

Confucian Burial Practices in the Late Goryeo and Early Joseon Periods

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This article questions notions of continuation and, in particular, change as reflected in burial traditions of the late Goryeo and early Joseon kingdoms. People of Goryeo largely buried their dead in the ways of their ancestors, but the introduction to Korea of Zhu Xi's the *Family Rituals* in the late thirteenth century marked the beginnings of a new means of interment. Zhu Xi's writings were to have a paramount influence on burial procedures as they were increasingly adhered to over the course of the Joseon period. In detailing how funerals should be carried out and in outlining how people should be buried, Zhu Xi mapped out 'proper' Confucian ways of dealing with death. In focusing on archaeological material, this article discusses how the increasing influence of Zhu Xi's writings on rituals is reflected in ways of burial over the course of the late Goryeo and early Joseon periods. It will be demonstrated that the Confucianization of burial practices is seen first and foremost in the ways in which graves were made, followed by how objects were placed inside the burial pit and, finally, in the types of burial goods used.

Keywords: Goryeo, Joseon, burial, Zhu Xi

Introduction

Stimulated by its rapid economic growth, South Korea has over the past ten years or so been witness to an ever-increasing number of large-scale construction works taking place around the capital as well as in the provinces. Though such engineering works may be criticized for their potential negative impact on the local environment, there is little doubt that they foster important archaeological work. As diggers move in, so do the archaeologists since the law stipulates

that any archaeological remains which are uncovered during construction must be surveyed and excavated before the work can continue. As a result, over the past ten to fifteen years, a steadily increasing number of graves from all periods have been unearthed in the southern half of the peninsula. More recently, the boom in the construction industry has even spread north across the DMZ where the opening of an industrial park near the ancient Goryeo capital of Gaeseong in 2004 has subsequently led to a number of sites near this city being excavated by joint teams of North and South Korean archaeologists.¹ The growing number of graves from the Goryeo (AD 918-1392) and Joseon (AD 1392-1910) periods that have thus been unearthed on the Korean Peninsula have been instrumental in furthering our understanding of how people interred their dead during this time.

This article questions the rise of Confucian ways of interment through an analysis of archaeological material from the late Goryeo and Joseon periods. Following the introduction to Korea of the *Family Rituals* (Ch. *Jia li* 家禮), written by the Song (AD 960-1279) Chinese Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), some learned members of Goryeo society broke with earlier traditions and began interring their dead in ways which were felt to agree better with Confucian modes of proper ritual behavior. Such codes of acceptable ritual etiquette were discussed in the *Jia li*, which in terms of funerals detailed different kinds of procedures that had to be carried out in the event of somebody's death, including the wearing of mourning garments, the preparation of the corpse, the making of the grave, and the performance of mourning sacrifices. While the *Jia li* thus maps out how funerals should ideally be carried out, there is no doubt that the ways in which this materialized in practice largely depended on individual circumstances and needs. Like people on the Chinese mainland had felt at liberty to pick and choose from Zhu Xi's liturgy, few Koreans appear to have followed it slavishly, certainly in the late Goryeo and early Joseon times when Neo-Confucianism was yet to take a stronghold of the Korean Peninsula. Without detailed records it is impossible to assess how in reality the extended funeral process from the death of an individual to the end of the mourning period was carried out among different types of people. Surviving historical sources do not include detailed discussions of burial practices in the Goryeo and early

1. For a detailed report of one such joint excavation project, see Hanguk doji bangmulgwan (2005).

Joseon periods.² When they are alluded to, records are often tainted by the philosophical agendas of the time in which they were written.³ Though the actual grave itself only forms a part of the funeral procedures, it serves as an important-historical record, since in contrast to other funeral events which do not leave behind any material evidence, a grave is exactly that, namely a record of human action. We may take this argument further and propose that the archaeological material mirrors actual conditions more truthfully than any written record and presents a more convincing picture of how people in reality dealt with the passing of a member of the community. I am for this reason particularly interested in the ways in which the actual interment took place, in terms of how the grave was constructed, how the body was laid out, which funeral goods were placed with the deceased, and so on.

There is no doubt that the recent increase in excavated remains has created a progressively more complex picture of the ways in which the dead were interred in Goryeo and Joseon times. New findings have offered more detailed insights into how graves were constructed, the ways in which bodies were laid out inside the pit, and which burial objects were placed with the interred. The rise in the number of excavated graves has also made it possible to draw up broad chronological and at times regional differences within the material, as common traits in burial remains over a given time or across a region have been identified. In addition, the growing body of material has brought to light significantly more variations within methods of interment than commonly thought to be the case, forcing us to review our perceptions of burial practices from these periods. Though it is widely believed that cremation was the norm in the Goryeo kingdom due to the reigning dominance of Buddhism, while Confucian style burials were commonplace in the Joseon period, the excavated material draws a far more com-

2. "Treatise on Rites" (K. *yeji* 禮志), *Goryeosa* (59-69) includes a chapter on funerary rites, but it deals mainly with consolation rites and mourning rather than burial rites (K. *jangnye* 葬禮). See *Goryeosa* (64:1-31a). For example, the section on burial rites for high officials (K. *jesinsang* 諸臣喪), provides a compilation of more than twenty examples of funerals of high officials, detailing the gifts the king bestowed on the deceased's family and the conferral of a posthumous title. See *Goryeosa* (64:20a-22b). More details are provided in a record from the first year of King Gyeongjong's 景宗 reign (r. 975-981) when the size of tombs for officials was specified. See *Goryeosa* (85:6b).

