



# **Twin Pillars Tomb**

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## Twin Pillars Tomb

Twin Pillars Tomb in P'yŏngan Namdo, one of the earliest identified Koguryŏ tombs, remains one of the most important. Evidences of its significance are its structure, painting subjects and technical details, and the ways in which architecture and painting compliment each other. The most important architectural feature is the pair of pillars, unique in Koguryŏ tombs. The twinning resonates in the dual-chamber structure and pair of pillars and tomb occupants that are the focus of the main interior mural. Architecture and painting details together provide clear direction from the entry to that painting, located on the back wall of the back chamber. Gold paint and the selective use of red further enhance the importance of the back wall mural. Features of the Twin Pillars tomb are seen in other Koguryŏ tombs or traceable to China of the early seventh-century or earlier date. The uniqueness of such a coherent structure and painting program suggest the occupants to have been important members of Koguryŏ society, perhaps even royalty.

## Twin Pillars Tomb

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With nearly one hundred Koguryō tombs with interior murals, it has become increasingly possible to identify regional, stylistic, chronological, and thematic features that are shared by many of them. It is widely believed, for example, that the tombs can be divided into three or four chronological groups based on stylistic features of their paintings. It is known that the majority of Koguryō tombs have one main chamber, sometimes with an admiration chamber at the entrance or with side niches, and that fewer than 15% have two or more chambers. Certain themes, including the occupant and activities of his life, heavenly bodies, the four directional animals, architecture, door guards, and mounted figures, can be expected to appear on the walls of Koguryō tombs.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, through nearly a century of

<sup>1</sup> General studies of Koguryō tombs with murals that have been particularly useful for this article are (in alphabetical order): Cho Ūi-hwan, *Chiban Koguryō kobun pyōkhwa* [Wall paintings of Koguryō mounded tombs in Chiban] (Seoul: Choson Ilbosa, 1993); Ikeuchi Hiroshi and Umehara Sueji, *Tsuko* (T'ung-kou [Tonggou]) (Tokyo: Nicniman Bunka kyokai, 1938-40); Kasai Torajiro, *Chosen koseki zuroku* [Illustrations of remains in Korea], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Kokka-sha, 1915); Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no hekiga kofun* [Tombs with wall paintings of the Korean peninsula] (Tokyo: Mutsukyo, 1980); Kim Wōl-lyong, *Hanguk pyōkhwa kobun* [Korean tombs with wall paintings] (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1980); Koguryō Research Society, *Koguryō kobun pyōkhwa* [Koguryō mounded tombs with wall paintings] (Seoul: Hak'yon Munhwa-sa, 1997); *Kokuri bunkaten* [Koguryō exhibition] (Tokyo: Kokuri Bunkaten Jikko linkai, 1985); *Kokuri kofun hekiga* [Koguryō tomb murals], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Chosen Gahosha shuppansha, 1985); Junghee Lee, "The Evolution of Koguryō Tomb Murals," *Korean Culture* (Summer 1992): 12-17 and 40-44; Li Dianfu, ed. *Dongbei kaogu yanjiu* [Research on archaeology in China's Northeastern provinces], vol. 2 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1994); Youngsook Pak, "Buddhist Themes in Koguryō Murals," *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 44,4 (1990): 177-204; Umehara Sueji, *Chosen kodai no bunka* [Ancient cultures of Korea] (Kyoto: Takagiri shoin, 1946); Umehara Sueji, *Chosen kodai no bōsei* [Tomb systems of ancient Korea] (Tokyo: Zauho kankokai, 1947-1966); Wei Cun Cheng, *Gaogouli kaogu* [Koguryō archaeology] (Changchun: Jilin Daxue chubanshe, 1994); and Zhu Rongxian, *Kokuri no hekiga kofun* [Korean tombs with wall paintings], trans. Nakajima Kimichika (Tokyo: Gakuseisha, 1972). Chon Ho-tae, *Koguryō kobun Pyokwha ui Segye* [The world of koguryō mural painting] (Seoul: SNV Press, 2004); Chōn Ho-t'ae, *Koguryō kobun pyōkhwa yon'gu* [The study of Koguryō painting tombs] (Seoul: Sageyeol, 2000)

research on Koguryŏ tombs, those with unique elements have become rare. Twin Pillars Tomb (雙楹塚) is one of the rare Koguryŏ tombs with a unique feature, one that, in addition, is extraordinary.

Twin Pillars tomb, in P'yŏng'an Namdo(平安南道), was first reported by Kasai Torajiro in 1915.<sup>2</sup> Marked above-ground by an earthen mound, the underground portion is stone. A ramp from ground level leads to five subterranean spaces in this order: an admiration chamber, a passageway, the

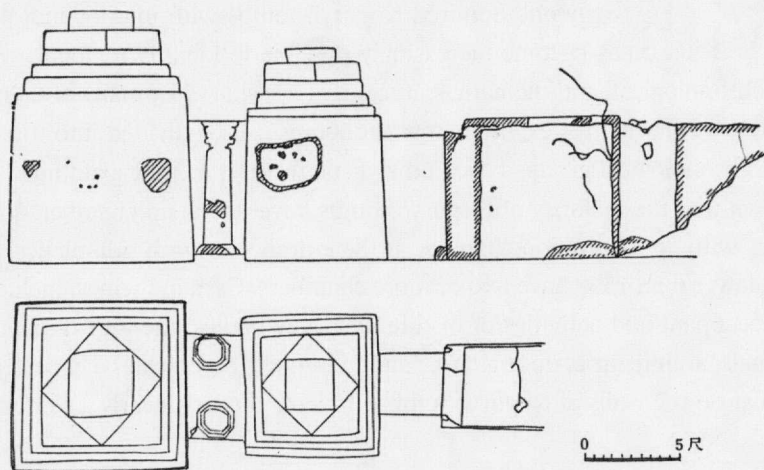


fig.1 Plan and side sectional drawing of Twin Pillars Tomb. After Kasai, pls. 529-530.

front chamber; a wider passageway, and a back chamber (fig. 1). All the wall and ceiling surfaces were treated with a white, lime-based covering to enhance the potential for painting. The two octagonal pillars positioned at either side of the passageway have given the tomb its name. They are also the unique and one of the extraordinary features of the tomb.

Oriented roughly north-south, and entered at the south, the first underground space is an admiration chamber, 2.72 by 1.2 meters in floor dimensions and 2.2 meters in height. The squarish front chamber is 2.35 by 2.27 meters and rises 3.3 meters in height and the back chamber is square, 2.75 meters in base dimensions and rises 4.3 meters from floor to ceiling. The ceilings of both the front and back chambers are constructed of three,

<sup>2</sup> Kasai Torajiro, *Chosen koseki zuroku*, vol. 2, pls. 527-581.

stepped layers that decrease in perimeter from the top of the wall to the apex of the ceiling. The apex of each is a quadrilateral superimposed near the middle of each side of a quadrilateral so that looking up, one sees an octagonal shape. In profile, as seen in figure 1, the ceilings thus appear to have five levels. At the center of each ceiling is a lotus.

The dimensions of the corridor that joins the front and back rooms are 1.2 by 1.82 meters at the base and 2.2 meters in height. The pillars standing in it are octagonal, with four-tier capitals and resting on plinths on a floor that is a step above the front chamber. The stepped approach, augmented by the highly elaborated ceilings and pillars, adds anticipation and drama to the confined interior space (fig. 2).



fig.2 Front chamber through connective corridor to back chamber, Twin Pillars Tomb. After Kasai, pl. 538.

## PAINTING PROGRAM

Every wall and ceiling surface originally contained paintings. Similar motifs can be found among the murals of numerous other Koguryō tombs and tombs of earlier Han China, but as we shall see, the arrangement of painting and the way architecture combines with murals, offer a kind of drama that thus far has not been observed in other tombs of the Koguryō kingdom.

