This article is aimed to reveal the characteristics of the Silla wooden tablets excavated from Seongsan Fortress in Haman, Korea (hereinafter “Seongsan Fortress wooden tablets”), through an examination of their current state and a comparison with the management of fortified government offices in ancient Japan. Archaeological research has discovered that Seongsan Fortress wooden tablets were collectively disposed of along with other vegetable organic materials to build efficient drainage facilities when the fortress was established. Most of the wooden tablets discarded during the construction were shipping labels of food delivered to the fortress from various parts of the country. It is highly likely that the food was provided for construction workers from North Gyeongsang Province and other places in the country.

Wooden tablets unearthed from the sites of ancient fortified government offices in Tohoku, Japan, include not only shipping labels of supplied food but other various kinds of tablets such as record tablets for redistribution of food and inventory tags for management of goods within the government offices. This point provides a contrast to Seongsan Fortress wooden tablets, which mainly consist of shipping labels. They seem to be excavations from the initial stages of wooden tablet culture before it spread to Silla fortresses in the late sixth century.

Assuming that Seongsan Fortress wooden tablets were shipping labels of food supplied to workers constructing the fortress, this article analyzes the delivery of private grain to the Mutsu Pacification Headquarters from influential clans in the first half of the eighth century as a comparable case in ancient Japan. According to Shoku Nihongi (Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan), the early eighth century saw a policy to make district magistrates in Bando provide their private grain to pacification soldiers in exchange for rank. It seems that when establishing the pacification soldier system, the government counted on food aid from the district magistrates in Bando because Mutsu could not secure food supply for the soldiers on its own. Seongsan Fortress wooden tablets indicate the involvement of local officials in food supply as well as the geographical spread of such suppliers in North Gyeongsang Province; therefore, there is no doubt that powerful local clans in various places engaged in the food supply, which might have been similar to the initial situation of fortified government office management in ancient Japan.

Key words: Seongsan Fortress wooden tablets, Production technique, Fortified government office management, Grain delivery