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The Role of Laity in Rebuilding Buddhist Devotional and Material Culture in the Late Joseon

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Abstract

Through a case study of Bogwangsa, this article examines the active role played by laity in rebuilding the devotional and material culture of Buddhism in the final decades of the Joseon dynasty. While the monastic community of this royal votive monastery reached out to the laity to ensure its institutional survival, lay devotees made changes to the physical structure and cultic practices at the monastery, heralding new developments soon to follow in the greater capital area. This study probes the questions of why the monastery was patronized by lay devotees of varied social standings and motivations as well as what benefits, religious and secular, they gained as a result. The study pursues this inquiry through an analysis of the networks of followers and their patronage of "Buddhist projects" (bulsa)*—from the construction of worship halls and the publication of Pure Land texts to the dedication of Buddhist paintings—centering around Bogwangsa. While influential male members of King Gojong's court sponsored the monastery in order to endorse the legitimacy of the monarch, male lay devotees of the "middle"* (jungin) *class and female court members—who were limited by the status system or gender norms—found in this monastery a place of their own in a society dominated by male Confucian elites. This study restores the role of lay Buddhists, little-explored in previous studies, in the revitalization of Buddhism in 19th-century Joseon society, while enriching our understanding of Buddhist devotionalism.*

Keywords: devotional practice, Korean Buddhist paintings, lay Buddhism, late Joseon Buddhism, material culture, patronage, Pure Land Buddhism, royal votive monastery

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Introduction

The late Joseon 朝鮮 (1600–1910) is conventionally described as a time of isolation and decline for Buddhism due to harsh persecution by the Confucian ruling class. Recent scholarship has not only challenged this common view but also offered a more comprehensive picture of Joseon Buddhism through studies of its doctrinal, socio-political, cultural, and institutional aspects. The Buddhist saṃgha found various ways to overcome the discriminatory measures imposed by the government, and support for Buddhism remained strong across social strata, including among the *yangban* literati themselves, throughout the late Joseon (Cho 2003; S. Han 2006; Walraven 2000, 2007, 2020; Baker 2014; Sung-Eun Thomas Kim 2020). The 19th century in particular was a time when Buddhist monastics actively reached out to the laity to secure institutional survival amidst rapid social upheaval and political change. Granted, the monastic community still resorted to the members of the royal house and elite patrons; however, they also began more closely interacting with a wider range of patrons in efforts to expand the social base of Buddhism in Joseon society. As a result, Buddhist monasteries became an arena where different social groups projected their shared religious desires as well as their varied political and socio-cultural aspirations.

Bogwangsa 普光寺 monastery demonstrates the active role played by the laity in rebuilding the Buddhist devotional and material culture over the last few decades of the Joseon period.[1] It stands as an example of new developments in the various quarters of late Joseon Buddhism, including the sudden increase in royal votive monasteries, the flowering of lay Buddhist organizations, the integral role of lay patrons in "Buddhist projects" or "temple works" (*bulsa* 佛事), and the formation of a unique artistic style and architectural type. These were hallmarks of Buddhism in the greater capital area from the late 19th to early 20th century (Sohn 2007; I. Hwang 2009;

1. For relevant studies on the lay impact of Korean religions at large in the last few decades of the Joseon, see Seo (2016; 2017), Park (2017), S. Lee (2019; 2021), Walraven (2020), and Sung-Eun Thomas Kim (2020).

Choi 2012, 2019; Seo 2016, 2017; S. Lee 2019, 2020; Tak 2020). With its ample textual and visual resources, the case of Bogwangsa in particular allows us to examine the ways in which different social groups—the influential ruling elites of King Gojong's court, low-ranking male officials of the "middle" (*jungin* 中人) class, and female court members—sponsored Buddhist architecture and artifacts in accordance with their means. More importantly, it allows us to explore the political and socio-cultural reasons behind their patronage.

Moving beyond state- and monastic-centered perspectives, this article aims to explain why these lay patrons gathered at Bogwangsa and what benefits they gained through participation in communal religious practices and devotional projects there. It starts with an examination of Bogwangsa's unique status as a votive monastery of Joseon's royal house—the main factor that attracted the privileged class in the first place. This factor also happened to draw a handful of commoners who were well-connected to the ruling class through their vocational service. Highly educated yet limited by their lower social standing, male lay devotees of the middle class found a place of their own at Bogwangsa, where they could actively participate in the operation of the monastery and lead cultural projects for the edification of the masses. What follows is a discussion of how and why female court members sponsored the dedication of Buddhist architecture and icons at the turn of the 20th century. In so doing, this article not only offers a nuanced view into the role of lay participation in the formation of the rich ritual and material culture of late Joseon Buddhism, but also restores the active role of Buddhism in the lives of those lay followers.

Bogwangsa as Royal Votive Monastery

The 19th century was a time when the public system of state and society collapsed, and this rupture affected the monastic community, causing societal issues such as increasing economic burden and private exploitation (S. Han 2006, 44–51). One feasible way of preserving prestige and maintaining economic independence was by being designated a "votive

monastery" (*wonchal* 願刹 or *wondang* 願堂) of the royal house, since such monasteries were exempted from the burden of paying taxes. In the 19th century, Buddhist monasteries throughout the greater capital area received lavish patronage from the royal house due to both their physical proximity to the capital, which allowed easy access, and their long involvement with the royal house, including serving as monasteries responsible for the upkeep of royal tombs (*neungsa* 陵寺 or *neungchimsa* 陵寢寺). Located on Goryeongsan 高嶺山 mountain in present-day Paju in Gyeonggi-do province, Bogwangsa was one such votive monastery.[2]

The early history of Bogwangsa is not entirely clear.[3] The oldest record of the monastery is found in an inscription that dates to 1634 commemorating the dedication of a bronze bell still preserved *in situ.* The inscription credits the monk Doseon 道詵 (827–898) as the monastery's founder.[4] From this moment on, the monastery witnessed incessant efforts by the monastic community to reconstruct their resident monastery. It was said to have been rebuilt by the monk Wonjin 元眞 in 1215 and the monk Muhak Jacho 無學自超 (1327–1405) in 1388 (I. Hwang 2009, 13). The monastery was then destroyed by fire in 1592 during the Imjin Wars (1592–1598) but reconstructed under the leadership of two monks, Seolmi 雪眉 and Deokin 德仁, in 1622. Seolmi is recorded to have built the dharma hall, whereas Deokin rebuilt the monastic quarters (CHA and RIBCH 2012b, 274, entry 93). Thereafter, during the time of reign of the Qing emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1662–1722), the two Seon masters Jigan 智侃 and Seongnyeon

2. It was originally called Goryeongsa 高嶺寺 but came to be called Goryeongsa 古靈寺 or Bogwangsa after the mid-Joseon period. To maintain consistency throughout this paper, I will refer to this monastery as Bogwangsa.
3. Relevant epigraphical sources were first introduced in Jeong (1971, 528–548) and Gwon (1979, 471–472). Ingyu Hwang (2009) provides the most detailed account of the monastery to date.
4. It is documented in the "Preface to the Record on the Newly Cast Precious Bell of Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain in the Land of Yangju of the Joseon Kingdom, a Tribute State of the Great Ming" (Yu Dae Myeong Joseon guk Yangju ji Goryeongsan Bogwangsa sinju bojong myeong seo 有大明朝鮮國楊州地高嶺山普光寺新鑄宝鐘銘序). For a reproduction of the artifact and a transcription of the inscription, see CHA and RIBCH (2012a, 308, entry 93; 2012b, 274, entry 93).

