



Fig. 2. Sculptures of Brahmā (left) and Indra (right) in Seokguram Grotto at Mt. Tohamsan, Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. Unified Silla, c. 751. Height: 2.48 m (left); 2.44 m (right) (Hwang Sooyoung 1989, Fig. 44)

## Iconography of Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram Grotto: Its Origins and Formation

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### Introduction

Brahmā and Indra, or *Beomcheon* (梵天) and *Jeseokcheon* (帝釋天) in Korean, respectively, are described in the sūtras of biographies of the Buddha as figures who helped the Buddha practice Buddhism and enlighten individuals. In comparison, in the sūtras of Mahāyāna and Esoteric Buddhism, they appear as a pair of Buddhist devas who attended the Buddha's preaching and protected his teachings. Brahmā and Indra are commonly considered to present a more complicated doctrinal nature compared to other guardian deities of dharma and consequently embody diverse symbolic meanings.

While representations of Brahmā and Indra were once widely produced in the regions of Gandhāra and India, later surviving images of the two devas are found only in Seokguram Grotto from the eighth century during the Unified Silla period (統一新羅, 676–935) in Korea and in the Nara period (奈良時代, 710–794) in Japan. It is noteworthy that the Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram Grotto are unparalleled in terms of iconography among eighth-century examples, thereby serving as model images for the two devas in East Asia. Despite their precise iconographic representation, outstanding modeling, and clear significance, little attention has been paid to the Seokguram Brahmā and Indra as subjects of in-depth studies.

This article attempts to examine the origins and development of Brahmā and Indra iconographies, analyze both the traits of their iconographies and their position as presented within Seokguram Grotto by associating them with historical literature, and, in doing so, carefully scrutinize the characteristics of the grotto. The iconographies of Seokguram Brahmā and Indra will be further examined by analyzing the transmission and transformation of their representations on stone pagodas and other structures.

### The Origins of Brahmā and Indra Iconographies and Early Examples

Brahmā and Indra were not originally Buddhist deities. They were the highest deities in Indian religion as it existed well before the birth of Śākyamuni Buddha. Brahmā was worshiped as the creator of the universe and as a symbol of the pure practitioner in the Brahmanism of ancient India. According to the Upaniṣads, the collected texts relating the philosophical concepts of Hinduism, Brahmā, longing for self-proliferation, created the world through *tapas* (苦行, ascetic practice) (Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 2.6.1). His ascetic practice enabled him to become both creator and practitioner.

Indra was the king of the gods and the highest form of god in India during the Rigveda period.

On the one hand, Indra is described as a heroic warrior, but he also enjoys material affluence and leads an ambitious secular existence. The characteristics of Brahmā contrast with those of Indra in that while the former is a creator god and pure practitioner, the latter is the ruler of the heaven and a more secular figure.

As Brahmā and Indra were absorbed into the Buddhist cosmology, they lost their position as the highest forms of divinity. Rather, they transformed into deities representing Buddhist doctrine. In Buddhist sūtras they are depicted as gods undertaking multiple roles. Most commonly, Brahmā entreats the Buddha to preach after he attained enlightenment, while Indra venerates the Buddha's *sarira* and his holy relics and erects stupas. Later, the expanded role of Brahmā in pleading with the Buddha to preach was codified as one of the motifs in the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures. For example, when Mahābhijñā Jñānābhībhū Buddha (大通智勝佛), the Buddha of the past, and Maitreya (彌勒), the future Buddha, attained Buddhahood, Brahmā emerged to request that they preach, an image which finds a prototype in the iconography of "Indra and Brahmā entreating the Buddha to preach" in the life story of Buddha as described in such texts as the chapter of "Huacheng yupin" (化城喻品, Parable of the Phantom City) in volume 3 of the *Miaofa lianhua jing* (妙法蓮華經), or *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, commonly known as *Lotus Sūtra* (T. 9, no. 262: 23ab) and the *Mile dachengfo jing* (彌勒大成佛經; Skr. \**Maitreya vyākaraṇa*; *Sūtra of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Attainment of Buddhahood*) (T. 14, no. 456: 430c–431a).<sup>1</sup> Indra enshrined and worshipped relics of the Buddha at the Trāyastriṃśa heaven (忉利天). For example, he performed rites with the hairs that Śākyamuni cut off upon leaving the palace (*Fo benxing ji jing*, T. 3, no. 190: 737c; *Fangguangda zhuan yan jing*, T. 3, no. 187: 576c; *Wufen lu*, T. 22, no. 1421: 102b; *Datang xiyu ji*, T. 51, no. 2087: 903a), and enshrined Śākyamuni's fingernail trimmings, alms bowls, and robes (*Shijia pu*, T. 50, no. 2040: 66bc; *Fayuan zhulin*, T. 53, no. 2122: 578b). He also constructed Buddhist temples and stupas at locations closely associated with Buddhism (*Datang xiyu ji*, T. 51, no. 2087: 904c and T. 51, no. 2087: 893b, 916c,

918b). It seems that Indra's establishment of halls and stupas provided the basis for the construction of the Queli stupas of Kanishka as recorded in the *Luoyang qielan ji* (洛陽伽藍記, *Records of the Monasteries of Luoyang*) (T. 51, no. 2085: 858b), the Renshou *sarira* Stupa during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty, Jeseokjeongsa Temple in the Baekje Kingdom, and the nine-story pagoda of Hwangnyongsa Temple commissioned by Queen Seondeok (善德女王, r. 632–647) of Silla. These particular roles of Brahmā and Indra have been consistently depicted in different forms in a number of Buddhist sūtras and ancient texts, including the *Guanfo sanmei hai jing* (觀佛三昧海經; *Buddha dhyāna samādhi sāgara sūtra*; *Sūtra on the Samādhi-Ocean of Contemplation of Buddha*) (T. 15, no. 643: 680c) and the *Samguk yusa* (三國遺事, *Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*).

The innate qualities with which Brahmā and Indra were formerly endowed in other Indic religions also continue to appear in Buddhism. Brahmā's name, Sahāmpati, meaning "the lord of the Sahā World, or the world of endurance" (娑婆世界主), indicates his innate nature as the creator god in Brahmānism. Brahmā is referred to by the Chinese designations tranquility (寂靜), complete purification (清淨), disciplined celibacy (淨行), and freedom from desire (離欲), all of which are based on his pure characteristic of asceticism. Buddhist scriptures portray Indra as a warrior combatting Asuras or as a ruler indulging himself and governing the devas of the Trāyastriṃśa heaven. This description also originates from his earlier characteristics as a warrior and king (*Chang ahan jing*, T. 1, no. 1: 144a; *Da loutan jing*, T. 1, no. 23: 302a; *Qishi jing*, T. 1, no. 24: 353ab; *Lishi apitan lun*, T. 32, no. 1644: 183–194). These original attributes of Brahmā and Indra later inspired the development of the visual images of these two devas in Buddhism.

In the early Buddhist art of Gandhāra and India, Brahmā and Indra often appeared separately as independent deities; however, there are examples of them being represented as a pair. For instance, Brahmā and Indra are commonly depicted together in Buddhist triads and pentads as attendants or protectors, and can be found in reliefs of Śākyamuni Buddha's life story, namely depictions of episodes including his birth, bathing, Brahmā's entreaty to preach, descent from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven, visit of Indra, and nirvāṇa (Fig. 1).

