Koguryŏ Buddhism: Pacifist Religion in a Multi-ethnic Warrior Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

Evidence for Koguryo Buddhism is extremely limited, and even the attribution of that evidence to the period is often contested. This leaves much room for interpretation, but the context must be appropriate, taking into account the nature of the state and its people. After surveying and evaluating all the archaeological and written evidence, it is clear that the evidence has to be compared with that for the neighbouring areas of China. Virtually all the written evidence has ultimately come from Chinese sources and the archaeological materials suggest links with the Xianbei tribes, who founded states bordering Koguryo. Most of the monks connected with Koguryo were probably members of immigrant families recruited into the Xianbei states by the ruling Murong clan. The chief sources of Buddhism entering Koguryo were probably Shentong Monastery in Shandong, Longcheng and the nearby complex of Wanfo tang. The Xianbei, while adopting Buddhism, were like the Koguryo ruling clans; warlike and ruling over vanquished farming populations. This similarity may have been a reason for Buddhism entering Koguryo. The conclusion to be drawn from the evidence is that we can only speak of Buddhism in Koguryo for at most 250 years, that it had shallow roots and was mostly confined to the court and to some of the immigrant Chinese and Xianbei refugees. The majority of Koguryo people instead likely retained their indigenous beliefs.

It is unlikely that Koguryŏ Buddhism will ever be well understood because of the scarcity of evidence, which is restricted to small quantities of archaeological data, a handful of epigraphical inscriptions, and a number of late or fragmentary and foreign records. Compounding the problem are the conflicting interpretations of Koguryŏ society by Korean and Chinese historians who read contemporary nationalist concerns back into the past. How one conceives of Koguryŏ society largely determines the understandings reached from the meagre evidence about Buddhism in Koguryŏ.

Koguryŏ was a multi-ethnic kingdom ruled by mounted warrior tribes originating from the north in Puyŏ, with local Ye and Maek farmers and other groups, likely the ancestors of modern Koreans, plus Chinese and Xianbei migrants and captives brought to bolster the rulers’ powers and those living in captured territories. For much of its history, Koguryŏ was fighting aggressive wars of expansion or defending itself against other states and tribal confederations. Apparently then Koguryŏ would seem to have provided little fertile ground for the implantation of a foreign, pacifist religion. Yet in China after 317, Buddhism was favoured by the nomadic and militaristic foreign regimes that conquered North China, partly because Buddhism was non-Chinese and claimed to provide powers to win battles and ward off disasters, could assuage remorse for horrific acts, and provided technicians and advisors in the form of Buddhist monks.\(^1\) However, Koguryŏ does not

seem to have favoured Buddhism to nearly the same extent, possibly because it had fewer Chinese subjects.

**EVIDENCE**

The evidence for Koguryŏ Buddhism is extremely scarce and largely disconnected. There are no extant funerary stelae for Koguryŏ monks dating from this period and no texts by Koguryŏ monks survive. Even the passages attributed to Sŏngnang (d. 512), championed by Korean nationalists as the only Koguryŏ Buddhist author, were written in China, and may not even be his own ideas. Indeed, I suspect he was a Chinese from a newly conquered district. There are at most only four or perhaps five short, some incomplete, inscriptions, some with disputed dates and provenance.

**Documentary evidence**

The documentary or narrative histories are also less than reliable, for they are late, or foreign, or biased. Of these domestic histories, the *Samguk sagi* dates to 1145 and was by a pro-southern Confucian, a descendant of Silla nobility, Kim Pu-sik, who saw Silla as the most legitimate of the three kingdoms and had put down a northern, irredentist rebellion by the monk Myochn’ŏng, who wished to shift the capital northwards to P’yŏngyang, into the old Koguryŏ heartland. While Kim Pu-sik cited older Korean sources, his account was heavily reliant on Chinese sources and contained little on Koguryŏ Buddhism.

The second domestic historical source is the *Haedong kosŏngjŏn*, a series of hagiographies modelled on the Chinese *Gaosengzhuan* series, compiled on royal command in 1215 by Kakhun (-1230). Kakhun was abbot of Yongt’ong Monastery located near the Koryŏ capital of Kaesŏng. The text is incomplete, only two of at least five chapters extant, but these two chapters probably contained all the Koguryŏ material available then. All current texts were likely based on only one manuscript found by the controversial monk Yi Hoegwang around 1914. Most of the extant text is based on Chinese sources and is relatively prudent.

The third domestic source, the *Samguk yusa*, traditionally attributed to the Sŏn monk, Iryŏn (1206-1289), but now known to have additions and notes by Mugûk (1251-1322), was based in part on monastic records that fabricated ancient origins for their monasteries and founders, which probably accounts for the varying records about Ado (Ch. Adao), for example, and for differing dates for the shift of a monastery residence by Pojang in 650 or 667. The process of compilation of this book seems to have taken a long time and it may not have been completed or published until 1394, about a century

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after it was started. The text then must be considered very unreliable, for it has Adao, who arrived in Koguryŏ from China in 374, curing a daughter of the Silla king Mich’u (r. 262-286) in 264. Nor had the compilers bothered to correct the evidently contradictory dates as found in its source, the Haedong kosŏngjŏn. Moreover, it has a pro-Silla stance, and can only be used for Koguryŏ Buddhism with the utmost care.

Thus historians must also turn to Chinese sources. Hence the earliest record of Buddhism supposedly being present in Koguryŏ is of a letter to a certain Gaoli Daoren, usually read as a “monk of Koguryŏ,” by Zhidun (a.k.a. Daolin, 314-366) praising Fashen (286-374). Zhidun and Fashen lived in an area to the south of Kuaiji, which was to the east of the southern capital, that of the Jin, at Jiankang. This was a long distance from Koguryŏ, separated by a hostile state in Former Qin. All there is of the letter, unfortunately, are the praises of Fashen, as would be expected in the place it is quoted, Fashen’s hagiography in the Gaosengzhuan:

The Senior Ju Fashen is a pupil of Lord Liu of Zhongzhou [Liu Yuanzhen], who embodied virtue…and currently is on Mt Yang in Shan Prefecture.

As Zhidun and Fashen were gentry monks much given to clever dialogue and the interpretation of prajñāparamitā via the native Chinese xuanxue (profound learning), the recipient of the letter likewise must have been a member of an elite, fluent in literary Chinese, possibly even a member of the Chinese community inside Koguryŏ. Descendants of Chinese lived in the Lelang and Daifang regions through the 350s and even as late as 404, and some Chinese refugees like Dong Shou (d. 357) also came to live in Koguryŏ. Given the probable obstacles to communication through the hostile territories of the Former Qin and the Murong Former Yan, it is likely that the Gaoli Daoren was then a resident in southern China, where the letter could reach him and where he could consult Fashen. Hence the sentence, “currently he is on Mt Yang.” There were very few diplomatic exchanges between Koguryŏ and the Jin, the Samguk yusa mentioning one in 343 and another in 413, but these were exceptional, so exchanges of private letters would almost be unheard of.

