

# Diverse Aspects and Characteristics of the Goryeo Dynasty Crafts in *Xuanhe Fengshi Gaoli Tujing*

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## Introduction

While the Unified Silla Kingdom established an eclectic artistic style by embracing diverse foreign cultural elements in the centuries after the Three Kingdoms period and provided a solid future foundation for Korean metalwork, the evolution and advancement of this craft were promoted during the Goryeo dynasty through the development of distinctive Korean forms and styles. Buddhism further flourished during this era, and the number of Buddhist temples greatly expanded, leading to the increased production of a wide variety of religious metalwork. These numerous metal items included Buddhist ritual objects required for the more complex and diverse rituals and adornments of the Seon school of Buddhism (禪宗) that began to gain popularity in the late Unified Silla period. The aristocratic aesthetic and splendid dignity of Goryeo art are demonstrated most fully in the era's metalwork.

## Status and Characteristics of Goryeo Dynasty Crafts in *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing*

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*Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* (宣和奉使高麗圖經, Illustrated record of the Chinese embassy to the Goryeo court in the Xuanhe era; hereafter *Gaoli tujing*) was written by Xu Jing (徐兢), who joined the diplomatic mission to Goryeo in 1123 led by Lu Yundi (路允迪). He stayed in Goryeo for roughly one month by order of Emperor Huizong of Song China. His writings provide information on the architecture, religion, rites, figures, and customs of the time. *Gaoli tujing* consists of 40 volumes with 28 chapters and roughly 300 sections. Volumes 30, 31, and 32, in particular, focus on vessels of daily use, serving as a valuable reference for the study of Goryeo crafts. The original version of *Gaoli tujing* that included illustrations was lost in a fire, but a copy published in 1169 survives. After returning to Song China in 1124, Xu Jing presented *Gaoli tujing* to Emperor Huizong. His documentation of diverse aspects of the lives of Goryeo people, including their daily routines, culture, folk customs, and vessels, provides vivid and varied details about the Goryeo dynasty.

## Najeon Chilgi Craft

The Goryeo craftworks mentioned in *Gaoli tujing* can be largely divided into daily craft wares and metalwork. First, mother-of-pearl lacquerware will be examined.

The term *najeon chilgi* (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) refers to the technique of inlaying shell in an object to be lacquered and also to the works so produced. The technique of lacquering wooden objects has been practiced since prehistoric times, but no lacquerware inlaid with mother-of-pearl from the Three Kingdoms or Unified Silla has survived. However, bronze mirrors inlaid with mother-of-pearl from these periods indicate that a technique involving mother-of-pearl inlay began to develop from early on in the Korean Peninsula. During the Goryeo dynasty, wooden objects were covered with a hempen cloth and decorated with thinly sliced abalone shells. Tortoiseshell painted using a technique known as *bokchae* (伏彩, reverse-side coloring) was added, and borders of plant stem and other designs were rendered using silver or copper thread. Most *najeon chilgi* wares of the Goryeo dynasty were adorned with chrysanthemum scrolls. The inlay techniques pioneered at this time continued to be used in the Joseon era. From the mid-Joseon period, however, tortoiseshell was no longer applied. Moreover, silver thread or copper thread was replaced with thread-like strips of mother-of-pearl.

Literature on the aesthetic value of Goryeo *najeon chilgi* is scarce. However, according to *Goryeosa* (高麗史, History of Goryeo) and *Dongguk munheon bigo* (東國文獻備考, Remarks about documents on Korea), “King Munjong of the Goryeo dynasty sent *najeon chilgi* wares to the royal court of the Liao dynasty as a gift in 1047” (the first year of the reign of King Munjong). “Gyobingji” (交聘志, Records on Exchanging Envoys) in *Haedong yeoksa* (海東釋史, History of Korea) and *Xiushilu* (髹飾錄, Records on lacquering) written by Huang Dacheng (黃大成) from the Ming dynasty, also mentioned Goryeo lacquerware inlaid with mother-of-pearl being sent to China. These references suggest that Goryeo *najeon chilgi* wares were considered special high-end products esteemed even in other countries.

In the Local Products Section of Volume 23 “Customs II” of *Gaoli tujing*, which was written during the golden age of Goryeo *najeon* (inlaying mother-of-pearl), Xu Jing stated, “In Goryeo, which has much copper but little silver and gold, people are not especially skillful in lacquering a bowl. However, their skill at inlaying mother-of-pearl is extremely delicate, and its elaboration is praiseworthy.” Clearly, this high-ranking Song official deeply appreciated Goryeo *najeon* technique and the



Fig. 1. Buddhist Rosary Case with Chrysanthemum Design Inlaid with Mother-of-pearl and Colored Tortoiseshell. Goryeo, 12th century. D. 12.4 cm. Taimadera Temple, Japan

beauty of objects it created and compared to the wares widely used in China at that time. Moreover, in Volume 15, “Horses and Vehicles,” Xu Jing mentioned a cavalryman’s saddle vividly ornamented with mother-of-pearl, which indicates the widespread use of *najeon* for decorating objects. Despite their brevity, his expressions “extremely delicate” (極精巧) and “praiseworthy elaboration” (細密可貴) suggest that he thought highly of these traits of Goryeo *najeon*. In contrast to Goryeo *najeon*, Chinese mother-of-pearl inlay technique at the time was experiencing a decline. Thus, although he had left only a short remark on Goryeo *najeon chilgi*, Xu Jing at least felt that it was worth noting.

