

Legacies of Japanese Colonialist Historiography and Scholarly Views on Wiman Joseon

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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand how the diverse historical views on Wiman Joseon were formed and evolved, as well as what caused these changes in perspective. In particular, it focuses on how conceptions of Wiman Joseon influenced research and the interpretation of archeological materials following the establishment of modern historical studies. The traditional understanding of Wiman Joseon in early Korean history changed with the emergence of the modern Korean nation from the late nineteenth century, while the modern concept of colony was applied to Wiman Joseon by Japanese scholars starting from the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945). The understanding of the archeological culture of Wiman Joseon was not established independently, but was a by-product of research on the Lelang Commandery. Based on such research, the governing structure of Lelang Commandery was interpreted as a so-called “dualistic ethnic governance structure.” It is important to reflect on whether the modern attempt to establish the state character of Wiman Joseon through the analysis of the ethnicity of Wiman and Wiman Joseon’s ruling class has still failed to emerge from out the shadow of nationalistic and colonialist perceptions.

Keywords: Wiman Joseon, Lelang Commandery, colonial historiography, colony, dualistic ethnic governance structure, Han Chinese culture, slender bronze dagger culture

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Wiman Joseon was a state established by a Chinese refugee Wiman 衛滿 (Wei Man in Chinese), who seized power after a successful coup against King Jun of Gija 箕子 (Jizi in Chinese) Joseon around 191 BC. The state was located in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. Subsequently, Wiman Joseon was destroyed by Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty in 108 BC, and in the state's former territories were installed the Four Han Commanderies. Among these Four Commanderies, the most well-known was the Lelang Commandery, which lasted until 313. Detailed historical records regarding Wiman Joseon have survived in the "Treatise on Joseon" (Zhaoxian liezhuan 朝鮮列傳) of Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), which is considered a highly reliable Chinese historical source.

Despite the detailed records in the *Shiji* and many archeological excavations, historical perspectives on Wiman Joseon remain controversial. Today, some historians understand Wiman Joseon as a stage of Gojoseon, the first state on the Korean Peninsula, whereas others interpret Wiman Joseon as a colony of China. Additionally, Neo-Confucian scholars during the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) regarded Wiman Joseon as the state of the traitor since Wiman had destroyed Gija Joseon. Gija Joseon was traditionally understood as a state founded by a semi-legendary Chinese sage named Gija in the eleventh century BC, though the historic credibility of Gija has been debunked by modern historians (Shim 2002, 272–274).

This paper seeks to understand how the diverse historical views on Wiman Joseon were formed and evolved. Additionally, it examines what caused these changes in the conception of Wiman Joseon, and, in particular, what influences such conceptions had on research and the interpretation of archeological materials following the establishment of modern historiography.

Firstly, this paper seeks to shed light on changes in the conception of Wiman Joseon, wherein the *traditional* understanding of Wiman Joseon altered with the formation of the modern nation-state discourse. This paper also traces the application of the modern concept of colony to Wiman Joseon by Japanese scholars during the Japanese colonial period in Korea (1910–1945).

Secondly, this paper examines how the understanding of Wiman Joseon

has developed by analyzing the archeological research conducted by the Japanese Government-General of Korea during the Japanese colonial period. It may be possible to confirm that Wiman Joseon archeology was not established independently, but was the by-product of research on the Lelang Commandery.

Finally, this paper demonstrates the reasons we cannot properly confirm that the surviving relics of Wiman Joseon are connected to a proper understanding of Wiman Joseon's governing structure. Following this, this article seeks to understand the implications of Japanese colonial interpretations of the ethnicity and state character of Wiman Joseon.

A New Understanding of Wiman Joseon in the Early Twentieth Century

The first Korean historical work to describe Wiman Joseon is the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) compiled by the Buddhist monk Iryeon in the early 1280s. In that work, Iryeon's account of Wiman Joseon follows his account of Gojoseon, in which the Dangun myth is described. Iryeon endeavors to establish Korean history as a unilineal and unitary historical development starting from Dangun Joseon. History books in the early Joseon dynasty drew on this historical presentation in works such as the *Jewang ungi* 帝王韻紀 (Rhymed Record of Emperors and Kings), a historical poem by Yi Seung-hyu from the late Goryeo period. In the *Dongguk saryak* 東國史略 (Brief History of the Eastern Kingdom [Korea], 1403) and the *Dongguk tonggam* 東國通鑑 (Complete Mirror of the Eastern Kingdom [Korea], 1484) from the early Joseon dynasty, the chronology of early Korean history, linearly linking Dangun Joseon, Gija Joseon, and Wiman Joseon, was established. Subsequently, many historians in the Joseon dynasty followed this interpretation. Thus, up until the Joseon period, Wiman Joseon was considered an important period of early Korean history.