1. References to Chinese canon hereinafter provided with *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (大正新脩大藏經, *Taishō Tripiṭaka*) indicated by "T." (vol.) and "text no.:" page."



Fig. 1. Bodhisattva Triad excavated in Swat, Pakistan. Greenschist, 38.8 x 40cm. Private Collection in Europe (Kurita Isao 1988, p. 2)

In Gandhāran high relief of the Buddha's life story, Brahmā appears as an ascetic with his hair tied, body covered with a shawl or a robe, and holding a water vase known as *kunḍikā* in his hand. This visual representation is modeled on the appearance of the Brahmins who worshipped Brahmā in ancient India. In contrast, Indra is depicted as a noble with a turban or a crown on his head and his body adorned with jewelry, which alludes to the appearance of the Kshatriyas. The Brahmins belong to the first and the Kshatriyas to the second highest social classes of varṇa in ancient India, and their appearances are respectively reflected in the representations of Brahmā and Indra. Moreover, Brahmā and Indra flank the Buddha to either side, one signifying the sacred and the other the secular, as well as the conceptually contrasting notions of attaining enlightenment through cultivation (上求菩提) and saving all beings (下化衆生), thus serving as the prototype for the Buddhist triad in Mahāyāna Buddhist art.

In China, historical documents record the production of images of Brahmā and Indra, yet few sculptural images of the two remain beyond the scant examples found in depiction of the life story of the Buddha. However, there does exist the image of Brahmā-Śikhin (螺髻梵王) with his hair tufted into the shape of a conch, which gained prominence after the sixth century and provided one of the iconogra-

phies for Brahmā during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (南北朝, 420–589) of China. This type of Brahmā with a tuft of hair on the head resembling a conch can be found in steles of seven Buddhas from the sixth century, as well as in the grottoes of Mt. Maijishan (麥積山), Longmen (龍門), and Mt. Xiangtangshan (響堂山). They have been ambiguously identified as either donors or pratyekabuddhas (緣覺), those who attained Buddhahood independently without assistance. Nonetheless, a Buddhist votive stele housed in the Chicago Art Institute in the USA and dated to 551, the 17th year of the Datong era (大統, 535–551) of the Western Wei (西魏, 535–556), bears an inscription that reads "Brahmā," and it is revealed that the Brahmā with a tuft of hair is an image created in China based on Buddhist sūtras translated into Chinese (Kim Lena 1991, 214–15). Brahmā-Śikhin is a Buddhist figure that, among the Buddhist deities of the Buddhist cosmology (e.g., Buddhas, bodhisattvas, arhats, devas), represents devas. During the Tang dynasty (唐, 618–907), the production of Brahmā-Śikhin images rapidly declined. In their place, images of Brahmā and Indra dressed in the form of Chinese emperors began to appear from the late eighth century on Dunhuang murals below Mañjuśrī (文殊菩薩) riding on a lion and Samantabhadra (普賢菩薩) on an elephant. No images of Brahmā-Śikhin have been found to date in Korea, and the Brahmā and Indra images in Seokguram Grotto from the mid-eighth century are the earliest known examples of Brahmā and Indra.

### Sūtras Related to the Brahmā and Indra Images in Seokguram Grotto

#### Iconography of the Brahmā and Indra Images and the Tuoluoni ji jing

Reliefs featuring Brahmā and Indra (Figs. 2 and 2-1) are carved on both sides of the entrance to the circular main chamber of Seokguram Grotto, which was commissioned by Kim Daeseong (金大城, c. 770–774), who had formerly served as Prime Minister, in the 15th year of the reign of King Gyeongdeok (景德王, r. 742–765) during the Unified Silla period. The Brahmā image appears on the left and the Indra image on the right when facing the main Buddha in the grotto. Brahmā wears clothing resembling *kāṣāya*, the robes of Buddhist monks and nuns, while



Fig. 2-1. Illustrations of the sculptures of Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram Grotto (Hwang Sooyoung 1989, Fig. 45)

holding a *kunḍikā* in his left hand. Indra is dressed in a robe with long sleeves and holds his left hand near his belly with a *vajra* on the palm. Standing on oval pedestals, both images have peg-topped elliptical halos around their heads and bodies adorned with ornaments. Bending their right arms, both deities hold in their right hands a fly whisk with its tail extending over their right shoulders. The appearances of Brahmā and Indra images in Seokguram Grotto correspond to the following passage from the *Bore huaxiangfa* (般若畫像法, *Prajñāpāramitā Painting Method*), volume 3 of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* (陀羅尼集經, *Compiled Dhāraṇī Sūtras*), or *Dhāraṇī-sammucaya Sūtra* (T. 18, no. 901: 805b).

To the right of the bodhisattva is enshrined Brahmā. The white-bodied deity, wearing earrings made from precious metals and a necklace made with the Seven Treasures (gold, silver, lapis, crystal, coral, agate, and pearl), stands atop a rug. With his right arm bent and extended above the shoulder, the deity holds a white fly whisk, and his

pendant left arm holds a *kamaṇḍalu*. The figure is wearing a skirt made of *joha* silk that hangs down from the waist and a robe adorned with embroidery and ornately woven silk. Brahmā is wearing a violet-colored *kāṣāya* and a coronet around his head with a nimbus surrounding it. His wrists and ankles are ornamented with bracelets studded with jewels.

To the left of the bodhisattva is enshrined Indra. The white-bodied deity, with earrings made from precious metals and jewelry made of the Seven Treasures extending downward from the top of the head, stands atop a rug. With his right arm bent and extended above the shoulder, the deity holds a white fly whisk. The left arm is bent in such a way that the elbow is directed leftward and the hand is placed toward the stomach with the palm facing upward. In his hand, the figure holds a *vajra*, the end of which faces outward and is surrounded with a flame. Indra is wearing a skirt called a *johagun* that hangs from the waist downward and a robe adorned with embroidery and ornately woven silk. The figure is covered in drapery decorated with strings of jewels, and is wearing a haloed coronet on his head, along with jewelry around his wrists and ankles.

This passage delineates the pictorial form of the deities. The descriptions of garments, halos, pedestals, and attributes held in the hands nearly conform with those of Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram Grotto.

The *Tuoluoni ji jing* represents a section of the text entitled *Jingang da daochang jing* (金剛大道場經, *Sūtra of the Great Vajra Practice Ground*) translated into Chinese by an Indian monk named Atiguta (阿地瞿多). After arriving in Chang'an, China, in 652, Atiguta performed the All Gathering Maṇḍala Initiation Ceremony (普集會壇, Ch. *Puji huitan*), a new ritual of Esoteric Buddhism, at Futuyuan (浮圖院) in Huirisi Temple (慧日寺). One year later, he compiled a portion of the *Jingang da daochang jing* in twelve volumes, the full text of which served as a foundation for the ritual he performed. Consisting of Esoteric Buddhist thoughts, mudrās, incantations, paintings, writings, and votive ceremonies, the *Tuoluoni ji jing* functioned as an encyclopedia for early Esoteric Buddhism (*Tuoluoni ji jing*, T. 18, no. 901: 785ab; *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T. 55, no. 2154: 562c).

