

The Formation of Gojoseon and Its Social Characteristics

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This article examines the process of establishing the state of Gojoseon and its national characteristics. Gojoseon established its nation in the process of social specialization due to the development of agricultural productivity of the metallic culture including iron-utensils with its foundation in the society of bronze-utensils. The period seemed to be roughly around the third to fourth century B.C.

In the records of *Wiryak* (魏略) and other documents, it is stated that many surrounding tribes made alliances with Joseonhu (朝鮮侯) at their center. The Yemaek (濊貊族) who were living around the Liaodong (遼東) region also formed as a regular regional group and appeared as the tribe nearest Joseon. Thus Liaodong, the northwestern region of Korea where regional groups such as Jinbeon and Yemaek lived had formed an alliance centered on Joseon, making Joseon the central state of this alliance.

Gojoseon had gained its power around the fourth century B.C. Thus it strengthened its ruling power in the regional group of Yemaek-lineage in Liaodong region and influenced small states such as Jinbeon (眞番) and Imdun (臨屯). The king of Joseon Huguk (朝鮮侯國) at the time exercised the responsibility of chief leader of the alliance. He prepared an immature administrative system, because he needed professional management. As mentioned above, Gojoseon equipped itself as a nation in the fourth century B.C.

After its fall, the culture and residents of Gojoseon continued into, and was the foundation for, the Three Kingdoms. After understanding the ruling structure of Nangnanggun (樂浪郡) and its system of counties and prefectures, clarifying the different influences Gojoseon people had on the formation of Silla (新羅) and Goguryeo (高句麗) is definitely necessary.

Keywords: Liaoning-style bronze-knives, Yemaek, Korean-style bronze-knife culture, Joseon Huguk, and the formation of state.

Introduction

Gojoseon (古朝鮮) was the first state to exist in our history. Therefore, understanding Gojoseon society and the process of its formation into a state is necessary to understand the ancient states of Korea and their social characteristics.

Our scholars have showed some differences in their understanding of the developmental stages of Gojoseon society. Many researchers claim that Gojoseon was established from the beginning of the Bronze-Util Age. According to archeological data, the typical bronze-utensil culture of Southern Manchuria (Northeastern China) would be the culture using Liaoning-style bronze-knives. Thus, Gojoseon seemed to have been established around this time when Liaoning-style bronze-knives were in use. People who believe the mythology of Dangun believe that Dangun Joseon, which had used Liaoning-style bronze-knives around 2,000 B.C., established the state.

While some people claim the establishment of the state of Gojoseon to be in the Bronze-Util Age, others claim that the germination of founding the state was in the Iron-Util Age. The latter seems to look at the society of Gojoseon as a transitional period from the end of primitive society to ancient times.

The main causes of these differences come from the differences in understanding the theory of the establishment of the state and attendant lack of information. However, this can be due to the confusion resulting from the limited awareness of believing that the history of Gojoseon existed only in the Bronze-Util Age. Gojoseon had come into existence during the Bronze-Util Age but flourished into a state in the Iron-Util Age. Keeping this in mind, it is absolutely necessary to systematically understand the history of Gojoseon in its entirety.

Explaining the period prior to Gojoseon as one inclusive characteristic is hard because of the wide range of time. Thus, history of Gojoseon definitely needs a clearly defined description of each period's uniqueness according to various stages of historical development: The first-half of Gojoseon (fourth century B.C. to seventh or eighth century B.C.) is defined as the period prior to the usage of iron utensils (second to third century B.C.), and the second-half of Gojoseon is defined as the period after the usage of iron utensils.

It is important to clarify the uniqueness and the differences between the two periods, the early Gojoseon period, the Bronze Age, and the later period, the Iron Age to closely examine the characteristics of Gojoseon society. Thus, this article attempts to investigate the conditions of the two stages of social charac-

teristics and the developmental stages due to the social changes brought on by the propagation of bronze and iron utensil usage.

Growth of Political Groups and the Formation of the Joseon Alliance

1. Growth of dolmen society and Gojoseon

In Gojoseon, agricultural productivity developed as iron-utensil culture built on the foundations laid by the development of bronze-utensil society. States were established in the process of this social change.

Dolmens are indicative of tribal or local groups that evolved into political groups within Gojoseon society and then transitioned from an alliance to a state, because dolmen society coincided exactly with the early Gojoseon period, both temporally and spatially. The dolmens are concentrated intensively in Liaodong (遼東). Especially, table-shaped dolmens from the Liaodong region to the northwest of the Korean peninsula share many similarities. The possibility of their being related to the political power of Gojoseon is very high due to the time of existence.

