

Koguryō Murals and their Silk Road Connections

ABSTRACT

Sergey Lapteff

In Korean history the period of ancient Koguryō Kingdom (277 BC – 668 AD) is the time of particular significance. Undoubtedly, it was the era when the Korean state was one of the strongest. With its capital at Pyongyang, Koguryō occupied vast territories of the northern and central parts of the Korean Peninsula, the Liaodong Peninsula, Manchuria, and Primorye, held a strategic position at the crossroads of routes linking the Chinese plains with the regions of Northeast and Central Asia. During the time when China was divided between Northern and Southern dynasties, Koguryō exerted overwhelming influence across East Asia. Its territory was comparable to other large political entities of the period, such as Parthia, Mauryan Empire and Byzantine.

Koguryō left us numerous fortresses and tombs across Korea and northeastern China, but the most important sites are concentrated around Pyongyang and Jian in Jilin Province.

Keywords

Koguryō Kingdom, Pyongyang, Korean Peninsula, Northeast and Central Asia, Fortresses and Tombs.

ARTICLE INFO

Received 11/4/2026

Accepted 30/4/2026

جداريات مملكة كوجوريو وصلاتها بطريق الحرير

ملخص

في التاريخ الكوري، تعتبر فترة مملكة كوجوريو القديمة (277 ق.م – 668 م) فترة ذات أهمية خاصة. حيث مثلت الحقبة التي كانت فيها كوريا واحدة من أقوى الدول. مع عاصمتها بيونج يانج، احتلت كوجوريو مساحات شاسعة من الأجزاء الشمالية والوسطى من شبه الجزيرة الكورية، وشبه جزيرة لياودونج، ومنشوريا، وبريموري، واحتلت موقعًا استراتيجيًا عند مفترق الطرق التي تربط السهول الصينية بمناطق شمال شرق ووسط آسيا. خلال الفترة التي كانت فيها الصين مقسمة بين الاسر الشمالية والجنوبية، كان لكوجوريو نفوذًا كبيرًا في جميع أنحاء شرق آسيا. وكانت أراضيها مماثلة لأراضي الكتل السياسية الكبرى الأخرى في تلك الفترة، مثل بارثيا، والإمبراطورية المورانية، والبيزنطية.

لقد تركت لنا كوجوريو العديد من الحصون والمقابر في جميع أنحاء كوريا وشمال شرق الصين، ولكن أهم المواقع تتركز حول بيونغ يانغ وجيان في مقاطعة جيلين.

سيرجي لابتيف

الكلمات المفتاحية

مملكة كوجوريو، بيونج يانج، شبه الجزيرة الكورية، شمال شرق ووسط آسيا، الحصون والمقابر

بيانات المقال

تاريخ الاستلام 2026 /4/11

تاريخ القبول 2026 /4/30

During Koguryŏ Kingdom period numerous fortresses and tombs been found in Korea and northeastern China among of them are, Taesŏngsan Fortress (Taesŏngsan district of Pyongyang), Hwangryongsan Fortress (Ryonggang County, South Pyŏngan Province), Kuknae Fortress (Tonggu, in Jian City, Jilin Province, China) (Fig.1), and the Suyangsang Fortress (Haeju City, South Hwanghae Province), the Buddhist temple Chŏngrŭngsa (Ryŏkp'ŏ district of Pyongyang); as well as a large number of burial mounds, including the Tomb of King Tongmyŏng (Ryŏkp'ŏ district of Pyongyang), the Tomb of the General (Changgun, in Jian City, Jilin Province), Anak Tomb No. 3 (the tomb of King Kogukwon, Anak County, South Hwanghae Province), Tŏkhŭng-ri, Yaksu-ri, and the Three Tombs of Kangsŏ (Kangsŏ district of Nampho), Chŏnwangjisŏn (Sunchŏn City, South Pyŏngan Province), Jinp'ari No. 4 (Ryŏkp'ŏ district of Pyongyang), and many others (Fig.2).



Fig.1. Suyangsang Fortress. Haeju City, South Hwanghae Province, Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.2. Koguryŏ burial mounds in Ryŏkp'ŏ District (Pyongyang, DPRK). V-VI centuries AD. Photo by

Sergey Lapteff

More than 90 tumulus tombs are decorated with mural paintings, which became a distinctive feature of Koguryŏ culture in ancient Korea [Chosŏn... 2008; Sahwe kwahakwon 1977; Ju Yŏng Hŏn 1972; Son Su Ho 2001; Son Yeong Jong 2006]. Murals of burial complexes of Koguryŏ dated to IV-VII centuries are an important source for studying of the cultural connections of the Korean Peninsula in this period. These murals can be divided into two main types: genre scenes (as in Anak and Tŏkhŭng-ri) and Four Guardian Deities (sasin). The example of the latter can be seen in Kangsŏ tombs (late VI – VII century AD) (Fig.3). They depict four sacred animals oriented by four directions, as in Chinese tradition: Blue Dragon (East), White Tiger (West), Vermilion Bird (South), Black Tortoise (North). They correspond also to four seasons, four preliminary elements, and other cosmological principles in Chinese tradition (Fig.4). Similar imagery appears in Japanese tombs such as Takamatsuzuka and Kitora, demonstrating Koguryŏ influence [Kwon Gi Hong 1997, pp. 32–37]. A well-known example is the model of the celestial bodies in the sky of the Kitora Tomb in Nara, which, according to astronomer Miyajima Kazuhiko, represents the sky of Pyongyang, not Nara [Miyajima 2006; 2007]. Thus, such tombs represent a model of the universe. The deceased ancestor is placed within a cosmological structure.



