

A security garden as paranoia

The guidebook of
The Easiest Way to understand Asia

Blind and Elephant

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14th Gwangju Biennale
soft and weak like water
2023 Gwangju Biennale participation works





Townpeople,
Who have Never Seen an Elephant,
Examine its Appearance in the Dark

Jalal al-Din Rumi, Maulana
(Persian, 1207-1273)

Source: Acquired by Henry Walters & The Walters Art Museum

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT.

A HINDOO FABLE.

I.

IT was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

II.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
“God bless me!—but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!”

III.

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried: “Ho!—what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me ‘t is mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!”

IV.

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant
Is very like a snake!”

V.

The Fourth reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
“What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,” quoth he;
“T is clear enough the Elephant is very like a tree!”

VI.

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: “E’en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant is very like a fan!”

VII.

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant is very like a rope!”

VIII.

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL.

So, oft in theologic wars
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter
ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

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1. The Greatness of the Ordinary

Definition of Art # Orient/the East # Asia



Yi Am, Hwajogujado (Flower, Birds, and Puppies), Early Joseon Dynasty, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

What comes to mind when you hear the word “art”? It may be a vague idea of an art museum or an artist standing in front of an easel. Or some people may think of artists like Michelangelo, Picasso, Klimt, Gogh, Monet, Mondrian, and Chagall. In other words, mainly Western painters.

Wouldn't some people think of an Eastern painter?

Of course, this would be the case if you were a reader who had picked up this book due to an interest in Eastern Art. However, when, at the beginning of lectures, I ask students to name the artists that they know, most of them only mention Western painters. This is to be expected since the majority of middle school and high school art textbooks and lectures are based on Western Art. However, given that you, the reader, have opened a book on Eastern Art, I believe that you wish to know more about the art of our surroundings. As someone who has great love for Eastern Art, I am more than happy to introduce you to this world of beauty.

For our first step into the world of Eastern Art, let us begin with a work of art that everyone will like. The work on the left is a painting by Yi Am known as Hwajogujado. This kind of dog is widely referred to a ‘sigoljabjong’ breed as a joke. Such puppies can commonly be seen in the countryside, resting comfortably with bright expressions that are unaware of the travails of the world.



Jeong Seon, Inwang jesaekdo (Scene of Inwangsan Mountain After Rain), 1751, National Museum of Korea

This is an ink landscape painting of Inwangsan Mountain after the rain. When we think of oriental art, we often think of ink-and-wash paintings and landscape paintings.

They say that mutts are the cutest.

In the name of the work, “hwajo” (花鳥) means flowers and birds, and “guja” (狗子) means puppies. Every aspect of this work is exemplary but, above all, the puppies are cute. This is why I am very fond of this painting. The natural objects placed around the puppies are also expressed in a realistic manner. Everything has been laid out in the frame in a harmonious way. This painting is the kind of the Eastern Art that everyone expects.

But isn't it an example of Eastern Art? It is definitely not Western Art.

This painting represents just one part of the vast world of Eastern Art. However, most of the time, the notion of “Eastern Art” brings to mind Kim Hong-do's genre paintings and or ink-and-wash paintings, such as Jeong Seon's Inwang jesaekdo, which can be seen on the next page. The fact that our perception of art is centered on paintings in this way illustrates how familiarized we have become to Western standards of art. The world of Eastern Art



that we will explore from now on is much wider and much deeper. Brace yourselves before our departure.

| Reasonable Prejudice |

There is an understandable reason why we have a fixed image of Eastern Art. It is because, in the beginning, the notion of “art (misul in Korean)” did not exist in the Eastern world.

“Art” did not exist? But there are clearly works of art.

Many of the Chinese characters that we now use in daily life were in fact created in Japan. The same goes for the term “art (k. misul, 美術)”. It is a translated term coined by the Japanese government in 1872, when they participated in an overseas exposition. It is a translation of the German term “Schone Kunst”, which is in fact has a broader meaning, encompassing all of the Arts. The original German term includes not only paintings, but also poetry, music, sculpture, and everyday objects.

Are you suggesting that everything is art?

I would not go that far since, first of all, art has to have been made by humans. No matter how beautiful, natural objects in themselves cannot be considered as art. It

(Left), Gold Earrings from the Bubuchong Tomb, Gyeongju, Silla Dynasty, National Museum of Korea

(Right) Lacquerware box with phoenix and cloud mother-of-pearl inlay, Joseon Dynasty, National Museum of Korea



On the left is an earring decorated with hundreds of tiny gold granules and thin gold threads, and on the right is a box decorated using the mother-of-pearl technique, in which shells such as abalone are cut out in various patterns to be used as decoration. Much effort was put into beautifully decorating both.



has to be an artificial object, elaborately made according to a meticulous design. And it should have the power to move our souls. Like all art, it must evoke some kind of emotion, be it joy, sadness, or pain.

Good art, is it art that greatly moves the soul?

Well, standards of good art differ according to time and place, and there have always been works that changed those standards. When we bring together the works that caused such innovations, that becomes “art history” as we know it. For example, performance art or installation art, in the past, was not regarded as art or as anything. However, they have now

become established as forms of art. This is why Nam June Paik's video art, a form of installation art, is highly praised. The art history that we know is based on a Western perspective. It is a narrative of art that puts "innovation" as its core criterion. Eastern Art is different. If the developments of Western Art have led to its alienation from the everyday, oriental art remains closely related to daily life.

I don't understand. Does this mean that Eastern Art comprises more everyday objects?

Eastern Art is fine art. But rice bowl can also be a work of art. Of course, it must be a well-made rice bowl. We will consider art to be anything, among the objects made

by people in the East, that has aesthetic characteristics. The gold earrings and lacquerware inlaid with mother-of-pearl examined above will also be considered as art.

Objects that are made by people and beautiful but not considered to be art?

The problem with most of the craft objects is that we do not know who made them. This is because if there is a design blueprint, then it is possible to make the same thing many times. This is not an original nor creative practice, so the results are generally not considered to be art. There is a recent exhibition that I personally enjoyed. It was a special exhibition called "Peonies, the



(Above) Pouch embroidered with peonies and fingered citron flowers, 20th century, National Palace Museum of Korea

(Bottom) Bojagi with auspicious phoenix patterns, Joseon Dynasty, National Palace Museum of Korea

주머니 안에는 한지로 싸 고급향이 담겨 있었으며, 주머니 입구에 연결된 청색 끈에는 유리로 만든 자색 구슬을 끼웠다.

Jo Yeong-seok, "Sewing" in Joseon sisa jecheop (Joseon City History Collection), Joseon Dynasty, Kansong Art Museum

Works of sewing and embroidery, which were considered to be women's pastimes, are now regarded as fine arts.



Flowers of Peace and Prosperity", which was held at the National Palace Museum of Korea, and I would like to introduce some of the pieces from the exhibition. They are works of art that illustrate how craft objects, which are irreplaceable, have been made since ancient times. The object displayed at the top is a pouch, and the one at the bottom is a wrapping cloth, known as bojagi. This particular pouch was used by the Joseon royal family. The silk fabric was elaborately embroidered with silk threads, and beads were attached to the ties, enhancing the pouch's splendid nature. As with the pouch, much thought and effort were put into the selecting the colors and rendering the patterns of the wrapping cloth.

For some reason, it evokes memories... It looks like the blanket I remember seeing in my grandmother's closet.

It seems familiar and not too

overwhelming, doesn't it? The important thing is that, in Eastern Art, such pouches and cloths made by ordinary women in the domestic context are also treated as art. Even though they may not be large, or be full of grand myths, or be the work of a master. In order to properly observe the world of Eastern Art, we need to break away from the Western standards that we are used to, and look around at our surroundings in a new light. Then, it will be possible to find clues of Eastern Art everywhere, in what is worn and well as the material world associated with eating and sleeping. Even on the street, in objects that people casually pass by.

2. When We Call it Art



Painting of the Buddhas of the Three Ages, around 1790, Daeungbojeon Hall of Yongjusa Temple, Suwon

The painting's name comes from the fact that the three Buddhas, respectively of the past, present, and future have been depicted.

This may be a bit confusing, but the definition of art can change at any time, be it in the East or in the West. What was not considered to be art in the past is now regarded as art. Even a few decades ago, there were many people who did not think of bojagi (wrapping cloth) as art. It was only after the turn of the millennium that such craft items came to draw attention as containing the unique beauty of Korea.

To be honest, I was surprised that bojagi, pouches, and the Boshingak Bell were regarded as art

In fact, it was the same with Buddhist paintings. Look at the left page and you will see the Painting of the Buddhas of the Three Ages featured on the wall of the Daeungbojeon Hall of Yongjusa Temple in Suwon.

Isn't that definitely Eastern Art?

In the past, Buddhist paintings containing Buddhist content, particularly Joseon Dynasty Buddhist paintings, were not highly valued. People said "Should this be regarded as art?", "Is it not just religious expression?", and vaguely overlooked the possibility of its value as art. No one was hesitant in calling the Hwajogujado, discussed in the previous section, as art, whereas Buddhist paintings were reluctantly acknowledged as art. And even then, it was not regarded as meaningful art. After some time, the art of the Joseon Dynasty was reexamined entirely, and it

came to be revealed that Kim Hong-do, an artist known to everyone, had been involved in this painting. This led to its gradual evaluation as good art. In this way, the categorical definition of art can be seen to change at any moment.

Then no one can know what art will become in the future.

One doesn't have to think too hard. Have you heard the phrase "When I called its/his/her name, it/he/she came to me and became a flower"? It comes from Kim Choon-soo's poem, "Flower". The same goes for art. It is only at that moment when someone calls it art that something that was just an object or a trace becomes art. The flowers that I grow at home have a name. I have named them "Camellia". Sometimes I call out "Camellia, Camellia" to the flowerpot. Maybe it is because I have been caring for them with such effort, the few buds have bloomed into beautiful flowers.

Did you name it "Camellia" because it is a camellia flower?

It wouldn't have mattered if I had given them the name "Rose" or "Lily" or indeed even "Strawberry" or "Deer". No matter what it was called, the flower would have existed as is.

Would it not be strange to call a camellia flower "Strawberry" or "Lily"?

It would have been, since names are important. If, in the first place, that red something had not been called a flower, it would not even be a flower. The moment that we named it “flower” and agreed to call it by that name, then it became a flower. The same goes for art. It was not called “art” from the beginning. That is the name that was given by us. This is why the boundaries of art fluctuate according to time period and region. Just as the wrapping cloths made by nameless women and Buddhist paintings hanging in temples have become art today.

| From the Eastern Sea to Asia |

Now, at least, when I think of “Eastern Art”, I will no longer think only of ink-and-wash paintings.

In a way, it is only natural that ink-and-wash paintings come to mind when we think of “Eastern Art”. There is, of course, the influence of Western Art which is focused on paintings, but it is also because our perception of the “East” is implicitly based on Northeast Asia, where we live. Korea, China, and Japan form a cultural sphere where ink-and-wash paintings developed. In fact, our knowledge of the entirety of the “East”, in other words Asia, may be keenly limited.



Camellia Flower

Asia? Isn't Asia also part of the East (k. dongyang)?

Do you know exactly what dongyang means? If you look at the Chinese characters alone, it is a combination of dong (東, meaning “the east”) and yang (洋, meaning “the sea”); in other words, the Eastern sea. Seoyang (i.e. the Korean term for “the west”), on the other hand, means the Western sea. Originally, the terms referred to the eastern and western seas of China, but “東洋” was used in Japan to mean Asia.

There are more words borrowed from Japan than I was originally aware of.

That is correct. In Korea, the term “東洋” was used as it had been in Japan. These days, there is a trend within academia to replace that term (often also translated in English into “Oriental”) with “Asia”. In preparing for this lecture, I thought about whether to use the expression “Eastern/Oriental Art” or “Asian Art”. Due to the nature of the lecture, I thought it would be better to use terms that are familiar to many people, so have I decided to use the expression “Eastern Art” for now.

So it is called Eastern Art, but it is in fact Asian Art, isn't it?

Yes, it can be thought of as the art of Asia. However, if you call it that, then the problem concerning the boundaries of Asia remains. Korea is definitely included. Turn

the page to see the map. Asia is largely divided into Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. To the north, it also includes Siberia.

I am familiar with the concepts of Southeast Asia and Central Asia, but it's awkward to see the other places being regarded as “Asia”.

Let's take a closer look. If you look at the colors on the map, gray represents Siberia, red is Northeast Asia, yellow is Southeast Asia, brown is South Asia, green is Central Asia, and blue is West Asia. What many people are most confused about is West Asia, which can be said to form the boundary between the West and the East. Parts of West Asia, located close to continental Europe, were sometimes referred to separately as the “Near East”. This is translated as “geundong”, with “geun” (近) meaning “close” and “dong” (東) meaning “east”. This term, geundong, represents a Western perspective and so I try not to use it, but it is true that there are characteristics unique to the Near East which make it possible to distinguish it as a separate entity.

What countries belong to the Near East?

Usually Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, etc. The region also extends to include parts of Northeast Africa. It also happens to be the birthplace of ancient



Asia's Location and Divisions

15th century, with the discovery of the "New World", the previously known continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa were grouped together as the "Old World", thereby forming a corresponding concept. The "Old World" is where human civilizations developed from a very early period.

Mesopotamian civilization. However, even though it is located right next to this region, Iran must be regarded separately. The roots of the area up to Iraq can be traced back to Near Eastern culture, in other words, the civilization of Mesopotamia. Iran, on the other hand, is a descendant of a slightly different Persian Empire. Perhaps due to differences in the way of life, the two still don't get along very well.

To be honest, they look the same to my eyes.

Persia originated in a small area in present-day Iran. Then, in 539 BC, it conquered all of the Near East and established a great empire. Before then, the people who lived in the Near East were people of the Mesopotamian civilization. The natural environments of the two countries are also completely different. One would expect many deserts since it is the



The Birthplace of the Four Great Civilizations

Middle East. Iraq has many deserts, as expected. On the other hand, deserts are rare in Iran. Whether Mesopotamian art belongs Western Art or Eastern Art is an ambiguous issue and so most of this content is skipped over in lectures on Eastern Art. Geographically, it clearly belongs to Asia and the East, but it has had a great influence on Western civilization. However, as you listen to the lecture, you will gradually come to understand why the story of Mesopotamia was brought up.

In the past, the first human civilizations were referred to as the "Four Great Civilizations". This concept comprised the Mesopotamian civilization, the Egyptian civilization, the Yellow River civilization, and the Indus civilization. Nowadays, this concept of the four major civilizations is rarely used. This is because continued archaeological excavations have led

to the discovery of other civilizations. Still, it cannot be denied that these four civilizations remain important. In the map below, the Egyptian civilization is located to the far left, the Mesopotamian civilization is next to it, the Indus civilization sits in the middle, and the Yellow River civilization is located to the far right. Look at where each civilization emerged. Three of the four great civilizations were all based in Asia. The region of Mesopotamia is in West Asia, the Indus River is in South Asia, and the Yellow River is in China. So, to talk about the culture of Asia, one has to go far back in time, wherever the culture. In a way, Asia may be defined as the region where civilizations were established from a very early age in human history. It will also stand witness to the emergence of other various civilizations in the future.