- **Occupant Painting**

The focal painting of Twin Pillars Tomb interior is the occupant portrait on the north wall of the back chamber. It is the culmination of the stepped

approach that begins at the entry to the tomb. Visible through the twin pillars from the front chamber, it is further highlighted by a pair of door guards on the north side of the connective corridor and a pair of painted pillars on either side. The presentation of three pairs, two painted and the other three-dimensional, cannot but indicate their importance in the tomb program.

As for the occupants, they, two, form a pair. Seated frontally on a dais



fig.3 Male and female tomb occupants on north wall of back chamber, Twin Pillars Tomb. After Kasai, pl. 575.

that is itself approached by set of diagonally-positioned small stairs, they are larger than life compared to the other figures or architecture in the painting. The drama of the scene and exquisite detail are apparent even though the upper right of the painting has been effaced (fig. 3). The face, shoulders, and legs of the male are larger than his female counterpart's, and his hands are exposed whereas hers are concealed by her sleeves. Two boots, perhaps a

pair, perhaps each representing a pair, outlined in red, are in front of them. It is the only red outline in the scene, and the color is an important artistic device on the wall. Used sparingly, it is most intense in the folds of the occupants' garments. Streamers that seem to emerge from the female's garment define an undulating pattern that breaks the covering of the red, six-pronged design on the dais. Red is next painted in the female's hair ornaments, then above, in the triangular flame at the top center of the roof. A similar, smaller flame appears on the roof ridge of a side chamber. No symmetrically placed roof or ridge is apparent, probably because the balance of the scene seems to be intentionally broken by the tiny, kneeling servant and what seems to be a brazier to a viewer's right and two small servants, one standing at a partially open door and the other on a floor defined by a diagonal line, to viewer's left. Finally, the entire scene is dramatized by the curtain that unfurls above them.

The pairing that dominates the interior of Twin Pillars tomb in the form of pillars and guards in the connective corridor and two occupants at the back end, resonates in a pair of enclosures around the occupant pair. The smaller is a building with gable ends. Only the gable at viewer's left is shown, presumably to indicate the two-dimensional aspect of the frame. Bracket sets and braces are indicated along a lintel and below a ceramic tile roof. The bracketing may appear abbreviated, formed by V-shapes alternating with two-pronged stems. Rather than abbreviation or lack of ability to paint details, it is suggested, these are a signature of a painter or painters who had a grand plan for the entire tomb interior. The first place we see the repetition of this signature is in the decoration of columns that support the second occupant frame, inverted V's. Here, the V's are thick and bold, gold, blue, or thinner red-brown, in contrast to the single-line V's of the lintel. Crowning the pillars are bold, gold V's with a jagged edge and red, flame decoration.

Red, as opposed to red-brown, appears again only as decoration for the dragon-headed finial of the curtains supported by these two pillars and as similar mouth decoration of a pair of dark warriors (tortoises around whom a pair of serpents entwine), to the left of the scene. Red paint has thus drawn the viewer's eyes from the occupants at the focus to each part of the

wall—boots, flames (triangular and the brazier), finial, and dark warriors. It is the kind of feature that only a serious painter with his full composition in mind would have employed, for the painting is static and its drama lies largely in its symmetry. In China, equivalently balanced compositions in which the occupants are motionless and color, specifically red, draws the eye from one balanced area to the next, characterize court painting of the early Tang period. Paintings attributed to Yan Liben (ca. 600-674) are believed to have been executed in this manner.<sup>3</sup> If the painting style in attributions to Yan Liben in fact represents court painting of the Sui or early Tang in China, then the Twin Pillars Tomb murals might have been inspired by the style of Chinese court painters of that period or slightly earlier painters who influenced those of early seventh-century China.

If balanced composition and the use of a bold color to carry the viewer's eye through the painting surface is a technique inspired by China, the extraordinary balance and duality in the painting nevertheless brings recognition to the Twin Pillars painter or workshop. Directly above the finial and extending just beyond the distance covered by the occupants, is an inverted V-shaped brace, one of three that one assumes to have been painted at the top of the wall. Balancing it, and extending the triangle anticipated by the legs of the top central brace, were two pillars with, one assumes, two-arm bracket sets, the one to viewer's right presumably effaced.

Between each pair of the three top braces is a golden, vase-shaped ornament from whose top emerge floral patterns. Below is more gold ornament, presented in four, evenly-spaced humps. Like the red that contrasts red-brown to move a viewer's eye through the composition, the gold of the pillars, flames, and upper wall decoration contrasts the yellow used in floor decoration. Gold, like red, a pair of colors, dominates, with red-brown and

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<sup>3</sup> It is controversial whether any of the paintings attributed to seventh-century China's most famous court painter are authentic, but if the style represented by them is of the period, then "Scholars of the Northern Qi Collating Texts," in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, exhibits these features of color and frozen pose observed in the occupant painting in Twin Pillars tomb. For a study of the painting and illustrations, see Tomita Kojiro, "Scholars of the Northern Ch'i Collating Texts," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 29, 174 (August 1931): 58-63 and Wu T'ung, "'Hoku Ki kosho zumaki' to sono sosaku haikai" ["The Scroll Scholars of the Northern Qi Collating Texts' and the background of its production], *Bukkyo geijutsu* [Ars Buddhica] no. 90 (February 1973): 77-86.

purper yellow the subdominant pair. Since the earliest known painting of civilizations such as ancient Egypt, gold and gold paint have been indicators of wealth and luxury. During the early Tang period, in West Asia, vase-shaped ornaments, inspired by Byzantine mosaics of earlier centuries, punctuate the top register of the interior wall decoration of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, dated 691 and 715,<sup>4</sup> much as they do in Twin Pillars Tomb (fig. 2). The purpose of the comparison is not to suggest artistic contact between the eastern and western ends of the Asian continent that might have inspired the similar motifs, but rather to suggest the importance of a tomb owner for whom so much gold ornament was used and for whom a painting and tomb structure of such exceptional balance and conception was built. As for the combination of red and gold, they are frequently noted in rhapsodies (fu) and other literary descriptions of Chinese architecture of the fourth through sixth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned above, the occupant painting is so common in Koguryŏ tomb murals that it can be considered a convention. It is, furthermore, a convention traceable to Eastern Han (23~220 AD) Chinese funerary painting.<sup>6</sup> Comparisons with Koguryŏ examples illustrate that the complexity and detail already established as characteristic of this tomb also distinguish it from other occupant paintings.

Almost every Koguryŏ tomb has a painting of its occupant or occupants somewhere on its walls. Some of the best-known occupant paintings are found in Anak Tomb no. 3 in Hwanghae province, Tŏkhung-ri Tomb in P'yŏng'an Namdo, Tomb of the Wrestlers in Ji'an, Tomb of the Dancers in Jian, Yaksu-ri Tomb in P'yŏng'an Namdo, Susan-ri Tomb in P'yŏng'an

4 For illustrations of the vase- and crown-shaped decoration and discussion of earlier sources that would be contemporary to the Koguryŏ period, see Oleg Grabar and Richard Ettinghausen, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 650-1250* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 30-34 and Said Nuseibeh and Oleg Grabar, *The Dome of the Rock* (New York: Rizzoli, 1996).

5 Fu Xinian, *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi* [History of ancient Chinese architecture] (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001), 247-252.

6 I have written about themes in Koguryŏ tomb painting and their Han, most often Eastern Han, origins in "Changchuan Tomb No. 1 and Its North Asian Context," *Journal of East Asian Art and Archaeology* 4, 1-4(2002): 225-292. Here and in the rest of this article, I shall provide only a few examples of themes that are discussed at greater length there and for which additional examples can be found in that article or in references cited in the notes.