As Xu Jing recorded, Goryeo mother-of-pearl inlay technique achieved a high level of sophistication in the early twelfth century. Only a few examples of Goryeo mother-of-pearl lacquerware from this time remain. They demonstrate that tortoiseshell (*daemo*) painted using the *bokchae* (reverse-side coloring) technique was used to depict the petals or stamens of small flowers at least up to the twelfth century (Fig. 1). This *daemo bokchae* technique begins with grinding a tortoiseshell to a transparent thinness. Red, yellow, or other colors are then applied on the inner side of the shell so that they can be seen through it. The use of this technique in *najeon chilgi* ware is unique to Goryeo. The *bokchae* technique was also employed for coloring the decoration on diaphanous veils and mandorlas in Goryeo Buddhist painting. Commonly, the tortoiseshell in Goryeo *najeon chilgi* wares were colored in red and yellow.

These tones harmonized with the iridescent mother-of-pearl to add vibrancy and a dignified beauty. Xu Jing, who observed this *daemo bokchae* in *najeon chilgi* wares, admired the quality of Goryeo *najeon*, as implied in his expression “praiseworthy elaboration.”

### Textiles

*Gaoli tujing* also describes the textiles observed in Goryeo, including *hil* (纈, dyed and patterned silk pieces woven together), embroidered tents, embroidered paintings, and intricately woven mats. Although actual examples of such textiles no longer exist, the records in *Gaoli tujing* prove that Goryeo practiced relatively elaborate and diverse textile crafting techniques. In the Dyed and Patterned Silk Tents Section of Volume 28 “Tents and Other Accessories I,” Xu Jing states: “In ancient times, tents made of dyed and patterned silk [*hil*] were not used. Ancient people, however, called dyed and patterned silk pieces woven together *hil*. Recently, Goryeo people have come to produce exquisite *hil*.” This underscores the refinement of the dyeing technique in Korea during the Goryeo dynasty. Moreover, the Embroidered Tents Section in the same volume includes the following: “Embroidered tents are adorned with five-colored threads. Panels that make up tents are not connected by sewing; they instead drape down from the top. Over the red patterned silk tents, mandarin ducks, flying *luan* (a mythical Chinese bird), and bundles of flowers are embroidered with red and yellow threads.” This section also mentions embroidered paintings. According to Xu Jing, “embroidered paintings are created on red fabrics edged with additional green cloth, and the mountain flowers and frolicking animals embroidered in five-colored threads demonstrate an exquisite crafting surpassing that of embroidered tents.” He continues that “These paintings are also embroidered with flowers, bamboo, birds, animals, and fruits, all of which look lively and vivid.” Such comments on embroidery suggest the sophistication of the paintings of the Goryeo era.

### Woodcraft

*Gaoli tujing* briefly addresses the wooden crafts of the Goryeo dynasty lacquered in red or black, including a bench chair, banquet table, and tray table (*soban*). Just as red-lacquered wares were exclusively used by the Joseon royal court, as evinced by extant examples, *Gaoli tujing* relates that red-lacquered tray tables were reserved for Goryeo kings or officials. This book also indicates that black-lacquered tray tables were produced during the Goryeo dynasty.

### Metalwork

Metalwork in Goryeo is discussed in Volume 30 “Vessels I,” Volume 31 “Vessels II,” and Volume 32 “Vessels III” of *Gaoli tujing*. Vessels I and II, in particular, introduce specific types of metalwork. The criteria according to which Xu Jing categorized and listed them are unclear. However, this paper examines the characteristics of Goryeo metalworks presented in *Gaoli tujing* by focusing on existing metal objects and pertinent examples.

According to Volume 23 “Customs II,” “... Goryeo ... has much copper but little gold and silver.” This quote suggests that gold and silver were used less, while bronzeware, of which the main ingredient is copper, was abundant. A majority of the surviving Goryeo metalworks are made from bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. However, it is uncertain whether Xu Jing differentiated between copper and bronze. Nonetheless, his comment in Volume 23 “Customs II” demonstrates that Goryeo did indeed produce a large number of metal objects. In other volumes on vessels in *Gaoli tujing*, he described metalworks related to daily life, such as incense burners in the shape of animals or Boshan Mountain or with three legs; braziers; utensils for lighting lamps; bottles; and cups. The name and shape of each item is described in detail. Through this, *Gaoli tujing* provides an essential reference for the study of the diverse aspects and forms of Goryeo craftwork.