The distribution pattern of the dolmen society in Liaodong and northwest Korea shows that chief leaders, who made it possible to construct dolmens over a fairly long period of time, existed in a supervisory capacity (三上次男 1966: 17). Acknowledging this means that the political power of a strong native family seems to have lasted for a fairly long period of time in places where the dolmens are distributed.

As a result of research on archeological data, the center of the bronze-utensil culture in the Liaodong region consists of sarcophagus tombs and Misongri culture near the Honha (渾河) and Yalu (鴨綠) River, the dolmen of northwestern Korea, and the top-style pottery culture, and the independent culture of the Liaodong peninsula. It seems as if the same original resident groups lived in the region of Liaodong when the usage of similar system of tombs called dolmens and sarcophagus tombs are taken into consideration.

An intensive distribution of dolmens and sarcophagus tombs in this limited region hints at the existence of tribes or residential groups from one root. Advanced literature such as *Gwanja* (管子), *Sanhaegyeong* (山海經), *Jeongukchaek* (戰國策), etc. tells of the existence of several Yungjeok (戎狄)

centered around Sanyung (山戎) as the tribe existed in the coastal area of Pohae and Joseon in the fourth century B.C. at the latest, prior to the Balhae dynasty. These documents and archeological data verify that Yeongji (令支), Gojuk (孤竹), Doha (屠何), and other many Yungjeok as well as Sanyung from around the seventh to eighth centuries B.C. were usually located all over Jangseong and Yeolha to Nanha and Yoseo.

Recently some researchers, who focused their research on the similarities among the dolmens, carefully brought up the point that the Liaodong peninsula and the northwestern Korean peninsula not only were in the same cultural area but were also of a single political structure (Jeong Han-deok 1990: 131-132; 東潮 1997: 28-34). Thus, descendants of Yemaek (예맥: 濊貊) residential groups who built the typical northern-style dolmens were distributed in a ring-shape along the northern coast of the West Sea (a.k.a. Yellow Sea) and formed political groups accordingly.

From the Chinese point of view, the northern coast of the West Sea is believed to be the area where the different tribes lived and has been marked as “the hometown of the barbarians and Yejok” (夷穢之鄉) (*Yeossi Chunchu*, 『呂氏春秋』卷20 恃君覽 第8). It was considered to be the residential district of a powerful political group called “Joseon.” But it is hard to present a clear supporting position because of the cultural gap between the Liaodong peninsula and north-west Korea.

Around the seventh century B.C., the Yeongji, Gojuk, and Doha tribes representing Sanyung located to the west of Joseon in those days did not have any dominant organization as the following statement in *Shih-chi* states: “More than 100 barbarian groups could not unite as one.” (*Historical Records, Shih-chi* in Chinese, 『史記』卷110 匈奴列傳 第50, Historical Records). Each group with its leader was just scattered around the valley in inactive alliance. Thus, Joseon in the east could not form a united state and was only one of the many tribes who resided within a cultural area based on Liaoning-style bronze-knife culture. According to the historical records of later generations, the leaders of each residential group became the forefathers who formed Joseon, Jinbun, and Yemaek, respectively. They carried their unique culture in an integrated relationship without mutually defined regulations or control.

However, the Liaoning-style bronze-knife culture that buried Misongri-pottery with the deceased in dolmens or sarcophagus tombs were equally distributed all the way from the Liaodong to the Korean peninsula. This phenomenon seems to have resulted from the formation of a federation with a relaxed rela-

tionship, in other words, the mutually close relationship between Yemaek tribes that developed in an environment profitable to agriculture in the Liaodong area and northwest Korea.

Earlier on, various residential tribes developed in Liaodong to the northwestern area under the influence of advanced bronze-utensil culture. They formed one united political structure through a self-development process and mutually close relationships or feuds with surrounding tribes, and this political structure was viewed as a powerful group called “Joseonhu” (조선후: 朝鮮侯) in the eyes of the Chinese (*Samgukji*, 『三國志』卷30 魏書30 烏丸鮮卑東夷傳 所引『魏略』). Finally, a federated political group represented as “Joseonhu” formed near Liaodong and the northwestern area and confronted the Chinese “Yeon” (燕) power in the last period that the dolmens and sarcophagus tombs were constructed.

