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# The Politics of Historical Knowledge: The Debate on the Historical Geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery

Tay Jeong

## Introduction: The Controversy over the Historical Geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery

Old Chosŏn (?–108 BCE) was a polity that is often represented as the first state in Korean history.<sup>1</sup> First mentioned in the text *Guanzi*, which was compiled by Guan Zhong in the mid-seventh century BCE, its name appears frequently in Chinese historical records on the Warring States, Qin, and Han periods. Historical texts testify to its *location* in the following way: By the late fourth century BCE, Old Chosŏn had grown into a significant power that competed with the neighboring state of Yan during the Warring States period. In the early third century BCE, Old Chosŏn lost 1000 *li* (or 2000 *li*) of its western territory to Yan General Jin Gai's campaign and bordered Yan at Manpanhan 滿潘汗.<sup>2</sup> After Qin annexed Yan, it turned the conquered territory of Old Chosŏn into an “outer fortress of Liaodong” (Liaodong *waijiao* 遼東外徼).<sup>3</sup> During the Qin-Han transition (c. 208–206 BCE), Old Chosŏn recovered some of its territory as the nascent Han retreated, establishing a new border at the Pei River 涿水.<sup>4</sup> In 194 BCE, the Yan migrant Wiman 衛滿, who had accumulated power in the “old empty land of Qin” (Qin *gu kongdi* 秦故空地) near the western frontier of Old

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1 There is some uncertainty about when Old Chosŏn came to an end. While there are some reasons to believe that it fell in 107 BCE, 108 BCE is the generally accepted date.

2 *Sanguo zhi* 30.850; *Shiji* 110.2885–2886; *Shiji* 115.2985; *Yantie lun* 8.6a.

3 *Shiji* 115.2985. Some historians interpret the record in *Yantie lun* 8.4a (秦既并天下東絕沛水并滅朝鮮) as indicative of Qin's further advance toward Chosŏn.

4 *Shiji* 115.2985; The record of Chosŏn's invasion of the “outer fortress” (*jiao* 徼) mentioned in *Yantie lun* 7.4a is also often understood in conjunction with this event. Whether this Pei River 涿水 is the same river as the Pei River 沛水 quoted in footnote 3 is a matter of debate.

Chosŏn, overthrew the court of Old Chosŏn.<sup>5</sup> In 108 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty conquered Wiman Chosŏn after a year of intense warfare and divided its territory into four commanderies – Lelang 樂浪, Xuantu 玄菟, Zhenfan 真番, and Lintun 臨屯. While the latter two commanderies were fleeting, the former two – Lelang and Xuantu – appear in historical records for many centuries thereafter. In particular, unlike Xuantu, which underwent frequent relocations, Lelang had a much more stable presence, exerting an important and sustained influence on the development of cultures and states in ancient Korea. Despite the significance of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery in Korean history, there is much uncertainty regarding their history, which makes it a highly volatile and contested topic. In particular, their *historical geography* has become the center of prolonged and acute debates among different parties in Korea and East Asia as a whole.

Throughout the Lee dynasty (1392–1910), Korean literati debated over the location of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery. Some argued that Old Chosŏn occupied a large area centered in Manchuria, while others placed them in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. As the two issues were closely related, opinions on the location of Lelang Commandery were split in accordance with the proposed location of Old Chosŏn. In the course of major social conflicts in Korean modern history, such as colonization and division, academic debates about ancient history became nuanced with political and ideological commitments. In South Korea, a minority of scholars advocating more expansive versions of historical geography that focused on Manchuria as the center of ancient polities such as Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies (whom I will henceforth refer to as “heterodox” scholars) have constantly challenged their mainstream counterparts who advocated a more “peninsular” conception of ancient history, as will be explained in greater detail below.

Recently, some popular historians in South Korea influenced by the heterodox tradition have strongly challenged mainstream historical research with far-ranging consequences not just within Korea but also beyond. In 2014, the “Harvard Early Korea Project” funded by the South Korean government with the aim of expanding awareness of ancient Korean history in the English-speaking world was suspended indefinitely due to allegations that its research was skewed toward purported distortions of Japanese colonial research and Chinese research to the complete exclusion of heterodox hypotheses. For a similar reason, in 2016 the South Korean parliament was pressured to discard a history map project that had cost 4.5 billion Korean Won over a period of 8 years. In response, some of the stalwart partisans of orthodox research started to implement more active countermeasures against heterodox challenges. In the same year, the major South Korean history journal *Yŏksabip’yŏng* dedicated a whole section in three of its four annual volumes to the denunciation of “pseudohistory” in the study of ancient Korean history, while other orthodox scholars actively organized academic conferences and

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5 *Shiji* 115.2985; *Sanguo zhi*, 30.850.

public lectures condemning their heterodox adversaries.<sup>6</sup> While these historical controversies encompass diverse regions and periods of ancient Korean history, the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery constitutes a significant portion of the dispute. Multiple public debates on key topics in the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery have been held in recent years, reflecting the high level of scholarly and public interest in this controversy within South Korea.

The heterodox tradition has a rich record of producing methodologically poor works, and political challenges from popular heterodox historians have frequently hindered meaningful historical research. Perhaps because of this reason, historiographical discussions of heterodox research have seldom gone beyond monolithic ideological attributions of nationalism and irredentism. While such characterization may suit certain specific cases of heterodox research, it does not provide a satisfactory account of the larger long-term debate on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery. What is the debate about, why is it such a contentious issue, what parties are involved, and how are they distinguished from one another? In this article I will examine how factional schisms originally developed in the study of the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery and how they interacted and developed over time in close connection with political conflicts in the modern history of Korea and East Asia. Repeated influences of political agendas and the frequent shifting of the boundary between normal and deviant hypotheses reveal the limitations of taking the level of disciplinary support as a measure of a hypothesis' likelihood of truth with regard to the study of the history and historical geography of ancient Korea.

### Research and Debate on the Historical Geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery

The historical geography of ancient Korean polities, such as Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies, was a major topic of debate among the Lee dynasty neo-Confucian literati. While diverse views were presented, one could roughly group them based on the location that formed the center of their historical geographies. On the one hand, there were some scholars who placed Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula. The most influential example comes from the prominent *Silhak* 實學 scholar Jeong Yakyong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), who argued based on a thorough analysis of historical records that the center of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery was in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula in modern Pyongyang.<sup>7</sup> Such a “peninsular view” of the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies received wide support among the Lee

6 Examples include, Ha Ilsik 2016; Kim Jong-il 2016; Han'gukkodaesahak'oe 2017.

7 *Yŏyudangjip* 181.1–26 (“Chŏson ko” 朝鮮考, “Nakrang ko” 樂浪考 in *Abang Kangyŏkko* 我邦疆域考).

dynasty neo-Confucian literati.<sup>8</sup> However, some advocated a more expansive historical geography that placed the center of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies in Manchuria.<sup>9</sup> The discussion of the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies had implications for contemporary understandings of the Korean geobody. For example, Park Ji-won, an eighteenth century *Silhak* scholar who placed the Han Commanderies in Liaodong, even exclaimed following his visit to Liaodong that “Korean territory was shrunk without anyone lifting a finger to preserve it,” condemning other Korean scholars who limited the territories of ancient polities including Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies within the Korean Peninsula.<sup>10</sup> Although these early debates were based on a relatively crude form of documentary analysis, many of the important issues and arguments pertaining to the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies appeared during this period.

The historical research among Korean scholars in the Lee dynasty did not continue into the modern era due to the Japanese colonization of Korea in the early twentieth century. During the colonial period, Japanese historians firmly established a theoretical framework based on a peninsular view of the location of the Han Commanderies and Old Chosŏn. An important achievement of Japanese scholarship in this period was the confirmation that Lelang Commandery was located in modern Pyongyang. Unlike many *Silhak* scholars who placed Lelang Commandery in Pyongyang, Japanese colonial scholarship on this subject was supported by archaeological excavations of the Pyongyang region conducted throughout the colonial period, which provided new scientific evidence to back this old argument.<sup>11</sup> The firm establishment of the location of Lelang Commandery in the northwestern part of the peninsula provided an important geographic anchor for the rest of the historical geography of Korea and Manchuria in antiquity. Unlike the Han Commanderies, Old Chosŏn received scant

8 *Haedongyŏksa sok* 2.1–5, 4.66–69; *Tongsa gangmok purok* ha/16, 19–20, 38–45, 58–59 (“Tangun gangyŏkko” 檀君疆域考, “Kija gangyŏkko” 箕子疆域考, “Wissi gangyŏkko” 衛氏疆域考, “Sagun’go” 四郡考, “P’aesugo” 溟水考). These authors’ expositions differ significantly when it comes to the details. Also, it is not that the proponents of the peninsular view totally ignored Manchuria. A number of influential scholars (including Jeong Yakyong himself) wrote that the territory of Old Chosŏn had at one point even expanded to Liaoxi, bordering Warring States Yan, although it subsequently shrunk and was confined within the Korean Peninsula. *Yŏyudangjip* 181.3. Minority opinions such as that of Sŏng Haeŭng and Hong Yŏha placed the Han-Chosŏn border (the Pei River) at the modern Hun River in Liaodong and at Liaoxi, respectively. See *Yŏn’gyŏngje jŏnjip* (“P’aesubyŏn” 溟水辨, “Nangnangbyŏn” 樂浪辨, “Chosŏnbyŏn” 朝鮮辨); Pak Inho 2004, 183–186. Such diversity of opinions decreased dramatically amidst the radical factionalization of historical research following colonization.

9 *Yŏrha ilgi* (trans. Yang-hi Choe-Wall), 38–43; *Sŏngho sasŏl* 1.127, 3.224, 249 („Chosŏn jibang” 朝鮮地方, “Chosŏn sagun” 朝鮮四郡, “Yogyesimal” 遼界始末). Yi showed some affinity with the peninsular location, arguing that the Pei River was the Yalu and that Lelang Commandery covered the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula in addition to Liaodong where it had its seat of government.

