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Materials and Trends in the Study of Ancient Korean Wooden Slips

Jeon Deog-jae

Introduction

The extant literary sources of ancient Korean history are extremely sparse, and furthermore, due to the fact that they were mostly compiled in the Goryeo period, centuries after the ancient kingdoms had fallen, their value for historians is rather limited. The limitations of these written sources can in large part be overcome through the use of primary materials such as epigraphy and wooden slips (*mokgan*). While paper and wood were both commonly used as writing materials up until the Three Kingdoms period, paper was widely used from the Unified Silla period onwards. During the Three Kingdoms period, wooden slips were used for various purposes such as preparation of documents, records, and labels. However, during the Unified Silla period, such materials were only used in conjunction with the production of memos, for handwriting practice, and for labeling purposes.

It was during the Japanese colonial period that the first wooden slip was found in Namjeong-ri tomb no. 116, Pyongyang, and in the subsequent period approximately 600 wooden slips have been discovered at various sites on the Korean peninsula (see Table 1).¹ The first purely Korean ancient wooden slips, apart from Lelang-related artifacts, were excavated in 1975 from Anapji in Gyeongju. The increase in archeological excavations of marshland sites since the 1990s resulted in a rapid rise in the excavation of wooden slips. The excavation of the Seongsan Fortress in Haman which began in the early 1990s has also yielded a large number of Silla wooden slips. In 2004 the Changwon National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (CNRICH)² published a comprehensive catalogue of the existing wooden slips entitled, *Ancient Wooden Slips of Korea* (Kor. *Hanguk ui godae mokgan*). Indeed, the scholars of ancient Korean history began to conduct studies based on the use of wooden slips in a full-fledged manner only after this catalogue was published.³

1. In addition, 33 wooden slips were discovered from a shipwreck near Taean, 17 from Shipwreck No. 1 and 57 from Shipwreck No. 2 of Mado 馬島, Taean. However, as all of these items were Goryeo dynasty label tags attached to goods, they were excluded from the present study.

2. This body was renamed the Gaya National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (GNRICH) in November 2007.

3. With the discovery of a large number of wooden slips at Seongsan Fortress in Haman serving

This study analyzes the current state of the Korean ancient wooden slips that have been discovered to date and summarizes the research trends in this field. The present study is largely confined to a review of studies on the contents of inscribed wooden slips. While a range of issues—including classification of the various types and uses of wooden slips,⁴ comparative studies of ancient wooden slips from Korea, China and Japan, studies on wooden slips devoid of inscriptions, as well as on the sites and environments where wooden slips were excavated—need to be addressed, the present study is limited in its scope and objective.

Wooden Slips of Lelang and Baekje

The Wooden Slips of Lelang Excavated in Pyongyang

About 120 wooden slips from the Lelang 樂浪 (Kor. Nangnang) period were excavated in Pyongyang which include approximately 110 bamboo slips inscribed with the *Lun Yu* 論語 (*The Analects of Confucius*) text. The first piece with such inscription was discovered in Namjeong-ri tomb no. 116 (or Chaehyeopchong 彩篋塚) in Pyongyang in 1931.⁵ Thereafter, in the aftermath of the national liberation in 1945, three wooden slips were uncovered in Pyongyang from Jeongbaek-dong tomb no. 3 and six others from Nangnang-dong tomb no. 1 (Yun Yong-gu 2007). In the early 1990s, wooden slips inscribed with the text of the *Lun Yu* and prefecture-level household statistics of the Lelang Commandery, dating from the fourth year of Chuyuan (“樂浪郡初元四年縣別戶口簿”), were unearthed at Jeongbaek-dong Tomb no. 364 in the Nangnang area of Pyongyang.

The bamboo slip version of the *Lun Yu* was originally rendered in

as the impetus, the Korean Society for the Study of Wooden Documents was established in 2007. Efforts are currently underway to establish the field of Korean wooden documents studies around this society.

4. Korean ancient wooden slips can be broken down into scroll-bound slips, individual slips, and wooden shavings. The individual slips can in turn be divided into the label and multi-sided types (conic, square and rectangular shapes). Furthermore, the wooden slips can also be differentiated based on their end use, i.e., into books, documents, portable slips and label tags.
5. The inscribed wooden slip was a wide, rectangular-shaped one.

scroll-bound slip form, and it was reportedly unearthed in 39 slips that were excavated intact, along with 70 fragmentary pieces. These bamboo slips are inscribed with Chapter 11, “Xian Jin” 先進, and Chapter 12, “Yan Yuan” 顏淵, of the *Lun Yu*. A comparison of this work with Zhu Xi’s commentary *Lunyun Jizhu* 論語集注 and the bamboo scroll version of the *Lun Yu* from a Han-dynasty tomb in Dingzhou City, Hebei Province, revealed few differences in terms of the basic structure and contents (Lee, Yun, and Kim 2009). Excavations in the Bonghwangdae in Gimhae and the Gyeongyang Fortress in Incheon also yielded wooden slips on which Chapter 5, “Gongye Zhang” 公冶長, of the *Lun Yu* was inscribed, thus suggesting that the bound-wooden slip copies of the *Lun Yu* were in use during the Three Kingdoms and Unified Silla periods.

Household statistics (*hogubu* 戶口簿) included the following records: the sum of the households in the 25 prefectures attached to the Lelang Commandery, including Joseon Prefecture, during the fourth year of Chuyuan (45 BCE); the increase or decrease in this sum over the previous year; and the number of newly added households. At the end of the household statistics, the number of households, which accounted for over 85% of the overall Lelang Commandery population, was listed, and explanations related to the number of residents were inscribed. However, the exact nature of these contents has proven difficult to decipher (Son 2006; Yun Yong-gu 2007; 2009). The bamboo slip version of the *Lun Yu* excavated from Jeongbaek-dong Tomb no. 364 in Pyongyang shows that Confucianism was emphasized within the Han dynasty during the mid-first century BCE and that the Confucian classics were widely read amongst the intellectuals. The household statistics provide information pertaining to the state of the population of Lelang, as well as its administrative structure, during the mid-first century BCE.

Baekje Wooden Slips Excavated in Buyeo

Since the first discovery of its kind in the Gwanbuk-ri area of Buyeo in Chungnam Province in 1983, over 150 Baekje wooden slips have been uncovered. Many were found in the Gunngnamji area of Buyeo in 1995, in Ssangbuk-ri in 1998, and at the Neungsan-ri Buddhist temple site in 2000. Another significant number of Baekje period wooden slips have been discovered since 2006 in Ssangbuk-ri and Gua-ri in Buyeo, and Bogam-ri of

Naju. Some 70 Baekje wooden slips and 40 wooden shavings were discovered in Buyeo. The planned increase in the number of archeological excavation projects in the Buyeo area is expected to yield more wooden slips in the future.

