Changes in the Internal Structure of Buddhist Temple Halls and Characteristics of Buddhist Sculpture in the Late Joseon Period

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Introduction

Most works of art are produced for a specific purpose. Buddhist artworks, and indeed all religious artworks, are created with the very clear objective of propagating the religion or aiding the enlightenment and conversion of believers. Buddhist artworks can be largely divided into two groups: sculptures and paintings designed as objects of worship, and ornamental craft objects (Buddhist implements). Buddhist sculptures created as objects of worship are enshrined on a particular altar within a specific temple hall, and as such the size of the temple hall places fundamental limitations on the scale and arrangement of the images.

Moreover, the position from which worshipers behold an image during the Buddhist rites, assemblies, and general services held in the temple hall was predetermined to a certain extent, so sculptors sought out the most suitable physical forms for images while taking into account the level and position from which the images would be viewed. In other words, the sculptor produced the image based on a careful consideration of the interaction between the object of worship and the worshiper. If the purpose of enshrining a sculpture was to convey the holy teachings of Buddhism to worshipers and enable a sacred religious interaction between the object of worship and the worshiper, the images produced in the latter half of the Joseon period, which are still found enshrined in most temples today, can be cited as representative sculptures that superbly fulfill this purpose.

Such an evaluation, however, is very much counter to the prevailing opinion that regards Buddhist sculptures made after the Japanese invasions of the Korean Peninsula (1592–1598) as inferior to those from previous eras in terms of artistry and sanctity. Many researchers consider these images to lack the artistic polish required of three-dimensional sculptures, stating that the head, large in comparison to the body, results in unsuitable proportions and the diminished mass of the

Fig. 1. *Wooden Seated Medicine Buddha* by Monk Hyehui (惠熙). Joseon, 1677. Height: 107.5 cm, Width: 72.5 cm (across knees). Ilchuram Hermitage, Jeonju (Photograph by the author)

body weakens the sense of volume. It is even argued that characteristics such as the lowered head and hunched back and neck are connected to the state policy of suppressing Buddhism in favor of Confucianism (Fig. 1).

These features of Buddhist sculptures from the later Joseon period (朝鮮, 1392–1910) reflect very different tastes compared to those manifested in Buddhist sculptures from the Goryeo (高麗, 918–1392) and early Joseon periods up to the fifteenth century. Although a tendency toward a diminished sense of volume may have continued from late Goryeo through the first half of the Joseon period, the lowered head and hunched shoulders are features that emerged only after the Japanese invasions. This means that new sculptural characteristics began to appear in Buddhist images in the fifteenth century, and that they became more pronounced during the seventeenth century after the wars with Japan.

It can be presumed that such changes in the characteristics of Buddhist sculptures were an extension of various religious elements inside and outside of the temple halls, including the altar, the pedestal (for the sculpture), the wall behind the sculpture, the wooden floor, and the rites held in the hall.

Temple Halls: Their Promotion of Buddhist Services and Their Interior Structure

Changes in the interior structure of temple halls

1. Spread of Buddhist altars and their expanded proportions within the temple hall

Buddhist altars (佛壇, *buldan*), a fixture serving both as a pedestal for enshrining a sculpture and a table upon which to place offerings to the Buddha, came to be widely established in temple halls starting in the latter half of the Joseon period. During the preceding Unified Silla (統一新羅, 668–935) and Goryeo periods, most temple halls had no altars. Images were generally enshrined on a pedestal alone, as seen in the eighth-century Seokguram Grotto from the Silla (新羅) period in Gyeongju and the Hall of Infinite Life (無量壽殿, Muryangsujeon) at Buseoksa Temple (浮石寺) in Yeongju. It is presumed that an early form of altar incorporating a pedestal for an image first appeared in the late Goryeo period. One such example is the altar in the Hall of Paradise (極樂殿, Geungnakjeon) at Bongjeongsa Temple (鳳停寺) in Andong, which is one of the oldest surviving wooden buildings in Korea (Fig. 2). As this early type of altar included no space for the arrangement of ritual implements used for offerings and services and was consequently used only for placing a pedestal to enshrine the image, it is considered to be the prototypical version of the rectangular altar with a flat upper surface that came to be widely used in the Joseon period (Lee Kanggeun 1994, 40–41; Her Sangho 2004, 131–135).

However, Buddhist altars were uncommon during the Goryeo period and the altar in the Hall of Paradise at Bongjeongsa Temple was an exception rather than the rule. It was not until the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries that temple halls with enshrined Goryeo Buddhist sculptures, such as the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Gaesimsa Temple (開心寺) in Seosan and the Hall of Silence and Light (寂光殿, Jeokgwangjeon) at Bogyeongsa Temple (寶鏡寺) in Pohang, came to include a partition-style altar installed around the original pedestal (Her Sangho 2004, 135–139). Even after the foundation of the Joseon dynasty, altars were not universally found in all temple halls, as evidenced by the Hall of Great Light (大光殿, Daegwangjeon) at Gosansa Temple (高山寺) in Hongseong, which features a pedestal but no altar (Fig. 3).

