



Exhibition and Research on Korean Buddhist Painting

Introduction

Compared to Buddhist sculptures or stone structures, Buddhist paintings on organic materials such as silk, hemp fabric, and paper have limitations in preservation due to the vulnerable nature of the material. Most of the murals painted on the exterior walls or interior of the temple buildings were destroyed by war and fire. There are no extant Buddhist paintings before the Goryeo dynasty, except for the National Treasure No. 196, the *Illustration of the Avatamsaka Sutra* in ink on white paper dating back to the King Gyeongdeok era of the Unified Silla period (754-755). Among 160 existing Goryeo Buddhist paintings, about 120 of them are located in Japan. Most of the Buddhist paintings handed down in Korea were produced during the reconstruction of the temples after the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592 and the Qing invasion of Korea in 1636. Such fragility of the material and limited access to the paintings were major obstacles to the study of Korean Buddhist painting.

In Korean art history, it is not so long that Buddhist painting has been studied in earnest. As to the Buddhist paintings from the Goryeo dynasty period, a discussion on nationality of works previously classified as of Chinese was raised again through the special exhibition held in Japan in 1978.¹ Some of the Goryeo Buddhist paintings in overseas due to either purchase or donation were brought back to Korea. However, they were mostly movable works painted on silk and paper, rather than large-scale paintings originally enshrined in the temples. The study of Buddhist painting history in Korea is composed of two categories: Goryeo Buddhist paintings and Joseon Buddhist paintings. In particular,

1. In 1978, 49 Buddhist paintings were introduced at a special exhibition *Korean Paintings of Koryo Dynasty*, held at the Museum of Japanese Art Yamato Bunkakan in 1978. Since then, they were actively displayed in other exhibitions such as *Goryeo, Eternal Beauty* in 1993, *Grand National Treasures of the Goryeo Dynasty* in 1995 at the Ho-am Art Museum, and *Exhibition of Korean Paintings of Koryo and Yi Dynasty* at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Museum of Art in 1997.

Buddhist paintings of the late Joseon dynasty period have been mainly studied.

In this article, I would like to review the trend of exhibition and research on Buddhist paintings since the 2000s. Special exhibitions that triggered further studies were selectively discussed together, and the research and exhibition trends before the 2000s were noted as necessary, but the main focus primarily lies on newly emerged aspects.² For the last 20 years, the scope and theme of studies on Buddhist painting were expanded by dint of diversified research institutes and data archiving. Although the history of the study itself is short, Buddhist painting history is preparing for a new leap forward, attaining remarkable outcomes.

New Trends after the 2000s: Diversification of Institutes and Data Archiving

Religious art researchers are interested in how abstract concepts such as religious doctrine and belief are visualized. Likewise, in the study of Buddhist painting in Korea, studies on the doctrinal context of the subject illustrated in paintings as well as the iconography and characteristics of styles have been carried out in earnest since the 1990s.³ Such studies formed an essential basis of understanding the system of Buddhist faith and the meaning of Buddhist paintings and examining their transformations in terms of art history. It was only about 30 years since the academic discipline of art history has been established in the universities in the late 1980s. Despite the short history, the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of Korean art history have been impressive in virtue of the collaborative efforts made by various institutions and research labs in universities and museums such as the National Museum of Korea. In particular, the role of the National Museum of Korea in art history has been critical, and this significance is in line with the history of museums in Korea. The first museum in the modern sense was the Yi Royal-Family Museum, built in 1907 during the King Soonjong period and opened to the public since 1909. The collection of the Museum of Japanese Government General of Korea, established in 1915,

2. Some of the overviews on the researches are extracted from the author's doctoral dissertation and reorganized. See Jeong 2013.

3. For further information on the current status and retrospect on Buddhist painting history, see Chung 1990, 2005; Kim 2017.

was transferred to the National Museum of Korea after the liberation. In the historical turmoil which started from the Japanese colonization period and led to the liberation and the Korean War, the National Museum of Korea has become an axis and motivity of the study of art history.

Relics, artifacts, figures, and customs, investigated by the Museum of Japanese Government General of Korea during its colonial rule from 1909 to 1945, were taken over by the National Museum of Korea. The National Museum of Korea launched a database for photographs of associated gelatin dry plates and official documents, such as field survey reports and investigation reports prepared in the course of archaeological surveys. This database has been open to the public since 2003. In addition to the disclosure of such original materials, corresponding researches by curators and scholars were published as well. One of the notable publications was *Buddhist Art of North Korea: Documentation in Gelatin Dry Plates*, published in 2013.

