



Fig. 1. *Portrait of King Taejo* (太祖, r. 1392-1398) Copied in 1872.  
Color on silk, 220.0 x 151.0 cm. (Gyeonggijeon Hall and National Palace Museum of Korea).

# Royal Portraits in the Late Joseon Period

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## Introduction

The characteristics of Joseon royal portraiture are exemplified by *Portrait of King Taejo* (太祖, r. 1392-1398) (Fig. 1), which is the only extant royal portrait that was actually produced during the Joseon Dynasty. Enshrined in the Gyeonggijeon (慶基殿) Hall in Jeonju, the full-length portrait shows a middle-aged King Taejo, seated on a sumptuous royal throne, wearing a winged cap (*ikseongwan*, 翼善冠) and blue royal attire (*gollyongpo*, 袞龍袍). Although the painting is a reproduction made in 1872, it still reflects the style of portraiture from the early Joseon period. King Taejo's portraits were enshrined in royal portrait halls (*jinjeon*, 眞殿) that were scattered throughout the kingdom. Royal portraits enjoyed tremendous prominence during the Joseon period, and a great number of archives regarding the painting of royal portraits survive to the present day. As mentioned, however, the portrait of King Taejo is the only royal portrait produced during the Joseon Dynasty that is known today. There are three other surviving portraits of kings—a half-length image of King Yeongjo (英祖, r. 1724-1776) and portraits of Emperors Gojong (高宗, r. 1863-1907) and Sunjong (純宗, r. 1907-1910)—but all of these were made around 1900, during the Great Han Empire (大韓帝國, 1897-1910).

This article uses archival records to investigate the production and enshrinement of kings' portraits, and examines the significance of painting royal portraits and constructing royal portrait halls during the

late Joseon period. In particular, special attention is given to the reproduction of royal portraits and the restoration of royal portrait halls after foreign invasions in the late 16th century.

Royal portraits served a multitude of functions, and can thus be explored from various perspectives and approaches. One could examine their aesthetic value as works of art, or focus on their religious aspects as ritual objects. The main purpose of this study, however, is to investigate the political function of royal portraits, emphasizing the fact that they were primarily produced and utilized within the realm of Joseon court politics.

## Collapse of the Tradition: Royal Portraits under King Seonjo (宣祖, r. 1567-1608)

Following the tradition of the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392), Joseon monarchs commissioned the painting of royal portraits from the beginning of the dynasty. In particular, King Taejo, the founder of the dynasty, had several portraits completed and enshrined at six sites around the country, including Junwonjeon Hall (濬源殿) in Yeongheung, Jipgyeongjeon Hall (集慶殿) in Gyeongju, Munsojeon Hall (文昭殿) in Hanseong, Gyeonggijeon Hall in Jeonju, Yeongsungjeon Hall (永崇殿) in Pyeongyang and Mokcheongjeon Hall (穆淸殿) in Gaeseong (Cho Insoo 2004, 2006 and 2010; Lee Soomi 2005). In addition, portraits of former

kings were housed in a special royal portrait hall called Seonwonjeon Hall (璿源殿),<sup>1</sup> initially located at Gyeongbokgung, the main palace. Each king would usually have a number of portraits depicting him in various forms, including full-length, half-length, and equestrian portraits, so Seonwonjeon Hall housed dozens of images of past kings.

However, most of these paintings and royal portrait halls were incinerated during the Japanese invasion of 1592 (Cho Sunmie 1983, 116-119). King Seonjo and his vassals had to evacuate immediately, and they were only allowed to bring spirit tablets housed in the Royal Ancestral Shrine (*jongmyo*, 宗廟) (*Seonjo sillok*). The large collection of portraits of previous kings at Seonwonjeon Hall could not be transported and were buried instead, sustaining great damage as a result.

During the Japanese invasion, the royal portrait halls in Gaeseong and Pyeongyang were destroyed, and the portraits of King Taejo that had been enshrined there were lost. Three portraits of King Taejo from Yeongheung, Gyeongju, and Jeonju were smuggled to safety by local officials, and thus managed to avoid the destruction. One portrait of King Sejo (世祖, r. 1455-1468) also survived, thanks to the efforts of Buddhist monks who stored it in Bongseonsa Temple (奉先寺) at Gwangneung. Unfortunately, with the exception of these four paintings, all other royal portraits were either lost or destroyed.

Following the invasion, King Seonjo could not actively execute a plan to restore all of the destroyed royal portrait halls or to commission new royal portraits to replace those that had been lost. The king remained in refuge until 1593, when he was finally able to return to the palace, but even then he had to postpone reconstruction of the devastated palace and royal household due to the war, which lasted until 1599. Still, he felt it was necessary to reconstruct the royal portrait hall in Yeongheung, so that at least one portrait of King Taejo could be properly enshrined.

Notably, some 60 meritorious subjects had portraits bestowed on them during King Seonjo's reign.

Subjects who distinguished themselves in battle against the Japanese were offered the title of "Military Order of Merit" (*Seonmu gongsin*, 宣武功臣), while the vassals who escorted King Seonjo to safety in Uiju were given the title of "Meritorious Subject Escorting the Monarch" (*Hoseong Gongsin*, 扈聖功臣). Furthermore, those who helped to suppress a revolt led by Yi Monghak (李夢鶴, d. 1596) in 1596 received the title of "Meritorious Subject Suppressing the Disturbance" (*Cheongnan Gongsin*, 淸難功臣). The work of selecting these meritorious subjects and recording their contributions began in 1601 and was completed in 1604. A total of 109 retainers were selected as meritorious subjects, and the 64 who had survived the war were presented with their portraits by the king (*Hoseong seonmu cheongnan gongsin dogam uigwe*). Despite this great number of new portraits commissioned by the court, the rebuilding of the royal portrait halls and the restoration of royal portraits did not begin until the reign of King Gwanhaegun (光海君, r. 1608-1623).

