

Koryōsa. 3 vols. Seoul: Yonsei University Press (1972 edition; originally issued in 1452).

Kugyōk tongmunsōn. Seoul: Minjok munhwa chujinhoe (1969 edition).

GLOSSARY

An Chiksung	安稷崇	Chōkchōn	籍田
Chongmyo	宗廟	Ch'ōngyōn	清燕
Chosōn	朝鮮	Dasheng	大晟
Dasheng xinyue	大晟新樂	Dasheng yayue	大晟雅樂
de	德	hōn'ga	軒架
hwangjong	黃鐘	Hulzong	徽宗
Im Chon	林存	Jin	金
Kaesōng	開城	Kōndōkchōn	乾德殿
Koryō	高麗	kukchagam	國子監
kūm/qin	琴	Mun Kongōn	文公彦
Pak Kyōngjak	朴景緯	Pomun	寶文
P'yōngyang	平壤	Sajik	社稷
Song	宋	Sōngjong	成宗
T'aejo	太祖	T'aemyo	太廟
tangak	唐樂	tūngga	登歌
ūm/yin	陰	Wang Chaji	王字之
wen	文	Wōn'gu	圓丘
yang	陽	Yejong	睿宗
Yuan	元	zhengsheng/chōngsōng	正聲
zhongsheng/chungsōng	中聲		

MUMUNT'OGI AND MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS: A Reconsideration of the Dating

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Preamble

The category of *mumunt'ogi*, plain pottery, in Korean archaeology needs to be deconstructed. It is traditionally associated with the Bronze Age, but C₁₄ dates show that some types predate bronze by a considerable period, while other types are found in the later *Wōnsamguk* period. More important than bronze is the construction of megaliths; therefore I prefer to consider the time period of *mumun* to be the Megalithic. In this paper I look at the C₁₄ dates along with the timing and distribution of various types of *mumun*, megalithic monuments, rice agriculture, and bronze. I conclude with some hypotheses about interpreting the Megalithic period.

Introduction

The category of *mumunt'ogi* has a long history in Korean archaeology. Early discussions of village settlements involved some sites on river banks where

incised potsherds and chipped stone tools had been recovered. Other similar artefacts were found on hillsides, featuring polished tools and sherds lacking surface decoration. Although conceptualized as representing different people, these types of site were at first believed to be contemporaneous with the first type. Excavations in the southeast of the Korean peninsula, especially at Tongsamdong, produced *mumun* in the lowest levels, leading to a hypothesis that *mumun* preceded *chulmun*, a plain style before "comb-marked" pottery. However, as *mumun* began to be found together with bronze objects, and as they were accordingly identified with the Bronze Age, *chulmun* came to be considered the earliest pottery in Korea, a purely "neolithic" pottery. Misari, a stratified site on the Han river, with *chulmun* below *mumun*, confirmed this revised sequence.

And so matters rested, with a suspicion of inverted stratigraphy cast upon the plain pottery at Tongsamdong. At least this was the case until carbonized wood associated with relatively plain vessels found at Osanni yielded the earliest C₁₄ dates then known from any pottery site in Korea. It began to become evident that the designations of *mumun* and *chulmun* were too imprecise to be useful. Nevertheless, the category of *mumun* continues to appear in Korean archaeological reports, and is often described as Bronze Age pottery (e.g. Kim 1981, Yi 1988, Riotto 1989).

Variants of *Mumun*

Leaving aside the pre-*chulmun* pottery, much of which is also plain, I will look at varieties of *mumun* said to belong to the Bronze Age to tease out both regional variants and

chronological sequences. Then I will consider the co-occurrence of various kinds of stone tools and the appearance of megaliths, stone cists, rice agriculture, and bronze.

The earliest C₁₄ dates associated with post-*chulmun* plain-surfaced pottery occur in sites along the southern coast. Dated layers at Sugari, Tongsamdong, Sangnodae Island, Kungoktong and Shinamni serve as examples. The plain pottery vessels in these layers have rounded bases and doubled-over rims, with a row of slashes or incised lines across the bottom of the collar or just below it (Chöng 1982). This is sometimes called double-mouth-rim pottery, or *ichungko*. Recalibrated dates fall in the 2000-1500 B.C. range (Nelson 1991). Several authors designate this stage Late Neolithic rather than Bronze Age (eg. Im 1984, Choe 1982, Choi 1984).

