

<ABSTRACT>

The Dating of Iron Buddha Image of the Unified Silla Dynasty -with particular reference to the seated Iron Buddha Image in Unsan-myŏn, Ssangnang-gun, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province-

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The present Iron Buddha is one of the most noteworthy images in the history of Korean Buddhist sculpture. However, not only is its provenance unknown, but its date of making has been inappropriately attributed to the Koryŏ dynasty, so that it has not received proper recognition.

It is recorded that this Buddha, in bhikkhuniśāstra, was removed from Unsan-myŏn, Ssangnang-gun, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. It is therefore very possible that this image was enshrined in Pongnosa, the most famous temple in the area, which since Paekche and throughout the Unified Silla and Koryŏ until Chosŏn, had a long tradition of keeping the Buddhist faith. The records, however, do not mention Pongnosa.

The Buddha sits with right shoulder covered and left shoulder bare, with the right hand in bhikkhuniśāstra. The image reflects the mature style of the Unified Silla period: the body is voluminous and substantial, and the drapery folds are in "ponp'asik" or wave pattern in which large and small ridges alternate. The broad shoulders, erect body and stable posture of the legs, the face influenced by the T'ong, and the modelling of the body, are all perfectly proportioned. The wave pattern of the drapery was popular during the Unified Silla Period, and this iron Buddha shows the style most clearly.

It is generally known that the casting of iron Buddha images began to flourish in Korea in the ninth century, but close inspection of the style and technique of this image argues that the technique was already practised in the mid-eighth century. In this article the writer has clarified the detailed process of casting iron image, and concluded that on the foundations of the techniques for casting bronze images and of modelling terra-cotta images, the casting of iron images was easily accomplished. In other words, the casting and modelling of the present Buddha image in the mid-eighth century was

possible through mastery of bronze -casting and terra -cotta sculpture. Without excellence of technique, creation of sculptural form could not be accomplished.

In China, Buddhist images in cast iron were made on account of a shortage of bronze, and it is said that their manufacture flourished during the T'ang period ; however, no actual examples remain from that time, and the majority date from the Song dynasty. In Japan, the manufacture of iron images began in the thirteenth century during the Kamakura period. Compared to this, in Korea there are five iron Buddha images from the Unified Silla Period, among which this Buddha is certainly the earliest and the most remarkable.

The expression of prana(breath) filling and expanding the vessel of the body, the stable proportions, the buoyant drapery, and perfect technique, all are the product of the most mature period of Unified Silla, and may be compared with the S kkuram Buddha image.

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On the Stele of My nghwalsan -Sansong Fortress

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This fortification, situated to the east of the Silla capital, is an outer fortification with the function of protecting the city. According to Samguk sagi, it was built before the fourth year of the reign of King Silsang (before A.D. 405), and was one of the earliest such fortifications to be built. In the reigns of King Chabi and King Soji (A.D. 475-488), it was even used as a dwelling-place. This fortification has earthen walls approximately 5km long, and about 4.5km of stone walls. On the 26th of August 1988, on the northwest side of the stone wall, the stele known as My nghwalsansong chak-songbi (Stele of the construction of the Mt. My nghwal fortification) was discovered. It is a record of the construction.

The stele measures 66.8cm in height, 31.0cm at its greatest width, and 16.5cm thick. It bears an inscription of 148 characters, the contents of which are as follows :

1. Preface with the cyclical date of construction
2. Name of the overseer of the building work
3. Names of the contractors, and the lengths of wall for which they were responsible.
4. Location of the construction.
5. Numbers of those employed in construction.
6. Duration of the construction.
7. Name of the writer of the inscription.

The stele was erected in the 12th year of King Chinh ng(551), in order to make clear the division of responsibilities and to commemorate the participation in the construction of the fortifications.

In the former territory of the Silla kingdom, several such ch'uksongbi (fortification - building steles) have been found in Namsan, Kyongju (A.D. 591), but this is the first one to have been found in the Mt. My nghwal.

With the discovery of this stele, one can begin to understand the organization of such construction work in the 6th century. The similar steles from Namsan Shinsongbi record the names in one body on each stele, but here they are divided into three smaller divisions.

On this stele, the duration of construction is recorded as having taken 35 days, so the building of such fortifications did not take many months as has been commonly believed. Also the names of professions such as sang'in nadu (head of patrolmen), chang'in (craftsmen), s sain (writer or calligrapher), previously unknown, are recorded. Particularly, the two characters after kunjung, in the second stele from Namsan shin - s'ngbi, previously undeciphered, can now be read as kunjung sang'in (leader of group), according to the evidence from the My nghwalsan stele. Moreover, the My nghwalsan stele has many features in common with the Namsan stele, so that they provide important complementary epigraphical materials.

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Report on Excavation of Tomb Tomb of Kang H i -an

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The research team of the National Museum of Korea has excavated the tomb of Kang H i -an for four days May 22 through 25, 1987 after it had been discovered in a low mountain in K mgok-dong, Changdan -my n, Changdan -gua Ky nggi -do Province near the demilitarized zone(DMZ) along the armistice line. Kang was a famous confucian scholar and literati -painter(1419-1464).

Kang's tomb was accidentally found by members of the Song family visiting the area to visit their ancestor's grave. The Kang family, after deciding to remove the remains of Kang H i -an to the tomb of his younger brother, Kang H i -maeng(1424-1483), in Shihfng, Ky nggi -do Province, reported the discovery to the National Museum of Korea, which decided to excavate and conduct research of the tomb.

Kang H i -an's mound was a 8-meter diameter. Two low stone tables were on either side of the tomb. A stone lantern was between the two stone tables. There was a robber's hole with a 60cm-diameter in the middle of the mound.

Excavation revealed that a 220cm-long wooden coffin appears to have been buried in the 260cm-long, 150cm-deep and 80cm-wide pit. The coffin and bones had already been completely decomposed, leaving no traces. Relics from the tomb were iron cramps and nails, 13 beads, a brass spoon and a pair of brass chopsticks. The Iron cramps and nails were obviously for the coffin, and the funerary objects of 13 beads found at the right side of the position of the head are thought to have once decorated Kang's headgears. The spoon positioned at the right side of the feet was found to be of the same type as those of the early Chos n period.

The tomb of Kang's wife below his own was completely flattened, level with the ground. Excavation showed this tomb was as large as Kang's and a number of Iron cramps and nails were retrieved.

The tombs of Kang and his wife dating from the late 15th century, whose pit walls were left plain, differ from tombs from the middle and later periods in that in the later tombs spaces between pit walls and coffin were filled with substance composed of earth, sand and lime at the rate of 1 : 2 : 3.

In view of the fact that there are only a few reports of excavation of Chos n tombs especially tombs of confirmed dates or of persons of confirmed social standing--the excavation and research of Kang H i -an's tomb is important for dating of Chos n tombs and study of their historical changes.

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