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The History and Archaeology of the Koguryŏ Kingdom was published in 2016 as part of the Early Korea Project at the Korea Institute of Harvard University. Edited by Mark E. Byington, the book is a collection of papers on the history and archaeology of Koguryŏ by researchers from Korea, China, Japan, the United States, and France. The papers contained in this book were originally presented at a conference on the “History and Archaeology of the Koguryŏ Kingdom” held in 2005. The conference was organized to provide an opportunity for Koguryŏ specialists from various countries to share their research results at a time when the historical dispute between Korea and China over the ancient kingdom was reaching a new level of acrimony.

The dispute over Koguryŏ touches upon the highly sensitive issue of the national identity of Korea. Korean people consider themselves descendants of the Koguryŏ people and believe that their country is the historical successor to the ancient kingdom. They were therefore stunned and shocked by the Chinese claim that Koguryŏ is part of Chinese history. This historical dispute between Korea and China in which both sides see Koguryŏ as part of their own histories is the result of misguided reasoning whereby the ancient kingdom is understood based on its present-day territory and the ethnicity of the present-day population therein. It is crucially important not to lose sight of the fact that Koguryŏ was an “ancient” state when attempting to understand this kingdom both at the micro and macro levels.

This book, compiled in cognizance of the dangers of such a perspective focused on the present, contains two types of material. One type is basic source material, reliable textual and archaeological sources that can assist historians in the English-speaking world in conducting research on Koguryŏ. The other type is the results of research from various fields, from the history and archaeology of Koguryŏ to tomb art and architecture. Research results are divided into four categories: history, archaeology, tombs and funerary art, and historiography.

Part 1, devoted to history, is organized so as to facilitate an understanding of how Koguryŏ was formed as a polity within East Asia’s regional sphere and its political and cultural relationships with surrounding areas against the historical backdrop of the overall region. The first paper by Mark E. Byington explains the formation of Koguryŏ as a state in relation to the Xuantu Commandery, a province of Han Dynasty China. Based on a critical review of written sources and archaeological evidence found in Liaoning Province, China, the author discusses the organization and location of this Han commandery and its subsequent relocation. In writing this paper, the author was wary of uncritically citing information from primary sources.

The next paper by Yeo Hokyu deals with Koguryŏ’s external policy within the rapidly changing regional order in East Asia of the fourth century. The paper discusses how the ancient kingdom established relations with various Chinese dynasties, including the Former Yan, Later Zhao, and Eastern Jin, in the early fourth century. This period saw the collapse of the Han Chinese dynasty-centered regional order, which gave way to the era of the Sixteen Barbarian States. During the same time, Koguryŏ established diplomatic ties with Baekje and Silla in the southern Korean peninsula, thereby building its own independent sphere of influence. In arguing that the creation of an independent sphere of influence led to the establishment of a Koguryŏ-centered worldview, this paper is
helpful for understanding the political and social status of Koguryŏ within the East Asian region of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The third paper by Lee Sungsi is a comprehensive discussion of the political and cultural influences of Koguryŏ and other East Asian states. The author describes the political, social, and cultural influences of Koguryŏ on Baekje, Silla, and Gaya in the southern Korean peninsula and on Wa (Japan), particularly in such areas as political institutions and systems for controlling and ruling over local provinces, defense systems including mountain fortresses, and writing systems. The author argues that Koguryŏ played the role of an intermediary in the acceptance of Chinese culture, allowing states in the southern Korean peninsula to achieve civilization without sinicization.

Part 2 presents the results of archaeological research on the sites and artifacts of Koguryŏ. The archaeological evidence from ancient tombs and fortresses described in this part of the book constitutes basic source material for research on Koguryŏ. Archaeological results from China are divided into two regions: Liaoning Province (Li Xinquan) and Jilin Province (Jin Xudong), while data from the Korean peninsula are presented separately for North Korea (Baek Jong-oh) and South Korea (Choi Jongtaik). All four authors are archaeologists involved in Koguryŏ-related research projects in their respective regions. Among the Koguryŏ archaeological sites discussed are the sites of capital cities such as the Wunu Mountain Fortress, Xiaguchenzi Walled Site, Wandu (Hwando) Mountain Fortress in Jilin Province, and Guoneicheung (Kungnae-song). All are very important for understanding Koguryŏ's walled capitals. Meanwhile, defensive fortresses such as Shitaizi Mountain Fortress and those in Jilin Province, including Bawangchao Mountain Fortress, Longtanshan Mountain Fortress, and Luotong Mountain Fortress, offer crucial insights into Koguryŏ's defense system and how it ruled over its provinces.