Namdo, Maesan-ri Tomb of the Four Spirits in P'yŏng'an Namdo, and Changchuan Tomb no. 1.<sup>7</sup> Among these tombs, the presentation in Twin Pillars tomb, where male and female occupants are seated together, is most common. At Anak Tomb no. 3 and the Tŏkhung-ri Tomb, the only Koguryŏ tombs with dated inscriptions, 357 and 408, respectively, and the two Koguryŏ tombs widely believed to be earliest in date, the male occupant is alone. At Susan-ri Tomb, the occupants are part of a promenade, their heads shielded by umbrellas. At Maesan-ri Tomb of the Four Spirits, the occupant sits frontally with three smaller figures. At Changchuan Tomb no. 1, the occupants appear on either side of an image of the Buddha, sharing their place as the central focus of the tomb. At the Tomb of the Wrestlers and Tomb of the Dancers, so close to each other that their occupants may be related, the occupant pair is at three-quarters pose. Only in the Yaksu-ri tomb are occupants frontal, as at Twin Pillars Tomb on the north wall of the



fig.4 Male and female tomb occupants on north wall of back chamber, Yaksu-ri Tomb.

<sup>7</sup> Illustrations of each of these except Changchuan Tomb No.1 are found in Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no hekiga kofun* [Tombs with wall paintings of the Korean peninsula] (Tokyo: Mutsukyo, 1980). For Changchuan Tomb No.1, see Steinhardt, "Changchuan Tomb No.1."

back chamber, with an additional portrayal of the male occupant alone in the front chamber on the north wall (fig. 4).

Comparison with the Yaksu-ri Tomb is instructive because the two tombs are located in the same province and both have two chambers. The occupant painting in Yaksu-ri Tomb is also on the north wall of the back chamber. Furthermore, although male and female are on opposite sides in the two tomb paintings, the dark warrior is on the female side in each tomb and based on the presence of an azure dragon on the male side, one can postulate that this second of the animals associated with the directions in the Chinese cosmological system, flanked the male on the north wall of the Twin Pillars back chamber.<sup>8</sup> As for the figures, tiny servants attend to either side of the occupants in both paintings, and the occupants are seated on a dais and backed by a curtain as well.

Yet comparison of the line quality, detail of facial features, clothing, drapery, dais, and architectural framework show those of Twin Pillars Tomb to be executed with a surer, more careful brush, more detail, more undulating folds of more layers, more complexity in design, and more structural features with more intense decoration, respectively, than their counterparts at Yaksu-ri Tomb. The curtains at the Tomb of the Wrestlers and Tomb of the Dancers have a similar number of folds and the triangular flames at both tombs are more patterned, at the Wrestlers' tomb also more numerous than their counterparts in Twin Pillars Tomb, but the tables on which food offerings are placed are supported by simply outlined legs and there is no indication of an interior frame of architecture between the figures and curtains.<sup>9</sup> Because of effacement, it is uncertain if directional animals were painted on either side of the occupants at the two tombs in Ji'an or if architecture framed the occupant scene at Tomb of the Dancers, but Twin Pillars Tomb's occupant portrayal was more complex in conception: the double architectural frame is unique. The Tombs of the Wrestlers and Dancers contain some of the most complicated and best-preserved painting programs among Koguryŏ tombs and they will be used again in comparisons with the Tomb

<sup>8</sup> The four directional animals will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this article.

<sup>9</sup> For illustrations of these well-known images, see, for example, Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no heki-ga kofun*, pl. 16 and p. 46

of Twin Pillars,<sup>10</sup> but when all aspects of the tomb are considered, Twin Pillars Tomb still emerges as unique.

The tomb whose male occupant is most strongly suggested by the depiction in Twin Pillars Tomb is Anak no. 3 in nearby Hwanghae province.<sup>11</sup> The frontal face, box-shaped hat, exposed hands, cross-ankled pose, and use of dark red to emphasize garment folds are common to both paintings. The face of the Twin Pillars occupant is more detailed however, with attention given line by line to eyebrows, facial hair, nose, and mouth that are rendered by single brush strokes at Anak Tomb no. 3. Anak Tomb no. 3 is almost certainly more than 150 years earlier than Twin Pillars Tomb, with the presence of the occupants alone, compared to as a pair in Twin Pillars Tomb, a key feature used in the dating.<sup>12</sup>

A last extraordinary feature of the north wall of the back chamber of Twin Pillars tomb will be mentioned before turning to other walls. At the top of the complete twin pillar and below its capital, a demon face presents



fig.5 Corner of ceiling of back chamber of Changchuan Tomb no. 1 showing crouching demon figure. Scale-model reconstruction of tomb, Seoul National Museum. Steinhardt photograph.

10 On the Tomb of the Dancers, see Ah-Rim Park, "Tomb of the Dancers: Koguryō Tombs in East Asian Funerary Art," Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2002.

11 Again, this is a frequently published image. See, for example, Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no heki-ga kofun*, pl. 1 and p. 38.

12 Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no heki-ga kofun*, p. 116.

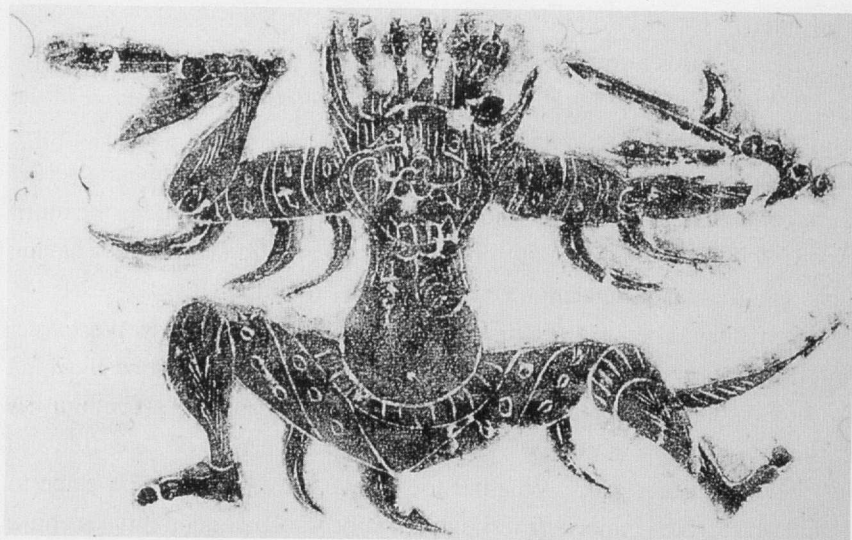


fig.6 Rubbing of demonic figure from Tomb no. 1, Yi'nan, Shandong province. After Cui Zhongqing, *Shandong Yi'nan Hanmu huaxiangshi*, p. 147.

itself. Demonic or grotesque figures appear in other tombs of the Koguryō kingdom such as Changchuan Tomb no. 1 where they mark most of the ceiling cornices (fig. 5). At Anak Tomb NO.3 the demon face is present in the same location.<sup>13</sup> Demon faces are also found in Han tombs dating as early as the Western Han tomb of Bu Qianqiu in Luoyang<sup>14</sup> and as late as the late Eastern Han tomb at Yi'nan, Shandong province (fig. 6).<sup>15</sup> The existence of the motif in the Yi'nan tomb is very important because similarities in plan and structural details of the Yi'nan tomb and others in the northern Jiangsu-southern Shandong region suggest the area to have been a source of tomb design for Anak Tomb no. 3 or for that tomb by way of tombs of the

<sup>13</sup> Based on the author's survey of available material. This author has not had the opportunity to enter every painted Koguryo tomb. Thus it is possible there are other examples of demon aware.

<sup>14</sup> For illustrations and more information on the Bu Qianqiu tomb see Huang Minglan, *Luoyang Hanmu bishu* [Han tombs with murals in Luoyang] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 61-76.

<sup>15</sup> On the Yi'nan tomb, see Cui Zongqing, *Shandong Yinan Hanmu huaxiangshi* [Pictorial relief from a Han tomb at Yinan] (Yinan: Shandongsheng Yinan Hanmu Bowuguan, 2001); Lydia Dupont Thompson, "The Yi'nan Tomb: Narrative and Ritual in Pictorial Art of the Eastern Han (25-220 C.E.," dissertation, Institute of Fine Arts, 1998; and Shih Hsio-yen, "I-nan and Related Tombs," *Artibus Asiae* 22, 4 (1959): 277-312; informal conversation with Cary Liu based on research for Wu Shrines exhibition.