10 *Yŏrha ilgi*, 40.

11 For a review of Japanese archaeological excavations of Lelang in colonial Korea, see Jung In-Seung 2011a, 149–170; Takaku 2010, 10–13; Wang 2001, 14–22; Oh and Byington 2013, 18–26.

coverage in colonial historical research. When Old Chosŏn was mentioned, it was assumed to have been located in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula centered in modern Pyongyang<sup>12</sup> Old Chosŏn was argued to have shared a border in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula with the Yan state of the Warring States period, and the Han-Wiman Chosŏn border at the Pei River 溱水 was also positioned variously in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula at the Taedong, Chŏngchŏn, or Yalu rivers.<sup>13</sup> The locations of Lelang Commandery and Old Chosŏn established by Japanese scholars became the standard view in South Korea in the decades following independence.

Despite the achievements of modern Japanese research, a consensus on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery was never reached. The strongest opposition came from a group of Korean nationalist historians who refused to accept the histories produced by Japanese-dominated institutional academia. Shin Chae'ho, one of the most influential of these "resistance historians" who were active during the colonial period, placed Lelang Commandery (together with the rest of the Han Commanderies) in Liaodong instead of in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. According to Shin, most of Old Chosŏn's territory was located in Manchuria, and it reached as far west as Luanhe. Manpanhan (the Yan-Chosŏn border after Jin Gai's conquest), the Pei River (the Han-Chosŏn border), and Wanghŏm (Wiman's capital) were all placed in Liaodong near modern Gaizhou or Haicheng.<sup>14</sup> Shin also hypothesized the existence of three Chosŏns, respectively located in the Korean Peninsula, Jilin/Liaodong, and Liaoxi, the latter two of which relocated to the southern part of the Korean Peninsula after Jin Gai's conquest to form the Three Han (Samhan 三韓).<sup>15</sup> Jeong Inbo, another influential resistance historian, came up with a roughly similar but more expansive historical geography that positioned the Han-Chosŏn border in Liaoxi near Shanhaiguan and depicted Lelang Commandery as stretching across Liaodong and Liaoxi.<sup>16</sup> In particular, Jeong questioned the credibility of the key archaeological evidence excavated by the Japanese in Pyongyang, marking the beginning of a series of debates on the credibility of Japanese colonial archaeology that would continue in the dec-

12 For example, see Chōsen Sōtokufu 1939, 11; Imanishi 1935, 74–76, 82–83.

13 Taedong: Naka 1894; Inaba 1910, 167–180. Chŏngchŏn: Yi Pyŏngdo 1933; Imanishi 1937, 229. Yalu: Tsuda 1912, 211–227; Shiratori 1912, 145; Hayashi 1912, 7. The location of the Pei River in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula was not entirely unchallenged: A small number of unorthodox Japanese scholars placed the Pei River in Manchuria. A case was made for the Liaohe in Nishikawa 1910, 226; and the Shahe 沙河 in Ōhara 1933, 90.

14 Shin Chae'ho 1929, 56–88 ("Pyŏngyang P'aesu ko" 平壤溱水考).

15 Shin's speculation can be seen as an early precursor to the hypothesis that the center of Old Chosŏn moved from Manchuria to the Korean Peninsula. As explained further below, this hypothesis is now widely supported among South Korean historians and archaeologists. Shin Chae'ho 1929, 89–141 ("Chŏnhu Samhan ko" 前後三韓考).

16 Jeong Inbo 1949, 94, 162–178.

ades to come.<sup>17</sup> Although the works of Shin, Jeong, and a handful of other resistance historians were methodologically crude by recent standards, they established the historiographical precedents that sowed the seeds of alternative historiographies that sprouted up in post-independence Korea.

The political division of Korea following decolonization entailed a division of its academic factions that had crystallized during the colonial period. North Korean historians rejected the historical geography established by Japanese colonial scholarship and developed their own alternative, which reflected a significant degree of consistency with the works of resistance historians from the colonial period. Early North Korean historians of the late 1940s and '50s positioned the center of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies in Liaodong and identified the Pei River as the Hun or the Daling River in modern Liaoning province through documentary analysis.<sup>18</sup> They also rejected Japanese scholars' firm establishment of the position of Lelang Commandery in modern Pyongyang by questioning the credibility of colonial archaeology, and some of these historians interpreted the high concentration of Han features and artifacts in the Pyongyang region to be indicative of the former presence of a Han trading post.<sup>19</sup> A number of North Korean archaeologists of the late 1950s and early '60s did challenge the revisionist tendencies of the North Korean historians and positioned the center of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery in modern Pyongyang.<sup>20</sup> However, such voices were soon drowned out as the theoretical framework placing Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies in Manchuria was chosen following an intense series of debates in the early 1960s.<sup>21</sup>

North Korean scholarship after the early 1960s may be seen as a continuous development of the revisionist framework laid down in the preceding decades. A seminal book-length work by Lee Chirin on the history of Old Chosŏn, which was published in 1963, deserves special mention.<sup>22</sup> In 1961, Lee completed his dissertation at Peking University under the supervision of the prominent Chinese historian Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980).<sup>23</sup> After returning to North Korea, Lee supplemented his dissertation with the latest

17 Jeong Inbo 1949, 182–200.

18 Jeong Hyun 1950, 2–19; Jeong Seho 1950, 2–21; Jeong Seho 1956, 54–71.

19 Kim Musam 1949, 127–145; Hong Kimoon 1949, 33–51; Hong Kimoon 1950, 91–106; Lee Yösŏng 1955, 84–103.

20 Do Yuho 1957, 1–10; Do Yuho 1961, 41–49; Jeong Chanyŏng 1960, 39–51.

21 Cho Bup-jong 2006, 111–117. For detailed discussions of early North Korean research on Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies, see Cho 2006, 81–115; Lee 1990, 118–136; Lee 2015, 5–27; Oh 1997a, 62–65.

22 Lee Chirin 1963.

23 Gu Jiegang was concerned with Lee's "nationalistic" historiography, but this did not affect the smooth conferment of the degree. Recent research on Gu Jiegang's personal documents and diaries suggests that Lee was backed by the diplomatically and academically prepared North Korean academics and that Gu had felt significant diplomatic pressure in his relationship with Lee. Kang 2015, 34–39; Cho 2016, 9–21.

archaeological findings in Korea and Manchuria, publishing his seminal work *Kojosŏn yŏn'gu* [Research on Old Chosŏn]. In this book, Lee argued that Old Chosŏn occupied a wide area in northeastern China that reached the eastern bank of Luanhe before Jin Gai's conquest. The center of Old Chosŏn was considered to have been on the present-day Liaodong Peninsula, and the Han-Chosŏn border at the Pei River was placed at the modern Daling River in Liaoxi.<sup>24</sup> Lee placed Wanghŏm (the capital of Wiman Chosŏn) and Lelang Commandery in Gaiping (Gaizhou) in the southwestern part of the Liaodong Peninsula.<sup>25</sup> Lee's historical geography was built on the assumption that the locations associated with certain place names in Manchuria, most importantly Liaodong and Liaoshui 遼水, were different in antiquity from their current locations because they had been relocated with the historical shifting of state borders.<sup>26</sup> Despite the fact that they contradicted the internationally more prevalent framework of historical geography established by Japanese historians, Lee's historical analyses were very comprehensive by contemporary standards. His work was more than just a single book written by one dedicated historian – it was a culmination of the historical research conducted by North Korean historians after independence.<sup>27</sup> While Lee's works were far from flawless, they proved to be highly influential: On top of providing a solid framework for historical research in North Korea in subsequent decades, they also had a significant impact on related historical research in the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> Lee's works probably also influenced the South Korean historian Yoon Nae-hyun, whose research and teaching career within institutional academia from the mid-1970s significantly contributed to the development and spread of heterodox positions in South Korea.

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24 Lee Chirin 1963, 74–77.

25 Lee Chirin 1963, 88.

26 This was probably a development of a similar argument made by Jeong Inbo. Jeong argued that the Liaoshui used to be the modern Luanhe before Han's advance to Manchuria based on the reasoning that ancient Chinese sources seem to shift the referent of "Liaodong" much further westward than normally understood. Jeong Inbo 1949, 91–93. For criticisms, see Seo Young-Soo 2008, 19–30. The general idea that certain geographic names in Manchuria may have been transferred to new locations in conjunction with important political events is an old and common assumption that is still employed by many scholars studying this region, although Jeong Inbo and Lee Chirin's idea of Liaodong and the Liaoshui remain a minority opinion outside North Korea.

27 Kang In-Uk 2015, 47–55. Kang suggested that Lee Chirin may have been a figurehead put up by North Korean historians to marginalize the archaeologists, many of whom supported a peninsular location of Old Chŏson and the Han Commanderies. Cho Bup-jong 2016, 1.

28 Lee 1989, 89–90. Soviet Koreanologist Yuri Mikhailovich Butin's detailed research on the history of Old Chŏson extensively referred to Lee's works. Butin 1982.



Map: The Bohai Littoral Region<sup>29</sup>

Legend: A – Beijing 北京; B – Mount Jieshi 碣石山; C – Shanhaiguan 山海關; D – Nuluerhu Mountain Range 努魯兒虎山脈; E – Luanhe 灤河; F – Chaoyang 朝陽; G – Daling River 大陵河; H – Mount Yiwulu 醫巫闞山; I – Liao River 遼河; J – Hun River 渾河; K – Taizi River 太子河; L – Liaoyang 遼陽; M – Gaizhou 蓋州; N – Qianshan Mountains 千山山脈; O – Yalu River 鴨綠江; P – Chōngchǒn River 清川江; Q – Taedong River 大同江; R – Pyongyang 平壤; S – Seoul; T – Han River; U – Shiertaiyingzi Site 十二營子遺蹟; V – Zhengjiawazi Site 鄭家窪子遺蹟.

