

## Study of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* in the National Museum of Korea

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### Introduction

Throughout the Joseon (1392–1897) period, peonies were depicted in both bird-and-flower paintings and ceremonial folding screens, reflecting the widespread appreciation of their aesthetic and decorative value. The large blooms and vibrant colors of peonies positioned them as a favored subject in both Chinese and Korean art. They have been known in Asia since ancient times as the ‘king of flowers’ (花王, *hwawang*) and ‘flower of prosperity and nobility’ (富貴花, *bugwiwpha*). Endemic to the Sichuan and Yunnan regions of China, peonies have been cultivated for medicinal purposes since before the Qin–Han period. They first appeared in early Northern and Southern dynasties texts as a flower purely for enjoyment but eventually came to represent China itself during the Tang period. The generous blooms commonly appear in May and measure 15–20 centimeters in diameter (Fig. 1).

In Korea, the earliest records of the peony are found in the tale of Queen Seondeok and the peony and in the fable of *Hwawanggye* (花王戒, Admonishment to the Flower King) written by Seol Chong (active late seventh–early eighth century), both of which appear in *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, History of the three kingdoms). *Joseon wangjo sillok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, Annals of

the Joseon dynasty) also contains numerous references to the kings’ appreciation for the peony and to its blooming providing a positive omen (Kim Hongnam 1999, 77). In the “Nine Grades of Flowers and Trees” (花木九等品第, Hwamok Gudeung Pumje) section of the horticultural and gardening book *Hwaamsurok* (花庵隨錄, Records on Hwaam) by the scholar Yu Bak (柳璞, 1730–1787), both herbaceous and tree peonies are classified along with the rhododendron, pomegranate, and hardy banana as symbols of wealth. This confirms that the peony continued to represent prosperity and nobility into the late Joseon period.<sup>1</sup>

Paintings that depict peonies can be divided broadly into bird-and-flower paintings and decorative screen paintings. Among the screens featuring peonies painted during the Joseon period, the surviving examples are mostly court and folk paintings from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

This study will focus on *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* in the collection of the National Museum of Korea, which was first publicly displayed in 2010. It will examine the screen’s characteristics, preservation process, and production period.<sup>2</sup> This screen is markedly distinct in style compared to other extant peony screens dated to the late nineteenth century or later. It can thus offer significant insights into the history and development of peony painting in the Joseon era.



Fig. 1. Peonies. Qiongsan Mountain, China



Fig. 2. Detail of *Jade House with Wealth and Honor* by Xu Xi. Southern Tang dynasty, ca. early tenth century. Color on silk. 112.5 x 38.3 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei



Fig. 3. *King of Flowers*. Song dynasty. Ink on silk. 117.2 x 72.3 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei

### Development of peony painting during the Joseon dynasty

Although it is likely that peony paintings date back as far as the Three Kingdoms period when the flower first appears in records, no examples have survived to today. The closest representation may be peony patterns in Goryeo celadon, such as those on *maebyeong* (*Prunus* vase).

Among examples of peony paintings from China, there are tenth-century works such as *Jade House with Wealth and Honor* (玉堂富貴圖) attributed to the Southern Tang (937–975) painter Xu Xi (徐熙, 886–975) and several works from the Song dynasty (960–1279) (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> In *Jade House with Wealth and Honor*, peonies in full bloom fill the surface of the painting, whereas the Song dynasty *King of Flowers* (花王圖, *hwawnagdo*) shows a lone peony tree atop a rock in a composition nearly identical to later court paintings of peonies from Joseon dynasty Korea (Fig. 3). However, this type of arrangement with peonies atop a rock positioned at the lower end of the painting, was rare in China. More popular were color or ink paintings that emphasized the peony's opulent blooms





Fig. 4. Flowering Plants (花卉) by Yun Shouping (惲壽平, 1633–1690). Qing dynasty (1644–1912). Ink on silk. 54.2 x 116.2 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei

(Fig. 4). In addition, folding screens with repeating patterns of peonies were never produced in China and remain unique to Joseon peony painting conventions.

Peony paintings belonged to the tradition of bird-and-flower paintings and were popular during the early and mid-Joseon period. They were produced well into the final years of the dynasty, but with new subjects included, such as the butterflies seen in the paintings of Nam Gyeu (南啓宇, 1811–1890)



Fig. 5. Ink Orchids (墨蘭圖) by Sim Sajeong. Joseon, 1767. Color on paper. 136.4 x 58.2 cm. National Museum of Korea

that featured flowers and butterflies. Until the early eighteenth century, peonies were applied as part of the overall composition of bird-and-flower paintings along with rocks, trees, birds, and more. In the late Joseon period, peonies grew more prominent, and their sumptuousness was emphasized using a wet-splash ink effect and other techniques. Ink paintings of peonies by Shim Sajeong (沈師正, 1707–1769) provides a good example of such late-Joseon peony paintings (Fig. 5). Peonies also emerged as a





**Fig. 6.** Detail of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*. Joseon, late 19th–early 20th century. Color on silk. 174.2 x 48.0 cm (each). Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art

sole subject matter for paintings. These examples can be seen in the decorative colored peony paintings by Shin Myeongyeon (申命衍, 1808–1886) and the orchid and peony paintings in ink by Heo Ryeon (許練, 1809–1893). As Joseon transitioned from its middle to late period, peonies were increasingly depicted independently rather than alongside other subjects.