Fig.3. Great Kangsŏ Tomb (Kangsŏ District, Nampho City, DPRK). Late VI – VII century AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.4. Murals in the Great Kangsŏ Tomb (Kangsŏ District, Nampho). Late VI – VII century AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

Another type of murals is represented in early type of tombs, such as Anak Tomb No. 3, Tŏkhŭng-ri, Changgun, Yaksu-ri and others demonstrate a highly developed pictorial tradition, including scenes of banquets, hunting, processions, military exercises and noble daily life (Fig.5). As Ancient Koguryŏ played important role on the trade routes in Eurasia (so called Silk Road) – no wonder that they show connections with the culture of other peoples, together with the unique features of Korean culture, culture of their creators [Pak Jun Ho 2012, p.24]. Their compositional techniques, iconography, and certain elements of costume show close parallels with the

mural painting of Sogdiana and Bactria (Panjikent in Sughd Region, Tajikistan, Afrasiab in Samarkand, Uzbekistan), as has been repeatedly noted by Korean and foreign researchers [Cho Hŭi Sŭng 2001; Albaum 1975; Marshak 2002] (Fig.6). In particular, similarities can be seen in choosing the subjects of the murals, such as frontal banquet scenes, depictions of seated figures holding raised cups, as well as in dynamic compositions of mounted hunting (Fig.7).



Fig.5. Equestrian procession. Mural. Anak Tomb No. 3 (Tomb of King Kogukwŏn (331-371 AD), Anak County, South Hwanghae Province). IV century AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

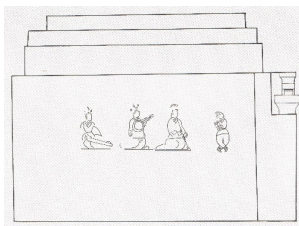


Fig.6. Dancing figure. Mural on the eastern wall of the rear burial chamber of Anak Tomb No. 3 (Tomb of King Kogukwŏn, Anak County, South Hwanghae Province, IV century AD). Line drawing of the mural [Chosŏn... 1990; Cho Hi Sŭng, 2001]



Fig.7. Hunting scene in the mural of the Tŏkhŭng-ri Tomb, Kangsŏ District, Nampho City (409 AD) [Bureau...1979]

In the same time the structure of the tombs itself is typically Korean, reflecting adoption of Eurasian painting tradition towards the beliefs of the Korean people. Korean tombs are typically round [Chosŏn...

1990; 1992]. This tradition continued even after Koguryŏ into later periods. Numerous tumuli of various dates are scattered throughout the mountains of Korea. Even in modern times, circular tombs remain standard—for example, those of soldiers who died in the Liberation War.

Korean tombs are located in elevated places such as mountains. Scenic beauty is considered an important factor. A legend concerning the tomb of King Kongmin (1365–1376) in Kaesŏng tells that when searching for a burial site for his queen Noguk Kongju (d. 1365) and himself, the king demanded the most beautiful location. After rejecting several proposals, he imprisoned the man who suggested the final site, intending to execute him if dissatisfied. When the king climbed the mountain, he was delighted with the view but accidentally wiped his sweat with a white cloth—mistaken below as a signal for execution. The man was killed, and the king later deeply regretted it. Though seemingly anecdotal, such stories reflect the importance placed on burial location. Indeed, Koguryŏ tombs are still situated in places with striking views.

This is closely linked with the fact that in the beliefs of the Korean people, ancestors hold a particularly important significance. In 1898, when traveling in northern Korea, the Russian railway engineer Nikolay Garin-Mikhaylovsky (later a famous novelist) noted the following: “People here believe that they can discover an auspicious burial place for their ancestors, and they devote their entire lives searching for it” [Garin 1916, p. 103]. He also wrote: “Searching for an auspicious grave is extremely laborious. Sometimes the remains must be exhumed and reburied several times” [Garin 1916, p. 108].

As noted above, in Korean belief the auspicious grave of ancestors determines the prosperity and happiness of their descendants in the living world. Unless the soul of the ancestor rests peacefully in a favorable place, the success of descendants is impossible. Ancestor worship, which exists in many forms, begins first with securing the best possible burial site. This idea had already formed in antiquity and is reflected in archaeological remains and artifacts [Hwang Chŏl Hak 2013]. Korean people have carefully preserved this tradition. Even when relocation of ancestral graves is not physically possible, it is said to be realized “in the mind.”

The most important criterion for selecting a burial site is its “auspiciousness.” This is not determined visually but by invisible spiritual qualities. According to Garin-Mikhaylovsky, those capable of identifying such sites were central figures in late XIX-century Korean society. The success of the living depended on whether ancestors were buried in auspicious places.

Koguryŏ aristocratic tombs are mound-shaped and located on the highest points of the surrounding area. Although appearing circular, some reveal square foundations—for example, the tomb of King Tongmyŏng in the Rakrang District of Pyongyang. According to Ju Yŏng Hŏn, Koguryŏ tombs were originally pyramidal in form [Ju Yŏng Hŏn 1960; 1960a; 1972] (Fig.8).

Inside the tomb there is a stone chamber with either a square ceiling or a corbelled dome. The entrance is always oriented south. The internal structure varies: small tombs have a single chamber, while larger ones include corridors and multiple rooms (Fig.9).



Fig.8. Tomb of King Tongmyŏng (Ryŏkp’o District, Pyongyang, ca.37-19 BC). Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.9. Tomb of a princess of the period of King Pyŏngwŏn (Ryŏkp’o District, city of Phyŏngyang, ca.559-590 AD). Photo by Sergey Lapteff

A notable example is Tomb No. 3 at Anak, discovered in 1949 in South Hwanghae Province. It consists of a main burial chamber, an antechamber, side rooms, and corridors. The murals are extensive and complex [Chosŏn...1958]. The tomb owner “Tong Su” is identified through an inscription mentioning his titles granted by the Jin dynasty and the date Yonghe 13 (357 AD). Korean scholars identify him as King Kogukwon (331-371 AD) [Kim Sŏng Chŏl 2006] (**Fig.10**). Murals in this tomb depict daily life (kitchen, stables, storehouses), attendants, wrestling scenes (ssirŭm), and processions. The eastern corridor shows a large procession with hundreds of figures accompanying the tomb owner in an ox-cart—one of the finest examples of Korean mural painting (**Fig.11**).