North Korean research in the 1970s and '80s increasingly benefited from the accumulation of archaeological data progressively made available to North Korean scholars. Amidst an overall

<sup>29</sup> For readers not familiar with the geography of the Bohai littoral region, the following brief introduction may be useful for navigating through this article. The most important and frequently used geographic names include Korean Peninsula, Manchuria, Liaodong, and Liaoxi. In modern usage, the border between the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria is usually considered to be the Yalu River (see O in the map). Although specifying the border between Manchuria and China Proper is rather difficult, Shanhaiguan (C) – the starting point of the Great Wall since the Ming Dynasty – is a commonly used demarcation. The Liao River (I) is a large river flowing through the middle of Manchuria, and the geographic names Liaodong (East of Liao) and Liaoxi (West of Liao) have been used frequently since antiquity. Sometimes, instead of the Liao River, Mount Yiwulu (H) is used as a demarcation between Liaodong and Liaoxi. As the exact referent of “Liaodong” was historically flexible and often vaguely stated, identifying the referent of “Liaodong” in various historical texts is often very important for historical geography. In this paper, unless otherwise stated, I will use “Liaodong” to refer to the part of Manchuria between the Liao and Yalu rivers and “Liaoxi” to refer to the part of Manchuria west of the Liao River.

continuity of hypotheses, several notable revisions were made in the 1970s, such as the inclusion of Pyongyang as an integral part of Old Chosŏn as opposed to previous tendencies to delimit its southern boundary at the Chŏngchŏn River.<sup>30</sup> All in all, North Korean research after independence posed a palpable academic challenge to the historical geographies established by the scholars of the Japanese Empire, in addition to presenting a strong provocation to Chinese scholars. China's active stance in the history of Northeastern China in the post-reform period was likely to have been at least partially provoked by North Korean revisionist research that strategically tackled this under-researched topic to back what appeared to be a type of historical irredentism.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, South Korean academia exhibited in its early postwar decades a greater degree of organizational and academic continuity with Japanese research of the early twentieth century – an unsurprising fact considering that Korean scholars who had built their careers in Japanese academic institutions assumed leading positions in South Korean history departments after independence.<sup>32</sup> Unlike many of their North Korean counterparts, South Korean historians retained the historiographical framework defining ancient Korean history mainly as a peninsular phenomenon, placing Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>33</sup> Yi Pyŏngdo, the most influential first-generation historian of ancient Korea in South Korea, positioned Manpanhan at the Bakchŏn River (a small northern tributary of the Chŏngchŏn) through crude phonetic speculation and the conjecture that Old Chŏson must have bordered Yan at the Liao River before Jin Gai's conquest of 1000 *li* of its western territory.<sup>34</sup> The Pei River 渭水 was identified as the Chŏngchŏn based primarily on the reasoning that the other major rivers in northwestern Korea were all designated by different names in the Han dynasty (the Taedong was usually identified as the Lie River 洌水 and the Yalu as the Mazi River 馬訾水).<sup>35</sup> As the Pei River was the new border that the Han Empire established after its retreat during the Qin-Han transition, the Yan/Qin – Chosŏn border was positioned south of the Chŏngchŏn at the

30 Cho Bup-jong 120–126.

31 Cho Bup-jong 17–22.

32 Xu 2007, 189–192; Kim Yong-sub 1972, 506–508; Lee Jongwook 2001, 307–308.

33 Yi Pyŏngdo 1976, 35–43, 65–76, 139–151.

34 Yi Pyŏngdo 1933, 119–122.

35 Yi Pyŏngdo 1933, 123–124. Yi Pyŏngdo simply dismissed attempts to locate the Pei River in Liaodong as outrageous in his writings during the colonial period and never considered them seriously even after independence. Important for this dismissal was the fact that Pei River was also the name of a county in Lelang Commandery, which is normally thought to have been confined within the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. Many Korean scholars now consider Pei River to be a general name that was found in multiple locations throughout history. Even within the time frame of the Han dynasty, there are records that describe the location of the Pei River such that it clearly exceeds the boundaries of the Korean Peninsula. See footnote 41.

Taedong River. After Jin Gai's conquest, Old Chosŏn was hypothesized to have sustained a meagre existence in a small strip of land on the southern bank of the Taedong River.<sup>36</sup> Nationalist resistance historiography was largely discontinued in the South, and whatever remained of it persisted in an unprofessional form outside the history or archaeology departments of formal academic institutions.

In the late 1980s, however, South Korean scholarship on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn underwent a significant change that moved it closer to frameworks of historical geography that took Manchuria to be the center of Old Chosŏn. The gradual accumulation of professional research on Old Chosŏn revealed significant problems in the documentary analyses of the type conducted during the colonial years, and increased awareness of archaeological excavations in the Chinese Northeast and North Korea led South Korean scholars to seriously consider Manchuria as the possible center of Old Chosŏn. In particular, archaeological research on mandolin-shaped daggers necessitated a revision of the older hypothesis that Old Chosŏn had been centered in Pyongyang since its inception.<sup>37</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several leading South Korean historians began to argue that the center of Old Chosŏn had been relocated from Liaodong to Pyongyang following the Yan general Jin Gai's conquest in the early third century BCE.<sup>38</sup> Manpanhan (the Yan-Chosŏn border after the conquest) was identified in the Qianshan Mountains in the western part of the Liaodong Peninsula instead of following the older norm of placing it near the Chŏngchŏn River in northern Korea.<sup>39</sup> There was some divergence of opinions with regard to the location of the China-Chosŏn frontier after Jin Gai's conquest. Some historians stayed closer to the older framework, conjecturing that Yan must have eventually advanced further to the northwestern part of the peninsula up to the Chŏngchŏn River and identifying the Pei River relatively conventionally as the Yalu.<sup>40</sup> Other historians, in a considerable divergence from the traditionally prevalent versions of historical geography, denied Yan's eventual advance to the Chŏngchŏn River and identified the Pei River as the Hun River in western Liaodong.<sup>41</sup> While the latter

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36 Yi Pyŏngdo 1933, 115–116.

37 North Korean scholars initially discovered the typological continuity of mandolin-shaped daggers with slender bronze daggers that were prevalent in the Korean Peninsula from around the fourth century BCE. Overall, North Korean archaeological research in the 1980s significantly triggered South Korean scholars' interest in Manchuria as the center of Old Chŏson. Pak Chinuk et al. 1987.

38 Seo Young-Soo 1988, 19–50; No 1990, 31–55.

39 Seo Young-Soo 1988, 41; No 1990, 49–53. Manpanhan is likely a combination of the names of the counties Wenxian 汶縣 and Panhanxian 潘汗縣 in the Liaodong Commandery as recorded in the book of Han.

40 No 1990, 49–53; Kim Han'gyu 2004, 79, 81.

41 Seo Young-Soo 1988, 49; Seo Young-Soo 1999, 18, 23; Kim Nam-Jung 2001, 10–19; Oh Hyun-Su 2013, 210–217; Park Jun-Hyoung 2012, 12–14, 19–20; Park Jun-Hyoung 2016, 89–104.

location was unconventional when it was proposed, it has gained increasingly widespread support in South Korea in recent years.<sup>42</sup>

Such a shift among South Korean historians (especially the latter variant) reinforced archaeological interpretations that associated the early-iron age material culture of Liaodong with Old Chosŏn. For example, some scholars identified the so-called Sejungni-Lianhuapu 世竹里-蓮花堡 culture – an Iron Age culture that stretched across Liaodong and the Korean Peninsula north of the Chŏngchŏn River, which developed roughly from the third to the second century BCE under significant influence of Yan and early Han culture – as belonging to Old Chosŏn (Wiman Chosŏn) instead of viewing it as a result of Chinese territorial expansion.<sup>43</sup> Despite the strong influence from the Chinese neighbors, the Sejungni-Lianhuapu culture shows a strong continuity of local cultural traits throughout its geographical scope. For example, local bronze ware, such as slender bronze daggers, exhibits a significant continuity and similarity across Liaodong (except for the western part that became thoroughly Sinicized) and the northern part of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>44</sup> These scholars generally challenged the tendency to look for Chosŏn only in places where its bronze culture remained the most intact in the absence of Chinese influence and argued that the presence of early Iron Age cultures in Liaodong was a result of Old Chosŏn's reception of Chinese migrants and their material culture.

All in all, the formerly dominant view that set the center of Old Chosŏn in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula rapidly fell out of favor among South Korean historians, making it a minority hypothesis after the shift. The South Korean scholars' expansion of the geograph-

42 Frequently consulted documentary evidence for this location includes the following: *Qian Hanji* 14.4a (漢興以為其遠難守故遼水為塞 盧縮之反也 燕人衛滿亡命聚黨千餘人在遼居秦故地), condensed from *Shiji* 115.2985 (漢興為其遠難守 復修遼東故塞至涿水為界屬燕 燕王盧縮反入匈奴 滿亡命聚黨千餘人 魁結蠻夷服而東走出塞渡涿水居秦故空地上下鄣) indicates that the Pei River was Liaoshui, which is usually interpreted as Xiao Liaoshui 小遼水 (the Hun River). The record in *Shiji* 110.2891 that Xiongnu bordered Chŏson and the inscription on the tombstone of Ch'ŏnnamsan 泉男產 that Jumong 朱蒙 reached the Pei River to found Koguryŏ suggest that the contemporary Pei River was in Liaodong. *Shiji* 115.2986 records that Wiman Chosŏn was a powerful state that spanned thousands of *li*. For further discussion, see footnote 41.

43 Park Sunmi 2000, 139–166; Kim Nam-Jung 2001, 5–57; Jung In-Seung 2014a, 193–241; Jung In-Seung 2016a, 4–33. The term Sejungni-Lianhuapu culture was first coined by North Korean scholars, who argued that it belonged to the Culture of Old Chŏson. Sahoegwahagwŏn kogohagyŏn'guso 1977, 139–143.

