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January 13 - 16, 2005

Friday

Time: 11:20 AM - 12:50 PM 1/14/2005 Room: Kohala
Session Topic: Art History
Session Chair: MacKenzie, Catherine

Revisiting the "Lady with Jade": Helen Burton and American Artists in Peking/Beijing
MacKenzie, Catherine — Concordia University

Why did Bodhidharma Come from the West? Origins of Representations of the First Zen Patriarch
Mecsi, Beatrix — Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

A New Media Exploration: The Conceptual Work of Masaki Fujihata
Ippolito, Jean — University of Hawaii at Hilo

Kamro-do: Buddhist Negotiation and Compromise with the Chosun Dynasty
Youn, Haeyoung — Ohio University

Friday

Time: 11:20 AM - 12:50 PM 1/14/2005 Room: Koko Crater
Session Topic: Cross-disciplinary
Session Chair: Shaw, Sylvia B.

Dialectics of Physics and Religion: String Theory and Religious Faith
Shaw, Sylvia B. — Boston University

"If You Want to be the Lord's Servant, Resign Yourself to Confrontation:" The Pietist Challenge in Early Georgia
Riley, Helene M. — Clemson University

Religious and Social Commentary in the Art of William Kurelek
Ota, Frances — University of Toronto

Dance as Musical Text: Winterguard and Elton John's "Candle in the Wind"
Engelsdorfer, Amy — DePauw University

Friday

Time: 11:20 AM - 12:50 PM 1/14/2005 Room: Kona
Session Topic: Philosophy
Session Chair: Schoedinger, Andrew B.

A Refutation of Solipsism
Schoedinger, Andrew B. — Boise State University

A Rousseauvian Argument against Economic Inequality
Weintraub, Jarett — University of California, Riverside

What We Can Learn from Anti-Heroes in Literature
Myers, Zacharia — University of Maryland

Kamro-do: Buddhist Negotiation and Compromise with the Chosun Dynasty

Haeyoung Youn

I. Introduction

This paper will deal with a style of Buddhist painting, Kamro-do, which originated in Korea. The Kamro-do has been used as a ritual painting done for dead people, hung inside a temple (see fig. 1). Its origin was the middle Chosun dynasty at the end of the sixteenth century.¹ Since Buddhism in Korea had been imported from China around the fourth century, Korean Buddhist paintings had generally functioned as background and supplements to Buddhist statues to imbue the statues with a majestic aura (Kang 97). However, Kamro-do, being independent from Buddhist statues, shows unique icons and composition. At the top there are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; in the middle there is a scene of memorial service, which is called Sisik, performed by Buddhist monks, heavenly beings, a king and peers, monks and nuns; and at the bottom, a Hungry Ghost, diverse forms of human lives, the world of Hell, and the world of beasts. Most Buddhist scholars² have agreed that its style is found only in the Chosun dynasty, and it further demonstrates a peculiar Buddhist painting of Korea.

This previous research, however, seems to deal with the pictorial style of Kamro-do. Beyond its artistic values, this paper suggests three questions. What is the relationship between Kamro-do and Chosun's Buddhism? Why did Kamro-do appear in the middle of Chosun's dynasty? Why does the scene of the Sisik take a large part in Kamro-do? Developing these viewpoints, this paper will argue that the value of Komro-do should be

¹ Based on its date, Yaksan-sa's Kamro-do (1589) in Japan is estimated as the earliest Kamro-do.

² Lee, kyoung-hwa. 'The research of customs scenes in Kamrodo'(Seoul: Hongik Universty), p 3.
The earliest research was introduced by Japanese scholar Koan Yoojung

examined based on the political and economic situations of Chosun's Buddhism, especially its mid and later period.

To advance this argument, this paper will introduce the unique composition and iconography of each stage of Kamro-do, and then, explain how Chosun Buddhism compromised reality under oppression. Finally, agreeing with the stylistic originality of Kamro-do, this paper highlights Kamro-do as a product of this oppressive time, which middle Chosun's Buddhism faced.

II. The composition of Kamro-do

The three sections of Kamro-do describe the process of emancipation of mankind from the bottom to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas at the top through the Sisik in the middle, which can extinguish people's karma.

