China has conducted its “Northeast Project” to incorporate the history of Manchuria, including Koguryo and Parhae, into Chinese history. Various research institutes in Korea are in the process of preparing analyses of related materials and research projects in response to Chinese arguments regarding Old Choson, Puyó, Koguryo, and Parhae. The Chinese attitude regarding Parhae is that it was a kingdom that was established and that was destroyed on what is now Chinese territory so therefore it is naturally part of Chinese history. China is now in the midst of investing huge amounts of capital into large-scale projects cleaning up and restoring Koguryo and Parhae remains, including the site of the Parhae Northern Capital, in preparation to apply to UNESCO for recognition as World Cultural Heritage sites. This creates concern that a second “Northeast Project” is underway.

Cleaning up the remains is a welcome move. However, the restoration work has been said to ignore indigenous cultural elements and recreate walled cities on models that use Tang and Qing architectural culture. In its culture, Parhae was a kingdom that shared the universal state culture of East Asia but also had its own particularity. In the case of architecture, Parhae adopted some aspects of Chinese walled city systems, but it also used Koguryo elements. It is particularly urgent that concrete and careful investigation be done in order to attain a proper restoration of Parhae’s Northern Capital.

To date, most of the research on Parhae has been done by China, North Korea, Russia, and Japan. Even though it has been confirmed through archaeology and investigation of remains that Parhae had its own unique architectural culture, each of these countries had focused only on investigating the relationship between Parhae’s culture and
its own and have not recognized Parhae’s own distinctive culture. In particular, China contends that Parhae’s culture was the culture of the Songmal Malgal who imitated Chinese culture and formed a regional regime that, like all other entities in Manchuria, was culturally subjugated to China. North Korea, on the other hand, has focused exclusively on comparisons of Parhae’s culture with that of Koguryô and has been preoccupied with establishing that Parhae was the successor to Koguryô. In the case of architecture, North Korea has shown a tendency to interpret Parhae culture in comparison with only the limited area of the Korean Peninsula. Thus this chapter will consider Parhae as an independent state and will seek to establish the identity of Parhae’s architectural culture by considering what Parhae shared with and how Parhae differed from the surrounding countries. This chapter will cover the full range of Parhae’s architecture, including walled cities and palaces, Buddhist monasteries, residences, the twenty-four stone remains, Buddhist stone lanterns and pagodas, and architectural decorations.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF WALLED CITIES AND PALACES

Parhae relocated its capital four times during the time from its founding in 698 by Tae Choyông (r. 698–719) to its demise in the twentieth year (926) of its fifteenth king, Tae Insôn (r. 906–926). The first was the relocation from Kuguk (now Dunhua City in Jilin Province) to the Central Capital, Hyŏndŏk Province (now Xigucheng, Helong Prefecture, Jilin Province). The second was in 755 from the Central Capital to the Northern Capital, Yongch’ŏn Province (now Shangjingcheng, Bohaizhen, Ningan City, Heilongjiang Province). The third was in 785 from the Northern Capital to the Eastern Capital, Yongwŏn Province (now Baliancheng, Hunchun City, Jilin Province), and the fourth was in 794 from the Eastern Capital back to the Northern Capital. The Northern Capital was Parhae’s main capital for over 150 years of the kingdom’s total 229 years. Thus an investigation of the Northern Capital is the first priority in understanding Parhae’s walled city and palace construction. To date, archaeological investigations of the Northern Capital have been larger in scale than those of other Parhae capitals and they have revealed that the Northern Capital was indeed a proper capital city. The Northern Capital is known to have been second largest, after the Tang’s Changan, among the capital cities of that time and can be considered to have been the representative walled city of Northeast Asia.

Of the walled cities of Parhae, those whose excavation can show us features of Parhae architecture include the Kuguk site at Wudongcheng, the Central Capital site at Xigucheng, the Eastern Capital site at Baliancheng, the Western Capital site at Linjiang, the Southern Capital site at Ch’ŏnghae, and the Northern Capital site. Roughly speaking, we can say that these sites share four major