

**Undercurrents of Go'joseon
Research Reflected in the Diaries:
With a Focus on Gu Jiegang's
Diary (顧頡剛日記) and
An Zhimin's Diary (安志敏日記)**

In Uk KANG
Kyung Hee University

The Journal of Northeast Asian History

Volume 18 Number 2 (Summer 2022), 179-192

Copyright © 2022 by the Northeast Asian History Foundation. All Rights Reserved.

*No portion of the contents may be reproduced in any form without
written permission of the Northeast Asian History Foundation.*

Undercurrents of Go'joseon Research Reflected in the Diaries: With a Focus on Gu Jiegang's Diary (顧頡剛日記) and An Zhimin's Diary (安志敏日記)

In Uk KANG
Kyung Hee University

Introduction

In North Korea, research on Go'joseon, traditionally regarded as the first state in Korean history, began with Li Ji-lin's study and with the formation of the North Korea-China Archaeological Excavation Team^{1*} in the 1960s. The field research, which had a significant impact not only on North Korea but also on South Korea and Russia, left no detailed information other than officially published material. The work of Yuri Mikhailovich Butin's work also had a decisive influence on the study of Go'joseon in the socialist bloc including the Soviet Union. The argument that Go'joseon's location was in Liaoning has been at the center of controversy in South Korea since the 1980s.

Two incidents marked the milestone of Go'joseon's study in the 1960s. The first event started with Li Ji-lin's publication of *Study of Go'joseon* at Peking University. Then from 1963 to 1965, North Korea and

* This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2019S1A5C2A01083578)

¹ This refers to the joint investigation team of North Korea and China that excavated and investigated Go'joseon and Balhae in Manchuria from 1963 to 1965.

the People's Republic of China (PRC) jointly excavated the archaeological sites related to Go'joseon in Manchuria. Both North Korea and the PRC, however, feared that the joint research on Go'joseon would directly lead to bilateral territorial disputes. They hurriedly ended the excavation project after a major tension. North Korea unilaterally publicized the results in 1966, which had a great influence on South Korea's Go'joseon research. On the other hand, the PRC only published a report in 1996 under the title of *Shuangtuozi and Gangshang* (雙砬子與崗上) without mentioning the joint excavation project with North Korea.

No primary source is known to exist on the activities of Li Ji-lin and the North Korea-China Archaeological Excavation Team despite its importance in determining the directions of Go'joseon research. Fortunately, some helpful materials on the activities of North Korean scholars in the 1960s were recently released in the PRC. First, there is the diary of Gu Jiegang (顧頡剛, 1893-1980), who mentored Li Ji-lin, the first Korean who studied at the Peking University for about three and a half years from March 1958 to September 1961. This is Gu's lifelong diary, the *Gu Jiegang riji* (顧頡剛日記), and the Complete *Gu Jiegang Collection* (顧頡剛全集) consisted of several research notes. The South Korean academia showed great interest in Li's Go'joseon research as described in Gu's diary. Moreover, in 2020, *An Zhimin's Diary* (安志敏日記), or a collection of the diary of the archaeologist An Zhimin (安志敏, 1924-2005) was published. An was in charge of excavating Go'joseon relics at the excavation team. An's diary provides details that reveal the excavation situation experienced by the person in charge of the joint excavation team. It covers the contents of the excavation conducted after Li Ji-lin's study abroad at Peking University.

These diaries contain the sources rarely studied in the historiography and archaeological history of Go'joseon. The materials which they include provide groundbreaking information regarding disputes related the recognition of Go'joseon. This article introduces the two diaries and examines their significance.

An Analysis of Li Ji-lin's Go'joseon Research Reflected in Gu Jiegang's Diary

The *Gu Jiegang's Diary* introduces almost all of the diaries recorded by Gu Jiegang. Most of them are about ancient Chinese history which was his main subject of study. Furthermore, the records of his family, friends, and academic life were also recorded in a plain manner. His relationship with Li Ji-lin, whom he advised as a student since 1958, can also be found in the source. The first entry on Li Ji-lin appeared in March 1958 when Li visited Gu to talk about the history of China and Korea. Since then, most of the detailed diary entries related to Li Ji-lin were included in the ninth volume of the diary. The entries from 1960 to 1961 described in detail the processes of Li bringing his Ph.D. dissertation at a time and Gu supervised it. As is well known, Li's dissertation viewed Manchuria as the territory of Gojoseon which Gu expressed his dissatisfaction immediately. On September 29, 1961, at Li Ji-lin's doctoral defense, he complained in writing that the review was practically perfunctory and that he had to pass the research without pointing out the flaws for the sake of the bilateral friendship between North Korea and the PRC.