Fig.10. Anak Tomb No. 3 (Tomb of King Kogukwŏn, Anak County, South Hwanghae Province). IV century AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.11. Murals in Anak Tomb No. 3 (Tomb of King Kogukwŏn, Anak County, South Hwanghae Province). IV century AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

The murals suggest symbolic spatial organization. The western chamber appears to hold special significance, possibly for ancestral rites. The tomb may not have been sealed immediately after burial. Like in Japan, the custom of temporary enshrinement existed: bodies could remain unburied for days or even months, as recorded by Garin.

The Tŏkhŭng-ri tomb (dated by inscription to AD 409) provides further evidence of this practice (**Fig.12**). Its murals resemble those of Anak but differ in layout. The tomb contains two chambers, and the owner is depicted prominently. Ritual tables suggest that ancestral rites were performed there.

Unlike Anak, Tŏkhŭng-ri murals emphasize processions, cavalry, and attendants rather than daily life scenes. The deceased is depicted between the worlds of the living and the afterlife, represented on the ceiling with celestial imagery (**Fig.13**).

Tŏkhŭng-ri murals have features related to Eurasian cultures. The key in understanding of the connections between them lays in Old Nisa murals in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, one of the brightest illustrations of Hellenistic symbiosis in mural painting (**Fig.14**).



Fig.12. Tŏkhŭng-ri Tomb (Kangsŏ District, Nampho City). 409 AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.13. Murals in Tökhüng-ri Tomb (Kangsö District, Nampho City). 409 AD. Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.14. Old Nisa Site, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. III-I centuries BC. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

If we do not consider the Mesolithic paintings in the Zaraut-sai grotto (Surkhandarya Region, Uzbekistan)—which represent not a Hellenistic tradition but a locally developed primitive one (and are more appropriately compared with Paleolithic cave paintings such as those in the Lascaux grotto in France)—Old Nisa frescoes are the earliest in Central Asia, executed according to Greek classical canons [Albaum 1975, p. 87]. Murals of such antiquity as those from Nisa are rare both in Asia and in the Mediterranean.

In Greece, murals are known from the island of Thera (Santorini, South Aegean, Greece), dated to the XVII century BC [Kodai... 2016, pp. 96–97]. Already here

one observes alternating longitudinal multicolored ornamental bands framing the composition above and below, a feature characteristic for later Greek frescoes and also attested in Old Nisa [Pilipko 2001, pp. 269–271]. The wall paintings of the palace at Knossos on Crete (XVI–XV centuries BC) are another world-famous example of this tradition.

Nevertheless, such early mural painting is relatively scarce in Greece. Of great importance are the murals discovered in Macedonia, dated to the reign of Philip II (359–336 BC), father of Alexander the Great (336–323 BC). A hunting scene is well preserved in the so-called Tomb of Philip II at Vergina, Greece. Based on similarities with the famous scene of Alexander's battle with Darius at Issus, preserved in the well-known mosaic copy from Pompeii (Naples, Campania, II century BC), it has been suggested that one of the hunters is the young Alexander [Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 2007, pp. 52, 54].

Parallels of this mural scene can also be seen in the Nisa painting from Tower Hall: the figure of a young Alexander on horseback with a raised spear resembles the rider with a spear from Nisa. However, differences exist in color scheme (red dominates in Philip's tomb) and in the orientation of the riders' bodies. A chariot scene is also preserved in the nearby to the Tomb of Philip II so-called "Tomb of Persephone," named for the abundance of scenes depicting this goddess.

It should be noted that Macedonian frescoes and mosaics became prototypes for copying in Pompeii, as in the case of the Alexander battle. Another example is mural from the villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale near Pompeii (second half of the I century BC – I century AD), which copy frescoes from the palace of Demetrius Poliorketes in the Macedonian capital Pella, depicting mythological scenes, and those from

Macedonian court life [Palagia 2014, pp. 207–231]. Pompeian wall paintings are essentially contemporaneous with those of Nisa, sometimes slightly earlier, dated to the II century BC – I century AD [Aoyagi, Pappalardo 2006, p. 7].

Before discussing their similarities with Nisa, let us consider the main features of the latter. In the Square Hall Building, the murals are characterized by meander and wave patterns (typical Greek ornaments), vegetal ornamentation, multicolored bands, red triangles, a predominance of red color (hence the “Red Hall”), and painted imitations of Ionic capitals (Fig.15).

Excavations revealed fragments of a battle scene with four horsemen; due to the clearly visible spear held by one of them, the composition was named “Rider with a Spear” [Pilipko 2011, pp. 266, 268–270] (Fig.16). Notably, one warrior turns his face backward—a feature characteristic of the later “Parthian shot,” widely spread in Central Asia and the Far East (including Korea), although here no bow is depicted. Two warriors carry quivers. The Tower structure frescoes are dated to the I century BC, and those of the Square Hall Building by the I century BC – I century AD [Pilipko 2001, pp. 269, 273].



Fig.15. Base of a column, Old Nisa. I century BC (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan). Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.16. Fragments of frescoes from the Tower Structure, Old Nisa. I century BC. Museum of Fine Arts of Turkmenistan (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan). Photo by Sergey Lapteff

The Tower Structure is characterized by a banded ornament, a vegetal shoot (white on a black background), and a rosette of acanthus leaves, instead of the grape motif popular in the art of Central Asia [Pilipko 2001, p. 280]; at the same time, the meander is absent here [Pilipko 1996, p. 47–50; Pilipko 2001, p. 269–277, pl. VII; Milli mirasyň hazynasy 2017, S. 124–125]. In addition, several figural compositions depicting people and animals have been preserved in the Tower Structure. Most of them are connected with representations of mounted warriors and battle scenes that formed a unified frieze painting. Two groups of riders are present here, conventionally called “right” and “left” — the Parthians and their opponents fighting each other [Pilipko 2001, p. 277–278, pl. VI].