44 While slender bronze daggers were formerly often associated only with the region south of the Chŏngchŏn River, the culture associated with them is now widely acknowledged as having persisted in Liaodong and as having maintained close interaction with the Pyongyang region. Lee Who-Seok 2014. Still, there were also clear cultural differences between the regions north and south of the Chŏngchŏn River, which is interpreted by some scholars as an indication that Old Chosŏn's geographic scope was limited to the area south of the Chŏngchŏn River. Song Ho Jung 2007, 1–34; Song Ho Jung 2013, 74–75.

ic scope of Old Chosŏn to include Manchuria exhibits an unintended yet unmistakable convergence on a number of key topics with what had in the past been considered typical positions of the heterodox framework of historical geography (for example, considering the initial center of Chosŏn to have been in Manchuria, placing Manpanhan in Liaodong, and identifying the Pei River as the modern Hun River).<sup>45</sup>

More recently, an increasing knowledge about Bronze Age sites in Liaoxi has led many South Korean archaeologists to identify the region around the Daling River as the center of Old Chosŏn in its early stages.<sup>46</sup> Important for this development was a growing tendency among Chinese and South Korean archaeologists to identify the unique early Bronze Age sites around the Daling River as distinct from the Upper Xiajiadian culture west of the Nuluerhu mountain range.<sup>47</sup> This group of Bronze Age sites, commonly referred to nowadays as the Shiertaiyingzi culture, is most notably characterized by the presence of mandolin-shaped daggers, which appeared in the tenth to ninth century BCE around the middle Daling River and spread throughout the Liaoxi region in the eighth to seventh century BCE.<sup>48</sup> As the Upper Xiajiadian culture was normally associated with Central Asiatic nomadic tribes such as the Shanrong or Donghu, Old Chosŏn or other closely associated groups such as Zhenfan or Mo 貊 became plausible candidates for the Shiertaiyingzi culture.<sup>49</sup> A hypothesis that has recently become popular among South Korean archaeologists is that Old Chosŏn first emerged in Liaoxi near modern Chaoyang together with the Shiertaiyingzi culture around the ninth century BCE, spread or moved to Liaodong in the sixth to fifth century BCE, and then, after Jin Gai's conquest in the early third century BCE, its center was relocated to present-day Pyongyang. Old Chosŏn's expansion or relocation to

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45 Chinese scholars have remained closer to older views on the location of Old Chŏson and tend to place its center in modern Pyongyang. Many Chinese scholars place Manpanhan at the Chŏngchŏn River and identify this river as the Pei River (i.e. Yi Pyŏngdo's hypothesis), which seems to be in accordance with their extension of the Yan and Qin Great Wall to the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. Li Jiancai 1998, 194–195; Liu Zimin 1996, 132–139; Miao Wei 2005, 79. This view is echoed in Western academia in Byington 2013a, 4; Byington 2013b, 291–292, 304. The documentary evidence supporting the Chŏngchŏn hypothesis is scant, and the archaeological evidence of Yan's territorialization up to the Chŏngchŏn is dubious considering the strong continuity of indigenous traits in the Sejungni-Lianhuapu Culture. A minority of Chinese historians place Manpanhan at or near the Yalu River and identify this river as the Pei River. Zhang Boquan 1985, 44–45, 53.

46 Kim Chŏnghak 1987, 75–83; Im 1991; Bok 2004, 1077–1100; Oh Kangwon 1997, 404–415; Oh Kangwon 2014, 173–222; Lee Chung-Kyu 2005, 35–58; Jo Jinseon 2014, 119–128; Park Jun-Hyoung 2014, 169–208. For a related overview in English, see Song Ho Jung 2013, 63–66.

47 Zhu 1987, 110–112; Guo and Zhang 2005, 465–482; Chen 2006, 442–443.

48 Song Ho Jung 2013, 64; Oh Kangwon 2007, 99; Wu'en 2007, 228–229.

49 Lin 1980, 157–160. The identification of Shiertaiyingzi sites as Chosŏn was also proposed by North Korean archaeologists in the 1980s. Pak Chinuk et al. 1987, 124–150.

Liaodong is identified with reference to the Bronze Age culture around the middle Liao River represented by the Zhengjiawazi tombs in modern Shenyang.<sup>50</sup> The collapse of the Shiertaiyingzi culture by c. 300 BCE is considered a strong indication of a connection to Jin Gai's conquest of Old Chosŏn as mentioned in recorded history.<sup>51</sup> While the hypothesis that Old Chosŏn initially emerged in Liaoxi, gradually moved to Liaodong, and then to northern Korea is by no means new, improved knowledge of the archaeology of the Bronze Age cultures of the Chinese Northeast has enabled scholars to endorse the hypothesis with more confidence.<sup>52</sup> The archaeological support for the presence of early Chosŏn in Liaoxi resonates with records in early Chinese documents that had traditionally often been cited by heterodox historians as evidence that early Old Chosŏn was located in or occupied the Liaoxi region.<sup>53</sup> The emergence of this recent trend among South Korean scholars further highlights the partial blurring of the traditional division in Korea between the mainstream and heterodox traditions of the historical geography of Old Chosŏn.<sup>54</sup>

50 Archaeologists acknowledge close similarities between the Zhengjiawazi type and the Bronze Age culture around the Daling River in Liaoxi. Most South Korean and some Chinese scholars classify the former as a regional type belonging to the Shiertaiyingzi culture that came about as a result of its expansion into Liaodong in the sixth to fifth century BCE.

51 Song Ho Jung 2013, 65. However, in stark contrast to recent trends among South Korean archaeologists, many Japanese and Chinese archaeologists date Yan's territorialization of Liaoxi, and even Liaodong, earlier. In particular, attempts to push back the date of Yan's advance (not only to Liaozhong but to the Chŏngchŏn River as is usually assumed among Chinese and Japanese scholars) has been coupled with the well-known recent movements among Japanese archaeologists to revise the chronology of the Yayoi Period. Guo and Zhang 2005, 603–606; Ishikawa 2011, 195–215; Ishikawa and Kobayashi 2012, 1–39.

52 Ōhara 1929, 9; Ch'ŏn 1974, 54–72; Zhang 1985, 41–42; Lee Hyeong-koo 1991, 7–54. These early studies interpreted the geographic relocation of Old Chŏson from Liaoxi to the Korean Peninsula in terms of the legend of the late Shang aristocrat Jizi. The excavation of bronze vessels associated with Jizi in the mid-1970s in western Liaoning Province made some scholars hypothesize that Jizi Chaoxian first emerged in Liaoxi and gradually moved to the Korean Peninsula. See Shim 2002, 284–292. Recent studies by South Korean scholars differ from these precedents in that they do not rely on the legend of Jizi Chaoxian or the migration of the Ji clan. In Chinese academia, which tends to stress the expansion of Chinese culture into Korea, Old Chŏson as an indigenous polity (often symbolically represented as Tangun Chŏson) is usually rejected, and arguments that Jizi Chaoxian gradually moved from Liaoxi to Pyongyang have persisted alongside the competing (and more popular) claim that Jizi Chaoxian had always been centered in modern Pyongyang.

53 The following are some of the passages that have been used to support the thesis that Chŏson was located in Liaoxi. *Shanbaijing jianshu* 12.5b: 朝鮮在列陽東海北山南列陽屬燕; 18.1a: 東海之內北海之隅有國名朝鮮天毒其人水居儂人愛人; *Huainanzi* 21.14b: 東方之極自碣石山過朝鮮貫大人之國東至日出之次樽木之地 碣石在遼西界海水西畔 朝鮮樂浪之縣也.

54 The trend among South Korean scholars to associate Liaoxi before Jin Gai's conquest with Old Chŏson or other closely related names is not widely supported by Chinese and Japanese scholars, and some South Korean scholars remain skeptical as well. For opposing views, see Wu'en 2007, 247–248; Song Ho Jung 2013, 66.

While previous decades have seen a significant diversification in the historical geography of Old Chosŏn up to the late Warring States period, some topics have remained more resilient to change. The majority of scholars continue to place Wanghŏm – the capital of Wiman Chosŏn – in present-day Pyongyang, and there are indeed logical reasons for choosing this location. The center of Old Chosŏn after Jin Gai’s campaign, which Wiman attacked and conquered, is widely believed to be modern Pyongyang, primarily based on the record in the “Chaoxian Liezhuan” chapter of the *Shiji*, which indicates that Wanghŏm was in modern Pyongyang.<sup>55</sup> Some historical records equate the location of Wanghŏm with Lelang Commandery, and, as will be discussed shortly, there is strong evidence indicating that the commandery was located in modern Pyongyang.<sup>56</sup> From an archaeological perspective, the mandolin-shaped dagger culture of Liaodong exhibits a strong continuity with that of the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula; for example, slender bronze daggers, which evolved from mandolin-shaped daggers from the fifth to the fourth century BCE, developed most fully in the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula.

Nevertheless, this location is not without its problems. One problem is that despite a century of extensive archaeological excavations in Pyongyang, no walled site nor any other significant remains that one would expect from the capital of a polity that had, according to historical records, most likely evolved into a powerful ancient state have been found. Another criticism states that considering Wiman Chosŏn’s central connection to migrants from China, Wanghŏm cannot have been located in a place where the indigenous bronze culture of Old Chosŏn remains the most intact but instead was probably located in Liaodong where there is a significant admixture of Chinese Iron Age culture with indigenous traits.<sup>57</sup> Provided that the Sejungni-Lianhuapu culture belonged to Wiman Chosŏn, it is not totally clear how the center of Wiman Chosŏn could have been located in an area south of the geographic boundary of the Sejungni-Lianhuapu culture (that is, south of the Chŏngchŏn River) considering that this area was technologically less advanced than the Sejungni-Lianhuapu culture. Also, a historian who examined the tables in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, which had previously been largely overlooked, convincingly inferred that Wanghŏm must have been located in Xiantu instead of Lelang.<sup>58</sup> These considerations, coupled with the recent trend of including Liaodong within the territory of Wiman Chosŏn, led a palpable minority to argue or at

55 This is on the assumption that the Liekou 列口 in *Shiji* 115 (“Chaoxian Liezhuan”) refers to the mouth of the present-day Taedong River.