#### 1. Metalwork for Daily Use

##### 1) Incense Burner and Brazier

*Gaoli tujing* describes incense burners in several shapes. As a case in point, an animal-shaped incense burner is recorded in Volume 30 “Vessels I” as follows:

“This delicately carved incense burner in the shape of a mother animal and her child is made of silver. The mother is crouching while a small animal hangs on to her and looks back with its mouth open, out from which the incense smoke escapes. This incense burner is brought out only on official occasions at Hoegyongjeon Hall and Geondeokjeon Hall and placed between two pillars of these halls ... each [incense burner is made] using 30 *geun* (1.8 kilograms) of silver. The animal-shaped burner is connected to its stand, and it is 4 *ja* (121.2 centimeters) in height and 2 *ja* and 2 *chi* (66.66 centimeters) wide.”



Fig. 2. Bronze Square Incense Burner with Lion-shaped Lid and Ferocious Animal Design in Relief. Goryeo. H. 29.8 cm. Private Collection



Fig. 3. Brazier with Animal Legs. Goryeo. D. 50.5 cm, H. 21.5 cm. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 4. Brazier with Animal Legs with Inscription of "Gapsin Year." Goryeo. Excavated from Jangpung-gun, Kaesong-si. D. 113 cm, H. 39.1 cm. Korean Central History Museum in Pyongyang

Compared to celadon animal-shaped incense burners, a relatively small number of metal examples remain. *Bronze Square Incense Burner with Lion-shaped Lid and Ferocious Animal Design in Relief* (Fig. 2) in a private collection may be similar to the one described in *Gaoli tujing*, which helps identify the production date of the bronze incense burner.

*Gaoli tujing* also details three-legged incense burners and others in the shape of Boshan Mountain, which suggests that vessels modeled after ancient bronzeware, including incense burners in the shape of Boshan Mountain, were created in abundance during the Goryeo period.

Regarding braziers, Xu Jing recorded: "The brazier looks like a three-legged caldron (鼎, Ch. *ding*) with a flaring mouth. Three legs being bitten by beasts are attached to the body. Such braziers containing water are placed on a desk. In most cases, they are used to warm the hands in the wintertime. This one is 1 *ja* and 2 *chi* (36.36 centimeters) in width and 8 *chi* (24.24 centimeters) in height." There are several large tripod braziers with animal-shaped legs from the Goryeo dynasty, including *Brazier with Animal Legs* at the National Museum of Korea (Fig. 3) and another brazier at the Korean Central History Museum in Pyongyang (Fig. 4). In particular, the brazier excavated

from Jangpung-gun in the city of Kaesong (or Gaeseong) and currently housed at the Korean Central History Museum in Pyongyang is notable as the sole surviving example with an inscription. The inscription includes "the Gapsin Year," referring to either 1164 or 1224. The latter date is presumed to be the production year of this brazier. Such braziers were in use when Xu Jing wrote *Gaoli tujing*. It is noteworthy that *Gaoli tujing* clearly defines Goryeo braziers' being used for heating the hands in winter.

## 2) *Gwangmyeongdae*

*Gwangmyeongdae* (光明臺), a kind of candle holder, are important items for studying Goryeo crafts given that actual examples remain today and term is mentioned in *Gaoli tujing*. *Gaoli tujing* addresses the type of *gwangmyeongdae* with three legs as follows:

*Gwangmyeongdae* are stands that hold a lamp or a candle. They have three legs on the bottom and a ribbed column like bamboo nodes in the middle. In the upper section is a tray with a small bowl in the center. Either a candle or a lamp is placed inside this bowl. A copper lamp is filled with oil, and its wick is held down by a small white rock. The lamp is then covered



Fig. 5. Bronze *Gwangmyeongdae* with Inscription of "Muja Year." Goryeo. Excavated from Beopcheonsa Temple Site. H. 50.7 cm. Handok Medico Pharma Museum

with a red net. The *gwangmyeongdae* is 4 *cheok* and 5 *chon* (136.35 centimeters) high, and the tray is 1 *cheok* and 5 *chon* (45.45 centimeters) wide. Its conical-hat-shaped cover is 6 *chon* (18.18 centimeters) high and 5 *chon* (15.15 centimeters) wide.

As quoted above, *gwangmyeongdae* are large objects over one meter in height and have a pedestal with three legs, a bamboo-joint-shaped column, and a disk-shaped lamp rest on which to set a candle or other lighting appliance. *Gwangmyeongdae* commonly consist of a pedestal, stem, and lamp rest. Among the candle and lampstands made during the Goryeo dynasty, those with flat, disk-shaped rests lacking a sconce in the center were described as *gwangmyeongdae*. Quite a number of such *gwangmyeongdae* from the Goryeo dynasty have survived. For example, there is one made in the Muja Year excavated from Beopcheonsa Temple (Fig. 5), now in the collection of Handok Medico Pharma Museum, and another in the collection of the Chuncheon National Museum. Both of them bear an inscription that refers to them as *gwangmyeongdae*.