釋蓮 led the dharma hall's reconstruction.[5]

Bogwangsa reached a turning point in 1718 as it was entrusted with the upkeep of the tomb of Sukbin née Choe 淑嬪 催氏 (1670–1718), the birth mother of King Yeongjo 英祖 (r. 1724–1776). The *Record of Soryeongwon Tomb* (*Soryeongwon ji* 昭寧園誌), compiled in 1758, provides valuable information regarding the privileges that Bogwangsa enjoyed as a votive monastery of a royal consort.[6] In 1718, the spirit chamber (*wisil* 位室), which enshrined a spirit tablet of Sukbin née Choe, was established inside the monastery. In the late Joseon, such a hall was an indispensable component of monasteries serving the tombs of royal consorts who had given birth to a future king or crown prince (Tak 2012, 216, 219–220).[7] The state even granted Bogwangsa land ownership (*sawijeon* 寺位田) and exemption from miscellaneous services, both official and private (Hangukak jungang yeonguwon 2009, 262–263; Tak 2020, 158). This type of economic support was a rare privilege for a royal votive monastery, guaranteeing its survival from the burden of maintaining the royal tomb (Tak 2020, 146). It is no wonder that the fortune of the monastery was closely intertwined with the rise of the tomb of Sukbin née Choe, which was first elevated to Soryeongmyo 昭寧墓 in 1744 and then to Soryeongwon 昭寧園 in 1753.[8]

5. See "Record of the Reconstruction of the Main Hall of Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain with Buddhist Paintings and Paintwork" (Goryeongsan Bogwangsa Gamjeon jungchang taenghwa byeong danhwak gi 古靈山普光寺紺殿重創幀畵幷丹艧記, dated 1901). For a transcription, see I. Hwang (2009, 56). Gwon (1979, 471–472) reproduces an almost identical account under a slightly different title, reading the "Preface to the Reconstruction and Paintwork of the Dharma Hall of Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain" (Goryeongsan Bogwangsa Beopjeon jungchang byeong danhwak seo 高靈山普光寺法殿重刱幷丹艧序).
6. The original text, together with its transcription and annotated translation in modern Korean, are published in Hangukak jungang yeonguwon (2009, 91–247, 167–320). This source has not been incorporated into previous discussions of the art and architecture of Bogwangsa.
7. The successor of the original building, which burned down during the Korean War, is located directly adjacent to the main hall. The prime location of the Royal Family Shrine (Eosilgak 御室閣) still speaks to its status and importance despite its modest scale and décor.
8. *Yeongjo sillok*, the 7th day of the 3rd lunar month, 1744; the 4th day of the 3rd lunar month, 1753.

This is corroborated by several entries scattered throughout official records. For example, in 1756 it was designated as one of seven monasteries in Gyeonggi-do province that maintained royal tombs and thus was exempt from levy for military purposes (*bangbeon jeon* 防番錢).[9] The prestige of the monastery was solidified once again when King Yeongjo even issued a royal decree declaring that "Bogwangsa is a monastery safeguarding the royal tomb and is a place where I have stayed."[10]

The strong association with King Yeongjo as well as its geographical proximity to the capital seem to have been crucial to the rise of Bogwangsa in the late 19th century. Although the monastery is recorded to have witnessed the construction of worship halls and the dedication of icons during the reign of King Cheoljong 哲宗 (r. 1849–1863), it acquired an architectural character that became popularized during the reign of his successor, King Gojong 高宗 (r. 1863–1907). The reconstruction project started in 1869 under the sponsorship of the mighty and wealthy, spearheaded by Prince Yi Ha-eung 李昰應 (better known as Heungseon Daewongun 興宣大院君, 1820–1898). While reigning Korea as regent from 1864 to 1873 on his son King Gojong's behalf, he sponsored a number of Buddhist monasteries, most of which had established a close relationship with the royal court and were located in the greater capital area. Bogwangsa's longstanding association with King Yeongjo must have been crucial for Yi Ha-eung (J. Lee 2015, 300). His father, Prince Yi Gu 李球 (Namyeongun 南延君), the sixth generation of Yi Yo 李濡 (Inpyeongdaegun 麟坪大君, 1623–1658), was adopted by Yi Jin 李禛 (Eunsingun 恩信君, 1755–1771), which made him a great-great-grandson of King Yeongjo and King Gojong a descendant of the fifth generation. In other words, King Yeongjo served as the source of political legitimacy for King Gojong and his regent, who were otherwise mere collateral members of the royal family. Given King Yeongjo's

9. *Bibyeonsa deungnok*, the 12th day of the 1st lunar month, 1756.

10. *Seungjeongwon ilgi*, the 28th day of the 3rd lunar month, 1759; the 23rd day of the 8th lunar month, 1787; and the 27th day of the 8th lunar month, 1787. See also Hangukak jungang yeonguwon (2009, 263).

patronage of Bogwangsa and the monastery's ongoing service for Sukbin née Choe, it is no wonder that Yi Ha-eung sponsored Bogwangsa. This is corroborated by nine wooden tablets engraved with documents (*wanmun* 完文), issued by the County Magistrate of Yangju 楊州 and transferred from the palace, stipulating the duties that Bogwangsa must fulfill as a monastery responsible for the upkeep of Soryeongwon Tomb.[11]

In 1869, the regent sponsored the renovation of the Gate Tower of Ten Thousand Years (Manseru 萬歲樓), transforming the architectural character of the building significantly.[12] Details of the construction are documented in the "Record for the Ceremony of Raising the Ridge Beam of the Third Reconstruction of Tower Chamber at Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain" (Goryeongsan Bogwangsa sam junggeon nubang sangnyangmun 古靈山普光寺三重建樓房上樑文, dated to the 16th day of the 3rd lunar month, 1869).[13] Composed by a certain Bulguk Hyeonong Neungyeo 佛國玄翁楞如,[14] the record consists of a poem portraying the scenery of the monastery, dedicatory wishes for the king, queen, and queen dowager (Queen Sinjeong née Jo 神貞王后 曺氏, 1809–1890), and the list of donors, starting with Yi Ha-eung. The list goes on to record the names of major patrons, presumably based on the level of contribution rather than

11. These wooden tablets, together with another document, were discovered during the restoration of the Gate Tower of Ten Thousand Years in March 1998. See I. Hwang (2009, 18, 60–65), CHA and RIBCH (2012a, 310, entries 99 to 107), and CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 274–275, entries 99 to 107). One of the tablets is inscribed with the following: "The documents issued by this county as well as those composed from the palace should be pasted onto the monastery wall. It is a matter not to be changed forever" (本州完文及自宮所成完文傳付寺壁以爲永久勿改之事). See CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 275, entry 104).
12. Apart from the gate tower and the main hall from the late 19th century, other buildings were burned during the Korean War and rebuilt in subsequent years. Therefore, this paper will not delve into architectural details of these modern reconstructions.
13. The original record was lost during heavy rains in July 1998. A photographic reproduction is published in I. Hwang (2009, 59).
14. The biography of this figure remains unknown. Based at Bogwangsa, he seems to have used a variety of dharma names, including Bulguk Yeoyeo 佛國如如, Hyeonong Neungho 玄顯楞湖/玄翁楞湖, Hyeonong Neungyeo 玄翁楞如, and Hyeonong Jinhan 玄翁陳韓/玄顯陳韓. See Seo (2016, 125n345).

official rank. For example, the regent is immediately followed by the Governor of Gyeonggi Yi Eui-ik 李宜翊 (b. 1794), County Magistrate of Yangju Im Hansu 林漢洙/林翰洙 (1817–1886), and Lady Hong, who was born in the year of *byeongja* (1816) and had the dharma name of Daewongak (Sanggung Hong-ssi *byeongja saeng* Daewongak 尙宮洪氏丙子生大圓覺), among others. Those who participated in the reconstruction also included the Chief State Councilor Kim Byeonghak 金炳學 (1821–1879), Minister Kim Byeongguk 金炳國 (1825–1905), Minister Kim Byeonggi 金炳冀 (1818–1875) and two female devotees. Sponsorship from Kim Byeonghak, Kim Byeongguk, and Kim Byeonggi—members of the Andong Kim clan that wielded power over state affairs as royal in-laws during the reigns of King Gojong's three predecessors—seems to have been driven by political motivations. At the start of King Gojong's reign, they supported Yi Ha-eung, who had no powerbase. Consequently, they were able to avoid being purged in the following years. Given that they had no prior involvements at Bogwangsa, they seem to have contributed to this project as a show of allegiance to the regent.