2. Formation of the Joseon Alliance, and Its Characteristics.

Chinese people first recognized “Joseon” as the object of trade with the Je (齊) dynasty. A full-scale armed conflict between Gojoseon and China should not have existed, because Gojoseon was weak and the power of China was not yet extended to the east at the beginning of Gojoseon, around 1000 B.C. Thus, the existence of Joseon is referred to briefly in the Chinese records as the state to the east that trades with the Je (齊) dynasty.

However, Gojoseon became the most powerful political authority to the east of Liaohe (Yoha: 遼河) around the fourth century B.C. The author of *Wiryak* (魏略) picked “Joseon Huguk (朝鮮侯國)” as the only power that could confront the Yeon dynasty in those days. According to the Chinese documents on the age of civil wars, “Joseonhu” existed and it named a king after it grew. It meant that the power of Joseon Huguk started to grow around the fourth century B.C. and finally reached a level on par with the Yeon dynasty China.

Expressions of Joseon possibly attacking Yeon shown in continuous records give the impression that Joseon grew into a power with a central government that could call upon a military force. The power of Joseonhu was strong enough to be written of by the Chinese as “very arrogant and ferocious” (*Wiryakjibbon*: 『魏略輯本』卷21 朝鮮 “後子孫稍驕虐”) in the fourth century B.C. But it is hard to speculate that Gojoseon’s such rapid growth was just due to Gojoseon naming a king around the fourth century B.C. At this point, it is necessary to briefly think about “naming a king.”

The seventh powerful state during the age of civil wars in China organized its internal structure of by competitively enforcing amendments around 400 B.C. The amendments generally enabled an enlistment system, and the feudal lords abandoned the traditional titles of “Hu” (侯) or “Gun” (君) and started using the title of “king” at that time in China. But calling a ruler “king” coincided with the enforcement of the amendments; each ruler showed his/her status and power by achieving internal stability and buildup of national strength, and furthermore, which is viewed as an expression of a fervent desire to be a king. In addition to the development of feudal-lords in the age of civil wars in China, naming Gojoseon’s leader “king” in the fourth century B.C. could have been a reflection of the power correspondent to the growth of Gojoseon’s governmental authority.

An alliance is generally referred to as a stage prior to that of the formation of ancient states where one central power controls many tribes or small states in each region. Its central power is based on the political and economical unity focused on that specific authority (Yi Hyeon-hye 1984: 170; Kwon Oh-yeong 1996: 209-210). However, it is hard to assume the relationship of the ruling and the subordinate groups based on political power or a unified body that includes powerful groups as well as small states of each region in an alliance. In the case of Gojoseon, the political power called “Joseon Huguk” assumed leadership in China around the fourth to fifth century B.C. and exerted its influence on the smaller neighboring states such as Yemaek, Jinbeon (眞番), and Imdun (臨屯). I would like to refer to this concept as the “Joseon Alliance.”

The use of the term Yemaek as well as Joseon or Jinbeon in ancient documents doesn’t mean that all areas of Yemaek belonged to Gojoseon. Joseon and Jinbeon were terms often used to simply refer to the region. Likewise, in the late Gojoseon period, several small towns and other regions were called Jinbeon and Imdun, implying that there already had been political power with some autonomy before Wiman (衛滿) came to power (*Historical Records*, 『史記』卷115 朝鮮列傳 第55). Even after Wiman came into political power, those areas might not have been ruled by Wiman for a certain period of time.

Although Gojoseon was an alliance of small nations at the time, it had been equipped with the characteristics of a state. Of course, it is hard to say that it had reached the level of ancient-nation in a real sense in the fourth century B.C. despite being equipped with the basic elements to form a nation. A king existed in Gojoseon at the time, and there was also the government post called *daebu* (大夫), which is an official who discussed important matters of the nation with the king. It is not clear if the position called *daebu* refers to the title of the office

in Gojoseon without translations or if it is the Korean translation of Gojoseon's government office. It would be appropriate to consider *daebu* in Gojoseon to be equivalent to that of the Han dynasty. In other words, the office of *daebu* in the Han and Jin dynasties dealt with problems that necessitated discussions by the state (Do Hi-seong 1962: 78-88; Seo Yeon-dal ed. 1991: 54), Gojoseon's *daebu*, seemed to have the authority to give direct advice to the king about important matters of the state.