#### **Restoration of the Tradition: Royal Portraits under King Gwanhaegun (光海君, r. 1608-1623)**

After King Gwanhaegun ascended the throne in 1608, he endeavored to reconstruct the palaces and portrait halls. In his first year, King Gwanhaegun rebuilt the Royal Ancestral Shrine for the spirit tablets of previous monarchs, and also repaired Changdeokgung Palace. Then, in 1614, he reconstructed Gyeonggijeon Hall in Jeonju, followed by Pyeongyang's Yeongsungjeon Hall in 1617. Finally, in 1619, he reconstructed Nambyeoljeon Hall (南別殿) in the capital, Hanseong (present-day Seoul) (*Gwanhaegun ilgi*). Thus, at that time, the state was maintaining a total of five halls, including the previously established royal portrait halls in Gangneung and Yeongheung, to enshrine King Taejo's portraits. As such, King Gwanhaegun restored all of the halls of King Taejo's portraits that had been built in the early Joseon period to their original condition, with the exception of the one in Gaeseong. Just as the original construction of the halls and enshrinement of the portraits had been closely connected to the political circumstances of that time, the later restoration of the halls and reproduction of the kings' por-

<sup>1</sup> According to Joseon tradition, Seonwonjeon Hall, the special royal portrait hall where portraits of former kings were enshrined, always had to be housed on the grounds of the main palace. Over the years, the main palace was relocated several times due to foreign invasion, which also necessitated the relocation of Seonwonjeon Hall to the grounds of the new palace.

traits were also related to court politics.

The restoration of Jeonju's Gyeonggijeon Hall in 1614 can be attributed to King Gwanghaegun's active interest in and strong support for the royal portraits. During the war, one of King Taejo's portraits was safely moved from Gyeonggijeon Hall to Mt. Myohyangsan. Once the reconstruction of Gyeonggijeon Hall was complete, Gwanghaegun decided that the portrait should be returned to the newly rebuilt hall. Moreover, since Taejo's portrait was being transferred to Gyeonggijeon Hall via the capital, Hanseong, King Gwanghaegun also ordered a magnificent reception to be held to welcome the portrait when it passed through the capital.

When the portrait arrived in Hanseong on the ninth day of the ninth month, King Gwanghaegun and his retainers went to the Guest Hall of Cherishing China (*Mohwagwan*, 慕華館) to receive the portrait and perform ancestral rites before it. King Taejo's portrait was finally enshrined in the newly reconstructed Gyeonggijeon Hall in the eleventh month of the same year, and, to celebrate the enshrinement, a state examination was conducted in Jeonju.

The re-enshrinement of King Taejo's portrait in Gyeonggijeon Hall was an important event in the post-war reconstruction, because Jeonju, once the clan seat of the royal Yi family, had been considered a historically significant site since the beginning of the Joseon Dynasty. The enshrinement occurred during a politically sensitive period, as Kim Jenam (金悌男, 1562-1613)—the maternal grandfather of King Gwanghaegun's half-brother, Prince Yeongchang (永昌大君, 1606-1614)—had recently attempted a revolt against the king. As a result of the treasonous acts that took place in the fifth month of 1613 and the power struggle between rival factions to gain the throne, Prince Yeongchang was sent into exile. Then, in the second month of 1614, King Gwanghaegun, who upon taking the throne had executed his older brother Prince Imhae (臨海君, 1574-1609), also put his younger half-brother, Yeongchang, to death. Immediately after Prince Yeongchang's execution, King Gwanghaegun began to pursue the reconstruction of Gyeonggijeon Hall and the enshrinement of King Taejo's portrait. Gwanghaegun was keenly aware that such a public expression of his veneration for the founder of the dynasty would help to legitimize his succession to the throne and reinforce his royal influence over the people.

The restoration of Yeongsungjeon Hall in Pyeongyang and the enshrinement of Taejo's portrait therein were also politically motivated actions strongly supported by King Gwanghaegun. As mentioned above, during the Japanese Invasion of 1592, the portrait of King Taejo housed in Yeongsungjeon Hall had disappeared and the hall was destroyed by fire. King Gwanghaegun ordered that Yeongsungjeon Hall be rebuilt and that a copy of King Taejo's portrait (painted in the likeness of the Gyeonggijeon Hall portrait) be produced and enshrined in the newly constructed hall. By the third month of 1617, the reconstruction of Yeongsungjeon Hall was complete and the copy of King Taejo's portrait was finished. The portrait was scheduled to be sent from Jeonju to Pyeongyang via the capital, but the journey was repeatedly delayed due to King Gwanghaegun's ill health. The portrait eventually left Jeonju in the eleventh month of 1617, but before reaching Hanseong, it was held in Suwon for a long time because of some exceptional circumstances at Gwanghaegun's court. The portrait finally entered the capital the following year, but then King Gwanghaegun decided that, rather than continuing to Pyeongyang, it should be enshrined in the capital, alongside the portrait of King Sejo, which was currently housed at Mt. Myohyangsan. Thus, the portrait of Sejo was ordered to be sent to the capital, but it too was delayed and had to be temporarily housed in Gaeseong. The two royal portraits remained on the outskirts of the capital longer than expected, before finally arriving at Nambyeoljeon Hall in Hanseong in the ninth month of 1619.

Today, it is difficult to discern why the portrait of King Taejo, which was supposedly created for Yeongsungjeon Hall in Pyeongyang, was eventually enshrined in Nambyeoljeon Hall in the capital or why it remained in Suwon for so long. But, like the restoration of Gyeonggijeon Hall in 1614, these events were certainly tied to the political circumstances of the time. The copy of the portrait of King Taejo was completed and sent to the capital in the eleventh month of 1617. About that same time, King Gwanghaegun had provoked controversy at court by demoting the status of Queen Inmok (仁穆大妃, 1584-1632), a queen of his predecessor King Seonjo, to that of a commoner. Some of the king's subjects protested his decision by refusing to sanction various government events and services. Thus, although the king had planned to hold a splendid reception for the

portrait of King Taejo, that was now impossible due to the lack of support and participation from his subjects. King Gwanghaegun clearly wanted to utilize King Taejo's portrait to strengthen his own base of power, so it seems likely that, in consideration of the unfavorable circumstances, he chose to postpone the portrait's arrival rather than risk the embarrassment of a lackluster ceremony. Throughout his rule, King Gwanghaegun persistently mentioned King Taejo's portrait, indicating the significant role that the painting played in this maelstrom of political changes.