3. This is the case of many records from the early Joseon period which show how Confucian officials were quick to criticize any type of burial which was thought not to conform with the Confucian way, in particular those influenced by Buddhist thought. For a discussion of Joseon funeral customs, see Deuchler (1992:197-202). See also Gang (2005:74-92).

plex picture. As will be detailed in the following, analysis of excavated remains indicate that graves constructed according to the *Jia li* began to appear already in the late Goryeo dynasty, suggesting that as new ideological beliefs came to the fore, new methods of interment became intermingled with already established ways of burial.

During the Goryeo period people disposed of their dead in a number of different ways, cremation being only one of them.⁴ Common to all of them is the fact that they had their origins in pre-Goryeo society which makes the introduction of a new type of burial in the fourteenth century all the more radical. In some cases bodies were laid out in the open to decompose: a method that had been practiced on the peninsula from as early as the Three Kingdoms period (trad. 57 BC-AD 668).⁵ This method is termed *pungjang* 風葬, literally 'wind burial,' which involved wrapping the body in a straw mat and tying it to the branches of a tree; after the flesh had decomposed, the bones were gathered and buried or scattered. High ranking members of society were interred in stone chambers (K. *seoksil* 石室).⁶ Built with large stone slabs and covered with an earth mound, their basic set-up was largely similar to that of royal tombs of the Unified Silla period (AD 668-935) which in turn had been modeled on Sui (AD 581-618) and Tang (AD 618-906) imperial prototypes.⁷ It seems that many, if not most, people opted to bury their dead in pit-style graves; normally in the form of stone-lined graves (K. *seokgwangmyo* 石槨墓) or earthen pit graves (K.

4. I have previously argued that cremation was not as widespread in the Goryeo period as commonly believed and that many preferred other means of burial, typically in the form of earthen pit or stone-lined graves. See Horlyck (2007).

5. For a discussion of *pungjang* as practiced during the Three Kingdoms period, see Murayama (1990:317-22). Exposed burials were commented on by the Chinese envoy Xu Jing 徐兢 (1091-1153) who stayed in the Goryeo capital for a month in 1123. See Xu 111-2. Several references in *Goryeosa* mention the abandoning of corpses. See, for example, *Goryeosa* (84:19), where it is recorded that the government would cover the funeral expenses of the needy in order to avoid them scattering the bones in the streets. For further discussion of the discarding of bones, see Miyahara (1968:381-3). See also Deuchler (1992:79) and Furuta (1994:6-8).

6. Archaeological records verify that the stone chamber tombs located near the Goryeo capital of Gaeseong were built for members of royal and aristocratic families. The majority of them have been excavated and published in Chōsen Sōtokufu (1916:261-764). For a more recent archaeological survey of these royal tombs, see Kim (1986a: 39-42). See also Kim (1986b: 32-6).

7. The external forms of Unified Silla royal graves were influenced by Sui and Tang imperial tombs, which in turn were based on elite tombs of the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) that were typically in the form of underground stone chambers covered with a large mound and set within a rectangular compound. In the Eastern Han dynasty (AD 25-220) changes in ritual practices

togwangmyo 土壙墓). The former are rectangular earthen pits lined with roughly cut stones, while the latter are simple rectangular earthen pits. Sometimes iron nails are found on the base of the pits indicating the previous existence of a wooden coffin. Yet, as iron is subject to decay over time, their absence does not necessarily mean that a wooden coffin was not used. Also these kinds of burials had been used on the peninsula prior to the rise of the Goryeo rule. In contrast, rectangular earthen pits lined with a cement-like substance normally made of limestone inside which a wooden coffin was often placed (K. *hoegwangmyo* 灰槨墓)⁸ mark the beginnings of a new method of interment, which had no precedent on the Korean Peninsula but came into practice as a direct result of the introduction and advocacy of the *Family Rituals*.

The Family Rituals

The *Family Rituals* was introduced to Korea in the late thirteenth century by the government official An Hyang 安珦 (pen name Hoeheon 晦軒, 1243-1306) following his trip to Dadu 大都 (present-day Beijing), the capital of the Yuan (AD 1279-1368) rulers. Departing in 1289, he returned the subsequent year with a copy of Zhu Xi's complete writings. Being greatly influenced by Zhu Xi's thinking, An proceeded to promulgate Neo-Confucian thought and practices among his contemporaries, leading to what Martina Deuchler has termed "the Confucian revival of the first half of the 14th century" (Deuchler 1992:17-8). Neo-Confucian studies continued to gain momentum and in 1367 King Gongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1351-1374) established the Confucian Academy (*Seonggyungwan* 成均館) where the Confucian *Four Books* were studied.⁹ The

called for the building of a road leading to the tomb mound. Lined with stone figures, this avenue came to be called a spirit road and the content and size of the stone monuments were strictly regulated according to the rank of the deceased. Still, Goryeo royal tombs never matched the enormous scale of their imperial counterparts on the Chinese mainland. Rather they were modest affairs, in the form of single-chambered stone tombs, covered with a small mound. Only a few statues of civil officials, warriors, and lions flanked the short spirit road leading up to the mound which was encircled by a stone balustrade.

8. I have here termed such graves either limestone graves or, in the cases where limestone was not used, cement-lined graves.

