New Perspectives in Korean Funerary Archaeology[1]

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Korean funerary archaeology in the last decade has witnessed the emergence of new interpretative approaches and methodological applications to burial contexts. This paper will consider some of the new and more notable research directions in Korean funerary studies. They include the understanding of burial contexts as a place of ritual practice, the interpretation of burials as a means of social reproduction, and the use of new units of analysis in the study of burial contexts. It is suggested that these new research trends also provide insight into the more general theoretical and methodological developments taking place within Korean archaeology, which include new perceptions of society and the archaeological record, as well as a diversification of units of analysis.

Keywords: funerary archaeology, burial contexts, ritual practice, social reproduction, units of analysis

1. Introduction

The study of burial remains in Korean archaeology has played a key role in structuring the nature of the discipline. Not only do burials represent and indeed provide, through their grave goods, the main source of archaeological evidence for many of the periods throughout Korea's prehistory and history, they are also "one of the most formal and carefully prepared deposits that archaeologists encounter" (Parker Pearson 1999:5). And as death occurs among us regardless of time or place, rank or religion, the meanings and expressions embedded within mortuary practices are as diverse (Chapman and Randsborg 1981),

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allowing the burial evidence to be an ideal medium through which archaeologists have considered issues of society, culture, chronology, and ethnicity in ancient Korea.

Funerary archaeology, with its long tradition of research, has thus established itself as one of the foremost subdisciplines in Korean archaeology. In particular, it boasts a wide pool of archaeologists who represent a diverse range of viewpoints. The majority of these archaeologists have continued to explore traditional themes of research, such as burial typology, chronology, and origins. But while such endeavors are not without merit, the last decade has also witnessed the emergence of new interpretative approaches and methodological applications to burial contexts. This has been fueled, first, by the introduction of new theoretical and methodological approaches developed mainly within the context of Anglo-European funerary archaeology. More significantly, however, archaeologists have begun to acknowledge the limitations of interpretative schemes currently being used within Korean archaeology, and it is this homegrown dissatisfaction that has led them to seek alternative ways of looking at the burial evidence. The New Perspectives in Burial Research conference (Korean Archaeological Society 2008) may be regarded as a prime example of this. Therefore, given these recent developments, it appears to be an appropriate time to examine recent trends of research in Korean funerary archaeology.

In addition, perhaps due to the sheer quantity and ubiquity of the material, as well as the considerable number of archaeologists involved in its study, burial remains in Korean archaeology have frequently acted as a medium through which broader interpretative frameworks relevant to all archaeological material are introduced and reworked, or the limitations of such are made manifest. Indeed, as with the example of the European megalithic monuments of the Atlantic seaboard, which have acted as a catalyst through which the possibilities of new methods—as in the case of Renfrew's radiocarbon revolution (Renfrew 1973)—were presented, and later, the interpretative frameworks of Hodder (1990), Barrett (1994), and Tilley (1994) were formulated and contested, the way in which Korean burials have recently been studied may also provide an insightful commentary on key theoretical and methodological developments taking place in Korean archaeology in general.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is two-fold. The primary aim will be to consider new trends of research in Korean funerary archaeology. Accordingly, a brief research history of burial studies will be presented, focusing on the more traditional approaches to burial remains which have been influenced by the

frameworks of culture history and processual archaeology. This will then be followed by a detailed examination of some of the new and more notable research directions in funerary archaeology which have emerged since the new millennium. Finally, I will conclude by discussing how these changing approaches to burial evidence may represent broader changes taking place within the context of Korean archaeology, thereby fulfilling the second aim of this paper.

2. Traditional Approaches to Funerary Contexts in Korean Archaeology

The study of funerary remains in Korean archaeology has traditionally been influenced by the concerns of culture history and processual archaeology. The earliest excavations of burial architecture on the peninsula were carried out by Japanese archaeologists, and research in the colonial period (1910-1945), as well as in the years following liberation, was concerned mostly with identification—that is, the identification of type variation and function in the case of dolmen burials, or the identification of architectural components and grave goods in the case of mounded tombs (Choi 1992:110).