There are no direct literary records proving the

transmission of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* to Unified Silla. However, a Unified Silla monk named Myeonghyo (明曉) sought a newly translated edition of the *Bukongjuansuo tuoluoni jing* (不空羂索陀羅尼經, *Dhāraṇī Sūtra of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Form of Amoghapāśa*) before returning from Tang China around the year 700 in order to supplement the missing sections of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* (Koh Ikjin 1989, 419-24). Therefore, it is possible that early Esoteric Buddhist monks in Unified Silla saw or were at least aware of this scripture. It also seems probable that the iconographies based on the painting method of the sūtra were circulated separately.

The halos of Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram are oval in shape and topped with pegs. The *Tuoluoni ji jing* calls this nimbus *pagigwang* (簸箕光; Ch. *boji-guang*). According to the Buddhist dictionary *Yiqie jing yinyi* (一切經音義, *Pronunciation and Meaning in the Complete Buddhist Cannon*) compiled in the eighth century during the Tang dynasty, *pa* means winnowing rice and throwing away the hulls, while

*gi* refers to a winnowing basket into which to pour rice (*Yiqie jing yinyi*, T. 54, no. 2128: 638c). *Pagi* thus indicates a winnowing basket, a container used to winnow grain. The halos of Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram resemble such a winnowing basket.

The deities stand atop a rug, a type of carpet known in Korean as *guyu* (黽毬; Ch. *quyu*). The *Yiqie jing yinyi* introduces *guyu* as “patterned woolen fabrics dyed in multiple colors, or those made from animal hair or bird feathers, used by people as a blanket,” or “fabrics loosely woven or pressed with a mixture of animal hair and cotton” (*Yiqie jing yinyi*, T. 54, no. 2128: 711a).

Ten disciples are depicted in Seokguram Grotto with the appearance of monks and stand on pedestals similar to those of Brahmā and Indra (Fig. 3). Some of the pedestals are decorated with lines and strings of pearls, but they are still essentially the class of rugs known as *guyu* that Brahmā and Indra are standing upon. Some written records mention various forms of *guyu*. The description of “the work involves mak-



Fig. 3. Detail of the pedestal of Arhat sculpture holding an alms bowl, Main Chamber at Seokguram (Hwang Sooyoung 1989, Fig. 92)

ing large, small, thick, thin, rectangular, or round rugs” in volume 26 of the *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pinaiye* (根本說一切有部毘奈耶; *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya vibhaṅga*; *Precepts of the Mūlasarvāstivāda School*) indicates that a circular *guyu* pedestal did exist in reality (T. 23, no. 1442: 766c).

*Guyu* are introduced as indigenous products of the regions of Gandhāra and North India, as well as Xiyu (西域), or Western Regions including Kashmir, Kashgar, and Khotan in the *Yiqie jing yinyi* (T. 54, no. 2128: 383a, 720c, and 821c) and travelogues by Buddhist monks such as Xuanzang (玄奘, 602–664) (*Datang xiyu ji*, T. 51, no. 2087, 51: 938a, 942c, and 943a) and Hyecho (慧超, 704–787) (Hyecho 1971, 61–99). *Guyu* pedestals have been found painted in the murals in the Kizil Caves and those of the early Tang dynasty under significant influence of the culture of the Western Regions. The lower section of the Pure Land scene at Cave 220 in Dunhuang dated to 642 shows celestial beings performing a dance called *hoseonmu* (胡旋舞, Ch. *huxuanwu*) from the Western Regions atop a carpet (Fig. 4). It corresponds with the definition of *guyu* in the *Yiqie jing yinyi* as originally a kind of mat laid on the floor for dancing (*Yiqie jing yinyi*, T. 54, no. 2128: 711a).

In the mid- to late eighth century when Seokguram Grotto was constructed, *guyu* were also being produced in Unified Silla for domestic use. According to the chapter “*Tapsang*” (塔像, Stupas and Images) in volume 3 of the *Samguk yusa*, during the reign of Emperor Daizong (太宗, r. 762–779) of the Tang dynasty, Silla offered *guyu* in tribute to the Tang im-

perial family, who praised the fabrication technique of Silla *guyu*. Thus, the *guyu* pedestals of Brahmā and Indra represent the international characteristics of both Seokguram Grotto and the culture of Unified Silla.

Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram Grotto are both clad in skirts of a similar type. The *Tuoluoni ji jing* referred to these as *johagun* (朝霞裙; Ch. *chaoxiaqun*), a type of skirt made of *joha* silk that appears to have been linked to *johau* (朝霞衣; Ch. *chaoxiayi*), a white item of clothing worn by the people of Takkadeśa (磔迦国) in North India (*Datang xiyuji*, T. 51, no. 2087: 888b). This also coincides with the white bodies of Brahmā and Indra as described in the *Tuoluoni ji jing*. According to the records of King Seongdeok in volume 8 of the *Silla bongi* (新羅本紀, *Records of Silla*) of the *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, *History of the Three States*), Silla produced a type of silk named *johaju* (朝霞紬; Ch. *chaoxiachou*) and shipped it to China in 723 during the reign of King Seongdeok (聖德王, r. 702–737). Moreover, the chapter “*Jikgwanjo*” (職官條, Monograph on Silla government) in volume 39 of the *Samguk sagi* records that King Gyeongdeok (景德王, r. 742–765) established *Johabang* (朝霞房; Ch. *Chaoxi-afang*), a government institution for manufacturing premium quality silk known as *johageum* (朝霞錦; Ch. *chaoxiijin*). At the time when Seokguram Grotto was being built, *joha* silk was clearly being produced in Silla.

The *Tuoluoni ji jing* records the fly whisk (拂子; Skr. *vālavayajana*; K. *bulja*; Ch. *fuzi*) in the hands of Brahmā and Indra as being a white fly whisk. Un-



Fig. 4. Detail of celestial dancers in *Amitābha's Pure Land*, South Wall of cave 220 at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, China. Tang dynasty, 7th century (Whitfield 1995, Fig. 75)



Fig. 5. Standing sculptures of supposedly Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara, Cave 23 at the Pandavleni Caves in Nashik, Maharashtra, India. 6–7th century. Height: 150 cm (Takahama Shu et al. 2000, Fig. 310)

like a plain version, a white fly whisk is considered decorative and a luxury item. In Buddhist art, the composition of two images flanking a principal icon with their right arms bent while grasping a fly whisk finds its origins in India in the Buddha triad (Fig. 5). Many Chinese Buddhist sculptures created around the same time as Seokguram wield a willow branch in their hands rather than a fly whisk in its complete form. In this sense, it is believed that the iconography of Brahmā and Indra holding a fly whisk in Seokguram faithfully follows prototypes from India.

The *kunḍikā* vase held in the left hand of Brahmā is the *kamaṇḍalu* (澡罐; K. *jogwan*) mentioned in the *Tuoluoni ji jing*. It has two spouts, differing from the form of a vase with one spout generally depicted in bodhisattva images from the Tang dynasty. The *kunḍikā* held by Brahmā is not only a ritual utensil or Esoteric Buddhist instrument, but also a manifestation of the origin of the deity Brahmā out of a Brahmān ascetic.