After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, Chinese intellectuals considered the region as a sovereign territory of China. As a fervent nationalist, Gu shared such a sentiment. In other words, the conflict between North Korea and the PRC over Go'joseon began to emerge in the early 1960s and this conflict intensified as the joint excavation began in earnest after Li received a doctorate degree. As the opposition from Chinese political and academic circles against the bilateral excavation was heating up, the frustration of Gu Jiegang, who advised Li, was also increasing. The diary on July 24, 1964, showed that the conflict over ancient history was already on the verge of explosion.

The North Korean historians attempt to reclaim the land, hoping to recover their pride by referring back to the people of Go'joseon who lived in the northeastern part of our country. Li Ji-lin was one of the people on these tasks. This purpose is to demonstrate that each eth-

nic group (Sukshin / Sushen, Yemaek / Huimo, Buyeo / Fuyu, Okjeo / Woju, etc.) in the northeastern region was under the rule of Go'joseon. Therefore, the North Korean historians aim to portray the northeastern part of China as being ruled by North Korea. Now, they are going to excavate the region and prove the (North) Korean origin of Go'joseon with the relics. Our government responded generously and also our archaeologists did cooperate with them in their excavation. However, it was of no use. I understand that their deed was tied to patriotism, which still makes me indignant. (*The Gu Jiegang Diary*, Vol. 10, p. 112)

The new story behind Go'joseon research revealed in Gu Jiegang's diary is as follows. First, it is highly likely that Li Ji-lin's research on Go'joseon was not his sole research but a collaboration with historians of ancient history such as Lee Sang-ho and Lim Gun-sang. Li was already in his mid-40s when he embarked on studying abroad and his original major was Chinese philosophy. Yet as soon as he arrived in China, Li completed the table of contents of his doctoral dissertation, which was examined by Gu Jiegang page by page. Moreover, Li's doctoral research was a very impressive work that reviewed a vast number of Chinese literary sources and added archaeological materials. Therefore, it would be difficult to conclude that the research was conducted by a single individual whose expertise used to be Chinese philosophy. Even, Li had little time to translate, present, and revise most of the contents, assuming that it had already been written at home.

Second, Li Ji-lin's study of Go'josen in the PRC was the political decisions of the North Korean academia and government. According to Gu's diary The North Korean embassy, for instance, participated in Li's Ph.D. dissertation defense. Gu Jiegang also regarded Li's study abroad as a political decision. In addition, in August 1961, when Li Ji-lin was about to complete his degree, the "Go'joseon Research Discussion Forum" was held in Pyongyang. It was officially determined under the direction of North Korea's Go'joseon research. Researchers presented their views at the Forum on August 30 and three days later, on September 2, they gathered together to engage in discussions. As a result, the Liaoning Location Theory of

Go'joseon's location, based on Li Ji-lin's Ph.D. dissertation, was officially adopted. However, the diary of Gu records the unexpected activities of Li. According to the diary, Li met Gu in Beijing on September 2, the date of the Forum discussion. In Li's absence, the North Korean academia held the meetings where Baek Nam-woon, the leader of these scholars, unilaterally declared the "victory" of Li Ji-lin's theory. It proves that Li's activities were politically deliberate.

Third, Gu Jiegang did not substantially guide Li Ji-lin's research on Go'joseon. Gu's diary clearly shows that he had no interest in Go'joseon, Manchuria, or the Korean Peninsula before the coming of Li Ji-lin. All the same, he was delighted to learn some Korean history including that of the Three Kingdoms, thanks to Li. In other words, the assignment of Gu as Li's advisor in studying Go'joseon can be interpreted as a tactical decision of North Korea to rely on his authority in Chinese academia.