It was during the 1960s, when relative social and economic stability was regained following the destruction of the Korean War that the systematic and wide-scale study of burial structures began to take place. With regard to prehistoric burials, regular field investigations of dolmens were carried out from this period onward[2] and the archaeological evidence thus accumulated facilitated further research into dolmen typology and chronology. Attempts were also made to infer mortuary rites from burial chamber size. It was suggested that the secondary burial of disarticulated remains was carried out at dolmen burials, and this in turn was used to argue for the 'southern (i.e., Southeast Asian) origins' of these structures. This issue of dolmen origins, and therefore, routes of diffusion, remained a key topic of debate into the 1970s, fueling the study of these

2. Most notable of these investigations is the 1967 project undertaken by the National Museum of Korea and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation which looked at over sixty dolmens from twelve different regions in southern Korea. The publication which came out of this project, *A Study of Korean Dolmen Burials* (Kim and Yun 1967), is regarded as a seminal work in the history of Korean dolmen research.

dolmens (Lim 1979; Seok 1979). The study of prehistoric stone cist burials was also heavily steeped in discussions of origins. Originally regarded as the prototype structure of dolmen burials,[3] attempts were made to associate the Korean stone cist burials to similar structures of the Siberian Bronze Age (i.e., the Andronovo, Karasuk, and Tagar cultures) (Lee 1976).

It was during the early 1980s that the reconstruction of past society emerged as a key topic of research for prehistoric funerary studies. This was made possible by the large-scale excavation of burials which took place along several river valleys in the 1970s.[4] The relative completeness of these data compared to previous data sets, which had come from piecemeal investigations, allowed archaeologists to consider the nature of past society, as can be seen in the works of Y. J. Lee (1980), B. M. Kim (1981), and G. G. Ji (1983), among others. It was, however, through the work of M. Y. Choi (1983a; 1983b; 1981) that a social evolutionary approach came to be adopted to the study of burial remains. Choi utilized Service's classificatory scheme of social evolutionary stages, as well as a Saxe-Binford approach to the burial data, to maintain that the dolmens of the Jeonnom region were the remnants of a chiefdom society, and in doing so introduced the key tenets of the processual framework to Korean funerary archaeology. Within this new paradigm, the social organization of Bronze Age communities responsible for these dolmens continued to be a key topic of debate into the 1990s—that is, whether they were chiefdoms (Lee 1982) or egalitarian societies (Park 1997).

Since the late 1990s, an enormous amount of data has been accumulated on prehistoric burials, including non-dolmen burials,[5] due to the ever increasing number of rescue excavations which have taken place. Archaeologists have had to focus, yet again, on classifying burial types and establishing chronologies (S. O. Kim 2001). In addition, the discovery of large-scale Bronze Age cemeteries in the regions of Jinan, Masan, and the Nam River containing dolmens with elaborate architectural features, such as earthen mounds and surrounding stone

3. Kim 1974. This view is now generally disregarded.
4. These rescue excavations were carried out due to the construction of several hydraulic dams initiated by the *Saemaul* development scheme of the military dictator Park Chung Hee (Lee 2002:34).
5. These include jar burials, earth cut (with stone cover) burials, and stone cist burials for the Bronze Age and wooden coffin burials, wooden cist burials, stone cist burials, and stone cairn covered wooden coffin burials for the Iron Age.

platforms, have led archaeologists to actively consider how processes of social stratification may be reflected in the funerary evidence.[6] But while these interpretative directions have produced results which are indeed meaningful, alternative ways of looking at burial contexts have also emerged, mostly since the new millennium, and these new directions will be examined in the following section.

With regard to historic burials of the Proto-Three Kingdoms period to the Three Kingdoms period, although they have been the subject of continuous investigation for the past six decades, research until the 1990s rarely went beyond the identification of architectural components, the examination of grave good assemblages, or the consideration of these tombs within the context of known historical narratives (i.e., which political groups they represented and, in particular, how the appearance of new burial types was associated with the recorded migrations of ancient people).[7] This was perhaps due to the fact that, although systematic investigations had been carried out in some regions of the peninsula,[8] the data sets for the diverse burial types adopted by groups forming the political entities of Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla, as well as their predecessors, were not big enough to allow meaningful investigations of spatial patterning and temporal change.