The *kāṣāya* worn by the Seokguram Brahmā is also equivalent to that described in the *Tuoluoni ji jing*. In Buddhist art, the *kāṣāya* is a garment worn by

images of the Buddha or a monk, and embodies the meaning of immaculate clothing free of worldly desires (*Yiqie jing yinyi*, T. 54, no. 2128: 698c). Brahmā being dressed in *kāṣāya* thus indicates his asceticism; in other words, Brahmā's *kāṣāya* mirrors his inherent ascetic aspect.

In the drapery of the Seokguram Brahmā, the folds are split into a Y-shape, one covering each leg, in the manner known as the Udayana style. This type is also rendered on the stone standing Unified Silla period Amitābha Buddha discovered in Gamsansa Temple (甘山寺) in Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. The Udayana style is often exhibited in eighth-century Japanese Brahmā images of the Nara period, including a wooden Brahmā originally placed in the Jikidō (食堂) of Hōryūji Temple (法隆寺), Nara (Fig. 6); a dry lacquer Brahmā in the Hokkedō (法華堂) of Tōdaiji Temple (東大寺), Nara; and another dry lacquer Brahmā held by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, which was originally enshrined in Kōfukuji Temple (興福寺), Nara. These examples illustrate the internationality of eighth-century Brahmā images. However, the robe style of the Seokguram Brahmā differs from that of the illustrated reproduction of the eighth-century Brahmā on the door of a portable shrine in the Shōsōin Repository (正倉院), which was originally enshrined in Kaidan-in (戒壇院) of Tōdaiji Temple (Fig. 7). The Japanese example wears Chinese shoes known as *gaotoulu* (高頭履; K.



Fig. 6. Brahmā (left) and Indra (right), originally placed in Jikidō Hall of Hōryūji Temple, Nara period, 8th century. Color on wood-core and clay. Height: 110.0 cm (Hōryūji Temple, Nara, Japan)



Fig. 7. Iconography of Brahmā (left) and Indra (right), paintings on the doors of a *zushi* (portable shrine) in Kaidan-in Hall, Tōdaiji Temple, reproduction made in 1148 of the original mid-eighth-century work. Tōdaiji Temple, Nara, Japan (Sekine Shunichi 1997, Fig. 39)

goduri) with a raised toe and a robe with fin-shaped sleeves, known as a *qixiu* (鱗袖; K. *gisu*), open at the elbow. These elements indicate the Chinese influence that emerged during the later period of the eighth-century images of Brahmā in Japan and differentiate the Brahmā image of Seokguram, whose origins differ from the Japanese versions (Matsuhara Satomi 2000, 213-38).

The *vajra* that the Seokguram Indra holds in his left hand is a five-pronged *vajra* (五錮杵), which is an important reference for the actual *vajra* used at the time. The *Tuoluoni ji jing* refers to five-pronged *vajra* as “great *vajra*” (大跋折羅), and further describes their features and the techniques required for making them (*Tuoluoni ji jing*, T. 18, no. 901: 803c-804a). A *vajra* originally signifies a thunderbolt and is described as a powerful weapon wielded by Indra in ancient Indic myth. The *vajra* held by Indra in Seokguram Grotto thus suggests his warrior nature.

Relative to eighth-century Japanese Indra images, the Seokguram Indra wears a similar outer robe with large sleeves and V-shaped collars. However, the clothing and attributes of the Indra on the door of the Kaidan-in portable shrine described in the documents of Shōsōin present Sinicized characteristics that were initiated after the eighth century. The Seokguram Indra’s U-shaped drapery drooping in two tiers and the strings of beads hung over the lower body with ornaments like a wind chime are associated with the seventh-century bodhisattvas from the Dunhuang murals heavily influenced by Indian Buddhist art (Fig. 8). These can be understood to exemplify the conservative nature of the Seokguram Brahmā and Indra images in terms of iconography. It can also be pointed out that they came from a different pedigree than that of contemporaneous Japanese images. Accordingly, the images in Seokguram Grotto embody both a global universality and Unified Silla distinctiveness.

#### Arrangement of the Brahmā and Indra Images Interpreted from the Perspective of Hwaom

As mentioned above, the iconography of Brahmā and Indra images in Seokguram Grotto appears to have been based on the *Bore huaxiangfa* of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* or its Sanskrit version. Nevertheless, the types and layouts of other images inside Seokguram do not correspond to the descriptions provided by the *Tuolu-*



Fig. 8. Detail of bodhisattvas. North Side of the West Wall, Cave 57 at the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, China. Tang dynasty, 7th century (Editorial Board of the Complete Collection of Chinese Arts, Fig. 9)

*oni ji jing*.

According to the *Bore huaxiangfa*, the principle image should be of a seated Prajñāpāramitā bodhisattva (般若菩薩) in the form of a heavenly maid with three eyes and two arms. Above the bodhisattva should be a Śuddhāvāsa deva (首陀會天), while eight divine kings are placed below the main icon. All of these are completely distinct from the images in Seokguram Grotto. The *Bore tanfa* (般若壇法, *Prajñāpāramitā Maṇḍala Ritual*) recorded in volume 3 of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* also includes images of Brahmā and Indra. Here, it is specified that Śākyamuni Buddha be enshrined in the center of a square platform and flanked by Brahmā holding

a *kunḍikā* to his right (north) and Indra holding a *vajra* to his left (south) (T. 18, no. 901: 808a). This disposition of Brahmā and Indra standing to the right and left of the Buddha coincides in part with the image found in Seokguram Grotto. The remaining text, however, describes diverse deities ranging from the Prajñāpāramitā bodhisattva to sixteen Great Yaksa Generals (大藥叉將), which are not found in Seokguram. Therefore, a universal comparison between Seokguram and the *Bore tanfa* is inappropriate. Above all, the square hall stipulated in the *Bore huaxiangfa* and the *Bore tanfa* differs from the round main chamber of Seokguram Grotto (Fig. 9). Even though the iconography of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* did impact the composition and manifestation of some images in Seokguram, this scripture alone does not provide an adequate explanation of the layout and characteristics of the Seokguram images.

A circular arrangement of images in the form of a monk encircling the main Buddha was a popular plan employed in eighth-century cave temples in East Asia, and the images in the main chamber of Seokguram Grotto are disposed according to this layout. It is probable that the archetype and earlier examples of the circular plan were derived from China, but only few survived today. A small number of existing ex-

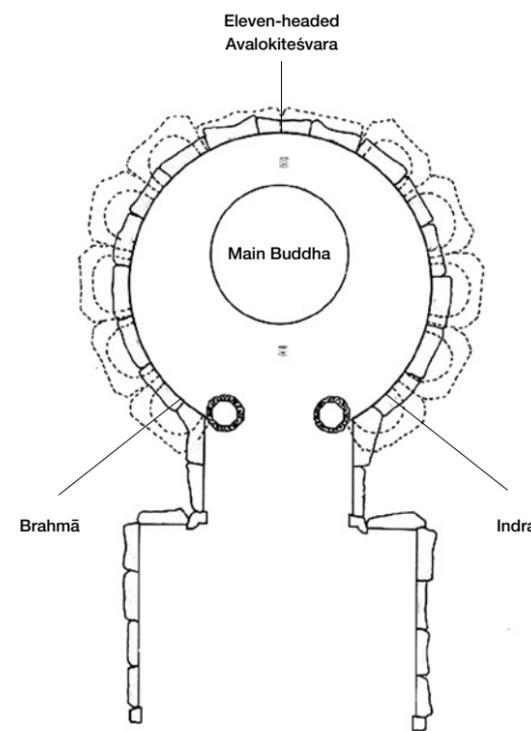


Fig. 9. Floor plan of Seokguram Grotto (Edited from the original image in Hwang Sooyoung 1989, p. 40)