In the late Joseon dynasty, a legitimism-based historical view that determined the *legitimate dynasties* in Korean history based upon a Neo-Confucian theory of legitimacy appeared. Such an historical outlook first found

expression in Hong Yeo-ha's *Dongguk tonggam jegang* 東國通鑑提綱 (Annotated Summary of the Complete Mirror of the Eastern Kingdom [Korea], 1672). In particular, a legitimate dynasty theory became an important issue in regards to the ancient history of Korea, which had been divided into several dynasties. In ancient Korean history, Hong Yeo-ha considered the legitimate dynasties as progressing from Gija Joseon to Mahan and then to Silla. Hong argued that Jun—the last king of Gija Joseon—went over to Mahan, located in the southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula, after Gija Joseon was destroyed by Wiman. Hence, the legitimacy of Gija transferred to Mahan, and Silla succeeded Mahan afterwards. According to such a historical view, Wiman Joseon—established by the usurpation of royal authority from King Jun of Gija Joseon—became a traitor state wherein royal authority had been seized by a subject. Many Neo-Confucian scholars who wrote historical works in the late Joseon dynasty wholeheartedly accepted this view, as represented by Hong Man-jong's *Dongguk yeokdae chongmok* 東國歷代總目 (A Chronological Survey of Korean History, 1705) and An Jeong-bok's *Dongsa gangmok* 東史綱目 (Outline of the History of Korea, 1778).

At the end of the nineteenth century, intellectuals of the Joseon dynasty gradually began not only to awaken to the authentic nature of the nation that was linked to the establishment of a modern nation-state, but also to perceive China as *the other*. Previously, Neo-Confucian scholars, who were so-called *traditional* intellectuals, thought of Joseon as a member of Sinic civilization, and as such did not perceive China as a foreign country in the modern sense. However, in the late nineteenth century and along with changes in the geopolitical environment of Asia, there was a shift in Korea's view of its traditional relations with China from something culturally legitimate to that of toadyism-based tribute. This appearance of a new—modern—world outlook had an influence on historical views as well. In this environment, Korean historians looking at the peninsula's ancient history could not continue to adhere to the conflicting relationship between Gija Joseon, which spread Chinese civilization to Korea, and Wiman Joseon, which destroyed Gija (i.e., an historical view based on legitimate-dynasty theory). As few history books were compiled by historians during the turbulent

period of the late nineteenth century in Korea, we can confirm such historiographical changes through an examination of history textbooks written by educators during this time.

Joseon yeoksa 朝鮮歷史 (History of Korea, 1895) and *Joseon yeokdae saryak* 朝鮮歷代史略 (Concise History of Korea, 1895), which were compiled by the Hakbu (Ministry of Education) following the Gabo Reforms of 1894, still wholly adhere to the legitimism-based history as expounded by the then-existing Neo-Confucian scholars of the late Joseon dynasty. However, a new historical perspective can be discerned in the *Jungdeung gyogwa Dongguk saryak* 中等教科東國史略 (Concise History of Korea for the Secondary Curriculum, 1906), compiled by Hyeon Chae, a famous educator of the period. Hyeon accepted the classification of the era and many contents as described in *Chōsenshi* 朝鮮史 by the Japanese historian Hayashi Taitsoke 林泰輔 (Hayashi 1892); he broke from the legitimism-based historical view and adopted a colonialist historical view. However, there is a difference in these two works' descriptions of Wiman Joseon and the Four Han Commanderies. Specifically, Hayashi describes Wiman Joseon and the Han Commanderies in detail, dedicating a separate chapter to them in the second volume of his work, whereas Hyeon describes Wiman Joseon only very briefly—in one sentence. As stated in Hyeon's work, he interpreted Wiman Joseon not only as a Chinese dynasty but also as a foreign state in the modern sense. Many Korean textbooks described Wiman Joseon in a similar manner to that found in Hyeon's work. In *Daedong yeoksaryak* 大東歷史略 (Concise History of Korea, 1906) published by the Gungmin Gyouok-hoe (National Education Society), Wiman Joseon and the Four Commanderies were totally excluded, while the traditional legitimism-based historical interpretation is followed, viewing the progression: Dangun Joseon → Gija Joseon → Mahan → Silla. Yet one cannot rule out the possibility that this text's author or authors excluded Wiman Joseon and the Four Han Commanderies in their presentation of early Korean history due to a perception of China as a foreign country in the modern sense.