### **Destruction of the Tradition: Royal Portraits under Kings Injo through Hyeonjong (1623-1674)**

In 1623, King Gwanghaegun was dethroned by a coup, led by two political factions: the *Seoin* faction (西人, Western faction) and the *Namin* faction (南人, Southern faction). They enthroned Prince Neungyang (綾陽君), who became known as King Injo (仁祖, r. 1623-1649). Injo's reign was marked by near constant warfare, and the royal portraits suffered serious damage as a result. Under the dominant influence of the *Seoin* faction, King Injo implemented a policy towards China that was strongly pro-Ming and anti-Manchu. Irritated by the consistently anti-Manchu policy of the Joseon Dynasty, the Manchus dispatched an army south across the Amnokgang River (鴨綠江) in the first month of 1627. King Injo and his court fled, taking refuge on Ganghwado Island. The invading Manchu forces eventually withdrew from Korea after the Joseon court signed an agreement describing its future relationship with the Manchus as one of "younger brother to older brother." Meanwhile, the royal portrait formerly enshrined in Nambyeoljeon Hall was brought to Ganghwado Island and returned to the capital after the war (*Injo sillok*).

King Injo drew the ire of many officials when he endowed his father, Prince Jeongwon (定遠君, 1580-1619), with the posthumous title of King Wonjong (元宗). In 1632, before the posthumous title was awarded, King Injo had already enshrined a portrait of his father in Nambyeoljeon Hall, alongside the other royal portraits. To justify this, Injo cited the precedent that King Seongjong (成宗, r. 1469-1494) had endowed his father with the posthumous title of King Deokjong (德宗, 1438-1457), and enshrined his

portrait in the hall of royal portraits.

In 1636, the Manchus proclaimed the beginning of the new Qing Dynasty, and they demanded that Joseon, as a vassal state, supply an annual tribute. Rejecting the Manchu demands, the Joseon court prepared an armed force to fight against a Manchu attack. The second Manchu invasion of Korea started in the twelfth month of 1636 when the Qing army again crossed the Amnokgang River into Joseon territory. King Injo took refuge in Namhansanseong Fortress, but the Manchu forces besieged the fortress until Injo surrendered in 1637. Before the war began, the portraits of Kings Taejo and Sejo in Nambyeoljeon Hall were sent to Ganghwado Island, while King Injo took the contested portrait of King Wonjong with him to Namhan Fortress. The portrait of Taejo was severely damaged when the Qing army invaded Ganghwado Island, and it was later buried. The portrait of King Sejo was temporarily lost, but was recovered after the war.

The Manchu Invasion of 1636 was much shorter than the Japanese invasion of a generation earlier, and overall, the damage to Joseon territory was less devastating. However, Yeongsungjeon Hall was burnt down and the portrait of King Taejo that had been enshrined in Nambyeoljeon Hall was destroyed. In all, during King Injo's reign, two portraits of King Taejo disappeared, while the new portrait of King Wonjong was painted. The next two successors to the throne, King Hyojong (孝宗, r. 1649-1659) and King Hyeonjong (顯宗, r. 1659-1674), did not reconstruct any royal portrait halls, nor did they commission any new copy of King Taejo's portrait.

### **Reconstruction of the Tradition: Royal Portraits under King Sukjong (肅宗, r. 1674-1720)**

When King Sukjong ascended the throne in 1674, portraits of King Taejo were housed in the royal portrait halls in Jeonju and Yeongheung, while portraits of King Sejo and Wonjong were displayed in Nambyeoljeon Hall in Hanseong. King Sukjong was well aware of the significance of King Taejo's portrait in consolidating royal authority, so he attempted to have a portrait of King Taejo enshrined within the walls of the capital (*Sukjong sillok*; Jin Junhyeon 1996, 89-119). To achieve this goal, King Sukjong had to pre-

vail upon some his subjects, who thought that rulers should not use the royal image and the royal portrait halls to increase their own power.

King Sukjong took advantage of conflicts between political factions to produce new portraits of rulers, unlike the preceding monarchs. In 1688, he ordered that a copy of Taejo's portrait be painted in the likeness of the Gyeonggijeon Hall portrait. Once the copy was completed, it was kept in Nambyeoljeon Hall in the capital. Thus, King Taejo's portrait, which had been absent from the capital for four decades, was finally re-enshrined within the capital by King Sukjong (*Yeongjeong mosa dogam uigwe*; Yi Songmi *et al.* 1997, 7-16; Kim Jiyeong 2003, 627-637). Like King Gwanghaegun before him, King Sukjong attached great political significance to copying King Taejo's portrait and enshrining it in the capital city. Around 1688, the king's court was divided by a power struggle between the *Seoin* and *Namin* factions, as the king's highly favored concubine, Lady Jang (張嬪, 1659-1701), gave birth to a son, while the king's second wife, Queen Inhyeon (仁顯王后, 1667-1701), remained childless. Under this complicated situation, King Sukjong effectively suppressed the leading power group (*Seoin* faction) and retained power by wielding strong authority over the production of royal portraits.

The *Uigwe*, the official manual of state rituals, states that King Sukjong issued direct instructions regarding the painting of the kings' portraits. When Taejo's portrait arrived in the capital from Jeonju,

King Sukjong came out to receive it personally. He also installed a rigorous selection process to determine which painter would be allowed to copy the portrait. Eight painters were initially recommended by high officials, but after a series of thorough tests, two finalists emerged: Jo Segeol (曹世傑, 1628-1705) and Yun Sangik (尹商翊, ?). Finally, after a very strict selection process, Yun, the younger painter, was selected as the principal painter for copying the portrait of King Taejo. After the portrait was produced and successfully enshrined, the subjects and painters who had been involved in painting the new portrait of the king were rewarded. To celebrate the second birthday of the prince, King Sukjong renamed Nambyeoljeon Hall as Yeonghuijeon Hall (永禧殿) in 1690, in the hope of perpetuating more propitious events (Fig. 2). King Sukjong sought to use this event to fortify his political dominance over his subjects, many of whom had opposed the copying of King Taejo's portrait.