Besides this Tower Chamber, Yi Ha-eung is recorded to have built two worship halls and two monks' quarters (*yijeon yangryo* 二殿兩寮), according to the "Preface to the Prayer for the King at Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain" (Goryeongsan Bogwangsa sangchuk seo 古靈山普光寺上祝序, dated to the 9th lunar month of 1869).[15] Composed by the monk Bulguk, who penned the record examined above, this preface commemorates the completion of the construction project, while offering a prayer for King Gojong and Queen Min (posthumously titled Empress Myeongseong 明成皇后, 1851–1895) as well as Yi Ha-eung and his wife. The expansion of the monastery is described as the fulfillment of Yi Ha-eung's long-cherished wish. With the completion of a series of constructions in 1869, Bogwangsa came to acquire worship halls and a multifunctional hall necessary for devotional practices. Under the auspices of prominent figures from the royal

15. This piece is written on a plaque still hung over the left entrance to the main hall of the monastery. For a reproduction and a transcription of the inscription, see CHA and RIBCH (2012a, 311, entry 114; 2012b, 275, entry 114).

household, the monastery became a home to a Pure Land society, the first of many lay religious organizations formed in the greater capital area during the late 19th century. Paintings and statues necessary for adorning worship halls and manuals essential for cultic practices were produced at Bogwangsa in subsequent years.

The Pure Vow Society and Its Religio-cultural Practices

Many Buddhist monasteries vied for royal support to maintain and protect themselves, especially in the 19th century; however, "great donors" (*daesiju* 大施主) from the royal household, such as Yi Ha-eung, did not limit their support to just one monastery. For example, the regent sponsored construction projects of large scale at Yonggungsa 龍宮寺, Hwagyesa 華溪寺, Heungcheonsa 興天寺, and Unsuam 雲水庵—all of which are located in close proximity to the capital (J. Lee 2015, 289–303). Under such circumstances, resident monks of Bogwangsa had to diversify their sources of sponsorship despite lavish patronage from the socio-political elites in 1869. The founding of a Buddhist society called the Pure Vow Society (Jeongwonsa 淨願社) at Bogwangsa in 1869 should be re-examined in this regard.

The late Joseon period witnessed the thriving of Buddhist organizations of multiple types, ranging from societies (*sa* 社) and fraternities (*gye* 契/禊) to assemblies and communities (*hoe* 會)—all of which allowed lay participants to cultivate their religious deeds and served to cement the bond between monastics and laity regardless of their specific nature (S. Han 2006, 55–116). Buddhist societies (*gyeolsa* 結社) are, in particular, organizations formulated by those who share common religious goals, bound by promises of faith while abiding by the rules of the society, and perform various devotional and cultic practices together through regular meetings for a fixed term. As a rule, monastic leaders of such societies presented methods of religious practice in a far simpler form for lay members, while lay members provided financial support for monks and their monasteries (Sung-soon Kim 2019, 249–251). When the monk Hwangong Chijo 幻空治兆 formed the Pure Vow Society in the winter of 1869, he must have longed to procure

the resources and assistance necessary for the monastery.[16]

Glimpses of the Pure Vow Society are found in the *Collection of Clear Jewels* (*Cheongju jip* 淸珠集; hereafter, the *Collection*), compiled by Hwangong Chijo and published by the society at Bogwangsa in 1870 to be used as rules for the society.[17] The composition of the book deserves further attention for the distinctive aspects of the society to which it bears witness. The *Collection* begins with three prefaces, by the Lay Disciple Soha 小荷居士 Jo Seongha 趙成夏 (1845–1881),[18] the monk Heoju Deokjin 虛舟德眞 (1806–1888), and the founder of the society, Hwangong Chijo, respectively. The main body of the *Collection* consists of 120 entries collated from 37 titles of Pure Land Buddhism. Selected by the monastic leader of the association, these entries provide guidelines on chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha (*chingmyeong yeombul* 稱名念佛), arguably the simplest and most effective means of reaching the Western Paradise, for lay members of the society (Hwangong Chijo [1870] 2020, 27, 29). It ends with an appendix containing four documents—the "Manifesto of the Society" (Gyeolsa mun 結社文) by Bogwang Bowon 葆光普元 (Yu Seongjong 劉聖鍾 or Yu Un 劉雲, 1821–1884), "Vow Text" (Balwon mun 發願文) by Buyeon Seongdam 芙蓮性湛 (Yu Huije 劉熙濟), "Letter of Collecting Alms" (Moyeon so 募緣疏) by Je-un Wonmyeong 霽雲圓明 (Tae Gyeongjin 太敬璡), and "Letter of Precepts and Repentance" (Gyecham so 戒懺疏) by Bonyeo Seonggong 本如性空 (Kim Seongho 金性浩), as well as two colophons by the Lay Disciple Yugyeon Jeongsin 六然居士 淨信 (Hong Seonju 洪善疇), and Bulgugong Samsa 佛國翁 三沙, the monk of Bogwangsa who composed the two documents

16. The details of Hwangong Chijo's life remain largely unknown, yet he appears to have been well-connected with royalty and royal in-laws. See Y. Lee (2021, 185).

17. The book in its entirety is available at https://kabc.dongguk.edu/viewer/view?dataId=ABC_BJ_H0286 (accessed December 23, 2021). For a modern Korean translation with annotations, see Hwangong Chijo ([1870] 2020).

18. Due to the lack of corroborating evidence, it is hard to clarify whether Jo Seongha—nephew to Queen Sinjeong who served as a high-ranking official at the court of King Gojong—was also a member of the Pure Vow Society. However, it is clear that Jo Seongha and his family had a close connection to Bogwangsa. When Jo Seongha died in 1881, for example, his son Jo Dongmyeon 趙東冕 (b. 1867) published the *Amitābha Sūtra* (*Bulseol dae Amita gyeong* 佛說大阿彌陀經) at Bogwangsa to pray for the repose of his late father.

commemorating Yi Ha-eung's patronage of the monastery in 1869, respectively.

What united the more than thirty members, including those who contributed to the *Collection*, was the shared goal of being reborn in the Amitābha Buddha's Western Paradise in the hereafter, a wish that could be realized through the recitation of Buddha's name for ten thousand days (Hwangong Chijo [1870] 2020, 344–345). The fixed term of ten thousand days stems from the legend of the Silla 新羅 (57 BCE–935 CE) monk Baljing 發徵, who was said to have organized the first ten-thousand-day Buddha recitation assembly (*manil yeombul hoe* 萬日念佛會) at Geonbongsa 乾鳳寺 on the Diamond Mountains in the 8th century—a Pure Land practice enjoyed great popularity among monastics and laypeople during the 19th century (B. Han 2000, 249–303; Cho 2003, 103–107; J. Lee 2022).[19] The period of ten thousand days requires an unwavering commitment from participants and continuous support for the host monastery. Viewed in this respect, organizations like the Pure Vow Society were an invaluable means for the monastics to keep lay patrons returning to their monastery generation after generation.[20] Apart from chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha, according to the "Letter of Precepts and Repentance," members of the society vowed to practice the five precepts (*ogye* 五戒) or to observe ten days of abstention (*sipjae* 十齋) in accordance with their religious capacity. They also pledged to convene on the last day of each month in order to testify how diligently they had practiced their vow and to encourage one another (Hwangong Chijo [1870] 2020, 350–351).