Lighting appliances of the Goryeo dynasty have been categorized into *gwangmyeongdae* and candlesticks with a sconce. However, recent research has found that candle holders in the style known as "*beon*" (燵) were also produced at the



Fig. 6. Bronze Candlestick with Inscription of "Sinmi Year." Goryeo. H. 18.8 cm. Uihak Cultural Foundation, Yongin

time. *Beon* refers to a lighting utensil with an empty column-shaped sconce in which a candle is pinned, rather than a sconce with a needle in the center of the base. Many *beon*-type candle holders have been unearthed from temple sites dating to the Goryeo dynasty, including Sanoesa Temple Site in Cheongju. In particular, the candle holder made in the Muja year with the inscription of "Beopcheonsa Temple" in the collection of Yeungnam University Museum bears an inscription describing it as a *beon*.

Nonetheless, the most widely used lighting utensils throughout the dynasty were in fact either *gwangmyeongdae* or common needle-type candle holders. These two types are almost identical in terms of the columns serving as a handle and base, but their tops differ (Fig. 6). At the time *Gaoli tujing* was written, *gwangmyeongdae* and candles were both being used. However, it is presumed that oil lamps were more common than candles, as indicated in the section on the meetings of the royal government in Volume 22 "Customs I" of *Gaoli tujing*. "In the old days, people could not use candles. These days, they come to make candles more skillfully. Large ones are like rafters, and even small ones are 2 *cheok* (60.6 centimeters) long. However, they are not very bright." Considering that *Gaoli tujing* was written in 1123, these sentences indicate that candle-making techniques were underdeveloped until the early Goryeo period, and even at the time of writing, their brightness was apparently unsatisfactory.

### 3) Bottles and Cups

Xu Jing also comments on water bottles in *Gaoli tujing*: "The shapes of most [Goryeo] water bottles are similar to those of Chinese ewers for serving alcohol. Made using 3 *geun* (1.8 kilograms) of silver, water bottles are placed in the abodes



Fig. 7. Bronze Ewer. Goryeo. Excavated from Gwangdeok-ri, Goesan. H. 22.5 cm. Cheongju National Museum



Fig. 8. Gilt-silver Flower-shaped Cup and Stand. Goryeo. H. 12.3 cm. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 9. Ewer and Basin. Goryeo. H. 34.3 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

of officials like senior envoys, vice envoys, Dohalgwan, and Jehalgwan. Each water bottle is 1 *ja* and 2 *chi* (36.36 centimeters) in height, 7 *chi* (21.21 centimeters) in diameter, and contains 6 *doe* (10.82 liters) of water.” As recorded here, water bottles were differentiated from kundika during the Goryeo dynasty. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Goryeo water bottles were shaped like Chinese ewers for alcohol. A number of metal ewers in such a shape and with a handle remain from the Goryeo dynasty (Fig. 7). However, it is interesting that *Gaoli tujing* describes them not as ewers, but as water bottles.

*Gaoli tujing* continues: “A flower vase (花壺) with a

pointed top and a round bottom is shaped like a sagging gall bladder. It is set over a square support and flowers are placed inside the vase with water inside in all four seasons. Goryeo people were poor at making flower vases before, but they have recently become proficient. The overall height of the flower jar is 8 *chi* (24.24 centimeters), the diameter of its body is 3 *chi* (9.09 centimeters), and it has a capacity of 1 *doe* (1.81 liters).” The flower vase mentioned here appears to refer to a specific type of flower vase (花瓶). Flower vases were commonly made out of clay. However, *Gaoli tujing* indicates that metal flower vases were produced as well during the Goryeo period and that the



Fig. 10. Silver-gilt Gourd-shaped Bottle. Goryeo. H. 11.1 cm. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 11. Silver-gilt Gourd-shaped Bottle. Goryeo. H. 8 cm. National Museum of Korea

metalworking techniques of the time had reached an advanced level of sophistication.

*Gaoli tujing* discusses *banjan* (盤瓊), a set consisting of a cup for holding alcohol and stand, in the following section: “The *banjan* of Goryeo is similar to those in China. However, in Goryeo the cup is deeper and its golden rim narrows in. The section of the stand where the cup rests is small and the foot [of the stand] is high. Commonly, such cups and stands are made of silver, but sometimes plated with gold. Flower designs are delicately engraved. Whenever alcohol is offered, new cups are used. Their capacity is rather large.” *Gilt-silver Flower-shaped Cup and Stand* (Fig. 8) in the National Museum of Korea is thought to have corresponded to the *banjan* mentioned in *Gaoli tujing*.