In addition to affirming his authority by reproducing King Taejo's portrait, King Sukjong also promoted his kingship by having his own portraits painted and distributed to the palace and royal portrait halls around the country. For approximately 100 years, since the reign of King Seonjo, the convention of painting the living monarch's portrait had absolutely ceased, so the production of King Sukjong's portrait in 1695 denotes the revival of an early Joseon Dynasty tradition. Sukjong had two portraits painted by Jo Segeol, one of which was kept at the palace and the other which was sent to the newly built Jangnyeongjeon Hall (長寧殿) on Ganghwado Island.

King Sukjong also significantly revamped the system of preserving the royal portraits by ordering the reconstruction of Seonwonjeon Hall, the special royal portrait hall for housing the portraits of former kings that had been built at the beginning of the Joseon Dynasty. The new Seonwonjeon Hall was constructed at Changdeokgung Palace, flanking the main reception building, Injeongjeon Hall (仁政殿) (Fig. 3).

In the year marking the 40th anniversary of King Sukjong's enthronement in 1713, he ordered another portrait of himself to be produced (*Eoyong dosa dogam uigwe* 1713; Yi Songmi *et al.* 1997, 16-29; Kim Jiyeong 2004a). The king met frequently with subjects and painters to discuss the details of his portraits; the meetings with painters would allow them to observe his face in detail in order to compose a more



Fig. 2. Yeonghuijeon Hall depicted in "Capital City" of *Map of Korea* (海東地圖). Mid-18th century. Color on paper. (Gyujanggak).

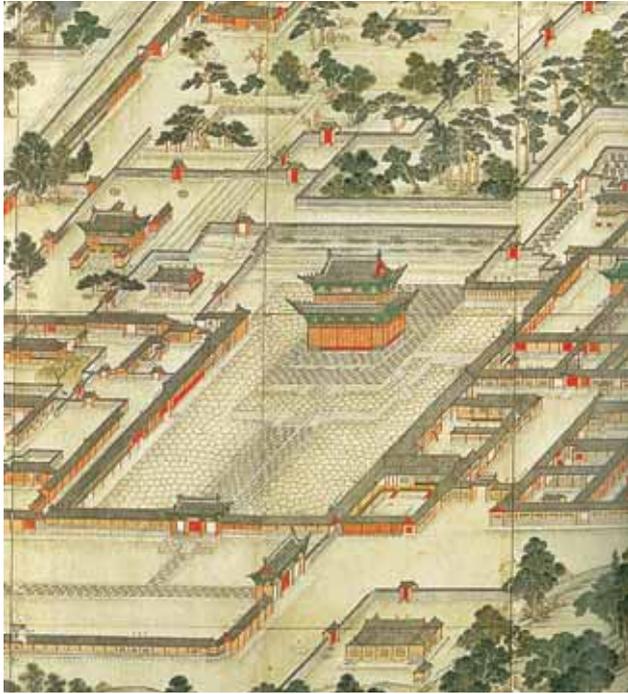


Fig. 3. Injeongjeon Hall and Seonwonjeon Hall depicted in the *Eastern Palace* (東闕圖), Early 19th century. Color on silk. (Korea University Museum).



Fig. 4. *Royal Genealogy* (璿源系譜紀略). 1681. (Academy of Korean Studies, Jangseogak).

realistic portrait. For this particular portrait, Sukjong broke with convention by having domestically produced *hwamunseok* (花紋席, straw mats with floral designs) depicted beneath the throne, rather than the imported carpets that had appeared in previous royal portraits (Kang Kwanshik 1998, 263-265).

Various terms were used to refer to the king's portrait, including "Face of the King" (*eoyong*, 御容), "Hanging Scroll" (*jeongja*, 幀子), "Shadow" (*yeongja*, 影子), and "Painted Royal Face" (*suyong*, 睟容). King Sukjong decided to replace those terms with a newly coined word meaning the "Essence of Royalty" (*eojin*, 御眞), a term that has only been used in Korea (Cho Seonmi 1983, 147-158; Yi Songmi *et al.*, 1997, 29-32). Again, painters who excelled in portraiture were recommended, and Jin Jaehae (秦再亥, 1691-1769) was selected as the main painter for King Sukjong's portrait. Two portraits of Sukjong were painted at that time, one of which was enshrined in Jangnyeongjeon Hall on Ganghwado Island while the other was placed in the restored Seonwonjeon Hall.

King Sukjong's decision to have his own portrait painted and enshrined next to the portraits of dead monarchs was a very controversial decision. For example, Eo Yugu (魚有龜, 1675-1740) strongly opposed the idea of subjects bowing before a portrait of the living monarch. This conflict reveals an old, persistent tension between monarch and officials, as well as the power struggle among factions in the political matrix of the Joseon court.

In 1681, King Sukjong published *Royal Genealogy* (*Seonwon gyebo giryak*, 璿源系譜紀略), the official genealogical record of the royal family, in order to demonstrate the origin and pedigree of the royal Yi household (Fig. 4). After its initial compilation, the book was reprinted over one-hundred times in order to make updates and add information on newly implemented royal family events. The added contents included instructions for producing and copying royal portraits, as well as how to properly wash out the old royal portrait once a successful reproduction was made, and details about the site changes in the enshrinement of the king's portrait (*Gyujanggak sojang wangsil jaryo haeseoljip* 2005, 32-34 and 107-133). In the Joseon period, it was common practice for a new portrait to be made to replace an older one that had become too damaged to be fit for ritual purposes. Similar to the way in which religious images were discarded and replaced, the old portrait was usually

washed out (*secho*, 洗草) or buried (*me'an*, 埋安). The process of washing out was a popular method to erase ink and colors on silk or paper used for official documents, religious paintings and portrait sketches.

Through his emphasis on royal portraiture, King Sukjong achieved his goal of reinforcing his sovereign power by glorifying his legitimate dynastic succession to the throne and eulogizing the accomplishments of preceding rulers. In this context, royal portraits and royal portrait halls played an essential role in supporting King Sukjong's political agenda. Sukjong was responsible for reviving the systems related to royal portraits in the late Joseon period, and later monarchs followed in his footsteps by actively utilizing the king's portrait to strengthen their political authority

### Renaissance of Royal Portraits under Kings Yeongjo (英祖, r. 1724-1776) and Jeongjo (正祖, r. 1776-1800)

Inheriting and developing on King Sukjong's policy on royal portraiture, King Yeongjo used royal portraits to manifest his royal authority. He consolidated the system of producing and preserving royal portraits, thus creating a method that was handed down through the end of the dynasty (*Yeongjo sillok*; Jin Junhyeon 1994, 19-72; Kim Jiyeong 2004b). In addition to the five extant royal portrait halls—Yeonghuijeon Hall, Seonwonjeon Hall, Jangnyeongjeon Hall, Gyeonggijeon Hall, and Junwonjeon Hall—King Yeongjo also ordered his portraits stored in Changui-gung Palace (彰義宮), Taeryeongjeon Hall (泰寧殿), Yuksanggung Shrine (毓祥宮), and Mannyongjeon Hall (萬寧殿).