It is notable that the Pure Land worship had long invited the engagements of varied social groups. Already in the 8th century Silla various lay groups, which included elites, commoners, and slaves, engaged in the Amitābha worship (McBride 2020). The case of Bogwangsa, in this sense, stood at the tail end of a long tradition. What makes the Pure Vow Society important in the long history of the Pure Land worship in Korea is that its members played a vital role in bringing the Buddhist devotionalism, which

19. See Jong-su Lee (2010) for the institutional background of Pure Land faith during the late Joseon.

20. For more on the religious background of the ten-thousand-day period, see Sung-soon Kim (2019, 257–259).

had been dormant under stricter control of the government, back to the capital region.

The *Collection* furthermore allows us to measure what monasteries such as Bogwangsa provided for founding members of the Pure Vow Society. The real names of these key figures, given above parenthetically, have been recovered through cross-checking with a contemporary Buddhist text compiled and published by another lay Buddhist association called the Wonderful Lotus Society (Myoryeonsa 妙蓮社, active 1872–1875) (Seo 2016, 120–122, 126; Park 2017, 12–17).[21] These lay contributors belonged to the *jungin* class, a group that was considered inferior to the *yangban* aristocracy in social standing but became prominent in diverse sectors of society through their cultural literacy during the final days of Joseon. Their *jungin* status seems to have freed them from Confucian ideology. Despite their lower social standing, these figures appear to have been highly educated and equipped with the skills and wealth to undertake publishing projects that required substantial funding, specialized knowledge of religious teachings and practices, and publication skills (Park 2017, 17). The key members of the Pure Vow Society participated in and played a pivotal role in different lay organizations, namely the Wonderful Lotus Society, Nectar Society (Gamnosa 甘露社, founded in 1882), and Formless Altar (Musangdan 無相壇, active 1877–1886)—all of which engaged in the compilation and publication of religious texts for the edification of the masses.[22] That they

21. The text, entitled *Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva's Mysterious Manifestation and Immortal Teachings to Save Sentient Beings* (*Gwanseeum Bosal myoeung sihyeon jejung gamno* 觀世音菩薩妙應示現濟衆甘露), is a collection of dharma talks given by the Lay Disciple Bowol 普月居士 Jeonggwan 正觀 at 11 gatherings held between 1872 and 1877. The woodblock edition was published by the Wonderful Lotus Society in 1878. Real names of those who received a guarantee from Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva are recorded in the sixth chapter in an undated manuscript copy in the collection of the National Library of Korea (acc. no. BA1799-12).

22. While the Pure Vow Society and Nectar Society leaned toward institutionalized Pure Land Buddhism, the Wonderful Lotus Society engaged in syncretic practices informed by Spirit-writing Altar Daoism (Nandan Dogyo 鸞壇道教). The Formless Altar was devoted to the Three Sages cult of religious Daoism. For more on the religious activities of these organizations, see Park (2017) and Jihyun Kim (2020). See also Y. Lee (2021) for more on the carving project of the Wonderful Lotus Society.

had previously signed up for membership in the Pure Vow Society is a matter of some significance. While strictly adhering to Buddhist precepts as practitioners of the "Pure Vow," they seem to have raised the bar for moral practice among Buddhist devotees in general as well as contributed to the rise of lay leadership in religious movements, which in turn would have resulted in the formation of other lay religious societies in the capital area.

How did this group of *middlemen* gather at Bogwangsa and play a leading role in various devotional and cultural projects? A clue to resolving this issue might be found in the figure of Yu Seongjong, one of the most prominent figures that shaped the religious topography of the 19th-century capital area. He not only wrote "Manifesto of the Society" in the *Collection* but also played an indispensable role in the publication projects at Bogwangsa and elsewhere from 1879 to 1884 as a crucial member of all four lay religious associations mentioned above. Yu Seongjong's activities trace back to the 1850s, during which time he interacted with both monks and lay Buddhist elites while trying to publish the Chinese Buddhists texts in his possession and compile new Buddhist texts for the general public (Seo 2016, 101–116). From 1868 to 1878, he served as the *bangam* 飯監, one of the miscellaneous posts in charge of food under the command of the Royal Cuisine Office, at Queen Sinjeong's palace.[23] While serving Queen Sinjeong in the palace, he would have been aware of the renovation of Bogwangsa and other religious, political, and cultural news through his travel to Beijing as well as interactions with other *jungin* officials. This in turn may explain the sponsorship by the Pungyang Jo clan of the publishing projects that the Pure Vow Society undertook (Seo 2016, 103–104, 106–109). At Bogwangsa, Yu Seongjong sponsored the first and fifth paintings from the *Ten Kings of Hell* (dated 1872) as the main donor along with fellow members of the Pure Vow Society (CHA and RIBCH 2012a, 302, entry 77; 2012b, 273, entry 77). His involvement went far beyond the usual lay role of supporting the monastic community; he also performed the monastic duty of spell reciter

23. *Seungjeongwon ilgi*, the 2nd day of the 1st lunar month, 1868; the 11th day of the 1st lunar month, 1878. He was first appointed to this post in 1846, see *Seungjeongwon ilgi*, the 24th day of the 5th lunar month, 1846.

(*songju* 誦呪) under one of his dharma names, Hyewoldang Yujip 慧月堂有執, for the dedication of *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva* and the *Ten Kings of Hell* in 1872 (Seo 2016, 127–128; CHA and RIBCH 2012a, 301–303, entries 76–79; 2012b, 273, entries 76–79).

Members of the Pure Vow Society seem to have defined the function of the architectural edifice of Bogwangsa reconstructed in 1869. As they engaged in Buddha recitation, they must have needed a place for their own religious practice. The Tower Chamber, rebuilt at the former site of Gate Tower of Ten Thousand Years, holds significance in this regard (Fig. 1). In Joseon Buddhist architecture, the gate tower is typically two-storied and built in front of the main hall. While in this type of building, the central section of the first story functions as a gate to the temple proper, the second story is floored with wood but not enclosed by walls. With its open structure, the second story was used to receive guests, providing spectacular

Figure 1. Tower Chamber of Bogwangsa (currently called Gate Tower of Ten Thousand Years). Reconstructed in 1869. Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

views of the surrounding landscape. At Bogwangsa, the current building replaced the gate tower that stood on the spot, converting it to a closed structure of external walls and doors with a possibility of being further subdivided inside. Although its current floorplan may differ from the original, the building appears to have been compartmentalized into a large chamber (*daebang* 大房) at the center, subsidiary chambers of smaller size, and a kitchen in the past (Fig. 2).[24] As the very appellation "tower chamber"