The conducting of in-depth studies on Baekje wooden slips became possible following the discovery of 28 wooden slips and 40 wooden shavings during the Buyeo National Museum's excavation of the Neungsan-ri Buddhist temple site carried out from 1992 to 2002. Of the various wooden slips excavated from the Neungsan-ri temple site, slip no.25 has drawn most attention from scholars.⁶ This 44 cm long slip consists of four sides with clearly legible inscriptions. The inscriptions on the first and second sides are known as “Jiyaga singmigi” 支藥兒食米記, a record of the daily supply of food (grain) to the *jiyaga* 支藥兒.⁷ Scholars are divided over the interpretation of the term *jiyaga* or *yaga* 藥兒. While some scholars have argued that *jiyaga* or *yaga* referred to a functionary in charge of the provision of medicinal herbs (Yun Seon-tae 2007a), others have maintained that it denoted an official in charge of medicinal herbs (Lee Yong-hyeon 2007b). Others have interpreted *jiyaga* as the agency or government office in charge of handling medicinal herbs and argued that this wooden slip was a record of the daily supply of food (grain) that was provided to those mobilized to undertake the construction of the Neungsan-ri temple (Lee Byung-ho 2008). The terms *daeseung* 大升 and *soseung* 小升 found in the “Jiyaga singmigi” refer to 4 *seunggi* 升器 (container size) and 2 *seunggi*. Because these inscriptions denote units, the slip has become a basic reference material in the study of measuring units employed in Baekje during the sixth and seventh centuries, along with a slip inscribed with *gap* 甲 and *ban* 半 units, which is also known as “Jwagwan daesikgi” 佐官貸食記, or “Jwagwan's Record of Grain Loans.”

The third side of wooden slip no. 25 contains entries pertaining to the

6. 支藥兒食米記初日食四斗二日食米四斗三日食米四斗 (side 1); 五日食米三斗大升六日食三斗大二七日食三斗大升二八日食米四斗大 (side 2); 食道使家口次如逢小吏猪耳其身如黑也道使後口彈耶方车氏牟祿祿耶 (side 3); 又十二石又十二石又十四石十二石又石又二石又二石 (side 4).

The numbering of wooden slips used in this study was based on the GNRICH, ed., *Hanguk mokgan jajeon* 韓國木簡字典 (Changwon: Yemaek, 2011).

7. Some have also argued that the term “*jiyaga*” should be interpreted as “provide to the *yaga* 藥兒” (No 2009a).

dosa 道使 (local governor), a dark-skinned *sori* 小吏 (low-ranking official) Jeoi 猪耳, and Mr. Mo (牟氏) and Mo Dae 牟祿, who resided in Tanyabang 彈耶方. While some scholars have suggested that Tanyabang refers to a local administrative district akin to the Nimibang 尼彌方 and Udubang 牛頭方, found in the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (*The Chronicles of Japan*), and that this was in some way related to the *Damno* 檐魯 (provincial administrative organization) (Yun Seon-tae 2007a), linguistics scholars have interpreted the term *jeoi* as referring to a pig (*dochi* or *doaeji*). They have claimed that this term employed typical phonetic loan characters found in *hyangga* 鄉歌 notations (Kim Yeong-uk 2007). The third side has been viewed as a simple memo, prepared by an officer who guarded the gate of Naseong Fortress in Buyeo, describing the local governor and residents who entered this gate (Yun Seon-tae 2007a). Lastly, given the fact that the direction of the writing was the reverse of the one found on other three sides and the phrase “*u sibi seok*” 又十二石 (“or twelve *seok*”) was repetitively inscribed, the fourth side of wooden slip no. 25 may well have been used for writing practice.

The second most intriguing wooden slip discovered at the Neungsan-ri temple site after slip no. 25 is wooden slip no. 1. It is a phallus-shaped wooden slip on which inscriptions such as “道禱立立立,” “天,” and “无奉用天” are written. As the character “*yang*” 禱 denotes the “ritual for the road deity,” some scholars have suggested that this phallus-shaped wooden slip was related to rituals performed for safety on the road (Yun Seon-tae 2007a). In addition, storage-related wooden slips were also discovered at the Neungsan-ri temple site, the most well-known being wooden slip no. 6 (“三月仲棕内上刃”). The character ‘*in*’ 刃 is the simplified form of ‘*in*,’ meaning unhulled rice. The inscription “三月仲棕内上刃” can be interpreted as the “grain stored in the warehouse in the third month.” This wooden slip is believed to have been a *buchal mokgan* 付札木簡 (slip used for labeling purposes) attached to sacks of grain that were stored in a warehouse at the site of Neungsan-ri temple (Hirakawa 2010b). Meanwhile, wooden slip no. 9 is regarded as having been a record of the delivered goods. However, partial damage to the slip makes it difficult to precisely assess its actual contents.

Wooden slip no. 7 bears the inscription “六卍五方.”⁸ While the term

8. 書亦從此法爲之凡六卍五方 (side 1); 入行之也凡作形之中了其 (side 2).

yukbu 六部 (部) was originally understood to indicate the administrative unit used to divide the capital into six districts, the term *obang* 五方 was thought to refer to the administrative unit used to denote local areas (Park Jung-hwan 2001; Jang 2010). However, new research suggests that “六部五方” was an idiomatic phrase that referred to a “world in which all the beings in the universe existed” rather than to the central and local administrative districts of Baekje. As such, this phrase should be regarded as one related to Taoism and Buddhism (Kim Yeong-sim 2009). While wooden slip no. 5 includes a list of ten people’s names on the front, including those of Samgwi 三貴 and Jijang 至仗, wave-patterned marks are repetitively inscribed in a lengthwise manner on the back. Although it is widely thought that this was used for spells, a recent study has challenged this conventional notion and argued that this wooden slip was in fact a tablet used in conjunction with memorial services (Yun Seon-tae 2007a). Meanwhile, based on an interpretation of the wave-patterned marks as a variant of the character “水” (water), other scholars contend that this wooden slip in reality formed part of an apotropaic ritual for Baekje officials (Bang 2010). Wooden slip no. 3 (“口城下部對德疏加鹵”) is conjectured as an identification tag of an official, because it bears a place name, an office rank, and a person’s name (Yun Seon-tae 2007a).

In addition, many wooden slips related to Buddhism and Buddhist temples were also discovered at the Neungsan-ri temple site. One of these archaeological artefacts, wooden slip no. 24, bears inscriptions on four sides, but they are hard to decipher. Amongst the characters that have been deciphered to date, one finds the expression “*bogwon*” 伏願. The slip has been interpreted by some scholars as prayers offered at a temple. Wooden slip no. 11 includes a poem composed of four-character lines that is also known today as *Suksega* 宿世歌 (Kim Yeong-uk 2003).⁹ This slip appears to be related to Buddhism, as it contains expressions pertaining to the karmic connections of past lives that determine the circumstances of current human existence. Wooden slip no. 10 includes the name of a Buddhist temple, Bohuisa 寶熹寺, and wooden slip no. 19 that of another Buddhist temple, Jagisa 子基寺. Illegible inscriptions render an attempt to analyze the remaining wooden

9. 宿世同業同生一處是非相問上拜白來 (side 1); 慧暉師藏 (side 2).

slips impossibly arduous and complicated.

