

# New Horizons in the Study of Ancient Northeast Asia

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*The foundational framework of perception that has driven the study of Ancient Northeast Asia for centuries, if not millennia, remains largely unchanged. However, recent discoveries, new data, and emerging perspectives—such as the Liaohe River Civilization and the Hongshan Culture (4500–3000 BCE); the discovery of the Taosi site and resultant historicization of the Yao-Shun period; the new theory of “Early Yi and Later Xia”; the reappraised historical accounts of Gojoseon by Father Jean-Baptiste Régis (1663–1738); new perspectives on the timing of entry into “Civilization” and “State” stage in the region—demand a fundamental reshaping of the existing paradigm in the study of Ancient Northeast Asia. Largely unknown to many researchers in philosophy, religion, and culture, nonetheless, they open new horizons for research in Northeast Asian histories, politics, societies, philosophies, religions, and cultures, signaling the need for a new framework of understanding in these fields. The author introduces and critically evaluates these new developments while focusing on their implications for the ancient history of Korea.*

## I. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In the field of Northeast Asian studies, particularly in philosophy, culture, and religion, the basic framework of understanding has been maintained for

hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years largely unchanged. However, in the field of history and archaeology, new data and perspectives have emerged that call for a fundamental reorganization of the existing frameworks.

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The author believes that the factors that challenge the traditional frameworks of research in Northeast Asian history, philosophy, religion, and culture include: (1) new archaeological discoveries in the “Liaohe River Civilization” [요하문명 遼河文明] centered around the Manchurian region, (2) the emergence of the “Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia”, which reexamines the relationship between Dongyi [동이 東夷] and Huaxia [화하 華夏] peoples, (3) the shift in perspective from seeing the era starting from the “Xia, Shang, Zhou” periods as the beginning of history in the region to recognizing the “Yao and Shun” period as the starting point, (4) the emergence of new data that increase the plausibility of Gojoseon (the first Korean state, also known as Old Chosun) in the same era as King Yao, and (5) new perspectives that suggest the civilization and statehood stages in Northeast Asia began earlier than previously thought.

These five factors are particularly noteworthy because they involve new data that are still unfamiliar even in the fields of history and archaeology, and are almost unknown to researchers in philosophy, religion, and culture. These findings open up new horizons for research in ancient Northeast Asia, necessitating a new framework of understanding. In this paper, we will examine how each of them is incompatible with the existing framework and what they are leading up to.

## II. NEW HORIZONS IN THE STUDY OF ANCIENT NORTHEAST ASIA

### THE NEW DISCOVERIES OF THE LIAOHE RIVER CIVILIZATION

Historically, it was believed that the Yellow River Civilization in the Central Plains [중원 中原] region was the cradle of ancient Chinese civilization, and that other regions were derived from this civilization. However, this conventional wisdom is no longer accepted even within China. Since the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Neolithic cultures that are "chronologically earlier and culturally more advanced" than those in the Yellow River Civilization area have been continuously identified around the Liaohe River region beyond the Great Wall. In 1995, this was officially named the “Liao River Civilization.” In particular, the discovery of large-scale sites at Niuheliang [우하량 牛河梁], which belong to the later period of the Hongshan Culture [홍산문화 紅山文化, 4500–3000 BCE], including stone tombs, altars, and goddess temples, was a great shock to Chinese academia, and has led to a comprehensive reevaluation of ancient Chinese history.

Before its formal naming, Guo Dashun [곽대순 郭大順] and Sun Shudao [손수도 孫守道] referred to this Neolithic culture as the “Primitive Civilization” [원시문명 原始文明] (Sun and Guo 1984, 11–17), and the late Su Bingqi [소병기 蘇秉琦] called it the “Ancient Culture” [고문화 古文化] (Su Bingqi 1993,

**Figure 1.** Locations of the Liaohe River Civilization, Yellow River (=Huanghe) Civilization, and Yangtze River (= Changjiang) Civilization (Woo 2007b)



1994). It was finally named the "Liao River Civilization" in 1995 by Chinese scholar Guo Dashun (1995a, 1995b). Detailed descriptions of the overall composition of the Liaohe River Civilization are available in the previous books and papers by the author (Woo 2019, 2018, 2007a, 2007b,

2004); a summary is provided in Figure 2<sup>2</sup> and Figure 3.<sup>3</sup>

The new discoveries of the Liaohe River Civilization have several implications for the study of Northeast Asian philosophy, religion, and culture. First, the discovery of the Liaohe River

<sup>2</sup> Korean scholars use the Carbon-14 dating method and generally consider the dating of Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture as ranging from 2000 to 1500 BCE (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, *Encyclopedia of Korean Archaeology*, 2001). In comparison, Chinese scholars use the dendrochronologically corrected dating method of charcoal samples and consider its absolute dating to range from 2300 to 1600 BCE (*Baidu Baike*, "Baidu Encyclopedia"). Since absolute dating has been used in other Neolithic archaeological cultures, the absolute dating of 2300 to 1600 BCE is used in this article. Below are some examples of the dendrochronologically corrected datings in Chinese academia that serve as the basis for the upper and lower limits of the dates of the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture:

- (1) Zhuzhushan [지주산 蜘蛛山] site in Chifeng City [적봉시 赤峰市]: dendrochronologically corrected date 2410 BCE (Carbon-14 date = 2015 BCE (3965±90 aBP))
- (2) Fengxia [풍하 豊下] site in Beipiao City [북표시 北票市]: dendrochronologically corrected date 1890±130 BCE.
- (3) Dadianzi [대전자 大甸子] site in Aohanqi County [오한기 敖漢旗]: dendrochronologically corrected dates 1695±130 BCE, 1735±135 BCE.

<sup>3</sup> This distribution map is redrawn by the author based on internal materials from the Aohanqi County Prehistoric Culture Museum (Woo 2018, 54; 2019, 38).

**Figure 2.** Important Neolithic and Bronze Age Archaeological Cultures of the Liaohe River Civilization (Woo 2018: 52)

1. Neolithic Era **Xiaohexi Culture** (小河西文化 소하서문화, 7000 - 6500 BCE)
2. Neolithic Era **Xinglongwa Culture** (興隆洼文化 흥릉와문화, 6200 - 5200 BCE)
3. Neolithic Era **Fuhe Culture** (富河文化 부하문화, 5200 - 5000 BCE)
4. Neolithic Era **Zhaobaogou Culture** (趙寶溝文化 조보구문화, 5000 - 4400 BCE)
5. Neolithic Era **Hongshan Culture** (紅山文化 홍산문화, 4500 - 3000 BCE):
  - Early Period (4500- 3500 BCE) - Neolithic Era
  - Later Period (3500 - 3000 BCE) - Era of Stone and Bronze Coexistence
    - → “Early State Stage” (初期國家段階 초기국가단계)
    - → “Early Civilization Society” (初級文明社會 초급문명사회)
6. Era of Stone and Bronze Coexistence **Xiaohewan Culture** (小河沿文化 소하연문화, 3000 - 2000 BCE) = Post-Hongshan Culture
7. Bronze Age **Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture** (夏家店下層文化 하가점하층문화, 2300- 1600 BCE)
  - → “Advanced Civilization Society” (高級文明社會 고급문명사회)
8. Bronze Age **Upper Xiajiadian Culture** (夏家店上層文化 하가점상층문화, 1000- 300 BCE)
  - → Emergence of the Mandolin-shaped Bronze Dagger