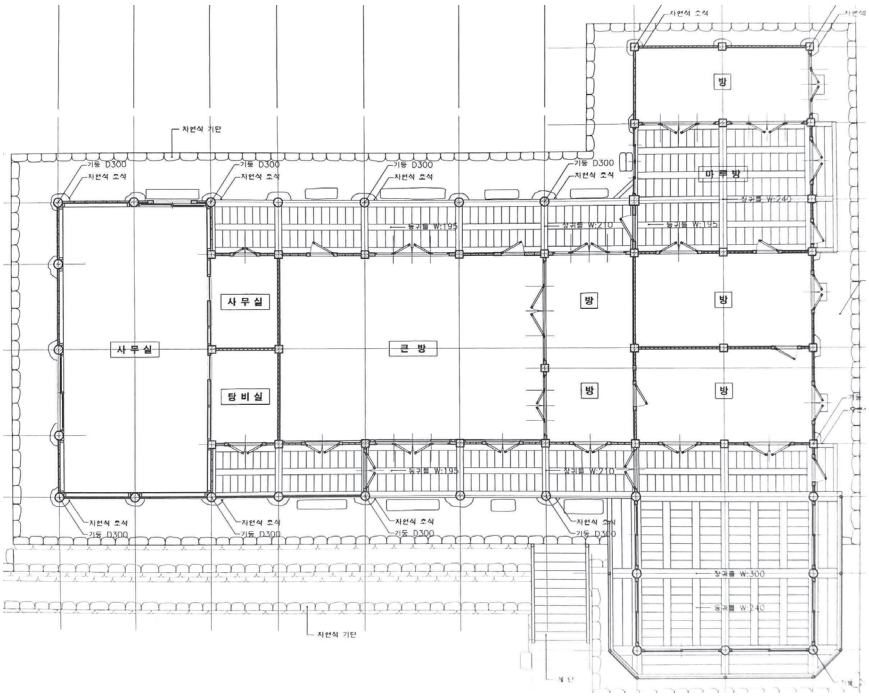

Figure 2. Ground plan of the Tower Chamber. Reconstructed in 1869. Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Gyeonggi-do Paju-si (2010).

24. Currently, the building is again called "Gate Tower of Ten Thousand Years" and used as monastic quarters and administrative office.

indicates, the large chamber was the element that gave a distinctive religious function and communal character to the newly constructed building. The large chamber seems to have been a place where residential monks and members of the society could gather and engage in joint practices. For example, they may have gathered there on the last day of each month to reflect upon their practice of the vow as stipulated in the "Letter of Precepts and Repentance" in the *Collection*. In fact, the large chamber was highly regarded by Bogwangsa's community in the subsequent years. The building was simply called the "Large Chamber" by 1891 when it received the altarpiece as the cultic focus for its inhabitants.[25]

The architectural transformation of this building from an open to a closed structure with a large chamber at its center may have been further related to the nature of the cultic practices performed at Bogwangsa. In the 19th century, members of the ten-thousand-day Buddha recitation assembly loudly chanted the name of Amitābha Buddha (*chingmyeong yeombul* or *goseong yeombul* 高聲念佛) to the pounding of a drum and a gong. A few *daebang* buildings are still equipped with such musical instruments even though they no longer accommodate Buddha recitation assemblies (Seongdo Kim 2007, 13n19). Some contemporaries criticized the agitating character of the Buddha recitation practice, whereas others defended it under the pretense of the ten kinds of merit derived from such practice (Sung-soon Kim 2019, 260–264; S. Lee 2021, 20–21; Y. Han 1913, 27–31). The large chamber of this building may have allowed members of the Pure Vow Society to chant Buddha's name without interfering with other monks or lay Buddhists who engaged in Seon meditation or day-to-day operations of the monastery. The religious function of the building appears to have been maintained even after the promised ten thousand days passed. In the donor ledger for its renovation in 1913, it was called "Hall of Buddha Recitation" (Yeombuldang 念佛堂).[26]

25. Past scholarship noted that the building was devoid of any altar and, by extension, objects of worship. See, for example, Seongdo Kim (2007, 90–91). However, this painting suggests otherwise. I will examine this painting more closely in the next section.

26. See "List of Donors for the Repairs of Hall of Buddha Recitation at Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain in Baekseong-myeon, Yangju-gun, Gyeonggi-do Province"

Bogwangsa and Female Court Patronage

The connection between Bogwangsa and the royal court was one of the initial factors that brought Yu Seongjong and like-minded men of the *jungin* class to the monastery in 1869. Likewise, it drew another type of patron—namely, ladies-in-waiting who held the senior fifth rank called *sanggung* in the internal court. Court ladies were of low social standing but were acquainted with the highest members of the royal house due to the nature of their work. As members of the royal house began to support Buddhism more openly in the late 19th century, the court ladies found more opportunities to participate in diverse types of Buddhist sponsorship. On the one hand, they customarily commissioned Buddhist artwork on behalf of the royal household since they could act as intermediaries for the royalty and Buddhist clerics. On the other hand, court ladies sponsored Buddhist projects of their own accord based on the wealth and power that they had accumulated through their close connection to the royal court (Ryu 2015, 168–175; S. Lee 2020, 187–189).

Declining fertility among the royal women and premature deaths among the royal males—the very factors that had enabled King Gojong to ascend the throne in the first place—seem to have led royal women to dedicate Buddhist icons in hopes of giving birth to a male heir and promoting longevity among royals.[27] The issue of posterity seems to have been a major factor compelling court ladies, who had entered the palace at a tender age and taken vows of celibacy, to embrace Buddhism. Under such circumstances, aspirations for the Pure Land—a perennial motivation behind lay Buddhist patronage—seem to have carried greater weight among court ladies who lacked progeny to perform Confucian-style

(Gyeonggi-do Yangju-gun Baekseong-myeon Goryeongsan Bogwangsa Yeombuldang jungsu si daejung giburok 京畿道楊州郡白石面古靈山普光寺念佛堂重修時大衆寄附錄, dated 1913). See Jeong (1971) and I. Hwang (2009, 17).

27. The fertility of royal women was considered an important state affair since the royal family identified it with the state's prosperity, see Jiyoung Kim (2013, 14). Ryu (2015, 147–167) provides a survey of royal women who patronized production of Buddhist paintings in the 19th century.

commemorative rites for them when they died. Many court ladies chose to reside in Buddhist monasteries and hermitages when they were no longer able to work due to old age. Or, they enshrined their spirit tablets at Buddhist monasteries where monks would perform memorial rites for them.

At Bogwangsa, court ladies played an indispensable role in the formation of its devotional and material culture from the very moment Yi Ha-eung re-established the monastery in 1869. As examined previously, Lady Hong sponsored the reconstruction of the Tower Chamber together with socio-political elites in the court of King Gojong. Furthermore, her sponsorship continued in subsequent years. In 1872, she sponsored the dedication of the *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva* for the Hall of the Underworld (Myeongbujeon 冥府殿), for which Hwangong Chijo collected alms and verified its iconography and Yu Seongjong recited spells during the process of production (CHA and RIBCH 2012a, 301, entry 76; 2012b, 271, entry 76). She also sponsored the relocation of the Hall of Sixteen Sacred Beings (Simnyuk seongjungjeon 十六聖衆殿) together with members of the Lotus Society (Yeonsa 蓮社), an epithet used in reference to the Pure Vow Society (CHA and RIBCH 2012a, 311, entry 112; 2012b, 275, entry 112). This series of devotional projects reveals the close network that was formulated among the resident monks, male lay believers of the *jungin* class, and court ladies beyond the limitations of social class and customs.

As Hwangong Chijo and other monks of Bogwangsa might have hoped, the practice of the ten-thousand-day Buddha recitation continuously drew lay adherents, including court ladies, to the monastery in subsequent years. Cheon Ilcheong 千一淸 (also known by her dharma name Jeonggongsim 淨空心, b. 1849), who served Noble Consort Eom (posthumously entitled Sunheon Hwanggwibi 純獻皇貴妃 嚴氏, 1854–1911) and Emperor Sunjong 純宗 (r. 1907–1910; 1874–1926) until his death, was one such devotee.[28] Brought into the court at the age of four, Lady Cheon had been a devout

28. In my previous study, I mistakenly gave her birth year as 1846 and Bogwangsa's ten-thousand-day assembly as being formed in 1891 (S. Lee 2021, 22, 24). While writing this article, I was able to correct these mistakes by crosschecking sources that were previously unknown to me.

