Introduction

Brahma and Indra, or Beomcheon (梵天) and Jeseok-cheon (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. Brahma 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 Brahma- 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 (676–935) in Korea and in the Nara period (710–794) in Japan. It is noteworthy that the Brahma- 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 Brahma- 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 Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha. Brahma was worshiped as the creator of the universe and as a symbol of the pure practitioner in the Brahmānism of ancient India. According to the Upanisads, the collected texts relating the philosophical concepts of Hinduism, Brahmā, longing for self-proliferation, created the world through tapas (苦行, ascetic practice) (Taittiriya Upanisad, 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.
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 kundaka 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 jewels, which alludes to the appearance of the Kṣatriyas. The Brahmās belong to the first and the Kṣatriyas to the second highest social classes of varna in ancient India, and their appearances are repeatedly 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 (on the path) and saving all beings (下生衆生), thus serving as the prototype for the Buddha 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 depictions of the life story of the Buddha. However, there does exist the image of Brahmā holding a conch shell, which his hair is tucked into the shape of a conch, which gained prominence after the sixth century and provided one of the iconographies for Brahmā during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (420–589) of China. This type of Brahmā with a tuft of hair on the head resembling a tussock which can be found in steles of seventh century Brahmās from the sixth century, as well as in the grottoes of Mt. Majishan (נטלון). Longmen (龍門), and Mt. Xiangtangshan (香山). They have been ambiguously identified as either donors or pratyekabuddhas (棒出者) who commissioned the images independently without assistance. Nonetheless, a Buddhist votive stele housed in the Chicago Art Institute in the USA and dated to 531, the 19th year of the Datong era (大 隆, 535–551) of the Western Wei (西魏, 535–550), 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 sutras translated into Chinese (Kim Lena 1991, 214–15). Brahmā-Sikhīn is a Buddhist figure that, among the Buddhist deities of the Buddhist cosmology (e.g., Buddhist, bodhisattvas, arhats, devas), represents devas. During the Tang dynasty (唐, 618–907), the production of Brahmā-Sikhīn 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 Mahāyāna (大乘) riding on a lion and Samantabhadra (施無畏) on an elephant. No images of Brahmā-Sikhīn have been actively 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 Brahmā and Indra Images in Seokguram Grotto**

**Iconography of the Brahmā and Indra Images and the Tadiouli jì jìng**

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 Daejong (김대종, 770–774) who was once a Prime Minister (Premier) in the 13th year of the reign of King Gyeongdeok (敬德王, 742–756) 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 kaśyapa, the robes of Buddhist monks and nuns, while...
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 halved 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 Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara represents a section of the Sūtra of the Great Vajra Practice Ground (T. 18, no. 901: 785ab; Ch. hoi–guang). According to the Buddhist dictionary Yiqie jing yinyi (一切經音義, Pronunciation and Meaning in the Complete Buddhist Canon) 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: 634c). Pagí thus indicates a winnowing basket, a container used to winnow grains. 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 (氍毹). 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: 711c).

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-
Iconography of Brahma and Indra in Seokguram Grotto: Its Origins and Formation

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 Brahmä and Indra holding a fly whisk in Seokguram faithfully follows prototypes from India.

The kündikā vase held in the left hand of Brahmä is the kumandala (川-logo, K. kogun) mentioned in the Tuoloni ji jing. It has two spouts, differing from the form of a vase with one spout generally depicted in boisahsattva images from the Tang dynasty. The kündikā held by Brahmä is not only a ritual utensil or Esoteric Buddhist instrument, but also a manifestation of the origin of the deity Brahmä out of a Brahman ascetic.

The kūšāya worn by the Seokguram Brahmä is also equivalent to that described in the Tuoloni ji jing. In Buddhist art, the kūšāya 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. 5. 4. no. 2126: 698c). Brahmä being dressed in kūšāya thus indicates his asceticism; in other words, Brahmä’s kūšāya mirrors his inherent ascetic aspect.

