



# World Cultural Heritage Koguryo Tomb Murals

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**ICOMOS - Korea**  
Cultural Properties Administration



*When Koguryo ruled East Asia  
two thousand years ago, great tombs and  
murals of magnificent scale were created.  
Such works of art depicted the lifestyles  
and philosophy of the modern Koreans' ancestors  
in the Koguryo period.  
These works are now designated as  
World Cultural Heritage  
sites and are treasures that each  
and every one of us should preserve.*

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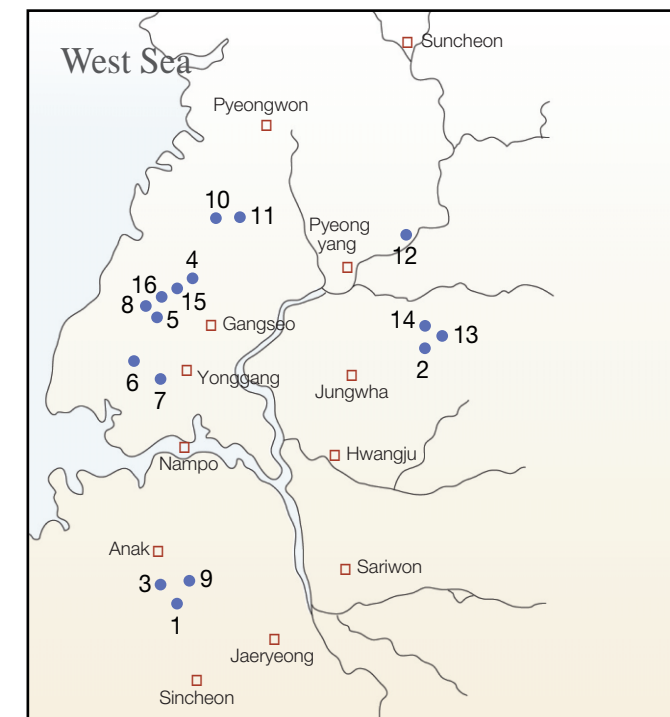
# I . Representative Mural Tombs

Map of Ancient Koguryo Kingdom in Korean Peninsular



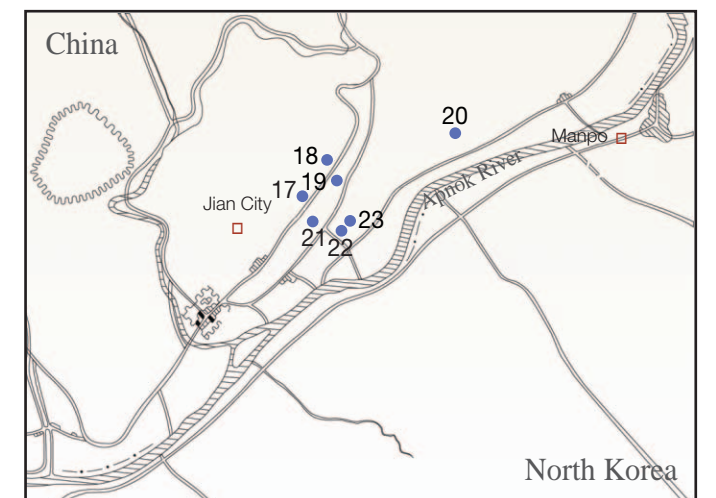
There are about 13,000 ancient tombs of Koguryo in the areas of Jian, China and Pyeongyang and Anak, North Korea. Among those, the number of mural tombs is reportedly 20 in Jian, China and 80 in North Korea. Of those mural tombs, this volume introduces 16 tombs in North Korea and 7 tombs in China, whose murals are relatively well preserved.

① Pyeongyang and Anak Areas



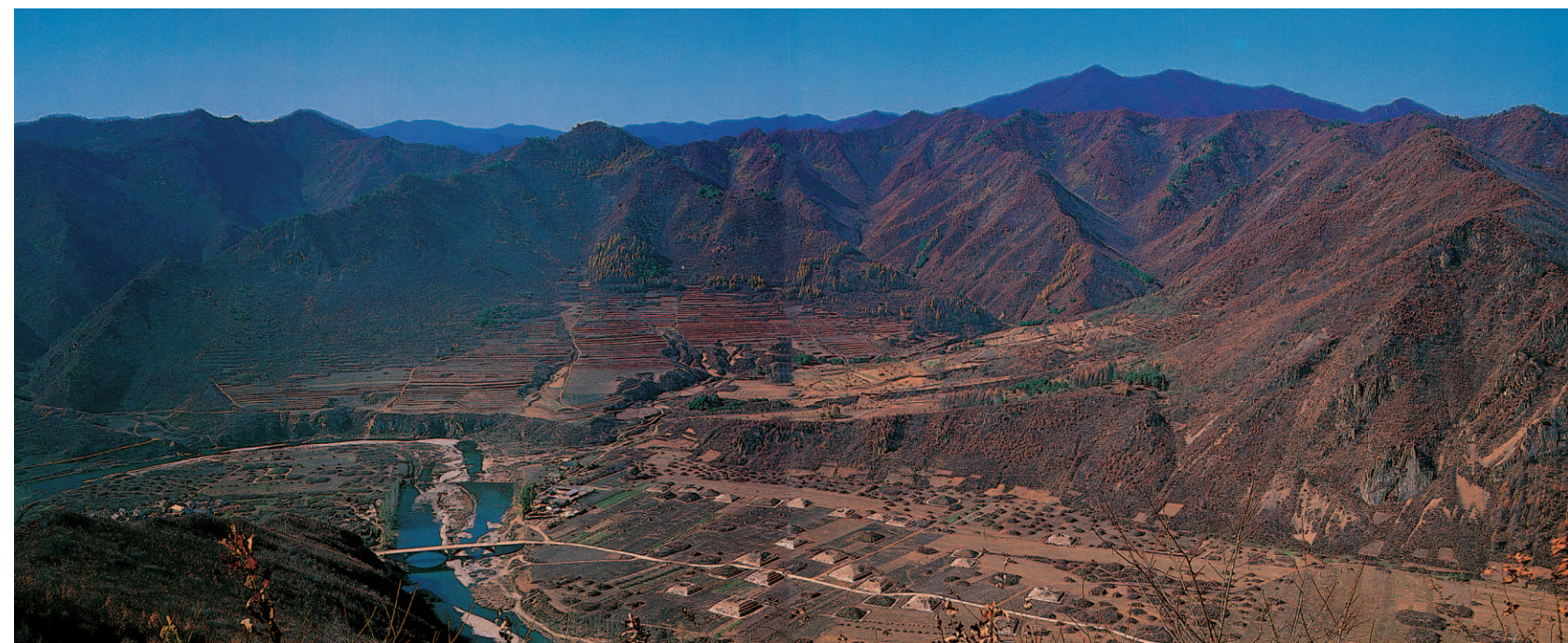
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|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Anak Tomb No. 3     | 5. Yaksuri Tomb    | 9. Anak Tomb No. 2       | 13. Jinpari Tomb No. 4 |
| 2. Dongmyeongwang Tomb | 6. Yonggangdaemyo  | 10. Deokhwari Tomb No. 1 | 14. Jinpari Tomb No. 1 |
| 3. Anak Tomb No. 1     | 7. Ssangyeongchong | 11. Deokhwari Tomb No. 2 | 15. Gangseo Daemyo     |
| 4. Deokheungri Tomb    | 8. Susanri Tomb    | 12. Honamri Sasinchong   | 16. Gangseo Jungmyo    |

② China's Ji'an Area



- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 17. Tonggu Tomb No. 12   | 21. Toggu Sashinchong |
| 18. Gakjeochong          | 22. Ohoe Tomb No. 4   |
| 19. Muyongchong          | 23. Ohoe Tomb No. 5   |
| 20. Jangcheon Tomb No. 1 |                       |

Ancient Koguryo tombs below Shanchengzi mountain city





# 1

## Anak Tomb No. 3

357 CE, Oguk-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province

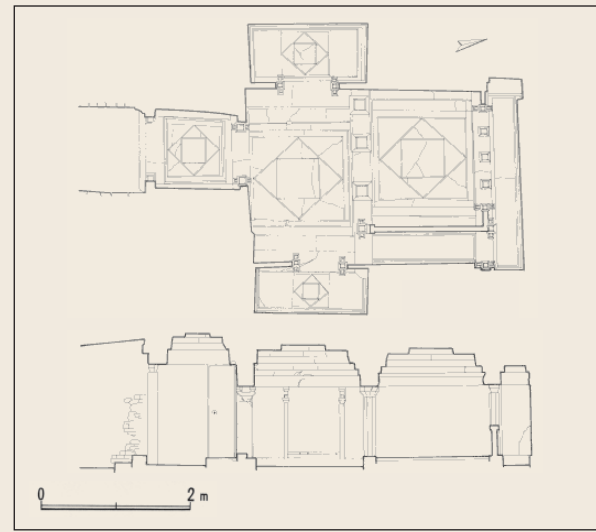
Anak Tomb No. 3 is one of the most important tombs of Koguryo with dated inscriptions. The large scale of the tomb makes it appear as an underground palace. The mural paintings of various scenes demonstrate the national strength and high cultural status of Koguryo and the lifestyle of its people.

This tomb has an entrance room that leads to the antechamber with two side-rooms on either side, then to the main chamber at the rear. All these chambers are connected by corridors. The portraits of the deceased master and his wife, as well as various life scenes and decorative motifs are vividly depicted. They serve as an important example of figure paintings of the early phase of Koguryo murals.

The entrance to the east side room



Anak Tomb No. 3



Plan and section



### Portrait of the deceased master of the tomb

\_ West wall of the west side room

The deceased master is depicted frontally on the wooden bed with curtains, and his attendants are seated on his either side. He is wearing a Baekna (white silk) crown with a black inner headdress and holds a *zhuwei* fan in his right hand. This scene generally follows the rule of early figure paintings that represent the important figures larger than his attendants.



### Portrait of the wife of the deceased master

\_ South wall of the west side room

A plump lady is seated in a three-quarter view facing towards the painting of the deceased master. Three maids, depicted much smaller, are attending her. Their head dresses and costumes are very decorative and elegant.





## Procession scene (Replica)

\_ East side corridor of the main chamber

The grand royal procession (2x10.5m) is painted on the east wall of the east corridor. As many as 250 figures are portrayed in this long procession. They include the deceased master in a chariot guarded by the cavalry, infantry and military bands. On one of the flags held up by a horsemen is written, "Seongsangbeon" (his majesty's banner) to indicate that it is a royal procession.



Drawing of the royal procession



Details of the procession





### Kitchen, meat storeroom, carriage shed \_ East wall of the east side room

This is an invaluable mural painting that displays the lifestyle of Koguryo people. Three women are working in the kitchen in which an earthenware steamer is placed on the fireplace with a chimney on its left side. The meat in the storeroom is hung on metal hooks. Two carriages with decorations are in the shed.



### Stable \_ Details on the south and west walls in the east side room

Three oxen and three horses are eating from a trough. Oxen and horses were then important transportation means. This mural stands out for its natural and realistic depiction.



### Warriors with hatchets

\_ Eastern lower corner of the south wall in the antechamber

The men wearing long jackets and pants in Koguryo fashion are standing side by side. They appear to be the guards of the tomb, as they are holding hatchets.



### The lotus on the ceiling

\_ Ceiling of the antechamber

This is a good example of a lantern ceiling. In the center of the ceiling a large lotus flower with eight pointed petals delineated in red lines.

### Well

\_ North wall of the east side room

Two ladies are drawing water from a well surrounded by a wooden fence. Several large earthenware jars and a lever fixed on a high pole are depicted. Above the well two Chinese characters of "jeong"(well) and "agwang" are written in red.





## 2

## Dongmyeong Tomb

Late 4th century~early 5th century  
Yongsan-ri, Yeokpo area, Pyeongyang

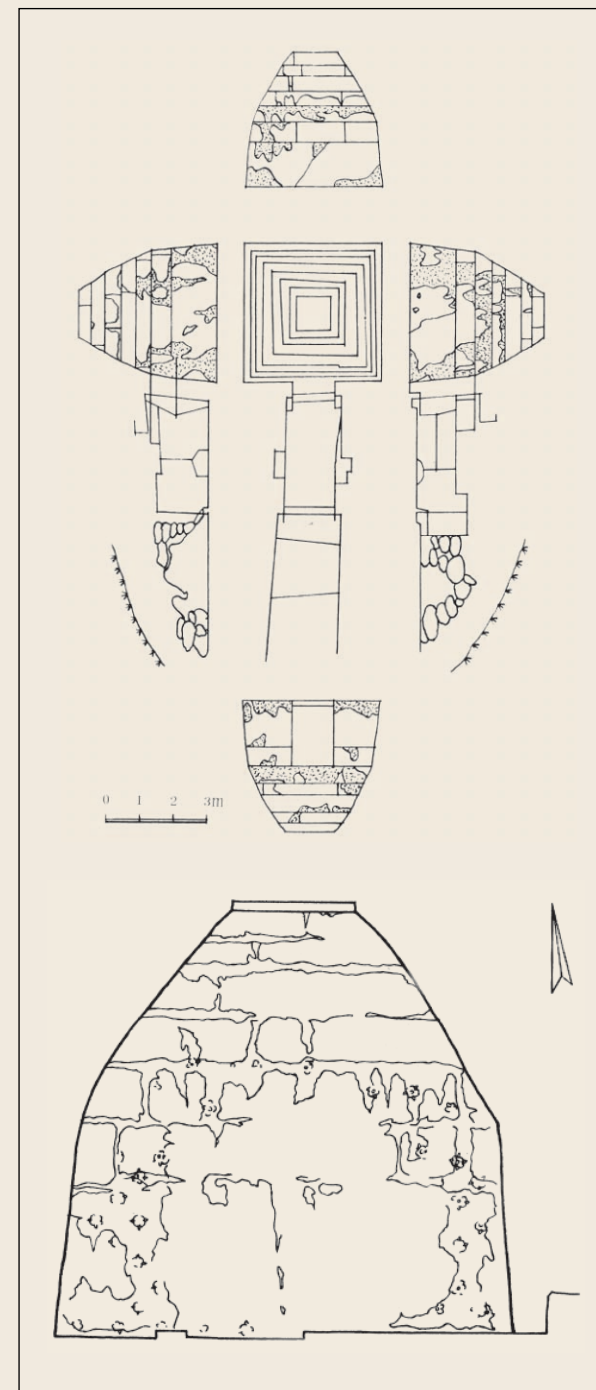
This is the tomb of Jumong (King Dongmyeong) who established Koguryo. It seems that the tomb was relocated from Tonggu region of South Manchuria to Pyeongyang when Koguryo moved its capital in 427 CE. This tomb belongs to tomb type with stone chambers covered with an earthen mound. The base of the mound is rectangular, and it is surrounded by tiers of stone blocks of 1.5m in height.

On the walls and ceiling of the main chamber are paintings of regularly arranged lotus flowers. But, unfortunately, most of the depictions is damaged due to grave robberies, and only their traces remain. Besides the tomb is Neungsa, a temple that overlooks the royal tomb. And a little more than ten tombs are situated in its vicinity.

View of the main chamber from the corridor



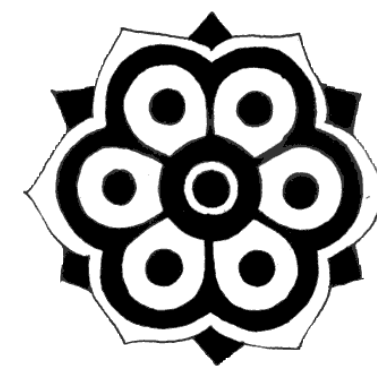
Dongmyeong Tomb



Drawing of tomb structure and painting on the east wall

### Structure of the ceiling of the main chamber

Unlike the lantern ceiling structure commonly seen in the tombs of Koguryo, the ceiling of this tomb has stone blocks piled up and becomes narrower to the top. Only traces of the mural painting remain on the ceiling.



Drawing of lotus flower design

### Lotus flowers

\_ Northwest corner of the main chamber

Most of the depiction is damaged and only traces of the lotus flowers remain. Lotus flowers with six petals are arranged at regular intervals.





## 3

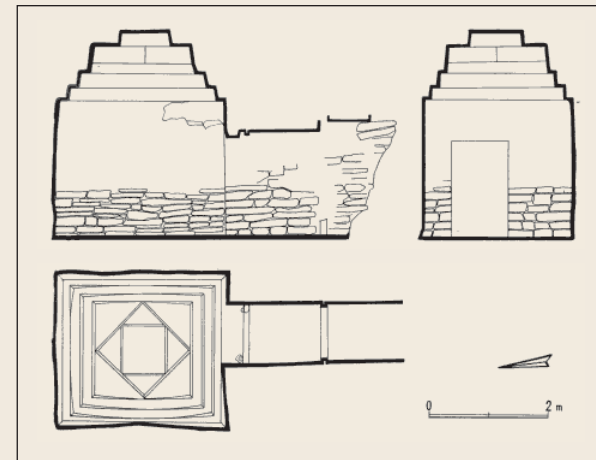
## Anak Tomb No. 1

Late 4th century~early 5th century,  
Daechu-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province

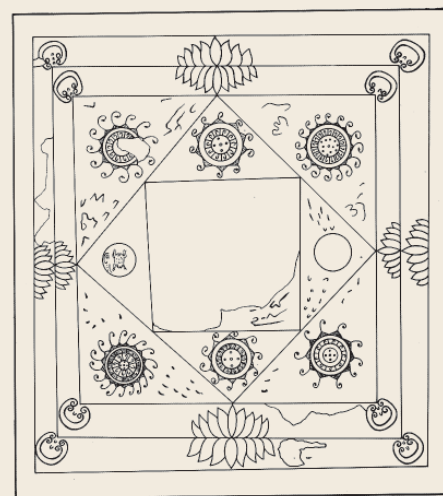
Anak Tombs No. 1 and No. 2 are located in the valley of a mountain village, not far from Anak Tomb No. 3. Tomb No.1 has a rectangular mound and is composed of an entrance room and a main chamber.

The interior of the tomb imitates that of a house by means of painting its architectural structures of pillars, purlins, and corbels on the four walls. The painting of the tomb include various themes, such as royal palaces, hunting scenes, processions, as well as clouds, flame patterns, lotus flowers, sun, moon, and constellations. These depictions reveal the imaginative and creative artistic talent of the Koguryo people.

The paintings on the ceiling of the east side of the main chamber



Elevation and plan



Drawing of the painting on the ceiling



Flying fish and horse \_ South section of the ceiling of the main chamber

In the lower part of the ceiling that consists of two tiers, flame patterns are painted in the center. On either side of flames, roundels are depicted on the upper tier, and a winged horse and bizarre fish with wings and legs are on the lower tier.



Hunting scene \_ West wall of the main chamber

This lively hunting scene with figures on horseback is similar to the hunting scene of Muyongchong in Tonggou region. A hunter on horseback on the left is drawing a bow and chasing after a deer, and another hunter on the right is trying to catch a pheasant with a hawk.





Drawing the painting  
on the north wall of the main chamber

### Architectural complex

\_ North wall of the main chamber

An architectural complex in bird's-eye view is depicted on the wall between the two painted pillars. The two-story wooden building located in the center is surrounded by walls. Seven figures are depicted inside the complex. This is an important work which shows the architecture of Koguryo.