Buddhist from a very young age. While serving as a crucial intermediary between the royalty and monastics, she also sponsored the reconstruction of worship halls and the production of Buddhist paintings of her own accord (S. Lee 2021, 22–24).[29]

Lady Cheon's connection to Bogwangsa is documented in the "Record of the Reconstruction of the Main Hall of Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain with [Dedication of] Buddhist Paintings and Paintwork" (Goryeongsan Bogwangsa Gamjeon jungchang taenghwa byeong danhwak gi 高靈山普光寺紺殿重創幀畵幷丹艧記, dated 1901).[30] According to this record, she was a devout follower of the monk Chupa Seojang 秋波瑞璋, who contributed to the publication of the Pure Vow Society and participated in court-sponsored dedications at Bogwangsa in the 1870s. In 1877, for instance, Chupa Seojang served as a verifier for the *Sixteen Arhats*, composed of four panels, together with the monks Munbong Choeung 文峯最雄 and Hyeonong Jinhan 玄翁陳韓, who were also leading monastic members of the Pure Vow Society (CHA and RIBCH 2012b, 274, entries 89, 90, and 92).[31] Lady Cheon's bond with Chupa Seojang must have led her to join the Amitābha assembly (Mitahoe 彌陀會), a name by which the Pure Vow Society was also referred, and to serve as its donor (*dansin* 檀信) for twenty years starting from around 1881. Consequently, she sponsored the dedication of Buddhist paintings and the reconstruction of the main hall of Bogwangsa in the capacity of its member. Intriguingly, the name "Pure Vow

29. Apart from her sponsorship for Bogwangsa, for example, she patronized the dedication of two pieces of the *Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva and Ten Kings of Hell, Host of Guardian Deities*, and *Tejaprabhā Buddha* for Chiljangsa 七長寺 in 1888 and *Kṣitigarbha, Guardian Deities* and *Ten Kings of Hell* for Silleuksa 神勒寺 in 1906, see CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 236, entries 216, 217, 221, and 222); Gogyeong, et al. (2011, 957–958). She also sponsored the reconstruction of the great tower (*daeru* 大樓) and repairs of the mediation chamber (*seonsil* 禪室) of Mangwolsa 望月寺.
30. For a transcription of the inscription, see I. Hwang (2009, 56).
31. One of the arhat paintings was, according to its votive inscription, dedicated to the health and longevity of the royal house, see CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 274, entry 89). The four paintings, currently hung inside the Hall of Arhats (Eungjinjeon 應眞殿) were originally enshrined at the Hall of Vulture Peak (Yeongsanjeon 靈山殿). For reproductions of the paintings, see CHA and RIBCH (2012a, 306–307, entries 89–92).

Society" disappeared from any surviving inscriptional sources after the 1880s, suggesting that its key members had left the monastery to pursue other religious goals or had passed away. Perhaps, the use of the suffix "assembly" (*hoe*) instead of "society" (*sa*) denotes a more indirect or inclusive nature of the Amitābha assembly by this time. Unlike the founding members of the Pure Vow Society, most of the lay members seem to have participated in the assembly as financial and material supporters of those monks who were devoted to the daily recitation, as in the case of Lady Cheon, who was physically bound by her vocational obligations and gender norms.

Bogwangsa's ten-thousand-day assembly (*manilhoe* 萬日會), corresponding to the Amitābha assembly, appears to have commissioned at least two Buddhist paintings for Bogwangsa in the beginning of 1891. It was not uncommon for lay members of such assemblies to sponsor multiple paintings at once in response to monks who exhorted them to give alms (Choi 2019, 96n12; Choi 2015, 154–156n31). Votive inscriptions of these two paintings provide crucial information regarding the occasion of dedication, subject matter, painters and monastic participants, major patrons, and resident monks of Bogwangsa at the time. Names of those who led the Pure Vow Society, both monastic and lay, no longer appeared in these votive inscriptions. The first painting to consider is *Assembly of Amitābha Buddha*, currently housed at the Hall of the Great Hero at Ssangnyongsa 雙龍寺 in Uijeongbu, Gyeonggi-do province (Fig. 3). The art historian Choi Yeob was the first to identify the original location of this painting, whose inscription is partially erased (Choi 2019, 96). A close reading of this painting's votive inscription has revealed that it was newly produced by the ten-thousand-day assembly of Bogwangsa as the altarpiece behind the main Buddha icon of the "Large Chamber" (Daebang Mita *hubultaeng* 大房彌陀後佛幀) (CHA and RIBCH 2012b, 265, entry 65).

The painting depicts a large assembly of Amitābha Buddha, probably echoing the sculptural icon that would have been enshrined on the altar inside the Large Chamber. Such iconographical choice reaffirms the cultic focus of the building in the 1890s. The votive inscription further documents the duties of the monks who participated in the dedication (*yeonhwa so* 緣化

Figure 3. Byeoksan Yongha and others, *Assembly of Amitābha Buddha*, 1891. Colors on silk. 166.0×228.3 cm. Hall of the Great Hero of Ssangnyongsa. Uijeongbu, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: CHA and RIBCH (2012a).

所) along with their dharma names, including the verifier of contents Haebong Namsun 海峯南巡 and the painters Byeoksan Yongha 碧山榕夏, Hyesan Chugyeon 蕙山竺演 (ca. 1850–1930), Jongin 宗仁, and Taeil 泰一. The inscription continues with the section of great donors (*daesiju jil* 大施主秩), which is headed by Lady Cheon and followed by other lay believers,[32] and ends with the section listing names of resident monks (*sanjung jil* 山中

32. The inscription of the painting is hard to examine firsthand since it is currently blocked by Buddha statues. The surname of this court lady has been mistakenly transcribed as "Yim" 任. See CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 265, entry 65). For more on this identification, see Choi (2019, 97n13).

Figure 4. Byeoksan Yongha and others, *Host of Guardian Deities*, 1891. Colors on cotton. 160.4×188.5 cm. Hall of the Great Hero of Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

秩). Names of these monastic participants, donors, and resident monks all accord well with those recorded in the votive inscription of *Host of Guardian Deities*, a painting also dedicated in 1891 for the Hall of the Great Hero by the ten-thousand-day assembly of Bogwangsa (Fig. 4). Herein, Lady Cheon is listed last among the three great lay donors (CHA and RIBCH 2012b, 273, entry 86). Taken together, these two paintings were products of the same workshop led by the monk painter Byeoksan Yongha, and of the same patronage network built by the fundraiser (*hwaju* 化主) Gwanheo Dohan 觀虛道澣, who seems to have been a key monastic member of the ten-thousand-day assembly.

Figure 5. Byeoksan Yongha and Taeil, *Assembly of Amitābha Buddha*, 1891. Colors on cotton. Originally enshrined at Suguam of Bogwangsa. History and Ethnology Museum, St. Gallen, Switzerland.

Source: Historisches und Völkerkundemuseum St.Gallen/Switzerland.

Intriguingly, one more Buddhist painting, now in the collection of the History and Ethnology Museum, St. Gallen, Switzerland, may have been produced together with these two paintings. The votive inscription of the third painting relates that it was intended to be the altarpiece for Suguam of Bogwangsa (Bogwangsa Suguam *hubultaeng* 普光寺守口庵後佛幀; Fig. 5). The association between Suguam and Bogwangsa dates back as late as the mid-18th century. It is listed as belonging to Bogwangsa in the *Record of Soryeongwon Tomb* (Hangukak jungang yeonguwon 2009, 267, 233–234). Although the inscription mentions neither the ten-thousand-day assembly nor Lady Cheon, names of monastic participants are almost identical to

Figure 6. Hall of the Great Hero of Bogwangsa. Reconstructed in 1898. Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Cultural Heritage Administration.

those appearing in the inscriptions of the two paintings examined above. Such correspondence has led Choi Yeob to conclude it to be a dedication by the ten-thousand-day assembly with the sponsorship of Lady Cheon (Choi 2019, 94–97).

