

KEYHOLE-SHAPED TOMBS IN THE YŎNGSAN RIVER BASIN: A REFLECTION OF PAEKCHE-YAMATO RELATIONS IN THE LATE FIFTH– EARLY SIXTH CENTURY

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Keyhole-shaped tombs were originally thought to only exist on the Japanese archipelago and to mark the hegemony of the early Japanese Empire. The discovery of keyhole-shaped tombs on the southwestern Korean peninsula in the Yŏngsan River basin reignited the debate on the nature of the relationship between early “Korean” and “Japanese” polities between the fourth–seventh centuries CE. Questions about the identity of those buried in the “Korean” keyhole-shaped tombs became a hot topic: Were they Paekche? Japanese or Wa? Or Mahan? These tombs only appeared for a single generation in the late fifth–early sixth century in a region that was quickly adopting influences from Paekche and the Japanese archipelago until the region was absorbed by Paekche by the early sixth century. Based on the limited textual evidence, I argue that Paekche’s move south in 475 and the instability of the Yamato court in the late fifth and early sixth centuries created opportunities for the local elites in the Yŏngsan River basin to make connections with both Paekche, Yamato, and other regional elites in northern Kyushu to create an eclectic and multicultural environment that gave rise not only to keyhole-shaped tumuli but also to other burial innovations in the Yŏngsan River basin.

Key Words: Early Korean-Japanese Relations, Paekche, Yamato, Yŏngsan River Basin

With the rise of nationalism came the claiming of historical monuments and archaeological sites as physical manifestations of national identity. In East Asia, historical ownership of material culture is further reinforced by long historiographical traditions that emphasize political and cultural continuity to an ancient past. Like the Egyptian pyramids, one prominent example of this intersection of nationalism, archaeology, and historical texts in East Asia is the keyhole-shaped

tumuli (𤮗*zenpō kōenfun* 前方後円墳)¹ in Japan. Ranging from several dozens to several hundreds of meters in length, these massive mounded tombs seem ubiquitous on the Japanese archipelago. The Daisen Kofun 大仙陵古墳 in present-day Osaka, Japan is the largest and most famous example, measuring a maximum of 840 meters long, 654 meters wide, and 35.8 meters high with the central mounded tomb surrounded by moats (see Figure 1).²

¹ The Japanese term 𤮗*zenpō kōenfun* (K. *chōnbang hūwōnbun* 前方後円墳) literally means “square front round back tumulus.” In general, these tombs did have a round component with a rectangular component attached to it (usually an elongated trapezoid in form). However, the generally accepted term referring to those tombs in the English-language literature is “keyhole-shaped tumuli,” which refers to their likeness to traditional keyholes used in the West. It is questionable if this translation is adequate as different scholars writing in languages other than English use a variety of terms for this particular tomb shape. Scholars in South Korea, for example, consciously try to distinguish the tombs found on the Japanese archipelago and similar ones on the Korean peninsula by using different terms. For example, Im Yōngjin refers to the graves on the Korean peninsula as *changgobun* 長鼓墳, which literally means “long drum mounded tumuli” taking the name from a traditional Korean drum that has an hour-glass shape. Other scholars, such as Kim Nakchung describe the same tombs as *chōnbang hūwōnbunhyōng kobun* 前方後圓形古墳, which literally means “square front round back-shaped mounded tomb,” [emphasis mine] in order to prevent the possible misunderstanding that the keyhole-shaped tombs on the Korean peninsula were under the authority of the Japanese Yamato court. Unfortunately, these distinctions become “lost in translation” when using the term “keyhole-shaped tumuli” for all varieties. Originally, I considered rendering 𤮗*zenpō kōenfun* as “keyhole tomb tumuli,” *changgobun* as “hourglass tumuli” and *chōnbang hūwōnbunhyōng kobun* as “keyhole-shaped tumuli,” but I found that attempting to preserve the usage of different scholars for the same type of tomb only proved more confusing than helpful. Although Kim Nakchung’s argument to avoid equating tomb shapes and political control are valid, there are cases of keyhole-shaped tombs on the Japanese archipelago that were not necessarily under Yamato political control either, but all of them shared structural traits that made them a distinct burial system, including the ones on the Korean peninsula. Therefore, for this article, instead of preserving the diverse terminology used to describe this particular burial system, I will use the general term “keyhole-shaped tomb.” For a more detailed discussion of the problems of using different terminology, see Taehan Munhwa Yusan Yōn’gu Sent’ō, ed., *Hanbando ūi chōnbang hūwōnbun* [Keyhole tombs of the Korean peninsula] (Seoul: Hagyōn munhwasa, 2011), 13–21.

² Sakai City, “Nintoku tennōryō kofun hyakka [Facts on Emperor Nintoku’s tomb],” Japanese Government, December 23, 2014, <http://www.city.sakai.lg.jp/kanko/hakubutsukan/kofun.html>.



Figure 1: The Daisen Kofun in Sakai City, Osaka, Japan³

Japanese nationalist historians claim that the largest of these massive mounded tombs or *kofun* 古墳 (K. *kobun*) were the resting places of “emperors”⁴ described in the earliest extant Japanese historical sources, the *Kojiki* 古事記 (compiled 712 CE⁵) and the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (compiled 720). Therefore, the appearance of keyhole-shaped tumuli (ca. mid-third century) marked the beginning of “Japan” and the Japanese nation. In other words, keyhole-shaped tumuli archaeologically symbolize the beginning of an “unbroken Japanese imperial line” and the “integration of the [Japanese] nation.”⁶ As highly conspicuous physical representations of Japanese national identity seen through historical texts, keyhole-shaped tumuli were considered to be a uniquely “Japanese” burial system and presumed only to exist on the Japanese archipelago.

³ Photo and copyright belong to the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism 国土画像情報（カラー空中写真）国土交通省]. Image taken from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofun#/media/File:NintokuTomb.jpg> and accessed April 27th, 2018.

⁴ The Imperial Household Agency (宮内庁) absorbed the functions of the Office of Imperial Mausolea (諸陵寮) in 1949 and is a government agency in Japan that is charged with designating keyhole tumuli as “imperial tombs” recorded in the historical texts, but the process continues to be quite arbitrary with little historical or archaeological basis. As these are considered imperial tombs, access is generally prohibited, and archaeological excavations are completely out of the question. Therefore, any data that these tumuli might contain will remain unknown for the time being. For a further discussion on this issue, see Hiroshi Takagi, *Ryobo to bunkazai no kindai* [The modernity of the imperial tombs and cultural properties] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2010), 100–105.