Fourth, there is an important difference between the contents of Li's book, *A Go'joseon Study*,² published in North Korea and his dissertation at Peking University. The book shows that he added more information on "Archeological Materials in Northeast China" to his dissertation. Along this line, we can speculate that Li actually collected archaeological data for the excavation team when he was studying at Peking University. From these facts alone, *Gu Jiegang's Diary* is an invaluable source indicating the inception of the conflict between North Korea and the PRC on Go'joseon.

Source material in the form of a diary has the advantage of helping researchers see the personal opinions of a writer. *Gu Jiegang's Diary* also does unveil national emotions triggered by the historical disputes between the two countries without any filtering.

However, historical conflict did not solely characterize the relationship between the scholars of North Korean and the PRC. There were also some accounts describing the more comfortable communication situation

² Li Ji-lin's doctoral dissertation is known to be similar to *A Go'joseon Study* published in North Korea. However, the publication's actual contents have never been made public although in the 1970 while photocopies from unknown sources were circulating as "internal data" by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Park Joon-hyung 2020).

crated by the researchers of the two states, Gu and Li in particular. It was mediated through Koryo ginseng. Around the time of his final Ph.D. defence at Peking University on September 30, Li presented Gu with the finest ginseng. Gu's liking of the ginseng is evident in many places in his diary. When he felt weary or had a sore throat, he used the ginseng for treatment. In his diary at the end of 1967, he lamented that ginseng was no longer available because of lost contact with Li. He was also unhappy with the fact that he could not travel to North Korea because his relationship with North Korea was cut off. As a non-political scholar, Gu hoped for scholarly exchanges between North Korea and the PRC. Perhaps the same sentiments were shared by North Korean scholars as well. This was Gu's last memory of Li Ji-lin. Two years later, in April 1969, the short sentence of "[P]ersonal contact with Li Ji-lin entailed the completion of the investigation report" marked the end. Gu Jiegang since then was unable to engage in academic exchanges with North Korea.

An Zhimin's Diary and Korea-China Archaeological Excavation Team

An Zhimin graduated from the Chinese University (中國大學) with a history degree and taught as an assistant professor at Yanjing University (燕京大學). He worked at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences for the rest of his life. He represented the early generation of Chinese archaeologists who led the early excavations after the founding of the PRC. Unlike other Chinese archaeologists, An Zhimin was in charge of international exchanges with the countries in East Asia as well as the West. He began his exchanges in the late 1940s when he interacted with Japanese scholars such as Torii Ryuzo (鳥居龍藏1870-1954). Under this background, An Zhimin was appointed as the director of Go'joseon division in the Korea-China Archaeological Excavation Team between 1963 and 1965. An's diary is very valuable in illuminating the situation of the joint excavation team, where the confrontation between North Korean and the PRC archaeologists over Go'joseon was intense.

In 2020, *An Zhimin's Diary* was compiled by his family after fifteen

years of his death. Unlike *Gu Jiegang's Diary*, An did not record his personal daily life. Instead, he took field notes at the excavation sites. An's diary was published thanks to his two daughters, An Jiayuan (安家媛) and An Jiayao (安家瑶, 1947-). Both are archaeologists. An Jiayao, in particular, is an ancient glassware expert who has often visited South Korea and, on the other hand, served as a State Councilor for the Chinese Communist Party of China. His diary thus can be very reliable because it was published through careful instruction by an archaeologist. However, it is regrettable that the diary section from 1966 to 1976 was deleted and published in accordance with the "method of record-keeping for major topics (重大選題備案方法)" that became available in October 2019. Therefore, An's diary has its limits in showing the domestic Chinese debates after the conclusion of the joint excavation team. Despite its limitations, the diary is an important source showing the situation pertaining to the Go'joseon research such as North Korea's attitude towards the joint excavation, China's reaction, and the subsequent bilateral conflict.