1. The lower part

The lower part of Kamro-do expresses the Wheel of the Six Realms³ through the diverse lives of humans. In this level, humans can continuously suffer or can be born in the Western paradise according to their karma. Most images in the lower part describe a human being's suffering life or their death; for instance, fighting and war, committing a suicide by hanging, falling from a tree, being chased or eaten by a tiger or snake, being killed by a collapse of a house or punishment, drinking poison, or being surrounded with a wave or a flame (see fig. 2). The characteristic of the lower part expresses ghosts, which wander in the Six Realms as the commoner's figure. It shows that the middle of Chosun's Buddhism was closely connected with the commoners. Thus,

³ Lee, kyoung-hwa. 'The research of customs scenes in Kamrodo'(Seoul: Hongik University), p 6. According to one's karma, one was believed to repeat the cycle of rebirth in the six possible paths – as a hell dweller, a Hungry Ghost, an animal, an asura, a human on earth, or a god in the heavens.

by expressing the suffering scenes through their lives, it can be easy to make the commoners get involved with the Buddhist ritual. In other words, the dead soul was an object which should be rescued through Sisik, whose charity makes Buddha sympathize (Kim 33-34).

The most important image in the lower part is the Hungry Ghost (see fig. 3). Since it is a real object which receives the mercy of Kamro, the Hungry Ghost is a substantial element in Kamro-do. In Sanskrit, the Hungry Ghost is Preta. If translated, it means ‘ghost’, and China has called the departed soul of a dead person a ghost (Kim 38). The ghost became an object of Sisik for the dead or ancestors. In this context, the Hungry Ghost became a departed soul of the dead person, in other words, an ancestor’s ghost. This is connected with the worship of ancestors and became an important medium in leading the Sisik ritual effectively. In addition, the Hungry Ghost is one part of the Six Realms, and before deciding Buddhist Samsara, the middle stage is called the Hungry Ghost. Thus, in the stage of the Hungry Ghost, a funeral ritual is held, praying for the soul to go to the Western paradise (*ibid*).

Based on the sutra *Ugagipouguanandaran*, the Hungry Ghost’s figure is described as a very skinny body, a neck as narrow as a needle, a mouth belching out flame, and a swollen belly (Kang 222). In the early Kamro-do, generally a Hungry Ghost appears, whereas in the later, it tends to be changed into twin ghosts (see fig. 4). However, the latter Hungry Ghost’s figure simplifies the detailed original form. For instance, as kamro-do at Youngju-sa (see fig. 5) shows, the flame gone, and instead, clouds surround the Hungry Ghost. The Hungry Ghost is a necessary image in Kamro-do which expresses the pain of the restraint of the karma of the Six Realms as a condensed

form (Kim 41). Thus, its grotesque and horrible figure could warn believers who participate in the ritual and exalt the mood.

2. The middle part

The function of the middle part prays for a dead person's happiness in the other world through a ritual called Sisik. To the left of an altar in the center of Kamro-do, there are several groups of Buddhist monks who lead the Sisik, read Sutras, and perform a Buddhist dance (see fig. 6). In fact, the meaning of "Kamro" is the "sweet dew," and in Buddhism it is analogous to the teachings of Buddha in saving mankind. It is called "amrta •amirita" in Sanskrit and is interpreted to mean "immortality, eternal life, or the other world." When it designates food, it becomes "Kamromi of immortality." If it is tasted, the suffering person is released and reaches emancipation, the highest stage in Buddhism (Kim 4). To give kamromi to humans, who are restricted to their karma, Sisik is needed. Thus, Kamro-do means that by giving Kamromi, which has Buddha's power to mankind, they can be born in the Western paradise.

3. The top part

The top part shows a soul that is born in the western paradise under the protection of Amitabha, seven Buddhas, Inrowang Bodhisattva, Ksitigarbha, and Avalokitesvara (see fig. 7). The seven Buddhas, displayed in the middle of the top part are called when the Sisik ritual is held. Each Buddha has a name and a role. Compared to the lower part, the iconography of the top part rarely changes. Emphasizing Amitabha and the accompanying Buddhas, which contrasts to realistic sufferings of the lower part, seems to accelerate the commoners' wish to be born in the Western paradise.

Comparing with other Bodhisattvas, Inrowang Bodhisattva is distinct in his role

and is located at the top of the left part. His body turns toward the seven Buddhas and his eyes look at mankind in the lower part who are the objects to be rescued. His role is to lead ghosts, suffering in the Karma of Six Realms to the seven Buddhas (Kim 50). Meeting Inrowang Bodhisattva is possible after recognizing the mercy of the Sisik ritual; thus, his role is very important in making a smooth ascension from the lower part to the top part. To go to the Western paradise, the dead person should be first selected by Inrowang Bodhisattva; thus, the real object of worship becomes Inrowang Bodhisattva (Kim 52).