With the start of the twentieth century, history textbooks with perspectives that diverged from the established legitimism-based historical view emerged. Some historians who remembered past royal dynasties that had

existed in the territory occupied by the former states of Goguryeo, Baekje, Silla, and Gaya, argued for a new historical progression: “Gija Joseon → ([Wiman Joseon → Han commanderies → Goguryeo] [Mahan → Baekje] [Jinhan → Silla] [Byeonhan → Gaya]) → Unified Silla → Goryeo → Joseon” (Do 2008, 199). Another historian established the histories of the three Joseon—Dangun Joseon, Gija Joseon, and Wiman Joseon—on an equal basis while placing emphasis on the fact that despite being a Yan figure, Wiman continued to designate Joseon as a country name (Jo 1908, 2–6). Additionally, stressing the fact that Goguryeo annexed the territory of Wiman Joseon and the Four Han Commanderies, they tried to incorporate Wiman Joseon and the Four Commanderies of Han into the narrative of early Korean history (Won and Yu 1906, 3–4).

The authors of many textbooks during this period wrote “Jina 支那”¹ next to their notation of the Zhou 周 (as related to Gija), Yan 燕 (as related to Wiman), and Han 漢 (in regards to the origins of Emperor Wu). In other words, this shows that some Korean historians of this period perceived China not only as another country, but as a state with which Korea had an equal relationship as established by the system of international law. Of course, there are limits to directly linking the emergence of such an historical perspective to the formation of a national consciousness or the establishment of nationalistic historical studies. This is because Joseon’s attempt to extricate itself from the political hegemony of the Qing dynasty at this time was done under the influence of Japan, and the emergence of a new historical view is closely related to this. Regardless, this new historical outlook was, embryonically, the beginning of a national awakening for Korea. This endeavor to differentiate itself from China came through the perception of a new geopolitical order, represented by the system of international law, and a rejection of the legitimism-based historical awareness of the late Joseon dynasty.

At the end of the nineteenth century, imperial Japan’s colonialist his-

1. “Jina” 支那 (another name for China) is a Romanized Japanese transliteration for the English word “China.” The term gained a derogatory tone due to its widespread usage by Japan in the context of the first Sino-Japanese War. Many Korean intellectuals in this period, influenced by Japan, adopted this negative term for China.

toriography was allied with the country's expansionist continental politics (M. Yi 1985, 127–134). The *Chōsenshi* of Hayashi Taitsoke is the first work on Korean history based upon modern historical methodologies. Influenced by German historical positivism, this work was part of the Japanese study of Korea's culture and heritage and informed by Japan's negative view of Korea. In addition, along with taking an historical perspective based on the unit of the modern nation-state, and rejecting the medieval legitimism-based historical view, Hayashi's work also denotes the beginning of modern colonialist historiography. Hayashi refers to his perspective on Korean history in the book's "Introduction." There he argues that Korea, despite its ancient origins, was always checked by China because of its geographic proximity to that country. In addition, Korea was treated like a subject state of China because a Chinese would come to Korea to become king or China treated Korea as their constituent territory. Unlike the clear position shown in his introduction, the work's third chapter, "Wi[man] Dynasty's Rise and Fall and Gun-hyeon," limits itself to organizing the aforementioned record of Joseon found in the *Shiji*; moreover, which indicates that Hayashi's understanding of the historical record was not very extensive.

Interpretations of Wiman Joseon as a Chinese colony began in earnest at the start of the twentieth century. This interpretation was closely connected to the processes of Japan's colonization of Korea. In 1907, the eminent Japanese historian Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 argued that the rulers of Gija Joseon and Wiman Joseon—which were located in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula—were Chinese, and the majority of the population of Wiman Joseon was also ethnically Chinese, thus Wiman Joseon was China's colony (Shiratori 1907, 821–823). Another historian, Inaba Iwakichi 稻葉岩吉, claimed that there was already a colony of Han China—established by Han refugees from the Yan dynasty—in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula at the time that Wiman and his followers arrived on the peninsula, and that therefore Wiman Joseon was a new colony, that is, a neo-colony (Inaba 1915, 24–30). The Lelang Commandery also appeared as a colony in period historiography. In fact, until the late nineteenth century, there had been no actual Japanese concept for the term colony, as understood in the West. With the settlement and development of Hokkaido in the 1870s, the

term colony began to be used in Japan. Additionally, with the introduction of Western ideas by Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉, Japan began to use this term in earnest in the course of its overseas expansionism, starting with the subjugation of Taiwan (Peattie 1996, 120–121).