The associated stone tools found along the south coast are variable. Amorphous flaked tools, hoes, grinding stones, a semi-lunar stone knife and shell bracelets were found with *ichungko* at Tongsamdong (Sample 1974), while Sugari's layers I and II with *ichungko* included flaked stone tools and biconical spindle whorls (Chöng, Shin and Im 1981). Kungoktong contained a projectile point with a diamond-shaped cross-section and a central tang, a small chisel and the usual utilized flakes (Kim and Chöng 1980). Its recalibrated date is between 2120 and 1865 B.C. The uppermost layer at Osanni, which included *mumun* pottery and semi-lunar knives, was dated a bit later, from 1785 to 1355 B.C. (Im and Kwön 1984), within the range of *mumunt'ogi* in central Korea.

Central western Korean *mumun* have later dates and are associated with dolmens, stone cists, polished stone daggers, rice, and bronze, none of which have been found

with the *ichungko mumun* on the southern coast. Nevertheless, the doubled rim is prevalent in sites along the Han and Taedong rivers, featuring the same slanted incising that is present further south. Many vessels found along the Han have flat bases and outflaring sides in a flower-pot shape. This is known as the *karak* type, after a site in metropolitan Seoul (Im 1968). *Karak* co-exists with another type called *kongyul*, with a row of punctates around the rim, sometimes a scalloped lip, and a globular necked jar that is entirely undecorated.

The large village at Songgungni in South Ch'ungch'öng province also produced rice grains and *mumun* pottery, with two dated periods of 870 to 785 B.C. and 820 to 585 B.C. A nearby stone cist contained a Liaoning bronze dagger, a bronze chisel, a polished stone dagger, 11 polished stone projectile points, 2 curved beads called *kogok*, and 17 tubular beads (Yi 1976). In the dwellings, artifacts include stone daggers, diamond-shaped projectile points, semi-lunar knives, saddle querns, whetstones, spindle whorls, and groundstone axes. A wooden spade and a handle for a stone dagger have recently been unearthed, along with pedestal vessels. Dates for these habitations are 2665 ± 60 and 2565 ± 90 B.P. (715 and 615 B.C.) (Kang *et al* 1979; Chi, An and Song 1986; An, Cho and Yun 1987).

The site of Hunamni on the South Han river contains all three of these pottery types, as well as burnished red jars, a common feature of stone-cist graves. The wide-ranging C_{14} dates average about 800 to 500 B.C., and this is the time period to which the site is usually ascribed. Both chipped and polished stone tools have been found, as well as semi-lunar stone knives. Two kinds of projectile points were identified, frequently together. One type is like the arrowhead described at Kungoktong, while the other is hexagonal in cross-section with an incurved base. Polished

stone daggers, commonly found in stone cists under dolmens, were found under Hunamni house floors. Spindle whorls, clay and stone net sinkers, and beads were also present. Four kinds of grains were identified, including wheat, barley, millet, and rice. The rice was of the *japonica* variety, which is adapted to climates with short growing seasons, that is, further north than the natural habitat of wild rice (Kim *et al* 1973, 1974, 1976, 1978).

Another type of (mostly) plain pottery, with two or three rows of short slanted lines forming a band around the rim but lacking the double rim is found at Naep'yöngni on the North Han river. A C_{14} date of 1265 to 1045 B.C. was obtained with this, while houses with completely plain vessels had later dates of 815 to 765 and 415 to 300 B.C.

P'aengi, or "top-shaped" *mumun*, is found in the vicinity of the Taedong river. Characterized by a very narrow base and a globular body, it is thought to resemble a child's spinning toy. Associated stone tools include semi-lunar knives, spoked mace heads, perforated stone disks, grinding stones, spindle whorls, stepped adzes, and projectile points and stone daggers. Both the latter have a diamond-shaped cross-section. Carbonized rice has been reported from a site near P'yöngyang. *P'aengi* is often regarded as the earliest *mumun* by South Korean archaeologists (eg Kim 1978), but this claim is not supported with radiocarbon dating.

Another type of pottery with incised all-over patterns is, I believe mistakenly, usually lumped with *chulmun*. This so-called *ponggae* (lightning pattern) pottery comes in identical shapes to some forms of plain pottery vessels found northwards, and it is accompanied by a similar artifactual assemblage (Kim 1968, Kang 1975). The decorative patterns are geometric, but much more complex

and better executed than those on the usual *chulmun* ware. This type of pottery is found in sites across the northern border of North Korea along the Yalu and Tumen rivers, and is possibly related to Upper Xiajadian in China. Unfortunately, no C₁₄ dates have been reported.