Furthermore, the liquor vessel (酒榼, *juhap*) mentioned in *Gaoli tujing* needs to be investigated since it bears a resemblance to *Ewer and Basin* (Fig. 9) in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. According to *Gaoli tujing*,

“A liquor vessel is mostly portable. Its top part [lid] looks like an upturned lotus flower, and a ring-chain partially painted in gold is attached on both ends of the handle. It is specially used when alcohol is offered. Alcohol contained in this vessel looks superb and tastes good. It is 1 *ja* (30.3 centimeters) high, its diameter is 8 *chi* (24.24 centimeters), the chain is 1 *ja* and 1 *chi* (36.36 centimeters) long, and it has a capacity of 7 *doe* (12.64 liters).”

The ewer at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is considered a gilt-silver ewer since some parts are plated with gold. This ewer consists of a semi-spherical body with a long spout, a lid designed like layers of lotus flowers, a



Fig. 12. Washbasin with Silver-inlaid Dragon Design. Goryeo. D. 77.3 cm. Jeonju National Museum

knob decorated with lotus flowers, and a handle on the side. Moreover, the flower-shaped basin in which the ewer is inserted remains intact, adding value to the ewer. What differentiates this ewer from others is the unique design of its body consisting of twenty-four bamboo stems. Each stem is delicately engraved with lotus scrolls. The upper and lower ends of the stems are also incised with scrollwork and plated in gold, which increases the splendor. Despite slight differences in details, the partially gilt liquor vessel with an upturned lotus-shaped lid from *Gaoli tujing* is presumed to have referred to the highest-class gilt-silver type of ewer made for holding alcohol.

#### 4) Jars and Caldrons

Regarding oil jars, *Gaoli tujing* states: “Most oil jars are shaped like wine jars and made of nickel. They do not have lids, but they are topped with nogs in case they fall and [oil] spills. Each oil jar is 8 *chi* (24.24 centimeters) high, its diameter measures 3 *chi* (9.09 centimeters), and it has a capacity of 1 *doe* and



Fig. 13. Bronze Kundika with Silver-inlaid Willow and Waterfowl Design. Goryeo. H. 37.5 cm. National Treasure No. 92. National Museum of Korea



Fig. 14. Silver-inlaid Incense Burner at Baegworam Hermitage. Goryeo, 1164. H. 26.5 cm. Koryo Museum of Art, Japan

5 *jak* (1.915 liters).”

Comparing *Silver-gilt Gourd-shaped Bottle* (Fig. 10) with the smaller *Silver-gilt Gourd-shaped Bottle* (Fig. 11) in the National Museum of Korea, the latter is silver in color, which is similar to the color of nickel. It matches the oil bottle mentioned above. Its original stopper was lost, and the bottle is currently plugged with a replacement, but the original stopper may have been made of wood.

#### 5) *Seban* (Washbasins)

As its name suggests, a *seban* (洗盤, washbasin) appears to be a daily item in the form of a basin holding water for washing or other related activities. According to *Gaoli tujing*, there were several types of *seban*.

The first type discussed in *Gaoli tujing* is *ohwase* (烏花洗): “[A basin] decorated with silver flowers is not used all the time, but only when senior or vice envoys personally meet the king. The flowers are created by dotting with glaze. Black patterns in varied weights decorate the white background. The circumference of the surface is 1 *ja* and 5 *chi* (45.45 centimeters), and the basin can contain 1 *mal* and 2 *doe* (21.6 liters) of water.” The original form of such *ohwase* can be

observed in the washbasin with silver-inlaid design (Fig. 12) in the collection of the Jeonju National Museum. However, the washbasin at the Jeonju National Museum is at most a version used during the Abhiseka Buddhist consecration ceremony (灌頂盤) at a Buddhist temple sponsored by the royal family due to its large size and the exquisite silver-inlay adorning the entire interior surface of its dragon design.

The second type of washbasin mentioned in *Gaoli tujing* is *baekdongse* (白銅洗): “A nickel washbasin is similar to a blackish-silver washbasin in shape, but it has no decorations or coloring. Goryeo people call this a *bingbun* (氷盆). There is a type of washbasin made of red copper (赤銅洗, *jeokdongse*) of the same nature, but it is rather crudely manufactured.” Here, the *baekdongse* features a white hue because of its high tin content, while the elevated copper content of *jeokdongse* produces a red hue. *Jeokdong* (赤銅) is another name for the *hwangdong* (黃銅, brass) used in the Unified Silla period. However, as Xu Jing considered Goryeo *jeokdongse* “crudely manufactured,” there seems to have been some technical differences between Goryeo *jeokdongse* and refined Unified Silla *jeokdongse*.