The Nisa paintings represent one branch of the Greek pictorial tradition and, at the same time, were executed in accordance with Parthian tastes, reflecting the demands specifically of the king and his entourage, since

rural estates belonging to the local elite demonstrate a completely different pictorial tradition [Pilipko 2001, p. 281].

The subjects of Pompeian wall paintings consist of everyday scenes or themes from Greek mythology; battle scenes are not characteristic for them, and the presence of warriors illustrates either mythological subjects or gladiatorial combat. Instead of horsemen, chariots are depicted [Sekai... 2016, p. 84–85].

At the same time, their decorative style is characterized by a number of features also typical of Nisa wall painting. First of all, this is the extensive use of a red background, similar to the “red room,” on which narrative scenes unfold, as in the Villa Carmiano, in the House of Marcus Fabius Rufus, in the “painting with a divine landscape,” and others in Pompeii [Aoyagi, Pappalardo 2006, p. 281, 329–341; Sekai... 2016, p. 55, 65–71; MIHO MUSEUM 1997, p. 144–145]; the combination of red bands with a blue background [Sekai... 2016, p. 47–53]; longitudinal and transverse bands of vegetal ornament [Aoyagi, Pappalardo 2006, p. 169–173]; and the depiction of an Ionic capital [Aoyagi, Pappalardo 2006, p. 182]. Also, characteristic is the stylistic similarity between the depiction of a female head in Nisa and the images of muses in the “House of the Golden Bracelet” [Aoyagi, Pappalardo 2006, p. 109].

The battle of horsemen, reminiscent of the relief scene in Firuzabad (Fars Province, Iran, ca. 240 AD), depicting the future Sasanian king Shapur I (241–272 AD) on horseback knocking a Parthian nobleman from his horse with a spear [Lukonin 1977, p. 147], as well as a possible tearing scene—a typical motif in Mesopotamian and Parthian plastic art. In general, very few objects with Parthian and Mesopotamian murals have

survived. These include frescoes in cult buildings and private houses in Dura-Europos in Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria (III century BC – III century AD) [Roztovtzeff 1938] and in the palace-temple complex (the so-called palace of Gondophares) at Koh-i Khwaja in Iranian Sistan and Baluchestan Province, which is dated to the same period [Kawami 1987, p. 15]. Minor fragments have also been preserved elsewhere, testifying to the wide distribution of fresco painting in the Parthian period [Kawami 1987, p. 25].

The frescoes of Dura-Europos preserved in the synagogue, the Christian church, the temples of Zeus and Mithra, and partly in private houses. They mainly represent scenes from the Old and New Testaments, and in the temples of Zeus and Mithra—scenes of sacrifice and boar hunting [Roztovtzeff 1938]. In style they absorbed many elements of the classical tradition, but differ from the Nisa paintings both in execution and in subject matter.

Fragments from the palace of Gondophares, described by Sir Aurel Stein in 1915 and Ernst Herzfeld in 1925 and 1929 and now almost completely lost, reveal ornaments in the form of rosettes, bands of vegetal shoots, and parts of a figural gallery composition, with Erotes riding, presumably on horses, seated male figures (possibly Parthian aristocrats), acrobats standing on their hands, figures in Greek dress—a man with a trident, possibly Poseidon, as on a Nisa rhyton, and a woman with a club—possibly a reinterpretation of Athena or Artemis, a composition of three bearded men in chitons and a beardless one with wings on his helmet, evidently Hermes, and a figure of a man with a crescent ornament on his head [Kawami 1987, p. 27–38] (Fig.17).



Fig.17. Rhyton from Nisa. Main State Museum of the State Cultural Center of Turkmenistan. Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

In another part of the gallery are depicted five men in belted caftans with hairstyles characteristic for Parthians, two of whom hold flowers, arranged in some kind of procession, as well as figures of a king and queen [Kawami 1987, p. 27–44]. In addition to the gallery, figures were also found in the complexes of the South and North Gates—of the latter only the beardless heads of a man and a woman have survived, while the former is known from the descriptions of A. Stein, who associated it with Buddhism on the basis of style and decoration [Kawami 1987, p. 25–26, 44–49]. Thus, the finds at Koh-i Khwaja represent a transitional variant from the Parthian style of Nisa to the Central Asian canon of a later period.

The wall painting of Central Asia mostly belongs to its more eastern regions, largely to the early medieval period, and its subjects are to a significant extent connected with Buddhism. These are frescoes from the sites of Khalchayan (I century AD), Fayaztepa (I–II centuries AD), Karatepa (II–IV centuries AD, all in Surkhandarya Region), Yerkurgan (I–II centuries AD, Kashkadarya Region), Kazakly-Yatkan (I century AD), Toprak-kala (III century AD, both in Karakalpakstan), Zartepa (IV century AD), Balalyk-tepa

(V–VI centuries AD, both in Surkhandarya Region), Afrasiab (VI–VIII centuries AD, Samarkand Region), Varakhsha (VII–VIII centuries AD, Bukhara Region) in Uzbekistan, Bamiyan (V–VIII centuries AD, Bamiyan Province), Fondukistan (VII–VIII centuries AD, Parwan Province) in Afghanistan, Panjikent (VII–VIII centuries AD, Sughd Region), Adjina-tepa (VII century AD, Khatlon Region), Kalai Kakhkakh I (Bunjhikat, Sughd Region, VII–VIII centuries AD), Kalai-Kafirnigan (VII–VIII centuries AD, Khatlon Region) in Tajikistan; an important pictorial example is also the painting on a shield from the castle on Mount Mug (Kalai Mug in Sughd Region) in Tajikistan (VIII century AD) [Albaum 1975, p. 87–94; Zhivopis... 1954, p. 87, 91, 92, 95–98, 101, 127; Litvinsky, Zeimal 1971, p. 57–76, 165–173; Uzbekistan... 2013, p. 56–57, 89–93, 137; Kyushu... 2016, p. 178–179; Drevnosti Tadzhikistana 1985, p. 164–165, 170–171, 220–237, 264–272; Bussagli 1979, p. 35–36, 43–48; Baumer 2014, p. 80, 101, 204].

