

# THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE SURVEY ON ANCIENT KOREAN WOODEN TABLETS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS IN SHAPE

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For a long time most of Korean wooden tablets were thought to be peculiar to Silla, centered on the ones excavated from Anabuchi. Recently, however, the whole situation of Korean wooden tablets of the three ancient kingdoms (Silla, Paekche, and Kokuryo) during the period of three ancient kingdoms (4th to 7th centuries) became clear, when wooden tablets of Kokuryo were excavated. Silla tablets are still the most in quantity, but the number of sites where wooden tablets were found in Paekche is five times the number of sites in Silla. This fact became evident as a result of the increase in number of research materials.

A distinctive feature of Korean sites where wooden tablets were excavated is that the tombs or burial mounds did not contain any wooden tablets. This is a different feature in comparison with Chinese tomb sites where wooden tablets with written records of burial accessories were discovered. Judging from surveys done in the past, I assumed that it was not customary to bury wooden tablets in tombs or burial mounds in Korea. This fact might reflect a cultural difference between Korea and China. Though it located on the same Korean peninsula, the custom of burying wooden tablets in Che hyup burial mound in Pyongyang, Leang was not passed on to Kokuryo and Paekche.

Korean wooden tablets display differences in length and width (Length: 2 cm. to 44 cm. Width: 1 cm. to 4.5cm.). In the case of Chinese wooden tablets of the Wei and Jin dynasties which were produced nearly at the same time as Korean wooden tablets, more than 90 percent of these Chinese tablets were limited in size from 24 cm to 28 cm. This type of tablet reveals a different aspect from the Korean tablets, whose dimensions vary widely. As a result, I may say that there was no standard in size of wooden tablets in Korea.

It is remarkable that Korean tablets include a number of tablets in the shape of a square pole with letters in ink on each side and cylindrical-shaped ones, in addition to a large majority of irregular strips of wood. This types of polyhedral wooden tablets with letters in ink were found throughout the entire period from the early sixth century to the late eighth century, and show the rich variety in shape among Korean wooden tablets.