3. Archetypes are Established

Definition of Art # Orient/the East # Asia

Guryong Waterfall in Geumgangsan



As we know, the Chinese people have always loved dragons. So did our ancestors. Below is the Nine Dragons Waterfall on Mount Kumgang. It was named for the nine dragons that seem to be harmonizing as the waterfall thunders down from a great height. It is a waterfall that Kim Hong-do, a famous painter in the Joseon Dynasty, as well as most painters, would paint whenever they traveled to Kumgangsan. Similarly, our ancestors would often liken a mysterious or spiritual landscape to a dragon.

Come to think of it, people say that good things happen if you dream of a dragon.

We often vaguely say that “dragons are good and bring good luck.” Have you ever wondered why we think this way? The symbolism of dragons being a bringer of good luck was established during the Chinese Han Dynasty. This idea was transmitted to Korea and has had an influence until now. During the Han Dynasty, not only this symbol but also elements that could be defined as characteristics of Chinese art were refined into a sophisticated form.

Why did it come during the Han Dynasty when there were also the Shang, Zhou, and Qin dynasties?

Of course, the symbols and unique Chinese aesthetic had been around for a long time, but the Zhou dynasty was too

weak and the Qin dynasty was too short-lived - it collapsed within a decade of Qin Shi Huang’s unification of China. The Han dynasty, on the other hand, lasted for more than 400 years. It was during this time that Confucianism and Taoism, two of the great ideas of the East, blossomed with the support of the state. These ideas played a crucial role in crystallizing the symbols that had existed as stories told by people.

| A sign of good fortune |

The dragon was a typical auspicious symbol in Confucianism. Other popular symbols included phoenixes, grains of wheat, lotus trees, and giraffes.

Is Yanli Mok a tree?

Compared to dragons or phoenixes, it may be unfamiliar. Yeonrimok is a tree that grows two separate trees entwined together like one tree. It is sometimes said to symbolize true love as it reminds people of two unrelated individuals meeting and spending their lives together.

To avoid confusion, the giraffe is not the African giraffe we know. It is an imaginary animal with a dragon’s face, a deer’s body covered in blue scales, a lion’s tail, two horns, and horse hooves. All of this was believed to be a lucky omen and a symbol of peace and prosperity during the reign of the celestial emperor, as it was believed

that the heavens sent this strange and mysterious creature as a sign of good governance.

Dragons, phoenixes, and giraffes are all imaginary, so they can't possibly exist, right?

These animals appear specifically in ancient Chinese literature and records, including

Confucian scriptures. Even reports from subjects to the emperor say things like, "Someone in a village saw a dragon ascending into the sky," or "A giraffe appeared and was going somewhere."

Did they really appear?

No, it's not. It was put up to flatter the emperor. These symbols are called

First-class military Officer Gold Thread Giraffe Chest and back Decoration, Qing Dynasty, Jung Young-yang Embroidery Museum at Sookmyung Women's University

The giraffe, which is a symbol of noble elegance, has been widely used as a decoration due to its sacred status. The male is called "Ki" and the female is called "Rin", and when combined, they are called "Kirin". "Kirin" means giraffe in Korean.



Keumsan Yangjiri Pinus Yanli Mok

It is estimated to be 150 years old and is designated as a natural monument. It is the only pagoda pagoda in Korea.

auspicious. We say something is "auspicious" when there are signs that something good is about to happen. Critically, they serve to cloud people's judgment about what is good and bad, right and wrong. Imagine a tyrannical king. And then one day a rumor spreads that the heavens, impressed with his politics, sent down a dragon. How would the people react?

The heavens wouldn't have sent a dragon for no reason, so people would have been confused.

Yes, the emperor could use it to rule the country with ease. But just like the dragon dream, "auspicious" often appears in

everyday life apart from political purposes. It was used by rulers and subjects alike to pray for good fortune and ward off evil. It was even embroidered on wedding dresses in the Joseon Dynasty. Look at the photo above. A pair of phoenixes are embroidered on the ends of the sleeves. When the sleeves are rolled up, the two phoenixes are supposed to meet. It was a wish for a happy marriage as the pair of phoenixes face each other affectionately.

| Why Do Rabbits Live on the Moon? |

Have you ever heard the song "Blue sky Milky Way white sided boat one cassia tree



Royal Women's Wedding Dresses, After 1880, National Palace Museum of Korea

This is a wedding dress kept at Changdeokgung Palace, and the photo shows the back of the wedding dress. A lotus flower and egret were placed in the center, and a pair of phoenixes were placed on the sleeves.

one rabbit"? The white sided boat points to the moon and a rabbit lives there.

When we were young, we used to think that there were rabbits on the moon. They said the dark spots on the moon were shaped like rabbits.

You probably didn't know that this legend originated from Taoism. The reason why rabbits came to live on the moon was even to serve the immortals who manage the elixir of life. Anyone who wants to become an immortal must eat this elixir.

Even if you try your best, can't you become a deity without that elixir?

That's right. So the administrator wasn't just anyone. Xi Wangmu (Queen Mother of the West: keeper of the peaches of immortality), who was served by the rabbit, was the administrator. They were like the gods of the gods. To the people of the Han Dynasty who were eager for eternal life, faith in Xi Wangmu was overwhelming. The royal family burned incense or held rituals for Xi Wangmu every day. Even King Xi Wangmu, who had

declared Confucianism the state religion, served him tenderly. The book "The Story of King Mu of Zhou" beautifully depicts the story of King Mu and Xi Wangmu falling in love.

In addition, the story of Xi Wangmu has left many traces in our lives. When we commonly say that the world is "Yaochi Mirror" which means chaos, "Yaochi Mirror" refers to the pond in Gonryun Mountain where Xi Wangmu lived. The mirror reflecting that pond is called the "Yaochi Mirror." Our lives may be nothing more than a landscape reflected in the pond of the divine world. The actual Gonryun Mountain range in western China also seems to have been named after Xi Wangmu's Kunlun Mountain.

It must have been a very powerful mountain range.

Just as magnificent natural objects were likened to dragons, the real-life Kunlun Mountains were also named because they were as harsh as the mountains inhabited by gods. According to Taoist mythology, the Kunlun Mountains of Xi Wangmu are also a place where no one can go. It was surrounded by a river called Ixu, or Yaxu.

Couldn't they cross by boat?

It was impossible. Even if they tried to float a boat on the river or tried to swim, everything sank. So only the immortals who could fly were able to go to the Kunlun Mountains. Even servants of Xi

Wangmu were transformed into three blue birds called "Samcheongjo" and provided what she needed.

| The Taoist World of Xi Wangmu |

Let's take a closer look at Xi Wangmu and his world. Below is a tile mural from the Han Dynasty. In the center is a tiger and a dragon, connected as if they were one body. Seated on it is Xi Wangmu, and it's clear that she's no ordinary person because even her chair is out of the ordinary. Records show that Xi Wangmu wore a jade crown on her head that looked like a fail, and that's exactly what her headdress looks like here. See the rabbit in the lower right? He's bent at the knees, respectfully holding a branch-shaped candlestick with both hands.

It's a real rabbit! Didn't you say that the rabbit came to live on the moon to serve Xi Wangmu? Where is the moon?

The world inside the "tile mural" is the world of the moon. If you decipher the name of Xi Wangmu, it means the queen mother who lives in the west and rules over it, roughly translated as the "goddess who rules over the west". In ancient times, Chinese people imagined the west to be the world of the moon and believed that Xi Wangmu ruled over it. When they looked up at the sky, the moon appeared to rise from the west, hence the association. Of course, scientifically, the moon does not



The Gonryun Mountains on the Silk Road

One of the longest mountain ranges in Asia, the highest mountain is about 7200 meters above sea level.

move around the earth like that. In Taoism, the moon is also associated with the toad. Under Xi Wangmu's throne, there is a toad with one leg raised as if dancing.

It looks cheerful. Could it be because they are serving Xi Wangmu?

It seems so. At least for now, we are in a perfect world of the moon. However, if we shift our gaze to the left from the toad, we can see a bird with three legs, which is called a "Samjoko" in Korean. As you can see on the right, it was often depicted in the wall paintings of ancient Korea's Goguryeo era, so someone might know about it. Samjoko symbolizes the sun. As the sun rises in the east, it is associated with the east.

Suddenly, the sun in the world of the moon?

Surprisingly, yes. There is a male god called "Dongwanggong" who rules the

east, paired with Xi Wangmu. He was called "Gong" as a title for high status men. According to Chinese thinking, yin and yang must be harmonized. So, since Xi Wangmu rules the west, a male deity should rule the east. If we think about it, the east is associated with Dongwanggong, so it would make sense for the sun to be under his authority, but people at that time had no interest in Dongwanggong. They just thought that Xi Wangmu was in charge of the moon and the sun, in other words, the one who governed the whole day was Xi Wangmu.

Xi Wangmu's popularity has really skyrocketed.

As long as Xi Wangmu has the elixir of immortality, no other god can surpass her popularity. If you look at the lower right corner of the tile mural, you'll see a group of people sitting and bowing, begging for the elixir of immortality to be granted to them. The tall man standing on the left is

the head of the gatekeepers of Xi Wangmu. Above the rabbit is a creature you might not expect to see here. It's a four-legged animal, both familiar and extraordinary: the gumiho.

Gumiho? You mean the legendary nine-tailed fox?

Yes, that's the tail that looks like a long leaf on its back. You've heard the story of the nine-tailed fox eating human's liver when you were a kid, right? Originally, Gumiho wasn't just scary, it was a divine being that worshiped Xi Wangmu.

| Raven of the Sun, Toad of the Moon |

But why did the three-legged crow (三足鳥) symbolize the sun and the toad symbolize the moon?

You can find clues in Chinese legends that feature the appearance of Xi Wangmu. Since it is a legend, the details vary by region, but I will tell you my favorite version. Look at the replica of the stone carving in the photo. There is a large and lush tree standing in the middle. It is the Boosang tree that is said to be in the most eastern part of the world where the sun

Tile mural with Xi Wangmu, 1st-3rd century, Sichuan, China, Sichuan University Museum



rises. The Boosang tree is said to have ten suns hanging from it, taking turns to illuminate the world every day. Each time a crow came and took one of the suns in its beak to help illuminate the world. The birds flying around the Boosang tree in the replica are crows.

I wonder if the crows are black because they were burnt to a crisp while carrying the sun.

It could be possible. One day, a maid serving Xi Wangmu stole the elixir of immortality, and ran away. The name of this maid varies from region to region, and is called Hang-ah or Sang-ah. Xi Wangmu was furious when she found out, and ordered ten suns to rise simultaneously to find Hang-ah. She wanted to illuminate the entire world to find her. However, as

the ten suns shone together, everything on earth burned and plants withered. At that time, a skilled archer named Yi appeared and shot arrows towards the suns one by one until only one sun remained. We can now live under one sun and feel its warmth thanks to Yi.

So Yi shot down the sun with his bow. He doesn't seem like an ordinary archer.

That's right. According to one legend, Yi was the husband of Hang-Ah. Feeling responsible for his wife's actions, he took up his bow and went out to shoot down the sun himself. The person shooting the bow in the upper right corner of the replica is Yi.

What happened to Hang-Ah? Yi suffered and was on the brink of the world's destruction.

It's not easy to escape the grasp of the Hand of Xi Wangmu. She was immediately caught. Xi Wangmu turned Hang-Ah into a toad and banished her to the moon. The toad on the moon who lived in solitude with the rabbit was Hang-Ah.

These symbols are repeated. The tomb mural painted in the 4th to 5th century BC is an example of this. Just like the sculpture we saw earlier, Xi Wangmu is in the center, and below her are the three-legged crow and the nine-tailed fox. Do you remember that the people of the Han dynasty wanted to go to the divine world, even after they died? Regardless of the time period, Xi Wangmu's image was often placed on tomb ceilings because they had the specific heaven, the afterlife, in mind. This mural was also painted on the ceiling.

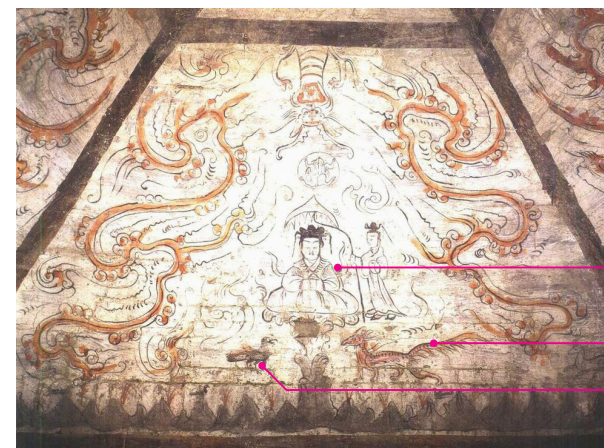
We can see that the desire to ascend to the divine world where Xi Wangmu resides after death continued.

Even after this time, worship of Xi Wangmu continued to be very popular. To this day, Xi Wangmu is an important deity in Taoism. These stories were passed down orally for a long time before being recorded in writing in the 200s AD. In this sense, the era of the Three Kingdoms can be seen as the origin of Chinese mythology and its symbols that are still in use today. Han-era art is the oldest image culture that reflects this worldview.

Gumiho in a tile mural with Xi Wangmu(part)

Gatekeeper

People bowing



Xi Wangmu, 4th-5th century, West Wall of fifth division of Jinggakap Jiuquan City Gansu Province, China

Opposite, on the ceiling of the east wall, there is Dongwanggong. Below and to the left of Xi Wangmu is the black bird Samjokuo. To the right is Gumiho.

Xi Wangmu

Gumiho

Samjokuo

4. The Dawn of the Era of Written Characters

#Sangnara #Eunheo #Gapgol #Calligraphy

Wherever you go to a temple, you can see lanterns of various colors swaying in the air. As you read the wishes written on them, you can feel the earnest hearts of people. Perhaps you also have a wish to write on a lantern?

The time and effort required to fulfill that wish would have been considerable. However, the correlation between effort and results is not always proportional. Sometimes, problems arise during important exams due to negligence in studying, or accidents happen on the day of a presentation preventing one from attending, and so on. At times like this, it feels as if luck determines everything in the world, and there is nothing one can do with their own strength. There would have been many sleepless nights filled with anxiety.

It seems like everyone experiences similar feelings. Is there anyone who has never experienced anxiety

throughout their entire life?

Even modern individuals experience anxiety, so what must it have been like for ancient people? Even phenomena that are now scientifically understood, such as solar eclipses and earthquakes, would have made them anxious. For ancient people who could not understand the causes of natural disasters and thus could not prepare for them, events involving the mysteries and dangers of the universe and nature were inevitable. There were frequent wars and famines as well. In such times, the Chinese would consult the divination book at Gang-gol.

Why did they do fortune-telling after solar eclipses or earthquakes had already occurred?

At that time, the Chinese believed in a deity who presided over natural phenomena, with the sky as its representative. So it was natural for them

to serve the heavens and try to understand its will. One way of doing this was through divination, such as fortune-telling.

It doesn't sound like such an unfamiliar practice after hearing about it.

Even today, when suddenly faced with misfortune or important decisions in life such as moving or marriage, some people pray to a deity, while others visit a fortune-teller to inquire about their future. They all seek a response from some entity that is greater than themselves.