9. *The Four Books* are the *Confucian Analects* 論語, *Mencius* 孟子, *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸, and *Great Learning* 大學. *The Four Books* are concerned mainly with the nature of man, his

increased observance of Confucian-style ritual behavior culminated in the prohibition of cremation in 1389, during the first year of King Gongyang's reign (r. 389-1392) (*Goryeosa* 85:39, Gang 2005:62-3);¹⁰ a ban that was later reinforced by King Taejo (r. 1392-1398) in 1395 (*Taejo sillok* 7:14).

As Neo-Confucianism increased in popularity in the late Goryeo period, so did interest in and concern for ritual procedures which adhered to Confucian principles and ways of thought.¹¹ It can be argued that the conduct and observance of rituals and ceremonies serve an important stabilizing role, and for the Neo-Confucians, rites were seen as a crucial means of creating harmony within society, both among individuals as well as between individuals and the collective, and the state and its subjects.¹² In concordance with the mutual dependence of the living and the dead that had long been a central feature of Chinese culture, rituals that facilitated communication between ancestors and descendants were deemed particularly important to Confucians (Ebrey 1991:xv). Especially significant were rites which were embedded in transitional states of being, such as the progressional shift from child to adult, from wife to widow, and from dead to living. Classified as family rituals, these rites were rooted in initiations, weddings, funerals, and ancestral sacrifices. In China, several volumes on family rituals were written and compiled; the earliest surviving example being the *Yi li* 儀禮 (Book of Etiquette and Ceremonies), dating from the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). Many scholars of the Song dynasty (AD 960-1279), too, wrote liturgies on Confucian rituals, but they appeared to have little impact on the practices of common people which were largely eclectic and unorthodox.¹³ In contrast, the prevailing influence of the *Jia li* lies partly in Zhu Xi's concern for making rituals

morality, and his relation to the larger cosmos. For a recent translation into English of the *Four Books*, see Gardner (2007).

10. See also Gang (2005:62-3).

11. For a discussion of the introduction of the *Jia li* to Goryeo and its advocates, see Kojima (2007:96-101).

12. Chen Jun 陳淳 (1159-1223), one of Zhu Xi's most outstanding pupils whose work was also held in high regard in Korea, reasoned that rites equal centrality, order, and respect. He argued: "If there is no order in sitting down, there will be perversion and disharmony. Take the relations between father and son, ruler and administer, brothers, and husband and wife. The reason they are disharmonious ... is because, lacking the rites governing their relationship in the first place, there is no idea of affection and no order or distinction in the relationship." See Chan (1986:127-8).

13. Discussions on popular religious practices in medieval China are numerous. See, for example, Ahern (1981), Davis (2001), Ebrey (1991), Ebrey (1993), Hansen (1990), McMullen (1999:150-97), Oxfeld (2004), and Stein (1979).

easy to practice for all, and people at the time clearly took to the *Family Rituals* as reflected in its wide circulation and the ways in which rituals gradually became standardized.¹⁴

The *Jia li* had widespread influence also outside China, and in Korea it was deemed a canonical text already from the inception of the Joseon dynasty. In 1403 officials entering the bureaucracy as well as serving officials below the seventh rank were required to pass an examination on it. Shortly afterwards, in the 1420s, Confucian critics argued that the *Jia li* should become the exclusive manual for funeral and mourning rites (Deuchler 1992:113 and 199). The significance of the *Jia li* is marked by the many commentaries that were published on this work over the course of the Joseon rule. It is not known which amendments were made in the early Joseon period, but several annotated works have survived from the seventeenth century onwards.¹⁵ Some were aimed at clarifying Zhu Xi's points, such as Kim Jangsaeng's 金長生 (1548-1631) *Garye Jimnam* 家禮輯覽 (Collected Commentaries to the *Jia li*), which was highly influential at the time. There were also compilations that dealt only with funeral rites. In an attempt to match Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* with local conditions, Shin Ugyeong 申義慶 (1557-1648) wrote an annotated volume titled *Sangnye piyo* 喪禮備要 (Essentials of Funerary Rites) which dealt with all formalities and ceremonies from the initial period of mourning to the performance of sacrificial rites. In 1620 it was prefaced by Kim Jangsaeng, and in 1648 expanded by his son Kim Jip 金集 (1574-1656).

Yet, despite the efforts exerted by Joseon scholars at making the *Jia li* the standard manual for family rituals, funerals seem to have been carried out in a decidedly uncannical manner, as suggested by written and archaeological records. Several written references highlight people's reluctance to give up local traditions, and in contrast to Confucian codes of ethics funerals were at times lively social affairs that involved copious amounts of food and drink. Such heterodox and hedonistic practices were fundamentally opposed to how Confucians interpreted funerals, namely as sorrowful affairs which required mourners to wail and abstain from partaking of wine and certain foods as a way to demon-

14. Patricia Ebrey has argued that the legacy of Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* is manifested in the ways in which people from different parts of China performed weddings, funerals, and ancestral rites in largely similar ways. See Ebrey (1991:xxix).

