



Tomb Murals of Korea

Mural Tombs of the Three Kingdoms Period and the Northern and Southern States Period

Koguryo

Tomb mural production flourished in Koguryo¹ during the Three Kingdoms Period. However, not as many were produced in Baekje, Silla, and Gaya. This may have been due to the differences in each kingdom's tradition and their attitude toward new cultural elements.

While tomb murals are painted with life that awaits the deceased in mind, the images are based on real experiences and memorable moments from life. Therefore, tomb murals allow us to view both the world that the deceased lived in and the afterlife that they had hoped for. Though the paintings are drawn from the details of the lived world, the images are not true replications. They exaggerate or include wishful thoughts. Thus, tomb murals must be studied and analyzed from various angles.

Koguryo tomb murals with rich and varied pictures are valuable source help us recreate real and imagined world of an ancient society. Koguryo fell when it lost the war against Silla-Chinese Tang allies. Anything above ground was lost to fire while the people scattered to various neighboring kingdoms. Therefore, tomb murals are invaluable when reconstructing history and culture of Koguryo.

A total of 127 Koguryo mural tombs—89 in North Korea and 38 in China—have been found as of the year 2020 (Korea Ancient-Medieval History Institute of Northeast Asian History Foundation 2021, 288-89). Because tomb murals require surfaces wide enough to be painted on, they were usually

1. For non-English words, the new (revised) Romanization convention established by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism is basically used in the journal. However, for the place names or heritages in North Korea in this manuscript, the Romanization convention of North Korea is exceptionally adopted since it has been already worldwide known and used.

painted on walls and ceilings of stone chamber tombs. For such reasons, they are mostly found in Pyongyang and Anak regions where most stone chamber tombs are concentrated rather than Guknaeseong area—Koguryo's capital until 427 A.C.E. and modern day Jian of Jilin Province, China—where stone pile tombs were more popular. In 427 A.C.E., during the early reign of King Jangsu, Koguryo moved its capital from Guknaeseong located in the banks of Amrok River, the northern city, to Pyongyang located by the Daedong River, the southern city.

The early tomb murals of Koguryo, produced from the early 3rd century to the early 5th century, are found by Anak near Chaeryong River and Nampo near banks of Daedong River. The theme of the mural is scenes of daily life (Jeon 2012b, 64-67). The structure of the tombs varies, ranging from ones with a hallway or multiple chambers. Most murals were painted on top of a layer of lime over the walls.

Anak Tomb No. 3, well known for the inked epitaph from 357 A.C.E., embodies many characteristics of the early tomb murals. Similar in structure to mural tombs of Hebei Province in the Late Han Period and Liaoyang area at Liaoning Province in the Wei-Jin Period, what catches our eyes in this tomb is the Great Procession scene painted on the walls of the hallway that measure about 10 m.

The Great Procession of Anak Tomb No. 3, with 250 people including the deceased, is of a scale unseen even in Chinese tomb murals. With only those in the front and middle rows painted in detail, the total number of people in the Great Procession is estimated to be at least 500 (Hwang 1958). With a



Figure 1. Mural from the Hallway of Anak Tomb No. 3: A Section from the Middle Row of the Great Procession.

procession of such scale depicted, many were curious as to who the deceased may be (Figure 1). However, the arguments regarding Dongsu 修壽, the deceased named in the epitaph, still have not reached consensus today when 70 years have passed (Jeon 2004b). Is he a king of Koguryo? Is he an exile of



Figure 2. Mural from the Side Chamber, West of Front Chamber, Anak Tomb No. 3: Details of the Portrait of the Deceased



Figure 3. Mural from the Side Chamber, West of Front Chamber, Anak Tomb No. 3: The Deceased and the Servants

Former Yan 前燕?

The portrait of the deceased from the side chamber west of the front chamber of Anak Tomb No. 3 exemplifies how people of high social status were painted in Koguryo and other East Asian kingdoms in mid-4th century. The deceased sits facing the front. His eyes and eyebrows are far apart. Around his smiling lips are distinct mustaches and beard (Figure 2). Also found in older tomb murals from the Chinese Han Dynasty, such style of portraits depicts charismatic but kind face. In order to both achieve the deceased's likeness and show his good nature, the painter made many corrections between the eyes and the brows.

The mural was painted on top of a thin layer of seashell powder, which was also used for the many corrections afterward. However, with time, the older brush strokes began to show through, providing a hint as to how many times the painter made corrections. Such example of painters making corrections or even covering the whole mural in lime and starting over can be found in other tomb murals. In Jangcheon Tomb No. 1, a Middle Period mural tomb, the painter made many corrections to one of the cosmic wrestler's face while in Hwanmunchong, the artists completely painted over the daily life scenery in favor of Buddhist decorative symbols.

Because of the hierarchy in size that was common in paintings of the period, the servants attending to the deceased from both sides in Anak Tomb No. 3 are shown significantly smaller (Figure 3). While such method of differentiating figures' sizes according to their social status was common in early tomb murals including ones of Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb, it is seldom found in Middle Period murals. This is because as Buddhism spread throughout Koguryo, the idea that all humans were equal at heart had gained popularity.

