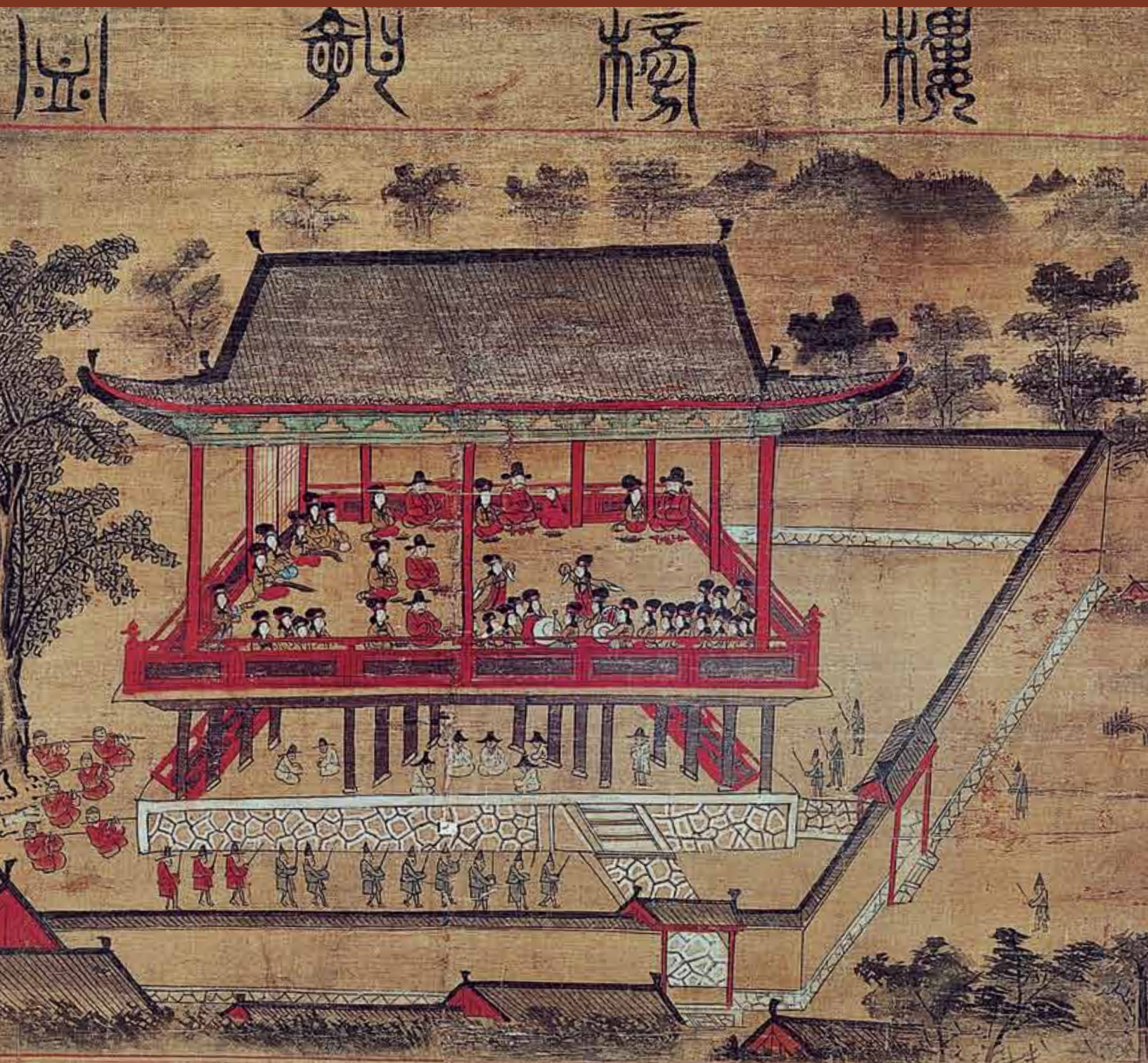


# ART OF THE KOREAN RENAISSANCE, 1400–1600



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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ART OF THE  
KOREAN RENAISSANCE,  
1400–1600



ART OF THE  
KOREAN RENAISSANCE,  
1400—1600

Soyoung Lee

*with essays by JaHyun Kim Haboush*

*Sunpyo Hong and Chin-Sung Chang*

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Robert Weisberg, Assistant Managing Editor  
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## *Director's Foreword*

The establishment of the Arts of Korea Gallery in 1998 represented a crucial stage in the Metropolitan Museum's commitment to representing Korean art and culture. Since the inaugural exhibition, this space has been dedicated to the rotating display of the Museum's permanent collection of Korean art, with occasional thematic exhibitions that also include works from other notable collections.

The exhibition "Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1400–1600" offers a rare chance to see some of the most elegant and inspiring art created during this extraordinary period. These works, now residing in museums and collections in different parts of the world, were brought together to tell a compelling story of the cultural renaissance that took place during the early Joseon period, generally regarded as one of the most brilliant episodes in Korean cultural history. The exhibition represents the culmination of several years of steadfast and creative effort on the part of Soyoung Lee, Assistant Curator for Korean Art in the Department of Asian Art, and a number of advisers and collaborators in Korea. It also marks a significant new phase in the Museum's Korean

art program, being the first of what we hope will be a series of exhibitions, each highlighting the artistic achievements of a particular period in Korean history.

We have been most fortunate to have the enthusiastic support of the National Museum of Korea, without whose cooperation this exhibition would not have been possible. Each of the seventeen lenders to this exhibition—from Korea, Japan, Europe, and the United States—has been instrumental in enriching the content of the exhibition. We are deeply grateful for their participation and assistance. We also extend our thanks to the Korea Foundation for its generous partnership in making this presentation and its catalogue possible for the public. The Museum's effort to promote the arts of Korea to a broad audience is greatly enhanced through the visionary support of The Kun-Hee Lee Fund for Korean Art and The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation, for which we are profoundly grateful.

Thomas P. Campbell

*Director*

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## Preface

Toward the end of the fourteenth century, Korea emerged from more than a century of Mongol domination and launched into a period of brilliant artistic creativity. It took two directions: the refining of traditional arts and the genesis of a national style.

Korea was never an integral part of the great Mongol empire, but was very much under the cultural and artistic influence of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China. Many Koreans served in China in both civil and military capacities, and there were frequent diplomatic and commercial exchanges. After the demise of the Mongol empire in China, the nascent Joseon dynasty adopted some of the cultural and artistic traits the Koreans shared with China during the reign of the Mongols. Neo-Confucianism, which dominated in scholarly circles in Yuan China, became a central element in political theory and statecraft in the Joseon dynasty. In the arts, Korean artists revitalized an early tradition of landscape painting that survived the Mongol period and gave it a poetic dimension. Hence the popularity of such themes as the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. In common with Chinese potters of the early fifteenth century, Koreans also made a version of white porcelain. Both versions, the Korean and Chinese, owed their origin to a quest in Yuan China for a white ware for ritual purposes.

On the wider cultural front, there was a major difference between the responses in China and Korea after the collapse of Mongol power. The cultural modes and art styles generated during the period of Mongol rule in China became the basis of the slow evolution of Chinese art and letters in the subsequent centuries, whereas in Korea, the effect was that of a liberation, and the reversion to native roots was almost instantaneous, leading to a period of cultural effervescence that has not been seen again until very recent times.

The most important cultural innovation in early Joseon was the creation of *hangeul*, the Korean alphabet, which made classical texts readable to a wider public

and enabled the generation of a vernacular literature. Artistically, the most distinctive marker of a national style that emerged in the early years of the Joseon dynasty is a class of ceramics known as buncheong ware. Its relation to the celadon wares of the preceding Goryeo dynasty is very much like that of *hangeul* to classical Chinese. Metaphorically, buncheong speaks in a uniquely Korean language. It is also a pure potter's art—the forms grew naturally from the actions of throwing a pot, showing little trace of artifice, yet highly expressive of the potter's sensibility. In spirit, it harkens back to the ancient pottery of Old Silla, nearly a thousand years before its time.

There is a small group of fifteenth-century ceramics that synthesizes the technical refinement of the white wares and the artistic sensibility of buncheong. These are the white porcelain pieces with uncluttered designs that are cleanly incised and inlaid. Two masterpieces of this rare group in the National Museum of Korea are included in this exhibition. It is a pity that not more of this class of ceramic ware has survived.

What is said above about the ceramic arts of early Joseon would apply to other branches of the decorative arts. For example, the mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquers of this period are among the most attractive lacquer wares of any period in any country in East Asia. They employ a decorative technique that has been used in Korea for centuries but in a distinctly early Joseon style that became the model for the production of lacquer in most of the rest of the Joseon period.

One of the challenges of an in-depth study of art of the early Joseon is the relative paucity of extant works from this period—compared to the later Joseon and to the art of the contemporaneous periods from China, Japan, or Europe—and the fact that many of the works are dispersed in diverse institutions and collections, both public and private. This relatively small exhibition has been assembled from collections in Korea, Japan, the



United States, and Europe. To the National Museum of Korea and all other lenders, we owe a great debt of gratitude—see the Acknowledgments that follow.

This exhibition is designed to present in a succinct manner some of the key aspects of the arts of a great period in Korean history. It is also the first of what we hope will be a series of such exhibitions, each on a particular period of Korean art. The publication associated

with each exhibition is intended to provide an introduction to the arts of the period concerned, written by specialists for an English-reading public.

James C. Y. Watt  
*Brooke Russell Astor Chairman*  
*Department of Asian Art*  
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*

## *Acknowledgments*

This exhibition and book were a truly collaborative project, made possible by an international partnership of many inspired and encouraging colleagues and friends. I am both humbled and deeply grateful. I owe a special thanks to James C. Y. Watt, Brooke Russell Astor Chairman of the Department of Asian Art at the Metropolitan Museum, who conceived the idea of focused exhibitions highlighting significant periods in Korean art history. His vision, keen eye, and encouragement guided this project.

Our principal lender, the National Museum of Korea, provided scholarly advice and logistical support, in addition to loans of important works from their collection. This project was approved, negotiated, and honed under the leadership of three distinguished directors: Yi Kun Moo, Hongnam Kim, and the current director, Choe Kwang-shik. In addition, many curators graciously gave their time and energy: Choi Eung-Chon (now at Dongguk University), Chun Inji, Han Soo, Kwag Hyunjin, Kwak Dong Seok, Kim Hyeon-jeong, Kim Kyu Dong, Kim Young-won, Lee Soomi, Lee Su-kyung, Lee Won-bok (who helped negotiate the loan of the portrait of Sin Sukju), Oh Youngchan, Shin Soyeon, and Yi Younghoon. I thank also the Jinju National Museum, in particular, Director Kang Dae-gyu.

Fifteen other institutions and collectors in Korea, the United States, Japan, and Europe generously lent works to this exhibition and permitted the use of images in this publication. I would like to acknowledge the following people in particular for their invaluable assistance: at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Deputy Director Hong RaYoung, Chief Curator Jeon Seung-chang, and curators Jo Jiyeon and Chung Seung Yeon; at Horim Museum, Director Oh Yun Sun and curator Park Chan Hee; at Dongguk University Museum, Director Dr. Chung Woo Thak, who also negotiated the loan from the Dongguk University Library; at AMOREPACIFIC Museum of Art, Director Suh Kyung-Bae and Chief Curator Moon Sun Joo; at the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Director Degawa Tetsuro and curator Higuchi Tomoko; Itoh Itakura and Katayama Mabi, former director and curator, respectively; at the Kyushu National Museum, curator Dainobu Yuji; at Yōmei Bunko, Director Nawa Osamu; at Seizan Bunko, curator Kataoka Ken; at the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Director Dr. Adele Schlomb and Mrs. Bettina Clever; at the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, curators Gratia Williams and Stephanie Wada; at the Cleveland Museum of Art, curator Anita Chung; and at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, curators Jane Portal, Matsutaro Shoriki

Chair of Arts of Asia, Oceania, and Africa, and Hao Sheng. At the Metropolitan Museum, numerous accomplished colleagues in various departments contributed to the success of this project. Special thanks are due to Aileen Chuk, Registrar; Nina S. Maruca, Senior Associate Registrar; and Meryl Cohen, Exhibitions Registrar, who stepped in at a crucial stage, for coordinating the packing and shipping of all loan objects; to Linda Sylling, Manager for Special Exhibitions, Gallery Installations, and Design; and to Michael Batista, Exhibition Design Manager, and Emil Micha, Senior Graphic Design Manager, for their creative work and good humor.

The exceptionally high quality of the publication owes largely to the scholarship of the contributing authors—JaHyun Kim Haboush, Sunpyo Hong, and Chin-Sung Chang—and the expertise and guidance of the Editorial Department of the Metropolitan Museum. My talented editor, Alexandra Bonfante-Warren, deftly and patiently polished all the book's prose; Salvatore Destro, Production Manager, gracefully coordinated and oversaw many facets of production, including the images; Jane S. Tai, Image Acquisitions and Permissions Specialist, cheerfully gathered the photos and reproduction rights; Robert Weisberg, Assistant Managing Editor, efficiently managed the typesetting and foreign fonts; Penny Jones skillfully assembled the bibliography; Elaine Luthy expeditiously compiled the

index; and Peter Antony, Chief Production Manager, brilliantly oversaw the entire production. The accomplished and amiable Bruce Campbell crafted the book's elegant design. Margaret Rennolds Chace, Managing Editor, shepherded us all through the process. I am especially grateful to the incomparable John P. O'Neill, Publisher and Editor in Chief, for making this book possible.

I am fortunate to have a large group of generous colleagues in the Department of Asian Art. I thank the following people for their assistance: Birgitta Augustin, Alison Clark, Rebecca Grunberger, Maxwell K. Hearn, Sinéad Kehoe, Crystal Kui, Shi-yee Liu, Hannah Thompson, and Masako Watanabe. Judith Smith, Administrator, and Hwai-ling Yeh-Lewis, Collections Manager, provided support with multiple aspects of the exhibition. My interns, Jung Hui Kim and Danielle Kim Donovan, and Eleanor Hyun, a former graduate fellow, helped with research.

Throughout this project, my husband, Stephen Kotkin, and our two children, Henry and Audrey, provided emotional support, joy, and balance.

Soyoung Lee  
*Assistant Curator for Korean Art*  
*Department of Asian Art*  
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*





# Timeline

KOREA		CHINA	JAPAN
	B. C. E.		
	<b>8000</b>		
Neolithic Period, ca. 7000–ca. 10th century B.C.E.	<b>2000</b>	Shang Dynasty, ca. 1600–ca. 1100 B.C.E.	Jōmon, ca. 10,000–ca. 300 B.C.E.
	<b>1000</b>		
Bronze Age, ca. 10th century–ca. 3rd century B.C.E.		Zhou Dynasty, ca. 1100–256 B.C.E.	
	<b>500</b>		
Iron Age, ca. 300 B.C.E.		Qin Dynasty, 221–206 B.C.E. Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.	Yayoi, ca. 300 B.C.E.–ca. 300 C.E.
Three Kingdoms Period, 57 B.C.E.–668 C.E.	<b>0</b>	Six Dynasties, 220–598	
<i>Silla Kingdom</i> , 57 B.C.E.–668 C.E. <i>Baekje Kingdom</i> , 18 B.C.E.–660 C.E. <i>Goguryeo Kingdom</i> , 37 B.C.E.–668 C.E.			Kofun, ca. 300–538
<i>Gaya Federation</i> , 42–562	<b>500</b>	Sui Dynasty, 581–618 Tang Dynasty, 618–907 Five Dynasties, 907–60 Liao Dynasty, 916–1125 Song Dynasty, 960–1279	Asuka, 538–710 Nara, 710–794 Heian, 794–1185
Unified Silla Dynasty, 668–935	<b>1000</b>		
Goryeo Dynasty, 918–1392		Jin Dynasty, 1115–1234 Yuan Dynasty, 1271–1368	Kamakura, 1185–1333 Nanbokuchō, 1336–1392 Muromachi, 1392–1573
Joseon Dynasty, 1392–1910	<b>1500</b>	Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644 Qing Dynasty, 1644–1911	Momoyama, 1573–1615 Edo, 1615–1868
	<b>1900</b>		Meiji, 1868–1912
	C. E.		

## *List of Lenders*

### GERMANY

Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne: cat. nos. 40, 41

### JAPAN

Kyushu National Museum of Japan, Dazaifu City:  
cat. no. 6

Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka: cat. nos. 21, 23,  
27, 37

Seizan Bunko, Sakawa: cat. no. 15

Yōmei Bunko, Kyoto: cat. no. 1

### KOREA

AMOREPACIFIC Museum of Art, Seoul: cat. nos. 22, 29

Dongguk University Library, Seoul: cat. no. 4

Dongguk University Museum, Seoul: cat. no. 8

Goryeong Sin Family, Yeongseong-gun Branch,  
Cheongju: cat. no. 31

Horim Museum, Seoul: cat. no. 30

Jinju National Museum of Korea: cat. no. 7

Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul: cat. nos. 16, 24,  
25, 26, 28, 39

National Museum of Korea, Seoul: cat. nos. 5, 11, 19, 20,  
33, 34, 35, 38

### UNITED STATES

The Cleveland Museum of Art: cat. no. 13

Florence and Herbert Irving, New York: cat. nos. 2, 3

Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, New York:  
cat. nos. 10, 12

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: cat. nos. 9,  
17, 18, 32

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: cat. nos. 14, 36

### NOTE TO THE READER

In this publication, the authors elected to use the Revised Romanization system of transliteration, established in 2000 by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Republic of Korea.

ART OF THE  
KOREAN RENAISSANCE,  
1400–1600





此圖畫之景，皆取法於古，其人物之布置，亦極其整齊。其間之文字，皆係當時之詩詞，其筆法亦極其秀麗。此圖畫之景，皆取法於古，其人物之布置，亦極其整齊。其間之文字，皆係當時之詩詞，其筆法亦極其秀麗。此圖畫之景，皆取法於古，其人物之布置，亦極其整齊。其間之文字，皆係當時之詩詞，其筆法亦極其秀麗。

# *Creating a Society of Civil Culture: The Early Joseon, 1392–1592*

JAHYUN KIM HABOUSH

The Joseon (1392–1910), Korea’s last dynasty, represents the past in the Korean historical imagination. The dynasty lasted more than five hundred years, beginning at a time equivalent to the early Renaissance in Europe and ending in the modern era. Its tragic and humiliating demise produced a compromised image of Joseon that persisted until recently. Japan annexed Korea in 1910, while in the West an Orientalist gaze viewed Asian societies as historically stagnant and static. The Joseon, however, was a period of political stability, cultural accomplishment, and technological innovation. It was, most prominently, a society devoted to civil order and culture.

The dynasty’s founding was most unusual. It adopted a new ideology with the stated aim of remaking Korea into a Neo-Confucian state and society. The Joseon was a rare instance before the modern era of a new state established on the basis of a new secular ideology. Moreover, this change was implemented by insiders of the Goryeo regime (918–1392), rather than by outsiders, with no extensive bloody military struggle. East Asian dynastic or other regime changes were carried out almost always through military struggle among contending powers or by conquest. The significance of this relatively peaceful yet total change has not been properly understood or placed in perspective in historical scholarship. Suffice it to say that the Joseon in its early stage was propelled and energized by its founders’ near-revolutionary vision of a new society of Confucian civil culture and the consequent adoption of new laws and practices.

During the dynasty’s 518 years a great deal of change occurred within and outside of Korea. Historians, for epistemological reasons, often divide Joseon history into early and late Joseon periods, punctuated by two wars, the Imjin War, 1592–98, and the Manchu invasion of 1636–37. In both the early and late Joseon eras, though

they ended in severe trials and challenges, peace prevailed for long periods, and efforts were made to create and maintain a Confucian vision of civilized society.

This essay will be devoted to the first two hundred years of the Joseon. Although the remaking of Korea touched all aspects of life, I will discuss three main areas: the adoption of Confucian ideology, the reordering of belief and religious systems, and the consequent changes in ritual practice; Confucian political culture and government structure; and the changing educational apparatus and literary culture. These changes were introduced and consolidated early in the Joseon. Certain important aspects of Joseon society, such as the reformulation of family structure and life that had a profound effect on the Korean mode of life but that became manifest after our period of concern, will be discussed only in reference to ritual.

## THE CONFUCIAN IDEOLOGY AND THE REBALANCING OF BELIEF AND RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

The adoption of Neo-Confucianism as the state ideology meant rehierarchizing systems of belief and religion. Generalizing about Korean religious life in the premodern era one might state that a number of religious beliefs and practices coexisted, and that, in state–church relations, the state, at least nominally, controlled religion. During the Goryeo, Buddhism and Confucianism—both of which had been introduced from abroad and were practiced by the fourth century—played complementary roles. Buddhism was de facto the state religion, while Confucianism prevailed in the political arena. Taoism and other popular religions, including native and shamanic practices, were also upheld. Each system was viewed as having its own

function and merit, and none was excluded from the public space. When the Joseon state placed Neo-Confucianism in a supreme position of unchallengeable authority and devalued other religions, it initiated a radical reordering of religious systems. Buddhism, the religion that had dominated state rites, life-cycle rituals, and the spiritual life of the population from a tremendous economic base and huge property holdings, became the Joseon's first target.

The anti-Buddhist campaign was carried out in a series of steps. Jeong Dojeon (1337/42–1398), chief adviser to the Joseon's founder, Yi Seonggye (1335–1408, r. 1392–98), and commonly viewed as an architect of the Joseon state, made a philosophical attack on Buddhism, denouncing its otherworldly outlook and its aspiration for annihilation.<sup>1</sup> Economic and institutional sanctions followed over the next century: the position of Buddhist Royal Master was eliminated; Buddhist rituals were prohibited in state functions and replaced by Confucian rites; there was a gradual loss of control of life-cycle rituals of the population such as weddings and funerals; and Buddhist sects were consolidated into two. The number of temples was restricted, with the majority of the disestablished temples turned into Confucian schools; much of the land and many of the slaves of the ecclesiastical establishment were confiscated; and increasingly severe restrictions on ordination of monks reduced the monastic population. With the enactment of the final anti-Buddhist measures—which included the disestablishment of the last two temples in the new Joseon capital, Hanseong (modern-day Seoul)—Buddhism was effectively banished from public life. By the early sixteenth century, temples were allowed to exist only in secluded mountainous areas, the ecclesiastical examination was entirely abolished, and the Buddhist clergy was forbidden from entering the capital.<sup>2</sup>

What is notable about these prohibitions is that, despite their severity, they addressed only the public aspects of religious practice and did not intrude on the private or personal space of faith. The furthest the state went in this direction were the prohibitions against making offerings to monks or Buddhist images and against reciting Buddha's names in the cities. Even these were proscriptions against certain practices in

certain spaces, not prohibitions against the Buddhist faith itself. In reordering religions, the state effected a spatial reapportionment of different systems of belief and religion.

With the rise of Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism was gradually banished from the public space and resituated in private space, from center to a remote periphery, and from a highly visible status to an almost invisible arena. In the private and “invisible” space, however, one was free to believe and to pursue devotional activities. This was true of other nonhegemonic popular religions, including shamanic and Taoist practices. True, Buddhists had to defend their religion by proclaiming support of the Confucian hegemony, as did the famous theoreticians Deuktong Gihwa (1376–1433) and Seosan Hyujeong (1520–1604).<sup>3</sup> The Buddhist clergy had to be content to administer minor rituals. Nevertheless, Buddhism remained a viable religious force, subscribed to by people of all ranks and all walks of life seeking spiritual solace. Devotional objects such as Buddhist paintings continued to be produced, commissioned by commoners, members of local elites, and the royal house. Buddhist sutras continued to be published. When the Korean script, *hangeul*, was invented, the sutras were translated into the Korean vernacular.<sup>4</sup> The Buddhist worldview, with its infinity of time, endless cycle of rebirth, and notion of karma, continued to constitute the stuff of popular literary and visual culture, imprinting Korean imaginings of life and death.<sup>5</sup>

### *Ritual Life: Public and Private*

It was perhaps in ritual life, both public and private, that the impact of the reordering of religious systems was felt most keenly. Although Confucian monarchies were not theocracies, one of the functions of the Confucian monarch was to represent his people to the cosmos, nature, ancestral spirits, and other supernatural and spiritual entities. One of the first tasks the Joseon state attended to was the systematization and reconstitution of sacrificial ceremonies. Sacrificial rituals were divided into three categories: the great sacrifices were offered to the Altar of Land and Grain, the Royal Ancestral Temple, and other royal ancestors. The middle sacrifices were dedicated to natural deities such as the gods of wind, clouds, lightning, and rain; the gods of





Fig. 1. Ritual vessel, early 16th century. Buncheong ware with white slip coating,  $5\frac{3}{8} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  in. (13.7 × 31.8 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of the Sumitomo Group (20109)

agriculture and sericulture; interestingly, Confucius and Confucian sages and scholars sanctioned by the state; and the founders of previous dynasties. Finally, small sacrifices were made to the gods of various stars, the deities of famous mountains and rivers, and other similar divinities. All these ceremonies specified the food and wine to be offered, the music to be played, the utensils to be used (see, for example, fig. 1), and the officiants and participants.<sup>6</sup> One may say that these rituals, as “cultural performances,” to borrow Clifford Geertz’s phrase, were the site where the dispositional and conceptual aspects of religious life converged.<sup>7</sup> Shamans and the Buddhist clergy were soon banished from these rituals; instead, the officiant became either the ruler or someone representing the ruler. As Confucian rituals acquired ever greater importance, scholarship became essential to ritual, and, not infrequently, ritual became a subject of controversy.<sup>8</sup>

The funereal and sacrificial rituals for the dead performed by the general population were also transformed. Previously, private individuals who were not ordained could participate in these rituals, but they could not officiate. Confucian sacrifices, however, initiated a fundamentally different ritual culture. Lay persons officiated at sacrificial and other funeral rites for their ancestors, and in so doing became the official representatives of the family and lineage to their ancestors, vitiating the role of mediating religious officiants. As the responsibility for

rituals shifted from the clergy to family descendants, a great concern for proper ritual behavior emerged, as might be expected. It is no exaggeration to say that the correct performance of ritual was viewed as the ultimate cultural capital of elite families. Many families were intensely preoccupied with acquiring and maintaining ritual wares of unblemished quality, sometimes at great expense. These ritual duties were viewed not merely as expressions of remembrance of private individuals. It became a legal requirement that every *yangban*, that is, aristocratic, lineage construct an ancestral hall in which the ancestral spiritual tablets were to be kept, and in which sacrifices to ancestors were to be performed.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, such sacrifices were ritual confirmations of Confucian hegemony, not to be contravened or violated. By performing these rituals, individuals ratified their membership in a Confucian world.

#### CONSTRUCTING A CONFUCIAN CIVIL STATE: WITHIN AND WITHOUT

For the Joseon to establish a new Neo-Confucian state, the dynasty had to attend to its dual mission as the inheritor and guardian of Korean tradition and culture and, simultaneously, to its identity as a participant in the larger world of East Asian civilization. All previous Korean regimes had been burdened with these dual tasks, but the international situation at the time of the founding of the dynasty and the Joseon’s commitment to Neo-Confucian ideology rendered these tasks particularly urgent. The founding of the Joseon was made possible in part by political changes on the continent. The Mongols, after ruling the greater part of the known world for a century, retreated from China, and the Ming (1368–1644) came to the fore. This ethnic Chinese dynasty claimed its legitimacy as a recoverer of China—and all Confucian civilization—from barbarian domination. The Joseon, too, was able to delegitimize the Goryeo primarily on the basis of its having been tainted by subjugation to the Mongols. Like the Ming, the Joseon constructed its legitimacy by restoring the indigenous tradition and culture on the one hand, while establishing a new beginning as a full-fledged member of the larger world of Confucian civilization on the other. In fact, the similar positions that China and

Korea occupied in their respective national histories seem to have strengthened their bonds, leading to an unusual period of harmony between Ming China and Joseon Korea.

The Joseon's two roles, internal and in the larger world, were not necessarily in conflict, nor were they seen by the Joseon to be bifurcated or dichotomous. However, the specific demands of those roles changed, depending on the situation, time, or task. In order to establish legitimacy, the Joseon evoked the Confucian concept of the Mandate of Heaven. Yi Seonggye's coronation edict stated that the Mandate of rulership was given to a person of most extraordinary virtue and intelligence to look after the welfare of the people and that the Mandate would continue within a ruling family until a ruler becomes the last—losing it by his misrule, that is, by neglecting his duty to his people.<sup>10</sup> The Joseon state also publicly assumed its role as the rightful inheritor to past Korean royal houses: as expected of a succeeding dynasty, the Joseon performed state rituals to earlier Korean dynasties, and it compiled an official history of the previous dynasty, the *Goryeosa* (The History of Goryeo).<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that while the compilation of *Goryeosa* was a task prescribed by Confucian culture, the history's description of the mythic Dangun as the progenitor of the Korean people—situating him in the same legendary age as the Chinese sage-king Yao<sup>12</sup>—denoted the compilers' desire to give Korea a distinguished and distinct place parallel to China's in that civilization.

These dual considerations permeated each stage of the Joseon's implementation of Confucian concepts in the specific circumstances of the Korean situation. The early Joseon undertook vigorously a codification of the law and an institutionalization of the new political and social structure. For example, the *Gyeongguk daejeon* (The Great Code of Governance), in effect the Joseon constitution, was published in 1471. Although each initiative presented its own challenges and required different negotiations, we can survey the way in which the Confucian kingship and bureaucracy took shape in the Joseon.