In 1735, King Yeongjo ordered a newly painted portrait of King Sejo to be enshrined in Yeonghuijeon Hall, and he also had the hall expanded from three to five chambers to accommodate King Sukjong's portrait (Fig. 5). In the newly added fourth chamber, where King Sukjong's portrait was enshrined, the king installed a special throne (*yongsang*, 龍床) as shown in the Royal Ancestral Shrine, and displayed an *obongsan byeongpung* (五峯山屏風, a screen painted with the sun, moon, and five peaks), a symbol of royal power. The interior of the fourth chamber of Yeonghuijeon Hall closely resembled that later built at Sinseonwonjeon Hall (新墻源殿) at

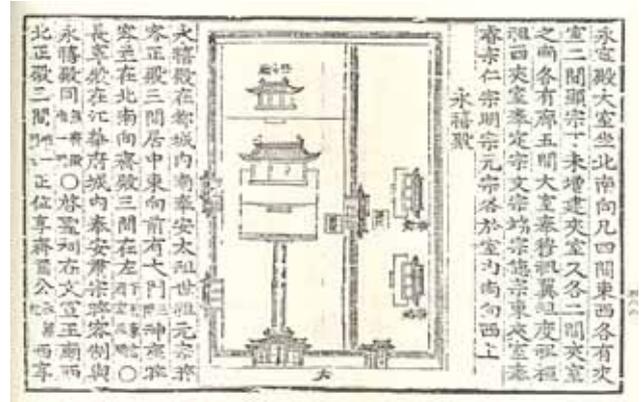


Fig. 5. Illustration of Yeonghuijeon Hall in *The Revision of the Five National Rites* (國朝續五禮儀序列). 1744. (Gyujeongguk)

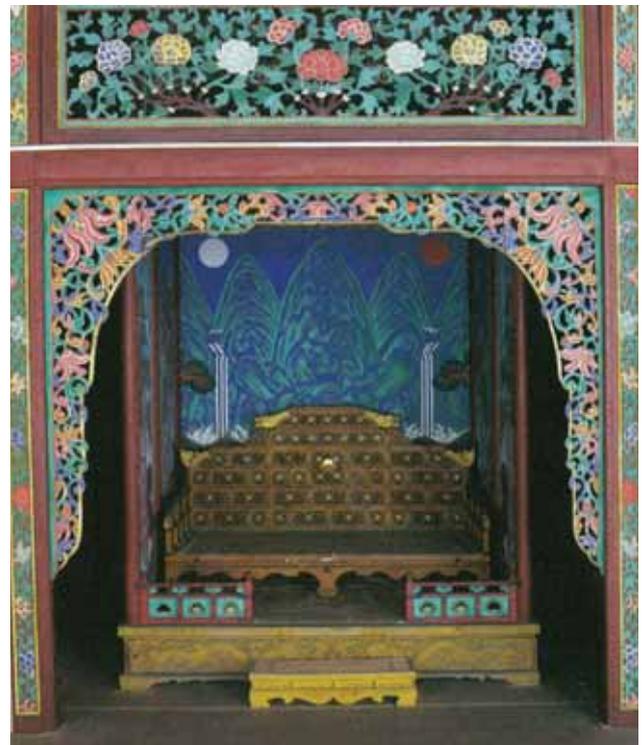


Fig. 6. Interior of New Seonwonjeon Hall located in Changdeokgung Palace. *Sinseonwonjeon* (新墻源殿). 2010. (Daejeon: National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage), p. 138.



Fig. 7. Jangnyeongjeon Hall from Palace of Ganghwado Island (江華府宮殿圖). 19th century. Color on paper, 98.9 x 68.6 cm. (National Library of Korea).



Fig. 8. Mannyongjeon Hall from Palace of Ganghwado Island (江華府宮殿圖). 19th century. Color on paper, 98.9 x 68.6 cm. (National Library of Korea).

Changdeokgung Palace (Fig. 6).

King Yeongjo commissioned two portraits of King Sukjong by the master painter Jang Gyeongju (張敬周, b. 1710), having one enshrined in Yeonghuijeon Hall and the other in Seonwonjeon Hall. With the addition of more kings' portraits, Yeonghuijeon Hall became the official hall of royal portraits, and one of the most sacred sites of the royal Yi family, comparable with the Royal Ancestral Shrine. At that time, Seonwonjeon Hall, reserved exclusively for portraits of former kings, contained only the portrait of King Sukjong. But since it was situated within the palace, unlike Yeonghuijeon Hall, King Yeongjo regularly visited Seonwonjeon Hall to offer incense, and also used the hall to conduct state affairs and inform his royal ancestors of significant happenings in the kingdom.

In 1721, the previous ruler (and half-brother to King Yeongjo), King Gyeongjong (景宗, r. 1720-1724), had established a new building west of Jangnyeongjeon Hall on Ganghwado Island (Fig. 7). King Sukjong's image was hung inside the new building, while the old building was used for temporary storage. King Yeongjo eventually changed the name of the new building to Mannyongjeon Hall and enshrined his own portrait there (Fig. 8).

King Yeongjo had a number of portraits of himself produced during his lifetime; after taking the throne, he ordered his portrait to be painted every ten years. In fact, even before he was enthroned, King Yeongjo had a portrait of himself painted when he was still the prince (Fig. 9). In 1733, two images of King Yeongjo were enshrined in Seonwonjeon Hall



Fig. 9. Portrait of Prince Yeoning (延礽君, later King Yeongjo, 英祖, r. 1724-1776). 1714. Color on silk, 150.1 x 77.7 cm. (National Palace Museum of Korea).