In the drapery of the Seokguram Brahmä, 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 Aitumātha Buddha discovered in Gamsansa Temple (甘泉寺) in Gyongju, Gyongsangbuk-do Province. The Udayana style is often exhibited in eighth-century Japanese Brahmä images of the Nara period, including a wooden Brahmä originally placed in the Jikidō (寄堂) of Hōryū-ji Temple (法隆寺). Nara (Fig. 6); a dry lacquer Brahmä in the Hokkedō (法華堂) of Todai-ji Temple (東大寺, Nara); and another dry lacquer Brahmä held by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, which was originally enshrined in Sō fukujō Temple (法福寺). Nara. These examples illustrate the internationality of eighth-century Brahmä images. However, the robe style of the Seokguram Brahmä differs from that of the illustrated reproduction of the eighth-century Brahmä on the door of a portable shrine in the Shōsōin Repository (正倉院), which was originally enshrined in Kaidan-in (応変院) of Todai-ji Temple (Fig. 7). The Japanese example wears Chinese shoes known as gōsūla (古頭履).
Arrangement of the Brahma– and Indra Images Interpret from the Perspective of Hwaenom

As mentioned above, the iconography of Brahmā and Indra images in Seokguram Grotto appears to have been based on the *Bore huaxiangfa* of the Taeanomi 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 Taeanomi 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 Siddhārtha deva (釋迦普天), 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* (般若經, *Prajñāpāramitā Mandala Ritual*) recorded in volume 5 of the *Taeanomi 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 *kundikā* to his right (north) and Indra holding a *vajra* to his left (south) (T. 18, no. 901: 807a). 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 (大毘天將), 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 *Taeanomi 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 a few survived today. A small number of existing ex-

**Arrangement of the Brahmā and Indra Images Interpreted from the Perspective of Hwaenom**

The *vajra* that the Seokguram Indra holds in his left hand is a five-pronged *vajra* (五銖鉢), which is an important reference for the actual *vajra* used at the time. The *Taeanomi ji jing* refers to five-pronged *vajra* as “great *vajra*” (大毘所鉢), and further describes their features and the techniques required for making them (*Taeanomi 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 Indian 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 document of Shōsōin present Sincized 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.

**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. 8)**

**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 ×177 cm, Tōdaiji Temple, Nara, Japan (Nara National Museum, Fig. 10)**

**Fig. 15. Mandala of the Kusha School of Buddhism, 12th-century reconstruction of the 8th-century original work. Color on silk. 164.5 ×177 cm, Tōdaiji Temple, Nara, Japan (Nara National Museum, Fig. 10)**

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**Fig. 15. Mandala of the Kusha School of Buddhism, 12th-century reconstruction of the 8th-century original work. Color on silk. 164.5 ×177 cm, Tōdaiji Temple, Nara, Japan (Nara National Museum, Fig. 10)**
Since the nature and name 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 Brahmá and Indra to the main Śaṅkumāra Buddha and examine its meaning.

Studies on Seokguram Grotto begin with the main Buddha. I first place the right hand in the “earth-touching” position, or bhūmisparśa mudrā, iconographically symbolizing the ultimate enlightenment of Śaṅkumāra and doctrinally correlated with Hwaeroam (佛護, Skr. Avatamsaka; Ch. Huayan) (Kim Lema 1989, 126–132; Hwang Soeyong 1987, 73–110). I thus attempt to examine the influence of Seokguram Grotto of the Huayan 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. Hwaeroam geuyong, or Flower Garland Sūtra, emphasizes the ultimate enlightenment of Śaṅkumāra 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 (geo. 航海僧) regarding the doctrines of the Three Bases of Samadhi (三本定; K. sambongjeong; the Samadhi of Sea Seal (海印定; K. haeinjeong); the Flower Garland Samadhi (佛華定; K. bulbhaeomjeong); and the Samadhi of Lion-like Moving with Reluctate Speed (獅子齧定; K. sajobunsinjeong) (Kim Daeseong, T. 45, no. 1871: 44a). This fact plays an important role in understanding Seokguram. Moreover, Hwaeroam thought appears to have affected the planning and construction of Seokguram in that, according to the records of “Daeseong kyo ieo buzo” (Daeseong Served His Parents with Filial Piety and Goodness) of the late eighth century Silla when Seokguram Grotto was constructed, and including huyan (花嚴, a term) of Tang, Uisang (義詳, 625–702) of Unified Silla, and Fazang of Tang. According to the record on Uisang in the chapter “Uihat” of the Samguk yusa, the Chinese characters “帝天” 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)4 which Fazang sent to Uisang and had a great effect on Unified Silla’s Hwaeroam school of Buddhist thought, can be examined (Kim Sanghyun 1986, 24–27):

Second is the difference in place. This Ekyāna (一 綱) refers to 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 completely. The appropriate teachings are preached in the realm of Ekyāna in a place appropriate to this realm of Buddhism (Fazang 1988, 193).