There are people around me who visit fortune-tellers whenever something big or small happens, but they don't seem too obsessed with the results.

Perhaps one difference between us and the ancients is that we don't take divination too seriously. At that time, the messages



People praying in front of incense

Even today, many people seek divine guidance or visit a fortune-teller when they encounter difficulties. Some even offer incense or make offerings.



Oracle bones(甲骨) / circa 1200 BC / Excavated in Eunheo, Henan Province, China/ National Museum of China in Beijing

implied by divination were considered absolute. Therefore, those who conducted divination, such as fortune-tellers, were very important figures.

| The king knows the will of heaven |

The person who cast the divination using oracle bones at that time was none other than the king. At the time, the king was not only the ruler of a country, but also the representative of the gods. Just as the ancient Chinese worshipped the gods, they also looked up to the king.

The king must have been pleased to be regarded as a god by the people.

That's right. Thanks to this, the king was able to strengthen his power through

offerings, also known as sacrificial rites. As the king's power grew, the ceremonies became more solemn and sacred. This was to show that the king was different from ordinary people, even if only to prove it.

Even though a king is also a human, how different could they have been?

They were different. Because they could read the oracle bone inscriptions. Do you see the markings on the bones in the picture below? They were used to record the inscriptions made by the diviner when he made his marks on the bone. These inscriptions were considered sacred characters that contained messages from heaven. Most people couldn't read the inscriptions, but the king, as the representative of the gods, could read them fluently. To the people, it must have been

an awe-inspiring sight. Naturally, they revered the king as a noble and followed him.

Was the king the only one who knew how to read the oracle bone inscriptions in the world?

More accurately, it should be said that it was the ruling class. The farther back in history you go, the fewer people can read and write. Most people didn't even have the opportunity to learn. Therefore, the oracle bone inscriptions symbolized even more special power. In other words, the person who knew the oracle bone inscriptions and could communicate with the gods became the king and the ruling class. Although it may seem like a mere ritual to us today, the act of divining by marking the bone was not an ordinary or

trivial matter to the people of that time. It was carried out in a solemn and reverential atmosphere.

But I can't imagine how they made divinations by marking the bones. It looks like it would break easily.

It does look like it would break easily because there is gold in it. However, this appearance is evidence that the oracle bones were used for divination.

| A Chinese medicine store sells skulls? |

Take a look at the picture here. The oracle bone inscriptions are carved on the left and right side. The two sides of the oracle bone inscriptions represent opposite meanings. For example, one side means "go to war" and the other side means "do not go to war." The method of divination is simple: first, you make a hole in the middle and put a hot rod through it, and then it cracks. The direction of the crack is the direction of the heavenly will. The reason why the oracle bone was made of hard tortoise shell or animal spine was so that it would not break when the hot rod touched it.

I thought it was just an old antique, but it played an important role....

First impressions can be deceiving, and



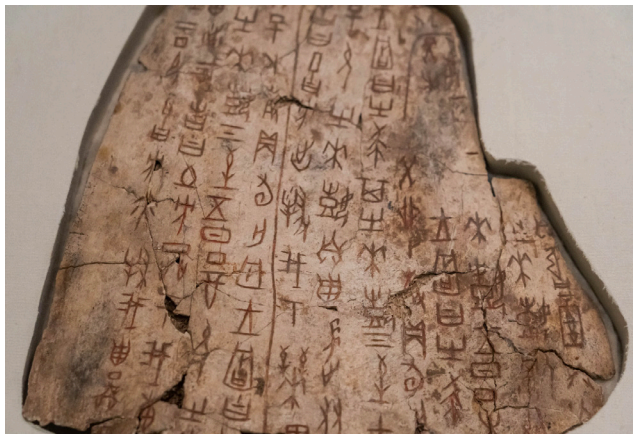
Replica of the oracle bone inscriptions

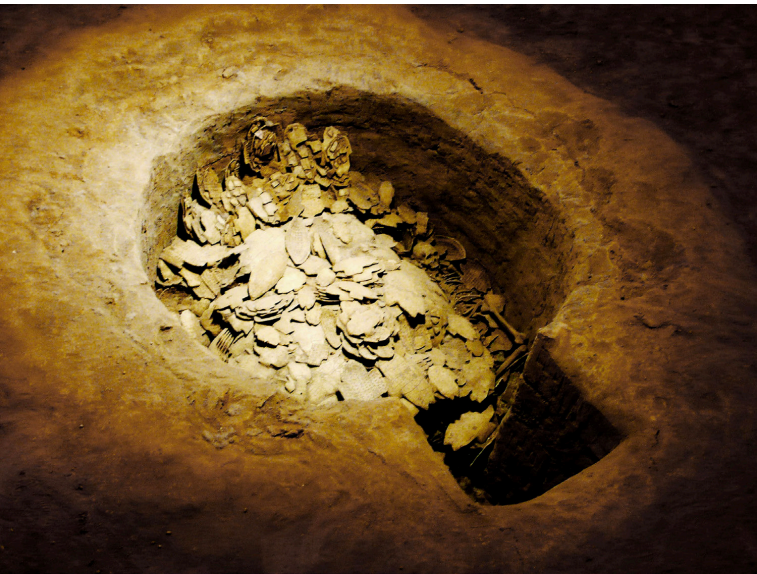
Similar yet different characters are engraved on both sides of the oracle bone. These characters are based on the shape of the oracle bone when it splits after being heated with a stick, and they resemble the Chinese character for divination, "卜" (b).

for a long time, the Chinese people didn't realize that skulls were important artifacts. Until the late 19th century, when a Chinese man named Wang Yirong realized the value of bones. When diggers stumbled upon them, they were often discarded or even sold to Chinese herbalists. It got to the point where the bones were sold as a panacea called dragon bone, or dragon

Oracle bone inscriptions, 11th century BC/ Excavated in Eunheo, Henan Province, China/ the National Museum of China in Beijing

These are inscriptions of the results of divinations that were carved into the bones. They are pictographs that are similar to hieroglyphs and are considered the origin of Chinese characters.





Oracle bones excavated in Anyang, Henan Province, China

Each and every one buried in the pit is an oracle bone. It can be estimated that there are an enormous amount of them.

bone. You can still find dragon bone in Chinese herbal medicine stores today. It's supposed to relieve stress and lower cholesterol, but it's made from fossilized animal bones.

What a way to make money, then and now. How did Wang Yirong recognize that a skull was an important artifact?

During the Qing dynasty, epigraphy was a popular field of study. Epigraphy is a discipline that studies ancient characters engraved on artifacts made of metal or stone. Wang Yeo-yeong was a researcher of epigraphy. One day, while recovering from malaria in an herbal medicine shop, he

discovered characters inscribed on a bone. To the eyes of an experienced epigrapher who had seen many inscriptions, the pattern on the bone looked unusual. From then on, Wang Yeo-yeong collected bones whenever he could. As he came from a wealthy family, he was able to do so. Eventually, he discovered that the bones were used for divination during the Shang dynasty.

Wow, so an herbal medicine ingredient became an artifact overnight?

However, it took some time for Wang Yirong's claims to be accepted. It wasn't until a massive amount of the oracle bones

was discovered in 1936, as shown in the picture below, that people began to take an interest in the oracle bones. Research on the oracle bones became much more active in later years than during Wang Yirong's time, and the true value of the oracle bones gradually became apparent. At this point, it's hard not to mention the Shang dynasty. In fact, the oracle bones could be considered one of the inventions of the Shang dynasty.

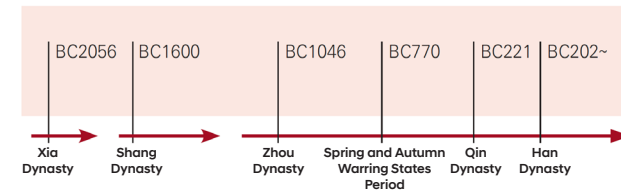
| From a Legendary Kingdom to Historical Fact |

You've heard of "Don Quixote", right? It's a Spanish novel about the adventures of a man who believed the events in the book were real. You might have experienced feeling like a story was real while reading a book or watching a drama. But how would you feel if you found out that a story you thought was made up actually happened?

It might feel like a pleasant surprise, but also a bit unsettling and thrilling.

Between 1928 and 1937, something significant happened in China. The ruins and relics of the Shang Dynasty, which had only been recorded in history, were discovered. This was such a remarkable discovery that it necessitated rewriting Chinese history. According to legend, the first state established on Chinese territories was not the Shang Dynasty. Ancient records, such as Sima Qian's "Shiji," state that the Xia Dynasty was the beginning of the country. The Shang Dynasty came after the Xia Dynasty, followed by the Zhou, Qin, and Han Dynasties.

The Xia and Shang Dynasties had long been considered legendary states, much like the founding myth of Korea's Dangun. The story goes that the legendary figure Hwanung descended from heaven, and the bear turned into a woman, and Dangun,



the son of the two, established Gojoseon.

When we think of it in terms of Korea, it becomes much more relatable. Even I would be shocked if evidence surfaced that Dangun was a real person.

The red circle on the map below indicates where the relics of the Shang Dynasty were excavated. Most of them are located in the central plain, with Eunheo in Anyang being one of them. Eunheo means “ruins of silver,” with “silver” referring to the capital of the Shang Dynasty, which was also known as Yin. It became Eunheo after the Shang Dynasty was destroyed by the Zhou Dynasty in 1046 BC. The word “ruins” or “hollow” (h) was added to signify the desolation of the place, resulting in the name Eunheo.

Once it might have been a prosperous capital city, but it ended up being remembered in history with a melancholic name.

In reality, during the Silla Dynasty, it was a thriving city. The excavations have continued since it was first discovered 85 years ago due to the vast size of the Eunheo site. At Eunheo, they discovered remains of sacrificial pits, building foundations, tombs, bronze vessels, and jade objects. The pit filled with armor shown earlier also came from Eunheo. This oracle bones was a decisive piece of evidence that proved the existence of the Shang Dynasty. Thanks to the oracle bones, it was revealed that the Shang Dynasty had a religious and political system that equated the king with the high



Main Sites of the Shang Dynasty

The early capital of the Shang Dynasty was in Unsah and Jeongju, and the later capital was in Eun, Anyang.

priest. Thus, the once legendary unknown kingdom became a vivid piece of history.

| Write it down, and it will last forever |

Is there no trace of the previous Xia dynasty before Shang dynasty was discovered?

That’s correct. Only Shang dynasty has been proven to exist through the discovery of the oracle bones. The once-existing Xia dynasty is still considered a legendary kingdom without any ruins found. There are some claims that there are ruins from the Xia dynasty, but they are not certain.

How many things disappeared without a name like that?

Making and recording letters from an early age meant that it was advantageous to preserve history. In Korea, we restored the history of the Three Kingdoms through the records left by China. Of course, some may ask if we have the “Samguk Sagi” and “Samguk Yusa”. However, these documents were written in the Goryeo Dynasty after the Three Kingdoms period, so we have no choice but to look at contemporary Chinese records.

The script that became the origin of Chinese characters in the future is called “Oracle bone inscriptions”. There are even Oracle bone inscriptions that can be

recognized in today’s Chinese character system. In fact, in China, they even offered a reward for deciphering Oracle bone inscriptions.

The prize may be tempting, but I don’t think anyone would study Chinese characters for that reason. There are usually too many things to memorize.

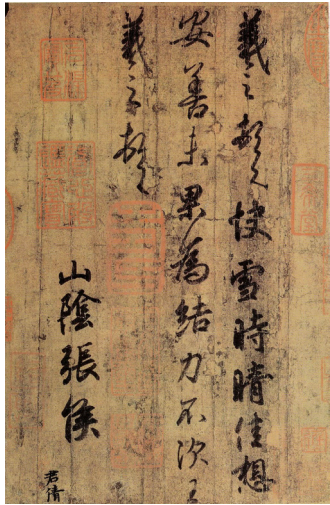
Many people are intimidated by Chinese characters. However, these difficult characters were the origin of Chinese culture. Art is no exception. Calligraphy is a representative example.

| Chinese characters blossoming through art |

Calligraphy is often considered an art made up of lines. Even small differences in how much pressure is applied to the brush or the speed of the strokes can greatly affect the aesthetic beauty of the characters. In China, calligraphy was actually recognized as an art before painting, as it was seen as a way to express the calligrapher’s personality and artistic abilities.

I remember doing calligraphy during art class. I would always feel a sense of accomplishment after finishing the first stroke...

Remember when we were kids and we tried grinding an ink stick on an inkstone?



Wang Huiji, *Joyful Greetings After the Snowfall* (excerpt), 4th century, National Palace Museum of Taiwan

"Joyful Greetings After the Snowfall" is a piece of writing that asks after the well-being of a friend after a heavy snowfall followed by clear weather, as the title suggests. It is one of the most highly-regarded works in the National Palace Museum of Taiwan's collection.

Even though it looked like we were just scribbling, it wasn't an easy task. The ink would spread so easily that by the end, the characters would be a complete mess. Just writing legible characters with a brush requires a lot of skill. If you try it yourself, you'll understand what it means to showcase one's artistic abilities through calligraphy. However, even if you write beautifully, it's another issue whether society recognizes it as art. Wang Xizhi is a

figure who made a significant contribution to establishing calligraphy as a genre of art in China. In the 4th century, he gained fame as a calligrapher and was called the "sage of calligraphy," or Shosei (書聖).

What kind of calligraphy did he use?

The piece on the left is by Wang Huiji, who was famous for his versatile and free-flowing handwriting. His calligraphy was also characterized by its harmony. He brought great innovation to the art of calligraphy by moving beyond the traditional focus on lines to incorporate space as well.

Afterwards, people refined their skills in beautiful calligraphy based on Wang Huiji's writing style. They began to develop calligraphy as an art form. In Korea and Japan as well, people honed their own calligraphy skills and developed the art of calligraphy. Later, figures like Chusa Kim Jeong-hee created their own styles, such as the "Chusa style."

Nevertheless, since calligraphy is first and foremost writing, wasn't the meaning of the sentence more important than its beauty?

Of course, calligraphy is an art form that cannot be separated from Chinese characters. The trends of the time also influenced handwriting. Some interpret Wang Huiji's free-flowing style as being influenced by his experience

creating Taoist talismans. We often say that "excellent writing comes from an excellent personality." In Northeast Asia, people have long believed that a person's knowledge and character are reflected in their calligraphy. It is not strange that the most certain way to cultivate one's character was through calligraphy. Both the writer and the reader had to be well-versed in classical Chinese literature and philosophy to appreciate calligraphy.

So it must have been an art form that only intellectuals could enjoy?

Not all art forms written in Chinese characters, such as calligraphy, were serious. Traditional Korean letters on the right-hand side can also be cited as an example of the same genre. In "munjado," each stroke of the Chinese character represents a picture. The content is also clear and easy to understand, with clear moral lessons. It was much more popular than traditional calligraphy.

Many works in "munjado" dealt with the eight virtues of Confucianism called "Pal-deok." Pal-deok refers to filial piety, loyalty, brotherly love, trustworthiness, etiquette, righteousness, integrity, and shame. Each picture that accompanies each character symbolizes creatures from Chinese history and legends that represent each virtue.

How are creatures from legends connected to the characters?