Yan states.<sup>16</sup>

Demon faces also appear above pillars and below column-top decoration in Yungang caves 5 and 10, dated to the decades before the move of the capital from the Datong region (Pingcheng) to Luoyang in 493. The form has a long history, particularly in Shanxi, traceable from the Yungang period through the Qing dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Although no definitive explanation for the motif has been offered, the faces are pronounced enough to suggest that having seen one, there might well have been the desire to imitate it.

Some have tried to trace the sources of the demon motifs to West Asia, and it has been suggested, specifically, that they were transmitted to China by the Sogdians.<sup>18</sup> Such a conjecture is almost impossible to prove, but the existence of similar motifs in West Asia during the period of Tang rule and just before is noteworthy. Whether the source is West Asian and came to China as a foreign import; or if the initial appearance of demon faces above columns was in China in one of the B.C. millennia and moved Westward; or if their route in West, Central, or East Asia was circuitous; their presence at Twin Pillars Tombs is of extreme importance. Because of the proximity of Anak Tomb No. 3 to Twin Pillars Tomb, it is possible that the builders of Twin Pillars Tomb were aware of imagery in Anak Tomb No. 3. Yet even if more examples exist in Koguryō tombs, it is unlikely the feature was invented there.

The question of original creation vs. imitation is especially important in funerary art. Funerary art from Egypt, China, or any other ancient civilization has striven toward a program of forms that represent ideas to help the deceased on his posthumous journey. Through several millennia of examples, the tendency has been to place in a tomb images and objects that are believed to have successfully served one's ancestors in the afterlife, rather than to innovate in this last attempt to ensure one's future. The afterlife is not the place one attempts creativity; it is a place where one employs every

16 I explore this in "Changchuan tomb No. 1, 260-270.

17 Steinhardt, "Demons at the Gate," in Lilla Russell-Smith, ed. *From Nisa to Niya* (London: Saffron Press, 2005), 93-109.

18 Jiang Boqin, "Shanxi Jiexiu Xianshenlou gujianzhu zhuangshi de tuxiang xuekao cha" [An investigation of the iconography of architectural decoration in the Zoroastrian structure at Jiexiu, Shanxi], *Wenwu* no. 1 (1999): 56-66.

possible means of securing the best future possible. In spite of the uniquely decorated set of pillars that offer a unique presentation of occupants in a pillared framework, it is suggested here that the demonic faces are borrowed imagery. Evidence of other elements of Koguryō tomb painting and funerary art in general suggest that the painter or occupant or commissioner of this tomb was aware of an international community beyond Koguryō's borders where such a motif was used. The presence of the demonic face here, in the Anak tomb, and in the tomb at Yi'nan, are most important in aiding us in understanding a route of transmission - from eastern China to the Yan states, to Koguryō. The presence of the feature in Han and post-Han China, in secular and later Buddhist contexts, is further evidence both that the painting on the north wall of the back chamber of Twin Pillars Tomb was intended to be a showcase for the tomb and that, drawing from an international repertoire of images, Twin Pillars Tomb was intended to be extraordinary among Koguryō burials.

Some male-female pairs in funerary art from far West of the Koguryō kingdom, dated to the fifth, sixth, or seventh century, or in other words, the period when Twin Pillars tomb was built, suggest numerous similarities when placed alongside the Twin Pillars occupant painting. One example is the couple on a central panel of a funerary couch excavated from the tomb of a Sogdian in Xi'an (fig. 7). Here the comparison is one of color and fold of garments, the latter



fig.7 Central right panel of funerary couch from tomb of An Jia, d. 579, Xi'an. After *Wenwu* no. 1 (2002), p. 19.

rendered think by paint on the wall and carving on the lacquer sarcophagus; and of structural framework, in which the lintel and its similar set of inverted-V-shaped struts and alternating two-arm bracket sets is frontal, but shown to the side from three-quarters view. In terms of pose of the pair, comparisons are more numerous. They are readily found in funerary art among frontal images with thickly folding garments seated under a canopy or building frame and they dominate religious imagery of the centuries between Han and Tang.<sup>19</sup>

Were there no evidence of a Buddhist presence in Koguryŏ tomb murals, one might be inclined to seek only secular paintings for comparison with the Twin Pillars Tomb occupants. The Buddha that dominates the interior of the east wall of the front chamber of Changchuan Tomb no. 1 and the heads born from lotuses in the same tomb and on the walls of Horse Armor Tomb, both in Ji'an, are evidence of an awareness of Buddhism and its designs.<sup>20</sup> Yet the focus on frontal imagery, whether specifically inspired by religious painting or a funerary portrayal in China, is equally important as hierarchic rendering. The frontal pose is an important hierarchic setting in Han China and in Chinese Buddhist art. It is the pose used almost exclusively for the Queen Mother of the West and King Father of the East from Shandong to Sichuan to Ningxia in the Han and post-Han centuries.<sup>21</sup> Among Koguryŏ tomb painting, perhaps none presents as powerfully hierarchic an image as the above-mentioned Changchuan Tomb no. 1, whose relation to painting in other Koguryŏ tombs and Chinese tombs of the Han and third-through sixth centuries as far West as Gansu, has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> That tomb, we shall see below, is important in our investigation of the structure of Twin Pillars Tomb no. 1.

19 Paired Buddhas under an archway or canopy, particularly Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna, are examples of this presentation of images.

20 On this subject, see Youngsook Pak, "Buddhist Themes in Koguryŏ Murals," *Asiatische Studien/ Etudes Asiatiques* 44, no. 4 (1990): 177-204.

21 The intermingling of images of deities such as the Queen Mother of the West or King Father of the East and Buddhist deities and Daoist deities has been studied by Wu Hung. For discussion and illustrations, see his "Buddhist Elements in Early Chinese Art," *Artibus Asiae* 47 (1986): 263-376 and "Xiwangmu, the Queen Mother of the West," *Orientalis* 18, 4 (1987): 24-33.

22 For illustrations, see Steinhardt, "Changchuan Tomb No. 1," figs. 3 and 4 and Cho Ŭi-Hwan, *Chiban Koguryŏ kobun pyŏkhwa*, pl. 63.

Before we turn to the other paintings in Twin Pillars Tomb, let us take a moment to review the database of images used here for comparison. So far, nine tombs other than Twin Pillars Tomb have been mentioned because they both contain prominent paintings of the tomb occupant(s) and are also some of the best-known and best studied Koguryŏ tombs. Recognition among the approximately one hundred tombs with murals is due to the condition of preservation of its paintings or to the structure of the underground space. Other Koguryŏ tombs not known for ancestor paintings but equally well-studied for the same reasons include Wukui Tombs no. 4 and no. 5, Tŏkhwa-ri Tomb of the Stars, Tomb of Concentric Circles, Moduru Tomb, Three Chamber Tomb, and Tomb of the Four Spirits, all in Ji'an, and the Spirit Niche Tomb, Dae-an-ri Tomb, P'alch'ŏng-ri Tomb, Horse Armor Tomb, Chinp'a-ri Tomb no. 1, Tŏkhwa-ri Tomb no. 2, Kangsŏ Great and Middle Tombs, and Tomb of Divine Kings and Heavenly Spirits, all in South P'yŏng'an. This total of twenty-six tombs will provide the database for the rest of this study. Among the tombs mentioned here and in the previous list, only one, Changchuan Tomb no. 1, has a mural of comparably strong and unique focus to that of the Twin Pillars occupant painting.