The king of Joseon Hukuk in those days prepared an immature bureaucratic system to satisfy his need for professional officers while fulfilling the responsibilities as leader of the alliance of surrounding tribes. The official posts of Gojoseon seemed to have been in a stage where government posts were all called *sang* (相) even during the Wiman dynasty, which came after Gojoseon. There were many aspects of underdevelopment in the official post system of Gojoseon as compared to that of the Gyeongdaeboo system in China.

We know political powers such as Jinbeon and Imdun existed in Gojoseon from these fragmentary old records, and these were small states occupying some regions of Gojoseon. These small states possessed relative uniqueness in politics, economics, and culture. This truth can be evinced from the fact that the last stage of Liaoning-style bronze-knife culture centered around dolmens and sarcophagus tombs was largely divided into the Honha River valley, the Liaodong peninsula, and the northwest Korea, and that each of these types grew independent of each other. These three types, of course, do not substitute the locations of the small states as shown in the ancient documents. However, it is explicit that regional characteristics of archeological types of culture show the uniqueness of small states with foundation in the region. These three cultural types developed their own uniqueness while being part of the Liaoning-style bronze-knife culture as a whole.

Although Gojoseon might have gathered some power by using natural boundaries and have established boundaries with other states until the fourth century B.C., it seemed to have ensured dominion over many small towns that were forming alliances but was not able to practice any specific territory or supremacy. Chinese historians focused on Joseon to describe the political groups of the Liaodong region, because they considered Joseon to be the central power of the political groups around the Liaodong region.

Looking through the window of Chinese history, natural boundaries such as valleys and forests were used to designate boundaries among feudal lands (Du Jeong-seung 1986: 475). But it only ensured the dominium of small towns and

did not have a distinct awareness of territory. Not only did it not defend the *gwansae* (關塞) but the concept of national border was not clear (Yi Seong-gu 1989: 96) as small towns of one state extended into the boundry of another state (Heo Tak-un 1986: 90). Moreover, territories without a ruling authority existed between two such states, and power struggles would occur over communities that formed in these areas by small farmers who had left their towns (增淵龍夫 1970: 168-179).

A type of spatial gap called “Jingogongji” (진고공지: 秦故空地) probably existed in Gojoseon society before achieving a national system similar to that of Wiman’s state system. This region was where common people could dwell free of controls that are usually associated with the standard concept of territory. Historically, these regions gained power by allowing the residents of other states to reside there freely.

Although Gojoseon acquired a large territory around the beginning of the latter half of 1000 B.C., specifically around the fourth century B.C., it was not able to control its towns under one unified government system. The central political power of Gojoseon controlled the entire state by giving certain political autonomy to its subjugated political powers to rule their individual regions. Thus, the economic and cultural influence of Gojoseon’s central regions did not extend to the smaller towns with certain political autonomy.

Concentration of Sovereign Power and the Formation of the Late Joseon Alliance

1. Wiman and Wiman Joseon

Chinese people from Habuk (河北) and Sandong (山東) migrated in the northwest Korea region since the age of civil wars in the third to fourth centuries B.C. On the basis of this historical movement, an independent political regime appeared in this region around the second century B.C. This new political regime was established by a person by the name of Wiman (衛滿), who fled from the Liaodong region to northwest Korea and established Wiman Joseon (衛滿朝鮮).

Wiman established Wiman Joseon by putting the immigrants and the natives of that territory under his power during the reign of Hyeje prior to the Han empire, namely around 190 B.C. Wiman and his descendents not only ruled the

northwest region of the Korean peninsula with Pyeongyang (平壤) as the capital but also extended their power all the way to the south and the east so that Jinbeon and Imdun were under their dominance. Dongokjeo (東沃沮) to the north was once under the rule of Gojoseon as well. The late Gojoseon established the dominating system by conquering surrounding territories, and prohibiting tribes under their political power from paying taxes and trading with Chinese counties and prefectures of the Liaodong region.

This attitude of Wiman Joseon probably depended on its own ability, but the possibility of a connection with Hyungno Empire which formed a huge political power in North Asia functional as yet another power in a way (三上次男 1966: 17-19). Based on such confidence, Wiman Joseon gave birth to a unique culture with its capital, Wanggeomseong (王儉城), at the center. This culture built earth tombs followed by wooden tombs, and created Korean-style bronze-knife culture unique to Gojoseon (Song Ho Jung 1998: 223).