Kim Jeong-hee, "Su-sik Deuk-gyeok(瘦式得格)" 19th century, Gansong Art Museum

This is a work included in "Nanmaengcheop," (a kind of picture book) and "Su-sik Deuk-gyeok" means to gain proper status in the technique of drawing thin lines. A dignified scholar figure is prominently featured at the top.

Let's take filial piety as an example, the most familiar to everyone. The picture on the next page represents the character for filial piety. At the top, there is an image of a crucian carp, below it is a bamboo shoot, and on the top right is a fan that looks like a lotus. These objects are associated with three stories that represent filial piety. One story is about breaking the ice of a frozen river to catch a crucian carp for one's stepmother, another is about searching for bamboo shoots in the dead of winter for a sick and old mother, and the third is about fanning one's father in the summer and warming his bed with one's body in the winter.

Part of a Munjado, 19th century, Korea, Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Munjado, 19th century, Korea, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

This artwork consists of eight panels and measures about 330 centimeters in width when unfolded. The combination of animals related to Chinese history or legends into a single character is a unique characteristic found only in Korea.



“Munjado” contains clear moral lessons and was often placed in children’s rooms as an intuitive work that could be understood at a glance. The meaning was to keep it nearby and engrave the eight virtues into the body.

If there was a T-shirt with that kind of design printed on it, I would buy it.

It still looks great even now. Isn’t it amazing that such diverse works of art were created using Chinese characters? In fact, Chinese characters have achieved even more remarkable accomplishments in recording history. The first history book in the Asia was written in Chinese characters. It is “Shiji” which was written by Sima Qian in the Han Dynasty of China. “Shiji” consists of ‘Bon-gi’, which deals with the story of the emperor, ‘se-ga’, which tells the stories of empresses and kings, ‘seo’, which explains the system and culture, ‘Pyo’, which summarizes important events in chronological order, and ‘Yeol-jeon’, which is composed of stories about important figures.

There must have been people living in other parts of East Asia during the same period... It’s thanks to Chinese characters that the first history book in the East came from China, right?

That’s correct. The early development of writing systems led to a culture of recording. Chinese characters evolved from their origins in oracle bones and went on

to unify Northeast Asia, including Korea, into a shared culture of Chinese characters.

5. A New Wind Sweeping across the Land of India

#Buddhism #Siddhartha #Vedic Period

One day, I had a lecture and drove out in my car. About 20 minutes after driving, I suddenly realized that I had forgotten to take the USB with the lecture materials. Although it was tight on time, I didn't think I couldn't go back for it, so I turned the car around and headed back. The walk from the car to my house felt like forever, and I only stared at the numbers on the elevator screen. Luckily, I arrived at the lecture hall just in time. I felt like I had become the protagonist of a novel who had successfully accomplished an impossible mission.

| Words from India by Our Side |

In fact, I didn't share this story without any particular reason. There are four Indian words hidden in this episode.

Four words? It seems like you were just speaking in the words we commonly use.

"Ipan-sapan" (meaning "helter-skelter" or "here and there") is an Indian word. Although it's somewhat unique, did you know that "lecture," "entrance," and "protagonist" are also Indian words?

I've never really thought about it as being related to Chinese characters.

Many words we use in our daily lives, such as "admirable" and "mysterious," as well as concepts, public, household, and even the word "knowledge," all come from India. Most of them are Buddhist terms. Indian words for Buddhist concepts have been translated into Chinese characters and spread to Korea along with Buddhism. For example, the word "protagonist" was a term used to refer to someone who had achieved enlightenment in Buddhist scriptures. They were known as individuals who had attained enlightenment.

So the Buddha is the protagonist then.

That's right. It's surprising how close India

is to us when you think about it. We've been using words that originated in India in our daily lives. The intermediary for this was Buddhism.

| Anyone can become a Buddha |

Let me explain this important point first. Buddha is a word that evolved from the Indian word "Buddha" which means an enlightened person. The word "Buddha" was transcribed into Chinese characters as "불타" (pronounced "Bultta") and then was further transcribed into Korean as "부처" (pronounced "Bucheoh"). So "Buddha" means an enlightened person.

Buddha → 불타 (Bultta) → 부처 (Bucheoh)
=
Enlightened person

I see, "Buddha" and "Bultta" are the same word.

Do you know what "tatata" means? It's the title of a song that starts with "Do you know me while I don't know you?" This is a phrase from an ancient Indian language meaning "a person from the world of truth". It's a shortened version of "tatagata". When you translate it into Chinese characters, it becomes "여래" (pronounced "Yeoraе"). "여" means "the

world of truth" and "래" means "coming". So it means a person who comes from the world of truth or a person who goes to the world of truth.

Enlightened person
=
Tatagata/tatata
(person from the world of truth)
=
Yeoraе
=
Buddha

So it means even if you come from the world of truth, it's like you fell from heaven, right?

It means they have achieved enlightenment. Tatagata, or Yeoraе, means an enlightened person, just like Buddha.

So the song title refers to Buddha.

That's correct. When you hear "Buddha," you may think of Siddhartha Gautama, but That's not always the case. It's important to note that although Siddhartha Gautama is a Buddha, not all Buddhas are Siddhartha Gautama. Buddha refers to a group of "enlightened people," not just one person. Siddhartha Gautama was just one of the countless Buddhas. His original name was "Gautama Siddhartha." He became a Buddha after achieving

enlightenment.

Are there multiple gods?

Strictly speaking, Buddha is not a god. The term "Buddha" refers to enlightened humans. Sakyamuni also claimed that anyone can become an enlightened human.

Can I become a Buddha if I make an effort?

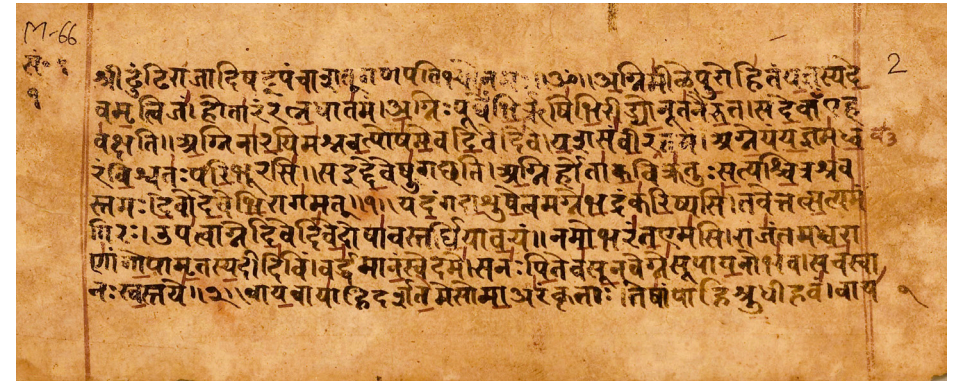
Yes, you can. It feels quite equal that anyone can become a Buddha. This was even more so thousands of years ago. Especially, it was enough to shake the hearts of desperate Indian people. What was India like at that time that Buddhism could steal people's hearts?

| Indus civilization was an unequal society |

In the 6th century BC, when Buddhism was just born, the Aryans were in the declining Indian land of the Indus civilization. The Aryans, who were nomads, entered the Indus River basin after wandering the prairie and occupied the Ganges River basin by around 1000 BC. They were physically strong due to their long nomadic life, and since they were already using iron while other ethnic groups were using bronze, they could overwhelm the indigenous people with their formidable combat power. The Aryan rule was a trigger for the introduction of the caste system after the end of the equal society of the Indus civilization.

Manuscript of the Rigveda

The oldest text and fundamental Veda among the four Vedas, it is full of praise for Indra, the chief god of the Aryans. It was passed down orally from around 1500 BC to 400 AD, and only then was it recorded in writing.



Have indigenous people become lower class?

Yes, they have. People were divided into classes through the caste system based on their race or occupation, which has led to severe discrimination and inequality that persists to this day.

Why did the Aryans create the caste system? Everything was fine when they lived equally, wasn't it?

They wanted to establish themselves as superior to the indigenous people as conquerors, and to do that, they needed a basis. The Vedas and the caste system were what they brought with them.

What is the Veda?

It is a scripture that contains hymns dedicated to the gods, methods of worship and offering sacrifices. There are four major Vedas, and the oldest one is the Rigveda. The verse about the fate of the Dravidians that was shown earlier comes from here. It may have been imagined as a book since it is a scripture, but it was actually passed down orally. It was completely new culture for the indigenous people of India at the time. The Indus civilization did not have a systematized mythology or ritual, but the Vedas contained stories that made the Aryans seem "noble." In other words, people who were not Aryans were naturally considered inferior. Ultimately,



Amidado of Gangjin Unjusa Temple Amitabha Triratna mural, 1476

The figure sitting in the middle is Amitabha Buddha, who was a popular Buddha as he governed the Pure Land.

the fact that the Aryans ruled over the indigenous people was interpreted as the will of the gods.

I don't know the basis, but they seem so arrogant. The Dravidians must have felt so helpless.

They had no choice but to follow the words of the Aryans. The caste system was created based on these claims in the Vedas. That's why this period is called the Vedic period. It lasted from around 1500 BC to about 500 BC. It still has an influence today. It's not an exaggeration to say that the Vedas are the foundation of Indian society.

How is it possible that events from thousands of years ago still have an impact today?

The Brahmanism that was created based on the Vedas at the time became the roots of Hinduism, which would later emerge. You may have heard of the concepts of karma or reincarnation. They came from Brahmanism.

I thought reincarnation was a concept that originated from Buddhism.

Surprisingly, it's not. It actually originates from the worldview of the ancient Indo-Aryans. Since you probably already know about reincarnation, I'll just briefly explain "karma". Karma is easy to understand as "cause and effect". It means that our

actions bring corresponding results. If we do something bad, we will suffer a bad consequence, and if we do something good, we will receive a good reward. Karma is a translation of the Indian word "karma" and is connected to reincarnation. If we do good deeds, we can be born in better conditions in our next life. Priests used the concepts of karma and reincarnation to support the caste system. They would say, "You were born into a low caste because of the bad deeds you did in your previous life. Accept it as repentance and live with it." To break free from this cycle, people had to perform religious ceremonies through the priests to wash away their past karma.

I used to unconsciously say, "Why is life so difficult? What did I do in my past life?" It's unbelievable that they used such suffering for their benefit...

In the Vedic period, the power of Brahmin priests reached the sky. The priests were at the top of the caste system. It took 20 years just to memorize the contents of the Vedas, so only a few people knew them. The only way to perform complex religious ceremonies and communicate with the gods was through the Brahmin priests. People could only perform religious ceremonies through them. By mastering these religious ceremonies, Brahmins solidified the caste order.

I bet the words of the priests were heard like the words of God.

Yes, That's true. The power of the second-highest caste, the Kshatriyas, also came from the priests. After the Indo-Aryans arrived, India, like other civilizations, began to wage wars frequently among various tribes. At this time, the general who led the war to victory became the origin of the Kshatriyas. First, the Kshatriya offered money and sacrifices, and the priests performed a ceremony saying, "This person is a leader sent by the gods." When the Kshatriya became king, the term became synonymous with nobles and aristocrats.

If the gods say so, people had no choice but to believe.

The only thing people could do to escape their karma was to ask the Brahmin, who could communicate with the gods, to perform religious ceremonies.

| Through good deeds and meditation |

However, over time, the authority of the Brahmins began to wane. Both the lower classes and the Vaishya, the merchant class, began to resent the caste system.

Did the higher classes also have reasons to resent it?

Even though Kshatriyas were nobility, they still had to be mindful of the Brahmins. The Vaishya, who accumulated wealth, were treated poorly due to their lower social status, and therefore, resented the caste system. In such Indian society, wandering ascetics emerged. They strongly criticized the unequal caste system and ritual of the Brahmanism. They believed that truth could be realized through good deeds and meditation, not just through rituals performed by priests. They



Statue of Shiva in Kshatriya

Kshatriyas were a class of rulers in the Maratha Empire, one of several countries that entered India in the 17th century. As they originated as military leaders, Kshatriyas are typically depicted as warriors wielding swords.

shaved their heads, begged for food, and constantly asked questions about how to escape the suffering of the world.

Wandering ascetics must have been a thorn in the side of the Brahmins.

Yes, and among them was even the Buddha himself. In such a social climate, the Buddha founded Buddhism. According to the Vedas, humans are inherently unequal, and salvation can only be achieved through priests. However, the Buddha argued that regardless of social status or birth, one could attain salvation through enlightenment without relying on priests. How revolutionary Buddhism must have seemed to those who lived tightly bound by the caste system.

| Buddhism Enters the Hearts of the People|

Of course, Siddhartha Gautama did not intend to establish Buddhism from the beginning. After spending six years as an ascetic wanderer, he gained enlightenment, but he believed that people would not understand the truth he had discovered. So, he persistently asked the five ascetics who had practiced with him at the beginning to share his enlightenment with them.

Since Buddha must have dreamed of everyone becoming happy together,

he must have been convinced to give a sermon.

That's when Buddha first gave a sermon in Sarnath. The word "sermon" comes from the words "seol" (說) and "beop" (法), which means "explaining the nature of Buddhism in words." It's like giving a lecture on difficult knowledge in a language that everyone can understand. The five practitioners who heard the sermon began to follow Buddha like chicks and asked to become his disciples. As time went on, more and more people followed him.

By today's standards, he would be almost like a celebrity lecturer!

Even today, there are people who seek famous lecturers for enlightenment. The difference between those who followed Buddha and those people is that the former became monks.

In Christianity, too, the apostles who followed Jesus spread his teachings.

That's right. Buddha is a senior figure, but he is still followed by a group of monks called "sangha" in Chinese characters. In Korea, there is a university that trains monks called "sangha university," and there is a temple called "sangha temple" on Mt. Bukhansan. It is essential for a philosophy to become a religion to have a founder and followers. If Buddha had kept his enlightenment to himself until

The Sangha Temple nestled in Mt. Bukhansan's Bibong Peak

The Sangha Temple, located on Mt. Bukhansan, was built in the 11th century as a sacred place where many kings prayed. There used to be a statue of King Seonjo in the back of the temple, but it has since been moved to the National Museum of Korea.



he died, Buddhism would not have been born. Knowledge that is not passed down disappears.

The disciples who urged and persuaded Buddha to preach must have made a great effort.

That's right. The problem is that Buddha only conveyed what he had realized in his lifetime through speech. When he was alive, the lack of written records was not a big problem. But after he died, the situation changed. As teachings were

transmitted orally, accuracy decreased over time. There was no one to correct it. Later, there were disputes about what Buddha had said, which led to arguments.

So Buddha's disciples gathered together to sort out what they remembered of Buddha's teachings and to determine what was correct. This process is called "canonization." It was done orally, not in writing.

I can't imagine how they sorted out Buddha's teachings orally.

Let me give you an example of the first canonization that took place shortly after Buddha's death. It lasted for a period of seven months, during which more than 500 of Buddha's disciples participated. The process was as follows: one disciple would recite what he remembered of Buddha's teachings, and then the others would check if there were any problems with it. If everyone agreed, it was adopted as the official version. Finally, they memorized the sorted teachings together. Such canonization was conducted several times over hundreds of years. It was first recorded in writing in the first century BC. Canonization was even conducted until 1954.

In the canonizations that followed the first one, ordinary people and kings who respected Buddha also participated. Ultimately, Buddhism spread widely not only because of Buddha's teachings, but also because of the people in India who actively spread his enlightenment to others.