Moved by the monk Inpa Yeonghyeon's 仁坡英玄 exhortation, Lady Cheon also sponsored the renovation (*jungjeup* 重葺) of the main hall of Bogwangsa, built in 1740 under the auspices of King Yeongjo (Fig. 6).[33] Inpa Yeonghyeon was originally a monk of Mangwolsa 望月寺 on Dobongsan 道

33. The following discussion is based on the "Record of the Reconstruction of the Main Hall of Bogwangsa on Goryeongsan Mountain with Buddhist Paintings and Paintwork." See I. Hwang (2009, 56) for a transcription of the inscription. For more on the dating of this building, see Sohn (2007, 72–73, 99).

峯山 mountain who had cultivated a close network with court ladies.[34] Influenced by Inpa Yeonghyeon's teaching, Lady Cheon donated a large sum of money and had the renovation of the main hall begun in the summer of 1897. Notably, the Pure Vow Society was founded in the winter of 1869. Considering that ten thousand days, the promised duration of the society's group practice, amounted to 27 years and 6 months approximately, the society may have reached the point of completion around 1897. Viewed in this light, Lady Cheon might have sponsored the renovation of the main hall in celebration of the completion of Bogwangsa's ten-thousand-day assembly. As the renovation was completed in that year, Lady Cheon asked Noble Consort Eom (then invested as Sunbin 純嬪) and Lady Hong (Sanggung Hong-ssi 尙宮洪氏) to sponsor production of Buddhist paintings and the paintwork of its exterior in the spring of the subsequent year. By encouraging (*gwonjang* 勸奬) her fellow lay believers, she played a more active role in this construction project, giving a helping hand to the monastic fundraiser. Consequently, in the third lunar month of 1898, six Buddhist paintings were consecrated and enshrined inside the newly renovated main hall.[35] Simultaneously, the exterior of the three-by-three bays received majestic decoration befitting its status as the main hall of Bogwangsa.[36]

The paintwork of the hall's exterior was not limited to the usual multicolor cladding of architectural members but extended to the faces of the rear and side walls as well. These earthen walls were lined with elongated wooden panels, which in turn served as ground for paintings. Demarcated first by columns and beams, each bay of the two side walls was turned into a pictorial frame with a decorative border. On the one hand, the south wall

34. In 1887, for example, he raised funds to dedicate a ritual banner painting for which six court ladies had given alms. See CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 264, entry 41).

35. They are *Assembly on Vulture Peak*, *Three Bodhisattvas*, *King Yama, Sweet Dew, Tejaprabhā Buddha*, and *Hermit Sage*. These paintings have not been discussed as Noble Consort Eom's dedication since her name does not appear in the votive inscriptions. See, for example, Ryu (2014, 117, 127). For the inscriptions, see CHA and RIBCH (2012b, 272–274, entries 73, 74, 84, 85, 87, and 88). See CHA and RIBCH (2012a, 300, 304–305, entries 73, 74, 84, 85, 87, and 88) for reproductions.

36. According to an inscription on the south wall, these murals were repaired in 1993.

Figure 7. Murals on the south wall of the Hall of the Great Hero, Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

begins with an image of Skanda, a devoted guardian of Buddhist monasteries who features in almost all of the extant guardian deity paintings from the late Joseon (Fig. 7). Skanda is depicted facing the courtyard as if to guard the main hall against external enemies, wearing a winged helmet and holding a vajra staff with both hands.[37] The central bay shows a young boy on a lotus throne, holding a lotus flower in his left hand and riding a blue lion. The gesture or attribute that might have been held in his right hand is hard to identify due to wear and tear of the painting. Yet, the mount still allows us to identify this boy as a representation of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, who accompanies Śākyamuni Buddha as a guardian of wisdom. The bodhisattva is followed by a mighty guardian who stretches his right arm to

37. For a recent study that sheds new light on Skanda, see Sujung Kim (2021, esp. 66–80).

Figure 8. Mural on the central bay of the north wall of the Hall of the Great Hero, Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

the sky while holding a spear in his left hand.

On the other hand, the front bay of the north wall bears no mural but a door to allow lay believers enter the hall. Its central bay is painted with an image of a young boy mounted on a white elephant—the mount of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, who attends Śākyamuni Buddha as a representation of his practice and mediation (Fig. 8). The boy with a shaved head is shown wearing a red robe and holding what appears to be a long staff in his left hand. The two bodhisattvas were often painted like boys in murals decorating the exterior of monastery buildings from the late 19th to early 20th century (Choi 2016, 115–117). This positioning reveals an intention to pair two bodhisattvas as if they were attending Śākyamuni Buddha even outside the hall. The rear bay of the north wall bears an intriguing composition in which Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva appears (Fig. 9).

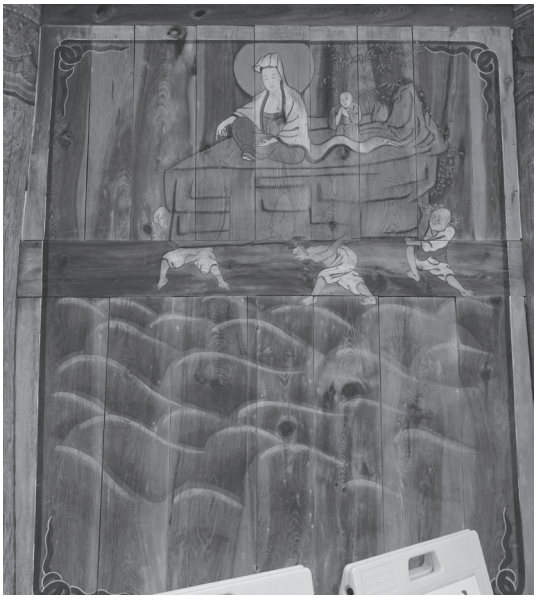

Figure 9. Mural on the rear bay of the north wall of the Hall of the Great Hero, Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

Wearing a white robe that covers his head and torso, the bodhisattva of mercy is shown seated on a rock with his right knee raised. He is accompanied by a young acolyte, likely a representation of the boy Sudhana, who clasps his hands in reverence. Three otherworldly figures are shown trying to move the rock but to no avail, against the mighty waves of the sea.

This iconographical theme is most likely derived from *Fifty-three Compassionate Manifestations* (*Ciyong wushi san xian* 慈容五十三現 in Chinese), a Chinese album of woodblock prints that gained wide exposure in the Ming and Qing eras (G. Hwang 2009, 78). The leaves of the album show various forms of the bodhisattva, from well-known ones such as the White-robed and Water-moon bodhisattvas to more inventive ones such as the bodhisattva in the guise of a European monarch, accompanied by a verse attesting to the deity's efficacy.[38] Given the compositional and iconographical

38. The album in its entirety is available online in the database of Harvard Art Museums. The museum entitles it *Homage of Sudhana: Portraits of Bodhisattvas* (acc. no. 1976.33.1–

Figure 10. *The Forty-seventh Compassionate Manifestation*, late 17th to early 18th century. Woodblock printed on paper. 31.75×27.31 cm. Harvard Art Museums / Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Oriental Objects Fund.