Amongst the wooden slips excavated at Buyeo wooden slip no. 1 (also known as “Jwagwan daesikgi” 佐官貸食記) which was discovered at 280 Ssangbuk-ri, Buyeo in 2008, has attracted most attention from scholars.¹⁰ The slip is an account of the provision of grain loans to the public in 618 CE (17th year of King Mu) and their repayment. Two different opinions have emerged with regards to the meaning of the term *Jwagwan* 佐官. Some scholars think that *Jwagwan* referred to a bureau within the *Oegyeongbu* 外淸部, responsible for grain loans (貸食) (No 2009a), while others believe that the term meant a mid-ranking official directly appointed by the king who assisted the ministers of various departments (Jeong Dong-jun 2009). Apparently two shades of opinion exist. The former interprets the *Jwagwan* as an officer directly responsible for the provision of grain loans; the latter sees it as an intermediary who facilitated the grain loan process. A quick calculation of the repayments and non-payments made by the recipients of grain loans reveals that the interest rate on such loans was somewhere around 50%.

Some scholars have suggested that this wooden slip is related to the *Jindaebeop* 賑貸法 (relief loan system) through which grain loans were provided to the public (No 2009a). However, the recent attention to the 50% interest rate has led scholars to a more generally accepted conclusion that the grain loan system was similar to the public loan system (公出舉) that existed in ancient China and Japan as a means to extend the financial resources of the government (Mikami 2009; Hong 2011). This wooden slip also includes the terms *ban* 半 and *gap* 甲, both of which were related to measuring units used in Baekje. Scholars are divided over the exact meaning of these measuring units. *Ban* was generally reckoned as half a unit (1/2) and *gap* as one-fourth of a unit (1/4) (Mikami 2009). However, a scholar recently came forward with a new interpretation that *ban* meant the equivalent of 5 *seung* 升 and *gap* denoted 2.5 *seung*, or a quarter of a *du* 斗 (Hong 2011).

10. 戊寅年六月中 佐官貸食記 固淳夢三石 止夫三石上四石 佃目之二石上二石未一石 佃麻那二石 比至二石上一石未一石 習利一石五斗上一石未一石 (front side); 素那一石五斗上一石未七斗半 今沽一石三斗半上一石未一石甲 佃首行一石三斗半上石未石甲 刀刀邑佐三石与 并十九石 得十一石 (back side).

A wooden slip closely related to the Jwagwan daesikgi was discovered at 208-5, Ssangbuk-ri, Buyeo.¹¹ It includes the inscriptions “外椶 𠂔 鐵代綿十兩.” The *Oegyeongbu* 外椶 𠂔 (部) has been identified as one of the twenty-two administrative departments within the central government of Baekje (Park Tae-u 2009). From this one can infer that a warehouse controlled by the *Oegyeongbu* was located in or around the Ssangbuk-ri area and that the grains stored in this warehouse were used to provide grain loans. Wooden slip no. 2, which was discovered at 102, Ssangbuk-ri, Buyeo, contains the characters deciphered as “那尔波連公” on its front side. This slip is believed to be related to a Baekje official of Japanese origin (Hirakawa 2009). Wooden slip no. 1 was discovered in the Hyeonnaedeul, Ssangbuk-ri, and includes the inscriptions “奈率牟氏 丁一” and “定信不 丁一.” This slip is regarded as having been a log-register of the people mobilized to implement a construction project. In addition, other wooden slips bearing inscriptions such as “德率” and “上 𠂔” were also discovered in Ssangbuk-ri.

Wooden slip no. 1, discovered in Gungnamji 宮南池 in Buyeo in 1995 and dated 634 (35th year of King Mu), is believed to be a household register (Jeon 2006; Yun Seon-tae 2007a; No 2010b).¹² This wooden slip includes information related to the administrative units of the capital such as “西部後巷,” inscriptions signifying the age-based social division (丁 · 中口 · 小口), and units used for land area, namely “*hyeong*” 形. It has been suggested that the distribution of the population according to age, such as 丁 (adult), 中 (adolescent) and 小 (child) was influenced by the Chinese Northern dynasties (Yun Seon-tae 2007a; Hong 2011). The interpretation of the characters “*gwiin*” 歸人 as a naturalized person (*gwihwain* 歸化人) has led some scholars to point out that this wooden slip was related to naturalized subjects of the state (Lee Yong-hyeon 2006). However, others have contested this understanding, arguing instead that “*gwi*” 歸 should be interpreted as “*bu*” 婦 (wife) (Hirakawa 2010a).

In addition, wooden slip no. 1 from the Gwanbuk-ri site, Buyeo, which features the inscriptions “二月十日兵与記” on the front and “中方向 𠂔”

11. This slip was not introduced in the *Hanguk mokgan jajeon*.

12. 西 𠂔 後巷已達已斯丁一 依活 𠂔 𠂔 丁 歸(婦)人 中口四小口二邁羅城法羅原水田五形 (front side); 西一 𠂔 夷 (back side).

Others have suggested that this wooden slip was in fact a permit to relocate to other areas (Lee Yong-hyeon 2006) or a register of the land granted to migrants (Lee Gyeong-seop 2010).

on the back, has been estimated to be a label that was attached to a paper document entitled “Registry of the Distribution of Weapons” (*Byeonggi bunyeo girok* 兵器分與記錄). Wooden slip no. 2, which bears the inscription “嵎夷” and a branded mark in front, is believed to be a pass that allowed members of local governments to enter the capital city of Sabi (Yun Seon-tae 2007a). The Gua-ri site of Buyeo has also revealed many wooden slips, but they are for the most part illegible. The fragmented nature of the slips found at Baeknyeong Fortress in Geumsan has made the meaning of their inscriptions difficult to ascertain.

Baekje Wooden Slips from the Bogam-ri Area of Naju

In 2008, over 40 wooden slips bearing inscriptions in ink were unearthed from a blacksmith site in Bogam-ri, Naju. While the content of thirteen of these wooden slips was partially deciphered, the others have rendered all attempts of decipherment futile (Kim Seong-beom 2010). The wooden slips from the Bogam-ri site have drawn attention from scholars of ancient Korean history because of their significance as having originated not in the capital region but in a local area of Baekje.

Among the wooden slips found in Bogam-ri, slips no. 2 and no. 4 bear inscriptions related to households. Wooden slip no. 2 is partially damaged, and only the inscriptions on the front side can be deciphered. The slip contains the following inscription: “兄將除公丁婦中口二小口四 / □兄定文丁 妹中口一 / 定 / 前□□□.” Here, “*jegong*” 除公 is the same as “除公,” found in the village census register (村落文書) of the Unified Silla period and pertaining to the age-based system of demographic distribution. This suggests that the household registration system of the Unified Silla was also influenced by Baekje’s age-based class structure. While all researchers agree that wooden slip no. 2 is a document related to households, divergent opinions have emerged with regard to its precise nature. More specifically, while some have viewed it as a log containing information about individuals mobilized for a certain task (Lee Seong-si 2010), others have seen it as extracts from the household registers used to compile information on a certain household and its surrounding households (Hirakawa 2010a). Meanwhile, others have claimed that it was a working draft of a document prepared in Duhil-hyeon 豆盼縣 that revolved around the compilation of basic profit and loss statistics of households (Yun Seon-tae 2010).