The 1215 Haedong kosŏngjŏn even identifies the recipient of the letter as Wangmyŏng, suspiciously meaning “lost name.” Although there were a few monks in Chinese history with that as a name, one must doubt this was a genuine name in the circumstances. Kakhun alleges that the fame of this Wangmyŏng had spread as far as Zhidun in the south of China, and the author of this comment, possibly Kakhun, states out of a spirit of patriotism that there then must have been eminent Buddhists in Koguryŏ in

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8 Ha (2005), 278-279, English summary 314-315.
10 For example, on the stupa of Asoka at the Liaodong Fortress and stories related to Podŏk, see Yi Pyŏngdo, ed. and trans. (1981), Samguk yusa, Kwangju ch’ulp’ansa: Seoul, 4: 100-101.
11 For this person, see Erik Zürcher (1959), The Buddhist conquest of China: The spread and adaptation of Buddhism in early medieval China, 2 vols, E. J. Brill: Leiden, 98, 77.
12 T50.348a12-15.
13 Zürcher (1959), passim.
15 Yi Pyŏngdo (1981), Samguk yusa, 184, 13th year of King Kogukwŏn; 188, 1st year of King Changsu. Lee (1969), 30 fn 91.
the latter period of the 370s.\textsuperscript{17} As this and the following hagiography of Üiyôn provide almost no factual information, these hagiographies seem to have been fanciful elaborations built on one or two clues from the Chinese source.\textsuperscript{18}

The second mention of Buddhism in connection with Koguryŏ is the sending of the monk Shundao (Kor. Shundo) to the Koguryŏ court by Fu Jian, ruler of the Former Qin, in 372, along with Buddhist scriptures and images. This gift by Fu Jian was likely a diplomatic gesture occasioned by his war against the Murong Former Yan in 370. This brought his borders up to those of Koguryŏ,\textsuperscript{19} and Fu Jian needed peace there while he turned his military might south-west to Szechwan in 373. As Former Yan had been an enemy of Koguryŏ, this was probably an astute move.\textsuperscript{20} Fu Jian had not necessarily been particularly friendly to Buddhism, and yet he used Buddhism to advance his own ends. For example, he exempted the monastery of Ju Senglang (ca. 315-400), a pupil of Fotudeng, from his proposed control over monasteries. Ju Senglang’s monastery, later named Shentong Monastery, was allegedly the first in Shandong, and a major centre in the region.\textsuperscript{21} It was founded in 351 and was later given tax grants from two prefectures. Fu Jian invited Senglang to court and wrote to him, and regional power-holders such as Yao Xing of Later Qin, Murong De (founder of Southern Yan), Tuoba Gui of Northern Wei and Emperor Xiaowu of Jin wrote to him or venerated him.\textsuperscript{22} By the time of Sengyi, a contemporary with Senglang, whose biography was found in a biezhuan (separate biography), this monastery possessed Buddhist images given to Senglang by the rulers of seven countries, including Koguryŏ and one of its dependencies.\textsuperscript{23} The Xu Gaosengzhuàn’s “Biography of Sengyi” states that Sengyi came to Shentong’s precursor monastery during Tuoba Wei times and that the monastery had gold and bronze statues from Koguryŏ displayed in the temple hall.\textsuperscript{24} As Tuoba Wei was founded in 386, this means that by around 400 A.D. that Koguryŏ was in contact with Senglang’s monastery and was sending Buddhist statues there. The monastery was near the base of the famous Taishan, not too distant from the Yellow River, and so was possibly on a marine route to Koguryŏ across the Gulf of Bohai via the Miaodao island chain to the Liaodong Peninsula.

If the report about Shundao being sent to Koguryŏ in 372, and then the arrival of Adao in 374, with the erection of a monastery for each of them in 375 as recorded in the Samguk sagi\textsuperscript{25} is correct, the similarities in the names of these two missionaries, both with dao as the last element, suggest they may have been sent from Senglang’s centre near Mt

\textsuperscript{17}Lee (1969), 33-34.
\textsuperscript{18}For Üiyôn, see Lee (1969), 35-36, esp. note 120.
\textsuperscript{19}Zürcher (1959), 198.
\textsuperscript{20}Gardiner (1969), 49.
\textsuperscript{21}Wright (1990), 40, 131 note 21; Zürcher (1959), 185.
\textsuperscript{22}Gaosengzhuàn, T50.351; Chen Qingxiang (2004), “Shentongsi simenta tanyuan,” Zhonghua Foxue xuebao [Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal] 17: 161; Zürcher (1959), 387 note 27, based here on the Guang Hongmingji 35, which purports to quote from these letters. A late source, the Lidai piannian Shishi tongjian 3, states it was Murong De who presented the income of the two prefectures to the monastery, see Jin Chengshu (Kim Sŏngsuk) (2005), “Murong Xianbei de Fojiao wenhua,” Wen shi zhe [Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy] no. 2 (serial no. 287): 106. For the location of the monastery and the claims to be the first monastery in the region, see F. S. Drake (1939), “The Shên-t’ung Monastery and the beginnings of Buddhism in Shantung,” Monumenta Serica 4: 1-39 and plates.
\textsuperscript{24}Xu Gaosengzhuàn, T50.647a5-9, 21-23.
\textsuperscript{25}Kim Pusik, Samguk sagi, 1973 reprint of 1929 Chōsenshi Gakkai edn, hereafter SGSG, 185, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 4\textsuperscript{th} and fifth years of King Sosurim.
Tai, which was favoured by Fu Jian. Yet it seems likely that both monks failed in their mission, as Kakhun implies, with Adao allegedly leaving Koguryŏ for Silla. If so, then who had sent Koguryŏ Buddhist images to Senglang?

By later times, Buddhism had certainly gained a hold in Koguryŏ, for of the year 576, the *Lidai sanbaoji* of 597 records that Ŭiyŏn came to Ye, capital of the Northern Qi, to ask the famous cleric Fashang (495-580) a number of questions on Buddhist history. Fashang was the Controller of the Clergy during the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi, a leader of Vinaya and a head of the Southern Dilun School that centred on the interpretation of the *Daśabhūmikāsūtra-sūtra* (Dilun) by Vasubandhu and certain passages of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*. The knowledge levels of the Koguryŏ monks must still have been low at that time for them to ask when Buddhism was introduced into China and who wrote a number of sutras and their commentaries, something well known in China in those days.

The Koguryŏ understanding was probably that belief in Buddhism would simply bring merit of good fortune as King Kogukyang is alleged to have advised the Silla king in the eighth year of his reign (391). Yet it was not until 498 that we find mention of the building of another monastery besides the first two, those for Shundao and Adao. This was the Kŭmgang Monastery in P’yŏngyang. Even if another monastery had been established in 427 as is sometimes suggested (see later), it would seem that the Koguryŏ images in Senglang’s monastery were probably from the court, possibly commissioned from Chinese artisans, not necessarily from inside Koguryŏ.