This part of the book also contains information about major Koguryŏ tombs located in the Liaoning and Jilin provinces, including Wangjianglou, Gaolimuzi, and Shangguchengzi in Liaoning and the Micang-gou cemetery (Huanren), Shijia cemetery (Fushun), and UNESCO World Heritage-listed tombs of kings and nobles. The Royal Tombs are stone-piled tombs such as Tomb of the General, Tomb of the Great King, Tomb of One Thousand Autumns, and Great Western Tomb. The noble tombs are mural-painted tombs such as Tomb of the Wrestlers, Tomb of the Dancers, Tomb of Ranmou, and Tomb #4 and #5 at Wukuien. The Kwanggaet'o stele located beside the Tomb of the Great King is also described. All of these tombs have been comprehensively discussed.

The section on Koguryŏ archaeological sites located in North Korea provides information on the current status of research on sites of walled cities and fortresses, tombs, and Buddhist temples and artifacts, and it presents the results so far achieved in this field of research. Meanwhile, the section on Koguryŏ archaeological sites located in South Korea discusses mountain fortresses and bastions in the Hangang river valley, northern Gyeonggi-do Province, and Geumgang river valley. This section furthermore contains the results of research into Koguryŏ's military organization based on the age and characteristics of the Acha Mountain archaeological site, determined through archaeological and written sources, and discusses weapons excavated from the same site.

Part 3 discusses Koguryŏ tombs and funerary arts from an East Asian perspective. "Historical Changes in Koguryŏ Tombs" (Azuma Ushio) deals with the structures of the most representative types of Koguryŏ tombs such as stone piled tombs, stone chambered earth-mound tombs, and mural painted tombs, at the same time as it describes the details of the mural paintings. This paper casts light on the structure of royal tombs and offers hypotheses on their likely owners to help readers develop an overall understanding of Koguryŏ tombs. Readers are nonetheless cautioned that the author's hypotheses on the ownership of Koguryŏ tombs remain conjectural and scholars diverge widely on this issue. The two papers on funerary art are concerned with the archaeological record, definition of tomb murals, style and content of Koguryŏ murals compared with other murals, and the historical context of the murals.
Organized by theme, this book does not consistently follow or espouse any single viewpoint. As a collection of various research results on the history of Koguryŏ and physical vestiges thereof, it instead gives a voice to many different perspectives. This appears to be a strength of this publication. At the same time, this same diversity of viewpoints undeniably limits the possibility of providing a comprehensive view of Koguryŏ history. Another limitation of this book is that, even though it contains research results based on written sources and archaeological evidence concerning the history and archaeology of Koguryŏ, it consists only of the work of individual researchers. It does not contain an organized and comprehensive body of interpretations that is widely accepted by the research community.

Furthermore, a few of the papers included in this book could potentially interfere with an objective understanding of the history of Koguryŏ and its cultural identity, something especially undesirable given the current contentious climate. For example, one of the papers likened Koguryŏ murals to Chinese murals based on a handful of similar motifs and overlooked more important characteristics such as overall image and composition; it thereby failed to bring attention to the lifestyle of Koguryŏ people and their vision of afterlife. Such an analysis potentially lends support to the view that Koguryŏ is part of Chinese history and may thus run counter to the purpose of this book, which is to offer objective basic source material to historians and others in the English-speaking world conducting research on Koguryŏ. Therefore, readers are advised not to uncritically accept the views voiced by the individual authors in this book and judge for themselves their objectivity or validity.

It cannot be denied the ancient state of Koguryŏ existed in an area that today territorially belongs to China. By virtue of this fact, China claims some of the Koguryŏ archaeological sites located in the area. However, the fact that after its fall, Koguryŏ was perceived by the people of Silla and Balhae as part of their own histories is more important, as is the perception of historical and ethnic continuity into the Koryo period. The crux of the matter in the historical

(Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt) or with the Four Gods murals (Ariane Perrin). Although the former paper offers an overview and describes the details of current research, and is therefore helpful for broadening understanding of Koguryŏ tomb murals as a funerary art form, it regrettably compares some of the mural themes with those in tomb murals of the Han Dynasty and other Chinese dynasties. By attempting to view Koguryŏ tomb murals within the Chinese Han mural tradition, it fails to bring to light their proper and full significance.

