggerated protrusions on the hilts, thereby perhaps suggesting a shift towards otherworldliness (Park 2004; Son 2010; Y. Kim 2015; Bang 2016). If so, why surrender the practicality and exaggerate the form? Viewing the polished stone dagger as a prestige good, it has been suggested that its otherworldliness may have increased the symbolic value imbued to the dagger. The more exaggerated the form, the larger the size, and the more difficult it was to produce, the more valuable the stone dagger (Bae 2007, 221-

26). It can be imagined that large stone daggers greater than 60 cm in length and with strongly exaggerated hilt protrusions, such as those discovered in Cheongdo Jilla-ri Tomb No. 3 and Dalseong Pyeongchon-ri Tomb No. 20, would have been regarded as highly valued prestige goods and were likely used by high-ranking elites. It has also been inferred that the stone raw material sources used to manufacture polished stone daggers were limited (Hwang 2011) and may have been acquired by a specific group and distributed through a wide trade network (J. Lee 2016).

The interpretation of the exaggerated form and otherworldliness of polished stone daggers as deriving from an attempt to differentiate the owner's social class is now regarded as a rather simplistic inference. We still know very little about what would make a stone dagger usable as a practical weapon at the time when the exaggerated forms of stone daggers were produced. It should be noted that bronze weapons, such as the *bipa*-shaped bronze daggers excavated from Gimcheon Songjuk-ri and Sangju Yejeon-dong, which are thought to have been far more difficult to obtain, were deposited or buried in the context of rituals rather than placed within tombs or worn by the deceased. *Bipa*-shaped bronze daggers, which may have been a medium for the memory of the lives and achievements of warriors or community leaders, are often buried or placed at one side of a cemetery or at community ceremonial locations and are not found in burial facilities associated with funerary rites. Put simply, depending on the historical context of each region, when a warrior or leader died, memory of the deceased would have been expressed in diverse ways. Of course, one might assume that the more complex and elaborate funerary rites associated with multi-level burial pits and multiple stone structures (Yun 2009, 2013), as well as huge cemeteries and large capstones, directly reflect the social status and amount of power of the deceased. And because of the great degree of influence and respect for the deceased in the community, such rites may have been carried out to further solidify the historical memory of the deceased. However, it is difficult to determine whether influence or political power in society at the time was divided into various classes and that such a system was materialized so that it was institutionalized in a way that the construction of tombs or the preparation of burials represented the division of such classes. Perhaps grave goods do provide a direct picture of the social identity or the amount of power of the deceased. It is dangerous to generalize simply that the symbolism of weapon-like stone implements such as the polished stone dagger can be equivocated with or

transposed to political influence or ideological power. In the process of funerary rites, grave goods were placed in a way to express the identity of the deceased, to share memories related to the deceased, to mourn for them, to protect their souls, or as an expression of materially woven belief.

Changes in Research Perspectives *To Which Culture Do Dolmens Belong?*

The excavation and archaeological interpretation of dolmens began during the Japanese colonial period. Research at the time was limited to discussions of morphological or structural characteristics, basic forms, and the rough geographical distribution of the features, but many descriptions were inaccurate. And while comparisons were made with European Neolithic megalithic tombs, Korean dolmens were considered to have been products of the Chalcolithic Age, making it impossible to reveal their characteristics as a cultural phenomenon of a particular age (Fujita 1942). Immediately after Korea's liberation, the North Korean scholar, Yuho Do, provided an interpretation of how dolmens could be positioned in understanding the formation processes of a local culture on the Korean Peninsula. Yuho Do understood dolmens as a cultural phenomenon similar to that of the European megalithic culture and argued that the Bronze Age began with the construction of the dolmen. Researchers during the Japanese colonial period raised the question of whether or not such tombs had diffused from Europe, but Yuho Do (1959, 2-3; 1960, 132) focused on whether the social context behind the construction of the tombs was similar. In other words, the construction of megalithic tombs was considered from the perspective of a material phenomenon associated with a certain historical development stage, and in Korea, that period coincided with the Bronze Age. Although the Bronze Age began with the construction of megalithic tombs and the end of megalithic culture did not equate with the end of the Bronze Age, it was argued that the Korean megalithic culture covered most of the Bronze Age (Do 1959). At the time, bronze artifacts had not yet been discovered within dolmens, but it was understood that polished stone daggers, Mumun pottery, and bronze items were of a similar age, and that period was the Bronze Age.