An Zhimin's diary consists of five volumes, of which the entries on the excavation team were included in the second volume. The second volume began in April 1963 and ended in August 1965. According to An's diary, the excavation began with enthusiasm. He carried out a field survey in the Liaoning and Jilin areas before the North Korean team arrived. The archaeological research in those areas was still in its infancy at that time and he organized all the data. However, the conflict began immediately after his North Korean counterparts arrived. This was because North Korea's primary goal was not to conduct archaeological research but to confirm the existence of Go'joseon. An's complaints about North Korea's efforts to find the central location of Go'joseon were spotted multiple times in his diary. Although North Korea failed to find the center of Go'joseon, it made a breakthrough to prove the existence of Go'joseon by excavating a series of stone pile tombs on the edge of Liaodong Peninsula. Most famous of them is widely known Gangshang (崗上) and Loushang (樓上).

North Korea and the PRC had many differences in excavation methods and interpretation of artifacts. They had been independently studying archaeology over a decade. They also had no prior experience with the in-

ternational joint investigation until then. In this situation, it was impossible to solve the sensitive Go'joseon issue. They failed to publish a final excavation report due to disagreements. The two countries agreed to produce an excavation report without controversial contents and to have copies of the report separately. In other words, both sides concluded that they did not approve of each other's research and the research on Go'joseon between the two countries crossed irreversible paths. Since then, North Korea and the PRC no longer discuss or study Go'joseon together.

North Korea later conducted its own research. Kim Yong-gan and Hwang Gi-deok, who led the excavation on Gangshang and Loushang, published a monumental article in 1967 which recognizes the Liaodong Peninsula and the northwestern part of North Korea as the location of Go'joseon. Since the 1970s, North Korea strengthened its cooperation with the archaeologists from Siberia under the Soviet Academy of Science instead of China. In 1974, a group of Soviet scholars, including V.E. Larichev and A.P. Okladnikov, visited North Korea. The visit of Soviet scholars led to the study of Go'joseon by Yuri Mikhailovich Butin in the 1970s.

The academic exchanges and conflicts within the socialist bloc, which used to be unknown, are gradually uncovered through the diaries of the scholars who were involved in the interactions. Yet, a large portion of the whole picture still remains unclear. Nevertheless, what has become clear is that cooperation and conflict between North Korea and the PRC over Go'joseon were not purely academic issues. Instead, the two diaries evince the fact that a series of political actions in the socialist bloc under North Korean initiatives were manifested around ancient history and archaeology.

The Significance of the Two Diaries

I have analyzed the little-known contents of the two diaries as above. This revealed the hidden aspects of ancient history research in North Korea and the PRC, which rapidly developed during the late 1950s and the mid-1960s. First, Gu Jiegang's diary shows Li Ji-lin's study in China from the late 1950s to the early 1960s and his Ph.D. research on Go'joseon. A

sense of crisis over the sovereignty of ancient history in North Korea was triggered by the publication of World History by the Soviet Union under the title of *Vsemirnaya Istoriya* in the mid-1950s. In this book, authors for Korean ancient history chapter described the beginning of Korea with the legendary movement of Kija (Qizi) to Korea in the Shang-Zhou transition period, and Leleng Prefecture of Han China without referring to Go'joseon. This eventually led to Li Ji-lin's study in Beijing.

After finishing studying abroad in 1962, Li immediately challenged Do Yu-ho's hegemony in the North Korean archaeological community. In order to validate his research, Li formed the Korea-China Archaeological Excavation Team. As shown in *An Zhimin's Diary*, North Korea and the PRC experienced a serious yet unacknowledged discord with each other and Li Ji-lin eventually stepped down from the front line. From the second year of research in 1964, more archaeological efforts were put to prove the existence of Go'joseon through the excavation of stone pile tombs like Gangshang and Loushang in Dalian. The North Korean scholars claimed that these tombs were made with sacrificed burials. All this research led to define the ancient kingdom as a slave society. Since then, the stone-filled tomb in the Dalian region has become key relics in North Korea's Go'joseon research. On the other hand, China saw the excavation as an opportunity to lay the archaeological foundation in its northeastern region. It was China's first and last large-scale international joint excavation. Starting with the excavation, the PRC's perspective towards the peripheral region shifted from the history of diverse ethnic groups to the expansion of a Han-centric order. In this regard, it is no exaggeration to say that the PRC's doctrine on the Northeast Asia Project(동북공정, 東北工程) has begun from their reaction to its tension with North Korea over Go'joseon six years ago. For both North Korea and the PRC, the joint excavation was not a minor incident that was forgotten or simply ended in a quarrel. Rather, it was the prelude to the unfolding disputes over ancient history between North Korea and the PRC along with the undercurrents of Go'joseon research. These two diaries are the main material helping us to comprehend the hidden dynamics in understanding the history of East Asian archaeology.