### *Confucian Kingship in the Joseon State*

The ideal of the “sage-king” to which Korean Neo-Confucians subscribed was modeled after Yao and Shun,

two legendary monarchs of antiquity. The image was based on the belief that Yao and Shun established a perfectly ordered society, effected through their great virtue, which in turn transformed all their subjects into exemplars of goodness. In Neo-Confucianism, the ascendance of the Mencian notion of the original goodness of human nature and the idea of the perfectibility of a person led to the emergence of the sage-kingship as a potent political ideal. However, there existed a wide variety of choices of how to translate the symbolic role of the monarch within the actual workings of the monarchy. At the beginning of the Joseon, two models at opposite extremes competed: one consisted of a purely symbolic ruler, with no power, in a prime minister-centered structure, the other, of an autocratic sovereign who sought the counsel of his ministers at his pleasure. The head-on clash between Taejong (r. 1400–1418), committed to a strong kingship, and Jeong Dojeon, the proponent of a prime minister-centered government,<sup>13</sup> ending with Taejong's victory over Jeong, whom he ordered executed in 1398, put to rest the possibility of a prime minister-centered government.

Still, for almost a century and a half the system swung from one extreme to the other, between strong kings such as Sejo (r. 1455–68) and bureaucratically minded rulers, including Munjong (r. 1450–52) and Seongjong (r. 1469–94). There were, of course, exceptions. King Sejong (r. 1418–50), arguably the most revered monarch of the Joseon, transcended this dichotomy. By the mid-sixteenth century the Joseon court seems to have reached some semblance of an agreement on the balance between the symbolic and actual roles of the monarch. The ruler maintained the decision-making power of a sovereign, but this was to be exercised with ministerial counsel. A monarch ruling in partnership with a governing elite was nothing new in Korea—it is a form of government that can be traced back to Silla (57 B.C.E.–935 C.E.)—but under the Joseon the political discourse was carried out in the Confucian rhetoric of the sage-kingship. Such institutions as the royal lecture, in which the king studied the classics with his minister-teachers, were forums for royal–ministerial competition for knowledge as much as occasions for productive discussions of scholarly and political issues.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Joseon Bureaucracy*

The two essential features of the Joseon state were governance by a civil bureaucracy, with bureaucrats selected through a civil-service examination, and the extension of the central government to all the provinces. These elements were premised on the supremacy of the civil state, free from intervention or threat from the military. In 1400, the Joseon government abolished all private armies and prohibited the private ownership of weapons. This made the Joseon a Weberian state, defined as an agency possessing a monopoly on legitimate violence. This had been attempted in the tenth century, under the Goryeo, but with the emergence of the military regime in 1170 and the subsequent Mongol control of Korea in the thirteenth century, private armies had reappeared. The enactment of 1400, however, would endure. There were military examinations for the selection of officers, but the military leadership and the minister of war were chosen from the civil bureaucracy, a system that effectively deprived military officers of decision-making or other leadership roles.

The civil bureaucracy had to be perpetually recalibrated. Although the structure remained somewhat stable, the function and distribution of power among posts were negotiated continuously and changed. After many decades of struggle, what emerged was a tripartite power structure consisting of the throne, the executive branch, and the admonitory and advisory agencies. The ranking officials of the executive branch, the ministers of the State Council, and the ministers of the six boards constituted the main consultative body that worked in partnership with the throne in the day-to-day governance. It is the prominence of the Censorate, consisting of three of the advisory agencies, that renders the Joseon unusual among Confucian states. The Censorate was a ubiquitous organ in Confucian states; it had existed in the Goryeo, but in the Joseon period, censors were granted a great deal of institutionally guaranteed freedom. The censors, collectively known as “speaking officials” (*eongwan*), were selected from the best and brightest of those who had passed the civil-service examination, and their activities were viewed as a barometer of the openness or closedness of speech (*eollo*). Seen as the conscience of the nation, censors enjoyed a freedom to voice criticisms of the throne and of high-ranking officials

that acquired near sanctity.<sup>15</sup> Once accused by a censorial memorial, even powerful ministers were obliged to cease performing their governing duties until the indictment was resolved by the throne. Conversely, when the king was the target of criticism, he also had to respond. All memorials were made available to officials at the Royal Secretariat, and this often had the effect of politicizing issues. Korean censorial activities, a highly visible feature of Joseon political life from at least the sixteenth century, stood in contrast to the censors’ rather subdued function in China in the same period.

It was during this time that provincial administration was incorporated into the central government. The country was divided into administrative units—provinces, counties, districts, and special towns—and administrative apparatuses were established, with the number of posts, their ranks, and their duration of tenure specified. All provincial posts were to be filled by officials sent by the central government. Although these centrally appointed officials in the provinces often had to govern in consultation with the local elite, administratively, the country functioned as a coherent whole.

### *The Civil-Service Examination*

The primacy of the civil bureaucracy of the Joseon state was underpinned by the unquestioned authority of the civil-service examination (see cat. no. 1). The civil-service examination, introduced in 958, was administered through the Goryeo period, except for a brief interruption under the military regime. In the Joseon, however, it became the only legitimate channel for official appointment. The Neo-Confucian founders of the Joseon saw the examination as the suitable vehicle for state control of ideology and vested it with a comprehensive structure, complete with a school system that trained candidates. The examination was in two parts, both of which were given every three years. Preliminary examinations were administered in two fields, classics and belles lettres, resulting in one hundred classics licentiates and one hundred literature licentiates. The final examination, called the *mungwa*, tested candidates on a variety of subjects, ranging from their ability to write diplomatic documents, to their ability to craft critical essays on current affairs, to the composition of poetry. Thirty-three candidates were selected and ordered according to



Cat. no. 1. *Banquet for Successful Candidates of the State Examination*, 1580. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk,  $46\frac{5}{8} \times 41\frac{1}{16}$  in. (118.5 × 105.6 cm). Yōmei Bunko, Kyoto

performance. They were assigned bureaucratic ranks and then were either appointed to posts commensurate with their ranks or placed on a waiting list for appointment when such posts became vacant. Though the examination system encompassed certain irregularities—for example, the state periodically gave special examinations to celebrate festive occasions such as the birth of a royal heir or a queen dowager’s birthday—the basic structure continued through the dynasty.<sup>16</sup>

The prestige of the civil-service examination also seems to have produced an ideal of meritocracy. The civil-service examination, though, was not for everyone—indeed, many groups were excluded from taking it based on class and gender. The prominence of the examination system, however, created a myth of talent sometimes obscuring class boundaries.

A comprehensive, national school system was also devised early in the dynasty. Each county was mandated to have a county school (*hyanggyo*), and Seoul had four district schools. Seonggyun-gwan, the Royal College, was established as a tertiary school, where classics and

literature licentiates and other similarly qualified students enrolled and prepared for the final examination. In addition to being guardians of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy with a state-designated curriculum, the state schools also performed rituals at the Confucian temples, which housed memorial tablets for state-sanctioned Confucian sages and scholars.

#### LITERARY CULTURE AND THE PRIVATE ACADEMIES

The state schools’ monopoly on Confucian scholarship did not last long. Soon education became more widespread, and Neo-Confucian scholarship acquired a certain maturity. Private academies emerged, providing alternative sites for scholarship. The private academies’ relation to the state was rather ambiguous. They, too, adhered to the basic tenets of Neo-Confucianism—in fact, a desire to pursue Neo-Confucian scholarship unencumbered by preparation for the civil-service examination was cited as a primary motivation for their founding.<sup>17</sup> The first of these private schools, Baegundong Academy, was founded by Ju Sebung (1495–1554), magistrate of Punggi County, in 1543. Believing that autonomy was essential to the academy, Ju initiated fund-raising, which his successors and the local people continued, making the academy one of Korea’s best-endowed. In 1550, another magistrate of Punggi, Yi Hwang (1501–1570), arguably the greatest Neo-Confucian scholar of the Joseon, requested that the academy be granted a royal charter. A plaque bearing the name of the academy, now changed to Sosu, was awarded by the state, along with financial and other material support. Thereafter, academies began to proliferate: by the close of the sixteenth century there were about eighty, though their numbers reached a peak during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> The academies became centers for scholarly activities, while state schools by comparison lost prestige.

The academies enjoyed a certain independence from the state. Unlike state schools, which had Confucian temples attached, the academies were allowed to choose the scholars to whom they built shrines and sacrificed. Baegundong Academy, for instance, built a shrine for An Hyang (1243–1306), the Goryeo scholar who was

credited with having introduced Neo-Confucian scholarship to Korea. The academies were centers of book culture for their areas; they tended to have large libraries but also published books, apparently with no state censorship, so that they functioned as publishing centers in their locality. From the beginning it was assumed that academies would make their own rules and regulations. Although their curriculum was largely based on Neo-Confucianism, namely, the Four Books, the Five Classics, a variety of historical texts, and philosophical works by Neo-Confucian scholars, they enjoyed autonomy with respect to their admissions policies and pedagogical methods, which apparently ranged widely. A question that has elicited heated debates among scholars concerns the social status of students, that is, whether academies accepted commoners. This is part of a larger inquiry into whether Confucianism, which implicitly promoted a meritocracy, in fact opened channels for individual accomplishment or merely reinforced the social hierarchy by granting educational privileges exclusively to the *yangban* aristocracy of the Joseon. Some academies had a clearly stated admissions policy of not excluding students based on social status.<sup>19</sup> However, there is no evidence

that academies were avenues for commoners to join the scholarly elite. The answer to this question probably will have to wait until all the student rosters are examined.

Academies did usher in a new literary culture, however. First of all, as alternatives to state schools, they offered a new way of life for scholars. Scholarship was no longer viewed only as a means of passing the civil-service examination and entering officialdom but as a viable, respectable mode of life. (See cat. no. 2 for an example of an art object related to scholarship and writing.) It is not that all academies eschewed the civil-service examination; in fact, many aimed to produce successful examination candidates. However, the academies produced the Confucian literary culture that valued the pursuit of Neo-Confucian scholarship and the practice of Confucian ritual in daily life for their own sake. Many of the landed elite opted for this way of life, and academies functioned as magnets for their scholarly activities.

The proliferation of academies also led to a diversity of Neo-Confucian schools. Famous scholars either founded or were enshrined in the academies and were associated with particular sectarian lineages. The most



Cat. no. 2. Stationery box with decoration of peony scrolls, 15th century. Lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay,  $3\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$  in. ( $9 \times 36.5 \times 24.1$  cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Promised Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving



famous scholar in this regard was Yi Hwang, better known by his nom de plume, Toegye. Enshrined in a number of academies, the most famous being Dosan Academy, Toegye became, posthumously, a founding father of the Yeongnam School of Neo-Confucianism. Soon the Kiho School, honoring Yi I (Yulgok, 1536–1584) and his scholarship, emerged as a rival.

The Yeongnam and Giho schools, named for their geographical locations in Gyeongsang Province, south-eastern region, and central Gyeonggi Province, respectively, remained the two major schools. In a number of ways, they held contrasting views. On philosophical positions, the Yeongnam School subscribed to the supremacy of principle (*i*), while the more pragmatic Kiho School upheld material-force (*gi*). The Yeongnam School prized a quiet, scholarly mode of life, while the Kiho School maintained a more activist approach, advocating engagement with government and policy matters. There were other schools as well, and although they differed in details, together they contributed to the prestige of literati culture. By the end of the sixteenth century, no one gainsaid the cultural capital of a life engaged in scholarship and practice of Confucian ritual. The academies also developed social relationships with one another, enabling them to rally behind a cause. With increasing frequency, they voiced their views on policy matters, first those concerning sectarian issues, but gradually on purely political issues. The emergence of the scholarly community as a political force soon gave a particular flavor to Joseon political culture.

### *A Dual Scriptural Culture*

The Joseon's dual cultural strands also manifested themselves in scriptural culture. This consisted of writings in literary Chinese, anchored in the wider world of East Asian civilization, and writings in the Korean script, anchored in the local culture. This diglossic written culture became possible only from the mid-fifteenth century, with the invention of the Korean alphabet, called *hangeul* in modern usage. Devised by a committee of scholars appointed by King Sejong, the Korean alphabet was proclaimed in 1443 in a royal edict:

*The sounds of our language differ from those of Chinese and are not easily communicated by using Chinese graphs. Many*

*among the ignorant, therefore, though they wish to express their sentiments in writing, have been unable to communicate. Considering this situation with compassion, I have newly devised twenty-eight letters. I wish only that the people will learn them easily and use them conveniently in their daily life.*<sup>20</sup>

This unprecedented concept of the use of a written language challenged the notion, prevalent at the time, that the acquisition of a written language was a privilege and a source of power reserved for the elite. The Korean script was employed as a medium of communication by all classes, from the royal family to commoners, and from the capital to rural areas.

With the introduction of the Korean alphabet, the scriptural culture of the Joseon was fundamentally transformed. This alphabet was designed to be accessible—it took one morning for a clever person to learn it, ten days for a dull one, in the words of Jeong Inji (1396–1478), one of its inventors.<sup>21</sup> Those who had been mostly excluded from written culture, including women and less educated men, could now participate in it: government and other agencies translated many works, ranging from agricultural manuals to religious texts (see cat. no. 4), from literary Chinese into Korean for wider dissemination. New genres such as the vernacular novel appeared, while old ones such as letters became much more widespread. Very generally, the dual scriptural culture of the Joseon falls into an analytic scheme constructed upon gender, class, and communicative space, that is, one in which literary Chinese was a male, elite, and public language, while Korean was associated with the female, the less educated, and the private realm. Within this framework, however, there were lively interactions and mutual borrowings between the two written cultures.<sup>22</sup>

Traditionally, it has been assumed that Korean script came into wide popular use only after the Imjin War of the late sixteenth century. Recent discoveries of texts in the Korean script, however, suggest that, long before the war, *hangeul* was in wider use than has been believed. In 1977, for example, 197 letters were excavated from the tomb of Madame Kim of Suncheon, who is believed to have lived in a rural area during the latter half of the sixteenth century. With the exception of three letters in literary Chinese, these letters, on single sheets of paper, were written in the Korean script. They date from the



Cat. no. 4. Episodes from the Life of the Buddha (*Seokbosangjeol*), 1447. Printed book; ink on paper, each page 8½ × 6½ in. (22 × 15.8 cm). Dongguk University Library, Seoul, Treasure no. 523

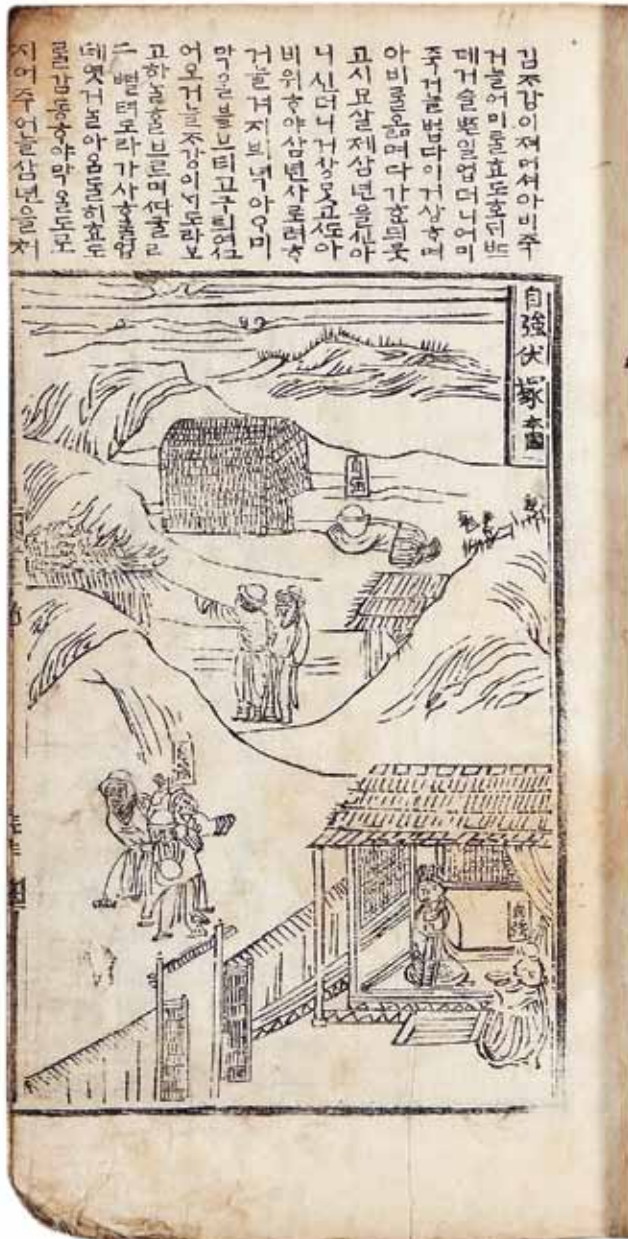
mid- to the late sixteenth century;<sup>23</sup> the trove suggests a broader circulation of epistles in Korean script from early on.

The history and texture of the dual scriptural culture of the Joseon await fuller investigation. It should be noted, however, that the diglossic literary culture of the Joseon should not be understood as a culture with sacral and vernacular scripts in dichotomy, as Benedict Anderson proposes.<sup>24</sup> Anderson places the sacral and the vernacular scripts at opposite and contending poles, arguing that the popularity of the latter replaced the use of the former. During the Joseon, writings in the two linguistic spaces coexisted and mutually reinforced each other; they would continue to do so until the close of the nineteenth century. The active dual scriptural culture also

led to a material diversity of scriptural production, with writings in different media—from handwritten manuscripts to wood-block prints and movable metal type—circulating widely.

#### THE POPULARIZATION OF CONFUCIANISM

Both the state and local elites made a concerted effort to propagate Confucian ethics and mores beyond the confines of the scholarly elite. Korean script served this purpose well. The state printed moral tracts in the vernacular to disseminate Confucian virtues to people unversed in literary Chinese. The publication of *Naehun* (Instructions for the Inner Quarters; 1475)<sup>25</sup> and *Samgang haengsildo* (Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds; cat. no. 5;



Cat. no. 5. "Jagang prostrates before burial mounds," Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds (*Samgang haengsildo*), ca. 1567–1608. Printed book; ink on paper, each page 14¾ × 8½ in. (37.7 × 21.6 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul

ca. 1567–1608)<sup>26</sup> are good examples. It appears that the court undertook many of these publication projects in the belief that morality books in Korean could be understood (even) by “women in the remote rustic villages and ports.”<sup>27</sup>

The local elite, on the other hand, opted for teaching the local population through personal contact. They

convened regular meetings in which the new ethics and practices were discussed and implemented. The most conspicuous examples were the self-regulatory assemblies known as community compacts (*hyangyak*). Although there were local variations, these associations generally united villagers of all classes. The community compacts, however, did not engage solely in moral instruction, but also functioned as mutual-assistance societies in times of need.<sup>28</sup>

These contacts between elite and non-elite populations may have produced other cultural effects. Making a distinction between societies in which the upwardly mobile were allowed to mingle with the aristocracy and those in which they were not, Norbert Elias proposes that in the former case traditional aristocratic manners trickled down, whereas in the latter different manners were invented for the newly wealthy class.<sup>29</sup> One wonders whether the community compacts contributed to an ethos in which the scholarly mode of life and manners gained currency and were even widely aspired to by commoners.

## CONCLUSION

The first two hundred years of the Joseon were a time of peace and vigor. The Koreans’ dual commitment to participating fully in Confucian civilization and at the same time to nurturing their own tradition produced an interesting and distinct polity and culture. What characterizes this period of the Joseon is the state’s total commitment to its project and its unclouded optimism about its power to accomplish the task. The systematization of law and the institutionalization of structures that would be carried out continuously in remaking Korea over the succeeding generations express this conviction. The project required changes and reconstitutions of political ideology, religious practice, kingship, bureaucracy, educational apparatuses and pedagogic practice, the examination system, and scriptural culture. By the sixteenth century, the Joseon state could boast that it had succeeded in transforming Korea into a society of civil culture. It felt itself to be China’s equal in the quality of its civilization and genuine in its mission to be a worthy descendant of its own native tradition. This sense of security and accomplishment was to be undone by the Japanese

invasion of 1592. Shortly after, China sent its army to assist Korea, and the three countries fought until 1598. The Imjin War, often considered the most significant event in the history of premodern East Asia, devastated Korea. Before Korea had time to recover from this war, the Joseon was plunged into more turmoil, stemming from the rise of the Manchu, who invaded Korea in 1636 and conquered China in 1644. The Imjin War and the

Manchu conquest of China ushered in a new East Asia. Joseon Korea was able to redefine its identity and place in the new world order, and the dynasty was to last another several hundred years. However, the Joseon of this later period, as prosperous and culturally thriving as it was, seems never to have regained the self-confidence of its first centuries, to which it looked, with nostalgia, for assurance and inspiration.

1. *Sources of Korean Tradition* 1997, pp. 253–56.

2. Buswell 1999, pp. 138–40, 256–57.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 140–57, 257–60.

4. Ledyard 1998, pp. 329–39.

5. See examples in Kim Gidong 1979.

6. Munhwajae gwalliguk 1967, pp. 14–20.

7. Geertz 1973, p. 113.

8. Haboush 1999, pp. 46–71, 239–45.

9. Deuchler 1992, pp. 134–36.

10. *Sources of Korean Tradition* 1997, pp. 272–74.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 303–4.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 282–83.

14. Haboush 2001, pp. 63–75.

15. Haboush 1993.

16. Yi Sŏngmu 1985, pp. 125–46.

17. For a discussion of private academies, see Cho'e Yŏng-ho 1999, pp. 17–27, 234–36.

18. There were more than eight hundred private academies by the end of the eighteenth century. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

19. The rules of admission for the Seosil Academy in Yangju clearly assert a policy against discriminating on the basis of class. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 235.

20. *Sources of Korean Tradition* 1997, p. 295.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Haboush 2004.

23. See Haboush 2009.

24. Anderson 1983, pp. 37–65.

25. Compiled by Queen Sohye (1437–1504), this is a collection of excerpts from famous Chinese instructional works for women.

26. This was based on the 1434 version in Chinese, but with a reduced number of people, from 110 in each category to 35, and with Korean rendering on the top margin of each page.

27. *Seongjong sillok* 1955–63, 127: 7a.

28. Sakai Tadao 1985.

29. Elias 1978, pp. 3–40.





# *Art and Patronage in the Early Joseon*

SOYOUNG LEE

## SETTING THE STAGE

The period from 1392, when the new dynasty, the Joseon, was established, to 1592, just before the outbreak of the Imjin War, was one of historic transformation within Korean society and culture. The ascent of a staunchly Neo-Confucian cohort of men to political power, centered around the monarch, altered the social and intellectual structure of the elite class and, consequently, its anchoring philosophical and theological paradigms. As a result, the cultural landscape shifted as well, profoundly affecting the nature and direction of artistic endeavors of the time. A defining characteristic of the visual arts of this period was the blossoming of secular, specifically non-Buddhist, painting. Prior to the establishment of the Joseon, Buddhism—the state religion for more than one thousand years—had significantly shaped the arts.<sup>1</sup> Following its aggressive suppression, at least on a state-policy level, the Buddhist faith and its expressions in the early Joseon period retreated mostly to the private realm. The Joseon created an environment that fostered the robust development of multiple genres of art that were unrelated to Buddhist texts or rituals. Instead, the officially propagated Neo-Confucian ideals became manifested in the arts in many ways. At the same time, a small output of exceptionally refined Buddhist art continued to be produced for the elite's private devotion and enjoyment, attesting to the enduring appeal of the religion in a state and period defined by a new secular vision.

This essay explores the dynamic art of the early Joseon through a selection of key trends in painting and ceramics produced during this period. It highlights and assesses the distinctive features of some of the major artistic achievements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a time of extraordinary cultural efflorescence. Early Joseon art adapted and altered old and new traditions first developed in China. These imported artistic

traditions were enthusiastically embraced, transformed, and made both complex and native. Contemporaneously, certain genres representing homegrown Korean aesthetic expressions display bold innovations made possible by the cultural atmosphere of the early Joseon. To the extent that it is possible to decipher such factors, how did taste and patronage shape the conditions of manufacture and patterns of consumption of art in the early Joseon?

## REFASHIONING TRADITIONS, ARCHETYPES, AND PARADIGMS IN PAINTING

The early Joseon was a period of close political, economic, and cultural relations between Korea and Ming China (1368–1644). The founding of the Ming dynasty, which preceded by some three decades the establishment of the Joseon kingdom, represented the reclaiming of sovereignty by the native Han Chinese after a century of rule by the Mongols under the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the “barbarian” outsiders who had established an empire and reigned supreme over much of the known world. King Taejo (Yi Seonggye, 1335–1408; r. 1392–98), the founder of the Joseon dynasty, and his followers and advisers, who formed the Neo-Confucian intellectual elite, supported the Ming's claim to China and its place at the center of a Neo-Confucian sphere of influence. During the Goryeo (918–1392), the dynasty preceding the Joseon, Korea had experienced Mongol invasions and political dominance (though not conquest like Yuan China), resulting in intermarriage of Goryeo and Mongol royalty and mandatory residence for Goryeo princes in the capital of Yuan. The rise of the Joseon, therefore, symbolized both political and cultural renewal centered on Neo-Confucian principles. Beyond its importance as an ideological and political ally, China



Fig. 2. *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, before 1539. Two panels of an eight-panel folding screen; ink on paper, each panel, 38½ × 19¾ in. (98.3 × 49.9 cm). Daigan-ji, Hiroshima

was also the source of the rich traditions of the past. Much as Renaissance Europe looked to ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration, the Joseon elites sought to digest, adapt, and refashion the classical Chinese heritage, in which they were deeply educated and which had become an integral and complex part of Korean culture.

Early Joseon landscape painting, which was based on classical Chinese models of the Song period but also incorporated some of the contemporary Ming trends, developed into a dynamic artistic expression. Works on certain themes—such as the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, discussed below—fully adapted their models and came to embody distinctly Joseon styles and aesthetic visions, arguably surpassing comparable Ming Chinese paintings. The development of porcelain—also

known as white ware—in the early Joseon exemplifies a similar dynamic of attraction to and departure from Chinese sources by Joseon patrons and artists. In the case of porcelain, Joseon ceramists were responding to a fashionable new trend rather than to a venerable old tradition.

*Poetic Imagery: Mountain and Water*

By the fifteenth century, landscapes emerged as the foremost genre of painting in Korea, where previously they had more often served as settings or backdrops, part of a larger narrative or scene.<sup>2</sup> Before the tenth century, landscapes, like most paintings, had appeared most frequently as murals on the walls of tombs or Buddhist temples. In the Goryeo period, landscape developed into an independent genre and in a scroll format, rather than



Cat. no. 7. *Night Rain on Xiao and Xiang*, from *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*. Jinju National Museum of Korea



Cat. no. 6. *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, ca. mid-16th century. Eight-panel folding screen; ink on silk, overall 41 $\frac{5}{16}$  × 12 ft. 8 $\frac{1}{16}$  in. (105.1 × 386.2 cm). Kyushu National Museum, Dazaifu City

as part of an architectural structure. Although very few examples survive from this period, making it difficult to gauge accurately the importance of the genre within the broader context of art production and appreciation in the Goryeo, even the limited number of extant works and written records demonstrate the rise of secular painting during this time. Landscape paintings incorporated the aesthetic philosophies and classical pictorial idioms of China's Northern Song (960–1127),<sup>3</sup> traditions that would prove to be enduring for generations to come, especially for painters of the early Joseon period. At the same time, there is no doubt that Buddhist art—painting, sculpture, sutras, decorative arts, and architecture—constituted the primary expressive endeavors of the Goryeo society, particularly for the royal court and the aristocracy.

In contrast, the Joseon's official suppression of Buddhism directed artistic sponsorship and production toward secular art. Though its practice encompassed aspects of worship and ritual, Neo-Confucianism was not a religion per se; rather it was a philosophical and

political ideology that also provided life principles (see JaHyun Kim Haboush's essay, "Creating a Society of Civil Culture: The Early Joseon, 1392–1592," in this volume). Painting served as both a means of propagating Neo-Confucian beliefs and worldviews and a form of aesthetic pleasure and intellectual and moral cultivation. As such, it was practiced not only by the professional painters employed by the court's Bureau of Painting (*dohwaseo*) but also by the political and cultural elite, including the scholar-officials in government and the monarchs themselves. The pursuit of painting by the king and the men in government, however, was accompanied by cautions expressed by the literati against excessive enjoyment of it, at the cost of diligent Confucian scholarship and effective governance.<sup>4</sup> The Joseon literati regarded nature as the paradigm of the ideal world order and as a vehicle for proper (Confucian) intellectual and emotional development.<sup>5</sup> This view, not surprisingly, contributed to the increasing prestige of landscape painting. Painted mostly in ink monochrome, sometimes accentuated with light colors, landscapes of





this period are lyrical, evocative, and compelling. Many illustrate idealized, or romanticized, scenery, whether of specific sites or abstracted water and mountain views.

One significant body of landscape paintings from the early Joseon period comprises works illustrating scenery or places in China of literary fame and with nostalgic associations, such as the Xiao and Xiang rivers in the modern province of Hunan. Though the Chinese tradition, both in literature and painting, was known and adapted in Korea during the Goryeo dynasty, the popularity of the theme of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers reached a new height in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with most extant paintings dating to the latter.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, in contemporary Ming-dynasty China, the number and reputation of paintings on this subject dwindled, compared to the earlier Song period. The early Joseon scrolls and screens illustrating the Eight Views represent Korean transformations of this classic theme and of landscapes more broadly.

The Eight Views follow a traditional, standardized sequence. In general, they begin with the scene Moun-

tain Market, Clear with Rising Mist and end with River and Sky in Evening Snow, with slight variations in the order of the six scenes in between, depending on the artist.<sup>7</sup> The changing seasons are incorporated into the Eight Views; most sets span spring, fall, and winter but usually omit summer.<sup>8</sup> The seasonal elements can be obvious, as with the snow-covered mountain of River and Sky in Evening Snow. In other scenes they are more subtle, infusing the scenes with the appropriate mood of the season, as in Mountain Market, Clear with Rising Mist and Returning Sail off Distant Shore. The overall compositions, too, are traditional. Within these established frameworks, the Eight Views offered grand poetic potential, which can only have enhanced their appeal to both artists and patrons.