Along with its modern expansionism, Japan began to employ the concept of *colony* arbitrarily, not only in reference to the Four Han Commanderies, but also to Wiman Joseon. Even the immigrants who moved on to the Korean Peninsula during China's Warring States period of early Korean history were understood as *colonists*. One could argue that this application of the modern concept of colony to the phenomenon of people's immigration and settlement during the early history of Korea was totally void of any historical justification. Moses I. Finley, the celebrated classical scholar, placed emphasis on the need to clarify the concept and definition of a colony, as it was a special phenomenon of modern times. He also raised the problem of the direct application of the modern concept of colony to ancient Western history (Finley 1976, 167–188). Japanese scholars' definition of Wiman Joseon as a colony during this period was not limited to simply interpreting the rule of an ethnic tribe as a colony. This paper will point out that Japan's perception of its own superiority and its attendant discrimination informed such an interpretation. The issue of *colonies* in early Korean history became the foundation of an *other-directed development theory*: namely, Korea was unable to develop itself and could achieve modernization only through the assistance of developed nations. Thus, Japan made full use of this other-directed development theory in examining Korean history as a tool for justifying its modern colonization of Korea.

Establishment of Wiman Joseon Archeology

During Japanese colonial rule in Korea, Wiman Joseon and the Four Han Commanderies were newly invented as parts of early Korean history. Japanese colonialist historians defined the Lelang Commandery in ancient Korea as the most important colony of China. Historiography of the Lelang Commandery became the vanguard of colonial histories of Wiman

Joseon and the three other Han Commanderies. In this, archeological investigations at sites in the former Lelang Commandery territory played a decisive role. The investigation of the Lelang tombs, commenced by Sekino Tadashi 關野貞 in 1909, became a significant foundation for finalizing the area of Pyongyang as the location of the Lelang Commandery. After 1916, the results of a large number of surveys of Lelang Commandery tombs—which were conducted intensively under the guidance of the Japanese Government-General of Korea—claimed to clearly establish the Lelang Commandery as a colony of China. Japanese colonialist scholars argued this was proved by the fact that Lelang culture was completely identical with that of Han China (Sekino 1932, 30–31). Indeed, Imanishi Ryu posited that the Lelang Commandery, as an ethnically Chinese area, was synonymous with China (Imanishi 1935, 74). In short, the Lelang Commandery became an important part of colonialist historiography's claim that Lelang was a medium for the advanced civilization of China into the Korean Peninsula, allowing Korea to enter on the path towards civilization (Oh 2014, 224). In the 1910s and 1920s, Japanese colonialist historians made every effort to restore and interpret the history and culture of the Lelang Commandery from the perspective of colonialism based on archeological excavations. Indeed, the major focus of archeological research was Lelang culture, which was identified with Han culture (Oh and Byington 2013, 20–25).

A series of relics, which differed from items typical of Lelang culture, were found in the course of archeological digs: for example, slender bronze dagger culture sites and excavated relics like the *mingdaoqian* 明刀錢 (a coin from the Warring States period). Slender bronze dagger culture sites were represented by relics excavated *en masse* from sites in Heosan, Dongdaewon-ri, Pyongyang in 1921, a bronze bell excavated from Oya-ri Tomb No. 22 and No. 23 in Pyongyang in 1931, and relics excavated from Sang-ri sites in Daedong-gun in 1932. Japanese archeologists dimly perceived the fact that slender bronze dagger culture sites predated the establishment of the Lelang Commandery, and began to examine the possibility of their linkage with Wiman Joseon. Many *mingdaoqian* excavation sites were discovered throughout Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula, and these relics were

interpreted as being linked to accounts in the *Shiji* and *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) of Chinese refugees during the early Han and the Warring States periods. On the basis of these excavation findings, Japanese scholars interpreted that advanced metal culture flowed into the Korean Peninsula along with the Han Chinese who entered the peninsula with the aim of establishing a colony, with Gojoseon the first colony established by the Han Chinese (Fujita 1948, 136). During its control over Manchuria, Japan stressed, with strong contemporary political motivations, the intimacy between Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula, even arguing that Manchuria and Korea were one entity in the historical sense (Fujita 1941, 29).

The archeological discussion related to the period of the Japanese occupation is comparatively well organized in the first volume of *Chōsen kobunka sōkan* 朝鮮古文化總鑑 (Compendium of Ancient Korean Culture) (Fujita and Umehara 1947). This work, co-authored by the representative Japanese archeologists, Fujita Ryosaku 藤田亮策 and Umehara Sueji 梅原末治, focuses on the cultural aspects of the Korean Peninsula before the establishment of the Lelang Commandery, and links the very period to Wiman Joseon. The authors conclusively understood the relics (e.g., slender bronze daggers, bronze spearheads, and bronze mirrors with intricate designs) as having Chinese origins. In the case of slender bronze daggers, the excavations from Lelang used white bronze or strong bronze, which coincided with developments in Chinese daggers. The authors then interpret these excavated relics as products of Han culture on the basis of excavations in Hebei province in northern China. Subsequently, they interpreted bronze weapons, bronze spearheads, and bronze bells as Chinese products, whereas excavated bronze mirrors with intricate designs they presumed to be from Scythian culture, linked to refugees in the Warring States period (Fujita and Umehara 1947, 3–11), because such items are not found in China. Japanese scholars readily interpreted this influx of foreign culture to the Korean Peninsula as the incursion of a specific tribe that brought in Han Chinese cultural aspects, such as Han Chinese-style daggers and social hierarchy. According to Korean archeological research since the 1960s, however, the bronze culture represented by the slender bronze dagger,

bronze spearhead, and bronze mirror with intricate designs has no direct relationship with Han Chinese culture. It has in fact become clear that these belong to a bronze culture native to Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula (National Museum of Korea 1992; Korean Archeological Society 2011). Today, neither Korean nor Japanese scholars deny this.