Given that Kakhun, and following him, Iryŏn or his successors, had to rely primarily on the *Samguk sagi*’s laconic and sparse mentions, plus the Chinese records and a text of marvels, the *Su’ijŏn*, compiled by Pak Hallyong (1047-1096), to fabricate hagiographies by much conjectural and eulogistic padding, we have to turn to the epigraphical evidence.

**Epigraphical evidence**

The earliest inscription is allegedly dated 396 and was unearthed in P’yŏngyang in the ruins of an old monastery. However, the sate, Yonggaeng 7, in the first of the twelve-year cycle, corresponds to no known date or reign. Some scholars have equated it with the 6th year of the Yongnak era of King Kwanggaet’o (396), but the forms of the last characters, *gaeng* and *nak* have no resemblance, the year number would be incorrect, and the cyclical number would be out of synch. The content suggests a date much later than 396.

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27 Lee (1969), 35-38; *Lidai sanbaoji* 12, T49.104c9-105a8, by Fei Zhangfang, a notoriously unreliable historian.
28 SGSG 186, literally, “handed down the teaching that veneration of and belief in the Buddha-dharma is to seek good fortune.”
29 SGSG, 194, 7th year of King Munja. An alleged earlier mention in 392 of the establishment of nine monasteries (*kusa*) in P’yŏngyang, 2nd year of King Kwanggaet’o, is more likely a reference to the nine courts or *jiusi* with their nine chamberlains. These were the “top echelon service agencies in the central government,” Charles O. Hucker (1985), *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 177. If there were nine monasteries, where did all the believers and monks come from to ordain other monks, only twenty years after the first and likely failed attempts to introduce Buddhism? This looks more like a program of creating a more centralized Chinese-style administration. See SGSG, 187.
30 Kim (1989), 238-239.
The inscription is on the back of a 22cm high nimbus that was attached to a seated Maitreya figure.\textsuperscript{31} In addition to suggestions that it dates to 417, stylistic grounds have made Prof. Hwang Suyong think it belongs to the mid-sixth century or later.\textsuperscript{32} The style looks rather like that of the late fifth to early sixth centuries and to a figure of Maitreya worshipped by people of Northern Wei, such as the Xianbei ruling class, and as just another deity in a heavenly paradise into which one could be reborn.\textsuperscript{33} The inscription reads:

Made an image of the Venerable Maitreya for my late mother….the merit \( \text{I hope will have the soul of the deceased rise to (the shore of?) enlightenment} \)…the three assemblies of Maitreya….First awaken to the thought of non-birth, and ultimately it must result…in bo(dhi). If one who has sin at the time of the above vow it will be extinguished….those who rejoice in the welfare of others equally share this vow….\textsuperscript{34}

Note again that this inscription is about good fortune, but here for the deceased, and resembles a more elaborate 279.4 cm Maitreya statue of 516 from Northern Wei.\textsuperscript{35} If it was from a monastery in P’Yŏngyang, it probably dates from after 496.

There is an earlier text, a note in ink on the wall of a tomb of a Koguryŏ fortress that was found in Tŏkhwŏng-ri, Taean City, P’Yŏng’an Namdo. It is dated 408. But the only reference is that of “the disciple of Sākyamuni Buddha, Mr ???Zhen…[list of titles follows] of Youzhou, who died at the age of 77…and in the 18\textsuperscript{th} year of Yonggo his grave was shifted.” But this Buddhism must have been shallow because the mural depicts many cattle and sheep being sacrificed and alcohol donated for the funeral.\textsuperscript{36} In other words, perhaps the Buddhist dedication was just a formality, possibly written in imitation of funerary inscriptions from the Chinese heartlands. Indeed, the deceased has been identified as Murong Zhen (332-408),\textsuperscript{37} although on what ground I am not sure. This means he was a Xianbei, a descendant of the Murong state of Former Yan that was conquered by Fu Jian in 370, and it is likely that this man fled with others to Koguryŏ then or later in 385 when the area was reconquered by Northern Wei.\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps then the scenes in the tomb mural of animals being hunted and possibly of warfare were like those from the story of Andha-vana found in the various Ahanjing (agama) on the life of the Buddha. The story is that the Buddha cured people whose eyes were gouged out in this garden by

\begin{itemize}
  \item Hwang Suyong (1980), \textit{Han’guk Pulgyo misul 10: Pu lsang p’yŏn}, Chungang Ilbo Tongyang pangsong: Seoul, plate 1.
  \item Wong (2004), fig. 6.4.
  \item Hŏ (1984), 4-5.
\end{itemize}
an enemy army. This scene is depicted in the Mogao Cave no. 285 at Dunhuang, in which the horsemen are in Xianbei dress. This suggests another link to the Murong clan or tribe and perhaps this was what the Koguryŏ artisans and the court donors thought would be appropriate.

Much debate has been focussed on this tomb, with the contention that this refugee from Northern Yan, a former prefect of Youzhou, had been a devotee of Maitreya, with the words Shijiawen Fo (Śākyamuni Buddha), as in the Milo xiashengjing translated by Ju Fahu or Dharmarakṣa, indicating a belief like those of the Northern Wei people who wished to be reborn in Maitreya’s Tuṣita Heaven. Another opinion is that this term, Shijiawen Fo, was common before the time of these translations and does not necessarily refer to Maitreya. As a result, discussion has turned to the mentions of a ritual of the seven jewels, which could refer to the decorations of altars, pedestals and palanquins for the installation of Buddhist statues, with many festivities, even sword-swallowing exhibitions. Hence, the scenes of “hunting” and dancing might be pictures of the sports accompanying such an installation. However, an analysis of the vocabulary suggests that these scenes are related to rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha, and that the illustrations are those of the Pure Land and the palace of the Cakravartin king. These words about seven treasures and natural music et cetera occur frequently in the translations of the Wuliangshou jing series made by Zhijian and Ju Fahu, and would appear to describe a Pure Land. But would a Pure Land permit hunting? Furthermore, one of the murals and the notes to it suggest that the supervisor of the funeral was sent by the Koguryŏ court (chungni 中裏 like Japanese dairi 大裏?), as were provisions for the ritual and possibly for the upkeep of the tomb, perhaps with some elements of the native Koguryŏ worship of ancestors or founder spirits.