The latter paper points out problems in earlier studies that held the view that the Four Gods theme only appeared in the late stage of Koguryŏ mural painting. The author argues that this theme cannot be used as an indicator for dating a mural. However, according to many researchers, the Four Gods, initially painted on tomb ceilings alongside various other deities, were progressively depicted on tomb walls, and eventually became central motifs in murals. Therefore, this theme may not be entirely without value as a chronological indicator.

Part 4 is about how Koguryŏ was perceived by posterity after its fall. It contains two papers: “Koguryŏ and Balhae” (Song Ki-ho) and “The Perception of Koguryŏ in Silla and Koryo” (Noh Tae-don). The former paper argues that while the culture of Balhae’s ruling class was initially heavily influenced by Koguryŏ, it later became influenced by Tang China, yet such things as roof tile designs, Buddhist sculptures, and the jjokudeul (a.k.a. ondol) wood smoke heating system prove that Koguryŏ culture was alive and well all the way until the late period. This constitutes evidence that Balhae was a successor of Koguryŏ and that this state should not be viewed as a Mohe state. Likewise, it is argued in the latter paper that the kings of Silla, who brought about the demise of Koguryŏ and unified the Three Kingdoms in the late seventh century, perceived the Koguryŏ as part of Silla. After the unification of Silla, their perception of ethnic homogeneity was qualitatively strengthened once a significant portion of the Koguryŏ area moved into the Koryo period at the same time as it spread spatially.
dispute over Koguryŏ is who remembers the history of this ancient kingdom and who inherits its culture. In the interest of resolving this controversy, it is important to note the fact that, in spite of the wealth of Chinese history books containing records on Koguryŏ, none of them communicate the perception that Koguryŏ was part of Chinese history. Since the publisher of this book wishes for new momentum in historical studies of Koguryŏ in the English-speaking world, it is to be hoped that historians will be mindful of these fundamentals in their new or continuing research endeavors.


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The archetypical Daoist immortal is depicted as a chubby bearded man wearing a loose robe, sometimes with a gourd of liquor in his hand and a donkey or water buffalo standing nearby. He rests in a scenic spot, communing, distilling, and considering the life of the mind. And, if the thesis of Pristine Affluence is to be believed, recovering prehistoric patterns of life.

Daoism is a philosophical tradition rooted in the first millennium B.C. in the Central Plains of China. As a religious movement, it was structured and shaped by political support and millenarian movements during the first millennium A.D. Texts from these two periods provide the sources from which Kohn distills the majority of her information on what Daoists did and thought in the past. Since the archaeology of Daoist communities is almost unknown (though see articles in Verellen 1998), we must make do with what Daoists said about themselves in their accounts of ideal societies, rather than look to the material residues of their practices.

The thesis of this book is that the mode of living set forth in Daoist philosophy was drawn from Palaeolithic and Mesolithic ways of life and that their similarities suggest a conscious construction and knowledge of the deep past on the part of Daoist social thinkers (pp. 7, 202, 207). Daoists, it is argued, sought to bring back a time of small, mobile, hunting and gathering communities and return to a state of “pristine affluence” (Sahlins 1972:38) as an alternative to the oppressive and stratified world in which they lived. Pristine Affluence seize on a moment in American anthropology and society and runs with it. The idea of the original affluent society, first presented by Sahlins in 1966 (Lee and DeVore 1968), drew on the zeitgeist of that decade by depicting hunter-gatherers as living comfortably and simply without the burdens experienced in agricultural societies.

The structure of the book’s argument is to lay out two sets of information next to each other and assert that similarities between interpreted anthropological syntheses on the one hand and historical social models on the other suggest a common social organization in the past. In this case, the two sets of information include narratives of human evolution and archaeological prehistory (chapters 1–3) and Daoist ideas about social structure (chapters 4–10). Kohn’s archaeological chapters draw widely and uncritically from the last half-century of surveys of world archaeology. They cover “The Stone Age” from the earliest Hominins to the Natufian period of the Levant; “Agriculture and Civilization,” the social and biological changes of the Neolithic; and “Early Chinese Cultures,” which repeats the sequence of the previous two chapters from the Palaeolithic to the Early Bronze Age while focusing on riverine East Asia. Though her bibliography is impressively deep and includes a range of popular and academic sources, the flow of concepts and citations are scattershot and the reader is left with no strong idea of what archaeological interpretations or data are important for the argument. Also sorely