Thus, apart from Nisa and the fortresses of Kazakly-Yatkan and Toprak-kala located in ancient Khorezm, all frescoes belong to the eastern part of the Central Asian region.

The earliest among them are Khalchayan, Fayaztepa, and Karatepa (Surkhandarya region, Uzbekistan), which belonged to the Kushan Kingdom (I–III centuries AD), whose core became the territory of the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms (III – I centuries BC). It is quite natural that the Kushans also inherited the Hellenistic tradition, including in wall painting, which gradually changed under the influence of the local style.

At Fayaztepa (I–II centuries AD), we see, on the one hand, a purely Greek manner in the detailed render-

ing of faces through multilayered application of paint, and on the other—a local style in clothing: caftans and boots in the scene of the king with courtiers, caftans in the right-facing male figures of gift-bearers [Pidayev 2011, p. 62–67, 105; Uzbekistan... 2013, p. 89–93; O'zbekiston 2018, p. 69–71]. In terms of subject matter, on the one hand, this is a supposed procession headed by the king (only its lower part has survived), the image of the Buddha—both subjects unknown in the western regions; on the other hand, the depiction of Alexander the Great in a horned helmet and the so-called image of a deity with loose hair, executed in the traditions of classical multilayer painting [Pidayev 2011, p. 63, 65–66]. At the same time, the aforementioned procession is painted in a single plane, with sharp contours, which is completely uncharacteristic for classical painting.

From the murals at Karatepa (II–IV centuries AD), images of the Buddha and his disciples have been preserved, as well as a group of four figures, one of which is under a parasol (a feature characteristic of the iconography of the Buddha in East Asia), placed within a kind of frame, which Shakirjon Pidayev quite logically considers an influence from the east, examples of which we will examine below [Uzbekistan... 2013, p. 56–57; Pidayev 2016, p. 50–51]. The image of the Buddha in a halo is executed with exaggeratedly long earlobes and linear rendering of facial features, but with traces of volume in the oval of the face. Likewise, the faces in the composition of four figures are rendered linearly, although the careful depiction of the eye in the face, of which only the upper part has survived, and the turn of one of the faces in three-quarter view testify the influence of the classical tradition [Uzbekistan... 2013, p. 56–57; Pidayev 2011, p. 105].

An even stronger influence of the Greek pictorial

school can be seen in the paintings from Toprak-kala (Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan). This includes the precise rendering of the face and hands of the harpist, the horse's hoof, and faces in full view, although they are executed in contour. A running wave motif is noted in the ornaments. On the other hand, the color scheme of the composition is different, with a predominance of pink and green backgrounds [Tolstov 1948, p. 176–181, 186, figs. 46–52]. The composition depicting a harpist resembles the Airtam frieze, which allowed Sergey Tolstov to speak here of a Kushan artistic tradition [Tolstov 1948, p. 177–178]. Contour images of people and animals discovered at Kazakly-Yatkan (Karakalpakstan) and dated to the I century AD are also stylistically close to Toprak-kala [Baumer 2014, p. 101].

Even greater similarity with the Nisa material is shown by fragments of paintings from the vicinity of Yerkurgan (Kashkadarya region, Uzbekistan)—this includes the presence of ornaments in the form of a running wave, meander, and a four-petaled rosette, as well as an abundance of red background. The careful rendering of the eyes of a face looking directly forward, which unfortunately is poorly preserved, and the Greek drapery of garments on figures on a column are undeniable evidence of the belonging of these paintings to the classical tradition [Abdullayev 2011, p. 209–220, pl. 3].

At Khalchayan (Surkhandarya region, Uzbekistan), Galina Pugachenkova also noted the presence of a large amount of red background and an ornament with a vine shoot characteristic of Pompeii, as well as the careful rendering of the hands and the face of a man looking forward, executed, as Lazar Albaum rightly emphasizes, in the style of Fayum portraits [Pugachenkova 1966, p. 144–153; Albaum, 1975, p. 89]. On the

other hand, the depiction in profile of a man with a Bactrian hairstyle and fragments of the drawing of a caftan indicate the emergence of a local pictorial tradition.

This local element becomes dominant in wall paintings of the later period (V-VIII centuries AD). In style, this represents a transition to static, planar images with clearly defined contours, and in subject matter—to the depiction of local elites and their way of life: processions, banquets, embassies, and battles. This period is associated with the dominance of the Sogdians along the Great Silk Road, who did not create a powerful state of their own but actively penetrated into the regions of East Asia, as far as Korea and Japan, becoming transmitters of Buddhism and Central Asian culture across this vast region.

Murals of this period are already little connected with the classical tradition, but a certain continuity with Parthian and Kushan painting, as Lazar Albaum rightly emphasizes, is preserved in them [Albaum 1975, p. 95]. This is manifested in the careful contour rendering of hands, faces in profile and half-turn, and horses, as, for example, in Panjikent in the Sogdian region of Tajikistan [Zhivopis... 1954, pls. XIII, XV, XXV, XXXVI–XXXIX] or at Afrasiab in Samarkand [Albaum 1975, pls. V, VII, XIV, XXII, XXIV, XXV, XXX, XXXI, XXXV–XXXVIII, LVII]. There is also the equestrian battle scene characteristic of Parthian tradition (Object III, Room 6; Object VI, Room 1 in Panjikent; the northern wall at Afrasiab) [Zhivopis... 1954, pl. XXV; Albaum 1975, pl. XXXV].

The classical pictorial tradition is clearly visible in Begram (Parwan Province, Afghanistan), on two glass cups: one depicting date harvesters, and the other scenes of hunting and from the Trojan War [Kyushu... 2016, p. 136, 158].