Anak Tomb No. 3 displays very sophisticated linework, colors, and expressive techniques. This reflects that the early tomb murals were accepted in Koguryo as a foreign practice. However, aside from the deceased and his wife, the other figures show little individualized features. It is likely that the painter could not take liberty due to the tradition of the time that did not allow for certain groups of people to show individuality (Jeon 2004a, 125).

Unlike Anak Tomb No. 3, which consists of a front chamber, two side chambers, a coffin room, and a hallway, Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb with an ink inscription dating to 408 A.C.E. is much simpler in structure. It is a double-chamber tomb with a front chamber and a coffin room. Such difference

shows how the structure of a tomb simplified over a 50-year period. This is also part of how mural tombs became more "Koguryo" in style. Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb, belonging to someone named "Jin" 鎭, who worked under King Gwanggaeto during the golden age of Koguryo, shows in detail how tomb murals became localized in Koguryo.



Figure 4. Murals on the East Wall of Front Chamber of Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb: Procession

The Procession painted on the southern wall of the front chamber of Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb is significantly smaller in size compared to the Great Procession in Anak Tomb No. 3, with fewer people and simpler composition (Figure 4). What catches our eyes is that unlike the mural in Anak Tomb No. 3, the figures in this Procession are not overlapping. Though the painter has depicted each figure on its own, the technique is not as impressive and the brush strokes are stiff. The faces of the figures are rather flat. Such is the result of the inevitable devolution of expressive techniques that followed Koguryo-ization of murals.

Jin, the owner of the Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb, announced through the ink epitaph that he was a disciple of Siddhartha Buddha. He has also included

a scene depicting Offering of Seven Treasures 七寶供養 and devoted half of the wall to a painting of a large pond, showing how he had actively supported the national policy that promoted Buddhism during the reign of King Gwanggaeto.

However, the end part of the ink epitaph mentions how Confucius and Zhu Gong 周公 had contributed to choosing the date of the funeral and the location of the tomb. The numerous constellations painted on the ceiling corner of the front chamber and the Immortal Men and Women flying by suggests that the Buddhist Paradise the deceased imagined was not exactly the heavens or the Pure Land (Nirvana 淨土) (Jeon 2016, 106-09). The afterlife as Koguryo people or the Chinese exiles knew until the early 5th century was the world of Immortals or a replication of the material society.

The murals on the ceiling corner of the front chamber in Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb are remarkable in that it shows how East Asians of the early 5th century imagined the heavens. In particular, the scene with Cowherd and



Figure 5. Mural on the South Corner of the Front Chamber Ceiling, Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb: Cowherd, Weaving Girl, and Milky Way

Weaving Girl with Milky Way between them painted on the wide surface of the southern surface of the ceiling corner provides a valuable hint that the lore of Cowherd 牽牛 and Weaving Girl 織女 was well known among the contemporary Koguryo people (Figure 5). We may also read the painting of Weaving Girl from Dae-an-ri Tomb No. 1 in relation to the story of the couple (Jeon 2000b).

Early tomb murals are rare in Jian Guknaeseong area. Gakjeochong mural is one of those few early tomb murals that show elements of Guknaeseong culture that is distinct from that of Pyongyang. The most eye-catching motif from Gakjeochong murals is the large tree. The tree appears on the narrow sidewalls of the front chamber as well as next to the wrestlers on the coffin room wall, functioning both as a background element and a marker that divides different mural elements. The bear and the tiger that sit by the foot of the large tree next to the wrestling scene that gave the tomb its name suggest that ancient Koreans knew well of Gojoseon's 古朝鮮 Dangun 檀君 myth that tells of two beasts who prayed to the heavens in order to become humans (Jeon 2000a, 47).

One of the wrestlers from the wrestling scene in Gakjeochong is a Central Asian man with a hooked nose and large eyes. This is because the contemporary East Asians associated Central Asians with great physical power. If a challenger



Figure 6. Murals from the Coffin Room, Gakjeochong: Wrestling (Ssireum)

triumphed against such champion, he would be hailed as a man of great power (Ahn 2013, 164-66). One of the figures in a martial art scene from Muyongchong, a Middle Period mural tomb, is also a Central Asian. Such Central Asian figures also appear in martial art scenes in decorative paintings of the Chinese Han Dynasty. The wrestling scene in Gakjeochong shows that Korean traditional wrestling dates back to the ancient days. The martial arts scene of Muyongchong similarly shows the ancient origin of *taekwondo*.

On the ceiling corners of Gakjeochong, among the vine motifs are the sun and the moon, Scorpio 心房六星 to the east, Orion 參伐六星 to the west, Big Dipper to the north, and Sagittarius to the south. These suggest that by the early 5th century, Koguryo had a well-established system of directional constellations (Kim 2008, 116-18). The Three-legged Crow with a long crest stands in the circle that represents the sun while a toad sits in the middle of the circle that represents the moon. Such layout of constellations appears in most ceiling murals of tombs dating after Gakjeochong, including Muyongchong.