The contents of wooden slip no. 4 are more complicated. The inscription on the wooden slip reads: “大祀村 □ 彌首山 □ □ 四 / 丁一 中 □ □ / □ 丁一 牛一 / □ 水田二形得七十二石 在月三十日者 / 白田一形得六十二石 / 得耕麥田一形半.” Here, “Misusan” 彌首山 refers to the head of a household who lived in Daesa-chon 大祀村. It includes characters such as 丁 and 中 □ that are related to the state of the household, as well as information about the possessions of this Misusan, such as the cattle, the amount of grains harvested from rice paddies (水田), dry fields (白田), and wheat fields (麥田). This document is similar in nature to the Tang dynasty Account of Households in Nine Grades in Puchang Prefecture of Xizhou (西州蒲昌縣九等定簿). This particular document estimated the class to which a household belonged, based on detailed records of the number of adult men (丁), the number of subordinate labor force (中 □), the state of households, the number of house buildings and gardens, the number of cattle and cattle carts, and the amount of harvested grains. Given the obvious similarities with the Account of Households in Nine Grades in Puchang Prefecture of Xizhou, some scholars have suggested that wooden slip no. 4 was in fact a basic document used to determine the class to which a household belonged (Yun Seon-tae 2010). However, the failure to uncover any other records in which household class was estimated, based on property assets, has led others to be skeptical of the validity of such an interpretation of wooden slip no. 4 as a basic document for classifying households. A new suggestion was made that this document was instead a log of the crop yield per household for collecting grain that was based on a varied grading of good or bad harvests (Hong 2011).

The fact that wooden slips no. 2 and 4 are documents closely related to Baekje's household register renders it necessary to undertake a comparative study in the future that would make use of register-related documents from ancient China and Japan. In addition, it is necessary to analyze the Baekje's acreage unit, “*hyeong*” 形, in terms of its relationship with other units such as *gyeol* 結 and *bu* 負, the background of its usage, and systematic examination of the area made up by 1 *hyeong*.¹³ The influence of Baekje's age-based class system—composed of *jegong* 除公, *jeong* 丁, *jung* 中, and *so* 小—on that of

13. Some have suggested that *hyeong* 形 refers to a Chinese acreage unit, *qing* 頃 (Hirakawa 2010a).

Unified Silla should also be examined more extensively.

Wooden slip no. 1 features the inscription “□□年三月中監數肆人 / 出背者得捉得安城.” The term “出背者” denotes a fugitive, and the slip records the fact that four supervisors arrested a fugitive in Deugan Fortress (得安城, Eunjin-myeon, Nonsan City, South Chungcheong Province). The fact that a person who ran away from Duhil-hyeon was caught in Deugan Fortress, which was about 130 km away, lends credence to the belief that Baekje’s local ruling system functioned in an organic manner during the early seventh century (Lee Seong-si 2010; Yun Seon-tae 2010). Wooden slip no. 3 includes place names such as “Mora” 毛羅, which is believed to be Moryangburi-hyeon 毛良夫里縣 (Gochang-eup, Gochang County, North Jeolla Province), and “半那,” or Bannaburi-hyeon 半那夫里縣 (Bannam-myeon, Naju City, South Jeolla Province). From the names of people who are believed to be local residents listed on the upper section of the slip and the names of officials with office rank titles such as “*Nasol*” 奈率, “*Hansol*” 扞率 and “*Deoksol*” 德率, listed on the lower section, some have concluded that officials dispatched by the central government had mobilized or supervised the local people listed on the upper section of the slip (Lee Seong-si 2010).

Wooden slip no. 12 includes the inscription “軍那德率至安.” The word “Gunna” 軍那 refers to Baekje’s Gulla-hyeon 屈奈縣, which is believed to have been located in today’s Hampyeong-eup, Hampyeong County, South Jeolla Province. This slip is believed to be a passport carried by an official named Ji An 至安, who held the position of the *deoksol* 德率 of Gunna and was dispatched to Duhil-hyeon in order to handle administrative affairs (Yun Seon-tae 2010). Finally, while wooden slip no. 9 (“麻中練六四斤”) was attached to hemp products, wooden slip no. 13 was used for writing practice. The remaining wooden slips proved too difficult to read and were only partially deciphered.

Wooden Slips of Silla

The Wooden Slips from Seongsan Fortress in Haman

Approximately 330 wooden slips dating back to the Silla-period have been uncovered since 1975, when the first items were discovered at Anapji in

Gyeongju. However, the largest numbers of such slips were discovered at Seongsan Fortress, a stone-built structure located in Gwangjeong-ri, Gaya-eup, Haman County in South Gyeongsang Province. The strata in the upper section of the fence facility, which is reckoned to have been built prior to the construction of the eastern fortress wall, yielded a large quantity of wooden products from 1992 to 2011, and it is noteworthy that 224 wooden slips were inscribed in ink. While the majority of these wooden slips were tags for labeling supplies (*bachal mokgan* 荷札木簡) that were attached to collected sacks of grains, some document slips were also unearthed. These wooden slips are generally regarded as having been produced around the year 561, an assessment that is based on a record in the *Nihon Shoki* which states that Silla constructed a fortress on Pasa Mountain in Ara 阿羅 (present-day Haman, South Gyeongsang Province) during the 22nd year of Emperor Kimmei (561). Moreover, the regional office rank “*Sangganji*” 上干支 appears on wooden slip no. 2 that was discovered at the Fortress. The Chinese character “*ji*” 支 in the office ranks is omitted from Silla inscriptions since the production year of Changnyeong Stele, which was erected in 561 in commemoration of the tour of King Jinheung to this place (Jeon 2008).

The inscriptions on the wooden slip labels (*bachal mokgan*) consisted of “place name, place name, person name, grain name, quantity”; “place name, person name, grain name, quantity”; or “place name, grain name, place name, person name, quantity.” Some slips had other labeling styles such as “place name, place name, person name, ‘奴人’ (or ‘奴’), person name, ‘負’”; or “place name, person name, ‘奴人’ (or ‘奴’), person name, ‘負’.” Although the majority of grains were barnyard millet (稗), some of the wooden slips were labeled with the character for barley (麥). Quantity was inscribed in various manners, such as “一,” “石,” and “一石,” all of which denoted ‘one *seok*’ (一石). There were many instances in which “一” or “石” was omitted. In some cases the quantity of grain or both the name of grain and its quantity were omitted. The personal names inscribed on these labels are believed to be those of the heads of households. The majority of these inscriptions involved “[a person] residing in [a particular place] provided one *seok* of barnyard millet or barley.”