Peony paintings designated for ceremonial purposes were made into folding screens. Those used in the royal court were identified as “court peony screens” (宮牡丹屏, *gung moranbyeong*) and showed peonies in nearly identical shapes across four to ten panels (Fig. 6). Court peony screens were featured in the rites held at the Jongmyo royal shrine (宗廟儀禮), celebrations (嘉禮), funeral rites (喪禮), and on other important occasions, as well as at sites such as the royal portrait halls. Royal records concerning peony screens are found in *Sohyeon seja garye dogam uigwe* (昭顯世子嘉禮都監儀軌, *Uigwe* for the Royal Wedding of Prince Sohyeon) (1627) and numerous other references. The next section of this paper will more closely examine peony screens mentioned in the royal protocols known as *uigwe*.

Peony screens played a role outside of the royal court at the private wedding ceremonies of commoners as well. This is demonstrated in the late-Joseon paintings of cycles of life (平



**Fig. 7.** Detail of *Scenes from the Cycle of Life*. Joseon, 19th century. 130.0 x 36.0 cm (each). National Museum of Korea





Fig. 8. *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*. Joseon, 18th century. Color on silk. 145.0 x 58.0cm (each). National Museum of Korea

生圖, *pyeongsaengdo*), particularly in scenes of sixtieth wedding anniversary celebrations, where peony screens are commonly depicted (Fig. 7). Peonies were also presented in folk paintings in combination with other auspicious indicators and widely appreciated by people of all classes over an extended period of history.

### Features and condition of the *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*

Each panel of the *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* in the collection of the National Museum of Korea measures 145 centimeters tall and 58 centimeters across. The panels are not mounted individually, and the screen shows a continuous image of peony blossoms and rocks that extends across all ten panels (Fig. 8). Peony screens in this type of unbroken format are very rare, and most show distinct images in each panel. The peonies in this decorative screen are painted on silk in deep-toned pigments. Rather than a pure repetition of exclusively peonies or peonies with rocks on each panel, the image depicts of a forest of peony trees set against a background of land and water. Each panel contains three peony trees on average, meaning there are about 30 trees in total. The flowers and leaves are outlined in ink and filled in with color (Fig. 8-1).

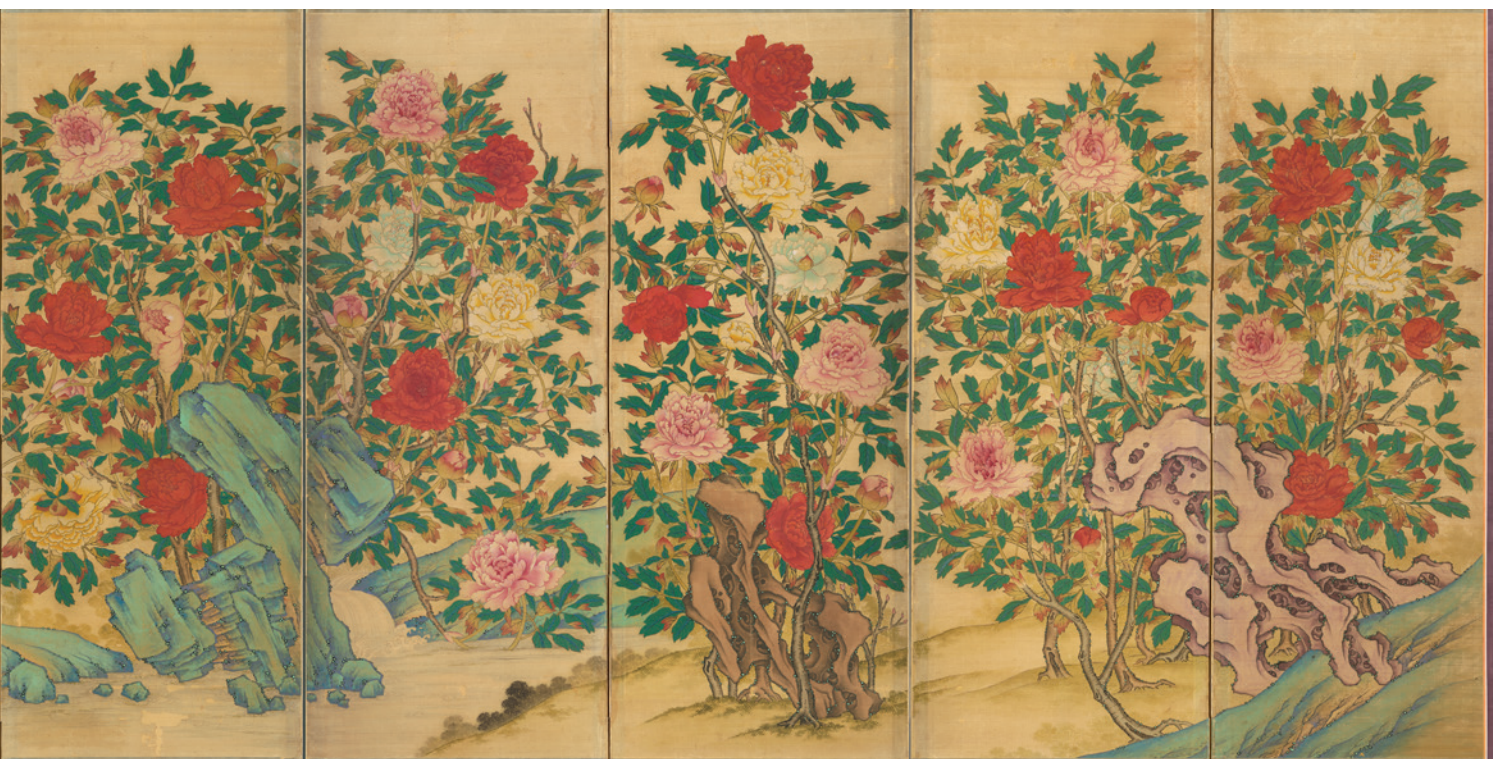
Each panel depicts peony blossoms and buds in red,

yellow, pink, and blue. Beginning with the first panel, there are six, seven, eleven, eight, eight, ten, eleven, eight, eight, and nine differently shaped flowers in each panel.<sup>4</sup> In reality, while peonies do come in the four colors depicted, they never appear together on a single tree as they do in the screen. This is a characteristic that the *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* shares with other surviving peony screens. The flowers themselves range from buds to full blossoms.