15. In the early Joseon dynasty, Gweon Geun 權近 (1352-1409) wrote an annotation to the *Jia li*, titled *Sangjeol garye* 詳節家禮 (*Annotated Jia li*). Used widely, it is unfortunately no longer extant.

strate grief and filial piety. As for the interment itself, some records lament the uncivilized manner in which inhabitants of the northern provinces of Hamgil 咸吉 and Pyeongan 平安 disposed of the dead simply by exposing corpses to the elements much in the same way as their ancestors did.¹⁶ The fact that *pungjang* was in use in the twentieth century too is not only indicative of its long-lasting appeal among Korean people but also reflects the persistent use of established methods of interment despite ideological and religious changes in society.¹⁷

Clearly, even though the Joseon government tried to regulate rites and ensure that correct codes of behavior appropriate to the individual's rank, age and gender were carried out, in reality such standardizing procedures were difficult to uphold. Old habits die hard and people evidently found comfort in their continuous observance of traditional customs. This corresponds well with cross-cultural studies on burial practices that have demonstrated how they tend to change slowly over time.¹⁸ Considering the emotional and societal upheaval caused by the death of a community member, it is precisely at such times that the comfort of tradition comes to its fore and the reluctance among some members of Joseon society to change existing ways of disposal is therefore not surprising. From this perspective, the use of a new means of interment in the form of limestone graves in the late Goryeo period is highly radical. The following will detail how this break with tradition is manifested and how it can be argued to be rooted in Neo-Confucian ideology.

Introduction of Sampled Data

The research presented here is based on a survey of around 600 pit graves, most of them from the Goryeo kingdom, while around one third of them date to the Joseon dynasty. The graves examined were selected under two criteria, namely,

16. For a discussion of how old customs persisted in Joseon, see Deuchler (1992:201-2). See also Walraven (1999).

17. For examples of contemporary practices of *pungjang* in South Korea, see Gungnip minsok bangmulgwan (1990).

18. By nature rituals are conservative rather than progressive, as part of their function lies in preserving certain actions and thought processes, even though in reality these actions and thought processes may change over time. The archaeologist Mike Parker Pearson has argued that the ritual practices involved in funeral traditions may be the most conservative of all: "We might dress in outmoded mourning clothes, and use coffins whose basic design has not changed substantially for hundreds of years" (Pearson 1999:195).

that they should be intact, i.e., undisturbed by looters when found, and that they should be published in detail. For methodological reasons, it was deemed necessary to focus the research solely on undisturbed graves in order to get as accurate a picture as possible of the variables within the material. The resulting thirty-five sites are spread across the southern half of the peninsula with clusters in North Chungcheong province (fig. 1). The strong interest in Three Kingdoms remains, which still prevails in Korea, may explain the relatively poor representation of sites in North and South Gyeongsang provinces where attention has traditionally focused on Silla and Gaya material. Likewise, archaeological work in South Chungcheong province and in North and South Jeolla provinces has predominantly centered on Paekche relics.

For statistical reasons it is necessary to point out that no overt regional differences among the material in the form of particular burial objects, grave constructions, or size of graves were detected. For example, graves at a site located at Deoksalli in Gimhaegun, South Gyeongsang province (德山里, 金海郡, 慶尙南道) are similar to those from the contemporary late Goryeo site at Gupori in Hwaseonggun, Gyeonggi province (鳩浦里, 華城郡, 京畿道). The graves from these sites are either earthen pit or lime-coffin graves and are relatively poor in burial objects, often containing just a few ceramics (Yun, Han, Seon, Bak, Son, and Jin 1995; Yi, Lee, and Yun 1995). Thus, it can be surmised that graves from

Figure 1 Map of Korean peninsula with locations of sampled excavation sites.



different regions can be compared successfully in terms of their construction and furnishing. In terms of gender it should be noted that human bones and other organic material rarely survive in the acidic soil of Korea, making it difficult to establish the sex of the interred. Exceptions include cases where the burial pit was lined with a layer of cement, which acted as a sealant around the coffin and prevented direct contact with the surrounding soil. As a result all material inside the pit, including the body, decayed only slowly over time.

Limestone Graves

The majority of the graves in the sampled data are earthen pit graves followed by stone-lined and limestone ones. Whereas the earthen pit graves date to the Goryeo and Joseon periods, thus reflecting the continuous use of this kind of construction, the popularity of stone-lined graves seems to have waned around the mid-Goryeo period and there are no examples of them among the sampled material from the late Goryeo and Joseon times. The late Goryeo period marks the first appearances of cement-lined graves on which the following discussion is centered. Those included in the sampled material date from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

It was in the *Jia li* that the importance of preparing a cement liner was first emphasized. In stressing the importance of preparing this mixture, Zhu Xi drew on arguments laid out by the earlier Confucian scholar Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), who reasoned that the bones of the deceased deserved to be treated with respect and should be cared for with the same kind of attentiveness and concern people at the time bestowed upon precious antiques. Zhu Xi maintained that “lime mixed with sand becomes solid and over time will become as strong as metal or stone. Neither ants nor robbers will be able to enter” (Ebrey 1991:108). Likewise, undoubtedly in the knowledge that charcoal seizes humidity, he recommended a layer of it around the coffin as a protection against tree roots, water, and ants. Thus, preservation of the bones was not advocated to delay their decay, but rather to safeguard them from damage until decay set in (Ebrey 1991:108). The efficacy of the cement lining is apparent in excavations of limestone graves as they frequently reveal human bones and other organic material that otherwise rarely survive in the acidic soil of Korea. The hard layer of cement also makes them difficult to break into.

Being particularly interested in how Zhu Xi’s instructions on the preparation

of the burial pit were adopted in the late Goryeo period, it is useful to summarize his main points:¹⁹

Dig straight down into the ground to make a grave. Spread out charcoal fragments on the bottom of it and pound them down, making a layer about two or three inches thick. Next spread out cement made of a mixture of lime, fine sand, and yellow earth on top of it and ram it down hard. Then on the four sides go around and put down the cement. Near the top, again put down charcoal and the cement and pound them until level with the walls (Ebrey 1991:107-8).