Several cases can be found in which the Chinese character *bu* 負 was inscribed at the end of wooden slips on which the place name Guribeol 仇利伐 was inscribed. Various opinions have been put forward with regards

to the meaning of *bu*. While some have maintained that *bu* should be understood as a unit indicating the quantity of tributes (Kim Jae-hong 2005), based on its earlier meaning of a load that had to be moved from one place to another (Lee Su-hun 2004),¹⁴ other scholars have interpreted it as a verb, meaning such acts as “assume the burden (for collection)” (Lee Yong-hyeon 2007c) or “carry on one’s back” (Jeon 2007a). Thus, the interpretation of *bu* is directly related to the issue of whether *noin* 奴人 or *no* 奴 denoted the burden of paying taxes.

The term *noin* or *no* appears on eight wooden slips, including wooden slips no. 26 (“仇利伐 近德知一伐奴人 □...”), no. 35 (“內恩知奴人 居助支 負”), no. 36 (“仇利伐 只卽智奴 於非支 負”), and no. 37 (“內只次奴 須禮支 負”).¹⁵ Here, in conjunction with the terms “*Noin* village” (奴人村) and “*Noin* Law” (奴人法) that were inscribed on the Bongpyeong Silla Stele in Uljin, erected in 524, some scholars have interpreted *noin* as denoting subjugated people in outlying areas who were newly incorporated into the Silla territory (Lee Seong-si 2000; Lee Gyeong-sup 2009; Lee Yong-hyeon 2009). However, further discovery of numerous wooden slips eventually led to the suggestion that *noin* and *no* denoted a privately owned slave (Jeon 2007a). A recent study notes that although *noin* basically had the characteristics of subjugated persons, they were kept as subordinates under inspection and control by individual residents in Guribeol during the mid-sixth century and were later on gradually included as citizens (Kim Chang-seok 2009).

The debate over the characteristics of *noin* has revolved around the burden for the collection of tributary items. The scholars who interpret *bu* 負 as a taxation package (Yun Seon-tae 2012) and *noin* as subjugated people (Lee Yong-hyeon 2009) understood the *noin* to refer to those who bore the burden of taxation by the state. In keeping with this line of reasoning, *bu* can be interpreted as “shouldering the taxation burden.” However, caution

14. Wooden slip no. 219 includes the inscriptions “此負刀寧負盜人有 / 方 □ 日七冠村.” To this end, one study has argued that “負” should be interpreted as “load” or “taxation package” (Yun Seon-tae 2012).

15. Wooden slips no. 131 (“仇伐末那沙刀永奴弥次兮碑石”), No. 138 (“太元礼密奴那智石”), and No. 167 (“及伐城癸奴碑石”) also include the Chinese character, “奴.” However, in these instances, it is believed to be a part of a person’s name rather than meaning subjugates (*noin* 奴人) or slaves (*nobi* 奴婢).

should be exercised in conjunction with such assertions in that no conclusive evidence to prove that the *noin* actually shouldered a taxation burden in Silla during the mid-sixth century has been found. If the *noin* were in fact not the subject of taxation, then *bu* should be interpreted as “carrying a load on one’s back.”¹⁶

In the case of wooden slips featuring more than one place name, the place names appear at the beginning of the inscription, e.g., Guribeol 仇利伐, Gammun 甘文, Gubeol 仇伐, Gota 古陀, Chumun 鄒文, and Ijinji 夷津支. Historical research has located Gammun as today’s Gaeryeong-myeon, Kimcheon City, North Gyeongsang Province; and Gubeol in modern-day Danchon-myeon, Uiseong County of the same province. Meanwhile, Gota was located in Andong City, and Chumun in Geumseong-myeon, Uiseong County of North Gyeongsang Province. However, the modern-day location of Ijinji remains unknown. Although one scholar has argued that Guribeol was located in Chirwon-myeon, Haman County, South Gyeongsang Province (Lee Kyung-sup 2005),¹⁷ it is generally accepted that it was located in Okcheon-eup, Okcheon County, North Chungcheong Province. Meanwhile, wooden slips inscribed with a single place name on each included names such as Geupbeolseong 及伐城, Ibeolji 伊伐支, Subeol 須伐, Maegokchon 買谷村, Mulsabeol 勿思伐, and Jeokseong 赤城. These are estimated as having been located respectively in Sunheung-eup and Buseok-myeon, Yeongju City; Sangju City; Dosan-myeon and Yean-myeon, Andong City; Yecheon-eup, Yecheon County, North Gyeongsang Province; and Danyang-eup, Danyang County, North Chungcheong Province. All of these place names, with the notable exception of Ijinji, are referred to as having constituted a county (*gun* 郡) or prefecture (*hyeon* 縣) in the “Geography” Section (*Jiriji* 地理志) of the *Samguk Sagi* 三國史記 (*History of the Three Kingdoms*). While scholars have identified those place names that were

16. In the *Hanguk mokgan jajeon* (GNRICH 2011), the inscriptions on wooden slip no. 144 were interpreted as “赤城安尔加稗石負.” If the last Chinese character is in fact an inscription of “*bu*” 負, then it should be interpreted as “load” or “burden.” However, as the possibility that the last Chinese character may be identified otherwise cannot be excluded, the exact meaning of this inscription continues to be up for debate.

17. One researcher who had previously identified Guribeol as being located in Chirwon-myeon, Haman County, recently presented a new study in which he located it in Imha-myeon, Andong City, North Gyeongsang Province (Lee Gyeong-seop 2011b).

proven to have been a county or prefecture as *administrative villages* (行政村), the villages located around these administrative villages have been referred to as *natural villages* (自然村). In cases where multiple place names appeared on a wooden slip, the place name that appeared first on the wooden slip can be regarded as having been the administrative village, while the place names visible on the subsequent parts of the slip to be reckoned as the natural villages. Meanwhile, in cases where only one place name appeared on a wooden slip, the location in question can be regarded as both a natural and administrative village (Jeon 2007a; 2007b).

It was initially suggested that all of these wooden labeling slips were produced at Seongsan Fortress (Park Jong-ik 2000; Ju 2000). However, this assertion was rejected once the individual shapes and calligraphic styles of the wooden slips were proven to be different. Here, two differing interpretations have been put forward. According to one group of scholars, the wooden slips were manufactured at the county level (Hashimoto 2009), while according to the other group, they were instead manufactured at the administrative village level (Jeon 2007a; Lee Gyeong-seop 2011b). The fact that each administrative village had different shapes and script, and that the character “郡” never appears on the relevant wooden slips, has led to widespread acceptance of the claim that these particular wooden slips were manufactured and inscribed at the administrative village level (Jeon 2009). This lends credence to the belief that the local administration and taxation systems at the time revolved around the *haengsa daedeung* 行使大等 (official in charge of administrative matters and tax collection at the provincial [*ju* 州] level) dispatched to the *ju* 州, along with administrators such as *dangju* 幢主, *nadu* 邏頭 and *dosa* 道使, who were dispatched to the administrative villages to conduct duties at the behest of the *haengsa daedeung* (Jeon 2007a). In keeping with this assertion, the wooden labeling slips from Seongsan Fortress can be seen as having been attached in Sangju 上州 to sacks of barnyard millet or barley that were collected at the administrative village unit and then transported to Seongsan Fortress in Haman through the waterways of the Nakdong River, under the responsibility of the *haengsa daedeung*. The labeling slips were naturally disposed of after the collected grain was consumed by the soldiers stationed at Seongsan Fortress.

