Attributes of Surrounding Moat Remains in the Southern Korean Peninsula and Their Changes during the Bronze Age to the Three Kingdoms Period of Korea

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This article reviews the previous studies of 48 surrounding moat remains in the southern Korean Peninsula from the Bronze Age to the Three Kingdoms Period of Korea to examine the features and characteristics of surrounding moats in each period and their transitions.

In the southern Korean Peninsula, surrounding moats appeared in the early Bronze Age, as evidenced by the Daeyulri Site in Cheongwon, where three narrow moats were constructed winding along the contour line. Judging from the excavated artifacts, we can tell that they were attributed to immigrants from the Liaoning region.

The oldest evidence of the establishment and spread of surrounding moats is dated to the late Bronze Age. At that time, surrounding moats were built mostly in Yeongnam, though there seem to have been regional differences. For example, in the Ulsan area, all surrounding moats were constructed on hills, and in many cases, a village was encircled by a single moat. Judging from geographical and locational features, we may assume that they were used to separate ritual spaces. This article refers to a unit consisting of a moat and the hamlets from which you can see the moat as a hub village. Meanwhile, in the Jinju area, in general, large-scale villages in river basins were enclosed by moats. Some villages even had wooden barricades, which indicates that moats were used rather for protection or as boundaries. Such security might have been intended against attacks not only from outside people but also from wild animals. Like in the Ulsan area, moats were built around large-scale villages considered as hub villages in the Jinju area. The establishment of surrounding moats is considered to have marked the start of the latter half of the Bronze Age and the rise of powerful individuals that enabled large-scale construction works such as moat building.

In the early Three Kingdoms Period of Korea saw the widespread of surrounding moats across the peninsula. At that time, their meaning as ritual constructions was maximized. In general, a main moat was paralleled by narrower outer moats. Many of them were located on the top of hills, forming a circle. In the late Three Kingdoms Period, the number of constructions of surrounding moats dropped sharply. In the meantime, wider moats were built, and some were even protected with wooden fences to enhance security, which seems due to mounting tensions in the region. The reasons for the drastic decrease of surrounding moats at that time are apparently because walled cities were introduced from...
the Chinese dynasties and Koguryo and because small units of “moat villages” were integrated into a
bigger unit as the peninsula was being united.

Key words: the Bronze Age to the Three Kingdoms Period of Korea, surrounding moat, category and chronology, functionality theory