If you could just tell me the essence, what was the teaching of the Buddha that they were trying to convey?

| The universe revolves and painful life repeats |

The truth that the Buddha awakened to is called "Dharma." It is written in Chinese

characters as "Dalma." You may have seen a picture of a famous monk named "Dalma" in the Joseon Dynasty on the next page. Perhaps the meaning behind "Dalma" may resonate more if it is translated into words. When "Dharma" is translated into Chinese characters, it means "law" or "way."

Is "Dalma" a person, a being, or a way?

"Dalma" means the truth of the world. The Dalma Sutra named the word after himself. When translated into Chinese, it becomes "Tao," which means "truth" in Buddhism. It means realizing the principles or laws of the world. Among them, one of the most important truths that the Buddha realized was that we must let go of attachments and desires.

But what is the benefit of gaining enlightenment?

It is naturally good because you no longer have to reincarnate. You are freed from the bonds of the world and no longer have to experience birth, old age, sickness, and death. It's called Nirvana.

So, the name "Nirvana" in the rock band, Nirvana, has a significant meaning?

Yes, it is. "Nirvana" is an ancient Indian language translated into Chinese characters, and the band's name is "Yi Ban" in Chinese characters, meaning "Nirvana."



Kim Myung-guk, Dalma-do, 17th century, National Museum of Korea

The protagonist of the painting, Dalma Dae-sa, was a prince from the southern part of India who traveled to China in the 6th century and founded the Seon (Zen) Buddhism.



(Above) Jeseokcheon and Beomcheon statues at Cheonggoksa in Jinju, 18th century

Originally deities in the Vedas, Indra and Brahma have become lesser deities in Buddhism and are often depicted in Buddhist scriptures and art.

(Below) Indra in Hindu mythology

Indra is also known as 'sakra' in the Rigveda, which means "the strongest". In Brahmanism, Indra was the king of all gods, but in Hinduism, he became an ordinary god as Trimurti took center stage.

| Not all aspects of tradition are old and worn out |

The beginning of Shakyamuni's teachings dates back to 2500 BC in the early Iron Age. Although it was a different era, the Buddhist philosophy that emphasized equality by saying "anyone can attain enlightenment" was considered revolutionary during the time when the caste system was at its peak. However, the teachings also contained familiar traditions of India at the time, and as a result, many people followed it. Buddhism did not completely reject India's traditions. Shakyamuni believed that "life is cyclic like the world" and this philosophy was from the Vedas. The Vedas were the fundamental worldview of India and their content was passed down through Brahmanism to Hinduism, which continues to this day. Buddhism shared some aspects of the Vedas' worldview. Although it was possible to argue that "there is nothing like reincarnation in the world," Buddhism did not do so.

It seems difficult to deny reincarnation, even if the caste system is removed.

Buddhism was not hostile to other worldviews, and it did not reject other gods. An example of this is the "Jeseokcheon" and "Beomcheon" that can be found in Korean temples, such as the one in the top right corner of the picture above.

The Jeseokcheon statue on the left in the photo represents 'Indra', who was considered the god of the Aryans. In Brahmanism, Indra was regarded as the king of all gods and the strongest god, receiving the worship of all the gods. The Beomcheon statue represents the god 'Brahma', which was originally a term in the Vedas referring to a sacrificial rite, but in Hinduism, he is elevated as the god who created the universe.

In Korea, the Jeseokcheon statue has been continuously revered in shamanistic beliefs since the 20th century, to the extent that there is even a Jeseokgut ritual.



From the "Records of the Three Kingdoms" Baekje section

The history of the Three Kingdoms era, compiled by the monk Iryeon of the Goryeo Dynasty, also records the folktales and songs that were circulated among the people. The Seodongyo song appears in the Baekje section.

Did you know that the deity appearing in Korean shamanistic rituals was the god of the distant Indian Aryans? It's quite surprising.

The key point is that Buddhism absorbed all existing traditions without overturning them to create its own unique system. Not only the worldview, but also the stories that convey Buddhist philosophy followed the method that Brahman priests used to transmit the Vedas. Like how the Vedas were transmitted through songs and epic poems, Buddhism also relied on oral tradition to spread its teachings. The process of compiling Buddhist scriptures that I mentioned earlier is an example of this. It was also surprisingly effective in conveying stories through songs and poetry.

When it's told orally, it's choppy and disjointed, isn't it?

That may be true, but it was also powerful. You know the song "Seodong," which starts with "Princess Seonhwa secretly..." The legend goes that Baekje's King Mu, who used to dig and harvest Chinese yam, spread this song and married Princess Seonhwa, becoming a king. It demonstrates how powerful songs and poems with melody can penetrate deep into people's hearts. While the stories of Buddhism in Vedas may not have been as easy to sing and recite as the folk songs, like Seodongyo, they were probably more intense than everyday speech or writings.

That's right. Sometimes we only realize the hidden meaning of the lyrics we mindlessly sing later on...

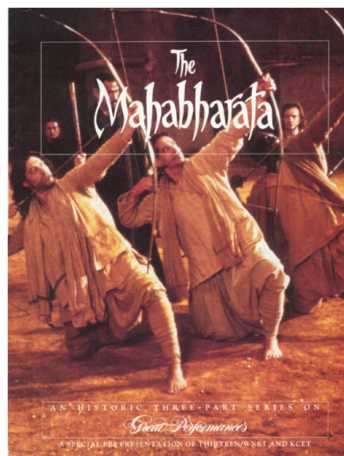
Even today, Indians still enjoy the genre of epic poetry. Most of the important Indian epics were created during the Vedic period. The Mahabharata is one of the three major epics that emerged during the Vedic period, and it is a story centered around Krishna, the incarnation of the god Vishnu who maintains the world. Incarnation refers to the various forms taken by a god. In India, it was imagined that a god who descended to the earth could transform into various forms. However, in 1989, this was adapted into a movie and became a huge hit.

So, they made a movie based on the entire worldview?

If it were to be made into a movie based on the story of Dangun mythology in Korea, 10 million people would come to see it. It's an incredible influence. Buddhism did not deny the advantages of this Veda tradition while accepting it and attracting people.

[The wind blows in many directions]

As Aryan became the protagonist of Indian history, the caste system and the epic shook society greatly. During this time, almost no one expected to be able to do



The poster for the movie "Mahabharata"

After gaining popularity as a 9-hour play that toured the world for 4 years, it was adapted into a movie in 1989. An anecdote of receiving a standing ovation for 20 minutes at the Venice International Film Festival that same year is famous.

more than their own status. Slaves had to live as slaves for life. However, with the popularization of Buddhism, cracks began to appear in the strictness of the caste system. The fact that a king could come from the fourth caste of Sudra was an example. Have you ever heard the greeting "Become a Buddha" in a temple? It means to become a Buddha by using the Chinese characters 成 and 佛 together. This greeting is given to anyone who comes to the temple, unlike Christianity, which does not say "Become Jesus"

If people are told to become Jesus at church, wouldn't that be a big problem?

This is where Buddhism differs from many religions. The true meaning behind "Become a Buddha" is the idea of equality that everyone can become a Buddha through realization. That was the most important message that Buddhism wanted to convey to people, even while embracing existing traditions. That powerful message gradually ignited the hearts of people in India. Initially, the influence of Buddhism was limited to the northeast region of India. However, the wind does not always blow in one direction. Even if it collides with mountains or faces another wind, it just splits into branches and continues to blow endlessly in various directions. 200 years after the passing of Buddha in the 3rd century BC, Buddhism finally spread throughout India. In the midst of this, an enormous transformation occurred for the first time in the history of India and Buddhism.

6. The Art of the Strangeness that Connects God and Power, Exaggeration and Subjugation

The mighty power of God revealed through exaggeration is not something that can only be seen here. Even in the prehistoric era, which is the first stage of human civilization, especially during the Bronze Age, the relationship between humans and gods that was formed during that time continued. Just as in human relationships, once a relationship is established, it is difficult to change. Relationships are quite conservative, after all. For example, the relationship of “humans who obey the gods,” which emerged from the idea that humans are weak and gods have mighty power. Humans hold on to the gods and negotiate with them, making various wishes and offerings. This was the case in both the East and the West. However, in the East where national power developed early on, gods were eventually depicted in monumental art. Fortunately, some of them still exist today. The more ancient the society was, the more closely related power, religion, and art were. The powerful ones tried to reign over the people by emphasizing their power, and art was a good way to show it off. The more grotesque and bizarre it was, the more it appeared to have a powerful transcendental force. Depicting gods in a tangible form and obtaining the power to rule over people by exploiting it was a rather convincing way to rule over people.

| A Mask for Communication with the Gods |

However, art depicting gods and deities was not exclusive to the powerful. The people found their own way of life. They created gods who could represent and speak for them. These are commonly referred to as folk beliefs and are a category of folklore. Some call it folk art, while others call it popular art. What do you call it? Regardless of the name, it contains the hopes and aspirations of the creators. Masks are a good example. Masks have been created in many Eastern countries, including Korea, Japan, and China. In Korea and Japan, people wore masks and performed dances or theatrical performances. But upon closer examination, they were not really modern performances, but rather ceremonial performances that reflected their wishing. They were dances, theatrical performances, and rituals that contained their own desires. Nowadays, masks are often displayed on walls, but they were not created solely for display purposes. They were not created as pure art for appreciation from a modern perspective. Think about the image of someone wearing a mask and dancing devoutly with a deep longing. The uniqueness of each mask is not intended to create beauty but rather to find a way to communicate with the gods, sometimes in a bizarre or threatening way. Grotesque masks from Indonesia or India are all doors to the heart of the gods. If they appear grotesque, it is because



Dangsan Tree

A "Dangsan Tree" is a sacred tree that is thought to be inhabited by a god as a guardian of a village. It is revered as the center of the Dangsan fortress, which is the guardian deity of the village, and also as the central axis of the village.

they are meant to ward off evil spirits. They must appear fierce and terrifying to frighten away evil spirits.

| Small Deity in Our Neighborhood |

What about the gods? It is not a religion filled with endless scriptures and complex priests. They are simple gods who protect the village, ward off evil spirits, and wish for the peace of the people in the neighborhood. They are the humble gods who sometimes settle on the edge of the neighborhood, and sometimes on the back of the village, guarding the land, and they are also the kitchen gods who watch over the stove. They do not need to boast perfect beauty like Greek sculptures of Zeus or Hercules, nor do they need to show off their enormous size like the Sphinx of Egypt. As long as we can always see them and pray to them in our daily lives, it is enough. The small shrines built near rural villages in Myanmar, Vietnam, or Indonesia, as well as the indigenous gods enshrined inside them, are all similar. If the masks are not standardized and the appearance is bizarre, small statues of gods enshrined in personal houses, village shrines, or neighborhood corners appear quite familiar.

| Is it a demon or a friend? The story of the puppet |

Our wooden dolls that we put on the funeral bier are similar to these ggokdu which are a kind of puppet. It is unclear when these ggokdu were first made, but it is certain that there has been a tradition of making them for a long time. This tradition continued until the 20th century. These small wooden dolls ggokdu, made in the shape of people or animals, are carved from wood and painted in various bright colors. Although it may not be considered outstanding artwork, it is an art form that is flawless as a companion on life's difficult journey. The ggokdu we put on the funeral bier are not just simple wooden dolls. They are a presence that reminds us of the joys, sorrows, pleasures, and pains of the deceased, who continue to

walk with us, urging us to let go and leave without worry. They may not possess the immense ability to bring rain or save us from disasters, but they are a transcendent existence that crosses between this world and the afterlife. Look at their appearance. Don't they look innocent? They seem naive yet natural, as if they are looking at us and our neighbors. We don't need to look for Eastern beauty only in grand palaces or eight-panel folding screens. These primitive art forms, such as the charming and skillful ggokdu dolls and miscellaneous figures, represent our own unique aesthetics. Eastern art has this multi-sensory approach that is both threatening and humorous. It's not about seeking strict balance or symmetry, but about expressing our artistic consciousness as our heart guides our hands.



Namhae sang-yeo from Chungmu in Gyeongsangnam-do, Korea, Jeju Bon-tae Museum collection

The funeral offerings used in Namhae County are adorned with carved top decorations depicting musicians or dancing jesters.

Kim Shidug

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7. Funeral bier ornament? Is really a 'Ggokdu'?

Ggokdu, Tongyeong City Museum Collection

It is a companion statue that decorates the offering used during traditional Korean funeral ceremonies, and is meant to accompany the soul of the deceased on their lonely journey. It is typically crafted in the shape of a person or animal.



Everyone calls the funeral bier ornament 'Ggokdu.' But is it really Ggokdu?

Sangyeo means funeral bier. When we applied for designation of 'sangyeo' the Bier Belonging to the Goryeongdaek House of the Jeonju Choe Clan, Sancheong as a national folklore cultural heritage in 1995, the 35 male and female dolls lined up on the first and second floors of the Sangyeo were called 'sirip-yong' which means 'lined up in honor of the deceased' on their way to the other side. At this time, experts agreed that sculptures and paintings decorating the statues should be called "funeral bier ornament" while human-shaped sculptures should be called "○○Yong(俑)" which means figurine.

However, it's been said that the term 'Ggokdu' started being used to refer to Sangyeo ornaments at some point. Recently, there have been musicals such as 'Ggokdu' and dramas such as 'seasons of Ggokdu' at the National Gugak Center. As an author studying funeral rites, I couldn't understand how 'Ggokdu' became the representative noun for Sangyeo ornaments no matter how hard I tried.

So, I searched the records of Korea and China for a long time, but I couldn't find any evidence for it. I learned a folk play called 'Ggokdu Gaksi Norum' in college, and I remember that the dolls appearing in it were called 'deolmi' or 'Ggokdu.' The meaning of the Ggokdu that appears in Ggokdu Gaksi Norum also means 'puppets

that move as people manipulate them.' It originated from China's Guō Tū (in Korean, Gwakdu), and the result of the Sangyeo ornament collector's mistaken use of terminology was 'Ggokdu.'

Historically, it is surprising that the term referring to the human form was used with strict logical distinctions. A wooden doll representing a person was called "mok-woo (木偶)," "mok-woo-in (木偶人)," "mok-woo-sang (木偶像)," or simply "woo (偶)."

On the other hand, dolls related to death were called "yong (俑)." For example, the terracotta warriors in the mausoleum of Qin Shi Huang represent the continuation of the funeral culture. When they are made of wood, they are called "mok-yong (木俑)." Confucius in China disliked the practice of burying people and even disliked making yong dolls. Therefore, Korean scholars in the Joseon Dynasty also avoided using the term yong. For this reason, from the Joseon Dynasty to the present, the scientific name for terracotta dolls has been "to-woo (土偶)," not "to-yong (土俑)."

The place where wooden dolls are decorated is the Sangyeo (喪輿). Sangyeo is a carriage that carries the deceased to the tomb. In classical literature such as Yeseo (禮書), Sangyeo has a simple design with little decoration. However, for the Daeyeo (大輿) used in the national funeral, dragons (龍) were decorated on the front

and back. The structure of Sangyeo made in the late Joseon period surrounded the small rectangular-shaped coffin (소방상, 小方牀) with decorations such as paintings, sculptures, and colorful patterns. These decorative elements can be divided into three main categories.

