

SAFE JOURNEY!

A VERY SHORT HISTORY OF SHOES FROM KOREAN TOMBS

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In Kim Hun's short story, *Hwajang*, the body of the deceased wife of the narrator was dressed tightly with raw hemp cloth according to Korean funerary ritual. At the feet a pair of pretty female shoes, *kkotsin* 꽃신 were attached before the body entered the cremation chamber (Kim 2004, p. 45).^{*} Placing shoes with the deceased person appears to be a continuous tradition for over a millennium in Korean funerary custom, no matter whether the deceased was buried or cremated. From the 5th century to the modern day, as described plainly in Kim Hun's contemporary short story, footwear seems to be an important funerary item of or for the deceased.

Many years ago in the National Museum of Korea, when I came across the display of a pair of woven sandals excavated from a 16th century tomb of a local gentry in Kyöngsang province in Korea, I resolved to investigate why models of shoes or shoes that were never actually worn were placed in tombs, and what significant meaning they embody beyond our mortal existence. Shoes as a part of garments or as an individual burial item disclose a significant aspect of Korean culture.¹ I shall discuss in this short essay pottery

^{*} Note: Korean transcriptions in English in this essay are in the McCune-Reischauer system which is used by most scholars in the West, while Korean new transcription system is used in Korean publications, e.g., Gongju instead of Kongju (MR). There is a considerable number of studies and publications on the archaeological excavations of Three Kingdoms, Koguryö (BCE 37 – CE 668), Paekche (BCE 18 – CE 663), Silla (BCE 57 – CE 935). Hence I will not discuss the structure of tumuli or burial goods from this period other than shoes. After finishing this article, I learned by chance from the web page of Pokch'ön Museum in Pusan that in 2010 it had a special exhibition of nearly 90 shoes, "*Kodaecin üi sin*" [Shoes of Ancient People] excavated from the tombs from the Iron Age (300 BCE – CE 300) to the Three Kingdoms period (1st century BCE – 7th c.). Unfortunately, I have not yet seen the catalogue of this exhibition; it may contain materials comparable to those discussed in this paper. Also a special exhibition on shoes at the Victoria and Albert Museum was mounted in summer 2015. However, the V&A exhibition was focused on the history and development of shoes mainly as luxurious fashion items in western societies.

shoes, gilt bronze shoes from the Three Kingdoms period and one pair of *mit'uri*, hemp-woven sandals from the early Chosön period.²

Pottery shoes

1. Ankle boot, *hwa* 靴

Taesöngdong in Kimhae South Kyöngsang province on the west of Nakdong River is a significant archaeological site as the former graveyard of Kümngwan Kaya, one of the Six Kaya 伽耶 (42–562) confederation of states. Kaya states were in the present south Kyöngsang province and stretched to a large part of Chölla province. To their north was the Silla kingdom and on the west Paekche. As evidenced from archaeological excavations, Kaya states had active cultural and trade relations with Yamato, Paekche, Silla, and Han China. In Taesöngdong Kaya tombs (4th – early 6th century) funerary furnishings in precious materials of bronze, gold, jade, crystal, quantities of pottery vessels and even a Han Chinese bronze mirror (Tomb No. 23) were excavated (Kaya 1991, pp. 28–33).

Among the numerous pottery vessels excavated in Taesöngdong tombs (5th – 6th century) in Kimhae is an unusual pottery short ankle boot with stamped roundel decoration [Fig. 1]. No further details are known

Fig. 1. Pottery ankle boot on top of a pottery sherd of a vessel [?] Kaya 5th century Taesöngdong, Kimhae, South Kyöngsang province.

After: *Conversation with Curator*. No. 150. National Museum of Korea, 2009, p. 15.





After: Chosŏn kŏhun pyŏkhwa jip. Tokyo, 1916, Pl. 68

Fig. 2. Man and three women on the north wall of the stone chamber. Sashinch'ong, Tomb of Four Spirits, also known as the Hunting Tomb, Maesanni.

from the publication of the National Museum. The toe of the boot is pointed.

Very similar but longer ankle boots are depicted in tombs of the Koguryŏ kingdom (37 BCE — CE 668) several hundred kilometres north of Kimhae. In the 5th century Suryŏbch'ong 狩獵塚 (Hunting Tomb), Tomb of Four Spirits, also known as the Hunting Tomb, South P'yŏng'an province, mysterious things are go-

ing on [Fig. 2]. There are depictions of the Seven Stars of the Great Bear, which guide the soul on the road to the other world, the tortoise entangled with two snakes which is the legendary animal symbol of the north, the deceased man and three women, presumably his wives, seated cross-legged on a dais under a canopy and a groom with a horse.³ The figures have flame-shaped wings from the chest over the shoulders.⁴ In front of the dais, three pairs of boots are neatly placed; a fourth pair has likely disappeared through damage. Boots of a similar type are also depicted in analogous fashion beneath the portrait of the deceased couple in Ssangnyŏngch'ong 雙楹塚 (Tomb of Double Columns), in South P'yŏng'an province, also dated around mid-5th century [Fig. 3].

In Paekche ankle boots appear to be a part of official attire. The Chinese handscroll "Tribute Officials of the Liang Dynasty 梁職貢圖" depicts the foreign envoys who came to the Liang court in 526–536. Among them is the Paekche envoy, depicted with the title "Paekche Kuksa, 百濟國使, Envoy from Paekche Kingdom" [Fig. 4]. Here an elegantly attired and youthful-looking Paekche official wears black boots. The existing handscroll is a later copy (probably Song dynasty), but the representation of figures and the accompanying text are authentic documents for the study of official costume and the historical circumstances.



After: Koguryŏ kŏhun pyŏkhwa. Ed. Koguryŏ Yŏn'guhoe. Seoul: Hagryŏn munhwasa, 1997, p. 22

Fig. 3 (left). Portrait of the deceased couple. Ssangnyŏngch'ong, Tomb of Double Columns. North wall of the coffin chamber. Koguryŏ, 5th century.