### Animal with a human face

\_ East section of the ceiling  
of the main chamber

This is a portrayal of an imaginary animal with a human head. Such depictions of auspicious animals display the celestial world that the Koguryo people imagined.



### Girin

\_ West section of the ceiling of the main  
chamber

Girin (oriental unicorn) is an auspicious animal living in the heavenly world, often depicted with a horn and wings in a galloping pose.



## 4

## Deokheungri Tomb

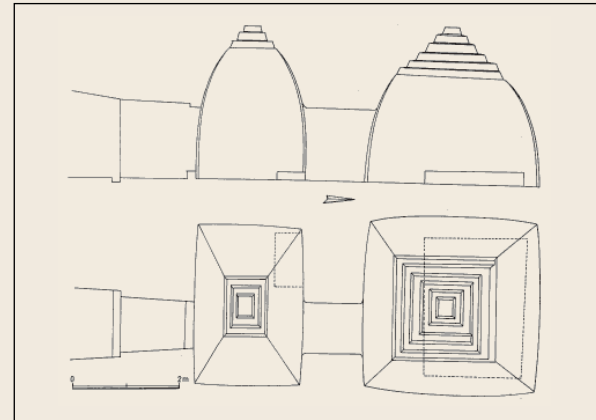
408 CE, Deokheung-ri, Gangseo area, Nampo

Deokheungri Tomb is historically important, as it has a valuable inscription. It is the tomb of Jin, known to have served as the magistrate of Yuju, who died in the 18th year of Yeongnak (reign of King Gwanggaeto, 408 CE). The structure of the tomb follows the universal type of the period, with an entrance room, a antechamber, and a main chamber. And their ceilings narrow down towards the top in corbel structures.

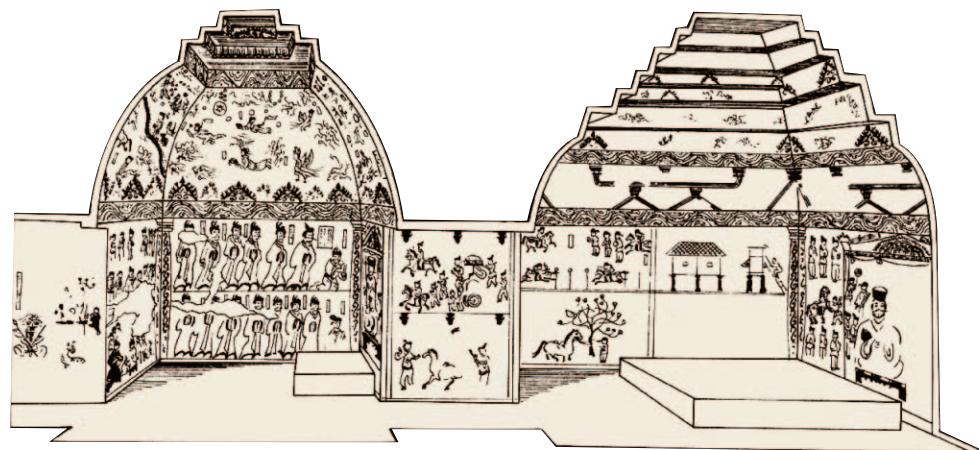
On the walls are the names of government positions and descriptions of painted scenes written in 600 Chinese characters. The contents of the paintings include decorative patterns, various life scenes of the deceased master, religious activities, portraits, processions, and the heavenly world. They show the customs and thoughts of the Koguryo people.



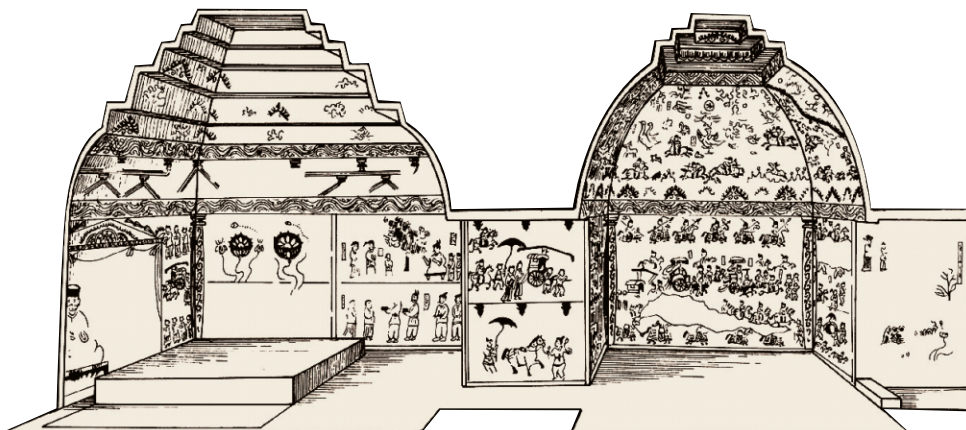
Deokheungri Tomb



Elevation and plan



Drawing of the antechamber and main chamber seen from the west



Drawing of the main chamber and antechamber seen from the east

## Interior of the tomb

## \_ Entrance to the main chamber

This is a view of the antechamber, with the main chamber behind it. The portrait of the deceased master of the tomb is visible on the left side of the north wall in the antechamber. An epitaph from 408 CE is written on top of the entrance to the main chamber.



Drawing of the north wall of the antechamber

## Portrait of the deceased master of the tomb

## \_ North wall of the antechamber

The portrait of Jin, the deceased master of the tomb, is painted on the left side of the north wall of the antechamber. He was a retainer of the Great King Gwanggaeto, and later succeeded to a minister. He is depicted in a majestic yet relaxed posture and wears a *Cheongna* (blue silk) crown and brown outer robe. In the center above the curtain appears a wheel-shaped roundel (*boryunmun*) surrounded by flames.







### 13 Governors and tomb occupant \_ West and north walls of the antechamber

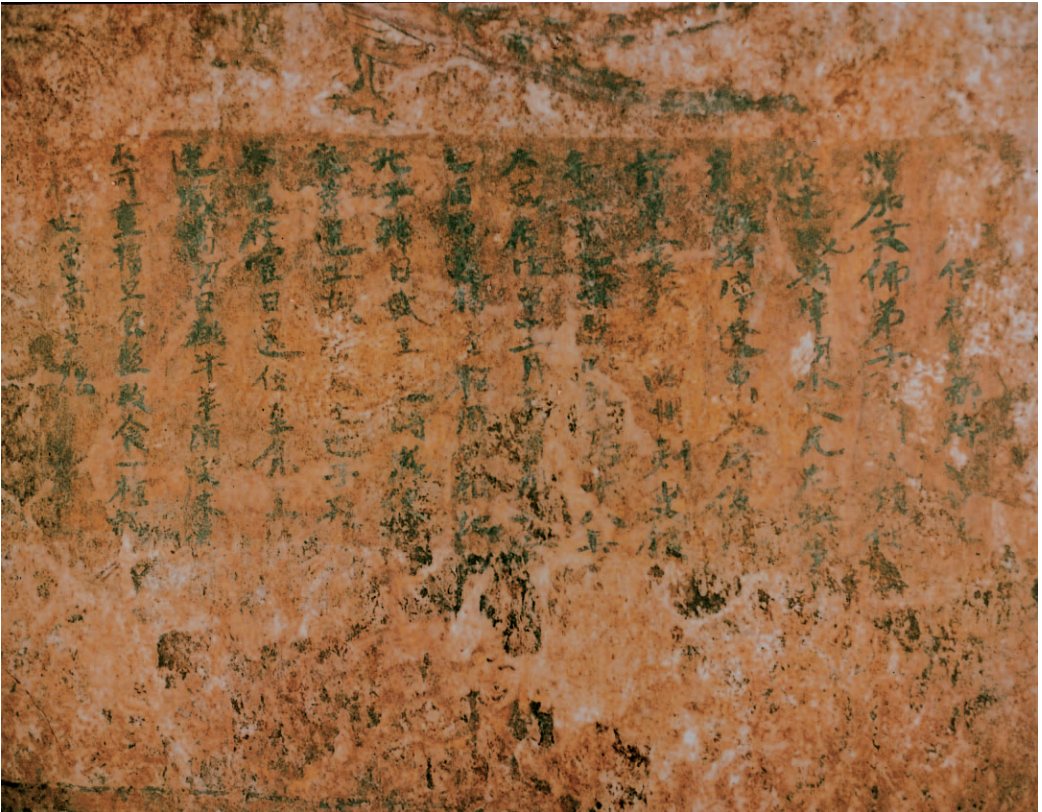
On the west wall, to the right side of the portrait of the deceased master is a depiction of 13 governors congratulating Jin on his appointment. The paintings of six governors on the upper row are especially well preserved with the legible inscriptions.





**Military procession** \_ East wall of the antechamber

The deceased master on the chariot in the middle of the procession is guarded by civil officials, military officers, cavalries, and armored horses and riders on the upper and lower parts of the main procession. There are not as many guards compared to the procession scene of Anak Tomb No. 3.



**Inscription written in the tomb**

\_ Upper part of the north wall of the antechamber

On top of the entrance to the main chamber, a brief biography of the deceased master Jin is written in 14 lines of 154 characters. According to the inscription, he was born in Sindo(presently Bakcheon, Unjeon area), passed through various positions including a general, a governor and finally the magistrate of Yuju. He died at the age of 77 and was buried in this place on December 25th in 408 CE.



**Government officials**

\_ South wall of the antechamber

This is a depiction of officials who served Jin at work. Four lines of 25 characters are written in the upper center of the scene.





## Hunting scene

\_ Ceiling of the east side of the antechamber

The hunting scene shows a depiction of eight hunters on horseback drawing bows at the running animals. The simple representation of mountains with a few peaks and trees is relatively small compared to the men. This is an important example showing the early stage of landscape painting of Koguryo.



Drawing of the south wall, antechamber

## Gyeonu and Jingnyeo

\_ South wall of the ceiling in the antechamber

This is a depiction of the parting couple, the ox-herding man Gyeonu, and the weaving lady Jingnyeo, and in-between is the diagonally depicted Milky Way. This couple shares the joy of rendez-vous only once a year, on the seventh of July, with the help of magpies. It is interesting to see that the ancient Chinese myth was introduced to Koguryo and depicted in its art.

## Auspicious birds of luck and wealth

\_ South section of the ceiling in the antechamber

Two imaginary birds with animal heads are depicted, with inscriptions in front of them. According to the inscription, the upper one represents "Gilli" and the lower one represents "Bugwi," each symbolizing luck and wealth.



## Flying Horse \_ North section of the ceiling in the antechamber

Diverse auspicious animals are depicted on the ceiling of this tomb. One of them is the winged horse flying westward with its forefeet lifted up. To its left side is an inscription of "cheonmajisang," which is translated as 'an image of the heavenly horse'





## 5

## Yaksuri Tomb

Early 5th century

Yaksu-ri, Gangseo area, Nampo

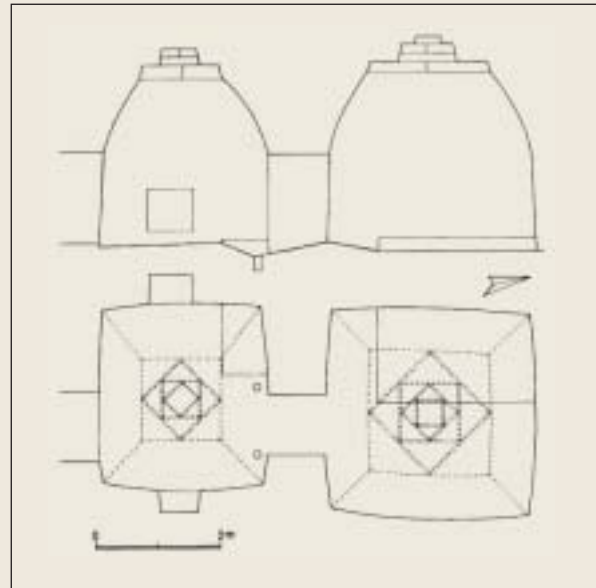
Yaksuri Tomb is built half-underground on a sloping hill. It consists of a passage way, a antechamber with two side rooms and a main chamber. Its wall paintings are important examples of the early stage of the Koguryo murals, in which both the genre scenes and the Four Directional Deities are depicted on the same wall. The genre scenes include some of the major events during the life-time of the tomb occupant, such as hunting and riding a chariot in a long procession. In addition, there are depictions of the heavenly world, with constellations and stylized cloud patterns. The murals are invaluable materials for understanding the Koguryo people's life and their perspective of the afterlife.

## Hunting scene \_ West wall of the antechamber

This painting is the largest among the hunting scenes in the Koguryo tombs discovered so far. The hunters on horseback are chasing after animals, and the mountains depicted in simple lines appear relatively small. The constellations are depicted as well.



Yaksuri Tomb



Elevation and plan



## Blue dragon and Red phoenix \_ East and south walls of the main chamber

Depictions of the Four Directional Deities, which prevailed in the later phase of the Koguryo murals, appear with various constellations. The blue dragon on the east wall is depicted with the sun, represented as a disk with a three-legged crow inside, and the red pheonix on the upper part of the south wall is painted with cloud patterns, and a constellation that is comprised of seven stars.



Blue dragon



Red pheonix





### White tiger and the moon

\_ West wall of the main chamber

The white tiger represents the west among the Four Directional Deities. In the painting, its long body, head and legs show the dynamic appearance of the deity. The toad in the round circle in front of the white tiger represents the moon.

### Black warrior and portrait of the deceased couple

\_ North wall of the main chamber

Black warrior, an imaginary animal that combined tortoise and snake, is the guardian deity of the north. In this tomb, it is depicted in small size next to the portrait of the deceased couple. Above the portrait are painted the Big Dipper and the Weaver.



### Detail of the hunting scene

\_ South wall of the antechamber

In the hunting scene, this section is relatively well-preserved and shows a fine depiction of the subject. A hunter riding a galloping horse is drawing a bow at a tiger in front.







### Procession scene \_ East wall of the antechamber

The procession is divided into three: front, middle, and rear parts. The officials are on horseback in the front part and the deceased master riding his chariot appears in the center. A total number of 90 odd men are in the painting, and it is notable that there are no guarding warriors in the procession. The composition is basically similar to that of Anak Tomb No. 3 but is smaller in scale.



Drawing  
of the procession scene



## 6

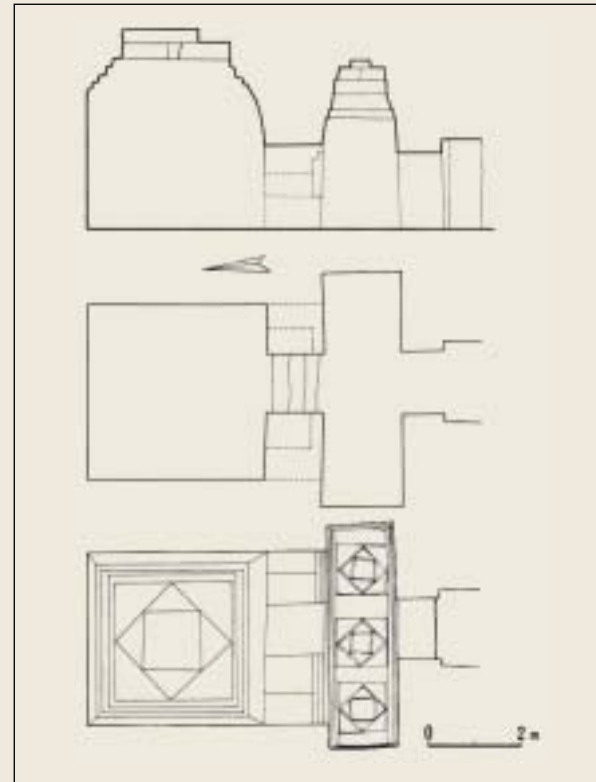
## Yonggang Daemyo

5th century, Yonggang-eup, Yonggang-gun, Nampo

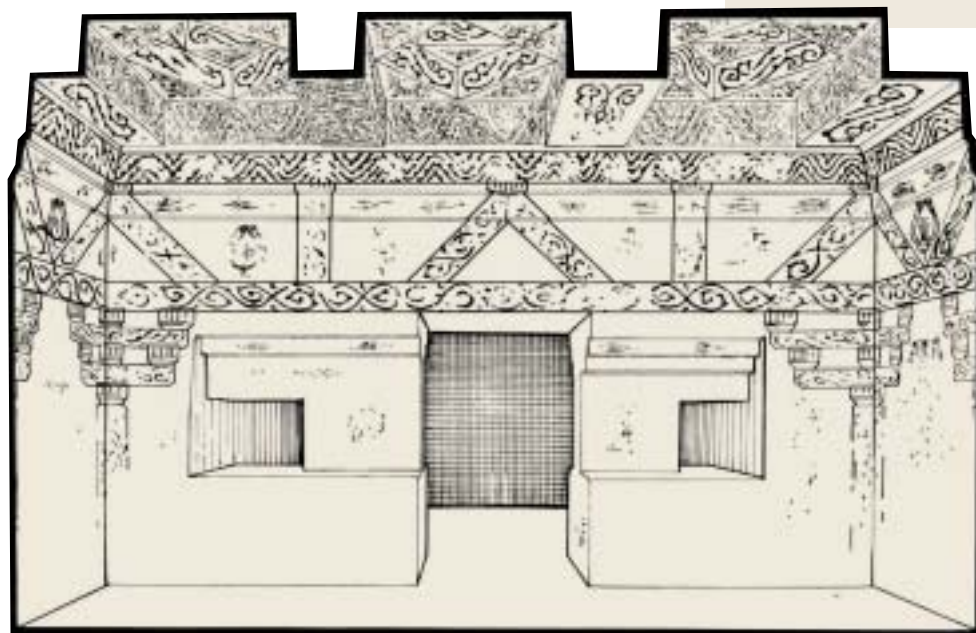
Yonggang Tomb is situated on a hill. It is an earth-mounded tomb with stone chambers, and consists of a passage, an antechamber, a main chamber, and niches on the side walls of the corridor between the two chambers. Most of the paintings drawn on plaster walls are damaged and hardly discernable. But some figures, cloud patterns, flame patterns, pillars and purlins are partially visible. There also remains a depiction of the fortress, and it provides valuable materials for the study of the Koguryo architecture.



Yonggang Daemyo



Elevation and plan



Drawing of the mural paintings on the north wall in the antechamber



### Ceiling of the antechamber

The rectangular ceiling of the antechamber is divided into three sections, and each section is topped with a lantern ceiling.



### Lotus flowers

\_ East wall of the antechamber

Lotus flowers are painted between the inverted V-shaped bracket, which is decorated with scroll patterns.



Drawing of the fortress

### Fortress

\_ South wall of the antechamber

A fortress with buildings, walls, and mansions is painted, but it is hardly discernible due to the severe damage. It is an important work showing the fortress architecture of the period.