Academic research by the National Museum of Korea began in 1954, when the scars of the Korean War were not fully recovered. It was part of an effort to protect cultural heritage by investigating basic data under the poor conditions. From 1969, a survey of Buddhist paintings in temples was conducted. In 1970, for instance, *Korean Buddhist Paintings: Songgwangsa Temple* was published as a result. The academic researches of the National Museum of Korea since then have continued to grasp the significance of Korean Buddhist paintings in art history and to study general paintings and religious arts together.

Diversification of research institutes, data archiving, and easier public access have become the driving force of fruitful researches. Research Institute of Sungbo Cultural Heritage conducted a research project entitled *Buddhist Paintings of Korea* which played a critical role in producing a number of associated researchers. On-site surveys of Buddhist paintings at temples and institutes were not very feasible; moreover, the paintings were often relocated to prevent potential theft and damage. The *Buddhist Paintings of Korea* project was planned by monk-painters, Seokjeong and Beomha. The research team was established in 1989 to document the inheritance of traditional Buddhist paintings and train researchers in the field.⁴

4. The Tongdosa Museum, established in 1987, was the pioneer of individual temple museums. As the consensus on preservation of Buddhist cultural heritage in each temple was formed, exhibition and research of Buddhist art began to be actively carried out as well. See Beomha 2008.

Most Buddhist paintings of head temples such as Tongdosa Temple and Jikjisa Temple from the 17th century to the 21st century were extensively investigated and photographed; since 1996, four publications were produced every year. In 2000, the first 20 volumes were published, and in 2007, 40 volumes on 20 years of work were published. These publications contained 3,153 Buddhist paintings, including the collections of 476 temples and 14 national, private, and university museum collections. After the publications on *Korean Buddhist Painting*, the research team compiled the information on the murals painted on the temple buildings and published the *Buddhist Mural Painting of Korea* (Tongdosa Temple and Research Institute of Sungbo Cultural Heritage 1997-2007; Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and Research Institute of Buddhist Cultural Heritage 2006-2013). The publication of such reports has given rise to further studies on related topics (Kim 2016b; Park 2015; Han 2016).

The publication of books by leading researchers from research institutes and museums and professors of Buddhist painting studies has stimulated the nurturing of young researchers (Yoo and Kim 2004; Kim 2009; Chung and Jung 2007; Kim et al. 2011). A series of *Buddhist Cultural Heritage of Korea*, published by the Research Institute of Buddhist Cultural Heritage under the Jogye order, highlighted unpublished resources from the individual collections of temples, such as paintings, sculptures, crafts, and texts, and contributed to the space-oriented approaches in the study of Buddhist painting (Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and Research Institute of Buddhist Cultural Heritage 2002-2012).

The National Museum of Korea conducted investigations on the cultural heritage of temples such as Heungguksa Temple, Seonamsa Temple, and Seonunsa Temple. It attempted to change the direction of the investigation through the participation of researchers in history, museum, and art history and conservation scientists.⁵ Following the publication of *Buddhist Art of Cheoneunsa Temple and Yeongoksa Temple and Buddhist Art of Hwaeomsa Temple*, a series of reports on the royal temples were published: *Royal Temples of the Joseon Dynasty I: Yongjusa Temple in Hwaseong City* in 2016 and *Royal*

5. See *Buddhist Art of Seonunsa Temple, Naesosa Temple, Gaeamsa Temple*, vol. 3 of *Journal of Korean Art History* (2000) and *Buddhist Arts in Donghwasa and Eunhaesa Temples*, vol. 4 of *Journal of Korean Art History* (2007).

Temples of the Joseon Dynasty II: Cheongryongsa Temple in Anseong City in 2017. These investigations scrutinized the genre studies, patrons of Buddhist art including the royal family, and impact of the temples on their regions according to size (Yoo 2015; Kim 2015). In 2015, the special exhibition, *Devout Patrons of Buddhist Art*, also dealt with such issues.