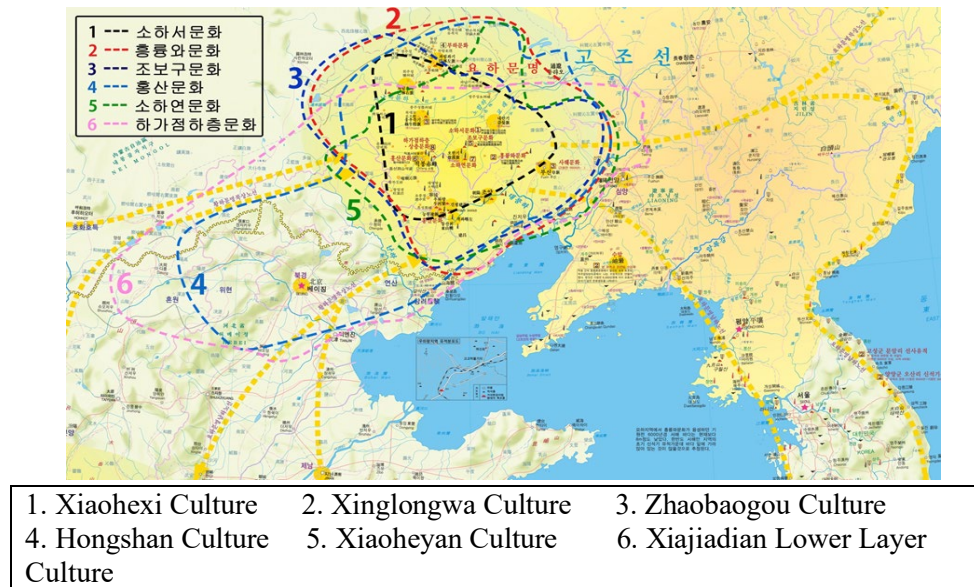
Civilization suggests that the “beginning of civilization in Northeast Asia” originated in Liaoxi [요서 療西], specifically the region west Liaohe River, a perspective that should be seriously considered. From these new discoveries, Su Bingqi argued that (1) the starting point of Chinese civilization began in the Liaohe River Civilization region and later moved to the Yellow River Civilization region, (2) the center of the activity areas of the Huangdi tribe [황제족 皇帝族] was the Hongshan Culture region, (3) the “Five Emperors” [5 제 五帝] era, previously considered mythical, actually

existed, and Yizhou [기주 冀州], known as their activity areas according to the old records, was the Hongshan Culture region, (4) the “Ancient State Stage” began at the Hongshan Culture period, and by the time of the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture [하가점하층문화 夏家店下層文化], the “Great Country at the Regional State Stage” [방국단계대국 方國段階大國] had emerged, and (5) the Hongshan and Xiajiadian Lower Layer Cultures were the centers of the ancient Jiuzhou [9 주 九州] mentioned in historical records (Su 1994, 130–131).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Su Bingqi’s article “Discussion on the ‘Ancient Culture’ of the Western Liaohe River: A Conversation with Historians in Chifeng” was first published in the 1993 supplement of *Northern Ethnic Culture*. It was later included in his book *Xia*

*people, Descendants of the Dragon, Chinese People: An Archaeological Search for Roots* (1994). For a more detailed discussion of his views, see Woo Silha (2009, 289–290).

**Figure 3.** Distribution Areas of Major Neolithic and Bronze Age Sites in the Liao River Civilization



Su Bingqi’s views presented a new perspective in the fields of archaeology and history. If we deeply research the Liaohe River Civilization without the Sinocentric perspective that pushes to associate it with the Huangdi tribe, we can establish a new starting point for the study of Northeast Asian philosophy, religion, and culture. Additionally, the existence of the Liaohe River Civilization, the earliest known civilization in Northeast Asia, which was centered in Liaoxi, must be closely connected with the origins of Northeast Asian philosophy, religion, and culture.

Second, the recognition that the Liaohe River Civilization—which was earlier and more advanced than the Yellow River Civilization—existed in the Manchurian region, enables better understanding of the reasons why the ancient records written before *Shiji, Records of the Grand*

*Historian* [사기 史記] and *Hanshu, The Book of Han* [한서 漢書] described the Dongyi people as “the land of gentlemen where the Dao (the way of enlightenment) is realized,” and why Confucius, the founding father of Confucianism, confessed his desire to live among the Jiuyi [구이 九夷].

Third, the existence of the Liaohe River Civilization further testifies to the likelihood of the historical existence of Gojoseon [고조선 古朝鮮], which is traditionally said to have been founded in 2333 BCE. Previously, researchers believed it was impossible for a state to exist as early as 2333 BCE. However, the discovery of the Liaohe River Civilization has led many scholars studying the Hongshan Culture to believe that by the late Hongshan period (3500–3000 BCE), the culture had already entered the “Early State Stage” or “early Civilization Stage.”

Even Chinese scholars now consider that by the time of the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture (2300–1600 BCE), a fully developed state stage had been reached. As previously mentioned, Su Bingqi believed that during the Hongshan Culture period, the “Ancient State” stage began, and by the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period, a “Great Country at the Regional State Stage” had emerged (Su 1994, 130–131).

Xue Zhiqiang [설지강 薛志强] argued in a 1995 paper that: (1) the Liaoxi region was the “ancestral land of the Yan [염제 炎帝] and Huang [황제 黃帝] emperors” as well as the “ancestral land of Zhuanxu [전욱 顓頊]”, (2) after the Huang and Zhuanxu tribes migrated southward into the Central Plains, they merged with the Early Huaxia Civilization (= Yellow River Civilization), (3) in the Liaoxi region, an ancient civilized state had been established before the Xia [하 夏] dynasty, (4) later, the ancient peoples of the Liaoxi region migrated and established the Shang [상 商] dynasty, which replaced the Xia dynasty, and (5) the Shang dynasty was a crystallization of the superior cultures of southern and northern China and was the most prosperous nation in the world at that time (Xue 1995, 43–49).

I, however, believe that the “civilized state before the Xia dynasty (2070–1600 BCE)” mentioned by Xue Zhiqiang could very well be Gojoseon, the first ancient state of Korea. The “civilized state before the Xia dynasty” he refers to is the “Great Country at the Regional State Stage” during the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period mentioned by Su Bingqi. There is no record of the name of this “civilized

state before the Xia dynasty” in any Chinese historical document, but our records of Korean history do mention the formal state name “Gojoseon” during this period. It is especially important to begin research into the relationship between the Liaohe River Civilization and Gojoseon, as well as its connection to the Korean Peninsula. Otherwise, the Chinese view that the leading force behind the Liaohe River Civilization was the Huangdi tribe could inevitably become the established theory even in international academia.

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE “THEORY OF EARLY YI AND LATER XIA”

The core points of the “Theory of Eastern Yi and Western Xia” [이하동서설 夷夏東西說] first proposed by Fu Sinian [傅斯年 부사년] are as follows: (1) The origin of the Shang dynasty, established by the Dongyi people, was in the northeastern region near the Bohai Sea [발해만 渤海灣]; (2) The Yi [이 夷] people occupied the east, while the Xia [하 夏] people occupied the west, around present-day Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces; (3) The eastern Yi tribe (= Dongyi tribe) and the western Xia tribe were in conflict until the Yi tribe defeated the Xia tribe and established the Shang dynasty; (4) Classical texts such as *Zuo Zhuan*, *Zuo’s Commentary* distorted this fact based on a Xia-centric perspective, demeaning the Yi people; (5) Despite the significant power of the Yi, thinkers of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods re-constructed



Figure 4. Front and back covers of Yi Hua (2012) (author's collection)

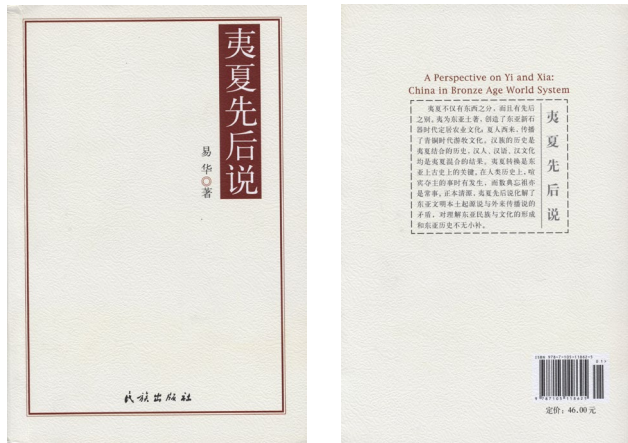
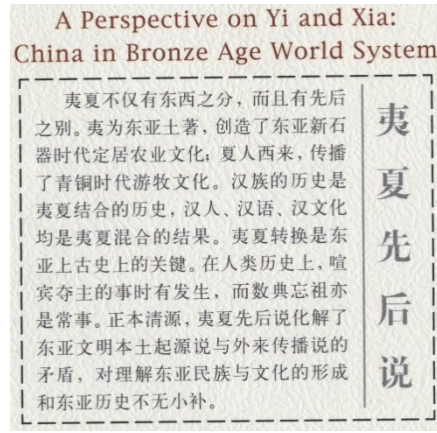


Figure 5. Zoomed Box on the back cover (Yi Hua 2012)



The text in this box summarizes the author's perspective well.