The first is the Seungseon-yong (昇仙俑), which elevates the deceased to heaven. Seungseon is carried out by dragons (龍) and birds (鳥), so dragons and birds always appear in Korean Sangyeo. Dragons are decorated in a straight line shape on the roof of the Sangyeo and in the shape of the Chinese character ‘丁’ in front and back. Since King Munmu of Silla in his 30s said, “If I am cremated and buried in the East Sea, I will become a dragon and defeat the Japanese invaders,” dragons have become the protectors of the country (호국룡, 護國龍) in Korea.

The dragon was originally the only creature that could carry a divine being to Mount Kunlun, where Xi Wangmu lived. Kunlun was a world of gods where death and regeneration coexisted, and it was the underworld. There is a sea called the Weak Water in Kunlun, which is a fierce place where even birds lose their feathers and cannot cross. Therefore, people have always known that the dragon must carry them across the Weak Water.

The dragon depicted in decorations always appears with the bodies of the blue dragon and yellow dragon twisted together. This

is interpreted as the union of yin and yang. The dragon is responsible for taking the deceased to the divine Kunlun, where they are regenerated and returned to the world of the living. This view sees death and love as not mutually exclusive but coexisting. In Buddhism, the dragon symbolizes the ship of the Prajna wisdom, which crosses the bitter sea of life and death and takes the middle way to the other shore, carrying sentient beings.

There is a term called “underworld bird.” It refers to a mysterious bird that has the ability to travel to the underworld. Since it must travel on unfamiliar paths, the underworld bird naturally becomes sacred or is conceptualized as such. This is also why birds often appear in decorations along with dragons. The crane is a sacred bird that is ridden by divine beings, while the phoenix is an imaginary bird that appears once every thousand years. Both the crane and phoenix have the sanctity and solemnity necessary to carry the deceased to the underworld.

The second type of figurine is the “hoiwee-yong” (護衛俑) that protects the deceased. There are many different types and shapes of decorative hoiwee-yong. When a funeral procession is underway, a song is sung that goes, “They say the underworld is far away, but here we are at its gate.” In the three-dimensional world, this means that both the world above and the world below exist alongside us.

However, in the perception of the afterlife, passing through the twelve gates means that the path to the underworld is distant, dangerous, frightening, and undesirable. Therefore, the deceased depart on their final journey accompanied by the hoiwee-yong, which take the form of animals such as tigers, giraffes, deer, horses, and mythical creatures such as the underworld lion, monks, and divine beings. Although tigers are often depicted as having ferocious expressions in paintings of mountain deities, they are used as guards due to their bravery and are always ridden by divine beings. The giraffe is a creature of the imagination, and the deer is a long-lived animal that has no lack of holiness. For these reasons, they are used to protect the deceased on their journey through the underworld.

The third is the shiripyong (侍立俑) who serves the deceased. In Goguryeo tomb murals, there are many people who pay their respects to the host of the house. They sometimes do household chores, but they always stand by the deceased, serving and supporting them. It is said that regardless of their social status during their lifetime, they are treated as noble guests when they go to the afterlife. Although everyone must go, it is a noble path that can only be taken once. Has Goguryeo culture been passed down to the present day?

The shiripyong is depicted as standing on the left and right sides of the reward

railing, transporting the deceased. Shiripyong includes people who guide the deceased’s path to the afterlife, people who hold flags and line up in solemn processions, and jaerin (才人) who provide pleasure through performances. Wrestling, performances, and sports that appear in Roman temple rituals and elsewhere are considered to be part of a common global mindset.

So where does the deceased go in the afterlife? Is it outside the main gate? Is it in Hwangcheon (黃泉)? Is it in Dosolcheon (兜率天)? Is it in Bukmangsancheon (北邙山川)? Or is it in hell or paradise? They are all places in the realm of the imagination. So where does the reward go? The answer is the tomb where the deceased is buried.

Interestingly, our cultural tradition refers to the tomb and the reward as yutaek (幽宅), which means the house of the deceased. Because it is the house of the deceased, it is not an ordinary house, but a special one. Therefore, there is a tradition that the son-in-law, who is a guest for a hundred years, must prepare for it, because he himself is special and sacred. The desire of African Americans to ride in a Cadillac, which only the rich could afford even at the moment of death, made Cadillac a symbol of permanent cars. In the same way, the reward was born from the desire to send off the deceased’s final journey without any shortcomings, and was adorned magnificently.

According to this logic, a funeral procession becomes the home where the deceased will live. Therefore, funeral processions are designed to honor and elevate the deceased, with the inclusion of mourners, escorts, and civic officials, and adorned with decorations and bright colors. Boarding the funeral procession to travel to the afterlife is symbolic of entering the home of the deceased. The day before the procession departs, villagers practice carrying the funeral bier by placing the oldest member of the community on it. This is called the “funeral bier game,” “great shaking,” or “great commotion.” Why is an elderly person placed on the bier? It is because boarding the funeral procession is a symbolic experience of death, which paradoxically imbues the elderly with the belief in longevity.

For humans, death is not approached as a biological fact of the cessation of breath. Instead, it is understood in the colors of spiritual metaphysics and religious beliefs in the soul. The contemplation of death allows humans to clarify their minds and souls. This is why death is viewed as a sign of freedom and liberation. At the moment of death, humans are no longer their conscious selves; death has already escaped beyond the realm of human consciousness.

These beliefs are also present in the funeral bier and its decorations. At the moment of death, the deceased cannot handle or decide on their own death. They must follow the regulations set by their children

or siblings as the designated mourner. The mourner prays for the deceased’s journey to the afterlife to be comfortable and safe while mourning the death of their parent, sibling, or child. This is why strict funeral rites are followed and the bier is adorned with decorations.

The deceased’s body is buried in a grave, and the bier is burned. Descendants, family members, and relatives hope that the decorations that adorned the bier will be resurrected as the house where the deceased will live in the afterlife. The deceased’s physical body is resurrected in the tomb, starting their new life in the afterlife.

However, in our cultural tradition of funeral rites, the deceased’s body is buried in a tomb, and their spirit is brought home and enshrined in a shrine. From this point on, the deceased becomes an unseen family member living with their descendants in the home they once lived in.

Humans have separated death from biology and nature. Humans have artificially created death and produced it. Humans have turned death into a cultural concept that changes over time. In traditional societies, death was relatively feared, but now it has emerged as an art form through funeral decorations. Funeral decorations have become a new genre of folk art or a new approach to death that attracts interest.

This art piece contains the philosophy of the Korean people, not just one individual. The wooden figurine that appears in funeral decorations serves as an assistant to the deceased both in this world and in the afterlife. Just as the wooden figurine served as an assistant to the deceased in their home, it performs the same duties in the tomb. The maker of funeral decorations would have carved and colored each decoration with this thought in mind.

If viewed through the eyes of a famous sculptor, funeral decorations cannot be considered works of art. However, when viewed through a new perspective that takes into account the natural philosophy of the Korean people embedded in their rough craftsmanship, funeral decorations become excellent works of art. Take a look at the decorations here. The reason why funeral decorations in a patient’s secret garden of obsession have become works of art is because they can help correct our distorted thoughts and prejudices about Orientalism through the escort, civic, and boarding decorations.

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8. Masks Embodying Wishes and Stories

A mask is an object made of wood, paper, clay, etc., worn over the face to hide or differently express one's face. It is worn when you want to hide your true intentions or pretend to be what you are not on the outside, and you remove the mask when you wish to throw away your false appearance and reveal your true identity. In this respect, a mask can be defined as a tool used on the face to hide one's true intentions and self. However, contrary to this definition, if we examine the history of masks, we can see that the role of masks is not simply to conceal one's true intentions and self.

Masks were first used for shamanistic purposes where humans were transformed into supernatural beings to chase away ghosts or diseases or to achieve their wishes such as material wealth. The history of Korean masks dates to prehistoric times. In the Neolithic shell mask excavated from shell mounds in Dongsam-dong, Yeongdo-gu, Busan, three holes were pierced in a large scallop to represent human faces. It is presumed that it was used as a magical tool related to group rituals or byeoksa (辟邪的, expel evil spirits). Also, in 1946, the lacquered mask (painted with Ot tree resin) excavated from the Houchong (壺塚) tomb in Noseo-ri (路西里), Gyeongju (慶州) from approximately the 6th Century, was painted golden around the glass eyeballs and suspected to be a mask of bangsangsi (方相氏假面, a deity that drives away evil spirits or spirits that hover in mountain

or streams and plants and trees). It is recorded in "Samguk Yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms)" that Sangyeommu (霜髯舞), the dance by King Heongang (875-886) wearing the Sansin (山神, mountain god) mask he created is taken after watching the dance of the god of Namsan (南山) when the god appeared at Poseokjeong Pavillion in Gyeongju. The tale of a plague disappearing after playing with a mask on that washed up in the river during a flood or the story of Silla's Cheoyong dancing and singing while wearing a mask to drive away yeoksin (plague spirit) who was sleeping with his wife and so forth interestingly provides the basis that masks were used to eradicate the plague. In Korea, a mask is called 'Tal', and there is a belief that the name originated from the fact that you wear a 'Tal' to get rid of any type of tal, a Korean word of the same pronunciation with the meaning diseases, illnesses or sicknesses.

With the development of the times, masks have been used beyond their shamanistic nature of the early days and are used to express myths, history, and narrative content through gamyeongueuk (masked dance-drama), or to resolve social structure and human problems through artistic and satirical gamyeongueuk. Gamyeongueuk which were acted out by saje (司祭, monks) in the past were now played by civilians and has established its place as artistic plays compared to its ritual nature in the past.

Except for in Muslim countries, masks are distributed worldwide, and exist in various forms. Due to the fact that the Islam scripture Koran forbids people to perform in the form of humans and animal idols, masks were not allowed to be used in Arabia, Northeast Africa, the Near Eastern (近東) countries including the Balkans as well as the North African areas influenced by Islam.

As the function of masks declined in the modern era, the use of masks decreased markedly, but with the present day carnivals and Halloween Festivals, Chinese 'Nahui (傩戲),' Japan's 'Noh (能)' and 'Kagura (新樂),' 'Khon' in Thailand, 'Topeng' and 'Barong' in Bali, Indonesia, 'Cham (姜姆)' and 'Ramo (拉姆)' in Tibet and, 'Chau' in India' and many other gamyeonggeuk (masked dance-dramas) have been handed down, and most of them have been listed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. From 1964, Korea's gamyeonggeuk has also been designated as 14 types of national intangible cultural assets and 5 types of provincial intangible cultural assets, and on November 30, 2022, it was finally decided that it was to be listed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

1. Mask Embodying Wishes

Masks can be divided into various categories based on their purpose and function, but the majority of gamyeonggeuk (masked dance-drama) used to embody a religious nature in wishing for abundance and human peace. They were a means of praying for prosperity in the livelihood of people, and for people to live peaceful lives away from war, disease, demons, goblins and negativity. However, with the development of society, gamyeonggeuk with the above characteristics have gradually disappeared, and now we can see that performed masked dance-dramas have become part of the main trend across the world as a genre of performing arts.

1) Mask Wishing for Wealth

One of the purposes of the gamyeonggeuk (masked dance-drama) or Sajachum (Lion Dance) carried out in rural areas was to anticipate good harvest for the year, but this kind of trend is harder to see in present days. In Korean gamyeonggeuk, marriage rituals are said to symbolize abundance and fertility. In Hahoe Byeolsingut Talnori (lit. Masked dance-drama performed in Hahoe Village, Andong) of South-eastern Korea, the sacred wedding of Seonang bride and a seonbi (nobleman) is carried out in secret and they show you the rituals from the bowing in the chorye (liquor drinking ritual) to the first night in the sinbang

(nuptial chamber), which is a means of homeopathic magic wishing for wealth and fertility as well as an act of comforting the virgin's soul. The love dance between the Won Gwangdae (main Clown) and Somae Gaksi (Lady Little Shaman) in the Gangneung Danogut Talnori (lit. Masked dance-drama performed during the Dano Festival) of Gangneung Province in the east of Korea portrays the newly wed rituals in the form of play. Byunyinhui (變人戲) of the Yi people (彝族) of Yuning County (威寧縣), Guizhou Province, China, is a gamyeonggeuk re-enacting the agricultural production activities of the Yi people during the Shangkou period, where the masks of a black ancestor over 1,000 years old, a cattle and a lion appear in it. 'Byunyin (變人)' refers to the meaning of humanity being in an everchanging era, and the gamyeonggeuk is performed yearly from the 3rd to the 15th of the Lunar New Year. In Anshun County, Guizhou Province, China, as gamyeonggeuk was usually performed in a rural courtyard it was called 'Jihui (地戲, Chin. dixie)' and its main aim was to relieve the pain of labor and pray for a good harvest for the year. However, in current days, Jihui mainly focuses on performing about historical war stories that are popular in the military.

2) Mask Wishing for Peace

Chukgwi (逐鬼, driving away of evil spirits), Chibyung (curing diseases), funeral and totem masks, etc. were worn

in rituals wishing for human peace. Chukgwi masks had the function of byeoksa (辟邪, expel evil spirits) where you intimidate the objects of hatred such as demons and chase them away and the Chibyung (curing) masks were masks used to cure diseases. Funeral masks were used to protect the deceased from evil spirits, prevent spirits from constantly wandering in the underworld and from destroying their original form. Until modern times, the person wearing the bangsangsi (方相氏, lit. a deity that drives away evil spirits or spirits that hover in mountain or streams and plants and trees) mask in a funeral rite and ceremony washed away the injustices on the road of the funeral procession and led the rituals at the tomb. While totem masks have a mythical nature, shamans wore them to ward off evil spirits or punish enemies and heal diseases. In the village of Hahoe in Korea, there is a legend that masks were made to ward off catastrophes, and a story passed on about the Imae mask not having a chin. In the village of Hahoe, the Heo family lived together as a clan, but it is said there was a disaster that struck the village and no human power could possibly stop it. At that time, a god appeared in a dream of Heo doryeong (a young bachelor from the Heo family) who lived in the village, and revealed that "if you make 12 tals (masks) and wear them to carry out gut (rites performed by shamans), the calamity will recede, but also gave him the warning that "he must not let anyone see him make the masks." After receiving the revelation

in his dream, Heo doryeong took a thorough bath to purify himself and then tied a golden rope outside his door and locked himself in to confine himself for a long time in totally focusing on reaching the levels of perfection in producing the masks. At that time, a girl who lived in the same village who was in love with Heo doryeong missed the Heo doryeong who had tied the golden rope outside his door to confine himself, so much that she went over the golden rope and made a hole in the door of the room that Heo doryeong was making the masks and looked inside. The moment the divine warning of “not letting anyone see the making of the mask” was broken, it is told that Heo doryeong died on the spot while coughing up blood and as he was not able to complete the chin of the last mask, the “Imae” tal (Imae mask), is passed down to this day without having a chin on the mask.