On the other hand, the ruling class of Wiman Joseon included many Chinese immigrants. Thus they may have maintained and developed Chinese culture. But the northwest region was far away from mainland China, and especially the cultures there during the age of civil wars and early Jinhan (秦漢) period were independent of the culture of mainland China; these cultures began to develop autonomously and later formed their own unique local cultures. The natives were able to enjoy the new cultures as well through contact with the advanced cultured society, and class society became established. These changes and developments can be seen in the concentrated discoveries of earth tombs, a new stage in tombs, from Southern Manchuria to northwest Korea. These earth tombs definitely seemed to be the tombs of powerful natives or their family members.

If so, what type of state was Wiman Joseon that appeared in the second century B.C.? Since they pushed out the semi-king and usurped the throne, was Gojoseon another new dynasty or a state that succeeded the Gojoseon dynasty?

After it came into power, Wiman attempted to achieve political stability by appointing all of the immigrants from China and native Gojoseon people to the posts of administrators and to decrease potential strife and the opposition between the two groups. It was able to increase its military strength by its quick acceptance of the iron-utensil culture from China.

At the time, China became stable after unifying into Han dynasty; Wiman made a peace treaty with Han dynasty with the condition that it will prevent surrounding tribes from intruding into Chinese territories and not block trade with China. Han dynasty in return promised to endow the authority called Outer

Subjects (外臣) by acknowledging Wiman Joseon as the representative state and to support it with goods (*Historical Records*, 『史記』卷115 朝鮮列傳 第55).

Wiman Joseon adopted Chinese civilization, thanks to the people from China, and increased its military power by utilizing Han dynasty's influence and supply of goods. It also garnered much profit from controlling the trade between Han dynasty and many smaller states in the south of the Korean peninsula. Wiman then became a conquering state with a territory the size of 1,000 *li* (a unit of measurement) in all four directions by conquering neighboring tribes such as Donggokjeo (東沃沮), Imdun, and Jinbeon with its increased power.

Wiman Joseon called the local chiefs who served under King Jun of Gojoseon to the capital and assigned each of them an official post called “*sang*” (相) so that the “*sang*” would discuss national matters. The king didn't bend everything to his will, and the local authority would be empowered to handle local matters of each region on its own. An aristocratic meeting consisting of “*sang*” and “generals” made decisions on matters of the state as a whole. Yeokgyebyeong (歷谿卿), one of the local chieftains in Gojoseon, left for a neighboring state with his tribe members because the king wouldn't listen to him.

The status of the king didn't continue from King Jun to Wiman; it could be the changes occurred within the state called Gojoseon. In other words, Wiman Joseon is considered to be the state that succeeded King Jun of the Gojoseon dynasty.

2. Wiman's Administration of Wiman Joseon

What positions were Wiman and the immigrants from the Northeast region of China in in the Gojoseon society when Wiman founded a new dynasty by increasing his power through winning the favors of the immigrants? Could the immigrants keep their unique and true identity and still exist as one of the tribal classes?

Men like Wang Gyeop (王夾), Han-Eum (韓陰), and No-In (路人) definitely wielded power within Wiman Joseon. In the case of Wang Gyeop and Han-Eum, it has been confirmed that they were powerful among the local families even after the fall of Wiman Joseon. Discoveries of several bricks that had inscriptions of contracts designating the Han family were found in the Hwanghaedo region, and the existence of the Nangnang (樂浪) governor Wangjun and the Daebang governor Wanggi prove as much. The fact that wood-

en tombs of the late Gojoseon period continued into the Nangnang dynasty in a county and prefecture could also be considered definite evidence.

If that is the case, then what kind of relationship were they in with the natives of Gojoseon? This is easy to find by looking at the process of national development in Gojoseon. As mentioned above, Wiman and more than 1,000 followers who immigrated with Wiman already rejected the authority of Chinese world-order and was absorbed into the system called Gojoseon to function as a motivating force for national growth.

The political structure of the late Gojoseon period allowed the native Gojoseon resident groups and Chinese immigrants groups to administer the nation together. There seems to have been a patriarch with a fairly large amount of power among the natives of Gojoseon in the second to third century B.C. This could be presumed from the fact that the earth tomb of the leader in the north-west region of Korea is crowded and the development of the Korean-style bronze-knife culture. In addition, it is hard to insist that the immigrant groups overwhelmed the society of the natives to a large extent, because there weren't too many people with power among the Chinese immigrants. Wiman Joseon definitely had a complex structure and not just a simple colonial political regime.