After: Muryŏngwang sidae 2014, p. 51



Fig. 4 (right). Paekche envoy in "Tributary Officials to the Liang Court" (526–536). Song copy. Handscroll, ink and colour on silk. The Palace Museum, Beijing.



After: Xu 2006, Pl. 4-1

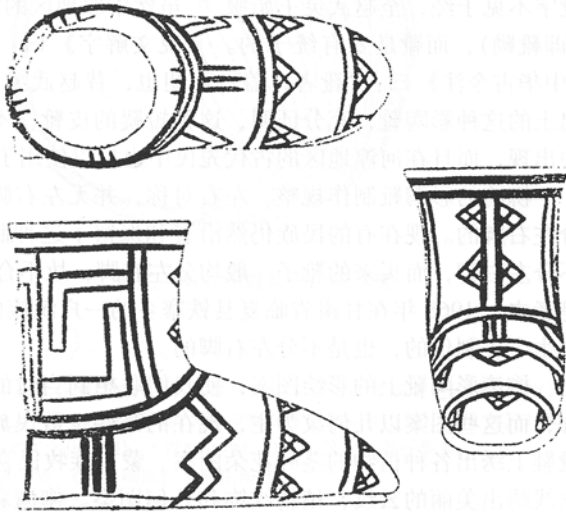


Fig. 5. Painted pottery boot from Qinghai. Xindian Culture, ca 1000 BCE. H. 11.6, L. 14.6, Thickness 0.3 cm.

The ankle boots “hwa” 靴, meaning “leather shoes,” have been discovered from tombs over a vast geographical area in the northern hemisphere. The oldest example is a single pottery boot excavated by a Chinese archaeological team in Liuwan, Lede in Qinghai province close to the present Tibetan plateau [Fig. 5] (Xu 2006, pp. 61ff, Pls. 4-1, 4-2). The Liuwan 柳灣 site belongs to the Bronze age Xindian 辛店 culture (1500 – 1000 BCE) in the area of the present Qinghai and Gansu provinces. This surprisingly thinly-potted boot (its thickness is only 0.3 cm), quite low-fired around 600°C, is made of reddish pottery with black painted decoration of geometric and zig-zag patterns. It is an imitation of a boot made of three pieces of leather sewn together: ankle section, uppers and sole. Even the thick sole is realistically rendered in the pottery. The excavators speculate whether actual leather boots were also decorated in this fashion (*Ibid.*, p. 62, Fig.



Courtesy of the Agora Museum, Athens

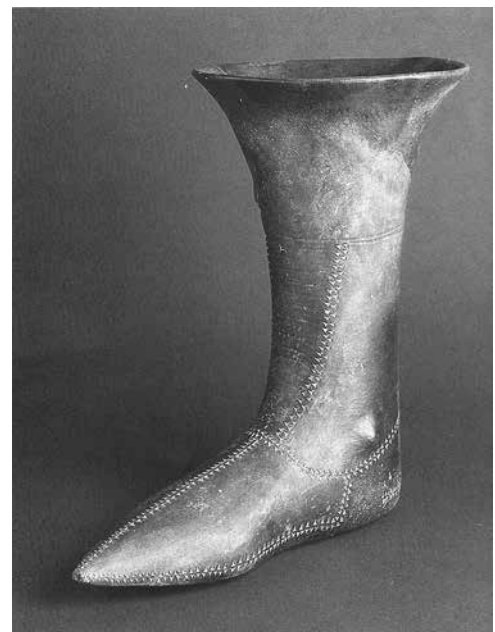
Fig. 6. Terracotta boots. Greece ca. 900 BCE. H. 7, L. 9.5, W. 4.5 cm. Inventory No. P 19249.

2). In the same excavation was a considerable number of pottery vessels painted with similar geometric designs. A thousand years later, a comparable wealth of pottery vessels was found as provisions for the departed in Korean Silla and Kaya tombs.

Boots have been found in the tombs of ancient Greece too. In female burials ca. 900 BCE, terracotta boots were found at the feet of the deceased (now displayed in the Agora Museum in Athens) [Fig. 6]. According to the museum entry, these terracotta boots have holes on each side of the uppers to be tied with laces and the surface has a black glaze, a faithful copy of black leather boots.

Another terracotta shoe excavated from a grave in Armenia dated 7th century BCE is a calf-length boot on which the seams between several pieces of leather are clearly shown [Fig. 7].⁵ But why just one boot? Inter-

Fig. 7. Pottery boot. Excavated at Karmir-blur (Yerevan). 7th century BCE. State History Museum of Armenia.



After: Tesori 1987, p. 56, cat. no. 64

estingly, there is an ancient Greek myth about Jason, who lost one sandal in a stream and was identified by his single remaining sandal as the man who would inherit the throne. I do not know whether there is any link between this story and the single footwear from the tomb in the Caucasus, and whether the one pottery boot was found from an undisturbed tomb.



After: *Secrets of the Silk Road*, Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California, 2010: Pl. 83, p. 198

Fig. 8. Embroidered Boots. L. 29; W. 16.5 cm. 2nd – 3rd century. Excavated from Tomb No. 5 of Cemetery No. 1, Niya. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum.

A pair of short ankle boots were excavated from Kurgan No. 6 (1st century CE) at Noyon uul in Mongolia. They are made of felt and leather and sewn with a silk band to the trousers (Rudenko 1969, Fig. 34, p. 138). Another pair of short ankle boots, embroidered with leather soles, were unearthed from a Niya tomb (2nd – 3rd century) in Xinjiang [Fig. 8]. Under the Liao dynasty, the deceased royal couple, Princess Chenguo 陳國公主 (1000-1018) and her husband, were adorned with sumptuous regal funerary costume including gold masks, and wearing silver gilt boots splendidly decorated with phoenix and cloud motifs [Figs. 9a, b].⁶

These few examples of ankle boots show that boots were not uncommon footwear for nearly two thousand years in ancient Greece, on the Himalayan plateau, and across Eurasia to East Asia. Therefore it is quite likely that this type of ankle boots originated amongst steppe nomads, as many scholars have already noted. Hide was the readily available material of the prehistoric pastoral and hunting society. It was only natural that the ancient people in the northern hemisphere made boots which protected their feet in a cold climate and which were practical for riding horses, and then placed them in the tomb as a significant burial item.