⁵ All dates are in CE unless otherwise indicated.

⁶ Koji Mizoguchi, *The Archaeology of Japan: From the Earliest Rice Farming Villages to the Rise of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5.

However, South Korean scholar Kang In'gu shattered this understanding when he announced that he had confirmed the presence of keyhole-shaped tumuli on the Korean peninsula, more specifically in the Yöngsan River basin in South Chölla Province.⁷ On the one hand, Korean scholars had successfully ignored or refuted Japanese nationalist claims that an early Japan had conquered and controlled the southern part of the Korean peninsula from the fourth–sixth century⁸, due to a lack of archaeological evidence, but these tombs threatened to overturn that view. Likewise, Kang's assertion that keyhole-shaped tumuli originated in Korea challenged the Japanese nationalist narrative that they symbolized the autonomous formation of a native Japanese state. Since then, scholars on both sides of the Korea Strait have produced a wide range of opinions on this topic due to its importance in understanding early Korean-Japanese relations and its potential impact on national identity narratives. The central question became, who were buried in these keyhole-shaped tumuli on the Korean peninsula?

This article seeks to understand the geopolitical situation of Paekche and Yamato, as seen through historical sources, that may have led to construction of the keyhole-shaped tumuli in the Yöngsan River basin (hereafter “YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli”). Although there are no written records directly pertaining to the Yöngsan River basin during the period when the keyhole-shaped tumuli appear (late fifth–early sixth century), a survey of the geopolitical situation of Paekche and Yamato may help historically contextualize any political or social changes in the Yöngsan River basin and identify external events that may have contributed to the construction of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli.

⁷ In'gu Kang, “Che-5-jang Hanbando ü chönbang huwönbun [Chapter 5 Keyhole tombs of the Korean peninsula],” *Minjok munhwa yön'gu ch'ongsö* 10 (1983): 257–312.

⁸ Often referred to as the Mimana Nihonfu 任那日本府 (K. Imna Ilbonbu) theory, Imperial Japanese scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries selectively and creatively interpreted passages from the *Nihon shoki* to create a narrative that ancient Japan had conquered the southern Korean peninsula from the fourth century and established a colonial apparatus called the Mimana Nihonfu or “Japanese Government Seat of Mimana” in the region associated with the Kaya polities in the Naktong River basin. It was destroyed by the kingdom of Silla in the sixth century. Although this theory has been heavily discredited by both Korean and Japanese historians and archaeologists, this theory continues to persist in Japan even today, particularly among the nationalist Japanese Far Right, who have been pushing for the theory's return to Japanese history textbooks. This, among many other historical issues, continues to be a source of diplomatic friction between Korea and Japan.

BRIEF ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Although the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli attract the most attention, the Yöngsan River basin was already considered an unusual region due to the use of jar coffin burials there since the late third century. This contrasts with the use of wooden or stone burials found in the rest of the Korean peninsula. The material culture of the Yöngsan River basin was so different from regions associated with Paekche, Silla, Koguryö, or even Kaya that Korean archaeologist Hwang Yonghon described it as a “cultural island.”⁹ Some scholars even argued that the Yöngsan River basin was the last bastion of remnant Mahan¹⁰ that were not immediately annexed by Paekche early in its expansion.¹¹ As far as the author is aware, no prestige goods from Paekche, Kaya, or the Japanese archipelago have been found in elite tombs jar burials in the Yöngsan River basin prior to the fifth century, instead preferring its own local prestige goods and ritual pottery.

This changed in the late fifth–early sixth century with the appearance of Paekche gilt-bronze crowns and shoes, decorative horse trappings as well as beads and swords from the Japanese archipelago. Another major innovation starting in the late fifth century was the introduction of horizontal corridor stone chambers. Instead of placing a coffin into a pit and covering it up, a horizontal corridor stone chamber tomb had a stone chamber constructed in the center, where the coffin and ritual objects could be placed, that was linked to an opening at the side of the tomb via a short corridor. The chamber and corridor would be large enough for someone to enter the tomb and place additional coffins or perform later ceremonies inside the tomb after the coffin was placed inside. The unfortunate side effect of this new tomb style was it made robbing the tomb far easier. This innovation on the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago began in Paekche but apparently spread to the Yamato core region in present-day Nara on the Japanese archipelago and spread westward to Kyushu before finally

⁹ Hwang Yonghun, *Yöng'am Naedong-ni onggwanmyo chosa pogo* [Report on the Yöngam Naedong-ni jar-coffin tombs] (Seoul: Kyönghui Taehakkyo Pangmulgwan, 1974), 29.

¹⁰ The Mahan 馬韓 are a collection of polities first mentioned in the *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (comp. late third century) that were located along the western section of the Korean peninsula. The *Samguk sagi* records Paekche's annexation of the Mahan polities as part of its expansion with the assumption that all of them were subsumed very early in Paekche's development. The idea is that those that held out until much later were “remnant” Mahan.

¹¹ Ch'oe Mongnyong, “Kogohakchök ch'üngmyön esö pon Mahan” [Mahan as seen through archaeology], *Mahan Paekche munhwa* 9 (1986): 5–15; Im Yöngjin, “3–5-segi Yöngsan'gang yuyökkwön Mahan seryök üi söngjang paegyöng kwa han'gye [The circumstances and limits to the growth of Mahan power in the Yöngsan River basin from the third to fifth centuries],” in *Paekche wa Yöngsan'gang* [Paekche and the Yöngsan River] (Seoul: Hagiön munhwasa, 2012), 83–132.

reaching the Yōngsan River basin.¹² It is quite a circuitous route to take, considering the Yōngsan River was immediately south of Paekche, but it speaks to the relationships that the Yōngsan River had with people in northern Kyushu. The shapes of tombs also began to change. The earlier jar coffin mounds were originally U-shaped or semicircular in shape, but the late fifth century saw a diversification of tomb shapes, including triangular-shaped tombs, and, of course, the keyhole-shaped tombs.

At present, there are fourteen confirmed YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli, and they were all constructed between the late fifth and early sixth century,¹³ meaning that this tomb style only lasted only one or two generations.¹⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the tens of thousands of keyhole-shaped tumuli found on the Japanese archipelago with constructions dates spanning the third to sixth century. Additionally, the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli are peripherally interspersed among the far more common jar-coffin tumuli, the political center presumed to being the massive cemetery complex in Pannam-myōn near Naju in South Chōlla Province.