# 7

## Ssangyeongchong

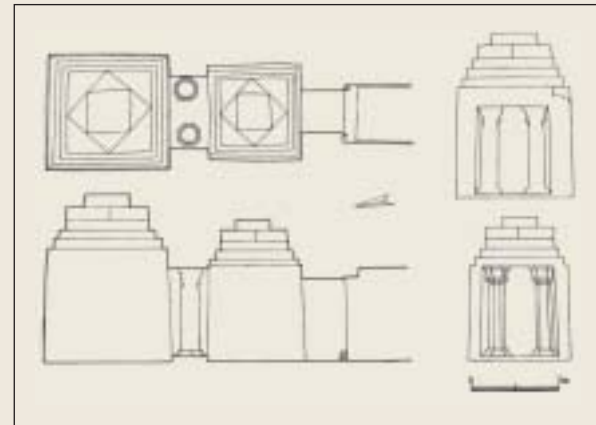
Second half of the 5th century, Yonggang-eup,  
Yonggang-gun, Nampo

Ssangyeongchong is a representative Koguryo tomb of the middle phase. The tomb consists of an antechamber and a main chamber with lantern ceilings. The designation of the tomb derived from its distinctive structural feature, two octagonal pillars standing in the corridor between the antechamber and the main chamber.

The murals of the tomb show genre scenes, a portrait of the deceased couple, immortals, heavenly animals, and a procession of ladies led by a monk. While all the murals provide important information for understanding the daily lives of the Koguryo people, the figures in the procession in the antechamber and those on both side walls of the corridor are especially significant for the study of the Koguryo costumes. The ceiling of the antechamber is embellished with colorful decorative patterns, as well as clouds and vine scrolls rendered in flowing lines. They create a majestic atmosphere of the heavenly world.



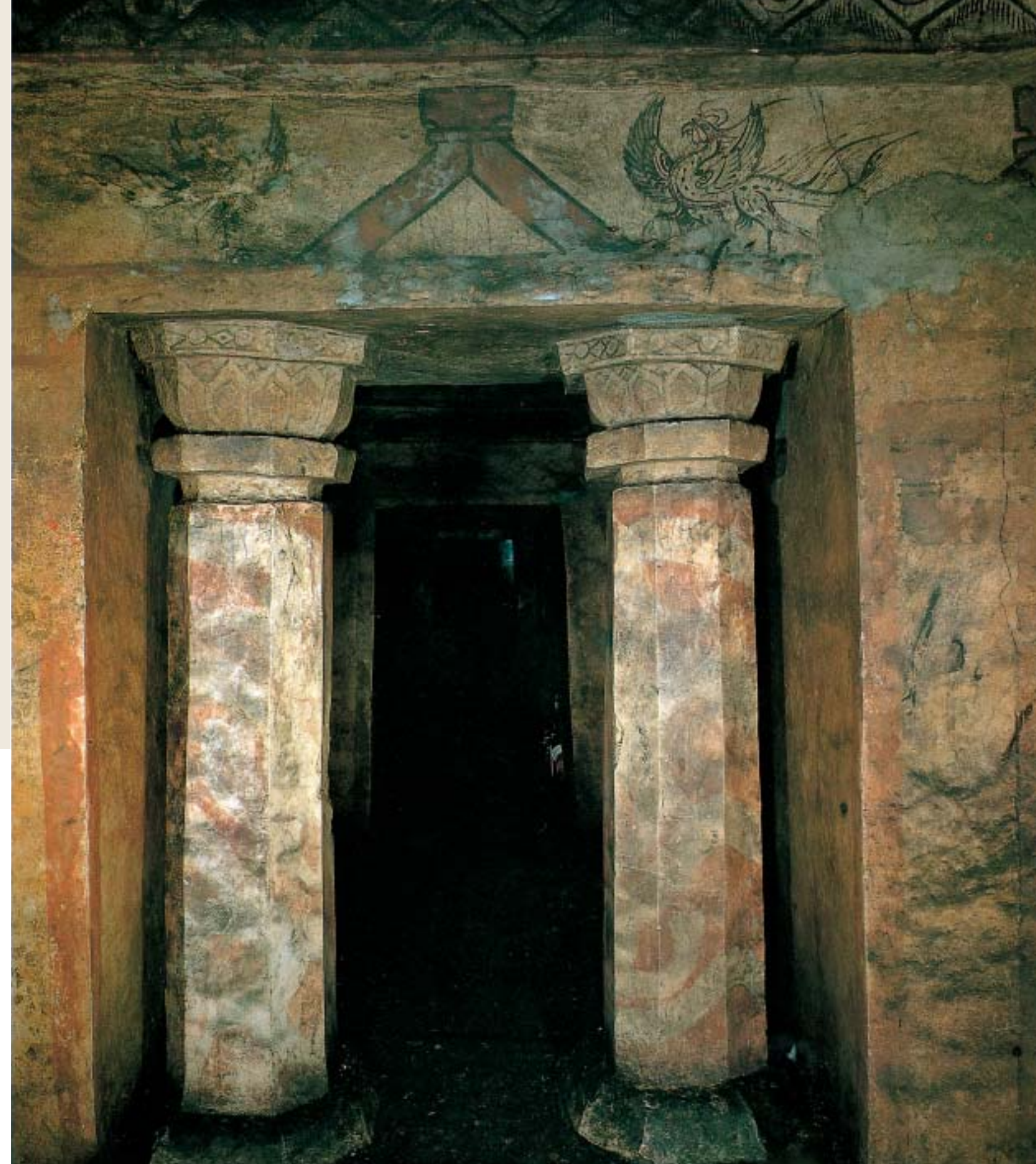
Ssangyeongchong



Elevation and plan



Drawing of the octagonal pillars seen from the main chamber



A pair of the octagonal pillars \_ Entrance of the south wall of the main chamber

Two octagonal pillars standing at the entrance of the main chamber are not common features in the Koguryo tombs. A pair of red phoenixes is depicted on either side of the inverted-V bracket painted above the pillars. The arrangement of the Four Directional Deities of this tomb is different from that of the later period. The blue dragon and the white tiger are in the front chamber whereas the red pheonix and black warrior appear in the main chamber.

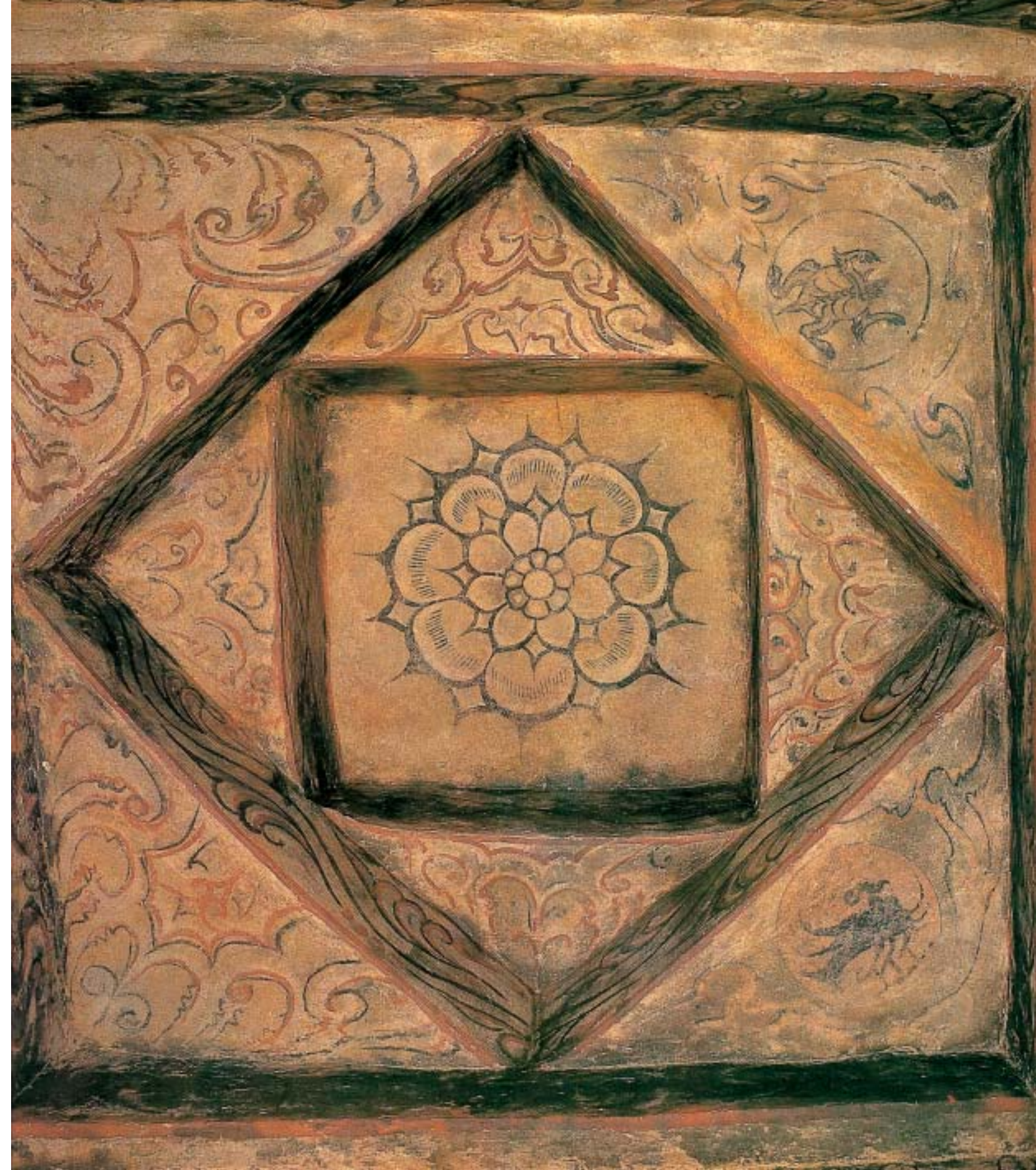




West ceiling of the main chamber



Ceiling of the antechamber



Lotus flower and heavenly world \_ Ceiling of the main chamber

A fully bloomed lotus flower is depicted in the center of the lantern ceiling. The pointed ends of the lotus petals appear archaic and decorative, and rhythmic patterns of clouds and flames surrounding the flower give a sense of vitality and liveliness. A similar motif of lotus flower with decorative patterns is depicted on the ceiling of the antechamber of the same tomb, but here are added the sun symbol containing a mythical crow with three legs, and a moon disc with a toad inside.





### Interior scene with the portrait of the deceased couple

\_ North wall of the main chamber

On the north wall of the main chamber, there is a portrait of a couple, probably the deceased master and his wife, seated together under sumptuous curtains. The wooden structure of the building above the curtains frames the scenes of the indoor life of the tomb occupants. On either side of the couple is a pair of black warriors. This combination of the portrait of the tomb occupants and the black warriors is also found in Yaksuri Tomb. Generally speaking, the murals in this tomb look more advanced in terms of descriptive techniques compared with those of the previous era.



Flowers in a vase, detail on the upper left side of the north wall of the main chamber



### Ceremonial procession

\_ East wall of the main chamber

Though much damaged, one can see the murals better in the photograph taken in earlier days. On the left side of the procession, a maid holding a tall incense burner on her head, is leading the group. She is followed by a Buddhist monk in a heavy robe, another maid, and a lady, who is one of the tomb occupants, wearing a black coat and a pleated skirt. The painting shows an aspect the religious life of the Koguryo people and the costumes of Koguryo ladies.



Procession scene before the damage



## 8

## Susanri Tomb

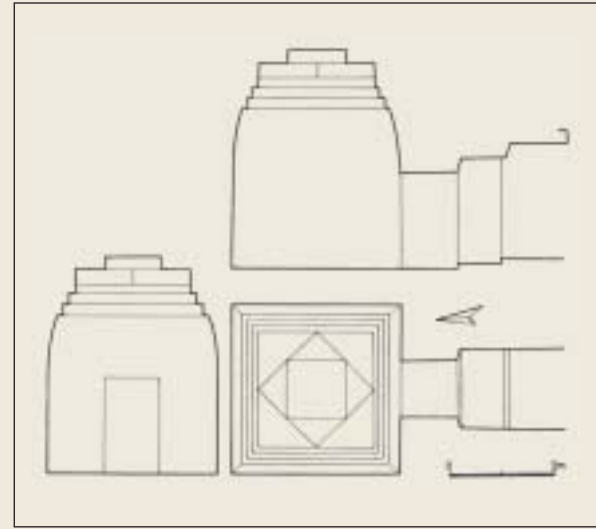
Second half of the 5th century, Susan-ri,  
Gangseo area, Nampo

Susanri Tomb was discovered rather recently in 1971. It is a one-chamber structure with a corridor. Murals were painted on the wall and ceiling of the main chamber. Door guards are depicted on the walls of the corridor. The importance of these murals lie in the fact that the figure paintings in procession display a powerful yet simple rendering in their costumes and posture. The detailed description of the elegant costumes of the female figures with pleated colorful skirts, in particular, is similar to the ladies depicted in the late 7th century Takamatsu tomb in Japan. Their affinities suggest cultural exchanges between Koguryo and Asuka Japan in the 6th and 7th centuries

Figures painted near the corners  
of the west and north walls of the main chamber.



Susanri Tomb



Elevation and plan

### Wife of the deceased master

\_ West wall of the main chamber

The lady under a large parasol appears self-assured. She wears a red-hemmed jacket and a colorful pleated skirt. The details of her make-up with blush on her face make the figure look lively.



### Two female attendants

\_ West wall of the main chamber

It is the most beautiful depiction of female figures among the tomb murals of Koguryo. Their facial make-up and fashionable hairdos, as well as their elegant appearances with long jackets and pleated skirts show the sophisticated taste of the Koguryo ladies. The painting shows that figure paintings were highly advanced during this period.







## Procession \_ West wall of the main chamber

A group of people, including the deceased couple, lead the procession with their attendants following in an orderly manner. This scene is different from the magnificent procession scene guarded by soldiers depicted in other tomb murals. Here, the atmosphere is casual and playful. The acrobats especially, performing in front of the procession create a delightful mood. They perform various tricks including pole walking, ball rolling, and rolling and throwing wheels. The scene probably embodies a wish of the Koguryo people for a joyful afterlife.



Drawing of the procession



## 9

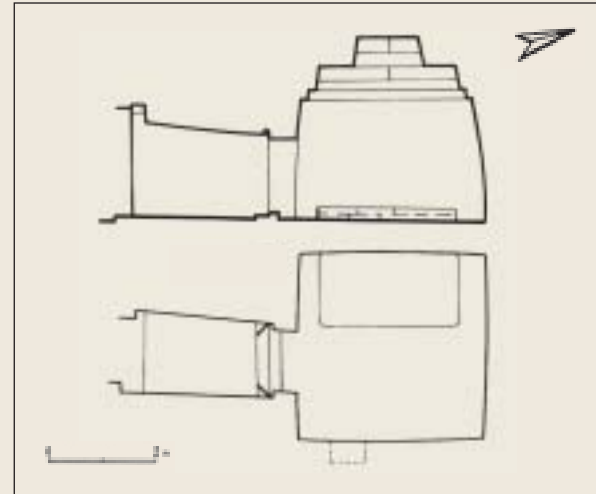
## Anak Tomb No. 2

Late 5th century~early 6th century, Daechu-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province

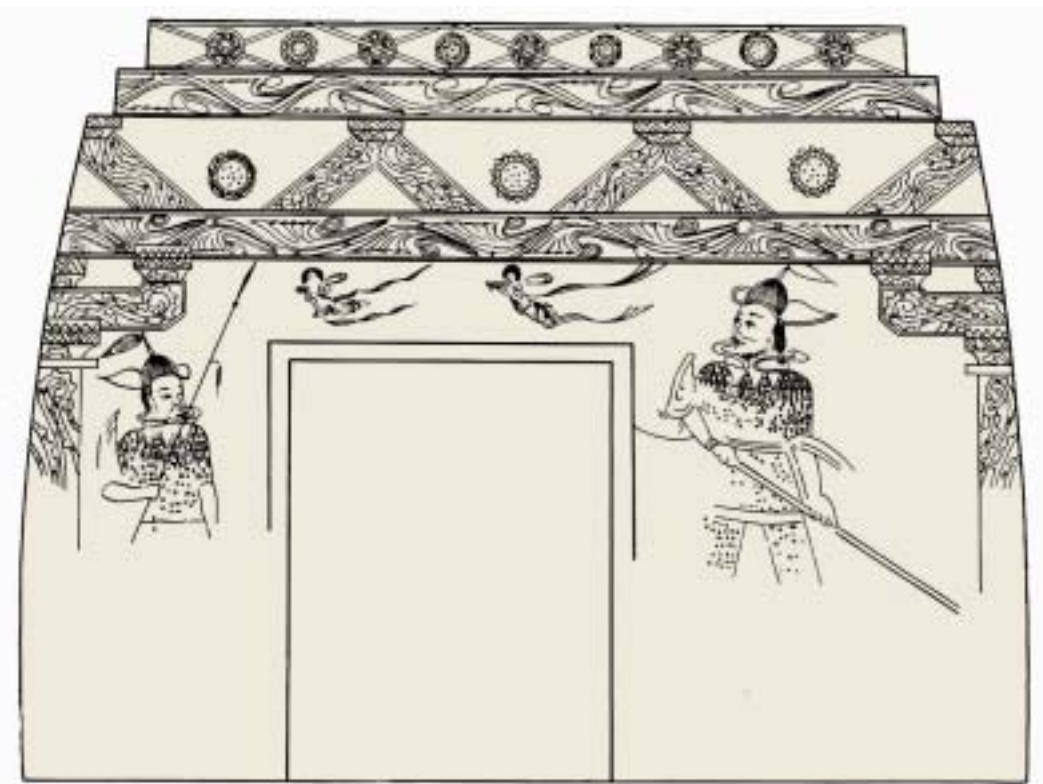
Situated behind Anak Tomb No. 1, the tomb consists of one main chamber and a corridor. The main chamber has a small niche on its east wall and a lantern ceiling. In the main chamber, two guardians are painted on either side of the entrance, and the tomb occupant and his attendants, *apsaras* and three ladies scattering lotus flowers, a procession of ladies and children are depicted on the rest of the walls. These murals display a notably Buddhist theme. On either side of the corridor are painted soldiers, holding spears and standing in line. The depiction of brackets over columns and inverted V-shaped brackets decorate the upper parts of the walls. With lotus flowers, clouds and flames, and scroll patterns, the interior of the tomb turn into an ideal resting place. Furthermore, the use of various colors of red, blue, green and yellow in addition to black make the murals look rich and colorful.



Anak Tomb No. 2



Elevation and plan



Drawing of mural paintings on the south wall



### Ceiling painting

\_ North side of the main chamber

The structure of the lantern ceiling offers many triangular and quadrangle surfaces for decorations. Sumptuous designs of scroll patterns, wheel-shape roundels, and various lotus flower designs are painted all over the ceiling, including its top central stone.



### Apsaras \_ East wall of the main chamber

Three ladies stand in the lower right side of the wall, each holding a stem of lotus flowers. Two *apsaras* flying above also hold offering plates full of lotus flowers in their hands, and their flying scarfs give a sense of fast movement. This depiction of the elegant celestial beings is the best of all the *apsaras* found in the Koguryo murals. And from the murals, one can sense devoted Buddhist faith.