Another inscription on a nimbus of a Buddha statue has been dated to 419. The statue is of a standing Buddha that was discovered buried in a 30cm square stone case in a pile of stones in Hach’on-ri, Taesůmyŏn, Ûiryong-gun, Kyŏngsang Namdo. The image is 16.2cm high with nimbus and throne, the figure itself only 9.1cm. It is dated Yŏnka 7th year, which Hwang thinks was 539 or 599 A.D. The dating is based on style, which initially suggests the mid-sixth century, but that has been modified on the basis of cyclical dates and the name of the Buddha, and partly because it is similar in style and technique of manufacture to the afore-mentioned Maitreya statue. Thus Prof. Kim Yŏngt’ae thinks the evidence for 539 is “very thin” and that the date is more likely to be the seventh year of King Changsu’s reign (419), which conforms to the cyclical date. In any case, the inscription reads:

In the 7th year of Yŏnka, in the kimi year, the abbot of the East Monastery of Nangnang (Ch. Lolang) of Koryŏ, Kyŏng and his disciple Sŏng’yon, master and pupils in all forty people, together made (a Buddha of the) Bhadra-kalpa of a thousand Buddhas, who distributed

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39 Illustration in Okazaki Takashi (1977), Zasettsu Chūgoku no rekishi: Gishin Nanbokuchō no sekai, Kôdansha: Tokyo, 20-21, plates 16 and 17. For the Andha-vana story, see Mochizuki Shinkô (1933-1936), Bukkyō Daijiten, 10 vols, Dipingxian chubanshe reprint of 1936 Sekai seitên kankô kyôkai edn, 3934a-b.
45 Kim (1989), 234.
Certainly, this set of Bhadra-kalpa Buddhas became popular in Northern Wei from as early as around 400. In this case, perhaps with early depictions, only the Śākyamuni Buddha was required. The thousand Buddhas motif was most popular in Central Asia and Northern Wei, especially in the early sixth century. It is difficult to choose between the years 419 or 539 or 599, but if this Buddha is the twenty-ninth, he is not identified, which suggests either a sophistication or a misunderstanding by the writer of the dedication.

One more statue of a Buddha, this time in stone, 39.5cm x 44.5cm, has been dated 489 for it uses a Northern Wei reign era that coincides with the cyclical date. Thus Kim Yŏng’t’e suggests it was probably an import from Northern Wei. The inscription donates the merit of making the statue to seven generations of ancestors. It does not contribute much to our understanding, except for the possibility that Koguryŏ artisans may still not have made many images and so they had to be imported.

The next inscription is also contentious, both for its date and the reading. Found in 1930 in Pongsan-ri, Hwachon-myŏn, Koksan-gun, Hwanghae-do, it is usually dated 571, but that is only a speculation based on the cyclical stems and branches. Some claim that the character kyŏng 腈 should be ch’ang 昌, and so could be the last element of Taech’ang, in the 4th year, the rule of Silla King Chinhŭng, which coincides with the cyclical number. The second character is usually read as “four” 四, but others have read it as “west” 西. Kim Yŏng’t’e suggests then it may have been a Silla item, having been found near a border marker between Koguryŏ and Silla. The nimbus on which the date is inscribed is 15.5cm x 9.2cms. The inscription tells of a group of five people, plus a monk, who had created a statue of Amitayus Buddha to pray for their late teachers and parents, in the hope they would meet good teachers and Maitreya to hear his teachings.

In the Ji’an area, around the old Koguryŏ capital of Wando, a 7cm high bronze statue of a seated Śākyamuni was discovered in the Koguryŏ-period strata. It was supposedly found in one of the first two monasteries, but no more evidence is provided. No inscription accompanies it.

A further item, from a private collection, is similar to the 16.2cm high Yŏnka standing Buddha. This item is 18cm high and bears the inscription, “On the third day of the third month of the kiyu年 year, Master Kakyŏn and his students of Namsan Monastery of Great Koguryŏ made this.” It is said to have been sourced from Yī County, Liaoning Province in the cave complex of Wanfo tang that has sixteen caverns containing Buddhist statues. This was near Longcheng, the old capital of Northern Yan. This item has been dated to 499 A.D. (a date of the Taihe reign of Northern Wei), but Koguryŏ only occupied

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46 Kim (1989), 234; Hŏ (1984), 33; Hwang (1980), 36. The text is problematic, having been written over in part, and has unusual forms of the characters.
47 Mochizuki (1933-1936), 946b.
48 Wong (2004), 64, 74.
49 Hwang (1980), 36.
this region from around 523 or 524, and so if this was made in that region by Koguryŏ monks, it probably dates rather to 529. The site of discovery was to the east of the old Northern Yan capital of Longcheng. This then was probably a centre of conquered Chinese and Xianbei populations.

The final examples of Koguryŏ statuary are two small Buddhist images that were found in a rough-hewn stone case with an inside measurement of 11 x 7.5 x 8 cms. The larger bronze image is of a monk with his staff and is 8.5cm high. The smaller image is of a woman, 3.5cm high. These were discovered on Mt Taesŏng, six to seven kilometres to the north-east of P’yŏngyang. This site had between the capital between 427 and 586. It was probably what was known as P’yŏngyang-sŏng or Chang’an-sŏng.

The figurines were laid sideways, together with fragments of cloth, small scraps of paper and chips of incense. The base of the container, a Buddha-niche, is inscribed with the characters 囎, which the archaeologists think is related to the current name for the place, Kuksabong 國士峯, but I think from the photographs that the second character is t’o 十 and not sa 十, and so this is doubtful. The male figure is bronze and sits on a lotus throne on the back of an animal. He carries a staff with warning bells in his right hand and holds a gemstone in his left. The animal is said to be a suanni (Ch. sanye), a fabulous lion. The figure is that of Kṣitigarbha who carries a sound-making staff, the khakkara and a cintāmani or “wish-fulfilling gem” in his hands and rides a lion while wearing a hempen cap. The second figure is in two halves, of gold in front and silver behind, the two welded together. Her hands are supposedly in the mudra of the meditation of Amitābha Buddha.

The proposed period of origin would appear to be rather early, for the popularity of Kṣitigarbha by most accounts only really began in the Sui and Tang periods, and the most famous ‘Kṣitigarbha sutras’ were only translated in a later period time, although the dates for several texts are unclear, but could be from before 539, one or two possibly translated by Dharmakṣema (385-433). However, in 650 Daoshi wrote:

Since the country was divided into sixteen kingdoms, the Jin, Song, Liang, Chen, Qin and Zhao (et cetera), four hundred years have passed, and those who have sought salvation by

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54 Geng (2007), 67-68.
58 TKY, 72.
59 TKY, 74.
61 TKY, 75-76.
62 Puk Han, 317.
chanting the names of Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara), Dizang (Kṣitigarbha), Maitreya and Amitābha (are so numerous) that they cannot all be recorded.64

Pictures of Kṣitigarbha had been painted on the walls of a monastery in the south of China in the period 502 to 519,65 so there is a possibility that the Taesŏng figurines date from before 586.