2. Flat shoes, *hye* 鞋

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In contrast to *hwa* 靴, ankle boot, *hye* 鞋 is the most common type of flat shoes. The two Chinese characters, *xue* 靴 and *xie* 鞋, have the radical “leather,” sig-



After: Liao 1998, Pl. 3

Fig. 9a. Burial of Princess Chenguo. Liao 1018. Qinglong Town in Inner Mongolia.

Fig. 9b. The silver gilt boots from Princess Chenguo's tomb.



After: *Zhongguo beifang caoyuan guda jinyin qi*, Beijing, 2005, III.123



After: Leeum Samsŏng Misulgwŏn sojangp'um sŏnrip. Seoul, 2004, p. 297

Fig. 10. Pottery shoes. Kaya 5th century. H. 6.8, 7.2; L. 23.5, 24; W. 7.5, 6.8 cm. Leeum Samsŏng Art Museum.

nifying they were originally made of leather. *Li* 履 denotes all footwear equivalent to the vernacular Korean 신 “sin” or 신발 “sinbal” as a general term for shoes.

A pair of pottery flat shoes now in Leeum Samsŏng Art Museum illustrates the type *hye* 鞋 flat shoes with uppers [Fig. 10]. The provenance of this pair of pottery shoes is not known, but it is said they are from a Kaya tomb, another pottery imitation of a real *hye*. The toe of the shoes is raised up. The tab at the heel which would help in putting the shoes on is also modelled after that on a real shoe. The small holes around the edges were tied up with shoe laces (Han 1981, p. 229, Pl. 91). This is an unusually realistic representation of shoes with laces. There are two possibilities as to whether such shoes

After: Kim Ki-ung. *Chōsen hantō no hekiga kofun*. Tokyo, 1980, Pl. 35



actually existed. The Leeum shoes may represent *chehye* 祭鞋, ceremonial shoes, an integral part of ceremonial accoutrements of funerary rites and ancestral service, so that the shoes are secured with shoe laces and not easily slipped off (on *chehye*, see Kim 1998, p. 336). On the other hand, this pair of pottery shoes may reflect the footwear of 5th- or 6th-century Korea. In the 5th-century Koguryŏ tomb Ssangnyŏngch'ong (Tomb of Double Columns) near Yonggang in South P'yŏng'an province (the same tomb as Fig. 3), young boys following their mother in a funerary procession wear shoes with shoe laces done up in zig-zag fashion [Fig. 11]. We do not know whether there might have been actual shoe laces for these pottery shoes: like all organic materials in Korean tombs, they have not survived in the acid soil.

Whether laced or not, such flat shoes were widely worn. In another Koguryŏ tomb Muyongch'ong (Tomb of Dancers) in Jian, the male dancers wear the same flat shoes with wide front section for the toes [Fig. 12]. The young male dancers are in pantaloons with the polka dot pattern fashionable in Koguryŏ,



After: Chosŏn Misul Pangmulgwŏn. P'yŏngyang: Chosŏn Hwabosa, 1980, Pl. 16

Fig. 12. Dancers and spectators in Muyongch'ong. Koguryŏ, late 5th century. Jian, Qilin Province.

while the female dancers wear ankle boots under a pleated skirt and long dress. The name of this tomb, Tomb of Dancers, comes from this elegant dance scene.⁷ The depiction of dancers in Muyongch'ong as well as young figures in Ssangnyŏngch'ong clearly indicates that such shoes were worn by men in ancient Korea. Furthermore, the ceremonial shoes *chehye* 祭鞋 would have been only for male participants in the ceremony. It makes one think therefore that the unknown tomb occupant of the Kaya pottery shoes in the Leeum Museum was a man and this pair of flat shoes were meant for him.

Fig. 11. Young boys in a funerary procession. Mural painting in Ssangnyŏngch'ong, near Yonggang in South P'yŏng'an Province. Koguryŏ, mid-5th century.



After: *Wenhua* 1972, Pl. 108

Archaeological finds prove that flat shoes *hye* 鞋 as well as ankle boots *hwa* 靴 were worn by people over a wide geographical area of the northern hemisphere. Shoes adorned in embroidery or brocade silk, or in tapestry-weave were preserved in excellent condition in the dry climate of Central Asia as exemplified in the Astana Tang period tombs [Fig. 13]. Chinese characters woven in the upper of these silk shoes, such as “noble and prosperous,” “fit for a prince,” “heaven grant longevity” indicate that the deceased, a male, would continuously enjoy high status and longevity in the other world [Fig. 14].

3. Chipsin 짚신 Straw sandals

Nearly a hundred tombs are densely packed on the mountain in Pokch’ŏndong, present Pusan in South Kyōngsang province. This was the cemetery of rulers of Kūmgwan Kaya (42 – 562) and the tombs are dated approximately around the 4th to 5th century.⁸ Iron horse trappings and armour buried in piled stone wooden pit chamber tombs covered with an earthen mound, *sōk-sil mogwakkun* 石室木槨墳, confirm that Kaya had rich iron reserves. Gold headgear and jewellery, jade and bronze artefacts and profuse pottery vessels in diverse and distinctive types and forms were discovered. The archaeological materials from Kaya tombs and comparable burial goods from Japanese tombs of the Yayoi (3rd century) and Kofun (250 – 552) periods manifest the exceptionally close political and cultural ties between the two countries.