Several iconic works attest to the significance of this theme in the early Joseon. One of the best known is an eight-panel screen in the collection of the Daigan-ji, a temple in Hiroshima (fig. 2; before 1539). A journal mounted on the back of the screen was written by the temple's abbot, Sonkai, and recounts his journey to Korea





Above and pages 21–23: Cat. no. 7. *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, 16th century. Eight hanging scrolls; ink on paper, each scroll  $35\frac{1}{6} \times 18\frac{3}{4}$  in. (91.1 × 47.7 cm). Jinju National Museum of Korea









in 1538 to obtain a new set of Buddhist sutras to replace the temple's old one.<sup>9</sup> The screen is presumed to have been acquired during this trip.<sup>10</sup> The Daigan-ji screen is important as a complete, dated set of the Eight Views but lacks the strength and visual coherence of another sixteenth-century eight-panel screen, this one in the Kyushu National Museum (cat. no. 6). The Kyushu screen's eight painted images were paired with short poems on the Eight Views. The inscriptions were written in 1584 by the Joseon literatus Kim Hyeon-seong (1542–1621); the painting most likely dates to the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The images, each roughly square in format and relatively small, present confidently articulated, emotionally resonant mountain-and-water scenes. The composition is compact but not dense, with the eight scenes repeating a recognizable structure in which the foregrounds, middle grounds, and backgrounds are both distinct and merging. Prominent in all the scenes are clusters of round, rolling mountain and cliff forms, clearly and finely outlined, yet softened by a masterful use of ink wash. The small scale of the painted images and of the overall screen creates an intimate viewing experience.

Another complete sixteenth-century set, preserved as eight hanging scrolls, now in the collection of the Jinju National Museum of Korea (cat. no. 7),<sup>12</sup> has the opposite effect: especially when displayed together, the scrolls present an almost panoramic view, filtered through changing seasons. In this work, as in other extant scrolls, the vertical format enables a clearer articulation of the tripartite composition (foreground, middle ground, and background). Here, the landscape has a majestic, rather than intimate, presence, and each scene conveys at once compositional coherence, expansiveness, and depth. A certain degree of stylization in the brushwork and in the expression of individual forms and atmosphere possibly indicates a later date than that of the Kyushu screen.

Both the Jinju scrolls and the Kyushu screen, along with most other extant works on the theme of the Eight Views, demonstrate the enduring influence and continued adaptation of the style of An Gyeon (act. ca. 1440–70), the most prominent court painter of the mid-fifteenth century and one of the great classical Korean artists, whose legacy, especially in landscape painting, loomed large throughout the early Joseon period. Though only

one signed landscape by him survives—the elegant, seminal handscroll *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* (fig. 5; 1447)—scholars have reconstructed his style from the few other works attributed to him and from other landscapes by known and unknown artists from the early Joseon period, primarily the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The *Dream Journey* scroll and An Gyeon's career and painting style, as reflected in works by his artistic descendants, are discussed in Sunpyo Hong and Chin-Sung Chang's essay, "Peace under Heaven: Confucianism and Painting in Early Joseon Korea," in this volume. Suffice it to note here that An, a hugely influential artist with classical training, creativity, and enviable patronage from the royal family, was well versed in and inspired by the works of earlier painters, particularly the monumental landscapes of the Northern Song-period Chinese court artist Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090). This Chinese tradition is reflected in An's *Dream Journey* and other attributed works, such as the album entitled *Eight Views of the Four Seasons* (National Museum of Korea, Seoul),<sup>14</sup> as a visual idiom that constitutes an underpinning of his artistic style and vision. Early Joseon landscapes by An's followers, such as the Eight Views paintings examined in this section, recast and expand upon An's innovative interpretations of the beloved earlier paradigm, thereby providing recognizable elements in works of the early Joseon period. Interestingly, a conflation of Chinese and Korean styles occurred in Japan, particularly during the Edo period, with collectors and artists confusing the An Gyeon-style early Joseon landscapes that had entered Japanese collections with Song painting. Indeed, the leading Japanese painter of the Edo period, Kanō Tanyū (1602–1674), pronounced the Jinju scrolls to be the work of none other than Guo Xi himself.<sup>15</sup>

Early Joseon pictorial representations of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers are romantic paintings: they represent the Joseon elite's intellectual nostalgia for the past. These works symbolized ownership of the past, in this case, a broader, shared East Asian artistic tradition that was very much a part of the Joseon Koreans' history. They were idealized, familiar representations of a celebrated foreign place, an exotic locale familiar to the educated elite, though few had actually seen it. In addition, the poetic vision, both literary and



pictorial, provided aesthetic delight, satisfying the cultured class's appreciation of beauty.

Influenced by the successful Eight Views conventions, Korean painters created a parallel tradition. In the late Goryeo period in the fourteenth century, the theme of the Eight Views of Songdo (another name for Gaeseong, the Goryeo capital) had emerged, incorporating native sites and scenery. In the early Joseon, painters developed the Eight Views of the New Capital (Hanseong, popularly known as Hanyang, today's Seoul).<sup>16</sup> Because these paintings survive only as references in written records, we cannot be certain of the exact nature of their iconographic or stylistic links to the classical conventions of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. Nonetheless, the adoption of the Eight Views format, as well as thematic similarities between the individual scenes constituting the Eight Views of Songdo and those of the Xiao and Xiang rivers prototype, provides ample evidence that the Korean adaptations were based directly on the Chinese Eight Views tradition. Landscape painters also favored other famous sites in Korea as subject matter during this period, including the Han River and the Diamond Mountains (Geumgang-san).<sup>17</sup> Paintings of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers continued to be produced for the elite throughout the Joseon period; toward the end of the Joseon the theme was even adopted by and absorbed into folk painting.<sup>18</sup>

### *Wine and Poetry: Literati Gatherings*

Paintings of literati gatherings are documentation of actual events. The practice of the meetings and of the pictorial recordings existed during the Goryeo dynasty, though no visual representations survive. In the Joseon dynasty, gatherings of scholar-officials (known as *gye*) became especially popular. These were essentially social occasions for men in government, whether those just starting out or those near or in retirement. The latter category was a particularly distinguished group, generally comprising men seventy years of age or older and of high government ranks. All these reunions were characterized by a carefree atmosphere, with abundant enjoyment of music, poetry, games, and wine.<sup>19</sup> Such *gye* gatherings continued into the early Joseon, with those taking place under government auspices acquiring a slightly more formal, organized character. Nonetheless,

the emphasis was on friendship and socializing, eating, drinking, and aesthetic enjoyment. Typically, these literati gatherings were accompanied by visual records of the events, usually in the form of painted hanging scrolls; a copy was usually made for each participant to take home as a keepsake.

The earliest extant paintings of this type date to 1487 and 1499;<sup>20</sup> most known early Joseon paintings of scholars' gatherings date to the sixteenth century. The standard compositional structure of *gye* paintings is a tripartite configuration, with the title written across the top, followed by the depiction of the event, followed by a list of the participants at the bottom of the scroll. A painting entitled *Gathering of Government Officials from the Office of*



Fig. 3. *Gathering of Government Officials from the Office of the Censor-General*, ca. 1540. Hanging scroll; ink on silk, 36% × 24 in. (93 × 61 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Treasure no. 868 (Sinsu 13556)

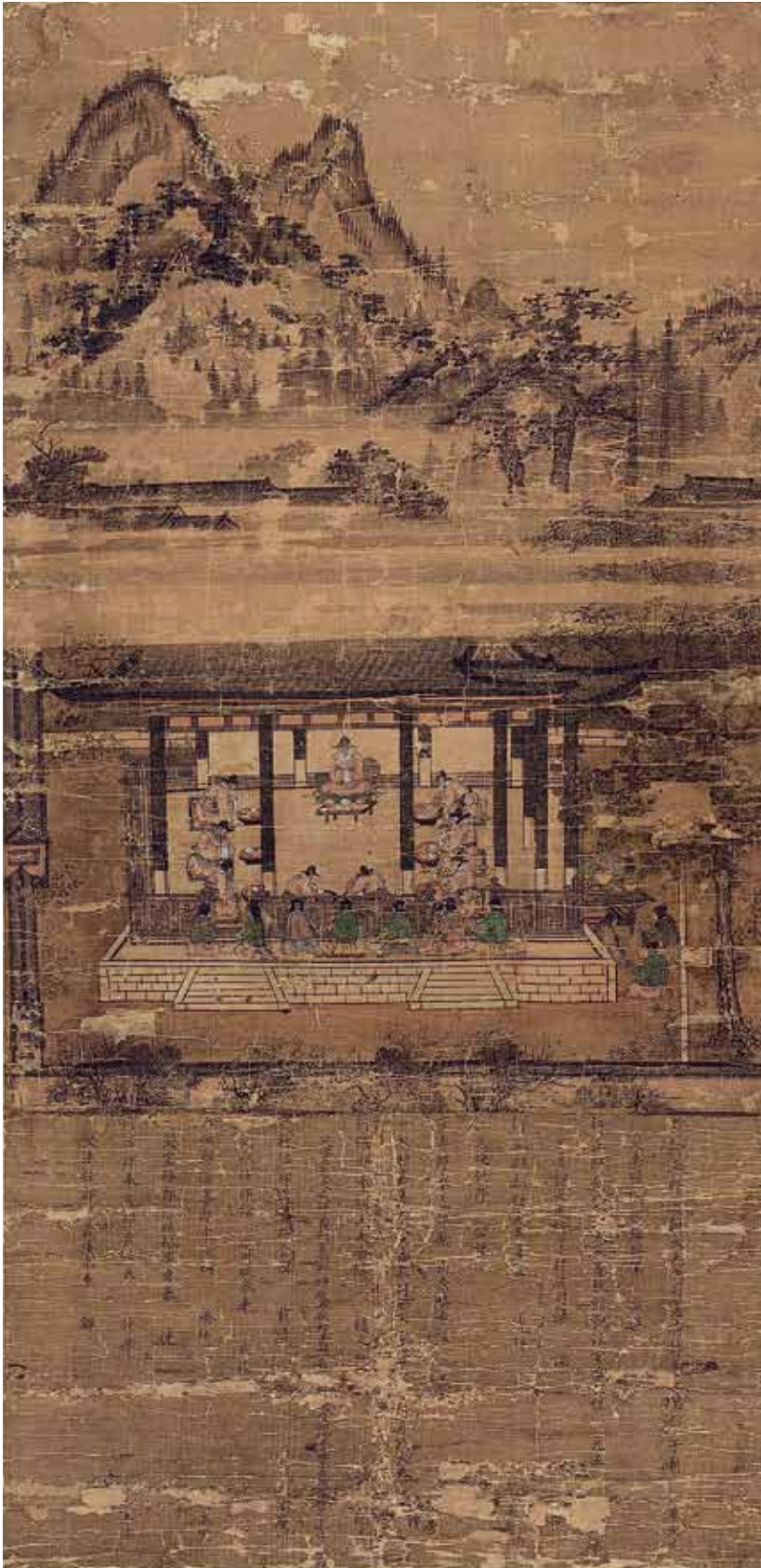
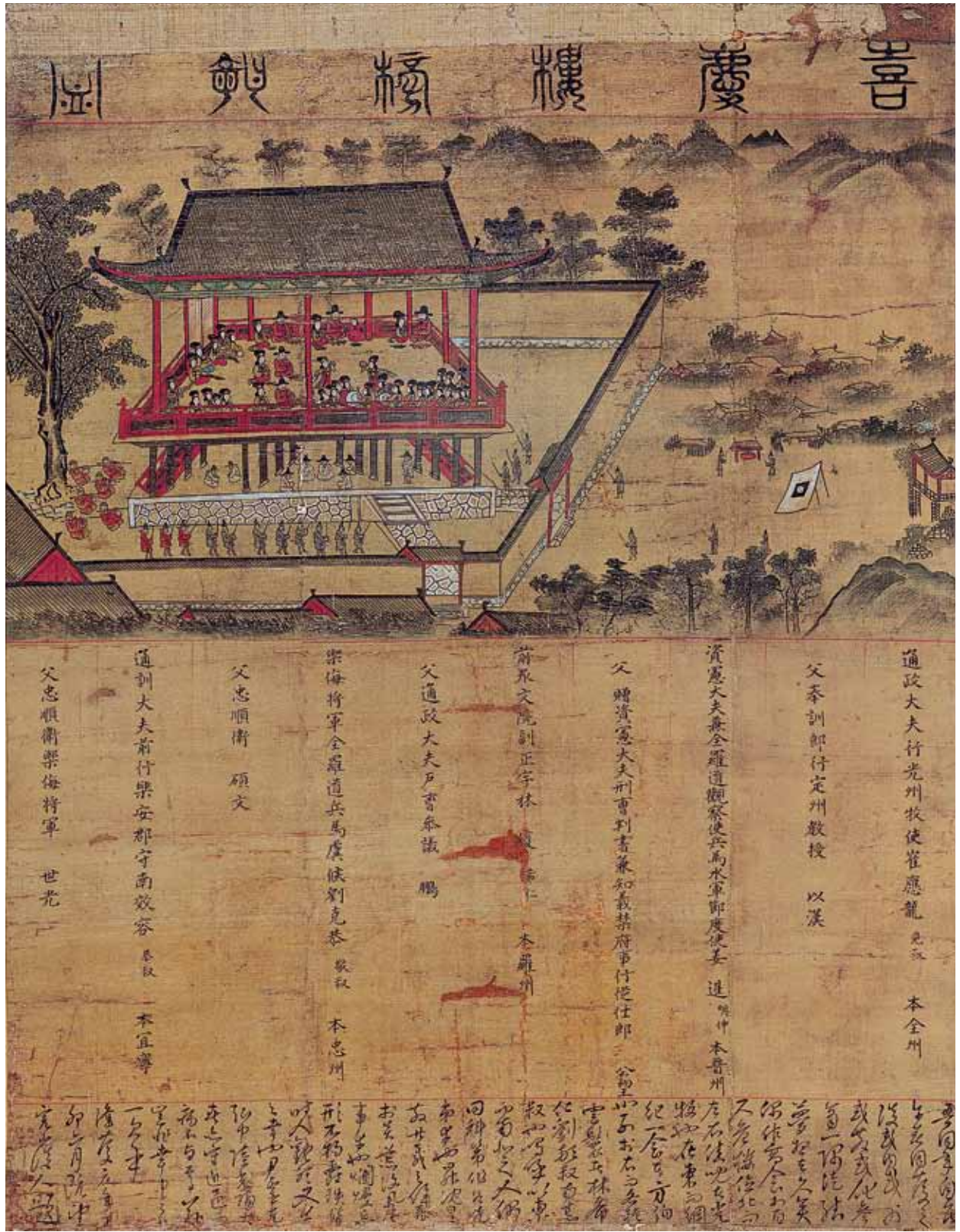


Fig. 4. *Gathering of Government Officials from the Ministry of Finance*, ca. 1550. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 47 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (121 × 59 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Treasure no. 870 (Sinsu 2234)





Cat. no. 8. Gathering of State-Examination Alumni at Huigyeong Pavilion, 1567. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 38¾ × 30¼ in. (98.5 × 76.8 cm). Dongguk University Museum, Seoul





Cat. no. 9. *Gathering of Government Officials*, ca. 1551. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk, 51 × 26¾ in. (129.5 × 67.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Acquisitions Fund, and The Vincent Astor Foundation and Hahn Kwang Ho Gifts, 2008 (2008.55)

*the Censor-General* (fig. 3; ca. 1540) illustrates the classically clear, three-part composition typical of the first half of the sixteenth century. The gathering is represented primarily through the evocative and lyrical landscape, especially the colossal mountains and vast expanse of water; the human presence, though visible, does not take center stage. From about the mid-sixteenth century on, however, *gye* paintings focus increasingly on the figures who have gathered to socialize and celebrate, often including an architectural setting, with nature receding into the background, sometimes only minimally illustrated. This shift is exemplified by two well-known works. One is *Gathering of Government Officials from the Ministry of Finance*, of about 1550 (fig. 4), in which the mountains and trees, though still prominent, nonetheless take on the role of backdrop, while the figures in a pavilion are rendered front and center. Similarly, in *Gathering of State-Examination Alumni at Huigyeong Pavilion* (cat. no. 8; 1567), in which government officials who had passed the state examination twenty-one years earlier, in 1546, have come together, the figures and their festivities are the main event.

Sometimes pictures of literati gatherings do not follow the standard format. In *Gathering of Government Officials*, in the Metropolitan's collection (cat. no. 9), the title and the list of participants, which would normally have framed the painting at top and bottom, have been disposed of altogether, replaced at the top by a verbal description of the event. Moreover, the landscape and figures are equally prominent, though the central placement of the rocky mountains and winding stream endows nature with the greater importance. At the same time, the scholars and their attendants, under tall pine trees in the bottom right corner, are rendered meticulously and clearly. Here we see an intriguing and Korean blend of the An Gyeon style (featuring a reinterpretation of Guo Xi) and the early Joseon interpretation of the Ming Zhe School style. This highly sophisticated court painter successfully reinvigorated the enduring pictorial paradigms of the past—distant and immediate, foreign and native—and integrated the present, in a distinctive and eloquent style. The inscription at the top of the scroll identifies the event as a commemorative reunion of sixty-year-old civil and military officials who entered the government about the same time. The poetic



Cat. no. 10. Yi Jeong (1541–1622). *Bamboo*, early 17th century. Hanging scroll; ink on silk, 45<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (115.7 cm × 53.2 cm). Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, New York (Ko 80)



inscription also offers a vivid description of the camaraderie of the friends and colleagues depicted in the painting, recounting how they gathered to “recite poetry over wine” during a break in their jobs, only to “hasten back to the offices to labor day and night.” It was written in 1551 by Jeong Sa-ryong (1491–1570), a government official and famous literatus, poet, and calligrapher, whose gathering with friends is captured delightfully in the painting.<sup>21</sup>

### *Royal Pedigrees: Artist and Subject*

The sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed the emergence of artists directly descended from the royal family—a phenomenon peculiar to the early Joseon period.<sup>22</sup> Among these artists were Yi Am and Yi Jeong, both great-great-grandsons of King Sejong; Yi Gyeongyun, a great-grandnephew of Yi Seong-gun, the ninth son of King Seongjong; and Yi Jing, a son of Yi Gyeongyun. These men did not form an organized group, nor did they share a particular genre or style of painting. Yi Gyeongyun and Yi Jing were primarily landscape painters, though the former also included figural paintings in his repertoire. Yi Jeong was well known as a premier artist of monochrome ink bamboo paintings (see cat. no. 10). Yi Am was renowned for his lyrical and poignant portrayals of animals, especially dogs and cats.<sup>23</sup>

The extant works by Yi Am (1507–1566) all possess a distinctive look, in large part because of the repeat appearances of a handful of striking subjects. Yi Am’s style is particularly evident in his paintings of puppies. In one of his most famous works, *Mother Dog and Puppies* (cat. no. 11), the large, reclining dog and her delightful suckling pups form the center of the painting. It is a work of uncomplicated beauty and immense emotional resonance. The short, awkward-looking tree sprouting above the animals has the effect of concentrating the viewer’s attention upon the canine family. It is setting as theatrical backdrop. With a deceptively simple and focused composition and visual description, the artist deftly rendered not only the endearing physical attributes of the mother dog and her brood but also the poetic quality of the familial bond. Three puppies are a frequent motif in Yi Am’s oeuvre. For further discussion of this work and Yi Am’s oeuvre, see Sunpyo Hong and Chin-Sung Chang’s essay, “Peace under Heaven:

Confucianism and Painting in Early Joseon Korea,” in this volume.

Yi Am’s animals were undoubtedly breeds of royal pedigree, reared within the palace precincts. Like the artist and his audience, the dog and puppies belonged to a rarified, privileged class and were thus more readily accessible to an insider like Yi Am. Within the broader East Asian traditions of animal and bird-and-flower painting, Yi’s dogs and puppies are unique, brimming with charm, and exceptionally engaging. They exhibit both realism and idealism.

### *Patron and Painter: A Symbiotic Relationship*

The early Joseon was a dynasty of strong kings, whose authority and influence often extended well beyond politics to the artistic and more generally to the cultural realms. King Sejong (r. 1418–50), arguably the most famous and revered monarch in Korean history, is credited with a wide range of cultural achievements, the most epochal of which is the invention of the Korean alphabet, *hangeul*. Sejong’s court—the king, his heirs, and his circle of scholar-advisers—was made up of exceptionally learned and refined men, cultivated intellectuals whose dedication to scholarship and the arts set the stage for a remarkable artistic efflorescence during the early Joseon period.<sup>24</sup> This was particularly true of the Hall of Worthies, an institution established under Sejong for intellectual, cultural, and scientific advancement.

Prince Yong, better known by his title of Anpyeong Daegun, was Sejong’s third son and an accomplished artist, a renaissance man much like his father. A document of the time describes Prince Anpyeong as follows: “[He] liked to study and was good in poetry and prose. His calligraphy was magnificent, the best in the world. He was also good at painting and music. His character was liberal and broad-minded. He loved antiquity and explored beautiful sights.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps even more important than his own artistic gifts is his role as a devoted and influential patron of the arts; most notably, Prince Anpyeong and his collection of paintings made possible the achievements of An Gyeon, discussed earlier. Though An Gyeon served under four monarchs, including Sejong, it was his relationship with Prince Anpyeong that truly defined his artistic identity and importance. The prince’s art trove boasted Tang- and Song-period



Cat. no. 11. Yi Am (1507–1566). *Mother Dog and Puppies*, first half of the 16th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper, 28¾ × 16⅝ in. (73 × 42.2 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Bon-gwan 255)



Fig. 5. An Gyeon (act. ca. 1440–70). *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land*, 1447. Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 15½ × 41⅞ in. (38.6 × 106.2 cm). Tenri University Library, Tenri

old-master paintings, including seventeen by the Northern Song giant Guo Xi. The prince's collection also numbered thirty paintings by An Gyeon.<sup>26</sup> An's access to this trove, especially the works of Guo Xi, would shape his artistic vision and style and, through An, those of succeeding generations of painters.

An Gyeon's handscroll *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* (fig. 5) embodies the ultimate convergence of patron's and artist's visions and exemplifies the successful symbiotic relationship between the two worlds. Having awoken from a strange dream, Prince Anpyeong recounted his nighttime vision to An Gyeon, his favorite and most distinguished court artist; Anpyeong also wrote the details of his dream journey to the mythical Peach Blossom Land in the colophon following the painting.<sup>27</sup> The prince then instructed his artist to produce a pictorial representation of his dream, a request An fulfilled in three days with this lyrical and imaginative work. *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* focuses entirely on the landscape—lush and enveloping in some areas, flat and easy to navigate in others, and precarious in still others—rather than on any figures traversing the terrain. Indeed, there are no visible travelers, and human presence is barely signaled by a half-hidden, anchored boat and two pavilions tucked among the peach trees. Utilizing the small format of the handscroll and unfolding from left to right, an unusual orientation for handscrolls in East Asia, *Dream Journey* presents an intimate portrait of a grand and panoramic landscape.

A work of substantial poetic and artistic merit, *Dream Journey* is also significant for the context of its making, especially what it reveals about the creative process of the artist, the dynamic relationship between the court painter and the princely patron, and the reception and endorsement of an important work of art by the intellectual elite of the time. Though it is a work created from the artist's inspired mind and made concrete by his exceptional technical skills, its *raison d'être*, its subject matter, and to an extent its content were determined by the wishes of the patron, Prince Anpyeong. As proof of its importance and resonance, the painting is followed by no fewer than twenty-one admiring colophons by twenty scholar-calligraphers and a monk, all contemporaries of the artist and his patron. This practice of adding commentaries to a painting has a long history in East Asia, particularly in China, and this work participates unequivocally in that well-established and revered tradition. The addition of these commentaries further elevated the significance of not only the painted image but the whole process of the creation of the scroll, from conception to execution.

#### *Iconic Imagery for Private Devotion and Public Statement*

One of the central tenets of the Joseon dynasty was the strict authority of Neo-Confucian ideology coupled with the aggressive rejection of Buddhism. Although the Neo-Confucian philosophy was already current during the Goryeo period and to some extent informed the



government structure, it coexisted with Buddhism, in a relatively harmonious state of balance. What was revolutionary about the new Joseon state was its intolerance for a public role for Buddhism. But, as noted in JaHyun Kim Haboush's essay, "Creating a Society of Civil Culture: The Early Joseon, 1392–1592," in this volume, this did not entail the eradication of Buddhist practices and expressions, but rather their retreat into the private realm. This was as true for the elites, in particular, the royal court, as for the general population. In private, many monarchs either followed Buddhist practices themselves or tolerated them among their family and court advisers. King Sejong, for example, like his older brother, Hyoryeong, sponsored Buddhist projects; Sejong underwrote the restoration of Heungcheon Temple and the printing of a number of significant Buddhist texts.<sup>28</sup> In his late years, he became a devout Buddhist, perhaps as a way to find peace amid his and his children's illnesses. A number of other prominent members of the royal family during the early Joseon, especially women, were active patrons of Buddhist art and other projects.

Although the royal court, along with the aristocracy, was an influential benefactor of Buddhist art during the Goryeo dynasty, there are few extant works with inscriptions confirming royal patronage. Of the 140 extant Goryeo Buddhist paintings, just 29 have inscriptions, some documenting royal or high-ranking patrons, others referring to unknown persons. In contrast, a number of Buddhist objects from the early Joseon dynasty, particularly from the sixteenth century, have direct connections with the royal family. Of the 90 surviving Buddhist paintings from the sixteenth century, 50 have inscriptions with dates, and 16 were produced under court patronage.

The dowager queen Munjeong (d. 1565) was perhaps the most influential supporter of Buddhism during the early Joseon period. Indeed, she lifted the official ban on Buddhist worship and instigated an impressive resurgence of Buddhist art production. The widow of King Jungjong (r. 1506–44) and mother of the reigning king Myeongjong (r. 1546–67), she was the de facto power behind the throne. A number of works survive that attest to her zealous devotion to the Buddhist faith. Among the best-known examples is the set of four hundred scrolls she commissioned in 1565 in honor of her



Cat. no. 12. *Shakyamuni Buddha Triad*, 1565. Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk, 23<sup>1</sup>/<sub>6</sub> × 12<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (60.5 × 32 cm). Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, New York (Ko 88)



Cat. no. 13. *Amitabha Triad*, 15th century. Gilt bronze, 16 × 6½ × 21½ in. (40.6 × 16.5 × 54.6 cm). Cleveland Museum of Art (1918.501)

son, King Myeongjong, and to commemorate the opening of Hoe-am Temple, a prominent Seon (Chinese: Chan; Japanese: Zen) Buddhist temple. This massive undertaking involved one hundred scrolls on each of four triads: those of the Historical Buddha (Sanskrit: Shakyamuni; Korean: Seokka), the Buddha of the Western Paradise (Amitabha; Amita), the Buddha of the Future (Maitreya; Mireuk), and the Medicine Buddha (Bhaishajyaguru; Yaksa). In each set of one hundred, fifty were executed in colors and gold, the other fifty in

gold only. To date, of the four hundred scrolls, six extant works have been identified, two of the Shakyamuni triad (see cat. no. 12) and four of the Bhaishajyaguru triad.<sup>29</sup> The composition of these paintings, and presumably of all four triads, is classically simple, focusing on three figures—the central, elevated Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas—with neither entourage nor background setting. This elegant, comparatively minimal composition continues the tradition of Goryeo Buddhist paintings, while the attenuated figures, ethereal and





Cat. no. 14. *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians*, second half of the 16th century. Hanging scroll; color and gold on silk, 48 $\frac{7}{16}$  × 50 $\frac{7}{16}$  in. (123 × 127.5 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (19.265)

slightly static, the small facial features, and the puckered lips reveal the direction of the early Joseon style, which adopted elements of Ming Chinese Buddhist works.

