

Articles

Goguryeo Buddhism: An Imported Religion in a Multi-ethnic Warrior Kingdom

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It is unlikely that Goguryeo 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 foreign records which are either late or fragmentary. Compounding the problem are the conflicting interpretations of Goguryeo society by Korean and Chinese historians who read contemporary nationalist concerns back into the past. How one conceives of Goguryeo society largely determines the understandings reached from the meager evidence about Buddhism in Goguryeo.

Goguryeo was a multi-ethnic kingdom, ruled by mounted warrior tribes originating from the north in Buyeo, consisting of local Ye and Maek farmers and other groups, who were likely the ancestors of modern Koreans. There were as well migrants and captives of Chinese and Xianbei ethnic groups, brought in to bolster the rulers' powers in the captured territories. For much of its history, Goguryeo was fighting aggressive wars of expansion or defending itself against other states and tribal confederations. In China after 317, Buddhism was favoured by the nomadic and militaristic foreign regimes that conquered the northern territories, partly because Buddhism was non-Chinese and claimed to provide powers to win battles, ward off disasters and it could assuage remorse for horrific acts. It also provided technicians and advisors in the form of Buddhist monks.¹ However, Goguryeo does not seem to have favoured Buddhism to nearly the same extent, possibly because it had fewer Chinese subjects.

Despite this, modern Korean historians have been eager to see Goguryeo as a Buddhist kingdom and champion the one monk who had a possible Goguryeo origin as an important thinker. A typical view is as follows:

[T]he research of scholar-monks of Goguryeo—which accepted Buddhism initially—was most active. Goguryeo Master Seungnang systematically

* This paper is dedicated to the memory of late Dr. Ken Gardiner. I wish to thank the reviewers for their questions and suggestions which have contributed to this article, although I have not been able to answer all the queries.

1. Arthur F. Wright, *Studies in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Robert Somers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 15-16.

researched and developed the study of the Three Treatises (Sanlun)...he directly influenced the establishment of the Chinese School of the Three Treatises. Besides him, many Goguryeo masters were active either in China and Goguryeo.²

This nationalist promotion of Seungnang 僧朗 as a Goguryeo Buddhist thinker started in 1930 with the publication of an article “Joseon Bulgyo: Dongbang munhwasa e inneun geu jiwi” by the nationalist historian Choe Nam-seon 崔南善 (1890-1957), who wrote, “Seungnang, who created a great turning point in Chinese Buddhism was in fact a Goguryeo monk.”³

Similarly, the unquestioning acceptance that “nine monasteries” were built in 392 (second year of the reign of King Gwanggaeto) in Pyongyang⁴ just twenty years after the first attempts to introduce Buddhism into the Goguryeo court demonstrates an assumption that Buddhism flourished in Goguryeo. Here I shall attempt to remove these nationalist distortions by presenting what evidence there is of Goguryeo Buddhism in an effort to show its paucity, and by interrogating the reliability of such evidence, it may then be analysed and put it into the larger context of north-east Asian developments.

Evidence

The evidence for Goguryeo Buddhism is extremely scarce and largely disconnected. There are no extant funerary stelae for Goguryeo monks dating from this period and no texts by Goguryeo monks survive. Even

2. Lee Jae-chang, “Introduction,” in *Buddhist Thought in Korea*, ed. The Korean Buddhist Research Institute (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1994), 5-6. For similar assertions about Seungnang, see the articles listed in John Jorgensen, “Korea as a Source for the Regeneration of Chinese Buddhism,” in *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*, ed., Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 117 note 60, to which can be added Kim In-deok, “Goguryeo Samnon sasang ui jeongae,” in *Hanguk Bulgyo munhwa sasangsa*, vol. 1, Gasan Yi Jigwan Seunim Hwagap Ginyeom Nonchong Ganhaeng Wiwonhoe, comp. (Seoul: Gasan Bulgyo Munhwa Jinheungwon, 1992), 165-91.

3. Cited by Kim Yeong-tae, “Goguryeo Seungnang e daehan jaegochal,” *Hanguk Bulgyohak* 20 (1995): 25.

4. Kim Yeong-tae, “Goguryeo Bulgyo jeollae ui jemunje,” *Bulgyo Hakbo* 23 (1986): 20.

the passages attributed to Seungnang (d. 512), championed by Korean nationalists as the only Goguryeo Buddhist author, were written in China.⁵ There are at most only four or perhaps five short inscriptions (some being incomplete), with some of their dates and their provenance being disputed.⁶

Documentary Evidence

The documentary or narrative histories are also less than reliable, for they are late, or foreign. Of these domestic histories, the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 dates to 1145 and was made by a pro-southern Confucian, a descendant of Silla nobility, Kim Bu-sik 金富軾, who saw Silla as the most legitimate of the three kingdoms and who had assisted in putting down a northern, irredentist rebellion. The rebellion was led by the monk Myocheong 妙清, who had wished to shift the capital northwards to Pyongyang, into the old Goguryeo heartland. Although Kim Bu-sik was not anti-Buddhist in general, as he is known to have written epitaphs for eminent monks, this experience of Myocheong's rebellion may have made him suspicious of Buddhism linked to Goguryeo. Thus, while Kim Bu-sik cited older Korean sources, his account was heavily reliant on Chinese sources and contained little on Goguryeo Buddhism.⁷ This may have also been due to the fact that there was little to record.

The second domestic historical source is the *Haedong goseungjeon* 海東高僧傳, a series of hagiographies modeled on the Chinese *Gaosengzhuan* series, compiled on royal command in 1215 by Gakhun 覺訓 (d. ca. 1230). Gakhun was abbot of Yeongtong Monastery located near the Goryeo capital of Gaeseong. The text is incomplete, with only two of at least five chapters extant, but these two chapters probably contained all the Goguryeo material

5. Jorgensen (2005), 81-83. Here I differ from most interpretations, including those of Jeong Plassen, "Süng Tonang 僧道朗 (a.k.a. Süngnang 僧朗, fl. 476?-512) from Koguryō and his Role in Chinese San-lun," *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture* 5 (2005): 165-98.

6. Counted from Heo Heung-sik, *Hanguk geumseok jeonmun: Kodae*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Asea Munhwasa, 1984); and Kim Yeong-tae, "Samguk sidae Bulgyo geumseongmun gojeung," *Bulgyo Hakbo* 26 (1989): 234-40, 242-43, 248-49 for a more skeptical view about provenance and dates.

7. K. Gardiner, "Tradition Betrayed? Kim Pu-sik and the Founding of Koguryō," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 37 (1988): 158.

available then. All current texts were likely based on only one manuscript found by the controversial monk Yi Hoe-gwang 李晦光 around 1914. Most of the extant text is based on Chinese sources and is relatively prudent.⁸

The third domestic source, the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事, traditionally attributed to the Seon monk, Iryeon 一然 (1206-1289), but now known to have additions and notes by Mugeuk 無極 (1251-1322), was based in part on monastic records that fabricated ancient origins for their monasteries and founders. This probably accounts for the varying records about Ado 阿道 (Ch. Adao), for example,⁹ and for differing dates for the shift of a monastery residence by Bodeok 普德 in 650 or 667.¹⁰ 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 after it was started.¹¹ The text then must be considered very unreliable, for it has Adao, who arrived in Goguryeo from China in 374, curing a daughter of the Silla king Michu (r. 262-286) in 264. The compilers did not even bother to correct the evidently contradictory dates as found in the *Haedong goseungjeon*.¹² Moreover, it has a largely pro-Silla stance, and can only be used for Goguryeo Buddhism with the utmost care.¹³

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

8. Peter H. Lee, *Lives of Eminent Korean Monks: The Haedong Kosŭng chŏn*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies 25 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 1-5; Jang Hui-ok, *Haedong goseungjeon* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1991), 14-18, 45-48, 23-30.

9. Jang lists sources in *Samguk sagi*, *Suijeon* and *Haedong goseungjeon* (1991), 26, 155-60.

10. Ha Jeongnyong, *Samguk yusa saryo bipan* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 2005), 232-34.

11. Ha (2005), 278-79, English summary 314-15.

12. Cf. Lee (1969), 6 note 29; and Jang (1991), 131, 157-58, 162-63, 374, 527.

13. For example, on the stupa of Asoka at the Liaodong Fortress and stories related to Bodeok, see Lee Byeong-do, ed. and trans., *Samguk yusa* (Seoul: Gwangju Chulpansa, 1981), 4, 100-01.

in the *Gaosengzhuan*:

The Senior Zhu Fashen is a pupil of Lord Liu of Zhongzhou [Liu Yuanzhen],¹⁴ who embodied virtue...and currently is on Mt. Yang in Shan Prefecture.¹⁵

The 1215 *Haedong goseungjeon* even identifies the recipient of the letter as Mangmyeong 亡名, suspiciously meaning “lost name.” Although there were a few monks in Chinese history with that as a name,¹⁶ one must doubt this was a genuine name in the circumstances. Gakhun alleges that the fame of this Mangmyeong had spread as far as Zhi Dun in the south of China, and the author of this comment, possibly Gakhun, states out of a spirit of patriotism that there then must have been eminent Buddhists in Goguryeo in the latter period of the 370s.¹⁷ As this and the following hagiography of Uiyeon 義淵 in the *Haedong goseungjeon* provide very limited factual information, these hagiographies seem to have been fanciful elaborations built on one or two clues from the Chinese source.¹⁸

The second mention of Buddhism in connection with Goguryeo is the sending of the monk Shundao 順道 (Kor. Sundo) to the Goguryeo court by Fu Jian 苻堅, 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 慕容 Former Yan in 370. This brought his borders up to those of Goguryeo,¹⁹ and Fu Jian needed peace there while he turned his military might south-west to Sichuan in 373. As Former Yan had been an enemy of Goguryeo, this was probably an astute move.²⁰

14. For this person, see Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*, 2 vols (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), 98, 77.

15. T. 50.348a12-15. Entries from the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (abbrev. T.) are noted with volume number followed by page number, register number, then line number.

16. James A. Benn, “Written in Flames: Self-immolation in Sixth-century Sichuan,” *T’oung Pao* 92 (2006), 410-65, see 415-21, on Wangming (516-67+), who had an important role in Chinese Buddhist history.

17. Lee (1969), 33-34.

18. For Uiyeon, see Lee (1969), 35-36, esp. note 120.

19. Zürcher (1959), 198.

20. Gardiner (1969), 49; Zürcher (1959), 198.

The third mention of Goguryeo in relation to Buddhism is in the *Xu Gaosengzhuan* 續高僧傳 biography of Sengyi 僧意. It states that Gushan 谷山 Monastery (later called Shentong 神通 Monastery, probably because of some “miraculous statues”), founded in 351 by Zhu Senglang 竺僧朗 (ca. 315-400), sometime after 386 had statues from (or of) seven minor countries, including Gaoli 高麗, that is, Goguryeo. These statues were all gold and bronze and were exhibited in the hall of the monastery, the doors of which were always open and through which fishers and hunters would not enter. The statues were praised by Lingyu 靈裕 (d. 605), “They came in response to influence; There was truly no direction (to do so).”²¹ It seems that Goguryeo had sent unbidden a statue to Gushan Monastery in Shandong, near Mt. Tai, by 400 CE.