Among the excavated materials from Poch’ŏndong Tomb No. 53, a pair of pottery sandals, representing straw-woven sandals, *chipsin* 짚신 or *ch’ori* 草履, stand out. These were unearthed together with a pottery lamp [Figs. 15a, b]. This tomb has two compartments

Fig. 15a, b. Mounted pottery sandals with a stem cup and pottery lamp [next page]. Sandal: H. 11, L. 16.9 cm. Lamp: H. 12, D. 16 cm. Kaya 5th century. From Pokch’ŏndong Tomb No. 53. Pusan, South Kyōngsang province.

Fig. 13. Brocade silk shoes. H. 8.3, L. 29.7, W. 8.8 cm. Tang, North District Tomb No. 381 Astana, Turfan, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. An almost identical pair was found in Astana Tomb No. 224.

– the larger stone chamber for the main occupant with burial items of iron and bronze weapons and the side wooden chamber for potteries and the sacrificial victim. Pottery vessels and stands all display typical Kaya design with geometric perforations. The sandals and an oil lamp were found in the side chamber. The oil lamp (H. 12.3 cm) consists of four small cups (each cup, H. 8.6 cm, D. 6.2 cm) on the rim above a stand. The pottery sandals (H. 4 cm, W. 6.7 cm, L. 16.4 cm) are also mounted on a stand and further enriched with a slender stem cup.⁹ Curiously, only one cup is still attached on one of the sandals, while the other one is missing. This most unusual composition of three sections – stand, sandals, and cup – indicates that this pair of shoes was an important item for the unknown tomb occupant.

Fig. 14. Shoes with Embroidered Characters. H 4.5; L. 22.5; W. 8 cm. 4th Century. Excavated from Tomb No. 39, Astana, Turfan. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum.



After: *Secrets* 2010, p. 100

Fig. 14. Shoes with Embroidered Characters. H 4.5; L. 22.5; W. 8 cm. 4th Century. Excavated from Tomb No. 39, Astana, Turfan. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum.



Fig. 15a

Sandals have been excavated from other sites, mainly in the southern part of Korea. In the ancient lake site in Kwanbuk-ni and water channel site in Kungnam-ji in Puyŏ, which was the last capital of the Paekche Kingdom (538-660), archaeologists excavated nearly 64 sandals in organic materials dating to the early 6th century. According to the investigation of these sites, some of the sandals in Kungnam-ji might have floated through the drainage from the capital city, while the Kwanbuk-ni sandals were found in a mud field, together with some bare footprints. These circumstances were interpreted to mean that the sandals were abandoned for their wearers to work in bare feet (Paekche 2003, pp. 7, 14). However, Roderick Whitfield suggests that they simply got stuck in the mud and the wearers had to walk in bare feet! The scientific analysis of these Puyŏ sandals reveals that they were made not of rice straw but of a special kind of plant *pudŭl* 부들, also known as *hyangp'o* 香蒲, which grows on riverbanks. Unlike straw sandals, *chipsin* or *pudŭl* sandals are quite soft, and more comfortable than tough rice straw sandals, but they had the disadvantage of being easily worn out (*Ibid.*, pp. 134ff.).

Kyŏngju National Museum has just one pottery *chipsin*, which like Kaya sandals is mounted on a stand with a sturdier large cup [Fig. 16]. The straps are pleated like those of the real straw sandal. But why was only one shoe found? Was that intentional? There is no explanation or detailed archaeological report about this sandal. However, the following story about the Silla monk Hyesuk (7th century), recorded in *Samguk yusa* 三國遺史, may give some clue:

Not long after this, Hyesuk suddenly died. The villagers put him on a bier and buried him to the east

Photo courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh



Fig. 16. Pottery sandal with a cup. Silla 5th century. H. 12.5 cm. Kyŏngju National Museum.

of Ear Pass. ... One of the villagers [who was late] came from west of the pass, and met Hyesuk on the way. Asking him where he was going, Hyesuk replied "I have lived here for a long time. Now I want to travel to other places." Facing each other, they bowed and parted. Having walked about half a *ri* [between 200 to 250 m], he stepped on a cloud and disappeared. When the villager arrived to the east of the pass, he saw that the funeral party had not yet dispersed. He told everything about his encounter, and when they opened the tumulus to check, all they found was one straw shoe [唯芒鞋一雙而已]. Today there is a temple north of Angang which is called Hyesuk[sa]. This is where he used to live. There is also a stupa there. [*Samguk yusa* IV 2012, pp. 498ff; my emphasis.]

The motif of one shoe is also found in the fictional story of the Chan 禪 Patriarch Bodhidharma, who arrived from India to China around 520 (*Ibid.*, p. 499, n. 102). When he returned to India, he was wearing two shoes, but when people in the Northern Wei excavated his tomb, they found only one straw sandal. This legend is apparently well-known as "with two shoes returning to the west. One straw sandal [found in the tomb] 雙履西歸 一隻革履" and is still told today in the Shaolin temple.¹⁰ One interpretation of this story is that one shoe in the tomb might have the connotation of the symbolic presence of the departed (Ch'oe 1995, p.