The triad is a key format for iconic Buddhist imagery, featured in both painted and sculptural formats (see cat. no. 13). In painting, the triad also appears in an expanded format, with an entourage of figures including guardians, a convention that appears in Goryeo works and continues in Joseon Buddhist paintings. A large and particularly stunning example of this expanded format

dating to the sixteenth century, the *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians* (cat. no. 14) was almost certainly commissioned by Queen Munjeong. Indeed, in its exquisite details, this painting is one of the most elegant works made under the patronage of the formidable queen. Four other devotional images were made at the same time; this group of five paintings was dedicated to “the long life of the King and peace for the dynasty and its people.”<sup>30</sup> It follows closely the composition of a fifteenth-century painting with the same iconography



Fig. 6. *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians*, 1477. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 33½ × 22 in. (85.7 × 55.9 cm). Private collection

(fig. 6; 1477), also a work commissioned by members of the royal family: in this case, Princess Myeongsuk and Prince Hongsang, a younger sister and a son-in-law, respectively, of King Seongjong (r. 1469–94).<sup>31</sup>

Two remarkable Buddhist paintings from the second half of the sixteenth century and either commissioned by or dedicated to members of the royal family evidence iconographic innovations based not on prototypes of the immediate past but on ancient traditions. One, dated to 1562 and commissioned by Yi Jong-rin (1536–1611), a grandson of King Jungjong (r. 1506–44), depicts the

Four Buddhas (fig. 7). Its innovative presentation of the Four Buddhas together—the same four represented in the four hundred scrolls commissioned by the queen dowager Munjeong in 1565—harks back to devotional images of the four directional Buddhas during the Silla (57 B.C.E.–668 C.E.) and Unified Silla (668–935) periods.<sup>32</sup> The other (cat. no. 15; 1576) includes inscriptions in *hangeul*, the Korean alphabet, a rarity among Buddhist or any paintings of the early Joseon. One of the cartouches relates that this work was made for King Seonjo (r. 1567–1608) and his queen but does not give





Fig. 7. *Four Buddhas*, 1562. Hanging scroll; color on silk, 35 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 29 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (90.5 × 74 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Sinsu 14193)





Cat. no. 15. *King Sala's Rebirth in Amitabha's Paradise*, 1576. Hanging scroll; color on silk, 41 $\frac{5}{8}$  × 22 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (105.7 × 56.8 cm). Seizan Bunko Collection, Sakawa





Fig. 8. Yi Sang-jwa (act. mid-15th–early 16th century). Buddhist sketch, early 16th century. Album leaf; ink on paper, 19<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (50.6 × 31 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 593

the name or title of the person who commissioned it. Based on a Buddhist tale, the painting illustrates a tragic yet ultimately auspicious journey taken by King Sala, his queen, and their young son; the narrative concludes with the family's rebirth in Amitabha's Western Paradise. The emphasis in this work is on storytelling—including plot, drama, characters, and movement in space and time—rather than conveying a static, iconic representation.<sup>33</sup>

Among the most unusual and dramatic of Buddhist works from the early Joseon period is a small album of

sketches (see fig. 8) by the court artist Yi Sang-jwa, whose exact dates are unknown. These sketches depict the arhats (Korean: nahan), disciples of the Buddha Shakyamuni, and though they are preparatory drawings, the swift and vigorous lines effectively capture the spirit of these individualistic characters. The accompanying colophon by the scholar-official Heo Mok (1595–1682) praises the artist's "godlike" talents in drawing.<sup>34</sup>

#### IN PURSUIT OF WHITE: JOSEON CERAMICS

Ceramics in the early Joseon were ubiquitous, whether as vessels for everyday life or for Confucian rites. A variety of ceramics were made during the early Joseon period, but the two main types were porcelain and buncheong ware.<sup>35</sup> Both were made and used not only for mundane purposes, as tableware or storage containers related to daily meals, but also for special ceremonial purposes, such as burial and ancestral rites. Buncheong ware, a distinctive kind of stoneware produced only in the first two hundred years of the Joseon dynasty, was initially used by royalty and the upper and middle classes, but quickly became the ceramics for the masses. Porcelain was initially a highly restricted luxury item; by the sixteenth century, however, the demand for and consumption of porcelain became widespread and contributed significantly to the decline and end of buncheong.

Porcelain was perhaps the most important new ceramic to emerge during this period. The majority of porcelain from the early Joseon period was plain white ware without painted or enameled designs. Porcelain with cobalt blue decoration, a much-desired extravagance, was produced in limited quantities. Soft-paste white porcelain had been made under the Goryeo dynasty, a time when celadon, the celebrated green-glazed ceramic (see fig. 9), dominated the Korean peninsula and was sought after throughout East Asia. The manufacture of hard-paste white porcelain—requiring superior-quality clay with low iron content and few impurities, usually combined with kaolin (also known as "china clay"); a clear glaze containing high levels of silica and low levels of iron oxide; and firing at a high temperature of between 1200°C and 1400°C<sup>36</sup>—was fully developed by the fifteenth century, the formative years of the Joseon dynasty. The shift in taste from



Fig. 9. Melon-shaped wine ewer with decoration of bamboo, Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), early 12th century. Stoneware with celadon glaze, 8½ in. (21.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mrs. Roger G. Gerry, 1996 (1996.471)



Fig. 10. Melon-shaped wine ewer with decoration of chrysanthemum and lotus, Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), first half of 13th century. Stoneware with inlaid design under celadon glaze, 9¼ × 9⅞ in. (23.5 × 25.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1913 (13.195.1a, b)

celadon to white porcelain had taken place in China as well, during the Yuan dynasty.<sup>37</sup> Alongside China and the Islamic world, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Korea was a participant in an international revolution in ceramics—that is, the production and consumption of porcelain, including the cobalt-painted blue-and-white ware—which would later spread to Japan and Europe.<sup>38</sup> Yet whereas porcelain from these other parts of the world was actively traded, Joseon porcelain was made essentially for the domestic market.

In contrast to porcelain, whose production was spurred by imported Chinese wares and know-how, buncheong ware developed locally. A high-fired, gray-bodied stoneware embellished with designs in white slip—a thin mixture of clay and water—under a green-tinted, translucent glaze, buncheong is distinguished by its earthy, bold, and sometimes startlingly modern appearance. Buncheong usually falls into seven categories of decorative modes, all using white slip: inlaid, stamped (often combined with inlay), incised or carved, *sgraffito*-decorated (in which the background, not the design, is

carved away), iron-painted, slip-brushed, and slip-dipped. Buncheong developed from the inlaid celadon of the late Goryeo (fig. 10), an heir transformed. The continuity in technique is especially apparent in buncheong vessels with inlaid decoration (fig. 11); the buncheong aesthetic is dramatically different, however, with the larger, more exuberant designs and nearly the entire surface of the vessel covered in white. In the case of stamp-decorated buncheong ware (see cat. no. 16), rather than being individually and carefully incised, the motifs were imprinted with stamps over a layer of white slip brushed on the surface of the vessel. Ceramics with stamped designs were essentially mass-produced, resulting in a rustic look that is markedly different from that of the refined inlaid Goryeo celadon. The clay and glaze used for buncheong were essentially the same as those employed in the manufacture of Goryeo celadon but far less refined, with less iron content in the glaze, which reduced the green “celadon” color. Though on the one hand buncheong was directly descended from Goryeo celadon, on the other hand it developed as a



Fig. 11. Vase with decoration of peony scrolls and lotus petals, 15th century. Buncheong ware with inlaid design, 15 in. (38 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 1422

counterpart to white porcelain; it served as a more economical alternative that imitated the white of porcelain but with a less polished, more organic appearance.

#### *Korean Transformation of Porcelain*

What is unusual about porcelain in the early Joseon, indeed throughout the five hundred years of the Joseon

dynasty, is the emphasis on undecorated white porcelain; the Joseon largely rejected the polychrome enameled decoration popular in much of the rest of the world. This development, unique to Korea, probably had much to do with Confucian aesthetics, specifically, the translation of Confucian ideals of purity and frugality into ceramic design. This is not to say that the Joseon





Cat. no. 16. Large dish with decoration of chrysanthemums and inscription (*naeseom*), 15th century. Buncheong ware with stamped design, h. 2¾ in. (7.1 cm), diam. 12¼ in. (31.1 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul



consumers, especially the royalty and the elite, were unaware of or indifferent to colorful porcelain. On the contrary, they desired and imported Chinese blue-and-white ware and, later, polychrome porcelain. Yet in their native production, the Koreans adhered strictly to gracefully austere tastes in porcelain.

Early Joseon white porcelain vessels exhibit clean lines and restrained forms and are captivating in their minimalist beauty. A large bowl with its lid (fig. 12), a superb example of early Joseon porcelain, exemplifies all of these qualities. The bowl possesses a fuller bottom and higher

foot than most porcelain bowls of this period and a silhouette that tapers in toward the top, rather than flaring outward. Also unlike most porcelain bowls, it has an accompanying lid, which is nearly hemispherical, with a pointed knob atop the center. The prototype for this form can be traced to metalwork, most likely silver, which was here translated seamlessly into a handsome ceramic vessel of distinction. During the last years of King Sejong's reign, near the mid-fifteenth century, metal vessels were replaced with identical or similar ceramics, including those used at the court for Confucian rites.<sup>39</sup> This bowl and lid may date



Fig. 12. Large bowl with lid, 15th century. Porcelain, h. 8 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22.7 cm), diam. of rim 6 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (15.5 cm). Horim Museum, Seoul, Treasure no. 806



Cat. no. 17. Cup with ear-handles, 15th century. Porcelain, h. 1 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (4.1 cm), diam. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (11.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1917 (17.175.1)

to that period and likely had a ceremonial use. In style and quality, this covered bowl is rare within the repertoire of early Joseon porcelain and perhaps of porcelain anywhere. It also embodies beautifully the Neo-Confucian ideals of simplicity, purity, and restrained elegance.

Also distinctively Korean are two other ceremonial vessel types, a small cup with ear handles (cat. no. 17)

and a flat-rimmed, shallow dish with a large foot (cat. no. 18). They may have formed a pair and served as a cup-and-saucer set for offering wine in ancestral rites. One example of the flat-rimmed dish (fig. 15) has a small circular groove in the center, as if to mark the placement for a small cup. Here, too, the unusual shapes of both vessels, with their sharply defined silhouettes,



Cat. no. 18. Dish, 15th century. Porcelain, diam. 8 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (21.4 cm) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Mary and James G. Wallach Foundation Gift and Seymour Fund, 2004 (2004.124)



Cat. no. 19. Bowl, 15th century. Inlaid porcelain, h. 3 in. (7.6 cm), diam. of rim 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (17.5 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Dongwon Collection, National Treasure no. 175 (Dongwon 887)

Cat. no. 20. Bottle, 15th century. Inlaid porcelain, h. 12 in. (30.6 cm), diam. of base approx. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ –3 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (7–8 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Dongwon Collection (Dongwon 550)

derive from metalwork, again, probably silver. Both types were made only in the early Joseon, and, as seen in the lidded bowl mentioned earlier, their gracefully understated appearance exemplifies the early Joseon aesthetic in white porcelain.

An unusual type of ceramic, inlaid porcelain was produced briefly, in limited quantity, primarily during the first half of the fifteenth century. Perhaps the most famous example is the pristine bowl with a refined decoration of lotus flowers (cat. no. 19). The fine lines of the lotus bloom and scrolling leaves were incised with a sharp tool and filled in with an iron-rich slip, which, when fired, turns black, creating a subtle yet striking design against the smooth white surface of the porcelain vessel. The technique of inlay, initially borrowed from other media, such as metalwork and lacquer, was applied to ceramics in the form of inlaid celadon during the Goryeo period. The application of inlay is much more relaxed in early Joseon buncheong ware but was transferred to porcelain, as demonstrated by this singular bowl. The inlaid design on this bowl emulates that on the late Yuan and early Ming blue-and-white porcelain and strives for a meticulous and flawless look.<sup>40</sup> A more experimental form of early Joseon inlaid porcelain is exemplified by a bottle with a tree design (cat. no. 20), whose decoration, while less sophisticated than that of the bowl, is exuberant. Similarly lively and bold inlaid decorations, indeed any method of design, are more

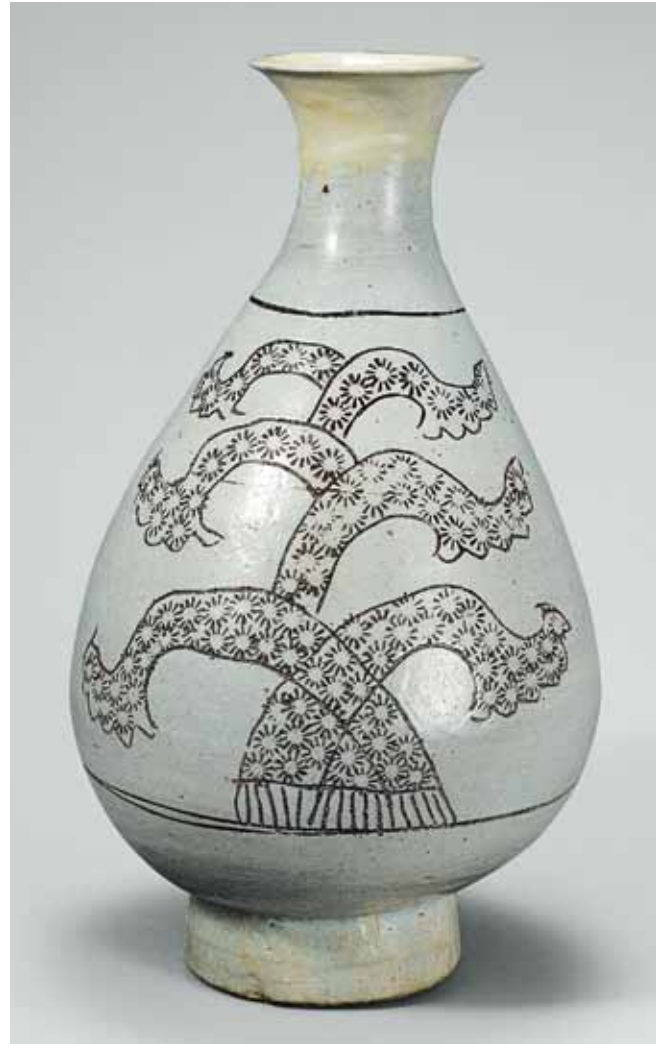






Fig. 13. Jar with decoration of bamboo and plum blossoms, 15th century. Porcelain with cobalt blue design, 16 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (41 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, National Treasure no. 219

characteristic of buncheong ware. The dual styles demonstrated by these two examples of inlaid porcelain—composed and polished on the one hand, and informal and expressive on the other—can also be found in early Joseon blue-and-white ware.

Early Joseon cobalt-painted porcelain exhibits both a fascination with Chinese fashions and a desire to explore the native styles, which depart considerably from the Ming prototypes. These two strands are readily apparent in two vessels similar in shape and in their painted design of bamboo and plum blossoms. A fifteenth-century jar

in the collection of the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (fig. 13) is a masterful and quite faithful rendition of a Chinese-style porcelain container, from its shape to its decoration, which is executed in precise brushwork and consists of a flawlessly arranged motif contained within a stylized decorative band at top and bottom. In contrast, a jar in the collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (cat. no. 21), which may date slightly later, to the early sixteenth century, exemplifies a move away from Chinese prototypes to a fully Korean expression. The jar's rolled-out lip is a new form that appears



Cat. no. 21. Jar with decoration of bamboo and plum blossoms, late 15th–early 16th century. Porcelain with cobalt blue design, 13½ in. (35 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of the Sumitomo Group (20325)



Fig. 14. Dish with floral decoration, 15th century. Porcelain with cobalt blue design, diam. 8 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22.7 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of the Sumitomo Group (20427)



Fig. 15. Dish with chrysanthemum and inscription, 15th century. Porcelain with cobalt blue design, diam. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (16 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 1057

in early Joseon porcelain jars, both decorated and undecorated, as well as in buncheong ware. The blue-painted design takes the entire surface of the vessel as a canvas, unconfined by stylized borders. The brushwork is looser, and both the individual plants and the overall composition are more organic. Korean artists transformed Chinese sources of inspiration, infusing them with native aesthetics. The decoration of both works was executed by skilled court painters, rather than by potters, but their different approaches are abundantly evident in the visual impact of the final products.

Another comparison further highlights the Korean divergence from Chinese models. The flat, circular dish with a notched band-rim and a large foot is, as mentioned earlier, a distinctive type specific to the early Joseon period. Two blue-and-white examples, one in the collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (fig. 14), the other in the collection of the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (fig. 15), evidence contrasting approaches in early Joseon porcelain. The design on the former, painted in a vibrant cobalt blue, comprises a swirling, leafy scroll anchored by six exuberant flowers. Rhythmic wave patterns adorn the rim. In style, iconography, and density of decoration, the design of this dish is based closely on Chinese blue-and-white ware of the late Yuan–early Ming period. The cobalt, too, was undoubtedly imported from China. Still, the softer, subtler execution of the design, combined with the unusual shape of the dish, not found in Chinese blue-and-white ware, distinguishes this piece as a product of fifteenth-century Korea.

The Korean character of the Leeum dish is unmistakable. The design, consisting of a few sprays of chrysanthemum and a lone, fluttering butterfly, is sparse and painterly. In the center, also in cobalt blue, is a three-character inscription in Chinese: *mangudae* refers to a place, but its exact meaning is unknown. The rim of the dish is decorated with unevenly rendered dots. The choice of decorative motifs, the free-style execution, the abundance of empty space, and the overall lyricism stamp this blue-and-white example with a distinctively Joseon flavor. Indeed, the poetic emphasis inherent in such spare compositions is a hallmark of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Korean blue-and-white porcelain that continues even into the cobalt-painted porcelain of the late Joseon period.





Cat. no. 22. Drum-shaped bottle, 15th century. Porcelain, w. 14 in. (35.5 cm), diam. 8 in. (20.2 cm). AMOREPACIFIC Museum of Art, Suwon



Cat. no. 23. Drum-shaped bottle with decoration of fish, bird, and lotus, late 15th–early 16th century. Buncheong ware with iron brown design, w. 9¼ in. (23.6 cm), diam. 5 in. (12.8 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of the Sumitomo Group (20773)



Cat. no. 24.  
Flask-shaped bottle,  
16th century. Porcelain,  
h. 10½ in. (26.7 cm),  
diam. 7⅞ in. (20 cm).  
Leeum, Samsung  
Museum of Art, Seoul

#### DISTINCTIVE DESIGNS IN BUNCHEONG CERAMICS

Unlike porcelain, both the undecorated white and the blue-painted types, buncheong ware has no foreign prototype that directly influenced its development. The emergence and evolution of buncheong ware were largely dictated by changes in patronage, manufacturing patterns, and aesthetic taste. In other words, buncheong evolved directly from fourteenth-century celadon, owing to the decline in elite patronage, the resulting dispersal of celadon potters, and the rapid shift in ceramic taste to white porcelain during the formative

years of the Joseon. If Goryeo celadon embodies classical restraint, buncheong represents an experimental spirit. At the same time, it offered a creative alternative to porcelain. This is particularly true of slip-brushed and slip-dipped vessels. Buncheong was most actively produced and used in the first half of the fifteenth century, prior to the establishment of Bunwon, discussed below, and the court-patronized manufacture of porcelain; by the mid-sixteenth century, porcelain, now produced in greater quantities, was replacing the popular stoneware.

Buncheong ware exhibits a remarkable diversity of shapes and decorative techniques, offering novel shapes



Cat. no. 25.  
Flask-shaped bottle  
with abstract  
decoration, early 16th  
century. Buncheong  
ware with brushed slip  
and incised design,  
h. 8 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (20.5 cm),  
diam. of body 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
(15 cm). Leeum,  
Samsung Museum  
wof Art, Seoul

not seen in Goryeo celadon; some buncheong had parallels in Joseon porcelain, but much did not. The drum-shaped bottle, for example, was an original and popular ceramic form in the early Joseon with virtually no precedent in celadon in the Goryeo period. This horizontal, oblong wine container was made as both white porcelain (the example shown in cat. no. 22 is an especially large and impressive one) and buncheong ware, but it is in the latter that the experimental potentials of its form are fully exploited. The painted designs on the drum-shaped buncheong vessels are particularly lively and sometimes whimsical, befitting and even enhancing the robust shape. A well-known late fifteenth- or early

sixteenth-century example (cat. no. 23), with an iron-painted decoration of a bird swooping down to catch a fish in a lotus pond, is a particularly splendid example of Gyeryong-san buncheong, so named because the production of iron-painted buncheong was concentrated at the kilns of Mount Gyeryong in Hakpong-ri, Gongju City.<sup>41</sup> Gyeryong-san buncheong is an especially beloved type because of the dramatic quality of its decoration, which may be representational or abstract. Whatever the specific designs, they are remarkable for the degree of liberated, dynamic, free-style drawing rarely found in contemporaneous paintings in any medium, whether Korean or more broadly East Asian, with similar themes.<sup>42</sup>





Above and pages 53–54: Cat. nos. 26a–f. Group of ceramic burial objects including an epitaph tablet dated 1448. Buncheong ware with stamped design. Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 1428

Above: Cat. no. 26a. Large basin. H. 4 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (10.5 cm), diam. of rim 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (28.8 cm)

The flask-shaped buncheong bottle (see cat. no. 25), another new ceramic form of the early Joseon, displays expressive differences from its porcelain counterpart: the porcelain version (see cat. no. 24) offers a clean, sharp silhouette that follows closely that of its leather prototype from nomadic cultures; the buncheong bottle has a fuller, heartier, and slightly misshapen form, with surface decoration that, whether representational or abstract (see cat. no. 25), enhances its organic appearance. The finely potted, beautifully crisp white porcelain bottle represents the quintessential ideal of purity and simplicity espoused by the Neo-Confucian literati elite. The buncheong bottle with its boldly abstract linear design has an earthier appearance, providing both a parallel and a foil to the aesthetic of its porcelain cousin.

#### *Entombed Vessels*

Certain ceramic vessels, both porcelain and buncheong, were destined to be used as burial ware. In some cases, a

number of ceramics of different shapes are entombed together, as in the case of the set that includes an epitaph tablet with an inscription and a date of 1448 (cat. nos. 26a–f). Besides the tablet, the set comprises a large basin with a wide rim, a spouted bowl, two small spherical jars with lids, and a pair of small dishes. Though varying in size and form, all the vessels in this group are clearly products of the same kiln and exhibit a uniform, cleanly executed design. Many buncheong ceramics employed as burial ware, especially for members of the elite, are of the stamp-decorated type and date to the first half of the fifteenth century, a period that saw the production of high-quality buncheong ware prior to the establishment of the court-patronized Bunwon porcelain kilns.

A special example of burial ceramics from the early Joseon is the so-called placenta jar. One famed buncheong example is the handsome inlaid and stamp-decorated jar with bulbous shoulders and rolled lip now in the collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka (cat. no. 27).



Cat no. 26b. Spouted bowl. H. 2  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (6 cm), diam. 8 in. (20.3 cm)



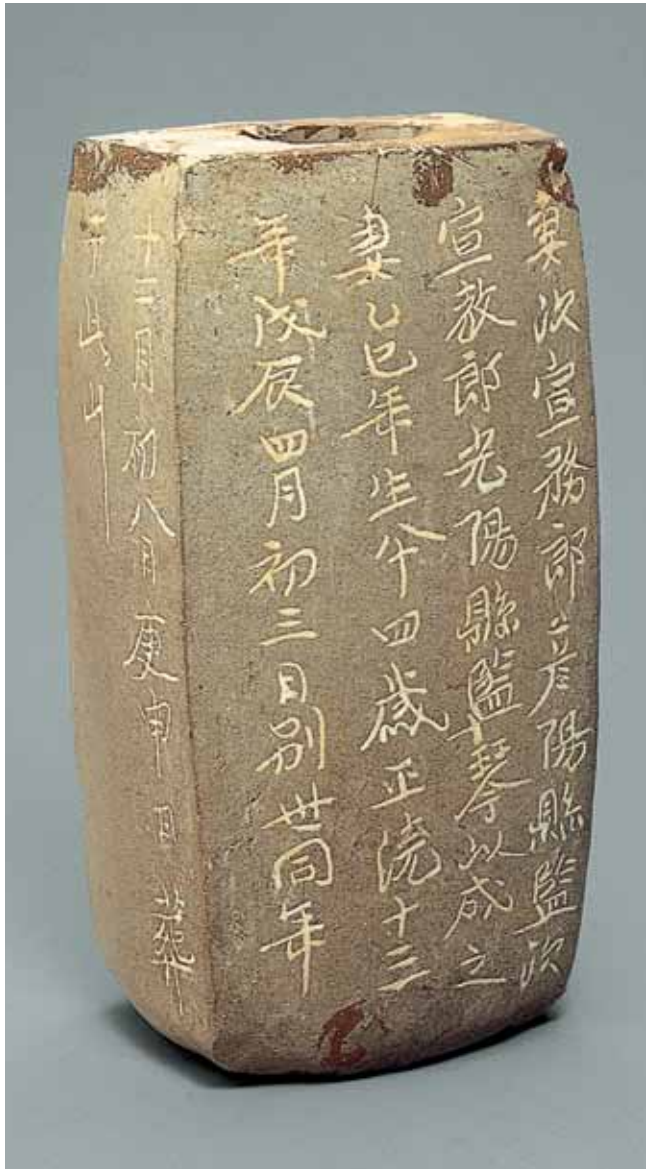
Cat. no. 26c. Jar with lid. H. 6  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (15.8 cm), diam. 8 in. (20.2 cm)





Cat. no. 26d. Pair of small dishes.

Each h. 1 in. (2.5 cm),  
diam. 5 in. (12.6 cm)



Cat. no. 26e.  
Epitaph tablet, 1448.  
H. 9 ¼ in. (23.5 cm)

Cat. no. 26f. Jar with lid.

H. 5 ¾ in. (13.5 cm),  
diam. 5 ¼ in. (13.2 cm)







Cat. no. 27. Jar with decoration of chrysanthemum, second half of the 15th century. Buncheong ware with inlaid and stamped design, 14¼ in. (36.3 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of Mr. Ataka Teruya (21494)



Fig. 16. Set of two placenta jars, 15th century. Porcelain, inner jar h. 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (27.6 cm), diam. of rim 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (10.6 cm), diam. of base 4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (11.7 cm); outer jar h. 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (42.5 cm), diam. of rim 9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (25 cm), diam. of base 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (25.8 cm). Horim Museum, Seoul, Treasure no. 1055

Jars of this shape were also made in porcelain, both undecorated white porcelain and cobalt-painted types (see cat. no. 21), though not all seem to have been used as placenta jars. The Osaka buncheong jar was reportedly found with a plaque identifying it as the placenta jar of Prince Wolsan (a grandson of King Seongjong), whose placenta was buried in 1462. It was likely produced at the Chunghyo-dong kilns in Gwangju City, Jeolla Province, one of the main buncheong kilns of the time and a supplier of buncheong ceramics to the court.

Well-known porcelain examples of placenta jars come in sets of two: an inner jar into which the placenta of a newborn prince or princess was placed, and an outer jar. The most exquisite pair (fig. 16), dating to the fifteenth century, has high, bulbous shoulders and a tapering silhouette, and is distinguished by four tiny loops on the shoulders and a lid with a large round knob in the center. Four tiny holes in the neck of the knob indicate that a string would have been threaded through these holes and the four loops on the shoulders, securing the lid to the

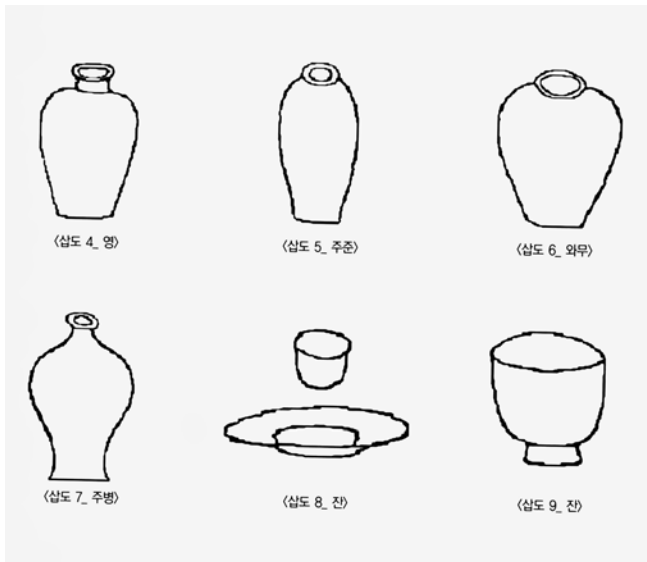


Fig. 17. Drawings of burial vessels from *Orye-ui* (Five Rites). 1451

body. The practice of burying the placenta and the production of placenta jars appear to have been unique to Korea. This vessel form is found also in Goryeo celadon, but, although they are sometimes assumed to be placenta jars, their exact function has not been determined.

