

IN MEMORIAM



MARTIN THOMAS BALE

(7 MARCH 1970 – 21 SEPTEMBER 2018)



With the passing of Martin Bale on 21 September 2018 in Gimhae, South Korea, the field of Korean archaeology lost one of its most active and ardent supporters. Martin was a pioneer of Korean prehistory in North America, devoting more than twenty years to the study of the Mumun Pottery Period (ca. 1500–300 B.C.) and broader East Asia. His interest in Korea was borne out of his training in anthropological archaeology—he passionately believed that the Korean evidence is among the best to answer questions regarding emergent complex societies. He was dedicated to and had incredible insight into a wide range of topics such as political economy, social inequality, settlement patterns, households, identity, archaeological

theory, and archaeobotany. More than his scholarship, however, he believed in being thoughtful, generous, and kind to those around him regardless of their position or rank.

A proud native of Regina, Saskatchewan, Martin was born on 7 March 1970. He received his B.A. degree from the University of Regina, went on to earn his M.A. from the University of British Columbia, followed by a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto in 2011, all in anthropology. Although he originally intended to pursue North American archaeology as an undergraduate, he changed course soon after traveling to Korea to teach English, never looking back. Naturally gifted in languages, Martin quickly and easily became fluent in Korean. This allowed him to form professional relationships and conduct fieldwork during a time when few foreign archaeologists worked in Korea. Beginning in the mid-1990s, Martin excavated at several important sites in the southern region of South Korea, including Neuk-do and Pyeonggeo-dong. His diverse field experiences included burials, shell middens, pithouses, and village settlements and field methods in archaeobotany.

Through his research, Martin cultivated a deep appreciation for Korean culture, past and present. He was especially fond of Korean cuisine and enjoyed communing with his colleagues over his favorite pork soup with rice called *dwaegi gukbap* 돼지국밥. He also met and wed his wife in Korea. Despite his immersion in Korean culture, however, his Canadian identity never diminished; he once said that he paradoxically felt more Canadian as his time abroad increased. An important part of his identity from his student days in Canada was understanding modern inequities. He carried this concern into his graduate research by examining the development of social inequality during the Mumun period. While his master's thesis (1999) focused on the village sites of the Nam River Valley in the city of Jinju, his doctoral dissertation (2011) impressively synthesized storage and related data from 71 sites located across South Korea. This was an incredible feat, made even more so by the level of detail and meticulousness of his analyses.

Although his career ended too soon, Martin published significant scholarly works in both English and Korean. His articles were among the first to introduce early village societies in Korea to an English-speaking audience, beginning with a co-authored paper in 2002 that examined prehistoric subsistence practices. He would continue to publish research on inequality in complex societies through perspectives in craft production (2006), households (2016), and storage (2017). Most recently, he was working on the role of identity formation in the spread of Mumun culture. He also received prestigious grants and fellowships from Yale, Harvard, Korea Foundation, and the Association for Asian Studies.

One of Martin's best qualities was his adherence to principles that he considered worthy, no matter the cost to himself and regardless of the opinions of others. Among these was increasing the exposure of Korean archaeology to the broader scholarly community. He worked tirelessly to disseminate the contributions of Koreanists to archaeologists worldwide, most notably with the Early Korea Project (EKP) at Harvard University. In 2009, he was invited by the EKP to help develop studies of Korean history and archaeology in North America; as part of this effort, he successfully directed a three-part workshop series on thematic issues in Korean archaeology. Martin was particularly qualified to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap while organizing these workshops, which were the first of their kind to bring together Korean and non-Korean scholars in a focused way with the intention of collectively publishing the

papers. Although circumstances ultimately prevented these papers from being published, Martin played an important role on other EKP publications as an editorial board member, author of a paper on cultural heritage management (2008), and co-editor of the final EKP volume entitled *Early Korea-Japan Interactions* (2018), which grew from a 2010 workshop that he additionally helped organize at Harvard. These works currently remain some of the few available resources and scholarly books on early Korea.

Martin was an early advocate for the use of social media to promote not only Korean archaeology but the archaeology of other Asian countries. For several years, he ran the Northeast Asia Archaeology accounts on Facebook and Twitter, which served as hubs for news and research relevant to the field for the scholarly community as well as the general public. This work was befitting of Martin as he was adept at connecting with people as well as creating connections in others. His network of colleagues and friends was thus exceptionally wide, undoubtedly owing to his affability and kindness. As much as he advocated for his field, he advocated for others, extending his time and whatever resources he had without self-interest. Stories of his goodness and generosity abound. He was also generous in praising the work of his colleagues, although he often did not recognize his own contributions, which were considerable and significant.

In 2012, Martin began a postdoctoral position at Yale University before moving to Korea in 2013 where he remained until his passing. For two years, he taught various archaeology courses as an adjunct lecturer at five different universities before his final position in 2015 as the Oeguk-in (Foreign) Professor in the Department of Cultural Anthropology at Yeungnam University. He was popular there among students and found deep satisfaction in participating in the intellectual life of the university department. However, he always dreamed of someday moving back to Canada. Poignantly, Martin was able to visit his home country one last time with his beloved daughter shortly before his passing.

Martin leaves a major vacuum that will not be easily filled. Without following a traditional career path, he forged a legacy that is profound and personally meaningful to many people worldwide. He accomplished much in the time that he had but sadly left a lot of his work unfinished, depriving the field of the research that could have been. More importantly, his many, many friends and mentors suffer a greater loss through his passing. The field of Korean archaeology is more connected, friendly, and resilient because of him, and those of us that remain will try our best to continue this spirit.

—Rachel LEE and Mark BYINGTON

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