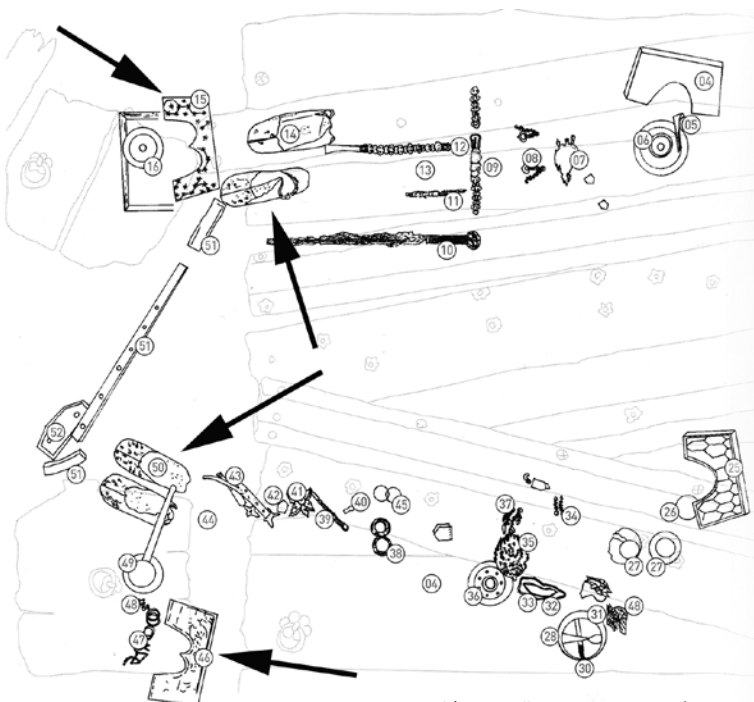
Fig. 15b

After: Kaya Burakiten. Tokyo National Museum. Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1992, pp. 88, 89

437). Iryōn (1206–1289), the eminent Buddhist monk and the National Preceptor of the Koryō kingdom who was the author of *Samguk yusa*, collected largely Buddhist materials to compile the history of the Three Kingdoms. These later accounts of a single shoe or sandal in association with the tomb of a Buddhist monk, or that of the patriarch Bodhidharma himself, can of course have no relevance to the single pottery sandal excavated from a Silla tomb, no more than could the still earlier story of Jason from a different culture, but they are examples of the mystery that was attached whenever only one of a pair of shoes was found.

Gilt bronze shoes from Royal Tombs

Two pair of gilt bronze shoes were discovered from the tomb of King Muryōng 武寧王 (r. 501–523) of the Paekche kingdom (18 BCE – CE 663) in Songsan-ni in Kongju 公州, the second capital Ungjin, South Ch’ungch’ōng province [Figs. 17, 18]. The discovery of the Songsan-ni



After: Muryōngwang 2009-2014, Vol. 1, p. 90

Fig. 19. Plan of King Muryōng's tomb. Reconstructed arrangement of burial findings in the tomb. No. 14 King's gilt bronze shoes, No. 15 King's foot rest, No. 50 Queen's gilt bronze shoes, No. 46 Queen's foot rest.



After: Gongju National Museum, 2004, p. 17

Fig. 17. Gilt bronze shoes for the King. L. 35cm. Paekche (523). Excavated from the Tomb of King Muryōng.

Fig. 18. Gilt bronze shoes for the Queen. L. 35cm. Paekche (526). Excavated from the Tomb of King Muryōng.

After: Gongju National Museum, 2004, p. 30



royal tomb is the most significant event in the history of modern Korean archaeology, as it was the first complete tomb to be found undisturbed and with written documents.¹¹ The epitaph found in the tomb recorded that King Muryōng died in 523 at the age of 62. After the three year mourning period, according to the Confucian rite, in 525 the King was properly buried. His royal sepulchre in decorated lotus tiles was built and his splendidly furnished black lacquer coffin was accompanied by a great variety of paraphernalia. His queen followed him soon after in 526, and three years later in 529 she was united with her husband in their final resting place. The royal couple reposed with the support of head rests while their feet in gilt bronze shoes were placed on foot rests, as the plan of the tomb shows [Fig. 19].

King Muryōng's shoes are adorned with open-work hexagonal tortoiseshell design on a silver base, while the Queen's shoes have floral scrolls on a gilt bronze base, symbolic motifs of longevity and prosperity. Both pairs of gilt bronze shoes are further enriched with gold spangles attached with twisted silver wire.¹² The soles have numerous spikes. The practicality of wearing such metal shoes with spikes has been debated among Korean scholars. Such splen-



Photo courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh

Fig. 20. Gilt bronze shoe soles with spikes. L 34.8 cm. Koguryō 5th-6th century. Reported from Ji'an, Qilin Province. National Museum of Korea.

did metal shoes are certainly ceremonial as a part of a royal funerary outfit. Further evidence is a striking example of gilt bronze shoe soles now in the National Museum of Korea, presumably excavated in Jian, the ancient Koguryō territory [Fig. 20]. The spikes are riveted to the sole, the edges of which are turned up and pierced with pairs of holes to fasten the uppers and insole. It is quite possible that the insole was made of thick textile. In fact, the detailed scientific analysis of the Queen's gilt bronze shoes mentions a thick textile remnant, which could have been the textile insole or, as has been suggested, part of Queen's silk shoes or socks (Park and Ro 2011, p. 203).

The spikes might have been actually soldered on the shoe sole in real shoes. The mural paintings in the Samsilch'ong Tomb of Three Chambers [Fig. 21] and

After: Chosŏn Misul Pangmulgwan: Pl. 21;
photo of drawing courtesy Daniel C. Waugh



Fig. 21. Military guard. Samsil ch'ong in Tunggou. Koguryō 5th century. The drawing is from a display in the National Museum of Korea, Seoul.

in Tunggou Tomb No. 12 show military guards wearing such shoes with vertical short spikes. We do not know what kind of materials were used for shoe soles and for uppers, but it is conceivable that such shoes were made of leather and a thick layer of material to which spikes could be attached. One would have to have very thick socks made of felt or something else. Considering the bitterly cold Manchurian winter, such spiked shoes might have been indispensable items for walking on snow or ice.

From other, mainly undocumented, Silla and Paekche tombs a number of gilt bronze shoes have been discovered. A pair of gilt bronze shoes were a part of regalia. In the 5th century Silla tomb Kūmgwanch'ong 金冠塚 (Geumgwanchong, Tomb of the Gold Crown) in Kyōngju, the ancient capital of Silla kingdom, in addition to the magnificent gold crown and gold belt in openwork design with its 17 pendants with symbolic (fish and dragon) or practical (perfume bottle, hexagonal container for tweezer or knife?) finials, a pair of gilt bronze shoes were excavated [Fig. 22 (next page) and Color Plate I]. The undersides of the soles are decorated with florets, unlike the spikes found on the underside of gilt-bronze shoe soles excavated from the Hwangnam Great Tomb [Fig. 23] in the same area in Kyōngju, or the very similar pair of gilt bronze soles with spikes from Koguryō [Fig. 20].

