



A Reconsideration of the Goguryeo Capital System

Sieun YANG

Abstract

This article examines how the general notion came to be established that Goguryeo, since its foundation, had a dual capital system of a mountain fortress and a flatland fortress, and critically reexamines this idea based on recent archaeological research. The discussion on Goguryeo's capital system began with Sekino Tadashi's 1914 study, which was based on his research experience in Pyongyang and the records of the Book of Zhou. Sekino claimed that the Goguryeo capital of Gungnae was also composed of a flatland fortress and an emergency mountain fortress, which was based on the Pyongyang capital consisting of a royal palace with a mountain fortress to its rear. Sekino's claim had a significant impact on South Korean academic circles via North Korea and China. However, after the excavation of Goguryeo capital sites, it was revealed that much of the evidence supporting the dual-capital theory was not valid. This article offers a detailed review of the structure of Goguryeo's capital city based on current archaeological data and the scholarly literature.

Keywords: Goguryeo, capital system, Jolbon, Gungnae, Pyongyang, Tadashi Sekino

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2021S1A5A2A03062185).

Sieun YANG is a professor at Chungbuk National University. E-mail: sieun75@cbnu.ac.kr.

Introduction

According to the 11th-century *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms), Jumong founded Goguryeo at Jolbon 卒本. In the 22nd year of King Yuri (3 CE), the capital was then moved to Gungnae Fortress 國內城. Later, in the 15th year of King Jangsu (427), the capital was relocated to Pyongyang 平壤. It was transferred again to Jang'an Fortress 長安城, Pyongyang in the 28th year of King Pyeongwon (586), but the kingdom fell in the 27th year of King Bojang (668). Although there are more recorded instances of Goguryeo capital relocations and debates about their dating, Goguryeo history is generally categorized into the Jolbon, Gungnae, and Pyongyang periods based on the location of its royal capital.

Archaeological research on Goguryeo's capitals began in the early 20th century by Japanese researchers. Particularly notable were Torii Ryūzō, who conducted investigations in various fields such as anthropology, folklore, and archaeology across East Asia, and Sekino Tadashi, who led ancient site surveys on the Korean Peninsula starting in 1909 (Yang 2009, 158–162). The Ji'an region of China, location of the Gwanggaeto Stele, Taewang Tomb, and General Tomb, and the Pyongyang region of North Korea, location of numerous Goguryeo mural tombs such as the Kangseo Three Tombs, garnered early attention as the sites of Goguryeo's Gungnae Fortress and Pyongyang Fortress, respectively.

The idea that Goguryeo's capital cities consisted of both plains fortresses and mountain fortresses also began at this time. This belief has significantly influenced contemporary academic circles in North Korea, China, and South Korea. This article aims to critically review existing theories on the Goguryeo capital system, based on recent archaeological findings and research.

A Review of the Formation of the Conventional Understanding of the Goguryeo Capital System

Ancient Chinese capitals typically consisted of an inner city that enclosed and protected the palace where the emperor or king resided, and an outer

city that enclosed the residential areas, forming a large walled city with a rectangular plan. These capitals were primarily plains cities enclosed by rammed earthen walls.

However, in Goguryeo, characterized by its mountainous terrain and deep valleys, there was a significant difference from Chinese capitals. Until the mid-period, Goguryeo cities did not feature large enclosing walls; only royal fortress existed within the capital. It was not until the late 6th century, with the relocation of the capital to Jang'an Fortress in Pyongyang in present-day North Korea, that Goguryeo began to include an outer city wall encircling the urban area.

The Goguryeo capital system has been a central topic of discussion since the early 20th century, with a prevailing perception in academia that plains fortresses and mountain fortresses were operated as a dual system from the early stages of Goguryeo's establishment. The fundamental discussion regarding the Goguryeo capital system begins with the description of Pyongyang Fortress in the *Zhoushu* 周書 (Book of Zhou), which records the history of Northern Zhou in the mid-6th century. It states of the Goguryeo capital, "The administrative center is Pyongyang Fortress. The fortress is 6 *li* 里 from east to west and reaches the Pae River 溟水 to the south. Within the fortress, only military provisions and weapons are stored and when the enemy invades, everyone enters and defends it securely. The king built a separate residence nearby but does not always stay there."¹ This record is pointed to as crucial evidence of the dual structure of Goguryeo's capital, consisting of a plains fortress for daily use and a mountain fortress for defense in emergencies.

However, this belief about the Goguryeo capital system is not based on archaeological evidence regarding the construction and utilization of individual royal fortress sites. Instead, it has been simplistically fitted into a fixed framework of plains fortresses and defensive mountain fortresses, without considering the timing and context of these fortresses' preservation into later periods (Yang 2021, 62).

1. *Zhoushou* (Book of Zhou), *Yiyu liezhuan* 異域列傳 (Biographies of Foreign Lands), "Goguryeo" 高句麗.

Origins of Archaeological Discussions: Japanese Colonial Period

Discussions on the Goguryeo capital system intensified during the Japanese colonial period, with a particularly significant debate emerging in the 1914 issue of the journal *Shigaku zasshi* 史學雜誌 published by the Historical Society of Tokyo Imperial University.

Torii Ryūzō and Sekino Tadashi, following their field investigations of Goguryeo sites, presented conflicting views on the Goguryeo capital during their academic lectures. Shiratori Kurakichi, head of the Historical and Geographical Survey Department of the South Manchuria Railway Company, subsequently engaged in a scholarly dialogue with them through *Shigaku zasshi* (Shiratori 1914).

Shiratori concurred with Torii's placement of Hwando Fortress 丸都城 in Ji'an 集安 and Sekino's identification of Gungnae Fortress, Goguryeo's second capital, as being in the same region. He thus rejected the notion that these fortresses were in separate locations. Additionally, Shiratori speculated that Jolbon was situated in the Hun River 渾江 basin and equated Heulseunggol Fortress 紇升骨城, Goguryeo's founding site, with Wunü Mountain Fortress 五女山城 in Huanren 桓仁.

Torii fortified his argument by citing the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms), which mentioned Guanqiu Jian's 毌丘儉 capture of Hwando Fortress in 244 and his subsequent erection of a commemorative stele. Torii linked this stele, discovered in Ji'an in 1906, to Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress 山城子山城, solidifying his identification of the latter as Hwando Fortress (Torii 1914).