Conceivably there was a link to Shentong Monastery, for Kṣitigarbha was often associated with descending into hell to rescue beings. There he would meet the judge of hell, who in popular Chinese belief is the god of Mt Tai which is to the back of Shentong Monastery.66 That may have been grounds enough for Kṣitigarbha to have been popular in the region, and so in one of the cliff-face caves and niches near Shentong Monastery there was a niche for Kṣitigarbha, but it probably dates to the early Tang. We do not know if Kṣitigarbha images were present earlier than that, for the monastery was destroyed in the Huichang persecution of 845 and so much evidence has been lost.67

Perhaps the reason for the location of the figures in the Taesŏng-san fortress can be found in some of the scriptures devoted to Kṣitigarbha. Although translated by Śikṣānanda (652-710), the Dizang Pusa benyuanjing68 says one will gain ten benefits by making an image of Kṣitigarbha as the earth god 地神 in a clean, south-facing place and putting it in a niche-room there of earth or stone. The image may be of metal or be a painting, and one should burn incense for it. The first of the benefits is a prosperous country.69 As an older translation, the Dafangguang shilunjing says that following the practices outlined in this text will protect the state in ten different ways,70 and as it uses the word “state-territory”國土 repeatedly,71 the worship of Kṣitigarbha could be a “state project.” Moreover, worship of this bodhisattva promises relief from all sorts of problems and was popular with women,72 which may explain the presence of a female “devotee” along with the image of Kṣitigarbha in the casket. I suspect then from the context that the characters 國土 stand for “the country” and may have been short for “Buddha country”佛國土. In that case, the cache was devoted to the salvation of the kingdom, perhaps in a fervent prayer by the woman whose image accompanied that of Kṣitigarbha. As there were no graves near the site, I conclude it was not a funerary object. Rather, it was found in a collapsed part of the citadel wall, notably on the southern side of the Kuksabong hill.73 The item then may have been that of the niche-room, worshipped with incense in a south-facing position.

A considerable distance away, closer to the centre of the citadel and next to a series of tombs, another stone casket was found. It contained fragments of the Lotus Sutra. The casket was buried under a collapsed wall and a large number of broken tiles. The casket was rough-hewn on the outside, 50 x 24 x 30 cm, with a lid. Inside was a hollowed out

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64 Quote in Kim Chŏnghŭi (1996), 52, from Fayuan zhulin 17, T53.411.
65 Kim Chŏnghŭi (1996), 53.
68 See Wang-Toutain (1998), 78.
70 T13.701a4.
71 T13.683a28ff.
73 TKY, 72, and map insert.
space, 34 x 12 x 16.5 cm. The number of pages of the book is estimated at about a hundred, each probably measuring 16.5 x 7 cm, with characters of 1.2 – 1.5 cm square, although some were only 8 to 10 mm square. They were arranged on average in 10 lines of 15 to 17 characters. The handwriting is a clear kaishu (haesŏch’e) or clerical script. About 1,500 characters could be restored, and they came from the sixth fascicle. Translations of the *Lotus Sutra* were made in 255, 286, 290, 335, 406 and 601. From the terminology, I suspect this is the 406 A.D. translation by Kumārajīva.\(^{74}\) The North Korean archaeologists suggest from the location that the text was stored or kept by the royal house.\(^{75}\) Yet the quality of the container would seem to militate against this, for it was heavy and rough, more suitable for use in a cache than for everyday use.

### Other archaeological data

Besides this, in the region of an earlier capital, there is a tomb mural from the Ji’an area, labelled Changchuan no. 1. The tomb was of a relatively high official, and the evidence indicates that the Buddha was worshipped like a god. The murals suggest that the deceased was a keen hunter who had killed many animals, but was now offering precious gems to the Buddha in atonement.\(^{76}\) It is dated 400 to 410, with an upper limit of 430, on stylistic grounds. Thus it could belong to the reign of King Kwanggaet’o (r. 391 – 412) or the early reign of king Changsu (r. 413 – 491), and so probably before the capital was shifted to the P’yŏngyang area in 427.\(^{77}\) Elements of this tomb are similar to those in the tomb of Murong Zhen,\(^{78}\) so the person may have adopted the Murong style of Buddhism or have been a Xianbei.

Another mural is that of the Ssang’yŏng tomb located between P’yŏngyang and Chinnamp’o. It has a mural like those found in Northern Wei. The mural depicts the wife and women of the buried person, the leading individual in the funerary procession carrying what appears to be a smoking censer. She is followed by a monk carrying a *khakkara* staff, and then the other mourners.\(^{79}\) It is thought to be related in style to those of the Yun’gang caves of Northern Wei, for the tomb uses similar octagonal stone pillars, and the murals are dominated by horses, carriages, warriors, and the animal gods of the four quarters.\(^{80}\)

The last type of archaeological evidence is that of monastery ruins, mostly foundation stones. Monasteries in North Korea that date to Koguryŏ times by tradition include the spectacular, cliff-hanging Podŏk-am in the Kŭmgang Mountains; An’guk-sa in Such’ŏn-gun, P’yŏng’am Namdo that is dated to 503; and three in P’yŏngyang: Kwangbŏp-sa, Pŏb’un-am and Chŏngnŭng-sa, the last dated 427.\(^{81}\) But Podŏk-am is only attributed to a monk who fled Koguryŏ in its last years during or after the reign King Anwŏn (r. 531 – 545), Podŏk. This ascription can only be found in a tradition recorded in the *Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* of 1486 of the Chosŏn Period. There is no other supporting

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\(^{75}\) TKY, 68-72.


\(^{79}\) Nakagiri (1973), plate 5, 10-11 in Art Section.


\(^{81}\) *Puk Han*, 41-42.
evidence. Again, for An’guk-sa, it is only the monastery’s own stele of record, the An’guk-sa sajŏkki of uncertain date that claims it was founded in 503 by Hyŏn’uk, who left a stupa base. There is, of course, no corroborating evidence.

Of the three sites in P’yŏngyang, Kwangbŏp-sa is on Taesŏng-san, and the only evidence yet again is in the Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam and a monastic-gazetteer on a stele of 1667, which claimed the monastery was originally built by Adao and was subsequently destroyed totally by flames, and was not rebuilt until the end of the Koryŏ. No details are known of the origins of Pŏb’un-am, a hermitage half-way up a scenic hell, but the style of piling the foundation stones and tiles found in the vicinity suggest a Koguryŏ origin.

Chŏngnung-sa is a genuine Koguryŏ-period monastery. It is surrounded by Koguryŏ mound tombs and is 150 metres from the huge mound tomb celebrating the legendary founder king, King Tongmyŏng. It was founded in 427 or 491 for the worship of the soul of King Tongmyŏng. Excavations there have found the name of the monastery written on pottery, and it has the same layout as Kŭmgang-sa, a known Koguryŏ monastery. The ruins are 132.8m x 223m. There was a single octagonal stupa behind a central gate, plus three “golden halls.” This format is thought by some to have been imitated by Asuka-dera near Nara. The ruins of Kŭmgang-sa are also in P’yŏngyang. According to the Samguk sagi, Kŭmgang-sa was founded in 498, but it was abolished sometimes after the Tongguk yŏji sŭngnam was compiled in 1486. The octagonal stupa was originally made probably of wood and is estimated to have been 61.25 metres high.

Chŏngnung-sa seems to have served as a model, for all the stupa bases dating from Koguryŏ times are in the same octagonal shape and differ from the stupa bases of Paekche and Silla that had šarira (relics) buried beneath or inside a central foundation stone. The Koguryŏ stupas probably installed the šarira relics above the foundation stone. Inside the stupa it seems four Buddha images were installed, just like those at the “Four-door stupa” of Shentong Monastery that is dated 544, and perhaps had murals like those inside the stupa of Hŏryuji in Japan. The tomb of King Tongmyŏng was probably shifted here in 427 when the capital was moved, and so the monastery was probably built as a prayer chapel for the divine ancestor, perhaps in 498. It may also be related to the worship of Maitreya.