Currently, gamyeonggeuk (the masked dance-dramas) wishing for peace include the Chinese Nahui (儺戲), the East Asian Sajatal (lion mask), and the Sri Lankan disease mask . Nahui originally originated from Narye (儺禮), a ritual performed on the eve of the lunar new year to drive away evil spirits and diseases and bring about good fortune, and features the four-eyed bangsangsi (方相氏) mask. The present-day Natanghui (儺堂戲) of Guizhou Province, China, originated from the custom of calling shamans to call on gods to exorcise evil spirits when people were sick, childless or suffering disasters and

so forth to resolve all their matters and is usually carried out in shrine buildings or in gardens. A total of 24 masks are used, which are made up of the appearance of the following four types of masks: the good god Jeongsin (正神), the bad god Hyungsin (凶神), the secular character and a clown. The good gods, such as the land god and hwasang (和尚, Buddhist monk), who have good, honest, and gentle images are made with benevolent faces, big eyes, broad faces, long ears, and smiling figures to give the kind and lovely feeling. Bad gods such as Yilang (二郎, Chin. Erlang) and Jongkyu (鐘馗, Chin. Zhong Kui) who have vicious and strange, but courageous and dignified images are made with exaggerated appearances with long horns on their heads, teeth sticking out of their lips, raised eyebrows, and protruding pupils, etc. Such appearances prove they are able to easily defeat goblins. The mask of the secular character is relatively realistic, so there is no deformation or exaggeration, but the clown Jindong (秦童) who performs the role of a joker in the play, has a distorted image with a crooked nose and mouth, slanted eyes, etc., and no lower chin. Chinese lion masks were imported from the West during the Tang Dynasty, as in East Asia lions were believed to surprise or bite people to drive away misfortune and evil spirits. It is said that in Yunnan Province, China, a tiger mask biting a sword in its mouth called a tangu (吞口), is hung on a door or house to prevent the approaching of evil spirits. The Sinhalese people of Sri Lanka have

19 species of Rakasa that are types of very horrifying disease masks. In other words, there are 19 ghost masks according to the 19 types of diseases. As a result, the shaman chooses a mask from the 19 masks that is relevant to each of the diseases and wears it while dancing to cure the disease. When shamans heal the sick, they usually build an altar in the sick person’s room and decorate it with flowers and food. The shaman then dances wearing the mask and costume corresponding to the demon that caused the disease. This dance is repeated three times: at sunset, in the middle of the night, and at dawn. This calls the demon out of the sick person and lures it into the masked dancer, the shaman. By going out to the outskirts of town and pretending to be dead for a while, not only the shaman themselves, but also the sick and the whole town can escape the demons of calamity. From time to time, when the cause of an illness is in doubt, one large mask that shows the faces of all 19 types of demons is used.

3) Divine mask representing god

East Asian masks have very similar forms due to a common cultural background, but the characteristics of each country are also clearly reflected. The common element is that each has a mask that symbolizes god. The gaksital (Bridal mask) of the Korean Hahoe Byeolsingut Talnori symbolizes Seonang, the guardian deity of the village, and the Yeonnip nunckemjeogi tal (monk

wearing a lotus leaf mask) of Yangju Byeolsandaenori represent the heavenly and earthly gods, and the obangsinjang (the guardian gods of five directions) along with Chwibari, lion, Cheoyong carry out the role of chasing away evil spirits. In particular, the gaksital is believed to replace Seonangsin, so it cannot be seen except during Byeolsingut, and when it is inevitable but to view, the sanju (ritual officiant) must go through a ritual. In addition, as gaksi is a substitute for Seonghwangsin, and the god must not step on the ground and must always be on top of people, they ride on a mudong (dancing child).

In Chinese gamyeonggeuk (masked dance-drama) the Taoist god Yilang (二郎神, Chin. Erlang), who is the god of water (protecting water conservancy and preventing floods) appears as well as the god of wealth, the god of land , Na Gong (儺公), Napa (儺婆), Jongkyu (鐘, Chin. Zhong Kui), Noegong (雷公), Guangong (關公), Gaesan (開山, Chin. Kai Shan), etc., who act as gods that drive away goblins. Japanese kagura (神樂) theatrically transforms the Shinto deities of the traditional Japanese religion along with the Buddhist gods, ancestral deities, and etc. in their performances. Amongst them, the myth of kingship in the Tenson realm accounts for a large portion, so the masks involved in Kagura are basically sacred masks worn to disguise themselves as gods, and the mask dance in Kagura has a very strong religious meaning.

In general, mythical gods such as Amaterasu Omikai (天照大神) who is considered in Japanese mythology to be the ancestral goddess of the Japanese people and the goddess of the sun, Susanoo-no-Mikoto (建速須佐之男命), the male god of the sea, and Ame-no-uzume-no-Mikoto (天宇受賣命) who danced to lure out Amaterasu hiding in a rock cave along with the lion mask sansin (山神) and so forth are made in to masks that appear in the Kagura gamyeongek (masked dance-dramas).

In modern times, there are masks that are made in the figures from Japanese legends or folktales such as Geumtaerang (金太郎, Jap. Kintaro, lit. a strong hero from an old tale), Dotaerang (桃太郎, Jap. Momotaro, lit. a person born from a peach tree who chases away ghosts), Jongkyu (鐘馗, Chin. Zhong Kui, lit. a legendary figure in China, who chases ghosts), Hyebisu (惠比壽, Jap. Ebisu, lit. one of the Seven Lucky Gods and the god of fisheries, holding a fishing rod in his right hand and a fish snapper in his left hand), Banya (般若, scripted name Prajna, who protects against evil), Daemuk (大墨, Jap. Daikoku, one of the Seven Lucky Gods, the god of good fortune who stands on rice island wearing a headband and holding a magic club and large sack), Okame and Hyottoko, etc.

2. Mask with a Story

1) Story of god

Many of the masks in Southeast Asia theatricalizes the content of religious ceremonies or epics. In particular, there are many cases where the two epics of India, Rama and the Mahabharata, were enacted as plays and gamyeongek (masked dance-dramas) from various countries in Southeast Asia have been derived from them. The date and origin of the work dates back to the 11th century BC, where it is estimated that it was around the 2nd century BC that it took the similar appearance of that as it is told today, and it was during this time when the first and seventh series were added to make up the total of the 7 series we have today. The content of the work is based on the eventful heroic story (武勇談) of Rama, the prince of Kosala, as well as the arduous ordeal of the princess (王子妃) Sita, who represents the embodiment of fidelity, the extreme filial piety of the younger brother Bharata, the activities of the monkey king (猴王) Hanumat and the tyranny of the demon (惡鬼) Ravana, etc., which were woven together and completed into an epic poem. In the first and second parts, the historical figure Rama is set as the incarnation (權化) of Vishnu and by adding on numerous illustrations, grants religious significance to this historical poem and encourages the thriving worship of Rama causing a profound impact on the literature, religion and thought of the later

generations. The war story, which is the center of the content, is told in volumes 6 to 10, where the preceding volumes 1 to 5 tell the story of the outbreak of the war, and the subsequent volumes 11 to 18 deal with the recollection of the aftermath of the Great War and the death of the succeeded prince.

The Thai gamyeongek (masked dance-drama) Khon is a dramatization of the ancient Indian Ramayana epic, in which dancers wear masks that depict the characters in the play. Ramayana tells the story of war between Pra Ram (the exiled prince of Ayothaya) and Totsakan (the demon king who kidnapped the prince's wife Sita). After winning the war with the help of the monkey army led by Hanuman, Pra Ram returns to Ayothaya with Sita. There are more than a hundred characters and they all wore fancy colorful masks as though they had been gilded with gold (金箔). Originally, female roles, heavenly women, and witches did not wear masks, but gradually the gods and major male roles also stopped wearing masks. As a result, at present, the only characters wearing masks are demons, monkeys, and animals. The costumes worn in Khon are theatrical modifications of the ancient royal gowns that had elaborate embroidery and were decorated with ornaments. Every costume is distinguished by the special color that represents the skin color of the characters. Since ancient times, Khon has been an entertainment provided by royalty and nobles to the common people.

The dancers were all once soldiers, and their training included the dances from Khon. The Khon is not only performed on stage during the King's cremation rite ceremony, but it has become a major program as well as a tourist product that is performed when there are national guests visiting. Indonesian masks include those of the witch (魔女) Rangda, the sacred animal Barong, imaginary animals such as the sacred bird Garuda, as well as gods (神), evil spirits, king, queens, princesses, heroes, high priests, strong men, monkeys, frogs, etc. and they also have many masks in the form of elderly people.

Indonesia's most widely known gamyeongek (masked dance-drama) is Wayang Topeng, which has been passed down from Java and Bali, and tells the story of the wars of the early kingdoms. The main ghost of Bali is Leyak, and apart from having different names as the appearances are considered to be almost the same in all parts with those of Palasik in Sumatra, Kuyang in Kalimantan, and Penangkal in Malaysia, it is thought to be one of the representative ghost forms in Southeast Asia. In gamyeongek, Rangda, known as the Queen of Leyaks, is an evil spirit who eats children and leads an army of demons and evil shamans to fight against the good army lead by Barong. Barong is a lion-like figure from Balinese mythology who is the guardian of the forest and the land. The Barong mask has big, sharp eyes, a fierce red face, and is covered with golden fur all over its body. Also, there is a small

mirror attached to the body, which glows even with the slightest movements, which shows the Barong's spiritual power (靈力). The battle between Barong and Rangda is portrayed through the Barong Dance, which symbolizes the battle between good and evil that continues through eternity and the characters and ghosts that appear here play a significant role in Balinese culture. Here, Rangda is represented as a naked old woman with long, tangled hair, sagging breasts, and terrifying nails. Traditionally, she had a terrifying appearance, with sharp fangs, protruding eyes, and a long tongue sticking out and so forth. Meanwhile, as the fearful being personified by the very essence of evil, the mask of Rangda is enshrined in the town's Temple of Death and brought out to the center of the parade whenever there is a festival in town. Also, you can commonly see the model of Leyak's head hanging on the wall of houses as an ornament.

2) Story of a Hero

A lot of Chinese gamyeonguok (masked dance-dramas) dramatizes an old story or a novel, so the entire story often has a narrative development. In particular, gamyeonguok focused on the heroes of historical war stories are handed down across generations. Such folk gamyeonguok originated from the military nuo (軍儺, Kor. gunna, Chin. junnuo, ritual to drive away ghosts and diseases) carried out in the military and

in Guizhou Province, gamyeonguok are currently performed under the name Jihui (地戲, Chin. dixie). The contents of them portray the lives of numerous generals such as those of the Qi generals from Sanguozhi (三国志, lit. Records of the Three Kingdoms), various immortals such as Kang Taegong (Chin. Jiang Taigong) from Bongsinyeonui (Chin. Fengshen Yanyi, lit. The Romance of the Gods) and the story of the conquest of Goguryeo by Tang General Seol In-gwi (Chin. Xue Rengui). Furthermore, gamyeonguok which recollects the stories of historical wars where the courage of Gwansaek, son of Gwanwu (Chin. Gwanyu) was created in to a masked dance-drama in Yunnan and Anhui province, and the Five Jiang (五將) and Three Jiang (三將) gamyeonguok of the Napdun Festival (納頓節) have been passed down. As the Jihui (地戲, Chin. dixie) of Guizhou Province mainly deals with war stories, the general carries out a role of great importance in the play. The helmets are usually decorated with dragons and phoenixes, where those of male generals are decorated with dragons and female generals with phoenixes. In addition, they are further decorated with white tigers, lotuses, bats, etc, and the wings of the ears are mainly designed with dragons or phoenixes and flowers that represent good fortune. The glittering colors of gold and silver are mainly used, and when supplemented with various other colors, the golden beam stands out as being more splendid and magnificent. On the other hand, the yeonggong (令公),

mask of Nahui from Guilin, Guangxi Province, China, is made up of three layers inside and outside, so the same person's face can be transformed three times. The innermost mask had an evil appearance with a golden face and sharp teeth, the middle one was a white-faced literary figure, and the outer one was that of a red-faced warrior. This was a means of depicting Lee Jung (李靖, Chin. Li Jing), the Grand Duke of Guilin as a god in order to honor his achievements of subjugating the bandits in the early Tang Dynasty. It is said that the appearance of the warrior represents Lee Yeonggong (李令公, Chin. Li Linggong)'s true appearance as himself, the literary figure is his good appearance, and the evil appearance is that of when he conquers the devil.

3) Story of Conflict and Reconciliation

Unlike those of China or Japan, hardly any of the gods of the heavens, gods of the undergrounds, mountain gods, ghosts, etc., as well as any emperors or kings like figures appear in Korean gamyeonguok (masked dance-dramas), and the characters are mainly performed by ordinary people. Even the context differs from those of China and Japan where there are hardly any stories borrowed from existing plays or talking-singing type performances or from folk tales, etc. but rather mainly criticizes real-life issues in a satirical way. By revealing the falsity of the ruling classes, yangban (nobleman) and seonbi (scholar),

the Korean gamyeonguok intensify the conflicting relationship between the ruling class yangban and the ruled class sangmin (lower class people), and in addition to this, reveals the corruption of Buddhism of those times through the apostatizing of a monk as well as satirically depicting the joys and sorrows of the lives of the ruled common people. Considering the strict status and order of the social situation of the Joseon Dynasty, the gamyeonguok that consistently criticized the ruling class were performed under the overlooking and economic support of the yangban, the ruling class. While the sangmin were able to relieve their suppressed emotions and dissatisfaction through such talnori (mask plays), the yangban were able to understand the lives and resolve the complaints of the sangmin through such criticism and satire they performed which they used to reduce conflict and resistance in managing a harmonious life between the rulers and the ruled. As a result, through the process of gamyeonguok, the contradictions and problems between the classes that were inherent in the community were able to go through a buffering process and this in turn assisted with further strengthening of the existing community system.

Masks representing the ruling class also expressed the perception of the common people. The yangban masks were expressed as hongbaek masks where half the mask was read and the other half white, biturumi masks with a crooked nose

and face, heuk masks where the face was completely black, gombo (pockmarked) masks and leper masks resulting from smallpox and those with cleft lips showing the hatred and contempt against them by revealing and criticizing their hypocrisy and corruption. Similar to the mask of the yangban, the mask of a corrupted monk is also expressed as a mask full of contagious scabies, making it gross and ugly just to look at. In yaryu (field play) and Ogwangdae (lit. Performance of Five Players), the fact that the nose of the Malttugi mask was made abnormally large was also an expression of dissatisfaction and rebellion against the current system.

Korean masks include a number of elements in order to show their satire. First of all, you can see contradicting ones with different shapes and colors from the left and right hand sides of the masks. Amongst the Hahoe masks, except for the juji (head monk), the rest of the masks are made with realistic techniques so the emotions of the characters are expressed in the facial expressions of the masks. In the case of the gaksi (new bride) mask, the left and right images are made differently, where the right side (右面) shows an expression of grief while the left side (左面) captures the moment when emotions of joy occur. This is seen as an indication of the suppression and curiosity of sexual desire, where you can understand why if you recall the legend of how gaksi died and became Seonangsin after making Heo Doryeong die suddenly

as well as a punishment from the gods for secretly peeking at Heo Doryeong who had received the oracle to make masks while he was fulfilling it because of her dear love for him. Gaksi, the main character of this sad legend, receives tribute from humans and comforts and delights them with songs and dances, which is to why one side of her masks expresses her happy feelings through it. Masks that express two conflicting emotions also appear in the halmital (grandmother masks), seonbital (scholar masks), and choraengital (servant masks). The halmital shows emotional duality with the eyes showing an angry expression on the one hand while the mouth expresses an outrageous smile on the other, as well as the seonbital having an angry expression on the top of his face while having a happy expression on the bottom. Choraengital (servant) has round protruding eyes showing an angry expression, but his mouth is crooked to the left and he mocks and criticizes the ruling class with his perverse words. In other words, the masks expresses all the representative emotions of human beings, joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure.