This segment implies that Indra’s net equates to the World of the Lotus Sanctuary, which is the ultimate stage of Hwaeroam, or the realm of Ekyāna. As the Huayan jing emphasizes the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly, Hwaeroam 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 Hwaeroam. The most notable instances are found in the various legacies of Fazang (641–711) and in the Huayan jing (T. 50, no. 2060: 2494, 498c)

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 is attained 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 Brahmá and Indra in the main chamber of the Four Heavenly Kings in the vestibule in Seokguram Grotto. Hwaeroam 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 (Beonggye dogi chongurek, T. 45, no. 1887: 71a; Huayan jing zhiguì, 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 (閻魔天) and the Tusita heaven (他事天), and evidences how the Hwaeroam sect considers the Trāyastriṃśa heaven assembly as the most notable. The Trāyastriṃśa heaven is related to Hwaeroam, it becomes possible that the grotto was impacted by Hwaeroam 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.

Hwaeroam gives profound doctrinal meaning to Indra of the Trāyastriṃśa heaven. It highlights the so-called endless realm-within-realm dharma-realms (無量無盡的法界), which is compared to the jeweled Net of Indra (因地網). The approach of the sphere that is like the jeweled Net of Indra (因地網) is one of the approaches of the ten mysteries of Hwaeroam (華嚴十玄門; Ch. Huayan shixuanmen) which provide the foundation of Hwaeroam philosophy. This term frequently appears in writings by Hwaeroam monks, including huyan (花嚴, a term)

1. Uisang asked his disciples to review this book and edited himself the table of contents. Sillim (使師), who resided at Bulguksa Temple and preached the teachings of Hwaeroam, had given lectures in the chapter “Uihat” of the Samguk yusa (四國史實) and translated “Huayan wuijiao” (華嚴五教), which Fazang sent to Uisang and had a great effect on Unified Silla’s Hwaeroam school of Buddhist thought, as can be examined (Kim Sanghyun 1986, 24–27).

2. Uisang asked his disciples to review this book and edited himself the table of contents. Sillim (使師), who resided at Bulguksa Temple and preached the teachings of Hwaeroam, had given lectures in the chapter “Uihat” of the Samguk yusa (四國史實) and translated “Huayan wuijiao” (華嚴五教), which Fazang sent to Uisang and had a great effect on Unified Silla’s Hwaeroam school of Buddhist thought, as can be examined (Kim Sanghyun 1986, 24–27).
Iconography of Brahma and Indra in Seokguram Grotto: its Origins and Formation

From the late Unified Silla (late eighth century) to the early Goryeo dynasty (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.

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

As seen above, Hwangok 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 abstract and speculative nature of Hwangok doctrine and faith. Certainly, however, further discussion and interpretation of the correlation between Hwangok and Esoteric Buddhist features in Seokguram Grotto are merited (Koh Ikjin 1989, 480; Hong Tunsik 1993, 167-179; Park Hyunggook 1998, 50-72).

493b: T. 51, no. 2074: 735b-736; T. 50, no. 2061: 871c.

Originally, Indra asked for preaching on the scripture in order to combat the army of Asura through the scripture, that is, the “Battle” chapter (§ 667), who maintained a friendship with Indra, but later, this topic frequently arose in Hwangok-related texts, including Usán’s sermon on Samadhi of Sea Seal (検三昧).