What could have prompted this flurry of burial style changes and influx of prestige goods from Paekche and the Japanese archipelago? The answer may partially lie in the historical records of Paekche and Yamato.

PAEKCHE AND YAMATO IN THE LATE FIFTH AND EARLY SIXTH CENTURY

To situate the late fifth and early sixth century historically for Paekche and Yamato, see Table 1. For Paekche, this period starts from the reign of King Kaero (r. 455–475) through King Sōng (r. 523–554). For Yamato, this corresponds to the reigns of Yūryaku (r. 456–479) through Keitai (r. 507–535).¹⁵

¹² Posik Hong, “Yōngsan’gang yuyōk kobun ūi sōngkkyōk kwa ch’ui” [Characteristics and development of tombs in the Yōngsan River basin], *Honam kogohakpo* 21 (2005): 107–37.

¹³ There are some questions about this chronology since relative dating is used based on pottery styles and other archaeological features. However, for the sake of argument, the currently accepted chronologies will be used for this article.

¹⁴ Lee, “Keyhole-Shaped Tombs and Unspoken Frontiers: Exploring the Borderlands of Early Korean-Japanese Relations in the 5th–6th Centuries,” 33.

¹⁵ The names of rulers found in the *Nihon shoki* are mid-to-late eighth century names and not their original names. For example, Yūryaku’s alias in the *Nihon shoki* is Ohatsuse Wakataeru no Mikoto. The name King Wakatakeru is also found on the inscription of the contemporary Inariyama and Eta Funayama sword, which suggests that Yūryaku was actually called King Wakatakeru and posthumously renamed Yūryaku in the eighth century. The case of Keitai is even trickier. For the sake of convenience, I will use the traditional names for rulers listed in the *Nihon shoki* with the understanding that these names are problematic.

Paekche ¹⁶		Yamato ¹⁷	
Ruler Name	Reign Period	Ruler Name	Reign Period
Kaero	455–475	Yūrayku	456–479
Munju	475–477	Seinei	480–484
Samgūn	477–479	Kenzō	485–487
Tongsōng	479–501	Ninken	488–498
Muryōng	501–523	Buretsu	498–506
Sōng	523–554	Keitai	507–531

Table 1: Paekche and Yamato Rulers from the Late Fifth–Early Sixth Century

As mentioned above, virtually no known records directly concerning activities in the Yōngsan River basin exist. However, the increasing presence of burial prestige goods from Paekche and the Japanese archipelago suggests increased contact and developing relations. The Yōngsan River basin's placement along the maritime trade route between Paekche and Yamato also makes it sensitive to events that might affect relations between Paekche and Yamato. To better understand the circumstances of both, we must turn to historical sources such as the earliest extant native Korean history the *Samguk sagi* (comp. 1145) and the *Nihon shoki*. But even those sources are limited and conflicting. The “Paekche Annals” of the *Samguk sagi* is remarkably silent on Paekche's relations with the Yamato court between 428 and 653. Jonathan Best notes that the compilers of the *Samguk sagi* had very little material on Paekche and probably did not have access to Japanese source materials.¹⁶ Therefore, the richest materials still available on Paekche-Yamato relations, albeit scanty, are from the *Nihon shoki*. Other than shifts in the capital, the “Paekche Annals” barely mentions Paekche's southern frontier and says nothing about its southward expansion. For information on most of this, we also have to rely on the *Nihon shoki* for indirect clues at best, for even the *Nihon shoki* mentions nothing directly. Interestingly, most of our knowledge about Paekche's frontier and regional administration comes from Chinese dynastic sources, and even they are also extremely limited. Even with these limitations, the

¹⁶ All dates are taken from the *Samguk sagi* (lit. *Records of the Three Kingdoms*). There are several minor discrepancies of names and dates regarding these rulers and their relationships with each other between the *Samguk sagi* and the *Nihon shoki*. For a full discussion, see Jonathan W. Best, *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche: Together with an Annotated Translation of the Paekche Annals of the Samguk Sagi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2006), 103–16.

¹⁷ All dates taken from the *Nihon shoki*.

¹⁸ Best, *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche: Together with an Annotated Translation of the Paekche Annals of the Samguk Sagi*, 472–73.

available historical sources can provide a rough sketch of important political and military events that may have influenced the Yōngsan River basin.

THE FALL OF HANSŎNG AND THE MOVE TO UNGJIN (475)

It is a curious historical coincidence that the construction of keyhole-shaped tumuli in the Yōngsan River basin begins around the fall of Paekche's original capital of Hansōng (present-day Seoul) in 475, one of the most traumatic events in Paekche history.¹⁹ Koguryō had been constantly threatening Paekche from the north since at least the fourth century and even assaulted Paekche's capital once before.²⁰ The year 475, however, was the first time that Koguryō took the Paekche capital, killed its king Kaero, and completely removed the Paekche ruling elite from the Han River basin. With most of the royal family captured or killed, the surviving remnants re-established a new capital to the south at Ungjin (present-day Kongju). This led to conflicts between the displaced Hansōng elite and the local elites of the new capital. Militant factionalism consumed the Paekche court, which led to a swift succession of short-lived rulers until the reign of King Tongsōng (r. 479–501), who had more success in consolidating his rule but ultimately was assassinated within the context of infighting among the Paekche elite. According to the *Samguk sagi*, Paekche only began to recover during the reign of Muryōng in the early sixth century. In other words, Paekche was militarily weak and somewhat politically unstable for most of the late fifth century.

The construction of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli, as well as the other materials changes happening in the Yōngsan River basin, sometime after Paekche's move south to Ungjin suggests a possible connection between the two. The southern relocation of the Paekche capital and the loss of its territory in the Han River basin would have undoubtedly changed the geopolitics of the southwestern Korean peninsula. Ungjin, on the Kūm River, originally marked the southern edge of Paekche territory, meaning that Paekche's center had now shifted to its southernmost limit. Confronting the possibility that Koguryō would have continued further south, the remnant Paekche elite would have sought refuge as far south on territory it solidly controlled without leaving it altogether. The fortress at Ungjin would have made a logical choice in that regard. Paekche had not made any inroads into the Yōngsan River basin prior to the late fifth century.

¹⁹ *Samguk sagi* [here after *SGSG*] 25 (Kaero 21:9). The text used is from Kim Pusik, *Samguk sagi* 三國事記, trans. Kangnae Yi (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 2004).