Figure 6. Illustrations at the Front Inserts of Yi Hua (2012)



a dynastic system centered on the Xia [하 夏], Shang [상 商], and Zhou [주 周] dynasties, while downgrading and excluding the Yi; and (6) Fu Sinian proposed to redefine the ancient history of Northeast Asia as a confrontation between the Xia-Zhou forces in the west and the Dongyi forces in the east (Fu 1980, 822–893).<sup>5</sup>

Fu Sinian’s view was revolutionary in that it (1) shifted the prevailing perspective of a conflict between the “civilized forces of the south” and the “barbarian forces of the north” to a conflict between the “Yi forces” of the east and the “Xia forces” of the west, and (2) highlighted the existence and role of the Yi, that is, Dongyi [Translator’s Note: “Dong” in Dongyi means the East].

In particular, Fu Sinian identified the Bohai Sea region as the stronghold of the Shang dynasty and interpreted the migration of Gija [기자 箕子] to Gojoseon when the Shang dynasty fell, as “going to the place where his predecessor king had lived.” In other words, the Shang dynasty originally came from the northeast, and when it fell, he “returned to the place it had originally come from.” This view outrightly rejects the established view in Chinese historiography that Gija was ‘appointed’ to Gojoseon or became its king and civilized it.

<sup>5</sup> The “Theory of Eastern Yi and Western Xia” included in the complete works of Fu Sinian has been translated into the following book in Korean: Fu Sinian (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Yi Hua completed his master’s degree at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and his doctorate at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The arguments of Xue Zhiqiang mentioned earlier builds on this Theory of Eastern Yi and Western Xia and views the ruling forces of the Hongshan Culture and the Xiajadian Lower Layer Culture as the “origin of the Dongyi people” and the “origin of the Shang people.” However, he draws from this a very strange conclusion that these people were the ancestors of the Huaxia (Chinese) people, i.e., the Huangdi tribe. Now, it is time to critically analyze such misleading logic and develop our own narrative.

Drawing recent attention beyond Fu Sinian’s Theory of Eastern Yi and Western Xia is a new theory called the “Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia” [이하선후설 夷夏先後說]. Its central argument is that the Yi of the east existed periodically and culturally earlier than the Xia of the west. This theory is presented in a book titled *The Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia* by Yi Hua (2012), who received his doctorate from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of discussion, see some scanned materials from this book in Figures 4-6.

The Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia presents a completely different perspective from the traditional views of the history, culture, and religious thought of Northeast Asia in the following ways (Yi 2012).

Afterwards, he worked as a researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, and a concurrent professor at the Humanities and Social Sciences Central Research Center of the Ministry of Education and at the Center for Chinese Ethnic Minorities Studies at the Central University for Nationalities.



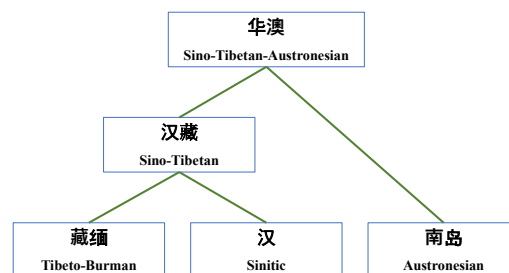
1. The relationship between Yi and Xia is viewed not merely as eastern and western forces in conflict; rather, the Yi were seen as the “indigenous forces” that had existed first in Northeast Asia. They were the main forces that cultivated the “settled agricultural culture” of the Neolithic period in Northeast Asia.
2. These indigenous forces in Northeast Asia, who cultivated the settled agricultural culture of the Neolithic period, were the leading forces of the Liaohe River Civilization which continued through the Xinglongwa Culture and Hongshan Culture and so on. These forces moved southward near the Bohai Sea and the Shandong Peninsula and were later referred to as “Yi” or “Dongyi.”
3. The Xia, which grew powerful in the west, were not indigenous forces but rather newcomers migrating from the West, that is, Central Asia. They are the ones who introduced a “nomadic culture” to Northeast Asia during the Bronze Age.
4. From the perspective of physical anthropology, (1) the Yi were a Mongoloid people who migrated from Southeast Asia long ago, and (2) the

Xia or Rongdi [융적 戎狄] were Indo-European people who migrated from Central Asia.

5. Linguistically, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese are typical mixed languages, where (1) the Yi language [이어 夷語] or Sino-Tibetan-Austronesian language [화오어 華澳語]<sup>7</sup> forms the substratum, and (2) the Hua language [화어 華語] or Indo-European language forms the superstratum.
6. The history of the so-called “Han [한 漢]” people is the history of the combination of Yi and Xia, and Han people, Han language, and Han culture are all the products of this combination.
7. The Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia helps to overcome the contradictions that exist between the Indigenous Origin Theory and the External Diffusion Theory of East Asian civilization.

The development of the theory is, without a question, enabled by the new discoveries of the Liaohe River Civilization. In particular, (1) the first illustration in his book (Figure 6) features the face of the goddess from the Hongshan Culture (4500–3000 BCE), (2) followed by the depiction of the earliest ring - ditch

<sup>7</sup> The term "Sino-Tibetan-Austronesian language" (華澳語, Hua-Ao language) refers to both the Sino-Tibetan language, the linguistic root of the Chinese language, and the Austronesian language, the language of the southern islands including Macau (Sagart 2011, 143–147). For the detailed lineage diagram, see the following diagram, re-created from Sagart (2011, 144, Figure 1).



**Figure 7.** The Key Points of the *Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia* (Yi 2012)

Yi [이 夷]	Xia [하 夏] or Rong [융적 戎狄]
Geographically in the east	Geographically in the west
Temporally earlier	Temporally later
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous forces in East Asia</li> <li>• Forces that created settled agricultural culture during the Neolithic Period</li> <li>• Cultivated cultures like the Xinglongwa Culture and Hongshan Culture of the Liao River Civilization, and later moved south to cultivate the Liangzhu Culture [양저문화 良渚文化]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrant forces</li> <li>• Forces introduced from Central Asia</li> <li>• Forces that introduced nomadic culture during the Bronze Age</li> </ul>
In physical anthropology, the Yi are a Mongoloid race, who migrated from Southeast Asia thousands of years ago	The Xia or Rong-Di are Indo-European races that migrated from Central Asia
<b>Key historical figures:</b> Shun [순 舜], Gaozu of Han [한고조 漢高祖]	Emperor Huang, Emperor Qin Shi Huang of Qin [진시황제 秦始皇帝]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the establishment of the Xia dynasty, East Asia was the land of the Yi</li> <li>• After the establishment of the Xia dynasty by the father and son of Dayu [대禹대우], distinctions were made between Dongyi (East Yi) and Xiyi (West Yi)</li> <li>• Before the establishment of the Xia dynasty, there was no distinction between nomadism and agriculture in East Asia.</li> <li>• Linguistically, Korean, Chinese, and Japanese are typical mixed languages, where (1) Yi language or Sino-Tibetan-Austronesian language forms the substratum, and (2) Hua language or Indo-European language forms the superstratum.</li> <li>• The combination and transition between Yi and Xia opened the history of China and created the unique cultural tradition of East Asia.</li> <li>• The transition from Yi to Hua (華 華) is the key to understanding the ancient history of Northeast Asia.</li> <li>• The history of the Han tribe is the history of the combination of Yi and Xia.</li> <li>• Han people, Han language, and Han culture are all products of the mixture of Yi and Xia.</li> <li>• The "Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia" helps to overcome the contradictions between the indigenous origin theory and the external diffusion theory of East Asian civilization.</li> </ul>	

settlement in Northeast Asia and various funerary artifacts of the Xinglongwa Culture (6200–5200 BCE) which marks the beginning of the settled agricultural culture 8,000 years ago, and (3) the

introduction of various jade artifacts from the Hongshan Culture. These elements carry significant symbolic meanings, as they demonstrate that the basis of the Yi—whom he referred to as the “indigenous

forces” and creators of the “settled agricultural culture”—was the very Liaohu River Civilization region.

