

## Letters Written on Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts and the Daily Lives of Ancient East Asians thereof

Kim, Kyungho (Sungkyunkwan University)

Nations organized and operated their administrative system based on documented rules and laws. Therefore, the study of ancient East Asian documents has been critical in understanding the character and system of those states. Despite its importance, thorough research on the origin and the contents of document administration in ancient East Asian societies only began after the discovery of the bamboo and silk manuscript records in the 20th century. As related research on the manuscripts were primarily centered on public documents, there has been a lack of research on private documents such as letters.

While public documents systematically link administrative agencies of the state for the seamless operation of state power, private documents act as a medium that connect individuals and groups. Private documents are useful resources that explain the civil order and society by organically connecting the everyday life of the people. Among the private documents of bamboo and silk manuscripts, this lecture focuses on letters as it requires more research in the field. The letters written on bamboo and silk documents convey the political, economical, social, and ideological aspects of real lives in a comprehensive manner compared to the letters found in historical literature. They are considered valuable as living material and primary data of the time. In this lecture, I would like to introduce the letters written on bamboo and silk manuscripts, and analyze their form, content and the specific aspects of people's lives at the time.

To this end, this lecture introduces around 50 relatively complete letters written on bamboo and silk manuscripts of the Qin-Han period, the period with the most abundant and diverse materials, to explain the following. First, this lecture clarifies the type and narrative form of the letters written on bamboo and silk manuscripts. Arranging the form and idiomatic expression of the letters can provide a clue to understanding other East Asian materials that share similarities with the letters from the Qin-Han period. Second, this lecture suggests prospects for future research on day-to-day life of ancient East Asians through the analysis of the letters. Third, it interprets the interaction between intellectuals and their inner character by analyzing the contents of the letters. With an exception of some letters written by ordinary people, most letters written on bamboo and silk manuscripts were sent and received by low-level officials and intellectuals. If we compare the form and content of these letters written on bamboo and silk manuscripts with those of literature sources written in later generations, we will be able to conduct an interesting analysis on the exchanges between intellects at the time and their inner character.

**\*In this lecture, the term “bamboo and silk manuscripts” includes bamboo slips, wooden slips, and silk manuscripts.**