Following his own investigations in Ji'an in 1913, Sekino contended that the abundance of Goguryeo relics, including the stele of King Gwanggaeto, conclusively established Ji'an as the site of Gungnae Fortress. Drawing on his archaeological experiences in Pyongyang and referencing the *Zhoushu*, he also posited that Goguryeo's Pyongyang capital consisted of a plains fortress (Anhak Palace) housing the royal palace and a mountain fortress (Daeseong Mountain Fortress) serving as a defensive stronghold. Therefore, he inferred that the Gungnae capital similarly comprised a plains fortress, Gungnae Fortress, and a mountain fortress, Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress utilized

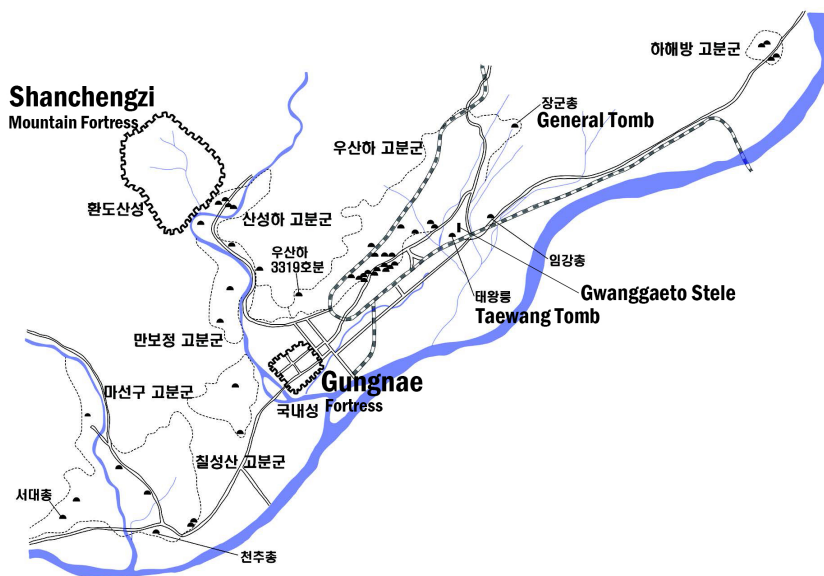


Figure 1. Goguryeo capital sites in Ji'an (Gungnae)

Source: H. Kang, et al. (2020, 146).

in times of enemy invasion (Sekino 1914).

The debates of 1914 significantly influenced subsequent research on Goguryeo's capital systems. Torii's identification of Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress as Hwando Fortress, Shiratori's determination that both Hwando Fortress and Gungnae Fortress were located in the present-day Ji'an area, and Sekino's conceptualization of Goguryeo's capitals as a combination of plains fortresses and mountain fortresses, have all been widely accepted (Ki 2017, 8).

However, it is important to note that Sekino's assertions at the time, although explained in conjunction with archaeological survey results and historical records, were not based on extensive excavation of individual sites in either the Ji'an or Pyongyang areas.

Research on the Pyongyang capital system only began to advance in the late 1920s. Sekino elaborated on his earlier theory that Goguryeo's

Pyongyang capital consisted of both plains and mountain fortresses. However, due to the discovery of late-period Goguryeo roof tiles at Anhak Palace and early-period lotus-patterned tiles, similar to those found at Daeseong Mountain Fortress, at Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress, Sekino revised his earlier claims. He later argued that the early Pyongyang capital likely comprised Daeseong Mountain Fortress and Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress, rather than Anhak Palace (Sekino 1928).

Excavations of the Pyongyang capital sites commenced in the mid-1930s. Koizumi Akio, director of the Pyongyang Municipal Museum, investigated present-day Pyongyang Fortress in 1935 and 1936, and in 1938 and 1939, he conducted investigations at Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress with Yoneda Miyoji.

During the investigation of the inner fortress of Pyongyang Fortress in 1938, a gateway site and large building foundations from the Goguryeo period were discovered. And at the investigation of the central area of Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress, presumed to be the site of the early Pyongyang capital's royal palace, structures indicative of a Buddhist temple, including an octagonal pagoda and a central hall, were discovered. Koizumi identified these remains as Geumgang Temple, founded in 498 (Koizumi 1940). This discovery has since been a crucial piece of evidence against the notion that Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress could have been Goguryeo's royal fortress.

Formation of the Conventional Theory

1) North Korean Academic Research on the Early Pyongyang Capital

Following Korea's liberation from Japan and subsequent national division, North Korea led the research and investigation into Goguryeo royal fortresses in Pyongyang.

Hwang O identified the present-day Pyongyang Fortress as Jang'an Fortress (late Pyongyang Fortress) based on inscribed fortress stones found along the Daedong River. He hypothesized that the core of the early Pyongyang capital was Daeseong Mountain Fortress, with Anhak Palace,

located below the mountain fortress, serving as the palace fortress. Despite the recovery of late-period Goguryeo roof-end tiles from Anhak Palace, Hwang argued that without excavations one could not conclude that Anhak Palace belonged exclusively to the late Goguryeo period (Hwang 1949).

Chae Hee-guk also considered Daeseong Mountain Fortress the most critical defensive structure of the early Pyongyang capital, proposing that Anhak Palace was the royal palace and Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress was the political and religious center (Chae 1957).

The understanding within North Korean academia that the early Pyongyang capital consisted of a mountain fortress and a palace fortress persisted even after extensive excavations of Daeseong Mountain Fortress and Anhak Palace between 1958 and 1961. In *The Study on Goguryeo Sites around Daeseong Mountain* (Excavation Report No. 9, 1964), Chae concluded that Anhak Palace was constructed between the late 4th and early 5th centuries, based on roof-end tiles patterns and pottery (Chae 1964).

However, Chae's claims lack sufficient archaeological evidence, as indicated by Yang Sieun's re-examination of the roof-end tiles and pottery from Anhak Palace (Yang 2021, 68–69). The roof-end tiles that served as the basis for determining the construction period of Anhak Palace show several differences compared to those excavated from Daeseong Mountain Fortress. The lotus-patterned roof-end tiles from Daeseong Mountain Fortress are similar in motif and basic structure to those excavated from the Taewang Tomb and the General Tomb in Ji'an, suggesting they were made before the relocation to Pyongyang. In contrast, the lotus-patterned roof-end tiles from Anhak Palace are characterized by a grayish-blue color, larger size, more voluminous lotus petals, small circular protrusions around the edges, and semi-circular grooves at the bottom of the tile's inner surface. These features distinguish them from the reddish-brown lotus-patterned roof-end tiles of the later Goguryeo period found in the Pyongyang area. Additionally, the pottery excavated from Anhak Palace differs in various aspects from later Goguryeo pottery, including the shape and color of the rim, hardness, and the presence of widespread paddle impressions on the surface.