While quite broad and often rough, this theory offers many insights for reexamining not only the ancient and early history of Northeast Asia but also the philosophy, religion, and culture of the region. I largely agree with the theory in its broader framework. We should further refine it and use it as materials to establish a new framework for the study of philosophy, religion, and culture in Northeast Asia. Figure 7 summarizes the key points of the theory.

### THE TAOSI SITE AND THE HISTORICIZATION OF THE YAO AND SHUN PERIOD<sup>8</sup>

China recently concluded the Chinese Civilization Exploration Project [중화문명탐원공정 中華文明探原工程: 2004–2015], which aimed to explore the origins of Chinese civilization. The focus was placed on the Taosi site [도사유지 陶寺遺址]<sup>9</sup>, discovered in the village of Taosi, Taosi Township, Taosi Town, Xiangfen County [양분현 襄汾縣], Linfen City [임분시 臨汾市], Shanxi Province [산서성 山西省]. It was officially announced that the Taosi site is (1) the capital city of Emperor Yao [요 堯], known as Pingyang [평양 平陽], which was

previously considered belonging only to the realm of legend, and (2) the “First Capital of China” or the “First Capital of the Huaxia [화하 華夏] people.”

The area around Linfen City, where the Taosi site was discovered, (1) has its administrative center still named Yaodu District [요도구 堯都區], and has been known as the ‘capital of Emperor Yao’ for thousands of years; and (2) still contains many sites associated with Emperor Yao, such as the Yao Temple, Yao Tomb, Emperor Yao’s Ancient Residence, and the Gushe Immortal Cave [고사선동 姑射仙洞]. These legends have now been officially confirmed as a historical fact through the excavation of the Taosi site. Figure 8 shows a series of maps that locate the Taosi site and its panoramic view.

On December 12, 2015, the final report of the exploration, *Xiangfen Taosi: Archaeological Excavation Report 1978–1985*, was released (compiled by the Archaeological Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Cultural Relics Bureau of Linfen City, Shanxi Province, 2015).<sup>10</sup> To commemorate the completion of the 12-year project, an academic symposium titled *Taosi Site and Taosi Culture Publication Symposium* was held in Beijing on December 12, 2015. This symposium presented a new interpretation of the Taosi

<sup>8</sup> This section briefly summarizes my book, Woo Silha (2019), with a few revisions. For details, see Chapter 5 (pp. 127–140) of Woo Silha (2019) and Chapter 13 (pp. 613–673) of Woo Silha (2018).

<sup>9</sup> In Korea, archeological sites or ruins are referred to by the term “yujeok” [유적 遺蹟] or “yujeokji”

[유적지 遺蹟地] is used to refer to archaeological sites, whereas in Chinese, the term “yizhi” [遺址 遺址] is used.

<sup>10</sup> This report consists of four volumes, each the size of a telephone directory.

**Figure 8.** The Location of the Taosi Site

8-1. Lifan City



8-2. Yaodu District and the Taosi Site



8-3. Relics of Emperor Yao in Yaodu District



Yaodu District Cultural Relics and Tourism Bureau, *Pingyang, the Capital of Emperor Yao*, p.1.

1. Yao Temple
2. Yao Tomb
3. Imperial Yao's ancient Residence
4. Gushe Immortal Cave

8-4. Panorama of Yao Temple



Yaodu District Cultural Relics and Tourism Bureau, *Pingyang, the Capital of Emperor Yao*, p.3.

site, marking the culmination of the Project. Its major characteristics and significance are as following:

1. The Taosi site is a Longshan Culture [용산문화 龍山文化] site of the Taosi type, discovered in Taosi Village, Taosi Township, Taosi Town, Xiangfen County, Linfen City, Shanxi Province.

2. It covers a total area of 4.3 million square meters and has a dual-walled structure with an inner wall and an outer wall. The area within the outer wall is 2.8 million square meters, while the area within the inner wall is 130,000 square meters. It is a large-scale city site at the stage of a

“Regional State [방국 方國]” or “Kingdom [왕국 王國].”

3. The dendrochronologically corrected absolute dating of Miaodigou 2<sup>nd</sup> Layer Culture [묘저구 2기문화 廟底溝 2期文化] of the Yangshao Culture is 2900–2800 BCE. That of the wall relics range from 2500–1900 BCE, 2450–1900 BCE to 2500–2000 BCE. Generally, it is considered to date 2500–1900 BCE. The site excavation director, He Nuo [何鷺 하노], notes that the central remains of the Taosi site lasted for about 400 years, with the early period ranging from 2300–2100 BCE, the middle period from 2100–2000 BCE, and the late period from 2000–1900 BCE (He 2004). The largest tombs are considered “royal tombs of the Regional State around 2400 BCE.” In the English summary, the Taosi site is described as “the capital city of an early prehistoric state around 2400 BCE.”
4. It is thereby concluded that the palace of the Taosi site is “Pingyang, the Palace of Emperor Yao around 2400–2300 BCE.” The Yao and Shun period, described in various literary records as mythological, was indeed real, and the Taosi site represents the “First China.”

As a result of the excavation of the Taosi site, the historical period of the Yellow River Civilization in the Central Plains region—which was traditionally viewed to have begun with the Xia-Shang-

Zhou era—has been extended further back to the Yao and Shun period. The newly established lineage of the historical period is now viewed as running from Yao of Tang [당요 唐堯] → Shun of Yu [우순 虞舜] → Yu of Xia [하우 夏禹] → Tang of Shang [상탕 商湯] → Duke of Zhou [주공 周公].

Particularly noteworthy is the discovery of the Wenzhi Pianhu [문자편호 文字扁壺], a pottery vessel with two characters drawn on its surface, shown in Figure 9. It is dated as old as 2000–1900 BCE (Xu 2012; Archaeology Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Shanxi Linfen City Cultural Relics Bureau 2015, 1,349).

The discovery of the Taosi site, which was officially announced by Chinese archaeologists as the capital city of Emperor Yao, provides many important implications for the study of Gojoseon of Korea. First, *Samguk Yusa, The Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea* [삼국유사 三國遺事] recorded the year of the founding of Gojoseon as “during the same period as Emperor Yao” when it quoted *Wei Shu, The Book of Wei* [위서 魏書], but “50 years after Emperor Yao's ascension” when it quoted *Gogi, Ancient Records* [고기 古記].

1. According to *Wei Shu, The Book of Wei*, [Dangun Wanggeom 단국왕검 檀君王儉] ... founded Gojoseon; it was during the same time as Gao [고 高, another name of Emperor Yao].<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Samguk Yusa* 『三國遺事』, Chronicles of Strange Events 紀異, Chapter 1, Gojoseon (Wanggeom Joseon) 第 1 古朝鮮(王儉朝鮮): 魏書云, 乃往二千載有壇君王儉, 立都阿斯達(經云無葉山, 亦云白岳,

在白州地, 或云在開城東, 今白岳宮是), 開國號朝鮮, 與高同時。



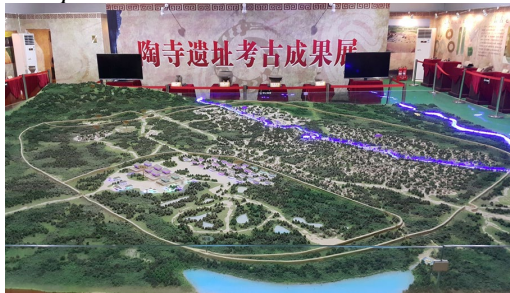
**Figure 9.** Field Research Materials of the Taosi Site (August 16, 2016)

9-1. Entrance to the Exhibition Hall Near the Site



- The entrance highlights “First China” [最早中國], “Ancient Capital of Emperor Yao” [帝堯古都], and the two characters visible on the *Wenzi Pianhu*.
- The entire site covers 4.3 million square meters, with 2.8 million square meters within the outer wall and 130,000 square meters within the inner wall.