Korean Buddhist Painting, a total of 40 volumes published by the Research Institute of Sungbo Cultural Heritage, introduced both Buddhist paintings and the written records on the painting process (*hwagi* 畫記), and a separate volume for *hwagi* was additionally published afterwards. These texts could entail various further analysis by showing the patron list, donated items, social situation of the time period, form of belief, and socio-economical background (Venerable Gogyeong 2011; Ahn and Choi 2007; Ahn 2008). The scholars like Ahn Gwi-sook and Choi Seon-il published the collection of *hwagi* and laid the ground for further studies in not only the Buddhist art history, but also in other fields such as Buddhist history, the Joseon dynasty's history, and socio-economical history. Meanwhile, data archiving and its public access stimulated the study on the producers of the Buddhist art. In 2011, the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and the academia of Korean art history organized a team of 130 authors and published *Dictionary of Korean Painters and Calligraphers*. It contains an enormous amount of artworks by 2,260 artists, including calligraphers and monk-painters who worked on Buddhist paintings. It was the most voluminous dictionary of calligraphers and painters after the pioneering work of Oh Se-chang, *Geunyeokseohwajing* 權域書畫徵.

Trend of Exhibition and Research on Goryeo Buddhist Painting

Most of the existing Goryeo Buddhist paintings were produced after the 1270s, when the Goryeo dynasty concluded a treaty with Mongolia by oppression of the Yuan dynasty. One of the oldest sutras of Mahayana, *Daehojeokgyeong* (the Rāntrna-Kuta Sutra), dates back to 1006, but as to Buddhist painting, the oldest ones include *Five Hundred Arhats* produced in 1235 and 1236, *Painting of Amitabha Buddha* of 1286, and the *Illustration of Maitreya-vyakarana-Sutra* of the Myoman-ji temple in Japan produced in 1294. It has been long since the end of the Goryeo dynasty, which lasted for 475 years, so it is difficult to comprehend the overall history of Goryeo Buddhist paintings. However,

according to literary records, Goryeo Buddhist painting boasted various subjects and was utilized from various angles in worship spaces.

Goryeo Buddhist paintings have not been the main subject of research because of the limited access to the actual paintings, but through special exhibitions and publications, they began to be recognized as an independent area within the scope of Buddhist painting. After 49 Buddhist paintings were disclosed at the Museum of Japanese Art Yamato Bunkakan in 1978, *Korean Goryeo Buddhist Painting* was published in 1981 as *Hanguk-ui Mi (The Beauty of Korea)* series. *Goryeo Dynasty and Eternal Beauty: Special Exhibition on Goryeo Buddhist Painting* held at Hoam Gallery in 1993 and *National Treasures from the Goryeo Dynasty: Looking for Grand Cultural Heritage* in 1995 extensively highlighted the art of the Goryeo dynasty. These publications and exhibitions served as an opportunity to evoke interest in aesthetic excellence and value of Goryeo Buddhist painting. In 1997, *Buddhist Painting of the Goryeo Dynasty* was published by a collaboration work of Chung Woo-taek, Kikutake Junichi, and Ide Seinosuke. This publication compiled information on 133 Buddhist paintings, thereby contributing to the expansion of studies on Goryeo Buddhist painting.⁶

In 2006, Dongguk University held an exhibition, National Treasures, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its establishment. This exhibition displayed Buddhist paintings of the early Joseon dynasty period, including *Painting of Bhaisajyaguru (Medicine Buddha) Triad with Twelve Guardians* of 1477, which was produced by the patronage of Princess Myeongsook, a sister of King Seongjong. In 2007, the National Museum of Korea held an exhibition, *Sutra Painting in Search of Buddhahood*, which exhibited sutra painting, an illustration of the contents of Buddhist scriptures. The means of producing Sutra paintings is different from that of general Buddhist paintings, but this exhibition helped to grasp the middle-age East Asian Buddhist culture and the influence relation among Korea, China, and Japan in the act of copying sutras.

In 2009, the Tongdosa Museum displayed *Water-Moon Avalokitesvara of the Goryeo Dynasty* in Kagami shrine, Japan. This painting was produced by a painter of Dohwawon, a royal academy of painting during the Goryeo dynasty, in May 1310, and its patron was Wangsukbi, the concubine of King Chungseon. It is over 4 meters wide, thereby being the largest Buddhist painting

6. See Chung 1997, 2007; Kikutake 1981; Lee 1981. For information on the current status and research outcomes of Goryeo Buddhist painting, see Chung 2009, 2013.

of the Goryeo dynasty. At the exhibition of the National Museum of Korea in 2010, *Masterpieces of Goryeo Buddhist Painting*, 108 Buddhist paintings from 44 institutions in Japan, France, Russia, and the United States were displayed. The exhibition *Exquisite and Precious: The Splendor of Korean Art*, held at the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in 2015, emphasized exquisite quality of Korean art in various genres, such as metal crafts excavated from tombs, mother-of-pearl pieces and Buddhist painting of the Goryeo dynasty period, and documentation paintings of the Joseon dynasty. In 2016, the Sen-oku Hakukokan Museum in Japan held a special exhibition, *The Fragrant Sublime: Koryo Buddhist Paintings*. Here, 57 Buddhist paintings, mother-of-pearl lacquerware, and ceramics were exhibited, including important Japanese cultural heritage. In 2017, it was also held as a travelling exhibition at the Nezu Museum in Tokyo.