However, the Simenta or Four-door Stupa, which is to the south-east of the remains of Shentong Monastery, has a square, not an octagonal base, and has a single storey, with a height of 15.04 metres, nothing like the estimated 61.25 metres of the Kŭmgang-sa Stupa. This square shape was common in Shandong from the late Northern Wei through to the Northern Qi period, at least in images. But no stupa of this form dates from before 544. The use of images of the Buddha in four directions as found in Shandong derives from the Guan Fo sanmeihaijing, a text famous for its mention of the “shadow of the

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82 Puk Han, 53.
83 Puk Han, 70.
84 Puk Han, 65.
85 Puk Han, 67.
86 Puk Han, 69; Geng (2007), 65-66.
87 Puk Han, 386-388.
89 Chen Qingxiang (2004), 150-151.
90 Chen Qingxiang (2004), 154.
91 Chen Qingxiang (2004), 156-158.
Buddha” and for its contemplation of the Buddhas and visualisations of them. So the icons in the octagonal stupas may have been the same as in the Shentong Monastery stupa, but not the ground plan.

**ANALYSIS**

A paucity of evidence, much of it controversial in interpretation because of a lack of sufficient context or the imposition of modern, competing nationalisms, place us in much the same position as Kakhun in his attempts to construct hagiographies from fragmentary sources, most originally Chinese. Thus when Kakhun came to deal with the penultimate Koguryo figure, he had to rely on the Gaosengzhuan for the account of Tanshi (Kor. Tamshi), who went to Liaodong in 396, where he taught briefly. Yet Kakhun had to admit that the compiler of the Gaosengzhuan considered this the beginning of Buddhism in Koguryo, contrary to the earlier assertions Kakhun had made. But again, Tanshi’s mission does not appear to have been much of a success, for Tanshi returned around 405 to central China.

Kakhun was so desperate for information that he copied all of the remainder of the account of Tanshi’s deeds after his return from China almost word-for-word from the Gaosengzhuan. Although Kakhun naturally objected to Huijiao’s comment about the beginning of Buddhism in Koguryo, citing Fu Jian’s mission of twenty-five years previous, the fact that Shundao and Adao both seem to have failed in their efforts is not mentioned here.

Finally, the same can be said of Kakhun’s account of Hyŏn’yu, who dates from the early Tang, that is, from after 618 and before 670 when Yijing began inquiring about those pilgrims who had been to India in order to prepare for his own journey to the homeland of Buddhism. Not only had Kakhun no other information on Koguryo Buddhist events from 405 to sometime in the 630s to 650s, he had to rely on Yijing’s account for only about two sentences, if that, and the remainder was praise and speculation. Kakhun in fact padded the account of Hyŏn’yu with the deeds of Sengzhe and praises of Yijing. In other words, Kakhun had virtually no information from domestic sources on Koguryo, with the possible exception of a couple of brief entries in the Samguk sagi and a tale from the Su’ichŏn by Pak Illyang (1047-1096).

Again, it is a connection with Shentong Monastery that gives information on the last Buddhist activities of the Koguryo monks. The link is again Yijing, who studied under two masters at Shentong Monastery in his youth. Yijing praised his teachers to the skies and saw them as heirs to Ju Senglang, who is named as a great teacher and sage. The first, Shanyu, was a Vinaya scholar; the second, Huixi, a devotee of the Lotus Sutra. Yijing was clearly interested in “Korean” monks, for in his work on the pilgrims

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92 Zürcher (1959), 224-225.  
93 See the list of Kakhun’s sources in Chang Hŭiok (1991), 23ff.  
94 Lee (1969), 40-41; Gaosengzhuan, T50.392b4-6.  
96 Lee (1969), 95-96; Yijing, Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaosengzhuan, T51.8b-c for Sengzhe, Hyŏn’yu’s master, and 8c15-17 for Hyŏn’yu. See Yijing’s preface on putting the pilgrims into a historical sequence in his accounts, T51.1a22-23. The first date for a monk is in the Zhenguan era (627-650), 1b29. For Yijing’s enquiries, 7c3. Sengzhe had several pupils and admirers, see also 7b18-19 and 8b20.  
97 Lee (1969), 96.  
99 See Lee (1969), 53.  
100 Junjiro Takakusu, trans (1896), A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695), Clarendon Press: Oxford, 199-207, esp. 206: “These two teachers of mine, Shan-yü and Hui-hsi, were the successors of the former sage, (Seng-)Lang the Dhyāna Master.”
to India he recorded seven Silla monks and one Koguryŏ monk (not listed in a separate biography) out of the total of 56 individuals he counted, and he used incidents from the Sui campaign against Koguryŏ to illustrate a point: “To make a comparison, a single sortie at the town of Liao-tung broke the courageous hearts of the three generals.”

All of the above suggests that Koguryŏ Buddhism was short-lived, superficial and mostly concentrated around the court. The evidence of Buddhism is almost non-existent when we consider that over ten thousand tombs of Koguryŏ vintage have been identified in China and Korea, and that ninety of them have murals. Yet only two or three of these murals have Buddhist content, and one of these is for a refugee official and possible advisor to the Koguryŏ king.

Secondly, there are no stele inscriptions extant for monks, or with mentions of Buddhism, and no large Buddhist statues in stone or metal, or traces of reliefs on cliffs of Buddhist images, and certainly no cave complexes like those of Yun’gang, Longmen or the many other sites of the Northern Wei or later periods, or even like those statues, engravings and remains from Paekche or Silla.

Perhaps a better comparison should be with the Xianbei peoples, similarly warlike and ruling over vanquished farmer populations. It is likely that the Xianbei came into contact with Buddhism around 294 and were influenced by the Later Zhao adoption of Buddhism during the lifetime of Fotudeng. The Murong Xianbei in particular brought Buddhism closer to Koguryŏ domains, for in 342 the Yan rulers shifted their capital to Longcheng, and the ruler Murong Huang established a monastery nearby in 345. Afterwards, the Former Yan continued to build monasteries in their territories. Successor regimes such as Later Yan and Southern Yan also built monasteries in the north-east and in Shandong. It was Murong De of Southern Yan who respected Ju Senglang and allegedly donated the tax incomes of two prefectures to his monastery around 399-400.