The Middle Period tomb murals, dating from the mid-5th century to late 5th century, embody diverse and rich culture of the golden age Koguryo. Most tombs are single-chamber or double-chamber in structure with murals painted on top of a layer of lime on walls or ceilings. Painting directly onto the stone wall was very rare. The themes vary greatly, with much regional variation. In addition to scenes of everyday life, decorative patterns and the Four Deities emerge, with many tombs having two or more central themes (Jeon 2012b, 72-73).



Figure 7. Mural from the Coffin Room, Anak Tomb No. 2: Flying Deva



Figure 8. Mural from the Coffin Room, Susan-ri Mural Tomb: Noble Lady

The murals from Anak Tomb No. 2, a Middle Period mural tomb from Anak region, shows how the view on afterlife changed as Buddhism spread throughout Koguryo. Walking past the gatekeepers armed with swords and spears into the coffin room, we see a group of flying devas and people dressed like Buddhist monks facing the deceased couple. The ceiling is full of lotus blossoms with some in full bloom decorating the lid stone. While the deceased couple is not painted like Buddha, the elements of the mural suggest that they

dreamed of an afterlife in the Pure Land where they will be reborn in a lotus blossom.

Susan-ri Mural Tomb of Nampo, a region near Pyongyang, also belongs to the Middle Period. Its murals also include elements reminiscent of Buddhism, but not to an extent of Anak Tomb No. 2. The coffin room walls are adorned with scenes of daily life like the choir band or the deceased couple watching acrobatics.

The noble lady from the procession scene in Susan-ri Mural Tomb presents typical makeup style and dress of a Koguryo nobility (Figure 8). Her *jeogori* and striped skirt are often compared to those worn by a lady in Japanese Takamatsu tomb mural (Ahn 2013, 180-82). Considering that the two Japanese mural tombs may be related to Koguryo exiles who fled to Japan after the fall of Koguryo, it may be natural that the lady of Takamatsu tomb mural is dressed in a Koguryo-influenced style (Jeon 2011).

The acrobats performing for the deceased couple in Susan-ri Mural Tomb are much smaller in size. This is because of the visual hierarchy was still being applied to some Middle Period tomb murals. The acrobatic performance that

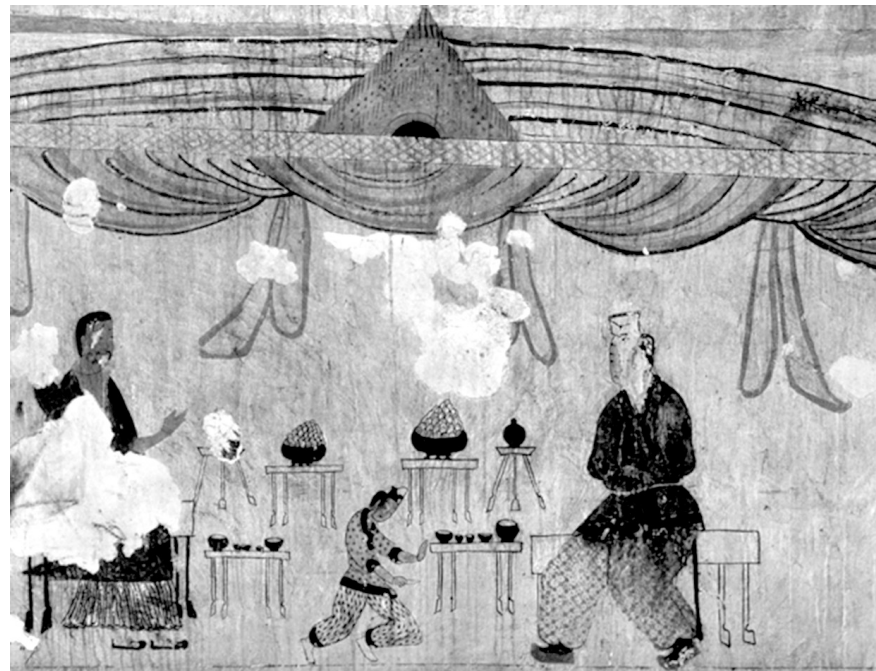


Figure 9. Mural from the Coffin Room, Muyongchong:
The Deceased Listening to the Monk's Sermon

includes walking on wooden beams, spinning wheels on air, and juggling various balls and knives was common in the street corners of 5th century Pyongyang or the courtyards of noble's mansions. Such scenes depicting acrobatic performances can also be found in Palcheong-ri Mural Tomb or Jangcheon Tomb No. 1.

The murals of Muyongchong, located in Guknaeseong in Jian, show that the region was the early center for Buddhism after Koguryo endorsed the religion officially. Sitting in front of table full of food and listening to the Buddhist monks' sermon, the deceased seems rather shocked by the fact that he may not be enjoying his current social status and life according to Buddhism (Figure 9). Muyongchong's coffin room ceiling is adorned with lotus buds rising and blooming, with celestial beings seemingly born from the blossoms floating around.