For example, let's look at "Nigyesang" (泥谿相) Sam (參), a bureaucrat of Gojoseon. It's not clear what "Nigye" refers to in "Nigyesang," but it's obvious that it is not a Chinese name. Some people think that "Nigye" was later called "Ye" (滅). Thus, it is surely not Chinese, but an aboriginal language written in Chinese characters. In other words, Nigyesang is a native who is referred to by an adjective in the native language. The reason for his being especially referred to by his native name in contrast to other high officials may be related to his function as a high-level bureaucrat in the central political world with foundation in his native region. In contrast, the bureaucrats without differentiated names, namely, those just referred to as "*sang*," could be those who were already disconnected from or not related to the local society as mentioned before.

It would probably be ration to consider "Nigye" as one of the town (邑落) groups within Gojoseon, which were denoted as small towns (小邑). Small towns here refer to small states. This point shows that the ruling system of the late Gojoseon period acknowledged the existence of town groups and a tributary, and operated an allied state.

The record of "Joseon sang yeokgyeongyeong icheonyeo ho" (朝鮮相 歷谿卿 二千餘 戶) in *Wiryak* was examined to review Yeokgyeong's move to

Jinguk, a state to the south, because of his differences with Woogeo (右渠) before the fall of Woogeo. If one family consisted of five people, then 2,000 families corresponded to 10,000 people, a fairly large small state. Yeokgyebyeong seems to have been the leader of a native society from the fact that his followers were so many. This document also shows that the residents of one minor state or large town might have moved with its chieftain.

This type of a big migration of Yeokgyebyeong might have been almost impossible in those days without tribal relations. At last the reason for leaders of each regional groups becoming the sang of Joseon was due to the late Gojoseon period, i.e., Wiman Joseon united Chinese immigrants including King Wiman into one group and the towns of native society formed an allied organization. In other words, one superior regional group formed a leading power among small state alliances along the Daedong River due to the growth of the political power even before Wiman. The Wiman dynasty seems to have been established on the foundation of native society and the influx of Chinese immigrants.

Gojoseon, divided into various regional groups and classes, with the gradual sovereignty as the climax, consolidated a ruling system that included all regions and the control of the central government was strengthened by forming an antagonistic relationship with the continuous rule of Dongjin in China. One can speculate that the succession of the throne was fairly stable when the succession of sovereignty from Buwang (否王) to Joonwang (準王) is viewed. King Jun seemed to have had some political power externally, because he put Wiman in charge of the sovereignty of West Gojoseon and gave him the position of a high-ranking educator.

After Wiman dynasty was established, it was conferred the title of Outer Subjects (外臣) of China, which acknowledged the position of the dynasty as an independent state in reality although it still paid formal tribute to China. According to "Joseon Yeoljeon" of *Historical Records*, Wiman was responsible for defending the boundaries from barbarians intruding into the frontiers of China and in return, Han dynasty provided him with weapons as well as being able to meet the Cheonja (天子). Wiman was then able to subdue powers such as Jinbeon and Imdun. This meant that the ruling group of Wiman Joseon was already using the iron weapons of the Han dynasty as the background for their expansion of power.

According to the Chinese system of order at the time, Outer Subjects were a contrary concept to "Inner Subjects" (內臣). Even if they were virtuously influenced by the emperor of the Han dynasty, they were set apart in the enactment of

regular public laws as well as the comprehensive culture and custom. Wiman received superior weapons and goods in exchange for this relationship, whereby he set out to conquer surrounding small states. As a result, he was able to subjugate many small states such as Jinbeon and Imdun near the coast of the East Sea (*Historical Records*, 『史記』卷115 朝鮮列傳 第55). In the meantime, the less active alliance centered on the early Joseon era from northwest Korea to the Liaodong region formed a new alliance and strengthened its central power and administrating power with its boundary extending from the Yalu River to the north, the East Sea to the east, and the state of Hwanghaedo to the south.