The legacy of Japanese colonial period scholars, who endeavored to connect the slender bronze dagger culture with their colonialist historical view, while interpreting Han Chinese culture based on inadequate archeological data, persisted for some time. One of Japan's major archeologists, Mikami Tsugio 三上次男, sought to understand the historical characteristics of Wiman Joseon in the 1950s while interpreting the slender bronze dagger culture as part of Han Chinese culture. It was this scholar who during the Japanese colonial period had constructed the history and culture of Wiman Joseon systematically using archeological materials. Mikami argued that the Chinese had already established political power in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula during the Warring States period, and began to import advanced Chinese metal culture. This argument is similar to Inaba Iwakichi's view, as mentioned previously, that migrant Chinese had established a colony. Mikami argued that the ruling authorities of Wiman Joseon were migrant Chinese because Wiman had fled China to found a state on the peninsula in the early second century. Mikami thought that culturally Wiman Joseon developed in two directions from its original Han Chinese culture. First, Mikami pointed to the slender bronze daggers and bronze mirrors with intricate designs, as well as pit burials, as evidence of the development of an independent culture while still under the influence of Chinese culture. This interpretation completely follows the view of the *Chōsen kobunka sōkan*. In addition, Mikami considered Chinese culture to have even made inroads with the indigenous population, while interpreting a dolmen as the tomb of a native potentate. This latter interpretation is judged to be an independent view of Mikami, who was devoted to research on dolmen culture (Mikami 1961, 147–149). However, Mikami's periodization of the dolmen culture was mistaken, for that burial tradition that he viewed as the culture of Wiman Joseon in fact predated Wiman Joseon. With regards to his view that the indigenous population of Wiman Joseon accepted Chinese

culture, Mikami argued that a native potentate manufactured stone daggers by imitating the Chinese-style slender bronze daggers, or that fine articles—bronze mirrors with intricate designs—were manufactured by Chinese craftsmen, whereas bronze mirrors with rough designs were cruder imitations made by a native population. However, as the excavated stone daggers were found to have been manufactured earlier than the slender bronze daggers, his argument that stone daggers were made by imitating slender bronze daggers was determined to be erroneous (W. Kim 1987, 310–313). Furthermore, because bronze mirrors with crude designs developed into bronze mirrors with intricate designs over an extended period, Mikami's argument about the mirrors was also erroneous. Such *misunderstandings* were the result of a colonialist mindset that interpreted the differences both between metal and stone artifacts and between sophisticated and crude artifacts as ethnic differences between the Han Chinese and a native population.

As noted above, Mikami argued that Wiman Joseon was a colonial state, considering the burial pit and slender bronze dagger indications of Han Chinese culture, while identifying dolmen culture as that of the local indigenous power (Mikami 1966, 19–20). He understood Wiman Joseon as a colony in that a Han Chinese ruler exercised all authority, and also understood its sociopolitical structure as the foundation and starting point of the Lelang Commandery. Mikami's opinion influenced that of Tamura Koichi 田村晃一, a noted Japanese archeologist of the 1970s and 1980s. Tamura arrived at conclusions similar to those of Mikami, in that he considered pit burials, wooden coffin tombs, and slender bronze daggers to be evidence of Han Chinese culture. However, this position is no longer tenable. Tamura argued that Wiman and his followers, based in Liaodong, founded Wiman Joseon in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula and became its ruling authorities, leaving behind pit burials as evidence of their presence. Tamura assumed that the Chinese people of the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula continued to maintain their position as mid-level officials even after the establishment of the Lelang Commandery. Also, he argued, they crafted their own wooden coffin tombs by combining the traditions of the burial system of Wiman Joseon with those of mainland China (Tamura 2001, 75–77). This argument succeeded that of Mikami and Fujita, which

understood pit burials as a product of Han Chinese culture influence and dolmens as the burial system of the local indigenous power. However, because the slender bronze dagger culture and pit burials are unrelated to Han Chinese culture and dolmens in the archeological chronology predate Wiman Joseon (Korean Archeological Society 2011, 88–92), it is also difficult to see the validity of Tamura's argument.