Furthermore, the Xianbei territories of the Murong clan produced a number of able monks, though it is likely most were from the conquered Chinese populations or immigrants. The Murong clan had adopted a policy of using refugees of eminent clans from the North China plains to help them rule over the conquered local Chinese clans, some of whom, such as the Wang, had been in the Lelang district since Later Han times. In 333, when the Former Yan was established by Murong Huang after the death of Murong Hui, many of these local, indigenous clans supported a revolt by Murong Ren, and so were thereafter under suspicion. This included Dong Shou. The Murong Yan encouraged refugees from the North China plains, who after 317 fled in large numbers, outnumbering the existing residents some tenfold. They were used by the Murong as ministers and officials, and they occupied nearly all important posts, and so the Yan used Chinese immigrants who had voluntarily submitted to Murong rule to control the conquered indigenous Chinese of the Liaodong region. These refugees probably brought their Buddhism with them, and made up the vast majority of the literate elite, and

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101 For the count, see Da Tang xiyu qifa gaosengzhuan, T51.1a-b, b22.
102 Takakusu (1896), xxxv; T51.11b9-10, 睦乎職(意 in three versions)城一發下三將之雄心. This may be a reference to the siege of Liaodong fortress in 612, for which see SGSG 20: 204; interpretation difficult.
it is estimated that 95% of officials of the government were from these immigrant
groups. Among these immigrants (or their descendants) were Sengquan (n.d.) who
erected a Buddha statue at Huanglong, i.e. the Yan capital of Longcheng; Tanwuje from
Huanglong in Youzhou, who went to India to study in 420; Tanshun, who studied under
Kumarajiva and went south with Huiyuan; Tanwucheng, whose family fled to Huanglong
where he studied and later came to study with Kumarajiva; Tanhong, also from
Huanglong, who went south into what is now northern Vietnam around 420. Also, there is
evidence ordinary people from Xianbei territories were believers, as with a certain Fuqin
Bilan (?) who had been in the Later Yan army in 396, and even rebellions were lead
against the Later Yan by (ethnically Chinese?) people appealing to Buddhist faith by
installing a Buddhist monk as their pretender emperor.

It is clear that the Murong Xianbei were strong supporters of Buddhism, as were
the subjugated populations, and so provided sources of Buddhism and even Buddhists to
Koguryo. They were succeeded by the Northern Wei, founded by the Tuoba clan, another
Xianbei group. All built many Buddhist images in stone, and a Xianbei from Northern
Wei, for example, worshipped Maitreya. The Northern Wei also worshipped the
Thousand Buddhas and Maitreya faith was important in Northern Wei, which seems
to be similar to what Buddhist faith Koguryo did have. It is likely that refugees from the
Murong Former Yan, defeated in 370, especially those indigenous to the Liaodong area,
brought elements of their faith to Koguryo, where it seemed destined to remain
predominantly a foreign faith for some time, sustained by Murong and descendants of the
Chinese of the Lelang and other commanderies, or refugees and border residents who
preserved some interest in the culture of the states to the south. This influence may have
been revived via the Wanfo tang caves complex that was begun at least by 499 under the
Northern Wei. This complex was probably a Buddhist centre for Yingzhou and
Longcheng, and its location at Yi County on the banks of the river and on the road from
Longcheng to Liaodong would have made it a conduit for Buddhism into Koguryo.

Despite the large Buddhist complexes and images produced by their Xianbei and
Chinese neighbours, the Koguryo Buddhist images that have survived are all small and
metal, none higher than 22cm, and the only stone statue that exists, slightly larger, may
have come from Northern Wei. One statue is definitely of Maitreya, another is of
Ksitigarbha and others are of the Buddha. The common features of the inscriptions,
dedications and murals are of a prayer for good fortune, either for oneself, the ancestors,
teachers or the country. This suggests a popular piety. The statues, all being small,
suggest they may have been for personal use and were portable. Notably, most have not
been found in identified monastery sites, with one exception.

The evidence of the monastery foundations, plus the tomb of Murong Zhen and the
items found at Taesong-san, suggest then that the Buddhism that did exist was largely
centred round the court, with the first substantial monastery possibly being only
established in 427, and perhaps a handful after that. Most of the missionaries, such as

105 Li Haiye (2005), 113.
107 Gaosengzhuan, T50.370a29-b2.
110 Wong (2004), 74-75.
111 Wong (2004), 93ff.
112 Cf. Okazaki (1977), 180, 158 table 204.
Adao (if true) and Tanshi stayed only briefly, suggesting few believers and little success. The tradition was probably shallow, for if Kim Pusik is to be believed, in 650, Po'dŏk of Pan'yŏng Monastery, fled Koguryŏ to Paekche because Daoism was becoming popular in Koguryŏ, but perhaps his actions were more related to his perceptions of a possible Chinese invasion and the conscription of Buddhist monks into the military, as in 668 when Yŏn Namgŏn entrusted military matters to the Buddhist monk Sinsŏng in P'yŏngyang, who then betrayed the city to the Tang army. This use of the Buddhist monks as military advisors and technicians was in line with Xianbei practices, as in 395 and in 399, when Ju Senglang was used to forecast the weather and the prospects of success of a military venture for Murong De. Moreover, the mixture of Buddhism and Daoism that may have occurred in late Koguryŏ, as referred to in a statement of 643 by Yŏn Kaesŏmun, may have had its origins in an area like that to the south of Chang’an, for example, where Daoism and Buddhism mixed among nomadic clans who also supported Daoism because it seemed to be similar to their own ‘shamanism.’ This seems to have flourished in the 490s to early 500s.

At most we can speak of Koguryŏ Buddhism over a 250-year period. It seems to have had a brief flowering from the late 500s, judging from the missionaries of the Sanlun School, who went from Koguryŏ to the Japanese Yamato court, but almost always only after having studied in China previously. At least one was sent as an envoy. Yet this need to study in Sui or Tang suggests that, contrary to a number of assertions, that there was not a developed doctrinal study of Sanlun in Koguryŏ. Rather, this study had its origins in the Later Yan territories, probably among descendants of Chinese refugees from the North China plains. Fadu (437-497/500) was a native of Longcheng, which had been captured in 436 by Northern Wei. A practitioner of austerities and a devotee of Amitāyus, Fadu arrived in South China in 477-479, and he became a teacher of Sŭngnang, a monk from the Liaodong territories of Koguryŏ. It is clear that a number of monks involved with Kumārajīva and Sanlun, such as Sengquan, heir to Sŭngnang’s monastery in the South, Tanshun and Tanwucheng came from or lived in Huanglong, that is, Longcheng. In addition, a Japanese text dating from before 1259, but based on a work by Junzheng (or Huizheng), the Silun xuanyi (possibly dating before 814), states that “a monk from the state of Gaoli, Dharma Teacher Shi Daolang [i.e. Sŭngnang?] journeyed to the descendants of the eight former (disciples of Kumārajīva) in the country of Huanglong, learned what the disciples had heard and studied…crossed the Yangtze and reached Yangzhou.” That would suggest that Sanlun was established in the Longcheng region

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113 SGSJ, 223, 9th year of King Pojang; backed by Samguk yusa 3: 97-98.
114 SGSJ, 227, 27th year of King Pojang.
115 Kim Sŏngsuk (2005), 108.
119 Gaoxengzhuan, T50,380b15.
120 See Jorgensen (2005), 82, 116 note 58.
121 This is controversial, as the possibility of confusion has been raised by Hirai Shun’ei (1976), Chūgoku Hannya shisōshi kenkyū, Shunjūsha: Tokyo, 271-272; cf. with Richard Robinson (1967), Early Madhyamika in India and China, University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 165-166.
122 Kim Sŏngsuk (2005), 107; see also table in Robinson (1967), 163 for the genealogy.
123 Cited in Jeorg Plässen (2002), “The Koguryŏ monk Sŭngnang…” 3. Huanglong is here given as the area around Dunhuang, but that is not tenable. Note, I have not had access to this original text.
after Kumārajīva’s death in 409 or 413, and that Sūngnang joined them from not far over the border in Koguryŏ. Yet I consider Sūngnang still needed to study with Zhou Yong and make notes before he could even compose his own text.