Fig. 10. *Portrait of King Yeongjo* (英祖, r. 1724-1776), by Jo Seokjin (趙錫晉, 1853 -1920) and others. 1900. Color on silk, 110.5 x 61.8 cm. (National Palace Museum of Korea).



Fig. 11. Junwonjeon Hall from *Paintings of Royal Ancestral Tomb and Shrine in Hamgyeong-do Province* (北道各陵殿圖形). 1808-1840. Color on silk, 51.3 x 59.0 cm. (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).

and Yuksanggung Shrine, respectively. In 1744, two portraits were sent to Yeonghuijeon Hall and Mannyeongjeon Hall, and in 1754, two more paintings were made for Yuksanggung Shrine and Changui-gung Palace (Fig. 10). Changui-gung Palace was the king's former residence before his accession, while Yuksanggung Shrine is a tablet hall constructed for his biological mother, Lady Choe (淑嬪崔氏, 1670-1718). In 1763, only one portrait was produced, which was placed in Taeryeongjeon Hall, and in 1773, the final two portraits were produced and situated in Taeryeongjeon Hall and Yuksanggung Shrine. With his images executed every ten years (a total of five times throughout his 52-year reign) King Yeongjo is one of the most frequently painted kings of the entire Joseon Dynasty.

King Yeongjo expected his subjects to remember him in the future by viewing his portraits, so he often showed the portraits to his subjects, both inside and outside of the palace. He also frequented Seonwonjeon Hall, where King Sukjong's portrait was housed, and he would sometimes prostrate himself and cry before the portrait of King Sukjong in Yeonghuijeon Hall. Since King Yeongjo, the production and preservation of portraits of deceased kings and living monarchs came to be considered an essential task of the royal household. Any monarch who effectively assumed this crucial responsibility wielded royal au-

thority and actively engaged in political activities.

Emulating King Sukjong, King Yeongjo also promoted numerous cultural enterprises as a means of transmitting political and royal propaganda. He ordered Wi Changjo (魏昌祖, 1703-1771) to compile the *Records of Royal Ancestors' Tombs and Shrines in Hamgyeong-do Province* (北道陵殿誌), which provides details about the tombs and historic relics related to the founder of the dynasty, King Taejo, and his forbears. The book also includes the record of Junwonjeon Hall, the hall of King Taejo's portrait. The *Paintings of Royal Ancestral Tombs and Shrines in Hamgyeong-do Province* (北道各陵殿圖形) are assumed to have been produced in conjunction with Wi's compilation (Academy of Korean Studies 2002, 132-134) (Fig. 11). The latter is a visual representation and sanctification of the cradle of the dynasty and the birthplace of the dynastic founder.

In 1751, Jogyeongmyo Shrine (肇慶廟) was built next to Gyeonggijeon Hall, to honor Yi Han (李翰, ?), the reputed apical ancestor of the royal Yi family (Fig. 12). The ancestral tablets of Yi Han and his wife were enshrined therein. Along with Gyeonggijeon Hall, it constituted a sacred site of the Joseon Dynasty, symbolizing the tracing of the distinguished Yi royal family lineage all the way back to the Silla Kingdom (57 BCE–935).

The operational system that King Yeongjo established related to the production and enshrinement of royal portraiture was continued by his successor, King Jeongjo. Under Jeongjo, Yeonghuijeon Hall, Seonwonjeon Hall, Jangnyeongjeon Hall, Gyeonggijeon Hall, and Junwonjeon Hall were all maintained, as were the halls for King Yeongjo's portraits, such as Yuksanggung Shrine and Changui-gung Palace. In addition, King Jeongjo had his own portraits enshrined in Gyujanggak (奎章閣, the royal library), Gyeongmogung Shrine (景慕宮), and Hyeollyungwon Tomb (顯隆園). Upon his enthronement, King Jeongjo moved King Yeongjo's portrait from Mannyeongjeon Hall on Ganghwado Island to Jangnyeongjeon Hall, where King Sukjong's portrait was housed. Then, in 1778, Jeongjo ordered Seonwonjeon Hall to be renovated to accommodate King Yeongjo's portrait, and had another of Yeongjo's portraits enshrined in Yeonghuijeon Hall.

Following King Yeongjo's precedent, King Jeongjo planned to have his portrait painted every ten years and placed in Gyujanggak. He established Gyujang-

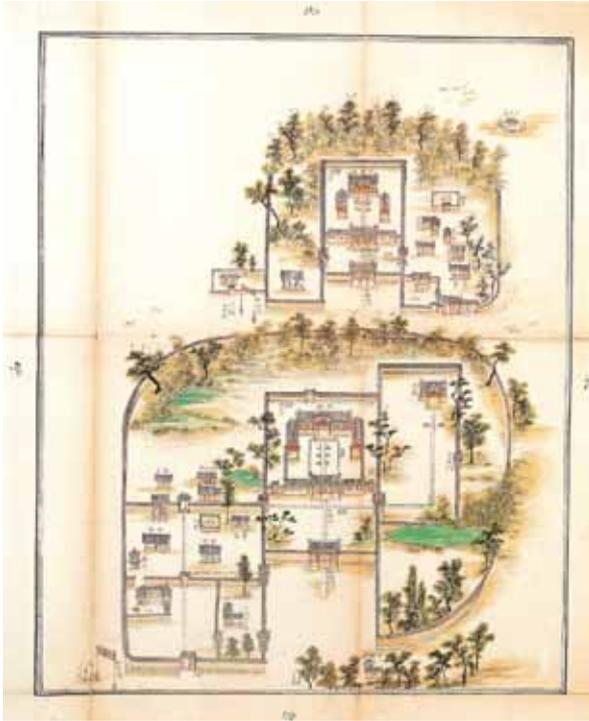


Fig. 12. Jogyeongmyo Shrine and Gyeonggijeon Hall (肇慶廟慶基殿圖形). After 1899. Color on paper, 112.8 x 92.2 cm. (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).



Fig. 14. Former Site of Jipgyeongjeon Hall (集慶殿舊基圖帖). 1798. Color on paper, 42.0 x 28.0 cm. (Gyujianggak).