As examined above, the archeological culture of Wiman Joseon was not established independently, but was a by-product of research on the Lelang Commandery. In short, in the 1930s, research on Wiman Joseon started from the assumption that the culture belonged to the period before the establishment of the Lelang Commandery. In the process of investigating and researching Lelang culture as an aspect of Han Chinese culture, Japanese archeologists interpreted slender bronze daggers—which are in fact non-Han Chinese-style cultural artifacts—as belonging to a period preceding the establishment of the Lelang Commandery, and interpreted them as remnants of Wiman Joseon culture. Afterwards, this argument was applied to the governing structure of Wiman Joseon to interpret the slender bronze dagger culture as the culture of the ruling power (emigrant Han Chinese), and to interpret dolmens as part of the culture of the indigenous population. In the 1970s, although Japanese archeologists replaced the slender bronze dagger culture of the ruling power with the culture of wooden coffins and framed tombs, they adhered to views of Wiman Joseon from the Japanese colonial period.

Endeavors to Overcome Colonialism

As previously mentioned, research into the history and culture of Wiman Joseon as a Chinese colony was a retroactive interpretation based on the view that Lelang Commandery was a Chinese colony. In the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese archeologists endeavored to determine the ethnicity of the occupants of the Lelang tombs, and in so doing to clarify the ethnicity of the ruling power (Oh and Byington 2013, 18–26). Based on such research, Japanese scholars concluded the governing structure of

the Lelang Commandery was characterized by a so-called *dualistic ethnic governance structure*, in which two different ethnic groups formed a master-subordinate relationship, with the Han Chinese as the ruling class and the local natives as the ruled (Mikami 1966, 23–82). This dualistic ethnic governance structure of the Lelang Commandery was perceived as a result of a compromise and union between Han Chinese migrants and the indigenous population. Also, Japanese scholars maintained the perception that the influential indigenous class, which enjoyed social power while co-existing with the emigrant Han Chinese ruling class during the period of Wiman Joseon, gradually went through a process of decline, disappearing by the time the Lelang Commandery was established. Additionally, it was considered that the governing structure continued unchanged from Wiman Joseon to the succeeding Lelang Commandery.

Such perspectives were based on the linear cultural evolution theory, which began from the premise that there was a higher civilized Han Chinese culture and that other indigenous people needed to be enlightened—a modernist view projected on to the ancient past. We must realize that local indigenous ruling authorities existed within the structure of Wiman Joseon and the Lelang Commandery. The actual presence of an indigenous ruling class in the period of the Lelang Commandery is more than sufficiently proven by archeological excavations of the wooden-framed tombs and slender bronze dagger culture (Oh 2006, 65–85).

Despite such obvious evidence, some historians in Korea have made similar arguments to the Japanese views described above. For example, Kwon O-jung, a Korean scholar of ancient China, conducted studies of the Lelang Commandery as a Han Chinese outpost for the management of barbarians (Kwon 1992). Kwon argued that the Lelang Commandery was a combination of the “commandery-county system” 郡縣制 transplanted by Han China and the indigenous *gugeup* 國邑 (prime town) system. He also added that the indigenous Han Chinese ruled the natives after the demise of Wiman Joseon.

In the second half of the twentieth century, it became an imperative task for scholars of both South and North Korea to critique Japanese theories of Wiman Joseon and the Lelang Commandery as being deeply rooted

in colonialism. Some North Korean scholars attempted to deny all together any traces of the Lelang Commandery on the Korean Peninsula. Such arguments were first proposed by Jeong In-bo, a distinguished scholar of the 1930s, and North Korean scholars now lent their wholehearted acceptance to this theory (Cho 2011, 62–64). The primary focus now turned from determining the location of the Lelang Commandery to debates about the possible location of Gojoseon (S. Park 2006, 84–89). Since the Lelang Commandery was established in the wake of the fall of the capital of Wiman Joseon, Wanggeomseong, the location of the Lelang Commandery would arguably coincide with the location of this Wanggeomseong. North Korean scholars then actively discussed the whereabouts of Gojoseon; and finally in the early 1960s, they concluded that the center of Gojoseon was in the Liaodong region of China. Consequently, the earlier theories that proposed the Lelang Commandery as located in Pyongyang were denied. Rather, North Korean scholars argued that sites in Pyongyang, formerly attributed to the Lelang Commandery, actually belonged to Nangnang, a small, independent state belonging to Gojoseon. Although the 1993 excavation of the Mausoleum of Dangun indeed radically shifted the territorial center of Gojoseon—from Pyongyang to Liaodong on the Chinese mainland—Pyongyang scholars still persist in denying the presence of the Lelang Commandery on the peninsula. North Korean scholars, who deny the Lelang Commandery was subjugated to China, insist on recognizing Wiman Joseon as a stage of Gojoseon; and in the history of Wiman Joseon, they strictly exclude the possibility of any influence of another culture and any presence of foreign migrants on the peninsula. Since the 1993 excavation of the Dangun Masuoleum, it can be said that North Korean archeology and ancient historical studies have drifted every further from objectivity—becoming extremely xenophobic and nationalistic in their tendencies—and North Korean studies and research on Wiman Joseon are no exception. In North Korea, when the issue of overcoming colonial history fused with political ideology, the result was a perversion of historical truth as scholars and politicians conspired with each other to create something utterly dangerous and terrible altogether.