Source: Harvard Art Museums.

affinities, the forty-seventh manifestation of the bodhisattva seems to have been an inspiration for the mural painters at Bogwangsa (Fig. 10); however, the mural painters altered the original composition by changing the young pilgrim's posture and simplifying the rocky outcrop of the mountain by eliminating the vase with a willow spray and the parrot. Due to the lack of further evidence, it is hard to pinpoint when *Fifty-three Compassionate Manifestations* was transmitted to Joseon and how it came to circulate among artisans. This particular manifestation of the bodhisattva appears to have received heightened interest from monk painters across the peninsula at the end of the 19th century. A mural on the interior of the Hall of Potalaka (Botajeon 補陀殿) of Yujeomsa 楡岾寺 shows monstrous figures attempting to shake a rocky outcrop where a seated bodhisattva in white robes faces the railing waves (Fig. 11). The same motif was also selected for a mural on the

1976.33.51). Another copy, which has a leaf bearing a depiction of Skanda, is held at L'Institut des hautes études chinoises (IHEC) and available online.

Figure 11. Mural on the interior of the Hall of Potalaka, Yujeomsa. Late 19th to early 20th century. Dimensions unknown.

Source: Eckardt (1929).

Figure 12. The central bay of the rear wall of the Hall of the Great Hero, Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

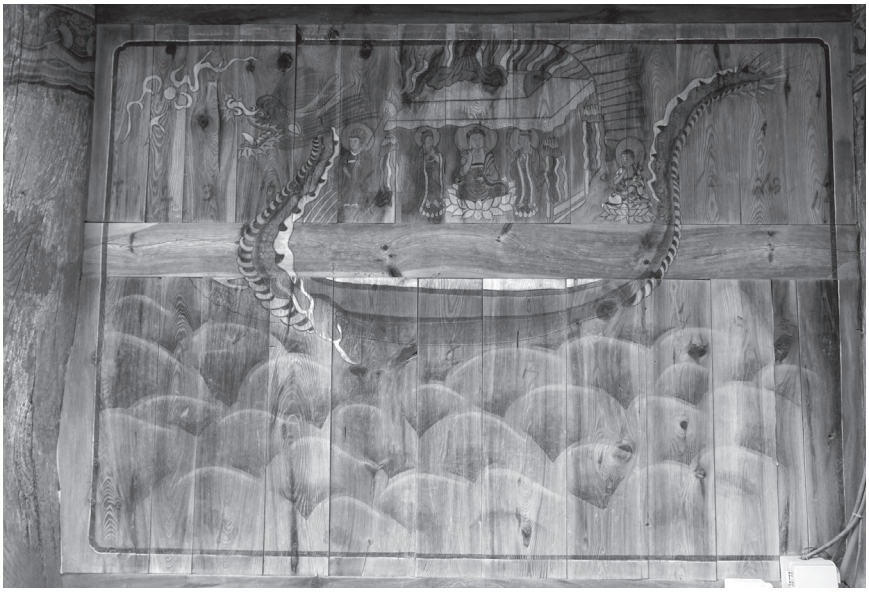

Figure 13. The salvific dragon boat on the rear wall of the Hall of the Great Hero, Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

exterior of the main hall of Ssangyesa 雙磎寺 in Gyeongsangnam-do province (Choi 2016, 117–118).

The rear wall of the main hall is divided into three sections. The central bay, which is subdivided into three small frames, depicts secular themes such as a rock and vines, a tiger, and a pine tree, whereas the two side bays are devoted to the two Pure Land themes that enjoyed great popularity in the late Joseon (Fig. 12). One of the side bays shows the salvific dragon boat (*banya yongseon* 般若龍船) in which Amitābha Buddha and his attendant bodhisattvas are usually shown ferrying deceased souls from this shore to the other across the menacing waves of the sea (Jiyeon Kim 2014, 103–109; S. Lee 2019, 48–51; Fig. 13). In this composition, the Bodhisattva Guiding the Soul (Illo bosal 引路菩薩) stands at the prow, with Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva seated on the stern. Seated in the middle is Amitābha Buddha

Figure 14. The rebirth in Amitābha Buddha's Pure Land on the rear wall of the Hall of the Great Hero, Bogwangsa, Paju, Gyeonggi-do province.

Source: Author.

flanked by two attendant bodhisattvas under a canopy bedecked with sashes. The mural on the other side bay illustrates souls undergoing rebirth inside floating lotuses as they meet buddhas and bodhisattvas in the Western Paradise (Fig. 14). All of the figures look like young boys with shaven heads. Although this mural lacks the jeweled trees, ornate railings, and majestic buildings that are usually depicted in Amitābha Buddha's Pure Land, it still shows heavenly birds flying and a musical instrument as well as other auspicious objects with dangling tassels.

Taken together, the iconographical program of the murals shows an interesting amalgam of faith in Śākyamuni Buddha and Amitābha Buddha. While the central bay of the side walls is dominated by Śākyamuni Buddha's attendant bodhisattva, the two bays of the rear wall are entirely devoted to Pure Land themes, betraying this hall's cultic orientation. As mentioned

earlier, the murals were most likely designed to celebrate nearly thirty years of religious devotion. The choice of the two Pure Land themes speaks to the religious goals of the three major benefactors—Lady Cheon, Noble Consort Eom, and Lady Hong. More importantly, it further represents the collective aspirations of all those who had participated in the ten-thousand-day assembly of Bogwangsa.

Conclusion

This article has aimed to provide, through a case study of Bogwangsa, a picture of how Buddhism was practiced at the local level. It is a corrective to previous studies that have overly emphasized the socio-political aspects of Joseon Buddhism vis-à-vis the state at the cost of the religious function that it provided to the people. This study has confirmed a broader range of Buddhist devotional practices through an analysis of the networks of followers and their activities at Bogwangsa. In particular, this study has traced the sponsorship of Buddhism by the royalty, the *yangban* elite, and royal servants, including the *jungin* and court ladies, through a close examination of various sources, including prefaces and colophons of Buddhist publications, epigraphical sources and historical records, and Buddhist paintings. As this analysis has shown, Bogwangsa was unique in that it became the interface between elite patronage, lay Buddhist organizations, and female court patronage—each of which contributed to the blossoming of the devotional and material culture of Buddhism in the late Joseon.

Granted, the royalty and royal in-laws sponsored Buddhist monasteries and hermitages on a massive scale, serving as a life line for Buddhist establishments. Bestowal of land ownership to a monastery or exemption from corvée labor for resident monks could only be granted by kings. However, monks of Bogwangsa not only sought support from the high and mighty, including the royal family and prominent Confucian intellectuals, but also reached out to those of lesser social standing. The presence of the Pure Vow Society at Bogwangsa points to the mutual commitments that

existed between resident monks and lay believers from diverse social groups. In the process, the monastic community allowed key lay members of the Pure Vow Society, regardless of their social standing, to participate in the monastery's operation and to lead major cultural activities such as the publication of Buddhist texts. Participation in such projects constituted socially and culturally significant experience for these middlemen who ranked between Joseon's aristocrats and commoners. By so doing, the monastics allowed these highly educated yet socially restricted men to usher in lay-oriented Buddhist movements, albeit for a short time.

This study has also explored the female court patronage of Buddhist monasteries in the late 19th century. While royal women's lavish patronage of Buddhist projects was driven by the decrease in childbirth and the increase in deaths of family members, female royal servants—most of whom were deprived of the chance to have children of their own—became almsgivers of Buddhist monasteries where they often stayed in their later years and in the form of spirit tablets after death. The case of Lady Cheon, as my analysis has shown, is unique in that she patronized Bogwangsa as a member of the Amitābha assembly, a successor to the Pure Vow Society. This demonstrates that the group practice of the ten-thousand-day Buddha recitation, launched at Bogwangsa by the society, continuously drew devout patrons to the monastery. That a new type of architecture appeared and that certain iconography was preferred at Bogwangsa attests to the lay impact on the material culture of late Joseon Buddhism. The laity enriched the Korean Buddhist culture not just as sponsors but as collaborators as well.

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