Special exhibitions were not only about releasing unpublished works to the public, but also an opportunity to review research achievements of the period through associated academic lectures and symposiums. The National Museum of Korea held a special exhibition, *Goryeo: The Glory of Korea*, to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of the establishment of Goryeo; this exhibition displayed about 450 artifacts, among which Goryeo Buddhist painting held a large share. To show the cultural exchange of Buddhist art in Northeast Asia, 14 Chinese and Japanese Buddhist paintings as well as 20 Goryeo Buddhist paintings were displayed together. This exhibition's main themes include the ritual style in Amitabha Buddha painting, which is the most prominent kind of Goryeo Buddhist painting, the visibility of paintings in the worship space,



Figure 1. Exhibition, *Goryeo: The Glory of Korea* (National Museum of Korea)

and the function of Buddhist painting for practice (Figure 1) (Jeong 2019). The Zhejiang University Press and the Korean Foundation for Advanced Studies published *Collection of Goryeo Painting: In Europe and USA* in 2019. This publication presents 33 Buddhist paintings from 17 museums in five countries, including the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy. Most of the publications include high-resolution photographs and Korean, English, Chinese, and Japanese explanations on Goryeo Buddhist paintings collected by each country before the end of the Second World War.

One of the characteristics of the studies on Goryeo Buddhist Painting is that not many methodologies have been applied due to the limitations of access to works, many of which were in overseas. Since 2000, various approaches have been attempted, dealing with the diversified topics such as patrons, groups of painters, and the location of enshrinement (Kim 2003). At the international symposium associated with *Masterpieces of Goryeo Buddhist Painting* in 2010, various scholars presented their works under the category of “East Asian Buddhist Painting and Goryeo Buddhist Painting.” The relevant topics include the originality and patrons of Goryeo Buddhist painting, the connection with Buddhist paintings from the Western Xia dynasty 西夏 excavated in Khara-khoto area in Russia, and the comparative study between Buddhist paintings of the Song and Yuan dynasties and those of Kamakura in Japan. These topics were also covered in the English academic journal published by the National Museum of Korea in the same year.⁷ Other essential themes include the investigation of individual Buddhist painting, analysis of expressions and techniques, stylistic studies, and the process of acceptance and transformation of iconography. Moreover, in-depth analysis on specific iconography such as Maitreya-vyakarana-Sutra, Bhaishajyaguru Buddha (Medicine Buddha), or Avalokitesvara and Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Pair has been carried out consistently.⁸

On the other hand, Professor Ide Seinosuke of Kyushu University in Japan is a representative scholar who approaches Goryeo Buddhist painting from the

7. For this, see all the articles featured in vol. 4 of *The International Journal of Korean Art and Archaeology* (2010).

8. Hwang Geum-soon studied various representations of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, their transformation, and the relation between religious belief and ceremonies in her studies in 2001 and 2005. For further information on other topics, see I. Kang 2015; Kim 2015.

standpoint of sectarian Buddhism (Ide 1997, 2016). Similarly, Lee Seung-hee interpreted the correlation between Buddhist painting and ritual ceremonies of the Pure Land doctrine of the Cheontae order during the late Goryeo dynasty period.⁹ This study was on the connection between the practice of the Cheontae order and the subjects depicted in *Painting of the Buddha Preaching* 靈山會上圖 and *Painting of the Paradise of Amitabha* 觀經變相圖 produced during the late Goryeo dynasty and the early Joseon dynasty period. There is also a counter-argument that since the existing Goryeo Buddhist paintings are not for the enshrinement in the temple buildings, there is a limitation to connect them with the doctrinal background based on the specific Buddhist sect. There is a functional difference between the worship paintings inside the temple and paintings hung in the private worship space; therefore, the counter-argument suggests that the latter is not an adequate object of study for exploring the significance of sectarian art.