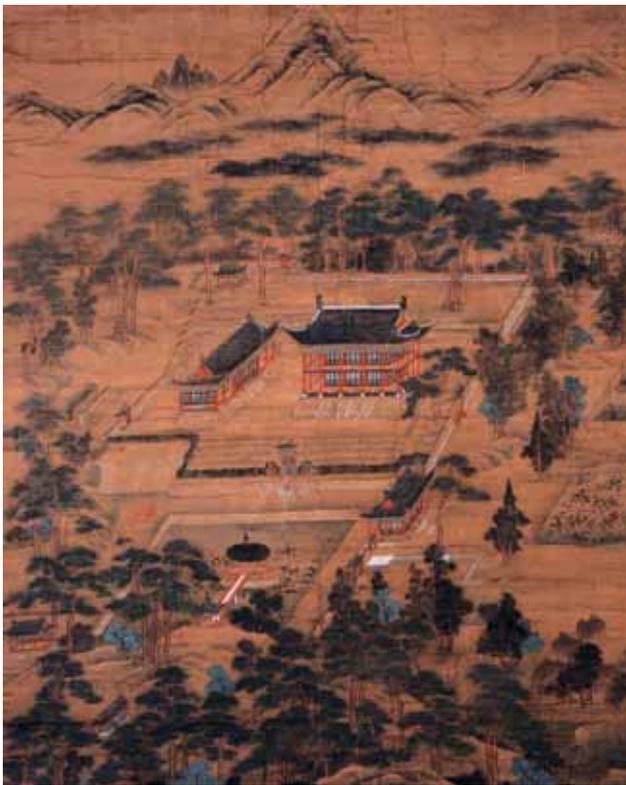


Fig. 13. Gyujianggak (奎章閣), by Kim Hongdo (金弘道 1745-after1806). 1776. Color on paper, 144.4 x 115.6 cm. (National Museum of Korea).

gak as a major political structure for policy research and reforms, and attempted to use this institute as his base for reasserting his royal authority. Considering Gyujianggak's political significance for Jeongjo's court, it was quite meaningful that he chose to have his own portrait enshrined there (Fig. 13).

When King Jeongjo's portrait was painted in 1791, a smaller painting was also sent to Gyeongmogung Shrine, the shrine of his father, Crown Prince Sado (思悼世子, 1735-1762, posthumously entitled Crown Prince Jangheon, 莊獻世子). The following year, Jeongjo enshrined another of his images in Hyeollyungwon Tomb, where his father was buried. The enshrinement of his portrait in the shrine and tomb of his real father was part of Jeongjo's project to re-

instate his father, who died tragically amidst court power struggles. Such actions not only demonstrated his filial piety, but also reaffirmed his royal lineage.

King Jeongjo was continuously involved in cultural enterprises to promote various agendas related to the royal household. For instance, he built stelae and stela pavilions at Jipgyeongjeon Hall in Gyeongju to commemorate King Taejo's accomplishments. Around this time, *Former Site of Jipgyeongjeon Hall* (集慶殿舊基圖) was painted (Fig. 14).

### Continuing the Tradition: Royal Portraits under Kings Sunjo, Heonjong, Cheoljong, and Gojong (1800-1897)

The convention of copying royal portraits and preserving them in royal portrait halls continued without change into the 19th century. Rulers were primarily concerned with upholding the previously established traditions of painting royal portraits and constructing shrines for them, and sometimes exploiting this system according to their own needs. Thus, no efforts were made to reform or change the royal portrait system. Since the portraits of previous rulers were well preserved and ruling sovereigns continually had new portraits made, the total number of royal portraits consistently increased. The background for making a new portrait of a reigning king once every ten years is not clear. In these cases, however, the new portrait was not a reproduction made after the older one but the most recent and updated image of the king. This practice is referred to as “painting a portrait (*dosa*, 圖寫)” instead of “copying a portrait (*mosa*, 模寫)” in various official documents concerning royal portraiture. Therefore, the old portraits which contained younger likenesses were not discarded but were added to the inventory and preserved together with the later versions. As a result, by the 1890s, more than 50 portraits of 11 kings were distributed in royal portrait halls around the country (*Seonwon gyebo giryak*; *Cheoljong sillok*; *Sunjo sillok*; *Heonjong sillok*).

In order to house the portrait of King Sunjo (純祖, r. 1800-1834), King Cheoljong (哲宗, r. 1849-1863) added a sixth chamber to Yeonghuijeon Hall, which by then held portraits of many generations of Joseon kings, including Kings Taejo, Sejo, Wonjong, Sukjong, and Yeongjo (*Cheoljong sillok*, seventh month,



Fig. 15. *Portrait of King Cheoljong* (哲宗, r. 1849-1863), by Yi Hancheol (李漢喆, b. 1808) and others. 1860. Color on silk, 202.3 x 107.2 cm. (National Palace Museum of Korea).

15th day in 1858, the ninth year of the reign of King Cheoljong) (Fig. 15). At that time, the images of King Jeongjo, Sunjo, and Heonjong (憲宗, r. 1834-1849) were not yet enshrined there. King Cheoljong decided to enshrine Sunjo's portrait in Yeonghuijeon Hall in order to confirm his position and authority as lawful successor to the crown. King Cheoljong's legitimacy was in question because he was an adopted son of the deceased King Sunjo, and thus merely a collateral descendant of the Yi Royal lineage. Thus, by elevating the status of King Sunjo, who had the same claim



Fig. 16. *Portrait of King Ikjong*, by Jo Seokjin (趙錫晉, 1853 -1920) and others. 19th century. Color on silk, 147.5 x 90 cm. (National Palace Museum of Korea).

to the throne as Cheoljong's biological father, Prince Jeongye (全溪大院君, 1785-1841), the king intended to reassert his legitimacy. Years later, in 1872, King Gojong ordered the extant portraits of Kings Taejo and Wonjong in Yeonghuijeon Hall to be copied, in order to commemorate the eighth 60-year anniversary of the founding of the Joseon Dynasty. This conventional method of boosting royal authority and seizing control of court politics had been used effectively by preceding rulers (Cho Insoo 2006, 29-56).