By later times, Buddhism had certainly gained a hold in Goguryeo, for of the year 576, the *Lidai sanbaoji* of 597 records that Uiyen came to Ye, capital of the Northern Qi, to ask the famous cleric Fashang 法上 (495-580) a number of questions on Buddhist history.²² This mission and the inquiries were made at the instigation of the prime minister of Goguryeo, Wang Go-deok 王高德, who asked; when did the Buddha pass away, when did Buddhism first enter China, and who were the authors of a series of major Buddhist treatises. He evidently did so “because he was ignorant of the origin and development of the religion.”²³

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 (地論宗) that centred on the interpretation of the *Daśabhūmikāsūtra-sāstra* (Dilun) by Vasubandhu and certain passages of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*. The knowledge levels of the Goguryeo monks must still have been low at that time for them to have needed to ask when Buddhism was introduced into China and who wrote a number of sutras and their commentaries, which would have been something well known in China in those days.

The Goguryeo understanding was probably that belief in Buddhism would simply bring merit and good fortune (福), as King Gogugyang is

21. T. 50.647a5-11.

22. Lee (1969), 35-38; and *Lidai sanbaoji* 12, T. 49.104c9-105a8, by Fei Zhangfang, a notoriously unreliable historian.

23. Lee (1969), 35.

alleged to have advised the Silla king in the eighth year of his reign (391).²⁴ 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 Geumgang Monastery in Pyongyang.²⁵

The next record is that of Dharma Master Hyeryang 慧亮. The *Samguk sagi* biography of Geo Chil-bu 居柒夫 (d. 579) of Silla relates that when young Geo Chil-bu cut off his hair and became a monk, he traveled around Silla and then crossed the border into Goguryeo where he listened to Hyeryang lecture on the sutras. Hyeryang asked Geo Chil-bu, then still a śramaṇera and so likely still in his teens, where he was from. Hearing that he was from Silla, Hyeryang predicted he would become a military leader of that state. After returning to Silla, Geo Chil-bu rose in the lay ranks and in 551, as a general, was ordered to attack Goguryeo. His troops occupied part of southern Goguryeo. Hyeryang led his followers along the road and there met Geo Chil-bu, who protected them. Hyeryang claimed that Goguryeo was about to fall and requested to be taken to Silla, which he was. He met King Jinheung of Silla and was appointed Controller of the Clergy. He also instituted the Hundred Seat Lecture Assembly (百高座法會) and the Palgwan Assembly (八關會).²⁶

The last record in the Korean histories of a Goguryeo monk is that of Bodeok 普德, who fled Goguryeo to Baekje in 650 because the Goguryeo court had adopted Daoism and no longer believed in Buddhism. The *Samguk sagi*'s laconic entry²⁷ is preceded by an entry for 643 that says that Yeon Gaesomun 淵蓋蘇文 (d. 666), who killed the previous king, told the newly installed monarch that Goguryeo only supported Confucianism and Buddhism, and so required Daoism as a balance. As a consequence, a mission was sent to Tang China to request Daoist texts and priests be sent to the Goguryeo court. The Goguryeo king, Bojang then converted

24. Kim Bu-sik, *Samguk sagi*, 1973 reprint of 1929 Chōsenshi Gakkai edn. (hereafter *SGSG*) 186, literally, “handed down the teaching that veneration of and belief in the Buddha-dharma is to seek good fortune.”

25. *SGSG*, 194, 7th year of King Munja.

26. *SGSG*, 444–45; also referred to in a note in the biography of Jajang in *Samguk yusa*.

27. *SGSG*, 223.

some monasteries into Daoist phalansteries.²⁸ The *Samguk yusa* fancifully embroiders on this by claiming that Bodeok was one of Goguryeo's leading monks who fled by flying himself and his hermitage over the border to land on a mountain in Baekje. These supernatural powers were probably attributed to Bodeok's knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures.²⁹

However, in the last century before the demise of Goguryeo in 668, there are records of Goguryeo monks going to study in China and of Goguryeo monks going to Japan to teach. Payak 波若 (562-613) studied under the founder of Tiantai Buddhism, Zhiyi, on Mt. Tiantai from 596. He practiced meditation there as an ascetic and died nearby in 613. However, he left no written records and had no pupils.³⁰ He never returned to Goguryeo. The first to go to Japan was Hyebyeon 惠便 in 584. He encountered resistance in Japan to his Buddhist message.³¹ However in 595, the monk Hyeja 惠慈 was sent to Japan as "tribute." He lived in Hōkōji 法興寺 from 596 until he returned to Goguryeo in 615. Knowledgeable of the *Lotus Sutra*, he was more successful, becoming a teacher of Shōtoku Taishi, one of the "founders" of Japanese Buddhism.³² Hyeja was followed by another two Goguryeo monks, Seungnyung 僧隆 and Unchong 雲聰 in 602, and then by two more "tribute monks," Damjing 曇徴 and Beopjeong 法定 in 610.³³

In 625, Hyegwan 慧灌, who had studied Sanlun under Jizang in China, went to Japan as a "tribute" monk. There he lectured on Sanlun and was famous as a rainmaker. Three years after Hyegwan arrived in Japan, Dodeung 道登, who also studied under Jizang, left for Japan and was famed for building

28. SGSG, 211.

29. Jonathan W. Best, "Paekche and the Incipency of Buddhism in Japan," in *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 25.

30. Chi-wah Chan, "The Korean Impact on T'ien-t'ai Buddhism in China," in *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 223.

31. Kokan Shiren, *Genkō shakusho* (1322), and Shibana, *Honchō kōsoden* (1702), cited in Kim Yeong-tae, "Ilbon munheon jung ui Hanguk Bulgyo saryo," *Bulgyo Hakbo* 15 (1978): 293, 308.

32. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 290-91, 286, 309; citing Shiren, Shibana, and Gyōnen, *Sangoku Buppō dentsū engi* (1311).

33. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 291-92, 297, 309.

a bridge in 646 at Uji 宇治.³⁴ The last Goguryeo monk to go to Japan was Dohyeon 道顯. He accompanied a “tribute” vessel to Japan when he learned that the Japanese ruler venerated Buddhism while Goguryeo was corrupt (anti-Buddhist?). In 662 he memorialised the Japanese throne when Silla and Tang China attacked Goguryeo.³⁵

Given that these Japanese records are so scanty, and that Gakhun, and following him, Iryeon 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 *Suijeon* 殊異傳, probably compiled by Pak In-ryang 朴寅亮 (1047-1096), to fabricate hagiographies by much conjectural and eulogistic padding, we have to turn to the epigraphical evidence of Buddhism in Goguryeo.

Epigraphical Evidence

The earliest inscription is allegedly dated 396 and was unearthed in Pyongyang in the ruins of an old monastery. However, the date, seventh year of Yeonggang 永康, in the first of the twelve-year cycle of earthly branches, corresponds to no known date or reign. Some scholars have equated it with the sixth year of the Yeongnak 永樂 era of King Gwanggaeto (396), but the forms of the last characters, *gang* 康 and *nak* 樂 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 396.³⁶

The inscription is on the back of a 22 cm high nimbus that was attached to a seated Maitreya figure.³⁷ In addition to suggestions that it dates to 417, on stylistic grounds, Prof. Hwang Su-yeong thinks it belongs to the mid-

34. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 284, 287-88, 305-06, 311.

35. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 312, citing *Honchō kōsōden*.

36. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 238-39.

37. Hwang Su-yeong, *Hanguk Bulsang ui yeongu* (Seoul: Samhwa Chulpansa, 1980), plates 1 and 2, esp. pp. 40-41, note 11, on doubts about provenance, and note 16 on dates. Oral testimony was that it was found among tiles inscribed with the year, Yuangeng 元康 of Da Qin (291-300), written on them, p. 28. See also Wen, in *Beifang Wenwu* 北方文物 [Northern Cultural Relics] 38 (2001), who dates it to 417; and Sachal Munhwa Yeonguwon, comp., *Bukhan sachal yeongu* (hereafter *Bukhan*) (Seoul: Sachal Munhwa Yeonguwon Chulpansa, 1993), 313-15 for more detail. Another suggestion is that it dates to 418, but that does not tally with the twelve-year cycle.

sixth century or later.³⁸ The style looks rather like that of the late fifth to early sixth centuries. It resembles a figure of Maitreya worshiped by people of Northern Wei, such as the Xianbei ruling class. It was probably just another deity in a heavenly paradise into which one could be reborn.³⁹ The inscription reads:

Made an image of the Venerable Maitreya for my late mother...the blessings (福) 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 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...⁴⁰

Note again that this inscription is about good fortune, but here for the deceased. It also resembles a more elaborate 279.4 cm Maitreya statue of 516 from Northern Wei.⁴¹ If it was from a monastery in Pyongyang, it probably dates from after 498, when Geumgang Monastery was built in Pyongyang.

There is an earlier text, a note in ink on the wall of a tomb inside a Goguryeo fortress that was found in Deokheung-ri, Taean City, South Pyeongan Province. It is dated 408. But the only reference is that of “the disciple of Śākyamuni Buddha, Mr ??? Zhen...[list of titles follows] of Youzhou, who died at the age of 77...and in the 18th year of Yonggo his grave was shifted.” The deceased has been identified as Murong Zhen 慕容鎮 (332-408).⁴² His Buddhism must have been shallow because the note writes of many cattle and sheep being sacrificed and alcohol donated

38. Hwang (1980), 30. This image should be compared with those in Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Use of a Symbolic Form* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 95 fig. 6.4 dated 516 from Shandong; and William Willets, *Foundations of Chinese Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1965), plates 124-25, image of N. Wei, early sixth century, and of Eastern Wei, 536 CE. See also Hwang Su-yeong, *Hanguk Bulgyo misul 10: Bulsang pyeon* (Seoul: JoongAng Ilbo and Tongyang Pangsong, 1979), plate 1.

39. Wong (2004), 92, 94-95, esp. fig. 64. Cf. image in Hwang (1980), plate 3, and Nakagiri Hisao, *Kaitō no Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1973), plate 1.

40. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 238. ...indicates lacunae.