Another sumptuous pair of gilt bronze shoes with fragmentary uppers and perfectly preserved shoe soles are from Singnich'ong 飾履塚 ("Tomb of Decorated Shoes") in Kyōngju, the Silla capital [Fig. 24].¹³ Recent research claims that they were made in Paekche and exported to Silla, in view of the exquisite craftsmanship and the active trade and diplomatic relations between these two kingdoms around the 5th and 6th century (Paekche 2014, p. 46). According to the archaeological report, sixteen pairs of gilt bronze shoes (5th – 6th century) have been discovered from tombs all over the Paekche territory. These gilt bronze shoes and gilt bronze head-gear as a set were gifts to regional rulers from the central royal court.¹⁴ Paekche style gilt bronze shoes have also been excavated from Japanese tombs. They are found in tombs of Edafunayama 江田船山 in Kumamoto district, Ichisuka 日須賀 in Osaka, Fujinoki 藤ノ木 in Nara among others, and demonstrate Paekche's extraordinary international relations in



Photos all courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh

Fig. 22. Regalia from the Tomb of the Gold Crown. Silla 5th–6th century: a) the crown H. 27.5 cm (National Treasure No. 87); b) detail of the gold belt L. 109.0 cm (NT 88); c) the gilt bronze soles L. 30.5 cm. Kyōngju National Museum. (See Sillain 1996, Pls. 49, 52; Silla 2001, Pl. 271).

the 5th and 6th century with Yamato Japan; with Liang, one of the southern dynasties in China; with the neighbouring kingdoms of Koguryō and Silla; and with the Kaya States (Muryōngwang 2014, pp. 96ff).

Mit'uri 미투리, *mahye* 麻鞋

Almost a thousand years later, a pair of sandals, *mit'uri*, woven from hemp and human hair was excavated in the tomb of a Confucian scholar Yi Ŭngt'ae 李應台 (1586) in Andong, North Kyōngsang province [Fig. 25]. This small pair of *mit'uri* was placed next to his head. A neatly folded letter written in *hangŭl*, the Korean script invented by King Sejong (r. 1418-1450), was tucked inside the wooden coffin [Fig. 26]. The letter was written by the widow of the deceased in the year *pyōngsul* 丙戌 corresponding to 1586.



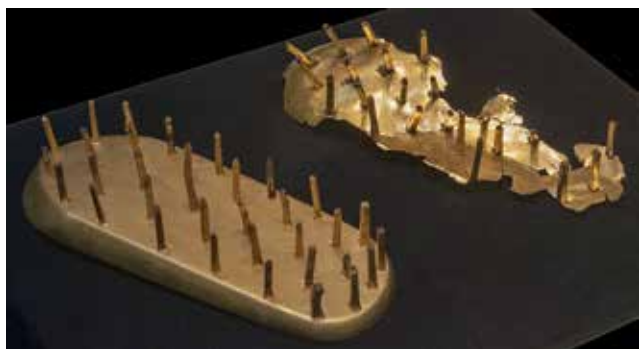


Fig. 23. Gilt bronze soles with spikes. Silla 5th century. Hwangnam Great Tomb, Kyōngju. Kyōngju National Museum.

Yi Ŭngt'ae (1556-1586) died at the relatively young age of 31 and was buried next to his grandmother, Lady Mun from the Ilsŏn clan. Yi Ŭngt'ae's body was placed in a pinewood inner coffin which contained an astonishing number of well-preserved items including his unborn son's jacket, his wife's skirt and numerous clothes, letters and poems written by his father and his elder brother, as well as the letter from his widow.¹⁵

Unlike all the known tombs from the Three Kingdoms period (4th – 6th centuries), in which almost

Fig. 24. Gilt bronze shoe soles with hexagonal design. Koguryŏ 5th – 6th century. Singnich'ong, Kyōngju, North Kyōngsang province. National Museum of Korea, Seoul.



all organic materials did not survive, Yi Ŭngt'ae's double wooden coffins remained intact. The burial was sealed with the method known as *hoegwakbun* 灰槨墳, lime coffin grave, a method using lime, clay and fine sand mixed with boiled elm bark to fill the entire space around the wooden coffins, thus preventing their decay. This new burial method began to be used from 1476, as seen in King Sejo's tomb Kwangnŭng 光陵, and thereafter from the 16th century was widely used in the burial practice of Neo-Confucian Chosŏn *yangban* 兩班 elite.¹⁶ This scientific burial method preserved perfectly all materials in an astoundingly good condition.

When the content of the letter by Yi Ŭngt'ae's wife [Fig. 26] – her name is not known – became public, modern readers in Korea were amazed and deeply moved. The letter is addressed to the father of her infant son Wŏn, and is expressed with the utmost tenderness:

You always said to me we shall live together until our hair turns white and that we shall die together. Yet you go ahead? Whom should I and the child [Wŏn] follow and how should we live?...When we lay side by side, I often told you "my love, would other people be affectionate and love each other as we do?" ...How should I live without you? ...When

Fig. 25. Mit'uri from Yi Ŭngt'ae's grave, Chosŏn (1586). Human hair and hemp. L. 18 cm. Andong University Museum, North Kyōngsang Province.