The earliest intact Buddhist altar is found in the Hall of Paradise (極樂殿, Geungnakjeon) at Muwisa Temple (無爲寺) in Gangjin (Fig. 4). It is likely that the altar was made when the hall was constructed in 1430. At the latest, it would have already been completed by the time the altar painting behind the image was produced in 1476. The Muwisa Temple altar is similar to the one in Bongjeongsa Temple, but has a larger top plate for the arrangement of offerings and an additional space at the back that is used for storage. Hence, the Muwisa altar from the

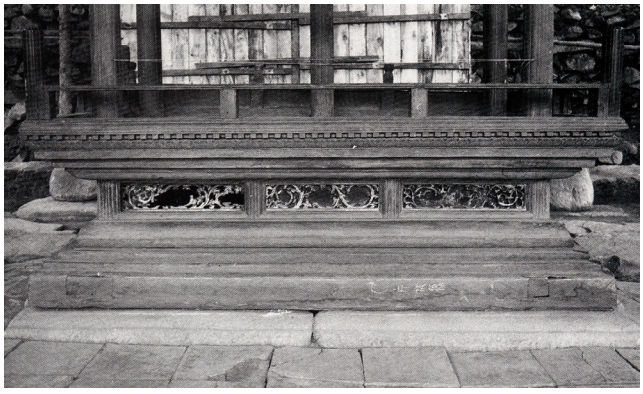

Fig. 2. Buddhist altar. Late Goryeo. Wood and colored paintwork. 414.5 x 192.5 x 142.8 cm. Hall of Paradise (Geungnakjeon) at Bongjeongsa Temple, Andong (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 1992, p. 220)

Fig. 3. Pedestal. Joseon, 15th century. Stone. Height: 91.0 cm. Hall of Great Light (Daegwangjeon) at Gosansa Temple, Hongseong (Cultural Heritage Administration and Cultural Heritage Survey Team of the Foundation for Preservation of Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism 2004, Fig. 1825)

Fig. 4. Buddhist altar. Joseon, c. 1430. Wood and colored paintwork. 318.0 x 201.0 x 111.0 cm. Hall of Paradise (Geungnakjeon) at Muwisa Temple, Gangjin (Photograph by the author)

Fig. 5. Buddhist altar. Joseon, 1569. Wood and colored paintwork. 358.0 x 159.7 x 92.0 cm. Hall of Silence and Light (Jeokgwangjeon) at Bogyeongsa Temple, Pohang (Photograph by the author)

Fig. 6. Pedestal. Early Goryeo. Stone and colored paintwork. Height: 97.0 cm, Width: 139.0 cm (Upper section). Hall of Silence and Light (Jeokgwangjeon) at Bogyeongsa Temple, Pohang (Photograph by the author)

fifteenth century is the first of its kind that demonstrates all the characteristics common to altars installed in the latter half of the dynasty; that is, it was the first to accommodate the functions of enshrining an image on a pedestal, the arrangement of offerings, and storage.

Apart from the Muwisa altar, no fifteenth-century altar in its original form and with an inscription has yet been discovered. Hence, it is not known how many altars of this kind were created between the time of the Muwisa altar and the Japanese invasions of the late sixteenth century. Considering the partition-type altar made in 1569 in the Hall of Silence and Light at Bogyeongsa Temple, which was constructed prior to the fourteenth century, as well as other examples, all that can be confirmed is that altars were probably installed in other temple halls constructed in the sixteenth century (Figs. 5 and 6). That all temple halls rebuilt in the seventeenth century after the Japanese invasions included a Buddhist altar that could accommodate the three abovementioned functions makes it highly likely that the altar had already been established as a conventional feature of temple halls by the sixteenth century, prior to the invasions.

The major difference between Buddhist altars from after the Japanese invasions and the fifteenth century altar in the Hall of Paradise at Muwisa is the proportion of the space within the hall occupied by the altar (Her Sangho 2004, 147). The Muwisa altar takes up only 7 percent of the hall, but in other temples this proportion gradually grew over time. This is demonstrated by the altar in the Hall of Paradise (極樂殿, Geungnakjeon) at Hwaamsa Temple (華巖寺) in Wanju from the early seventeenth century (1605), which occupies 13 percent of the hall; the altar in the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Cheonggoksa Temple (靑谷寺) in Jinju, made in 1612, which occupies 9 percent; the altar in the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Jeondeungsa Temple (傳燈寺) in Ganghwa, made in 1621, which takes up 17 percent; and the altar in the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Hwaeomsa Temple (華嚴寺) in Gurye, which fills 21 percent. Over time, the average proportion rose to 11 percent. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, the altar came to take up even more space, as exemplified by the altar in the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Gaeamsa Temple (開巖寺) in Buan occupying 18 percent of the interior and the altar in the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Beomasa Temple (梵魚寺) in Busan occupying 24 percent. The average is 16 percent (Her Sangho 2004, 147). The reason behind this rapid enlargement during the early seventeenth century is the increase in the width of the top plate of the altar so as to accommodate all of the implements required for offerings and rites, a move apparently necessitated by the increased frequency of rites and services being held and the expansion of their scale (Lee Kanggeun 1994, 143).

2. Use of wooden floors and relocation of pillars

Wooden floors were installed in the Buddha halls at most of the temples reconstructed in the seventeenth century. Though some temple halls from that time laid bricks for the floor, as seen in

Fig. 7. Flooring bricks. Goryeo. Upper Hall of the Great Hero (Sangdaeungjeon) at Janggoksa Temple, Cheongyang (Photograph by the author)

the Hall of the Enlightened Emperor (覺皇殿, Gakhwangjeon) at Hwaeomsa Temple in Gurye and the Hall of Eight Aspects of the Buddha's Life (八相殿, Palsangjeon) at Beopjusa Temple (法住寺) in Boeun, a portable wooden floor was laid down for Buddhist services as needed (Lee Kanggeun 1994, 28–30). Brick floors are evident in all extant Buddha halls from the Goryeo to the early Joseon period, including the Hall of Paradise at Bongjeongsa Temple in Andong, the Hall of Infinite Life at Buseoksa Temple in Yeongju, the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Sudeoksa Temple (修德寺) in Yesan, and the Upper Hall of the Great Hero (上大雄殿, Sangdaeungjeon) at Janggoksa Temple (長谷寺) in Cheongyang (Fig. 7). Excavations of the sites of the lecture hall and the Hall of Vairocana Buddha (毘盧殿, Birojeon) at Bulguksa Temple (佛國寺) in Gyeongju have confirmed that Silla-period temple halls also had brick floors, indicating that a wooden floor is a characteristic of temple halls built from the seventeenth century onwards (Lee Kanggeun 1994, 29).