Apart from the four colors of flowers growing from a single tree, this folding screen shows a relatively naturalistic composition of peony trees across the panels, appearing like an actual grove. Unlike the other conventional peony screens, this example does not contain one peony tree within each panel. The trees and flowers are all shaped differently and lean in different directions. The placement of the six oddly-shaped rocks also varies, with one stretching across the first and second panels, one in the third panel, one across the fourth and fifth panels, one in the sixth panel, one in the seventh panel, and one across the ninth and tenth panels. The rocks are respectively painted pink, brown, blue, dark brown, blue, and mauve again.

A clear distinction is made between the fronts and backs of the leaves next to the flowers, with the front painted in clear green and the back in yellow-ochre and red. The flower petals are darker near the center and grow lighter toward the edges to produce a gradation effect. This same effect can be observed in the rocks, where protruding points are painted brighter to





reflect the rugged surface of the rocks. In contrast to the highly pigmented flowers and rock, the land and water are only lightly colored. *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* is notable in this way for conveying the three-dimensionality of the flowers and rocks while adding light and shade to the background (Fig. 8-2, 8-3). Furthermore, instead of a repetition of nearly identical peonies, there is variation. In each panel the peony trees are positioned sometimes toward the front and sometimes toward the back. In particular, the peony trees and flowers in panels number nine and ten are set toward the back and thus quite small, which allows the screen to achieve a depth not seen in conventional peony paintings (Fig. 8-4).

Of all the extant peony screens, *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* contains the most verdant trees and luxuriant flowers. They fill the ten panels in a continuous image as if the screen were projecting a wish for the splendor and affluence of the peonies to continue forever.

A closer inspection of the mounting shows that the light-blue silk margin on the upper section is wider at the lower margin. The top, bottom, and side edges are bordered in purple silk to complement the peony paintings and create a lavish overall effect.

The following provides a brief introduction to the conservation treatment of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*.

The National Museum of Korea acquired this screen for its

collection in 1921. It was first displayed to the public from April 6 to June 20, 2010 after undergoing a six-month conservation process. Prior to the conservation, the mountings were soiled, parts of the painting had peeled away, the frame had been compromised, and there was a risk of damage from worms and other vermin (Figs. 9-1, 9-2).

All ten panels are connected, and the silk was painted only on the front. The technique of coloring the reverse side of the silk was not used. There was no sign of previous conservation attempts, so the screen retained its original form and traditional mountings. Therefore, the conservation effort focused on preserving and reproducing the entirety of the mounting in its original form. All the silk was reused. At the same time, the conservation sought to minimize future damage.

The conservation process can be summarized as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. Dismantling
2. Examining the screen's condition (x-ray, infrared inspection to confirm the absence of back painting)
3. Strengthening of pigment adhesion
4. Removal of old backing paper
5. Replace lost fabric
6. Attachment of backing paper
7. Construction of frame
8. Color matching on repaired portions
9. Completion of conservation





Fig. 8-1. Detail of Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies



Fig. 8-3. Detail of Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies



Fig. 8-2. Detail of Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies



Fig. 8-4. Detail of Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies



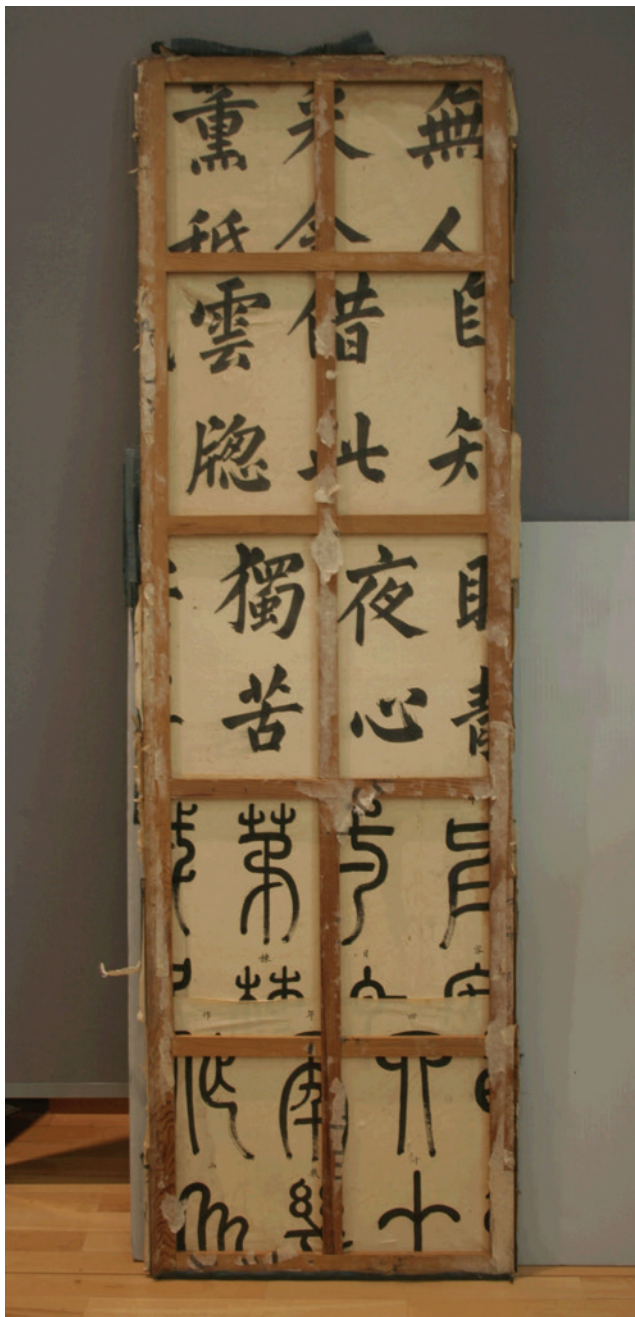


Fig. 9-1. Screen frame of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* before conservation treatment