41. Wong (2004), fig. 6.4.

42. Wen Yucheng, “Ji'an Changchuan Gaojuli yihao mu de Fojiao bihua,” *Dunhuang Yanjiu* 敦煌研究 [Dunhuang Research] 67 (1) (2001): 66.

for the funeral.⁴³ In other words, perhaps the Buddhist dedication was just a formality, possibly written in imitation of funerary inscriptions from the Chinese heartlands.

Murong Zhen 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 Goguryeo then or later in 385 when the area was reconquered by Northern Wei.⁴⁴ The scenes on the tomb's northern wall mural of animals being hunted resemble the style of the scene from the story of Andha-vana found in the various *Ahanjing* (agama) on the life of the Buddha depicted in the Mogao Cave no. 285 at Dunhuang. The story is that the Buddha cured people whose eyes were gouged out in this garden by an enemy army. This scene shows the horsemen in Xianbei dress.⁴⁵ This similarity in the murals suggests another link to the Murong clan or tribe, and perhaps this was what the Goguryeo artisans and the court donors thought would be appropriate.

Much debate has been focused on this tomb, with the contention that this refugee from Northern Yan, Murong Zhen, a former prefect of Youzhou, had been a devotee of Maitreya. The words *Shijiawen Fo* 釋迦文佛 (Śākyamuni Buddha) are written on the tomb wall. The words *Shijiawen Fo* are also found in the *Mile xiashengjing* 彌勒下生經 translated by Zhu Fahu 竺法護 or Dharmarakṣa. In this case, it is held that these words indicate 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 performances. Hence, the scenes of hunting and dancing might be pictures of the sports accompanying such

43. Heo (1984), 4-5.

44. Gardiner (1969), 37; and Ji Bae-seon, "Buk Yeon e daehayeo (I)," *Dongbang Hakji* 54/55/56 joint volume (1987), 858, 860.

45. Illustration in Okazaki Takashi, *Zusetsu Chūgoku no rekishi: Gishin Nanbokuchō no sekai* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1977), 20-21, plates 16 and 17. For the Andha-vana story, see Mochizuki Shinkō, *Bukkyō Daijiten*, 10 vols, reprint of 1936 Sekai Seiten Kankō Kyōkai edn. (Dipingxian Chubanshe, 1933-1936), 3934a-b.

an installation. However, an analysis of the vocabulary of the inscription on the tomb of Murong Zhen suggests that these scenes in the murals on the tomb wall 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. The words in the tomb inscription about seven treasures and natural music et cetera, occur frequently in the translations of the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 series made by Zhi Qian 支謙 and Zhu Fahu 竺法護,⁴⁶ 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 Goguryeo court (*jungni* 中裏 like Japanese *dairi* 内裏?),⁴⁷ along with provisions for the ritual and possibly for the upkeep of the tomb, perhaps with some elements of the native Goguryeo worship of ancestors or founder spirits.⁴⁸

Another inscription on a nimbus of a Buddha statue has been dated to 419.⁴⁹ The statue is of a standing Buddha that was discovered buried in a 30 cm square stone case in a pile of stones in Hachon-ri, Daeui-myeon, Euiryong County, South Gyeongsang Province. The image is 16.2 cm high with nimbus and throne, the figure itself only 9.1 cm.⁵⁰ It is dated the seventh year of Yeonga 延嘉, which Hwang Su-yeong thinks was 539 or 599 CE. 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.⁵¹ Thus Prof. Kim Yeong-tae thinks the evidence for 539 is “very thin” and that the date is more likely to be the seventh year of King Jangsu’s reign (419), which conforms to the cyclical date.⁵² In any case, the inscription reads:

46. Monta Seiichi, “Meimon no kentō ni yoru Kōkurai shoki Bukkyō no jissō: Tokkori kofun bokushochū no Bukkyō go’i o chūshin ni,” *Chōsen Gakuho* 180 (2001), 1-2.

47. *Jungni* is not attested, though *jung* is often related to court attendants and eunuchs of the royal palaces. *Dairi* in Japanese indicated the palace or court, and even indirectly, the emperor.

48. Monta (2001), 19-22.

49. Illustrations in Hwang (1980), plates 3 and 4; and Hwang Su-yeong, *Bulsang pyeon* (1979), p. 1 plate 1.

50. Hwang (1980), 39.

51. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 234-35; Hwang (1980), 30, 33-38.

52. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 234.

In the seventh year of Yeonga, in the *gimi* 己未 year, the abbot of the East Monastery of Nangnang 樂浪 (Ch. Lelang) of Goryeo, Gyeong 敬 and his disciple Seungyeon 僧演, master and pupils in all forty people, together made (a Buddha of the) Bhadra-kalpa of a thousand Buddhas, who distributed (Buddhism) for the twenty-ninth time, manifesting his majesty [or “he is the 29th, the Buddha Yinhyeoneui” 曰現義/歲]. The bhikṣu Beopnyeong 法穎 offers it.⁵³

Certainly, this set of Bhadra-kalpa buddhas became popular in Northern Wei from as early as around 400.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ 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,⁵⁶ which suggests either a sophistication or a misunderstanding by the writer of the dedication.

One more statue of a Buddha, this time in stone, 39.5 cm x 44.5 cm, has been dated 489 for it uses a Northern Wei reign era that coincides with the cyclical date. Thus Kim Yeong-tae asserts it was probably an import from Northern Wei. The inscription donates the merit of making the statue to seven generations of ancestors.⁵⁷ It does not contribute much to our understanding, except for the possibility that Goguryeo 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 Bongsan-ri, Hwachon-myeon, Goksan County, Hwanghae Province, it is usually dated 571, but that is only a speculation based on the sexagenary calendar. Some claim that the character *gyeong* 景 should be *chang* 昌, and so could be the last element of Daechang 大昌, a regin title of Silla King Jinheung in its fourth year, which coincides with the cyclical date. The second character is usually read as “four” (四), but others

53. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 234; Heo (1984), 33; and Hwang (1980), 36. The text is problematic, having been written over in part, and has unusual forms of the characters.

54. Mochizuki (1933-1936), 946b.

55. Wong (2004), 64, 74.

56. Hwang (1980), 36.

57. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 235-36; Heo (1984), 17-18.

have read it as “west” (西). Kim Yeong-tae suggests then, it may have been a Silla item, having been found near a border marker between Goguryeo and Silla. The nimbus on which the date is inscribed is 15.5 cm x 9.2 cm. 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.⁵⁸

In the Ji'an area, around the old Goguryeo capital of Wando, a 7 cm high bronze statue of a seated Śākyamuni was discovered in the Goguryeo-period strata. It was supposedly found in one of the first two monasteries, but no more evidence is provided. No inscription accompanies it.⁵⁹

A further item, from a private collection, is similar to the 16.2 cm high Yeonga era standing Buddha. This item is 18 cm high and bears the inscription, “On the third day of the third month of the *giyu* year, Master Gagyoon 覺緣 and his students of Namsan Monastery of Great Goguryeo made this.” It is said to have been sourced from Yi 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 CE (a date of the Taihe 太和 reign of Northern Wei), but Goguryeo only occupied this region from around 523 or 524,⁶⁰ and so if this was made in that region by Goguryeo monks, it probably dates rather to 529.⁶¹ The site of discovery was to the east of the old Northern Yan capital of Longcheng.⁶² At that time, this was probably a centre of conquered Chinese and Xianbei populations.

The final examples of Goguryeo statuary are two small Buddhist images that were found in a rough-hewn stone case with an inside measurement of 11 cm x 7.5 cm x 8 cm. The larger bronze image is of a monk with his staff

58. Kim Yeong-tae (1989), 236-37; Heo (1984), 44-45; and Hwang (1979), plate 3.

59. Geng Tiehua, “Gaoguli Ru Shi Dao ‘sanjiao heyi’ de xingcheng yu yingxiang,” *Gudai Wenming* 1 (4) (2007), 65-66.

60. Wei Shou, *Weishu* 1/9/237 in the Zhonghua Shuju ed.

61. Geng (2007), 67-68.

62. In 499, Northern Wei was still in control, as the Yingzhou prefect Yuan Jing erected a stele and statue to pray for the N. Wei emperor Xiaowen; see Liaoningsheng Bowuguan, “Chuancheng Zhonghua wenwu: Zhanshi Liaohe wenming,” *Zhongguo Wenhua Yichan* 3 (2006): 89; for an image of the damaged inscription, see Zhao Baoan and Li Shuji, “Wei bei ‘Yuan Jing zao xiang tiji’ puwen lunyao,” *Jinzhong Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Jinzhou Normal College] 25 (6) (2003): 37-39.

and is 8.5 cm high. The smaller image is of a woman, 3.5 cm high. These were discovered on Mt. Daeseong, six to seven kilometres to the north-east of Pyongyang. This site had been the capital between 427 and 586.⁶³ It was probably what was known as Pyongyang-seong or Jangan-seong.⁶⁴

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 ‘□土,’ which the archaeologists think is related to the current name for the place, Guksabong 國土峯,⁶⁵ but I think from the photographs that the second character is *to* 土 and not *sa* 士, 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* 狻猊 (Kor. *sanye*), a fabulous lion.⁶⁶ The figure is that of Kṣitigarbha who carries a sound-making staff, the *khakkara* and a *cintāmaṇi* or “wish-fulfilling gem” in his hands and rides a lion while wearing a hempen cap.⁶⁷ The second figure is in two halves, of gold in front and silver behind, the two welded together.⁶⁸ Her hands are supposedly in the mudra of the meditation of Amitābha Buddha.⁶⁹

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 time period, although the dates of translation for several texts are unclear, but could be from before 539, one or two possibly translated by Dharmakṣema (385-433).⁷⁰ However, in 650 Daoshi 道世 wrote:

63. Kim Il-sung Jonghap Daehak Gogohak mit Minsokhak Gangjwa, comp., *Taeseongsan ui Goguryeo yujeok* (hereafter *TKY*) (Kim Il-sung University Press: Pyongyang, 1973), 72-75, 316.

64. Wang Mianhou, “Gaoguli de chengyi zhidu yu ducheng,” *Shehui Kexue Zhanqian* (2001): 99-101.

65. *TKY*, 72.

66. *TKY*, 74.

67. *Bukhan*, 317; for the items carried by Kṣitigarbha, see F. Wang-Toutain, *Le bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha en Chine du Ve au XIIIe siècle* (École Française d’Extrême-Orient: Paris, 1998), 276-78, cf. fig. 3, 283-85 on the lion; and Kim Jeong-hui, *Joseon sidae Jijang Siwangdo yeongu* (Seoul: Iljisa, 1996), 50-51.

68. *TKY*, 75-76.

69. *Bukhan*, 317.