It is unclear precisely when wooden floors were first laid in temple halls. Judging from a record stating that when the Hall of Vairocana Buddha at Seonwonsa Temple was expanded sometime between 1325 and 1326, at the end of the Goryeo dynasty, the floor was laid with boards, it can be confirmed that at the very least one temple hall in the fourteenth century had a wooden floor.[1] Despite this example, it is assumed that wooden floors were not common in fourteenth-century temple halls. As mentioned above, all extant temple halls from the Goryeo period

1 "When he became the next chief abbot of the temple, the artist monk Seolbong looked at the temple hall and said, 'The building is splendid but the hall is low, small, and cramped, and there is no knowing how many monks it will accommodate.' So in the end, the boards underneath were moved a few *chi* (寸; 1 *chi* is equivalent to about 3 centimeters), the pillars to the south were moved a few *ja* (尺; 1 *ja* is equivalent to about 30 centimeters) and connected to the beam above, and the supporting pillar in the middle was removed to make the space larger. By doing so, 120 to 130 monks were able to sit inside. . . ." From Sigyeongam, "Record of *dancheong* paintwork on the Hall of Vairocana at Seonwonsa Temple" (1327) in *Dongmunseon* (Cited in Lee Kanggeun 1994, 29).

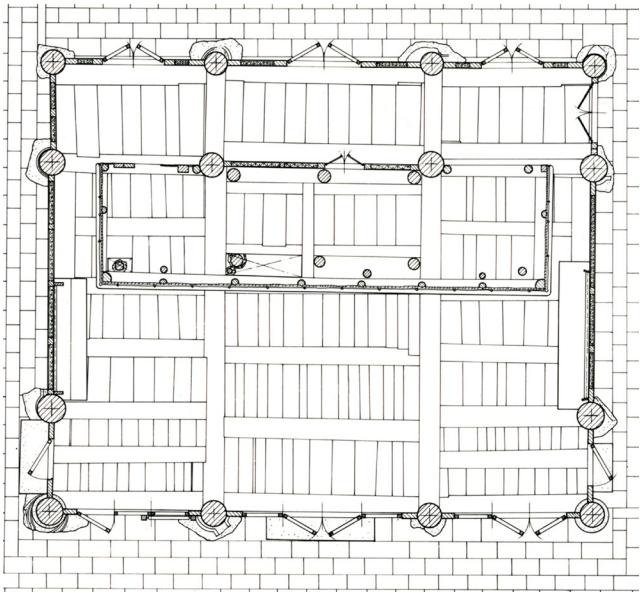

Fig. 8. Floor plan showing altar aligned with side-wall pillars according to the *jeongchibeop* method. 1658. Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon) at Beomeosa Temple, Busan (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 1994, p. 57)

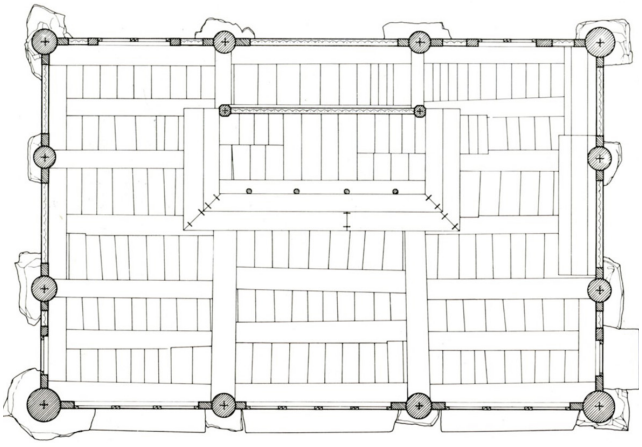

Fig. 9. Floor plan showing altar shifted toward the back according to the *ijubeop* method. 1621. Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon) at Jeondeungsa Temple, Ganghwa (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage 1986, p. 9)

feature brick floors, which is also true of the Hall of Paradise at Muwisa Temple from early Joseon. This indicates that brick floors were the norm until the fifteenth century, and while wooden floors became conventional during the seventeenth century, they first appeared prior to the Japanese invasions of the late sixteenth century. This assumption is notable since it aligns with the fact that altars first appeared in temple halls in the fifteenth century and had become common by the seventeenth century, as examined above.

Another important change in the internal structure of the temple hall is the gradual shift of the altar toward the back wall that resulted from a rearrangement of the internal pillars. Generally, a method of arrangement known as *jeongchibeop* (正置法), or "common placement method," was applied in which high pillars were placed inside and aligned with the side wall pillars of

the second row from the back. The altar was attached to the front of these high pillars (Fig. 8). Alternatively, when the high pillars were installed farther back than the second row and the altar and wall behind the Buddha were placed accordingly toward the rear, the method of arrangement was known as *ijubeop* (移柱法), literally the "pillar relocation method" (Fig. 9) (Bae Byeongseon 1993, 121–124). Research by architectural historians has revealed that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the use of *ijubeop* inside temple halls gradually took precedence over *jeongchibeop* until it accounted for 50 percent of major temple halls built in the seventeenth century. It grew even more widespread in the eighteenth century, eventually accounting for the arrangement in some 60 percent of major temple halls (Kim Hongjoo 2001, 13).

Promotion of Buddhist Services

Why did this form of altar, larger in size and placed deeper inside a hall laid with wooden floorboards, appear in the seventeenth century? As Buddhism was suppressed by the Joseon state, its social and political influence waned and the foundations of the temple economy gradually eroded. Starting in the Three Kingdoms period (三國時代), Buddhism played a central role in the management of the state for over a thousand years. With the foundation of the Joseon dynasty, however, its influence not only in governance but across society in general largely diminished. Under these conditions, the Buddhist community actively sought avenues for survival. In response to public demand, popular participation in Buddhist events was encouraged. As the people were physically and mentally exhausted after the Japanese invasions, the Buddhist community took charge of consoling them by holding rites for the souls of the dead, such as the *suryukjae* (水陸齋, Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land) and *cheondojae* (薦度齋, Rite for the Deceased and the Afterlife). To some extent, it was thus able to restore its position as a central force in society.