Fig. 9-2. Conservation process of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*

### Description of the process

- This peony screen retained its traditional mountings in their original form from when it was first made. However, there were signs of damage to the elements connecting the panels, partial losses, and damage to the frame from insects or vermin.
- The painting was restored after being separated from the frame. The old backing paper was removed and replaced.
- Damage on the painting was addressed using silk that had been artificially aged by electron beams to create a precise match with the original.
- After surface losses were repaired, two layers of backing paper were attached to reinforce the painting. The first backing paper was bamboo paper, and the second was mulberry paper. These two papers with different grains were joined to form a secure bond.
- The losses to the painting were treated with matching colors to minimize any difference from the original.
- The old pine frame had been severely damaged by insects or vermin and had the additional disadvantage of being heavy once all ten panels were connected. A new frame was constructed out of cedar wood for the borders and *Paulownia* for the inner frame as a means to reduce the overall weight and minimize damage from insects and vermin. Additional ribs were added to the middle portion of the frame to prevent the painting from sagging in the future.
- Once the treatment for each component was completed, the painting, the silk margins on the upper and lower parts of the screen, and the border strips were attached, in that order.

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### Production period of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*

#### Records

As there is no record of the date or artist for *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*, so its production period must be inferred by analyzing the screen's style and available pertinent records.

The first recorded use of a peony screen at the royal court is found in *Sohyeon seja garye dogam uigwe* (昭顯世子嘉禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Royal Wedding of Prince Sohyeon).<sup>6</sup> This protocol provides details on a ten-panel folding screen commissioned for this royal wedding, including its size and the names of the painters and artisans involved in making it. Peony screens are frequently mentioned in the royal protocol manuals known as *uigwe*, with 899 references in 76 *uigwe* (See pages 92–93). Interestingly enough, with the exception of the abovementioned royal wedding protocol, peony screens are generally mentioned



in rites associated with death, as in protocols for state funerals, protocols for setting up a funerary hall and temporary spirit-tablet hall, protocols for the construction of a royal mausoleum, protocols for the relocation of a royal tomb, and protocols for bestowing posthumous titles. The only other references are found in the protocols for replication of the portraits of kings and in the *uigwe* dealing with revisions and amendments to the *Seonwon gyebo giryak* (璿源系譜紀略, Genealogy of the royal family). The *uigwe* that refer to peony screens are evenly distributed from 1627 to 1895, when *Myeongseong hwanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([明聖王后]殯殿[魂殿]都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall [Spirit Hall] of Queen Myeongseong) was published. Peony screens that have survived to this day are mostly dated to the nineteenth century, which corresponds to the fact that more than half (44 *uigwe*) of the 76 *uigwe* mentioning peonies are dated to the nineteenth century or later.

Records show that peony screens were frequently used in court events in the second half of the Joseon period. However, considering that the oldest surviving *uigwe*, *Uiinwanghu salleung dogam uigwe* (懿仁王后山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Ui-in), dates to 1601, there is a good possibility that peony screens were made for and used in court events prior to their first-known mention in the 1627 *Sohyeon seja garye dogam uigwe* (昭顯世子嘉禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Royal Wedding of Prince Sohyeon).

### ***Uigwe* Mentioning “Peony Screens”**

- 1) *Sohyeon seja garye dogam uigwe* (昭顯世子嘉禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Royal Wedding of Prince Sohyeon), 1627
- 2) *Injo binjeon dogam uigwe* ([仁祖]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of King Injo), 1649
- 3) *Hyojong binjeon dogam uigwe* ([孝宗]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of King Hyojong), 1659
- 4) *Hyeonjong binjeon dogam uigwe* ([顯宗]殯殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall of King Hyeonjong), 1675
- 5) *Seonwonrok gyojeongcheong uigwe* (璿源錄校正廳儀軌, Uigwe for Genealogy of Royal Ascendants by the Repair Agency), 1680
- 6) *Ingyeong wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([仁敬王后]殯殿[魂殿]都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall [Spirit Hall] of Queen Ingyeong), 1681
- 7) *Ingyeong wanghu gukjang dogam docheong uigwe* ([仁敬王后]國葬都監都廳儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Queen Ingyeong), 1681
- 8) *Myeongseong wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([明聖王后]殯殿[魂殿]都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall [Spirit Hall] of Queen Myeongseong), 1684

### **Total number of the seventeenth-century *uigwe*: 8**

- 9) *Inhyeon wanghu honjeon dogam uigwe* ([仁顯王后]魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Spirit Hall of Queen Inhyeon), 1702
- 10) *Dan'uibin hongung dogam uigwe* ([端懿嬪]魂宮都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Spirit Hall of the Crown Princess Danui), 1718
- 11) *Minhoebin bokwi siho dogam uigwe* (愍懷嬪復位宣謚都監儀軌, Uigwe

for Reinstating Crown Princess Minhoe and Bestowing Her a Posthumous Title), 1718