However, throughout the whole Goryeo dynasty period, there were ritual ceremonies held by the royal family or by sects, such as Lotus Lantern festival (Palgwanhoe 八關會), a national Buddhist ritual ceremony. In *Goryeosa* (*History of the Goryeo Dynasty*), there are over 80 Buddhist ceremonies recorded, and they were held 1,038 times in total (Ahn 2005; Kim 2001; Kim 2012; H. Kang 2015). As the Buddhist paintings were used in these rituals, it is worth reconsidering the use of Buddhist paintings.¹⁰ For instance, Arhats and associated sculptures, crafts, Buddhist paintings of the Goryeo dynasty could be thoroughly studied since the special exhibition, *The Arhats, The Holy Men of Truth and Enlightenment*, at the Chuncheon National Museum in 2003 and other subsequent exhibitions. Moreover, a budding scholar Shin Gwang-hee has shown remarkable achievements.¹¹ Nahanjae is a nation-wide ceremony which present offerings to the Arhat, but honoring the Arhat was often equated

9. See Lee 2011. For the study on the correlation between *Painting of Amitabha Buddha* and *Nae-ang* 來迎, the coming down of Amitabha to welcome the spirit of his believer, see Park 2011.

10. Among the extant Goryeo Buddhist paintings, about 100 of them are either on Amitabha Buddha or on Water-Moon Avalokiteshvara 水月觀音. This tendency might lie on the demand of collectors based on religious background or the circumstances of trading system at that time. However, it is also necessary to look at the demand of these paintings for ritual ceremonies.

11. See the exhibition catalogues of *The Arhats, The Holy Men of Truth and Enlightenment* published by the Chuncheon National Museum, 2009, and *Sacred Ningbo, Gateway to 1300 Years of Japanese Buddhism* published by the Nara National Museum in 2009. For further scholarly achievements, see Shin 2010, 2014.

with honoring the living monks.¹² In the painting of the Arhats, the Arhat is sat on a chair, and this posture is same as that of monks' portraits. Nahanjae was held regularly, and it was closely related with the operation of temples. These characteristics can be considered in iconographic, compositional, and background analysis of the painting.¹³

Meanwhile, the field of costume history has also accomplished notable academic achievements. In a series of publications such as *Fabrics and Fabric Motifs Depicted in Goryeo Water-moon Avalokitesvara* in 2012, Professor Shim Yeon-ok presented that the fabrics expressed in Buddhist paintings precisely reflect the characteristics and formative elements of the clothing and fabric during the Goryeo dynasty period. Such empirical methodology focuses on the stylistic characteristics and the significance of the painting in overall painting history; however, future researches should deal with comprehensive perspectives to consider the characteristics of Buddhist painting and its universality in terms of the whole East Asia.

The Goryeo dynasty period existed throughout the turbulent period when Song, Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties rose and fell in China. In the midst of dynamic diplomatic confrontation, there was an active exchange of materials and human resources. Inheriting the tradition of the Unified Silla and the Later Three Kingdoms, the Goryeo dynasty interacted with the Kingdom of Wúyuè, Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, and Song dynasty (960-1279), and was also in contact with the northern people from the Liao dynasty (916-1125) and Jin dynasty (1115-1234). Therefore, throughout the whole Goryeo dynasty period, new iconography and style proliferated in virtue of dynamic foreign exchange. Also, Buddhist texts and literatures such as the Buddhist canon of the Song dynasty 開寶藏 and Buddhist sutras from the Kitan were introduced. These backgrounds should be considered in earnest, and such cultural exchange should be carefully scrutinized in the study of Buddhist painting. The cultural achievement accomplished by the Goryeo dynasty will be brought to light comprehensively when studies are conducted from diverse perspectives—focusing on the influence of foreign exchange on the production of Buddhist painting, its producers, the function of Buddhist painting as a ritual medium, and so on.

12. Nahan is the Korean name for the Arhat 阿羅漢.

13. For the study which scrutinizes the connection between Buddhist painting and the ceremonies for the Arhats focusing on 8 Treasure paintings where the Arhat was illustrated as a sole figure, see Jeong 2017.

Trend of Exhibition and Research on Joseon Buddhist Painting

Since the 2000s, the field of Joseon Buddhist painting has achieved fruitful results that dozens of research papers have been published based on extensive studies and data collection. For instance, Professor Park Eun-kyeong (2005, 2008) is a representative scholar who has conducted researches on multi-faceted aspects of Joseon Buddhist painting such as its current status, traditionality, new elements, and chronological transformations during the Joseon dynasty period, thus organizing the lineage of Korean Buddhist painting.