If Anhak Palace's construction date cannot be placed before the relocation of the capital to Pyongyang in 427, the assertion that the structure

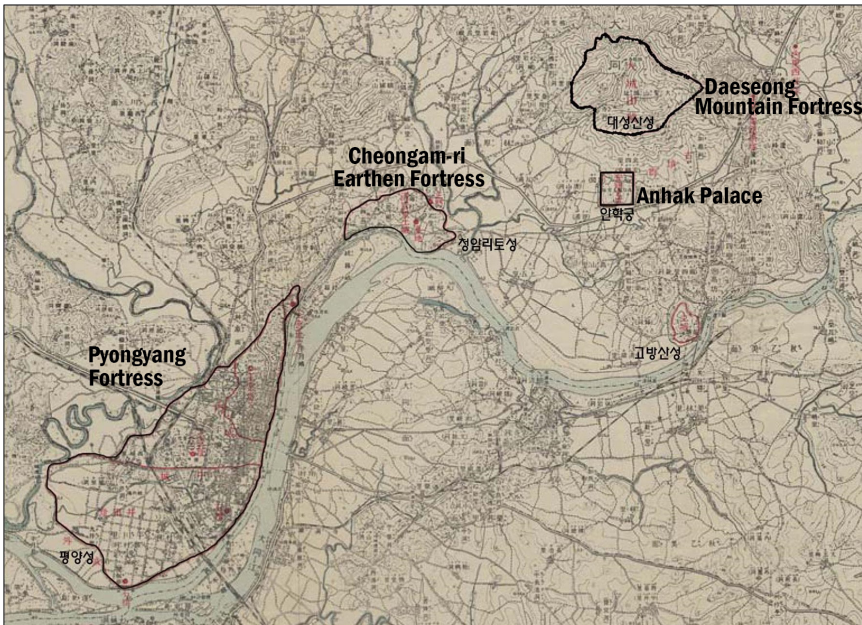


Figure 2. Map of Goguryeo capital sites in Pyongyang

Source: Chosen sotokufu (1929, 110).

mentioned in the *Zhoushu* as being beside Pyongyang Fortress is Anhak Palace becomes untenable. Nonetheless, North Korea continues to maintain that the unique structure, roof tiles, and pottery with later elements found at Anhak Palace are indicative of its status as the royal palace of a powerful Goguryeo.

Due to the firm stance of North Korean scholars on the early Pyongyang capital, investigations and research into Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress, one of the candidate sites for Goguryeo's royal fortress during the Japanese colonial period, did not receive much attention. It was not until the mid-1990s that partial excavations of Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress were conducted. However, these investigations were influenced by the newly proposed Daedong River Culture Theory, emphasizing the cultural continuity from Gojoseon to Goguryeo, rather than focusing on Goguryeo's royal fortresses.

In the western section of the earthen fortressb, a building with murals was discovered, marking the only known example of murals in Goguryeo a building (Nam and Kim 1998). Additionally, numerous roof tiles from the early to late Goguryeo periods were found at the fortress. The presence of mural architecture within the fortress, along with lotus-patterned tiles from the Gungnae Fortress period, similar to those found at Daeseong Mountain Fortress, suggests that Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress played a significant role alongside Daeseong Mountain Fortress before the capital moved to Pyongyang. Nevertheless, North Korea still maintains its original stance that the early Pyongyang capital consisted of Daeseong Mountain Fortress and Anhak Palace until the capital moved to Jang'an Fortress (the late Pyongyang capital) in 586.

2) Chinese Academic Research on the Jolbon and Gungnae Capitals

Compared to North Korea, China began its research on the Jolbon and Gungnae capitals much later, in the 1980s. Extensive excavation of Goguryeo royal sites in China did not occur until around the 2000s, coinciding with efforts to have these sites inscribed as World Heritage.

Wei Cuncheng identified the combination of mountain fortress and plains fortress as a distinctive feature of Goguryeo capitals. He proposed that the early capital (Jolbon) consisted of Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress 下古城子土城 and Wunü Mountain Fortress in Huanren, while the mid-period capital (Gungnae) was composed of Gungnae Fortress and Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress in Ji'an (Wei 1985).

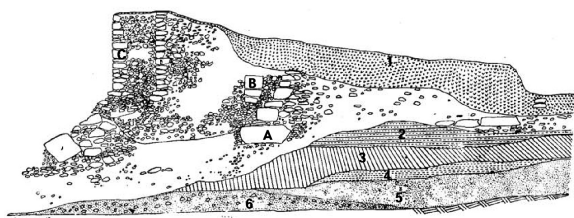
Wei argued that due to the inconvenient living conditions and limited space of Wunü Mountain Fortress, another plains base was necessary. He suggested that Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress on the Hun River served this purpose, hypothesizing that Goguryeo initially reused a Han dynasty fortress as it did not have a tradition of building earthen fortresses in the early days.

Wei also contended that the area of Ji'an, with its large-scale Goguryeo royal tombs and Gwanggaeto Stele, had to be the mid-period capital. He identified Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress as Weinaam Fortress 尉那巖

城 and Hwando Fortress, suggesting that Weinaam Fortress was its earlier name, and it was elevated to Hwando Fortress when it became a temporary royal capital in 209 during the reign of King Sansang. Additionally, based on traces of earthen walls discovered beneath the stone walls during a 1970s excavation of Gungnae Fortress, Wei speculated that when Goguryeo moved its capital to Gungnae in 3 CE, they initially used a Han dynasty fortress. He believed that after Hwando Fortress was destroyed by Guanqiu Jian in the mid-3rd century, Gungnae Fortress was rebuilt with stone walls.

Wei's interpretation, aligning archaeological findings with historical records as closely as possible, became widely accepted among Chinese researchers and formed the conventional theory.