It was only from the 1990s that an overall understanding could be obtained for the burials of the historic period. This began with the publication of B. H. Choi's (1992) seminal work on the development of mounded tombs in the Silla region. This was soon followed by attempts to reconstruct the process through which the Silla state emerged by looking at the emergence and disappearance of burial types as well as the developmental trajectory of cemetery groups (Lee 1998). Similarly, attempts were made to consider the development of the Baekje state, as it went through the Haseong, Ungjin and Sabi periods, using evidence from burial contexts. Research, in particular, focused on tracing the relationship between the central Baekje government and the indigenous elite, which was

6. See the papers in Korean Archaeological Society (2006).
7. The Houchong and Eunryeongchong tombs excavated in 1946 represent the earliest archaeological investigations carried out in post-liberation Korea (Choi 1992:110).
8. For example, the systematic investigation of Silla burials was carried out at the site of Joyang-dong for four seasons, from 1979 to 1981. Rescue excavations were also carried out on several large-scale mounded tombs, as well as hundreds of lesser tombs, in the 1970s due to the Gyeongju Ancient Capital Development Plan (Choi 1992:110).

seen to be represented in the adoption of new burial styles and grave good assemblages (Park 1996; 1998). This was, of course, backed up by ongoing work on Baekje burial typology and chronology (S. N. Kim 2001; 2003). The study of Goguryeo burials, on the other hand, remains in its early stages, perhaps due to the constraints faced by archaeologists working in South Korea where little primary material is available. Indeed, it is only in the new millennium that a relatively complete overview of the burial material was attempted (Kang 2003).

The last decade has also witnessed new empirical and interpretative developments in the study of historic burials. In terms of empirical developments, the Honam region has recently witnessed an increase in the number of land development projects, and therefore, rescue excavations, which has resulted in the accumulation of burials believed to be associated with the Mahan confederacy. This has made possible a more complete understanding of Mahan burials (Lee 2008), which until now has been dominated by studies on the great mounded tombs of the Yeongam region. The new interpretative developments which have emerged in this period include more subtle attempts to understand how the agency of the state may have operated through burial structures, as well as a consideration of burial remains using finer analytical units. With regard to the latter, GIS applications and ancient DNA analysis represent some of the new methods now being used to examine burial contexts at a higher resolution. These developments will be discussed further in the following section.

Finally, one more recent development in Korean funerary studies which must be mentioned is that archaeologists are now coming to regard burials of the Goryeo and Joseon periods as a valid subject of archaeological research. Prior to this millennium, such burials—referred to as *minmyo* (民墓), which can loosely be translated as peasant graves, although this was not necessarily the case—were seen to be the forgotten graves of direct ancestors, and therefore not categorized as archaeological evidence. This perception has now changed and research has begun to be carried out on the material. Consequently, as burial evidence comprises much of the archaeological material for these later periods, this new development in the realm of funerary studies also looks to be a driving force in establishing medieval archaeology as a valid subdiscipline within Korean archaeology.

3. New Directions in Korean Funerary Archaeology

3.1. From Static Record to Place of Ritual Practice: A New Understanding of Burial Contexts

Previous approaches in Korean funerary archaeology have tended to regard burial contexts as architectural structures or repositories of grave goods. In other words, they have been studied primarily in terms of their form and content, based on which considerations of typology, chronology, and past social organization have taken place. More recently, however, attempts have been made to approach burial contexts from a different perspective—namely, as places where funerary practices took place.