III. The situation of Choson's Buddhism

In contrast to the previous dynasty, Koryu, the new Chosun government decided to practice Confucianism and to repress Buddhism. However, the repression of the early Chosun's Buddhism began as ideological politics, not as a rejection of Buddhism's doctrine. For instance, the early Chosun dynasty held Buddhist services continuously and Confucian scholars helped to translate Buddhist Sutras into Korean.

It was from the middle Chosun dynasty that the oppression started on a full scale. Since Buddhism had been imported to Korea, this period of Buddhism was the most seriously oppressed and then, the social position of Buddhism declined. For instance, first, the Chosun dynasty closed the "Sungkwa" system, which was the highest level of examination for electing elite monks. This systemic prohibition resulted in a lack of talented monks and further, blocked the development of Buddhist thought. It is a direct reason why middle Chosun Buddhism could not produce any achievements of thought. The second oppressive step was a stop to the Docheopje system, a public route to

becoming a Buddhist monk. Comparing the monk's social position in the period of Docheopge with the monk's after the stop of Docheopje, while the former monks were included in an officially legal social class, the latter monks were offenders. Thus, since the middle Chosun dynasty, the Buddhist monk had been treated contemptuously as a deviant. The third restriction was to prohibit Buddhist monks from coming into Hanyang, the capital city of Chosun. This prohibition seriously affected the decline of Buddhism. In contrast to China and Japan, Chosun kept centralism, politics, economics, culture, and thought gathered in Hanyang. Thus, the prohibition on coming into Hanyang meant that Buddhist monks were isolated from all centralistic systems. These three situations helped not only to oppress Buddhism but also to root Confucian ideology stably into Chosun's society (Han 368-370).

To maintain Buddhism under the harsh oppressions, Chosun Buddhist monks began negotiating with Confucian scholars who led a Chosun's official political ideology. Confucian scholars harshly criticized the lack of filial piety or *Huo*, respecting one's parents as well as loyalty to a king in Buddhist doctrine, which are summarized as the essence of Confucianism (Han 372). To avoid this blame, the Buddhist monks frequently taught the Buddhist Sutras which emphasized *Huo*. In fact, the origin of Kamro-do was traced from the two Sutras, the Sutra of *Filial piety*, emphasizing respecting one's parents favor, and the *Ullambanapatra* Sutra, containing vivid and emotional descriptions of a son's attempts to save his mother in the ancestral hall. In Kamro-do, the ghost becomes the ancestor and needs nectar to go to the Western paradise. Through Sisik, the descendant can send the dead souls to the Western paradise by appealing to Buddha's power. Moreover, an addition of a king and his court officials in Sisik is relevant to

show the Buddhist monks' loyalty. Since Sisik appeals to Buddha's mercy, Chosun Buddhism inserts a king and his court in the ritual symbolically to share the Buddha's power.

Next, the most interesting change in the middle Chosun Buddhism was the combination of Zen Buddhism and esoteric Buddhism. Since the preceding Koryo dynasty (918-1392), the mixture of Zen Buddhism and Doctrinal Buddhism had been attempted, and the external oppression during the period of the Chosun dynasty accelerated the flow of Doctrinal Buddhism into Zen Buddhism (Han 375). The mixture of Zen and esoteric Buddhism changed the Buddhist ceremony. Since the Dharani recitation of esoteric Buddhism was faster and surer than Zen meditation or the repetition of chants in achieving the commoners' supplications in this world, esoteric Buddhism strongly absorbed the public. As a result, Dharani came into Zen temples, and the Buddhist ceremonies were developed, based on esoteric Buddhism. Additionally, there were many books of Dharani published, the most popular Dharani up to now, the Dharani of *Cheosu* was produced in the middle Choson dynasty (Hwang 156).

Since esoteric Buddhism had a mixed native magico-animism, it included many elements of folk belief. Thus, the esoteric rites in the Buddhist temple were established to suit the commoner's realistic demand, not the original Buddhist meanings (*ibid*). Therefore, the role of the monk was not a religious teacher such as a guide for confession or repentance but rather, a professional substitute holding a ceremony and praying for the believer's fortune (Hwang 154). Even though Chosun's Buddhism communicated well with the commoners through this kind of ritual, it was hard to say that they transmitted the essentials of Buddhism.

IV. The relation between Kamro-do and Chosun's Buddhism

A way to understand the characteristics of Kamro-do objectively is to look at it in realistic situations which Chosun Buddhism faced. It was from the middle Chosun dynasty that early Kamro-do was produced and Chosun's Buddhism established its peculiar characteristics. It is interesting to examine Kamro-do under the ideology and order of the changed Chosun's Buddhism and the relationship to other religions.