Funerary or burial ceremonies formed an important part of the Confucian rites, especially on the state level. *Orye-ui* (Five Rites), an illustrated manual on Confucian rites performed by state officials and compiled during the reign of King Sejong, provides an insight into the significance of such rites to Joseon society.<sup>43</sup> The five rites were: *gilrye*, or sacrificial rites, including ancestral rites; *garye*, or rites marking auspicious ceremonies of the royal family, including weddings; *binrye*, or reception of foreign envoys; *gunrye*, or military rites; and *hyungrye*, or rites of state funerals. The publication of this manual is a concrete example of how the crown codified Neo-Confucian principles. *Orye-ui* provides drawings of specific ceramic vessels used for burial, such as tall jars, usually with bulbous shoulders and high necks (fig. 17). Most of the vessels recommended for use in the various rites were of bronze, in antique shapes from ancient China and long associated with rituals, yet extant ceramic versions of certain bronze vessels evidence the use of ceramics in place of ceremonial metal ware during the early Joseon period. One such buncheong ware



Fig. 18. Ritual vessel, 16th century. Buncheong ware with brushed slip and incised design, 7 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (18 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

example (fig. 18) imitates not only the shape but also the elaborate linear surface decoration of its bronze model. Whereas the latter had a classicizing and solemn appearance, the buncheong version displays a quirky, even—to twenty-first-century eyes—avant-garde flavor, with surface designs that are freer and even more abstract than in the bronze prototypes.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Artistic Production and Consumption: Ceramics as Case Study*

The project of the early Joseon was to create a highly centralized society—politically, socially, economically, and culturally. This centralized federal structure played out in the production of various arts, crafts, and other commodities, especially those relative to palace life and government administration. This was especially true of





*Left:* Cat. no. 28. Large bowl, 15th century. Porcelain, h. 4¼ in. (10.9 cm); diam. of rim 8½ in. (21 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

*Below:* Cat. no. 29. Large dish, 15th century. Porcelain, h. 1¾ in. (4.4 cm), diam. 8½ in. (21.6 cm) AMOREPACIFIC Museum of Art, Suwon



ceramics, as demonstrated by the institution of a court-sponsored and court-managed group of kilns. These official court kilns were founded in the late 1460s in Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province, not far from the new capital, Hanseong.<sup>45</sup> Known as Bunwon, this center of ceramic production was managed by and for the court, through an administrative bureau, known as Saongwon, which was

responsible for overseeing all aspects related to the meals for the court, including supplying tableware ceramics (see cat. nos. 28, 29). This enterprise represented an innovation in Korea, a shift from ceramic manufacture in the Goryeo dynasty. Under the earlier rulers, certain kilns specializing in choice celadon for the royal family and the aristocracy had been inspected periodically by



Fig. 19. Dish with decoration of chrysanthemums and inscription (*Gyeongju jangheunggo*), 15th century. Buncheong ware, diam. 7½ in. (18.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Colman, 1893 (93.1.216)

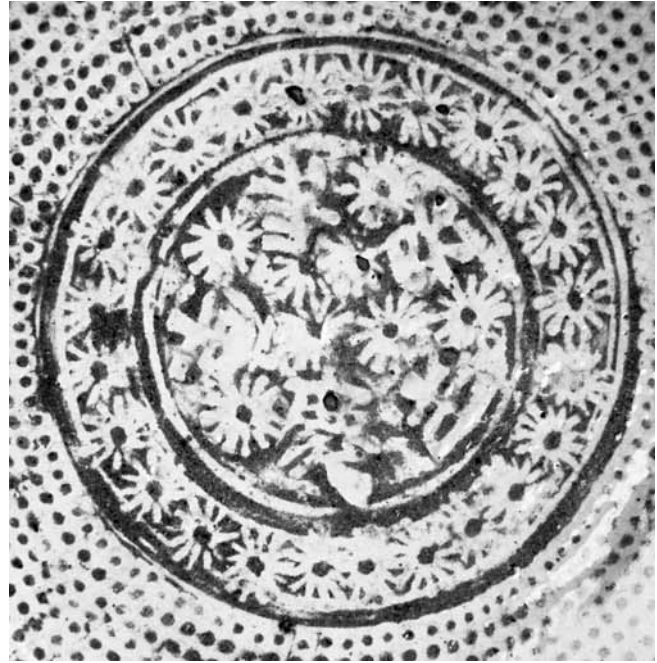


Fig. 20. Dish with decoration of chrysanthemums and inscription. Detail

supervisors sent by the court, but there was no systematic management like that established for the Joseon Bunwon.<sup>46</sup> Under the Joseon, a supervisor from the Bureau of Saongwon took residence at the Bunwon kilns, overseeing both the overall management of the kilns and their day-to-day operations.

Prior to the establishment of the official court kilns, the ceramic vessels needed by the numerous departments of the palace and government—for daily meals, special banquets, ceremonies, storage of foods, and other purposes—were made at various regional kilns throughout the country and collected as taxes.<sup>47</sup> For the most part, these earlier ceramics were buncheong ware, rather than porcelain. The vessels intended for the court were inscribed with the names of the designated government bureaus, to distinguish them from the rest, made for local consumption, and also to endorse their quality. Indeed, a significant number of stamp-decorated buncheong pieces from the first half of the fifteenth century were made expressly for the central government. Two of the most frequently found names are *jangheung-go* (the bureau that supplied mats, paper, and various other goods to

government offices) (fig. 19) and *naeseom-si* (the bureau that processed tribute arriving from the provinces to the royal palace and provided liquor to officials of the second rank or higher and food and textiles for Japanese and Manchurian visitors) (see cat. no. 16). Most of the stamped buncheong inscribed with the names of government bureaus comes from Gyeongsang Province, and many pieces also bear the names of the manufacturing locale (for example, Gyeongju) (see fig. 20).

The Bunwon system reconfigured significantly the landscape of ceramic production in Joseon Korea, with the manufacture of porcelain for the royal court and the central government concentrated exclusively in the newly established kilns. Bunwon's location was ideal (see map, p. xi). Besides Bunwon's proximity to the capital and the royal court, the rich natural resources of the area made Gwangju a natural candidate. In addition, the best-quality clay from various regions around the country was transported to Bunwon. The kilns there operated for approximately ten-year periods, relocating to new sites within Gwangju as the forests providing firewood became depleted. With the best natural resources and



Fig. 21. Jar with lid, early 15th century. Porcelain with celadon glaze, h. 9¼ in. (23.4 cm), diam. of rim 8¼ in. (20.8 cm). Horim Museum, Seoul, Treasure no. 1071

highly trained potters fully at their disposal,<sup>48</sup> the Bunwon kilns concentrated on manufacturing porcelain, mostly undecorated white porcelain, alongside a small output of the cobalt-painted type. Inlaid porcelain, produced in one or two kilns in the Gwangju area before the establishment of Bunwon, was now made at the royal kilns in limited quantities, as was celadon-glazed porcelain (fig. 21). In large part because of the cost and difficulty involved in importing cobalt from China,<sup>49</sup> the manufacture of porcelain with cobalt blue decoration during the early Joseon period was quite limited. The

demand for and the resulting native production of blue-and-white ware followed upon the introduction of Chinese cobalt-painted porcelain of the Ming period. These fashionable luxury items entered the Joseon court as gifts brought by envoys from the Ming emperor, especially during King Sejong's reign, as well as via private trade.<sup>50</sup> These prized ceramics were also brought by Japanese and Ryukyuan visitors to the Joseon court.<sup>51</sup> Such imports continued, despite sumptuary laws intended to curtail extravagant spending and to promote proper Confucian mores and tastes. The Joseon court records



Cat. no. 30. Jar with lid,  
15th century. Porcelain,  
h. 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (27.7 cm),  
diam. of base 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.  
(12.2 cm). Horim  
Museum, Seoul



also indicate a decline in the importation of Ming blue-and-white ware—presumably owing to production problems at the Chinese imperial kilns at Jingdezhen—in 1436–65, following the reign of Xuande and before that of Chenghua.<sup>52</sup> The difficulty in obtaining Chinese porcelains seems to have spurred the production of native blue-and-white ware.

It was unembellished white porcelain (cat. no. 30), more than any other types of ceramic, that consumed the efforts of the official court kilns of Bunwon. About the time of the manufactory's founding, the Crown had

attempted to restrict the use of white porcelain through official decrees prohibiting its use beyond the royal family.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, even within the palace, convention mandated distinctions between vessels made for the monarch, the crown prince, and other members of the court.<sup>54</sup> These edicts were responding to the popularity of porcelain with elites and commoners alike outside the palace. Indeed, though in theory the Bunwon kilns were meant to supply top-grade porcelain exclusively for use by the court, in actuality they seem to have made porcelain of varying quality, with the less-than-royal grade

vessels supplied to those beyond the court. The royal proclamations attempted to associate white porcelain with the ruler's authority and to stamp it with a degree of exclusivity, but despite such restrictions porcelain consumption (and production) quickly spread throughout Korea and to virtually all social classes.

With the emergence of Bunwon porcelain in the second half of the fifteenth century, a clear distinction emerged between porcelain and buncheong, the two main ceramic wares of the early Joseon, in terms of their consumer or patronage base. No longer a regional product required to be presented as tribute to the palace and central government, buncheong ware now catered far more to local and regional consumers, including the middle to lower classes. The design of buncheong followed two sometimes distinct, sometimes overlapping currents: on the one hand imitations or emulations of white porcelain, and on the other, imaginative and bold expressions unique to the type. Iron-painted buncheong, for example, possesses a dynamic energy and whimsical inventiveness in marked contrast with the refinement and elegant creativity evidenced by cobalt-painted porcelain. The popularity of porcelain would directly contribute to the extinction of buncheong ware, which ceased to be produced within the Korean peninsula by the end of the sixteenth century. A significant number of pieces of buncheong ware migrated to Japan; in a surprising twist of history, the exported buncheong—whether original early Joseon bowls acquired by wealthy Japanese merchants or later Japanese ceramics adapting the buncheong repertoire—enjoyed a long life span outside Korea. Porcelain continued to be produced and admired to the end of the Joseon dynasty. Though the specific shapes and designs changed through the decades and centuries of the dynasty, porcelain in its unpainted and painted forms would retain the essential aesthetics established in the early Joseon: minimalism and effortless elegance.

## EPILOGUE

During the early Joseon, the court and the elites engaged actively in diplomatic, economic, intellectual, and cultural exchanges with Korea's Asian neighbors, most notably in the form of official missions to and from Ming China. Interactions between the Joseon and the wealthy social and political classes in Japan, particularly in Kyushu and western Honshu, regions geographically closest to the Korean peninsula, resulted in the export to that country of many desirable art objects, which fortunately—as it turns out—were copied, transformed, and preserved over generations even into the modern period.

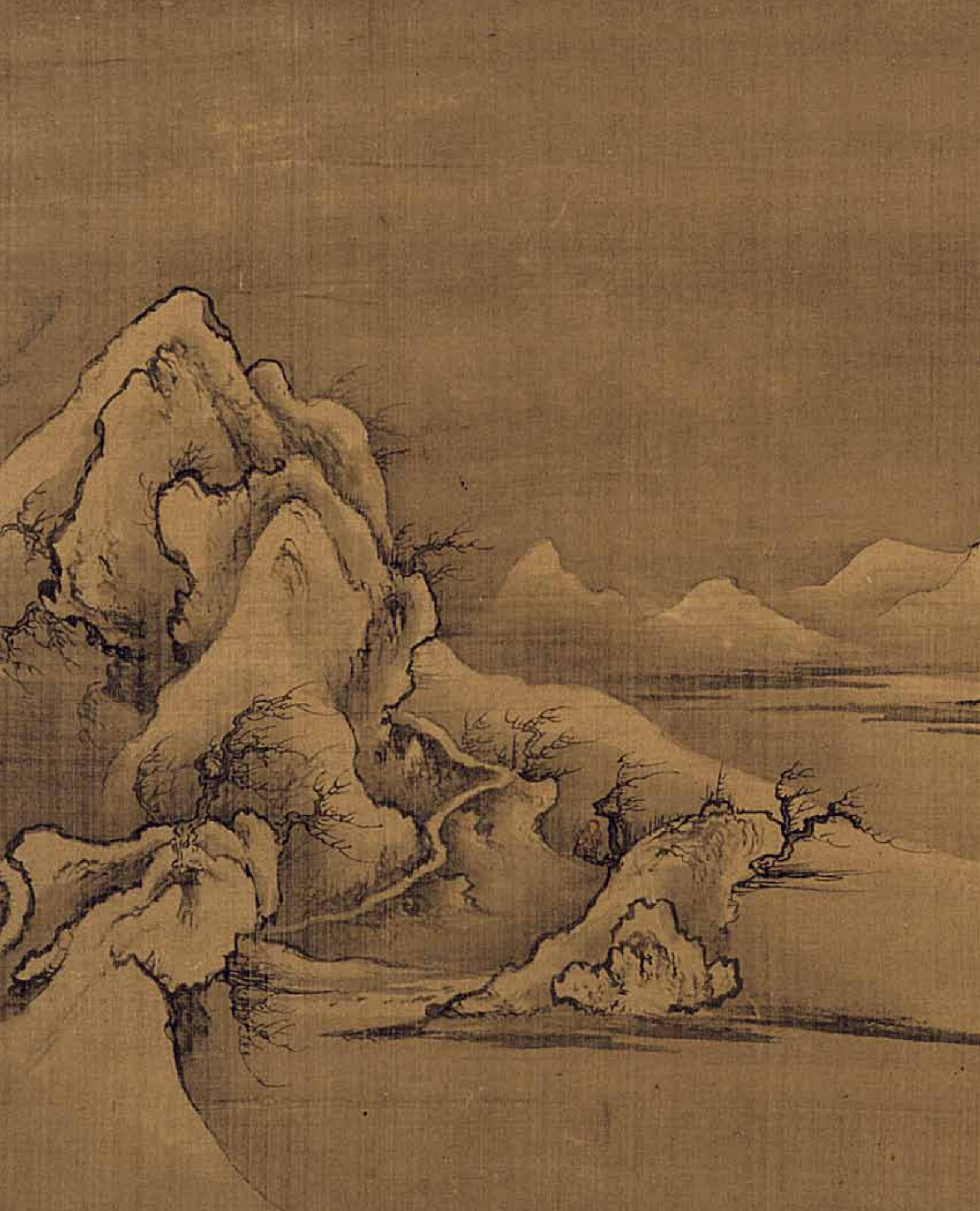
In 1592, the Japanese warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi's army invaded Korea in two sets of military campaigns, with the ultimate goal of the conquest of Ming China. The Imjin War ended abruptly with Hideyoshi's unexpected death in 1598. The Japanese invasions, followed by those of the Manchus in 1636–37 not only devastated the Korean people and land but also substantially depleted the nation's trove of artworks.

Whether through diplomatic exchanges, commercial exportation, piracy, or the violence of war, a significant portion of the artistic production of the early Joseon was destroyed or resides outside the Korean peninsula. Part of the challenge of constructing the history of the art of this period lies precisely in the relative paucity of extant materials and their geographic dispersal. The substantial progress in historiography achieved in the last half century owes much to the shared passion of both amateur and professional scholars and collectors and their desire to bring to light works from this period. The early Joseon was a period of singular peace and stability, of extraordinary cultural renaissance, and unique accomplishments, a period that combined in novel ways a reevaluation of past traditions with bold, even unprecedented innovation.

1. For an overview of the highlights of arts of the Goryeo period, see San Francisco 2003–4; Seoul 1995.
2. For a brief overview of landscape painting prior to the Joseon, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1998–99, pp. 295–310.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 302–10. Hong Sunpyo 1999, pp. 126–59.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–205.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 216–20.

6. See Ahn Hwi-joon 1988, pp. 162–249; and the essay by Hong Sunpyo and Chang Chin-Sung, "Peace under Heaven: Confucianism and Painting in Early Joseon Korea," in this volume.
7. Ahn Hwi-joon 2000a, p. 392.
8. Ahn Hwi-joon 1988, p. 170.
9. Seoul 1996–97, pl. 17, p. 297.

10. For a discussion of the influence of sixteenth-century Joseon landscapes, including paintings of the Eight Views such as the Daigan-ji screen, on the works of eighteenth-century Japanese Nanga (literati) painters, see Jungmann 1995.
11. Nara 1996, p. 82.
12. Gungnip Jinju Bangmulgwan 2001, pp. 204–5. They were probably originally mounted as an eight-panel screen.
13. Ahn Hwi-joon and Yi Byeong-han 1987.
14. Seoul 1996–97, pl. 10.
15. Tanyū's attribution is recorded on the wood box for the scrolls. Nara 1996, p. 82.
16. Ahn Hwi-joon 1988, pp. 168–70.
17. For a brief discussion of the different types of real-site paintings, see Hong Sunpyo 1999, pp. 218–20. For a study of paintings of the Diamond Mountains, see Bak Eunsun 1997. For an overview of late Joseon True View landscape painting, see Yi Sōng-mi 1998–99.
18. Ahn Hwi-joon 1988, pp. 224–47.
19. Ahn Hwi-joon 1995, pp. 87–90.
20. Lee Won-bok 2007.
21. The text of the poetic inscription can be found in the collections of Chung's writing. I am grateful to Dr. Yun Chin-young for sharing his research into Jeong Sa-ryong.
22. I am grateful to Professor Chin-Sung Chang of Seoul National University for suggesting that the category of painters of royal descent be included in the exhibition.
23. For a recent article on Yi Am's and other Joseon paintings of animals, see Chung Sehyang 2006.
24. Hejtmanek 1992.
25. As recorded in *Yongja chonghwa*; see Ahn Hwi-joon 1980a, p. 61.
26. As recorded by Sin Sukju's *Hwagi* (Record of Paintings), Prince Anpyeong's collection, formed in 1435–45, included 220 hanging scrolls. Presumably some of the 17 works by Guo Xi purported to be in the collection were misattributed to him, given the limited number of paintings securely assigned to the artist today. See Ahn Hwi-joon 2000b, p. 123.
27. Prince Anpyeong's dream is closely related to a famous tale by the ancient Chinese scholar Tao Yuanming (365–427). For an English translation of Anpyeong's dream (as written in his colophon) and a comparative discussion of the two accounts, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1980a, pp. 64–66.
28. Mun Myeong-dae 1986, pp. 52–53.
29. Kim Jung-hee 2001, pp. 5–39; and New York 1991.
30. Gungnip Munhwajae Yeonguso 2004, pp. 80–81, 263.
31. This painting was also part of a larger set. Seoul 2006, p. 9.
32. Seoul 2000.
33. Seoul 1996–97, pp. 333–34; see also Kim Chang-il 2003.
34. Seoul 1996–97, pp. 334–35.
35. This is a shortened version of *bunjang hoecheong sagi*, which translates as “gray-green stoneware ceramics covered in white powder.” The term was coined by Go Yuseop, the first Korean art historian of the twentieth century.
36. For a general overview of the technical and compositional structure of ceramic clays and glazes, see Rhodes 1957.
37. For a concise survey of the history of Chinese porcelains see Vainker 2005.
38. Porcelain production in Japan was introduced about 1600 by Korean and Chinese immigrant potters who settled in Arita, Kyushu. Traditionally the first porcelain kilns have been attributed to Yi Sam-pyeong, one of the many Korean artisans and laborers transplanted to northern Kyushu, following Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea (1592–98).
39. An entry dated to 1447 in *Sejong sillok* (The Annals of Sejong) indicates that vessels for use at the royal ancestral altars should be ceramic, rather than the previously standard metal, vessels. See Bang Byeongseon 2005, p. 64. See also Kim Young-won and Kang Daegyū 2004, p. 218.
40. Kim Young-won and Kang Daegyū 2004, p. 229.
41. The most recent and most comprehensive account of the Gyeryong-san kilns can be found in Gungnip Jungang Bangmulgwan 2007.
42. For example, the bird-and-flower paintings attributed to Yi Yeong-yun adhere more closely to principles of realism, coming, as they do, out of a long East Asian tradition of court-style paintings on this subject that can be traced back to paintings by the Song-dynasty Chinese emperor Huizong.
43. The compilation of this important book was carried out during King Sejong's reign, but it was not published (as part of The Annals of Sejong) until 1453, the second year of King Danjong's reign. See Bang Byeongseon 2005, pp. 66–78, for an overview of ceramics mentioned in Five Rites.
44. For discussions of buncheong ware based on metal prototypes used in the rites of *gilrye*, see Jeong Sora 1999.
45. Scholars have proposed various dates for the establishment of Bunwon, but all fall between 1455 and 1480. Kim Young-won narrows the date down to 1467, pointing to documentary evidence of the shift in terminology from *saong-bang* to *saong-won* and of the official appointment of *rokkwan* that year. Kim Young-won 1995, pp. 53–54. Bang Byeongseon, however, points out that this record alone does not definitively settle the question of when exactly the Bunwon kilns were established. Bang Byeongseon 2005, p. 103.
46. The two main centers of celadon production were Gangjin, in South Jeolla Province, and Buan, in North Jeolla Province, both renowned for very high-quality celadon, especially inlaid pieces. The Gangjin kilns in particular seem to have been a steady supplier of celadon to the royal court.
47. For the most part, this was buncheong ware, which was made throughout the country. For further discussion of buncheong ware inscribed with the names of government bureaus, see Gang Gyeong-suk 2000.
48. *Gyeongguk daejeon* (The Great Code of Governance) lists 380 potters at the Bunwon kilns. They worked from spring through fall exclusively at the kilns, unlike regional potters, who were farmers and only worked seasonally at the kilns.
49. Cobalt was imported from China, though it originally came from Persia. Although there were attempts to produce local cobalt, its quality appears to have been unsatisfactory. Bang Byeongseon 2005, p. 100.
50. The Annals of Sejong, Bang Byeongseon 2005, pp. 38–41, 50–53.
51. The Annals of Sejong, Bang Byeongseon 2005, pp. 56–57.
52. Bang Byeongseon 2005, p. 66.
53. An entry in The Annals of Sejong records episodes of potters from the Bunwon kilns sneaking outside of Gyeonggi Province to make porcelain for commoner consumers. Bang Byeongseon 2005, pp. 100–101.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 96–97.





# Peace under Heaven: Confucianism and Painting in Early Joseon Korea

SUNPYO HONG AND CHIN-SUNG CHANG

## THE NEW DYNASTY

The founder of the Joseon dynasty, Yi Seonggye (King Taejo, 1335–1408; r. 1392–98), rose to prominence from an obscure military family and in 1388 achieved a coup that played a decisive role in the fall of the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392). After the coup, Yi was successful in attracting reform-minded Neo-Confucian literati who aspired to organize a new government and establish a new code of regulations for the state. In 1392, Yi proclaimed a new dynasty. He named his dynasty Joseon, or “Fresh Dawn,” and moved the capital to Hanseong, present-day Seoul.<sup>1</sup> Yi and the Neo-Confucian scholar-officials justified the dynastic change in the name of the Mencian concept of the Heavenly Mandate. The Neo-Confucians formed a dominant group in the bureaucracy and began to reorganize the entire structure of government and society in the hope of realizing their Confucian ideals.<sup>2</sup>

The new dynasty’s ambition to bring peace and order to a nation is most eloquently expressed in the monumental literary work *Songs of Flying Dragons* (1445–47), a cycle of 125 cantos comprising 248 poems praising the martial vigor and kingly virtues of Yi Seonggye as a Confucian sage-ruler. The aspirations and ideals of the founders of the Joseon are clearly revealed in the *Songs*, which are, in effect, a manifesto of the Confucian policies of the new state.<sup>3</sup> Canto 83 was composed to celebrate Yi’s revolution against the corrupt last Goryeo king as a response to Heaven’s Mandate. Responding to the will of Heaven, Yi, as a paragon of the Confucian statesman, ascended the throne and reasserted order and harmony:

*He knew the crown was a precious jewel;  
Heaven wished to tell him its plan  
Hence the gold tower soared  
In the middle of the sea.*

*He was to map the norms with a ruler;  
So wishing to charge him with a good government,  
Heaven sent down  
A gold ruler.<sup>4</sup>*

The Confucian scholar and high official Jeong Dojeon (1337/42–1398), a political ally and later “meritorious subject” of Yi Seonggye’s, wrote two poems, “Sindoga” (*Songs of the New Capital*; 1394), and “Sindo palgyeongsi” (*Eight Scenes of the New Capital*; 1398), praising the beauty of Hanseong, whose royal palaces, government office buildings, main thoroughfares, residential quarters, and commercial districts were constructed in accord with a carefully laid out city plan. The poet lauds in the most heroic of voices the splendors of the new dynasty and the magnificence of the founder’s statesmanship. In these poems, Yi Seonggye’s political visions of *taepyeong* (grand peace and prosperity) are echoed by the architectural grandeur of new palaces, the economic prosperity of thriving streets, and the dazzling beauty of the city with its numerous mountains and streams, all serving to present the auspicious image of good government.<sup>5</sup>

King Sejong (r. 1418–50), a grandson of Yi Seonggye’s, became the most distinguished Confucian ruler of the early Joseon period, reforming various social and economic institutions and establishing the Hall of Worthies, where outstanding scholars were appointed to assist him in improving the systems of taxation, medicine, and punishment.<sup>6</sup> Sejong and the scholars of the Hall of Worthies carried out a series of measures designed to establish the foundation of the state; these included compiling and publishing a variety of scholarly works and promoting the advancement of science and technology. Their most distinguished achievement was the creation of *hangeul*, an indigenous phonetic alphabet for the people,



Cat. no. 5. “Seokjin cuts his finger,” Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds (*Samgang haengsildo*), ca. 1567–1608. Printed book; ink on paper, each page 14 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (37.7 × 21.6 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul

promulgated in 1446.<sup>7</sup> *Songs of Flying Dragons*, the most ambitious work written in *hangeul*, was intended to legitimize the rule of the Yi royal house as being in accord with the Mandate of Heaven. Sejong’s Confucian rulership is clearly demonstrated in the publication of *Samgang haengsildo* (Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds; cat. no. 5), a compendium of the instructive accounts of 330 Korean and Chinese paragons of loyalty, filial piety, and moral rectitude, all exemplifying the three Confucian bonds: between parents and children, lords and vassals, and husbands and wives.<sup>8</sup> The didactic stories and pictures in publications such as the Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds were compiled for the education of ordinary people in the virtues of Confucian ethics.<sup>9</sup> The instructive illustrated anecdotes exemplify Sejong’s efforts to encourage morality among commoners and children. No Confucian virtue is more emphasized in this book than filial piety, because of its underlying theme of moral obligation and obedience to authority.

The royal court was the major center of artistic patronage in the early Joseon period, setting the agendas of production and style through direct commissions and political programs. The court-sponsored painting projects were inseparable from the establishment of the Confucian state. Many court paintings served Confucian ideological purposes by illustrating and propagating the values and interests of the king and the dominant ruling group. The Bureau of Painting (*Dohwaseo*)—consisting of twenty painters ranked the lower sixth in the Joseon court bureaucracy and fifteen painting students—was established sometime between 1463 and 1469 for the recruitment of talented painters and would play a leading role in painting throughout the Joseon period. Regardless of whether they were amateurs or professionals, or held other official positions, candidates had to pass examinations in four subjects—ink paintings of bamboo, landscapes, figure and animal paintings, and flower and plant paintings—in order to gain admission to the Bureau.<sup>10</sup>

Under the court's supervision, artists of the Bureau of Painting executed numerous works on didactic subjects, touching upon the loyalty of meritorious officials, the historical lessons provided by wise and wicked rulers of the past, the significance of agriculture and sericulture for the governing of the state, and the symbolic meaning of *Odes of the State of Bin* from the Book of Odes, written to instruct the ruler in diligence and good government.<sup>11</sup> Such paintings were intended to convey the political authority and dignity of Joseon rulers and the loyalty of their subjects.

Along with depictions of royals, one of the most important tasks of the court painters was the creation of portraits of meritorious officials (*gongsin*). Subjects who performed distinguished services for the state were exemplars representing the Confucian virtue of loyalty. Throughout the Joseon period, a large number of portraits of meritorious officials were created to mark such occasions as the foundation of the dynasty, the suppression of revolts, and the repulse of foreign invasions.<sup>12</sup> The most important of these occasions was the enthronement of a new ruler after the removal of a tyrannical king from the throne; there are only two instances of this throughout the dynasty's history: the enthronement of Jungjong (r. 1506–44) and of Injo (r. 1623–49) following the banishment of Yeonsangun (r. 1494–1506) and of Gwanghaegun (r. 1608–23), respectively. Following these events, large numbers of meritorious subjects were granted royal favor and enormous privileges.

Although numerous portraits of meritorious subjects were produced during the early Joseon period, only a few, unfortunately, have survived. Two such survivors are the portraits of Sin Sukju (1417–1475) and Jang Malson (1431–1486) (figs. 22, 23). The primary function of portraits of meritorious subjects was to celebrate their contributions to the state and to emphasize the Confucian value of loyalty to the king. An eminent literatus with important publications to his credit, Sin Sukju was also a key political figure of his time, who rose to the position of prime minister. He was named a meritorious subject four times during his life, including under kings Sejo (r. 1455–68) and Seongjong (r. 1469–94). Following the convention of fifteenth-century Korean *gongsin* portraiture, *Portrait of Sin Sukju* (fig. 22) depicts the sitter in a three-quarter pose facing his right, resplendent in an

official robe and an official black silk hat. Particularly eye-catching is the garment's luminous gold-embroidered green rank badge with peacocks. Despite the painting's weathered appearance, the portrait retains a lifelike quality, capturing not only the physical features of this eminent scholar-official but also his character.

Like Sin, Jang Malson was a high official in the mid-fifteenth century. He played a crucial role in suppressing the revolt in 1467 of Yi Si-ae (?–1467), the governor of Hoeryeong, an uprising that aimed to protest excessive interference by the central government in local affairs.<sup>13</sup> *Portrait of Jang Malson* (fig. 23) was created to celebrate the sitter's significant contribution to the subduing of the uprising and the pacification of Hoeryeong and to commemorate his loyal deeds for posterity. Jang's portrait follows conventions similar to Sin's. The likeness is rendered with firm, even rigid lines and rich colors. In both portraits, the facial features and drapery folds are defined by lines, with little modeling; this is characteristic of fifteenth-century Korean *gongsin* portraiture. Just as Sin and Jang became icons of the Confucian ideal of loyalty, so did their representations become models embodying that virtue for *gongsin* portraiture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Another responsibility of court painters was to make pictorial records of various court rituals and ceremonies. Artists executed documentary paintings depicting court banquets for or gatherings of elder statesmen and state-examination alumni, that is, those who had passed the same civil-service examination.<sup>14</sup> The promotion of Confucian learning in the early Joseon period was closely related to the recruitment of educated civil and military officials to the court. To recruit men of ambition, virtue, and talent, the Joseon state relied heavily on a ranking system based on civil, military, and technical examinations. Civil officials received by far the greatest honor and prestige; as a result, the civil-service examination became the most competitive. Under Confucian rulership, the primary emphasis was on state examinations, which served as important gateways to an individual's, and therefore his family's, success. The ruling *yangban*—degree holders and their families, as well as candidates who had not yet passed the civil-service and military examinations—enjoyed political, social, and cultural privileges and monopolized the state examination





Fig. 22.  
*Portrait of Sin Sukju*  
(1417–1475), second  
half of 15th century.  
Hanging scroll; ink  
and color on silk,  
65½ × 43½ in.  
(167 × 109.5 cm).  
Goryeong Sin  
Family Collection,  
Cheongwon,  
Treasure no. 613





Fig. 23. *Portrait of Jang Malson*, end of 15th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 67<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 42<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (171 × 107 cm). Jang Deokpil Collection, Yeongju, Treasure no. 502



Fig. 24. Han Sigak (1621–?). *Special National Examination for Applicants from the Northeastern Provinces*, second half of the 17th century. Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 22<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. × 22 ft. 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (57.9 × 674.1 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Bon-gwan 5055). Detail

system. Although in theory male commoners were allowed to sit for the examinations, the education necessary to pass the examinations was made available almost exclusively to the sons of the *yangban*.