However, like Jin, the owner of Nampo's Deokheung-ri Mural Tomb, Muyongchong's owner seems to have been less than well-informed about the



Figure 10. Mural from the Coffin Room, Muyongchong: The Hunting

Buddhist paradise he will reach through Samsara. The dancing scene painted in the coffin room depicts people bidding farewell for the deceased as he departs on a long journey toward the afterlife. On horseback and accompanied by the soul-guiding dog, the deceased is ready to leave his servants and family as they bid farewell through dancing and singing (Jeon 2020a).

The hunt that is presented as a moment from the deceased's life and a scene of his afterlife also shows that he only had a vague idea of a Buddhist afterlife (Figure 10). Hunting was an activity that also showed the participant's pride as a noble. In the Hunt scene, the deceased wears a *jeolpung* 折風 with many feathers as he hunts a pair of deer to be used in a sacrifice. He executes a Parthian shot, the most difficult archery technique on horseback. The mountains are painted in flowing strokes, as if to show that this is a high-speed chase on horseback. The other hunters accompanying the deceased wear *jeolpung* with two feathers or black headcloth. Their outfits show that they are lower in social status than the deceased.

Jangcheon Tomb No. 1, which dates after Muyongchong, sets itself apart in that its murals are reminiscent of a scene from a Buddhist temple. The ceiling of the front chamber is adorned with paintings showing the deceased couple making an offering to Buddha, bodhisattva standing in worship, flying deva that showers lotus petals in adoration, and musician devas with their instruments. Between the bodhisattvas is a lotus blossom from which emerges a young child couple—being reborn. According to Buddhist teachings, when a person is freed from Samsara and sent to the Pure Land, they will be reborn in a lotus blossom.



Figure 11. Cross Section of Hwanren Michanggujjanggun Tomb

The lotus blossoms filling the walls and ceiling of Jangcheon Tomb No. 1's coffin room show that the deceased couple wished dearly to be reborn in Pure Land through a lotus blossom (Jeon 2016, 301). Such mural tombs where walls and ceilings are only decorated with lotus blossom are found mostly in mid-5th century Guknaeseong, or Jolbon—modern day Hwanren of Liaoning Province, China—which had been the first capital of Koguryo. They show that Buddhism which had become a mainstream religion in the 5th century East Asia now had enough influence in Koguryo to affect how the artists presented afterlife.



Figure 12. Mural from Chamber No. 2, Samsilchong: Cosmic Giant

Buddhism having traveled eastward, passing through northern China and the steppes north of Gobi Desert, allowed Koguryo people to see West Asian and Indian worldview, culture, and art. The cosmic giant from Jangcheon Tomb No. 1 and Samsilchong is one of the examples of such foreign artistic and conceptual elements that reached Koguryo through the Silk Road. These figures, painted with snakes or lotus blossom motifs, have large eyes, prominent

nose, and side burns, which suggests that they are Central Asians.

Even the faces of Buddha, bodhisattva, and devas from Jangcheon Tomb No. 1 resemble Central Asians. The practice of depicting Buddha and his followers with Central Asian features would have reached Koguryo not via the northern Chinese road through the oasis but through the northern Asian steppes (Jeon 2012a). This shows that Koguryo not only interacted with the Northern and Southern Dynasties of China but also with Central and West Asians through Yenyen 柔然, which dominated the steppes (Park 2015).

In Ssangyeongchong, a late 5th century mural tomb, we see a fusion of Guknaeseong and Pyongyang style, two very distinct regional trends. On the full-bloom lotus blossoms adorning the lid stones of the front chamber and the coffin room of Ssangyeongchong, we see two types of petals, one narrow Guknaeseong style and the other round with pointed tip. It suggests that the northern and southern Koguryo styles of painting were being merged around Pyongyang.

The deceased couple on the northern wall of the coffin room shows that Ssangyeongchong follows a typical layout of Middle Period tomb murals. On the other hand, the Four Deities 四神 in the front chamber and the coffin room with the large, prominent Blue Dragon and the White Tiger suggest the future popularity of the Four Deities.

From the early 6th century to the early 7th century, the theme of the Late Period Koguryo tomb murals is the Four Deities. The Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, the Red Phoenix, and the Tortoise and Serpent that originate from seven constellations in each direction—north, south, east, and west—that is part of 28 constellations' Reincarnations take stage in coffin rooms as the main subject of these Later Period Koguryo tomb murals. The Four Deities, the cosmic directional divine beasts, only emerge as the central subject of tomb murals in Koguryo. All Late Period mural tombs are a type of single chamber in structure. Murals are typically painted right on top of the rock wall surface, and it is rare to find an instance where the painter painted on top of a layer of lime.

In the early works of the Late Period Koguryo tomb murals, the Four Deities are painted with quick swirls of energy to the background, a style that was popular in the Chinese Northern and Southern Dynasties (Lee 2006). Jinpa-ri Tomb No. 1, Jinpa-ri Tomb No. 4, and Tonggusasinchong murals are good examples. On the walls of the coffin rooms are the Blue Dragon and the White Tiger floating across the sky along a swirl of *qi* and the Tortoise and



Figure 13. Mural from the Coffin Room, Tonggusasinchong: Tortoise and Serpent

Serpent standing between the trees that sway with the energy flow (Figure 13). The flow of *qi* 氣 is connected to an idea that *qi* is the source of life. If reincarnation in lotus blossoms is a Buddhist concept, reincarnation in *qi* is a Daoist one (Yoshimura 1999).

