Gold and jade crown

Three kingdoms Period, Silla Kingdom, Korea. Fifth to sixth century C.E. Metalwork

- Article at Khan academy
- fragile gold construction initially led some to believe that these crowns were made specifically for burial, recent research has revealed that they were also used in ceremonial rites (of the most powerful Silla Kingdom)
- Prior to the adoption of Buddhism, Koreans practiced shamanism, which is a kind of nature worship that requires the expertise of a priest-like figure, or shaman, who intercedes to alleviate problems facing the community
  - Silla royalty upheld shamanistic practices in ceremonial rites such as coronations and memorial services. In these sacred rituals, the gold crowns emphasized the power of the wearer through their precious materials and natural imagery
- tree-shaped . . . similar ones found in royal tombs
  - In this crown, three tree-shaped vertical elements evoke the sacred tree that once stood in the ritual precinct of Gyeongju. This sacred tree was conceived of as a “world tree,” or an axis mundi that connected heaven and earth
  - Attached to the branch-like features of the crown are tiny gold discs and jade ornaments called gogok. These jade ornaments symbolize ripe fruits hanging from tree branches, representing fertility and abundance
- Cross cultural connections:
  - The Silla crown demonstrates cultural interactions between the Korean peninsula and the Eurasian steppe (thousands of miles of grassland that stretches from central Europe through Asia). Scytho-Siberian peoples of the Eurasian steppe created golden diadems similar to the Silla crown, such as a crown from Tillya Tepe (an archaeological site of six nomad graves that contained objects known as the “Bactrian Hoard”) in modern-day Afghanistan. With five tree-shaped projections, flower ornaments and reflective discs, the Tillya Tepe crown can be compared with the natural imagery and radiant gold of the Silla crown. Though separated by many miles and by centuries, both crowns attest to shamanic beliefs prevalent among the nomadic cultures of the Eurasian steppe
  - Though their use of gold and practice of shamanism related to the northern steppe cultures, the Silla royalty adopted the burial customs of the Chinese by burying their elite in mounded tombs. In Chinese burials, objects that were important in life were often taken to the grave. Similarly, power objects like the Silla gold crowns were used both above ground and below, and their luxurious materials conveyed the social status of the tomb occupant in the afterlife
    - In addition to crowns, belts, earrings, other jewelry were placed in Korean tombs during the Three Kingdoms era to represent the rank and identity of the wearer. This gold belt, for instance, was made for the burial of a Silla king. It was like a tool belt or charm bracelet, with pendants that dangled from its band of interlinked square plates and entwining dragon openwork. Some objects were practical, such as knife sheaths and needle boxes, which evoked nomadic life on the Eurasian steppe. Others were symbolic, such as the comma-shaped ornaments seen on the Silla crown or miniature fish, which may have been charms to avert evil. The materials of the belt also corresponded to social status; for example, tombs of the Silla royalty had gold belts, while the nobility in other regions of the peninsula had silver or gilt-bronze belts
  - While the Silla kingdom shared shamanism with the Eurasian steppe and burial customs with China and Japan, the Silk Road was a main route for conveying materials, techniques, and ideas from as far away as Rome
  - Metalworking techniques, such as granulation (a technique whereby a surface is covered in spherules or granules of precious metal) and filigree—seen in the Mediterranean—appear to have traveled along the
Silk Road. Silla tombs also contained other objects, such as Roman glass bowls and ewers, which reveal the extent to which luxury materials traveled via the Silk Road. These prized imports clearly inspired new forms of Korean-made luxury goods for use in both life and death.