²⁰ The Kwanggaet'o stele inscription notes a naval attack on the Paekche capital in 396, which forced Paekche to surrender and declare fealty to Koguryō. See [HKK 1:10(f) and 18(f)].

With Paekche's interests now turning south, this would have created more opportunities and incentives for Paekche to cultivate relationships in the Yōngsan River basin, especially in its weakened condition soon after its move to Ungjin. Later, as Paekche gained in military and economic strength, it could have converted those relationships with Yōngsan River basin polities into annexation. In this regard, this change in geopolitics presented both an opportunity and a threat to the polities in the Yōngsan River basin. Paekche offered advanced technology, culture, and political legitimacy, while the Yōngsan River basin offered human as well as agricultural resources from its large swaths of arable land. At the same time, increased Paekche influence also threatened the autonomy of the Yōngsan River basin polities, which may have encouraged local polities opposed to Paekche to seek other places for support, such as polities on the Japanese archipelago.

YAMATO INSTABILITY

The Japanese archipelago was far from a singular unified empire as described in the *Nihon shoki* and was more a loosely connected network of polities with Yamato (located in present-day Nara, Japan) at the center. Although the *Nihon shoki* claims places, such as Tsukushi (present-day northern Kyushu), as provinces under direct control of the Yamato court, it was merely an anachronistic projection of Yamato's eighth-century political situation into the past. In reality, the Yamato court's hold on Kyushu up until the early sixth century was based on a series of constantly negotiated relationships (fictitious or actual) with regional authorities,²¹ who had their own autonomy and own relations with other regions, such as the Yōngsan River basin. This was especially true in the late fifth century after the death of Yūryaku in 479.

The Yamato court was plagued with succession issues, competing factions, a rash of "rebellions" of powerful lineages, as the Yamato court tried to continue its process of consolidating rule over the Japanese archipelago. Things became so dramatic that one of the imperial princes was roasted alive.²² For almost the next three decades there was a succession of several rulers with relatively short reigns until Keitai in 507. Even Keitai, according to the *Nihon shoki*, was an outsider of

²¹ Koji Mizoguchi, "Nodes and Edges: A Network Approach to Hierarchisation and State Formation in Japan," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 28, no. 1 (2009): 14–26.

²² *Nihon shoki* [hereafter] *NS* 15 (Seinei 1). The text used is from Noriyuki Kojima, trans., *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, vol. 2–4, Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 新編日本古典文学全集 (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1994).

the Yamato core and originally came from Tamba Province 丹波国 (part of present-day Kyoto Prefecture and Hyōgo Prefecture). In other words, powerful local authorities outside the Yamato core region were competing for power at the Yamato court.

This instability at the Yamato court weakened its influence on frontier local authorities, such as those on Kyushu, who were part of the Yamato network of kinship ties. This weakening may have incentivized local authorities, such as those in Kyushu, or those outside the Yamato court to further strengthen their own ties with other regions, such as the Yōngsan River basin. We can see evidence of this interaction with the appearance of material culture from the Yōngsan River in northern Kyushu along the Ariake Sea as well as Kyushu prestige goods and Kyushu-style horizontal corridor stone chambers appearing in the Yōngsan River basin tombs in the late fifth and early sixth century.²³ As with Paekche, Yamato found itself in a weakened state for most of the late fifth century and only began to reassert itself in the early sixth century.

This idea of powerful independent Kyushu elites is supported in the *Nihon shoki* with examples such as the story of Iwai's Rebellion. Kyushu had the geographic advantage of occupying the middle of the valuable trade route between the Korean peninsula and the Yamato court. For the most part, the *Nihon shoki* portrays Tsukushi in northern Kyushu as being a cooperative partner in its dealings with the southern Korean peninsula. This, however, was not the case when a powerful local Kyushu leader, Iwai of Tsukushi, resisted Yamato's attempt to support the Kaya region in 527.²⁴ This shows that the regional authorities in Kyushu were strong enough to keep an expeditionary force from Yamato at bay if they wanted to and had considerable control over the sea routes between the Korean peninsula and the Yamato court. Second, the Yamato court called Tsukushi "the territory of the Western Barbarians" or *seijū* 西戎, which could also translate to the "western wilderness," and is probably used here to denigrate Tsukushi, but it also points out that Tsukushi is Yamato's western borderland, which it obviously did not have full control over. It is possible that the prior instability at the Yamato court after Yūryaku's reign encouraged elites in Kyushu to rely less on Yamato and to grow more independent, resulting in this military conflict. It is also telling that the Yamato ruler "allowed" the local elites to rule Kyushu after putting down Iwai's rebellion, leaving only Honshu for himself.

²³ Pak Ch'ōnsu, "Yōngsan'gang yuyōk chōnbun huwōnbun e taehan yōn'gusa kōmt'o wa saeroun chomyōng" [A review and new insights into the research on the keyhole-shaped tombs of the Yōngsan River basin], in *Hanbando ūi chōnbang huwōnbun* [Keyhole tombs of the Korean peninsula] (Seoul: Hagyōn munhwasa, 2011), 175–255.

²⁴ *NS* 17 (Keitai 22:12).

Even at this point, Yamato continued to rely on these relationships to enforce its influence. As Iwai refused to acknowledge the reciprocal responsibilities of the relationship, he was eventually replaced by someone who would.

As for this account's relevance to the Yōngsan River basin, it indirectly shows that the Kyushu region during the construction period of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli had the autonomy to form its own relationships with groups on the Korean peninsula, as Iwai had also tried to bribe Silla officials for his own purposes. Instead of seeing the keyhole-shaped tombs in the Yōngsan River basin as extensions of Yamato power, they could merely be reflecting ties with other local elites in northern Kyushu during the late fifth–early sixth centuries.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH PAEKCHE AND YAMATO AFFILIATION

In the milieu of a disrupted Paekche and Yamato, it appears that local authorities in between the Paekche-Yamato trading network took advantage of the situation to further their own political and economic interests. However, Paekche also quickly started engaging with its southern neighbors and began expanding its influence. We see evidence of this with the discovery of Paekche prestige goods, such as Paekche gilt-bronze crowns and shoes, found in most of the local authority tombs of the Yōngsan River basin, such as Sinch'on-ni Tomb 9 (present-day Pannam-myōn in Naju, South Chōlla Province). At the same time, there were also prestige goods from the Japanese archipelago, such as swords and beads, in the same tombs. There was considerable variation in the piece-meal eclectic nature of Yōngsan River basin tombs in the late fifth–early sixth century. The keyhole-shaped tombs there simply could have represented one of these variations as local elites in the Yōngsan River basin competed for recognition from the Paekche or Yamato court or simply tried to represent their strong ties with other local elites in Kyushu or other parts of the Japanese archipelago.