The scene of Sisik in the middle section of Kamro-do is related to a financial aspect of Buddhist temples. The characteristic of Buddhist orders had been changed to self-government since the middle Chosun dynasty. Kamro-do at Bongso-am (see fig. 6), dated at 1759 shows this in the middle section. In front of the Sisik there are two sutra tables: a volume of the *Lotus Sutra* lies on one, and a volume of ritual texts is on the other. This indicates that these texts were read aloud on such ceremonial occasions (Kang 94). During the period of Koryo and the early Chosun dynasties, Buddhist administrations and major rites were managed by the nation. This situation suggests that the dynasties provided finances for the Buddhist temple's management, and Buddhist monks were able to devote themselves to study. However, after the invasion by Japan (1592-1598), with the pressure for money for the Chosun dynasty, the financial ground of Buddhist temples totally collapsed. As a result, Buddhist temples had to find their own way since the middle Chosun dynasty. In addition, as Buddhist festivals for peace and the future of the nation which were popular in the previous dynasty, disappeared, middle Chosun Buddhism depended on holding rites at an individual level, praying for their believers, and offerings (Hwang 134-42). Thus, the Rites of Forty-nine Days

became a substantial financial source (Kang 90). The middle section of Kamro-do, which emphasizes the ceremony of Sisik and the ideology that the dead souls can go to the Western paradise through the Rite, are understood in this context.

In Komro-do, different religions co-exist. Another characteristic of the middle of Chosun's Buddhism is that it was assimilated into other religions because the power of Chosun's Buddhism became weak (Han 398). When it was a national religion in the previous dynasties, it did not need to negotiate with other religions. However, middle Chosun Buddhism should recognize other religions such as Confucianism, Daoism, native faith, and Sirhak philosophy which were popular with the public. This example is shown in Kwanyoung-sa kamro-do dated 1791 (see fig. 8). In the upper center, needle-leaf, blossoming peach trees, and city walls divide the upper and middle parts, and the Daoist figure of the Queen Mother of the West of the Peach Blossom Land is located at one side of the central Hungry Ghost. In addition, the scene of exorcism performed by a female shaman, stretching her arms and dancing, is displayed in the lower part (Kang 96).

After shaking the Confucian ideology in the latter part of the Chosun dynasty, a new philosophy, Sirhak, which stressed realistic and practical aspects and Koreanization, emerged and was reflected in Kamro-do. Compared to the figures' costumes in the early Kamro-do, the figures' costumes in Youngju-sa's Kamro-do (see fig. 9) show a partial change from Chinese to Korean traditional costumes. Even though most figures wear Chinese costumes, a few figures wandering at the bottom in front of the rock and the group watching the entertainers at the bottom left wear Chosun native costumes, *hanbok*: men wear *kats* and *durumagis*; women are dressed in *ch'imas* and *chogoris*. This change

shows the first appearance of native Korean costumes in Kamro-do (Kang 94). In Kwangyoung-sa's Kamro-do (see fig. 8), most figures dress in hanbok. Thus, in contrast to orthodox Buddhist paintings, kamro-do developed its iconography, connecting to the surrounding influential religions and philosophies.

V. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to look at Kamro-do objectively beyond its unique pictorial style. As a method, focusing on the same period, the middle Chosun dynasty which produced early Kamro-dos and when Chosun's Buddhism was founded on its own characteristics, this paper examined the structure and iconography of Kamro-do in these Buddhist changes. As a result, Kamro-do reflects the realistic situations of the middle of Chosun's Buddhism. In the political aspect, under the strong domination of Confucianism, Buddhism was not able to avoid the blame for its lack of filial piety and royal loyalty to Confucian scholars. As a defense, the middle of Chosun's Buddhism widely published the Sutra of filial piety which originated from China and inserted the contents of this Sutra in Kamro-do. Thus, Kamro-do is closely related to the thought of filial piety and is hung inside main temple complexes for memorial services. In addition, through inserting a king and his court in Sisik, the Buddhist monks showed their loyalty. Since the ritual appeals to Buddha's mercy, it showed symbolically the sharing of the Buddha's power with the king and his court.

Since the middle Chosun dynasty, Buddhist temples had to find finances by themselves, as they were disconnected from the financial support of the nation. Thus, Buddhist monks had to earn money to maintain their temples. As a financial source, the

Buddhist temples, emphasizing the doctrine of exoteric Buddhism, depended on holding rites, praying for their believers and their offerings. Thus, the emphasis on the scene of Sisik was naturally required, and the doctrine that through the Sisik, the dead souls can enter the Western paradise, is understood in this context.