Fig. 10. Mandala of the Kusha School of Buddhism, 12th-century reconstruction of the 8th-century original work. Color on silk. 164.5 x 177 cm. Tōdaiji Temple, Nara, Japan (Nara National Museum, Fig. 200)

amples of the arrangement of ten monks surrounding the Buddha can be found in maṇḍala painting of the Kusha school (俱舍宗曼荼羅圖) of Buddhism at Tōdaiji Temple (reproduced after the eighth-century original), and an embroidered image of Buddha (繡佛) from Kajūji Temple (勸修寺), Kyoto, presumably made either in Tang China or in Japan and presently located in the Nara National Museum (Fig. 10). The arrangement and the types of Seokguram images, however, do not perfectly coincide with those seen in Japanese counterparts.

The main chamber of Seokguram Grotto enshrines sculptures of Buddha, the Ten Disciples, and bodhisattvas, while the antechamber and vestibule display devas, gods, and additional figures. The round main chamber is regarded as a sacred space distinct from the outer room filled with images of Four Heavenly Kings, Vajrapāni, and Eight Classes of Divine Beings. What is notable here is that, despite belonging to the group of devas, Brahmā and Indra are enshrined within the main chamber as opposed to the other devas who remain in the outer room. How can we explain this unusual phenomenon? Brahmā and Indra are devas occupying a lower status of the hierarchy in Buddhist cosmology compared to the Buddha and bodhisattvas; nonetheless, an exception is made in order to place them in the main hall.

Since the name and nature of a main Buddha determine the attributes of the associated lower deities, the arrangement of the Seokguram sculptures needs to be understood in relation to the main Buddha. In this sense, I plan to correlate Brahmā and Indra to the main Śākyamuni Buddha and examine its meaning.

Studies on Seokguram Grotto begin with the main Buddha posing with his right hand in the “earth-touching” position, or *bhūmisparśa mudrā*, iconographically symbolizing the ultimate enlightenment of Śākyamuni and doctrinally correlated with Hwaeom (華嚴; Skr. Avatamsaka; Ch. Huayan) (Kim Lena 1989, 326-332; Hwang Sooyoung 1987, 73-110). I thus attempt to examine the influence on Seokguram Grotto of the Hwaeom school of Buddhism, taking into account the dominant Buddhist ideology and faith as well as the historical background of mid- to late eighth century Silla when Seokguram Grotto was constructed.

The *Huayan jing* (華嚴經; Skr. Avatamsaka Sūtra; K. Hwaeom gyeong), or *Flower Garland Sūtra*, emphasizes the ultimate enlightenment of Śākyamuni and describes the scene of his preaching. In 760, when Seokguram was being constructed, Kim Daeseong, the patron of the grotto, consulted a Hwaeom monk named Pyohun (表訓) regarding the doctrines of the Three Bases of Samādhi (三本定; K. *sambonjeong*); the Samādhi of Sea Seal (海印定; K. *haeinjeong*); the Flower Garland Samādhi (佛華嚴定; K. *bulhwaeomjeong*); and the Samādhi of Lion-like Moving with Resolute Speed (獅子奮迅定; K. *sajabunsinjeong*) (Kim Sanghyun 1986, 39). This fact plays an important role in understanding Seokguram. Moreover, Hwaeom thought appears to have affected the planning and construction of Seokguram in that, according to the records of “*Daeseong hyo ise bumō*” (大城孝二世父母, Daeseong Served His Parents with Filial Piety in Two Lifetimes) in the chapter “*Hyoseon*” (孝善, Filial Piety and Goodness) of the *Samguk yusa*, Pyohun was invited to serve as the first head priest upon the completion of Seokguram. Research on the close relationship between Hwaeom thought and the circular chamber and domed ceiling of Seokguram are also pertinent to the understanding of the grotto (Bae Jindal 2000, 141-194). Taking into account the correlation between Seokguram Grotto and Hwaeom thought, I scrutinize not only the *Huayan jing*, but also its annotations, Hwaeom thought, Hwaeom

faith, and the achievements of Hwaeom monks. In this manner, I examine a possible explanation for the placement of Brahmā and Indra along with the Buddha and bodhisattvas inside the main chamber of the Grotto.

The *Huayan jing* describes the Buddha, who had attained ultimate enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, moving from earth to heaven and preaching while manifesting his original self in seven places and holding eight or nine assemblies. The first chapter “Ascent of Buddha to the Peak of Mt. Sumeru” (佛昇須彌頂品) in the 60-fascicle version of the *Huayan jing* depicts the third assembly at the Trāyastriṃśa heaven as follows:

Just then, Buddha, using his spiritual power, reached the top of Mt. Sumeru and headed to the palace of Indra without rising to his feet. Upon seeing Buddha arriving, Indra quickly made on top of the Seongmyojeon Hall (勝妙殿) a lion pedestal adorned with various gems... Guarding Buddha were ten thousand sons of heaven surrounded by ten thousand Brahmā-gods, and ten thousand gleams of light glowed in all their splendor (T. 9, no. 278:441b).

As the Buddha appears in Trāyastriṃśa to preach, Indra and Brahmā welcome him together. Brahmā and Indra in the main chamber of Seokguram Grotto can be understood as members of the audience listening to the Buddha’s sermon alongside bodhisattvas, as described in the *Huayan jing*, rather than guardian gods of the principal Buddha.

In Buddhist cosmology, the Trāyastriṃśa heaven is not an especially high one, being only the second heaven in the desire realm. However, the *Huayan jing* elevates the status of Trāyastriṃśa heaven. For example, the *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記, *Exploring the Profound Theory of the Avatamsaka Sūtra*), a major commentary on the 60-fascicle version of the *Huayan jing*, written by the Hwaeom priest Fazang (法藏, 643–712) and passed on to the Silla monk Uisang (義湘, 625–702) and his disciples, including Pyohun, comments on the “Ascent of Buddha to the Peak of Mt. Sumeru” in the *Huayan jing* as follows:

Question: Why was the Heaven of the Four Heavenly Kings not reached?

Answer: There are three reasons. Firstly, it is a heaven of evil spirits, and therefore it was bypassed because it is not outstanding in presenting dharma. Secondly... it was passed by in order to demonstrate the great difference between progression and regression. Thirdly, although there may be advance and retreat if the summit has not yet been achieved, upon reaching the top, there is no retreat and therefore dharma was practiced as going beyond the heaven of the mountainside and reaching the summit (*Huayan jing tanxuan ji*, T. 35, no. 1733: 192b).