- 12) *Sukjong binjeon dogam uigwe* ([肅宗]殯殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall of King Sukjong), 1721
- 13) *Sukjong honjeon dogam uigwe* (肅宗魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Spirit Hall of King Sukjong), 1721
- 14) *Gyeongjong binjeon dogam uigwe* ([景宗]殯殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall of King Gyeongjong), 1725
- 15) *Seonui wanghu honjeon dogam uigwe* ([宣懿王后]魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Spirit Hall of Queen Seonui), 1731
- 16) *Seonwon boryak sujeongsi jongbusi uigwe* (璿源譜略修正時宗簿寺儀軌, Uigwe for Revised Royal Genealogy by the Office of Royal Household), 1751
- 17) *Hyosunhyeonbin bingung hongung ryangdogam yibang uigwe* ([孝純賢嬪]殯宮魂宮兩都監二房儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Crown Princess Hyeon), 1752
- 18) *Hyosunhyeonbin yejang dogam uigwe* ([孝純賢嬪]禮葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Crown Princess Hyeon), 1752
- 19) *Uisojo yeonggeoncheong uigwe* (懿昭廟營建廳儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Shrine of Crown Grandson Uiso), 1753
- 20) *Sunhoe seja sangsi bongwon dogam uigwe* ([順懷世子]上諡封園都監儀軌, Uigwe for Bestowing the Posthumous Title to Crown Prince Sunhoe), 1755
- 21) *Inwon wanghu gukjang dogam uigwe* ([仁元王后]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Queen Inwon), 1757
- 22) *Inwon wanghu honjeon dogam uigwe* ([仁元王后]魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Spirit Hall of Queen Inwon), 1757
- 23) *Inwon wanghu myeongreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([仁元王后]明陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Inwon), 1757
- 24) *Jeongseong wanghu honjeon dogam uigwe* ([貞聖王后]魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Spirit Hall of Queen Jeongseong), 1757
- 25) *Sado seja bingung hongung dogam uigwe* ([思悼世子]殯宮魂宮都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Crown Prince Sado), 1762
- 26) *Jangjo Yeonguwon myoso dogam uigwe* ([莊祖永祐園]墓所都監儀軌, Uigwe for Honoring Crown Prince Sado's Yeonguwon Tomb), 1762
- 27) *Yeongjo binjeon dogam uigwe* ([英祖]殯殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall of King Yeongjo), 1776
- 28) *Munhyo seja myoso dogam uigwe* (文孝世子墓所都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Crown Prince Munhyo), 1786
- 29) *Seonwon boryak gaejang sebo uigwe* (璿源譜略改張洗補儀軌, Uigwe for Amended and Proofread Royal Genealogy), 1787
- 30) *Jangheonseja hyeonryungwon wonso dogam uigwe* ([莊獻世子]顯隆園園所都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Crown Prince Sado), 1789
- 31) *Jangheonseja hyeonryungwon cheonwon uigwe* ([莊獻世子莊祖]顯隆園遷園儀軌, Uigwe for the Relocation of Crown Prince Sado's Hyeonryungwon Tomb), 1789
- 32) *Seonwon boryak sujeong uigwe* (璿源譜略修正儀軌, Uigwe for Revised Royal Genealogy), 1795

### **Total number of the eighteenth-century *uigwe*: 24**

- 33) *Jeongjo gukjang dogam uigwe* ([正祖]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of King Jeongjo), 1800
- 34) *Jeongjo daewang binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* (正祖大王殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of King Jeongjong), 1800
- 35) *Jeongjo geonreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([正祖]健陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of King Jeongjo), 1800