To consolidate further the establishment and spread of Neo-Confucianism, the government continued to develop public academies where members of the *yangban* received the Confucian education required to pass the state examinations. The curriculum included the Five Classics and Four Books; Neo-Confucian commentaries, histories, and other writings; and the enhancement of literary skills, notably the composition of poetry, documentary prose, and essays.<sup>15</sup> Along with the National Academy and county schools (*hyanggyo*), however, many private academies in the countryside proliferated as centers of local education and scholarship for the civil-service examinations.<sup>16</sup> Han Sigak's (1621–?) *Special National Examination for Applicants from the Northeastern Provinces*, of the late seventeenth century, is a pictorial record meticulously documenting scenes of civil-service and military candidates for the state examinations held in Hamgyeong Province. The first section of the scroll shows court officials judging military candidates' skill in mounted archery in a courtyard set against the city wall, above which are hills and mountains painted in bright blue-and-green mineral pigments, evoking the archaic styles of Tang China. The second section (fig. 24) presents civil-service candidates, court officials,

standard-bearers, and musicians gathered to attend a memorial service.<sup>17</sup>

Reflecting the ongoing importance of the state examinations, many court-sponsored paintings depicting gatherings of successful candidates, sometimes banqueted by the king, were produced until the end of the dynasty. *Banquet for Successful Candidates of the State Examination* (cat. no. 1, fig. 25; 1580) is one example. It records the feast given by the king for those who passed the 1580 Royal Visitation Examination, a special test administered by the king in person that assessed the scholarly achievements of students at the National Confucian Academy. The examining officials, dancers, and servants are in a large pavilion, while, in the courtyard, those who passed the civil-service and military examinations are seated in rows, watching the dance performance. Musicians and acrobats enliven the festive mood. The names of the principal participants are listed at the bottom of the painting. An eyewitness record of the royal banquet, the painting provides valuable information on the court ceremonies, fashion, music, and dance of the time.<sup>18</sup>

*Gathering of State-Examination Alumni at Huigyeong Pavilion* (cat. no. 8; 1567), another fine example of sixteenth-century documentary painting, shows five state-examination alumni having a party with local courtesans and musicians at Huigyeong Pavilion, located in Jeolla Province, in southwest Korea. The reunion celebrated the glory of their success in the state-examination of 1546.





Fig. 25. *Banquet for Successful Candidates of the State Examination*. Detail of cat. no. 1

#### AN GYEON AND *DREAM JOURNEY TO THE PEACH BLOSSOM LAND*

The early years of the Joseon dynasty saw the flourishing of landscape painting, in keeping with the cultural energy and vitality of the era.<sup>19</sup> The most influential landscapist of this time was An Gyeon (act. ca. 1440–70), whose exact dates are still unknown.<sup>20</sup> He rose to prominence as the most distinguished court painter during the reign of King Sejong. An enjoyed royal favor and achieved brilliant political success, gaining promotion to the upper fourth rank in the Bureau of Painting, at a time when painters rarely were allowed to advance

beyond the lower sixth. An's elevation reflects exceptional recognition on the part of the court. Largely inspired by the pictorial idioms of the Northern Song painter Guo Xi (ca. 1000–ca. 1090), author of the masterpiece *Early Spring* (fig. 26; 1072),<sup>21</sup> and his followers, An Gyeon formulated his own distinctive style.

*Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* (fig. 5; 1447) is a fantastic monumental landscape depicting the splendors of a magical paradise and the only extant painting bearing An Gyeon's signature and seal. In 1447, Prince Anpyeong (Yi Yong, 1418–1453), the third son of King Sejong, and the painter's major patron, asked An to paint

a picture of the Peach Blossom Spring land that the prince had seen in a dream, a land in which towering mountains, deep gorges, and rocky peaks enveloped in thick mists and clouds made up a supernatural realm with many peach trees. Prince Anpyeong left a colophon on the painting detailing what he saw in the dream and how he commissioned An Gyeon to execute the magnificent landscape, to which twenty eminent scholar-calligraphers and a monk contributed colophons. The *Dream Journey* scroll serves as crucial evidence of the artistic achievement of a leading court painter and of the distinguished scholar-officials at the court of King Sejong, who collectively set a new standard for painting, calligraphy, and poetry.<sup>22</sup>

Prince Anpyeong was a man of great intellect and talent. A painter himself, he was also a scholar, poet, musician, and the most distinguished calligrapher of his time, who derived his calligraphic style from that of the Yuan master Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322). Anpyeong was also the most eminent collector of his day, possessing the largest collection of Chinese painting and calligraphy in Korea. Sin Sukju's (fig. 22) *Hwagi* (Commentaries on Painting), written in 1445, itemizes the collection, which comprised scrolls by such famous Song and Yuan masters as Guo Xi, Li Gonglin (ca. 1041–1106), Wen Tong (1019–1079), Su Shi (1036–1101), Li Kan (1245–1320), Huang Gongwang (1269–1354), Wu Zhen (1280–1354), Ni Zan (1301–1374), and Wang Meng (ca. 1308–1385). The absence of Ming paintings shows the strength of Anpyeong's preference for Song and Yuan paintings, and, among the former, for the work of Guo Xi—the prince's collection contained seventeen paintings by the Northern Song master.

Anpyeong's collection of 225 paintings and calligraphies included 30 paintings by An Gyeon, the only Korean painter in the prince's holdings—the remaining 195 works were all Chinese. An Gyeon was given full access to the Chinese masterpieces, a privilege that played a significant role in his artistic evolution. Under Prince Anpyeong's active patronage, An emerged as the most distinguished painter of his day, creating a paradigm for painting styles of the fifteenth century and after. The Guo Xi tradition, introduced during the Goryeo period, in the twelfth or thirteenth century, continued to exercise a strong influence on the painters of early Joseon Korea.



Fig. 26. Guo Xi (Chinese, ca. 1000–ca. 1090). *Early Spring*, 1072. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk, 62 $\frac{5}{16}$  × 42 $\frac{7}{16}$  in. (158.3 × 108.1 cm). National Palace Museum, Taipei

An Gyeon's exposure to the Guo Xi tradition came about through his study of paintings by the Chinese master and his followers in Prince Anpyeong's collection.<sup>23</sup>

An studied Guo Xi's manner and then developed his own style. In *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land*, the fantastic, cloudlike mountain forms, the dramatic interpenetration of solids and voids, the effective use of vapors and mists, the sharp contrast between light and dark ink tones, and the powerful command of thickening and thinning brushstrokes and modeling ink washes are indebted to the pictorial idioms of Guo Xi and his followers. The treatment of the subject matter—the Peach Blossom Spring as a landscape—is, however, astonishingly new, as is the adaptation of a fantastic landscape to the handscroll format, indicating that An Gyeon was no mere emulator.



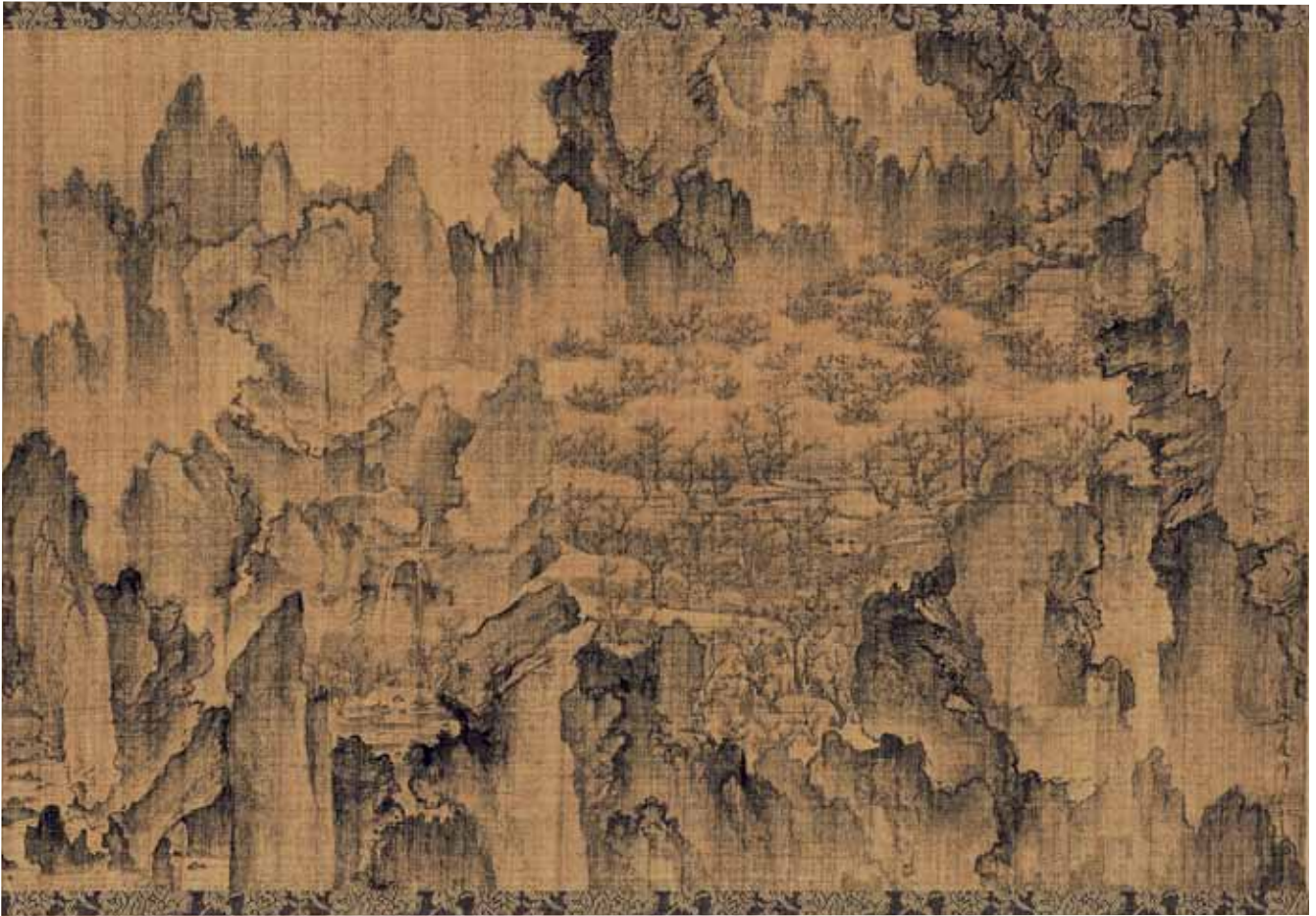


Fig. 27. An Gyeon. *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land*. Detail



Fig. 28. An Gyeon. *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land*. Detail of frontispiece



Fig. 29. Attributed to An Gyeon.  
*Early Summer*, from *Eight Views of the Four Seasons*, 15th century.  
One of a set of eight album leaves; ink and light color on silk,  
13 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 11 $\frac{3}{16}$  in. (35.2 × 28.5 cm).  
National Museum of Korea, Seoul  
(Deoksu 3144)

The composition of *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* starts in the lower left corner and evolves toward the right middle ground, where a vast open area presents a grand view of paradise imagery: a land surrounded by steep mountains and misty gorges, with peach trees and their pink-dotted blossoms emerging from the steamy, rosy mists; growing bamboos; icicle-like overhanging rocks; and thatched-roof houses. The surreal, many-layered mountains, range upon range, construct a phantasmagoric vision of a paradise, an otherworldly grandeur of countless fantastic peaks. The artist established effective contrasts—between “ordinary” nature on the left and the Peach Blossom Land on the right—that

emphasize the magical splendors of this paradise. He used nervous, interlaced strokes to paint the fantasy world of the Peach Blossom Land, with its craggy peaks and rocks. This compositional inventiveness does not appear in any of the surviving Chinese paintings of the theme, indicating the power of An’s pictorial innovations. Another, equally bold innovation is the absence of figures, though there are houses and, in the middle of the peach grove, a small boat with an abandoned oar beside a reach of water from the mountain valley, suggesting the presence of a fisherman (fig. 27). Absorbing Guo Xi’s direct influence, An Gyeon successfully created a brilliant visionary landscape, reinterpreting the

earlier style and evolving pictorial idioms that would have a great impact on Korean painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Although *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* is a depiction of Anpyeong's dream, the representation is closely related to "Peach Blossom Spring" by the great Chinese poet of retreat and seclusion Tao Qian (Tao Yuanming, 365–427). Tao Qian's tale tells of a paradise discovered by a poor fisherman who follows a stream lined with blossoming peach trees into a mysterious cave. In the cave, the inhabitants of a prosperous village, refugees from warfare and oppression under the first Qin emperor (r. 221–206 B.C.E.), have been living in peace and harmony through the centuries, down to the poet's own time.<sup>24</sup> The fabled land that the fisherman discovered, despite its Taoist ideas, represents the vision of a Confucian utopia, free from war, malice, and oppression, and governed by sage-rulers.<sup>25</sup>

Tao Qian, in many of his writings, repeatedly evoked the ancient golden ages of such legendary sage-rulers as Fu Xi, Shennong, the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun. "Peach Blossom Spring" reflects a universal longing for innocence and happiness.<sup>26</sup> It must be noted that some of the colophon writers for *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land* also discerned in An's scroll the Confucian vision of an ideal primordial time. Gang Seokdeok (1395–1459) and Bak Yeon (1378–1458) recognized the beauty of the Peach Blossom Land as the world of the "peace under Heaven" under the reigns of the sage-rulers Yao and Shun.<sup>27</sup> Yi Hyeon-ro (d. 1453) interpreted the paradise presented in the scroll as the image of *taebyeong* (grand peace and prosperity).<sup>28</sup>

The influence of Guo Xi's style on An Gyeon's landscapes is further evidenced in *Eight Views of the Four Seasons*, a set of eight album leaves, in the National Museum of Korea, Seoul, depicting the cycle of the seasons. The album, attributed to An Gyeon, strongly recalls Guo Xi's stylistic hallmarks in the cloudlike rocks and crab-claw branches.<sup>29</sup> Though small in size, *Early Summer* (fig. 29), a leaf from the album, evokes the sense of monumentality, complexity, and vastness that are characteristic of Guo Xi's manner. An developed Guo's rock forms into an exuberant atmospheric style. The intervals of space between foreground and background are blurred by wafting mists and vapors. At lower right, an enormous

outcropping of boulders crowned with tall pines and leaning hardwood trees and sheltering a mountain village stretches diagonally toward the distant mountain, down which flows a waterfall. In the foreground, below the protruding stone are pavilions with figures. Moored on the riverbank, a boat on the mist-filled water echoes the tranquility of the summer river. Elusive in the middle ground, Buddhist pavilions lie in the haze-enveloped mountain valley, above which serpentine mountain peaks soar from behind a veil of mist. Abandoning clarity of form, the painter achieved a remarkable interpenetration of spatial elements, which bring the high peaks in the distance close to the viewer, enriching the landscape with a sense of intimacy. The marvelous atmospheric effect of shimmering lights and mists adds a poetic dimension to this peaceful summerscape.

#### IMAGES OF AN EARTHLY PARADISE: THE EIGHT VIEWS OF THE XIAO AND XIANG RIVERS

The dominant influence of An Gyeon and his followers appears as well in paintings of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, a classic landscape theme that explores the luxuriant and atmospheric beauty of the famously scenic region of the Xiao and Xiang rivers near Lake Dongting in Hunan Province, a region historically identified with banishment, exile, and lament.<sup>30</sup> The subject of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, with their banks, hills, islets, rivulets, and marshes, became a major artistic and literary theme in China and Korea. In China, the theme generated intense interest especially during the Northern and Southern Song dynasties, and many paintings of or taking their inspiration from the subject have come down to us from this period. The Northern Song scholar-painter Song Di (ca. 1015–ca. 1080) has long been credited with the creation of the theme, though none of his paintings survives. The subject's immediate and far-reaching success is already evident in the earliest extant example, *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (fig. 30; ca. 1150), a work by Wang Hong (act. ca. 1131–61), who depicted the compelling beauty of the Xiao and Xiang region in the most evocative and haze-saturated manner, currently mounted in two handscrolls.<sup>31</sup> In about 1090, the





Fig. 30. Wang Hong (Chinese, act. ca. 1131–61). *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* from *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, ca. 1150. Pair of handscrolls; ink and light color on silk, handscroll A:  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 65\frac{1}{8}$  in. (23.4 × 165.7 cm); handscroll B:  $9\frac{1}{2} \times 92\frac{7}{8}$  in. (23.4 × 236 cm). Princeton University Art Museum, Edward L. Elliott Family Collection, Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund (y1984-14 a-b)

eminent Northern Song scientist, statesman, and literatus Shen Gua (Shen Kuo, 1031–1095) recorded the earliest list of the Eight Views:

*Wild Geese Descending to a Sandbar*  
*Returning Sail off Distant Shore*  
*Mountain Market, Clear with Rising Mist*  
*River and Sky in Evening Snow*  
*Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting*  
*Night Rain on Xiao and Xiang*  
*Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple*  
*Fishing Village in Evening Glow*<sup>32</sup>

As Wang Hong's work indicates, paintings of the Eight Views flourished during the Southern Song period. Over time, however, the composition became simpler and more intimate, with an emphasis on the atmospheric effects of mists and clouds. This streamlining of the composition was closely related to the rise of Chan Buddhism, which encouraged the development of landscape paintings done in a free, swift style of ink drawing. Such Chan Buddhism-inspired Southern Song masterpieces as *Returning Sail off Distant Shore* by Muqi (ca. 1200–after 1279; Kyoto National Museum) and *Mountain Market, Clear with Rising Mist* by Yujian (act. mid-thirteenth century; Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo) are powerfully minimalist examples of the Eight Views.<sup>33</sup>

It is still a mystery why the popularity of Eight Views paintings declined radically after the fall of the Southern Song dynasty in 1279. The splendid renaissance of the theme in painting occurred not in China, however, but in early Joseon Korea and in Muromachi Japan.<sup>34</sup> It is

unclear when the Eight Views began to be painted in Korea, but some textual sources reveal that paintings by or attributed to Song Di had been introduced into Korea by the reign of King Myeongjong (r. 1171–97), who asked court officials to compose poems on “Song Di's *Eight Views*” and commissioned the eminent painter Yi Gwangpil to paint scenes of the theme. Such scholar-officials as Yi Inno (1152–1220), Jin Hwa (act. ca. 1200), Yi Gyubo (1168–1241), and Yi Jehyeon (1287–1367) wrote poems on the subject. Although no extant paintings can unquestionably be dated to the Goryeo dynasty, poems by leading scholar-officials of the period demonstrate the growing popularity of the Eight Views,<sup>35</sup> which would continue to inspire early Joseon painters and poets.

The early Joseon period, in fact, witnessed the production of many paintings of the Eight Views, largely in An Gyeon's style. *Wild Geese Descending to a Sandbar* and *River and Sky in Evening Snow* by Guo Xi, as well as a complete set of Eight Views by Li Bi (act. fourteenth century), were in Prince Anpyeong's collection, indicating an ongoing interest in the Eight Views at that time.<sup>36</sup> Although the two Eight Views paintings by Guo Xi are later works, the Chinese sources highlight the popularity of the theme in early Joseon Korea. It must be noted that Prince Anpyeong also owned a complete set of the Eight Views by An Gyeon. In about 1442, the prince had seen a set of poems on the theme by the Southern Song emperor Ningzong (r. 1195–1224) and had had the poems copied. Prince Anpyeong commissioned a painter to depict the eight scenes in handscroll format with the title *Poems of Eight Views*. He added to the scroll as colophons



Cat. no. 32. *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* (above left) and *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting* (above right), from a series of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, mid- to late 15th century. Hanging scrolls; ink on silk, each  $34\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$  in. (88.3 × 45.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick P. Rose and John B. Elliott Gifts, 1987 (1987.278a, b)

poems on the Eight Views by the Goryeo scholar-poets Yi Inno and Jin Hwa. Altogether nineteen men of letters contributed verses to the scroll—eighteen eminent scholar-officials, including Jeong Inji (1396–1478), Seong Sammun (1418–1456), Bak Paengnyeon (1417–1456), Sin Sukju, and Kim Jongseo (1390–1453), and the monk Manu (Cheonbong, 1357–ca. 1447).

Although the painter has not been identified yet, it was very likely An Gyeon, the only Korean painter represented in the prince's collection and the earliest Joseon painter to experiment with the theme.<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately the scroll is now lost and the colophons have been remounted as album leaves.<sup>38</sup> For the colophon writers, the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers evoked an



earthly paradise, in which eternal peace and cosmic harmony resonate with the beauty, purity, and grace of nature. The poetic landscape with the returning sail, wild geese, mist-shrouded mountains, snowy peaks, fishing villages, and numerous hillocks in an undefined, ever-expanding watery world presents the utopia the writers associated with the golden age of the “grand peace and prosperity.”<sup>39</sup> Seong Sammun called himself “a man living in the age of *taebyeong*.”<sup>40</sup>

The two landscapes *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* and *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting* (cat. no. 32; mid- to late fifteenth century) demonstrate how the Eight Views theme regained its power and vitality in early Joseon Korea and had a profound impact on the landscape painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>41</sup> While Chinese artists favored the handscroll format for Eight Views paintings, early Joseon painters preferred either the hanging scroll or the album format. *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* and *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting* are fine examples of the ways in which individual scenes are painted in a pair of hanging scrolls. The *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (cat. no. 7; sixteenth century) in Jinju comprises a complete set of Eight Views in the hanging-scroll format. In Korea, the entire set of eight hanging scrolls was also often mounted as a folding screen, as in the Kyushu’s *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers* (cat. no. 6; 1584).

*Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* represents a mountain valley in which, set against high peaks in the distance, a large Buddhist temple complex is veiled in mist. The mist-filled evening air, together with a dark expanse of water in the foreground and an impression of shimmering light, imparts a lyrical, even elegiac mood to the timeless landscape, an impression of remoteness, tranquility, and otherworldliness. *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* was considered one of the most challenging subjects of the Eight Views because of the

Fig. 31. *Wild Geese Descending to a Sandbar*, from a series of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, early 16th century. Hanging scroll; ink on silk, 49¾ × 29⅞ in. (126.4 × 74 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, John M. Crawford Jr. Bequest, and The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift, 1992 (1992.337)



difficulty of depicting the sound of distant temple bells. In most Chinese and Japanese paintings on this theme, two figures on a hill are essential pictorial requirements,<sup>42</sup> because they act as listeners who hear the sound of bells ringing through the mist (see fig. 30). There is, however, no human presence in *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple*. The painter coupled this startling artistic innovation—which would become characteristic of Korean landscapes of this period—with another, when he enriched the evening landscape with the poetic subtlety of eternal serenity.

*Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting* shares the same mood of melancholy and contemplation. A fishing boat moored on the shore in the foreground; a large, empty pavilion enveloped in mist in the far background; a Buddhist temple nestled in the thin cloud-filled mountain; cold, shimmering light; and vapors rising from the water all contribute to the mystery of a silent landscape. This mystery is further intensified by the absence of the moon and the absolute lack of human presence. The enigmatic poetic allusions in this painting and in *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple* are indicative of how the Korean painter transformed the Chinese conventions and presented his creative reinterpretation of the classic theme in captivating visual terms. The transcendental tranquility found in both paintings may be a visual metaphor for the Confucian world of “peace under Heaven,” suggesting the advent of a golden age governed by a sage-ruler. The absence of figures points to an earthly paradise of endless peace existing beyond political turmoil and other human conflicts. The poetic richness of both paintings is associated in the most subtle, economical manner with emblems of the ideal Confucian state. The same may be said of *Wild Geese Descending to a Sandbar* (fig. 31), another masterpiece of the Eight Views theme. In this spacious composition, moored boats; flat, indented riverbanks; a solitary fisherman; migrating geese flying in close formation; and distant mountains bathed in obscuring mists and clouds create an image of mesmerizing calm eliciting the allure of a mystery. This metaphoric mood and poetic richness became the defining characteristics of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Korean Eight Views paintings.

## THE CULT OF ZHU XI AND THE NINE-BEND STREAM OF THE WUYI MOUNTAINS

During the first century of the Joseon dynasty, many Neo-Confucian officials altered the political and social institutions in the light of Neo-Confucian models. These meritorious elites pursued pragmatic studies concerned primarily with the administration of state affairs, the cultivation of the kingly way, and the activation of people’s moral nature—in other words, the Confucian ideal of a perfect government under a virtuous ruler. During King Seongjong’s reign (r. 1469–94), large numbers of rural Neo-Confucian scholars appointed to high-ranking government positions began to direct the politics of the court. The rise of local Neo-Confucians inevitably caused conflicts with the ruling bureaucracy. The factional struggle between the new meritorious class and the Neo-Confucian elite brought on a series of political purges; the massive purges of 1498 and 1504 resulted in the banishment or death of many members of both groups. The political strife continued, with two more waves of persecution of Neo-Confucian scholars, in 1519 and 1545.<sup>43</sup> Despite the successive purges of literati, the Neo-Confucian scholars gained power at the local level through the private academies, administration of the village regulations, and their landholdings. Because of the political turmoil at the court, a large group of Neo-Confucian literati stayed in the countryside, devoting themselves to study and self-cultivation, in particular, to the more serious Confucian writings exploring the metaphysical structure of the inner life.<sup>44</sup>

The teachings of the Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi (1130–1200) on man’s mind and heart and his nature, extensively discussed in his *Commentary on the Great Learning*, of the late twelfth century, became the cornerstone of Neo-Confucian metaphysics for rural scholars. For them, Zhu Xi was the model of the learned recluse in a peaceful natural setting who achieves moral and intellectual enlightenment and sagehood through self-cultivation.<sup>45</sup> The places associated with Zhu Xi, in particular, the Wuyi Mountains, became sacred sites for Korean Neo-Confucians.

The Wuyi Mountains, also referred to as Mount Wuyi, located on Fujian’s northernmost border with Jiangxi, are famous for the Nine-Bend Stream (*Jiuqu*),



Cat. no. 33. Yi Seonggil (1562–?). *The Nine-Bend Stream of Mount Wuyi*, 1592. Handscroll; ink and color on silk, 13 $\frac{3}{6}$  × 13 ft. $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (33.5 × 398.5 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 2216)

which runs below myriad peaks, majestic precipices, and spectacular cliffs.<sup>46</sup> The attraction of the Wuyi Mountains lay not only in their scenic beauty but also in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian academies. In 1183, Zhu Xi built his study, the *Wuyi jingshe* (Hermitage in Wuyi), in the Wuyi Mountains, which became an important intellectual center of the time.<sup>47</sup> Zhu Xi's contribution to the formation of the cultural geography of the Wuyi Mountains was further enriched by his famous song "Rafting in the Nine Bends," celebrating his pursuit of leisure in the mountains. With its natural wonders and Zhu Xi's legacy, the Wuyi Mountains emerged as a popular leisure site for the literati. As a result, the travel literature of this region has flourished since the Southern Song period.<sup>48</sup>

Because of their association with Zhu Xi, the Wuyi Mountains also became a source of inspiration for Joseon poets and painters. *The Nine-Bend Stream of Mount Wuyi* (cat. no. 33), by Yi Seonggil (1562–?), depicts Zhu Xi's private academy and its environs, illuminating the ways in which Zhu Xi's reclusion and the Neo-Confucian life of moral self-cultivation were received in sixteenth-century Korean intellectual culture.<sup>49</sup> A vast river landscape of interlocking voids (water) and solids

(mountains) stretches across the scroll in an all-embracing panorama. The dynamic interplay of the frontal sequence of mountains and right- and left-leaning peaks increases the formal complexity of the composition. The precipitous peaks and deep ravines are wrapped in thick layers of clouds and haze. Houses and other buildings nestle quietly in the mountain valleys. The lateral series of rising peaks is, however, interrupted by a sweeping diagonal shift that changes the spatial orientation. The dramatic diagonal and counterdiagonal thrusts carry the viewer's eye to an expanse where a wide, winding river runs along the base of the mountains, its line echoed by the geese above. The scroll ends in a broad view of the open river with the long range of mountain peaks and lowlands receding into the remote distance, while the rest of the scroll is consigned to misty space. The technique of dissolving solid forms into the atmosphere is remarkably successful in leading us to a world extending far beyond the frame of the scroll.