What catches our eyes in Late Period Koguryo tomb murals regarding astronomy is the 28 constellations' Reincarnations painted on the lid stone of the coffin room ceiling in Jinpa-ri Tomb No. 4. Stars were painted in different sizes according to their brightness. The remnants of gold powder upon excavation hints to the splendor of the painting upon its completion. The star map found in Kitora Ancient Tomb of Nara, Japan, was based on the one from the coffin room of Jinpa-ri Tomb No. 4. Research suggests that the 28 Constellations painted in this tomb with Koguryo style Four Deities align with observations from Pyongyang area located approximately 39°N (Kim 2003).

Ohoebun Tomb No. 4 and Ohoebun Tomb No. 5, two Late Period mural tombs from Guknaeseong are of Jian catch our eyes with colorful splendor unseen in other sites. In the two mural tombs, the walls of the coffin rooms

were decorated with continuous tortoise shell pattern with flames blazing within honeysuckle-lotus blossoms or figures being reincarnated through lotus blossoms in each panel. Along with the five-colored Four Deities, the patterns create a unique, surreal world.



Figure 14. Murals on Coffin Room Ceiling Corner, Ohoebun Tomb No. 4: Sun God and Moon Goddess

The decorative hexagonal tortoise shell pattern was used multiple times in Koguryo tomb murals of the 5th century. However, inserting fire, honeysuckle-lotus, or Immortals in addition to text or lotus blossom as we see in Ohoebun Tomb No. 4 and Tomb No. 5 is one of the new trends of the 6th century East Asian paintings (Kim 2009). Such continuous tortoise shell pattern, also found in cave temples or decorative patterns in funerary art of Northern Wei also appears adorning the queen's headrest from the Tomb of King Muryeong of Baekje or decorative copper shoes from Sikrichong of Silla (Jeon 2019a).

Also on the ceiling corner of Ohoebun Tomb No. 4 and Tomb No. 5 are various gods such as the Sun God and the Moon Goddess, blacksmith god, and the gods of wheel and whetstone, showing Late Period Koguryo's myths. Considering that almost no written records survive from Koguryo, such motifs serve a valuable insight into the kingdom's cultural and religious history. The Immortal flying with a bowl of elixir likewise provides an example of the

Immortals that became popular again in the Late Period Koguryo.

The Sun God and the Moon Goddess on the ceiling corner of Ohoebun Tomb No. 4 and Tomb No. 5 have upper bodies of humans and lower bodies of dragons. An old example of such god can be found in the depictions of Fuxi 伏羲 and Nuwa 女媧 in Chinese Han Dynasty as carved stones (Jeon 2007). From Han to Tang Dynasties, Fuxi and Nuwa, who were thought to be the creator gods of the world were also often presented as deities of the sun and the moon. However, the Chinese versions of the gods are not comparable to more dynamic and colorful ones of Koguryo. The Sun God and the Moon Goddess that appear in Late Period Koguryo tomb murals are likely to have been influenced by the older tradition of worshipping Jumong 朱蒙, the kingdom's founder and his mother Yuhwa 柳花 as the gods themselves.

The opus magnum of Late Period Koguryo tomb murals is Gangseodaemyo of Nampo. The murals of Gangseodaemyo show that people worshipped the Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, the Red Phoenix, and the Tortoise and Serpent not as imaginary but real beings. The Four Deities of Gangseodaemyo are



Figure 15. Murals of West Wall of the Coffin Room, Gangseodaemyo: The White Tiger

the central figures in the endless cosmos. The lack of any background motifs emphasizes the boundless nature of the pictorial space.

The Blue Dragon on the east wall of the coffin room descends from the heavens with its left front leg stretched out southward. Auspicious energy blazes like flames from its shoulders while similar balls of *qi* float backward behind the four legs. Its neck curves like a letter “S” while the tail stretches backward in waves. Two large eyes, stretched-out tongue, and two horns jutting out between the ears create a typical image of the Blue Dragon.

What catches our eyes in the White Tiger that stands on the west wall of Gangseodaemyo’s coffin room is its head (Figure 15). The exaggerated eyes, large, prominent brows reminiscent of a bird’s crest, and the big teeth and the red lips bared in a roar differ from those of an actual tiger or a jaguar. Gangseodaemyo’s White Tiger is a meaningful example of how Koguryo people’s devotion toward a cosmic divine beast recreated the White Tiger that is distinct from an actual animal.