The gist of this question and answer is that the Buddha’s preaching in the heavens began with the Trāyastriṃśa heaven, bypassing the heaven of Four Heavenly Kings because it was considered a coarse area. This evokes the unusual arrangement of Brahmā and Indra in the main chamber and of the Four Heavenly Kings in the vestibule in Seokguram Grotto. Hwaeom thought also explicates the preaching assembly in the Trāyastriṃśa heaven as in the following passage by Uisang:

(Chapter Ten) ... If someone asks for the name of the first assembly, I would say the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly... What causes this? The first assembly encompasses all of the gatherings held before and after since it serves as the basis of others. Like the first assembly, the ensuing assemblies also form the bases for others. From this point of view, it encompasses all of the gatherings held before and after (*Beopgye dogi chongsurok*, T. 45, no. 1887: 721b; *Huayan jing zhigui*, T. 45, no. 1871: 589a).

This passage means that the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly can represent the other assemblies held in higher heavens, such as the Yama heaven (夜摩天) and the Tuṣita heaven (兜率天), and evidences how the Hwaeom sect considers the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly special. If Seokguram is related to Hwaeom, it becomes possible that the grotto was impacted by Hwaeom ideas and feelings toward the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly. Indeed, the dome of Seokguram’s main chamber is generally believed to symbolize heaven or the universe.

Hwaeom gives profound doctrinal meaning to Indra of the Trāyastriṃśa heaven. It highlights the

so-called endless realm-within-realm dharma-realms (重重無盡的法界), which is compared to the Jeweled Net of Indra (因陀羅網). The approach of the sphere that is like the Jeweled Net of Indra (因陀羅網境界門) is one of the approaches of the ten mysteries of Hwaeom (華嚴十玄門; Ch. *Huayan shixuanmen*) which provide the foundation of Hwaeom philosophy. This term frequently appears in writings by Hwaeom monks, including Zhiyan (智儼, 602–668) of Tang, Uisang (義湘, 625–702) of Unified Silla, and Fazang of Tang. According to the record on Uisang in the chapter “*Uihae*” of the *Samguk yusa*, the Chinese characters “帝網” as a synonym for Indra’s net were used as an idiomatic phrase in letters sent by Fazang to Uisang. As another example of the importance of Indra’s net, the following passage from Fazang’s *Huayan wujiao zhang* (華嚴五教章, *Five Teachings of Avatamsaka Buddhism*),<sup>2</sup> which Fazang sent to Uisang and had a great effect on Unified Silla’s Hwaeom school of Buddhist thought, can be examined (Kim Sanghyun 1986, 24-27):

Second is the difference in place. This Ekayāna (一乘, literally “one path”) is referred to as beneath the Bodhi Tree adorned with jewels under the sea of the World of the Lotus Sanctuary... Moreover, because this World of the Lotus Sanctuary leads to Indra’s net, all the worlds can be overseen carefully. The appropriate teachings are preached in the realm of Ekayāna in a place appropriate to this realm of Buddhism (Fazang 1988, 139).

This segment implies that Indra’s net equates to the World of the Lotus Sanctuary, which is the ultimate stage of Hwaeom, or the realm of Ekayāna. As the *Huayan jing* emphasizes the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly, Hwaeom philosophy points out that Indra’s net functions as a kind of gateway for transiting in and out of the ultimate supreme stage.

Indra is often directly related with Hwaeom. The most notable instances are found in the various legends in which Indra requests monks offer a sermon on the *Huayan jing* (T. 50, no. 2060: 429a, 498c,

2. Uisang asked his disciples to review this book and edited himself the table of contents. Sillim (神琳), who resided at Bulguksa Temple and preached the teachings of Hwaeom, had given lectures on this *Wujiao zhang* at Buseoksa Temple (Kim Sanghyun 1986, 24-27).

499b; T. 51, no. 2074: 175b-176; T. 50, no. 2061: 871c). Originally, Indra asked for preaching on the scripture in order to combat the army of Asura through the sūtra's spiritual force. The battle between Indra and Asura first appeared in the "Battle" chapter (戰鬪品) of the *Shiji jing* (世記經, *Sūtra of Records of the World*) in volume 21 of the early scripture known as *Chang ahan jing* (長阿含經, *Collection of Long Discourses*), or *Dirgha Āgama*. Later, this topic frequently arose in Hwaeom-related texts, including Uisang's sermon on Samādhi of Sea Seal (海印三昧).

Furthermore, monks of the Hwaeom school were believed to have entered into friendly relations with Indra. The *Samguk yusa* records that when Uisang studied under Zhiyan, he not only borrowed a tooth of the Buddha enshrined in the Palace of Indra (帝釋宮) through the Tang monk Daoxuan (道宣, 596–667), who maintained a friendship with Indra, but also worshipped and enshrined it. Moreover, Pyohun, a disciple of Uisang, maintained close ties with Indra, regularly visiting a heavenly palace while staying at Bulguksa Temple and requesting the birth of a son on behalf of King Gyeongdeok.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars regard this episode of Pyohun's regular visits to a heavenly palace during the reign of King Gyeongdeok to symbolize "preaching dharma under the bodhi tree in seven places without getting up" (不起樹王 羅七處於法界) in Hwaeom thinking (Kim Sanghyun 1984, 49). Additionally, Hwaeom made Brahmā and Indra equal to bodhisattvas, consequently raising their status by means of diverse doctrinal explanations (*Xin huayan jing lun*, T. 36, no. 1739: 760a). This particular perspective and doctrine of Hwaeom might have resulted in the arrangement of placing Brahmā and Indra within the circular main chamber of Seokguram Grotto. In other words, Seokguram serves as sculptural architecture reconstructing the concepts and beliefs of the *Huayan jing*, which emphasizes Śākyamuni's preaching assemblies after attaining enlightenment as typified by the Trāyastriṃśa heaven

3. See "Jeonhu sojang sari" (前後所將舍利, A Chronological Account of the Transmission of Buddhist Relics) in the chapter "Tapsang" (塔像, Stupas and Images), "Uisang jeongyo" (義湘傳教, Uisang Transmits the Teachings) in the chapter "Uihae" (義解, Exegetes), and "Gyeongdeok wang Chungdam sa Pyohun daedeok" (景德王 忠談師 表訓大德, King Gyeongdeok, Master Chungdam, and Venerable Pyohun) in the chapter "Gii" (紀異, Wonders) of the *Samguk yusa*.

session. Therefore, Seokguram Grotto seems to have been intended to provide worshippers with an opportunity to gain the religious experience of joining the majestic Hwaeom assembly.

Although the *Tuoluoni ji jing* contains explanations corresponding to the images of Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram, compared with the *Huayan jing* it lags in suggesting systematic and consistent thoughts. Considering the practice of excerpting only some of the contents from the *Tuoluoni ji jing* as needed during the Nara Period of Japan, this scripture appears to have provided an iconography collection used for crafting Buddhist sculptures. As a result, Esoteric Buddhist iconographies recorded in the *Tuoluoni ji jing* are thought to have been absorbed into the structure of Hwaeom.

The Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara (十一面觀音) placed directly behind the central Buddha also indicates the relationship of the Seokguram Brahmā and Indra to both Hwaeom and the *Tuoluoni ji jing*. His appearance is almost identical to the description in the *Shiyimian Guanshiyin shenzhou jing* (十一面觀世音神呪經, *Incantation Sūtra of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara*) in volume 4 of the *Tuoluoni ji jing* (T. 901, 18: 812b-813c), and it is classified as early Esoteric Buddhist iconography. However, if Hwaeom influenced the overall structure of Seokguram Grotto, this Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara also needs to be investigated in the context of Hwaeom. For instance, the Hwaeom school monk Fazang related the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara to Hwaeom, explaining that Avalokiteśvara preached the *Shiyimian Guanyin jing* (十一面觀音經, *Sūtra of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara*) at his abode on Mt. Guangmingshan (光明山) (*Huayan jing tanxuan ji*, T. 35, no. 1733: 471c). In the first year of the Shengong Era (697) of Empress We Zetian (武則天, r. 690–705), when the Khitans invaded Tang, Fazang built a sacred site for the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara for Buddhist practice and meditation, enshrined a sculpture of the deity, and worshipped it, thus contributing to the defeat of the Khitans (*Beopjang hwasang jeon*, T. 50, no. 2054: 283c). In addition, it is written in the record of "Gyeongheung u seong" (憬興遇聖, Gyeongheung Encounters a Saint) in the chapter "Gamtong" (感通, Spiritual Responses to Sentient Beings) in volume 5 of the *Samguk yusa* that during Unified Silla in the reign of King Sinmun (神文王, r. 681–692) a monk named Gyeongheung (憬興) lay sick in bed. A nun

came to see Gyeongheung and cured him by reciting the phrase, "A good friend can cure an illness" (善友原病之說) from the *Huayan jing* and performing eleven different kinds of dances. This nun turned out to be a manifestation of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara.

As seen above, Hwaeom expediently accepted the early Esoteric Buddhist iconographies found in Seokguram Grotto, consequently harmonizing with them. The adoption of iconographies from Esoteric Buddhism, which are more concrete and tangible, took place in part as a means to supplement the abstraction and speculative nature of Hwaeom doctrine and faith. Certainly, however, further discussion and interpretation of the correlation between Hwaeom and Esoteric Buddhist features in Seokguram Grotto are merited (Koh Ikjin 1989, 460; Hong Yunsik 1993, 167-179; Park Hyounggook 1998, 50-72).

### Transmission and Transformation of the Brahmā and Indra Images in Seokguram Grotto

From the late Unified Silla (late eighth century) to the early Goryeo dynasty (高麗, 918–1392), that is, after the completion of Seokguram Grotto, images of Brahmā and Indra were created primarily in reliefs on the surfaces of stone pagodas and stupas. These images are occasionally misinterpreted as bodhisattvas or the eight devas, but it is actually correct to recognize them as Brahmā and Indra. Brahmā and Indra images made after the late-eighth century are classified into several types according to their attributes, postures, and garments. In this section, however, I will focus on those images resembling the images of Brahmā and Indra as found in Seokguram.

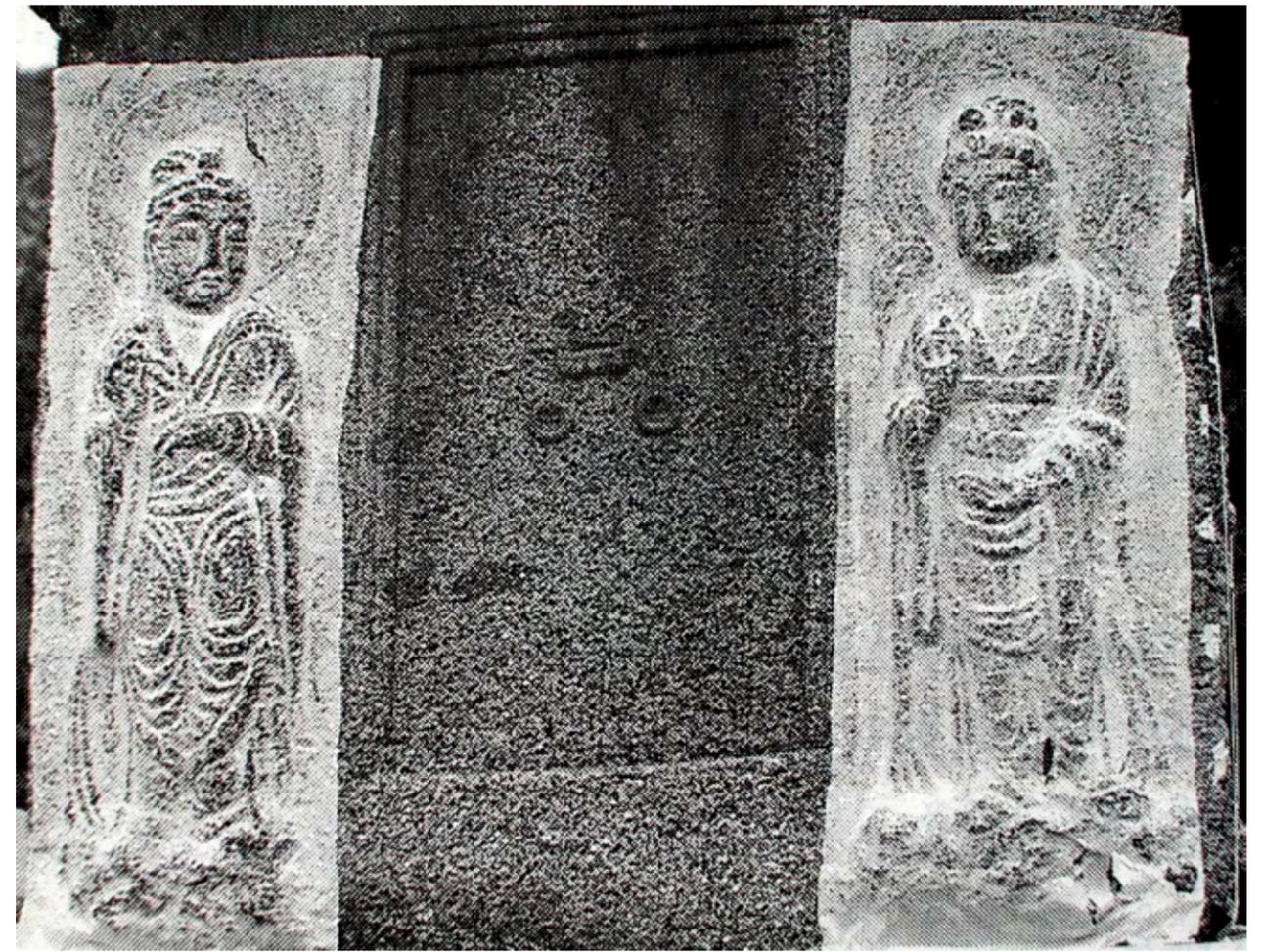


Fig. 11. Indra (left) and Brahmā (right), main body of the first story of the Three-story Stone Pagoda Carved with Four Lions at Hwaeomsa Temple, Gurye, Jeollanam-do Province. Unified Silla, late 8th century (Suh Yoonkil 1994, p. 256)

Most of the known reliefs bearing similarities to the Brahmā and Indra of Seokguram are carved on the surfaces of three-story stone pagodas, particularly on the first tier and the upper portion of the base. There are nine surviving examples of pagodas bearing such an image, namely the three-story stone pagoda carved with four lions at Hwaeomsa Temple (華嚴寺) in Gurye, Jeollanam-do Province; the stone pagoda at Jangyeonsa Temple (長淵寺) in Mt. Geumgangsan, Gangwon-do Province; the stone pagoda in Imha-dong, Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; the stone pagoda in Gwandeok-dong, Uiseong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda in Geumso-dong, Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda at Yonghwasa Temple (龍華寺) in Sangju, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda of Daejeonsa Temple (大典寺) in Cheongsong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda of Beopjusa Temple (法住寺) in Boeun, Chungcheongbuk-do Province; and a fragment of a pagoda in the collection of the National Museum of Korea (Sinsu 7569).