Fig. 15. Bell of Yeonboksja Temple. Goryeo, 1346. Southern Gate of Kaesong. H. 324 cm

## 2. Buddhist Metalwork

While Volume 30 “Vessels I” of *Gaoli tujing* mentions water bottles as a crafted item in common use, Volume 31 “Vessels II” discusses a type of kundika that was an important Buddhist craftwork and vessel for making offerings. It explicates the shape and uses of a kundika in greater detail than other craftworks, thus providing significant data for dating and studying the metal kundika of the Goryeo dynasty.

*Gaoli tujing* describes as follows:

“A kundika has a long neck, bulging body, and spout on the side for pouring [water]. In the middle [of the ewer] are two sections where loops for tying a string are attached. There is a wide ring in the center of the neck of the lid which divides the upper and lower neck. This form recalls a portable brush. It is widely used by aristocrats, high-ranking officials, Daoist masters, Buddhist monks, and commoners, but contains only water. The ewer is 1 *ja* and 2 *chi* (36.36 centimeters) high, 4 *chi* (12.12 centimeters) in diameter; and holds a capacity of 3 *doe* (5.30 liters).”

A kundika is a Sanskrit term for a type of ritual ewer that is known as a *jeongbyeong* in Korean. They originated out of the

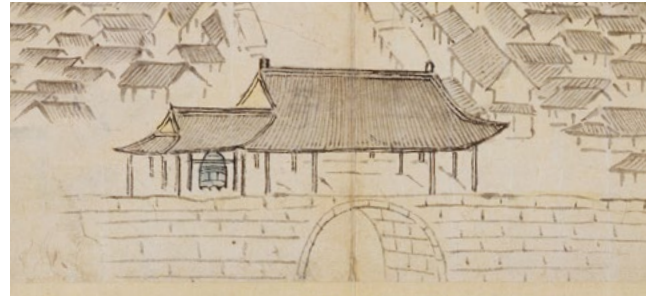


Fig. 16. “Southern Gate Pavilion in Gaeseong” in *Album of a Journey to Songdo* by Kang Sehwang. Joseon. National Museum of Korea

water bottles carried by traveling Buddhist monks in India. These ritual ewers as conceived in the Goryeo dynasty consist of an oval body, a long, slender, tube-shaped mouth, and a pouring spout on one side. Like incense burners, kundika are beautifully adorned with silver-inlaid designs of willow, waterfowl, clouds, cranes, dragons, flowering plants, and scrollwork (Fig. 13). The records mentioning ritual ewers in *Gaoli tujing* indicate that the ewers were used not only at Buddhist temples for holding water in front of the Buddha, but at houses of aristocrats, Daoist masters, and commoners as well. They further clarify that such ewers were exclusively for holding water, not alcohol. They make no mention of silver inlay, which suggests that such techniques might not yet have been applied to ritual ewers, or perhaps only began to be widely used later than the mid-twelfth century at the earliest. The lack of any reference to high-footed incense burners with silver-inlaid design in *Gaoli tujing* can be understood in the same manner. The earliest known example among Goryeo silver-inlaid ritual ewers and incense burners is an incense burner (Fig. 14) created in 1164 that once belonged to Baegworam Hermitage and is currently housed in the Koryo Museum of Art in Japan. Accordingly, it appears that ritual ewers and incense burners were not yet being inlaid with silver in 1123, or at least not yet widely popular.

In regards to Buddhist temple bells, a definitive Buddhist craftwork, Xi Jing examined a huge bell hung at Bojesa Temple in *Gaoli tujing*:

“A large bell is hung at Bojesa Temple. Despite its size, it does not ring out well. At the top of the bell is a dragon-shaped handle, and in the middle are a pair of flying immortals. According to the inscription carved on the bell, ‘This bell was produced in 1094 with 15,000 *geun* (9,000 kilograms) of nickel.’ Goryeo people related, ‘It was originally placed in a two-story pavilion; however, its sound reached the Khitan and Chanyu (單于) hated it. Therefore, the bell was moved to its current location.’ This is clearly an exaggeration, however.”



Fig. 17. Iron Flagpole at Yongdusa Temple Site. Goryeo, 962. Yongdusa Temple Site, Cheongju. National Treasure No. 41. H. 12.7 cm

Bojesa Temple mentioned here was situated in Hancheon-dong, Kaesong-si, Gyeonggi-do Province. Although the date of its establishment remains unclear, a record of a visit by King Jeongjong of the Goryeo dynasty in 1037 (the third year of the reign of King Jeongjong) proves that it existed at least prior to this date. When King Chung Suk ascended to the throne in 1313, its name was changed to Yeonboksja Temple. According to the inscription on the bell, in 1346 the Bell of Yeonboksja Temple was rusty when a Yuan dynasty Chinese bell master on his way home after crafting a bell at Jangansa Temple on Geumgangsan Mountain stopped to produce a new large bell. *Dongmunseon* (東文選, Anthology of Korean literature) also remarks on this event. Unlike other Buddhist bells from the Goryeo dynasty, the Bell of Yeonboksja Temple (Fig. 15) was created in the Chinese style. Considerably influenced by this example, many bells during the early Joseon period followed this