### Ceiling painting

\_ Center of the lantern ceiling of the main chamber

Anak Tomb No. 2 is distinctive in its strong Buddhist tone. A large lotus flower with five layers of petals is painted in the center of the ceiling, surrounded by lotus flowers in profile located at four corners. On the tiers of triangular supports are various forms of lotus flowers in simple and elegant design. This ceiling painting stands out for the fine composition and lotus decorations.



### Painted brackets

\_ Northwest corner of the main chamber

In each corner of the main chamber is detailed depiction of bracket sets and pillars. They are intended to recreate the interior structure of wooden architecture. The pillars are topped with bracket sets, lintels and inverted V-shaped brackets. Although modeled after the earthly architecture, the pillars and bracket sets appear to be those of heavenly palaces, decorated with colorful variations of cloud patterns and lotus stems.



### Long procession of figures \_ West wall of the main chamber

A tall lady, presumably one of the occupants of the tomb, is standing in the middle of the procession surrounded by her attendants. On the both ends of the procession are seven other ladies with large headdresses. The lotus flowers and stems on and between the painted bracket sets show a strong Buddhist influence.

### Detail of the figures in the procession

Due to the severe damages on the wall surface, the figures are hardly discernable. The female protagonist is the tall lady standing on the right with a colorful headdress.





## 10

## Deokhwari Tomb No. 1

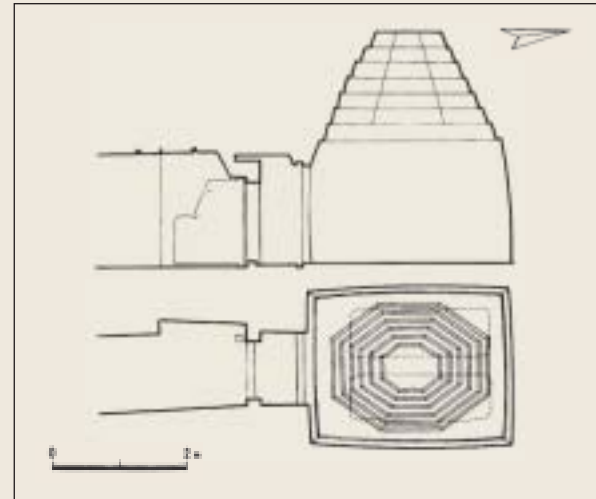
Late 5th century~early 6th century

Deokhwa-ri, Daedong-gun, South Pyeongan Province

Two tombs are located side by side at the southern foot of Mt. Bonghwa, and Deokhwari Tomb No. 1 is the one located in the west. The tomb consists of a main chamber and a corridor. The murals depicting Four Directional Deities are seen on the four walls of the chamber, and their presence is emphasized by their large size. It is noteworthy to find human figures above the black warrior, the mythical animal of the north formed by a tortoise and a snake. The ceiling, in octagonal tiers, has a depiction of the heavenly world with the sun, the moon, stars, milky way, clouds, and lotus flowers. Among them, the depiction of the constellations demonstrates Koguryo's advanced knowledge in astronomy.



Deokhwari Tomb No.1



Elevation and Plan

## Ceiling painting

\_ North side of the main chamber

In the center of the ceiling wall, a red-colored Big Dipper is painted across the four successive tiers. Various decorative patterns and constellations are drawn around the Big Dipper. It looks like a diagram of the constellations in an astronomical chart.



## Black warrior and figures

\_ North wall of the main chamber

This mythical animal is a combination of a tortoise and a snake, and symbolizes the north. The body of the snake draws two semi-circles, tying itself around the tortoise's body three times. Both the heads of the snake and the tortoise look at each other as if to converse. Above this deity, there is a procession of figures, including a man, who is believed to be the tomb occupant, followed by his wife and children.



## Lotus in Heaven

\_ Ceiling of the main chamber

A lotus, symbolizing the heaven, is boldly represented with red clouds in the center of the octagonal ceiling. Its petals have pointed ends, and its center is filled with small seeds. In its background is depicted auspicious energy that represent vitality. The Koguryo people's notion of heaven appears to have been influenced by Buddhist views, as the lotus flower occupied the center of the ceiling that stands for heaven.







### Painting on the east part of the ceiling, main chamber

The stone slabs of the octagonal ceiling are covered with bold depiction of hexagonal cells. The rest of the space is filled with red clouds and constellations. The hexagonal cell in the center contains a three-legged crow in a red disk that symbolizes the sun.



# 11

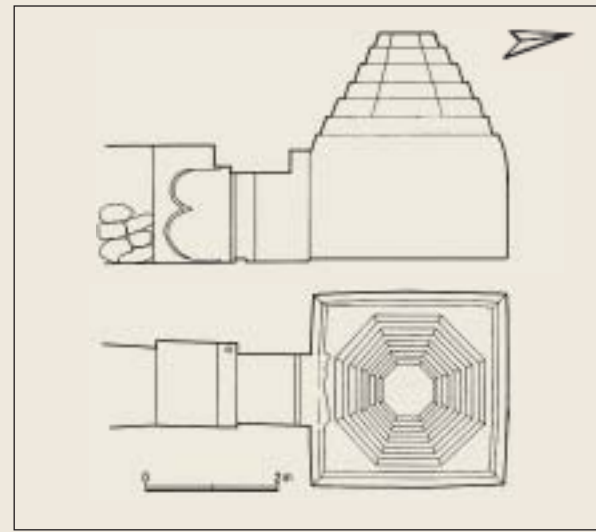
## Deokhwari Tomb No. 2

Late 5th century~early 6th century  
Deokhwa-ri, Daedong-gun, South Pyeongan Province

Among the two tumuli at the southern foot of Mt. Bonghwa, the one on the east side is Deokhwari Tomb No. 2. Its architectural structure and murals are similar to those of Deokhwari Tomb No. 1 located next to it. It is believed that both tombs were built by the same architects and artisans at about the same time. There are murals of Four Directional Deities, human figures and their life scenes, pillars and decorative supports on the walls of the main chamber. On the ceiling, which is hexagonal in shape, are depictions of the sun, the moon, stars, clouds, and lotus flowers. Among the twenty-eight constellations, some have their names written down. They show the advanced astronomical knowledge of the Koguryo people at that time.



Deokhwari Tomb No. 2



Elevation and plan



### West side of the ceiling in the main chamber

On the opposite side of the sun on the octagonal ceiling is the moon, represented as a white disk with a toad and a rabbit inside. It is surrounded by various constellations and cloud patterns.



### Moon disc with a toad and a rabbit

\_ Ceiling on the west side of the main chamber

A rabbit and a toad appear inside the moon disc in this painting, which is different from the examples of the earlier period where only a toad was depicted. A similar representation of the moon is also shown in mural of Gaema Tomb.

### East side of the ceiling in the main chamber

The sun is represented as a red disk with a three-legged crow inside, and is surrounded by constellations and cloud patterns. Right below the tier with the sun is depiction of a constellation that consists of two circles connected with a line. It is identified as "byeokseong" by the inscription written next to it.





## 12

**Honamri Sashinchong**

Early 6th century, Seongmun-ri, Samseok Area,  
Pyeongyang

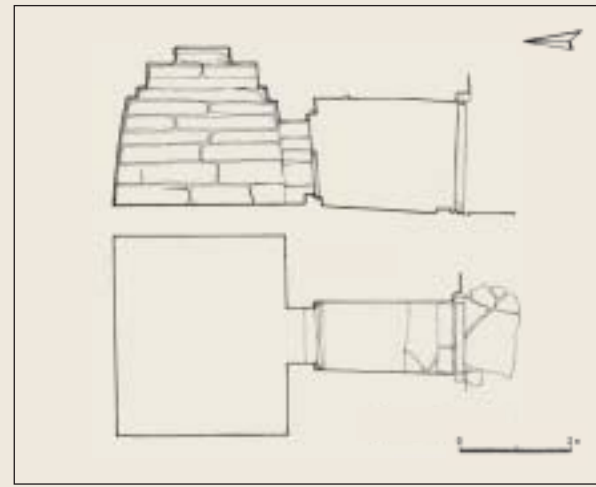
Ancient tombs of the Koguryo Kingdom are scattered over this area, and Honamri Sashinchong is the largest of them. The tomb, comprised of a main chamber and corridor, is made of marble. Murals were painted onto the surface of the marble. In the murals, instead of figures and life scenes, Four Directional Deities including blue dragon, white tiger, red phoenix and black warrior are depicted. This marks an important turning point in the history of the Koguryo murals.

**Blue dragon** \_ East wall in the main chamber

The blue dragon depicted on the wall turns its head backward to look at its tale. While most of the blue dragons of the late Koguryo period have two horns, this dragon has one horn, which was the tradition in the 5th century.



Honamri Sashinchong



Elevation and plan



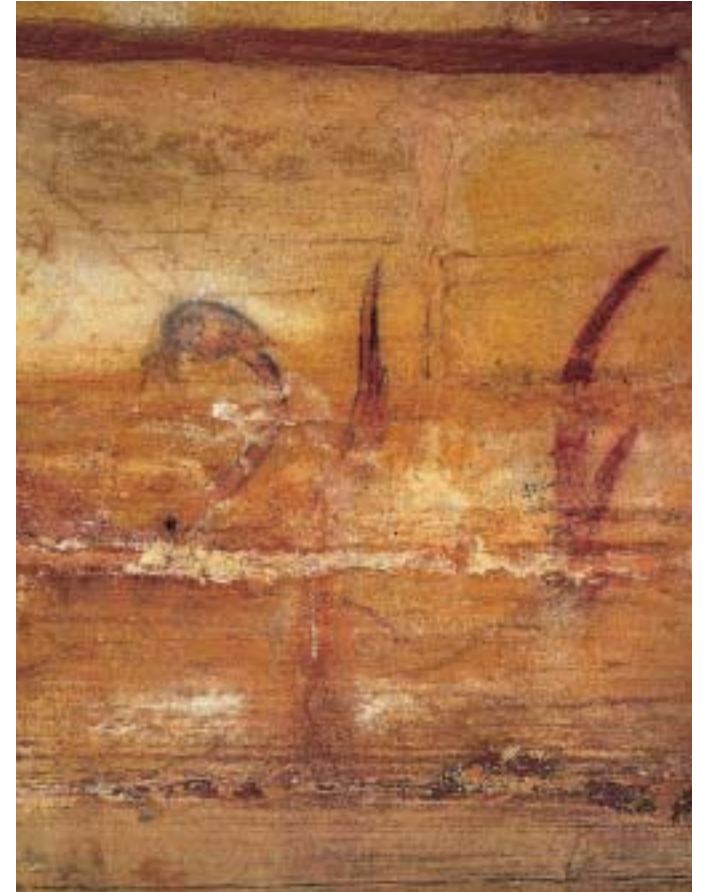
White tiger | West wall in the main chamber



Black warrior | North wall in the main chamber



Red phoenix | East side of the south wall in the main chamber



Red phoenix | West side of the south wall in the main chamber



## 13

## Jinpari Tomb No. 4

6th century, Yongsan-ri, Yeokpo Area, Pyeongyang

This tomb is the largest among the ancient tombs scattered on the hill of Mt. Jaeryeong, located southeast of the city of Pyeongyang. It is situated behind the tomb of King Dongmyeong. The tomb consists of a main chamber and a corridor. Murals were painted on plastered stones. The murals of the main chamber show the Four Directional Deities, the sun, the moon and Taoist immortals. On the ceiling are depicted decorative designs, including lotus flowers, honey suckles and constellations. The corridor has paintings of a pond surrounded by trees and rock cliffs, which appear to be more sophisticated than those of the 5th century. Considering that the tomb is located near King Dongmyeong's tomb, the tomb occupant is believed to be one of royal family members.

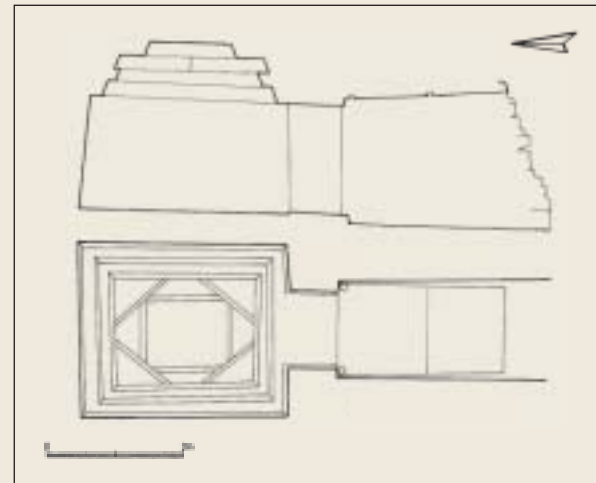
## Ceiling Paintings

\_ South and north corners of the tomb ceiling

On the supporting section of the ceiling lotus flowers in full bloom and honeysuckle vine patterns are painted.



Jinpari Tomb No. 4



Elevation and plan

## Trees and oddly shaped rocks

\_ East wall of the corridor

The corridor wall displays hills with rocks of unusual shapes and tall trees. They are more naturally done compared with the schematic depictions of the same subjects in 5th century murals.



## Lotus flower design

\_ Ceiling of the main chamber

A lotus flower with eight petals is surrounded by honeysuckle leaves. The fast curves used in the depiction of the honeysuckle leaves convey a sense of lively movement.





## 14

**Jinpari Tomb No. 1**

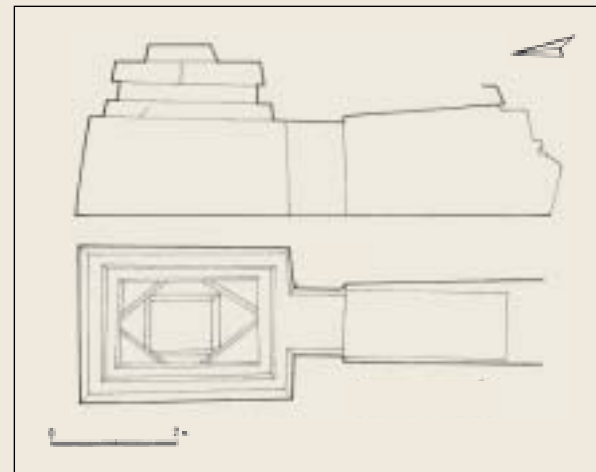
Second half of the 6th century  
Yongsan-ri, Yeokpo Area, Pyeongyang

This tomb is located in the same area as Jinpari Tomb No. 4. The tomb consists of a main chamber and a corridor. Its mound is huge measuring 30m on one side, and 7m in height. The murals in the main chamber show the Four Directional Deities, flying clouds, and a honeysuckle pattern. On its ceiling are painted with lotus flowers surrounded by the sun, the moon and honeysuckles. The corridor has depictions of guardian figures. The description of the trees in this tomb is significant in that it shows the most sophisticated and realistic depiction of the subject found in the Koguryo tombs. The tomb occupant is believed to be Goheul, a General in Koguryo.

South entrance and ceiling of the main chamber



Jinpari Tomb No. 1



Elevation and plan



Drawing two phoenixes  
on the south wall of the main chamber



Bird above clouds \_ East wall of the main chamber



Ceiling painting \_ South ceiling of the main chamber



Blue dragon \_ East wall of the main chamber

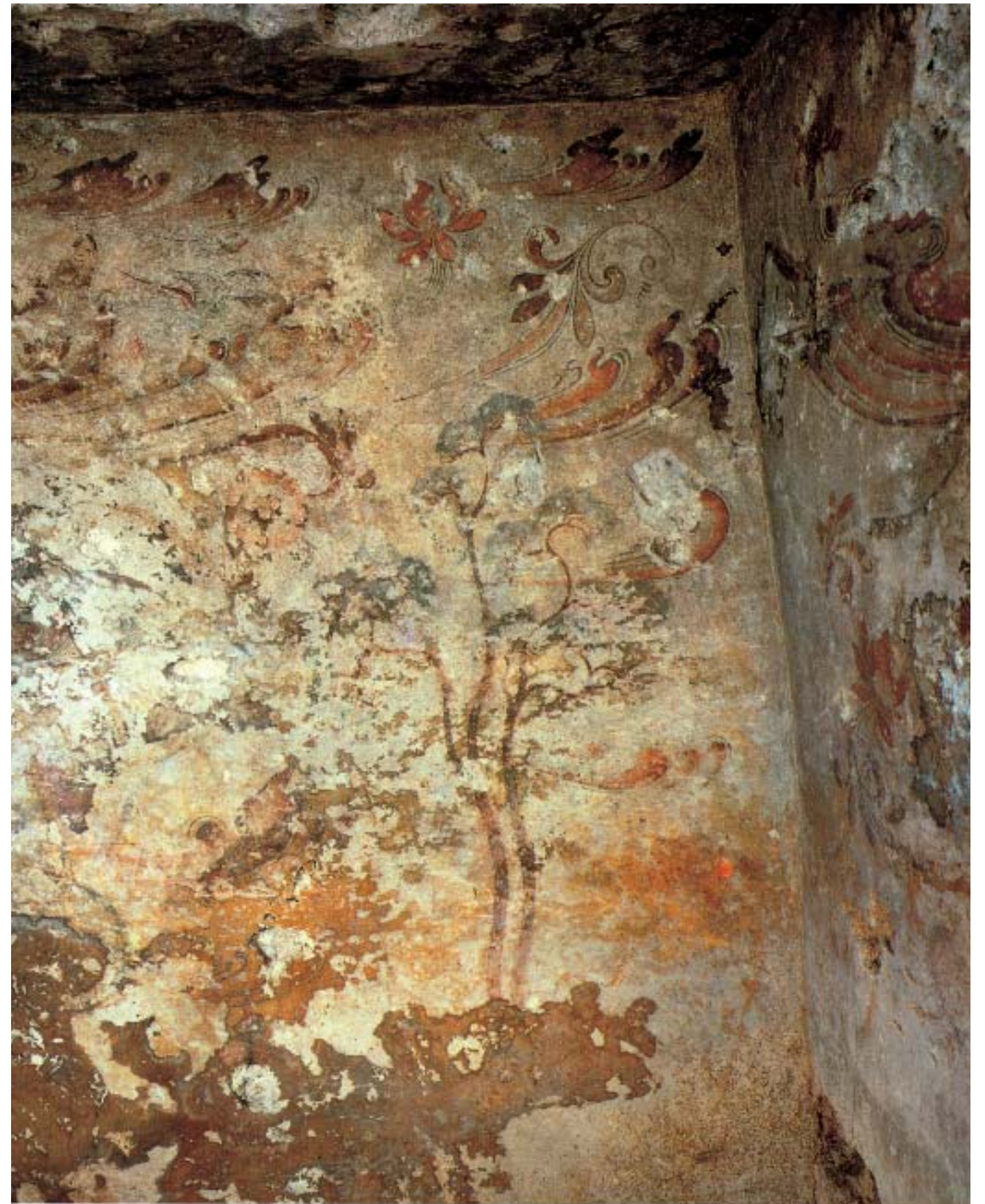
A blue dragon occupies the center of the mural. The background is filled with clouds and honeysuckle designs. With its head held up, the dragon shows a fine stride. The long, supple body and wavy tale of this mythical animal emphasizes the rhythmic movement in its descent from the heaven.





Pine trees \_ West side of the north wall of the main chamber

On either side of the black warrior depicted on the north wall are representations of pine trees. They are one of the most notable depictions of trees in the Koguryo tombs. The bigger branches rendered in graceful curves, the small branches in undulating lines, and the green heap of pine needles all show the advanced skills of the Koguryo artisans.