There are many cases of inscriptions in which place names are accompanied by supplementary designations such as *Bonpa* 本波, *Ana* 阿那, and *Malla*

末那. *Bonpa* was initially believed to be located in modern-day Seongju-eup, Seongju County in North Gyeongsang Province, based on the interpretation of characters in connection to Bonpi-hyeon 本彼縣 (Kim Chang-ho 1998). However, the subsequent discovery of numerous wooden slips featuring the inscription “*Bonpa*” led to a marked decrease in the support for this particular interpretation. *Bonpa* has been interpreted as an original village that became the source for a place name (Jeon 2007a; Kwon 2008) or as a settlement located in the central part of a particular area (Lee Gyeong-seop 2011b). Other scholars, however, believe that *Bonpa* was not a settlement, but rather has to do with sending goods and constituted an “original (first) strap” or “to bundle with an original (first) strap” (Lee Su-hun 2010). Furthermore, while *Ana* and *Malla* were initially perceived as words related to personal names (Lee Yong-hyeon 2007c), these have nowadays been accepted as referring to a village (Jeon 2007a).¹⁸

Some of the wooden slips discovered at Seongsan Fortress in Haman have been identified as having been used for documentation purposes. For instance, wooden slip no. 127 includes the inscription “丁廿二益丁四村,” and is estimated to have been a document that recorded facts pertaining to the labor force mobilized to build Seongsan Fortress. Wooden slip no. 128 includes an entry that reads, “*Gosi Acheok* 古尸阿尺, *Yihwe* 夷喙, *Nahye* □ 羅兮 □, and *Geupbeolji* 及伐只 of *Bisabeol* 比思伐 (Changnyeong, South Gyeongsang Province) manufactured four urns (瓮) or *du* 斗 of wine together in the first [lunar] month.”¹⁹ Although they have so far proven to be difficult to decipher, there is a strong likelihood that wooden slips no. 219, 221, 222, and 223 were also rendered for documentation purposes.

The wooden slips that have been discovered so far at Seongsan Fortress in Haman have helped to shed some light on Silla’s local administration and tax collection systems during the mid-ancient period. Furthermore, these discoveries have contributed immensely to the enhancement of our understanding of the writing culture of the people of Silla. The archeological

18. Some scholars have recently suggested that *Ana* 阿那 and *Malla* 末那 should be understood to refer to a “person in charge of sending goods” (Lee Su-hun 2010) or to names that indicated the direction or location of a certain area (or district) (Lee Kyung-sup 2011b).

19. 正月中比思伐古尸阿尺夷喙 / 羅兮 □ 及伐只并作前 □ 酒四 □ 瓮.

artefacts of wooden slips suggest that the administration system of Silla was based on institutional writing practice.²⁰ The strong possibility that more wooden slips will be unearthed at the Seongsan Fortress site has raised hopes that the scope of historical research on mid-ancient Silla will be further expanded in the near future.

Wooden Slips from Gyeongju and Other Areas

The moat at Wolseong and Anapji pond in Gyeongju have emerged as the largest depositories for Silla wooden slips after Seongsan Fortress in Haman. An excavation conducted at the moat of Wolseong from 1985 to 1986 led to the discovery of 31 wooden slips. These wooden slips were produced during the sixth and seventh centuries, prior to the unification of the Three Kingdoms, and were mainly used as documents at the royal palace and administrative agencies. While only wooden slip no. 2 from the Wolseong moat had its inscriptions completely deciphered, only partial success has been achieved with the other slips excavated from the site. Wooden slip no. 2 bears inscriptions on all four sides and is seen as an administrative document rendered using the Idu 吏讀 script.²¹ This slip has drawn the attention of Korean linguists as material for the study of the Idu script (Kim Yeong-uk 2007; Jeong Jae-yeong 2008), as well as that of ancient historians, whose interest in this document stems from its formality as a basic administrative document (Yun Seon-tae 2005; Lee Yong-hyeon 2006). The contents of the inscriptions can be summarized as *daejo jirang* 大鳥知郎's order to purchase two or three *geun* 斤 of *baekbulsuji* 白不雖紙 and the reported implementation of the order.

Although not all of the inscriptions have been deciphered, wooden slip no. 8 provides information about village (里) names within the six administrative districts (部) of the Silla capital, including Jung-ri 仲里, Sang-ri 上里, Ha-ri 下里, and Sin-ri 新里 of Mohwe 牟喙 (or Moryang-bu 牟梁部). The names of some other villages, although their corresponding district

20. A number of document scrolls (*jecheonchuk* 題籤軸) were discovered at the Seongsan Fortress in Haman. These significant materials help to shed light on the fact that paper-based documents were also being used circa 561.

21. 大鳥知郎足下万口白 / 經中入用思買白不雖紙一二斤 / 牒垂賜教在之後事若命盡 / 使內。

names are unknown, are also found on this slip; e.g., Ageum-ri 阿今里 and Sannamchisang-ri 山南置上里. Furthermore, smaller characters reading “*su*” 受 or “*bul*” 不 were marked above the village name (Yun Seon-tae 2005). This wooden slip has been interpreted as an administrative document related to the reception of land and grains, or as a requisition for labor to engage in construction projects at the six-*bu* 部 village unit level (Lee Yong-hyeon 2009). This wooden slip constitutes an important artifact in that it provides information on how the village names were established upon their installation within the six administrative districts of the Silla capital. Wooden slip no. 11 includes characters that read “*Jeondaedeung*’s instructions presented on the first day of the fourth month” (四月一日典大等敎事). The *jeondaedeung* was the vice-minister of the *Jipsabu* 執事部 (Chancellery Office), who appears, based on the inscription found on the slip, to have conveyed a royal edict to a certain administrative agency. Wooden slip no. 21 bears inscriptions of herb names and their quantity, and is regarded as having been a medical prescription (Yun Seon-tae 2005). The rest of the wooden slips were either largely illegible or consumed for writing practice.