Finally, the middle of Chosun's Buddhism was so weak that it needed to negotiate with other religions which were popular to the public. Not only did a Buddhist temple include the elements of Daoism and native religions, but also kamro-do represented the flexible relationship with other religions and philosophies. In its structure, as an example of Daoism, the icon of the Queen Mother of the West of the Peach Blossom Land is shown, and the scene of a dancing female shaman is displayed as an example of a native religion. Above all, the figures in Chosun's dresses are understood under the influence of Sirhak. Therefore, beyond its artistic value, kamro-do is understood as a political and financial medium to solve the realistic problems which the middle of Chosun's Buddhism faced under the oppression of a Confucian society.

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Fig1) Scene of an offering ceremony at Bongun –sa, showing a Nectar Ritual painting above the altar table, on which there are ancestral tablets.



Fig. 2) An Example of the low part of Kamro-do

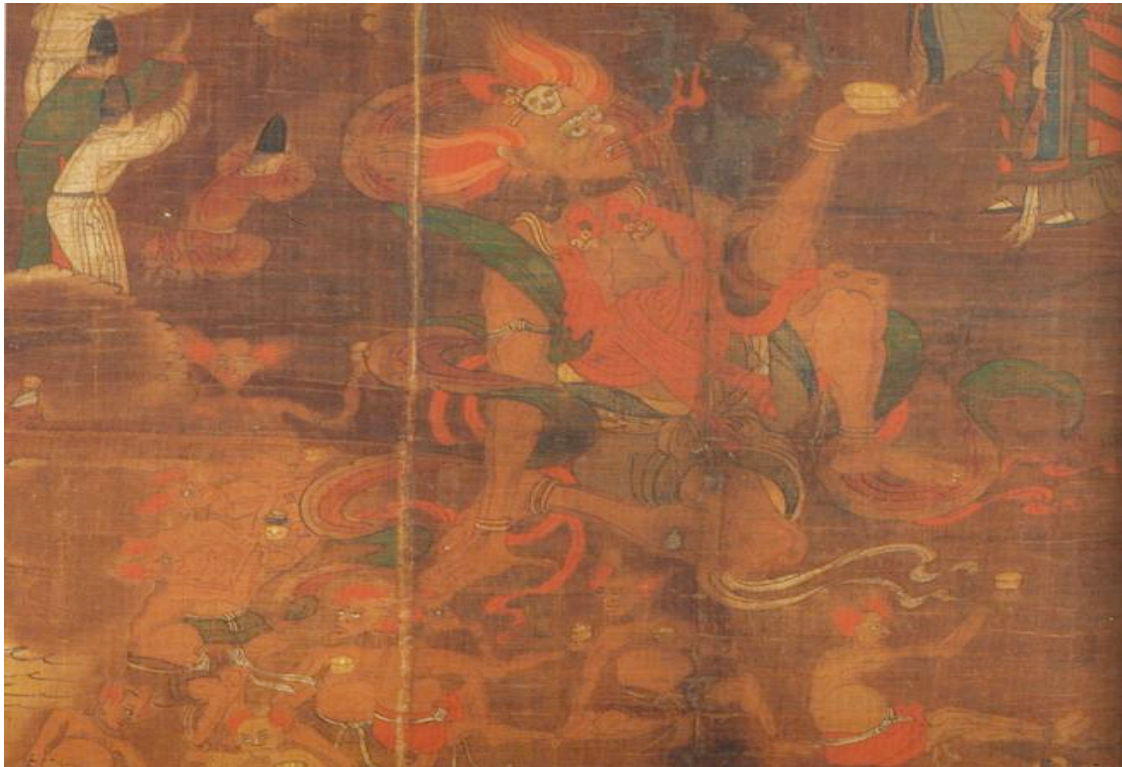


Fig.3) An example of Hungry ghost



Fig.4) Nectar Ritual painting, 1762 from Unhae-sa



Fig.5) Nectar Ritual Painting, 1790 from Youngju-sa



Fig. 6) Detail of Nectar Ritual Painting 1759, from Bongso-am



Fig.7) Nectar Ritual painting, 1701 from Namsang-sa



Fig. 8) Nectar Ritual Painting, 1791, from Kwangyoung-sa



Fig. 9) Detail of Nectar Ritual Painting, 1790 from Youngju-sa