One of the best preserved examples among the sampled data of a cement-lined grave²⁰ from the Goryeo period was unearthed in the mid-1990s at Songnari in Hwaseonggun, Gyeonggi province (松羅里 華城郡 京畿道). The site was excavated by a team from Korea University Museum in connection with the construction of a highway near the city of Ansan. It consisted of seven graves: two from the late Goryeo period, three from the early Joseon period, and the remainder from the mid- to late Joseon period (Yun and Kim 1995:3-94).

The larger of the two Goryeo graves was located within a raised stone bank,

Figure 2 Cement-lined grave, Songnari, Gyeonggi province, Goryeo, 14th century. After Yun and Kim 1995: 58.



19. In the following, all translations of Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* are from Ebrey (1991). For a translation into Korean of the *Family Rituals*, see Im (2007).

20. Though the grave is similar in structure to limestone graves (K. *hoegwangmyo* 灰槨墓), I use the term 'cement-lined grave' here, since limestone was not used.

inside which the burial pit was constructed on a NE-SW axis (fig. 2). Approximately 1m below ground level was the burial pit which was lined on all four sides with a thick layer of a cement-like material. In contrast to the limestone mixture which Zhu Xi advocated, it was made of ground oyster and clam shells. It is not clear why limestone was not used, considering that this material was not difficult to come by and is still mined extensively on the peninsula.²¹ However, the fact that it was not unique to this site but was also utilized in the making of a contemporary grave at Teoksalli in Gimhaegun, South Gyeongsang province, suggests that it was considered an acceptable replacement for limestone and was possibly advocated as such.²²

While the ground shells resulted in a considerably more porous lining than that made of limestone, thus making it easier to penetrate, it served its purpose of preserving many of the organic remains inside the grave. At Songnari, interred within the pit was a wooden coffin which contained the skeletal remains of a woman aged 21-35. That she belonged to the upper echelons of society is indicated by the burial goods which accompanied her, all of which can be argued to be prestige goods indicative of high social standing.²³ A bronze mirror with a wooden lacquered comb placed on top was located above the head of the deceased, while a pair of iron scissors was found close to her right hand. Also at her right hand was a bronze finger ring. The style of the artifacts suggests that the grave dates to the fourteenth century (Yun and Kim 1995:10-20).²⁴

The Songnari burial stands out from other Goryeo cement-lined graves not only because of its lining, but also because it contained more burial goods than normally found in such kinds of pit graves. Most cement-lined graves from the Goryeo kingdom tend to be either devoid of objects or contain only a few, as in the case of two graves that were excavated from a large site near Chungju in

21. For a brief discussion of limestone reserves in South Korea, see http://www.imea.com.au/aboutkorea_economy.php [accessed 19/03/2008]. It is particularly abundant in Gangwon province. See http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/096th_issue/99052602.htm [accessed 19/03/2008].

22. The pit was relatively long, spanning 325 cm in length, 115 cm in depth and 85-50 cm in width. Earthenware was found at the bottom of the grave. See Yi, Lee, and Yun (1995:46).

23. For an analysis of burial objects found in pit graves from the Goryeo period, see Horlyck (2001). See also Horlyck (2006:98-152).

24. The adjacent Goryeo grave is an earthen pit grave which originally contained a wooden coffin, as verified by findings of iron nails. No other artifacts were found inside the pit. It has been suggested that the interred of the two graves were related, but due to lack of further evidence, this cannot be confirmed.

North Chungjeong province (丹月洞 忠州 忠清北道) (Gil and Hwang 1992; Gil and Yi 1996).²⁵ One of them did not reveal any objects while at the bottom of the other pit were three bronze coins, one of them dating to 1156-1161.²⁶ Due to corrosion it has not been possible to pinpoint the exact dates of the other two coins. The objects and the limestone lining have led to the graves being dated to the fourteenth century.

Graves lined with cement gradually became more popular in the Joseon period and the tomb of King Sejo 世祖王 (r. 1455-1468) marks the earliest recorded use of such a type of construction among the Joseon upper class. Because of the frequent absence of burial goods inside limestone graves, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between those made in the closing years of the Goryeo dynasty and those constructed during the first centuries of the new rule. While further research on Joseon limestone graves is strongly needed, preliminary studies have shown that the ways in which the cement lining and the inner coffin were constructed changed over the course of the Joseon dynasty.

The increased support and advocacy of Zhu Xi's writings resulted in graves of the mid- to late Joseon period adhering more closely to the *Jia li* than their earlier counterparts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thus, pits became increasingly deeper and were lined with ash, followed by a thick layer of limestone cement. Also the size and shape of the wooden coffin were largely made according to Zhu Xi's instructions:

The [wooden] coffin should be made straight and with square angles, the head large and the foot small, just spacious enough to hold the body. (Ebrey 1991:72)

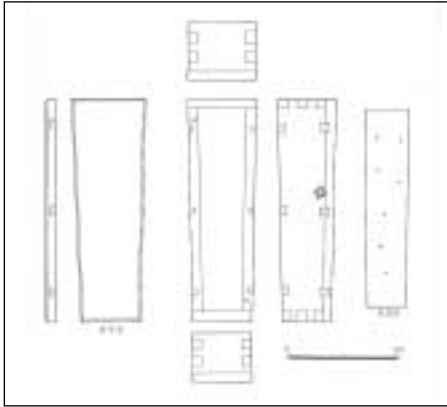
This is reflected well in a grave at Gupori near Hwaseong, Gyeonggi province, dating to the mid-seventeenth century where the wooden coffin which was placed inside the limestone pit is noticeably wider and taller at one end than the

25. Also at the site were eleven stone-lined burial pits and six earthen-pit graves. Judging from the objects placed inside the pits including celadon ceramics and coins, it is believed that the stone-lined graves are the earliest in the sample, dating from the late eleventh to the early twelfth century. The earthen-pit graves are believed to be from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

26. In the Goryeo period it was common to place coins of different dates in graves. That a coin with a twelfth century date is found in a fourteenth century burial is therefore not unusual.

