A Re-examination of Brick Chamber Tombs in the Nangnang and Daebang Commanderies: A Study of the Classifications and Chronology of Brick Chamber Tombs and Issues

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The author examined brick chamber tombs in the Nangnang and Daebang commanderies dispersed in the areas of Pyongyang and Hwanghai Province in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by classifying types of tombs, creating a chronology, and studying their relationship with related burial systems, genealogies, and the background to their emergence and disappearance. As a result, the author was able to classify domed brick ceiling, single-brick chamber tombs, the predominant type of Nangnang brick chamber tomb, into four types, create a chronology and estimate their actual dates. The author then identified a chronological relationship between these tombs and other brick chamber tombs from the common relationships of the various attributes. Looking at this history of these changes, a considerable transformation took place during the period from the end of the 2nd century through to the beginning of the 3rd century when the 1BII-type domed brick ceiling single-brick chamber tomb became established. The author surmises that this occurred against the backdrop of the Gongsun clan's control of the Nangnang commandery and the clan's splitting of the commandery to create the Daebang commandery. As a result of making a comparative study of materials on Han burials in northeastern China, the author suggests that the archetypal domed brick ceiling brick chamber tomb has particularly strong ties to the Liaodong Peninsula.

The author suggests that tombs with bricks and wooden caskets were not a transitional burial system during the transition from tombs with wooden caskets to brick chamber tombs, but that elements of brick chamber tombs were introduced to wooden casket tombs. Based on this, the author posits that brick chamber tombs had already appeared in the period from the end of the 1st century to the beginning of the 2nd century when tombs with bricks and wooden caskets were built.

Both stone ceiling brick chamber tombs and stone chamber tombs were burial systems that were built at the same time as domed brick ceiling brick chamber tombs. Stone ceiling brick chamber tombs did not represent a transitional system that evolved during the change from brick ceiling brick chamber tombs to stone chamber tombs, but were built because the ceiling type used in stone chamber tombs was introduced to brick ceiling brick chamber tombs. The author then looked at the final stage and the period after the demise of the Nangnang and Daebang commanderies, about which details are unclear, by studying the distribution and inscriptions of domed ceiling brick chamber
tombs, stone ceiling brick chamber tombs and stone chamber tombs. The study showed that the commandery-district system underwent significant changes during the period from the middle of the 3rd century when the local ruling family moved from Pyongyang to the Hwanghae Province and were replaced in Pyongyang by the influx of a new ruling elite.

Keywords: Nangnang commandery, Daebang commandery, brick chamber tomb, stone chamber tomb