The National Museum of Korea began to operate the room of Buddhist painting in earnest since its relocation to Yongsan in 2005. In preparation for its relocation, it organized the first exhibition with the paintings of the Joseon dynasty period as a preliminary step for opening the room dedicated to Buddhist painting.¹⁴ The room of Buddhist painting was part of the permanent exhibition hall, and it was composed of two categories of the enshrinement space: “interior” and “exterior” of the temple buildings. Normally, in the reports of cultural heritage temples and publications on Buddhist painting, Buddhist paintings have been categorized according to hierarchies of depicted figures, such as Buddha, bodhisattva, Hindu gods 天部, and the divine guardians 神衆. Furthermore, they approached the paintings in the spatial context rather than individual paintings. Since the theme of Buddhist painting varies depending on the characteristics of temple buildings such as Daeungjeon hall 大雄殿, Myeongbujjeon hall 冥府殿, or Gwaneumjeon hall 觀音殿, the classification of architectural spaces have been applied as well. Also, exhibitions specialized in the minor themes—a certain group of monks, painting of Amitabha Buddha, or paintings of Myeongbujjeon hall—have been held regularly.

In the National Museum of Korea, the space to exhibit Buddhist hanging painting—those originally hung outside the pavilion—was designed as a mezzanine floor from the time of construction. The large exhibition space for Buddhist painting for ritual ceremonies over 10 meters was an important issue

14. The title of this exhibition was *A Journey into the Buddhist Paintings of Joseon Dynasty*, which was held in 2003. It was organized with the themes of “hell and paradise” and “practice and wish.” This was also held in Frankfurt, Germany, for the international book exhibition in 2005. Its exhibition catalogue was in German, and in 2009, an English catalogue, *A Journey of Soul: The Buddhist Painting of the Joseon Period*, was published as well.



Figure 2. Exhibition, *A Rain of Flowers: Buddhist Hanging Scroll at Eunhaesa Temple* held at the National Museum of Korea

since the planning phase for its relocation (Figure 2). It could be entered from the 2nd floor of the Calligraphy and Painting hall and was also connected to the 3rd floor where the Sculpture and Crafts hall was located, thereby allowing audience to view Buddhist painting not only in terms of traditional painting but also as a type of religious art beyond the distinction between painting and sculpture. The exhibitions of Buddhist hanging painting could be conducted by annually borrowing 120 pieces from temples nationwide. Starting from *Cheonggoksa Gwaebul: Large Buddhist Painting for Outdoor Rituals* in 2005, a total of 15 exhibitions were held until

2020. A brief catalogue of these exhibitions provided in-depth information on exhibits, large-scale paintings that could not be easily seen even at the temples. The means of providing the brief catalogue was soon adopted by other exhibitions that it has become a representative publication type of the museum.¹⁵

Various large and small exhibitions have been constantly held, reflecting the survey results on Buddhist cultural heritage of the university museum collections and temple collections: *Painting of the Eight Great Events* 八相圖 in 2007, *Bulbeopseung (The Three Jewels: The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha)* in 2015, *Arhat* in 2018 of the Dongguk University Museum, and *Visions of the Afterlife in Korean Buddhist Art* at the Hongik University Museum in 2013. Also, starting from *Donghwasa Temple of Palgongsan Mountain* at the Daegu National Museum in 2008, there has been special exhibitions regardless of genre, as in *Tongdosa Temple* in 2018 and *Geumsansa Temple* in 2019 at the Central Buddhist Museum.

15. A total of 15 brief catalogues were published, from *Cheonggoksa Gwaebul: Large Buddhist Painting for Outdoor Rituals* in 2005 and *A Buddha with a Lotus Flower: Tongdosa Gwaebul* in 2005 to *A Rain of Flowers: Buddhist Hanging Scroll at Eunhaesa Temple*.

The Tongdosa Museum has been established as a pivotal institution in the study of Buddhist painting history since the establishment of the Association Of Korean Buddhist Art History in 2003. In 1999, the hanging painting of the Tongdosa Temple was exhibited, and since then, hanging paintings were exhibited 37 times by 2020. A special exhibition *Gamro* 甘露 held at the Tongdosa Museum in 2005 highlighted the collection of 23 *Paintings of Saving Hungry Ghosts by Giving Nectar, Gammodo* 甘露圖. The exhibition catalogue is critical in the study of *Gammodo*; for each exhibit, a comprehensive explanation was provided in the format of essay, thus stimulating relevant studies. The study of *Gammodo* painting has shown remarkable achievements centered on Kim Seung-hee, and it has been applied in various studies on the correlation with Chinese Suryukjae 水陸齋,¹⁶ folk studies, social historical consideration such as a monastic order of Buddhist nuns and Buddhist ritual ceremonies (Kang and Kim 1995; Yoon 2003; Heo 2009; Park 2010b; Yeon 2010; Park 2011; Kim 2013).