- 36) *Jeongsun wanghu gukjang dogam ujuso uigwe* ([貞純王后]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for Queen Jeongsun's Royal Funeral by the Office of Temporary Tablet), 1805
  - 37) *Jeongsun wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([貞純王后]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Queen Jeongsun), 1805
  - 38) *Jeongsun wanghu wonreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([貞純王后]元陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Jeongsun), 1805
  - 39) *Heongyeong hyebin sangrye dogam uigwe* (獻敬惠嬪喪禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Mourning Rituals for Consort Heongyeong Hyebin), 1815
  - 40) *Heongyeong hyebin bingung hongung dogam uigwe* (獻敬惠嬪殯宮魂宮都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Crown Princess Hye), 1816
  - 41) *Heongyeong hyebin hyeonryungwon wonso dogam uigwe* ([獻敬惠嬪]顯隆園園所都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Crown Princess Hye), 1816
  - 42) *Hyoui wanghu gukjang dogam uigwe* ([孝懿王后]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Queen Hyoui), 1821
  - 43) *Hyoui wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([孝懿王后]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Queen Hyoui), 1821
  - 44) *Jeongjo geonreung cheonbong dogam uigwe* ([正祖]健陵遷奉都監儀軌, Uigwe for Relocating the Tomb of King Jeongjo), 1821
  - 45) *Hyeonmok subin jangrye dogam uigwe* ([顯穆綏嬪]葬禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Lady Bak), 1823
  - 46) *Hyeonmok subin bingung hongung dogam uigwe* ([顯穆綏嬪]殯宮魂宮都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Lady Bak), 1823
  - 47) *Hyomyeong seja jangrye dogam uigwe* ([孝明世子]葬禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Crown Prince Hyomyeong), 1830
  - 48) *Hyomyeong seja bingung hongung dogam uigwe* ([孝明世子]殯宮魂宮都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Crown Prince Hyomyeong), 1830
  - 49) *Ikjong yeongyeong myoso dogam uigwe* ([翼宗]延慶墓所都監儀軌, Uigwe for Bestowing the Title Yeongyeong to King Ikjong's Tomb), 1830
  - 50) *Sunjo gukjang dogam uigwe* ([純祖]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of King Sunjo), 1835
  - 51) *Sunjo binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([純祖]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of King Sunjo), 1835
  - 52) *Sunjo inreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([純祖仁陵]山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of King Sunjo), 1835
  - 53) *Sunjong daewang silrok uigwe* (純宗大王實錄儀軌, Uigwe for the Annals of King Sunjong), 1838
  - 54) *Hyohyeon wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([孝顯王后]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Queen Hyohyeon), 1843
  - 55) *Hyohyeon wanghu gyeongreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([孝顯王后]景陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Hyohyeon), 1843
  - 56) *Munjo sureung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([文祖]綏陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Construction of King Munjo's Sureung Mausoleum), 1846
  - 57) *Munjo sureung cheonbong sanreung dogam uigwe* ([文祖]綏陵遷奉山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Construction and Relocation of King Munjo's Sureung Mausoleum), 1846
  - 58) *Heonjong daewang binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([憲宗大王]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of King Heonjong), 1849
  - 59) *Sunjo daewang chusangjonho daewangdaebijeon gasangjonho dogam uigwe* (純祖大王追上尊號大王大妃殿加上尊號都監儀軌, Uigwe for Bestowing the Posthumous Title to King Sunjo and Presenting New Honorific Title to the Hall of Grand Royal Queen Dowager), 1853
  - 60) *Hwigyeongwon cheonbong dogam uigwe* (徽慶園遷奉都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Relocation of Hwigyeongwon Tomb), 1855
  - 61) *Sunjo inreung cheonbong sanreung dogam uigwe* ([純祖]仁陵遷奉山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Construction and Relocation of King Sunjo's Inreung Mausoleum), 1856
  - 62) *Sunjo inreung cheonbong docheong uigwe* ([純祖]仁陵遷奉都廳儀軌, Uigwe for the Relocation of King Sunjo's Inreung Mausoleum), 1856
  - 63) *Sunwon wanghu inreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([純元王后仁陵]山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Sunwon), 1857
  - 64) *Sunwon wanghu gukjang dogam uigwe* (純元王后國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Queen Sunwon), 1857
  - 65) *Sunwon wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* (純元王后殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Queen Sunwon), 1857
  - 66) *Sinjeonghu gojonho Hyojeonghu samjonho gasangjonho dogam uigwe* ([神貞后五尊號孝定后三尊號]加上尊號都監儀軌, Uigwe for Presenting New Honorific Titles to Queen Sinjeong and Queen Hyojeong), 1863
  - 67) *Munjo Sinjeonghu sipyijonho Heonjong Hyojeonghu chil Cheolinh Gajong chojon sangjonho dogam uigwe* ([文祖神貞后十二尊號憲宗孝定后七哲仁后高宗初尊]上尊號都監儀軌, Uigwe for Presenting New Honorific Titles to Queen Sinjeong (Wife of King Munjo), Queen Hyojeong (Wife of King Heonjong), and Queen Cheolin (King Cheoljong) and the First Honorific Title to Empress Myeongseong (Wife of King Gajong)), 1873
  - 68) *Sinjeong wanghu gukjang dogam uigwe* (神貞王后國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Queen Sinjeong), 1892
  - 69) *Sinjeong wanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* (神貞王后殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Queen Sinjeong), 1892
  - 70) *Sinjeong wanghu sureung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([神貞王后]綏陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Sinjeong), 1892
  - 71) *Cheolin wanghu yereung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([哲仁王后睿陵]山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Queen Cheolin), 1880
  - 72) *Myeongseong hwanghu gukjang dogam uigwe* ([明成皇后]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Empress Myeongseong), 1898
  - 73) *Myeongseong hwanghu binjeon honjeon dogam uigwe* ([明成皇后]殯殿魂殿都監儀軌, Uigwe for Installing the Royal Coffin Hall and Spirit Hall of Empress Myeongseong), 1898
  - 74) *Myeongseong hwanghu hongreung sanreung dogam uigwe* ([明成皇后]洪陵山陵都監儀軌, Uigwe for Constructing the Tomb of Empress Myeongseong), 1898
  - 75) *Hyeonmok subin hwigyeongwon wonso dogam uigwe hwigyeongwon cheonbong dogam uigwe* (徽慶園遷奉都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Construction and Relocation of Hwigyeongwon Tomb of Consort Hyeonmok Subin), 1863
  - 76) *Yeongjeong mosa dogam uigwe* (影幀模寫都監儀軌, Record of the Replication Process of Kings' Portrait), 1901
- Total number of *uigwe* produced in and after the nineteenth century: 44**

### Comparison of Peony Screens

Court peony screens were produced throughout the Joseon period, but there is no artwork with a known production date to serve as reference point. A chronological order can be estimated





Fig. 10. Eight-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies. Joseon, 19th–20th century. Color on paper. H. 195.5 x W. 57.5 cm (each). National Museum of Korea



Fig. 8-5. Detail of Fig. 8



Fig. 8-6. Detail of Fig. 8

based on a comparison of the styles of extant peony screens. The surviving court peony screens are all composed of four to ten individually separated panels. In other words, each panel contains a peony or peony-and-rock painting on a separate mounting (Fig. 10).

*Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* in the National Museum of Korea's collection differs markedly from these

peony screens since it extends across the length of ten panels combined. Also, whereas other peony screens such as eight-panel screen show eight peony trees and eight rocks to correspond to their eight panels, *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* is less formulaic. There are indeed ten trees on the ten panels, but the trees and the six rocks are naturalistically scattered throughout the overall composition. The trees spread out across the panels, and the branches and flowers from different trees intersect, meaning the panels are not uniformly divided.