Pine tree on the east side of the north wall of the main chamber



## 15

## Gangseo Daemyo

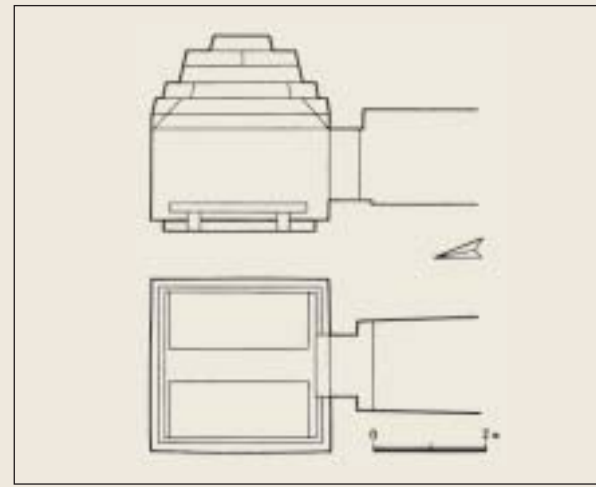
Second half of 6th century~early half of 7th century,  
Sammyo-ri, Gangseo Area, Nampo

Gangseo Daemyo is the largest among the three tombs found in Sammyo-ri. The tomb has excellent examples of wall painting of the late Koguryo period. The mound was built with lime and mud, whereas the coffin chamber was made of granite.

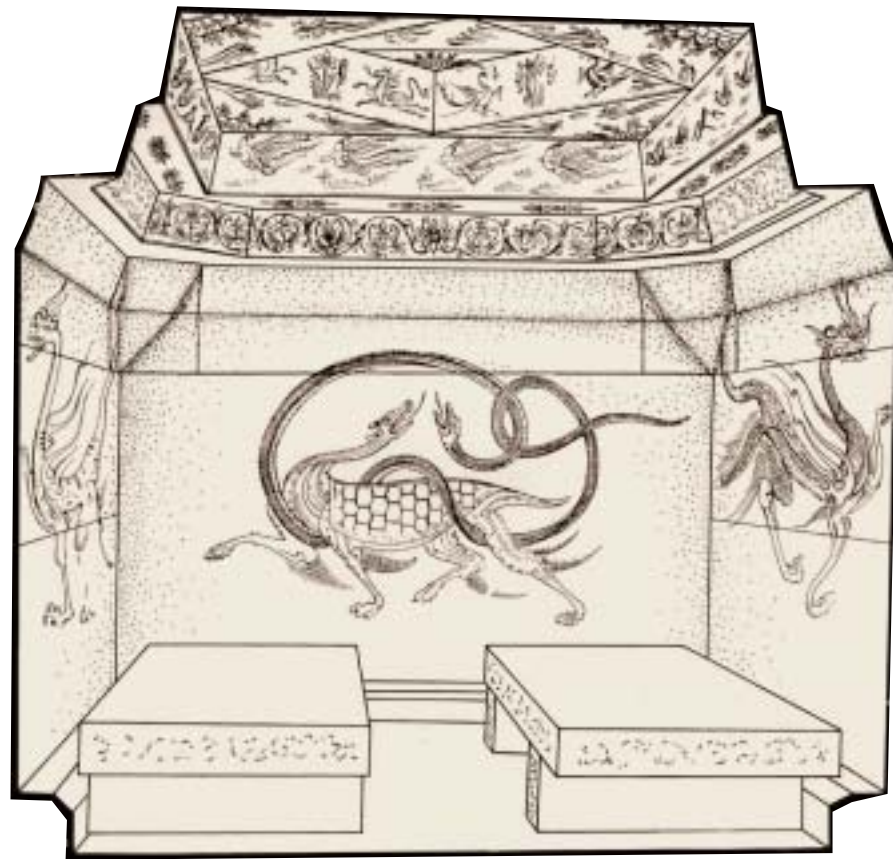
Murals were drawn directly onto the stone surfaces. On the ceiling are paintings of auspicious animals, immortals, flying celestial beings, lotus flowers, honeysuckle vines, and clouds. On the walls of the main chamber are depicted Four Directional Deities (blue dragon, white tiger, red phoenix, and black warrior). These paintings are combinations of creative imagination and powerful brushstrokes. They are considered the masterpieces in the Koguryo tomb murals.



Gangseo Daemyo



Elevation and plan



Drawing of the main chamber



Ceiling painting \_ West ceiling of the main chamber

Celestial figures and animals, mountains and clouds, and honeysuckle vines are depicted in fluent lines.



White tiger \_ West wall of the main chamber

This painting of a white tiger is notable for the solemn and courageous appearance of the beast. Also, the flowing lines used for the depiction of the tiger are remarkable.



Black warrior \_ North wall of the main chamber

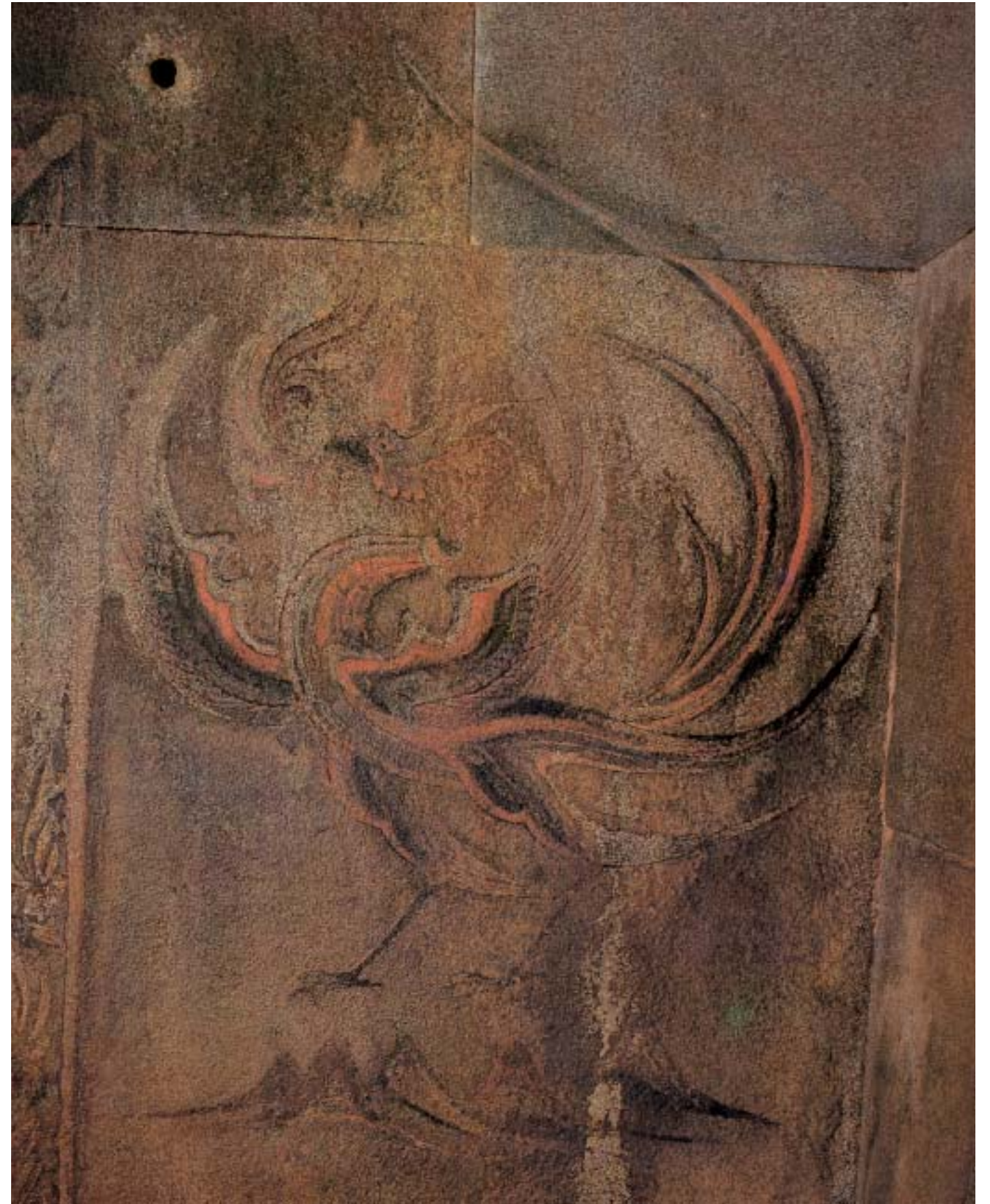
In this painting of a black warrior, the snake and tortoise are combined in perfect harmony. The snake winds the body of the turtle with its long body. The head of the snake intersects with its tail and looks at the tortoise, whose head is turned back toward that of the snake.





### Red phoenixes \_ South wall of the main chamber

A pair of red phoenixes are painted on either side of the entrance located on the south wall of the main chamber. Red phoenix is an imaginary and auspicious bird representing the south. Here the birds are superbly rendered in bright colors and are about to soar up with wings spread out. The mountain peaks below the red phoenixes are delineated in red, white and black, and their arrangement shows some consideration in perspective.







### Blue dragon \_ East wall of the main chamber

Among the Four Directional Deities depicted on the walls of the main chamber, the blue dragon is most outstanding in terms of composition, color and design. The mural, which conveys a sense of ferocity, boldness, and swiftness overwhelms viewers. This is one of the best blue dragon paintings in the Koguryo tombs.



## 16

## Gangseo Jungmyo

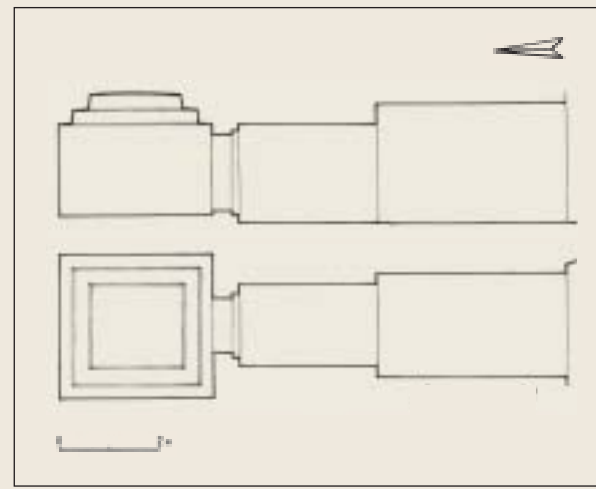
Second half of 6th century~first half of 7th century  
Sammyo-ri, Gangseo area, Nampo

There are three tombs in Sammyo-ri, Gangseo area. Gangseo Daemyo (Great tomb of Gangseo) is located in the south. Among the two other tombs situated behind the Gangseo Daemyo, Gangseo Jungmyo (Middle tomb of Gangseo) is the one in the west. Its paintings of the Four Directional Deities are as famous as the ones in Gangseo Daemyo. Each symbolic animal is shown on each wall of the main chamber. On the ceiling, there are lotus flowers, honeysuckle vine patterns, cloud patterns, the sun and the moon. This tomb is particularly known for the superb depictions of the white tiger and the red phoenixes. They display the vigorous spirit of Koguryo, sophisticated colors and detailed descriptions.

Mural on the eastern ceiling of the main chamber



Gangseo Jungmyo



Elevation and plan



## Blue dragon

\_ East wall of the main chamber

A courageous-looking blue dragon holds up its head and moves toward the south. Instead of depicting scales, the body of the dragon is filled with vivid colors of red, yellow and green which makes the animal appear more lively.



## Black warrior

\_ North wall of the main chamber

The black warrior is made up of a tortoise with thick and long legs of a crawling animal and a snake that feebly winds the body of the tortoise twice. The dark warrior in this painting is depicted relatively small, and more emphasis is given to the mountains in the background.



## Red phoenix \_ South wall of the main chamber

The two red phoenixes facing each other on the south wall each hold a red bead in its mouth, fluttering its wings as if it is about to fly. When compared with those in Gangseo Daemyo, they are depicted more colorfully.



East side of the south wall



West side of the south wall





**White tiger** \_ West wall of the main chamber

The white tiger appears to be dashing forward. Its powerful movement shows the vigorous spirit of the Koguryo people. It is different from that of Gangseo Daemyo in that it does not show its tongue between its teeth.

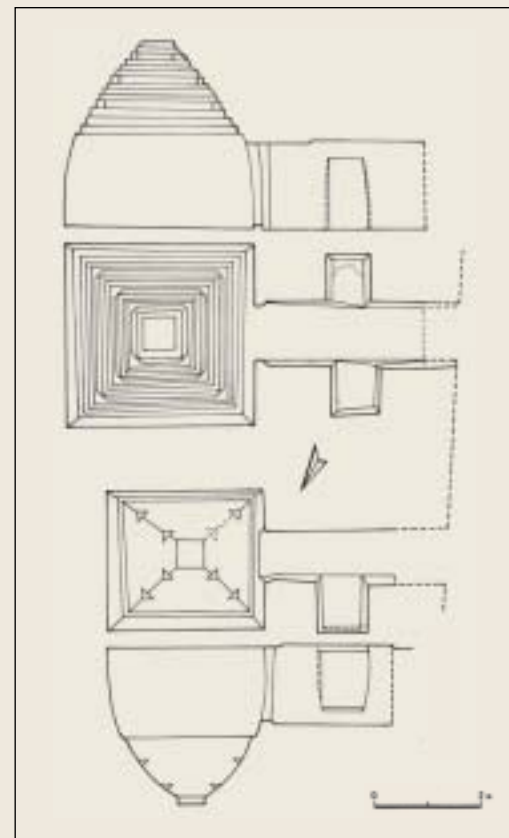


## 17

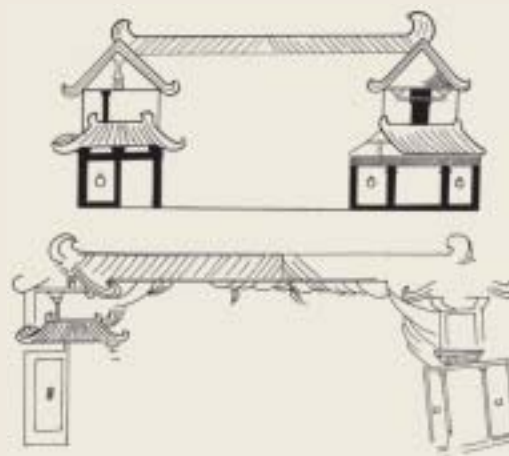
## Tonggu Tomb No. 12

Late 4th century~early 5th century  
Ji'an City, Jilin Province

This tomb is a unique example of twin graves that consist of two main chambers and a single entrance. Its murals deal with diverse subjects such as portraits, hunting, battle and daily life scenes, and provide important sources for the study of the Koguryo culture and customs. Especially notable are the battle and hunting scenes that succinctly illustrates the martial spirit of the Koguryo men. As the murals are much damaged, the details of the paintings are difficult to see.



Elevation and plan



Drawing of architecture painted on the walls

### Tomb entrance viewed from the main chamber of the south tomb

Two side rooms are seen on either side of the corridor between the entrances of the tomb and the main chamber. The main chamber is stably built with the upper part of its walls slightly tilted inward. Not much of the painted details are deciphered from the present condition of the walls.



### Battle scene \_ Left side of the main chamber in the north tomb

This is a most lively battle scene amongst the Koguryo tomb murals. The tension of the scene is vividly illustrated as a warrior blocks another warrior with his spiked battle-shoes and lifts his sword to slash the opponent's head off. On the right side of the scene is a warrior on horseback holding a long spear. The warriors are clad in armors and the horses are harnessed with an iron mask.



### Lotus flowers \_ Ceiling of the main chamber in the north tomb

Instead of the common repertoire of the sun and moon and constellations, the entire ceiling is covered with paintings of lotus flowers and vines. Among the curved stems appear lotus buds and lotus flowers in full bloom, described in sumptuous red color. This ceiling painting filled with abundant lotus flowers demonstrates the wish for the rebirth in Buddhist paradises.



# 18

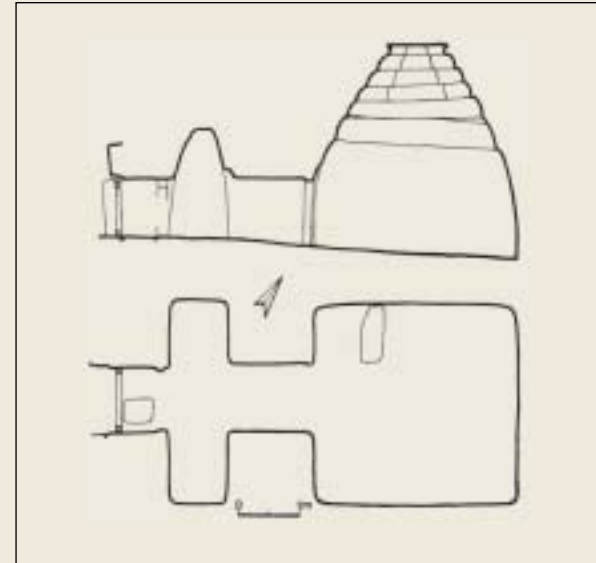
## Gakjeochong

First half of the 5th century, South slope of Yushan  
Ji'an City, Jilin Province

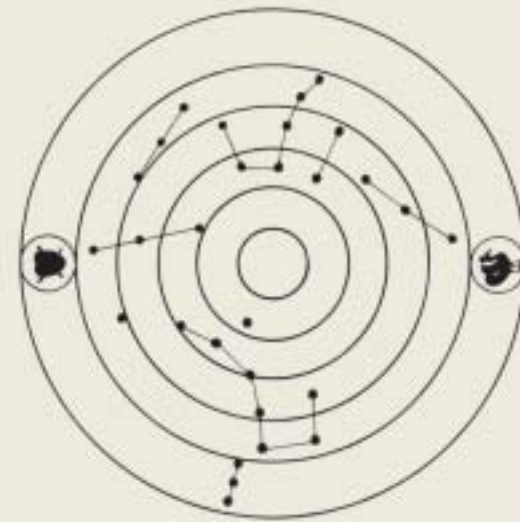
The name Gakjeochong, Tomb of Wrestlers, comes from the well-known wrestling scene painted on the wall of the main chamber. The tomb consists of an antechamber and a main chamber. One of its remarkable features is the representation of large trees with stylized branches and rich foliage on the walls of both chambers. The rest of the murals mostly are depiction of the daily life of the tomb occupant. Among many scenes, the portraits of the tomb occupant and his two wives are especially famous. On the borders of the ceiling and the main walls are flame patterns. The ceiling is covered with the sun and moon, and constellations as well as cloud patterns represented in flowing lines. It is regretful that the murals are hardly discernible today, for a large proportion of the mural has fallen off since its discovery.

### Entrance viewed from the main chamber

Although much defaced, two trees with stylized branches stand on either side of the entrance. On the corners are depictions of pillars topped with bracket sets, imitating the interior of wooden architecture. The rest of the wall is filled with clouds rendered in flowing lines, displaying the auspicious nature of the embellished space in the tomb.