27. The lime-stone pit measures 223 x 78 x 8 cm. The interior wooden coffin measures 204.4 x

Figure 3 Wooden coffin from limestone grave, Gupori, Hwaseong, Gyeonggi province, Joseon, mid 17th century. After Yun, Han, Seon, Bak, Son, and Jin 1995: 153.



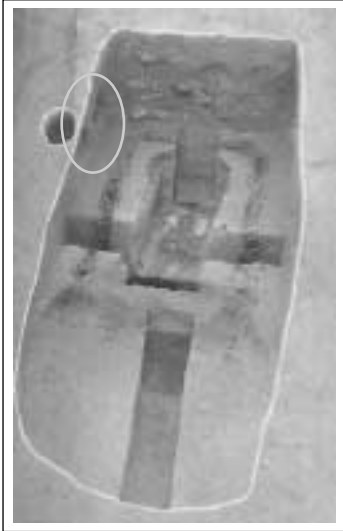
other (Yun, Han, Seon, Bak, Son, and Jin 1995:153) (fig. 3).²⁷ Punched into the lid of the coffin are seven points which make up the constellation the Big Dipper and this practice, too, is rooted in the *Jia li* (Ebrey 1991:72).

A well-preserved example of how the *Jia li* was interpreted in the mid-Joseon dynasty is reflected in a limestone grave at Sawolli in South Gyeongsang province (沙月里 慶尙南道), dating to the sixteenth century (fig. 4).²⁸ Situated deep within the burial pit, the wooden coffin was lined by a thick layer of limestone which in turn was surrounded by an equally thick layer of ground ash. Half-way between ground level and the coffin were two niches carved into the coffin wall: one contained a pair of iron scissors, while the other revealed a bronze spoon and five miniature porcelain vessels. As will be discussed in the

63.5-55.5 x 61-53.5 cm. It may also be noted that the coffin is held together with wooden wedges rather than iron nails, reflecting how the construction of wooden coffins changed over the course of the Joseon period. This development cannot be attributed to the *Jia li*, but is more likely rooted in local woodworking traditions. In the fifteenth century the coffin was held together with iron nails like they were in the Goryeo dynasty. From the middle of the Joseon period, however, the coffin walls were joined using wooden wedges as seen at Gupori. For further discussion on the construction of wooden coffins in the Joseon period, see Yun and Kim (1995:136-7).

28. The grave was excavated by Bugeong National University Museum in 1996. To date, only a brief report has been published on its excavation. See Hanguk daehakgyo bangmulgwan (1997:140-2).

Figure 4 Limestone grave at Sawolli, South Gyeongsang province, Choson, 16th century. Niches for burial objects circled. After Hanguk daehakgyo bangmulgwan. 1997: 141.



following section, the carving of niches and the use of miniature burial goods was also in keeping with the *Jia li*. Yet, despite such apparent efforts, allowances for local customs were also made as reflected in the position of the bronze mirror and two small perfume bottles which were placed inside the coffin on the body of the deceased, this being something which Zhu Xi did not advocate.

Burial Goods

As can be expected, in the late Goryeo and Joseon dynasties, changes gradually took place in terms of the types of burial objects that were interred with the deceased as well as how they were placed inside the pits.²⁹ Over the course of the Joseon period, burials became simpler as reflected in comparatively fewer artifacts per grave, and in some cases small-scaled objects were used, including

29. For a discussion of the locations of artifacts in Goryeo tombs, see Horlyck 2006:133-44.

30. Joseon *myeonggi* are normally of white porcelain, though a few *buncheong* stonewares were also made. In shape, they either imitate vessels, including those used for ritual such as incense burners, or are in the form of figurines, ranging from males and females to cows, horses, and

miniature ceramics (K. *myeonggi* 明器).³⁰ Modifications of established traditions did however take time to become firmly accepted in society and the kinds of burial goods that have been found in early Joseon graves—earthen-pit as well as limestone ones—are largely similar to those of the late Goryeo period. They are typically in the form of ceramic vessels, bronze spoons and, in a smaller number of cases, iron scissors. In some instances, bronze vessels were also placed in graves. Yet, in contrast to the Goryeo period, jewelry, such as beads, and other items are rare and weapons are virtually never found. The reason for this may lie in Zhu Xi's argument that "precious objects of gold or jade should not be put into the grave pit for they will be a burden to the deceased" (Ebrey 1991:122).