In Korea, the National Museum of Korea and the Tongdosa Museum are the only museums that have the permanent exhibition space for Buddhist hanging paintings. Through the consistent exhibit opportunities for hanging paintings by the two institutions, the value of this tangible heritage as the ritual of artists in the context of both space and time could be reinterpreted. Buddhist hanging painting is recognized as a genre that shows the characteristics of Buddhist culture in the Joseon dynasty period, when each temple attempted to have its own large ritual paintings. More than 70 Buddhist hanging paintings were designated as national cultural heritage.

Since 2016, the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and the Research Institute of Sungbo Cultural Heritage have been conducting a 10-year extensive investigation project.¹⁷ The primary goal was to prevent the potential hazards in the storage area in order to preserve and maintain large Buddhist paintings. Subsequent documentation works on various phenomena contributed to bolster the Buddhist painting history, the protective measures of cultural heritage conservation and management, and scientific analysis for restoration projects.

16. Suryukjae is a ritual for honoring souls wandering land and water, and Cheondo ritual is a comfort ritual for the dead.

17. See *Report on Buddhist Hanging Painting*, vols.1-3, National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 1992, 2000, 2004 and *Detailed Investigation Report on Large Buddhist Painting*, Cultural Heritage Administration and Research Institute of Sungbo Cultural Heritage, 2016-2019.



Figure 3. Interior View of Daegwangbojeon Hall in the Magoksa Temple

As briefly mentioned above, the study on Buddhist painting since the 2000s focuses not only on individual works, but also on the enshrinement space of Buddhist painting, interaction with worshipers, and relevance to other forms of Buddhist art (Figure 3). As to the origin of the iconography, multifarious elements such as Buddhist scriptures and manuals for religious ceremonies were studied. Topics of new research trends include the way of accepting Buddhist art, its functions, enshrinement space, facilities, and relation between Buddhist painting and ritual ceremonies (Lee 2009, 2011; Hwang 2010; Tak 2011; Jeong 2015).

Buddhist painting is produced by monk-painters who use painting as a means of practice. The existence of monk-painters called *hwaseung*, *hwawon*, and *geumeo* and the phenomenon of monks becoming professional masters are unique phenomena of Joseon even in East Asian Buddhist civilization (Jang 2003). The written records of the painting process and relevant details (*hwagi*) are primary materials for the study of Buddhist art which usually has limited written sources. From those records, the production date, the content of prayer offerings, the list of donation, the composition of temples at that time, the organization of monks, and assigned roles can be found (Lee and Heo 2010). In addition, after the 16th century, a more coordinated organization of monks emerged. Despite the limitation in research materials, there are subjects that require further studies such as the production mechanisms, including collaboration and role allocation. Lee Yong-yoon (2018, 2019) has produced a

series of studies, which highlighted the significance of the monk clans in *A Study of Buddhist Painting and Dharma Clan of the Yeongnam Area during the Second Half of the Joseon Dynasty* in 2015.

Bulhwacho is an underdrawing of Buddhist painting. With a charcoal, an overall outline of figures is drawn on *hanji*, Korean traditional paper, and a detailed line drawing is marked over the outline with an ink stick. The draft drawing, which works as a blueprint, is produced by *hwaseung*, a monk-painter who is adept at drawing. Therefore, this draft drawing often has a great artistry as a piece of artwork. The design is first copied from the draft drawing to the base fabric, colored, and detailed patterns are illustrated. Sometimes, *bulhwacho* shows a conceptual design, comments on production steps or colors, or the name of *hwaseung*. In 2013, the Seokdang Museum of Dong-A University held a special exhibition, *The Story of Draft Drawing: Bulhwacho*, which highlighted the historical significance and contents of draft drawings (Yoon 2011). The draft drawings were circulated among monk-painters, thus indicating the production background, time period, transformation of iconography, master-apprentice relationship, and regional characteristics of Buddhist painting.