70. Wang-Toutain (1998), 16-22, cf. 51.

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 chanting the names of Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara), Dizang (Kṣitigarbha), Maitreya and Amitābha (are so numerous) that they cannot all be recorded.⁷¹

Pictures of Kṣitigarbha had been painted on the walls of a monastery in the south of China in the period 502 to 519,⁷² so there is a possibility that the Daeseong figurines date from before 586, the last year the Mt. Daeseong site was the Goguryeo capital.

Perhaps the reason for the location of the figures in the Daeseong-san fortress can be found in some of the scriptures devoted to Kṣitigarbha. Although translated by Śikṣānanda (652-710), the *Dizang Pusa benyuanjing*⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ As an older translation, the *Dafangguang shilunjing* says that following the practices outlined in this text will protect the state in ten different ways,⁷⁵ and as it uses the word “state-territory” (國土) repeatedly,⁷⁶ 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,⁷⁷ 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 ‘口土’ 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

71. Quote from Kim Jeong-hui, *Fayuan Zhulin* 17 (1996), 52; and see T. 53.411.

72. Kim Jeong-hui (1996), 53.

73. See Wang-Toutain (1998), 78.

74. Kim Jeong-hui (1996), 41, citing T. 13.787a24-28.

75. T. 13.701a4.

76. T. 13.683a28ff.

77. Wang-Toutain (1998), 243-46.

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 Guksabong hill.⁷⁸ The item then may have been that of the niche-room, worshipped with incense in a south-facing position. It was likely built before 586 when Mt. Daeseong was still the capital, and the wall collapsed after that capital was abandoned.

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 cm x 24 cm x 30 cm, with a lid. Inside was a hollowed out space, 34 cm x 12 cm x 16.5 cm. The number of pages of the book is estimated at about a hundred, each probably measuring 16.5 cm x 7 cm, with characters of 1.2 to 1.5 cm square, although some were only 8 to 10 mm square. They were arranged on average in ten lines of fifteen to seventeen characters. The handwriting is a clear *kaishu* (Kor. *haeseoche*) 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 CE translation by Kumārajīva.⁷⁹ The North Korean archaeologists suggest from the location that the text was stored or kept by the royal house.⁸⁰ 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 the above listed evidence, in the region of an earlier capital, there is a tomb mural from the Ji'an area, labeled Changchuan no. 1. The tomb was of a relatively high official, and the evidence indicates that the Buddha was worshiped like a god. The murals suggest that the deceased was a keen hunter who had killed many animals, but was now offering precious gems

78. *TKY*, 72, and map insert.

79. Cf. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 9.

80. *TKY*, 68-72.

to the Buddha in atonement.⁸¹ It is dated 400 to 410, with an upper limit of 430, on stylistic grounds. Thus it could belong to the reign of King Gwanggaeto (r. 391-412) or the early reign of King Jangsu (r. 413-491), and so probably before the capital was shifted to the Pyongyang area in 427.⁸² Elements of this tomb are similar to those in the tomb of Murong Zhen,⁸³ so the person may have adopted the Murong style of Buddhism or have been a Xianbei.

Another mural is that of the Ssangyeong tomb located between Pyongyang and Jinnampo. It has a mural like those found in Northern Wei. The mural depicts the wife and women of the buried person, with 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.⁸⁴ It is thought to be related in style to those of the Yungang 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.⁸⁵

The last type of archaeological evidence is that of monastery ruins, mostly foundation stones. Monasteries in North Korea that date to Goguryeo times by tradition include the spectacular, cliff-hanging Bodeok-am in the Geumgang Mountains; Anguk-sa in Sucheon County, South Pyongan Province which is dated to 503; and three in Pyongyang: Gwangbeop-sa, Beobun-am and Jeongneung-sa, the last dated to 427.⁸⁶ Bodeok-am is attributed to the monk Bodeok, who fled Goguryeo in its last years during or after the reign King Anwon (r. 531-545). This ascription can only be found in a tradition recorded in the *Dongguk yeoji seungnam* 東國輿地勝覽 of 1486 of the Joseon Period. There is no other supporting evidence.⁸⁷ Again, for Anguk-sa, it is only the monastery's own stele of

81. Wen Yucheng, "Ji'an Changchuan Gaoguli yihao mu de Fojiao bihua," *Dunhuang Yanjiu* 67 (1)(2001): 66-67.

82. Wen, *Dunhuang yanjiu* (2001), 70-71.

83. Geng (2007), 69; Wen, *Dunhuang* (2001), 66.

84. Nakagiri (1973), plate 5, 10-11 in Art Section.

85. Kim Won-yong, *Kankoku bijutsushi*, translated by Nishitani Tadashi (Tokyo: Meichō Shuppan, 1976), 69.

86. Bukhan, 41-42.

87. Bukhan, 53.

record, the *Anguk-sa sajeokgi* 安國寺寺蹟記, which is itself of uncertain date, that claims it was founded in 503 by Hyeonuk, who left a stupa base.⁸⁸ There is, of course, no corroborating evidence.

Of the three sites in Pyongyang, Gwangbeop-sa is on Mt. Daeseong, and the only evidence of its origin is in the *Dongguk yeoji seungnam* and a monastic-gazetteer on a stele of 1667. The stele claimed the monastery was originally built by Adao and was subsequently destroyed totally by flames, and was not rebuilt until the end of the Goryeo.⁸⁹ No details are known of the origins of Beobun-am, a hermitage half-way up a scenic hill, but the style of piling the foundation stones and tiles found in the vicinity suggests a Goguryeo origin.⁹⁰

Jeongneung-sa is a genuine monastery of the Goguryeo period. It is surrounded by Goguryeo mound tombs and is 150 metres from the huge mound tomb celebrating the legendary founder king, King Dongmyeong. It was founded in 427 or 491 for the worship of the soul of King Dongmyeong. Excavations there have found the name of the monastery written on pottery, and it has the same layout as Geumgang-sa, a known Goguryeo monastery.⁹¹ The ruins are 132.8 m x 223 m. There was a single octagonal stupa behind a central gate, plus three “golden halls” (Kor. *geumdang* 金堂). This format is thought by some to have been imitated by Asuka-dera near Nara and may be as well evidenced in the ruins of Geumgang-sa in Pyongyang. According to the *Samguk sagi*, Geumgang-sa was founded in 498, but it was abolished sometime after the *Dongguk yeoji seungnam* was compiled in 1486. The octagonal stupa was originally made probably of wood and is estimated to have been 61.25 metres high.⁹²

Jeongneung-sa seems to have served as a model, as all of the stupa bases dating from Goguryeo times are in the same octagonal shape and differ from the stupa bases of Baekje and Silla that had *śarira* (relics) buried beneath or inside a central foundation stone. The Goguryeo stupas probably installed the *śarira* relics above the foundation stone. Inside the stupa, it seems four Buddha images were installed, just like those at the “Four-door

88. *Bukhan*, 70.

89. *Bukhan*, 65.

90. *Bukhan*, 67.

91. *Bukhan*, 69; Geng (2007), 65-66.

92. *Bukhan*, 386-88.

Stupa” of Shentong Monastery in Shandong (dated 544) and it perhaps had murals like those inside the stupa of Hōryūji in Japan. The tomb of King Dongmyeong 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.⁹³

However, the Simenta or Four-door Stupa, which is to the south-east of the remains of Shentong Monastery, has a square base, not an octagonal one, and has a single story, with a height of 15.04 metres, which is nothing like the estimated 61.25 metres of the Geumgang-sa Stupa.⁹⁴ 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 544.⁹⁵ The use of images of the Buddha in four directions as found in Shandong derives from the *Guan Fo sanmeihaijing* 觀佛三昧海經,⁹⁶ a text famous for its mention of the “shadow of the Buddha” and for its contemplation of the buddhas and visualisations of them.⁹⁷ Therefore 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, places us in much the same position as Gakhun in his attempts to construct hagiographies from fragmentary sources, most of which were originally Chinese.⁹⁸ Thus when Gakhun came to deal with the penultimate Goguryeo figure in the extant parts of his *Haedong goseungjeon*, he had to rely on the *Gaosengzhuan* for the account of Tanshi 曇始 (Kor. Damshi),

93. Lee Heung-beom, “Kōkurai jidai Teiryōji garan no kōzō to shisō kiban,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 51 (1) (2002): 296-93.

94. Chen Qingxiang, “Shentongsi simenta tanyuan,” *Zhonghua Foxue Xuebao* [Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal] 17 (2004): 150-51.

95. Chen Qingxiang (2004), 154.

96. Chen Qingxiang (2004), 156-158.

97. Zürcher (1959), 224-25.

98. See the list of Gakhun’s sources in Jang Hui-ok (1991), 23ff.

who went to Liaodong in 396, where he taught briefly. Yet Gakhun had to admit that the compiler of the *Gaosengzhuan* considered this the beginning of Buddhism in Goguryeo, contrary to the earlier assertions Gakhun 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.⁹⁹ Gakhun 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*.¹⁰⁰ Although Gakhun naturally objected to Huijiao 慧皎's comment about the beginning of Buddhism in Goguryeo, citing Fu Jian 符堅'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 Gakhun's account of Hyeonyu 玄遊, who dates from the early Tang, that is, from after 618 and before 670 when Yijing 義淨 (635-713) began inquiring about those pilgrims who had been to India in order to prepare for his own journey to the homeland of Buddhism.¹⁰¹ Not only did Gakhun have no other information on Goguryeo Buddhist events from 405 to sometime in the 630s to 650s, he only relied on Yijing's account for about two sentences, if that, and the remainder was praise and speculation.¹⁰² Gakhun in fact padded the account of Hyeonyu with the deeds of Sengzhe 僧哲 and praises of Yijing.¹⁰³ In other words, Gakhun had virtually no information from domestic sources on Goguryeo, with the possible exception of a couple of brief entries in the *Samguk sagi* and a tale from the *Suijeon* by Pak In-ryang.¹⁰⁴

It is a connection with Shentong Monastery that gives information on the last Buddhist activities of the Goguryeo monks. The link is again Yijing, who studied under two masters at Shentong Monastery in his youth. Yijing

99. Lee (1969), 40-41; *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.392b4-6.

100. Cf. T. 50.392b6-c7, with text in Jang Hui-ok (1991), 144-49; Lee (1969), 40-41.

101. Lee (1969), 95-96; Yijing, *Da Tang xiyu qiufo gaosengzhuan*, T. 51.8b-c for Sengzhe, Hyeonyu's master, and 8c15-17 for Hyeon'yu. See Yijing's preface on putting the pilgrims into a historical sequence in his accounts, T. 51.1a22-23. 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.