Although archaeologists have long recognized the possibility of mortuary rites taking place at prehistoric burials, the archaeological evidence of these rituals does not appear to have merited the in-depth analysis afforded to burial structure or grave good composition.[9] It is only recently, through the pioneering efforts of S. G. Lee (1994; 1996; 2000), that mortuary ritual has been established as a meaningful subject of research.[10] Interestingly enough, Lee's concern with funerary rituals does not appear to have been influenced by similar approaches taking place in Anglo-European archaeology; rather, it was a homegrown and purely empirical reaction of a field archaeologist who experienced first hand "bafflement when features and artifacts are found in entirely unexpected contexts" during the investigation of burials (Lee 1994:96). How to identify traces of mortuary rituals in the field was, therefore, a key topic of interest, and although the guidelines he presented are rudimentary at best, it cannot be denied that Lee's efforts represent an important attempt to readdress what we may regard as meaningful contexts of study in Korean funerary archaeology. Consequently, the archaeological evidence of mortuary rituals, which had previously been recognized (Kim and Yun 1967:12) but set aside amidst studies that focused on typology, chronology, and regional variation, thus came to be synthesized and presented as a coherent body of material through which meaningful discussions of the past could take place.

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9. An exception to this is Y. J. Lee's (1980) study which explored the ritual aspects of dolmen burials.
10. It should be noted that Lee is one of the very few archaeologists who refers back to studies carried out by anthropologists such as Van Gennep on the experience of death. For example, see S. G. Lee (1994:95).

Since the new millennium, the importance of ritual contexts has gradually been recognized by the wider Korean archaeological community, and a key factor in this development has come from the archaeological material itself, namely *guhoik-myo,* which can best be understood as a type of dolmen burial surrounded by a stone platform structure (Kim 2006). Excavations undertaken at Bronze Age cemeteries in Jinan, Sacheon, and Jinju have, in particular, yielded large concentrations of these stone platform dolmens, which appear to have emerged in the latter stages of the Early Bronze Age and continued into the Middle Bronze Age, coexisting with non-dolmen burials of the Songgugni tradition. What is significant about these dolmens is the large number of artifacts, interpreted as ritual debris, found amongst the stone platforms. Consisting of a diverse range of stone tools and pottery as well as objects whose function cannot easily be ascertained, the sheer volume of this ritual material overshadows in many cases the assemblages of objects found within the burial chamber. In addition, some of the artifacts (from both within and outside the burial chamber) show clear signs of deliberate fragmentation which, even to the most skeptical of archaeologists, cannot be explained due to post-deposition processes. It is also fortuitous that many of the stone platform dolmens were excavated by archaeologists like S. O. Kim and J. C. Lee (2001) at Yeouigok who recognized the significance of these ritual traces and made the upmost effort to identify and convey this information at an extremely high resolution. It is these factors which have thus come together to allow stone platform dolmen burials to play a significant role in bringing to the fore of archaeological consciousness the ritual practices which would have taken place at burial events.

Research which has emerged out of this new consciousness includes I. Ko's (2008) doctoral dissertation on the Yongdam complex of Jinan, an area which happens to represent one of the main concentrations of stone platform dolmens in Korea. In an attempt to go beyond previous studies which focused on burial structure or the changing frequency of pottery and stone artifact types over time, Ko examined the different stages of ritual practice that accompanied dolmen construction and use, as represented by the different contexts in which artifacts were found deposited. In other words, the unit of analysis adopted was the context of deposition.[11] The type and nature[12] of objects found in each of these

11. For example, object deposition beneath the stone floor of the burial chamber, object deposition on the burial chamber floor, object deposition on top of the burial chamber wall, object deposi-

contexts were therefore analyzed and their temporal and spatial variation examined in order to understand the changing nature of mortuary practices from the late Early Bronze Age to the Middle Bronze Age. This new awareness of rituals in a funerary context may also be observed in the study of other burials besides stone platform dolmens. For example, in examining the dolmens of the Gyeonggi region, H. P. Yun (2007) approached the material in terms of the rituals that could have accompanied their construction and use. In other words, he identified the various stages of ritual which may have taken place during the process of burial construction and the interment of the deceased as well as after the funerary event, and explored the possible meanings that these rituals may have had.