However, recent re-examinations of the construction dates of Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress and Gungnae Fortress have challenged Wei's key assertions. The 1998 trial excavation at Xiaguchengzi Fortress uncovered early Goguryeo pottery shards predating the earthen walls, revealing that the fortress was built by Goguryeo, not the Han (Yang 2013, 23). Moreover, excavations in the early 2000s of the northern wall of Gungnae Fortress found no traces of a Han-period fortress, showing that the stone walls and internal earthen structures were built simultaneously with the construction of Gungnae Fortress (Sim



A: 1st wall (Goguryeo), B: 2nd wall (Goguryeo), C: 3rd wall (modern)
2–5: earthen compaction layer (not earthen wall)

Figure 3. Wall of Gungnae Fortress

Sources: (left) Ji'an Xian Wenwu Baoguan Suo (1984, 52); (right) photograph by author (2007).

2005, 179). The earthen compaction layer discovered in the mid-1970s was not the remnant of a Han-era fortress but a foundation layer created by Goguryeo for building the stone walls of Gungnae Fortress. Such compaction layers are also found in other Goguryeo plains fortresses, like Horogoru and Dangpo Fortress in South Korea. Early Goguryeo pottery shards from the earthen compaction layer and mid-Goguryeo wheel-turned pottery shards from the internal earthen structures of the stone walls further confirm that Gungnae Fortress walls were built in the mid-Goguryeo period (Yang 2013, 56).

Like Sekino, Wei viewed the structure of Goguryeo capitals as a combination of mountain fortress and plains fortress and extended this concept back to the Jolbon period. However, subsequent excavation results have invalidated this theory, necessitating a re-evaluation of the Goguryeo capital system.

Reconsideration of the Goguryeo Capital System

Interest in the Goguryeo capital system in South Korea became more pronounced when China designated the “Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo [Goguryeo] Kingdom” as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2004, and simultaneously published excavation reports on Wunü Mountain Fortress, Gungnae Fortress, Wandu Mountain Fortress, and the Ji’an Goguryeo royal tombs. Prior to this, there was a consistent interest based on North Korean academic investigations into Goguryeo capital sites. However, due to limited access to disclosed archaeological data in both North Korea and China, it was challenging to fully understand the Goguryeo capital system.

As a result, South Korean academia also developed a strong belief, based on prior studies from China and North Korea, that the Goguryeo capital system had incorporated both plains fortress and defensive mountain fortress from its founding. However, recent archaeological reviews of individual sites have sparked diverse discussions about the Goguryeo capital system.

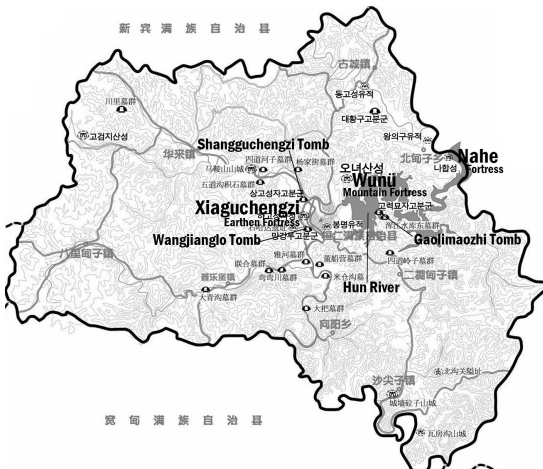


Figure 4. Goguryeo capital sites in Huanren (Jolbon)

Source: Z. Wang (2016, 9).

Jolbon Capital

Regarding records related to the Jolbon capital, the Gwanggaeto Stele mentions that a fortress was built on a mountain west of Holbon (Jolbon) in Biryu Valley 沸流谷 and made into a capital. According to the *Weishu* 魏書 (History of the Wei), they reached Hulseunggol Fortress and finally settled there. The *Samguk sagi* states that in 37 BCE, Goguryeo peoples arrived at the Jolbon River, observed its fertile soil and the rugged and solid surrounding terrain, and decided to establish a capital there.

The first capital of Goguryeo, Jolbon, is located in the Huanren area of Liaoning province, China. The Huanren region features several early Goguryeo sites, including the Xianguchengzi Fortress, Wunü Mountain Fortress, Wangjianglo Tomb 望江樓古墳群, Shangguchengzi Tomb 上古城子古墳群, and Gaojimaozhi Tomb 高麗墓子古墳群.

As previously mentioned, there are various views on the specific details of the Jolbon capital. If Goguryeo's capital system is considered to consist of a plains fortress for regular times and a mountain fortress for emergencies, Heulseunggol Fortress would be identified as Wunü Mountain Fortress, and the plains fortress at Jolbon as Xianguchengzi Earthen Fortress. Some scholars, based on the Gwanggaeto Stele's record of the building of a fortress



Figure 5. Wunü Mountain Fortress

Source: Photograph by author (2009).

on a western mountain of Holbon 忽本, identify Jolbon as Nahe Fortress 喇合城, located at the convergence of the Bui River 富爾江 and the Hun River, and Wunü Mountain Fortress as Weinaam Fortress. However, as Nahe Fortress is far from Huanren and its identification as a Goguryeo site is uncertain, further discussion is difficult.

On the other hand, Wunü Mountain Fortress, located at the highest point in Huanren and defensible without walls, is a natural fortress that offers a panoramic view of the Huanren basin, symbolizing the early capital of Goguryeo. Excavations confirm its use during the early Goguryeo period, supporting the idea that Wunü Mountain Fortress could be Heulseunggol Fortress, where the capital was established by building a fortress on a mountain (Yang 2020, 148).

However, the suitability of Wunü Mountain Fortress as a permanent royal residence remains questionable due to its difficult accessibility and the challenges of conducting state affairs from such a location. Considering the difficulty of climbing Wunü Mountain during winter, it is unlikely that the king resided there permanently, suggesting that a separate plains palace existed for regular governance.

The core issue is whether the presumed plains palace was surrounded by defensive structures, such as walls. Previous discussions were not based on a thorough archaeological review of the construction and use of Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress, but rather on the distribution of fortresses in the Huanren region presumed to be Jolbon. Detailed excavations of Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress are necessary for more information, but considering the Gwanggaeto Stele's mention of Holbon and a mountain capital, early Goguryeo pottery found in pits predating the earthen wall, the construction dates of the Shangguchengzi Tomb, and whether the construction of earthen walls was feasible in early Goguryeo, Xiaguchengzi Fortress is unlikely to be Jolbon's royal fortress.