56 *Kuodi Zhi* quoted in *Shiji* 115.2985.

57 Kim Nam-Jung 2014, 66–68.

58 Cho Bup-jong 2006, 244–282. *Shiji* 20 („Jianyuanilai houzhennianbiao”) 建元以來侯者年表 and *Hanshu* 17 („Jingwuzhaoxuanyuancheng gongchenbiao”) 景武昭宣元成功臣表 indicate that Wanghŏm fell in 107 BCE, a year after the establishment of Lelang Commandery in 108 BCE. For a summary in English, see Shim 2006, 42–44.

least seriously consider the possibility that Wanghŏm may not have been located in Pyongyang but somewhere in Liaodong.<sup>59</sup> Such recent criticisms add to the documentary interpretations traditionally used by resistance, heterodox, and North Korean historians in placing Wanghŏm in Liaodong.<sup>60</sup> While skepticism about the standard location of Wanghŏm tended to be expressed only sporadically and with much caution in the past two decades, it is likely that it will become increasingly represented in the future as archaeological research of Old Chosŏn takes on more momentum. For example, at the latest annual conference of the Korean Archaeological Society (held Nov. 3, 2017, specifically and unprecedentedly on the topic of Old Chosŏn), Jung In-Seung, a prominent archaeologist of Lelang, explicitly endorsed the view that Wanghŏm was probably located in Liaodong, signaling a further crack in the epistemic authority of the standard location.

If there is a major geographic location that has remained almost unanimously uncontested among mainstream South Korean scholars, it is that of Lelang Commandery. The version of history in which Lelang commandery was established in what is now Pyongyang by Emperor Wu in 108 BCE and remained there until Koguryŏ annexed it in 313 CE has been the standard since the early 1910s.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, there are ample reasons for placing Lelang Commandery in modern Pyongyang, and the exceptional resilience of this location and within Korean historiography reflects its high evidentiary strength. Nevertheless, the location of Lelang Commandery is the topic that has given rise to the most vitriolic debates covering a wide range of clash points.

The location of Lelang Commandery in modern Pyongyang is most importantly buttressed by archaeological evidence that has accumulated from a century of extensive excavations in this area. The discovery of a walled site on the southern bank of the Taedong River in Pyongyang provided important evidence supporting the presence of Lelang Commandery at that location. Seals and roof-end tiles explicitly bearing the name “Lelang” or other related names of places or people were excavated at the walled site during the Japanese colonial period. A number of artifacts with inscriptions related to Lelang Commandery have been found even outside the walled site.<sup>62</sup> Still, North Korean and heterodox scholars tend to express skepticism regarding their authenticity, pointing out that most of these artifacts that serve as

59 Park Sunmi 2001, 163.

60 Commonly cited sources include the commentary on Xiandu 險瀆 (footnote 4 in *Hanshu* 28b/1626; footnote 9 in *Shiji* 115.2986).

61 The relocation 僞置 of the Lelang Commandery in 313 CE is alluded to (but not unequivocally stated) in *Zizhi tongjian* 88.28a (樂浪王遵說統帥其民千餘家歸鹿鹿為之置樂浪郡以統為太守遵參軍事) and *Samguk sagi* 17.11a (十四年冬十月侵樂浪郡虜獲男女二千餘口).

62 Such findings include a bronze bell from the Temple of Emperor Xiaowen (孝文廟銅鐘), a stamp from Wang Guang 王光's tomb, a stele of the Spirit Shrine of Nianti District (粘蟬縣神祠碑), the tomb of Daifang Taishou Zhang Fuyi and wooden tablets recording the Lelang Commandery population census.

pieces of evidence were excavated during the Japanese Empire, which was notorious for its extreme politicization of history.<sup>63</sup> Admittedly, much of this skepticism is not merely ideological and speculative but based on detailed historical and scientific criticism. Recently, there have been significant efforts to increase transparency of contested archeological discoveries made during the colonial period.<sup>64</sup> In addition to artifacts with inscriptions, the sheer number of Chinese-style tombs surrounding the walled site also provides an important linkage to Lelang Commandery. Again, as robust as such archaeological evidence is, it has continuously been met with rebuttals from dissenters. North Korean and heterodox scholars stress the continuity of the material culture reflected in the tombs and grave goods in this area, interpreting it as an indigenous development from Old Chosŏn and attempting to show how much it differs from contemporary trends in Mainland China.<sup>65</sup> On a wider geographical scale, the archaeological finding that the Pyongyang region functioned as an important channel for distributing Han artifacts to the Korean Peninsula and Kyushu is interpreted as indicating that Lelang Commandery was located there, especially in light of the documentary records of exchanges between Lelang Commandery, Han 韓, and Wa 倭.

Contrary to the archaeological evidence, which seems to corroborate the widely accepted location of Lelang Commandery, documentary interpretations produce more ambiguous results, making them a prime resource for those who argue in favor of heterodox locations of Lelang Commandery. For example, *Samguk Sagi* makes a distinction between Lelang Commandery (governed by a viceroy, *taishou* 太守) and another Lelang governed by a king (*wang* 王) with the family name Choi 崔, the latter of which is recorded to have been located in what appears to be the Pyongyang area.<sup>66</sup> This distinction has been used by heterodox and North Korean historians alike to argue that the “Lelang” in modern Pyongyang was an independent

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63 Lee Sunjin 1997, 215–239. A major exception is the wooden tablets recording the Lelang Commandery population census, which were excavated by North Korean scholars in the early 1990s and gradually published beginning in 2006. These provide a fresh support for the dominant belief that the Lelang Commandery was in Pyongyang that is relatively immune to accusations of political fabrication. Still, North Korean and South Korean heterodox scholars have cast doubt on the place of origin of the wooden tablets based on their written content and the tomb they were excavated from.

64 Oh Youngchan 2015, 5–29. Recent in-depth examinations of controversial artifacts and tombs have plausibly revealed their evidentiary limitations. Lelang archaeologist Jung In-Seung showed that the Lelang seals and roof-end tiles found initially were not from official excavations, making their credibility questionable. While it is nearly impossible that Japanese archaeologists forged fake seals, the possibility that private merchants counterfeited Lelang seals and even buried them in the ground before official excavations cannot be ruled out. Still, he makes it clear that this possibility does not irrevocably damage the case for placing Lelang in Pyongyang. Jung In-Seung 2016b, 116–126.

65 Hwang Kidök et al. 1971, 80–102.

66 *Samguk Sagi* 14.6a. This distinction is also hinted in *Shuowen jiezi* through the parallel notation of Lelang, Panguo, 樂浪潘國 and Lelang, Dongyi [County], 樂浪東暉. *Shuowen jiezi*, 11b/388.

indigenous state as opposed to the Lelang Commandery established by emperor Wu, which was located in modern Liaoning province.<sup>67</sup> This is rejected by most scholars, although there is a significant amount of divergence in how they make sense of the record of the two apparently distinct yet homonymous polities.

A major piece of documentary evidence that confirms the archaeological evidence in modern Pyongyang comes from a set of Chinese historical records, starting with the *Shuijing zhu* written by Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (466?–527) in the early sixth century CE, that equate the location of Koguryŏ's capital Pyongyang (the capital since King Jangsu) with that of Lelang Commandery established by Emperor Wu of Han.<sup>68</sup> While these records are generally considered as supporting the standard location of the commandery, since the Lee dynasty a minority of researchers has attempted to place the Pyongyang of Koguryŏ within/near modern Liaoyang. There are historical records that can be interpreted as suggesting that the Pyongyang of Koguryŏ was located in a different place than its modern namesake, and some sources – including the *Liaoshi* – even explicitly place Koguryŏ's Pyongyang and Lelang Commandery in present-day Liaoyang.<sup>69</sup> Recently, a team of researchers with ties to institutional academia in South Korea has been actively propagating this view; however, it still faces a number of problems and will need to undergo more thorough examination.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the possibility of Liaodong, Liaoxi – a location widely supported by popular extra-institutional historians in South Korea – also has its own set of evidentiary support from historical records, although the interpretation of these records in this manner has been heavily criticized.<sup>71</sup> Among the documentary sources used by the proponents of the Liaoxi hypothesis, the *Taikang dili zhi* 太康地理志 deserves special mention. The *Taikang dili zhi* is usually considered to have been published in 282 CE during the Taikang (280–289AD) era of Emperor Wu of Jin.<sup>72</sup> While the original document is lost, passages from this work are cited in numerous later historical documents.<sup>73</sup> Quoting the *Taikang di[li] zhi* in his commentary to the *Shiji*, *Shiji suoyin* 史記索隱, Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (656–720) recorded that Mount Jieshi,

67 Yoon Nae-Hyun 1985, 2–36.

68 *Shuijing zhu* 14.38b–39a; *Kuodi Zhi* quoted in *Shiji*, 115.2985; *Jiu Tang Shu* 1975, 149.5319; *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 3.15 (the section “Chengyi” 城邑 in the chapter “Guocheng” 國城).

69 *Liaoshi* 38.455, 457.

70 Bok 2010, 227–233; Bok 2016, 255–273; Nam 2016.

71 For arguments locating Lelang Commandery in Liaoxi, see Yoon Nae-Hyun 1994; Lee Deok-il 2009. A seal with the inscription “Lintun taishou zhang” 臨屯太守章 was excavated in Huludao City in 1997, adding archaeological support for a possible connection between Liaoxi and the Han Commanderies. Bok 2001. Many counterarguments have been presented against placing Lelang Commandery in Liaoxi, including Li 2001, 67–74; Kong 2016. Lee 2016, 252–274.