Furthermore, monks of the Hwangok school were believed to have entered into friendly relations with Indra. The Samguk yusa (吏議) through the Tang monk Daoxuan (道玄, 596–667), who maintained a friendship with Indra, but also worshipped and enshrined it. Moreover, Pyohun, a disciple of Usán, 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. 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” (buryting 環坐於法界) in Hwangok thinking (Kim Sanghyun 1984, 49). Additionally, Hwangok made Brahmā and Indra equal to bodhisattvas, consequently raising their status by means of diverse doctrinal explanations (Xin huayin jing lun, T. 36, no. 1735: 760a). This particular perspective and doctrine of Hwangok 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 Huayin jing (華嚴經), Su-trā of the Eleven-headed Avalokitēvara (十面觀音) in volume 4 of the Tuo-lo-uni jing (T. 901, 18: 812b-813c), and is classified as early Esoteric Buddhist iconography. However, if Hwangok influenced the overall structure of Seokguram Grotto, this Eleven-headed Avalokitēvara also needs to be investigated in the context of Hwangok. For instance, the Hwangok school monk Fazang related the Eleven-headed Avalokitēvara to Hwangok, explaining that Avalokitēvara preached the Shiyi-man Guanyin jing (十面觀音經, Su-trā of the Eleven-headed Avalokitēvara) at his abode on Mt. Guangmingshan (光明山) (Huayin jing tanxuan ji, T. 35, no. 1731: 471c). In the first year of the Shengong Era (607) of Empress We Zetian (武則天, r. 690–705), when the Khitans invaded Tang, Fazang built a sacred site for the Eleven-headed Avalokitēvara for Buddhist practice and meditation, enshrined a sculpture of the deity, and worshipped it, thus contributing to the defeat of the Khitans (Bingqiong kuausang jen, T. 79, no. 2054: 28b). In addition, it is written in the record of “Gyeongheung u song” (御興遇聖, Gyeongheung Encounters a Saint) in the chapter “Gamrong” (感應, Spiritual Responses to Sentient Beings) in volume 5 of the Samguk yusa that during Unified Silla in the reign of King Sinsun (聻文王, T. 681–694) a monk named Gyeongheung (御興) lay sick in bed. A nun came to see Gyeongheung and cured him by reciting the phrase, “A good friend can cure an illness” (善友病可治) from the Huayin jing and performing eleven different kinds of dances. This nun turned out to be a manifestation of the Eleven-headed Avalokitēvara.

As seen above, Hwangok 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 abstract and speculative nature of Hwangok doctrine and faith. Certainly, however, further discussion and interpretation of the correlation between Hwangok and Esoteric Buddhist features in Seokguram Grotto are merited (Koh Ikjin 1989, 480; Hong Tunsik 1993, 167-179; Park Hyunggook 1998, 50-72).

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

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Fig. 11. Indra (left) and Brahmā (right), main body of the first story of the Three-story Stone Pagoda Carved with Four Lions at Hwaomsa 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 Hwaesaomsa Temple (화서모사사) in Gurye, Jeollanam-do Province; the stone pagoda at Jangjeonsa Temple (장전사) in Mt. Geumgangsan, Gwangju-do Province; the stone pagoda in Imha-dong, Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda at Yonghwasa Temple (용화사) in Sangju, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda of Daejeonsa Temple (대전사) in Cheongdo, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province; a fragment of the stone pagoda of Beopjusa Temple (보국사) in Cheongju, Chungcheongbuk-do Province; and a fragment of a stone pagoda at Jangyeonsa Temple (장연사) in Imha-dong, Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (Fig. 12).

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 Brahmā and Indra sculptures of Middle Esoteric Buddhism from the early Heian Period (794–1185), which include those in the Kōdō Hall (焼討) of the Nara Temple (奈良의사지주), 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 the Brahmā and Indra iconographies in Seokguram Grotto. The winnowing basket-shaped halos (불사물로 문양,) guya pedestals, attributes, and garments of the Seokguram Brahmā and Indra are associated with the early Esoteric Buddhist scripture Taolooni 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 Hwaesaomsa 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 Hwaesaom, 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 Brahmā and Indra, setting it apart from those of China and Japan.

Translated by Park Seokhun

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Fig. 12. Petrogram of Indra (left) and Brahmā (right) from the gilt-bronze hexagonal pillar; Skr. Dhāraṇī-samucayāvatāra-sūtra (Collection of Long Discourses). T. 1, no. 1.