Some researchers suggest Wunü Mountain Fortress was used temporarily in emergencies, hypothesizing the existence of a separate permanent plains earthen fortress along the Hun River in Huanren (Kang 2015, 23). However, no other plains fortress besides Xiaguchengzi Fortress has been identified in the Huanren area.

If we move beyond the established belief that the Goguryeo capital system consisted of plains and defensive mountain fortresses, it may be more effective to understand the early Goguryeo capital's landscape. Current archaeological data suggest that the king's regular residence in Jolbon may not have been fortified. Consequently, Some researchers suggest the submerged area near the large-scale early and late Goguryeo tomb clusters in Gaolimaoshi village, located east of Wunü Mountain Fortress, as the plains base of Jolbon (Yang 2014, 47; Yeo 2014).

Meanwhile, recent claims suggest that the early capital of Goguryeo might have been solely composed of mountain fortress. Wang Zhigang has argued that there is insufficient evidence to support the establishment of the Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress in the early Goguryeo period. Moreover, before moving the capital to the Gungnae region, Goguryeo was relatively weak and likely lacked the manpower to construct a defensively unfavorable plains earthen fortress. Therefore, in Wang's view, during the period when Wunü Mountain Fortress was the capital, there were no plains palaces or large ceremonial buildings (Wang 2016, 64–65).

Gungnae Capital

The *Samguk sagi* records that in the 22nd year of King Yuri (3 CE), the king moved the capital to Gungnae and built Winaam Fortress. In the 2nd year of his reign (198), King Sansang built Hwando Fortress, and in the 13th year (209), he moved the capital to Hwando. After Hwando Fortress was occupied by the Wei general Guanqiu Jian in 246, in the 21st year of King Dongcheon (247), “Pyongyang Fortress was built and the people, along with the ancestral shrines and altars, were relocated there.”² In the 12th year of King Gogugwon (342), “Hwando Fortress was repaired, and Gungae Fortress was built”, and in the eighth month of the same year, “the capital was moved back to Hwando.”³ Additionally, in the seventh month of the 13th year of King Gogugwon (343), there is a record of “relocating the residence to Donghwangseong in Pyongyang.”⁴ These numerous records of capital relocations before the capital moved to Pyongyang in 427 illustrate the complex situation faced by Goguryeo in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries, during which time the capital was captured twice. However, the Pyongyang Fortress mentioned during King Dongcheon’s reign does not refer to the present-day Pyongyang area, as Commandery of Lelang 樂浪郡 was present there at the time.

Goguryeo’s second capital, Gungnae, is located in the Ji’an area of Jilin province, China. Throughout the Ji’an region, in addition to Gungnae Fortress and Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress (present-day Wandu Mountain Fortress), several large-scale stone mound tombs, presumed to be royal tombs, are distributed. These include the Taewang Tomb, and the General Tomb, along with the Gwanggaeto Stele.

Though there is no significant dispute about the location of the Gungnae capital, various opinions exist regarding the timing of the capital relocation from Jolbon to Gungnae. These include the theory of relocation

2. *Samguk sagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms), “Goguryeo bongi” (Annals of Goguryeo), *gwon* 5.

3. *Samguk sagi*, “Goguryeo bongi,” *gwon* 6.

4. *Samguk sagi*, “Goguryeo bongi,” *gwon* 6.

during King Yuri's reign (19 BCE–18 CE), King Taejo's reign (53–146), King Sindae's reign (165–179), and King Sansang's reign (192–227). Chinese and North Korean scholars generally support the theory of relocation during King Yuri's reign, while Japanese scholars commonly support the theory of relocation during King Sansang's reign. In South Korea, the theory of relocation during King Yuri's reign was predominant for a while, but since the 2000s, variant opinions have emerged due to ongoing archaeological investigations in the Ji'an area.

It is challenging to discuss the exact timing of the relocation to Gungnae due to the lack of relevant archaeological data, except for the Guanqiu Jian commemorative stele. However, the record for the 3rd year of King Sindae (167) in the *Samguk sagi* states, "The king went to Jolbon to pay tribute at the shrine of the founder," suggesting that by the mid-2nd century, the capital was not Jolbon but Gungnae.⁵

Currently, the fortress remains identified in the Ji'an area are Gungnae Fortress and Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress. Based on the distribution of the remains, Sekino argued that the Gungnae capital consisted of a plains fortress and a mountain fortress used in emergencies. However, the construction dates of these individual sites pose a problem. Until the 2000s, the prevailing theory was the view of Wei Cuncheng that Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress was constructed and used as Weinaam Fortress when the capital moved to Gungnae, and that the Han dynasty earthen fortress under the stone wall of Gungnae Fortress was used as the plains fortress.

However, excavations in the 2000s revealed no traces of an earthen wall under the stone wall of Gungnae Fortress, and it was also found that the wall was constructed in the mid-Goguryeo period, not the early period. Based on the distribution of building sites and the excavation of rolling cloud-pattern roof-end tiles in the current Gungnae Fortress, it is believed that tiled buildings were constructed within the current Gungnae Fortress by the 320s at the latest, and that Gungnae Fortress was rebuilt in 342 to prepare for the invasion of the Former Yan (Yeo 2019, 26).

The *Samguk sagi* also records that Hwando Fortress was built in the 2nd

5. *Samguk sagi*, "Goguryeo bongi," *gwon* 4.

year of King Sansang (198). Excavations at Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress have primarily uncovered artifacts dating to the 5th century and later, with no artifacts or remains from the late 2nd to 3rd centuries identified. Moreover, no 4th-century rolling cloud pattern roof-end tiles found in Gungnae Fortress have been discovered. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress, identified as Hwando Fortress, existed in the mid-3rd century, as evidenced by the nearby Guanqiu Jian commemorative stele. Further excavation is needed to determine the exact construction period of Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress.

As the excavation of major sites in the Ji'an area has progressed, the conventional theory that from the relocation to Gungnae the structure of the capital consisted of a plains fortress and a defensive mountain fortress is no longer valid (Yang 2021, 80).

In this context, Kang Hyun-sook argued that by the first half of the 2nd century, the Gungnae area had already established itself as a royal capital. She speculated that the royal palace of the early Gungnae capital was located in the Maxiangou tomb 麻線溝古墳群 area, where the early large-scale stone mound tomb, Tomb No. 2378, is situated (Kang 2015, 28). Yeo Hokyu also speculated that the early Gungnae capital was located in the Maxiangou area, which is surrounded by mountain ranges on three sides, making it a sufficient site for a peacetime stronghold without the need for a separate fortress. The absence of fortress remains in this area suggests that, in the early period, Maxiangou area served primarily as a political center and that a typical capital landscape, such as with a fortified wall, had not yet fully developed (Yeo 2019, 18).