With regard to the burials of the historic period, there exists a longer tradition of interest in funerary rituals which can be traced back to the mid-1990s; examples of this are well illustrated in D. S. Kim's (2008) overview of the topic. Most of these studies, however, have been limited to the piecemeal identification of certain ritual practices, such as the use of fire or the deliberate breaking of grave goods. Given the stronger hold of culture history in historical archaeology, these rituals have been linked to specific groups in history. In other words, the archaeological remains of funerary rituals are primarily understood, when possible, with reference to historical records which describe the funerary rites of ancient states. When historical records can not be used, attempts have been made to trace the origins of these funerary rites from regions outside the peninsula where some of the ancient Korean populations are believed to have originated.

More interesting developments regarding funerary rituals have, however, emerged from Silla and Gaya archaeology. For example, attempts have been made to consider the role of food in funerary rites (Kim 1996). Funerary rituals have also been examined in association with burial construction (D. S. Kim 2002). Finally, D. S. Kim (2008:147) has also identified the study of human sacrifice in burials and the consideration of funerary rituals through animal remains as other developments worth mentioning.

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tion beneath the lowest layer of the stone platform feature, and object deposition amongst the stones of the platform.

12. For example, complete, fragmented, signs of prior use, unfinished, and recycled.

3.2. From Passive Indicator to Active Mechanism: Burials as a Means of Social Reproduction

Due to the relative dearth of settlement evidence vis-à-vis burials, the latter has been the main source of material through which the nature of past society has been reconstructed in Korean archaeology, both for prehistoric and historic periods. Therefore, discussions of social hierarchization and state formation have inevitably gone hand-in-hand with in-depth examinations of burial evidence. Burials have, in particular, been approached as the fossil records of past social organizations. More recently, however, an alternative way of considering past society through burial remains has emerged in which burials are no longer regarded as passive indicators, but as active mechanisms through which past society is structured and reproduced.

Within the context of prehistoric archaeology, the limitations of previous efforts to explain the nature of past society through simplistic associations with social evolutionary stages appears to have been acknowledged. Attempts have therefore been made to produce a more refined consideration of past social organization—specifically, social stratification—through a more detailed and subtle analysis of the burial evidence which is then used, for example, to identify systems of kinship relationship. However, as J. I. Kim (2007) has pointed out with reference to such attempts, studies of the past which deal solely with social stratification tend to loose sight of the dynamic nature of society. In addition, they rarely take into consideration the role of individuals or the non-elite within society. More importantly, it is stressed that burials should be approached as a medium through which symbolic and social strategies are played out. This, of course, reflects the position of post-processual funerary archaeology, drawing heavily upon the work of Hodder (1982) and Parker Pearson (1999). Not surprisingly, therefore, studies adopting this alternative stance on both society and burials have been carried out by Korean archaeologists influenced by the British archaeological tradition.

J. I. Kim (2002; 2004a), for example, has tried to conceptualize how symbolic power was executed in the construction of burial groups during the Korean Middle Bronze to Late Bronze Age by looking at the placement of each burial and the nature of grave goods deposited, these being approached as the medium through which the structuration of society by individuals and community took place. Based on an analysis of the above components, he maintains that in the Middle Bronze Age symbolic value was placed on the

community with the past (i.e., common origins) acting as the source of power. In the Late Bronze Age, on the other hand, symbolic value existed with the individual, with the power of the deceased emanating not from a common past but through positions obtained within the power network of society and expressed through bronze objects which facilitated social differentiation.

I. Ko (2008) has similarly adopted Giddens' theory of structuration as a means of readdressing the relationship between burials and society, with particular emphasis on the role of practice—as a generator of experience and, consequently, knowledge—in the structuration of society. Her research has therefore focused, first, on considering the possibilities of practice which were structured by the material conditions of the late Early Bronze Age to Middle Bronze Age burials of the Yongdam complex, and second, on the possibilities of experience that emerged from these practices. It is maintained that these experiences would have guided the future practices of knowledgeable individual agents, and that it was through these practices that the reality of Bronze Age society was reproduced.