Elevation and plan



Constellation on the ceiling of the main chamber



### Wrestling scene

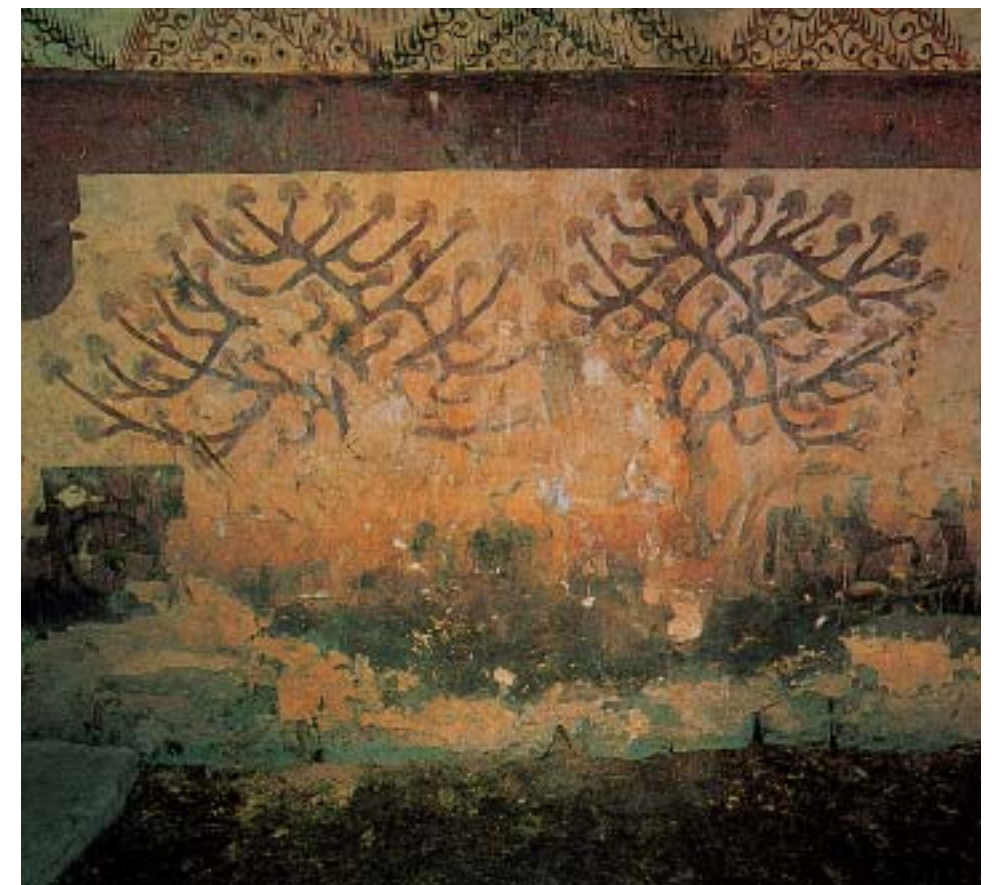
\_ South wall of the main chamber

This wrestling scene is the main theme of the tomb and covers the entire south wall of the main chamber. Under a big tree, two sturdy men are in a wrestle holding each other's thigh bands. To their left is standing an old man with a cane, who probably is a referee. The birds on the tree are watching the match with their heads craned out. In addition to being a popular sport among the Koguryo people, the wrestling most likely was one of the funerary rituals.

### A horse and a groom under the tree

\_ North wall of the main chamber

A carriage, horse and groom are depicted under two large trees with rich foliage and stylized branches. This scene probably is related to some kind of official outing of the deceased couple. The schematized trees show an early example of tree depiction.







Drinking tea with the deceased master(Replica) \_ East wall of the main chamber

The deceased master and his two wives are drinking tea in a room with drawn up curtains. The master is seated on a chair, while the wives are kneeling down. A sword, a bow and arrows laid around the master suggest that he is a warrior. The two ladies wearing jackets and pleated skirts show the costumes of the Koguryo women. The lady on the right is wearing a two-layered skirt with black hem. The portraits are notable for the inclusion of the figures in profile, which makes them distinct from those in the Pyeongyang region where most of the portraits are in frontal views. Below the figures are represented symbolic cloud patterns rendered in curvilinear lines displaying an auspicious atmosphere.

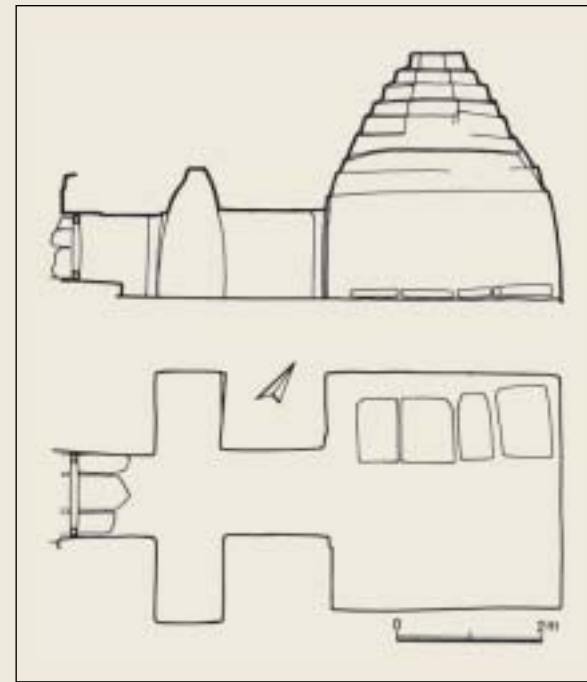


## 19

## Muyongchong

First half of the 5th century, South slope of Yushan  
Ji'an City, Jilin Province

This tomb, located next to Gakjeochong, is known for its famous hunting and dancing scenes. Its interior reminds of wooden architecture, with painted bracket sets and pillars in the corners of the walls. And its murals are some of the most remarkable tomb murals of Koguryo. In the ceiling are represented the sun and moon deities, blue dragon, white tiger, auspicious animals and immortals. The well-known hunting and dancing scenes are found on the walls of the main chamber.



Elevation and plan



Constellation on the ceiling of the main chamber

### Mural painting \_ Left side of the antechamber

The interior of the tomb appears as that of wooden architecture with painted bracket sets and lintels. Although the mural is severely damaged, flame patterns above the lintel are vaguely discernable.

### Tomb occupant receiving Buddhist monk \_ East wall of the main chamber

The deceased master of the tomb receives two guests who appear to be monks. In terms of curtains and interiors, this scene is similar to the scene in Gakjeochong Tomb. The attending servants are represented smaller than the master and the monks, which indicate that their social positions are lower than those of the main figures.



### Hunting scene \_ North wall of the main chamber

Hunters on horsebacks are dashing across the field surrounded by mountains. The space looks shallow and the animals appear stiff and motionless. Yet the rhythmical lines in the depiction of the mountains enliven the scene. Also, the careful arrangement of the hunters and chased animals successfully conveys the tension of the moment.







Dancing scene(Replica) \_ South wall of the main chamber

This is a banquet scene filled with dance, music and food. A group of men and women are dancing to the music, and three barefooted maids are bringing out foods from the house. In the middle, a figure on horseback that appears to be the tomb occupant is watching the dance. The designation of the tomb derived from this scene. It is also important in understanding the Koguryo people's love for music and dance.



Drawing of the dancing scene

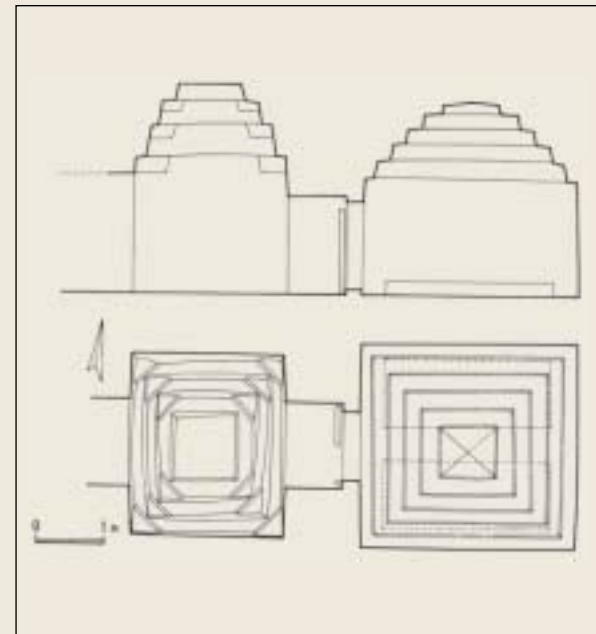


## 20

## Jangcheon Tomb No. 1

Mid-5th century, Ji'an City, Jilin Province

One of the most distinctive features of this tomb is its interior, which is completely covered with wall paintings. They deal with almost all kinds of subjects found in the Koguryo tomb murals, including lotus, decorative patterns, scenes of daily life, *apsaras*, bodhisattvas, Buddha worship, Four Directional Deities and gatekeepers.



Elevation and plan

### Guardians \_ Entrance on the east wall of the antechamber

The stone gate that once closed up the entrance to the main chamber still remains today. The gatekeepers are painted on either side of the entrance with their hands clasped. And they are dressed in the traditional Koguryo costume decorated with dots.



### Worshipping the Buddha \_ East ceiling of the antechamber

This is the sole depiction of a Buddha image with worshipers in the Koguryo mural paintings. The Buddha in the center with *dhyani mudra* is seated on a pedestal with two lions on its both sides. To the right is the deceased couple prostrating to pay worship to the Buddha. To the left are male and female figures standing with umbrellas. Lotus flowers and *apsaras* adorn the rest of the space, representing the serene ambience of the Buddhist paradise that the tomb occupants aspired.



Drawing of the gate keepers and the Buddha and worshipers on the east wall and ceiling of the antechamber



Drawing of the genre scenes, bodhisattvas, rebirth in lotus on the north wall and ceiling of the antechamber







#### Genre scenes \_ North wall of the antechamber

The wall is fully occupied by a number of events in everyday life such as dancing, juggling, wrestling, hunting and outings. Various scenes of people in different activities are represented in spacious area without any dividing devices, and the lotus buds scattered in the background bring unity to the painting. The activities depicted include those of an acrobat's juggling balls, hunters' chasing deer or shooting an arrow at a tiger, and dancers performing to the sound of Korean zither.



## 21

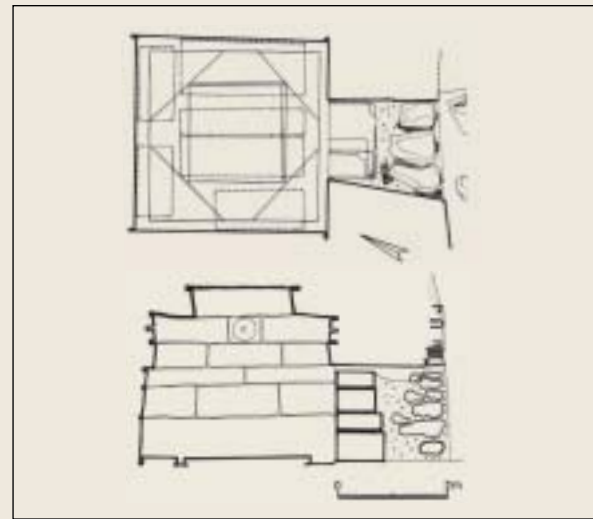
## Tonggu Sashinchong

Second half of 6th century, Ji'an City, Jilin Province

In this tomb, located near Gakjeochong and Muyongchong, are depictions of Four Directional Animals, immortals and monstrous beasts. They display the diverse beliefs of the Koguryo people. In terms of artistic aspect, these paintings show highly skillful techniques and lively brush strokes, demonstrating the distinct taste and culture of Koguryo kingdom.

## Red Phoenix \_ South entrance of the main chamber

A pair of red phoenixes are represented on either side of the entrance. These auspicious birds are facing each other and their wings wide spread. In their background appear fast moving clouds, creating a dynamic and vibrant atmosphere.



Plan and elevation



Drawing of ceiling mural of the main chamber



## White tiger \_ West wall of the main chamber

Among the Four Directional Deities, white tiger is the only non-imaginary animal. However, wings were added in order to accentuate its auspicious nature. Although this painting of white tiger is only partially discernible due to poor preservation, it seems to resemble closely to that of the blue dragon on the east wall in terms of composition and style. The lintel is adorned with refined patterns of honeysuckle vines. Above it the moon disk is represented in the square space between the triangular supports of the ceiling.



## Beasts \_ West corner of the main chamber

This is one of the four beasts in the corners of the main chamber, supporting the beams with their arms. Its beastly head and hairs on the arms and legs emphasize the extraordinary power of this imaginary creature.



## Blue dragon \_ East wall of the main chamber

Blue dragon symbolizing the east is fluently drawn in brilliant colors at the center of the east wall. Honeysuckle vines in vibrant colors decorate the lintel on the upper part of the wall.





**Black Warrior** \_ North wall of the main chamber

The black warrior is meticulously depicted with fine brushworks. Although the conventional style makes the animal look somewhat stiff, the vigorous movement the snake and fast moving clouds in the background bring liveliness to the painting. One can detect full tension in the part where the tortoise and the snake are facing each other with their mouths wide open. Similar black warriors are also found in Ohoe Tombs No. 4 and No. 5. It seems that this type of black warriors was typical in the Jian area tombs of the late period.

Black warrior before the damage



**Immortal riding on a crane** \_ Supporting stone on the south side of the ceiling

Among the ten celestial figures painted on the ceiling, two are immortals riding on cranes. Headgears, costumes and shoes suggest that they are transcendent beings, yet their slender bodies and natural their poses suggest their personified aspect.



**God of fire** \_ Supporting stone on the west side of the ceiling

Two seated figures are depicted side by side. One of them is writing at his desk and the other is making a fire under a tree. Both are donned in winged garments, suggesting that they are celestial beings. The figure seated on the right side is the personified god of fire.



**Honeysuckle Pattern** \_ Northwest corner of the main chamber

Honeysuckle pattern rendered in bright colors of yellow, red and green decorate the upper part of the four walls. This scroll pattern consists of a series of white, three-petal flowers embraced by symmetrically arranged honeysuckle leaves.



## 22

## Ohoe Tomb No. 4

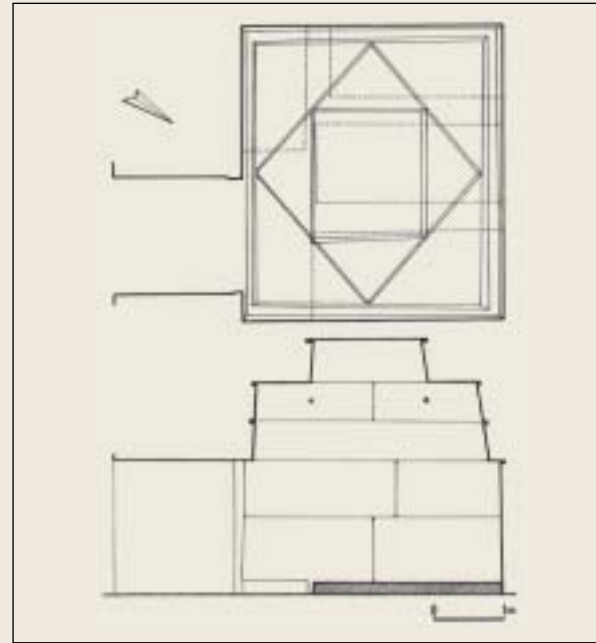
Late 6th century~early 7th century  
Dawangcun, Ji'an City, Jilin Province

‘Ohoe Tombs’ refers to a group of five tombs situated side by side on the foot of Yushan in Ji'an City. Among them, the Tombs No. 4 and No. 5 are both single chambered structures with lantern ceilings, and their murals share similar themes. The tombs are preserved in a fairly good condition.

In the main chamber of the Tomb No. 4 is realized a Taoist mandala. On its four walls are paintings of Four Directional Deities, and the ceiling is filled with depiction of mythical figures, immortals and various ornamental patterns. Especially notable are the background features in the paintings of the Four Directional Deities. They are curvy vine scrolls forming hexagonal shapes, and are unique in the paintings of the same theme in the later tombs of the Pyeongyang region.

## Red phoenix \_ South wall of the main chamber

As the entrance of this tomb is located on the east side of the south wall, it was impossible to draw a pair of phoenixes on either side of the entrance. Therefore, only one red phoenix is painted on the west side of the wall. Moreover, this phoenix is the sole example in which the bird is described as soaring upward among many phoenix paintings in the Koguryo murals.



Plan and elevation



Drawing of an immortal on the west wall of the main chamber

Drawing of an immortal on the south wall of the main chamber

## Gods of the sun and moon

\_ North side of the ceiling in the main chamber

On either side of the tree, the traditional Chinese gods of creation, Fuxi and Nuwa, are transformed into the gods of the sun and moon. Fuxi on the right is holding up the sun disk, which has vivid description of a three-legged crow inside. On the other hand, Nuwa on the left is upholding the moon disk with a toad inside. Both figures have characteristic features of immortals, especially the winged garments. This type of painting of Fuxi and Nuwa are not found in the Pyeongyang region, and only appear in the murals in the Jian area from the late period.



## Immortals riding on a dragon and a crane

\_ West side of ceiling in the main chamber

This painting shows a couple of immortals among the nine immortals in various appearances painted on the triangular stones supporting the ceiling. In the middle of the painting is a round disk with a toad, which represents the moon. Around it appears constellations and red clouds. The colors appear rich and sophisticated, and the natural poses and rhythmical movement of the immortals are deftly rendered with elegant and flowing lines.



## Immortals playing musical instruments \_ Second tier of the north ceiling of the main chamber

The immortal playing *jang-gu* (double-headed drum) appears in the center. To its right is another immortal playing *geomungo* (Korean harp with six strings), and to its left is a flying immortal holding a bowl with miraculous medicine. Surrounding them are red clouds and constellations. The fantastic world of the immortals is well delineated by means of the perfect harmony of fine colors and rhythmical lines.







### Blue dragon \_ East wall of the main chamber

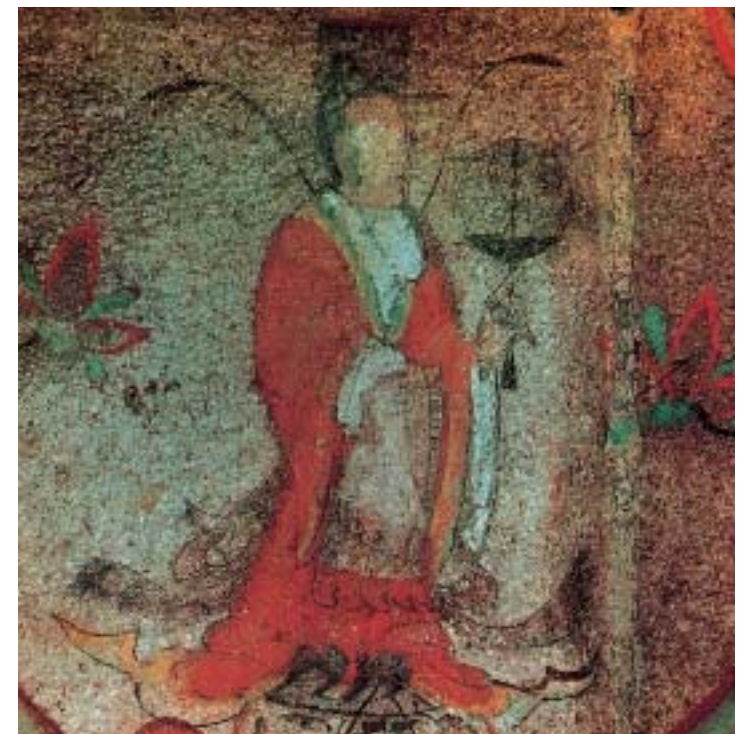
This painting of blue dragon is a most stunning example among a number of paintings of the Four Directional Deities in the Koguryo mural tombs. This painting shows a typical example of dragon in the late period, which has a bent neck, a long and slender body and a winding tail. Additionally, flame-like features and hair are attached on the back of the wings and neck. The background is covered with hexagonal patterns formed of curved honeysuckle vines. Together with flame patterns and lotus decorations, these background features enhance the fantastic atmosphere in the tomb.