However, considering the significant difference in size between the Maxiangou area and the flatland area of present-day Ji'an city, it seems implausible to view the narrow Maxiangou area as the relocation site for the capital (Lim 2018, 25). Wang Zhigang argued that, contrary to the Chinese view that Gungnae Fortress was used as a plains capital from an early period, there was no plains fortress for some time after the relocation to Gungnae. It was only in the mid-4th century that Gungnae Fortress was constructed, complementing the capital and strengthening defense (Wang 2016, 147–149).

Based on current archaeological findings and the aforementioned research, it can be concluded that the existing view that Goguryeo's capital consisted of a plains fortress and a defensive mountain fortress is applicable only from the 4th century onward, when Gungnae Fortress was constructed.

Pyongyang Capital

1) The Early Pyongyang Capital

According to the *Samguk sagi*, in the 15th year of King Jangsu (427), “the capital was moved to Pyongyang.”⁶ The Pyongyang area, being a vast plain, already had a well-established urban infrastructure when Goguryeo occupied it, as it had been under Lelang's control for a long period. Considering the ink inscription in the Anak mural Tomb No. 3, created in 357, it is presumed that Goguryeo governed Pyongyang from the time Goguryeo's King Micheon expelled Lelang in 313. Additionally, there is an account from the 2nd year of King Gwanggaeto (392) stating that “nine temples were built in Pyongyang,” indicating that the area was significant even before it was utilized as a capital by Goguryeo (Yang 2013, 242).

North Korean scholars have recognized the early structure of Pyongyang's capital as a combination of Daeseong Mountain Fortress and Anhak Palace based on records from the *Zhoushu* that describe Goguryeo's Pyongyang Fortress. Large-scale excavations of these sites began in the late 1950s. Despite the absence of artifacts from the time of Pyongyang's relocation in Anhak Palace, the view persisted. However, the destruction of Goguryeo stone tombs to build Anhak Palace, the notable differences in the structures of walls, gates, and internal building layouts compared to previously known Goguryeo earthen fortresses, along with the significant portion of artifacts dated to later periods, pose significant issues. Consequently, researchers from surrounding countries other than North Korea generally regard Anhak Palace as a palace constructed in the later Goguryeo period or the Goryeo dynasty.

6. *Samguk sagi*, “Goguryeo bongi,” *gwon* 6.

In contrast, Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress, where murals were found in buildings within the fortress and lotus-patterned roof-end tiles identical to those from the Gungnae capital period were excavated from the Daeseong Mountain Fortress, suggests that this site played a crucial role alongside Daeseong Mountain Fortress before Pyongyang became the capital. However, this idea has not received much attention in North Korea. While North Korea speculates that Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress might have been a temporary royal palace during the Gungnae capital period, it maintains the traditional view that the early Pyongyang capital structure from 427 to 586, before moving to Jang'an Fortress, consisted of Daeseong Mountain Fortress and Anhak Palace.

Recently, South Korean scholars, due to the controversy over the construction period of Anhak Palace, have considered Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress as the royal castle of the early Pyongyang period. However, the primary reason for identifying Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress as the royal castle is the difficulty in viewing the Anhak Palace site as a plains fortress used contemporaneously with Daeseong Mountain Fortress, leaving Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress as the only remaining candidate. This perspective has been criticized as an inherent bias towards or obsession with the notion, established since Sekino, that Goguryeo's capital necessarily consisted of a pair of plains fortress and mountain fortress.

Thus, a fundamental question has arisen regarding the Goguryeo capital system: whether a flatland fortress was an essential component not only for the Jolbon and Gungnae capitals but also for the early Pyongyang capital. One such view is to consider only Daeseong Mountain Fortress as the royal castle, moving away from the dichotomy of plains and mountain fortresses. Ki Kyoung-ryang argues that since *Zhoushu* describes Pyongyang Fortress as a mountain fortress, beside which the king built a separate residence, the flatland residence does not necessarily need to be a fortress. Thus, the early Pyongyang capital should be seen solely as Daeseong Mountain Fortress (Ki 2017, 148). Kwon Soon-hong, through his analysis of historical records, also suggests that the relocation of Pyongyang during King Jangsu's reign aimed at establishing royal absolutism and bureaucratization of the nobility, implying that Daeseong Mountain Fortress alone may have served as the

royal castle to express the exclusive royal power against the nobility (Kwon 2019, 90).

However, the limited archaeological data from North Korea currently restricts further detailed examination of the early Pyongyang capital. While it is clear that Daeseong Mountain Fortress was used as the early Pyongyang capital, determining whether Cheongam-ri Earthen Fortress served as the royal palace during the relocation remains a task for future research.

2) The Late Pyongyang Capital

According to the *Samguk sagi*, Goguryeo began constructing Jang'an Fortress in the 8th year of King Yangwon (552), and in the 28th year of King Pyeongwon (586), the capital was moved to Jang'an Fortress from Pyongyang Fortress. This fortress, now known as present-day Pyongyang Fortress, was built in a natural stronghold surrounded by the Daedong River and Botong River on three sides, with Moran Hill to the north. According to conventional wisdom, present-day Pyongyang Fortress of Goguryeo's Jang'an Fortress, with an outer wall circumference of 17 km, marked a significant shift from Goguryeo's traditional capital system, which had previously been divided into a plains fortress and a defensive mountain fortress, to a unified large-scale fortress equipped with both administrative and defensive functions.

Jang'an Fortress was divided into an inner fortress for the royal palace and an outer fortress for the residential area. To enhance defense, a mountain fortress was integrated into the northern part of the inner fortress. The Jang'an Fortress comprises the Northern Mountain Fortress, Inner Fortress, Middle Fortress, and Outer Fortress, although there is some debate about whether the Middle Fortress wall dates to the Goguryeo period.

In the Outer Fortress of Jang'an, a grid-based system called *bangniye* 坊里制 has been identified. It consisted of square blocks, each with a side length of 177.08 meters, which were further divided into four smaller square blocks, each with a side length of 88.54 meters (Ki 2017, 230). This system is understood to have been influenced by the city of Luoyang 洛陽城, the capital of the Northern Wei.