Types, Chronology, and Origins

Attempts to classify dolmens as types began in the 1960s (Lim 1964; Kim and Yun 1967). Typology was a task used for seriation in order to understand relationships of phylogenetic change. Characteristics such as the structure of the burial facility, the presence or absence of support stones, the form of the capstone, and auxiliary stones were used as the basis for classifying types, and assuming an evolutionary relationship between forms, researchers attempted to shed light on how dolmens changed through time. Constructing the chronology of dolmens, from which very few radiocarbon dates have been derived, unavoidably relied on type chronologies of grave goods, such as polished stone daggers, arrows, and burnished pottery, but there are many examples of burial facilities in which no grave goods were found. For this reason, there was an interest in identifying changes in the dolmen itself based on chronological schemes, but most researchers of dolmens were interested in temporal changes in the form and structure of the dolmen. For example, assuming that the *takja*-type dolmen is the oldest type, when the above-ground stone chamber of the *takja*-type dolmen moves underground, it becomes the *gaeseok*-type dolmen, and when the capstone is raised and placed on support stones, completely separating the underground structure, it becomes the *giban*-type dolmen (Shim 1986). Researchers often searched for such regularities in change.

Since the 1990s, as the number of excavated dolmen clusters in the southern region increased, researchers began to question whether there were any such regularities. In fact, by this time, issues surrounding the term and category "dolmen" had already been discussed thoroughly. Researchers suggesting that they should variously be called "tomb-marking dolmens" (Fujita 1937), "large stone tombs" (Lim, Gwak, and Jo 1987), or "section tombs" (Lee 1996) is an indication that it is difficult to fit all of these into the category of "dolmen." And it is impossible to avoid the difficulties of describing an evolution of forms when the capstone, support stone, and stone lid do not even form a single entity (Noh 1999). In particular, as more complex arrangements that could not be observed preceding the implementation of full-scale excavations were uncovered, such as large and small stone platforms, their interconnectedness, and the separation of burial facilities from capstones, researchers began to point out that explaining the diversity of forms and structures of dolmens was extremely difficult using existing classificatory concepts (Lee 1996, 2003; Noh 1999; Yun 2009). As

a result, it is difficult to find recent studies of dolmens that use typologies and seriation to attempt to explain regional diffusion through phylogenetic relationships. Even if questions of origins and transitions are approached through analyses of form and structure, interpretations often take different perspectives. It has been suggested that the emergence and transition of dolmens can be better understood by considering other concepts and perspectives, such as the adaptation of existing structures in the construction of monuments (S. Lee 2010; S. Lee 2012), the idea and practice of ritual, and the identities of the deceased and their interrelationships (Lee 1996, 2006; Kim 2005; Yun 2009, 2013, 2017).

Social Evolution and Stratified Societies

A third explanation of the diversity of dolmens raises the question of which stage of social evolution dolmens were built. Research attempting to determine the evolutionary stage of society associated with the construction of dolmens is mostly associated with archaeologists who had embraced neo-evolutionism. Nonetheless, North Korean scholars had much earlier already addressed the question of whether dolmen societies were hierarchical societies. In the 1950s, North Korean scholar Yuho Do (1959, 35), frequently citing Marx and Engels, argued that the dolmen-building societies were classless, primitive societies. At the same time, it was not argued that societies of the time were egalitarian; they were societies in which people who were buried in dolmens were distinguished from those who were not, and it was recognized that people such as war chiefs may have existed. However, if one considers the ways in which the dolmens were built, it is notable that they were arranged in clusters or rows. In a group of dolmens, each dolmen is, after all, only a part of the whole. As such, Yuho Do (1960, 277) suggested that societies at the time were at a stage that had not evolved beyond primitive communities.

However, in the 1970s, perspectives of North Korean scholars underwent a sea change. As the Juche philosophy emerged and replaced Marxism, the social theoretical premises of Marx and Engels ceased to be mentioned. Rather than looking at society through lens of dolmens, the discussions began with the question of how dolmens fit into a preconceived scheme of historical development centered on the Joseon people. Gwangjun Seok's dolmen chronology is one representative example of such a scheme. He suggested that

a shift from collective tombs to individual tombs signaled the development from a communal society to a stratified society. In the late 1970s, North Korean scholars contended that societies constructing dolmens in the 2nd millennium BCE had transitioned towards a patrilineal society and that in the latter half of the 2nd millennium, an increase in military leaders and slaves coincided with the transition to a hierarchical society (The Archaeological Research Center of the Social Sciences Institute 1977, 112-18; Sahoe gwahak chulpansa 1984, 115-28). Even today, this interpretation is widely accepted in North Korea, and it is assumed that the construction of dolmens took place in the 3rd millennium BCE, corresponding with the Gojoseon period, and that dolmen-building societies were a slave society (Seok 2002).