However there was no official diplomatic relationship with the Han dynasty in the period of his grandson, Woogeo, which implies changes in circumstances. This could be seen as the rejection of status quo that resulted from economic and practical concerns to keep all of the profits from mediated trade. This decision to reject the relationship with the Han dynasty was possible because Wiman Joseon had already acquired the technique of producing iron weapons at a certain level. In other words, it is feasible for Wiman Joseon to produce iron weapons autonomously, because Wiman Joseon seemed to have acquired the technique to produce steel in the late second century B.C. (佐藤武敏 1977: 79). It's hard to find the catharsis for the development of iron techniques and the specific differences in the elements of iron, but the ruling class of Wiman Joseon should have been able to possess steel goods such as iron-knives, steel-helmets, and iron-axes similar to those of the Han dynasty. As time went on, the iron culture of Wiman Joseon developed. With "military goods" from China as the foundation, Wiman Joseon made many iron weapons and agricultural implements to improve productivity and make armed conquests of surrounding states through the reinforcement of its military strength.

Gojoseon was able to maintain its society by ensuring the bountiful goods from its neighbors, Jinbeon, Imdun, and Dongokjeo. With its foundation in the iron culture, it focused on extending a stable foundation by making neighbor powers submit as subordinated groups during its process of national growth. A record exists that requests to attack Joseon and Namweol (南越) at the beginning of the reign of Emperor Mun (文帝) of the Han dynasty while General Jinmu and others were looking furtively toward China with intent to invade it with military force (*Historical Records*, 『史記』卷25 律書 第3). It is possible to presume that Wiman Joseon might have tried to launch an attack on the Liaodong region from the northwest region of the Korean peninsula based on the iron culture and steel weapons they had developed.

Gojoseon utilized the goods that had been paid to them by the conquered neighboring regions and controlled and received tributes from those regions through remodeling the regions as sources of materials to maintain political unification. Thus the size of political unification in the society of Gojoseon might have been decided by the tributary payments and the allowance system of Gojoseon. If this is the case, then the sovereignty or dominance of the royal family of Gojoseon could be strengthened by controlling many small states within and by monopolizing trade within 1,000 *li* radius of Gojoseon. These facts show that the authority of the royal family of Gojoseon had been somewhat established.

In 107 B.C., Gojoseon fell at the hands of the troops sent by Emperor Mu (武帝) of the Han dynasty. Why did Emperor Mu decide to go to war with Gojoseon and try to put it under his control? Gojoseon had strengthened its national power and accumulated riches by restricting surrounding small states from trading with China. The king of Gojoseon prohibited many states south of the Han River such as Jin (辰國) from trading with the Han dynasty directly in order to monopolize the profits of mediated trade. This was against the regulation of Outer Subjects, and it stimulated Han dynasty to take action. The struggle between Joseon and the Han dynasty continued inevitably after the reign of Emperor Mu, as long as the Joseon dynasty did not act according to China's policies and developed independent of China.

3. Political Unification of Gojoseon--Ideological Provisions

On top of the development of independent productivity, ideological and systematic provisions were other elements that more effectively maintained the political unification of Gojoseon. This presumption was possible through examining the examples in surrounding regions. In the case of China, the religious concept with its apex on *Je* (帝) or *Sangje* (上帝) accompanied by ritual system supplemented the immaturity of the national regime of the society in the Shang dynasty (商代) (Yi Seong-gyu 1989: 73-77). Namely, this refers to the form of domination by seizing the power of sacrificial rite. In reality, priests belonging directly to the royal family were dispatched to each region for the execution of traditional sacrificial rites in that region in the Shang (商) period (Baek Cheon-jeong 1972: 132-138).

Gojoseon was already at the stage of forming a nation in the second to third century B.C. Gojoseon revised big and small tribal powers of the unit-political

structure from allied and unified stages to that of the nation's ruling social class. The special characteristic of the ruling system is that the rural communities in each region, namely strong continuous existence of birth-related system of hereditary institutions from the internal structure of towns and the class dominance and subordinate relationship among the rural communities as its agency were organized (Song Ho Jung 1994: 148-149). The core of the royal family performed religious rituals to heaven from a social point of view to bind the power of the chieftains and the commoners who were tied to the community-wide hereditary institutions. The royal family attempted to supplement the limitations in economical and political authority. Gojoseon tried to maintain the unification of its royal family through ceremonies on blood ties and ideology on fate, because Gojoseon society itself could not fully subjugate the powers of the regional communities under the sovereign power even in its last stage and acknowledged the autonomy of each region.