With regard to historical archaeology, Yamamoto's (2002) study of Late Baekje type stone chamber tombs may be regarded as a new and interesting attempt to approach past society, and more specifically, the Baekje state, through burial evidence. Prior attempts to do so, represented by the work of S. B. Park (1996; 1997; 1998) and S. N. Kim (2000), have consisted of simplistic interpretations in which certain burial types, as well as the grave goods contained within, are regarded as fossil-like evidence of the Baekje state's presence or influence through time and space. For example, the appearance of grand stone pyramid tombs around the third century AD in the Han River region was seen to represent the earliest evidence of Baekje state formation, as initiated by the migration of an ethnically Buyeo Onjo group (Park 1997; 1998). Grave assemblages of Hanseong type pottery, represented by black burnished ceramics and defined as ritual vessels or prestige goods produced and used by communities which were part of the Baekje state, were seen to chart the pattern of state formation and expansion (Park 1996; 1998; Kim 2003). Of course, with regard to Hanseong type pottery, it has also been suggested that these vessels were imbued with the political strategies of the Baekje central government (Park 1998), but little has been done to explain precisely how these strategies may have operated through the material culture.

However, a more sophisticated attempt to understand how the Baekje central authority may have operated through burials can be seen in Yamamoto's (2002)

study of late Baekje type stone chamber tombs, which examined the nature of stone chamber tombs in the Sabi period vis-à-vis those of the earlier Hanseong and Ungjin periods, and considered how these structures were involved in the changing political strategies of the Bakeje central government. In particular, it is noted that in contrast to the stone chamber tombs of the Ungin period, which were used as royal and central elite burials and show significant variation in size and structure, thereby suggesting their use as a medium of stratification, the Late Baekje type stone chamber tombs of the Sabi period are noticeably standardized in size and structure. This standardization would have only been possible through the application of a common unit of measurement during tomb construction. Therefore, the presence of such standardized stone chamber tombs in regional centers where the indigenous elite previously maintained influence can be seen to reflect the operation, in practice, of the Baekje central government's strategies of consolidation with regard to regional administrative control.

3.3. Looking Beyond the Individual Burial: New Units of Analysis in the Study of Burial Contexts

The individual burial has traditionally been the main unit of analysis through which burial contexts are studied in Korean archaeology. For example, issues of typology, chronology, origins, and spatial distribution have primarily been addressed through the analysis of discrete burial structures, with the analysis of grave good assemblages playing an important secondary role. More recently, however, a widening of perspectives has taken place, with the burial ground itself being regarded as a meaningful unit of study. As part of this trend, the comparative analysis of burial grounds has emerged as an important topic of research, as can be evidenced in the studies of Silla cemeteries where issues of social stratification and consolidation have been approached through inter-site analysis.[13] Prehistoric archaeology has also witnessed similar attempts at inter-site analysis, a prime example of this being the examination of Songgugni type burial grounds presented by S. O. Kim (2001). But while such endeavors have undoubtedly led to a more dynamic understanding of burial contexts, they have not been able to address the issue of how these burial grounds came to be

13. For a list of these studies, see Lee and Son 2005:79.

formed and the concomitant social meanings involved in this process.

It is in this context that Lee and Son's (2005) use of GIS analysis in investigating the spatial organization of Silla and Gaya cemeteries stands out. Representing the first and, as far as the author is aware, the only application of GIS analysis to burial contexts in Korean archaeology, periodic slice visualization was used in this study to consider the temporal variations of spatial patterning. Analysis revealed that, in the case of mid to lower level cemeteries, such as Siji-dong, Wuksu-dong, Joil-ri and Hakchon-ri, the linear expansion of burials within a cemetery came to be replaced by the sectored growth of burial clusters around the fifth century AD. It was suggested that this reflected a change in the social meanings of mortuary ritual in which the family, rather than the community as a whole, came to be emphasized through funerary practices. It may therefore be suggested that this study has played an important role in Korean funerary archaeology, not only in demonstrating the utility of GIS analysis, but also in illustrating the efficacy of adopting the single burial ground as a unit of study. It was in analyzing the single burial ground (i.e., the way it had developed over time and the intra-site variation observed within) that the changing nature of burial practices and the social meanings involved could be considered at a higher resolution. This would not have been possible through previous studies which focused solely on burial structures or compared cemeteries on an inter-site level.