Fig. 26. Letter in han'gŭl written on hanji [Korean paper] by Yi Ŭngt'ae's wife, dated 1586. 58.5 x 34 cm. Andong University Museum, North Kyōngsang Province.



the child in my body is born, whom should it call “father”? My heart is inconsolable...Please do read my letter and show me your presence in my dreams. I am certain I can see you in my dreams. Do come quietly and show yourself.¹⁷

This affectionate and heart-rendingly emotional letter written by a grief-stricken wife, believing that her from-this-world-departed husband would read her letter, is an expression of the innermost private feelings that is quite unprecedented, especially in the Neo-Confucian *yangban* elite society of the Chosŏn dynasty where individuals knew their places and cultivated a restrained composure and attitude following social norms and rules. The procedure of Confucian funeral ceremonies was complicated and was undertaken over a long period. The principal mourners (male) and female mourners including the wife of the deceased would live in modest quarters during the mourning period, wearing untreated natural hemp cloth and tying up their hair with straw (Chŏng Sŭngmo 1990, p. 179). This intimate private letter addressed to her departed husband was not meant to be discovered, nor was it to be read during the funeral ceremony.¹⁸

The pair of sandals, *mit'uri* 미투리, woven in hemp and human hair, was placed on the right side of Yi's head, wrapped in Korean paper. The wrapping paper of the shoes was damaged but a few sentences were legible, among them, “이 신을 신어보지도 못하고 ...”: “you were not able to wear these shoes in life...” Yi Ŭngt'ae's wife had cut her long hair (married Korean women had very long hair which was made into a bundle at the back of the head and horizontally secured with a hairpin) and through her sobs lovingly wove this pair of *mit'uri*.¹⁹ Her utmost tender feelings toward her husband are materialized in this pair of shoes through the sacrifice of her treasured black hair, and the placing of the shoes made with it beside her husband's head, as if she were lying beside him in the tomb. In fact, shoes have a connotation in traditional literature as the token of love (Ch'oe 1995, p. 441).

Mit'uri were the shoes worn by *yangban* elite in contrast to *chipsin*, the straw sandal, the footwear of the ordinary people. Plant materials such as flax, hemp, ramie, and silk, occasionally mulberry bark fibre are used to make *mit'uri*. Sandals woven with hemp had been worn by East Asians for a long period. A most perfectly preserved pair of hemp sandals was excavated from a tomb of the Tang dynasty (618–907) in Turfan in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.²⁰

Conclusion

Interviews of prominent people in their professions appear every week in the London *Financial Times*

weekend magazine. One of the questions is, “Do you believe in afterlife?” Most interviewees answer they are not sure, or definitely not, but only very rarely do they believe in an afterlife. The ancient Koreans, without exception I think, believed like most people in various ancient cultures that there was definitely an afterlife. The ancient Greek terracotta boots, now in the Agora Museum, Athens, have been interpreted as serving for the journey of the deceased to the other world (Thompson 1976, p. 230), although a recent study has suggested that they were a part of “nuptial symbolism,” considering that the graves were those of young women (Langdon 2007, p. 185).

To reach that otherworld they made sure to provide provisions (pottery food vessels), proper clothing according to their social ranks, vehicles (a pottery boat found in Silla and Kaya tombs and carriages depicted on wall paintings of the Koguryŏ kingdom) or feathers as a device to fly to the other world, and shoes.²¹ In the realm of death as in life shoes are an essential part of garments. Shoes have been found from the ancient Mycenaean graves in Greece to modern times in Korean funerary practice, as seen in Kim Hun's short story at the beginning of this essay. To the wearer, shoes confer dignity and distinction. Beyond their practicality and functionality to protect and adorn one significant part of the body, the feet, a pair of shoes in the grave had further symbolic meaning: to take us safely to the other world. They could be also an expression of personal affection, as the *mit'uri* from Yi Ŭngt'ae's grave demonstrate. In Korean there are terms for the departure to the other world: “hwangch'ŏn ŭro kanda 黃川으로 간다 going to the Yellow Springs”²² “chŏsŭnggillo kanda 저승길로 간다 going to the other world.” Both expressions have the connotation of going. For the long road to the other world what else do we need, other than a good pair of shoes? Are they not a token of a Safe Journey?

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I am indebted to several friends and colleagues: Eun Bahng who first drew my attention to the terracotta shoes in the Agora Museum; Sylvie Dumont, Agora Excavations American School of Classical Studies in Athens for allowing me to copy illustrations in their archive and for providing relevant information; In-Sung Kim for Susan Langdon's article; Kang-sung Lee for *Paekche ŭi chipsin* (Paekche 2003); the Director of Gongju National Museum for all published materials on King Muryŏng's tomb; Jeong-eun Kim for the Korean article by Ch'oe Un-sik which I could not obtain here in London; Soo-mi Lee at the National Museum of Korea for the photograph of the letter from Yi Ŭngt'ae's grave; and Roderick Whitfield for the reference to the Liudan painted pottery boot and valuable discussions.

About the author

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Notes

1. A complete set of quilted skirt, jacket, underclothes, socks, and fabric shoes for the deceased (*sūmni* 襲履) was found as a set of funerary garments (*suīi* 壽衣, lit. 'longevity garment') in the coffin from the late 16th-century tomb of a Lady of the Andong Kim (*Han'guk sangjangnye* 1990, Pls. 108–114). A thousand years earlier, a *mingyi* 冥衣 funerary garment in miniature size was discovered on the chest of the deceased from the Yingpan burial ground (4th–5th century) in Xinjiang, China (*Fangzhipin kaogu* 2002, p. 69) [Fig. 27].



Photo courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh

Fig. 27. Detail of burial costume of so-called "Yingpan man." Tomb No. 15. 4th–5th century. Yingpan, Yuli district, Xinjiang.

2. From Koryŏ tombs no shoes have been found. Koryŏ (918–1392) being a Buddhist country, the preferred funerary method of the deceased was cremation. See the detailed research on the burial custom of this period, Vermeersch 2014 and Horlyck 2014.

3. Maesanni (district) Tomb was renamed as Suryŏbch'ong by Chu Yŏng-hŏn, the late North Korean archaeologist. Most recent publications on Koguryŏ tombs use Suryŏbch'ong. A considerable number of studies on Koguryŏ tombs have been published by North and South Korean scholars (especially by Jeon Ho-tae). See two small concise and informative studies on Koguryŏ tombs by the late distinguished scholars, Kim Yong-jun (1958) and Kim Won-yong (1983). On Koguryŏ in western languages, see *Kunst* 2005.