### Gods of agriculture and fire

\_ East side of ceiling of the main chamber

On the left side of the triangular support of the ceiling is depicted a god of agriculture. He has a head of ox, and is wearing a robe with wings and shoes with pointed ends. The god of fire on the right appears to be flying, carrying a kindling in his right hand. The flowing brushstrokes and vivid colors highlight the supernatural atmosphere of the immortal world.



### Reborn Immortals \_ North wall of the main chamber

This painting shows an immortal being born from a lotus flower, located inside a vine scroll pattern on the north wall of the main chamber. Thin wings sprout out from the shoulders of the immortal, indicating that he was newly born as a transcendent being. In this icon is integrated the Buddhist idea of 'rebirth from a lotus flower' and the Taoist idea of immortality. It succinctly displays the creative artistic talent of the Koguryo people and their view of afterlife that combined Taoist and Buddhist ideas.



## 23

## Ohoe Tomb No. 5

Second half of 6th century  
Dawangcun, Ji'an City, Jilin Province

The shape of the lantern ceiling in this tomb is slightly different from that of Ohoe Tomb No. 4. Both tombs, however, resemble each other in that the interior walls are densely covered with various motifs in bright colors.

The themes such as Taoist immortals, the Directional Deities, mythical figures and intertwined dragons also appear in the Tomb No. 4. The distinct local character and the diversity of the Koguryo culture are manifest in the representation of Fuxi and Nuwa, the creators of mankind in Chinese myths. Furthermore, the tomb is unique in its colorful decorations, in which gold, other precious stones and primary colors are employed.



Plan and elevation



Drawing of ceiling painting in the main chamber



### Painting on the lantern ceiling

\_ North side of the main chamber

In this picture, one can see the structure of the lantern ceiling that consists of two layers of triangular and parallel supports. The lintel is decorated with intertwined dragons. Right above the lintel, another dragon is depicted on the parallel support, sustaining the upper structure with its back. On either side of this dragon are painted mythical figures including Fuxi and Nuwa. Other immortals playing musical instruments are seen on the upper level of the triangular support.

### Black warrior \_ North wall in the main chamber

In this painting of black warrior is captured powerful movement of the vigorously intertwined tortoise and the snake. In the background appear hexagonal patterns made of curved vine stems. All these features are similar to those in the Ohoe Tomb No. 4. This complicated composition is characteristic of the Four Directional Deities of the late period in the Ji'an region. While such characteristics appear in the painting of black warrior in Sasainchong Tomb in Tonggu, they are not found in the contemporary paintings of the Four Directional Deities of the Pyeongyang region.



### Immortals riding on a dragon and a girin \_ Northwest corner in the main chamber

Interestingly, the figures riding on dragon is wearing a king's headdress. Similar immortal also appears in Sasinchong in Tonggu. Some think that this figure may be the emperor of the heaven. An immortal riding on *qilin* behind him is facing backward. The bold brushstrokes and bright colors make the painting appear even more dramatic.



### Gods of the sun and the moon \_ Northeast corner wall in the main chamber

Fuxi and Nuwa, each holding the sun and the moon disks on their hands, derived from the Chinese myth of the creation of mankind. Here they are transformed into the gods of the sun and the moon respectively. This mythical couple has the bodies of dragons and human faces, and is dressed in winged garments. This type of Fuxi and Nuwa are found only in the Jian region of Koguryo and not in the murals in the Pyeongyang area.





### Blue dragon \_ East wall of the main chamber

This finest painting of blue dragon is comparable to that in Ohoe Tomb No. 4. The dragon is soaring up to the sky with its forelegs stretched out. In the background are a series of hexagonal patterns made of curved vine scrolls and decorated with flame patterns. The delicate yet vigorous brushworks and rich colors convey the fantastic atmosphere of the immortal's world. This painting exhibits the superb skill and sophisticated taste of the Koguryo people.



## II. Koguryo, An East Asian Hegemon

By Im Ki-hwan (Section chief, Koguryo Research Foundation)

Koguryo is one of the oldest kingdoms in the Korean peninsula. At the height of its power in the 5th century, Koguryo ruled over a vast territory that extended in all directions: In the north up to the Songhwa River valley (in today's Jilin Province, China), in the south down to the Han River valley and northern part of today's Gyeongsang Province in the peninsula. In the west it extended to the Liao River (today's Liaoning Province in China), and in the east to the Far Eastern Littoral States area (today's Jilin Province of China and parts of Russia). Koguryo at that time was one of the major powers along with the Chinese states that controlled the political order of East Asia.

### 1. Name and Ethnicity

The designation of "Koguryo" is divided into two parts. The first part, "Ko," is a Chinese character meaning "high" or "big." The second part, "guryo," is an old native Korean noun, meaning a town or fortress. Thus we can assume that the name of the kingdom indicate a big town or large fortress. After the 5th century, it was shortened as "Koryo." The people of the Maek tribe, who used to live along the middle section of the Yalu River valley in the 5th-4th centuries BCE, established Koguryo. In the course of developing into a kingdom, these people were joined by a branch of the Ye tribe who migrated from Buyeo, and together they formed the Koguryo people.

### 2. Founding of Koguryo

The spread of Iron Age culture that began around the 3rd century BCE laid the social infrastructure on which Koguryo was established. Meanwhile, the Han dynasty in China invaded Gojoseon and set up 3 commanderies, among which Lelang is included. And in Koguryo's territory, the Han established the Xuantu Commandery in 107 BCE. The

people of Koguryo, the original settlers in the region, resisted strongly against the presence of the Chinese commandery. The resistance gradually forced the Xiantu Commandery to move to the Liaodong region. After driving out the Xiantu Commandery, small states in the area formed a coalition with the king of Koguryo as its head. *Samguksagi* (The Historical Records of the Three Kingdoms, compiled in 1146 CE) recounts a founding legend of the Koguryo kingdom as following: "Jumong, the founder of Koguryo (r. 37-19 BCE), came southward from Buyeo and established a new kingdom together with the local forces in the Apnok [Yalu] River valley."

During the reign of King Taejo, Koguryo became a powerful state that exercised strong leadership over all the tribes within its domain. Its ruling system was consolidated, and its abilities to mobilize military forces grew significantly with the centralization of sovereign power. Also, its external activities for conquests and territorial expansions increased. Koguryo first annexed the regions of the Eastern Okjeo and the Eastern Ye, where agricultural and fishery resources were abundant, and continued to launch large-scale offensives against Chinese towns and commanderies. Koguryo's efforts for growth during this early period can be characterized as a series of struggles to drive the Chinese forces out of its territory.

### 3. Consolidation of Power and External Activities

Koguryo established a centralized government around the 4th century during the reign of King Sosurim, promulgating a set of state laws and reorganizing its domestic systems. Having solidified its political systems, Koguryo began its external campaigns for conquests, taking advantage of the political chaos in China, which is known

in history as the "Era of Five Barbarian Tribes and Sixteen States." In 313 CE, King Micheon overpowered the two commanderies of Lelang and Daifang, thus completely expelling the Chinese forces from the Korean peninsula. The fertile lands of the two commanderies gave Koguryo an important economic base for further development.

In the ensuing years, Koguryo advanced to Liaodong and became involved in an intense rivalry over the control of the region with the Early Yan, which was founded by the Mujung tribe of the Xianbei. Fighting the rivalry, Koguryo went through a serious crises in 342 CE, when its capital Gungnaeseong fell under the offensive of the Early Yan. In carrying out southerly expeditions, Koguryo also fought ferocious battles with Baekje, whose troops advanced all the way to Pyongyang Fortress in 371 CE. In this battle, Koguryo lost their king, Gogugwon.

When its westerly and southerly military expeditions repeatedly failed during the reign of King Gogukwon, Koguryo turned its attention inward, carrying out reforms to restructure domestic systems and establishing a more effective ruling mechanism. King Gogugwon's successor, King Sosurim promulgated statutes, set up Taehak, an academy of a higher learning, and propagated Buddhism. As a result, Koguryo was able to have a more stable and effective centralized ruling structure.

### 4. Establishing an Independent Power

Koguryo's successful reforms in this period paved the road for the vigorous external expeditions for conquests, launched by King Gwangaeto and King Jangsu in succession. During the reign of King Gwangaeto, the kingdom overpowered the Later Yan, founded by the Mujung tribe of the Xianbei, winning full control over Liaodong in the west. It also conquered Sushen as well as the Eastern Buyeo in the northeast. Further, the kingdom annexed Buyeo in the north, thus occupying a large part of southern Manchuria. To the south, Koguryo troops continued the offensive against Baekje. As a result, the kingdom's influence extended to the Han River valley. In addition, Koguryo exercised strong influence over Shilla.

During the reign of King Jangsu, Koguryo relocated its capital in Pyongyang and vigorously carried out the policy of southward expansion. As a result, it gained complete control over the middle section of the Korean peninsula. To the west, it also ventured out across the Liao River to fight

Northern Wei over the control of the Liaoxi region. It formed an alliance with the Later Yan and partitioned "Didouyu," a nomadic tribe who inhabited northwestern Manchuria, thus expanding its influence all the way to the Xing'an Mountain Ranges. Koguryo also annexed most of the Khitans in the upper valley of the Liao River.

The massive expansion of its territory gave Koguryo an opportunity to build up strong national power. This allowed the kingdom to establish an independent sphere in Northeast Asia. In the East Asian international order a balance of multiple powers was maintained. China was divided into Southern and Northern Dynasties, the Later Yan was prominent in the north, and Koguryo took control of its domain. Therefore, in the region after the mid-5th century relative political stability was maintained. In this international setting, Koguryo was also able to develop multilateral diplomatic ties with the Northern Wei, which it bordered, and the Southern Dynasties, as well as the Later



The Inscribed Stele of King Gwangaeto (414CE)



Yan to its north.

Koguryo's vigorous external activities led to greater contacts and exchanges with various countries in East Asia as well as those in Central Asia. They provided an opportunity to learn from diverse cultures. Eventually Koguryo developed a unique culture that was both rich and international.

The prosperity and international status Koguryo enjoyed then was reflected in the minds of its people. The inscriptions written on the extant stele at the Tomb of King Gwanggaeto and the Koguryo Stele discovered in the Jungwon region clearly demonstrate that the Koguryo people regarded their kingdom as the center of the world and took great pride in its position.

5. Changes in the Later Period

Koguryo encountered changes at home and abroad in the mid-6th century. At home, fierce political infighting over the throne among the ruling classes erupted and continued. No single group of aristocrats had a decisive victory, and it forced the kingdom to resort to a compromise for a coalition government. This coalition stayed on until near the end, when Yeon Gaesomun (?-666 CE), a prominent politician at that time, mobilized military forces, purged opposition aristocrats, and finally seized power.

Amid the deepening of domestic political crises, Koguryo also underwent several external crises as well. Taking advantage of internal political struggles in Koguryo, Baekje and Shilla launched a joint military offensive in 551 CE. This attack resulted in Koguryo's loss of much of its territory along the Han River valley in the middle section of the Korean peninsula.

Meanwhile, international politics in China were also undergoing a significant change around that time. The Sui dynasty, founded in 580 CE, conquered Chen of the Southern Dynasties in 589 and unified China, which had suffered from internal division for more than three hundred years. Having unified the continent, the Sui sought to build a unitary, Sino-centric international order. First, the Chinese dynasty conquered the Tujue (the Turks) in the north, and also took full control over the western region. Then, the Sui launched four expeditions against Koguryo in the east, including the one in 612 led by the Sui Emperor Yangdi himself. Although more than a million troops went on this offensive, Koguryo eventually defeated the Sui forces.

6. Collapse and Legacy

The Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), which succeeded the Sui, also launched an offensive campaign against Koguryo once it secured control over the northern and western regions. Its aim, like that of the Sui dynasty, was to establish a Sino-centric international order. Meanwhile, Shilla, which was oppressed by the attacks of Koguryo and Baekje, formed a military alliance with the Tang dynasty. The Tang-Shilla allied forces attempted to reorganize the political order in East Asia. In 645, Emperor Taizong (r. 627-657) of the Tang launched a massive offensive against Koguryo. However, the Tang troops were defeated by Koguryo's successful defense at Anshi Fortress.

Prolonged battles led to the gradual attrition of Koguryo's national strength. The fall of Baekje in 660 CE under the joint offensive of Shilla and Tang meant further isolation for Koguryo. Having secured military ground in the southern part of the Korean peninsula, the Tang began to attack Pyeongyang Fortress. This resulted in Koguryo's fighting of a two-fronted war, on northern and southern fronts. Koguryo's internal power struggle, which resurfaced at that time, significantly undermined its national strength. Finally in 668, a weakened Koguryo succumbed to the Shilla-Tang joint forces when its Pyeongyang Fortress fell into their hands. It was then that Koguryo, the prosperous, powerful state that occupied the Korean peninsula and Manchuria for more than 700 years and flourished with a highly cultivated culture came to an end. Its history, people, and legacies were succeeded by Balhae and Shilla.



Rubbing of the Inscribed Stele of King Gwanggaeto

III. Evolution of Koguryo Tomb Murals

By Jeon Ho-tae (Professor of History and Culture, Ulsan University)

1. First Phase: Aspiration for Prosperous Afterlife

The evolution of Koguryo's tomb murals can be discussed in three phases. The first phase covers a period from the late 3rd century through the early 5th century. During this period, the territory of the kingdom expanded greatly. The wall paintings of this phase were drawn on plastered surfaces inside tombs. By means of painting life scenes that were then popular, the tumuli were intended to physically restore or symbolically represent the house of the deceased during his/her life. Also, inside the tomb, the framework of a wooden house, including pillars and crossbeams, was painted in burgundy pigment onto the corners and the upper parts of surrounding walls to make the interior look like a house.

Portraying life scenes, often the achievements of the tomb occupant during his public life and the prosperity of his private life, appear prominently in the kingdom's mural art. It is related to the hope of reviving the life of the deceased in his/her afterlife. The murals of this stage often featured scenes of the deceased person or couple, dancing, singing and enjoying games, with servants serving them,

along with a long procession and those of hunters racing up and down the mountains and open fields. The figures appear in enlarged or reduced sizes according to their social status or the ranks of their official positions, and are wearing hats, hairdos, and clothes in varying sizes, designs, and colors (particularly, the sleeves and trousers are depicted in different lengths and widths).

Among the tumuli with life scenes found in the Pyeongyang/Anak region, the Anak Tomb No. 3 and the Deokheungri Tomb are most significant, with their ink inscriptions still extant. The Anak Tomb No. 3 (357 CE) is particularly famous for a 10.5-meter painting of a long procession in the gallery area featuring as many as 250 individuals. The Tokhungri Tomb, dated to 408 CE, has been known for the wall paintings that depict 13 county chiefs of Yuju (an administrative area in the northeast of northern China) bowing to the deceased master, Magistrate Jin, as well as the murals of 60 constellations, including Aquila (Altair) and Lyra (Vega), and of mystical and spiritual images representing the heavenly world.

Of the murals found in the Gungnae region (present-day Jian City, Jilin Province, China), belonging to the first



Flying *apsaras* in Jangcheon Tomb No. 1





Ceiling mural in Muyongchong

phase, the Gakjeochong, Tomb of Wrestlers, and the Muyongchong, Tomb of Dancers, are best known. Both tombs are situated at the southern foothills of Usan and face the southwest. Their interiors are divided into two sections, as the walls and the ceiling inside a wooden frame house. Large trees divide sections for the depiction of various themes.

Of the two, the Tomb of Wrestlers is easily recognized for the painting of two men, an aquiline-nosed man from West Asia and a Koguryo man, engaged in wrestling, as well as the portrait of the tomb occupant and his two wives. All these individuals in the murals, including the master couple and servants show the characteristic appearance of Koguryo people, whose faces are narrow and thin. They are clearly different from the individuals portrayed in the murals of the Anak Tomb No. 3, who have full and round faces.

The Tomb of Dancers, meanwhile, portrays scenes of hunters on horseback, dancing figures, two muscular men performing a martial art, lotus petals and buds hovering in the sky, as well as celestial figures such as immortals and auspicious animals (blue dragons and white tigers). The dancing scene is part of a larger painting that portrays the dead master venturing out on horseback followed by his attendant, while dancers and choir members see him off. The murals attest to the sophisticated artistic skills of the Koguryo painters in the Gungnae region during the early 5th century.

## 2. Second Phase: The Diversified Celestial World

The second phase in the evolution of Koguryo's mural art covers a period from the mid-5th to early 6th centuries. This was when Koguryo dominated Northeast Asia as one of the region's four major powers, along with the Later Yan in inner Asia and the Southern and Northern Dynasties in China. During this period, murals were created for one-chamber or two-chamber tumuli, featuring a variety of themes. Some show a mixture of life scenes and the Four Directional Animals, some life scenes and decorative patterns, and others have only decorative patterns. When the Four Directional Animals were painted in the interior of the burial-chamber, they always appeared in the order of blue dragon (left/east), white tiger (right/west), red phoenix (front/south), and black warrior (rear/north). It is assumed that these auspicious animals were painted in order to complement the geomantic disadvantages of the tomb, or when the tombs were built at a location where the animals could not exercise their strongest power.

A good number of tomb murals depicting life scenes and decorative patterns were excavated in the region of Gungnae, the kingdom's former capital and political and cultural center after the capital was relocated to Pyeongyang in 427 CE. Some of the popular decorative motifs were the spiral pattern, 'king' letter pattern, lotus-petals, clouds, intertwined dragons, and honeysuckle. Among them, the lotus-petal is important, for it appears in most of the murals. The popularity of the motif is relevant



Procession scene of Samsilchong

to the spread of Buddhism, which was notable during the 5th century. A lotus-flower pattern drawn inside the burial-chamber reflects the aspirations of the deceased for rebirth in the Buddhist Paradise.

As for the mural tombs of the second phase in the Gungnae region, the Jangcheon Tomb No. 1 and the Samsil Tomb are significant. The Jangcheon Tomb, a typical two-chamber tomb, has drawn attention for its paintings that depict the tomb occupant and his guests enjoying games, and the images of afterlife and Buddhist deities (Buddha and bodhisattvas), wrestler-like figures from West Asia who symbolically sustain the world of afterlife with their raised hands, and the two figures of rebirth from lotus flowers. As for the Samsil Tomb, it is an unusual structure in which three chambers are linked in a "U" shape. The images of the wrestler-like figures occupying the walls of the second and third chambers appear to be of the same ethnic background as the West Asian figures in the Jangcheon Tomb No. 1. These murals are evidence of the active cultural exchanges between Koguryo, Central Asia and West Asia.