Active participation by the general public in Buddhist affairs during the latter half of the Joseon period can be observed in various fields. Esoteric Buddhist texts, such as dharani, collected mantras, and ritual proceedings, were translated into Korean and published. Most of these projects were undertaken in order to pray for good fortune (Hong Yunsik 1986, 451; Nam Heesook 2004, 51–112). They were carried out for the benefit of the general populace, who had newly emerged as important patrons of Buddhism, as well as to encourage people to become closer to Buddhism. Attesting to this rising importance of ordinary believers is the fact that from the seventeenth century onwards names of people connected to the royal family or members of the ruling class, who had frequently appeared in writings for the collection of alms for Buddhist works (募緣文, *moyeonmun*) and written prayers (發願文, *barwonmun*) during the first half of the Joseon period, all but disappeared from the votive writings enshrined in Buddhist artworks or offerings and from the ridge beam inscriptions marking the start of a building project (上樑文, *sangnyangmun*). After this point dozens or even hundreds of people came to take part in the sponsorship of the production of new Buddhist sculptures or the construction of temple buildings. The names of nobles were replaced by those of common people and monks, a reflection of the shifts within the Buddhist community. This expansion of the number of people taking part in Buddhist projects as patrons also implies a reduction in the amount of alms offered per individual. Consequently, it can be deduced that in order to maintain the temples, the number of Buddhist services being held needed to grow in proportion. To collect sufficient alms for the maintenance of the temple from ordinary people with minimal financial means, ceremonies and services for believers would have been offered more frequently. Until the early Joseon period, Buddhist ceremonies were held at large outdoor altars installed inside the city walls of the capital or at streamside locations. During the latter half of the era, however, this was no longer possible and all such events had to be held within temple grounds. Major events such as the *yeongsanjae* (靈山齋, Vulture Peak Rite) and *suryukjae*, both of which attracted huge crowds, were held in the central courtyard of temples. Such mass participation in Buddhist proceedings gave rise in the first half of the seventeenth century to the production of *gwaebul* (掛佛), large hanging scroll paintings designed for outdoor assemblies (Chung Myounghee, 2000, 11–20).

It is presumed that smaller ceremonies and rites that did not warrant an outdoor event were held either inside the Hall of the Great Hero or within another main hall at a temple. The laying of wooden floorboards and the repositioning of the indoor pillars toward the back of the temple hall were measures designed to create a larger space in front of the altar and thus accommodate a greater number of people inside the building (Lee Kanggeun 1994, 29). Indeed, it has been confirmed that at temples rebuilt in the seventeenth century after the Japanese invasions, the Hall of the Great Hero and other major temple halls were transformed into multifunctional spaces for various rites and services. This is connected to the fact that the *suryukjae* and other major events that had been held outdoors or in dedicated temple halls prior to the Joseon period had shrunk in scale and moved indoors with the decline of Buddhism. The main halls of temples (Hall of the Great Hero) built during the seventeenth century retained their function as spaces of worship of the principal icon, which was enshrined along the northern wall along with associated Buddhas and bodhisattvas, with an altar painting behind them. However, additional spaces for worship were added along the side walls, which sets these halls apart from corresponding examples from previous eras. On one side, paintings of Śakra and the guardian deities were enshrined to create a space for the protection of the temple, while on the

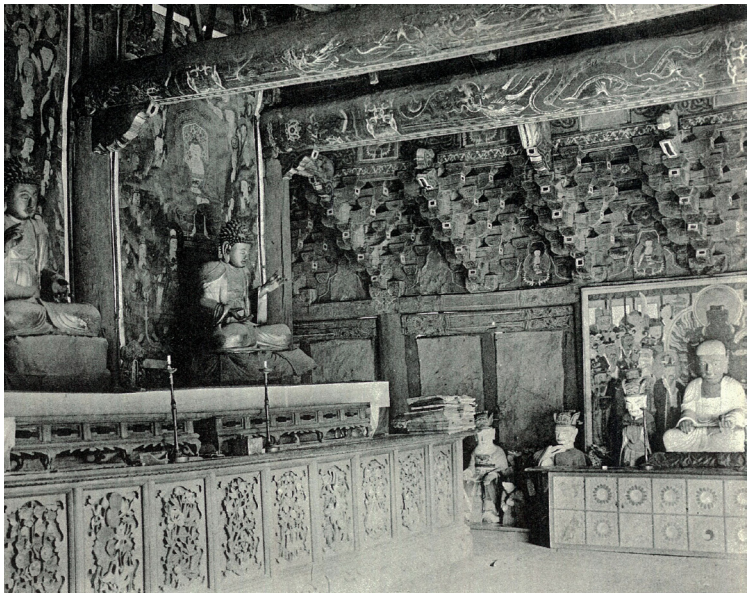

Fig. 10. Buddhist altars. Joseon, 16th century. Wood and colored paintwork. Height: 114.0 cm, Length: 675.6 cm. Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon) at Hwanseongsa Temple (環城寺), Gyeongsan (Japanese Government-general of Korea 1932, Fig. 5503)

Fig. 11. Buddhist altar and altar painting. Joseon, 1658 (altar); 1661 (image); 1882 (painting). Wood and colored paintwork. 177.5 x 989.7 x 273.0 cm (altar); 130.0 cm (image); 321.4 x 365.5 cm (painting). Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon) at Beomeosa Temple, Busan (Kyungsung University Center for Korean Studies 2002, Fig. 6)

other side paintings of Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva and nectar ritual paintings (甘露圖, *gamnodo*) were enshrined to provide an area for praying for the souls of the dead in the afterlife (Kim Bongryol 1989, 111–113). Buddhist texts, such as the *Jineon gwongong* (眞言勸供, Admonition for offering in true words) published in 1496 and the *Beomeumjip* (Collection of Sanskrit sounds) published in 1661, describe the three-level altar system of Korean Buddhist temples, comprising an upper altar for the Buddhas; a middle altar for guardian deities, Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva, and the retinue of the underworld; and a lower altar for departed spirits and lonely ghosts (Hong Yunsik 1975, 32). It is believed that such triple altars were installed in the Hall of the Great Hero. Originally devoted to Śākyamuni Buddha, the Hall of the Great Hero at temples constructed during the latter half of the Joseon period were multi-functional spaces with diverse altars to accommodate guardian deities and departed spirits that did not have dedicated temple halls of their own (Fig. 10).

