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In this paper, I examined the chronology of the settlements of the hard Mumun pottery period in the upstream area of the Yeongsan River, which is identifiable as the early period of Mahan, and its significance. First, I presented a suggestion of the chronology of the earthenware excavated from the shell mounds of the Haenum Gungok-ri Mausoleum (Hanyang-gun), a typical compound ruin of this period, based on the existing research results. Next, I examined each of the three stages of hard Mumun pottery in regard to the actual condition of the residential sites of the Three Kingdoms period, which has been a popular topic for discussions in recent years.

In the first stage, hard Mumun pottery coexisted with the triangular clay band pottery, and I estimate it to be from around the first century B.C. to A.D. 1. This is when the settlement sites of a non-facility type, which were a degenerated form of the Songguk-ri settlement sites, were constructed mainly in the Gwangju area.

The second stage is the simplified period of the hard Mumun pottery, and I estimate it to be from around A.D. 1 to the middle of the second century. This is when the plane figures of the residential sites were circular, rectangular, oval, etc.; the groups of pits clustered to a certain extent and the remains of grooves are recognizable. What is noticeable is the existence of the Hon-dong ruins, which were the central living space, and the Shinchang-dong ruins, which were the center of foreign trade. It is thought that the location of these ruins probably played a central role in the assimilation of various cultures from outside and in spreading them to the surrounding areas.

The third stage is the period when the hard Mumun pottery was excavated alongside the textile-printed pottery from typical settlements of the Three Kingdoms period, and I estimate it to be from around the mid-second to the fourth century A.D.

The materials of the hard Mumun pottery are still mostly excavated from the settlement sites centered on Gwangju and Damyang, and there is a lack of materials concerning the surrounding areas. Therefore, there is a limit in doing research on the landscape of the settlements of this period and the process of the propagation in more detail. However, if more data is accumulated through future surveys, there is a high possibility that the research will progress rapidly.
Key words: Early Mahan period, hard Mumun pottery, textile-printed pottery, chronology of the settlements