Two of the most prominent Neo-Confucian scholars of the sixteenth century ruminated on Zhu Xi and the Nine-Bend Stream. Yi Hwang (1501–1570) wrote a colophon to the earliest extant scroll, praising the natural beauty of the stream and the hermitic life of Zhu Xi. Yi I



(1536–1584) admired Zhu Xi’s reclusive life of study and contemplation in the Wuyi Mountains and built his own hermitage along a nine-bend stream in Seokdam, in Hwanghae Province. He also composed a poem, “Song of the Nine-Bend Stream of Gosan,” with the rhyme scheme of Zhu Xi’s song. Yi I’s emulation of Zhu Xi and his life in the Wuyi Mountains is just one example of the reception and popularity of the Nine-Bend Stream theme in sixteenth-century Korea.<sup>50</sup> Both Yi Hwang and Yi I, two of the greatest Neo-Confucian thinkers of the sixteenth century and ardent admirers of Zhu Xi, following the philosophical tradition of the Chinese master, developed their own conceptions of the natural order of the universe, the fundamental principle of the world, human enlightenment, personal experience and feelings, and self-cultivation. Their new ideas and the debates their conceptions of the natural order of the universe stimulated over the Neo-Confucian worldview and especially human nature opened the intellectually vibrant age of Neo-Confucianism.<sup>51</sup>

#### KIM SI AND THE FORMATION OF THE KOREAN ZHE SCHOOL

The Chinese Zhe School style, introduced in early Joseon Korea, played a crucial role in shaping a new

pictorial tradition, which gradually replaced that of the dominant An Gyeon School.<sup>52</sup> The Zhe School was a loosely organized group of professional painters from the area of Zhejiang, around the old Song capital city of Hangzhou, who built upon the distinct and flourishing regional current of Southern Song court painting, represented by such masters as Ma Yuan (act. ca. 1190–1225) and Xia Gui (act. ca. 1195–1230). The Zhe School came to include painters from many areas of China, most notably from Fujian, which had a strong local tradition. There were close ties between the Zhe School and the Ming academy, because many Zhe School painters were recruited as court artists for imperially sponsored projects. In official service at the capital, these painters worked for the court; outside the court, they were



Fig. 32. Gang Hui-an (1419–1464). *Lofly Scholar Contemplating Water*, 15th century. Album leaf; ink on paper, 9½ × 6⅜ in. (23.5 × 15.7 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Bon-gwan 2504)



independent professionals. The Zhe School was neither a formally instituted academy nor a uniform style; nonetheless, following and expanding upon the pictorial idioms of Ma Yuan and Xia Gui, the Zhe School shaped the Ming professional and academic traditions and had a profound impact on Korean and Japanese painting.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the strong influence of the Zhe School manner on early Joseon painting, the origins of the Korean Zhe School are still unclear. For example, Gang Hui-an's (1419–1464) *Lofty Scholar Contemplating Water* (fig. 32; fifteenth century) is the earliest extant painting in the manner of the Zhe School and, more specifically, in the style of Zhang Lu (ca. 1490–ca. 1563). Yet it predates the pictorial idioms of the Chinese master. The broad, sweeping brushwork and the marked contrasts between light and dark that define the sharp edges of the rocks are characteristic of Zhang Lu's pictorial manner, but other features strongly recall the stylistic hallmarks of Ma Yuan and his followers: the introspective mood and lyrical atmosphere; the presence of a scholar, who leans on a boulder below a sheer cliff with branches and foliage by a stream and gazes at the water, seeking enlightenment through meditation; and the enclosed and intimate one-corner composition.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that the composition of *Lofty Scholar Contemplating Water* was derived from that of paintings such as *Water-Moon Avalokiteshvara* (private collection, Japan; Yuan dynasty, fourteenth century), formerly attributed to Muqi. The pose of the scholar-recluse lying upon a rock and meditating on water closely resembles that of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Korean: Gwaneum; Chinese: Guanyin) leaning against a rock below a cliff with a waterfall, supporting his head on his hand.<sup>55</sup>

Whereas in China the Zhe School manner was practiced by professional and court painters, in Korea it was not class-bound. Both court and literati painters employed the style, albeit for different artistic purposes. The most creative interpreter of the Zhe School idioms was Kim Si (Kim Je, 1524–1593), one of the leading painters of the sixteenth century, who used the newly introduced Chinese style to express his identity and selfhood as a politically unsuccessful scholar. He was the son of one of the most powerful officials at King Jungjong's court, Kim Anlo (1481–1537), whose plot against the queen dowager, Munjeong, resulted in his political downfall. Kim



Fig. 33. Kim Si (1524–1593). *Boy Pulling a Donkey*, second half of the 16th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 43<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (111 × 46 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 783



Fig. 34. Kim Si. *Water Buffalo*, early 17th century. Hanging scroll or album leaf; ink on silk,  $14\frac{5}{16} \times 11\frac{1}{16}$  in. (37.2 × 28.1 cm). Private collection, Japan

Anlo was exiled and executed as a traitor in 1537, and his demise deeply affected his son's life and career.

Except for a brief stint as a deputy director of the Bureau of Painting, Kim Si spent most of his life as a recluse, devoting himself to painting, calligraphy, and poetry.<sup>56</sup> Although politically unsuccessful, he made a key contribution to the establishment of the Zhe School manner at the time. And because of his stymied political career, Kim's works are thematically allusive, touching upon such topics as the ephemerality of honor and fame, the folly of political involvement, the passage of time, and the sorrow of loneliness. *Boy Pulling a Donkey* (fig. 33) shows Kim's remarkable command of the Zhe School idioms.<sup>57</sup> The one-corner composition with a spiraling pine; the rugged, ax-cut brushstrokes in the rocks and the strong tonal contrast on the rocks in the foreground; and the shimmering mountains in the distance are distinctive elements recalling the stylistic features of the Zhe School. *Boy Pulling a Donkey* depicts a seemingly humorous scene in which, against a background of distant mountains, large boulders, a thrusting cliff, and a meandering stream, a boy pulls at the reins of a recalcitrant



Fig. 35. Kim Si. *Snowscape with Figures*, 1584. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk,  $20\frac{7}{8} \times 26\frac{7}{16}$  in. (53 × 67.2 cm). Cleveland Museum of Art (1987.187)





Cat. no. 34. Attributed to Yi Gyeongyun (1545–1611). *Landscape with Figures*, end of the 16th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 35<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 23<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (91.1 × 59.5 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 6165)

donkey. Despite the scene's lighthearted charm, the stubborn donkey might be a self-representation of Kim Si refusing to reenter the world of court politics in which he was intricately entangled during his early years.

This encoded self-referentiality also appears in Kim Si's *Water Buffalo* (fig. 34; early seventeenth century), a small painting in which a water buffalo rests below

gigantic rocks and clusters of trees. Kim Si's inscription on the painting reads:

*Every day the water buffalo sleeps on the ground,  
Showing no desire to eat a hundred grasses,  
Free from the bondage of reins.  
[He] never dreams someone is coming to pull at him.*



Here the “hundred grasses” stand for the glory of court life, while “someone” refers implicitly to the king.<sup>58</sup> Kim Si, in a metaphorical way, aligns himself with the water buffalo. The artist’s exploration of his inner world as a man in self-imposed exile, a victim of political vicissitudes, also informs *Snowscape with Figures* (fig. 35; 1584).<sup>59</sup> It is a still, frozen landscape, connoting a time of sorrow and bitter hardship. In the foreground, a solitary scholar sits in a pavilion under tall pine trees, above which loom clusters of huge, overhanging rocks. On the right, an expanse of water creates a vista of level distance leading to mountains silhouetted in the distant background. The motifs of the scholar in his pavilion and the solitary boatman suggest that this dismal landscape is an image of reclusion and exile. The brooding vision of this landscape resonates with the bleakness of the painter’s mindscape.

Yi Gyeongyun (1545–1611) was another leading painter working in the manner of the Zhe School.<sup>60</sup> A direct descendant of King Sejong in the fourth generation, he gained promotion to Hangnimjeong (Lord Hangnim) of the senior third rank. *Landscape with Figures* (cat. no. 34), traditionally attributed to Yi, displays his effective use of pictorial idioms of the Zhe School. In a spectacular landscape, two scholars converse; one of their attendants holds a staff and the other brews tea near a crane under a large pine tree. In the foreground is a cluster of large, angular boulders and rocks. A horizontal band of mist separates the middle ground from the background, where a mountain village shelters under rocky mountains. The striking contrasts of light and dark on the rock surfaces are stylistic hallmarks of the Zhe School, as are the outsize scale of the figures. Yi Gyeongyun introduced a powerful diagonal into the painting’s organization, creating an expanse of space and a deep recession into the mist-filled distance, and counterbalanced the rigid, monumental landscape with a lyrical mood.

#### INNOCENT PUPPIES: EMBLEMS OF PEACE UNDER HEAVEN

One of the remarkable characteristics of early Joseon art is the rise of painters of royal descent such as Yi Am (1507–1566), Yi Gyeongyun, Yi Jing (1581–after 1645), and Yi Jeong (1541–1622). As in the case of Prince Anpyeong, many members of the royal house of Yi were

deeply interested in painting and made important contributions to the development of early Joseon art. The master of monumental landscapes Yi Jing was the illegitimate son of Yi Gyeongyun. He was a prominent court painter during the reign of King Injo and fulfilled numerous commissions from the court including the pictorial documentation of the king’s wedding ceremony in 1638. While following the family tradition and producing a number of landscape paintings done in the manner of the Zhe School, Yi also deliberately returned to the An Gyeon style, which was going out of fashion during Yi’s lifetime. *Gold-Painted Landscape* (cat. no. 35; first half of the seventeenth century), the painter’s homage to An Gyeon, revitalized the waning tradition of the fifteenth-century master with creative reinterpretations of the earlier style. It is a visionary landscape showing a large rock promontory with a massive pine tree and pavilions overlooking the water; a wide range of rolling mountains like billowing clouds rises in the distance. The gold ink on black silk further enhances the fantastic, even surreal effect of the composition and animates the surface of the painting with its glitter.<sup>61</sup>

Yi Am, a great-great-grandson of King Sejong, achieved fame as a court painter specializing in dogs in garden settings. He is known to have studied the Southern Song academician Mao Yi (1178–1243), renowned for his paintings of cats and dogs. Yi’s perceptiveness and painterly virtuosity are apparent in the remarkable *Falcon* (cat. no. 36; first half of the sixteenth century).<sup>62</sup> This painting, though long attributed to the Chinese painter of birds and animals Xu Ze (act. second half of the fourteenth century), bears three of Yi Am’s seals.<sup>63</sup>

The falcon, with fierce stare, heroic pose, and head turning to the left, perches on a beautifully designed stand. The minute details of the feathers combine an exquisite decorative quality and magic realism. The brilliant hues of the stand—red, green, gold, and silver—are in harmony with the lifelikeness of the falcon. The painting is accurate in every detail, showing the painter’s keen observation and visual sensitivity.

Yi Am may have derived this exacting style and meticulous attention to natural life from the Neo-Confucian approach to learning called “the objective investigation of things leading to the extension of knowledge,” a major component of Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian



Cat. no. 35. Yi Jing (1581–after 1645). *Gold-Painted Landscape*, first half of the 17th century. Hanging scroll; gold on silk, 34<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 24<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (87.8 × 61.2 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 1790)

philosophy.<sup>64</sup> In China, the heroic falcon, a common symbol of justice, righteousness, and strength, was specifically associated with the Imperial Censorate, an office that required courage and uprightness.<sup>65</sup> In the same vein, in Korea, the falcon may have symbolized the justice of the Neo-Confucian rulership required to bring order to the state.

Yi Am also exhibited great skill in the depiction of suckling, sleeping, and playing puppies. His works were very popular in Muromachi Japan for their atmosphere of innocence and the pictorial values of his richly colored and subtly ink-washed paintings of puppies.<sup>66</sup> *Mother Dog and Puppies* (cat. no. 11; first half of the sixteenth century) shows a large dog with her three puppies



Cat. no. 36. Yi Am. *Falcon*, first half of the 16th century. Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 38<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 21<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (98.1 × 54.2 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (11.6164)





Fig. 36. Yi Am. *Puppies, Birds, and Blossoms*, first half of the 16th century. Hanging scroll; ink and light color on paper, 33 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 17 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (86 × 44.9 cm) Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 1392

sleeping and suckling under a tree. The contrast between the careful treatment of the dog and puppies in the foreground and the lively execution of the tree in the background is dramatic. The red collar with a bell that the mother dog wears imparts a vivid decorative accent to the otherwise monochrome ink-washed work. The peaceful mood of the scene that the mother dog and puppies create endows the composition with lyricism, while the rough, swift brushwork in the “boneless” manner with which the tree branches and leaves are depicted enlivens the composition with vitality and freshness.

*Puppies, Birds, and Blossoms* (fig. 36) is another of Yi Am’s masterpieces. Three charming puppies rest comfortably under a blossoming tree that curves gracefully upward; a pair of birds perches there, watching a large butterfly and a bee. The gracious mood of the composition is conveyed by the poses and gestures of the three innocent puppies: one sleeps, one sits quietly, and one plays with a grasshopper. The scene exudes the cozy

warmth of domestic bliss. Within the delicately balanced composition, however, resides a dynamic tension between the puppies, rendered in ink only, and the flowering tree, butterfly, bee, and birds, depicted in refined tints. The delicate ink drawing and the washes with their serene, harmonious colors glow with a warm realism.<sup>67</sup>

*Puppies, Birds, and Blossoms* may conceal a metaphor, with the stillness of the scene symbolizing eternal life and suggesting in the most delicate of terms that the peaceful and harmonious world of the Joseon dynasty would prosper forever. The puppies, who seem to live in a paradise, embody timeless peace. The painting would thus depict an ideal microcosm that mirrors the ideal state built on Neo-Confucian philosophy and the pursuit of social and moral harmony. Yi Am successfully created a miniature universe in which harmoniously arranged puppies and birds emblemize the political vision of the early Joseon period: “Peace under Heaven.”

1. For the rise of Yi Seonggye and the foundation of the Joseon dynasty, see Duncan 2000.
2. Lee, Peter H. 1993, pp. 469–70, 479.
3. On *Songs of Flying Dragons*, see Lee, Peter H. 1975. *Songs of Flying Dragons* was composed and published in Korean in 1445 and in classical Chinese in 1447.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
5. Lee, Peter H. 2003, p. 149. On Jeong Dojeon and his Neo-Confucian philosophical and political thoughts, see Chung Chai-sik 1985.
6. For the cultural achievements of the King Sejong era, see Diamond Sutra Recitation Group 2006.
7. On the origins and invention of *Hangeul*, see Lee Sangbaek and Kim Wonyong 1970, pp. 5–84.
8. For more on the Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds, see Shibu Shōhei 1990.
9. On the relationship between didactic illustrations and Confucian rulership, see Murray 2007.
10. On the Bureau of Painting, see McCune 1962, p. 233, and Ahn Hwi-joon 1980b, pp. 121–24.
11. For the political function of illustrations of the Book of Odes, see Murray 1993.
12. For details of the portraits of meritorious subjects, see Cho Sunmie 2005.
13. For details of Yi’s revolt, see Lee Ki-baik 1984, p. 184; Han Woo-keun 1970, pp. 214–15.
14. On Joseon documentary paintings of gatherings of elder statesmen and royal banquets for court officials, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1995.
15. For the relationship between Neo-Confucian education and the civil service examination system, see Yi Sōngmu 1985.
16. Lee Ki-baik 1984, pp. 206–8.
17. New York 1998–99, p. 198.
18. Seoul 1996–97, p. 301.
19. For general overviews of early Joseon landscape painting, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1998–99, pp. 310–15; Lee, Sherman E. 1991–92, pp. 333–35.
20. For a discussion of the life of An Gyeon and his masterpiece, *Dream Journey to the Peach Blossom Land*, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1980a; Ahn Hwi-joon and Yi Byeong-han 1991.
21. On Guo Xi’s stylistic features, see Princeton and New York 1984, 1987–88, pp. 47–49; Fong 1996–97, pp. 130–34; and Foong Leong Ping 2006.
22. Ahn Hwi-joon 1980a, pp. 60–64.
23. For a discussion of Prince Anpyeong’s collection, see Ahn Hwi-joon and Yi Byeong-han 1991, pp. 46–51; Kim Hongnam 1998–99, pp. 392–96.
24. For details, see Hightower 1970, pp. 254–58, 268–70. For the pictorial tradition and the reception of the Peach Blossom Spring, see Nelson 1986.
25. Chen-Courtin 1979, pp. 16–23.
26. Kwong 1994, pp. 55–57.
27. Ahn Hwi-joon and Yi Byeong-han 1991, pp. 204, 213.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
29. The album is reproduced in Seoul 1996–97, pp. 30–33, pl. 10. For discussions of *Eight Views of the Four Seasons*, see Ahn Hwi-joon and Yi Byeong-han 1991, pp. 138–40, and Roderick Whitfield’s entry in London 1984, pp. 189–90.
30. On the origin and development of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers theme in Chinese painting, see Murck 2000; Barnhart 1992.
31. For details, see Murck 1984, 1987–88.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
33. For details, see Murck 2000, pp. 228–58.
34. For discussions of the reception and development of Eight Views paintings in early Joseon Korea and Muromachi Japan, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1988, pp. 162–202; Stanley-Baker 1979.

35. Ahn Hwi-joon 1975, p. 36; Kim Hongnam 1998–99, pp. 373–74.
36. Ahn Hwi-joon and Yi Byeong-han 1991, pp. 48–49.
37. Kim Hongnam 1998–99, p. 374.
38. Seoul 1996–97, p. 303.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 303–6.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 304.
41. Both paintings are discussed in detail in Kim Hongnam 1998–99.
42. Barnhart 1992, pp. 55–60.
43. Lee Ki-baik 1984, pp. 204–6.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 206–8.
45. Lee, Peter H. 1993, pp. 604, 625; Chung, Edward Y. J. 1995.
46. For a detailed discussion of the cultural geography of the Wuyi Mountains, see Purtle 2001, pp. 278–83, 328–42.
47. Chan Wing-tsit 1987, p. 165.
48. Purtle 2001, pp. 278–80.
49. For discussions of the scroll, see Yi Sŏng-mi 1998–99, pp. 338–39.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 339.
51. For details, see Chung, Edward Y. J. 1995.
52. For the formation and development of the Korean Zhe School, see Ahn Hwi-joon 2000a, pp. 558–619.
53. For the definition and stylistic characteristics of the Zhe School, see New York and Dallas 1993.
54. Ahn Hwi-joon 1998–99, pp. 312–13.
55. Hong Sunpyo 1999, pp. 372–81.
56. Ahn Hwi-joon 2000a, pp. 541–42, 577–78.
57. For a discussion of the painting, see Ahn Hwi-joon 1998–99, pp. 318–19.
58. Ahn Hwi-joon 2000a, pp. 541–42.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 581.
60. On the life and career of Yi Gyeongyun, see Jungmann 1987.
61. Ahn Hwi-joon 1998–99, p. 317.
62. Boston 1997, pp. 219–20.
63. Gungnip Munhwajae Yeonguso 2004, p. 267.
64. Gardner 1990, pp. 117–20.
65. Boston 1997, p. 219; Barnhart 1996–97, p. 358.
66. Ahn Hwi-joon 2000a, p. 334.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 335–36.



*Checklist of Objects in the Exhibition*





1. *Banquet for Successful Candidates of the State Examination, 1580*

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk,  $46\frac{5}{8} \times 41\frac{1}{16}$  in. (118.5 × 105.6 cm). Yōmei Bunko, Kyoto

This painting depicts a celebration given by the king to those who had passed a special state examination for both civil and military offices. The successful candidates—on the right, those who had passed the civil service exam, on the left, those who had passed the military exam—sit in rows outside the building. A special seat in the front row is reserved for the highest scorer. Inside the pavilion are six examiners. Entertainers, dancers, and musicians further enliven the scene.

This scroll has been in the collection of the Konoe family, a prominent noble family in Kyoto, since the time of Iehiro (1667–1736), of the twenty-first generation. Konoe Iehiro chose the current mounting for the painting: the sumptuous fabric decorated with a design of dragons on a blue background was imported from Qing-dynasty China (1644–1912). Iehiro used the same material to mount one of his own works of calligraphy.

REFERENCES: Seoul 1996–97, p. 301; Yōmei Bunko 2004, p. 93.







Cat. no. 2



Cat. no. 3

2. Stationery box with decoration of peony scrolls, 15th century

Lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay,  $3\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$  in. ( $9 \times 36.5 \times 24.1$  cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Promised Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving

3. Small box with decoration of peony scrolls, 15th–16th century

Lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay,  $\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{7}{8} \times 3\frac{7}{8}$  in. ( $1.9 \times 9.8 \times 9.8$  cm). Lent by Florence and Herbert Irving

Lacquer has a long history on the Korean peninsula, though surviving examples of lacquer with mother-of-pearl decoration date from the Goryeo dynasty and later. Objects from the early Joseon period expand on the earlier tradition of mother-of-pearl inlaid designs: one new trend, as evidenced in these two boxes, is the motif of a single floral scroll, often the peony, over the entire surface. Another compositional innovation, visible in the stationery box (see also cat. no. 2, p. 9) is the use of slightly larger pieces of mother-of-pearl, sometimes combined with more areas of negative space. The elegantly stylized

scrolls on the stationery box—which would have stored writing accoutrements and held pride of place in a scholar’s study—are accented with ornate acanthus leaves. On both boxes, the peonies are rendered both in bud and in blossom. The latter is almost identical in style to peony-blossom designs on buncheong ware like the large Leeum, Samsung vase (fig. 11, p. 41). These two boxes exemplify the superb and subtle craftsmanship and refined aesthetic of early Joseon lacquer.

4. Episodes from the Life of the Buddha  
(*Seokbosangjeol*), 1447

Printed book; ink on paper, each page 8% × 6¼ in.  
(22 × 15.8 cm). Dongguk University Library, Seoul,  
Treasure no. 523

King Sejong (r. 1418–50) commissioned the publication of a twenty-four-volume *Life of the Buddha* (that is, Shakyamuni, the Historical Buddha), in a Korean translation, to honor the soul of Queen Soheon, who died in 1446. The execution of the project was led by her son, the future King Sejo. Only six volumes survive today, distributed among several collections; this one is volume twenty-three. This book is an important documentation of *hangeul*-type printing in the mid-fifteenth century, shortly after the invention of the Korean alphabet under King Sejong.

REFERENCE: Seoul 2006, p. 102.



5. Illustrated Guide to the Three Bonds (*Samgang haengsildo*) (with *hangeul* explanations), ca. 1567–1608

Printed book; ink on paper, each page  $14\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$  in. (37.7 × 21.6 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul

This printed book is a compilation of Chinese and Korean Confucian sources. The following two sections, based on the stories of historical figures of the early Joseon period, convey the epitome of filial piety.

*Jagang Prostrates before Burial Mounds*

After the death of his mother, Kim Jagang, following proper Confucian prescription, buries her with his father (who had passed away earlier) and, also following Confucian mores, spends three years at the burial site in mourning for his mother. When he tries to spend three more years in mourning for his father, his relatives intercede by burning the hut where he lived during the period of mourning. But Jagang weeps and adamantly refuses to leave. Moved by his devotion, the relatives rebuild his hut, allowing Jagang to spend three more years at his parents' tomb.

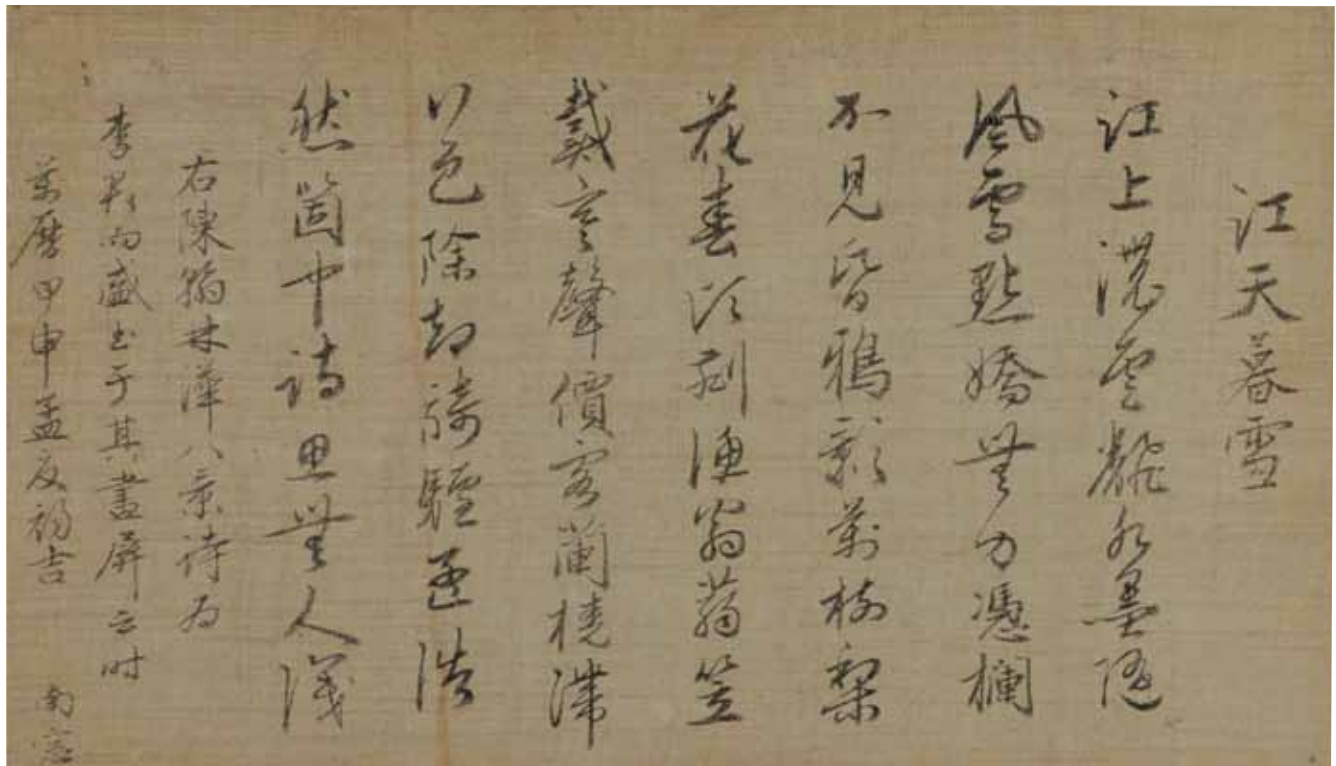
*Seokjin Cuts His Finger*

When his father falls gravely ill with daily seizures and fainting spells, Yu Seokjin stays by his side day and night, tending him. One day, a man tells him that the best cure for his father is to drink a mixture of bone and blood from a living person. Without hesitation, Seokjin cuts his own left index finger and feeds it, mixed with blood, to his father, who immediately recovers.

I thank the National Museum of Korea for their help with interpreting the text.







Cat. no. 6, detail

6. *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, ca. mid-16th century. Colophon by Kim Hyeon-seong (1542–1621) dated 1584

Eight-panel folding screen; ink on silk, overall 41 $\frac{5}{16}$  in. × 12 ft. 8 $\frac{5}{16}$  in. (105.1 × 386.2 cm). Kyushu National Museum of Japan, Dazaifu City

Kim Hyeon-seong, who wrote the inscription on each of the eight panels, was a scholar-official known especially for his calligraphy and poetry. The poem that Kim wrote on this screen—which describes, in eight verses, the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers—is not his own composition but the work of a Goryeo-period poet, Jin Hwa (act. 1197–1211). Following the last verse, “River and Sky in Evening Snow,” on the leftmost panel—the screen is read from right to left—Kim wrote his name and the date of the colophon, along with the notation that he wrote Jinhwa’s poem on a painted screen owned by a man named Yi Iseong.

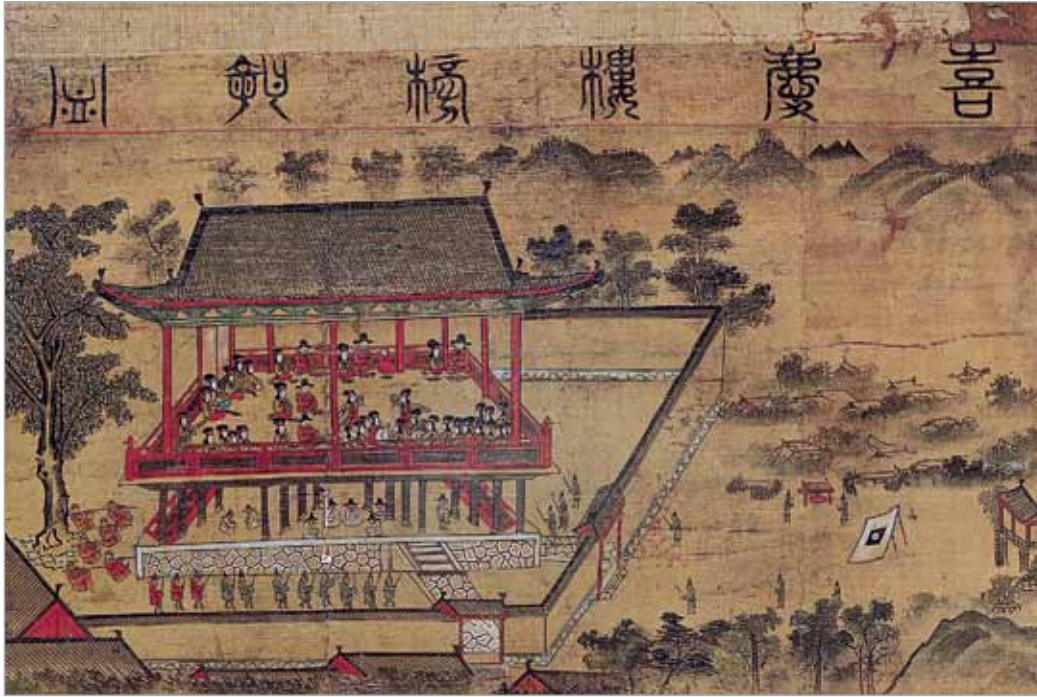
This work has been in Japanese collections since at least the seventeenth century and appears to have been

in the collection of the prominent Mori family of western Honshu by the early eighteenth century. At that time, the paintings and the calligraphy were mounted separately into a pair of screens. The current configuration and mounting, with its gold-speckled paper background, was done in Japan sometime after the mid-eighteenth century.

REFERENCE: Kim Ji-hye 1995.