- **Images of the Cosmos**

Representation of heavenly bodies and the universe through a group of images with well-established symbolism was a standard theme in Han funerary art. Sometimes referred to as Chinese cosmology, the sun and its associate the three-legged black raven, moon and its associates the hare and/or toad, the dipper constellations (Ursa Major and Minor), and four animals associated with colors and representing the seasons and quadrants of the universe (red bird of the south and summer, white tiger of the west and autumn, dark [black] warrior [tortoise around which a two-headed serpent

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23 For explication of these symbols and their Chinese textual sources, see John Major, "The Five Phases, Magic Squares, and Schematic Cosmography," in *Explorations in Early Chinese Cosmology*, ed. Henry Rosemont, Jr. (Chico: Scholar's Press, 1984), 133-66; John B. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); and Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991).

entwines] of the north and winter, and azure dragon of the east and spring) are present on the ceiling and walls of a majority of Han and Koguryō tombs.<sup>23</sup>

The directional animals dominate the walls of Kangsō Great and Middle Tombs, Chinp'a-ri Tomb, and Tomb of the Four Spirits, the last of which is named for them. Sometimes in Koguryō tombs the directional animals, particularly the birds, are painted in pairs. This is the case at Changchuan Tomb no. 1



fig.8 Fragment of painting on east wall of front chamber of Twin Pillars Tomb showing azure dragon. After Kasai, pl. 552.

and Kangsō Middle Tomb. At Twin Pillars Tomb the dark warriors are presented in a pair to the occupant's right, perhaps indicating that a corresponding animal or pair was symmetrically placed on the part of the wall that is now effaced. A pair of red birds is painted on the south wall of the back chamber (fig. 3). The azure dragon appears on the east wall of the front chamber and the white tiger is found opposite him, on the west wall of the front chamber (fig. 8). The distribution of directional animals in the front and back chambers is unusual, but each is placed on the wall corresponding to its correct quadrant. It has been noted above that red birds are often painted in pairs in Koguryō tombs and in some Koguryō tombs such as Changchuan no. 1 and in a fourth-century tomb excavated at Yuantaizi, near Chaoyang, Liaoning province, directional animals can be placed on walls that do not correspond to their associated directions.<sup>24</sup> So far, no pattern of altered positioning, such as a frequency of red birds on the east wall or the

<sup>24</sup> I have discussed this in "Changchuan Tomb No. 1 and Its North Asian Context," 254-258.

omission of the dark warrior or the sharing of wall space in more than one chamber to accommodate the animals, can be determined. Probably the decision of placement was due to other factors such as location or size of the occupant or other important paintings, total wall space, or perhaps personal decisions of patrons. If a general trait of representations of the four directional animals in Koguryŏ tombs can be suggested, it is that this element of standard Han funerary art was adopted but also adapted from Han China, so that the primary concern for Koguryŏ tomb builders was the presence of the animals and accurate directional placement of them was of less concern. That the animals spread over two chamber in Twin Pillars Tomb, but are in their correct locations, probably indicates another aspect of this extraordinary tomb that will be discussed below: the tomb interior was viewed as one entity, rather than as two separate rooms. Thus one animals could be placed on the correct directional walls, but of both the front and back chambers. Further, then, it is possible that the dark warriors were another set of twins in this tomb, and there might have been yet another pair to the viewer's right of the occupant painting. That twin might have been another dark warrior pair, emphatically emphasizing the northern quadrant of the tomb, or a second set of birds representing the south. As for the other heavenly bodies one anticipates in Koguryŏ funerary art, the sun and moon and their attributes and constellations, all are painted on the southeast and southwest sides, respectively, of the back chamber ceiling of Twin Pillars Tomb (fig. 3) and additional star groups, including the dipper, are found on ceiling layers of the back chamber.

- **Procession**

On the east wall of the back chamber of Twin Pillars Tomb, nine figures stand on a red-brown line facing the occupants (fig. 9). Although their legs are concealed by garments so that one cannot be sure they are moving, the appearance is that of a procession. Several wear similar garments, yet each figure is distinctive and three of them are especially noteworthy for their size or headgear. One of the extraordinary figures is the second in the procession. Identified as a monk due to his shaven head and staff that seems to have a



fig.9, 9-1 Group of figures, probably a procession, on the east wall of the back chamber of Twin Pillars Tomb, redrawn. After Kasai, pl. 5.

lotus at the top, if he is a Buddhist clergyman,<sup>25</sup> Twin Pillars Tomb joins the growing list of Koguryŏ tombs with Buddhist elements in mural painting. The Buddhist association would not be inconsistent with any proposed date for the tomb, since the official entry of Buddhism into Koguryŏ was 372, during the reign of King Sosurim. Yet neither would it inform us about the

<sup>25</sup> As mentioned already, little has been written about Twin Pillars Tomb. This figure is called a monk in Kasai's *Chosen koseki zuroku* of 1915. To my knowledge that identification has not been disputed.

date, for there is little doubt that this tomb post-dates the year 372. Rather, the presence of a holy man, Buddhist or a shaman, suggests that at least one person who could communicate with the gods on high was among those the tomb builder believed would be needed in the afterlife.

The other tall figure in the procession is female. Dressed in a splendid robe of black ornamented with red, it is possible she is the wife of the occupant, shown here paying homage to her spouse, or perhaps a secondary wife, high ranking courtier, or a female relative of the deceased. The pattern at the bottom border of her garment, the red-lined sleeves, the pleated skirt, and her pose are shared by the smaller female in front of her. The headgear of the smaller female is effaced, so one cannot be sure it was the same as the tall woman's, but logic suggested the smaller female is a child, less important relative, or female servant of higher status than other small figures on the wall.

The other six figures are probably servants. The one female, identified by her pleated skirt, wears a green-blue jacket with black trim, similar to those worn by figures eight and nine, but in her case there is a bit of red at the cuffs. Most unusual is the lamp or candlestick-like object she holds above her head, from which streamers or flames emerge at the top. The three figures between the tall female and final two green-blue garbed servants wear the spotted waist jackets and pantaloons that define this tomb as Koguryŏ. Similar figures are found in Tomb of the Dancers, Changchuan Tomb no. 1, and Three Chambers Tomb.<sup>26</sup>

### • Horses, Carts, and Another Procession

The last important murals preserved in Twin Pillars Tomb are found on the east and west walls of the admiration chamber. Again one finds figures that populate the walls of other Koguryŏ tombs such as a standing figure and equestrian wearing a two feathered cap and an armored rider with one-feathered cap wearing an armored horse (fig. 10). Comparative imagery is, of course, found in the tomb named for this last figure, the Horse Armor

<sup>26</sup> For illustrations of these servants from each of the tombs see Steinhardt, "Changchuan Tomb No. 1," figs. 10-12.

Tomb and in Tomb of the Dancers, on whose walls one finds figures with the two-feathered cap. Described in *Weishu* (Standard history of the Wei), compiled by Wei Shou (506-572) to cover the years 386-550 in China and at her borders, the cap may be the same one described for dress of shamans from the Northern Steppe (Siberia).<sup>27</sup> It has also been pointed out that gold hats with feathers have been excavated in at least one tomb of the Silla kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

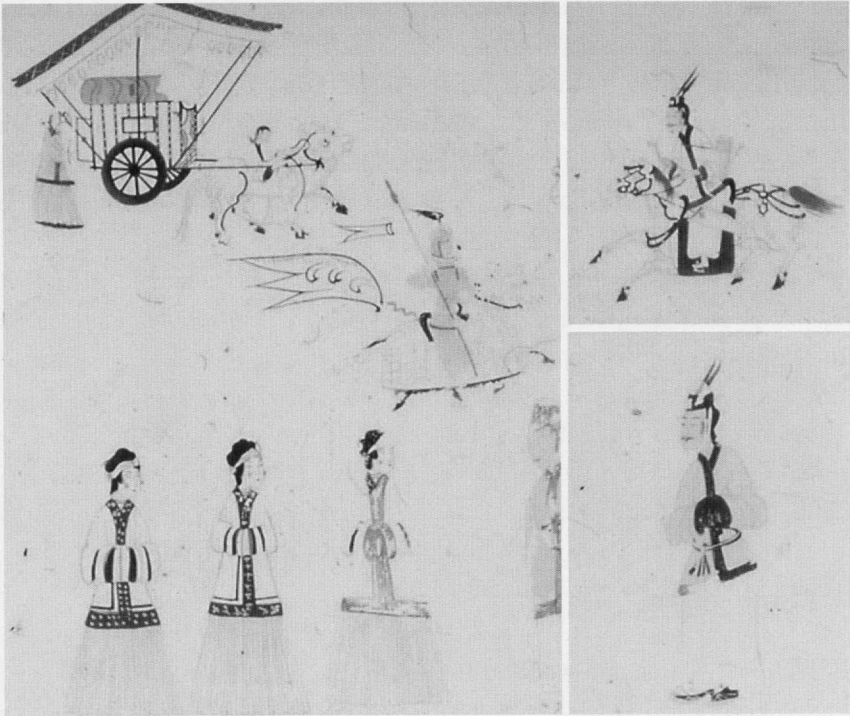


fig.10 Group of figures on the east and west walls of the admiration chamber of Twin Pillars Tomb, redrawn. After Kasai, pls. 542 and 543.