We see some possible evidence of this in the *Nihon shoki* but for the neighboring region of Kaya. Although the Yōngsan River basin is never mentioned, local authorities carrying title and ranks from both the Paekche and the Yamato courts from the Kaya region are recorded. It is entirely possible that local authorities from the Yōngsan River basin could have similarly held title and ranks from Paekche and Yamato courts as well.

The earliest example of this recorded in the *Nihon shoki* is Hozumi no Omi Oshiyama 穗積臣押山,²⁵ who was the regional authority of Tari 哆唎國 in the Kaya region. In 512, the Yamato court had Oshiyama send forty-four horses from Tsukushi as tribute to Paekche.²⁶ It seems odd that the Yamato court would ask a Kaya regional authority to procure horses from Kyushu to send to the Paekche court, unless he had strong connections with both courts and Kyushu. It may also indicate Oshiyama's influential position on the Paekche-Kaya-Kyushu-Yamato trading network. In the twelfth lunar month of the same year, Oshiyama accompanied a Paekche envoy to Yamato requesting ownership over the following "four districts of Mimana" 任那四県: Upper Tari 上哆唎, Lower Tari 下哆唎, Sat'a 娑陀 (J. Sada), and Moru 牟婁. Oshiyama, as the authority of Tari, made the following impassioned plea:

[512] Hozumi no Omi Oshiyama, the governor of the land of Tari, petitioned the [Yamato] emperor saying, "These four districts are closely connected to Paekche but distantly separated from Japan. Morning and night [Paekche and Tari] exchange communications, and our chickens and dogs [are so close to each other] it is difficult to distinguish [whose are whose].²⁷ If [these counties] are now bestowed to Paekche and joined together to form the same country, then there is no better policy. True there may be a threat to future generations if [these counties] are bestowed to make a unified country. But how many years can [they] be defended if they are separate?"

哆唎國守穗積臣押山奏曰「此四縣、近連百濟、遠隔日本、旦暮易通、
鷄犬難別。今賜百濟合爲同國、固存之策、無以過此。然縱賜合國、
後世猶危、況爲異場、幾年能守。」²⁸

The request was subsequently granted.²⁹

²⁵ Omi 臣 was a Yamato hereditary title or *kabane* 性 reserved for the most powerful lineages. Traditionally, those who held the *kanabe* of *omi* were considered branches of the imperial line whether fictitious or real. The part of the title in front of Omi was usually a territorial designation, usually their place of origin.

²⁶ NS 17 (Keitai 6:4).

²⁷ This appears to be an allusion to Laozi in a similar line in the *Daodejing* 道德經 where it describes neighboring states being so close that they can "hear the sounds of each other's chickens and dogs" 雞犬之聲相聞.

²⁸ NS 17 (Keitai 6:12).

²⁹ The designations for these place names to present-day are in many ways just as arbitrary as Suematsu's choice to equate the "four counties of Mimana" to the Yōngsan River basin. In the case of Kimun and Taesa, there seems to be a general agreement among Korean and Japanese scholars about their present-day equivalents. See Kim T'aesik, *Kaya yōnmaeng sa* [History of the

Oshiyama's impassioned plea tells us several things. One, Paekche at this time had expanded far enough to neighbor Tari on the Sömjin River. Second, Oshiyama had calculated that merging his territory with Paekche would be more beneficial than being independent or continuing relations with Yamato. This provides an example of a regional elite willing to merge his territory into Paekche and join the ranks of Paekche's elites for political and/or economic reasons and not within the context of a conquest. A similar situation may have been developing in the Yöngsan River basin as well.

On the other hand, some Japanese scholars believe that the "four districts of Mimana" are in the Yöngsan River basin.³⁰ All of these theories, however, are based on very arbitrary and questionable linguistic work done by Suematsu Yasukazu, who looked at Paekche place names and tried to find ones that sounded similar to the ones of the four districts in present-day South Korea. One example is his arbitrary decision that Moru was the same as present-day Muan in South Chölla Province. According to the "Monograph of Geography" in the *Samguk sagi*, the old Paekche name for Muan was Murahye 勿阿兮. Suematsu argues that this name would have been pronounced "mur-a-xoi" at the time, which happens to sound similar to Moru.³¹ No other evidence is presented, and no further analysis or even sources for his reconstruction are given. Yet many Japanese nationalist scholars have taken his geographic designations as canon and do not question them. In addition, if Oshiyama is considered a regional authority of the Yöngsan River basin, his participation in the following Paekche tribute mission to Yamato is problematic:³²

[513] Seventh Year, Summer, Sixth Month. Paekche sent General Chömi Mun'gwi [J. Sami Monki] and General Churi Chügi [J. Tsuru Soni], along with Hozumi no Omi Oshiyama (the Paekche Annals say, "Commissioned Lord Oshiyama.") to present a scholar of the Five Confucian Classics Tan Yangi³³ and a separate memorial that said, "the land of Panp'a [Tae Kaya]³⁴

Kaya confederation] (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1993), 116-124; Suematsu, *Mimana kobōshi* [A history of the rise and fall of Mimana], 130.

³⁰ Suematsu, *Mimana kobōshi* 任那興亡史 [A history of the rise and fall of Mimana], 123.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

³² Recently, there is a view that these four districts of Mimana are related to the fall of Kümngwan Kaya and is in the region of Kimhae. See Hideo Suzuki, "Iwayuru 'Mimana shiken katsujō' mondai to Ōtomo Kanamura no shikkyaku: 'Kumanari' to 'Mimana shiken' no ichi [The so-called 'Yielding of the four districts of Mimana' and the downfall of Ōtomo Kanamura: The location of 'Kumanari' and the 'four districts of Mimana,'" *Kokugakuin daigaku kiyo* 48 (2010): 277-95.

³³ The person most likely was a person of Paekche of Han Chinese-descent based on the name.

³⁴ Panp'a is generally thought to be the polity of Tae Kaya, which was based out of present-day Koryōng, North Kyöngsang Province in the Naktong River basin.

has seized our land of Kimun [J. Komon].³⁵ We humbly wish that your Heavenly favor can restore it to its original jurisdiction.”