As a result, temple halls rebuilt in the seventeenth century emerged as places more often frequented by believers and patrons who either took part in Buddhist services or visited the temple for other reasons. As the rites conducted in the hall became more prominent and more frequent, the volume of offerings laid on the altar grew as well. Consequently, the altar gradually widened and came to take up more space inside the hall. With the need to conduct various kinds of rites within a limited space and the consequent expansion of the altar in proportion to the rites, the need inevitably arose to make more efficient use of the given space.

One method to secure the space necessary to accommodate the large number of believers taking part in rites and ceremonies would have been to reduce the size of the altar in the center of the hall, and another would have been to shift it further toward the back. Since the size of the altar was gradually expanding to allow the arrangement of Buddhist implements and offerings, the only viable solution would have been to move the altar to the rear. This idea is reinforced by the fact that the floors started to be laid with wooden boards in the seventeenth century, around the same time that the altar began to be pushed backwards to create more space. Previously, it had been necessary to place cushions or portable wooden floors on the ground to facilitate bowing to the Buddha during the worship service. Permanent wooden floors eliminated the need for dedicating space to the storage of such flooring equipment. Therefore, it is clear that by laying wooden floors it would have been possible to conduct rites and services in a more efficient manner (Lee Kanggeun 1994, 29).

In relation to the increase in the number of Buddhist ceremonies held indoors, another interesting fact is that there is no mandorla behind the enshrined image in seventeenth-century temple halls, but rather a painting hung behind the altar or a mural on the wall (Fig. 11). The exact timing of the disappearance of mandorlas and the emergence of altar paintings and back-wall murals is unknown. In contrast to the clay seated Buddha inside the Hall of Infinite Life at Buseoksa Temple dating to the mid-Goryeo period, which does have a

Fig. 12. *Clay Seated Buddha* and mandorla. Mid-Goryeo. Height: 276.0 cm (image); 384.0 cm (mandorla). Hall of Infinite Life (Muryangsujeon) at Buseoksa Temple, Yeongju (Cultural Heritage Administration website)

Fig. 13. *Wooden Seated Amitābha Buddha Triad* and mural. Joseon, 1476 (mural); 1478 (image). Height: 110.0 cm (Amitābha Buddha, center); 136.1 cm (Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva, to viewer's right); 125.2 cm (Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva, to viewer's left). Hall of Paradise (Geungnakjeon) at Muwisa Temple, Gangjin (Cultural Heritage Administration and Cultural Heritage Survey Team of the Foundation for Preservation of Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism 2006a, Fig. 56)

mandorla, it is notable that by the early Joseon period at other temples the mandorla had already been replaced by a mural behind the image. Examples include the Hall of the Great Hero at Bongjeongsa Temple in Andong, which records show to have been rebuilt in 1435, and the Hall of Paradise at Muwisa Temple in Gangjin, whose mural was produced in 1476 (Figs. 12 and 13). Hence, it can be stated that altar paintings or murals behind the image began to replace the mandorla by the fifteenth century at the latest, although this is not confirmed in any records written before the early Joseon dynasty. It is still uncertain, however, when they came to be used at all temples, since most temple buildings built prior to the sixteenth century were destroyed during the Japanese invasions and changes are thus hard to trace. However, in most temple halls rebuilt during the seventeenth century, the mandorla behind the sculpture was replaced by an altar painting. Based on this fact, it can be supposed that altar paintings and murals had entered the mainstream by the sixteenth century.

Unlike a mandorla, altar paintings and murals on the back wall provide a space for the depiction of many diverse Buddhas and bodhisattvas. According to various books regarding Buddhist ceremonies published during the Joseon dynasty, rites generally began with the invocation of different Buddhist deities, and a physical representation of them would have been necessary. Three-dimensional sculptures would have been most effective at providing a realistic experience, but it would have been difficult to enshrine so many images within a small temple hall. Paintings provided a solution for the realistic representation of a large number of deities in a limited space. The *Jineon gwongong*, translated into the Korean script Hangeul in 1496 by the monk Hakjo (學祖), who was active during the reigns of Kings Sejo (世祖, r. 1455–1468) through Yeonsangun (燕山君, r. 1494–1506), contains a chapter on ritual procedures. It states that the invocation of Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva was followed by a chanting of the names of the *Lotus Sūtra* (法華經) deities and then by chanting of the names of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (華嚴經) deities. In the case of the *Lotus Sūtra* deities, Śākyamuni, Prabhūtaratna, and Amitābha Buddhas are invoked, followed by Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and Avalokiteśvara bodhisattvas, and finally the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Assembly on Vulture Peak. In the case of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* deities, Vairocana, Rocana (盧舍那), and Śākyamuni Buddhas are first invoked, followed by Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta bodhisattvas, and finally all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the *Avataṃsaka* Assembly. At all large Buddhist ceremonies held during the Joseon dynasty, such as the *yeongsanjae* and *suryukjae*, a procedure was held that required calling out of the names of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who appeared in paintings hanging in the main hall of the temple, such as the *Painting of the Vulture Peak Assembly* (靈山會上

圖, *Yeongsan hoesangdo*), *Painting of the Avataṃsaka Assembly* (極樂會上圖, *Geungnak hoesangdo*), and *Painting of the Amitābha Assembly* (華嚴會上圖, *Hwaeom hoesangdo*). That is, the number of images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas required for rites and ceremonies in the main hall had expanded greatly over the previous period, and it is presumed that altar paintings and murals began to replace mandorlas in order to allow the visual representation of such a large number of deities. Moreover, the hanging of various paintings, such as the *Painting of the Vulture Peak Assembly*, *Painting of the Avataṃsaka Assembly*, *Painting of the Amitābha Assembly*, and *Nectar Ritual Painting*, attests to the large number of rites and ceremonies held inside the main hall.

