



**Special Review**

# Important Archaeological Sites in Korea

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The Review of Korean Studies



## Editor's Note

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In the last issue of the *Review of Korean Studies* (hereafter, *RKS*), the December 2021 issue, we invited total of five Korean scholars and asked them to provide us with a special review on specific Korean cultural legacies that have so far been recognized by UNESCO. It was a magnificent opportunity for both the readers and us at the *RKS*, as it gave us all a chance to recollect on the supreme nature of all those Korean legacies.

However, certain circumstances at the moment prevented us from reviewing all Korean legacies that were ever acknowledged by UNESCO, so some of them had to be reserved for similar occasions in the future. One of them was Korean dolmens, so to finish what we started, the *RKS* started to develop a special review plan for them. In the process of doing so, however, it occurred to us that we should host a number of scholars who could provide their incredible insights on not only dolmens but important prehistoric archaeological findings ever found on the Korean peninsula as well. And the *RKS* is now happy to report that four outstanding Korean scholars agreed to join the occasion, and that they contributed their special reviews on various aspects of the prehistoric culture of Korea.

## Tomb Murals of Korea

Professor Ho-Tae Jeon from the University of Ulsan is a renowned expert in Korean mural tombs and has been engaged in studies of tomb murals for his entire career. In this enlightening review, he first discusses the mural tombs from the Three Kingdoms period, as well as those from the following eras. The former ones refer to of course first the Koguryo mural tombs, which constitute the majority of examples discussed here in the review. And then he examines the mural tombs from other ancient polities like Gaya, or kingdoms such as Baekje

and Silla, and cases with legible murals from the Balhae dynasty as well. He also chose to discuss Koryo mural tombs, of which a surprising number of them remains today, as well as the Joseon ones. All these visual records of the past people's lives are so important, and Professor Jeon's review brings us even closer to them. Please enjoy all the details you can find from the eternal resting places of past individuals.

## Korea's Dolmens

Professor Sung-joo Lee from the Kyungpook National University provided us with an extraordinary review on Korean Dolmens. According to him, among diverse types of Bronze Age tombs the dolmen may be the most characteristic one, not only in terms of the number of cases, but also in terms of the length of time they were produced and the extent of region covered by them. He also points out that while those that are recognized as dolmens do share certain common figures, it is not easy to define a dolmen, so Professor Lee categorically reviews the external features of dolmens, how they are constructed in groups, when they were created and where they are located, as well as things that were found inside. He also discusses how scholars' points of view perceiving these dolmens have changed over the years. Thanks to his review, we can now better appreciate the importance of Dolmens, which let us imagine the dynamic lives of the people of the Bronze Age.

## Investigation, Interpretation, and Research on a Bronze Age Site on Jungdo: Culture, Chronology, People, and Society

Professor Oh Kangwon from the Academy of Korean Studies provided us with a special review on a very important—and exceptionally wide—Bronze Age site that was only archaeologically excavated in full-scale during the 2010s, the HaJungdo (“Jungdo”) site at Chuncheon city in the Gangwon Province of Korea. According to Professor Oh, the Jungdo site is South Korea's largest Bronze Age site that has ever been investigated and also serves as the marker site for the “Jungdo type,” the definitive form of Iron Age culture of the Korean peninsula's central region. More than 2,000 Bronze Age sites including

residences and tombs were found and investigated. The professor emphasizes that their features, as well as all the artifacts that were found here, will prove to be extremely useful in future research of the material culture and chronology of the Bronze Age that prospered not only on the west side of Gangwon Province, but in the entire South Korean region in general.

## A Review of the Songguk-ri Site

Professor Joonho Son from the Korean University contributed a special review on the Songguk-ri site, located in the Buyeo area of Korea. According to him, full-scale excavations that began in mid-1970s quickly revealed the site's importance as a complete Bronze Age settlement and provided the Bronze Age research with a crucial breakthrough, resulting in the formulation of the “Songguk-ri type.” Professor Son also provides us with an informative recap on the academic significance and value of the Songguk-ri site, which is articulated in three distinctive categories: the meaning of the excavation itself, the value of newfound data, and possibilities for future research. He points out that unlike other large-scale sites, this site in particular provides us with an extensive and comprehensive vision of a Bronze Age settlement. But he also cautions us that we should come up with a way to secure the maximum amount of information, with minimal damage during excavations.

With all these reviews, the *RKS* wishes the readers would be able to learn what it was like on the Korean peninsula in its prehistoric phases. The *RKS* once again expresses its deepest gratitude to all four scholars and humbly honors their passion and dedication. Hope you all enjoy their reviews.