On both sides of the coffin room entrance on the southern wall stand

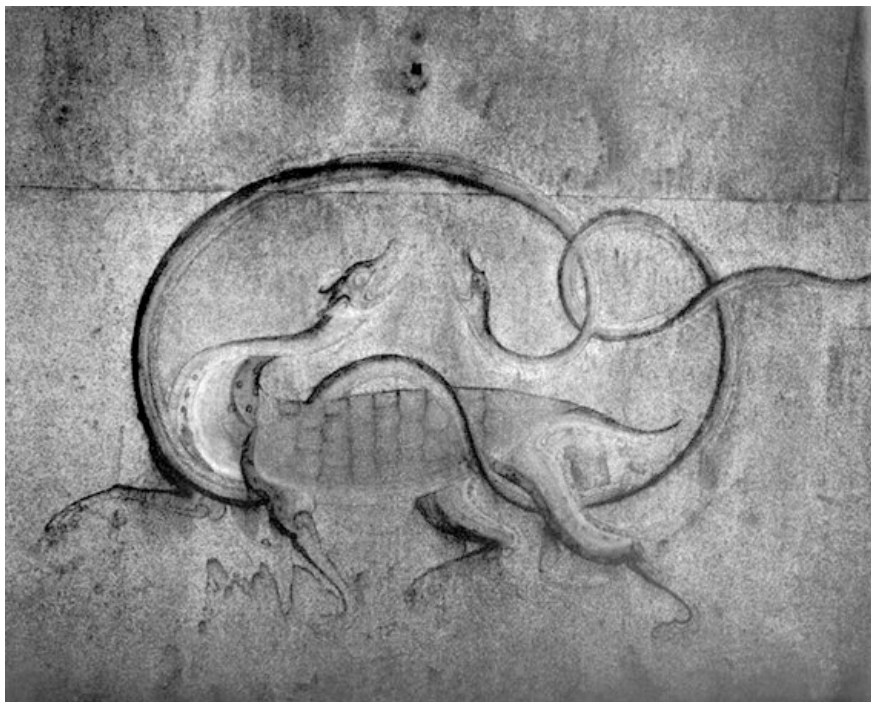


Figure 16. Murals of North Wall of the Coffin Room, Gangseodaemyo:
The Tortoise and Serpent

a male and a female Red Phoenixes stretching out their wings in a circular motion, staring toward the entryway. The glaring eyes, a long crest that juts backward, curved neck, forked tail feather that swirls upward, and the raised leg as well as the huge surrounding mountains show the charisma of the guardian beast of the south.

On the Tortoise and Serpent standing on the north wall of Gangseodaemyo’s coffin room, the serpent circles around the tortoise once before twisting around its own tail and turning its head up (Figure 16). The tortoise likewise twists its neck to look up. From the two beast’s open mouth flows *qi*, twisting and touching in the middle. The painter shows this circulation of *qi* to present how the Tortoise and Serpent restores the cosmic order. Such sophisticated and creative expression is unseen in other East Asian tomb murals.

The coexisting flying devas and Immortals on the ceiling corner of the coffin room of Gangseodaemyo suggest that by the Late Period Koguryo, Buddhism and Daoism had fused somewhat (Jeon 2021). The flying devas on the second tier of the ceiling corner are definitely Buddhist figures in that they scatter lotus petals and play instruments while the Immortals are undeniably Daoist in origin as they ride auspicious birds toward undying mountains. The mythical birds, beasts, and what appears to be *reishi* 靈芝 mushrooms on the third tier of the ceiling corner also are typical elements of Immortal worship. What we see in Gangseodaemyo murals can also be understood as a fusion of Buddhist and Daoist world.

Constructed and painted with how everything from the building materials to structure would come together in mind, Gangseodaemyo shows a height of artistry. The painters showed their devotions by painting the Four Deities as if they were living and breathing divine beasts. The tomb structure and the murals also blend seamlessly together, making Gangseodaemyo is a celebratory work of Late Period Koguryo.

Baekje, Silla, Gaya, and Balhae

From Baekje, two mural tombs have been found, Songsan-ri Tomb No. 6 and Neungsan-ri Tomb No. 1. This suggests that while tomb mural was introduced and accepted in Baekje, it never got established as a new tradition. Of many tombs of Songsan-ri, which served as royal burial grounds when Baekje’s capital was in Woongjin—modern day Gongju—only Songsan-ri Tomb No. 6 has

any mural. Songsan-ri Tomb No. 6 is a brick tomb where sun, moon, the Red Phoenix, the Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, and the Tortoise and Serpent had been painted in lead powder on top of a layer of lime and clay on each wall of the coffin room. However, by the time the tomb was investigated under Japanese colonial period, the murals had already been significantly damaged.

The Blue Dragon, the White Tiger, and the Tortoise and Serpent of Songsan-ri Tomb No. 6 are presented without many additional motifs. The Blue Dragon and the White Tiger of east and west walls are each shown as if roaring toward any intruders to the tomb while the Red Phoenix on the south wall is spreading its wings with the sun and the moon to its left and right. On the middle of the north wall is the Tortoise and Serpent. The serpent wraps around the body of the tortoise, and its upturned head faces the tortoise. Considering how similar the Four Deities of Songsan-ri are to those of Koguryo's Jinpari Tomb No. 1 or picture block tombs of the Chinese Southern Dynasty, it is likely that Songsan-ri Tomb No. 6 was constructed in the mid-6th century (Jeon 2019a).