The background provides another distinctive feature of this *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*. Other peony screens show either a peony planted atop a small mound or do not include any background. In contrast, *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* shows a more varied background of low hills, grass fields, streams, and more. There is even what seems like a low waterfall, although it appears to be a perfunctory drawing. In short, while other peony screens follow a schematized pattern, this ten-panel screen is far from mechanically repetitive (Figs. 8-5, 8-6, details of Fig. 8).

This style described above compares to a four-panel peony screen also in the National Museum of Korea's collection with a similarly non-formulaic design. Its background is simpler than that of the ten-panel screen, and peony images are not depicted throughout the four panels. However, small wildflowers have been added next to the peony trees, and the small rocks change shape in each panel (Fig. 11). The four-panel screen alternates regularly between wildflowers and rocks, but it differs from the repetitive pattern seen in other peony screens. The flowers are likewise not schematized but face different directions and have petals that seem to sway in the breeze.

In terms of the shapes of the flowers and trees as well as the number of flowers, each panel in the ten-panel screen contains





Fig. 11. Four-panel Folding Screen of Peonies. Joseon, 18th–19th century. Color on silk. 148.6 x 62.4 cm (each). National Museum of Korea

a different number of flowers, from six to eleven. Other peony screens contain recurring designs, whether the exact identical design is reproduced in each panel or two or three alternate.

#### Discovery of an Inscription

Presuming that the screens with repeating flower and rock patterns were painted from the end of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the National Museum of Korea's ten-panel screen can be dated to this period. This hypothesis was complicated during the conservation process, however, by the discovery of an inscription on the back of the screen bearing the name of an individual who was active in the early nineteenth century.

The paper that covered the back of the screen was found to have ink writing in both seal script (*jeonseo*) and regular script (*haeseo*). Among the inscriptions is the following: 啓功郎行司諫院正言 臣 李冕植 (*Gyegongnang haeng Saganwon Jeongeonsin Yi Myeonsik*) (Fig. 12). The writing is somewhat smaller than the other large characters (大字).

Yi Myeonsik, a member of the Jeonju Yi family, sat for the *jeongsi* (廷試, state examination held at the palace) version of the civil service examinations known as *gwageo* and obtained the *byeonggwa* (丙科, third group) ranking in 1814 (14th year of the reign of King Sunjo). Little is known about his private or public life. His name appears six times in the *Joseon wangjo sillok* between March 1, 1822, (22nd year of the reign of King Sunjo) and August 20, 1827, (27th year of the reign of King Sunjo) as a

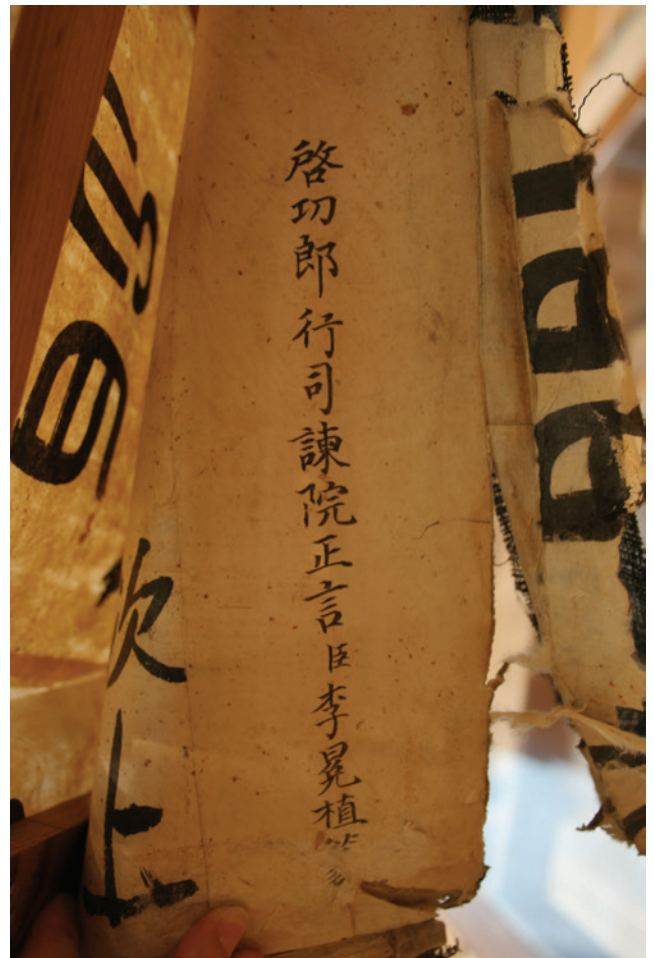


Fig. 12. Inscriptions on the back of Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies



censor (正言, *jeongeon*) in the Office of the Censor-General (司諫院, Saganwon).<sup>7</sup> No other record of Yi holding another public office is found in *Joseon wangjo sillok* beyond this five-year period. Yi's name also arises in the *uigwe*. In the 1815 *Heongyeonghyebinsangrye dogam uigwe* (獻敬惠嬪喪禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Mourning Rituals for Consort Heongyeong Hyebin). Yi Myeonsik appears as an *bongjukchaekwan*, an official who holds a bamboo book during an investiture ceremony, and is noted to have received a young horse. Yi again receives a young horse in 1821 according to *Hyoui wanghu gukjang dogam uigwe* ([孝懿王后]國葬都監儀軌, Uigwe for the Funeral of Queen Hyoui).