In Xinjiang (China), murals mostly belong to a later period. Paintings have been preserved at the following sites: the Astana necropolis (Turfan, IV-X centuries AD, mainly VII-IX centuries AD), Astana-Karakhoja (Turfan, IV-V centuries AD), the Thousand Buddha caves at Bezeklik (Turfan, VI-XIII centuries AD, mostly after the VIII century AD), the Toyuk caves (Turfan, V-VII centuries AD), the Gaochang site (Turfan, IX-X centuries AD), the Jiaohe site (Turfan, X-XII centuries AD), the ruins of the Buddhist monastery Tarishlak (Yanqi, first half of the VIII century AD), the Kyzyl Gaha caves (Kucha, V-VIII centuries AD), the Kumtura caves (Kucha, VII-IX centuries AD), the Thousand Buddha caves at Kyzyl (Aksu, IV-VIII centuries AD), the Loulan necropolis (Charklyk, III-IV centuries AD), the Buddhist monastery at Miran (Charklyk in Bayan Gol, III-IV centuries AD), the Buddhist temple at Karadun (Khotan, III-V centuries AD), the Buddhist temple at Dandan-Uiliq (Khotan, VI-VII centuries AD), the Buddhist temple complex Topulukdun (Khotan, VII-IX centuries AD), Balawaste (Khotan, VIII century AD), not to mention later paintings (X-XIII centuries AD) in the Buddhist temples at Gaochang (Turfan) and Beiting (Jimsar, Changji) [Silk Road... 2019, p. 228–230, 234–235, 350–352, 356–358, 379–382, 395–422, 436–448, 464–465, 479–483, 512–513, 535–541, 566–567, 609–619, 622–648, 703–704, 716–719, 851–854, 893–897, 957–961, 974–976; Bussagli 1979, p. 18–30, 49–114].

Thus, the overwhelming majority of wall paintings in Xinjiang are associated with the spread of Buddhism and Buddhist themes. The earliest of them are in Khotan (Karadun, III-V centuries AD) and Charklyk oases (Loulan, Miran, III-IV centuries AD), that is, south of the Taklamakan Desert. Slightly later, paintings appear north of the Taklamakan in Aksu (Kyzyl,

IV–VIII centuries AD) and Turfan (Astana — IV–X centuries AD; Astana-Karakhoja—IV–V centuries AD; Toyuk— V–VII centuries AD), as well as in Kucha oases (Kyzyl Gaha, V–VIII centuries AD), located between them.

The paintings at Karadun depict Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and are characterized by linear drawing with solid coloring; the eyes and other features are not carefully rendered. The frescoes from tomb LE in Loulan depicted some scene with people in caftans and boots and horses, a procession of five figures in frontal view. The preserved lower parts represent a very schematic drawing filled with black, red, blue, and white. Thus, these monuments show neither Parthian-Kushan nor classical influences.

At the same time, the wall paintings at Miran are characterized by careful rendering of the eyes and dynamism in the depiction of people, with tonal transitions alongside linear drawing [Silk Road... 2019, p. 703–704, 716–719, 957–962].

A completely different character is seen in the early paintings of Turfan. In Tomb No. 97 at Astana-Karakhoja (IV–V centuries AD), the deceased himself is depicted with his wife, and around them are servants, livestock, a bow in a case, and household objects. The figures are outlined and almost not filled in, and the scenes are placed within frames. They wear Chinese costume, and the painting style resembles Chinese tombs [Silk Road... 2019, p. 512–513]. Similar in style and subject are the contemporary frescoes in Tomb No. 13 at Astana (IV–V centuries AD). Here also the deceased with his wife is at the center under a canopy in Chinese dress, surrounded by servants and household objects. Characteristic is the depiction of trees with paradise birds, under the central one of

which a servant has led a saddled horse. The drawing is executed in contour with red and black paint, some images being filled in with a single color [Silk Road... 2019, p. 464–465].

The same style and subject are characteristic of Tombs No. 408 and 605 at Astana, dated broadly between IV–X centuries AD, but apparently contemporary with the above [Silk Road... 2019, p. 444–446]. Thus, the traditions of Central Asian painting are absent here in the early period, while in later Astana painting (from the VIII century AD) the developed Tang painting school of China already dominates [Silk Road... 2019, p. 479–483].

A completely different situation is observed in the Aksu Region of Xinjiang, not far from Issyk-Kul. The walls of the caves at Kyzyl (IV–VI centuries AD) are literally filled with images of Buddhas seated surrounded by flames, as well as scenes from the life of Shakyamuni from birth to death. Faces and hands are rendered with lines, surfaces are filled in with uniform color, and all paintings are executed in a green-violet palette [Silk Road... 2019, p. 623–634].

The wall paintings in the Toyuk caves in Turfan (V–VII centuries AD) are similar in style, covering cells with seated Buddhas and the bodhi tree, executed in green or green-brown tones on a white background. The partitions of the cells are filled with ornament consisting of medallions with pearl outlines, plant leaves, and spirals [Silk Road... 2019, p. 535–540]. It is characteristic that here a complete break with the previous tradition known in Astana and Karakhoja is observed, which occurred under clear influence from the west, from Aksu.

In the Kyzyl Gaha caves (V–VIII centuries AD), as well

as in Kucha, the same style of Buddhist wall painting is observed as in Kyzyl and Toyuk, but the subjects are more diverse. For example, they include depictions of the ruler of Kucha with his wife in rich caftans and with halos around their heads, and an angel flying among the stars [Silk Road... 2019, p. 613–614].