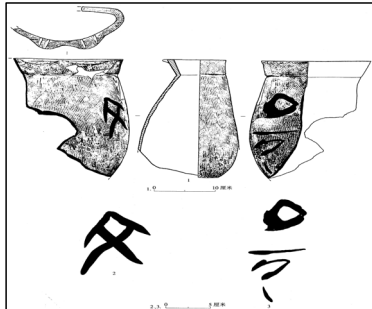
9-2. Model City of Pingyang, the Royal City of Emperor Yao



9-3. Information Board for the Earliest Chinese Characters on *Wenzi Pianhu*



9-4. The characters “Wen” [文] and “Yao” [堯] on *Wenzi Pianhu*



(Source: Left: *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p. 369, Fig. 3-51; Center: *Ibid*, Volume 4, Color Plate 9; Right: *Ibid*, Volume 4, Color Plate 10.)

The left character is considered “Wen” [文], and the right character “Yao” [堯], although there are differing opinions suggesting the right character could be “Yi” [易], “Ming” [明], or “Ming” [命].

2. According to *Gogi, Ancient Records*, ... [he] was called Dangun Wanggeom. In the year Gyeongin [경인 庚寅], 50 years after Gao of Tang (the first year of Emperor Yao’s reign was the year Mujin [戊辰 무진], so 50 years later is the year Jeongsa [丁巳 정사], not

Gyeongin. This might be an error), he established the capital in Pyongyang-seong [평양성 平壤城] (present-day Seogyeong [서경 西京 the West Capital]), and used the name Joseon first time to name the country.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, *Chronicles of Strange Events 紀異*, Chapter 1, *Gojoseon (Wanggeom Joseon) 第 1 古朝鮮(王儉朝鮮)*: 古記云, 昔有桓國(謂帝釋也)庶子桓雄, ... 號曰壇君王儉. 以唐高即位五十年庚寅(唐高即位元年戊辰,

則五十年丁巳, 非庚寅也, 疑其未實), 都平壤城(今西京), 始稱朝鮮.

When *Wei Shu, The Book of Wei* was referenced, the founding of Dangun Joseon was viewed as occurring during the same time as Emperor Yao. When *Gogi, Ancient Records* was used, it was “50 years after Emperor Yao ascended the throne,” hence the founding year was corrected from *Gyeongin* to *Jeongsa* in the sexagenary cycle.

Regarding, Chinese scholars generally accept the following views regarding Emperor Yao: (1) the year he ascended the throne is the year *Gapjin* [갑진년 甲辰年]; (2) after reviewing various sources, they have determined it was 2357 BCE; and (3) since he ascended the throne at the age of 20, his lifespan is estimated to be 2377–2259 BCE.

If we also accept this and use *Gogi, Ancient Records*, the founding year of Dangun Joseon—which is said to be “50 years after Gao of Tang ascended the throne”—would be 2307 BCE, only 26 years different from the commonly accepted founding year of Gojoseon in Korea, that is 2333 BCE. Or, if we use *Wei Shu, The Book of Wei*—which says it was during “the same time as Emperor Yao”—the founding year of Dangun Joseon would be in 2357 BCE, only 24 years earlier than 2333 BCE. Of course, Korean scholars estimated the Gojoseon foundation year as 2333 BCE on the basis of the correction by Il-yeon [일연 一然, the author of *Samguk Yusa*]. Which estimate is closer to the truth is yet to be determined.

Various historical texts—such as the *Shiji Zhengyi, True Interpretation of the Records of the Grand Historian* [사기정의

史記正義], *Diwang Shiji, The Chronological History of Emperors* [제왕세기 帝王世紀], *Shijing, The Book of Songs* [시경 詩經], and *Shangshu, The Book of Documents* [尚書 상서, also known as *Shujing* 서경 書經]—record that “the capital of Emperor Yao was Pingyang” and that “the name of the country ruled by Emperor Yao was Tang.” As emphasized by Wang Wei, the excavation of the Taosi site has revealed that Emperor Yao was not merely a legendary or mythical figure but a real historical figure. It strongly suggests that as Emperor Yao was a historically real figure, the existence of Dangun Joseon was also historically real. There is now a compelling reason for the study of Dangun Joseon from new perspectives.

Second, it is important to note that a regional state of a large scale existed in the Liaoxi region during the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period, at the time when regional states started to emerge in the Central Plains centering around the Taosi site identified as the capital of Emperor Yao and the Shimao site identified as the capital of Huangdi. As mentioned earlier, there existed in the Liaohe River Civilization region during the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period (2300–1600 BCE) a great country, which a great Chinese archeologist Su Bingqi referred to as a “great state at the regional state stage,” and which Xue Zhiqiang referred to it as a “civilized ‘Ancient State’ established before the Xia dynasty.” In other words, another ancient state had existed in the Liaoxi region during the time when the Yao and Shun period was beginning in the Yellow River Civilization region.

If we evaluate Su Bingqi's and Xue Zhiqiang's arguments while setting aside their attempts to link the leading forces of the Liaohe River Civilization to the Huangdi tribe, then we arrive at the following conclusions: (1) If Xue's "civilized 'Ancient State' established before the Xia dynasty (2070–1600 BCE)" existed in the Liaoxi region, it is highly likely to be Gojoseon; (2) Xue's "civilized 'Ancient State' established before the Xia dynasty" could be the same "Great State at the Regional State Stage" that Su identified as existing during the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period; (3) Only after some of the leading forces of the Hongshan Culture and Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture moved southward into the Central Plains, did the Huangdi tribe form and led to the Yao and Shun period. (4) If the Yao and Shun period was unfolding in the Central Plains while a "great nation at the regional state stage" or a "civilized 'Ancient State'" existed in the Liaoxi region, it is highly likely to be Dangun Joseon, the early dynasty of Gojoseon.

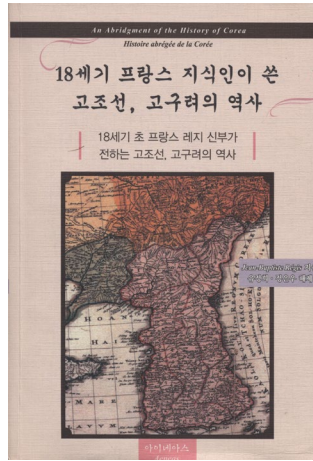
It is lamenting that even when respected Chinese scholars acknowledge the existence of a "great country at the regional state stage" or a "civilized 'Ancient State'" in the Liaoxi region during the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period, the Korean academic community tends to dismiss these many studies on the Liaohe River Civilization as something irrelevant to them, merely occurring within Chinese academic circles. It is high time that research on the relationship between the Liaohe River Civilization and Dangun Joseon, and further, the relationship

between the Korean Peninsula and the Liaohe River Civilization, should begin in earnest. If not, the Chinese academic viewpoints—that the leading forces of the Liaohe River Civilization were the Huangdi tribe and that all the northern ethnic groups which appeared later in this region were descendants of Emperor Huang—will inevitably become the accepted orthodoxy even in international academic circles. It is my opinion that the Liaohe River Civilization was the very foundation of the Gojoseon civilization. I hope that more scholars from various fields of Korean academia will take an interest in studying the Liaohe River Civilization and the Hongshan Culture.

#### **FATHER JEAN-BAPTISTE RÉGIS (1663–1738) ON GOJOSEON**

The shortage of written documents has always been a significant obstacle in the study of Gojoseon. Lately introduced, however, was the research notes by Jean-Baptiste Régis (1663–1738), a French Jesuit missionary who were active in China in the 18th century. During his stay in China, he investigated the history of Gojoseon through the Chinese historical records preserved in the imperial archives of China. His research has a great potential to shed new insights into the history of Goguryeo; it is eventually translated by Yoo Jeonghui [유정희] and Jeong Eunwoo [정은우] and published for the first time in Korean (Régis 2018; see Figure 10). Father Régis' report was first published in French in 1735, and in English three years later.

**Figure 10.** *The History of Gojoseon and Goguryeo Written by an 18th-Century French Intellectual* (2018)



The translated book in Korean includes both the French and English versions, along with detailed annotations by Yoo Jeonghui and Jeong Eunwoo.

Father Régis' account begins with the statement that Gojoseon existed from the time of Emperor Yao before the Xia dynasty, and that it was a subordinate state during the Xia dynasty. According to Father Régis, Gojoseon rebelled against the tyranny of the Xia dynasty and even invaded the Xia territory; Gojoseon existed for 2,814 years before the era of Gija Joseon [기자 조선箕子朝鮮]; and, it occupied the regions south of the Yangtze River and the Shandong area until the reign of Qin Shi Huang of Qin, the first emperor of the unified China.