Accompanying the mounted and standing males were one additional male wearing a pinkish coat who faces three similarly-posed and similarly dressed females, and another female following a riderless, ox-drawn cart. The ox-drawn cart has a long history in Chinese funerary art, traceable from the Han dynasty. It is believed to be a conveyance used in the funeral procession, its empty appearance, even if a corpse is in it, suggestive of the

posthumous stage into which the tomb occupant has entered.<sup>29</sup> The two-directional movement in and out a tomb on the walls of the approach ramp or in the first room continues in Chinese funerary murals through the Yuan dynasty.<sup>30</sup>

Enough similarities exist among Twin Pillars Tomb and other Koguryŏ tombs to feel certain that this tomb was not painted without knowledge of what was being commissioned by other tomb builders of the kingdom. Yet in three ways, Twin Pillars Tomb distinguishes itself from almost any other Koguryŏ tomb with which it might be compared. First, it can be argued that the walls present a coherent, organized, inter-related pictorial program. Second, architecture works with painting to further enhance the integral planning of the paintings. Third, the architecture is distinct from that of any other Koguryŏ tomb known. Even if one of these features can be observed at other Koguryŏ tombs, no tomb of the kingdom possesses all three.

- **Twin Pillars Tomb : A Uniquely Elaborated and Coherent Structure**

The more familiar one is with the interior imagery of Koguryŏ tombs, the more surely he understands how unique both the structure and back wall image are. The most apparent uniqueness is, of course, is the pair of pillars. No doubt that is the reason that when discovered, the tomb was named for its architecture. The name was a contrast to those of all other tombs known at the time, rendered by site or because of an extraordinary painting. Now nearly a century later, the interior structure of Twin Pillars remains unique.

Aspects of the drama and coherence of the tomb have already been noted: the view from exterior to back chamber so clearly focused by the pillars; the inclusion of a step in the approach rather than a level floor through admiration chamber, front room, connective corridor, and back chamber; and the

27 Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no hekiga kofun*, p. 121 and Wei Shou, *Weishu* [Standard history of Wei] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), *juan* 88, 2213-2217.

28 Kim Ki-Ung, *Chosen hanto no hekiga kofun*, p. 121.

29 On this subject see Wu Hung, "Where Are They going? Where Did They Come From?—Hearse and 'Soul-carriage' in Han Dynasty Tomb Art," *Oriental Art* (June 1998): 22-31.

30 On this subject see my "Yuan Period Tombs and Their Decoration: Cases at Chifeng," *Oriental Art* 36,4 (1990/91): 198-221.

use of pairing that cannot but have been preconceived—two chambers, two door guards, two pillars, and two occupants. Other aspects of structural coherence, such as the spread of four directional animals over two chambers and the directional focus of the procession scene to the occupants, become apparent after having observed the other aspects of pairing and focus.

Other features of this extraordinary burial space might be noticed only by someone fairly familiar with Koguryō tombs. One is the presence of two lantern ceilings. Yaksu-ri Tomb and Three Chamber Tomb have a lantern ceiling over each of their rooms, but other two-chambered tombs of Koguryō including Changchuan Tomb no. 1, Moduru Tomb, and Spirit Niche Tomb, have only one ceiling that both stepped from the top of the wall to a flat ceiling and has two quadrilaterals superimposed at the center. Even among lantern ceilings, the decoration in Twin Pillars Tomb is among the more elaborated. The single lantern ceiling in Changchuan Tomb no. 1, for example, does not have a lotus at the center. Tomb of the Dancers and Tomb of the Stars have ceilings whose decoration deserves the label phenomenal, but each is an octagonal ceiling from lowest to highest level, without the structural complexity of superimposed three-dimensional quadrilaterals. Only a few tombs bear ceilings as elaborated as that of Twin Pillars. Among them are those at the Wukui site in Ji'an.<sup>51</sup>

Still, there is an important aspect of contrast between the decoration of the Wukui tombs and Twin Pillars Tomb. The Wukui tombs are intensely decorated from floor to ceiling. Twin Pillars Tomb, by contrast, had intentionally undecorated wall spaces. In the back chamber, for example, it is unlikely that the procession was alone on the east wall, but it is likely that the two red birds were painted against an unadorned surface above the pillars on the south wall. The ability to highlight elements of a composition by blank space around them is another indication of the high level of skill of the Twin Pillars tomb painters. It is equally evidence that every aspect of the tomb interior was planned from inception.

51 Koguryō tombs at the Wukui site were found by Kasai. Most recently, a mural tomb was uncovered near Wukui tomb complex in 2004. For information and illustrations of the Wukui tombs, see Cho Ŭi-hwan, *Chiban Koguryō kobun p'yōkhwa*, pls. 1-48 and Jilinsheng Bowuguan, "Jilin Ji'an Wukuifen sihao he wuhao mu qingli lueji [Discussion of Wukui Tombs 4 and 5 in Ji'an, Jilin], *Kaogu* no. 2 (1964): 59-66.

Indeed, the careful manipulation of blank space is part of the overall scheme of the tomb that separates it from other tombs with focused spaces, such as Changchuan Tomb no. 1. At Changchuan Tomb no. 1, only the east wall of the back chamber, and perhaps the placement of azure dragon and white tiger opposite each other, can be considered aspects of a pre-planned, unified interior space. The walls below the tiger and dragon are composites of individual focal elements of, one assumes, greater and lesser significance. As for the Wukui tomb walls, they include numerous identifiable elements, but no overarching unified scheme has thus far been observed in any of them.

The use of blank space to highlight the red birds on the south wall of the back chamber is repeated for the vases out of which flora emerge on the east and west walls. Indeed, like the decorative shapes of Umayyad art to which these elements have been compared, the immediate area around them is undecorated. On all walls of the back chamber, inverted-V-shaped brackets that characterize architecture of the sixth century in China are replicated in paint, but there is always some unadorned space between the architecture and decoration it highlights.

The carefully planned implementation of bold decoration is nowhere as apparent as on the pillars. The lotus petals of their plinths are echoed by wider lotus petals of the capitals. Three additional layers comprise the capitals, each octagonal, each of different perimeter dimensions, and each differently decorated. Yet those decorations repeat or recall decoration on the back chamber walls: above the simplest, lowest level of the capital is an octagonal plate whose pattern is a simpler version of the ornamental lintel painted above bracket sets and below inverted-V-shaped braces; and the topmost level has an alternating diamond and circular pattern that corresponds to the first ceiling layer decoration as well as the depiction of constellations. Most extraordinary are the columns themselves, with golden dragons on a red surface. The use of gold paint anticipates the gold paint on the north wall of the back chamber; passing through the columns to reach the back, the luxurious element is further emphasized. The coherent path through the tomb, architecturally and in paint, the careful choice of color and decisions where to use or repeat certain colors, the use of blank space,

and the use of direction in paintings as well as architecture to lead one through the tomb all indicate the input of artists as well as patrons (occupants or their family) in every aspect of Twin Pillars Tomb.