South Korean scholars who subscribed to neo-evolutionary ideas of social development defined dolmen societies as patriarchal societies. In the early 1980s, Mongryong Choi (1981) argued that society at the time was divided into those who could be buried in dolmens and those who were not and that a social stage had been achieved in which specialization in the production of goods and social status could be inherited. Such interpretations can be said to be typical of the processual archaeology that dominated British and American trends in the 1970s, which often sought to assign levels of social evolution through investigations of megalithic monuments and tombs.

While the basic attributes of dolmens used for the purposes of constructing typologies and chronologies—the morphology of the capstone, supporting stones, and burial facilities—were the same, North Korean scholars, who focused their interests on social organization, emphasized an additional attribute: the platform (Seok 1979). The question of whether dolmens were collective-type or individual-type, that is, whether platforms were shared among dolmens or associated with an individual dolmen formed the basis for their typological scheme, one that was completely different from those employed by South Korean scholars. This typological scheme developed as a means of justifying a transition from a communal society to a stratified society (Yu 2003, 136). Even in South Korean scholarship, discussions involving stages of social evolution focused on variations of dolmens in terms of formal and phylogenetic approaches, as discussed above. For example, more attention was given to the arrangement of burial facilities of dolmens, whether they were connected, whether capstones were present or absence, and whether such stones were large or small. In addition, such studies also considered the degree of skill in craftwork and clay

materials required in order to determine whether or not items such as polished stone daggers and burnished pottery were produced by specialized craftspeople (Choi 1988, 1990).

In attempting to understand characteristics of societies through the study of dolmens, South Korean and North Korean scholars focused on different attributes in their typological approaches, although it can be said that both emphasized the importance of the arrangement of dolmens and their interconnectedness. Interestingly, however, both North Korean and South Korean scholars argued that these were stratified societies, but the societies the two refer to are completely different. In South Korea, the focus was on demonstrating a chiefdom society (Choi 1981) or considering the processes of development towards a powerful individual society (Kim 2007; Lee 2020), while North Korean scholars concluded that the construction of dolmens took place in an ancient slave society (Seok 1979, 1998).

More efforts are being made to identify social characteristics through dolmens from new perspectives that go beyond the simple questions of whether the dolmens reflect a patriarchal society or how hierarchical dolmen-building societies were. Early on, Sunbal Park suggested that dolmens were built by an intensive farming society and searched for correlations between the distribution of sedentary settlements and dolmens. He argued that because securing arable land was the most important concern in an agricultural society, a competitive relationship for securing land was induced among villages. It is argued that under these conditions, dolmens were built as graves of common ancestors in a certain landscape by some village communities to claim ties to agricultural land (Park 2002). It is generally acknowledged that dolmens began to be built at an early stage when social organization became more complex as it shifted towards intensive agriculture. If so, we must ask, under what socio-economic conditions did dolmens begin to be intensively constructed? Under these conditions, why were dolmens even built? Bumcheol Kim argues that within a context of high competition among groups to exclusively occupy land with high productivity, the construction of dolmens, which worked to mobilize labor, was an important ideological mechanism. In particular, it was suggested that if the construction of dolmens had political and economic effects in certain areas where paddy farming was concentrated, traditions of monument construction would quickly spread to surrounding areas (Kim 2010, 2011).

In early studies of dolmens, research was largely limited to simple

classification, geographic distributions, and speculation about beliefs. After Korea's liberation, studies attempted to improve typologies by subdividing forms through more detailed observations of form and structure. The next research topic that archaeologists in North and South Korea attempted to address was the question of whether the society that built dolmens was a hierarchical society, and if so, how stratified it was and what kind of power its elites possessed. Until recently, several researchers showed interest in these topics, but compared to earlier studies, the nature of the data and interpretive perspectives have changed dramatically. In recent studies of dolmens, research seeks to consider the construction process as a part of community rituals or to focus on the monumentality of dolmens and understand them as a part of the landscape.