102. Lee (1969), 96.

103. Cf. Jang Hui-ok (1991), 217-18; T. 51.8b28-cl.

104. See Lee (1969), 53.

praised his teachers to the skies and saw them as heirs to Zhu 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*.¹⁰⁵ Yijing was clearly interested in “Korean” monks, for in his work on the pilgrims to India written after 685, he recorded seven Silla monks and one Goguryeo monk (not listed in a separate biography) out of the total of 56 individuals he counted.¹⁰⁶ He also used incidents from the Sui campaign against Goguryeo to illustrate a point: “To make a comparison, a single sortie at the town of Liao-tung (Liaodong) broke the courageous hearts of the three generals.”¹⁰⁷

All of the above suggests that Goguryeo 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 Goguryeo vintage have been identified in China and Korea, and that of those excavated only ninety of them have murals.¹⁰⁸ 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 Goguryeo 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 Yungang, Longmen or the many other sites of the Northern Wei or later periods, or even like those statues, engravings and remains from Baekje or Silla.

Chronological Development

The letter by Zhi Dun (314-366) sent to the Gaoli Daoren or “monk of

105. Junjiro Takakusu, trans., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 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.”

106. For the count, see *Da Tang xiyu qiyfa gaosengzhuan*, T. 51.1a-b, b22.

107. Takakusu (1896), 35; T. 51.11b9-10, 警乎聊 (遼 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; a passage of difficult interpretation.

108. Figures for the tombs from Yonson Ahn, “Competing Nationalisms: The Mobilisation of History and Archaeology in the Korea-China Wars over Koguryo/Gaogouli,” *Japan Focus* 2004-2007, Japan Forum org (accessed 23, 2008, <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/1837>) who cited an article by Leonid Petrov of 2004.

Goguryeo” praising Fashen does not prove that Buddhism was present in Goguryeo at that time. As Zhi Dun and Fashen were gentry monks much given to clever dialogue and the interpretation of *prajñāparamitā* via the native Chinese *xuanxue* 玄學 (profound learning),¹⁰⁹ the recipient of the letter likewise must have been a member of an elite, fluent in literary Chinese, and possibly even a member of the Chinese community inside Goguryeo.

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 冬壽 (d. 357) also came to live in Goguryeo.¹¹⁰ 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 in the letter that states “currently he (Fashen) is on Mt. Yang.” There were very few diplomatic exchanges between Goguryeo and the Jin, the *Samguk yusa* mentioning one in 343 and another in 413,¹¹¹ but these were exceptional, so exchanges of private letters would almost be unheard of. What this evidence does show is that it was likely there was one person, possibly of Han Chinese descent, from the Goguryeo region who was interested in Buddhism.

The first recorded attempt to introduce Buddhism into Goguryeo, or at least into the Goguryeo court, was in 372 when Fu Jian, the ruler of Former Qin, sent Shundao to the Goguryeo court. Fu Jian used Buddhism to advance his own ends and build a more centralised state. He therefore patronised Buddhism.¹¹² For example, he exempted the monastery of Zhu Senglang, a pupil of Fotudeng 佛圖澄, from his proposed control over monasteries. Zhu Senglang’s monastery, later named Shentong Monastery 神通寺, was allegedly the first in Shandong, and a major centre in the region.¹¹³ It was founded in 351 and was later given tax grants from two

109. Zürcher (1959), *passim*. Zhu Fashen had the lay surname Wang, and Zürcher (1959), 98 suggests that Fashen’s master was Indian because of the use of Zhu as his religious surname.

110. K. H. J. Gardiner, *The Early History of Korea* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969), 40, 53.

111. Lee Byeong-do (1981), *Samguk yusa*, 184, 13th year of King Gogugwon; 188, 1st year of King Jangsu. Lee (1969), 30 note 91.

112. Zürcher (1959), 201.

113. Wright (1990), 40, 131 note 21; Zürcher (1959), 185.

prefectures. Fu Jian invited Zhu Senglang to court and wrote to him, and regional power-holders such as Yao Xing of Later Qin, Murong De 慕容德 (founder of Southern Yan), Tuoba Gui 拓跋珪 of Northern Wei and Emperor Xiaowu of Jin wrote to him or venerated him.¹¹⁴

By the time of Sengyi, a contemporary with Zhu Senglang, this monastery possessed Buddhist images given to Zhu Senglang by the rulers of seven countries, including Goguryeo and one of its dependencies.¹¹⁵ The *Xu Gaosengzhuan*'s "Biography of Sengyi" states that Sengyi came to Zhu Senglang's monastery, then called Gushan Monastery (renamed Shentong Monastery during the Sui dynasty)¹¹⁶ during Tuoba Wei times and that the monastery had a gold and bronze statue from Goguryeo displayed in the temple hall.¹¹⁷ As Tuoba Wei was founded in 386, this means that by around 400 CE that Goguryeo was in contact with Zhu Senglang's monastery and had sent a Buddhist statue there.

If the report about Shundao being sent to Goguryeo in 372 by Fu Jian, a sponsor of Zhu Senglang's monastery in Shandong, 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*¹¹⁸ is correct, the similarities in the names of these two missionaries, both with *dao* 道 as the last element (something rarely seen in the names of monks),¹¹⁹ suggest they may have both been

114. *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.351; Chen Qingxiang (2004), 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 Seong-suk), "Murong Xianbei de Fojiao wenhua," *Wen Shi Zhe* [Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy] 2 (serial no. 287)(2005): 106. For the location of the monastery and the claims to be the first monastery in the region, see F. S. Drake, "The Shên-t'ung Monastery and the beginnings of Buddhism in Shantung," *Monumenta Serica* 4 (1939): 1-39 and plates.

115. Wen Yucheng, "Ji'an Changchuan yihao Gaoguli-mu Fojiao bihua yanjiu," *Beifang Wenwu* 北方文物 [Northern Cultural Relics] 66 (2) (2001): 38.

116. Chen Qingxiang (2004), 150.

117. *Xu Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.647a5-9, 21-23.

118. *SGSG*, 185, 2nd, 4th and 5th years of King Sosurim.

119. *Dao* 道 was common in the first part of the names of monks, but rare as the final element. In the *Gaosengzhuan* or "Lives of Eminent Monks" by Huijiao covering the years 67 to 519 CE, there is only one monk, Zhidao (T. 50.401c), with *dao* as the last element, out of 257 primary biographies, and one, Yu Fadao (T. 50.419c) out of 259 subordinate biographies. In the continuation, the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* by Daoxuan, there is only one case, Jingdao (T. 50.613c), out of 340 primary biographies and 160 subsidiary biographies.

sent by Fu Jian. It is striking for two monks with the rarely occurring *dao* as the last elements in their names to both go to Goguryeo within two years of each other. This hints that there was a connection between the two, such as a master in common. Thus, as Fu Jian had sent Shundao, perhaps he also sent Adao. They may have been sent from Zhu Senglang's monastery, which was favoured by Fu Jian, for it was near the base of the famous Taishan, not too distant from the Yellow River, and so was possibly on a marine route to Goguryeo across the Gulf of Bohai via the Miaodao island chain to the Liaodong Peninsula. As the primary monastery in Shandong since 351, it was also likely to have been the nearest major monastery to Goguryeo on the main route via river and sea.

Yet it seems likely that both monks failed in their mission, as Gakhun implies, with Adao allegedly leaving Goguryeo for Silla and Tanshi listed as the start of Buddhism in Goguryeo in Liaodong in 396 and leaving soon after in 405.¹²⁰ If so, then who had sent Goguryeo Buddhist images to Zhu Senglang's monastery, and why did they do so?

If the first transmissions of Buddhism failed, Buddhism may have been confined largely to the émigré communities in Goguryeo, people such as Murong Zhen (332-408). Similarly, the court, as suggested by King Gogugyang's advice to the Silla king in 391, may have thought Buddhism useful for creating good fortune. Thus, in Murong Zhen's tomb, the mention that he was a "disciple of Śākyamuni Buddha" and that cattle and sheep were sacrificed at the funeral, taken with the accompanying murals of hunting and entertainments, suggest a search for a better rebirth and the pursuit of good fortune. The pursuit of good fortune by worshipping buddhas like gods is hinted at also by the tomb mural of Changchuan no. 1 that belongs to a similar time period. This also seems to reflect a Xianbei style of Buddhism. This interpretation is supported by the inscriptions on the Maitreya figures from fifth to sixth century Goguryeo.

Moreover, it has been argued that it was in the late fourth to early fifth centuries that Buddhism was used to bolster monarchical prestige, as in the stele for King Gwanggaeto of 414 CE.¹²¹ It was also around this time that

120. Lee (1969), 31-32, 40-41.

121. See an unpublished paper by Miwa Stevenson, "Buddhism in Fourth Century Koguryō and

there is evidence that Goguryeo sent a Buddhist statue to Zhu Senglang's monastery, Gushan-si, suggesting this may have been part of a diplomatic effort to demonstrate the power of the Goguryeo monarch.

However, it was not until 427 or 498 that a monastery, other than those for Shundao and Adao, was built. An alleged earlier mention in 392 of the establishment of nine monasteries (*gusa*) in Pyongyang, second year of King Gwanggaeto, is more likely a reference to the nine courts or *jiusi* 九寺 with their nine chamberlains. These were the “top echelon service agencies in the central government.”¹²² 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.¹²³

A century or so later, Buddhism seems to have gradually attracted a following, for around 530, Hyeryang was lecturing on sutras and then in 551 or soon thereafter introduced the Palgwan Assembly into Silla.¹²⁴ This assembly has been associated with rituals for protecting the state and prayers for the souls of the war-dead.¹²⁵ Hyeryang also introduced the Baekgojwa (Hundred Seat Lecture) Assembly that was based on the “Chapter on Protecting the Country” of the *Renwang jing* 仁王經 (*Sutra of the Compassionate King*). This too was an assembly to pray for the good fortune of the country.¹²⁶ Hyeryang's actions support the idea that Goguryeo Buddhism was still court-centred and directed to obtaining good fortune.

In 576, Uiyeon's mission to Northern Qi at the instigation of Wang

Monarchy,” cited in Pankaj Mohan, “Cakravartin and the Relic-cult in Early Silla: Focusing on the Chinese Antecedents and Korean Adaptation,” in *Korean Buddhism in East Asian Perspectives*, comp. Geumgang Center for Buddhist Studies (Seoul: Jimoondang, 2007), 81 note 50.

122. Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 177.

123. See *SGSG*, 187.

124. The calculation of the time frame is based on the biography of Geo Chil-bu, who in *SGSG*, 445, is said to have died at the age of seventy eight, sometime after he was appointed to a high post in 576. As he was still a śramaṇera or novice when he met Hyerang, he was probably then in his late teens, suggesting he was born in the teens of the sixth century.