What is astonishing is that these records had been made by a then most prominent French scholar-priest about 300 years ago in 1735, long before the controversial *Hwandan Gogi*, *The Ancient*

*Records of Hwan and Dan* [환단고기 桓檀古記] and other similar texts became known to the public. Father Régis' records, published nearly 300 years before *Hwandan Gogi* came into public knowledge, testify the historical existence and history of Gojoseon, Goguryeo, and Goryeo based on three historical records preserved in the imperial archives of China. The exact titles of the three records remain uncertain which he phonetically transcribed in French. What is certain is that his records were surely based on the historical records that were available at the time in the imperial archive of China and were recorded over 300 years ago.

The following quotes from (Régis 2018) are the key records related to Gojoseon during the Yao and Shun period and the Xia Dynasty. They have been divided into paragraphs only for the purpose of adding the annotator's footnotes; but without the footnotes, they form a continuous narrative of the whole history of Gojoseon therein.

The Joseon people [here referring to the people of Gojoseon] were subjects of China from the reign of Emperor Yao, who began his rule in 2357 BCE, until the reign of the third emperor of the Xia dynasty, Taikang [태강 太康], who began his rule in 2188 BCE. However, the tyrannical rule of the Xia emperor Taikang led to resistance from Joseon. By the time of the last emperor of the Xia dynasty, Jie [걸 桀], who began his rule in 1818 BCE, Joseon had once again pay tribute. However, Jie's tyranny once more provoked a rebellion from Joseon, during which Joseon even invaded some Chinese territory. (Régis 2018, 174)

Chengtang [성탕 成湯], the founding king of the Shang dynasty who usurped the throne from Jie of Xia and ruled China around 1766 BCE, subdued the Joseon people by force and made them pay tribute once again. (Ibid., 176)

During the reign of Zhongding [중정 中丁], who began his rule in 1562 BCE as an emperor of the Shang dynasty, Joseon invaded China. Afterward, Joseon alternated between submission and rebellion, a pattern that continued until the reign of Pangeng [반경 盤庚], who began his rule in 1324 BCE. (Ibid., 177)

The weakening of power during the reign of Pangeng provided an opportunity for Joseon to become the ruler of the Jiangnan [강남 江南] and Shandong [산동 山東] regions. Joseon occupied these areas until it was conquered and driven out by Qin Shi Huang of Qin. Since little is known about the historical facts regarding Joseon before the Zhou dynasty, however, Chinese historians generally consider that its monarchy properly began with Gija. From the time of Gija's Joseon, Joseon continued for 2,814 years, excluding the period when it was annexed as a province of China. (Ibid., 178)

Gija was a wise prince of the Shang dynasty. He was the founder of Gija Joseon. However, his reasonable counsel angered his nephew, King Zhou [주 紂], the Son of Heaven of the Shang dynasty. Zhou, who ruled with tyranny, not only ignored Gija's advice, which could have saved the country, but even imprisoned him. Gija had to remain in a strict prison until King Wu of Zhou [무왕 武王], who later became the Son of Heaven, freed him. King Wu killed King Zhou, the last emperor of the Shang dynasty, and established the Zhou dynasty in 1122 BCE. (Ibid., 180–181)

After being immediately released from prison, Gija became a free man, but he wanted to leave the domain of King Wu of Zhou, who had taken the title of Son of Heaven from his family. He considered the Joseon area to be most suitable for his goals, so he headed east. King Wu of Zhou, not opposed to this, appointed Gija as the king of Joseon, thereby relieving Gija of his uneasy feelings towards the Zhou dynasty. It appears that Gija was entrusted with the kingship of Gija Joseon because he had submitted to the Zhou dynasty. Gija's descendants continued to rule Joseon until the time of Emperor Qin Shi Huang of Qin, who began his reign in China around 246 BCE. (Ibid., 181)

Emperor Qin Shi Huang seized and annexed Joseon from the Gija family, incorporating it into Liaodong [요동 遼東], the east of the Liaohe River region. After that, the royal family of Gija Joseon remained in the region only as titular rulers with the rank of marquis for about 40 years. They had to wait for about 40 years until their descendant Jun [준 準] regained the throne. (Ibid., 182)

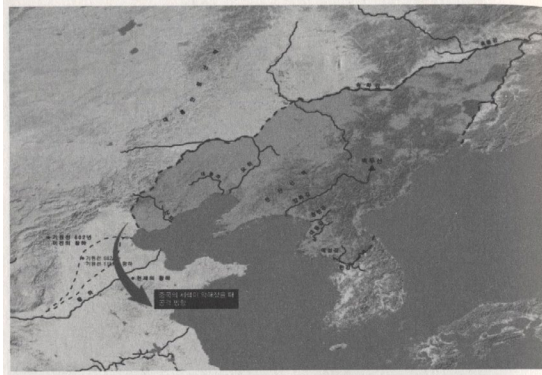
Originally from the vicinity of Beijing, a man whom the Chinese called Ouei man (hereafter Wiman in Korean pronunciation, 위만 衛滿) knew how to take advantage of the Chu-Han Civil War during the period of Liu Bang, the founder of the Han dynasty, who began ruling China in 206 BCE. (Ibid., 182)

After defeating Gija's descendants in numerous battles, Wiman became the ruler of Joseon and obtained the title of King of Joseon. He overthrew the Gija family and declared Joseon independent of the control of Liaodong. However, it took a long time for him to have his kingship recognized by the Chinese emperors. Emperor Hui of Han [혜제 惠帝], who began his reign in 195 BCE, and Empress Lü [여후 呂后],

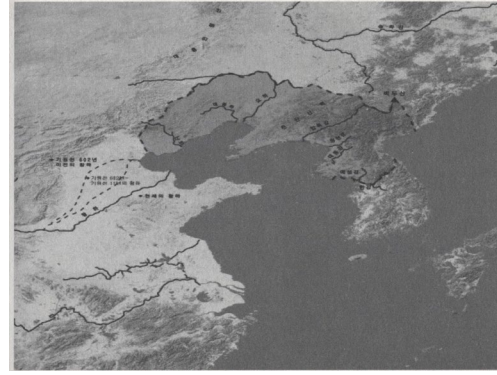


**Figure 11.** Changing Spheres of Influence of Gojoseon, Based on Father Régis' Book  
(The arrows below indicate the invasion routes of Gojoseon.)

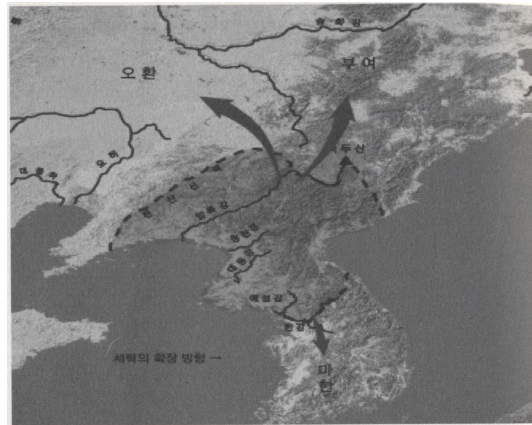
11-1. During Dangun Joseon (Before the 11th Century BCE) (Ibid.: 162)



11-2. During Gija Joseon (Late 4th Century BCE – Early 3rd Century BCE, before the Invasion by Jin Ke) (Ibid.: 163)



11-3. Expanded Sphere of Influence during Wiman Joseon (Ibid.: 164)



who acted as regent in his name accepted the advice of a former governor of Liaodong and granted Wiman the title of King of Joseon. This allowed Wiman the opportunity to conquer and expand his territory, eventually bringing the Maek [맥 貊], Goguryeo, Ohwan [오환 烏桓], and other tribes under his control. (Ibid., 182–183)

Wiman's grandson, Ugeo [우거 右渠], initiated a perilous war with the Han dynasty after killing the Han envoy She He [섭하 涉河] around 110 BCE.