This feature seems to have been closely related to the nation-town authority (國邑勢力) of the Three Han carrying out traditional ceremonies on a level with super-towns by seizing the principal power of agricultural rituals and discovering the intrinsic cohesion principle of the small states themselves through this (Yi Hyeon-hye 1984: 128). In the case of the society of the Three Han, many towns gathered together to celebrate religious services to heaven by praying for productive wealth under the direction of the heavenly king in the states where independent skills of each town functioned relatively strongly. It raised close awareness among the towns and provided the social foundation for maintaining the small states as one unified political group. The king of Gojoseon probably celebrated the rituals to Cheongun (天君, the Heavenly God), the God of our ancestors, each year. Commanders from all of the Gojoseon groups participated in these rituals to heighten political unification and unity (Noh Tae-don et al. 1997: 26). Namely, the ruling class and the king of Gojoseon seemed to have controlled the local groups and increase the ruling power by practicing these rituals of the mythology on founding a nation called Dangun mythology (Noh Tae-don et al. 1997: 25-26).

These points can be inferred from archeological materials. Although it was not the central region of the late Gojoseon period, the discovery of round-shape bronze-knives and thin pattern mirrors from the burial accessories of the earth tombs such as Jeonggawaja (鄭家窪子; 瀋陽故宮博物館 1975) and Bongye (本溪) yangga (魏海波 1984) in the city of Shenyang are presumed to be used in religious services to heaven or the private properties of the priests. Not only that,

but there is also a great likelihood of Korean-style bronze-knives and thin pattern mirrors which are the main remains of the Korean-style bronze-knife culture being the tools used in sacrificial ceremonies. Due to many remains related to ritual services among the archeological materials of Gojoseon, the ruler in those times might have been the head of the group that performed ritualistic ceremonies in local communities and executed priestly powers (Kim Jong-il 1994: 45).

The features of early Goguryeo that had developed within the boundary of power of Gojoseon are helpful in understanding the national system of Gojoseon. In the case of Goguryeo, Gyerubu (桂婁部), the most powerful group in the 5-bu (Noh Tae-dong 1994: 43), was able to increase its power to control and integrate by making the commanders of each group under his command participate in sacrificial rites through yielding its ritualistic power.

In the case of Gojoseon, the legislative administering system necessary in keeping the unification of the royal family can be seen to have been developed as needed when “Beomgeumpaljo” (犯禁八條), which shows certain bureaucratic system and the existence of the customary laws, is examined, and it can be deduced that national reigning order might have been established through these.

Conclusion

We have looked at the formation process of the state of Gojoseon and its national characteristics. I would like to conclude by summarizing what we’ve examined in the main body of this article. Gojoseon established its nation in the process of social specialization due to the development of agricultural productivity based on the metallic culture including the iron-utensils with its foundation in the society of bronze-utensils. This period seems to be approximately around the third to fourth century B.C.

Political groups and political powers developed after the fourth century B.C. as the residents of Yeon dynasty moved into the southern Liaoning region and the culture of Yeon was handed down. Culturally, the styles of tombs changed to dolmens and sarcophagus tombs. Except some special cases, Liaoning-style bronze-knives or narrow-shaped bronze-knives were buried together in the sarcophagus.

The records of *Wiryak* and other documents state that many neighboring tribes had made alliances with “Joseonhu” (朝鮮侯) at the center. The Yemaek

(滅貊族) who lived around the Liaodong region also formed as a regular regional group and had the appearances of a tribe near Joseon. Thus, regional groups such as Jinbeon and Yemaek around the Liaodong and northwest Korea regions had formed an alliance with the central state of this alliance as “Joseon.”

Gojoseon had gained its power around the fourth century B.C. Thus, it strengthened its sovereign powers by absorbing the regional groups of Yemaek-lineage in the Liaodong region and also influenced small states such as Jinbeon and Imdun. The king of Joseon Huguk (朝鮮侯國) at the time exercised the responsibility of the leader of the alliance. He prepared an immature government system, because he needed professional management. As shown above, Gojoseon equipped itself as a nation in the fourth century B.C.

The reason that Gojoseon was able to accomplish political unification called ancient state is due to the fact that it was able to overcome its regional limitations not only because of the dynamics of the development in productivity, but also having learned to deal with the struggles against the Chinese. In other words Gojoseon strengthened themselves internally during the continuous struggles against Chinese authority and culture. Gojoseon was able to accomplish political unification during the process of dealing with the Chinese.

After its fall, the culture and residents of Gojoseon continued into, and was the foundation for, the Three Kingdoms. After understanding the ruling structure of Nangnanggun (樂浪郡) and its system of counties and prefectures, clarifying the different influences Gojoseon people had on the formation of Silla (新羅) and Goguryeo (高句麗) is definitely necessary.

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КСІ