On the other hand, unlike their North Korean counterparts, South Korean scholars were not as adamantly pursuing the debate on the location

of Gojoseon. Some South Korean historians tried to approach the question of the character of Wiman Joseon by clarifying whether the ethnicity of Wiman and its ruling class as described in the *Shiji*'s "Treatise on Joseon" was Han Chinese or another indigenous race. Following Korean division in 1948, a representative historian of South Korea, Yi Byeong-do, made efforts to aggressively incorporate Wiman Joseon into Korean history by interpreting the ethnicity of Wiman as Gojoseon Korean, not Han Chinese (B. Yi 1976 [1956]). Yi's attempt contradicted the argument of Japanese historians, who had identified Wiman as Han Chinese and Wiman Joseon as a Chinese colony. It seems that Yi's antagonism towards Japanese scholars' studies on Wiman Joseon during the colonial period had a considerable influence on his own stance. Afterwards, Korean historians traced their national ethnicity by analyzing the family names of the ruling class during the Wiman Joseon, rather than Wiman's personal ethnicity (H. Kim 1980; Noh 1999; Song 2002). In this manner, Korean historians argued that Wiman Joseon was a polity established by Chinese migrants and indigenous people, both from the territory of Wiman Joseon and the area around it. Nevertheless, Wiman continued to use "Joseon" as a state name, and cultural interruptions were not significant relative to the periods that had preceded it. Therefore, they argued that Wiman Joseon should be understood as a stage of Gojoseon. These perspectives need to be dealt with very carefully as they are based on a limited and scarce written and archeological record. However, determining whether Wiman Joseon was the colony of a Chinese dynasty or a stage of Gojoseon based on the ethnicity of its ruling class remains bound to the lingering fetters of the former colonialist historiography.

Some Western scholars have also mentioned Wiman Joseon in regards to early state formation in the ancient period of Korean history. Kenneth H. J. Gardiner posited that no states emerged on the peninsula until the third century BC, and that the first kingdom on the peninsula was established, in the form of a foreign dynasty, with the migration of Wiman (Gardiner 1969). According to Gina Barnes, an archeologist, Wiman Joseon seems to have been a "city-state," with a simple ruling structure and no territorial administration (Barnes 2001, 13–15). Hyung Il Pai, who examined both the colonialist and nationalist scholarly discourses regarding the early period of

Korea, insisted that Wiman Joseon could not be considered a state because the archeological evidence of a capital, such as fortress remnants, had not been found and the process of state formation on the Korean Peninsula was initiated by the Han invasion and the establishment of the Lelang Commandery (Pai 2000, 121–126).

Nevertheless, many Western scholars accepted the theories presented by earlier Japanese scholars on Wiman Joseon. They then argued that the social development of Wiman Joseon had been generally underestimated because the dominance and influence of the Lelang Commandery had been given priority. All this demonstrates that the studies of Wiman Joseon continue to be influenced by Japanese colonialism, as some Korean scholars have criticized (J. Kim 2004; D. Park 2004).

Recently, in order to investigate Wiman Joseon, active research projects are being conducted in such areas as slender bronze dagger culture, iron culture, and tombs (Jo Jin-seon 2005; Jung 2013; S. Park 2013; Lee 2014). However, the significant challenge facing archeological studies of Wiman Joseon is that Wiman Joseon's sites and artifacts remain inconclusive. For example, some studies on Wiman Joseon's trade refer to Chinese coins (*mingdao-qian*), yet point to artifacts that predate Wiman Joseon, or even to tomb sites in the Lelang Commandery, as evidence (Choi 1985, 65–75; S. Park 2013, 258).

Wiman Joseon is clearly identified in the historical record by the *Shiji*'s "Treatise on Joseon," but its matching archeological sites or relics have not been discovered. This contrasts with the case of Nanyue 南越, an ancient kingdom established in 204 BC that consisted of parts of the modern Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan, as well as northern Vietnam. Its characteristic as a state has been established based on both the historical record and archeological evidence, namely, the "Treatise on the Nanyue" of the *Shiji* and King Nanyue's tomb in Guangzhou, southern China, respectively.