Korean funerary archaeology has also recently witnessed a narrowing of the analytical lens. This can be seen, for example, in the application of DNA analysis to human remains found in burial contexts. Although human remains are not frequently found at burials on the Korean Peninsula due to factors of preservation, osteological research has been carried out since the 1980s on what little material exists (Choi 1993). Due to the piecemeal nature of the evidence, and therefore the absence of sufficient samples which may be meaningfully studied, archaeologists have generally focused on the identification (e.g., sex, age, and pathological anomalies) of these samples. When interpretation has been attempted, the results of the analysis have been used to discuss issues of kinship (Choi 1993), although more recently, skeletal evidence has also been used to understand the nature of mortuary rituals (J. W. Kim 2008). The fact remains, however, that the osteological examination of ancient human remains has not contributed greatly to the understanding of funerary practices. The analysis of this evidence at a microscopic level using DNA analysis, on the other hand, has the potential to produce finer-grained interpretations of burial contexts.

The majority of studies using ancient DNA analysis have been carried out by specialists working in disciplines other than archaeology, such as biology and paleoanthropology, as a means of examining the identity of the ancient populations of the Korean Peninsula, as well as their relationship to current populations. However, DNA analysis has also begun to be utilized by archaeologists, and it is these applications which have proved efficacious in the understanding of burial contexts. For example, analysis undertaken on samples from Bokam-ri tomb no. 3 revealed that the male/female interment identified within a jar burial could represent a mother/son, brother/sister, or incestuous husband/wife relationship (Lee et al. 1999), while analysis on the samples from the Eunha-ri stone chamber tomb indicated that brothers and sisters were buried together, along with another male and female (Lee et al. 2006). Finally, the analysis of samples from the Imdang-dong and Joyang-dong cemeteries has shown that grouped burials may not necessarily represent family groups of parents and their children, as generally believed (Lee et al. 2008). Consequently, these results have provided archaeologists with a window through which the actual choices surrounding the interment of the deceased (i.e., who was buried with whom) may be observed. Thus, it is through the analysis of burial contexts carried out at a microscopic level that the social meanings and strategies involved in mortuary practices may be better explored.

4. Changing Perspectives in Korean Archaeology

The new directions in funerary archaeology presented above may also provide insight into the more general theoretical and methodological developments taking place within Korean archaeology. First, it may be argued that the way in which burial contexts are now beginning to be approached illustrates the possibility of a new understanding of the archaeological record.[14] Within the traditional framework of Korean archaeology, the archaeological record has been regarded as a fossil record (Patrik 1985). In other words, the material evidence has been approached as a faithful—albeit, perhaps, incomplete—remnant of past cultures (in the case of culture history) or past processes (in the

14. For an in-depth discussion of the various approaches to the archaeological record, see Ko (2008:26-46).

case of processual archaeology). It is precisely this understanding of the archaeological record that has provided the epistemological framework in which burials are regarded as a valid means of considering chronology, the movement of groups, and social organizations.

There exist, however, other ways of approaching the archaeological record. Hodder (1982), for example, has proposed an understanding of the archaeological record as text, in which the meaning of material culture is found not only in its functional nature, but also in the ideas and symbolic intentions which lie behind its production and use (Johnsen and Olsen 1992). It can be suggested that J. I. Kim's (2002; 2004a) study on the execution of symbolic power through the placement of burials and the use of grave goods in Middle to Late Bronze Age Korea demonstrates the interpretative power of this contextual/symbolic approach. On the other hand, given the criticism which has been put forth regarding its subjective handling of the data, it is unclear whether the phenomenological approach to the archaeological record as espoused by Tilley (1994) will be able to gain acceptance within Korean archaeology. There is, however, yet another approach to the archaeological record which is based on an understanding of Heideggerian phenomenology, albeit different to that of Tilley. This approach, formulated by Barrett (1994; 2005; 2006a; 2006b), sees the archaeological record as representing the material conditions which structured practices in the past, and finds meaning in the experiences which emerged out of these practices. Its application to the Korean material can be observed, for example, in Ko's (2008) analysis of Yongdam complex burials, in which diachronic change in the material conditions of the burial architecture was examined in order to explore the changing nature of funerary practices in the Early to Middle Bronze Age of Korea.