The similarity of the color scheme in Kyzyl, Toyuk, and Kyzyl Gaha is also characteristic—a monochrome palette that contrasts sharply with the paintings of Miran, Loulan, and Karadun, which are distinguished by a rich multicolored palette. It is evident that the Central Asian tradition gradually came to Xinjiang together with Buddhism, first to the regions south of the Taklamakan Desert, and later to that north of it. Classical influence in Xinjiang is clearly visible in an earlier period, beginning from the I-II centuries AD, in paintings on textiles. In Tumulus No. 1 at Sampula (Khotan, I-II centuries AD), a fragment of woolen fabric measuring 116 × 48 cm was found, with a painting depicting in the lower part a warrior with a shaved face and long curly hair gathered at the forehead with a band, dressed in an embroidered garment (the preserved part is limited to the bust), with a spear behind his back on a red background, and above him there is a band of ornament on a black background in the center of which is a figure of a centaur. The images are executed according to all the canons of classical painting—in a rich natural color palette, with careful rendering of facial features, not to mention the expressive drawing of the eyes, with half-tones emphasizing volume [Tyugoku... 2005].

Another fabric with a design—a silk caftan in which the mummy of a man found in Burial No. 15 at the Yingpan necropolis (at Lop Nor, to the south of Lake Lop Nor)—is dated to III-V centuries AD. On the red fabric, an ornament executed in monochrome yellow

depicts a pair of warriors fighting with short swords [Tyugoku... 2005; Silk Road... 2019]. They are completely naked, showing relief musculature reminiscent of Heracles or Atlantes, favored in Gandharan sculpture [Arekusandorosu... 2003, p. 148]. Their hair is curly; shields are raised high above them. Above and between them there is a tree dividing into two branches directed toward each warrior. The same tree appears below them, serving as a frame for the lower pair of similar warriors standing sideways to each other without shields and with raised javelins [Silk Road... 2019, p. 154, 155, 745–748, 912–914].

The classical school of painting, examples of which in Central Asia have been preserved at Nisa, reached Xinjiang fairly early. Further east, we can speak only of the influence of the Central Asian school of painting, but not of the classical one. One of the most vivid examples of Central Asian influence can be seen in the mural frescoes of Koguryō.

In contrast to the frescoes of the Chinese tradition, which in that period primarily depicted the world of mythological animals and celestial beings [Lo Shipin, Liao Yang 2005, pp. 29–59], Korean mural painting of the early period (III-VI centuries AD) is characterized by realism, as well as the predominance and diversity of everyday scenes.

A number of subjects bring Koguryō painting closer to that of Central Asia. These include numerous mounted battle scenes (for example, the Tomb of the Three Galleries in Ji'an, Jilin Province (China), late IV – early V century AD, etc.), hunting scenes, which in the Parthian and Sasanian tradition symbolized the paradisiacal world (the Yaksu-ri tomb in the Kansō district of Nampho City, the Chum tomb (“with a dancing scene”) in Ji'an, Jilin Province, late IV – early V century AD, the Tōkhūng-ri tomb in the Kansō district of Nampho

(dated to 409 AD), and others), as well as the “Parthian shot,” discussed above (the Chum tomb (“with a dancing scene”), Tökhüŋ-ri, 409 AD, etc.) [Bureau... 1979, pp. 22–25, 30–31, 36, 38] (Fig.18).

In the Tökhüŋ-ri tomb, an image of a rhyton—a sacred vessel for libations in Persian tradition—has also been preserved (Fig.19). In the Hellenistic period, the rhyton from Persia and Central Asia spread widely westward—to Thrace—and became firmly integrated into the Hellenistic tradition. One of the most striking examples of highly artistic Hellenistic rhyta are the ivory vessels from Nisa, decorated with narrative carvings—depictions of Greek gods, mythological and ritual scenes, and, in accordance with Achaemenid tradition, with animal protomes [Pilipko 2001, pp. 288–296]. Later, rhyta also spread eastward—ceramic rhyta (without openings, i.e., “false rhyta”) are found on the Korean Peninsula (V–VI centuries AD) and on the Japanese islands (VI century AD) (Fig.20). In China, the rhyton is known, in particular, from reliefs on Sogdian tombs, which may indicate their Central Asian origin in the East Asian region [MIHO MUSEUM 2009, pp. 64–77].

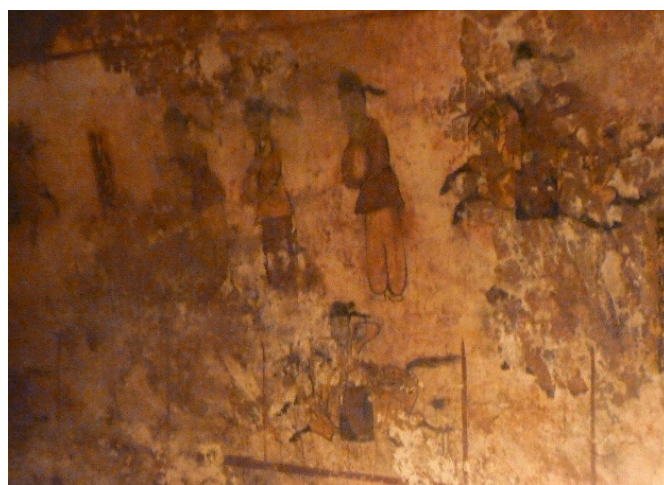


Fig.18. Horsemen shooting at targets. Mural. Tökhüŋ-ri Tomb (Kangsö District, Nampho City), AD 409.

Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.19. Rhyton in the mural of the Tökhüŋ-ri Tomb, Kangsö District, Nampho City (AD 409). Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.20. Rhyton with a horse protome. Height 12.1 cm. Ceramic. From Tongnae Site, (Pusan City, South Kyöŋsang Province), V century AD. National Museum of Korea. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

The iconography of the murals from the Tökhüŋ-ri tomb and some others reveals similarities with the frescoes of Xinjiang. As in Astana and Astana-Karakhoja, there is a canopy over the deceased and his spouse (**Fig.21**); it is also characteristic that to the right of the main figure there appears a sacred tree (a Central Asian tradition) and a servant leading a horse beneath it (**Fig.22**). At the same time, the artistic style of the Tökhüŋ-ri frescoes is quite different from that of Astana. It is characterized by realism of representa-

tion, solid coloring of surfaces, and clearly defined details of horses and human faces—all of which show affinity with the Buddhist Central Asian pictorial tradition (**Fig.23**).