As a case in point, the three-story stone pagoda carved with four lions at Hwaeomsa Temple shows reliefs of Brahmā, Indra, Vajrapāni, and the Four Heavenly Kings on its first tier. When facing the pagoda, Indra is on the left with a *vajra*, and on the right is Brahmā holding a fly whisk (Fig. 11). While they seem similar to the Brahmā and Indra in Seokguram, some discrepancies are apparent. Compared to the Seokguram images, the Brahmā and Indra on the pagoda hold only a single attribute that sums up their characteristics. Moreover, Brahmā is placed on the left in Seokguram Grotto, but on the right in the pagoda, while Indra on the right in Seokguram is reversed as well. The Brahmā and Indra on the pagoda have also exchanged clothes relative to those in Seokguram Grotto, with Indra wearing *kāṣāya* and Brahmā wearing an outer robe and a garment with a drapery drooping in two tiers.

The changes made in the disposition and clothing of the two deities have not been explained, but the Brahmā and Indra images on the pagodas have all inherited the iconographies of Seokguram with partial alternations. Iconographies of Brahmā and Indra showing an affiliation with Seokguram are also found in additional Buddhist artworks beyond stone pagodas. One example is the Brahmā and Indra

images incised on the surface of a ninth-century gilt-bronze reliquary excavated from Dorisa Temple (桃李寺) in Seonsan, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (Fig. 12). The basic form of iconography in the Seokguram pedigree continued to appear with some minor alterations according to period and region.

The transmission of the Seokguram iconographies to Brahmā and Indra representations from the late Unified Silla period becomes clearer when they are compared with contemporaneous Japanese examples. In contrast to the multi-faced and multi-armed (多面多臂) Brahmā and Indra sculptures of Middle Esoteric Buddhism from the early Heian Period (平安, 794–1185), which include those in the Kōdō Hall (講堂, ca. 839) of Tōji Temple (東寺), Kyoto, the ninth-century Brahmā and Indra images of Unified Silla do not feature multiple faces and arms. Unified Silla created distinctive Brahmā and Indra images based on their own traditions by selectively adopting new icons popular in China.

### Conclusion

This article is mainly concerned with examining the origins, nature, characteristics, and development of



Fig. 12. Petrogram of Indra (left) and Brahmā (right) from the gilt-bronze hexagonal *śarīra* reliquary excavated at Dorisa Temple, Seonsan, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province. Unified Silla, 9th century. Height: 17.0 cm. Jikji Museum of Buddhist Arts (Tongdosa Museum 2000, p. 41 and p. 43)

the Brahmā and Indra iconographies in Seokguram Grotto. The winnowing basket-shaped halos (*pagig-wang*), *guyu* pedestals, attributes, and garments of the Seokguram Brahmā and Indra are associated with the early Esoteric Buddhist scripture *Tuoluoni ji jing*, serving as a benchmark for mid- and late eighth-century images of Brahmā and Indra in East Asia. These Seokguram images indicate both the international universality and distinctiveness of Unified Silla. Upon investigating the iconographic connotation of the central Buddha with earth-touching mudrā in regard to the overall structure of Seokguram, this article further explores the unusual arrangement of Brahmā and Indra in relation to the Hwaeom ideas that prevailed during the Unified Silla period. It has thus been confirmed that the iconographies of early Esoteric Buddhism were absorbed into and merged with Hwaeom, the fundamental beliefs and ideology underlying Seokguram Grotto.

The iconography of Brahmā and Indra that were established at Seokguram continued to appear on stone pagodas and stupas of the late Unified Silla. Through the transmission and transformation of this tradition, this Seokguram iconography established a unique Korean convention for depicting Brahmā and Indra, setting it apart from those of China and Japan.

▲▲

TRANSLATED BY PARK SHINHEE

This paper is an abridged and revised English version of “The Origin and the Formation of the Brahmā and Indra Iconographies in the Seokguram Grotto” (석굴암 범천·제석천 도상의 기원과 성립), previously published in 2005 in *Korean Journal of Art History* (미술사학연구) 246·247.

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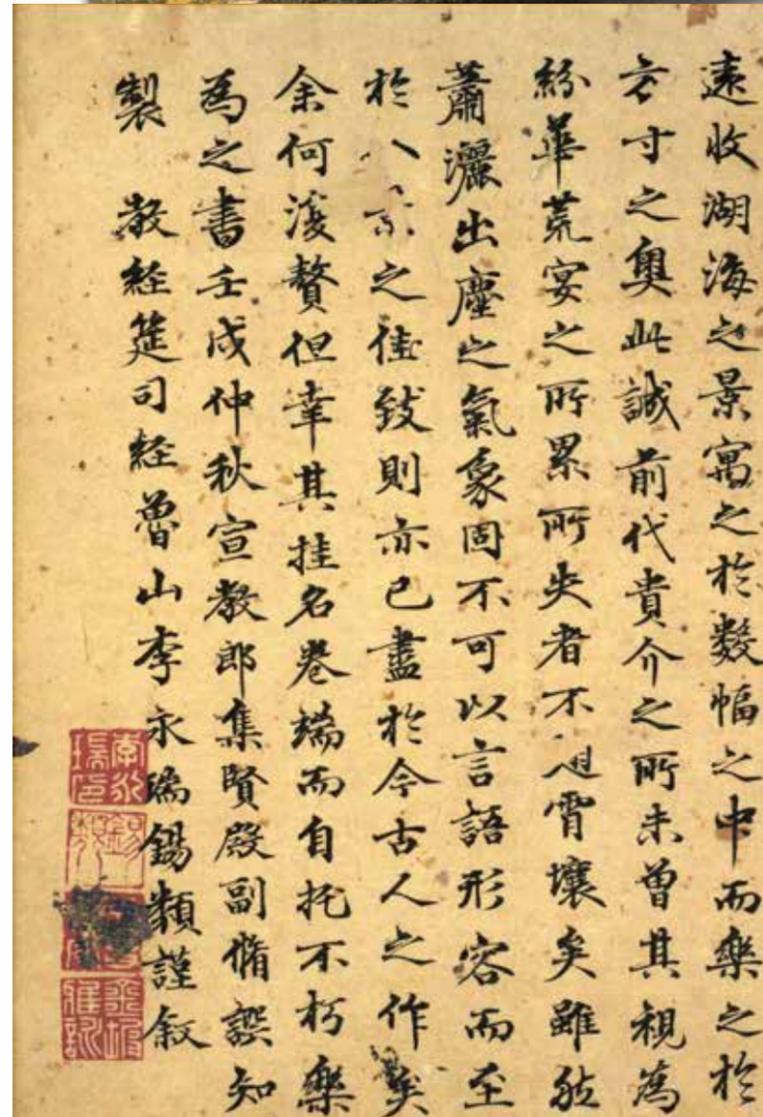
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