The fame of the line on Mt She from Sūngnang, who became abbot of Zhiguan Monastery there, probably then reached Emperor Wu of Liang. This royal patronage in turn later attracted a number of monks from Koguryŏ to study under Jizang (549-623), who claimed to be heir of this lineage. It was largely Jizang’s “Koguryŏ” pupils who went on to teach Sanlun in Japan.124

The origin of this fascination with Sanlun by monks from the region may perhaps be indirectly sourced to Ju Senglang, for Kumārajīva’s first pupil in Chang’an, Sengrui (352-436), had listened to Senglang preach the Pañcavimśata (Fangguangming) scripture of prajñāparamitā sometime before 375, the translation of which sutra he later assisted. As the most senior and leader of Kumārajīva’s pupils,125 the connection with Ju Senglang may have created a seal of approval for Kumārajīva’s scholarship, which then attracted the Longcheng/Huanglong group to Sanlun. This then enticed Sūngnang from across the border. Sūngnang then cannot be claimed as a Koguryŏ Sanlun scholar, for he studied initially in Northern Wei and wrote all of his work in South China and never returned to Koguryŏ. Indeed, he probably had to verify what he had learnt with Zhou Yong (-485), a most learned man versed in Buddhist philosophy of the Madhyamaka kind and in phonology.126 Most of the Sanlun scholars, including those from Longcheng, moved to south of the Yangtze, which is later where Jizang taught and the students from Koguryŏ came. There was thus no substantial Sanlun school of studies in Koguryŏ itself, and it is possible most of the students from there were of Chinese ethnicity.

In order to avoid the nationalist claims that read present requirements back into the past, we should then see Koguryŏ as a multi-ethnic kingdom, with a semi-nomadic warrior ruling class made up of clans descended from Puyŏ to the north, local subject farmers of the Ye and Maek peoples,127 plus some descendants of Chinese populations with their roots in the Han Dynasty colonies, and new groups of ethnic Chinese from the bordering states, either refugees or captives brought from the collapse of the Xianbei states, and some Xianbei defectors as well. The last two ethnic groups may have been relatively few numerically, some living on land conquered by Koguryŏ. As boasted in the words of King Kwanggaet’o ca. 414, he would have the Han (Chinese) and Ye that he had captured, brought to care for his tomb and as personal dependents used to bolster royal powers against the other aristocratic Koguryŏ clans.128 Like modern refugees and immigrants searching for a better life, or forced from their homes by violence, these groups, who were probably valued for their skills and used to control selected areas such as Nangnang (Lelang) and Taebang (Daifang) and as buffer forces between the Koguryŏ conquerors and newly subjected peoples,129 probably maintained an interest in their homelands and

126 For a recent discussion of Zhou Yong, see Nakajima Ryūzō (1985), Rikuchō shisō no kenkyū: Shidaifu no Bukkyō shisō, Heirakuji shoten: Kyoto, 290-318. Oshima Shōji (2003), Kanji to Chūgokujin, Iwanami shoten: Tokyo, 146 suggests that Zhou Yong was the first Chinese to consciously use the four tones of Chinese. Of course, Sengrui was also versed in phonology.
127 Gardiner (1988), 175.
128 Gardiner (1988), 176-177; SGSG, 188, King Kogukyang, 2nd year, summer, the attack on Liaodong gained 10,000 people who were herded back into Koguryŏ territory.
intermarried with the local population.\textsuperscript{130} It was probably these people, along with the centralizing royalty, who were the initial supporters of Buddhism and facilitated its introduction. As these migrants and ethnic minorities were valuable as officials loyal to the Koguryŏ king and state, and were used as Koguryŏ envoys,\textsuperscript{131} the king may have reciprocated by lending support to their Buddhism. I suspect then that few of the Ye and Maek subject peasants adopted Buddhism, nor many of the Koguryŏ warriors, who would not have found the pacifist Buddhism attractive. Rather, the Buddhists probably came from the minority ethnic communities and from the royal clan and its immediate supporters.

The Buddhism taken into Koguryŏ largely came via Xianbei territories and was therefore likely heavily influenced by Xianbei Buddhism. The route this Buddhism took into Koguryŏ probably began in Shentong Monastery, which seems from a number of hints to have been a focus for Koguryŏ, possibly because of an initial connection made earlier by Fu Jian. There were three other cave complexes in the vicinity dating from Northern and Eastern Wei. They were in Licheng, near modern Ji’nan, close to the Yellow River, and on a road from Mt Tai.\textsuperscript{132} The references to Beidu in several places in the \textit{Haedong kosŏngjŏn}\textsuperscript{133} suggest that one route went from near the mouth of the Yellow River and followed the Miaodao islands at the head of the Gulf of Bohai across to the Liaodong Peninsula and then onto Ji’an and P’yŏngyang. The other route from Shentong Monastery probably went via the old Former Yan capital of Longcheng, with one centre or stop-over at the Wanfo tang cave complex, and then on into Liaodong.

However, as Koguryŏ had to fight for its survival in its later history against Sui and Tang China, as well as its peninsular neighbours Silla and Paekche, the Koguryŏ rulers tried to use Buddhism as a diplomatic lever with the Yamato court in particular, but it failed with Silla and Paekche. The evidence shows Koguryŏ was not a major Buddhist centre, and its Buddhism was a prayer for benefits and was purely derivative. It produced no important Buddhist thinkers, schools or art. The religion was likely that of the small ethnic populations, possibly creoles like Ko Un,\textsuperscript{134} and of the court as a nation-protecting device and for diplomacy. The monks who appear in the historical records were mostly those who went to China to study and make a better life. Few returned to Koguryŏ, possibly because Buddhism there was not especially favoured, or because they were members of the Chinese ethnic minority. It is likely then that the majority of Koguryŏ subjects largely maintained their old beliefs, while the ruling elites enjoyed their hunting and military pursuits, as the tombs suggest.

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\textsuperscript{130} The \textit{Samguk sagi} mentions on a number of occasions that populations crossed over borders to improve their lives.

\textsuperscript{131} Shinohara (2005), 218-219.

\textsuperscript{132} Okazaki (1977), 158.

\textsuperscript{133} Lee (1969), 34; Chang Hŭiok (1991), 135, ref. 271 note 280.

\textsuperscript{134} SGSG, 407, 17th year of King Kwanggaeto; see Shinohara (2005), 221-223; and Chi Paesŏn (1987), 867-871. Ko Un founded Northern Yan in 407, and was possibly of mixed Murong and Koguryŏ Ko clan ancestry.
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