Conclusion

From the end of the Korean War until the early 1970s, the PRC experienced the tumultuous history of the Cultural Revolution whereas North Korea established the Juche [Self-Reliance] Ideology. During the same period, the two countries established a chronological system for ancient history and archaeology. Since the 1990s, the Go'joseon research in South Korea has been based on their research results. However, the details of Go'joseon's research in North Korea and the PRC were not known. The two socialist countries soon began to experience conflict as nationalist views of history were spreading rapidly. After eight years of joint study from 1958 to 1965, North Korea and the PRC stopped exchanging views on Go'joseon and Goguryeo. The diaries of Gu Jiegang and An Zhimin reveal the vivid voices of the Chinese side during the eight-year collaborative period. As with all diaries, the two diaries can never be considered complete in regard to data. They are an one-sided record on the part of the PRC with many parts still missing. We can never claim that the entire situation can be grasped with these personal records. Nevertheless, they are significant in providing an important clue that conveys the undercurrents of ancient East Asian history by filling the void of information. As ancient history lacks historical data, scholars' methods and historical views inevitably influence the interpretation of archaeological materials. Archaeology can be a field that best reflects the political and social reality of the time as compared to other disciplines. That is why contemporary materials such as the diaries of Gu Jiegang and An Zhimin should be more academically read and analyzed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In Korean

- Jo Beop-jong. "Relationship between Li Ji-lin's Research of Go'joseon and Beijing University Professor." *Silla Culture* 48: 1-28, 2016.
- Kang In Uk. "Reexamination of role and significance of Lee Ji-Rin's study on Old Joseon and Korea-Chinese joint excavation on North-Eastern Part of China in 1963~1965 years." *Prehistory and Antiquity* 45: 29-58, 2015.
- Kim Yong-gan and Hwang Gi-deok, "Go'joseon Culture in the First Half of the Millennium BC." *Ancient Ethology*: 1-17, 1967.
- Korea-China Archaeological Excavation Team, ed. *A Report on the Excavation of Historic Places in Northeast China*. Pyongyang: Press of the Academy of Social Sciences, 1966.
- Park Joon-hyung. "The Discovery and Review of Li Ji-lin's Ph.D. dissertation [古朝鮮の研究] at Beijing University." *Prehistoric and Ancient Periods* 62: 5-34, 2020.
- Song Ho-jeong. "Li Ji-lin's Research on Go'joseon and Its Influence." *History of Culture* 44: 279-304, 2015.

In Chinese

- 顧頡剛. 『顧頡剛日記第9卷(1960~1963)』. 臺灣聯聯經經公司, 2011.
- 安家瑤, 安家媛. 「考古人生 緬懷父親安志敏先生」. 『大眾考古』 7, 2014.
- 安志敏, 鄭乃武. 「內蒙古寧城縣南山根 102 號石槨墓」. 『考古』 4, 1981.
- 安志敏, 鄭乃武. 「瀋陽肇工街和鄭家窪子遺址的發掘」. 『考古』 10, 1989.
- 安志敏. 論環渤海的史前文化—兼評“區系”觀點. 『考古』 7, 1993.
- 安志敏. 『安志敏日記(全五冊)』. 社會科學文獻出版社, 2020.
- 中國社科院考古研究所. 『雙砣子與崗上』. 考古學專刊丁種第四十九號, 科學出版社, 1996.
- 夏鼐. 『夏鼐日記-夏鼐考古筆記(共十冊)』. 華東師範大學出版社, 2011.

In English

Kang In Uk. “An Unique Travel of Russian Archaeologist to the Nation of Morning Freshness-A Book Review on *An Archaeologist’s Travel to the Nation of Morning Freshness* by Vitali Epifanovich Larichev, Novosirsk, Novosibirsk, Russia, 2012.” *Localities* 3: 227-231, 2013.