The examples outlined above represent pioneering attempts to introduce to Korean archaeology alternative approaches which stress the active nature of the archaeological record. Given that such approaches are now also being used and suggested for other types of evidence, such as storage puts and dwellings (J. I. Kim 2004b; 2008), it is hoped that they will soon gain a wider acceptance within the discipline, thereby enabling a more dynamic understanding of how the archaeological material was produced and used in the past.

Second, the understanding of burials as a means of social reproduction demonstrates the possibility of an alternative way of approaching past society. Processual (i.e., social evolutionary) approaches in archaeology have tended to regard society as an organization—an abstract entity divorced from the lived

experiences of people—as can be seen in the systems approach to culture (Trigger 1989). Society has therefore been approached in terms of its different organizational components (i.e., the different elements of society), and how these different components of society functioned to maintain harmony with its environment (Gosden 1999:489). Within Korean archaeology, the focus of archaeological investigation has also focused on ascribing stages of social evolution based on the identification of these components.

There is, however, an alternative way of approaching society; society can also be understood as a lived reality, an experienced world, which was maintained through the social practices that took place within the material conditions of the world. It is this understanding of society, as a reality which must be reproduced, that underlies the studies of J. I. Kim (2002; 2004a) and Ko (2008). In both cases, burial contexts were approached as the medium through which the structuration of society took place. Although not explicitly theorized as such, Yamamoto's (2002) study, which focused on the operation of Baekje central authority and the manifestations of this operation, also contains an understanding of the Baekje state as a reality which was reproduced through practices, rather than as an abstract political entity. A similar understanding of the Baekje state can also be evidenced in Cho's (2006) study of Bakeje ceramics in which certain types of Baekje prestige pottery were interpreted as having facilitated practices that allowed the reality of the state to come into being. Based on the interest in ritual and construction practices present within Korean funerary studies, Korean archaeology in general is indeed ready to consider an alternative understanding of society which focuses on how it was reproduced through everyday and ritual practices. In doing so, it will be possible to step away from grand trajectories of change and focus on smaller narrative structures and examine the finer-grained aspects of social life (Gosden 1999:485).

Finally, the adoption of new analytical methods in the study of burial contexts illustrates a diversification of analytical units used in Korean archaeology. In other words, rather than selecting the artifact, feature, or site as the unit of study (in many cases the unit of comparative study), studies have emerged in which archaeological contexts representing contexts of past practice are approached as the unit of analysis. This can be seen in Lee and Son's (2005) use of periodic slice visualization in the GIS analysis of Silla and Gaya cemeteries, as well as in Ko's (2008) focus on contexts of deposition as the unit of analysis. Studies which utilize minute units of analysis, such as the studies of ancient DNA analysis examined above, also represent a notable trend in Korean

archaeology. Other examples of this can be seen in studies using ceramic analysis (Cho 2006), use-wear analysis (J. Y. Yun 2007), and stable isotope analysis (An 2006).

5. Concluding remarks

This paper considered new trends of research in Korean funerary archaeology which have emerged amidst the introduction of new theoretical and methodological approaches from Anglo-European funerary archaeology, as well as being fueled by a homegrown dissatisfaction by archaeologists who have begun to acknowledge the limitations of interpretative schemes currently being used within Korean archaeology. It has also been possible to examine some of the key theoretical and methodological developments taking place within Korean archaeology in general. It is hoped, therefore, that the current paper will provide an insightful commentary on where Korean funerary archaeology and Korean archaeology in general has come from, where it stands at the moment, and, most importantly, where its direction in the future lies.

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