A significant difference between Confucian-style methods of burial in the late Goryeo and Joseon periods is the interment of miniature burial goods as encouraged in the *Jia li*, which states that grave goods "should resemble those used in real life but be smaller" (Ebrey 1991:109). Yet, Confucian scholars of the fourteenth century appear to have paid little attention to this since the earliest Korean reference to the use of *myeonggi* is found in the *Sejong sillok* 世宗實錄 in which it states that six miniature ceramics were placed inside the burial pit of King Jeongjong 定宗王 (r. 1398-1400). It also includes detailed information on the arrangement and large numbers of *myeonggi* prepared for the funeral of Queen Wongyeong 元敬王后 (1366-1420), the wife of King Taejong 太宗王 (r. 1400-1418).³¹ There are, however, no archaeological findings of *myeonggi* predating the sixteenth century, and the majority of excavated finds are from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, suggesting that in early Joseon times other members of society largely continued to use normal-sized burial objects. Clearly, the tradition of interring the dead with various kinds of precious objects was hard lived and not given up easily. While it is possible that people felt compelled to bury their dead with as much splendor as they could muster, despite the Confucians advocating the opposite, the reluctant use of *myeonggi* may also lie in practical reasons. Miniature artifacts had to be specially made and had to be

carts. Porcelain *myeonggi* are frequently undecorated; some elaborate examples, such as a set from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, now in the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul, were painted with under-glaze cobalt blue. Others were touched up with under-glaze iron.

31. For examples of early dated *myeonggi* from the early sixteenth century, see Chung (1997:132-4). For a detailed discussion of *myeonggi*, see Yi (2000). For representative examples of Joseon *myeonggi*, see Ehwa yeoja daehakgyo bangmulgwan (1978).

Figure 5 Limestone grave, Songnari, Gyeonggi province, Choson, 15th —16th centuries. Niche for burial objects circled. After Yun and Kim 1995: 75.



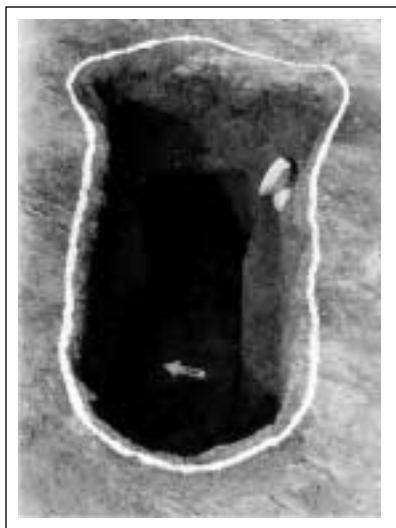
sourced separately. While it is not known how much they cost at the time, it cannot be ruled out that for some, it was easier and cheaper to use artifacts that were more readily available.

As mentioned earlier, the ways in which burial goods were situated inside tomb pits also differ between the Goryeo and Joseon periods. In the Goryeo kingdom, it was common for burial objects to be placed inside the coffin in close proximity to the body of the deceased, as exemplified in the case of the previously discussed limestone grave at Songnari. This position followed in the tradition of how objects were laid out in other kinds of pit graves at this time. In contrast, with the beginnings of the new dynasty, burial objects began to be either clustered at one end of the pit or placed in small niches carved into the pit wall. An early example of this is found at the burial site of Songnari where a limestone grave from the early Joseon period revealed such a niche, built into the upper part of the eastern pit wall (fig. 5) (Yun and Kim 1995:75). Inside the niche was a black-glazed ceramic ware from the fifteenth to sixteenth century. The placing of burial goods in such niches closely adheres to the *Jia li* in which it says the following on storing grave goods:

When the soil is filled halfway up, store the grave goods [and other furnishings] in side niches. Block their entrances with board. (Ebrey 1991:122)³²

32. In the case of Korea, such boards may have been used, but are likely to have decayed over time.

Figure 6 Earthen-pit grave, Danghari, Hwaseong, Gyeonggi Province, Joseon, 16th century. After Hanshin daehakgyo bangmulgwan. 2004: 58.

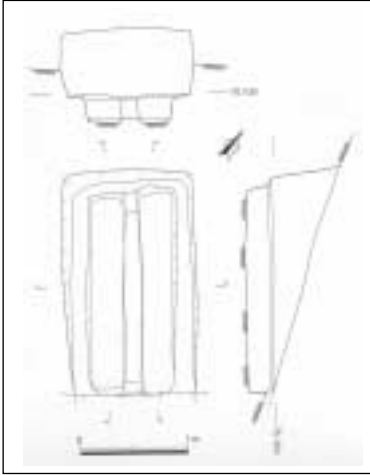


Though such niches were not always used, they did become increasingly common over the course of the Joseon dynasty. Yet, curiously, they were not only used when the interred was placed inside a limestone grave, but also when an earthen-pit was the grave construction of choice. Thus, in the case of two sixteenth century earthen-pit graves from Danghari near Hwaseong in Gyeonggi province (화성 당하리 경기도), several white porcelain bowls and a bronze spoon seem squeezed into a small niche (Hanshin daehakgyo pangmulgwan 2004:58) (fig. 6). In some cases, such niches are located precariously close to surface level as exemplified in a contemporary earthen-pit grave from Wondangdong at Incheon in Gyeonggi province (인천 원당동 경기도), where two porcelain bowls and a bronze spoon were found in a niche just below ground level (Hanguk munhwajae gwalliguk 2007:118-9). It is possible that such niches were used in a partial attempt to follow the *Jia li*, possibly at times when limestone was either not available or perhaps deemed too cumbersome to bother with.