4. Kang Woo-bang interprets such scrolling motifs found in Koguryŏ wall paintings as 'yŏnggi' 靈氣, 'energy of soul' in his numerous articles. See his most recent Korean article in *Muryŏngwang* 2011.

5. The catalogue (*Tesori* 1987, Pl. 64) catalogues this pottery boot as a goblet! There is another example (reported to me by Daniel Waugh), a pottery boot dated to the 1st millennium BCE now displayed in the Tehran Reza Abbasi Museum (Acc. No. 20707), where the caption indicates it is a drinking vessel (rhyton). Why should a boot function as a goblet? There is no further explanation about this.

6. The royal tomb is located "on the hillside of northern Shugetu village at Qinglong town at Naiman Banner of Zhelimu League in Inner Mongolia." The Princess of Chen State was the niece of the Liao Emperor Sheng Zong (r. 983–1031) (*Liao* 1998, p. 188).

7. Hardly any written documents or burial objects have survived in Koguryŏ tombs as they were all looted. Tombs are therefore named after the distinctive features found in tombs (Tomb of Dancers) or after the topographical names (Maesanni or Anak tombs), or simply after the tomb construction (Samsilch'ong 三室塚, Three-Chamber Tomb).

8. *Kayasa non* 1993, pp. 17ff. A comprehensive archaeological report on Pokch'ŏndong tombs is *Pusan* 1993.

9. I have just published a short article on this pair of pottery sandals (Pak 2015).

10. The story appears in the Wikipedia entry for Bodhidharma, but without a textual reference. See <<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bodhidharma&oldid=695080795>> (accessed 17 December 2015).

11. The Paekche King Muryŏng (Muryeong) 武寧 can also be read Munyŏng in Korean. Since the first archaeological report (1973) on King Muryŏng's Tomb by Munhwajae Kwalliguk (Institute of Korean Cultural Heritage), a number of important new studies and thorough investigation of this tomb have been published in recent years. The most comprehensive and detailed documentations are *Muryŏngwang* 2009–2014. Two more volumes of research will be published in the near future. For a short introduction of this tomb in English, see *Treasures* 1984, pp. 61–64. On Paekche (Baekje) metal work from King Muryŏng's tomb and Silla metal work, see Bush 1984 and Lee 2014.

12. Bush 1984, pp. 68ff. The flattering effect of silver or gold spangles is the key decorative device in metal work of the Three Kingdoms period (see Pak 1988).

13. Susan Bush (1984, pp. 66ff) discussed the hexagonal motifs of these shoes.

14. *Paekche* 2014, p. 44. One such set of a gilt bronze hat and shoes was excavated in Ibjŏm-ni Tomb No. 86-1 (*Chŏnbuk* 2009, pp. 50–53, Pls. 45, 47). Very similar gilt bronze shoes with open-work design have been excavated from Silla territory [Fig. 28, next page]

15. A detailed excavation report has been published (*An-dong* 2000). See also in English on this tomb and its excavated material Lee et al. 2009

16. Chŏng Chongsu 1990, pp. 136ff. For a recent study on this burial type, see Kim 2015. On Chosŏn burial practice, see Hejtmanek, 2014.



Fig. 28. Gilt bronze shoes with T-shaped openwork design. Silla 5th–6th century. From the collection of Dr. Lee Yangseon. Kyōngju National Museum.

17. My translation is based on the modern Korean version by Professor Im Se-kwōn, Department of History in Andong University. Compare the translation of the whole letter in Lee et al. 2009, pp. 151ff, and Kim 2009, pp. 395ff. 'Wōn' in the letter was interpreted as the name of the unborn child (Lee et al. 2009, p. 153).

18. Kim (2009, p. 395) suggested that the letter was "a type of elegy and was probably read aloud before being placed on top of the chest of the deceased," but this interpretation seems most unlikely.

19. It has been suggested that this pair of *mit'uri* were made by Yi's wife in the hope of her husband's speedy recovery from illness (see Lee et al. 2009, p. 154).

20. Hemp sandals. H. 5.3, L. 26.5, W. 7.8 cm. Tang. Excavated from Astana Tomb No. 106 in Turfan (*Wenhua* 1972, p. 109) [cf. Fig. 29].

Photos courtesy of Daniel C. Waugh



Fig. 29. Hemp sandals. H. 8, L. 26.3, W. 8.2 cm. Tang. Excavated from Astana Tomb No. 340 (?106) in Turfan.

21. On the meaning of feathers in headgear, see Pak 1988, n. 25.

22. There is another common expression in Korean meaning to go to the other world, "going to Pungmang Mountain 北邙山으로 간다." Mt. Beimang is located in the north of Luoyang in Henan Province. Since the Han dynasty this mountain was the burial site of emperors and famous people in China. It is not clear when this phrase began to be used in Korea for the place after death. Wu Hung (2010, p. 7) defines the Yellow Springs as "the imagined location of innumerable tombs." There is no evidence in Korean ancient belief as precise as this rather vague notion about the realm of the other world. Yellow Springs appear in the passage in *Zuo's Commentary to the Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals) 春秋左傳, Book 1, 1 (*Ibid*). After Duke Zhuang had expelled his scheming mother, he swore: "Until I have reached the Yellow Springs, I will not see you again 不及黃川,無相見也." For the original text and commentary see Legge 1960, vol. 5, p. 6.

Plate I

[Pak, "Safe Journey!" p. 10]

a



b



Photos © Daniel C. Waugh

Regalia from the Tomb of the Gold Crown. Silla 5th–6th century: a) the crown H. 27.5 cm (National Treasure No. 87); b) detail of the gold belt L. 109.0 cm (NT 88); c) the gilt bronze soles L. 30.5 cm. Kyōngju National Museum. (See Sillain 1996, Pls. 49, 52; Silla 2001, Pl. 271).

c