Monuments in the Landscape

So far, interests in the study of dolmens can be summarized in two ways. First, there was an interest in identifying phylogenetic relationships through typology, chronology, and inter-type relationships. Secondly, questions sought to address which stage of social evolution dolmens were constructed in. These two interests focused on properties of dolmens that were suitable for their respective discussions and resulted in different methods of classification. However, the following problems can be pointed out with regards to previous studies focused on classification and phylogenetic relationships as well as stages of social evolution. In particular, existing methods and perspectives of typology and stepwise social evolutionary approaches appear to be limited when explaining data collected from dolmen clusters revealed through full-excavations carried out since the 1990s.

First of all, it is difficult to take into consideration the diversity and temporality of the morphological and structural properties of dolmens through typological approaches that focus on phylogenetic change. In conventional typological approaches, each type of dolmen is assumed to be associated with a particular region and period. The different types of dolmens are thought to exist because they belong to different periods, regions, or groups. However, dolmens are not simply confined to a particular time or region. Studies that tried to diagnose degrees of stratification in society through characteristics of dolmens also assume that dolmens reflect the social organization of one group

and one period at any given time, but it is difficult to limit a type of dolmen to a particular space, time, or societal unit. It is clear that dolmens possess meaning beyond the scope of time and group identity. This is because dolmens are the result of processes of materialization and deposition involving the coexistence of the structures with one another for long periods of time, the constant addition of new structures, and rituals being carried out at their locations even hundreds of years after their construction. In addition, it is clear that dolmens exist beyond the boundaries of a single “group,” forming as a result of an extensive network and take on different meanings through history as they become a part of a particular landscape after their construction.

Unlike the typological perspective, which sees the dolmen as composed of certain formal attributes, they are beginning to be recognized as a product of repeated short-term and long-term ritual activities. If they can be understood as the accumulation of ritual activities in this way, the properties of the dolmen are no longer limited to its morphological characteristics. As such, pointing out the issues of typological approaches, types of dolmens can be considered from the perspective of a process of ritual performance, as described in the following:

Research in the past hardly took into account the fact that dolmens were built in certain spaces and remained as conspicuous structures over a long period of time, were remembered and used, and continually transformed by people in the area. It is difficult to define types of dolmens and identify regularities of change based solely on characteristics of individual features uncovered by excavations. Even more, it will be impossible to explain types of dolmens and their transformations without first gaining an understanding of what the dolmen (group) would have looked like at the time and what actions were once, or repeatedly, performed at these locations over a long period of time. (Lee 1999, 423)

Rather than focusing on morphological analyses of dolmens, many recent studies consider the role of each stage of funeral rites and subsequent, continuous ritual performances in the creation of dolmen forms (Lee 1996, 2006; Kim 2005; Yun 2009, 2013, 2017; Woo 2016).

Secondly, rather than viewing dolmens as mainly a reflection of a stratified society, more recent discussions seek to understand the dolmen as a monument within a particular landscape and consider how histories and the social memories they convey are produced through those landscapes. From

the point of view of landscape archaeology, perspectives of the time and space of archaeology and the diversity of archaeological data change significantly when considering the construction of dolmens (Ko 2012; Kim 2012, 2015). In particular, these approaches give special attention to landscape elements and objects that were not considered meaningful before and raise questions about the relationships both between them and archaeological remains. For this reason, Jongil Kim (2015, 241) wrote, “Above all, it should be emphasized that the natural environment comprising mountains, rivers, and land and the landscape composed of human-made structures such as houses and farmland are not simply a backdrop in which certain archaeological activities took place in the past, but rather places imbued with meaning that historically formed as the result of diverse human behaviors over a long period of time.”

The construction of the dolmen can be seen as a kind of cultural landscape. As Pauketat (2000) discussed using Giddens’ (1984) concept of “unintended consequences,” it may not be clear whether the long-term effects of monument construction were the builder’s intention. However, structures built as cultural landscapes persist for a long time, and the communicative effect is clear and direct (DeMarrais et al. 1996). Along with the structures that began to be built from the end of the Early Bronze Age, including ditches, tombs with ditches, stone platforms, and large building structures, dolmens form a part of the cultural landscape. If the construction of dolmens is understood as a result of ritual processes within a certain landscape, it is necessary to discuss the relationship between elements of various landscapes and other cultural landscapes. One recent study, for example, seeks to better understand the construction of dolmens within the landscape of a certain area by distinguishing the physical landscape, social landscape, and symbolic landscape (Gang 2019).