72 Bu 2010, 42.

73 Works citing *Taikang dili zhi* include *Sanguo zhi*, *Shiji jiji*, *Jinshu*, *Shiji suoyin*, and *Tongdian*. A detailed summary can be found in Kong 2016, 236.

the starting point of the Great Wall of the unified Qin Empire, and Suicheng County of Lelang Commandery were located in the same place.<sup>74</sup> Related quotes from this source can be found in other historical records including the *Tongdian* 通典 and *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記.<sup>75</sup> Proponents of heterodox locations of Lelang Commandery like to treat the location of Mount Jieshi (see B on the map) as the unmoveable geographic anchor, shifting the starting point of the Great Wall of Qin and Suicheng County in Lelang Commandery towards it. Ironically, the same record has been used by a number of Japanese and Chinese historians as documentary evidence supporting the extension of the Great Wall of the Qin dynasty to modern Pyongyang.<sup>76</sup> Most South Korean historians do not accept any part of the three-way equation regarding the location of the starting point of the Great Wall of the Qin dynasty, Suicheng County in Lelang Commandery, and Mount Jieshi. Instead, they consider the relevant record in the *Taikang dili zhi* to be erroneous and to have actually been written after the relocation of Lelang Commandery to Liaoxi in 313 CE.<sup>77</sup>

Over the course of modern historical research a handful of intermediate positions regarding the location of Lelang Commandery have been proposed. Early in 1910, Nishikawa Ken placed Wanghöm and the seat of Lelang Commandery (Chaoxian County) at modern Haicheng in the Liaodong Peninsula and argued that Lelang Commandery occupied a large territory spreading across most of Liaodong and the Korean Peninsula.<sup>78</sup> In 1933, Ôhara Toshitake hypothesized that Lelang Commandery encompassed Liaodong and the north-western part of the Korean Peninsula with its seat of government moving back and forth between Liaodong (where he placed the Pei River and Wanghöm) and present-day Pyongyang at different stages in the commandery's history.<sup>79</sup> Early North Korean scholar Lim Keonsang argued that Lelang Commandery must have been relocated to modern Pyongyang from Liaoxi after the Later Han Emperor Guangwu conquered that area in 44 CE and established a commandery as recorded in *Samguk Sagi*.<sup>80</sup> Among Western scholars, Gary Ledyard wrote that "the original site of Lo-Lang [Lelang] was perhaps in Liao-tung [Liaodong] and not

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74 *Shiji* 2.54.

75 *Taiping huanyu ji* 70.11b-12a; *Tongdian* 178.4715; 186.5015; In addition to sources quoting *Taikang dili zhi*, *Jinshu* 14.427 equates the location of Xiucheng County with the starting point of the Qin Great Wall, and *Shuijing zhu* 3.19b equates Mount Jieshi with the starting point of the Qin Great Wall.

76 Inaba 1910, 167–180; Wang 1933, 29–33; Tan 1944, 16; Tan 1982, vol. 2, 9–10; Tan 1988, 38. For a detailed discussion, see Kong 2015, 145–151.

77 No 1990, 11–21; Kong 2016, 238–242.

78 Nishikawa 1910, 225–235.

79 Ôhara 1933, 76.

80 Lim 1963, 218–239; Yoon Nae Hyun once made a similar argument. Yoon Nae-Hyun 1985, 15–17. The original quote is found in *Samguk sagi* 14.7b (漢光武校勘帝遣兵渡海伐樂浪，取其地爲郡·縣，陸水已南屬漢).

in the vicinity of modern Pyongyang, but it was certainly located in Pyongyang from around the last half of the first century B.C.<sup>81</sup> These partial revisions have all been explicitly rejected by the proponents of the standard hypothesis.<sup>82</sup> Still, no hypothesis, including the standard one, fits all the available evidence with a high level of precision, and carefully argued criticisms of the standard hypothesis continue to emerge. In recent decades, Japanese archaeologist Azuma Ushio's dating of several stone mound tombs (which characteristically belonged to Koguryŏ) in the Pyongyang region as having been built in the second and third century CE motivated new attempts to challenge the standard time frame of Lelang Commandery's presence in Pyongyang.<sup>83</sup> While defenders of the standard thesis perceive this as something to be explained away (for example, by conjecturing that the stone mound tombs must have been the result of an influx of migrants from Koguryŏ), a couple of South Korean historians took it as an indication that Lelang Commandery had been pushed back to Liaodong from the Pyongyang region by Koguryŏ in the second century CE.<sup>84</sup> These scholars supplemented such archaeological evidence with thorough documentary inferences, which, unsurprisingly, significantly overlapped with the ones that had been used by nationalist heterodox and North Korean scholars to deny the presence of Lelang in Pyongyang.

So far in the first part of this article, I have presented a brief overview of the research on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery with a particular focus on the trajectories of different academic factions and the debates that occurred between them. The historical geography of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies has been an important topic of debate in the study of ancient Korean history since the Lee dynasty. During the Japanese colonial period, the debate became polarized between scholars who tended to place Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies outside the Korean Peninsula in Manchuria and those who placed them within the Korean Peninsula, and nuanced with political implications. While Japanese historians firmly established the latter position as the standard, resistance historians advocated the former position. This divide was carried over into post-independence Korea, in which heterodox scholars from North and South Korea competed against their South Korean mainstream counterparts. This legacy, which still persists today, has made the discourse on this subject in Korean academia dynamic and active, unlike that in Japanese and Chinese academia, which have largely retained the historical geography of ancient Korea and Manchuria established by Japanese historians in the early twentieth centu-

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81 Ledyard 1983, 316.

82 Oh Kangwon 1997, 62; No 1990, 10.

83 Azuma 1996, 99-100.

84 Chang 2003, 18-21; Lee 2014.

ry.<sup>85</sup> During the past several decades, there has been a significant diversification of ancient history scholarship in South Korea, which has increasingly blurred the gap between the opposing historiographical traditions with regard to a number of important topics in the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery.

### **The Politics of the Historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery**

Why has this topic caused so much controversy in Korean society? One reason might be the relative dearth and vagueness of historical evidence, which leaves room for different inferences. Yet, the overall alignment of academic hypotheses with political borders and motivations strongly suggests that sociopolitical factors have been deeply involved in this controversy. In this part of the article, I will discuss the debate on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery with respect to the political and social conflicts that have influenced its research in the course of modern historical research. I will analyze the sociopolitical background of the current academic contention in South Korea according to two different conceptual schematizations: External versus internal conflict and the influence of nationalism as opposed to that of colonial legacy.

As with many other schisms in contemporary Korean society, controversies over ancient history owe much to Korea's experience of Japanese colonialism. By the early twentieth century, Old Chosŏn, together with its mystic founder Tangun, had firmly established itself as a symbol of the Korean nation. The history of Tangun Chosŏn within Korean "national" history attained high symbolic significance in the conflicts not only between resistance and colonial scholars but also between Japanese scholars and their Korean collaborators working within the colonial institution.<sup>86</sup> The exclusion of Tangun was not simply a rejection of mythology in the new "scientific" discipline of history; it also meant neglecting the indigenous history and culture of Korean antiquity, apart from the expansion of Chinese (and, as was popularly argued at the time, Japanese) culture. Old Chosŏn was largely excluded from historical and archaeological research, and histories that did mention it focused on narratives of how Chinese cultures as represented by the records of the migration of Jizi (Kor. Gija) and Wiman preliminarily

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85 Japanese historical research in the first half of the twentieth century was by no means unanimous in settling on the precise location of all the rivers, borders, and administrative districts in Lelang, and opinions continued to differ among Japanese and Chinese scholars within the confines of the peninsular view of the location of Old Chosŏn and Lelang. For example, Chinese and Japanese scholars identify the Pei River either as the Chŏngchŏn or Yalu River, with the former being the more widely supported position in both countries. See footnotes 46, 52, 53, and 55. Park Sung-Hyun 2015 presents a summary of how various Japanese scholars have located major rivers in Old Chosŏn/Lelang Commandery.

86 Chŏsen Sŏtokufu 1938, 19–24.

brought civilization to the miscellaneous natives of the Korean Peninsula before the establishment of the Han Commanderies.<sup>87</sup> The influential Japanese archaeologist Fujita Ryōsaku divided the periods of early Korean history after the initial stage of “Stone Age Culture” into “inundation of Qin and Han Culture” and “Lelang/Daifang Culture.”<sup>88</sup>

Unlike Old Chosŏn, Lelang Commandery received much attention from Japanese historians of the early twentieth century as the beginning of Korean history.<sup>89</sup> Its establishment in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula was acknowledged as the watershed moment at which point Chinese culture was spread in earnest to the Korean Peninsula. In colonial historiography, Lelang Commandery provided a strong historical framework for ascribing the characteristic of “passivity” to the history of the Korean Peninsula, which had purportedly been stuck in an overall stasis until the introduction of civilization through Lelang Commandery.<sup>90</sup> Academic research and museum exhibits focused on the Han-style features and artifacts excavated in this region without making any serious inquiry into indigenous cultural traits.<sup>91</sup> Surely, it was not the case that Japanese scholars had commenced archaeological excavations in the Pyongyang region with an *ex ante* aim of setting the location of Lelang Commandery there, and pure archeological evidence played a prime role in the initial identification of its location in Pyongyang.<sup>92</sup> Still, once its location in Pyongyang had been confirmed and its close connection to Han culture identified, Lelang Commandery became a central theme in narratives of Korean historical passivity in antiquity that were often based on sweeping generalizations in the absence of careful empirical examination. Modern Japa-

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87 Chōsen Sōtokufu 1939, 5–10. This does not mean that Jizi and Wiman Chosŏn received serious academic attention. Even the clearly documented Wiman Chosŏn that immediately preceded the Han Commanderies received scant historical and basically no archaeological attention.