7. *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*, 16th century

Eight hanging scrolls; ink on paper, each panel 35 $\frac{13}{16}$  × 18 $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (91 × 47.7 cm). Jinju National Museum of Korea, Gift of Kim Yongdu (Jinju 6330)



Cat. no. 8, detail

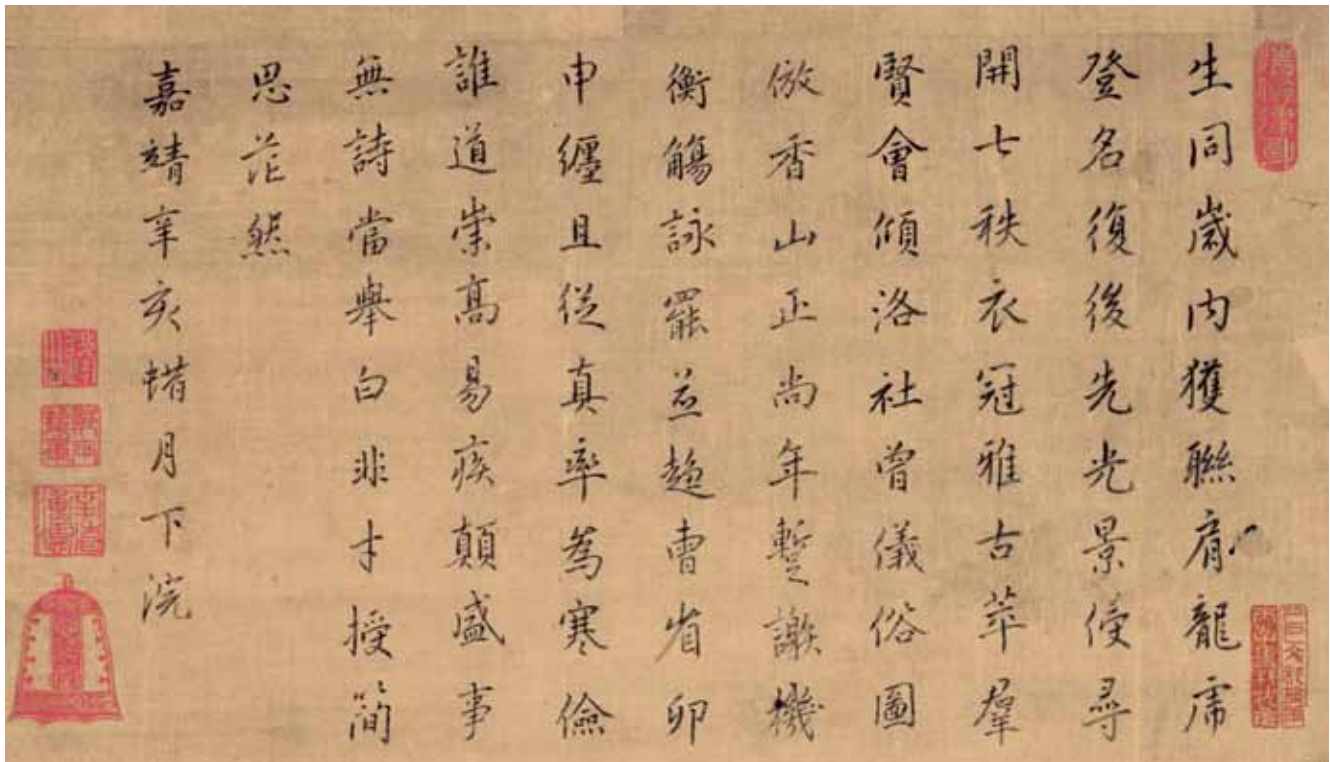
8. *Gathering of State-Examination Alumni at Huigyeong Pavilion, dated 1567*

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk, 38 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 30 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (98.5 × 76.8 cm). Dongguk University Museum, Seoul

This scroll celebrates the reunion of five government officials who had passed either the civil- or military-service examination twenty-one years earlier, in 1546. It was rather unusual for civil servants and military men to form a social group such as this one. Choe Eung-ryong, seated at the top center (north), had scored the highest on the civil-service examination. Choe also wrote the poetic inscription at the bottom of the scroll; it expresses both joy (for the long-awaited reunion) and a bittersweet sentiment (for those colleagues who could not join the gathering owing to illness). The participants of this gathering were current or former high-level officials of the Gwangju area, in Jeolla province.

The Huigyeong Pavilion, a famous sightseeing spot in Gwangju, was built about the mid-fifteenth century, more than a hundred years earlier than the event illustrated here. The story of the pavilion's genesis and construction can be found in a collection of writings by an eminent scholar-official of the time, Sin Sukju (1417–1475; see fig. 22, p. 68). Inside the pavilion, a large number of courtesans (*gisaeng*) accompany and entertain those assembled for the festive gathering. Outside, to the right of the hall, is an area for archery, built at the same time as Huigyeong Pavilion.

REFERENCES: Yun Chin-young 2002; Seoul 2006, p. 36.



Cat. no. 9, detail

9. *Gathering of Government Officials*, ca. 1551

Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk, 51 × 26¾ in. (129.5 × 67.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Acquisitions Fund, and The Vincent Astor Foundation and Hahn Kwang Ho Gifts, 2008 (2008.55)

The inscription by the literatus Jeong Sa-ryong translates as follows:

*Born in the same year we stood shoulder to shoulder.  
Passed the civil or military examination at more or less the  
same time.  
Time passes, and now we are facing seventy years of age.  
Dressed in elegant clothing and hats, wise men meet.  
We emulate the Literary Gathering of Luoyang,<sup>1</sup>  
And the painting shows respect for the elders, following  
Xiangshan.<sup>2</sup>  
We pause in our busy schedules and recite poetry over wine  
Then hasten back to the offices to labor day and night.  
Our gathering is humble and frugal, modeled after Jinsolhoe.<sup>3</sup>*

*Whoever said loftiness is easily followed?  
Lacking poetry for this great event, I raise my glass.  
Lacking talent, my thoughts turn blank.  
Written in the latter half of the twelfth month of 1551.*

1. This refers to a gathering formed in Luoyang, China, by Wen Yanbo (1006–1097) and other scholars during the Song dynasty (960–1279).
2. Xiangshan (Bai Juyi, 772–846), a Chinese poet from the Tang dynasty, had organized a gathering of elderly literati.
3. A gathering formed without regard for wealth or social status.

Translated by Soyoung Lee, with the help of the National Museum of Korea and Dr. Yun Chin-young.



10. Yi Jeong (1541–1622)

*Bamboo*, early 17th century

Hanging scroll; ink on silk,  $45\frac{5}{16} \times 20\frac{3}{16}$  in. (115.7 × 53.2 cm).  
Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, New York (Ko 80)

A premier literati artist of his time, Yi Jeong was celebrated for his poetry, calligraphy, and ink bamboo paintings. Although executed in monochrome ink, the painting's juxtaposition of darker and lighter ink tones reveals the bamboo's layers, creating a more subtle spatial depth than in Western paintings. The crisply articulated—and deceptively simple—stalks and leaves capture precisely the essential physicality of bamboo and the metaphorical qualities associated with it: nobility, integrity, and high-mindedness. Bamboo, plum blossom, orchid, and chrysanthemum were originally associated with the four seasons, and the composite motif became known as the “Four Gentlemen.” Symbolic of the Confucian scholar, this group was a favorite subject of literati artists in East Asia.



11. Yi Am (1507–1566)

*Mother Dog and Puppies*, first half of the  
16th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper,  $28\frac{3}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$  in.  
(73 × 42.2 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul,  
(Bon-gwan 255)

12. *Shakyamuni Buddha Triad*, 1565

Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk,  $23\frac{13}{16} \times 12\frac{5}{8}$  in.  
(60.5 × 32 cm). Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation,  
New York (Ko 88)

Cat. no. 10

### 13. *Amitabha Triad*, 15th century

Gilt bronze,  $16 \times 6\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$  in. ( $40.6 \times 16.5 \times 54.6$  cm).  
Cleveland Museum of Art (1918.501)

This elegant bronze sculpture with traces of gilding represents the principal icon of Pure Land Buddhism, the Buddha Amitabha (Korean: Amita), flanked by two bodhisattvas, the shaven-headed Kshitigarbha (Korean: Jijang), on his right, and Avalokiteshvara (Korean: Gwaneum), wearing a crown with an image of Amitabha, on the Buddha's left. This grouping, rather than with the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Korean: Dae-seji) on Amitabha's right, is not based on any Buddhist text and appears to be distinctly Korean. In Pure Land Buddhism, deliverance into the paradisiacal Pure Land after death was achieved by the practitioner's repeatedly reciting Amitabha's name, a recitation known in Korean as *yeombul*. Though this Buddhist sect existed in Korea prior to the fifteenth century, it continued to have a strong following under the Neo-Confucian, anti-Buddhist Joseon state. Indeed, Amitabha's followers included members of the court and the elite, as well as the masses. Many statues of Amitabha, including triads, were commissioned not by a single person or a small group but often by hundreds of people, as evidenced by examples with inscriptions. A number of miniature triads (much smaller than the Cleveland example) found in the Geumgang Mountains had been hidden among the rocks.

REFERENCE: Yi Bun-hui 2006.



14. *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians*, second half of the 16th century

Hanging scroll; color and gold on silk,  $48\frac{7}{16} \times 50\frac{3}{16}$  in. ( $123 \times 127.5$  cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (19.265)

15. *King Sala's Rebirth in Amitabha's Paradise*, dated 1576

Hanging scroll; color on silk,  $41\frac{5}{8} \times 22\frac{3}{8}$  in. ( $105.7 \times 56.8$  cm). Seizan Bunko Collection, Sakawa

16. Large dish with decoration of chrysanthemums and inscription (*naeseom*), 15th century

Buncheong ware with stamped design, h.  $2\frac{3}{4}$  in. (7.1 cm), diam. of rim  $12\frac{1}{4}$  in. (31.1 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

17. Cup with ear-handles, 15th century

Porcelain, h.  $1\frac{5}{8}$  in. (4.1 cm), diam.  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in. (11.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1917 (17.175.1)

18. Dish, 15th century

Porcelain, diam.  $8\frac{3}{8}$  in. (21.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Mary and James G. Wallach Foundation Gift and Seymour Fund, 2004 (2004.124)

19. Bowl, 15th century

Inlaid porcelain, h. 3 in. (7.6 cm), diam. of rim  $6\frac{7}{8}$  in. (17.5 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Dongwon Collection, National Treasure no. 175 (Dongwon 887)

20. Bottle, 15th century

Inlaid porcelain, h. 12 in. (30.6 cm), diam. of base approx.  $2\frac{3}{4}$ – $3\frac{1}{8}$  in. (7–8 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Dongwon Collection, National Treasure no. 175 (Dongwon 550)

21. Jar with decoration of bamboo and plum blossoms, late 15th–early 16th century

Porcelain with cobalt blue design,  $13\frac{3}{4}$  in. (35 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of the Sumitomo Group (20325)

22. Drum-shaped bottle, 15th century

Porcelain, w. 14 in. (35.5 cm), diam. 8 in. (20.2 cm). AMOREPACIFIC Museum of Art, Suwon

23. Drum-shaped bottle with decoration of fish, bird, and lotus, late 15th–early 16th century

Buncheong ware with iron brown design, w.  $9\frac{1}{4}$  in. (23.6 cm), diam. 5 in. (12.8 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka

24. Flask-shaped bottle, 16th century

Porcelain, h.  $10\frac{1}{2}$  in. (26.7 cm), diam. of body  $7\frac{7}{8}$  in. (20 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

25. Flask-shaped bottle with abstract decoration, early 16th century

Buncheong ware with brushed slip and incised design, h.  $8\frac{5}{8}$  in. (20.5 cm), diam. of body  $5\frac{7}{8}$  in. (15 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul



26a–f. Group of ceramic burial objects including  
an epitaph tablet dated 1448

Buncheong ware with stamped design. Leeum, Samsung  
Museum of Art, Seoul, Treasure no. 1428

This group of ceramic objects was buried in the tomb of  
the wife of Yi Sa-deung; her title, Yeongin, indicates  
her status as the spouse of a government official of the  
fourth rank. Yeongin Yi, originally from Goryeong,  
died in 1448 at the age of eighty-four.

I thank Jeon Seung-chang, Chief Curator, Leeum, Samsung Museum  
of Art, for this information.



Cat. no. 26e

27. Jar with decoration of chrysanthemum, second  
half of the 15th century

Buncheong ware with inlaid and stamped design, 14¼ in.  
(36.3 cm). Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of  
Mr. Ataka Teruya (21494)

### 28. Large bowl, 15th century

Porcelain, h. 4¼ in. (10.9 cm), diam. of rim 8¼ in. (21 cm).  
Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

### 29. Large dish, 15th century

Porcelain, h. 1¾ in. (4.4 cm), diam. 8½ in. (21.6 cm).  
AMOREPACIFIC Museum of Art, Suwon

White porcelain was the ceramic of choice of the early Joseon court and elites. Large porcelain bowls and dishes such as these examples (see cat. nos. 28, 29, p. 58) were certainly made for use at the palace, probably for banquets, and were produced at the royal kilns of Bunwon in Gyeonggi. These tableware pieces are defined by extremely simple forms and clean lines. The intentional lack of decoration further emphasizes the purity of the white porcelain medium. On the bases of the dish and bowl shown here is incised an inscription, the Chinese character for “Heaven” (天). The exact significance of the inscription is unknown, but it may refer to a storage facility where the vessels would have been kept until needed for an official function or event. The Bunwon kilns produced a number of vessels with single-character inscriptions on the base of the foot. Some of the most notable, besides “Heaven,” are “Earth” (地), “Black” (玄), and “Yellow” (黄); porcelain with these four inscriptions was made primarily at the Bunwon kilns of Usan-ri, Doma-ri, and Beoncheon-ri.

REFERENCES: Seoul 1996–97, pp. 320–21; Kim Young-won 2003, p. 147.



Cat. no. 28, detail



Cat. no. 29, detail

### 30. Jar with lid, 15th century

Porcelain, h. 10⅞ in. (27.7 cm), diam. of base 4¾ in. (12.2 cm). Horim Museum of Art, Seoul (KO387)

31. *Portrait of Sin Sukju (1417–1475)*, 18th century

Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk. Goryeong Sin Family Collection, Yeongseong-gun Branch, Cheongju

It was common practice in the Joseon to make replicas of portraits of important ancestors, particularly meritorious subjects. These portraits, believed to embody the spirit of their subjects, were worshiped in various family shrines (*yeongdang*), which might belong to different branches of a family.

For conservation reasons, the fifteenth-century portrait of Sin (fig. 22, p. 68) could not travel to the exhibition and has been replaced by this faithful eighteenth-century copy.

32. *Style of An Gyeon*

*Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple and Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting*, mid- to late 15th century

Pair of hanging scrolls; ink on silk, each  $34\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$  in. (88.3 × 45.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick P. Rose and John B. Elliott Gifts, 1987 (1987.278a, b)

33. *Yi Seonggil (1562–?)*

*The Nine-Bend Stream of Mount Wuyi*, dated 1592

Handscroll; ink and color on silk,  $13\frac{3}{16}$  in. × 13 ft.  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (33.5 × 398.5 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 2216)

34. *Attributed to Yi Gyeongyun (1545–1611)*

*Landscape with Figures*, end of the 16th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk,  $35\frac{7}{8} \times 23\frac{7}{16}$  in. (91.1 × 59.5 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 6165)

35. *Yi Jing (1581–after 1645)*

*Gold-Painted Landscape*, first half of the 17th century

Hanging scroll; gold on silk,  $34\frac{5}{16} \times 24\frac{1}{8}$  in. (87.8 × 61.2 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 1790)



Cat. no. 31



### 36. Yi Am

#### *Falcon*, first half of the 16th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk,  $38\frac{5}{8} \times 21\frac{1}{16}$  in.  
(98.1 × 54.2 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (11.6164)

In China, the origins of paintings of falcons and hawks have traditionally been traced back to the Northern Song period (960–1127). Many were produced under the Mongol rulers of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). Most such paintings, however, illustrate the bird in the wild, within such a natural setting. This portraitlike painting of a falcon, however, depicts a bird in captivity—as evinced by the rope around its ankles—likely trained and used for hunting. A nearly identical work is in the collection of the Mingeikan, Tokyo.

Long thought to be the work of a fourteenth-century Chinese painter, Xu Ze, this painting was recently re-attributed to Yi Am during a survey of the Korean collection of the Museum of Fine Arts by Korea's National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage. Two of the six seals in the top left corner of the scroll relate to Yi Am (the second seal reads *du seong-ryeong* (杜城令), his official title, the fourth *wansan* (完山), his ancestral hometown; the third seal, in the shape of a Chinese bronze vessel (*ding*), is similar to a seal found on his other works, including *Mother Dog and Puppies* (cat. no. 11).

REFERENCE: Gungnip Munhwajae Yeonguso 2004, p. 267.



Cat. no. 36, detail

37. Flask-shaped bottle with lotus decoration,  
15th century

Buncheong ware with *sgraffito* design, 8¾ in. (22.3 cm).  
Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, Gift of Sumitomo  
Group (20555)

The design on this charming bottle was achieved by applying a coat of white slip over the clay body, on which were incised the outlines of a large lotus flower and semiabstract leaves. The background area between the full blossom and leaves was carved out to create a design in low relief. Buncheong ware decorated in this technique was a specialty of kilns in South Jeolla province.

REFERENCE: Chicago, San Francisco, and New York 1991–92, p. 92.



38. Incense burner, dated 1397

Bronze inlaid with silver, h. 15 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (39.1 cm), diam. of rim approx. 11 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (29 cm), diam. of base approx. 8 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22 cm). National Museum of Korea, Seoul (Deoksu 3103)

This splendid bronze incense burner was made for the Cheonggok Temple in Jinju (South Gyeongsang province) in 1397, just five years after the founding of the Joseon dynasty. The date, name of the temple, and other information related to the production of this object are revealed in the silver-inlaid inscription of ninety-nine characters on the underside of the lip. The inscription also calls for a “Buddhist rule over the people.” Elaborate Buddhist objects such as this continued to be made by the elite despite the state’s Neo-Confucian mandate and anti-Buddhist policies, attesting to the endurance of this long-established religion. Though in shape and design this censer follows earlier Goryeo models quite closely, it has a more solid appearance, and the inlay is perhaps even more delicate and ornate. The main decoration on the body consists of six double-ringed roundels containing Sanskrit characters, surrounded by stylized floral scrolls.

REFERENCE: Seoul 1996–97, p. 328.







39. *Palace Scene*, mid-16th century

Framed painting; ink and color on silk,  $18\frac{3}{16} \times 35\frac{15}{16}$  in.  
(46.5 × 91.4 cm). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul

Very little original architecture from the early Joseon period survives. Most palaces and temples, made of wood, have been reconstructed numerous times following their destruction by natural disaster or war.

This painting illustrating the palace compound offers a rare glimpse into both the architecture of the time and daily life within the royal court. The composition employs parallel diagonals and horizontals, along which the buildings are aligned. Unlike the Western practice of perspective, which creates the illusion of recession, here the picture plane is tilted so that the background and foreground elements are the same size and equally clearly articulated. The figures engaged in various activities of

daily life both inside and outside the palace compound provide an engaging collection of genre scenes within the larger picture. Of particular note within the palace compound are the large Buddhist halls at the top center of the painting, with a view of Buddhist icons in one and monks dancing to the beat of a drum in the other. This work may date to the mid-sixteenth century, during the time of the dowager queen Munjeong, who promoted a revival of Buddhism and Buddhist activities.

REFERENCE: Seoul 1996–97, p. 301.

40. *Preaching Buddha*, ca. 1560.

Hanging scroll; gold and silver on silk,  $23\frac{7}{16} \times 14\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
(59.5 × 37.8 cm). Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne  
(Inv.-No. A 77,104)

The Buddha Shakyamuni, with his hands in a gesture (mudra) of teaching, sits atop a lotus dais amid an entourage of deities, guardians, and disciples. The style of the figures, particularly their round faces and delicately sensuous features, exemplifies the court style of Buddhist figural paintings produced during the reign of the dowager queen Munjeong. Though there is no identifying inscription, this painting was certainly made during this period and may have been commissioned by a member of the royal family. Painted almost entirely in gold, this work is notable for the refined linear treatment of the figures and for the background color: what appears to be black silk was originally blue silk dyed with silver, which has tarnished.

REFERENCE: I thank Kim Jung-hee, Professor, Archaeology and Art History, Wonkwang University, Korea, for this information; Ingelheim am Rhein 1984, pl. 94.



41. *The Great Departure*, second half of the 16th century

Hanging scroll; ink, color, and gold on silk, 59<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 41 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (150 × 105 cm). Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne (Inv.-No. A 11,7)

The fourth of eight traditional episodes illustrating the life of the Buddha, this representation portrays the so-called Great Departure: Prince Siddhartha, who will become the Buddha, or Enlightened One, leaves the palace compound in search of Truth and Salvation. The overlapping narrative reads from left to right, in the scenes both inside and outside the palace. Within the palace, a horse in the lower right brought before the king signals the prince's imminent departure; his wife, the princess, weeps as she caresses the horse; the narrative moves to the left, where the king, seated in a room of the palace, wipes away his tears; finally, in the grand room at the top of the palace compound, another scene takes place following the prince's departure, with the servants gathered around the distressed princess before two empty chairs. At the top of the painting, surrounded by dark mountains, Siddhartha sits in a red robe shaving his head, then, traveling in monk's garb, he meets a hunter. At the very top, a golden palace is enveloped in clouds. The bright colors juxtaposed with the dramatic play of dark, mysterious mountains and clouds create the mood of this theatrical narrative. It has been suggested that this painting may form a set with the scroll illustrating the Birth of the Buddha now in the collection of Hongaku Temple, Japan.

I thank Kim Jung-hee, Professor, Archaeology and Art History, Wonkwang University, Korea, for this information.







# Guide to Korean Transliterations

In 2000 the Korean Ministry of Culture established the Revised Romanization system—or “RR,” also known as the “Ministry of Culture,” or “MC”—for the transliteration of Korean names and terms. The chart below lists Korean names and terms appearing in the book, given in Revised Romanization, the McCune-Reischauer transliteration, and the *hangeul* spelling.

Revised Romanization	McCune-Reischauer	Hangeul			
An Gyeon	An Kyŏn	안견	Gyeongguk daejeon	Kyŏngguk taejŏn	경국대전
An Hyang	An Hyang	안향	Gyeongju	Kyŏngju	경주 (慶州)
Anpyeong Daegun	Anp'yŏng Taegun	안평대군	Gyeongsang Province	Kyŏngsang Province	경상도
Baegundong	Baeg'undong	백운동	Gyeryong-san	Kyeryong-san	계룡산
Bak Paengnyeon	Pak P'aeng-nyŏn	박팽년	Hakpong-ri	Hakpong-ri	학봉리
Bak Yeon	Pak Yŏn	박연	Hamgyeong Province	Hamgyŏng Province	함경도
Beoncheon-ri	Pŏnch'ŏn-ri	번천리	Han Sigak	Hang Si-gak	한시각
<i>binrye</i>	<i>pinrye</i>	빈례	<i>hangeul</i>	<i>hangŭl</i>	한글
buncheong ware	punch'ŏng ware	분청사기	Hangnimjeong	Hangnim-jŏng	학림정
Bunwon	Punwon	분원	Hanseong	Hansŏng	한성
Cheonggok Temple	Ch'ŏnggok Temple	청곡사	Heo Mok	Hŏ Mok	허목
Choe Eung-ryong	Ch'oe Ŭng-ryong	최응룡	Heungcheon Temple	Hŭngch'ŏn Temple	흥천사
Chunghyo-dong	Ch'unghyo-dong	충효동	Hoe-am Temple	Hoe-am Temple	회암사
Dae-seji	Tae-seji	대세지	Hoeryeong	Hoeryŏng	회령
Dangun	Tan'gun	단군	Hongsang	Hongsang	홍상
Deuktong Gihwa	Tŭkt'ong Kihwa	득통기화	Huigyeong Pavilion	Hŭigyŏng Pavilion	회경루
<i>dohwaseo</i>	<i>tohwaso</i>	도화서	<i>Hwagi</i>	<i>Hwagi</i>	회기
Doma-ri	Toma-ri	도마리	<i>hyanggyo</i>	<i>hyanggyo</i>	향교
Dosan	Tosan	도산	<i>Hyanggyak</i>	<i>Hyang'gak</i>	향약
Du Seong-ryeong	Tu Sŏng-ryŏng	두성령	Hyoseong	Hyosŏng	효성
<i>collo</i>	<i>ŏllo</i>	언로	<i>hyungrye</i>	<i>hyungrye</i>	흥례
<i>eongwan</i>	<i>ŏn'gwan</i>	언관	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>	이
Gaeseong	Kaesŏng	개성	Imjin War	Imjin War	임진왜란
Gang Hui-an	Kang Hŭi-an	강희안	Injo	Injo	인조
Gang Seokdeok	Kang Sŏk-dŏk	강석덕	Jang Malson	Chang Mal-son	장말손
<i>garye</i>	<i>karye</i>	가례	<i>jangheung-go</i>	<i>changhŭng-go</i>	장흥고 (長興庫)
Geumgang-san	Kŭmgang-san	금강산	Jeolla Province	Chŏlla Province	전라도
<i>gi</i>	<i>ki</i>	기	Jeong Dojeon	Chŏng Tojŏn	정도전
Giho	Kiho	기호	Jeong Inji	Chŏng Inji	정인지
<i>gilrye</i>	<i>kilrye</i>	길례	Jeong Sa-ryong	Chŏng Sa-ryŏng	정사룡
<i>gisaeng</i>	<i>kisaeng</i>	기생	Jijang	Chijang	지장
Gongju	Kongju	공주	Jin Hwa	Chin Hwa	진화
<i>gongsin</i>	<i>kongsin</i>	공신	Jinju	Chinju	진주
Goryeo	Koryŏ	고려	<i>Jinsolhoe</i>	<i>Chinsolhoe</i>	진솔회
<i>Goryeosa</i>	<i>Koryŏsa</i>	고려사	Joseon	Chosŏn	조선
<i>gunrye</i>	<i>kunrye</i>	군례	Ju Sebung	Chu Sebung	주세붕
Gwaneum	Kwan'ŭm	관음	Jungjong	Chungjong	중종
Gwanghaegun	Kwanghae'gun	광해군	Kim Anlo	Kim An-lo	김안로
Gwangju	Kwangju	광주	Kim Hyeon-seong	Kim Hyŏn-sŏng	김현성
<i>gye</i>	<i>kye</i>	계	Kim Jagang	Kim Cha-gang	김자강
Gyeonggi Province	Kyŏnggi Province	경기도	Kim Jongseo	Kim Chong-sŏ	김종서
			Kim Si (Kim Je)	Kim Si (Kim Che)	김시(김제)
			<i>mangudae</i>	<i>mang'udae</i>	망우대 (忘憂臺)
			Manu (Cheonbong)	Man'u (Ch'ŏnbong)	만우 (천봉)
			<i>Mungwa</i>	<i>Mungwa</i>	문과
			Munjeong	Munjŏng	문정
			Munjong	Munjong	문종
			Myeongjong	Myŏngjong	명종
			Myeongsuk	Myŏngsuk	명숙
			<i>Naehun</i>	<i>Naehun</i>	내훈
			<i>naeseom</i>	<i>naesŏm</i>	내섬 (內贍)

Nahan	Nahan	나한	<i>yangban</i>	<i>yangban</i>	양반
<i>Orye-ui</i>	<i>Orye-ŭi</i>	오례의	<i>yeombul</i>	<i>yŏmbul</i>	염불
Prince Wolsan	Prince Wolsan	월산	Yeongin	Yŏng'in	영인
Punggi County	Punggi County	풍기군	Yeongnam	Yŏngnam	영남
<i>Samgang haengsildo</i>	<i>Samgang haengsildo</i>	삼강행실도	Yeonsangun	Yŏnsan'gun	연산군
Saongwon	Saong'won	사옹원	Yi Am	Yi Am	이암
Sejo	Sejo	세조	Yi Gwangpil	Yi Kwang-p'il	이광필
<i>Seokbosangjeol</i>	<i>Sŏkposangjŏl</i>	석보상절	Yi Gyeongyun	Yi Kyŏng-yun	이경운
Seokka	Sŏkka	석가	Yi Gyubo	Yi Kyu-bo	이규보
Seon	Sŏn	선	Yi Hwang	Yi Hwang	이황
Seong Sammun	Sŏng Sam-mun	성삼문	Yi I	Yi I	이이
Seonggyun-gwan	Sŏnggyun-gwan	성균관	Yi Inno	Yi In-no	이인로
Seongjong	Sŏngjong	성종	Yi Iseong	Yi I-sŏng	이이성
Seonjo	Sŏnjo	선조	Yi Jehyeon	Yi Che-hyŏn	이제현
Seosan Hyujeong	Sŏsan Hyujŏng	서산휴정	Yi Jeong	Yi Chŏng	이정
Silla	Silla	신라	Yi Jing	Yi Ching	이징
Sin Sukju	Shin Suk-chu	신숙주	Yi Jong-rin	Yi Chong-rin	이종린
Sindo palgyeongsi	Sindo p'algyŏngsi	신도팔경시	Yi Sa-deung	Yi Sa-dŭng	이사등
Sindoga	Sindoga	신도가	Yi Sang-jwa	Yi Sang-jwa	이상좌
Songdo	Songdo	송도	Yi Seonggil	Yi Sŏng-gil	이성길
Sosu	Sosu	소수	Yi Seong-gun	Yi Sŏng-gun	이성군
Suncheon	Sunch'ŏn	순천	Yi Seonggye	Yi Sŏnggye	이성계
Taejo	T'aejo	태조	Yi Si-ae	Yi Si-ae	이시애
Taejong	T'aejong	태종	Yi Yong	Yi Yong	이용
<i>Taepyeong</i>	<i>T'aep'yŏng</i>	태평	Yi Hyeon-ro	Yi Hyŏn-ro	이현로
Toegye	T'oegye	퇴계	Yu Seokjin	Yu Sŏk-chin	유석진
Usan-ri	Usan-ri	우산리	Yulgok	Yulgok	율곡
Wansan	Wansan	완산			



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