Neungsan-ri Tomb No. 1, a stone chamber tomb with a long, narrow coffin room, is also the only mural tomb of Neungsan-ri, which was used as royal burial ground after Baekje moved its capital to Buyeo. The mural was painted directly on top of the coffin room wall and the stone slab that covers the ceiling. On the east wall is the Blue Dragon while the west wall is adorned with the White Tiger and the moon. On the ceiling are lotus blossoms. No other mural had been found from the investigation of Japanese colonial period.

The moon behind the White Tiger's back distinguishes Neungsan-ri Tomb No. 1 murals from other 6th century East Asian tomb murals. The White Tiger's long, almost horizontal body and the poised, tiger-shaped head shows that the Baekje painter who worked on Neungsan-ri Tomb No. 1 mural created the images based on his own interpretation of the Four Deities following Baekje painting tradition. Neungsan-ri Tomb No. 1's murals were likely painted in the late 6th century.

Two Silla mural tombs were found at Sunheung in Yeongju, regions that border Koguryo to the north. In Eupnae-ri Mural Tomb, a stone chamber tomb, has an ink epitaph that states "Year of Gihae, the deceased's name is □□" 己亥中墓像人名□□, showing that the murals were likely made in 579 or 519 A.C.E. (Kim 2019). The theme of the murals is everyday life. The red-bodied giant on the east and west walls and the large lotus blossom on the north wall of

the coffin room all seem related to Buddhism (Figure 17). These murals suggest that the regional rulers of Sunheung in Yeongju, located in the outskirts of Silla, had accepted Buddhist ideas of afterlife in the early 6th century even before the official endorsement of the religion (Jeon 2020b). Such findings show Eupnae-ri Mural Tomb's significance in religious and cultural history.



Figure 17. Replica of the Mural on the East Wall of the Corridor, Eupnae-ri Mural Tomb, Sunheung: Giant

In Eosukmyo at Sunheung in Yeongju, located 1 km from Eupnae-ri Mural Tomb, an epitaph stating "Eulmyonyeoneosukjisulgan" 乙卯年於宿知述干 has been found engraved on the inner side of the stone door. The text suggests that Eosukmyo, a stone chamber tomb, had been constructed and its murals painted in 595 A.C.E. (Kim 1980, 137). At the time of the investigation, only the lotus blossom on the corridor ceiling and two women on the coffin room door were

said to have been visible. The women, drawn in sophisticated brush strokes, most likely are beings similar to Buddhist devas.

In Gaya, one mural tomb has been found in Goa-dong of Goryeong, the part of former Great Gaya. From Goa-dong Mural Tomb, a south-facing stone chamber tomb, only eleven lotus blossoms have been found on the corridor ceiling upon investigation. Unlike seven-layered lotus blossoms of Eosukmyo, the eight-layered lotus blossoms of Goa-dong do not have any veins drawn in. Inside the flower are teardrop-shaped stamens. The petals, drawn with thick lines, are round and wide with tapering tips. Overall, these lotus blossoms are similar to the ones decorating the queen's headrest found in the Tomb of King Muryeong in Baekje. However, the style of making the outer petals shorter than the inner petals cannot be found in lotus blossom motifs of Baekje or Koguryo. Such observations suggest that the lotus blossoms of Goa-dong Mural Tomb were likely the result of a Great Gaya painter of Goryeong including his own input after one of the various lotus blossom motifs was introduced to the region from Baekje in the early 6th century.

While three Balhae mural tombs have been found, only one, Tomb of Princess Jeonghyo, has any legible murals. Princess Jeonghyo, the fourth daughter of King Mun, the third king of Balhae, died in 792 A.C.E. She was subsequently buried in the royal burial grounds near Yongdu Mountain in modern day Helong 和龍, Jilin Province. Her tomb is a pagoda tomb with a pagoda erected on top of the tomb. Murals were painted on the walls of the coffin room and the corridor, showing twelve figures including a gatekeeper, a warrior, and ten servants and musicians.

Decorating tomb interiors with life-sized paintings of those who served the deceased is also found in Chinese Tang Dynasty mural tombs. However, Tomb of Princess Jeonghyo is unique in its presentation of human figures as the sole theme of the murals. No other East Asian sites, including those from Tang, have done so (Jeon 1999). The servants and the musicians are all thought to be women in men's attire. The instruments provide a clue to Balhae's music.

Samreungdun Tomb No. 2, found in Samreungdun, Ning'an, Heilongjiang Province, is a typical Koguryo style stone chamber tomb. Murals have been painted on top of a lime layer on walls and ceiling. However, due to severe deterioration at the time of investigation, the motifs were barely legible. The murals show 15 figures, including gatekeepers. On the ceilings of the corridor and the coffin room were found some remnants of flower patterns.

Samreungdun Tomb No. 2 is a tomb of size befitting the deceased's royal status. It is also one of the good examples which confirm that the Koguryo's tomb building tradition had also been passed on to Balhae.

While another Balhae mural tomb had been discovered in Geumseong-ri, Hwadae-gun, Hamgyeongbuk-do, North Korea, its murals were in a poor state. On north wall of the coffin room remains a portion of a figure's legs. From the mural flakes that had fallen to the ground were found lotus blossoms and a portion of a figure on the calyx. The content of the murals suggest that the tomb mural traditions of Late Period Koguryo possibly survived partially in Balhae.