88 Fujita 1948, 1–37; Jung In-Seung 2015, 174.

89 Apart from the more radical contention about the location of Lelang Commandery, the heavy representational focus on the Han Commanderies was one of the main criticisms directed at the Harvard Early Korea Project. The volume covering the earliest period of Korean history was titled *The Han Commanderies in Early Korean History*, with only one out of ten articles discussing Old Chōsen as its main topic. Critics have argued that the minimal coverage of Old Chōsen and a predominant focus on the Han Commanderies in the narration of the development of early cultures in Korea do not suitably represent the achievements of postwar South Korean academia, which has accumulated a large amount of research on the history and historical geography of Old Chōsen. Regardless of its plausibility, this criticism exemplifies how colonial research and its perceived legacies have intensified and radicalized historical debates in South Korea.

90 Jung In-Seung 2011a, 160; Oh Youngchan 2014a, 351–353.

91 Nishikawa 1970, 107.

92 Oh Youngchan 2004, 55–56; Jung In-Seung 2006, 151–152.

nese historiography in the colonial period was deeply intertwined with the empire's political aims, rendering it a highly controversial academic foundation in post-independence Korea.<sup>93</sup>

Such tendencies of colonial historiography had a lasting effect on postwar research including that in South Korea. While many of the previously held views about Lelang Commandery such as equating its culture with Han culture and imagining a strictly ethnicity-based system of social stratification were criticized and revised in the subsequent decades following independence, the colonial foundations in the study of Lelang Commandery may have had an enduring impact. It has recently been forcefully argued that, even long after decolonization, archaeologists have excessively and prejudicially relied on the establishment of Lelang Commandery as an easy explanation for various developments in material culture in the Korean Peninsula.<sup>94</sup> While the role of Lelang Commandery in the dissemination of advanced Chinese culture to the Korean Peninsula cannot be denied, detailed empirical archaeological research on Lelang increasingly revealed chronologically and geographically multilayered channels of cultural influence, posing a challenge to simplistic hierarchical models of cultural expansion centered on the establishment of Lelang Commandery in modern Pyongyang.<sup>95</sup> Components of Lelang material culture that were previously assumed to have been transferred from Han through the establishment of the commandery were recently shown to date further back in time and to have been closely connected to the Yan or Sejungni-Lianhuapu cultures, which may shed light on the archaeology of Wiman Chosŏn, which has largely evaporated from the study of Korean antiquity despite the fact that its historical prosperity is indicated in documentary sources.<sup>96</sup>

The existence of the colonial research on Lelang Commandery and its legacy partially explains the disproportionate level of attention that Lelang Commandery has received among resistance and heterodox historians: The excessive focus on Lelang Commandery commonly reflected in popular heterodox criticisms of the mainstream may find its precedent in the research tendencies that began with Japanese scholars of the early twentieth century rather than being a new phenomenon that emerged from modern Korean nationalism. The prevalence of diffusionist historical explanations centered on the establishment of Lelang Commandery, regardless of their plausibility, was enough to give nationalistic Korean intellectuals

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93 Zhao 2015, 4.

94 Jung In-Seung 2014b, 8–29. For example, Jung criticized the influential view of dating wood-framed tombs with individual interment in Pyongyang after the establishment of Lelang Commandery as a case of circular reasoning: They were dated to the middle Yayoi period, the dating of which is based on the date of establishment of Lelang Commandery. Jung In-Seung 2013; Han 2014, 53.

95 Chungang munhwajae yŏn'guwŏn 2014 is a recently published compilation of Lelang archaeology that generally reflects such perspective. See also Jung In-Seung 2011b, 55–96.

96 Jung In-Seung 2014a; Miyamoto 2012, 1–30. Oh Youngchan 2014b, 95–125. Of course, this is not to say that these authors have the same opinion.

the feeling that Korean history can and should be written in a different way. Rejecting the *location* of Lelang Commandery was an appealing response nationalist historians could make against the seemingly plausible narratives of historical passivity centered on Lelang Commandery, especially considering the presence of historical records that support its location in Liaodong or Liaoxi.

In recent decades, pressure from China has played an important role in intensifying the debate on ancient Korean history in South Korea. In post-reform China – after the period of Communist internationalism in the 1950s and the academic “black hole” of the Cultural Revolution in the ’60s and ’70s – the Chinese government actively expanded its historical claims on its peripheral territories and ethnic minority regions.<sup>97</sup> While Koguryŏ was the topic that bore the brunt of public attention in Korea, discussion of the classic topic of Old Chosŏn (especially its historical geography) also became deeply involved. For example, until the 1970s and even the ’80s, the Great Wall of the Yan and Qin dynasties was generally (although not unanimously) considered by Chinese scholars to have ended in Liaoyang.<sup>98</sup> However, by the mid-1970s, its expanse was subsequently revised, such that the wall was said to have extended further and further eastwards, and now the standard claim has become that it even reached the northwestern part of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>99</sup> Such trends in post-reform China not only caused tensions with Korean nationalist sentiments but also directly clashed with South Korean scholars’ increasing acknowledgment of Old Chosŏn’s presence in Liaodong.

Compared to Korean scholars, who like looking for the agency and autonomy of early Korean cultures, Chinese scholars nowadays tend to stress that they had a distinctively Chinese origin. It is hardly surprising that post-reform Chinese research on ancient Korean history (or Chinese frontier history, depending on the viewpoint) significantly resembled and relied on Japanese scholarship of the early twentieth century – a fact that increased its tension with Korean nationalist sentiments. The evaporation of the theory of indigenous (Tangun) Chosŏn, a focus on the expansion of Chinese culture into Old Chosŏn (recently, speculations of prehistoric migrations of people from the central plains to the Korean Peninsula have seen widespread application in Chinese academia), the propensity to limit the geographic scope of Old Chosŏn to within the Korean Peninsula, and the relatively strong tendency towards diffusionist explanations focusing on the influence of Lelang Commandery are generally iden-

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97 Yoon Hwytak 2004, 99–100.

98 Hong Seng-Hyun 2014, 36. The *Shiji* indicates that Yan built a wall extending to Xiangping 襄平, which normally is understood as modern Liaoyang. There were Chinese scholars before the 1980s who thought that the Yan and Qin wall reached the Korean Peninsula, but this opinion was not as widely accepted then as it has become in recent decades. See footnote 76.

99 Hong Seng-Hyun 2012, 330, 356.

tifiable patterns in recent Chinese research that resemble the work of Japanese scholars during the colonial period when seen from the perspective of the recent trends among South Korean scholars, not to mention from the viewpoint of heterodox scholarship.<sup>100</sup> The impetus created by China's historical research has been so potent that it apparently has been the main foreign influence to constitute a driving force in the escalation of historiographical conflicts in Korea (both international and domestic) in recent decades. The Koguryŏ Foundation and its successor, the Northeast Asian History Foundation, were governmental responses to pressures mainly coming from China, and recent radical heterodox polemics that led to the suspension of major state-funded ancient history projects also primarily targeted the alleged expansionary historical claims coming from China. While such recent tendencies among Chinese scholars have been negatively received by both mainstream and heterodox South Korean historians specializing in ancient Korea, their emergence caused a certain portion of the former, whose historical geography resembled their Japanese and Chinese counterparts more than those of the heterodox scholars, to be subjected to increasing domestic criticism.

In addition to complications in modern international politics in East Asia, the current high degree of tension between conflicting historical geographies in South Korea can also be explained with reference to the factional schisms within South Korean academia, which were brought about and have been sustained by the political divisions in its modern history. As explained in the previous part of the article, the debate between those who place Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies in Manchuria and those who place them in the Korean Peninsula has been a very resilient one in Korean historiography, having continued since the Lee Chosŏn dynasty. During the Japanese colonial period, this debate became deeply entwined with the problem of Korea's internal political stance towards a dominant external power. The struggle between resistance and self-esteem on the one hand and dependence and conformity on the other became closely connected to controversial topics in the ancient history of the region including the history and historical geography of Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies. Colonization separated the Korean society into rigidly opposing factions, and the field of ancient history was no exception.

The complete institutional dominance of colonial historians over resistance historians during the colonial period artificially tipped the power balance between the competing views on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery towards the view that placed them within the Korean Peninsula. By the time of independence, the factional polarization of academic research had already advanced a long way, and the ensuing division of the nation removed the prospects for gradual integration.<sup>101</sup> In South Korea, the continued

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100 Li Zongxun 2016, 45–57; Ahn 2016a, 241–258.

101 See a similar point made by Schmid 1997, 39–40.

dominance of institutional scholars who initially exhibited a certain academic and personal continuity with early twentieth century Japanese scholarship prolonged the artificial power imbalance between the two competing factions that had carried over from the colonial period. Surely, the acknowledgment of this historical continuity does not necessarily need to be understood as a moral accusation against South Korean mainstream historians. As many have correctly pointed out, colonial legacies in South Korean ancient history scholarship have gradually withered with the passage of time, and it is surely debatable whether such historians can still be perceived as practicing history upon a 'colonial' academic background to any meaningful degree. Also, resistance scholarship had relatively little to offer to newborn Korean academia compared to the dense foundations laid down by Japanese historians, especially when it came to the indispensable discipline of archaeology. Whatever one's verdict on the historical power imbalance between the two sides, mainstream South Korean historians specializing in ancient history have not been so successful in convincing the Korean public, or the broad intellectual community, that they have fulfilled the historical demand to fully cast off whatever biases had been carried over from colonial research.

The history of historiography strongly suggests that the exclusion of heterodox historical geography within South Korean institutional academia after decolonization was as much a result of political division as rational persuasion.<sup>102</sup> Lacking a stable presence in formal institutions, heterodox scholarship initially manifested itself in the works of "amateur" historians working outside university history and archaeology departments. Since they were excluded from formal academic discourse, a major weapon for these outcast scholars against the dominance of mainstream scholars was to appeal to public sentiment and political pressure – a strategy that further exacerbated mainstream historians' contempt for them.<sup>103</sup> While heterodox scholarship in early South Korea can be seen as a public response to the arrogance of mainstream academia, which gained its institutional dominance partially through unfair competition, it is also true that the extra-institutional status of heterodox scholarship in South Korea adversely affected its academic quality, leading to the production of numerous methodologically poor works that rightfully deserve the name pseudohistory.