125. Sin Jong-won, *Silla chogi Bulgyosa yeongu* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1992), 196-97.

126. Sin (1992), 219-20.

Go-deok, the prime minister of Goguryeo, once again shows court involvement. Wang Go-deok admitted that he was ignorant of the history of Buddhism, and his concerns with the dates of the Buddha¹²⁷ suggest that this was not simply a question of faith, but rather a debate over whether Buddhism should be favoured over Confucianism. Part of this quest for historical dates may have been driven by the Northern Zhou persecution of Buddhism and Daoism that began in 574. Selecting Confucianism as the state orthodoxy, Emperor Wu of Northern Zhou attempted to eliminate Buddhism. The calculations of the Buddha's year of birth, given by Fashang, the Controller of (Buddhist) Clergy in Northern Qi, as 1027 BCE,¹²⁸ were possibly aimed at showing the greater antiquity of Buddhism over Confucianism and Daoism.¹²⁹ It may also have been used as "evidence" that Confucius acknowledged the superiority of Buddhism¹³⁰ or was a disciple of the Buddha, something declared, for example, by Emperor Wu of Liang in 504 CE.

The list of treatises that Uiyeon asked about means they had been known by name in Goguryeo, but as he had to ask who wrote them and about their history, it is unlikely that Goguryeo had (complete) copies, for usually such texts note the author's name and who the translator was at the beginning. Perhaps the texts were only known by reputation. Therefore it is likely that Goguryeo Buddhists only had sutras in their possession and were not engaged in doctrinal discussions and interpretation.

However, there was a rising curiosity about doctrinal interpretation, for from this time on Goguryeo monks began to go to China to study and to Japan to teach. Hyebyeon arrived in Japan in 584, and Hyeja in 595. Payak went to Mt. Tiantai in south-east China in 596 and never returned to Goguryeo. Hyegwan and Dodeung both studied under Jizang (549-623) in China before going to Japan in 625 and 628 respectively. According to a comment by Shibān 師蠻 in his *Honchō kōsōden* 本朝高僧傳 of 1702, up till the time of Hyegwan (arrived 625) or the end of the Suiko reign (628), the

127. Lee (1969), 35.

128. Lee (1969), 36, 39.

129. Zürcher (1959), 273, says this date was presented to the Northern Wei court in 520 by Tanmozui 曇謨最.

130. Zürcher (1959), 274-75.

Baekje and Goguryeo monks all belonged to the school of the deva, or gods (提婆宗) and did not preach Buddhism proper (宗教). They lacked a lineage. In contrast, Hyegwan taught Sanlun and was an heir to Falang 法朗 of the Liang.¹³¹ This made Hyegwan a member of the Sanlun lineage. It seems then that real doctrinal concerns in the Goguryeo Buddhist community only appeared from around the end of the sixth century.

In other words, Shibān's comment, although late, supports the interpretation that up till the late sixth century Goguryeo Buddhists were only concerned with practising morality in order to obtain a better rebirth, as a god, for example. This was the teaching of the school of the deva.¹³² However, there was probably some knowledge of basic sutras such as the *Lotus* and Pure Land sutras.

Yet there are also hints that Goguryeo monks themselves thought that Goguryeo Buddhism had shallow roots or was corrupt. As early as ca. 551, Hyerang thought that Goguryeo was about to fall and so defected to Silla to strengthen that state by his religious activities. Before 662, Dohyeon also suggested that Goguryeo was corrupt. Dohyeon's biography in the *Honchō kōsoden* writes, "(harmful) borers infiltrated the Indian (Buddhist) soil" (蠹巢竺墳), meaning that other teachings had undermined Buddhism in Goguryeo. As a consequence of this and learning of the Japanese ruler's veneration of Buddhism, he left for Japan, and in 662 he memorialized the Japanese throne that Goguryeo was not to be feared.¹³³ Dohyeon's concerns largely agree with those of Bodeok who fled Goguryeo for Baekje because Daoism had largely replaced Buddhism in Goguryeo. This suggests that Buddhism had only shallow roots in Goguryeo and was largely dominated by the court.

Gushan/Shentong Monastery

There are a number of hints that this monastery, founded in 351 near the base of Mt. Tai in Shandong and near a possible maritime route from Ye and other capitals on the north China plain to Goguryeo via the Gulf of Bohai

131. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 305.

132. Mochizuki (1933-1936), 3770a, on 天道.

133. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 318.

was a key link between Goguryeo and northern Chinese Buddhism. For example, Fu Jian, who sent the first monk to Goguryeo in 372, exempted this monastery from his control and invited its founder, Zhu Senglang, to his capital in Chang'an. Later, by around 400, the Goguryeo court and a number of other states had donated gold and bronze statues to this monastery. As there is virtually no other evidence of Buddhist activity in Goguryeo before this time, Goguryeo must have had a reason for donating a Buddhist image to Gushan Monastery. It may have been in thanks for the gifts from Fu Jian in 372, which I speculate may have been made via Gushan Monastery. Moreover, Murong Zhen, who came to serve the Goguryeo court as a senior official, was a former member of the Murong Xianbei state of Former Yan which had occupied the region around Gushan Monastery in 357. Perhaps Murong Zhen facilitated this contact.

Furthermore, Gushan Monastery sponsored worship of buddhas and bodhisattvas that were also venerated in Goguryeo. There is a cliff face carved with a thousand buddhas in relief at Gushan Monastery that was commenced sometime between 535 and 550 in the Eastern Wei.¹³⁴ This could possibly be connected with the thousand Bhadra-kalpa buddhas referred to in an inscription on a 419 statue of a Buddha found in Goguryeo.

There is also a commonality in another object of devotion. The monastery may have venerated Kṣitigarbha, a bodhisattva also worshipped as a protective deity at Mt. Daeseong, the capital of Goguryeo between 427 and 586. 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 facing Gushan/Shentong Monastery.¹³⁵ That may have been grounds enough for Kṣitigarbha to have been popular in the region, and indeed 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, as the monastery was destroyed in the Huichang Persecution of 845 and much evidence has been lost.¹³⁶ It should also be remembered,

134. Okazaki (1977), 158.

135. Cf. Kim Jeong-hui (1996), 29-30.

136. Tokiwa Daijō, *Shina Bukkyō shiseki tōsaki* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1938), 1972 reprint in one volume, 569, 262-63, plate 26.

Goguryeo stupas may have been influenced in their form by stupas found near Gushan/Shentong Monastery.

Finally, Yijing, who had studied in Shentong Monastery, and so claimed a lineage link with Zhu Senglang, the founder of the monastery, listed a Goguryeo monk in his *Da Tang xiyuji qiufa gaosengzhuan* 大唐西域記求法高僧傳. This monk still lived in Śri Lanka with his master Sengzhe for about four decades until the time of writing, 685.¹³⁷

The Buddhism taken into Goguryeo largely came via Xianbei territories and was therefore likely heavily influenced by Xianbei Buddhism. The route this Buddhism took into Goguryeo probably began in Gushan/Shentong Monastery, which seems from a number of hints to have been a focus for Goguryeo, 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.¹³⁸ The references to Beidu 杯渡 (ca. 380-458), a monk who crossed water in a wooden coracle, and to the stranding of the Song emissary Zhu Lingqi 竺靈期 on an island in the Gulf of Bohai, in the *Haedong goseungjeon*¹³⁹ 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 Pyongyang. 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.

Despite the fragmentary nature of these tantalising hints, I speculate that Gushan Monastery was one of the sources for Goguryeo Buddhism.

Seungnang

At most we can speak of Goguryeo Buddhism over a 250-year period before 668. It seems to have had a brief flowering from the late 500s, judging from the missionaries of the Sanlun School, who went from Goguryeo to the

137. T. 51.8c15-16.

138. Okazaki (1977), 158.

139. Lee (1969), 34; Jang Hui-ok (1991), 135-36, 217 note 280.

Japanese Yamato court, but only after having studied in China previously.¹⁴⁰ 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 Goguryeo, and therefore there must be suspicions about the nationalist assertions that Seungnang from Goguryeo was influential in the formation of a lineage of Sanlun that culminated with Jizang.

Rather, at first observation, this study of Sanlun seems to have had its origins in the Later Yan territories, probably among descendants of Chinese refugees from the North China plains. Fadu 法度 (437-497/500) was a native of Longcheng,¹⁴¹ which had been captured in 436 by Northern Wei. A practitioner of austerities and a devotee of Amitāyus, Fadu arrived in South China between 477 and 479, and he became a teacher of Seungnang, a monk from the Liaodong territories of Goguryeo.¹⁴² It is clear that a number of monks involved with Kumārajīva and Sanlun, such as Sengquan 僧詮, heir to Seungnang's monastery in the South,¹⁴³ plus Tanshun and Tanwucheng 曇無成 came from or lived in Huanglong, that is, Longcheng.¹⁴⁴ In addition, a Japanese text dating from before 1259, but based on a work by Junzheng 均正 (or Huizheng 慧正), the *Silun xuanyi* 四論玄義 (possibly dating before 814), states that “a monk from the state of Gaoli, Dharma Teacher Shi Daolang 釋道朗 [i.e. Seungnang?] 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.”¹⁴⁵ That would suggest that Sanlun was established in the Longcheng region after Kumārajīva's death in 409 or 413, and that Seungnang joined them from not far over the border in Goguryeo.

140. For dates, see Richard A. Gard, “The Mādhyamika in China,” republished from *Paek Seong-ik Baksa songju ginyeom Bulgyohak nonmunjip* in Choe Hyeon-gak comp. (1959), *Bulgyohak Nonchong* 1 (2) (Seoul: Gaeunsa, 1979), 1210-213 and notes on 1221-223.

141. *Gaosengzhuàn*, T. 50. 380b15.

142. See Jorgensen (2005), 82, 116 note 58.

143. This is controversial, as the possibility of confusion has been raised by Hirai Shun'ei, *Chūgoku Hannyā shisōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1976), 271-72; cf. with Richard Robinson, *Early Madhyamika in India and China* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 165-66.

144. Kim Seong-suk (2005), 107; see also table in Robinson (1967), 163 for the genealogy.

145. Cited in Jeorg Plassen (2005), 173. Huanglong is here given as the area around Dunhuang, but that is not tenable. The relevant parts of the *Sanron soshiden shū* are provided in Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 315-19.

A closer examination shows that the earliest two sources for Seungnang, the *Gaosengzhuan* of ca. 530 by Huijiao¹⁴⁶ and the “Sheshan Qixia-si pei” 攝山栖霞寺碑 by Jiang Congchi 江總持 (518-594), do not state Seungnang was from Goguryeo. The *Gaosengzhuan* says Seungnang was from Liaodong(-cheng) and Jiang says he was from Liaoshui.¹⁴⁷ The use of Goguryeo as Seungnang’s state of origin began with Jizang (549-623), who needed to include Seungnang in his lineage in order to link himself with Kumārajīva.¹⁴⁸ According to Jizang, the Mt. She lineage of Sanlun would be: Kumārajīva, Kumārajīva’s immediate heirs, Seungnang, Sengquan, Falang, Jizang.