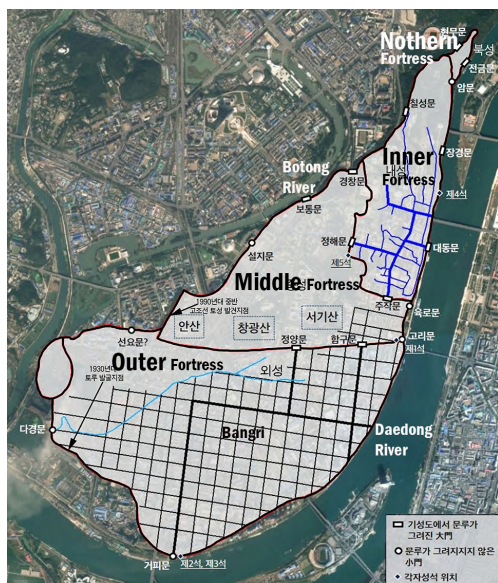


Figure 6. Reconstructed depiction of Jang'an Fortress

Source: Ki (2017, 242).

The first instance of a residential area being divided using the *bangni* system in China was in Pingcheng 平城, the Northern Wei capital built in 422. The *bangni* system, involving walled rectangular areas, was devised by the Tuoba Xianbei 拓拔鮮卑 to control residents during the resettlement of nomads and Han Chinese to increase the city population (Park 2012, 79). This system of urban planning continued in Luoyang city of the Northern Wei and later influenced the development of the Sui and Tang capital of Chang'an, becoming a model for ancient East Asian capitals.

Conclusion

This paper has chronologically examined the establishment of the prevailing view in academia that Goguryeo had a dual capital system composed of a plains and mountain fortress.

The capital system of Goguryeo, one of the core subjects in Goguryeo studies, began to be seriously discussed during the Japanese colonial period

when archaeological investigations of Goguryeo sites commenced. Sekino Tadashi, in his 1914 article in the journal *Shigaku zasshi*, argued that based on his investigative experience in Pyongyang and records from the *Zhoushu*, the Goguryeo capital in Pyongyang consisted of a plains fortress (Anhak Palace) and a mountain fortress (Daeseong Mountain Fortress). He suggested that Goguryeo's Gungnae capital similarly consisted of a plains fortress (Gungnae Fortress) and a mountain fortress (Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress), the latter for use during enemy invasion. However, his argument was not based on excavation results but on correlating the distribution of remaining ruins with historical records.

Sekino's assertion on the Goguryeo capital system greatly influenced later researchers. In China, the view that the capital system from the early Goguryeo period combined plains and mountain fortresses became conventional wisdom, and in 1985 Wei Cuncheng identified Jolbon in Huanren as a combination of Wunü Mountain Fortress and Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress, and the Gungnae capital in Ji'an as consisting of Gungnae Fortress and Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress. However, this argument was also based on limited archaeological evidence, especially the erroneous claim that the lower earthen structures of Gungnae Fortress and Xiaguchengzi Earthen Fortress were Han-era fortresses. In the 2000s, extensive excavations of sites such as Wunü Mountain Fortress, Gungnae Fortress, and Shanchengzi Mountain Fortress led to new perspectives on the Goguryeo capital system.

In North Korea, research and investigations into the Pyongyang capital began shortly after the end of the Japanese colonial period. Based on records from the *Zhoushu* describing Pyongyang Fortress, the combined structure of Daeseong Mountain Fortress and Anhak Palace as the early Pyongyang capital became the dominant view. Despite extensive excavations in the late 1950s, and ongoing issues regarding the dating of Anhak Palace artifacts, this view remains unchanged in North Korean academic circles.

Meanwhile, the Gwanggaeto Stele and the *Samguk sagi* record that Goguryeo initially established capitals on mountains. However, the inconvenience of mountain fortress for daily life and state affairs likely led to the construction of separate plains residences for the king. This

understanding aligns with the depiction of Pyongyang Fortress in the *Zhoushu* and the distribution of existing fortress ruins, supporting the ongoing claim that Goguryeo's capitals consisted of plains and defensive mountain fortresses.

However, with substantial excavations of individual royal fortress sites, many of the previous supporting claims have been disproven. Current archaeological evidence indicates that the notion of Goguryeo's capital system comprising plains and mountain fortresses is applicable only after the construction of Gungnae Fortress in the 4th century. Some researchers even suggest that during the early Pyongyang period, Daeseong Mountain Fortress alone served as the royal fortress without a separate plains fortress. While there are still numerous issues to be addressed in future discussions, it is clear that new perspectives will continue to be significant alongside prior research findings.

The Goguryeo capital system underwent a significant transformation with the relocation to Jang'an Fortress in the late 6th century. The construction of outer walls enclosing the city and the implementation of a grid system suitable for controlling residents based on roads indicate Chinese influence, although distinct Goguryeo characteristics remain evident.

To advance research on the Goguryeo capital system, joint investigations and research collaboration with China and North Korea will be essential. It is hoped that the international environment will improve soon to facilitate such collaboration.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Samguk sagi 三國史記 (History of the Three Kingdoms).

Sanguo zhi 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms).

Weishu 魏書 (History of the Wei).

Zhoushu 周書 (Book of Zhou).

Secondary Sources

Chae, Hee-guk. 1957. "Pyeongyang bugeun-e inneun goguryeo sigi-ui yujeok" (Goguryeo Sites Near Pyongyang). *Munhwa yusan* (Cultural Heritage) 3: 5–19.

Chae, Hee-guk. 1964. "Daeseongsan ildae-ui goguryeo yujeok-e gwanhan yeongu" (Study on Goguryeo Sites around Daeseong Mountain). Excavation Report No. 9. Pyongyang: Kwahakwon Publishing House.

Chosen sotokufu 朝鮮總督府 (Japanese Government-General in Korea). 1929. *Kokuri jidai no iseki* 高句麗時代之遺蹟 (Remains of the Goguryeo Period) Vol. 1. Keijō [Seoul]: Chosen sotokufu.

Hwang, O. 1949. "Goguryeo-ui godo: Pyeongyangseong japgo" (A Study of Pyongyang Fortress, the Ancient Capital of Goguryeo). *Munhwa yumul* (Cultural Relics) 1: 96–100.

