

The Image of the Deceased in Koguryŏ Funerary Art (4th–5th Centuries AD): A Comparison between the Ji'an (China) and Pyongyang (Korea) Regions

This paper examines the image of the deceased in Koguryŏ tomb mural art in the two Koguryŏ core areas: the Ji'an region in northeast China and the vicinity of Pyongyang in North Korea. Although tombs in both regions feature a similar imagery, its location within the stone chamber, its association with other pictorial elements, as well as the pictorial style are regionally distinctive. Based on a corpus of twenty-seven painted tombs containing the image of the deceased or partial evidence of it, this study shows that funerary portraiture in tombs of the Pyongyang region connects the tombs' occupant to their official class, as revealed by the use of the official paraphernalia signifying prestige and power (i.e. curtained canopy, screen and cap). These elements are not found in the tombs of the Ji'an region. It is also significant that procession scenes, which are closely associated with the image of the deceased, appear only in tombs of the Pyongyang area.