One reason for the gap between the archeological relics and the chronological record in regards to the northwestern Korean Peninsula in the second century BC might be the way in which the search for archeological materials has been approached, in other words, by the presumption of Wiman

Joseon's "dualistic ethnic governance structure." Archeologists tend to discover cultural artifacts of Wiman Joseon based upon the assumption that the ruling and ruled classes were defined ethnically and culturally. In this process, they always focus on the advanced culture from Han China. From the archeologists' point of view, it is an important subject whether the specific artifacts, such as newly emerging ironware and earthenware, belong to the Warring States or the Han period. In addition, they even connect the emergence of a new culture with the influx of migrants and specific historical events. Hence, it is the argument of this paper that past scholars have concentrated their energies on looking for sites and relics based upon the presumption of Wiman Joseon's character as described above, which affects their approach to the historicity of Wiman Joseon.

Moreover, efforts need to be made to reconstruct the overall archeological aspect of Wiman Joseon. For example, we can ask some questions and seek answers from the archeological sites and artifacts, such as whether the artifacts pertaining to Wiman Joseon are spread throughout areas to both the north and south of the Daedonggang river; whether there is continuity between Wiman Joseon and the Lelang Commandery in regards to earthenware; and whether prestige items such as the gilt bronze end-fittings of parasol ribs or bronze mirrors were already being imported during the Wiman Joseon period. There is much room for an objective rediscovery of the truth within these questionable, persisting conditions regarding the archeology of Wiman Joseon. This should serve as the platform for actualizing the hidden process of cultural continuity of Gojoseon and Wiman Joseon, while reconstructing Wiman Joseon culture and history based on the independent identity of the indigenous forces that accepted and adopted advanced culture from outside their realms.

Conclusion

This paper has proposed a reunderstanding of Wiman Joseon, the processes behind the establishment of Wiman Joseon archeology, and the implications of colonialism inherent in these processes. As way of conclusion, let

me reorganize and reiterate the contents discussed above.

Wiman Joseon, which first emerged in Korean historiography in the *Samguk yusa*, was traditionally interpreted under the legitimate-dynasty thinking of the late Joseon dynasty as a traitor dynasty, established by the usurper Wiman who had overthrown Gija Joseon. However, in the late nineteenth century, with Korean national self-awakening, there came a change in the traditional perception of Gija Joseon, which came to be viewed as a symbol of civilization derived from the civilized community of traditional China, and of Wiman Joseon as standing in an antipodal relation with Gija Joseon. This new outlook was confirmed through an examination of Korean history textbooks from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which minimized comments on Wiman Joseon while understanding Chinese dynasties—such as the Zhou, Yan, and Han—as distinct from Joseon and perceiving China as a foreign country.

In the wake of a series of colonialist histories starting with Hayashi Tait-suke's *Chōsenshi* (1907), Shiratori Kurakichi posited Wiman Joseon as a colony, and afterwards, such an interpretation was steadily maintained. This colonialist historiography was connected to Japan's development of Hokkaido in the 1870s, the influx of the Western ideas, and the modern concept of colony imported from the West at that time. In particular, the concept of colony was randomly applied not only to the Four Han Commanderies but also to Wiman Joseon, and even to settlements of refugees during the Warring States period in early Korean history. Subsequently, this concept of colony formulated the backbone of colonialist historiography vis-à-vis Korea along with the other-directed development theory.

The Japanese colonial period invention of Wiman Joseon as a Chinese colony was complemented by the archeological research on the Lelang Commandery led by the Japanese Government-General of Korea. The central focus of these archeological surveys was the Lelang Commandery, and in the 1930s, materials belonging to the period predating the establishment of the Lelang Commandery, which were confirmed concomitantly through the investigation of Lelang culture, were connected with Wiman Joseon. At that time, artifacts of non-Han style culture (slender bronze daggers), which were also perceived as part of Wiman Joseon culture, were interpreted as

Han Chinese culture. Such a perception was applied to the understanding of Wiman Joseon's governing structure, interpreting slender bronze dagger culture as the culture of the ruling power (i.e., the Han Chinese interlopers) and the dolmens as part of the culture of the indigenous population. In the 1970s, although pit burials and wooden coffin tombs replaced slender bronze daggers as the archeological evidence for the ruling power, the framework of the existing interpretation was maintained.

Attempts to discover the authentic archeological record for Wiman Joseon by proceeding from the assumption of a dualistic ethnic governance structure has been a central factor in the archeological gap that remains for that polity. It is important to reflect on whether attempts to inquire into the state character of Wiman Joseon through an examination of the ethnicity of Wiman and its ruling class have still failed to emerge from out the shadow of colonialist/nationalist conceptions.

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