Emperor Wu of Han sent Yang Pu and Xun Zhi to punish Ugeo for his insolence, but they failed. However, soon after, one of Ugeo's own men assassinated him and surrendered to the emperor, leading Emperor Wu to annex Joseon as a province of China. This newly conquered territory was soon named Canghai Commandery [창해군 滄海郡]. Once stability was restored, the emperor divided the annexed Joseon into four commanderies: Zhenfan [진번 真番], Lintun [임둔 臨屯], Lelang [낙랑 樂浪], and Xuantu [현도 玄菟]. Additionally,

Emperor Wu demoted regions such as Ohwan and Goguryeo to the status of third-class local units. Emperor Zhao of Han, who began his reign in 86 BCE, abolished two of the commanderies, leaving only Lelang and Xuantu, thus reducing Joseon to just two commanderies. (Ibid., 183)

Based on these records, the annotators summarized Father Régis' view of the sphere of influence of Gojoseon as shown in Figure 11.

Although Father Régis' records of Gojoseon are brief, they convey a significant amount of information. While these accounts need to be rigorously cross-examined by experts in the field, one thing is clear. That is, from the Xia-Shang-Zhou period, Gojoseon was a real state that contended with these dynasties. The time has come to study Gojoseon from a new perspective. Considering the discoveries of the Liaohe River Civilization, the theory of the succession of Yi and Xia, and other new discoveries, it might be necessary to completely reshape the historical and cultural framework of Northeast Asia.

### **NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE TIMING OF ENTRY INTO THE "CIVILIZATION STAGE" AND "STATE STAGE"<sup>13</sup>**

#### *THREE VIEWS ON THE ENTRY INTO THE "CIVILIZATION STAGE"*

With the recent discoveries of new archaeological data such as the Liaohe

River Civilization and the Taosi site, different views compete within Chinese academia regarding the timing of different regions entering the "civilization stage" and "state stage." These discussions can be broadly categorized into three positions, listed from the earliest to the latest: (1) the theory of around 3000 BCE, (2) the theory of around 2500 BCE, and (3) the existing mainstream theory of around 2,000 BCE with the Xia dynasty (2070–1600 BCE) as the reference point. As I have discussed these in detail in another book, I will briefly summarize them in Figure 12.

The Chinese academia is standing firmly against each other, divided into these three perspectives. The key to this debate lies in the criteria for determining when a society has entered the "civilization stage" or the "state stage." Western standards require the presence of writing, bronze tools, cities, and the establishment of absolute monarchy, and it is the Shang dynasty that meets all of these conditions first time. Yet, there are very few scholars in Chinese academia today who believe that civilization or statehood began only with the Shang dynasty. For there were many civilizations around the world even without writing or bronze tools.

First, those scholars who argue that the "Early Civilization Stage" or "Early State Stage" began around 3000 BCE base their argument on the presence of elements such as the exercise of absolute power, the presence of articulated class system, and

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<sup>13</sup> This section summarizes my book (Woo 2018, 589–595).

**Figure 12.** Summary of Views on the Timing of Entry into the "Civilization Stage" (Woo 2018: 590)

Entry Timing	Main Regions	Proposed by	Major Scholars
Around 3,000 BCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Liaoxi</i>: Late Hongshan Culture</li> <li>○ <i>Zhejiang</i>: Early Liangzhu Culture</li> <li>○ <i>Central Plains</i>: Miaodigou Culture</li> </ul>	Su Bingqi [蘇秉琦]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Guo Dashun</b> [郭大順]</li> <li>- Han Jianye [韓建業]</li> <li>- Yu Xiyun [余西雲]</li> <li>- Zhang Chi [張弛]</li> </ul>
Around 2,500 BCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Shandong</i>: Longshan Culture Sites</li> <li>○ <i>Central Plains</i>: (1) Taosi site, 2.8 million m<sup>2</sup>, Imperial Capital of Emperor Yao; (2) Shimao site, 4.25 million m<sup>2</sup>, Imperial Capital of Emperor Huang</li> </ul>	Yan Wenming [嚴文明]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>He Nu</b> [何弩]</li> <li>- Zhao Hui [趙輝]</li> <li>- Zhao Chunqing [趙春青]</li> <li>- Qian Yaopeng [錢耀鵬]</li> </ul>
Around 2,000 BCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Central Plains</i>: Erlitou site; Capital of the Xia Dynasty</li> </ul>	Xia Nai [夏鼐]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Xu Hong</b> [許宏]</li> <li>- Liu Li [柳莉]</li> <li>- Chen Xingcan [陳星燦]</li> </ul>

the construction of large temples, even in the absence of writing or bronze tools. They assert that these elements, even if not fully meeting the criteria for a complete civilization or state, should still be recognized as indicative of an “Early Civilization Stage” or “Early State Stage.”

Second, those scholars who argue for the period around 2500 BCE emphasize the discovery of pure copper products and, particularly, the ruins equivalent to capital cities of walled cities with both inner and outer walls. For example, (1) the Taosi site, identified as the capital of Emperor Yao, is a city site with a dual structure of inner and outer walls, covering an area of 2.8 million square meters within the outer wall; (2) the Shimao site [석묘유지 石卯遺址], identified as the capital of Emperor Huang, also has a dual structure of inner and outer walls, with an area of 4.25 million square meters within the outer wall.

Third, those scholars who argue that civilization or statehood began around 2000 BCE during the Xia dynasty (2070–1600 BCE) adhere to the conventional, relatively conservative perspective. According to them, true statehood began with the so-called three great dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou.

#### TERMINOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE “STATE STAGE”

With respect to the timing of entry into statehood, above-mentioned three perspectives contend with each other. However, each perspective defines the state stage at different levels, and various terminologies—such as “Ancient State” [고국 古國], “Chiefdom” [추방 酋邦], “Many States” [방국 邦國], “Regional State” [방국

Figure 13. Summary of the "State Development Stages" (Woo 2018, 595)

Period	<i>Liaoxi: Late Hongshan Culture</i> <i>Zhejiang: Early Liangzhu Culture</i> <i>Central Plains: Miaodigou Culture</i>	<i>Central Plains: Taosi site; Shimao site</i>	<i>Liaoxi: Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture</i>	<i>Xia-Shang-Zhou</i>	<i>Post-Qin</i>
Scholar					
Su Bingqi [蘇秉琦]	<b>“Ancient State”</b> [古國 고국] "An “Ancient State” is a higher stage than a tribe, indicating a stable and independent political entity."		<b>Regional State</b> [方國 방국]	<b>Empire</b> [帝國 제국]	
Xu Hong [許宏]	<b>Chieftdom</b> [酋邦 추방]	<b>Many States</b> [邦國 = 方國] "Fortifications were as numerous as a forest" "Small States with Sparse Populations"	<b>Kingdom</b> [王國] + <b>Many States</b> [方國] "Wide-Area Monarch State"	<b>Empire + Many vassal states</b>	

方國], “Kingdom” [왕국 王國], and “Empire” [제국 帝國]—are used depending on different levels of statehood. The lack of consistency in the use of these terms according to developmental stages of statehood leads to considerable confusion.

To clarify these terms, I have summarized the discussions of two prominent scholars: (1) Su Bingqi, a pioneer of modern Chinese archaeology, and (2) Xu Hong, the director of the excavation at the Erlitou site [이리두유지 二里頭遺址], which is believed to be the capital of the Xia dynasty. The summary is presented in Figure 13.

I personally find Xu Hong’s argument more persuasive and support it. To aid reader's understanding, below I summarize

the stages of state development while synthesizing other’s arguments based on Xu Hong’s logic.

First, the late Hongshan Culture, Miaodigou 2<sup>nd</sup> Layer Culture, and early Liangzhu Culture [양저문화 良渚文化] can be considered as belonging to the “Ancient State” or “Chieftdom” stage. As Su Bingqi discussed, at this stage, “an ‘Ancient State’ is a higher stage than a tribe, indicating a stable and independent political entity.” Experts on Hongshan Culture, such as Liu Guoxiang [유국상 柳國祥], regard this stage as the “Early State Stage” or “Early Civilization Stage.”

Second, Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture, Taosi site, Shimao site and so on can be seen as representing a stage where

“Many States” coexist. At this stage, no single state yet exercises absolute power, and states coexist side by side. The fortifications of these states are so numerous that they “form a forest of city sites.”

Third, the Xia-Shang-Zhou period represents the stage of the “Kingdom along with Many States,” where an absolute power emerges, establishing a “wide-area monarch state” that controls numerous surrounding states.