The obangsaek (five colors of the five cardinal directions) made up of red, black, blue, yellow (or brown) and white were the main colors used for tal (masks). However, there were masks that were expressed with two colors in one tal such as the hongbaek masks, which reveals the duality of human beings. As an example, the red and white masks of Tongyeong Ogwangdae represent

yangban (noblemen), the red and white of Kkokdugaksinoreum represent the lives of Mr. Hong and Mr. Baek, who fail to pay off their bills, and the red of Yeonggwang Nongak represent corrupt officials (Kor. tamgwanori, Chin. tanguan wuli) while the white represent Cheongbaekri (exemplary officials of the Goryeo and Josun Dynasty). By doubling the movement of masks, the character of the masks were intentionally revealed. The eyeballs of the bangsangsi mask, both eyes of the nunkkemjeogi (blinking monk) mask in Sandaenori, the chin of the Tukkkabultal of the Masan Ogwangdae talnori (five clowns masked dance), the chin of the Suyangban (首兩班) mask of Suyeongdeulnori (yaru), and the chin of the seonbi (scholar), yangban (nobleman), monk, baekjeong (butcher) masks in the Hahoe Byeolsingut talnori (Chin. 河回別神) are made to freely express the smiling face or angry face on masks. mask moved to show the expression of the mask. You can freely create a smiling expression or an angry expression. For example, if a clown wearing a mask tilts his head back to laugh, the mask will become widely open to show a laughing expression, and when angry, if the clown lowers his head, the mask's upper lip and lower chin stick together to create an angry expression. As if to support this, there is a saying that is handed down, "the mask is sacred, so if the clown wearing the mask laughs, the mask laughs too, and if the clown gets angry, the mask gets angry too".

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9. Blue-and-white Porcelain: A Spectacle of Blue on a White Porcelain Canvas

As the name implies, “blue-and-white porcelain” refers to white porcelain vessels painted with blue pigment. Following the legacy of ceramic types such as “Goryeo celadon” and “Joseon white porcelain,” blue-and-white porcelain came to the fore during the Joseon Dynasty. Already a global leader in ceramics, Joseon became the second country in the world to produce blue-and-white porcelain, after China. Over the course of the 500-year history of the Joseon Dynasty, blue-and-white porcelain was produced with a wide variety of shapes and designs.

History of Blue-and-white Porcelain

Like almost every type of ceramics, blue-and-white porcelain originated in China. It is said that blue-and-white porcelain was first produced in the fourteenth century during the late Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). In the ensuing Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), from around the late fourteenth century, blue-and-white porcelain began to be made in earnest in Jingdezhen, near Poyang Lake in Jiangxi Province. Notably, Joseon seems to have started producing its own blue-and-white porcelain less than 100 years after its initial appearance in China. According to Annals of the Joseon Dynasty, in 1455, King Sejo (r. 1455–1468) ordered the use of blue-and-white porcelain in the royal kitchen. This record indicates that blue-and-white porcelain was already in use and circulation by the time King Sejo ascended to the throne.

Cobalt Pigment: More Expensive Than Gold

The blue pigment used to produce blue-and-white porcelain is made from the mineral cobalt. After being meticulously refined, the cobalt pigment is brushed onto the surface of a white porcelain vessel to make a pattern or design, and then coated with glaze and fired at high temperatures. In the past, the blue pigment was called “回回青,” which means “blue mineral imported from the Islamic region” (i.e., present-day Iran). Since cobalt is rarely found on the Korean Peninsula, it almost always had to be imported from China, which itself imported the mineral from the aforementioned “Islamic region.” As a double import, cobalt was an extremely precious material that is said to have been even more expensive than gold. Therefore, cobalt-blue pigment was not generally available to the greater public, with its possession and use being restricted to products for kings and the royal court. Also, for much of the Joseon Dynasty, blue-and-white porcelain was viewed as an extravagant luxury product, the likes of which were generally frowned upon due to the Neo-Confucianist emphasis on frugality.

Efforts and Failures to Obtain Cobalt

Through the years, Joseon persistently sought an indigenous source of cobalt or other minerals for producing blue-and-white porcelain. Under King Sejo, some minerals similar to cobalt were found, collected, and tested in Gangjin and Suncheon (Jeolla Province), and in Ulsan, Miryang, and Uiseong (Gyeongsang Province), with the results being reported to the central government. These efforts were due not only to the high price of cobalt, but also to the instability of the supply of cobalt from China. Due to domestic circumstances in China, the Jingdezhen kilns went into hiatus from 1435 to 1464, which made it difficult for Joseon to import cobalt. To overcome this, Joseon continued its efforts to find a domestic variety of cobalt, called “tocheong,” but ultimately these efforts failed. According to the reports, various minerals that were similar to cobalt were found and tested, but they could not produce the distinctive pure blue color of cobalt-blue pigment. Eventually, the supply of cobalt from China became more stable, bringing an end to Joseon’s attempts to procure domestic cobalt.

Characteristics of Joseon Blue-and-white Porcelain: Paintings, Rather Than Patterns

Thus far, we have examined some of the events and practices that occurred after blue-and-white porcelain was introduced from China. But despite the Chinese influence, it cannot be said that Joseon blue-and-white porcelain was simply an imitation of the original. Other than the fact that they are made with the same materials, Chinese and Korean blue-and-white porcelains show key differences in many areas, including their decorative designs. Chinese blue-and-white porcelain is characterized by dense, schematic patterns that cover almost the entire surface of the vessel. Representative motifs include stylized depictions of lotus petals, along with designs featuring various auspicious symbols. In contrast, most designs on Joseon blue-and-white porcelain have a more painterly quality, as demonstrated by a blue-and-white porcelain jar with plum blossom and bamboo design. While the Chinese influence is visible in the lotus pattern around the shoulder and base of the jar, the natural expression of the bamboo and plum blossoms on the main body resembles a classic inkwash painting. Even though it was produced shortly after blue-and-white porcelain was introduced from China, the jar has a completely different look from Chinese vessels, thereby demonstrating the unique aesthetic style and techniques of Korea.

Blue-and-white porcelain jar with plum blossom and bamboo design, Joseon Dynasty (15th century), private collection, National Treasure



Blue-and-white Porcelain Produced by Official Government Kilns

During the Joseon Dynasty, high-quality white porcelain vessels for the royal court and government offices were produced under state supervision by the official kilns in present-day Gwangju, Gyeonggi Province. At that time, the production of porcelain required significant industrial resources and the most advanced technology. As of the sixteenth century, China, Korea, and Vietnam were the only countries in the world that were able to properly produce porcelain. Even Japan, which later became globally renowned for its porcelain, only began producing porcelain after abducting Korean potters during the Imjin War (1592–1598). Meanwhile, porcelain was not produced in Europe until the eighteenth century. Befitting its unique status and importance, the production of white porcelain was initially controlled and regulated by the national government. Notably, the production of porcelain required great quantities of firewood for the kilns. Thus, the kilns were established in the area of Gwangju, which offered a local supply of fine white clay, abundant forests for firewood, and access to a major river that allowed the finished vessels to be easily transported to the capital city of Hanyang (present-day Seoul). Produced under strict state supervision, the ceramics produced in Gwangju were of the highest quality. For example, the designs on vessels for the royal court are known to have been

painted by master court artists who were dispatched from the royal palace in the capital. As a result, many of the designs on Joseon blue-and-white porcelains show the same level of skill and artistic quality as a masterpiece painting.

Painting Gunja: Painting and Calligraphy in Cobalt-blue Pigment

The painterly quality of Joseon blue-and-white porcelain reached its pinnacle in the eighteenth century. Under King Sukjong (r. 1674–1720), for the first time, members of the literati class were allowed to possess white porcelain produced by the official kilns, which had previously been reserved exclusively for the royal court and central government. As the demand for blue-and-white porcelain spread to the literati, the designs on blue-and-white porcelain began to reflect the refined tastes of these scholars.

This shift is most evident in the rise of designs featuring the “four gracious plants” (i.e., plum blossoms, orchids, chrysanthemums, and bamboo), which symbolized the highest virtues and ideals of an exemplary Neo-Confucianist subject, known as a “gunja.” Of course, designs of the “four gracious plants” had been painted since the early Joseon period. But starting from the seventeenth century, their style became more lyrical with a greater emphasis on blank space,

akin to a traditional inkwash painting. A quintessential example of this style is a flattened bottle with an elegant design of plum blossoms and bamboo. Here we can see how designs of the “four gracious plants” had changed from earlier examples, as seen on the jar. On the earlier jar, the plant motifs are densely painted to fill almost the entire surface, and the details (such as the veins on the leaves) are meticulously expressed. But the plant design in Figure 2 is more simple and sparse, with an emphasis on the wide blank background.

Some extant blue-and-white porcelain vessels are decorated with designs of landscapes or landscapes with figures. As compared to other themes, landscape and figure paintings require a greater degree of artistic skill, which is why they rarely appear as designs on crafts. For this very reason, landscape paintings did not appear on Joseon blue-and-white porcelain until the eighteenth century. One of the most popular landscape designs on blue-and-white porcelain is “Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers” which depicts eight scenic vistas from the area of Dongting Lake in China, where the Xiao and Xiang Rivers converge. As the oldest theme in Eastern landscape painting, this motif was beloved by the literati of the late Joseon period.

Another popular decorative motif that directly expresses the tastes of the literati is poetry. This trend can be seen on a blue-



Blue-and-white porcelain flattened bottle with plum blossom and bamboo design, Joseon Dynasty (17th century), private collection.

and-white porcelain jar from the early eighteenth century, which is inscribed with two poetry verses that are beautifully written in seal script calligraphy. The two verses are taken (respectively) from famous poems by Tang poet Li Bai (701–762) and Northern Song scholar Shao Yong (1011–1077), who were among the most revered poets and scholars of the time. With its inscribed verses expressing the spirit of the literati, its use of seal script (viewed as the quintessential style of calligraphy), and its strong emphasis on pure white color and blank space, the jar showcases the aesthetics favored by the literati of the late Joseon period.

New Tastes of the Literati: Blue-and-white Porcelain Stationery Items

The influence of the literati on blue-and-white porcelain goes beyond the painted designs. Starting in the eighteenth century, cobalt-blue pigment was widely used to decorate white porcelain stationery items, which are emblematic icons of literati culture. At this time, more literati scholars embraced the trend of collecting and appreciating attractive stationery items, such as inkstones, water droppers, and brush holders. Early examples are more modest and austere, in keeping with the dignified tastes of the literati,

who initially showed a general disdain for excessive decoration. But over time, as the use of cobalt-blue pigment became more widespread, the designs and decorative techniques for stationary items became more resplendent. This shift is particularly evident among water droppers, which were produced in an array of interesting shapes and became prominent features in the elegant décor of a “sarangbang,” the studio of a literati scholar. In addition to more conventional square or octagonal water droppers, there are also examples shaped like spheres, houses, miniature furniture (such as a hinged cabinet), and a variety of animals, including carp, cranes, and dogs. One of the highlights of this unique genre is a peach-shaped water dropper (Fig. 4). The refined shape, taut texture of the peach, and creative addition of a cicada are harmonized by the judicious use of cobalt-blue pigment, perfectly capturing the seasonal characteristics of summer. While effectively serving its practical function for making ink, this water dropper also models the increasingly ornate style of literati culture in the late Joseon period.

much more diverse, leading to a veritable golden age of blue-and-white porcelain. These changes were directly related to the expansion of the user base for blue-and-white porcelain, which became available to a greater portion of the public. Another crucial contributing factor was the reduced price of cobalt pigment, which began to be domestically produced in China, rather than being exported at great expense from the Middle East. As a result, the designs on blue-and-white porcelain evolved in accordance with the tastes of the new users, highlighted by the appearance of more designs featuring auspicious symbols. With more common people owning and enjoying blue-and-white porcelain, the designs came to reflect their wishes for happiness, prosperity, and longevity and their desire to ward off misfortune, as opposed to elegant painterly designs of literati motifs, such as the “four gracious plants” and landscapes. Similarly, motifs from folk paintings, which were very popular among common people of the time, also started appearing on blue-and-white porcelain.

Furthermore, previously existing motifs took on new meanings, as exemplified by dragons. In years past, dragons were revered symbols of the king, and thus could only be used as decorative motifs on objects for the royal court. But in the late Joseon period, dragons came to be more widely interpreted as supernatural creatures that protected against disaster and brought good luck or rain. Therefore,

Blue-and-white Porcelain into Common People

Blue-and-white porcelain underwent further changes in the nineteenth century. The overall quantity of white porcelain vessels drastically increased, while the types of vessels and designs became



(Left) Blue-and-white porcelain jar with inscribed poem, Joseon Dynasty (early 18th century), Museum of Oriental Ceramics (Osaka)

(Right) Blue-and-white porcelain peach-shaped water dropper in copper-red underglaze, Joseon Dynasty (18th century), Leeum Museum of Art

Blue-and-white porcelain brush holder with cloud and dragon design in iron-brown underglaze, Joseon Dynasty (19th century), private collection



dragon designs were more widely used on vessels for ordinary people, as demonstrated by a brush holder with cloud and dragon design painted with both cobalt-blue and iron-brown pigment. The dragon is shown breaking through the clouds, symbolizing its domain over rain and water, which held principal importance for agriculture. For this reason, since ancient times, people of Korea performed rituals for dragons in order to summon rain. Interestingly, on this brush holder, the dragon was painted with cobalt-blue pigment, while the clouds were expressed with cheap iron oxide pigment. Overall, the brush holder does not seem to have been produced with the greatest care, with some spots on the surface even being left unpainted. Based on such details, it was almost certainly produced for the general public, rather than for the royal court or literati. At first, it might seem a bit disappointing that Joseon blue-and-white porcelain began to diverge from the splendid style of earlier times. But such changes show how blue-and-white porcelain, once reserved solely for the royal court and ruling class, came to be used and loved by more common people, becoming an integral part of their daily lives.

focusing on how its beauty and details changed and developed over time. Newly produced in the early Joseon period, blue-and-white porcelain took on new traits as it gradually spread from the royal court to the literati to the common people, eventually becoming an essential medium symbolizing the characteristics of Korean beauty. This evolution is ongoing, with blue-and-white porcelain of the contemporary era developing in even more surprising directions. Blue-and-white porcelains can be viewed and appreciated in numerous ways: as essential household goods used in daily life; as great artworks produced by master artisans upholding the legacy of Joseon blue-and-white porcelain; or as dynamic crafts that are grounded in tradition, yet continually expand through the use of new materials, techniques, aesthetics, and modes of expression. This multiplicity is a special characteristic of blue-and-white porcelain, which is why it has been beloved by so many people from different times, places, and walks of life.

Epilogue: The Beauty of Painting in Blue-and-white Porcelain

This article has examined various aspects of Joseon blue-and-white porcelain,

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**14th Gwangju Biennale
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