Fig. 18. Gilt-bronze Miniature Buddhist Flagpole with Dragon Finial. Goryeo. H. 73.8 cm. National Treasure No. 136. Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

Chinese style rather than a more traditional Korean manner. In the Joseon era, the Bell of Yeonboksja Temple is believed to have been transferred to the Southern Gate of Kaesong (Fig. 16). In *Gaoli tujing*, Xu Jing describes the bell of Bojesa Temple in detail. “A pair of flying immortals” that he mentions on the body of the bell might have referred to two heavenly beings commonly represented on the body of Goryeo Buddhist bells. His depiction of the bell proves that Bojesa Temple was home to a huge Goryeo-style bell made in 1094 before the Bell of Yeonboksja Temple from 1346. It suggests that the original bell at Bojesa Temple was produced in the traditional Korean style, unlike the later Yeonboksja Temple version. Moreover, in the Gwangtongbojesa Temple Section of the same Volume 17 “Shrines and Temples,” Xu Jing extensively describes buildings, Buddhist sculptures, and pagodas at Gwangtongbojesa Temple. He further states that “there is a large bell across from the



Fig. 19. *Vajra and Vajra Bell* excavated from Dobongseowon Confucian Academy, Goryeo, 11th century. Vajra: H. 19.5 cm, Vajra Bell: L. 17.7 cm. Seoul Baekje Museum

priests' living quarters, but its sound does not echo loudly." This hints that Bojesa and Gwangtongbojesa Temples are in fact the same temple. Additionally, the fact that Xu Jing mentioned only the bell at Bojesa Temple among the many Buddhist temples in Kaesong indicates that there were only a few bells on the scale of the bell of Bojesa Temple in the city at the time.

Albeit briefly, *Gaoli tujing* also describes the Buddhist flagpoles (寶幢, bodang) at temples, and the vajras (金剛杵) used as a ritual implement in Esoteric Buddhism during the Goryeo dynasty. The Heungguksa Temple Section in Volume 17 "Shrines and Temples" records: "In the center of the garden, a copper banner pole (幡竿) stands. The diameter of the bottom is 60.6 centimeters, and its height measures about 30 meters ... Its upper part is pointed, its body consists of several joined parts, and it has been gilded. The top of the banner pole is shaped like the heads of mythical *bonghwang* birds (Ch. *fenghuang*) holding a silk flag. Such poles can be found in other places, but the one at Anhwasa Temple is inscribed with 'For the long life of the emperor in Great Song.'" This describes a Buddhist flagpole used at a temple. The extensive height of 30 meters and the assembly of joined parts recall other Buddhist flagpoles from the Goryeo dynasty, including the *Iron Flagpole at Gapsa Temple* and *Iron Flagpole at Yongdusa Temple Site* (Fig. 17) in Cheongju. However, the description of the flagpole as gilded and decorated with a *bonghwang* finial suggests that the conventional bronze flagpoles adorned with a dragon head finial, like the example in the collection of Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art (Fig. 18), were not the only type produced during the Goryeo period, but that there were also flagpoles with a *bonghwang* head finial.

Although the actual flagpole discussed in *Gaoli tujing* no longer remains, it is noteworthy that it was called a *beongan*, a pole for hanging a banner, and that the banner was hung from the mouths of *bonghwang*. *Gaoli tujing* could serve as a significant material for the restoration of such a flamboyant flagpole in its original form.

Moreover, a brief phrase in the State Preceptor Section of Volume 18 "Daoism" relates: "... a monk who holds a rank higher than *guksa* (國師, state preceptor) is called *wangsa* (王師, royal preceptor). When meeting a royal preceptor, even kings bow. Royal preceptors wear a long-sleeved undergarment, a shawl adorned with a landscape, a violet lower garment, a black belt, and shoes with bells, and carry a golden *balcha* (跋遮)." Here, *balcha*, namely a vajra, is a Goryeo Buddhist craftwork worthy of notice. Considering that another name for a vajra is *vasara* (跋折羅, pronounced "*baljeolla*"), *balcha* here definitely refers to a vajra. They are presumed to have actually been made of bronze rather than gold. Until now, Esoteric Buddhist ritual implements are considered to have been predominantly produced mostly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, the record in *Gaoli tujing* indicates that vajras were in use since at least the early twelfth century. In a similar vein, a vajra and vajra bell (Fig. 19) dated to the early twelfth century were recently excavated at the site of Dobongseowon Confucian Academy. Another new and important discovery stemming from *Gaoli tujing* is that high-ranking monks such as royal preceptors carried a vajra as an attribute.