At Anapji in Gyeongju, 49 wooden slips with inscriptions were uncovered from a pond. The majority of them were used during the eighth century as labels attached to jars and pots containing food, or goods used at the *Donggung* 東宮, or the living quarters of the crown prince. The variety of food inscribed on the wooden slips includes *Goseong-hae* 高城醢 (slip no. 4), salt-fermented ray (*gahwaeo-hae* 加火魚醢; slip no. 35), salt-fermented venison (*nok-hae* 鹿醢; slip no. 14), *gyeonojang* 豸五藏 (slip no. 13), salted ray (*gahwaeo-josa* 加火魚助史; slip no. 7), *jeo[su]-josa* 猪[水]助史 (slips no. 22, 25, and 26), salted roe meat (*jang-josa* 獐助史; slip no. 36), *saengpo* 生蛸 (slip no. 9), and 汲上汁 (slip no. 15). Here, “*hae*” 醢 denotes salt-fermented food; *jeup* 汁 denotes juice or sap; and *josa* 助史 is a transliteration of *jeotgal*, meaning salted meat or seafood products (Hashimoto 2007). *Saengpo* indicates abalone, and “豸” indicates either hog (豕), dog (犬) or cattle (牛) (Lee Yong-hyeon 2007a).²² *Goseong-hae* indicates salt-fermented food (*sikhae* 食醢) made in Goseong, Gangwon Province, that was provided to the palace as a tributary item. The majority

22. In addition, some have perceived “豸” as the vernacular script of “貂” (sable) or as denoting sable skin (Yun Seon-tae 2000).

of the inscriptions read “[A specific] *sikhae* or *jeotgal* made on [year/month/day],” and they include indications regarding the container type and quantity. Based on these wooden slip labels, one can learn much about the eighth-century culinary culture within the living quarters of the Silla crown prince.

Among the wooden slips discovered from Anapji, some are related to the administrative agencies of the *Donggung*. For instance, wooden slips no. 4 and 10, along with other wooden slips that were not introduced in the *Hanguk mokgan jajeon*, include the name “*Setaek*” 洗宅.²³ In addition, the name “*Buksang*” 北廂 appears at the bottom of the front side of wooden slip no. 2 (Hashimoto 2007). The *Setaek* was an administrative office affiliated directly with the king or the *Donggung* that was in charge of attendants and literary works. The term *Buksang* is believed to be associated with the *Buksangjeon* 北廂典, an office affiliated with the *Donggung*. However, its characteristics by and large remain unknown. Some of the wooden slips include inscriptions which appear to be “*sinsim*” 辛審 or “*sinbeon*” 辛番 (wooden slips no. 4 and 34). Here, several scenarios have been suggested. For instance, while some have interpreted it as *sinsim* 辛審 and explained that it referred to the mountain god (山神) (Go 1993), others claimed that it actually denoted a position within the *Donggung* and referred to the person in charge of newly harvested items that were to be used as part of the sacrifice for the ritual ceremony for the sea god (Yun Seon-tae 2000). Recently, this term has been interpreted as “*sinbeon*” 辛番, with a link made to the shiftwork system of the capital (*beonsang jedo* 番上制度) (Hashimoto 2007). Up until this point, the exact meaning of “辛” remains unknown, and the identity of “審” (or “番”) is unclear. To this end, a more detailed review should be conducted in the future.

Wooden slip no. 5, also known as *munho mokgan* 門號木簡 (wooden slips inscribed with palace gate names), has received the most attention amongst the various wooden slips discovered at Anapji.²⁴ Its usage is estimated to be for the placement and inspection of the guards assigned to various palace gates and later receipt of the guards’ meals (Yun Seon-

23. 洗宅日之 二典前四 □ 子頭身沐浴 □ □ 木松箇 / 十一月廿七日典 □ 思林 / □ 迎 □ 入日 □ □ .

24. 隅宮北門迺 阿 □ / 才者在 同宮西門迺 元方在 / 馬叱下在 / 東門迺 三毛在 開義門迺 小巴乞在 / 金者在.

tae 2006). Meanwhile, wooden slip no. 27 is known to be a tag that was attached to the keys of the *Chaeksamun* 策事門 and *Sayeokmun* 思易門, which appear to be the gates of the *Donggung* (Yun Seon-tae 2006). Wooden slips no. 5 and 27 provide important clues with which to analyze the placements of the buildings in the crown prince's court during the eighth century. Meanwhile, wooden slip no. 21 was attached to the tributary goods related to an animal (豕) from a local area to the crown prince's court. Wooden slip no. 22 is a document slip that is related to the acceptance of goods, including animal glue. For its part, wooden slip no. 11 is a document on which the various rugs (郎席) and spoons (細次杔, 法次杔) that were used at the palace are recorded. Wooden slip no. 16 is apparently a medical prescription that lists herbs for medicine and their quantities. The remaining slips were either used for writing practice or are illegible.

In Hwangnam-dong, Gyeongju, three wooden slips related to warehouses, such as *Hagyeong* 下椋 and *Junggyeong* 仲椋, were discovered. At the presumed site of Inyongsa temple, a wooden slip with an inscription recounting that So-gwi Gong 所貴公 and Kim Hu Gong 金候公 conducted a ritual ceremony for the dragon king by a well was discovered (Lee Jae-hwan 2011). Moreover, a wooden slip inscribed with a poem was discovered at the site of the Gyeongju National Museum. The claim that the poem inscribed on the slip is a *hyangga* had the effect of drawing the attention of scholars of Korean linguistics (Lee Seung-jae 2012).

Wooden slips discovered in areas other than Gyeongju include the seven discovered at Iseong Fortress in Hanam, the four unearthed from the lotus pond at Hawang Fortress in Changnyeong, and the two discovered at the Mireuksa temple site in Iksan. Of the various wooden slips discovered at Iseong Fortress, only wooden slip no. 1 is to some extent legible. This is an administrative document which states that the dosa of Namhanseong (南漢城道使) had conveyed something to the dosa chonju of Suseong (須城道使村主) on the 12th day of the first month in the year of *mujin* 戊辰 (608). This wooden slip provides important information that can add substance and specificity to the study of the local administrative system during the early seventh century (Ju 1991; Lee Gyeong-seop 2011a). Wooden slip no. 1, retrieved from the lotus pond at Hawang Fortress in Changnyeong, shows a human figure with nails or nail marks in the wood over parts of its body specifically over an eye and the heart. Various opinions have been raised in

regard to its discovery. Some scholars have argued that the figure was related to a ritual ceremony intended to invoke the blessing of the the lotus pond deity for ensuring political stability, prosperity, a cure for a disease or for the birth of a son (Kim Chang-seok 2010). Others believe that it was in fact related to a ritual for rain (Kim Jae-hong 2009). The inscriptions on the two wooden slips discovered at the Mireuksa temple site in Iksan are too illegible to shed light on their purpose and character.

Conclusion

This study has reviewed and synthesized the current state of research on the extant Korean ancient wooden slips, and has also discussed research trends on the interpretation of their contents. While the majority of Baekje wooden slips fall under the category of document slips, some wooden slip labels were also identified. At Seongsan Fortress in Haman, over 200 wooden slips listing supplies were discovered. While the majority of the wooden slips excavated from the Wolseong moat in Gyeongju were used as documents, some of them served as labels. The majority of the wooden slips discovered in the Anapji in Gyeongju were affixed to goods. Based on the items discovered to date, we can conclude that until the end of the Three Kingdoms period wooden slips were widely used, not only to serve the purpose of labelling and listing supplies but also as documents. The widespread introduction of paper documents during the Unified Silla period led to a significant decline in the use of wooden slips for documentation purposes, while wooden slip labels attached to goods still continued to be in use. This line of interpretation is expected to remain largely unchanged, even if additional wooden slips are discovered in the future.