It is also known that in 1821 he attained the seventh senior rank position of scribe (注書, *juseo*) in the Royal Secretariat (承政院, Seungeongwon). In 1822, Yi became a censor in the Office of the Censor-General. The inscription on the back of the peony screen reads “司諫院正言 臣 李冕植” (*Saganwon Jeongeon sin Yi Myeonsik*), which dates the production of the screen to the period between 1822 to 1827 when he held the position of *Jeongeon*. If the painting and screen were made in the same period, *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* may be an early nineteenth century work. If the painting and screen were produced at different times, meaning the painting was not at first prepared as a screen and some time passed before it was mounted, then the peony painting may be even older.

These records indicate that *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* can be dated to the early nineteenth century, which would be consistent with its less-schematized design and formalized style relative to other peony paintings as described above. While most peony screens are believed to date from the late nineteenth century, the ten-panel screen can be confirmed to be considerably older. The screen retained its original mountings untouched, and assuming that the painting and mounting were produced at around the same time, the peony screen most likely was created in the 1820s.

## Conclusion

Based on its size, the skill level manifested, rich colors, and other aspects of *Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies*, there is a strong possibility that it was used at the royal court. Furthermore, records indicate that peony screens were often produced for and used in ceremonies related to funerals, the relocation of tombs and mausoleums, the bestowal of posthumous titles, and the like.

Among the peony screens presumed to have been used

in the court, most of the remaining examples consist of panels with uniformly repetitive images that are nearly copies of one another. This ten-panel screen is striking for its presentation of a continuous scene extending across all its panels. The background also differs from the standard rounded design. Instead, peonies and rocks in various shapes and colors are positioned against a relatively naturalistic background of hills, fields of grass, water, more fields of grass, and water again. This suggests that the ten-panel screen predates other peony screens and was produced in the early nineteenth century. The production period is further verified by the mention of the name of an early nineteenth century official in an inscription on the back of the screen.

*Ten-panel Folding Screen with Image of Peonies* provides a key source for understanding the history of Joseon-period peony screens since its style precedes the particular rigid design commonly found in the majority of the extant court peony screens. Going forward, closer examination of the numerous references to peony screens in the *uigwe* will make it possible to analyze aspects of peony screen production in the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries.

## Translated by Park Shinhee

This article is an abridged and revised English version of “A Study of a 10-fold Peony Screen housed in the National Museum of Korea” (국립중앙박물관 소장 <모란도> 10폭 병풍 연구), previously published in 2012 in *Misulshakyeongu* (미술사학연구) 26.

- 1 “Second grade. Symbolizing wealth. [Peonies] are also called ardent friend (熱友) or king of flowers (花王). *Hwangwuja* and *nokhojeap* are the best kinds of peonies ... They must be planted in fertile soil under the lee. Most flowers are planted in spring, but only peonies should be planted around the fifth day after the beginning of autumn. Also, it is better to graft them. Peonies are called *yohwang* or *wija*.” (Yu Bak (柳璞), “Nine Grades of Flowers and Trees” (花木九等品第), in *Hwaam surok* (花庵隨錄, Records on Hwaam)). (From *Concise Notes on Growing Flowers* (養花小錄), translated by Yi Byeonghun. Seoul: Eulwoo Munhwasa, 2009). *Concise Notes on Growing Flowers* was known to be written by the early Joseon civil servant Gang Huian; however, Jeong Min switched the name of the author from Gang to that of the late Joseon figure Yu Bak (Jeong Min 2003, 101-133).
- 2 The ten-panel folding screen of peonies in the collection of the National Museum of Korea (Bon 8165) was acquired in 1920, underwent conservation treatment in 2010, and was introduced to the public in the special exhibition entitled *Paintings of Peonies in the Joseon Period* at the National Museum of Korea (April 6, 2010–June 20, 2010).
- 3 For images of Chinese peony paintings (Figs. 2, 3, 4), see figure 1, figure 3, and figure 22 in the National Palace Museum's (國立古宮博物院) *Special Exhibition Catalogue of the Masterpieces of Peony Paintings* (牡丹名畫特展圖錄) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1986).
- 4 In his “Nine Grades of Flowers and Trees,” Yu Bak classified peonies into plain yellow, red, rose, pink, purple, white, and blue.
- 5 Cheon Juhyeon, curator at the Conservation Science Department of the National Museum of Korea, provided photographic and documentary materials pertaining to the preservation of the screen.
- 6 Peony screen are documented in *Sohyeon seja garye dogam uigwe* (昭顯世子嘉禮都監儀軌, Uigwe for Crown Prince Sohyeon's wedding) as follows: Installation:



Gaemyeongcheong Hall, ten panels, middle-size folding screen, one piece, peonies painted on silk (改眠廳 10帖 中屏風 1坐 綃畫牡丹). Size: ten panels wide: 132.6 cm, height: 53.0 cm (10帖-長3尺5寸, 橫1尺4寸). Court painters: Cha Chung-gae, Yi Jing, Kim Myeong-guk, Yi Deok-ik, and others (車忠蓋, 李澄, 金明國, 李德益 外). Screen makers: Yi Deok-ik, Kim Deok-nam (李德益, 金德南).

- 7 Yi Myeonsik was mentioned in six entries of the *Joseon wangjo sillok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, Annals of the Joseon Dynasty), including the entry on the tenth day of the third month of the twenty-second year (1822) of the reign of King Sunjo in volume 25 of the Annals of King Sunjo; the entry on the nineteenth day of the third month of the twenty-seventh year (1827) of the reign of King Sunjo in volume 28 of the Annals of King Sunjo; and four other entries made in 1827. All of these entries were recorded when Yi Myeonsik served as a sixth-rank official known as *jeongoen* (正言) with the Saganwon (司諫院, Office of Censors).

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