Following the new cultural heritage designation of Buddhist paintings, related studies are vitalized (Shin 2004; Choi 2017a). For instance, *Mural Paintings in Yeongsanjeon Hall of Tongdosa Temple* in Yangsan city, Treasure No. 1711, and *Mural Paintings in Daegwangjeon Hall of Sinheungsa Temple* in Yangsan city, No. 1757, are the examples. The scope of research has expanded from the iconography-oriented studies, lingering on the categories such as “Painting of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva” 觀音菩薩圖, “Painting of the Arhats,” or “Painting of the Eight Great Events,” to diverse aspects, including woodblock prints from which iconography originated, composition, mural paintings, and folk paintings. In particular, exemplary studies on the relationship between folk paintings and Buddhist paintings delved into the connection between the painting of the Arhats and print collections of the Ming dynasty, such as *Hong Shi Xian Fo Qi Zong* 洪氏仙佛奇蹤. As to the origin of mural painting, the mural painting of the Daeungeon Hall in Bulguksa Temple 釋氏源流應化事蹟 was studied.¹⁸

18. Also, *Temple Mural Paintings in Yangsan City* was the exemplary exhibition jointly held by the Tongdosa Museum and Yangsan Museum in 2018. Through academic events associated with this exhibition, new achievements on traditional temple mural paintings were introduced and future preservation measures were discussed.

Modern Buddhist paintings account for the largest number of existing Buddhist paintings, but the research interest on them has not been as great as that of traditional Buddhist paintings. Recently, more young scholars are studying this topic, so the topics have diversified. The turbulent period from the late Joseon dynasty to the Korean Empire and the Japanese colonization period was a time when tradition and new culture co-existed. It is possible to examine the foreign influence on the iconography of Buddhist painting and acceptance of various external impetus, including foreign religions from Japan and China and even Western Catholicism (Jang 2003; Choi 2010, 2015). The illustrations of Buddhist publications and prints of the 1910s are analyzed, and the newly built Buddhist temples and Buddhist paintings involved in religious propagation have been highlighted. Modern Buddhist paintings have been devalued for their degradation of inks and techniques and the issue of authenticity in iconography. However, recent studies are trying to reconsider their value in diverse perspectives. In 2007 and 2008, the Seoul Museum of History published *Buddhist Painting of Seoul*, which presents academic researches on the Buddhist paintings from the late Joseon dynasty period and the modern era in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do province. Meanwhile, the Gyeongju National Museum held a special exhibition, *Magoksa Temple, Encounter with Modern Buddhist Paintings*. This exhibition featured the monk-painter Ilseop and the Magoksa Temple which was a famous workshop of Buddhist painting during the modern era.

As discussed above, the perspectives of Buddhist painting researches have been diversified, and the topics have been subdivided into more specific ones, including the issue of producers and patrons of Buddhist art, modern Buddhist painting, *Chilseongdo*, *Gamnodo*, or woodblock prints. Studies actively dealing with the use and function of Buddhist painting is another recent trend of the post-2000. Meanwhile, there are also concerns about this research trend. Overemphasizing fragmentary resources due to the limitation in literary records and materials should be avoided, and scholars should refrain from focusing on functions too much while neglecting the art historical value. Moreover, among the topics that review the current status and issues of recent studies, Buddhist terminology is a notable one¹⁹: not only the terminology in academia, but also

19. See for instance, Jung 2003; Kim 2016a; Choi 2017a. The National Museum of Korea published *Glossary of Terms-Exhibitions at the National Museum of Korea: Art History* in 2007. In this glossary, Sino-Korean words, jargons and academic terms are explained and standardized. As a follow-up

administrative terms of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and exhibition-related terms of the museums were discussed.

From a comparative standpoint, East Asian Buddhist culture shows a universal tendency of holding ceremonies such as offering ceremonies, Suryukjae and Cheondo rituals. The universal idea of Buddhism is shared with neighboring countries, but each country's endemic characteristics appear in the process of systematization and visualization. Although the associated rituals were influenced by the ritual manuals originated from China, a unique characteristic formed as the procedures were simplified to suit our situation and equipped with pertinent ritual facilities and means. Korean Buddhist painting not only showed symbolic illustrations of religious faith, but also played a dynamic role in the ritual culture prevalent throughout Korean history. China, Korea, and Japan are individually researching their own data, but studies on wider horizons are necessary to thoroughly comprehend the universality and distinctiveness of East Asian Buddhist culture. In terms of cultural exchange, more interesting narratives can be found when each country's Buddhist paintings are comprehensively examined both individually and collaboratively.

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