Ji'anxian Wenwu Baoguan suo 集安縣文物保管所. 1984. "Ji'an gaogouli guoneichengzhi de diaocha yu shikue" 集安高句麗國內城址的調查與試掘 (Investigation and Trial Excavation of the Gungnae Fortress Site in Ji'an). *Wenwu* (Cultural Relics) 1: 47–54.

Kang, Hyun-sook, 2015. "Goguryeo chogi doseong-e daehan myeot gaji gogohakjeok churon" (Archaeological Consideration on the Early Goguryeo Capital). *Yeoksa munhwa yeongu* (Journal of History and Culture) 56: 3–42.

Kang, Hyun-sook, et al. 2020. *Goguryeo gogohak* (Goguryeo Archaeology). Seoul: Zininzin.

Ki, Kyoung-ryang. 2017. "Goguryeo wangdo yeongu" (A Study of Goguryeo's Royal Capital). PhD diss., Seoul National University.

Koizumi, Akio 小泉顯夫. 1940. "Heijo seiganri haiji no chōsa" 平壤清岩里廢寺址の調査 (Investigation into the Ruins of Temple at Cheongam-ri in Pyongyang). In *Shōwa jūusan-nendō koseki chōsa hōkoku* 昭和13年度戸籍調査報告 (Report on Archaeological Investigations in 1938). Kyoto: Joseon Historical Site Research

Institute.

- Kwon, Soon-hong. 2019. "Goguryeo doseong yeongu" (A Study on the Royal Cities of Goguryeo). PhD diss., Sungkyunkwan University.
- Lim, Ki-hwan. 2018. "Goguryeo gungnae cheondo sigi jaeron" (Research on the Time of the Goguryeo's Capital Transfer to the Gungnae Region). *Sahak yeongu* (Review of Korean History) 132: 177–230.
- Nam, Il-ryong, and Kyung-chan Kim. 1998. "Cheongamdong toseong-e daehayeo 1" (On the Cheongamdong Earthen Fortress 1). *Joseon gogo yeongu* (Studies on North Korean Archaeology) 19.2: 13–15.
- Park, Soon-bal. 2012. "Goguryeo-ui doseong-gwa myoyeok" (On the Capital of Goguryeo and its Cemetery). *Hanguk godaesa tamgu* (Studies on Early Korean History) 12: 43–94.
- Sekino, Tadashi 關野貞. 1914. "Kokunaijō oyobi marutojō no ichi" 國內城及丸都城の位置 (Locations of Gungnae Fortress and Hwando Fortress). *Shigaku zasshi* (Journal of Historical Science) 25.11: 1–43.
- Sekino, Tadashi. 1928. "Kokuri no Pyeongyang-jō oyobi changan-jō ni tsuite" 高句麗の平壤城及び長安城に就いて (On Pyongyang Fortress and Jang'an Fortress of Goguryeo). *Shigaku zasshi* (Journal of Historical Science) 39.1: 1–30.
- Shiratori, Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉. 1914. "Marutojō oyobi kokunaijō kō" 丸都城及國內城考 (A Study of Hwando Fortress and Gungnae Fortress). *Shigaku zasshi* (Journal of Historical Science) 25.4–5: 18–40.
- Sim, Gwang-ju. 2005. "Goguryeo gukga hyeongseonggi-ui seonggwak yeongu" (A Study on the Fortresses of the Goguryeo State Formation Period). In *Goguryeo-ui gukga hyeongseong* (State Formation of Koguryo), edited by Nam-gyu Im, 123–199. Seoul: Goguryeo Research Foundation.
- Torii, Ryūzō 鳥居龍藏. 1914. "Maru-to-jō oyobi koku-nai-jō no ichi ni tsuite" 丸都城及び國內城の位置に就きて (On the Locations of Hwando Fortress and Gungnae Fortress). *Shigaku zasshi* (Journal of Historical Science) 25.7: 36–62.
- Wang, Zhigang 王志剛. 2016. "Gaogouli wangcheng ji xiangguan yicun yanjiu" 高句麗王城及相觀遺存研究 (A Study on the Goguryeo Royal Capital and Related Relics). PhD diss., Jilin University.
- Wei, Cuncheng 魏存成. 1985. "Gaogouli chu zhongqi de ducheng" 高句麗初中期的都城 (The Capitals of Goguryeo in the Early and Middle Period). *Beifang wenwu* (Cultural Relics of Northern China) 2: 28–36.
- Yang, Sieun. 2010. "Ilje gangjeomgi goguryeo balhae yujeokjo sawa geu uimi: Seoul daehakgyo bangmulgwan sojangpum-eul jungsim-euro" (A Study on the Research of Goguryeo and Balhae Sites in the Period of Japanese Occupation: Focusing on Items in the Seoul National University Museum). *Goguryeo balhae*

- yeongu* (Goguryeo and Balhae Studies) 38: 155–192.
- Yang, Sieun. 2013. “Goguryeo seong yeongu” (A Study of Goguryeo Fortresses). PhD diss., Seoul National University.
- Yang, Sieun. 2014. “Goguryeo doseong yeongu-ui hyeonhwang-gwa gwaje” (The Current Issues Regarding the Goguryeo Capital). *Goguryeo balhae yeongu* (Goguryeo and Balhae Studies) 50: 37–66.
- Yang, Sieun. 2020. “Onyeo sanseong-ui seonggyeok-gwa hwaryong yeondae yeongu” (Study of Wunu Mountain Fortress at Hengren). *Hanguk gogo hakbo* (Journal of the Korean Archaeological Society) 115: 133–157.
- Yang, Sieun. 2021. “Goguryeo doseongje jaego” (A Review on the General Belief of Goguryeo’s Capital System). *Hanguk sanggosa hakbo* (Journal of Ancient Korean History) 112: 55–87.
- Yeo, Hokyū. 2014. “Goguryeo doseong-ui gujo-wa gyeongwan-ui byeonhwa” (The Structure and Landscape Changes of the Goguryeo Capital). In *Samguk sidae gogohak gaeron 1* (Introduction to the Archaeology of the Three Kingdoms Period 1), edited by Daehan munhwajae yeonguwon, 62–109. Seoul: Zininzin.
- Yeo, Hokyū. 2019. “Goguryeo gunnaeseonggi-ui doseong gyeongwan-gwa toji iyong” (Landscape and Land Use of the of Goguryeo’s Gunnae Fortress). *Goguryeo balhae yeongu* (Goguryeo and Balhae Studies) 65: 9–38.