Changes in the Height of Buddhist Altars and Characteristics of Buddhist Sculptures

The seventeenth century also brought changes to the arrangement and elevation of the interior of Buddhist temple halls. An elaborately decorated tier called the "jewel platform" (寶壇, *bodan*) was added to the altar's top plate, the pedestal was placed upon it, and finally the sculpture was positioned on top of the pedestal. As discussed earlier, altars first came to be installed in temple halls between the late Goryeo and early Joseon periods, but it was not until the seventeenth century that they became a common feature across all temple halls. The height of the pedestal also grew during the seventeenth century. Consequently, the image was enshrined at a much greater height compared to in the preceding period.

In most temple halls from the Three Kingdoms period to the Goryeo dynasty that have no altar, the image is enshrined at the relatively low height of around one meter. The *Stone Seated Vairocana Buddha* at Vairocana Hermitage (毘盧庵) in Donghwasa Temple (桐華寺) in Daegu, dating to the ninth century (during the Unified Silla period), sits on a pedestal about 1.13 meters high; the *Stone Seated Vairocana Buddha* in the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Cheongnyongsa Temple (青龍寺) in Yecheon from the Goryeo dynasty sits on an 89-centimeter-high pedestal; and the *Clay Seated Buddha* in the Hall of Infinite Life at Buseoksa Temple in Yeongju sits on a 1.18-meter-high pedestal (Figs. 14 and 15). Created in the early Joseon period, the *Clay Seated Buddha* in the Hall of Great Light at Gosansa Temple in Hongseong

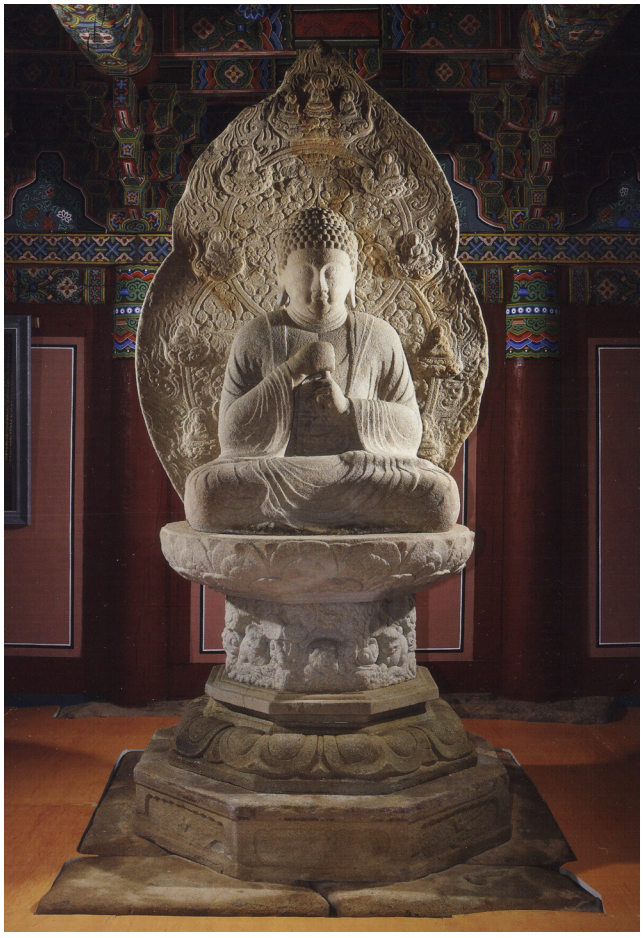

Fig. 14. *Stone Seated Vairocana Buddha*. Silla, 9th century. Total height: 309.0 cm. Biroam Hermitage at Donghwasa Temple, Daegu (Cultural Heritage Administration and Cultural Heritage Survey Team of the Foundation for Preservation of Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism 2007a, Fig. 308)

Fig. 15. *Stone Seated Vairocana Buddha*. Mid-Goryeo. Height: 112.0 cm (image); 89.2 cm (pedestal). Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon) at Cheongnyongsa Temple, Yecheon (Cultural Heritage Administration and Research Institute of Buddhist Cultural Heritage 2008, Fig. 267)

Fig. 16. *Clay Seated Buddha*. Joseon, 15th century. Height: 135.0 cm, Width: 89.2 cm (across knees). Hall of Great Light (Daegwangjeon) at Gosansa Temple, Hongseong (Photograph by the author)

Fig. 17. *Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Directions* and altar. Joseon, 1618 (altar); 1629 (image). Wood and colored paintwork (altar). Height: 108.0 cm (altar); 160.0 cm (image). Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon) at Gwallyongsa Temple, Changnyeong (Photograph by the author)

rests on a pedestal 91 centimeters high. This illustrates that Buddhist sculptures from the Unified Silla period to the early Joseon era were enshrined on pedestals ranging in height from 80–90 centimeters to 120 centimeters, and the combined height of the image and the pedestal in most cases did not exceed three meters. The sculptures from this time sit with the upper body and head held rigidly upright, and have broad shoulders pulled straight back, presenting a stark contrast with examples from the latter Joseon period, which tend to show a lowered head and hunched shoulders (Fig. 16).

The altars of the early Joseon period enabled the sculpture to be enshrined at a higher level than previously erected. The Hall of Paradise at Muwisa Temple, built in 1430, has an 82-centimeter-high altar topped with a 71-centimeter-high pedestal. An image of Amitābha Buddha on the pedestal is therefore set at a height of 153 centimeters from the floor. Although its total height is somewhat greater compared to examples with no altar, it is still lower than Buddhist sculptures enshrined during the seventeenth century. The *Amitābha Buddha* at Muwisa Temple thus carries on the Goryeo tradition, and its sculptural characteristics do not differ greatly from those of the Buddha image at Gosansa Temple in Hongseong.