After King Sunjo added an extension to Seonwonjeon Hall in 1802, portraits of Kings Sukjong, Yeongjo, and Jeongjo were enshrined in its first, second, and third chambers (respectively). During King Heonjong's rule, Seonwonjeon Hall was expanded to five chambers to add two more kings' portraits (Fig. 16). King Cheoljong later extended the building again to enshrine King Heonjong's portrait. After

these repeated extensions, Seonwonjeon Hall underwent a startling transformation in 1868 under the reign of King Gojong. At that time, Gyeongbokgung Palace, which had been burnt during the Japanese invasions of Korea (1592-1598) and left in ruins for the next three centuries, was restored. With Gyeongbokgung resuming its original function as the main palace, Seonwonjeon Hall had to be relocated there as well. Thus, six royal portraits that had previously been placed in the former Seonwonjeon Hall at Changdeokgung Palace were transferred to the new Seonwonjeon Hall. Then, in 1895, Japanese agents assassinated Queen Myeongseong, forcing King Gojong to take refuge at the Russian legation in 1896. When he returned in 1897, he took up residence at Gyeongungung Palace (presently Deoksugung Palace), and so Seonwonjeon Hall also had to be relocated there. Gojong established a new Seonwonjeon Hall at Gyeongungung Palace and had the kings' portraits moved there from Gyeongbokgung Palace.

Unlike Yeonghuijeon Hall, Seonwonjeon Hall was not considered an "official" portrait hall, and thus could contain different images of the same king. After a king died, his portraits were moved from local shrines into Seonwonjeon Hall in the capital. Since King Sukjong had established Seonwonjeon Hall as an informal repository of kings' portraits, state ceremonies were not conducted there. For the same reason, Seonwonjeon Hall did not hold a portrait of King Taejo until 1900, because portraits of Taejo were only to be housed in official royal portrait halls, such as Yeonghuijeon Hall.

Local royal portrait halls were managed by personnel from the capital, but that did not prevent unfortunate incidents from occurring there from time to time. For example, in 1837, thieves damaged King Taejo's portrait at Junwonjeon Hall during an attempted robbery; the damaged portrait was transferred to the capital to be copied (Yi Songmi *et al.* 1997, 38-44; Kim Jiyeong 2005, 522-538). In 1866, the French invaded Ganghwa Island, doing considerable damage to the palace architecture there, including Jangnyeongjeon Hall, where portraits of Kings Sukjong and Yeongjo were still held. To avoid theft or destruction, the two portraits were first moved to neighboring temples and then later to Yeonghuijeon Hall in the capital. King Jeongjo's portrait was moved from Hyeollyungwon Tomb to the secondary palace in Hwaseong, where the newly constructed

Hwaryeongjeon Hall (華寧殿) housed two royal portraits.

The tradition of painting the portrait of a living sovereign also continued in the 19th century, as King Sunjo placed his own portrait in Gyujanggak. During Heonjong's reign, portraits of his grandfather (King Sunjo) and his father (Crown Prince Hyomyeong, posthumously endowed with title of King Ikjong (翼宗, 1809-1830)) were enshrined in Gyeongugung Shrine (景祐宮), dedicated to Lady Bak (綏嬪朴氏, 1770-1822), King Sunjo's mother. This followed the example of King Yeongjo's portrait being enshrined in Yuksanggung Shrine (dedicated to the king's mother) and that of King Jeongjo in Gyeongmogung Shrine (dedicated to the king's father). Other portraits of Kings Sunjo and Ikjong were also kept in Gyeongmogung Shrine.

The dominant ideology of the time cherished tradition and custom, so the kings sought to emphasize their adherence to those values. King Gojong in particular enforced many policies to redeem his royal authority, such as producing the portraits of previous Joseon kings, constructing and restoring royal portrait halls, and maintaining historical relics that were emblematic of royal ancestors' achievements. King Gojong's activities to propagate his political agenda noticeably increased after he declared the establishment of the Great Han Empire in 1897.

### Conclusion

As chief of state, the king's portrait symbolizes the rule and sovereignty of a dynasty. However, for much of the Joseon Dynasty, the king's rule was restricted by a complex system of checks and balances operated by the Confucian bureaucracy. After the Manchu Invasion of 1636, royal authority was further diminished. As powerful, long-term officials accumulated more influence, the king's political control and sovereignty waned. However, King Sukjong was able to reestablish his dominance of the court and his royal authority, which in turn allowed the subsequent rulers, Kings Yeongjo and Jeongjo, to exert their sovereign power more effectively. Amidst such complicated political circumstances, discourse and controversy concerning royal portraiture was reflective of the power struggle and conflict between the ruler and his civil bureaucrats. Kings often com-

missioned multiple royal portraits of themselves and their ancestors and then obliged subjects to pay dutiful respect before the images. On the other hand, scholarly officials tried to invoke Confucian precepts in order to oppose the production of more royal portraits, but nevertheless, the number of royal portraits constantly increased during the late period of Joseon Dynasty, as every ruler made it customary to have portraits of themselves and previous monarchs painted and enshrined.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for the constant increase hinges on the use of royal portraits as objects for worship during ancestral rites in later Joseon society. Rituals conducted over a long period of time form the conventions and traditions of a given society. In particular, state rituals contribute to consolidating social order and spreading the ruling ideology and social values. For believers, ritual is not merely a metaphysical exercise, but a faith-driven system related to practical goals. To comply with ritual ceremonies, all of the participants must consent to or agree on the norms, values, beliefs, or expressive symbols represented in the course of the ritual. Thus, in addition to their political purposes, the rituals related to the production and enshrinement of royal portraiture during the Joseon Dynasty had religious significance as well. Hence, when examining the royal portraits and their related rituals, we must consider their function within the Confucian context, keeping in mind that religious perspectives lie behind such practices. Through such an approach, further investigation can provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and roles of royal portraiture in later Joseon society. ㄸ

TRANSLATED BY SEO YOONJUNG

This paper is a revised and extended version of "Production and Enshrinement of Royal Portraits in the Joseon Dynasty," which was previously published in 2007 in *Re-examining Korean Portraiture: Studies of Portrait Paintings in the Joseon Dynasty* ( : ).

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, virtually all of the royal portraits from the Joseon Dynasty were destroyed or disappeared during the Korean War. In particular, in December 1954, the works from Sinseonwonjeon Hall were destroyed by a fire at a shelter in Busan, where they had been stored for protection during the war.