Wooden slips are expected to be found continuously in the near future in many places, including the Seongsan Fortress in Haman. Future discovery of new wooden slips and advances in deciphering inscriptions on existing pieces, currently regarded as incomprehensible or illegible, should lead to the further enhancement of our understanding of ancient Korean history. The most important task in the study of wooden slips is that of correctly deciphering inscriptions. Since this task has not been performed with meticulous care nor in a systematic way, the importance of developing

more careful and cautious approaches in studying such wooden slips cannot be overemphasized. On the other hand, historical research has always to some extent involved a process of trial and error before the truth is revealed. That being the case, research on wooden slips cannot be expected to advance as long as researchers remain wary of taking certain gambles. It is through such trial and error that the study of ancient Korean wooden slips can be greatly advanced and a more profound and balanced understanding of Korean ancient history established. If the ancient Korean wooden slips are studied not only from interpretive angles of historical studies but also from the perspectives of linguistics and other disciplines, our understanding of these invaluable historical documents can assume new range and richness.

Translated by
Young-ki and Michael Bujold, Somang Translation

Table 1. Existing Finds of Ancient Wooden Slips in Korea

Excavation site	Prod. period of the wooden slip(s)	2004	2006	2011	Remarks
Tomb no. 116 (Chaebyeopchong), Namjeong-ri, Pyongyang	Lelang, late 2 C -early 3 CCE				1 (found in 1931)
Tomb no. 3 Jeongbaek-dong, Pyongyang	Lelang, late 1 CCE BCE				3 (found in 1963)
Tomb no. 1, Nangnang-dong, Pyongyang	Lelang, early 1 CCE				6 (found in 1981~1984)
Tomb no. 364, Jeongbaek-dong, Pyongyang	Lelang, 45 BCE				3 household statistics documents (戶口簿), 110 bamboo slips of the <i>Lun Yu</i> 論語
Neungsan-ri temple site, Buyeo	Baekje, 6-7 CCE	20	20	28	27 slips + 40 fragments
Gwanbuk-ri, Buyeo	Baekje, 7 CCE	10	10	8	
Gungnamji, Buyeo	Baekje, 7 CCE	3	3	3	
Ssangbuk-ri, Buyeo	Baekje, 7 CCE	2	2	19	
Gua-ri, Buyeo	Baekje, 7 CCE			13	
Dongnam-ri, Buyeo	Unified Silla?			1	
Baengnyeong Fortress, Geumsan	Baekje			1	
Bogam-ri, Naju	Baekje, 7 CCE			41	
Mireuksa temple site, Iksan	Unified Silla?	2	2	2	
Moat of Wolseong, Gyeongju	Silla, 6-7 CCE	29	29	31	
Anapji, Gyeongju	Unified Silla, 8 CCE	69	69	49	
Alleged Inyongsa temple site, Gyeongju	Unified Silla			1	
Gyeongju National Museum site	Unified Silla	2	2	2	

Excavation site	Prod. period of the wooden slip(s)	2004	2006	2011	Remarks
Hwangboksa temple site, Gyeongju	Unified Silla, 706 CE	?			numerous bamboo frag. with sutra manuscripts
Hwangnam-dong, Gyeongju	Unified Silla	3	3	3	
Gyeyang Fortress, Incheon	Baekje or Unified Silla		1	2	<i>Lun Yu</i> 論語
Bonghwangdae, Gimhae	Unified Silla	1	1	1	<i>Lun Yu</i> 論語
Iseong Fortress, Hanam	Silla, 6-7 CCE	13	13	7	
Hwawang Fortress, Changnyeong	Unified Silla		3	4	
Bangu-dong, Ulsan	Unified Silla or Goryeo			1	
Seongsan Fortress, Haman	Silla, ca. 561 CE	94	94	224	
Total		248	252	441	441 slips + approx. 120 Lelang slips + 40 frag. + α (from the Hwangboksa temple site)

Note: The wooden slips found blank were excluded from these statistics. For reference purposes, the survey of wooden slips in 2004, 2006 and 2011 was summarized based, respectively, on the wooden slips introduced in: "Table: The Current Excavations of Korean Ancient Wooden Slips (as of April, 2004)" in *Ancient Wooden Slips of Korea*, ed. CNRICH (Changwon: Yemaek, 2004), 359; "Table 1: The Current Excavations of Korean Ancient Wooden Slips (as of January, 2006)" in the revised edition of *Ancient Wooden Slips of Korea* (Changwon: Yemaek, 2006), 19; and *Hanguk mokgan jajeon*, ed. GNRICH (Changwon: Yemaek, 2011). Meanwhile, the statistics of the wooden slips excavated from the Neungsan-ri temple site in Buyeo mentioned in the remarks column was based on the 27 wooden slips and 40 wooden fragments introduced in the exhibition catalogue edited by BNM and GNRICH, *Neungsan-ri saji: Baekje jungheung eul kkumkkuda* (Buyeo: Yemaek, 2009) 119-141.

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Jeon Deog-jae (ms8794@chollian.net) is a professor of Dankook University History Department, Director of Research at the Society for Korean Ancient History, and a member of the Korean Society for the Study of Wooden Documents. His works include *Silla yukbu cheje yeongu* [A Study on the Structure of the Six-bu of Silla] (Iljogak, 1996), *Hanguk godae sahoe gyeongjesa* [The Economic and Social History of Ancient Korea] (Taehaksa, 2006) and *Silla wanggyeong ui yeoksa* [History of the Capital of Silla] (Saemunsa, 2009).

Abstract

This study analyzes the current state of the Korean ancient wooden slips that have been discovered by 2011 and conducts a summary of the overarching research trends. All in all, some 120 Lelang wooden slips, 150 Baekje wooden slips and shavings, and 330 Silla wooden slips have to date been uncovered. Up until the Three Kingdoms period, wooden slips were widely used, not only for labeling and listing purposes but also as a means of documentation. The widespread use of paper documents during Unified Silla coincided with a significant decline in the use of wooden slips for documentation purposes, with such resources increasingly being used mainly as labels attached to goods. Research on wooden slips has contributed to furthering scholars' understanding of the ancient document administration system, the ruling structure in the central and local areas, the tax and socio-economic systems, and the everyday lifestyle of ancient people. In this regard, the continued excavation of wooden slips and advent of new interpretations of existing wooden slips is expected to further invigorate the practice of Korean ancient history based on such wooden slips.

Keywords: *Jiyaga sikmigi*, *Jwagwan daesikgi*, wooden slips from Seongsan Fortress, document slips, label tags (*hachal mokgan*)