Yet, heterodox historiography gradually made its way into the institutional scene in South Korea partially through the influence of North Korean scholarship, which had successfully institutionalized and sophisticated resistance historiography following decolonization. Yoon Nae-Hyun was a major figure in this development in South Korea, and

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102 Likewise, the dominance resistance historical geography achieved over colonial historical geography in North Korea was also largely due to politics. See footnote 28. The primacy of politics in the formation of institutional research in post-independence Korea is apparent, regardless of which geographical framework provides a more plausible explanation of the available traces of the past.

103 Cho In-Sung 1997, 1–13.

his disciples (and increasingly, their disciples and adherents) have established a small but palpable presence in formal academic institutions and publications in South Korea and improved on Yoon's work. Still, heterodox scholarship has continued to be largely excluded from the works of most institutional historians and archaeologists, although there have been a handful of voluntary attempts to actively discuss and criticize its arguments.

As discussed so far in the second part of this article, ancient history and historical geography in Korea have become sensitive and controversial topics due to a range of external and internal conflicts that developed as a result of Korea's troubled position within the modern politics of East Asia. Another way of analyzing the various societal influences on the study of the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery is to examine the structural background dominant in historical research. On the one hand, there is the lasting legacy of colonialism, and on the other hand, there is the influence of Korean nationalism. Different perspectives on ancient Korean history are closely connected to diverging opinions on the comparative magnitudes of distortion caused by these two conflicting influences. Considering the central role that colonial historical research played in the formation of South Korean academia and the ideological rigor of Korean nationalism, it is likely that these two conflicting influences on the study of ancient history in post-independence Korea contributed to the observed vitriol.

Intuitively the influence of the colonial legacy is highly plausible considering the presence of an academic lineage among the early mainstream South Korean historians.<sup>104</sup> Admittedly, proving the existence of the colonial legacy – especially with regard to the *flaws* that *still* persist because of it – is a difficult endeavor, and particular social phenomena have been (falsely or implausibly) attributed to the colonial legacy in numerous controversies in post-independence Korean society as an easy criticism to make against one's opponents. In ancient history research, the identification of biases or hindering frameworks that can be causally traced back to colonial research is tricky because if there are such things that remain to the present day, they must possess a certain degree of plausibility. Epistemically feeble components of colonial research such as Nissen Dōsoron 日鮮同祖論 or Mimana Nihonhu 任那日本府 quickly dissolved or were weakened once the political apparatus that upheld them collapsed.<sup>105</sup> Still, the presence of prejudicial colonial legacies in the study of ancient history

104 The colonial educational and academic connections of early leading South Korean historians are summarized in Kim Yong-sub 1972. For the same in archaeology, Jung In-Seung 2015 provides a detailed examination.

105 Nissen Dōsoron was a theory that maintained that Japanese and Koreans descend from common ancestors in antiquity. While seemingly harmless, in practice, Nissen Dōsoron was coupled with various auxiliary theories that showed Korea to have been subordinated to Japan in antiquity. One such auxiliary theory was Mimana Nihonhu, which, based on records in the *Nihon Shoki*, claimed that Japan conquered and ruled the southern part of the Korean peninsula from the fourth to the sixth century CE.

has been recurrently pointed out in post-independence Korea, and the removal of their undesirable effects has been openly demanded and become an acknowledged goal. It would not be unreasonable to generalize that South Korean ancient history scholarship has by and large recurrently moved further away from colonial precedents over the past decades partly because this has become such a widely acknowledged goal. The research on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn, which has produced increasingly expansive views of the chronological and geographical scope of Old Chosŏn, is a conspicuous example of such a divergence.

Nevertheless, even the record of moving away from colonial historiography has not been enough to shut down criticisms that research has continued to be conducted within a biased colonial framework. Assuming that the trajectory of professional research in South Korea has produced historical knowledge, its recurrent divergence from Japanese colonial historiography across many important topics in ancient history and historical geography could be interpreted as an intimation that it *had been* under the influence of a persisting path dependence that was only gradually weakened with the passage of time. There may be topics where colonial prejudice has been staved off, but one may wonder if it still lingers in other topics that remain closer or identical to colonial precedents. However, critics skeptical of expansionist revisions in ancient history research in South Korea associate them not with the role of overcoming colonial biases but with nationalist exaggerations of the scope of Korean history. For example, one commentator harshly criticized Korean scholars' recent active research on Old Chosŏn as a futile endeavor motivated by nationalism that was akin to "building a house on few pillars."<sup>106</sup>

In addition to colonial legacies, nationalism is also commonly identified as exerting an influence on ancient history research in Korea.<sup>107</sup> With regard to the influence of nationalism, two common yet radical views can be distinguished. On the one hand, there are simple dichotomous views – often put forth by popular writers inspired by the heterodox tradition – that represent the competition between mainstream and heterodox scholars within the old framework of colonialism versus national resistance. This view is flawed in that it overlooks the multilayered influences spanning across the entire historical research scene in post-independence Korea. The unmistakable divergence between South Korean and Japanese or Chinese scholars refutes this anachronistic characterization. On the other hand, there is what seems to me to be an equally simplistic view that explains the entire development of the postwar Korean historical research only or primarily in terms of nationalism. According to this view, most South Korean scholars have been working under a nationalist bias whereby ancient history was either knowingly or unknowingly exaggerated for ideological purposes. For example, Hyung-il Pai denounced ancient history research in South Korea as a whole for

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106 Shim, 2007, 18.

107 Zhao 2015. See also, Kim Seung-il 2010, 287–292; Pai 2000.

having been primarily driven by nationalism, which led to exaggerated, expansionist, and racist representations.<sup>108</sup> And Jae-Hoon Shim, despite his earlier criticism of Pai's monolithic characterization of the whole of South Korean ancient history scholarship as nationalist, echoed this characterization in a recent article, in which he seems to have developed a stronger stance against nationalism and heterodox scholarship.<sup>109</sup>

However, accounting for the development of mainstream South Korean academia only or primarily in terms of nationalism would be an overstatement. In addition to the possibility of colonial path dependence, the effect of the existence of a bitter domestic factional adversary with more blatant nationalist tendencies cannot be ignored. In the past couple of decades, western influences in the form of national constructivism and even anti-nationalism have begun to establish a palpable presence among South Korean scholars, with some openly reappraising the contributions of Japanese colonial historical research to the study of Korean antiquity.<sup>110</sup> Even if the whole of South Korean academia has been primarily motivated by nationalist pursuits, seeing as colonial research was not without errors and prejudice, it is at least not self-evident that historical research motivated by nationalism has produced so much error as some commentators have claimed.

## Conclusion

In this paper I examined the debate on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery and analyzed it in terms of its historiographical and sociopolitical trajectory. I tried to show that this is an old historical debate involving a complicated set of arguments that cover a wide range of clash points. It is a debate that became radicalized through the influence of the major political conflicts in Korean society in the course of its modern history and was aggravated by its political relationships with its neighboring countries in the region. I examined the conflicting influences from the colonial legacy and nationalism, both of which are closely linked to the study of ancient history in Korea. Despite the history of factionalization and conflict, the boundary between orthodox and heterodox historical geographies has exhibited a certain degree of flexibility, with some topics in orthodox research having partially converged towards what had been previously associated with deviant hypotheses.

What insights can the historiographical and sociological analyses offer to the study of the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and Lelang Commandery? I think they raise important epistemological and ethical questions that are easily hidden in individual empirical studies. As for the epistemological questions, the considerable extra-epistemic influences that have inter-

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108 Pai 2000, 1

109 Shim 2001, 375; Shim 2016, 101.

110 See footnote 6.

laced themselves with historical research over the course of the past century raise the question of how much the level of disciplinary support can – both domestically and internationally – be attributed to common knowledge. As for ethics, such analyses raise the question of what solutions for reconciling the intensifying conflicts between different factions and parties that will continue in the foreseeable future would be righteous. Did the discarded history maps of the Northeast Asian History Foundation or the books of the Early Korea Project really reflect a certain historiographical prejudice and unrightfully exclude certain voices that merit an inclusion in serious academic discourse, or were these projects victims of pseudohistory and nationalism? While providing a direct answer to these questions is beyond my reach, I have attempted to identify the important issues at stake and suggest their implications for our understanding of this long-standing historiographical contention.

I have tackled a sensitive topic whose mere discussion may be the subject of a number of concerns. Some have pointed out that the research on Old Chosŏn and the Han Commanderies has been overly focused on historical geography, which, while important for historical knowledge, often leads to unproductive quarrel and diverts attention from other fruitful topics of research. Such a criticism is especially relevant in the case of Lelang Commandery, whose historical geography is considered to have been settled beyond dispute by the majority of institutional scholars (outside North Korea). Others have taken issue with paying serious academic attention to heterodox histories and giving them a chance to have their voices heard among a wider audience when they arguably do not merit any attention at all. Despite these concerns (the first of which I find plausible, the second not so much), I think the debate on the historical geography of Old Chosŏn and even Lelang Commandery deserves explicit review and analysis because it is an ongoing current affair that offers useful insight into the politicized nature of modern scholarship on the ancient history of the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. If anything, I think the topic calls for wider and more open communication among scholars from diverse backgrounds. The study of the ancient history of this region demands conscious efforts from interested parties to increase intellectual honesty and openness, which, I believe, is an attainable goal in spite of a history riddled with politicized conflicts. Contending historical geographies have exhibited high degrees of internal resilience against external challenges, but past experience shows they are by no means intractable.

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