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## Conclusion

Notable characteristics of Goryeo dynasty crafts include the dramatic advances made in *najeon chilgi* (mother-of-pearl lacquerware) and the diverse applications of metalworking techniques. The originality of Goryeo crafting can be found in inlay. The fundamental forms of incense burners and kundika were based on Chinese counterparts, but the application of silver inlay decorations was an inspiration of Goryeo artisans. In addition to silver inlay, repoussé was often used in silver works and reflects the outstanding metalworking skill developed during the period. Exquisite repoussé technique, which emphasized three-dimensionality by creating a raised

design by means of hammering from the reverse side and pressing marginal spaces from the front recalled filigree work. Repoussé established itself as the most remarkable technical trait of Goryeo metalcraft.

Only a small portion of *Gaoli tujing* by Xu Jing describes Goryeo crafts. However, it does discuss various types of craftworks, including mother-of-pearl lacquerware, textiles, wooden wares, and metalwork. In particular, the forms and uses of types of metalworks are explained relatively comprehensively. Xu Jing's brief comment on "praiseworthy elaboration" reflects the sophistication in mother-of-pearl inlay technique achieved in Goryeo by 1123. Mother-of-pearl lacquerware produced using the superlative *daemo bokchae* (reverse-side coloring of tortoiseshell) technique is presumed to have been exported abroad. Among textiles, Xu Jing notes embroidered tents and embroidery with images of flowers, birds, and animals. Moreover, for woodcraft, he remarks on tray tables and the red-lacquered wooden pieces used by the royal family and aristocrats since the Goryeo dynasty.

The next category of crafts that Xu Jing highlights is metal, which is classified according to its use as incense burners, *gwangmyeongdae*, bottle and cup sets, jars and cauldrons, and washbasins. *Gaoli tujing* sheds new light on the incense burners and braziers of the Goryeo dynasty by focusing on their varied shapes, the large-scale production of Boshan Mountain-shaped incense burners modeled after ancient bronzeware, and the uses and forms of braziers with animal legs. Moreover, it provides crucial material for investigating the state of mass production of *gwangmyeongdae* and various kinds of lighting appliances in 1123, including candles. It can also be demonstrated through *Gaoli tujing* that water bottles of the era included bronze ewers that began to be produced in abundance from early in the dynasty. It cannot be said for certain, but the *banjan* (a set consisting of a cup and stand for holding alcohol) mentioned in *Gaoli tujing* appears to connect to *Gilt-silver Flower-shaped Cup and Stand* in the National Museum of Korea. In a similar vein, the explanation of *juhap*, a type of liquor vessel, in *Gaoli tujing* corresponds to *Ewer and Basin* in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Both *banjan* and *juhap* require further examination. Among the jars and cauldrons discussed in *Gaoli tujing*, oil bottles bear a resemblance to *Silver-gilt Gourd-shaped Bottle* in the National Museum of Korea, which also demands further in-depth study. Notably, *Gaoli tujing* divides Goryeo washbasins, whose designations were obscure until now, into nickel and red copper types.

Furthermore, *Gaoli tujing* mentions only a few examples

of Goryeo Buddhist metalworks, including kundika, a large bell hung at Bojesa Temple, a flagpole, and vajra. However, it provides relatively detailed information on ritual ewers, which helps date the ritual ewers of the period. In particular, the lack of reference to the silver inlay technique commonly applied in Goryeo ritual ewers and incense burners suggests that this may not have been fully implemented until around 1164 when the earliest dated incense burner, that of Baegworam Hermitage, was created. In this sense, the records on ritual ewers in *Gaoli tujing* are invaluable for understanding the development of silver inlay. Moreover, *Gaoli tujing* indicates that a large bell produced in 1094 and decorated with heavenly beings was hung at Bojesa Temple, which was expanded into Yeonboksas Temple, prior to 1346 when the new bell of Yeonboksas Temple was made. In addition, *Gaoli tujing* mentions a banner pole standing in the precincts of Heungguksa Temple adorned with a finial in the form of the heads of *bonghwang* holding a silk banner in their mouths. This information would be useful for restoring Buddhist flagpoles from the time. It has also been newly discovered that Buddhist flagpoles were once called banner poles. Lastly, *Gaoli tujing* mentions a gilt vajra held by a royal preceptor, which shows that a vajra was considered a monastic attribute from early on.

The original illustrations included in *Gaoli tujing* by Xu Jing have been lost. Moreover, its contents presented from the perspective of a Chinese official are rather peripheral and fragmentary. Nonetheless, it carries meaningful implications in that it offers new perspectives and materials on Goryeo crafts from around 1123 that are otherwise absent or unrecoverable.

Translated by Kwon Ye Gee and Park Shinhee

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Image Source

Fig. 2: *The Beauty of Korea: Metal Craft*, 1995, 119, Fig. 134, Seoul: The JungAng Ilbo Co, Ltd.

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