In the end, however, it may be the pillars that are most significant. We have already observed that the echoing pillars, structural and painted, are the hub of the unity of the tomb. The rare presence of two octagonal ceilings may also be part of this unified plan, although the importance of this tomb suggested by so many other factors may have been the justification for two lantern ceilings rather than one. In contrast to the spectacular pillars here, at Spirit Niche Tomb, Yaksu-ri Tomb, Tae-an-ri Tomb, Chinp'a-ri Tomb no. 1, Changchuan Tomb no. 1, and the Tomb of Divine Kings and Heavenly

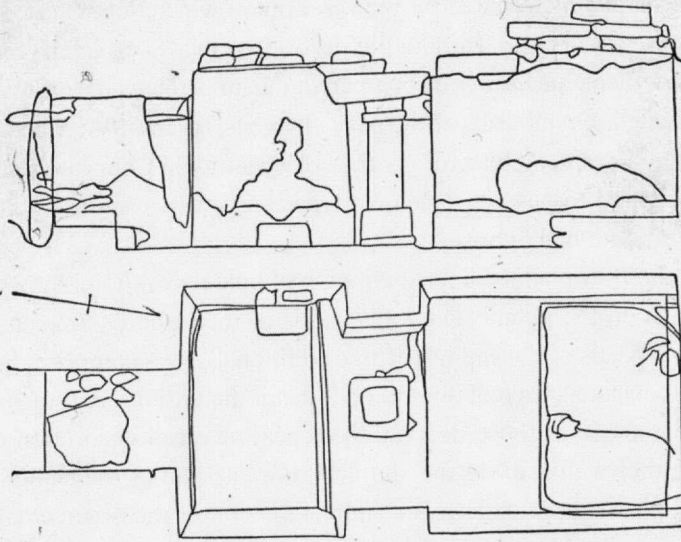


fig.11 Plan and sectional drawing of P'alch'ong-ri Tomb. After Kim Ki-Ung, p. 123.

Spirits, the connective corridor is empty and P'alch'ong-ri Tomb has only one pillar in the corridor (fig. 11).

Han architectural precedents may explain the structure of Twin Pillars Tomb. Before the end of the last century BCE, an octagonal pillar was used in subterranean tombs to divide large open interiors into front and back spaces. A famous example of this type of structure is Tomb no. 61 at Shaogou, Luoyang, dated to the period between emperors Yuandi and

Chengdi, or 48-7 BCE (fig. 12).<sup>32</sup> Single interior pillars continued to divide interior space in the Eastern Han dynasty. One example of such a tomb was excavated at Changlishuiku in Donghai county.<sup>33</sup>

By the Wang Mang interregnum (8-23 CE), both a pair and single central pillar were employed in the Luoyang region to divide a larger interior space into three sections (fig. 13).<sup>34</sup> Both a pair of pillars and the single and pair combination are present in Han tombs in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, as well.<sup>35</sup> An individual

and pair of pillars is found in Yi'nan Tomb no. 1, mentioned several times already as a ca. third century tomb whose plan suggests antecedents for the plan of Anak Tomb no. 3.<sup>36</sup> A pair of pillars also may be present in the

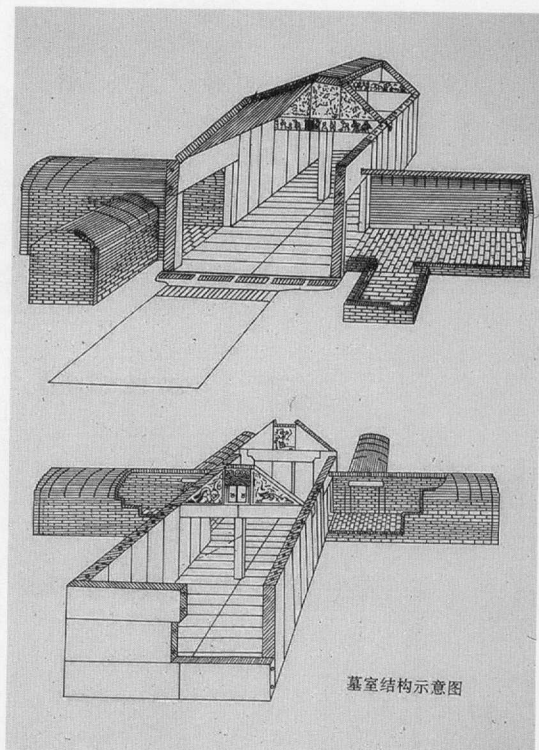


fig.12 Infrastructural drawing of Shaogou Tomb no. 61, showing central pillar dividing main interior space into two areas. After Huang and Guo, *Luoyang Hanmu bihua*, p. 89.

<sup>32</sup> For numerous illustrations and succinct discussion of this tomb, see Huang Minglan and Guo Yingqiang, *Luoyang Hanmu bihua* [Han tombs with murals in Luoyang] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 87-120.

<sup>33</sup> For an illustration and discussion of the tomb, see Huang Shaofen, *Hanmu de kaoguxue yanjiu* [Research on the archaeology of Han tombs] (Changsha: Yueli shushe chubanshe, 2003), p.143, fig.5.

<sup>34</sup> For discussion of the Xin Mang tomb, see Huang Minglan, *Luoyang Hanmu bihua*, 121-140.

<sup>35</sup> For an illustration of the Xuzhou tomb at Jingshanquanbaiji with single and a pair of pillars, see Huang Shaofen, *Hanmu de kaoguxue yanjiu*, p. 143, fig. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Illustrations of the interior of Yinan Tomb No.1 are found in the three works cited in note 14. Plans and interior section drawings of Anak Tomb No. 3 are found in most of the works cited in note 1.

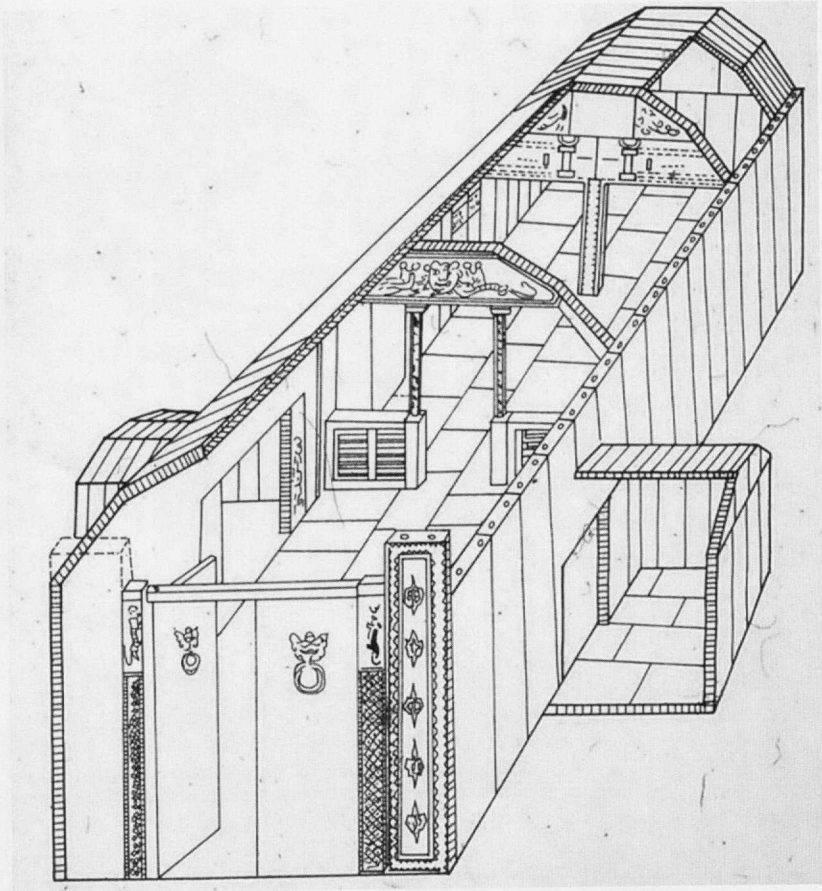


fig.13 Infrastructural drawing of tomb at Xin village, Yanshi, Henan, showing pair of pillars and central pillar dividing main interior space into two areas. After Huang and Guo 1996, p. 123.