Also of note is that in some tombs in the Pyeongyang/Anak region, the life scenes appear with the images of the Four Directional Animals. Initially, the animals were depicted with the constellations in the ceiling of the chamber. They later moved down to the wall areas, eventually occupying the entire wall, replacing the life scenes and becoming the main themes of the murals. The Ssangyongchong, the Tomb of Twin Pillars, the Susanri

Tomb and the Tokhwari Tomb No. 1 are among the best examples of the second phase tumuli discovered in the regions of Pyeongyang and Anak.

In the two-chamber Tomb of Twin Pillars, the most notable is the portrayal of figures, which are rendered in much more sophisticated and refined lines when compared with those in the previous paintings. In the paintings, men are wearing Koguryo hats ("Jeolpung"), jackets with rims of different colors, and loose-legged pants. Women are wearing similar kinds of jackets with rims of different colors and pleated skirts. Persons donning similar outfits appear on the murals of the Susanri Tomb as well. These materials enable us to conclude that the tradition of portraiture in Koguryo was established during the later part of the 5th century.

## 3. Third Phase: The Place for Eternal Rest

The third phase of the evolution of Koguryo mural art covers a period from the mid-6th century to the 7th century. In this period, the pan-Koguryo culture, which began flourishing in the later part of the 5th century, was reflected in the kingdom's mural art, even though the kingdom's status as a regional power and its role as a cultural hub of Northeast Asia then were being seriously challenged. The murals of this period were painted on the smoothened stone surfaces of the burial chambers. This shows that the artisans of the kingdom were familiar with manufacturing and handling of pigments. For the murals of one-chamber tombs, the Four Directional Animals were still favored.





*Apsaras and honeysuckle scrolls in Gangseodaemyo*

Throughout this final phase, the mural tombs were mostly built at the foot of mounds and all faced south; they were situated at the most propitious locations possible, with a mountain in the back and a wide open field in the front. In this period, each of the four directional animals occupied one full wall area of the burial chamber. This phenomenon explains that at that time, the auspicious animals were regarded not just as the guardians of the seven-stars in each of four directions, but as grand cosmic entities that would safeguard the afterlife. It was based on an admixture of the beliefs in heavenly beings and Buddhism.

The Gangseo Daemyo and Gangseo Jungmyo are representative examples of tombs of the third phase in the Pyeongyang region. They clearly show the changes in the mural art of this period. Koguryo's mural art now broke away from the artistic trends it inherited from the Chinese dynasties in the early 6th century, and fostered its own tradition.

In both tombs, the directional animals appear without any background features. Due to the skillful use of strokes and lucid colors, these imaginary animals appear as if they are present in front of the viewer. The murals of the black warrior in the Gangseo Daemyo and the white tiger in the Gangseo Jungmyo are particularly successful in creating a sense of liveliness in the imaginary animals. Additionally, in these murals, one can see varying depth of the space in the background and an ambiance in which the wall surfaces emerge as an eternal space in the heavenly world.

The mural tombs in the Gungnae region of the third

phase convey distinctive characteristics of Koguryo, and are often described as full of vigor and tension. Also, the tombs reflect the sumptuous and exquisite culture of the Gungnae region in the 6th century, as well as the characteristics of the late Koguryo culture. All the major characteristics of the Gungnae tombs are seen on the wall as well as in the murals on the triangular supporting rocks of the Ohoe Tombs No. 4 and No. 5.

The directional animals on the murals of the tombs are depicted in refined strokes. Below the animal are sequential hexagonal patterns, which are filled with honeysuckle stems/leaves, flames, honeysuckles with the rebirths of heavenly figures, and heavenly figures atop honeysuckle-lotus flowers. The bodies of the directional animals are depicted in minute detail and painted in magnificently lucid colors. However, the excessively visible outlines, color strips, and schematic descriptions decrease the aesthetic quality of the paintings.

The murals on the triangular supporting rocks in the two tumuli show the sun, the moon, and constellations. Also, the gods of civilization, including the gods of the sun, the moon, the fire, the agriculture, the blacksmith, the wheels, the whetstone, and heavenly figures holding musical instruments. The gods of the sun and the moon, holding up the sun and the moon discs convey the characteristic vigor and tension in Koguryo art. These characteristics cannot be found in the tomb murals of the Pyeongyang region, nor in the contemporary paintings of the Northern and Southern Dynasties in China.

## IV. Koguryo Tombs: Past and Present

By Kang Hyun-sook (Professor of Ancient Art, Dongguk University)

Koguryo's high cultural standards are reflected in its tombs. In particular, the stone-mound tombs and tombs with murals demonstrate Koguryo's high status as a powerful cultural center, as well as an influential state that commanded vast territory. However, in the study of the subject, are certain limitations as the territory that the kingdom used to rule straddles parts of China and North Korea.

The remains of Koguryo are found all across North Korea. For this reason, the North Koreans were highly aware of the fact that Koguryo was one of the most powerful states in world history. Even before the government of North Korea appeared, they duly recognized the importance of proper preservation of the historical sites and relics. Intensive investigations were conducted on the Koguryo tombs as well. The Anak Tomb No. 3 found in Anak, Hwanghae-do Province in 1949 and half a dozen Koguryo tombs unearthed in the process of building a dam from 1957 until 1959 along the Dokro-gang and Jaseong-gang Rivers, both tributaries of the Yalu River, offer invaluable materials for understanding the evolution of Koguryo tombs. In addition, since the 1990s, North Korea has been working on the restoration and preservation of the major tombs unearthed in and around Pyeongyang.

### 1. Tombs of Koguryo

Koguryo tombs appear in various types according to locations and periods. Among them, the most representative are the stone-mound tomb and the stone-chamber tomb covered with earthen-mounds. The mural tomb belongs to the latter type.

When making stone-mound tombs, first the body was laid on the ground, and its top was covered with stone blocks. They are recognized by the stone mounds rising above the ground. As building techniques improved, the appearance of

the tombs changed from the no-platform style to the platform style, then again to the tier style. The stone-mound tombs are again divided into two kinds: One is the tomb with a chamber for a single person, and the other is the tomb with a chamber for a deceased couple. Chronologically speaking, the former was followed by the latter.

As to the stone-chamber tomb covered with an earthen-mound, a stone chamber was made on the ground or half underground and was covered with soil. Generally, a married couple was buried together. In terms of the materials for the mounds, this type of tomb differs from the stone-mound type, which was indigenous to Koguryo. However, as to the structure of the burial part, the two types are similar, and they are both found within the same groups of tombs.

The “mural tombs” refer to the tombs with decorative paintings inside the burial chamber(s). There are cases in Jian, China where the murals are found in stone-mound tombs. Yet, those found in North Korea are all stone-chamber tombs covered with earthen-mounds. The structure of the mural tombs is complicated. Often, a stone platform was made around the base of the earthen mound. Inside the tomb, next to the room for the tomb occupant, an additional space was made for funeral rituals. When compared with the tombs without mural paintings, the mural tombs would cost far more. In this sense, we can assume that the mural tombs were built for the persons of high social standings.

The interior of the tomb chamber was entirely covered with paintings. They can be divided into two kinds. One is the painting on the plastered surfaces, and the other is the painting on the smoothened stone surfaces. The former show portraits of the deceased, life scenes and imaginary images of the celestial world. The latter mostly show depictions of the Four Directional Animals.



## 2. Koguryo Reflected in Tombs

Ancient tombs reflect the society of the time. Considering the scales of the stone-mound tombs and the paintings of the mural tombs, it is evident that Koguryo was not only a politically and militarily powerful state, but also a kingdom with a highly advanced culture.

### 1) Inheritor of Ancient Culture

The stone-mound tombs of the early Koguryo period located near the mid and lower Yalu River valley inherited the tradition of stone graves of the prehistoric era. In terms of the building technique and burial method, the stone-mound tombs are similar to the stone graves and dolmens in the Liaodong in China and the prehistoric stone-coffin graves in Jilin Province in China. Traditionally, the stone graves were used from the prehistoric times in the northeastern region in China, including Liaoning and Jilin Provinces. It was when the Han culture of the Central Plain expanded to this region that the graves with wooden coffins spread widely. It was not the case in the Koguryo region, in which we see the continuation of the stone tombs of the prehistoric era.

The stone-mound tombs were used for joint burials, which at that time were popular in East Asia. The tomb consists of a main chamber, a passage way and a vaulted ceiling, which was designed to make the interior to appear more spacious. During the time of Koguryo's territorial expansion, tombs of this type were constructed in various places within its domain. Balhae, the successor to Koguryo, also adopted this type for the tombs of the upper class. The stone-mound tombs were sometimes combined with the other type of stone-chamber tomb covered with earthen mound, which were then new.

The shift from the stone-mound tomb to the stone-chamber tomb covered with earthen-mound is irrelevant to the discontinuation of the Koguryo people. It is revealed in the mausoleum of King Dongmyeong, which was restored recently. The tomb consists of a chamber-stone-chamber, an earthen-mound, and a platform. The structure combined all the available structures at that time, which include that of the stone-mound tomb and also that of the stone-chamber tomb covered with earthen-mound. This tomb is important in showing that the stone-chamber and earthen-mound tomb type with a stone platform was built in Pyeongyang. Moreover, it is significant in showing the inclusive nature of the Koguryo tombs that embraced

various burial methods practiced in East Asia.

### 2) Powerful State with Vast Territory

The tombs in and around the mountain fortresses in northeast China and the northern part of the Korean peninsula show the various aspects of life and death of the Koguryo people. They also show the vast domain of the kingdom. In particular, the Anak Tomb No. 3 and the Deokhung-ri Tomb, suggest a possibility that Koguryo's influence extended from Hwanghae Province to the northeastern region in China.

The Anak Tomb No. 3 has large-scale murals with various contents and a unique structure with a corridor. An ink-written inscription found in the tomb shows that it was built in the mid-fourth century (357). The tomb was referred to as “Dongsu Tomb” at the early stage of its excavation, named after the figure Dongsu that appeared in the inscription. However, after the continuous examinations of the identity of the tomb occupant, it was concluded in the early 1960s that the tomb belonged to a king of Koguryo. Based on the archeological evidence of Mt. Jangsu fortress in Sinwon, Hwanghae Province, the tomb occupant was regarded as King Gogugwon. While it is uncertain whether the Anak Tomb belonged to the king, the existence of the large tomb in Hwanghae Province attests that the region was politically stable under the control of Koguryo.

As to the Deokheungri Tomb, it consists of two connected chambers and has an inscription on the wall of the passageway to the inner chamber, in which the body was placed. According to the inscription, written in the 18th year of Yeongnak (408) during the reign of King Gwanggaeto, the occupant of the tomb was Jin, who was once a magistrate of Yuju.

### 3) State with Advanced Culture

Remains and relics found in many parts of the Korean peninsula confirm that Koguryo was the political and cultural leader of the three kingdoms. The stone-mound tombs of Baekje found in the basin of the Han River, the tombs with murals discovered in the Shilla domain, as well as the building method of the stone-chamber tombs in Shilla, all evince the influential culture of Koguryo during that time. It is also illustrated in the personal ornaments, horse gears and other burial goods found in the stone-mound and wooden coffin tombs in the Shilla region.



View of Janggunchong

Koguryo's influence on Japan's funerary culture is well demonstrated in the tombs with murals. It is often pointed out that the wall paintings in the Takamatsu Tomb and the Kitora Tomb in Japan show Koguryo's influence. The women in long pleated skirts depicted in the murals of the Takamatsu Tomb are similar to those drawn in the wall paintings of the Susan-ri and Ssangyeong Tombs. In addition, the Four Directional Animals shown in the Kitora Tomb murals are similar to those of the Koguryo tombs.

The influence of Koguryo seen in the tomb murals of Japan and the Korean peninsula demonstrates Koguryo's prominent position in this region as a culturally powerful state.

## 3. The State of the Field and Future Research

It has been almost a century since the research on the Koguryo tombs began. Since the investigation of the Gangseo Daemyo in the 1900s, about 100 tombs with murals have been inspected. In particular, the structure of the Taseong-ri Tomb No. 3 that is similar to that of the Anak Tomb No. 3, and the linear depiction in the murals of the Geumokri Tomb, which were examined after the 1990s, serve as good examples of the variety in the tomb structures and drawing techniques in the Kogoryo tombs. The increased new data provided a basis for the new interpretations on the origin and development of the Koguryo tombs with murals. Furthermore, the contents of the mural paintings provide important information about the Koguryo society.

One of the important outcomes of the research concerns

the origins of the mural tombs. Until the 1960s, it was considered that the tombs were constructed under the influence of China or the countries to the west of China. The excavations of the tombs in North Korea's Dongro and Jaseong Rivers in the 1950s, however, suggested a possibility that the tombs developed from the indigenous Koguryo tombs. Moreover, the recent research showed the transition from stone-mound tomb to the stone-chamber tomb covered with earthen-mound. Also, the use of stone for tombs, decorative patterns, and tombs with the Four Directional Animals show that the Koguryo tombs with murals were not mere imitations of their Chinese counterparts.

These new scholarly achievements owe much to the findings in China. The Jeolcheonjeong Tomb and the Wusanha Tomb No. 41 both in Jilin Province are stone-mound tombs with murals. It shows that the Koguryo people, who used stone-mound tombs, adopted murals. This resulted in the combination of Koguryo's traditional tomb system and new tomb type. This understanding revised the previous view of the appearance of the mural tombs in Koguryo. It is certain that the cooperation of North Korea and China will bring a better result in the study of Koguryo tombs.

The Koguryo tomb murals are not only a repository of infinite information about Koguryo society, but are also well-preserved cultural assets in East Asia. It is for this reason that the move to have the Koguryo tomb murals registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List began. It is our responsibility to investigate, conduct research on and preserve them.



List of Koguryo Tombs with Mural Paintings

Name	Location	Presumptive Age	Name	Location	Presumptive Age
Pyeongyang and Anak Areas			Cheonwangjisinchong	Bukchang-ri, Eunsan-gun, South Pyeongan Province	5th ~ 6th centuries
Anak Tomb No. 3	Oguk-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province	357 CE	Gaemachong	Nosan-ri, Samseok Area, Pyeongyang	5th ~ 6th centuries
Bongseongri Tomb	Bongseong-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province	Mid 4th century	Suryeopchong	Oncheon-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Early 6th century
Yodongseongchong	Yongbong-ri, Suncheon-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Mid and late 4th century	Honamri Sashin Tomb	Seongmun-ri, Samseok Area, Pyeongyang	Early 6th century
Taeseongri Tomb No. 1	Gangseo-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Mid and late 4th century	Seongchong	Shinyeong-ri, Oncheon-gun, South Pyeongan Province	First half of 6th century
Pyeongyangyeokjeon Tomb	Waeseong Area, Pyeongyang	Mid and late 4th century	Gosanri Tomb No. 1	Gosan-ri, Daeseong Area, Pyeongyang	First half of 6th century
Dongamri Tomb	Dongam-ri, Suncheon, South Pyeongan Province	Second half of 4th century	Jinpari Tomb No. 4	Yongsan-ri, Yeokpo Area, Pyeongyang	6th century
Gamshinchong	Shinyeong-ri, Oncheon-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Late 4th ~ early 5th centuries	Jinpari Tomb No. 1	Yongsan-ri, Yeokpo Area, Pyeongyang	Second half of 6th century
Dongmyeongwang Tomb	Yongsan-ri, Yeokpo Area, Pyeongyang	Late 4th ~ early 5th centuries	Naeri Tomb No. 1	Nosan-ri, Samseok Area, Pyeongyang	Second half of 6th century
Anak Tomb No. 1	Daechu-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province	Late 4th ~ early 5th centuries	Gangseo Daemyo	Sammyo-ri, Gangseo Area, Nampo	Second half of 6th ~ first half of 7th centuries
Deokheungri Tomb	Deokheung-ri, Gangseo Area, Nampo	408 CE	Gangseo Jungmyo	Sammyo-ri, Gangseo Area, Nampo	Second half of 6th ~ first half of 7th centuries
Yaksuri Tomb	Yaksu-ri, Gangseo-area, Nampo	Early 5th century	Joari Tomb	Joa-ri, Jaseong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Second half of 6th ~ first half of 7th centuries
Taeseongri Tomb	Taeseong-ri, Gangseo-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Early 5th century	Seohaeri Tomb	Seohae-ri, Jaseong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	
Gajangri Tomb	Gajang-ri, Jungsan-gun, South Pyeongan Province	First half of 5th century	Beopdongri Tomb	Beopdong-ri, Jaseong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	
Yeonhwachong	Gangseo-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Second half of 5th century	Songamri Tomb	Songam-ri, Jaseong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	
Daeanri Tomb No. 1	Daean-ri, Yonggang-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Second half of 5th century	Ji'an Area		
Ssangyongchong	Yonggang-gun, Nampo,	Second half of 5th century	Tonggu Tomb No. 12	Ji'an City, Jilin Province	
Susanri Tomb	Susan-ri, Gangseo Area, Nampo	Second half of 5th century	Moduruchong	Xiajiefangcun, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Late 4th ~ early 5th centuries
Wusanri Tomb No. 1	Wusan-ri, Nampo,	Second half of 5th century	Gakjeochong	South slope of Yushan, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Early 5th century
Wusanri Tomb No. 2	Wusan-ri, Nampo,	Second half of 5th century	Muyongchong	South slope of Yushan Ji'an City, Jilin Province	First half of 5th century
Wusanri Tomb No. 3	Wusan-ri, Nampo,	Second half of 5th century	Miinchong	Shanchengzi, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	First half of 5th century
Unnyong-ri Tomb	Unnyong-ri, Pyeongwon-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Second half of 5th century	Jangcheon Tomb No. 1	Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Mid 5th century
Gosanri Tomb No. 9	Gosan-ri, Daeseong Area, Pyeongyang	5th century	Hwanmunchong	Xiajiefangcun, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Mid 5th century
Yonggang Daemyo	Yonggang-gun, Nampo,	5th century	Sanyeonhwachong	Yushan, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Second half of 5th century
Palcheongri Tomb	Daedong-gun, South Hwanghae Province	5th century	Samsilchong	Yushan, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Second half of 5th century
Boksari Tomb	Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province	5th century	Maseongu Tomb No. 1	Ji'an City, Jilin Province	5th century
Bosanri Tomb	Bosan-ri, Daedong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Late 5th century	Gugapchong	Shanchengzi, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Late 5th ~ early 6th centuries
Anak Tomb No. 2	Daechu-ri, Anak-gun, South Hwanghae Province	Late 5th ~ early 6th centuries	Tonggu Sasinchong	South slope of Yushan, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Second half of 6th century
Deokhwari Tomb No. 1	Deokhwa-ri, Daedong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Late 5th ~ early 6th centuries	Ohoe Tomb No. 5	Dawangcun, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Second half of 6th century
Deokhwari Tomb No. 2	Deokhwa-ri, Daedong-gun, South Pyeongan Province	Late 5th ~ early 6th centuries	Ohoe Tomb No. 4	Dawangcun, Ji'an City, Jilin Province	Late 6th ~ early 7th centuries