The new perspective I have introduced here regarding the development of the civilization and state stages can open new horizons in the study of Northeast Asian philosophy, religion, and culture as well. Respected Chinese scholars above have also acknowledged that during the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period (2300–1600 BCE), a “Great Country at the Regional State stage” (Su Bingqi) or a “Civilized Ancient State that preceded the Xia dynasty” (Xue Zhiqiang) already existed in the Liaoxi region. Chinese scholars did not have any specific country name in their history that corresponds to the Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture period. Hence, they had no other choice but to describe it with such abstract terms as a “Great Country at the Regional State stage” (Su Bingqi) or a “Civilized Ancient State preceding the Xia dynasty” (Xue Zhiqiang). For us, in contrast, there existed—albeit mythologically recorded—Dangun Joseon during this period. The time has come for us to enthusiastically examine this connection.

### III. THE “A-SHAPED CULTURAL BELT”: A NEW APPROACH TO ANCIENT NORTHEAST ASIA

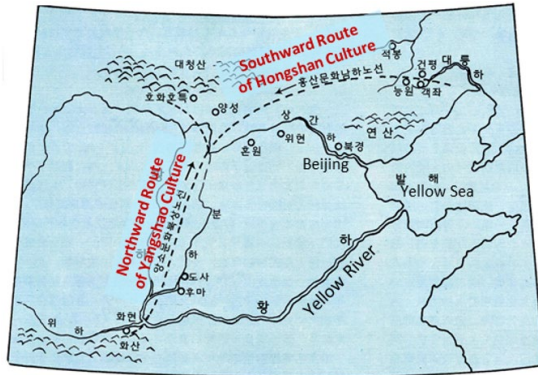
The author argues that, due to the five factors presented earlier, including the discovery of the Liaohe River Civilization, the fields of not only ancient Northeast Asian history but also thought, religion, and culture should be restructured from a new perspective. Given the discovery of the vast Liaohe River Civilization, which no one had known about, this is an inevitable course of action.

Chinese academia is currently reorganizing these narratives in their own frameworks. If we do not establish a new narrative framework based on our own logic, we will have no other choice but to follow their frameworks that Chinese academia is developing since the discovery of the Liaohe River Civilization. It is crucial to recognize how poisonous the new narrative frameworks of the Chinese academia are: They aim to portray all the ethnic minorities in the Manchurian region as descendants of the Huangdi tribe, the ancestors of the Han Chinese, and to claim that all the histories created by these descendants are part of Chinese history.

I argue that the new frameworks—whether in China or Korea—should start from a new recognition that while the Liaohe River Civilization is located at the center, they further expanded to the left toward the Central Plains on the one hand and to the right toward the Korean



**Figure 14.** Su Bingqi’s “Y-Shaped” Cultural Zone” (Su 1994, 85)



**Figure 15.** Woo Silha’s “A-Shaped Cultural Zone” (Woo 2016, 223)



Peninsula on the other. I call this approach as the “A-Shaped Cultural Belt” [A 자형문화대 A 字型 文化帶].<sup>14</sup> This differs from Su Bingqi's Y-Shaped Cultural Belt [Y 자형문화대 Y 字形的文化帶] which he used to describe the relationship between the Yellow River civilization and the Liaohe River civilization (Su 1988, 1994, 2009).<sup>15</sup>

Su Bingqi’s Y-Shaped Cultural Belt does not include the Korean Peninsula and merely connects (1) the northern steppe region, (2) the Yellow River Civilization region, and (3) the Liaohe River Civilization region within China (see Figure 14). Of course, there certainly were connections among these regions.

However, I argue that we must also pay attention to how the Liaohe River Civilization connects with the Korean Peninsula, in addition to the ‘Y-Shaped

Cultural Belt.’ My ‘A-Shaped Cultural Belt’ can be substantiated by various cultural elements, including (1) the microlith culture, (2) comb-patterned pottery, (3) Jade Jue [옥결 玉玦, ancient jade ornaments] artifacts, (4) Bone divination [골복 骨卜] culture, (5) various forms of stone tombs and pyramid-style stone mound tombs, (6) stone fortresses with chi (moats), and (7) mandolin-shaped bronze daggers.

Shown in Figure 15, my A-Shaped Cultural Belt consists of three routes: (1) a southwest route from the Liaohe River Civilization along the eastern coast of China, (2) a southeast route connecting the Liaohe River Civilization to the Korean Peninsula and Japan, and (3) a sea route from the lower Yangtze River region connecting to southern Korea and Japan

<sup>14</sup> My theory of the A-Shaped Cultural Belt was officially presented at the 10th Hongshan Culture Summit Forum in 2015, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia. Along with other presentations at the forum, it has also been published as a book in China (Woo, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Su Bingqi's theory of the Y-Shaped Cultural Belt was first proposed in 1988 and has been featured in several of his different books. It was also introduced in my book (Woo 2007a).

**Figure 16.** Different Perspectives on Liao River Civilization and Hongshan Culture between Chinese Academia and Woo Silha (Woo 2018, 689)

Issues	Chinese Academia	Woo Silha
Leading Force of Liao River Civilization	Huangdi tribe, the ancestors of the Chinese people	Ancestors of the Dongyi tribe
Nature of Liaohe River Civilization	The origin of Chinese civilization	The "common origin civilization of Northeast Asia"
Liaohe River Civilization and Surrounding Areas	Su Bingqi: Y-Shaped Cultural Belt	A-Shaped Cultural Belt
Stage of Hongshan Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Early State stage = Early civilization stage</li> <li>○ Chiefdom (추방 酋邦 = Chieftain Society)</li> <li>○ “Ancient State” stage [고국 古國]</li> </ul>	
Leading Forces of Hongshan Culture	The Gaoyang clan [고양씨 高陽氏] led by Zhuangxi and the Gaoxin clan [고신씨 高辛氏] led by Diku, descendants of the Emperor Huang	Likely to be the Ungnyeo tribe [웅녀족 熊女族] among the indigenous forces before Dangun Joseon
Stage of Xiajiadian Lower Layer Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Su Bingqi: "Great country at the regional state stage"</li> <li>○ Xue Zhiqiang: "Civilized “Ancient State” preceding the Xia dynasty"</li> <li>○ However, there is no specific country name in Chinese ancient history.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A confederation of various Regional States or Many States</li> <li>○ Likely to be Dangun Joseon [단군조선 檀君朝鮮]</li> </ul>

(Woo 2016, 223). The A-Shaped Cultural Belt identifies the Liaohe River Civilization as the ‘common origin civilization of Northeast Asia’ and offers a perspective that can help prevent future historical and cultural conflicts between Korea and China.

In the Chinese academic community, the prevailing perspective is that anything within China’s current territorial boundaries is considered ‘Chinese.’ If Korean academia does not adequately

respond to the recent trends in China, all our ancestral history, as well as our philosophy, religion, and culture, would be subsumed under the rhetoric of everything being ‘Chinese.’ The recent controversies over what is known as the “Kimchi project” and the “Hanbok project” are just one tip of the iceberg. Figure 16 compares and summarizes the fundamental differences between the Chinese academic community’s and my own interpretations regarding the Liaohe River Civilization.

In this article, I have introduced new developments that can open new horizons in the study of Northeast Asian philosophy, religion, and culture: (1) the recent discovery of the Liaohe River Civilization, (2) the emergence of the Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia, (3) the discovery of the Taosi site, the capital of Emperor Yao, and resultant historicization of the Yao and Shun period, (4) the new historical records about Gojoseon documented by Father Jean-Baptiste Régis in 1735, and (5) the emergence of new perspectives on the timing of the establishment of the civilization and state stages in the regions.

When evaluated as a whole rather than individually, they can provide many new insights not only into the ancient history of Northeast Asia but also into the study of Northeastern Asian philosophy, religion, and culture. They also require a new paradigm of understanding, one that is firmly based on these findings and that departs from the existing ones. I hope that scholars from various fields will show keen interest in these new developments, rigorously examine them, and actively utilize them to create a new paradigm of understanding.

### Key Words

Liaohe River Civilization, Hongshan Culture, Gojoseon, Theory of Early Yi and Later Xia, Taosi site, Father Jean-Baptiste Régis, A-Shaped Cultural Belt

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