Along the coast of Sacheon in the South Gyeongsang Province, there is a Middle Bronze Age settlement, and below it, a dolmen with a platform from which a larger cluster of dolmens extends for about 200 m at the Igeum-dong site. Right above the cluster of dolmens, which are arranged in a linear pattern, are two large-scale above-ground buildings placed side by side, and above those, dwellings and other building structures were built (Choi 2003). According to surveys, the dolmens do not stop at this point but continued to be arranged at regular intervals along the foot of the mountain about 50 m above sea level, forming a massive “dolmen belt” (Yun 1999). Although it is an archaeological phenomenon not uncommonly observed in the Honam region, 5 to 10, and

even more than 20 dolmens, can sometimes be found to be arranged in a certain direction along natural embankments or floodplains along rivers. By filling the floodplain landscape, these communal dolmen cemeteries, as well as single dolmen cemeteries, arranged in rows in similar topographical locations became a conspicuous aspect of the cultural landscape to people of the time. These communal cemeteries, single dolmens, or dolmen belts were not built temporarily; in the end, they were never forgotten.

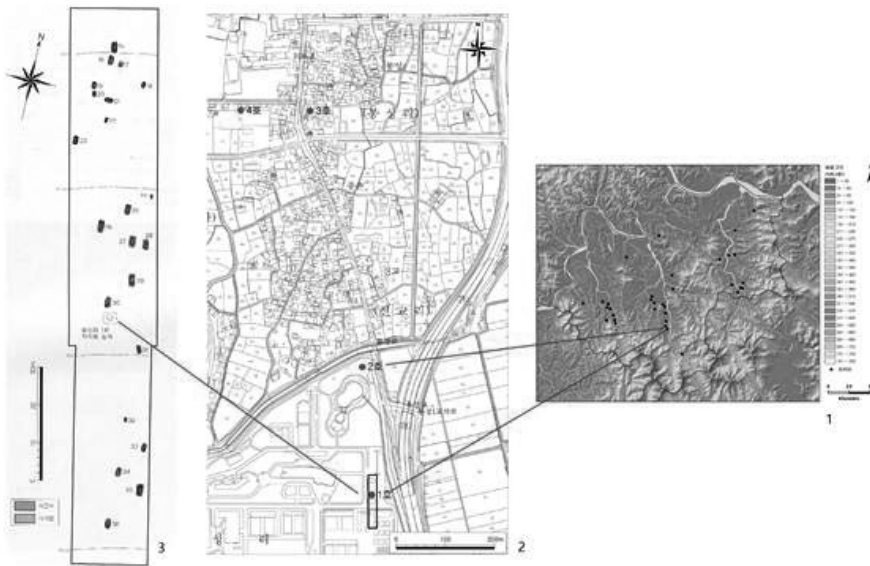


Figure 17. The Construction and Placement of Dolmens in the Landscape in Haman: 1. Dolmen Capstones Arranged along Seokgyo Creek, Haman Creek, and Gwangryeo Creek, 2. Dolmen Capstone Arranged Upstream of Haman Creek in Bongseong-ri, 3. Burial Facility (Stone Chamber) Uncovered during Excavation of Dolmen No. 1

In Haman in the Gyeongnam area, dolmen clusters were formed following three rivers that flow north-to-south of a basin. In almost regular intervals, the capstones of the dolmens were arranged to follow the rivers, forming a line of dolmen clusters. Within these rows of dolmens, each single capstone does not represent a single dolmen grave. Rather, several burial facilities are associated with a single capstone so that each capstone represents its own small dolmen tomb cluster. Therefore, it can be said that a large-scale dolmen belt was constructed in Haman's long floodplain, which runs lengthwise from north to south. Because dolmens and their associated burial facilities tend to be built in

concentrations separately from settlement areas in the Haman area, no large-scale complexes used for funerary rites have been observed in the region. There is a clear trend of building settlements and small dolmen clusters in areas nearby in this area. However, dolmen clusters never seem to become mixed up with these settlements associated with daily life.