七年夏六月、百濟遣姐彌文貴將軍・洲利卽爾將軍、副穗積臣押山[百濟本記云、委意斯移麻岐彌]貢五經博士段楊爾、別奏云「伴跋國、略奪臣國已汶之地。伏願、天恩判還本屬。」³⁶

If this passage is accurate, Tae Kaya (i.e. Panp'a) and Paekche were both expanding into the upper reaches of the Sōmjīn River basin and apparently clashing with each other. Not only did Paekche absorb Kimun, but several months later, thanks to Yamato diplomacy, it had also absorbed Taesa 帶沙 (present-day Hadong, South Kyōngsang Province) at the mouth of the Sōmjīn River.³⁷ Oshiyama's participation in this would only make sense if he were already a regional authority of the Sōmjīn River and could negotiate on behalf of Paekche. As a local authority of the Yōngsan River basin, he would have very little influence on the outcome of this negotiation.

The presence of Oshiyama as a regional authority of the Sōmjīn River basin and mediator between Paekche, Yamato, and the Sōmjīn River authorities is also a possible model for something similar happening in the Yōngsan River basin. It is also interesting to note that Oshiyama is still recorded with his Yamato title Hozumi no Omi while also holding a Paekche title as well. Kimun or Taesa was not one of the “four districts” that Paekche had acquired the previous year, but it is clear that Paekche's expansion into the Sōmjīn River basin was nearing completion by this point, according to the *Nihon shoki*. A similar expansion may have also been occurring in the Yōngsan River basin as well, since the Yōngsan River basin is geographically adjacent to the Sōmjīn River basin. Based on Paekche's expansion into the Sōmjīn River basin, the local authorities in the Yōngsan River basin would have been keenly aware of Paekche's southern intentions. Whether some embraced it, as Oshiyama had, or resisted it is a question that cannot be answered with the extant texts.

PAEKCHE OFFICIALS OF WA-DESCENT

Other theories on the identity of the occupants of the keyhole-shaped tumuli in the Yōngsan River basin argue that they are Paekche officials of Wa-descent. Wa

³⁵ Kimun is thought to be in present-day Namwŏn, North Chōlla Province in the Sōmjīn River basin.

³⁶ NS 17 (Keitai 7:6).

³⁷ NS 17 (Keitai 7:11).

being loosely defined as natives of the Japanese archipelago who subscribed to the keyhole-shaped tumuli culture. There are several variations of this, but they all try to explain the eclectic nature of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli (i.e. combination of Paekche, Japanese archipelago, local elements) by creating a scenario where someone from the Japanese archipelago is recruited by Paekche and is essentially bicultural, which is then reflected in their burial style.

Interestingly, the *Nihon shoki* does mention a number of Paekche official of Wa-descent, and they suddenly appear in the early part of Yamato ruler Kinmei's reign (r. 539–571), which overlaps with Paekche's King Sōng's reign (r. 523–554). Paekche's foreign relations situation at the time consisted of fighting with Koguryō in the north and confronting Silla in the Kaya region in the south. In the early sixth century, Silla began expanding into the Kaya region, which, according to the *Nihon shoki*, alarmed Paekche and Yamato. As a result, many envoys were sent from Paekche and Yamato to the Kaya region to try to find a solution to the Silla crisis. Unable to find a diplomatic solution, the situation quickly deteriorated into a conflict, which the Kaya polities lost. The following is a chronological list of Paekche officials of Wa-descent found in the *Nihon shoki* during the reigns of Keitai and Kinmei:

[512, 513, 529] Hozumi no Omi Oshiyama 穗積臣押山

[516] Shinano Ahita 斯那奴阿比多³⁸

[541, 542, 544] Nasol Ki no Omi 紀臣奈率³⁹

[543] Sidōk Mononobe no Makamu 物部施德麻哥牟⁴⁰

[544; 545] Nasol Mononobe no Yōkata no Muraji 物部連奈率用歌多⁴¹

[544] Nasol Kose Kama 許勢奈率歌麻⁴²

[544] Nasol Mononobe no Kahi 物部奈率歌非⁴³

[553] Nasol Shinano Shishu of the Upper Division 上部德率科野⁴⁴

[553] Kawachibe no Ashihita 河内部阿斯比多⁴⁵

[553] Nasol Shinano Shiragi of the Upper Division 上部奈率科野新羅⁴⁶

³⁸ NS 17 (Keitai 10:9).

³⁹ NS 19 (Kinmei 2:7; 3:7; 5:2). According to the commentary in the *Nihon shoki*, Nasol Ki no Omi was probably the son of Ki no Omi and a woman from the Korean peninsula, who remained in the country and was made Nasol by Paekche. It is not clear who his father was. Here Ki no Omi is just a hereditary title and not a personal name.

⁴⁰ NS 19 (Kinmei 4:9).

⁴¹ NS 19 (Kinmei 5:2; 6:5).

⁴² NS 19 (Kinmei 5:3; 5:10; 5:11).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ NS 19 (Kinmei 14:1).

⁴⁵ NS 19 (Kinmei 14:1).

⁴⁶ NS 19 (Kinmei 14:8).

[554] Nasol Mononobe no Kaku of the Upper division 上部奈率物部烏⁴⁷

[554] Governor of the Eastern Province Mononobe no Makamu no Muraji
東方領物 部莫哥武連⁴⁸

The lineages of some of these Paekche officials of Wa-descent are the same as those that form the core of the Yamato court, such as Ki 紀氏, Mononobe 物部氏, Shinano 科野(斯那奴, 斯奈奴)氏, Kose 許勢氏, which suggests that they had connections at the Yamato court as well.⁴⁹ With the exception of Mononobe no Makamu no Muraji, these Paekche officials of Wa-descent functioned primarily to request military assistance from the Yamato court or were sent to Kaya to devise strategies to restore the Kaya polities that were being annexed by Silla.

Among the above-listed historical figures who had dual Paekche-Yamato ranks and title, Mononobe no Makamu no Muraji is notable because he served as a high-ranking Paekche military officer and was even governor of Paekche's Eastern Province 東方. Since provincial governors had to have held at the rank of *talsol* [second highest rank out of sixteen], Mononobe no Makamu no Muraji would have been the highest-ranking dual Paekche-Yamato official ever recorded. In 554, as the governor of the Eastern Province, he was assigned to attack Silla's Hamsan Fortress (present-day Okch'ŏn), where Paekche's King Sŏng was killed. Mononobe no Makamu no Muraji was of the Mononobe lineage, who handled military affairs in Yamato. The headquarters of the Eastern Province was in present-day South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. Therefore, if he had been buried in a keyhole-shaped tumulus, it would have been there or in the Paekche capital of Sabi but not in the Yŏngsan River basin.