In the seventeenth century, altars were commonly installed in temple halls and the characteristics of Buddhist sculptures began to change as altars and pedestals grew in height. The altar in the Hall of the Great Hero at Gwallyongsa Temple in Changnyeong, believed to have been built in 1618, is 108 centimeters high and topped with a pedestal of 85 centimeters, which means the sculpture is enshrined at a height of 193 centimeters. With the addition of the 160-centimeter-high sculpture, the total height reaches 353 centimeters (Fig. 17). In the Hall of the Great Hero (大雄殿, Daeungjeon) at Ssanggyesa Temple (雙磎寺) in Hadong, built in 1632, the combined height of the altar and jewel platform is 149.5 centimeters, and with the addition of the 79.3-centimeter-high pedestal, the height at which the image is enshrined is 228.3 centimeters. When the 186.5-centimeter-high sculpture is added, the total is 415.3 centimeters (Table 1).

The combined height of the altar and the pedestal had increased greatly by the seventeenth century compared to the fifteenth century. As shown in Table 1, in the seventeenth century the image was enshrined at a minimum height of 166 centimeters (Hall of the Great Hero at Jeondeungsa Temple in Ganghwa) and at a maximum height of 255 centimeters (Hall of the Great Hero at Hwaeomsa Temple). In most cases, the height was around 200 centimeters. In all cases, the combined total height of the sculpture, pedestal, and altar exceeds 300 centimeters, which means that the principal icon in the major halls at all temples was enshrined at a combined height of around 350 centimeters.

However, no clear answer has yet been found as to why the altar grew to be so high. Raising the altar might have been a measure for enshrining the sculpture at a greater height, but why was it considered necessary in the seventeenth century to place the sculpture at a higher level than before? It is proposed here that the increase in height was based on concerns that enshrining the image within a confined space would be of less impact, and hence weaken the devotee's sense of reverence and awe when coming before the Buddha.

Following the Japanese invasions of the late sixteenth century, many people frequented temples to take part in Buddhist services, and they would have approached the image

Temple / hall	Altar / image	Date	Ratio	Top plate	Treasure platform	Altar	Pedestal	Altar+pedestal	Image	Total height
Gosansa Temple, Hongseong	Stone pedestal	15th c.	×	×	×	×	91.3	91.3		
Treasure Hall of Great Light (大光寶殿, Daegwangbojeon)	*Clay Seated Amitābha Buddha*	15th c.							135.0	226.3
Muwisa Temple, Gangjin	Altar (*jeongchibeop*)	1430	0.07	82.0	×	82.0	71.4	153.4		
Hall of Paradise (Geungnakjeon)	*Wooden Seated Amitābha Triad*	1478							110.0	263.4
Jeondeungsa Temple, Ganghwa	Altar (*ijubeop*)	1621	0.17	93.0	22.0	115.0	51.0	166.0		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Directions* (Śākyamuni Buddha)	1623							140.0	306.0
Gwallyongsa Temple, Changnyeong	Altar (*ijubeop*)	1618	0.09	108.0	×	108.0	85.0	193.0		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Directions* (Śākyamuni Buddha)	1629							160.0	353.0
Ssanggyesa Temple, Hadong	Altar (*ijubeop*)	1632	0.13	124.0	25.5	149.5	79.3	228.8		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Directions* (Śākyamuni)	1639							186.5	415.3
Hwaeomsa Temple, Gurye	Altar (*ijubeop*)	1636	0.21	108.0	28.0	136.0	119.0	255.0		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Bodies* (Vairocana Buddha)	1636							279.0	535.0
Jikjisa Temple, Gimcheon	Altar (*ijubeop*)	1651	0.13	108.0	21.0	129.0	85.0	214.0		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Directions* (Śākyamuni Buddha)	17th C.							132.8	346.8
Beomeosa Temple, Busan	Altar (*jeongchibeop*)	1658	0.24	117.5	33.0	150.5	53.0	203.5		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Generations* (Śākyamuni Buddha)	1661							135.0	338.5
Donghwasa Temple, Daegu	Altar (*ijubeop*)	1727	0.15	99.0	31.0	130.0	52.0	182.0		
Hall of the Great Hero (Daeungjeon)	*Wooden Seated Buddhas of the Three Directions* (Śākyamuni Buddha)	1727							145.0	327.0

Table 1. Height and Space Occupation Ratio of Buddhist Altars[2]

more closely than before. At such range, the worshiper may have experienced a stronger interaction with the object of worship, but the proximity could have potentially reduced the sense of awe and respect. As the area occupied by the altar grew gradually larger to accommodate the arrangement of offerings used in ceremonies and rites held inside the temple hall, the altar and back pillars were moved further toward the back to provide additional space for these events, as mentioned above. However, this measure alone would not have been sufficient to enable the worshipers to experience the majesty and dignity of the Buddha in a small space and at an intimate distance.

Other measures had to be taken, therefore, to inspire greater reverence and awe among worshipers. Two courses of action were pursued. First, the sacred space centering on the altar was richly ornamented in order to visually distinguish it from the mundane world. Second, a supplemental platform was placed on the altar and a pedestal was set on top of it to raise the enshrined Buddhist image to a greater height. These measures would have been effective to some extent in causing the worshiper to look up at the image and contemplate its majesty. In particular, those images enshrined at a height almost double that of images from the fifteenth century would have emanated considerable dignity and authority, even when worshipped from up close.