Fig.21. Canopy in the mural of the Tŏkhŭng-ri Tomb, Kangsŏ District, Nampho City (AD 409). Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.22. Sacred tree in the mural of the Tŏkhŭng-ri Tomb, Kangsŏ District, Nampho City (AD 409). Photo by Sergey Lapteff



Fig.23. Equestrian procession. Mural. Tŏkhŭng-ri Tomb (Kangsŏ District, Nampho City), AD 409. Photo by Sergey Lapteff

Contacts between the Koguryŏ people and the Sogdians can be observed in the depiction of Korean (evidently Koguryŏ) envoys in the embassy scene on the western wall of the palace hall at Afrasiab, first identified by Lazar Albaum and later studied by scholars from the DPRK—Pak Jin Uk, Cho Hŭi Sŭng, and others [Albaum 1975, pp. 74–76; Pak Jin Uk 1988, pp. 11–16; Cho Hŭi Sŭng 2001, pp. 51–61] (Fig.24).

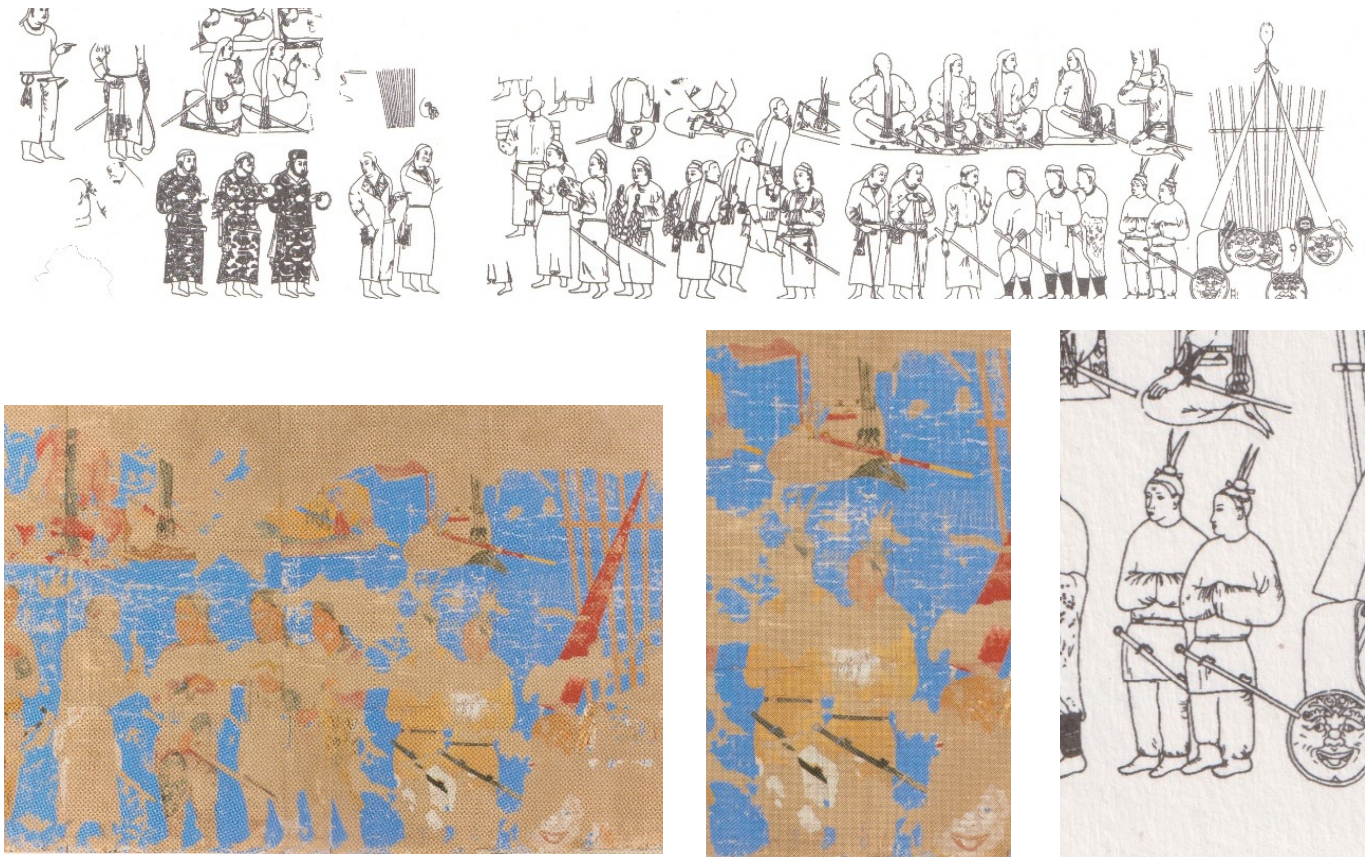


Fig.24. Envoys of the state of Koguryō in the mural on the western wall of palace chamber in Afrasiab (Samarkand, Uzbekistan). VII-VIII centuries AD [Albaum, 1975]. Line drawing [Uzbekistan... 2013, p. 153]

Conclusion:

Thus, the cultural exchange along the Great Silk Road from Central Asia to Korea during this period was also reflected in artistic culture. Mural painting is one such example. Frescoes that inherited the classical tradition became the foundation of the Central Asian school of painting, which later spread further east and found expression in the visual arts of Korea.

Despite the originality of Korean mural painting, its connections with Central Asia—manifested in style, subject matter, and techniques of execution in the mural painting of ancient Korea—are beyond doubt. At the same time, the degree and forms of this influence reflect the characteristics and needs of the era and soci-

ety, as well as the national and religious-cultural specificity of the ancient Korean state of Koguryō, which, thanks to its strategic position, became a bridge linking Central Asia with East Asia.

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