Starting in the 540s, there was a sudden jump in the number of recorded Paekche officials of Wa-descent. This also happens to coincide with Paekche's annexation of the Yŏngsan and Sŏmjŏn River basins. This suggests that there may have been local authorities of Wa-descent, who had connections with both Paekche and Yamato and were absorbed into the Paekche central elite. In fact,

⁴⁷ NS 19 (Kinmei 15:2).

⁴⁸ NS 19 (Kinmei 15:12).

⁴⁹ Yi Chaesŏk, "Sowi Waegye Paekche kwallyo wa Yamato wanggwŏn" [The so-called Wae Paekche officials and the Yamato royal authority], *Han'guk kodaesa yŏn'gu* 20 (December 2000): 531–67; Paek Sŏngch'ung, "Imna Ilbonbu wa Paekche-Waegye kwallyo [Mimana Nihonfu and Paekche's Officials of Wae-descent]," in *Kangŏn Han'guk kodaesa che-4-kwŏn: kodae kukka ŏi taese kwan'gye* [Lectures on ancient Korean History, Volume 4: Foreign relations of the ancient state] (Seoul: Karakkuk sajŏk kaebal yŏn'guwŏn, 2003), 395; Yŏn Minsu, "6-segi chŏnban Kaya cheguk ŏl tullŏssan Paekche, Silla ŏi tonghyang" [Trends in Paekche and Silla surrounding Kaya in the early 6th century], *Silla munhwa* 7 (December 1990): 105–43.

Paekche's countryside already seemed to have been quite diverse as indicated by the Chinese dynastic histories *Suishu* 隨書 (compiled in 636) and the *Nanshi* 南史 (compiled in 659):

A province [in Paekche] has [up to] ten prefectures. Each prefecture has a general. The people are a mix of Silla, Koguryŏ, Wa, etc., and there are even Chinese.

方有十郡，郡有將。其人雜有新羅、高麗、倭等，亦有中國人。⁵⁰

Paekche could have found these local authorities of Wa-descent, quite useful for their connections with other regional authorities and their positions on the Paekche-Kaya-Kyushu-Yamato trade network. Yŏn Minsu speculates that these Paekche officials of Wa-descent would have also been useful for their language skills as well, although the Paekche and Wa seemed to have had no trouble communicating previously.⁵¹

The main problem connecting these figures to those buried in the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli is the chronology. These Paekche officials of Wa-descent appeared after the last of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli were constructed, so they could not be the ones buried in them. The only possibilities are that the above Paekche officials of Wa-descent are the offspring of those buried in the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli or that the tomb chronology is incorrect. The chronology of the texts is difficult to question since the circumstances of their activities (i.e. Silla's annexation of the Kaya region) is cross-verified in other texts, such as the *Samguk sagi*.

HISTORICAL FIGURES OF MIXED HERITAGE

Current theories regarding the identity of those entombed in the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli have been restricted to limited identity labels found in historical texts, such as Wa, Paekche, or Mahan. I argue that some of the entombed may not have fallen so easily into either textually-derived category of identity and could be a mixed category or something different altogether, which may explain the eclectic nature of the burials. Evidence for people of mixed heritage between “Japanese”

⁵⁰ *Suishu* 46 (Baiji): 1818.

⁵¹ Yŏn Minsu, “Waegye Paekche kwallyo ū silch'e wa kŭ sŏngkkyŏk” [The reality of Paekche officials of Wae-descent and their characteristics], in *Ch'ungch'ŏng bak kwa Ch'ungch'ŏng munhwa 11* (Kongju: Ch'ungch'ŏngnam-do yŏksa munhwa yŏnguwŏn, 2011), 224.

people and Han 韓, a general term for people from the southern Korean peninsula,⁵² can be found in the *Nihon shoki*. One example is a memorial sent by the ruler of Imna (J. Mimana) to the Yamato court complaining about Kena no Omi, the Yamato envoy to Imna:

[530] [Kena no Omi] is negligent in administering governmental affairs. There are many complex disputes regarding children between Japanese and Imna people. None have been resolved. Kena no Omi enjoys trials by boiling water saying, “Those who are true will not be scalded. Those who are false will surely be scalded. Due to this, many have been scalded to death by being plunged into the boiling water. Furthermore, he killed Nadari [J. Natari] and Sap’ori [J. Shifuri], the Han children of Kibi. (Those born of Japanese marriage with barbarian women were called “Han children.”

懶聽政焉。爰以日本人與任那人類以兒息、諍訟難決、元無能判。毛野臣、樂置誓湯曰、實者不爛、虛者必爛。是以、投湯爛死者衆。又、殺吉備韓子那多利・斯布利[大日本人娶蕃女所生、爲韓子也、恆惱人民、終無和解]。

Another example found in the *Nihon shoki* regarding Paekche is Nasol Ki no Omi:

[541] Fall, Seventh Month. Paekche heard that the Japanese authorities of Alla [J. Ara] and Silla were scheming together, so it sent Nasol Piri Makko of the Forward Division, Nasol Sōnmun, Nasol Mokhyōp Misun of the Middle Division, and Nasol Ki no Omi Mimasas. (The Nasol Ki no Omi was probably the son of a Ki no Omi by marriage with a Han 韓 woman, who then remained in Paekche and became a Nasol.)

秋七月、百濟聞安羅日本府與新羅通計、遣前部奈率鼻利莫古・奈率宣文・中部奈率木笏昧淳・紀臣奈率彌麻沙等、[紀臣奈率者、蓋是紀臣娶韓婦所生、因留百濟、爲奈率者也。未詳其父。他皆效此也。]⁵³

Nasol Ki no Omi Mimasas is half “Wa” and half “Han” 韓. Mimasas represents a third identity that may have been quite common for this time, having a Yamato name and title, residing in Paekche and also carrying a Paekche title. This could

⁵² The Han 韓 refers to the Three Han 三韓 groups that inhabited the southern half of the Korean peninsula mentioned in the *Sanguozhi*, namely the Mahan, Chinhan 辰韓, and Pyōnhan 弁韓. In later periods, this term became synonymous with inhabitants of the Korean peninsula and currently is used as the official name of South Korea Tae Han Min’guk 大韓民國 or quite literally “the Great Han Republic.”