However, neither Huijiao, writing around 530, approximately a decade after Seungnang’s death, and living in South China (coincidentally in Jiexiang Monastery in Kuaiji, which was later made famous by Jizang who taught there),¹⁴⁹ nor Jiang, who wrote a history of the monastery Seungnang lived in, mention Goguryeo or his ethnicity. The Liaodong and Liaoshui they refer to were localities conquered by Goguryeo around 397 CE. Most of the population there were probably Han Chinese.¹⁵⁰

Indeed, many Han Chinese used their *benguan* 本貫, or place of ancestry, for identity even generations after they had moved away from that place. This was particularly the case with aristocratic refugees from the conquest by “barbarians” of North China living in South China after 317.¹⁵¹ Place trumped state for identification purposes among Han Chinese, and would-be Han Chinese, owing to the fact that states themselves, particularly in the period 317 to 618, were especially ephemeral. Therefore, Seungnang may not have been born in Liaodong(-cheng).¹⁵² He may not have even been

146. Arthur F. Wright, “Hui-chiao’s *Lives of Eminent Monks*,” in *Studies in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Robert M. Somers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 89.

147. Jorgensen (2005), 114 note 43. Cf. Plassen (2005), 168, “we may assume that Seungnang was not Chinese by origin, as he is consistently labeled a Goryeo (i.e. Goguryeo) monk.”

148. Jorgensen (2005), 82; Plassen (2005), 188 on Seungnang as a “convenient link to the Kuan-chung (Kumārajīva and his heirs) tradition... for the construction of a San-lun lineage.”

149. For Jiexiang Monastery, see Wright (1990), 86-87.

150. Jorgensen (2005), 81.

151. For two such families, see the Wang of Langye and Yan of Langye, a place on the south coast of Shandong, who used Langye as their *benguan* after generations of living south of the Yangzi; see Okazaki (1977), 76-83 for a discussion of these two clans and their tombs.

152. Jorgensen (2005), 115 note 44.

concerned with which state he had been born in. Jizang probably latched onto the fact that Liaodong was then under Goguryeo rule because that country was notable in his day due to the costly wars between Goguryeo and the Sui dynasty, and Liaodong was one of the places fought over.¹⁵³ These contested borderlands were multi-ethnic areas containing Han Chinese, Xianbei, Goguryeo “Koreans” and other groups. They often despised each other, the Han Chinese in particular resenting foreign rule.¹⁵⁴ In Liaodong, however, the ethnicity of families was often difficult to determine.¹⁵⁵ Given all the above factors, it would be difficult to prove that Seungnang was a Goguryeo monk.

The second claim is that Seungnang received an education in Sanlun thought while in Goguryeo. The only indirect evidence for this is found in the *Sanron soshiden shū* 三論祖師傳集, a late and slightly corrupted text from Japan revised in 1259 and again in 1726, quoting a work by Huijun 慧均, the *Silun xuanyi*.¹⁵⁶ The first mention of a person supposed to be Seungnang, quoted above, says a Daolang (Kor. Doneung) from Goguryeo traveled to study with the heirs of Kumārajīva in the country of Huanglong, that is, the Xianbei state of Yan or its capital, Longcheng. Longcheng, a town captured by Northern Wei in 436, was also the birthplace of Fadu, Seungnang’s first teacher.¹⁵⁷ This mention is later followed by what is thought to be a quote from the *Jōmyō genron ryakujutsu* 淨名玄論略述 by 智光 Chikō (709-770/780):

In Qi times there was a Shi Daolang of the Go(gu)ryeo country...who had already been thoroughly versed in the scriptures in his homeland, and then followed Dharma Master Tanji 曇濟 of Dunhuang,¹⁵⁸ who was a student of Zhu Daosheng 竺道生.¹⁵⁹

153. See note 108 for a battle over Liaodong in 613.

154. Zürcher (1959), 81-83, 111-12.

155. Jorgensen (2005), 115 note 45, citing the research of Jennifer Holmgren on the Feng clan of Northern Yan.

156. Plassen (2005), 172-73.

157. Jorgensen (2005), 82, 115 note 51.

158. The character 火 + 燄 here read as 煌 or 燄.

159. Kim Yeong-tae (1978), 318.

The problem here is it does not specify what this Daolang (not Seungnang) studied in Goguryeo. Also, the only known Tanji was in Zhuangyan Monastery in South China between 473 and 477, and is not mentioned as a pupil of Zhu Daosheng or as having any connection with Dunhuang.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, Fadu, listed by Huijiao as Seungnang's teacher, is not even mentioned here. These assertions by Chikō and Huijun rather reflect Jizang's genealogical imperative and are therefore suspect. Rather, Seungnang probably studied Sanlun in Northern Wei or in the South. Furthermore, Fadu (437-497/500) practiced austerities and was a devotee of the Pure Land of Amitāyus. There is no evidence that he was a Sanlun scholar. Seungnang probably did not become Fadu's pupil until 489, which means they met in South China and not in Goguryeo or even Northern Wei.¹⁶¹

There is also a question as to what Seungnang wrote, if anything. As noted by J. Plassen, "most attributions (of text to Seungnang) should be treated with caution."¹⁶² What he did write would surely have been written in South China, for it was likely sparked by Zhou Yong 周顒 (ca. 438-ca. 490+), a lay person from South China.¹⁶³ Zhou Yong had been an ascetic hermit in his younger years, and later became a bureaucrat who also studied Buddhist doctrine.¹⁶⁴ He wrote a *Sanzonglun* (*Treatise on Three Propositions*) sometime after 465. The biography of Zhilin 智林 (409-ca. 487) in the *Gaosengzhuan* states that Zhilin was ordered to live at Lingji Monastery at the start of the reign of Emperor Ming (r. 465-473) of the Liu Song. There he lectured on the Two Truths and Three Propositions. "At the time, Zhou Yong of Runan also wrote a *Sanzonglun* that coincided with Zhilin's ideas."¹⁶⁵ It is possible then that the *Sanzonglun* was written by 476,¹⁶⁶ and that Seungnang only arrived in the South in 476 at the earliest.¹⁶⁷ Given

160. *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.373b6-7.

161. See *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.380c9-10; Jorgensen (2005), 115 note 52, following the discussion by Hirai Shun'ei (1976), 247-49.

162. Plassen (2005), 179.

163. Zhou Yong's dates from Nakajima Ryūzō, *Rikuchō shisō no kenkyū: Shidaifu no Bukkyō shisō* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1985), 316 note 2. For allegations that Zhou Yong was not influenced by Seungnang, see Plassen (2005), 171 and Jorgensen (2005), 82-83.

164. Nakajima (1985), 313-14.

165. T. 50.376a23-27.

166. Plassen (2005), 171.

167. Plassen (2005), 172.

such time constraints, it is therefore unlikely that Seungnang taught Zhou Yong as Jizang claimed. Jizang needed to maintain the fiction of a lineage of monks, not lay people like Zhou Yong, back to Kumārajīva. Therefore Jizang asserted that Seungnang had studied Sanlun in North China and had taught Zhou Yong, and not the reverse.

Rather, Seungnang probably learned from Zhou Yong. If we believe Zhilin, there was no-body left in North China who understood Sanlun.¹⁶⁸ If so, Seungnang could not have learned Sanlun in great depth in North China. As it seems that it was Zhou Yong who introduced Fadu to Seungnang after Fadu came south ca. 477 to 479,¹⁶⁹ it could be that Zhou Yong was in fact Seungnang's mentor and it was he who introduced Seungnang to the subtleties of Sanlun thought.¹⁷⁰

Therefore, as there is such an accumulation of doubt about Seungnang's origin and role, it is doubtful that Seungnang can be identified as a Goguryeo Buddhist, or even a major theorist of Sanlun thought. It is even questionable whether he wrote anything at all. Yet, the fame of the line on Mt. She from Seungnang, who became abbot of Zhiguan Monastery there, reached Emperor Wu of Liang. This royal patronage in turn later attracted a number of monks from Goguryeo to study under Jizang (549-623), who claimed to be heir of this lineage. It was largely Jizang's "Goguryeo" pupils who went on to teach Sanlun in Japan.¹⁷¹

The origin of this fascination with Sanlun by monks from the region may perhaps also be indirectly sourced to Zhu Senglang, for Kumārajīva's first pupil in Chang'an, Sengrui 僧叡 (352-436), had listened to Zhu Senglang preach the *Pañcaviṃśata* (*Fanguangjing* 放光經) scripture of *prajñāparamitā* sometime before 375, which he later assisted in translating. As the leader and most senior of Kumārajīva's pupils,¹⁷² the connection with Zhu Senglang may have created a seal of approval for Kumārajīva's scholarship, which then attracted the Longcheng/Huanglong group to Sanlun. This then enticed Seungnang from across the border. Seungnang then cannot be claimed as

168. See Jorgensen (2005), 83, 116 note 56 for the sources of and debates over this issue.

169. Jorgensen (2005), 82-83, 116 note 58.

170. Jorgensen (2005), 116 note 58.

171. Jorgensen (2005), 83, 117 note 61.

172. Robinson (1967), 115-16; Hirai (1976), 93-94; *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.364a14-17.

a Goguryeo Sanlun scholar, for he studied initially in Northern Wei and wrote all of his work, if anything, in South China and never returned to Goguryeo. Indeed, he probably had to verify what he had learned with Zhou Yong (d. ca. 490+), a most learned man versed in Buddhist philosophy of the Madhyamaka (Sanlun) kind and in phonology.¹⁷³ 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 Goguryeo came to study. There was thus no substantial Sanlun school of studies in Goguryeo itself, and it is possible most of the students from there were of Chinese ethnicity.

Ethnicity and the Xianbei Influence

Korean nationalists have mostly ignored these questions and doubts and read modern nationalist and ethnic prejudices back into the past when ethnicity was supposedly less of a concern in what has been called a “Buddhist commonwealth” or “cosmopolitan China.” However, in pre-Tang times, there were ethnic tensions (as noted above), and there seems to have been “some sense of identification with their native tradition” on the part of “Koreans.”¹⁷⁴

Let us examine accounts of a monk who was definitely of “Korean” ancestry; the Silla monk Woncheuk 圓測 (613-696). The Chinese biographer Zanning 贊寧 (921-1002) does not indicate anything about Woncheuk’s origins. The lay Chinese scholar Song Fu, writing in 1105, states he was a descendant of the kings of Silla, while Choe Chi-won (857-ca. 908+), writing in the late 890s for a Silla audience stated that Woncheuk was “of the Pung village clan and a descendant of the kings of Yan.” This last may refer to the Feng (Kor. Pung) clan of Northern Yan, a Xianbei state, or to

173. For a recent discussion of Zhou Yong, see Nakajima (1985), 290-318. Oshima Shōji, *Kanji to Chūgokujin* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003), 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.