Northern Yan tomb at Yuantaizi, also mentioned above. At the Yuantaizi tomb, two pairs of exterior extensions, presenting themselves as pillars, are positioned on the stone tomb. Offering no additional interior space, they were probably support mechanisms, as they are at Twin Pillars Tomb.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For discussion of the Yuantaizi tomb and illustrations, see Li Qingfa, "Chaoyang Yuantaizi Dong Jin bihuamu" [A tomb with murals from the Eastern Jin period in Yuantaizi, Chaoyang], *Wenwu* no. 6 (1984): 29045; Liu Zhongcheng, "Guanyu Chaoyang Yuantaizi Jinmu bihua de chubu yanjiu" [Preliminary research on the tomb with murals from the Jin period at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang], *Liaohai wenwu xuekan* no.1 (1987): 95-101; and Pu Shi, "Liaoning Chaoyang Yuantaizi Bei Yan mu" [The Northern Yan tomb at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang, Liaoning], *Wenwu* no.11 (1994): 43-47.

If pottery models of architecture, relief sculpture, and painting are based on actual structures, then twin pillars, octagonal and other shapes, were used at entry façade of residential and religious architecture above-ground in China in the fifth and sixth centuries. A pottery building with such a façade was excavated in a Sui tomb in Henan province (fig. 14). Most common is the use of twin pillars in Buddhist facades. Numerous pairs of painted and sculpted pillars are found on various walls of Cave 5, the west wall of Cave 11, and the western walls of both chambers of Cave 12, among other locations, at Yungang, all dated to the second half of the fifth century, or before the move of the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 493.



fig. 14 Pottery structure excavated from Sui (581-618) tomb in Henan. After *Ancient Chinese Architecture* (Joint Publishers: Hong Kong and Beijing, 1983), p. 57.

Literally countless examples of four-sided, circular, and octagonal pairs of pillars frame Buddhist facades.<sup>38</sup> In Buddhist art, the pillars most often frame one or more deities. Non-Buddhist deities such as the Queen Mother of the West are presented the same way in Han China and the following centuries. The Queen Mother of the West and another frontal deity beneath a heavenly gate (*tianmen*) were carved into a gilt bronze sarcophagus excavated in Chongqing, Sichuan, in the Han dynasty (fig. 15). The pair of pillars known as *que* that frame the heavenly gate have a long history in non-Buddhist China: pairs of *que* and pairs of pillars are known from texts

<sup>38</sup> Illustrations are found in any volume of any cave of the *Zhongguo shiku* [Chinese rock-caved caves] series.



fig.15 Line drawing of engraving into gilt-bronze sarcophagus excavated at Han tomb in Wushan county, Sichuan. After Huang 2003, p. 240.

to have designated the entrance to city gates before the Han dynasty and pairs are extant at the approaches to funerary precincts in Han and post-Han China (fig. 16).<sup>39</sup>

The funerary context of the twin pillars in the tomb that bears their name suggests a pair of que or pillars along the aboveground approach to a tomb as an obvious possible source. It is even possible that que or other pairs of components of a spirit path (*shendao*), a ubiquitous marker of the approach to tombs of Chinese royalty, stood at Twin Pillars Tomb when it

<sup>39</sup> On *que* see Chen Mingda, "Handai de que" [Stone gate-towers of the Han dynasty], *Wenwu* no 12 (1961): 9-23; reprinted and edited in *Chen Mingda gu jianzhu yu diaosu shilun* [Essays on ancient architecture and sculpture by Chen Mingda] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), 142-155. For more on *que* and illustrations of funerary *que*, see also, *Sichuan Handai shique* [Stone que of the Han period in Sichuan] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992) and Victor Segalen, *The Great Statuary of China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), based on research conducted by Segalen (1878-1919) in China in the early twentieth century).

was constructed. Yet the intermingling of Buddhist and secular motifs of Han China, including the Queen Mother of the West and the Buddha, or Queen Mother, King Father and a pair of Buddhist deities, or a pair of occupants was so prevalent that the

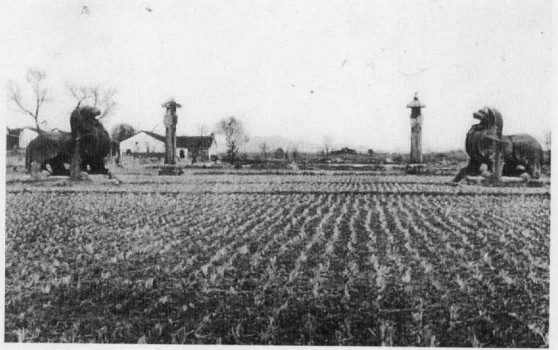


fig.16 Pairs of pillars and monumental animal sculpture at the approach to the tomb of Xiao Ji of the Liang dynasty (502-556). Shishi Village, Nanjing county, Jiangsu, 529

source of the twin pillars in the connective corridor of the tomb was not necessarily secular.<sup>40</sup> The possible presence of a Buddhist monk on a wall combined with potential Buddhist sources for the occupant pair and pillars rather suggest that like other famous examples of funerary art produced by non-Chinese patrons at China's borders, including the lacquer sarcophaguses in Xianbei tombs in Guyuan,<sup>41</sup> the funerary couch of the Sogdian An Jia excavated in Xi'an, and Koguryō murals such as those in Changchuan Tomb no. 1, the cosmopolitan occupant of this extraordinary tomb was aware of art traditions of peoples in every part of continental Asia at this time.

Although the view through twin octagonal pillars to tomb occupants on the back wall of the back chamber is unique in subterranean funerary art, the shared features with Korea's greatest stone monument cannot be ignored. Korea's unique rock-carved Buddhist cave-chapel offers a strikingly similar view of a focal image through a pair of octagonal pillars (fig. 17). Dated to the mid-eighth century, after Silla had united the Korean kingdoms, it cannot be said that twin pillars had become part of Korean imagery,

<sup>40</sup> I discuss possible intermingling of Buddhist and secular Chinese imagery in Changchuan No.1 and related tombs in my "Changchuan Tomb No. 1," esp. 258-260. The subject of paired images in funerary and Buddhist contexts is discussed at length in Eugene Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), esp. ch. 1.

<sup>41</sup> For discussion and illustrations of the sarcophagus, see Ningxia Huizu Zizhiqu Guyuan Bowuguan, *Guyuan Bei Wei mu qiguanhua* [A lacquer painted sarcophagus from the Northern Wei tomb in Guyuan] (Yinchuan: Ningxia Renmin chubanshe, 1988).



fig.17 Sokkuram showing Buddha behind twin octagonal pillars. After Hwang Su-Yong, *Sokkuram* (Seoul :Youl Hwa Dang, 1989), p. 82.

but it may be valid to suggest that this presentation was reserved for early Korea's greatest monuments.

Without an inscription or date, it may never be possible to know the occupants of Twin Pillars Tomb. Other aspects of this tomb, however, seem certain. The tomb was planned as a unified progression of architecture and painting from the admiration chamber whose walls bore the funerary cart and riders, through a pair of doors guarded by a pair of men, between two octagonal pillars, to a burial chamber where figures including a monk moved toward the occupants. Those occupants were the culmination of the interior space, framed by two architectural facades, one three-dimensional and the other painted; and by animals symbolizing the movement of the seasons and the heavenly bodies according to a classical Chinese understanding of the universe. The exceptional coherence of architecture and painting, the apparent understanding of Chinese symbols from que to the directional animals, a similar apparent awareness of elements of Buddhist architecture and painting, the frequent use of gold and bright red paint, and the contrast of all the above to nearly one hundred other Koguryŏ tombs, seem to make a strong

case for an assumption that the tomb occupants were royalty who presided in life, much as they do in their tomb chamber, sometime during the century-and-a-half preceding unification by Silla in 668.