⁵³ NS 19 (Kinmei 3:7).

also equally apply to Korean peninsula immigrant groups residing on the Japanese archipelago.

Another example of the fluid exchange between the Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula is Nichira:

[583] “The late emperor planned to restore Imna but died before [his plan] came to fruition and could not complete his will. Therefore, I must undertake his divine plan. Talsol Nichira, the son of Arishito, ruler of the province of Ashigita in Hi⁵⁴, is now in Paekche. He is wise and brave.”

先考天皇謀復任那、不果而崩、不成其志。是以、朕當奉助神謀復興任那。今在百濟、火葦北國造阿利斯登子達率日羅、賢而有勇。⁵⁵

Nichira’s father is a regional authority in Kyushu, and yet his son decided to pursue a political career in Paekche. Even as late as 583, this shows that there was considerable mobility between Kyushu and Paekche.

It makes it even more difficult to classify someone from the Yōngsan River basin as “Wa,” “Paekche,” “Mahan,” etc., and trying to identify them as such is most likely a foolhardy endeavor. It is entirely possible that the inhabitants of the Yōngsan River basin were themselves an eclectic mix of many different groups stemming from the jar burial culture that had existed there several centuries prior. It is a difficult question to answer archaeologically and an even harder one to answer through the existing historical texts. But it is unlikely that those buried in the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli came directly from Paekche or Yamato because the construction methodology is identical to non-keyhole-shaped tumuli in the same region.⁵⁶

PAEKCHE’S MOVE TO SABI (538) AND THE YŎNGSAN RIVER BASIN

In 538, Paekche King Sōng (r. 523–554) moved the Paekche capital approximately 30 km southwest from Ungjin to Sabi (present-day Puyō) and changed the name of the state to Nam Puyō 南夫餘.⁵⁷ Several factors precipitated this move, but the primary concern seemed to be breaking free from the militarily defensible but

⁵⁴ Hi Province is within present-day Nagasaki, Saga, and Kumamoto prefectures in Kyushu.

⁵⁵ *NS* 20 (*Bidatsu* 12:7).

⁵⁶ Lee, “Keyhole-Shaped Tombs and Unspoken Frontiers: Exploring the Borderlands of Early Korean-Japanese Relations in the 5th–6th Centuries,” 154–158.

⁵⁷ *SGSG* 26 (Sōng 16).

restrictive geography of Ungjin, which was surrounded by mountains and difficult to access, to Sabi, which was on an open plain and closer to the oceanic transportation routes to China and the Japanese archipelago.⁵⁸ The move to Ungjin from the previous capital Hansŏng was not by choice and hastily prepared, with the primary goal at the time to reconstitute the government as quickly as possible in a militarily defensible position. However, as the population grew, the militarily advantageous rugged terrain became a limiting factor in Ungjin's growth and its ability to foster trade and diplomacy outside the Ungjin region. The move to Sabi, on the other hand, was carefully planned and reflected Paekche's new confidence in its political and military strength.⁵⁹

King Sŏng's move of the capital also bookmarks the end of the construction period of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli. Jar burials are also all replaced with Paekche-style tombs, indicating that the local elites have been fully integrated into the Paekche political structure. It may seem coincidental that the beginning and end of the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli are timed to changes in Paekche's capital, but I think it is no accident. The geopolitical and economic changes that accompanied each move most likely had an impact on the internal changes already taking place within the Yŏngsan River basin.

CONCLUSION

After examining the available textual data concerning Paekche and Yamato in the late fifth to early sixth century, there are several events and figures that may provide clues regarding the relationship between Paekche and the Yŏngsan River basin. First, Paekche's move to Ungjin and loss of all its territory in the Han River basin in 475 as well as the persistent threat from Koguryŏ in the north would have encouraged Paekche to focus on the south for allies and resources. According to the *Samguk sagi*, Paekche at the time was too weak in the late fifth century to have absorbed the polities in the Yŏngsan River and most likely formed relationships with the local authorities in the Yŏngsan River basin instead, which is supported by the archaeology. Second, local authorities in the Yŏngsan River basin (as well as Kyushu) started building ties with both Paekche and Yamato and neighboring local elites. This can explain the sudden explosion of eclectic burial goods and the

⁵⁸ Yi Tohak, "Paekche Sabi ch'ŏndo ūi chaegŏmt'o" [Reevaluating Paekche's move to Sabi], *Tongguk sabak* 39 (2003): 25–52.

⁵⁹ Best, *A History of the Early Korean Kingdom of Paekche: Together with an Annotated Translation of the Paekche Annals of the Samguk Sagi*, 122.

incorporation of tomb structural innovations that started in the late fifth to early sixth century, which includes the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli.

The *Nihon shoki* also shows that there was considerable mobility of people between Paekche and the Japanese archipelago. Groups from the Japanese archipelago could easily migrate into the southern Korean peninsula and integrate with the local authorities. Local authorities in the Kaya region, Kyushu, and presumably the Yöngsan River basin could simultaneously hold rank and title in the Paekche and Yamato courts. In other words, there was considerable flexibility of identity across the Paekche-Yöngsan River Basin-Kyushu-Yamato trade corridor. This also meant that local authorities in the Yöngsan River basin had access to groups that specialized in the construction of keyhole-shaped tumuli via their connections in Kyushu. The Chinese dynastic histories also confirm that there was considerable ethnic diversity in the Paekche countryside, which further supports the idea of a fluid multi-ethnic/multicultural world at this time.

The historical sources, however, provoke more questions than answers. The identity of those buried in the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli is still difficult to answer, and the process that led up to the adoption of the keyhole-shaped tumuli in certain areas of the Yöngsan River basin and the relationship between the local authorities, Paekche, and polities on the Japanese archipelago that might have influenced it is not entirely clear. The absence of historical sources regarding the Yöngsan River basin limits their usefulness regarding these questions, which forces us to look at archaeological approaches. However, even the archaeology has its limitations. But based on the limited data that we have, it is seem most likely that the YSR keyhole-shaped tumuli were constructed for local elites who had strong ties with both Paekche, Yamato, and Kyushu. And the decision to use a keyhole-shaped tumulus with Paekche prestige goods, Kyushu horizontal corridor stone chambers, and local ritual pottery and construction methods is reflective of a very multicultural period in the Yöngsan River basin in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.

Submitted: February 27, 2018
Sent for revision: April 13, 2018
Accepted: May 4, 2018

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