174. Robert E. Buswell Jr., “Introduction: Patterns of Influence in East Asian Traditions,” in *Currents and Countercurrents: Korean Influences on the East Asian Buddhist Traditions*, ed. Robert E. Buswell Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 8.

Wei Man, who fled from Yan to Chaoxian during the Qin conquest and unification of China.¹⁷⁵

Hence, references to ethnicity and ancestral origins vary according to the sources and the intended audience. Huijiao and Jiang Congchi only mentioned Liaodong and Liaoshui, districts, not states, whereas Jizang and his followers referred to the state, Goguryeo, probably because Goguryeo had a greater public notoriety in Jizang's day. Modern scholars have locked onto this state identification for nationalist purposes, unlike Seungnang's contemporaries. The nationalist reading ignores the multi-ethnic compositions of the borderlands of North China and Goguryeo.

Perhaps a good comparison for Goguryeo 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, teacher of Zhu Senglang. The Murong Xianbei in particular brought Buddhism closer to Goguryeo domains, for in 342 the Yan rulers shifted their capital to Longcheng, and the ruler Murong Huang 慕容皝 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 Zhu 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

175. John Jorgensen, "Representing Wöñch'ük (616-696): Meditations on Medieval East Asian Buddhist Biographies," in *Religion and Biography in China and Tibet*, Benjamin Penny, ed. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002), 74-131 passim, for discussion of the Pung clan reference, 101-02.

a revolt by Murong Ren 慕容仁, 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 to settle in Liaodong, outnumbering the existing residents some tenfold. (This is one more reason for thinking Seungnang was likely a Han Chinese.) They were used by the Murong as ministers and officials, and they occupied nearly all important posts. Thus the Yan used the Chinese immigrants who had voluntarily submitted to Murong rule to control the conquered indigenous Chinese of the Liaodong region.¹⁷⁶ These refugees probably brought their Buddhism with them, and made up the vast majority of the literate elite, and it is estimated that 95% of officials of the government were from these immigrant groups.¹⁷⁷ Among these immigrants (or their descendants) were Sengquan (n.d.) who erected a Buddha statue at Huanglong, i.e. the Yan capital of Longcheng; Tanwujie from Huanglong in Youzhou,¹⁷⁸ who went to India to study in 420; Tanshun, who studied under Kumārajīva and went south with Huiyuan; Tanwucheng, whose family fled to Huanglong where he studied and later came to study with Kumārajīva;¹⁷⁹ and 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. There are even instances of rebellions that were lead against the Later Yan by (ethnically Chinese?) people appealing to Buddhist faith by installing a Buddhist monk as their pretender emperor.¹⁸⁰

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 Goguryeo. 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, worshiped

176. Li Haiye, "Murong-shi Liaodong zhengquan de 'qiaotu' guanxi," *Nei Menggu Daxue Xuebao (Renwen shehui kexue)* [Journal of Inner Mongolia University (Humanities and Social Sciences)] 37 (3) (2005): 109-13.

177. Li Haiye (2005), 113.

178. *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.369b14-15.

179. *Gaosengzhuan*, T. 50.370a29-b2.

180. Kim Seong-suk (2005), 105-107.

Maitreya.¹⁸¹ The Northern Wei also worshiped the Thousand Buddhas¹⁸² and Maitreya faith was important in Northern Wei,¹⁸³ which seems to be similar to what Buddhist faith Goguryeo 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 Goguryeo. There it seems it was 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 cave 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 Goguryeo.¹⁸⁴

Despite the large Buddhist complexes and images produced by their Xianbei and Chinese neighbours, the Goguryeo Buddhist images that have survived are all small and metal, none higher than 22 cm, and the only stone statue that exists, being only slightly larger, may have come from Northern Wei. One statue is definitely of Maitreya, another is of Kṣitigarbha 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 Daeseong-san, suggest then that the Buddhism that did exist was largely centred on 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 Adao (if true) and Tanshi stayed only briefly, suggesting few believers and little success. The tradition

181. Wong (2004), 56, 58.

182. Wong (2004), 74-75.

183. Wong (2004), 93ff.

184. Cf. Okazaki (1977), 180, 158 table 204.

was probably shallow, for if Kim Bu-sik is to be believed, in 650, Bodeok of Banyong Monastery, fled Goguryeo to Baekje because Daoism was becoming popular in Goguryeo.¹⁸⁵ However, 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 Yeon Nam-geon 淵男建 entrusted military matters to the Buddhist monk Sinseong 信誠 in Pyongyang, who then betrayed the city to the Tang army.¹⁸⁶ This use of the Buddhist monks as military advisors and technicians was in line with Xianbei practices, as in 395 and in 399, when Zhu Senglang was used to forecast the weather and the prospects of success of a military venture for Murong De.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, the mixture of Buddhism and Daoism that may have occurred in late Goguryeo, as referred to in a statement of 643 by Yeon Gaeseomun,¹⁸⁸ may have had its origins in an area like that to the south of Chang'an, where, for example, 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 from the 490s to the early 500s.¹⁸⁹

In order to avoid the nationalist claims that read present requirements back into the past, we should then see Goguryeo as a multi-ethnic kingdom, with a semi-nomadic warrior ruling class made up of clans descended from Buyeo to the north. Goguryeo's multi-ethnic population consisted of local subject farmers of the Ye and Maek peoples,¹⁹⁰ plus some descendants of Chinese populations with their roots in the Han dynasty colonies, along with 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 with some living on land conquered by Goguryeo. As boasted in the stele for King Gwanggaeto written ca. 414, the king ordered that the Han (Chinese) and Ye that he had captured, be brought

185. *SGSG*, 223, 9th year of King Bojang; backed by *Samguk yusa* 3, 97-98.

186. *SGSG*, 227, 27th year of King Bojang.

187. Kim Seong-suk (2005), 108.

188. Cf. Geng (2007), 72.

189. Wong (2004), 107-09, 114-17.

190. Gardiner (1988), 175.

to care for his tomb. These captives would then, as personal dependents, be used also to bolster royal powers against the other aristocratic Goguryeo clans.¹⁹¹ Like modern refugees and immigrants searching for a better life, or forced from their homes by violence, these groups were probably valued for their skills and used to control selected areas such as Nangnang (Lelang) and Daebang (Daifang) and as buffer forces between the Goguryeo conquerors and newly subjected peoples.¹⁹² Such groups probably maintained an interest in their homelands and intermarried with the local population.¹⁹³ 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 Goguryeo king and state, and were used as Goguryeo envoys,¹⁹⁴ 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 Goguryeo warriors, who would not have found Buddhism attractive. Rather, the Buddhists probably came from the minority ethnic communities and from the royal clan and its immediate supporters.

However, as Goguryeo had to fight for its survival in its later history against Sui and Tang China, as well as its peninsular neighbours Silla and Baekje, the Goguryeo rulers tried to use Buddhism as a diplomatic lever, with the Japanese Yamato court in particular, but it failed with Silla and Baekje. The evidence shows Goguryeo was not a major Buddhist centre, and its Buddhism was purely derivative and used to pray for good fortune. It produced no important Buddhist thinkers, schools or art. The religion was likely practiced by small ethnic populations, possibly creoles like Go Un 高雲,¹⁹⁵ and used by the court as a nation-protecting device and for

191. Gardiner (1988), 176-77; *SGSG*, 188, King Gogugyang, 2nd year, summer, the attack on Liaodong gained 10,000 people who were herded back into Goguryeo territory.

192. Shinohara Hirokata, "The Formation and Evolution of the Koguryō-centric Perception of the International Order," *International Journal of Korean History* 9 (2005): 208.

193. The *Samguk sagi* mentions on a number of occasions that populations crossed over borders to improve their lives.

194. Shinohara (2005), 218-19.

195. *SGSG*, 407, 17th year of King Gwanggaeto; see Shinohara (2005), 221-23; and Ji Bae-seon (1987), 867-71. Go Un founded Northern Yan in 407, and was possibly of mixed Murong and Goguryeo Go clan ancestry.

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 Goguryeo, possibly because Buddhism there was not especially favoured, or because they were members of the Chinese or other ethnic minorities. It is likely then that the majority of Goguryeo subjects largely maintained their old beliefs, while the ruling elites enjoyed their hunting and military pursuits, as the tombs suggest.

Conclusion

The sparse and fragmentary evidence of Buddhism in Goguryeo shows that Buddhism had a presence there from ca. 400 to 668 CE. Unlike the surrounding states, Goguryeo left no stele inscriptions for monks, no cave complexes and only a handful of small statues. Moreover, the one monk championed as a major doctrinal scholar or innovator, Seungnang, may not have been a native of Goguryeo and the ideas attributed to him may have not have been his own. The impression is of a religion of prayers for good fortune or of one used to bolster royal prestige. Yet even this last was superficial and subject to change.

Goguryeo Buddhism was influenced by and very similar to the Buddhism of the Xianbei, a war-like and originally nomadic people who were rather like the Goguryeo ruling elites. In fact, many of the early supporters of Buddhism in Goguryeo were possibly of Xianbei origin. Moreover, because the Goguryeo kingdom, especially in its borderlands, was multi-ethnic, the modern identification of Goguryeo as “Korean” is questionable. The different ethnic groups in Goguryeo may have supported different forms of Buddhism and had varying interests. It is possible that many of the monks from Goguryeo of the sixth to seventh centuries had Han Chinese backgrounds. So to speak of Goguryeo Buddhism as a united whole is problematic. Given the paucity of evidence, which itself suggests Buddhism had only shallow roots in Goguryeo, perhaps it is best not to even speak of “Goguryeo Buddhism,” and instead to view it as a weak branch in the history of Xianbei Buddhism, a Buddhism that was just starting to gain root before the Goguryeo state was snuffed out in 668.

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Abstract

The scanty evidence from histories, inscriptions on Buddhist statues, and tomb excavations shows that Goguryeo Buddhism had only a short history from ca. 400 CE until the collapse of the kingdom. This Buddhism was largely that of prayers for benefits and was probably centered on the royal court and supported by Han Chinese and Xianbei settlers. Buddhism was introduced into Goguryeo from Xianbei dominated regimes that controlled the north China plain, and a key site related to this introduction seems to have been Shentong Monastery in Shandong Province. It is likely that Seungnang, championed as the only known Buddhist scholar from Goguryeo, was not from Goguryeo. That Buddhism had only shallow roots in Goguryeo is demonstrated by the lack of Buddhist cave complexes, cliff engravings or large statues, and by the ease with which the last Goguryeo rulers shifted support towards Daoism.

Keywords: Goguryeo Buddhism, ancient Korean history, Seungnang, Shentong Monastery, Xianbei

