The Landscape and Structure of the Ancient Settlements in the Yeongsan River Basin

LEE Youngcheol

This paper aims to analyze the landscape and structure of the ancient settlements in the Yeongsan River basin. Specifically, using historical documents and some of the settlement ruins, I examined the transformation that the landscape of the settlements had undergone through the stages when the Yeongsan River basin (Mahan) was gradually converted into Baekje.

First, I analyzed the landscape and the structure of the settlements in the Mahan period. Featuring characteristics of the Mahan-type dwelling sites, there are a four-post type with a rectangular plane figure and a housing structure with the facility of wall-grooves without pillars. From the size and contents of the settlements, it is possible to classify them into general settlements and base settlements, and the latter were formed at the chief port (or in a place where the chief port is assumed to have been) of the mainstream Yeongsan River and at the end of each river branch. Furthermore, to review typical base settlements, I considered the Damyang Taemok-ri/Eung Ryong-ri (태암) ruins and introduced their detail, highlighting their character as the center of one small country of Mahan.

It was after the mid-fifth century when the landscape of such Mahan settlements underwent a big transformation. As an example of this, I examined Gwangju Dongshin-dong ruins in the Yeongsan River basin and grasped the character as one of the “regional Baekje cities,” while introducing the satisfying size and content of the settlement, the important location in terms of transport, the various facilities, and the sections seen in the central part of the settlement. I concluded that the person (or the group) who led the city construction formed a direct relationship with the Baekje Kingdom, and there was a plan in the background to unify the society of the Yeongsan River basin (Mahan confederacy) by Baekje.

Finally, I pointed out the situation where the Takatsuka tumuli and settlements spread all over Naju Bannam-Myeon and Fuyan-ri in the middle basin of the Yeongsan River while the base settlements of the upstream area of the River declined rapidly around the beginning of the sixth century. I then highlighted the possibility that such changes were linked with the historical incidents such as the fall of Seoul and the transfer of the capital to Ungjin.

Key words: Yeongsan River basin, Mahan and Baekje, ancient settlement, regional Baekje cities