Mural Tombs of Goryeo and Joseon

From Goryeo Period, a total of 22 mural tombs have been found. Of these, 17 of them had astronomical charts (Kim 2008, 159; Han 2019, 255). Ten of Goryeo's mural tombs are royal tombs. Of these, nine of them including Tomb of King Gongmin are stone chamber tombs in which coffin rooms were layered with lime with Twelve Earthly Branches painted on the walls and constellations painted on the ceiling. From the ceiling lidstone of Yangreung, which belongs to King Shinjong, an astronomical chart with 28 Constellations has been discovered. Apricot blossoms, bamboo, pine trees, and constellations among others were found in the tombs of Kings Taejo, Jeongjong, Munjong, Wonjong, and Chungmok. These were likely painted by Goryeo's national painters.

On the coffin room wall of Surakam-dong Tomb No. 1, discovered in Surakam-dong, Gaepung, is a line drawing of Twelve Earthly Branches dressed in official's robes and hat. Below the figures were the Four Deities corresponding to each direction. However, by the time of the excavation, they were hardly discernible. Jangdan Beopdangbang Tomb No. 2 also has Twelve Earthly Branches on the walls and an astronomical chart on the ceiling. The figures each have one of the Twelve Earthly Branch depicted on their hats. The group circles around the room counterclockwise, beginning with the Rat on the northeast wall and ending with the Pig on the northwest wall. Da Song yuan bao 大宋元寶, a coin from Chinese Southern Song Dynasty, was unearthed from the tomb, suggesting that the tomb would have been constructed in the first half of the 13th century.

From Dunma-ri Mural Tomb, a two-chamber stone tomb found in Dunma-ri, Geochang, figure paintings have been discovered from the walls of the east and the west chamber. On the east wall of the east chamber are three musicians playing drums and flute and two dancers dancing to the tune. Of the dancers, the one raising arms to clasp hands together seems to be performing hu xian dance that was popular in India and Central Asia and made its way to China and Koguryo. On the west wall of the east chamber is a woman playing a flute with one hand and holding a plate of fruits with her other hand.

The adorned crowns and raiment suggest that all of these figures on the east wall are devas. Though some ink writings were found on the north wall of the east wall, they have yet to be interpreted. Three figures who seem to be musicians and dancers appear on the west wall of the west chamber. Outlined in black and painted with brown and green pigments, the figures of Dunma-ri Mural Tomb have been praised as having dynamic line work and lively expressions.

Seosam-ri Mural Tomb of Andong has the Four Deities and human figures on the stone chamber walls and constellations on the ceiling. The Four Deities are the main theme of the narrow walls, but much is damaged. Only the Blue Dragon of the east wall is visible. On the west wall, we merely see a figure holding a round vessel and the front legs of the White Tiger. The Red Phoenix and the Tortoise and Serpent of the south and the north walls are front-facing. The pose of the Four Deities is static, with little movement, giving an impression of a decorative painting. The sun and the moon, the Big Dipper, and the 28 Constellations, painted red on a green background, remain well-preserved on the ceiling. A total of 177 stars are painted in the astronomical chart of Seosam-ri Mural Tomb (Kim 2008, 164).

The mural tomb of Seogok-ri, Paju belongs to Gwon Jun 權準 and was constructed in 1352. Constellations and the figures presenting Twelve Earthly Branches were painted directly onto the rock surface without any lime layer. The constellations on the ceiling include the North Star, the Big Dipper, and the Orion's Belt. The Twelve Earthly Branches of Gwon Jun's Tomb differs from those of other tombs in that the Rat and the Horse are placed each by themselves on the north and the south walls with the remaining ten on the east and the west walls in groups of five (Ahn 2013, 240-41). The variation in poses, with the Ox and the Pig sitting and the others standing, is another observation only found in this tomb.

Two mural tombs have been found dating to Joseon Period. Gobeop-ri Mural Tomb of Miryang, built in 1420, belongs to Park Ik 朴翊 (1332-1398) who was active from the late Goryeo to early Joseon dynasty. The mural was painted on top of a lime layer on a stone wall, but much was lost by the time of investigation. The surviving murals include figures on the east and the west walls and horse and driver on the south wall. The murals have been praised as a valuable work that provides a detailed glimpse into early 15th century Joseon life and clothing (Ahn 2013, 294-96).

Dongwha-ri Mural Tomb of Wonju, belonging to No Hoesin 盧懷愼 (1415-1456), was constructed in 1456. In this tomb, two stone chambers were placed side by side. The theme of both Chambers 1 and 2 of north and south respectively is the Four Deities and the Twelve Earthly Branches. On the ceiling is a large circle with constellations painted inside. Of the Four Deities, only the Blue Dragon is dynamically posed. The White Tiger is painted in a *minhwa* style, hinting to a lesser known tradition of Joseon painting (Han 2019, 271-72). This mural tomb provides a valuable evidence that tomb murals were still being painted in the 15th century.

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