The final outcome of these changes inside temple halls during the seventeenth century was the enshrinement of the image at an elevated level within a small space. As a consequence, it became no longer viable to produce sculptures maintaining the same appearance as those from the early Joseon period. The style of the Goryeo and early Joseon periods is characterized by a strictly upright body with the head held high and eyes gazing straight ahead. In the seventeenth century, however, with the image enshrined high atop an altar and pedestal, it became difficult for the worshiper to comfortably look into the face of such an image. Hence, it can be presumed that the altered appearance of seventeenth-century Buddhist sculptures, marked by a lowered head that was large in proportion to the body with its shoulders hunched

2 For the space occupation ratio of the altars, Her Sangho 2004, p. 147, Table 2 has been cited. The heights of each part of the altar and the image are based on Her's dissertation, materials compiled by the Buddhist Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, and the author's own surveys. The x-marks in certain columns mean *undetermined*.

Fig. 18. *Wooden Seated Medicine Buddha.* Level view (left); View looking upwards (right). Joseon, 1677. Height: 107.5 cm, Width (across knees): 72.5 cm. Ilchuram Hermitage, Jeonju (Photograph by the author)

forward, would have been influenced by the conditions inside the temple hall. When a worshiper looks up at close range at an image enshrined high up, the head must be large relative to the body if it is to appear balanced in proportion with the body. The head must also be lowered if worshipers are to look at the face and eyes straight-on. If Buddhist sculptures in the style prevalent prior to the fifteenth century had been enshrined high on seventeenth-century altars, the head would have appeared remarkably smaller than its actual size and the face would have seemed distorted. In addition, if sculptures from the latter half of the Joseon period had been enshrined not at a height of around 200 centimeters, but at 100 centimeters, as in the first half of the Joseon dynasty, it would have been hard to avoid a sense of distortion of the face (Fig. 18).

These tendencies began to appear among a very small number of early Joseon images and became fully established entering the seventeenth century. It is generally understood that these features carried over to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It can certainly be argued that the characteristic upper body and head that appear hunched forward and the head that seems large in proportion to the body of Buddhist sculptures from the latter half of the Joseon dynasty resulted from reduced skills on the part of sculptors under the decline of Buddhism during the Joseon period. However, and more importantly, they are also the result of a creative effort to ensure that worshipers could properly behold the face of the image by adjusting the sculpture to suit the height at which it was to be enshrined.

Conclusion

The Buddhist temple halls rebuilt in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries following the Japanese invasions took on a distinct appearance compared to those built before the wars. An altar was placed in the center of the rectangular hall, and the floor around the altar was laid with regular wooden boards. One pillar rises from each of the back corners of the altar, and a rectangular board serving as a wall is affixed at the back of the altar with a mural painted on it or a hanging altar painting. The repositioning of the pillars with the changed position of the altar and its backing toward the rear of the hall (*ijubeop*) became widespread practice. Consequently, 50 percent of temple halls from the seventeenth century and 60 percent of those from the eighteenth century show this positioning of pillars designed to create a larger space in front of the altar. These elements in temple halls are related to the shift in the prominence of common people within the Buddhist community during the latter half of the Joseon period, and ultimately affected the

characteristics of the Buddhist sculptures enshrined within the halls.

Over the course of the Joseon period, the power of Buddhism continued to decline. Its social roles diminished, leaving only its religious functions. In place of the royal family and ruling-class believers who had been the mainstay of the temple economy, the common people came to constitute the core body of believers. As such, many ceremonies and rites, large and small, began to be held at temples, and it is presumed that larger numbers of people took part in these events during the latter half of the Joseon period than in the first. This is confirmed by the changes in the ranks and number of believers listed in the writings for the collection of alms for Buddhist works and written prayers. That is, the greater part of the burden of temple finances was transferred from the small number of rich patrons contributing large amounts in the first half of the dynasty to large numbers of ordinary people contributing small amounts in the latter half.

As great numbers of ordinary people began to participate in the patronage of Buddhist works at the temples, ceremonies and rites had to be frequently held. It is presumed that the larger ceremonies were performed in the central courtyard where a large scroll painting was hung, while smaller rituals took place inside temple halls. In the latter half of the Joseon period, altars were universally installed inside temple halls, and over time they grew gradually larger as a means to provide sufficient space for the arrangement of offerings used in the rites. As the number of believers taking part in Buddhist services increased, the space inside the temple hall became insufficient. Measures such as the laying of wooden floorboards and installation of internal pillars toward the back of the hall were used in an effort to maximize the amount of space inside the hall and accommodate the crowds. Believers attending these ceremonies and rites inevitably gazed upon the Buddha image at very close range, which diminished their sense of awe and respect. In response to this, an additional level called a "jewel platform" was placed on top of the altar and a high pedestal was set on top of that. By displaying the Buddhist image at a greater height than before, the sacred space could be distinguished from the secular world.

Buddhist sculptures from the latter half of the Joseon dynasty were enshrined at a great height of around 200 centimeters and showed certain distinct characteristics compared to previous sculptures, which were enshrined at a height of around 100 centimeters. In general, sculptures from the latter half of the dynasty featured a head that was large relative to the body, lowered, and tilted forward, as were the shoulders. In addition, the body evinced a diminished sense of volume and depth. While those are traits common to Joseon Buddhist sculpture in general that had carried over from the late Goryeo period, the large, lowered head and hunched shoulders are peculiar to images from the latter half of the Joseon period. These features were a creative innovation made by sculptors who wished to ensure that believers had the most comfortable view of the face possible when the Buddhist image was enshrined at a great height.

In the halls of Buddhist temples built during the latter half of the Joseon dynasty, the shortage of space resulting from increasing numbers of people participating in ceremonies and rites was addressed with interior pillars placed further toward the rear and the installation of wooden floorboards. The reduced sense of awe and respect in the presence of the image caused by the mingling of the sacred with the mundane within the space was resolved by raising the altar and pedestal to separate the sacred from the mundane. The image was accordingly enshrined at a great height, which in turn required sculptors to devise new features as a means to distinguish it from preceding images enshrined on lower pedestals. The forward-tilted head and hunched body of sculptures from the latter half of Joseon was the best solution to address the goal of maximizing interaction between the worshiper and the object of worship in the altered temple hall environment.

Translated by Cho Yoonjung

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