Other plain pottery found in the northeast includes jars with long funnel-shaped necks, gourd-shaped bodies and small lug handles, along with pedestal vessels called *dou*. These are similar to sites in the Yanbian Autonomous Region of Jilin Province, China, where they are lumped into the Tuanjie Culture (Lin 1985). This is probably the earliest appearance of *dou* in Korea.

Finally, plain pottery with large, oval, shallow impressions around the base or (more commonly) around the rim is found from central to southern Korea. It is sometimes referred to as the *chǒngdo* type. Radiocarbon dates associated with this pottery are late, up to 115 AD, placing it in the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (National Museum of Korea 1981, Ch'oe 1983).

Thus we see that *mumun* pottery varies both spatially and temporally. What can we make of this? The most obvious conclusion is that *mumun* is found throughout the Korean peninsula, but with regional variants. Again, so-called *mumun* has dates that cover a more than 2000-year span. Using *mumun* as a time marker consequently obscures the fact that megaliths, stone cists, rice and bronze seem to have appeared in Korea at different times across this 2000 year period, with possibly different ports of entry and different trajectories.

Stone cists and Mumun

The major type of pottery found in stone cists is not *mumun*, but burnished red jars. These are usually small and globular, with short necks and out-flaring rims. Their walls are thinner than *mumun*, and the vessels appear to be fired at a higher temperature. Associated stone tools, however, are also found at dwelling sites where *mumun* is abundant, and sherds of red burnished jars rarely turn up at habitation sites. The association seems confirmed, but indirect.

The distribution of stone cists and red jars includes the Tumen river and the northeast coast, sites uncovered along the east coast near Yangyang and the basin of the North and South Han river branches, southwest Korea, and the lower Naktong river (An 1977).

Megaliths and Mumun

Megaliths are found in several forms: table dolmens, *paduk*-table dolmens, dolmens without propping stones, and menhirs (Hwang 1981). Except for menhirs, these stone formations usually mark burial sites. Table dolmens, also called "northern style" dolmens, probably continued the grave within the above-ground structure. Easy to rob, these constructions nowadays provide little information and virtually no associated artifacts. Southern style dolmens, in contrast, mark subterranean graves, are difficult to move, and cannot be easily distinguished from natural boulders. It is not surprising that the recovery of

objects and even skeletal material from beneath the cap stone is more common than from northern style dolmens.

The structure of the burial beneath the dolmen structure may be a stone cist, a jar, or a simple pit (in roughly chronological order). Stone cists, as noted above, tend to contain red burnished pottery, but the jars may be *mumun* jars. Round-based early jars were never used in this manner, but later forms of *mumun*, especially those with basal oval depressions, may be used for burials.

Rice and Mumun

Sites at which rice has been discovered contain *mumun* or later styles of pottery. The Songgungni and Hunamni sites are in particular firmly associated with rice at least as early as 850 B.C. The types of *mumun* found include both *karak* and *kongyul*, as well as jars with narrow necks. Rice was also found with *mumun* at Namgyŏng near Pyŏngyang, along with millets and soybeans (Kim and Sŏk 1984). These latter sites also establish a connection between rice, *mumun*, and polished stone daggers and arrowheads.

Bronze and Mumun

Songgungni, with its nearby stone cist burial including a bronze dagger of the Puyo style, demonstrates a firm relationship between bronze and the *mumun* of the central west coast styles. It is unknown whether this particular

dagger was made locally or imported. But to designate any appearance of *mumun* as Bronze Age appears inappropriate, and is unlikely to lead to any better understanding of this period of Korean prehistory. Tight assemblages of bronze, stone cists, dolmens, rice, and diamond cross-sectioned projectile points are associated only with *karak* and *kongyul* pottery in South Korea, and possibly with *p'aengi* pottery in the northern Hwanghae and South *P'yŏngan* provinces. The *ichungko* of the south coast have few of the same attributes, and the dates are much earlier.

Conclusion

In order to begin to get a better grasp of the Megalithic period, it seems wise to abandon the general categorization of *mumun*, and to use terms that are more specific in both time and place. In particular, *karak* ware appears to be a valid time marker for perhaps 1000 through 500 B.C. throughout the southern part of the peninsula. With a more fine-grained grid to build on, it may become possible to examine the process of culture change, and the effects of rice and bronze on the local economy.

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