In the Haman basin, dolmens are arranged in rows on the floodplain along rivers. Although the arrangement of dolmens in rows along rivers is the most distinctive characteristic of dolmens in this area, dolmens can also be found arranged in rows running across hills and the floodplain running east to west. In the current landscape of these sites, one to three capstones are arranged in a row, but excavations beneath the capstones have revealed small dolmen clusters consisting of about 10 burial facilities. In some cases, such small dolmen clusters run contiguously for two to three kilometers, forming a linear, large-scale dolmen cluster. This can be said to be the result of repeated episodes of construction and ceremonies carried out over the course of centuries through the negotiation of rules and cooperation of the communities that used each group as a place for burial rites.

Rows of dolmens along riversides are the most conspicuous arrangement of the features, but dolmens are also arranged along transportation routes that cross the floodplain and hills running from east to west and pathways that follow the bases of hills. One way this can be understood is to see the arrangement of dolmens as following passages that trace the livelihoods and daily activities of residents of that time (C. Kim 2015). But at the same time, these pathways would have also been imbued with ideological and symbolic meanings that were shared by people in the area. The agricultural communities of the Haman basin would have imbued these places with meaning as they carried out burial rites in certain places and moved to others, depositing memories of the dead. In this way, residents would have continuously encountered the dolmens as they followed them, moving about and carrying out their daily activities, and through such experiences, residents would have affirmed their ideological and symbolic meanings. The people who led such ceremonies, as well as their memories, must have also one day been buried in such burial facilities along the extending row of dolmens. Individual and communal experiences and memories were deposited within the dolmen cluster itself or the landscape surrounding it, which were constructed over a long period of time but now only remain as a long row of dolmens, lengthening and extending their historical

narratives and leaving behind the material traces of the present (Lee 2020).

Conclusion

Dolmens are representative of the Bronze Age in Northeast Asia, distributed from Liaodong through the Korean Peninsula to the Kjuu region of Japan. Dolmens have been classified into basic types according to their external form, such as *takja*-type, *gaeseok*-type, *giban*-type, and *wiseok*-type dolmens, and each type coexisted, although there was regional and temporal variation in their distribution. Although some dolmens were built alone, usually dozens of dolmens form a cluster. In a dolmen cluster, dolmens are equipped with capstones and burial facilities that gather to form a cluster, but burial facilities such as stone coffins and stone chambers are also clustered. In some cases, dolmens with stone platforms are linked together into groups or they are arranged in rows even if they are not connected to form a large-scale dolmen group. Often, dolmen groups are formed through their arrangement in certain places, such as following a river or the foot of a mountain, and sometimes a belt or row of dolmens is created within a particular landscape.

Although archaeological excavations and research into dolmens began during the Japanese colonial period, at the time, the age of the dolmens was not well understood. Immediately after Korea's liberation, North Korean researchers, including Yuho Do, determined that dolmens first appeared in the course of the development of Bronze Age agricultural societies. In the 1970s, North Korean scholars put forward dolmens as evidence of the emergence of a hierarchical society, that is, an ancient slave society, and more recently, have attempted to link dolmens with Gojoseon society as far back as the 3rd millennium BCE. Until the 1970s, South Korean scholars mainly focused on typologies, changes in basic forms, and comparisons of geographical distributions. In the 1980s, under the influence of neo-evolutionary anthropology, research focused on whether the dolmen-constructing societies corresponded to chiefdom societies. Although the discussion of inferring the social identity of the deceased and characteristics of social organization through construction methods or grave goods recovered from dolmens is still an important research topic, recent research has advanced from the simple lines of reasoning and interpretations of earlier days.

Current studies have shown more interest in the question of how dolmens are clustered in particular places and arranged in particular landscapes over a long period of time. Since the 1990s, full-scale excavations of dolmen groups have rapidly increased, and the results of excavations conducted in certain areas, such as the excavation of areas to be submerged by dams, have greatly changed perceptions of dolmens. The premise that a dolmen cannot be reduced to a specific type of structure built by a specific group of people at a specific time but instead is a monument that remains in a particular landscape long after its construction and continues to exert influence over a long period of time is generally accepted. Therefore, through investigation of the processes of construction, clustering, and the layout of dolmens, researchers have begun to attempt to understand the meaningful interaction that local groups had with the landscape over long periods of time. At the same time, there has also been an effort to approach landscape archaeology in new ways through spatial analysis or network analysis on the arrangement of dwellings and dolmens (Kim 2016; Gang 2018, 2019).

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