Joint Burials

A final point worth noting is the gradual increase in couples being interred

Figure 7 Double earthen-pit grave, Gunyeongni, Boryeong, South Chungcheong province, late Goryeo. After Jung-ang munhwajae yeonguwon 2001: 63.



together, this being a significant difference between late Goryeo and early Joseon burials. Though not advocated in the *Jia li*, the spread of this custom seems to have been influenced by the Confucian emphasis on upholding conjugal bonds. Certainly, one sure way to demonstrate a wife's devotion to her husband was to have her buried alongside him and thus for them to be together in eternity. In addition, it also signified a wife's integration into her husband's descent group as demanded by Confucian ideology. Though some epitaphs from the Goryeo period include references to joint burials (Kim 1997:85, 142, 484, 529),³³ the archaeological material does not suggest that this was a common occurrence as examples of them are rare. Among the exceptions is an earthen pit grave that has been excavated from a large burial site at Gunyeongni near Boryeong in South Chungcheong province (九龍里 保寧 忠淸南道). Dating to the late Goryeo period, the grave contained two pits placed alongside one another. Devoid of burial objects as well as organic remains, it is impossible to tell who the interred were (fig. 7) (Jung-ang munhwajae yeonguwon 2001:63).³⁴ A more conspicuous example of a joint burial from this time is that of King Gongmin 恭愍王 (r. 1330-74) and his Mongolian wife, Noguk (d. 1365), who

33. Examples date from the mid-twelfth to the mid-fourteenth century.

34. Earthen pit grave no. 47 may also be a double tomb judging from its shape and size, though it is not listed as such in the report.

were buried inside adjacent tomb mounds in the hills west of Gaeseong.³⁵

Joint burials appear to increase in popularity from the inception of the Joseon dynasty as evidenced in findings of several double limestone graves from this time. Sometimes such graves are in the form of a large pit lined with lime-stucco inside which two wooden coffins were placed, as in the case of a grave excavated two years ago near Gaeseong. Because of the presence of an epitaph located in front of the tomb it has been possible to date it to 1666 (*Hanguk doji bangmulgwan* 2005:220-5).³⁶ In other cases, joint burials were in the form of two separate limestone pits placed next to each other. Such graves were presumably used when one spouse died considerably later than the other, making it impossible to inter them within the same cement-lined burial pit.

Conclusion

What makes a funeral Confucian? In the eyes of Zhu Xi, a ‘proper’ send-off was undoubtedly one which did not conflict with the Confucian way of thought, from the time mourners gathered at the death bed to when condolence letters were sent out. Yet, it seems that in many cases people adopted a mix-and-match approach to how such Confucian-style funerals should be carried out. In the *Family Rituals*, Zhu Xi clarified and consolidated earlier Confucian concerns for proper ritual etiquette before, during, and after burial and gave detailed instructions on all aspects of this important ritual, from the garments mourners should wear to the preparation of the grave and the arrangement of sacrificial offerings. But how were these instructions followed in the fourteenth century when Zhu Xi’s thoughts were still new to the people of Goryeo and how did they manifest themselves in the early Joseon dynasty? In the Goryeo period Koreans demonstrated a tenacious hold on local traditions and proved themselves adept at modifying imported Tang (AD 618-906) Chinese models to suit local conditions, particularly with regards to mourning obligations toward the maternal line. Also in the Joseon dynasty, people were at times criticized by the elite for continuing to bury their dead in the ways of their ancestors and for violating the Confucian way.

35. For a discussion of this tomb, see Till (1989:26-34). For a more recent survey of the tomb, see Joseon yujeok yumul dogam pyeonchan wiwonhoe (2000:100-14).

36. The two wooden coffins were not assembled with iron nails but with wooden wedges as is typical of coffins of this time.

While written records detail how mourning rites and other customs linked to burial were practiced, they do not specify how people at the time incorporated Zhu Xi's writings on proper Confucian ritual protocol in the ways in which they interred the dead. The aim of this paper has been to explore this through a study of the archaeological material. Though Confucian means of burial is largely seen to be synonymous with the Joseon period, archaeological remains suggest that they began to take hold already in the Goryeo dynasty. Yet, it took time before the instructions mapped out in the *Family Rituals* become firmly rooted in society and initially only selected elements were adhered to. Of all the different instructions detailed by Zhu Xi, it seems that it was the lining of graves with cement which was adopted first by the Confucians of the Goryeo period. Later, in the early Joseon period, other measures were taken, as reflected in the placing of objects in niches. Finally, the use of miniature burial goods began to become widespread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It seems that by the sixteenth century Confucian means of interment were well established in Korea, certainly among the elite, and that details of burial as mapped out in the *Jia li* were increasingly adhered to. It can be no coincidence that the close observance of Zhu Xi's writings on 'proper' burial corresponds with a time which James Palais has termed 'Korea's Confucian age.' This was an age when not only educated Koreans were affected by Confucian ideas in their behavior, but Korean society, as a whole, was subtly influenced by Confucianism. In the sixteenth century almost all the elite were Confucian, and many had a thorough grasp of Zhu Xi's metaphysics. Furthermore, the mid-sixteenth century also saw the Neo-Confucian scholars Yi Hwang 李滉 (pen name Toegye 退溪, 1501-1570) and Yi I 李珥 (pen name Yulgok 栗谷, 1536-1584) take their places as regular officials at the court (Palais 1984:427-68). In the seventeenth century, the Japanese invasions of the 1590s and the Manchu attacks of 1627 and 1636 gave further cause for the strengthening of Neo-Confucian thought and practices. Following the destruction of the invasions, ritual was seen as the manifestation of order as well as a means through which order was preserved and restored.³⁷ The political situation in China also fuelled interest in and support for Confucianism since in the wake of the fall of the Ming and the rise of the Manchu rule, the Koreans saw themselves responsible for upholding Confucian civilization (Deuchler 1999:92). This gradual Confucianization of

37. JaHyun Kim Haboush also notes that a high level of ritual scholarship emerged from this time. See Haboush (1999:49).

society is clearly reflected in burial remains.

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