

King Gojong's Portrait and the Advent of Photography in Korea

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Introduction

During the late 19th and early 20th century, photos of King Gojong (高宗, r. 1863-1907) frequently appeared in various Western and Japanese print media, travel brochures, and geographical texts. These photos usually accompanied news coverage of the Great Han Empire (大韓帝國, 1897-1910), the Korean empire that succeeded the Joseon Dynasty, as the world pondered the fate of Korea amidst the Sino-Japanese War, and the territorial and political disputes between Japan and imperialist European countries, and then finally under Japanese colonization. However, in sharp contrast with images of European kings or the Japanese emperor, who were always photographed wearing official royal uniforms, King Gojong was typically shown in traditional gowns, symbolizing an unsophisticated, backward nation that needed to be civilized. After Korea was colonized by Japan, these photos were seen as images of a defeated, conquered nation, and were often sold to foreigners as souvenir postcards.

Although most of these photos were taken by visiting foreigners, they were not simply random snapshots; in fact, they were taken under strict conditions with the king's permission. Therefore, before these pictures were ever seen by outsiders, the images were carefully composed, with the king's background, attire, and pose all painstakingly selected for foreign consumption. In light of such circumstances, it is important to closely examine how the advent of photography altered the representation and meaning of royal portraits from the Great Han Empire.

King Gojong left behind numerous portraits, more than any other Joseon monarch. This proliferation was made possible by the emergence in Korea of new mediums such as oil painting and photography around the end of the 19th century, marking a turning point in traditional art. However, the portraits were created with a political agenda in mind, as the king attempted to strengthen the legitimacy of his throne. In order to examine the hidden gaze behind the perception of the "fallen Joseon king," this paper looks at how the public consciousness and political function of royal portraits changed after the introduction of photography, from the 1880s through the duration of the Great Han Empire.

Changing Roles of the King's Portrait

Throughout the Joseon Dynasty, royal portraits served as objects of worship in state rituals, but they also symbolically projected the legitimacy of the crown. Unlike the traditions associated with Western portraiture, portraits of Joseon rulers were produced under careful observation according to strict regulations. Once a portrait was completed and consecrated into a royal shrine, it was forbidden for anyone outside the palace to see it. Notably, it was not the painting alone which served as a sacrament projecting the legitimacy of the Joseon monarchy, but the combination of the portrait, the rituals, and the royal portrait halls where the portraits were enshrined. Therefore, the symbolic role of royal portraits did not rest in the images themselves, but in the protocols

of the institution that surrounded them. This explains why, even after the Joseon Dynasty opened its ports to international trade, the royal portraits were never shown to foreign guests. For example, in William Elliot Griffis' book *Corea, Without and Within*, published in 1885, the illustration *King and Queen of Corea* (Fig. 1) shows the Joseon monarchs wearing Chinese-style gowns, demonstrating that, at that time, westerners were still relying heavily on their imagination to conjure up images of the Joseon king.

During the early years of modernization, the portraits of heads of state were commonly exchanged at official state gatherings or distributed to diplomatic offices, as symbols of national sovereignty and power. In 1872, the Japanese emperor was photographed for a portrait to be used for diplomatic purposes. By the early 1880s, when diplomatic ties were being established, European countries were asking for a royal portrait of the Joseon sovereign, but this request would go unfulfilled until 1883 at the earliest. It was under these circumstances that King Gojong started being photographed.

The earliest surviving photograph of King Gojong was taken by Percival Lowell (1855-1916) in 1884. At the start of the 1880s, the Joseon Dynasty was beginning to import Western technology and culture from China and Japan, and the first photographic equipment was introduced to the Korean peninsula at this time. Between 1883 and 1884, the first Korean photo studios were founded by Kim Yongwon (金鏞元, 1842-92), Ji Unyeong (池運永, 1851-1935), and Hwang Cheol (黃鐵, 1864-1930) (Choe Injin 83-118). Kim Yongwon and Ji Unyeong were court painters and bureaucrats who both studied photography after it filtered in from Japan. In particular, Ji Unyeong was given special tax-allowances from the government to import photographic equipment from Japan, and in 1884, he was given permission to photograph King Gojong. The fact that King Gojong was among the first Koreans captured by the lens of the newly-introduced camera illustrates that photography was being actively sponsored by the Joseon government as part of their efforts to welcome modern Western technology (Yun Chiho 2001, 91-92).

The whereabouts of Ji Unyeong's photographed portrait of King Gojong are still unconfirmed, but Percival Lowell took a photograph of the Joseon monarch on the very same day, and that picture was included in Lowell's photo album, which is pres-



Fig. 1. *King and Queen of Corea*. 1885. Illustration from *Corea, Without and Within* by William Elliot Griffis (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication), p. 211.



Fig. 2. *His Majesty the King of Korea*, by Percival Lowell. 1884. Photograph from *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm: A Sketch of Korea* by Percival Lowell. 1885. (London: Trübner).

ently in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as well as his book, *Chosŏn, the Land of the Morning Calm* (1885).¹ In 1883, Lowell was invited to stay in Korea and serve as a general councilor during the exchange of ratifications of *Jo-Mi suho joyak* (朝美修好條約, Joseon-U.S. Friendship

¹ After Lowell graduated in physics from Harvard University in 1876, he took a trip to Asia. During his stay in Japan, he served as a councilor to a special Korean diplomatic procession to the U.S. After visiting Korea, he returned to Japan and wrote a book about Korea. He also wrote books emphasizing Japanese culture, including *Soul of the Far East* (1888) and *Occult Japan* (1895). In 1893, he returned to the U.S. and began concentrating on astronomy. He eventually became a prominent astronomer, known for being the first to predict the existence of Pluto and for his books *Mars and Its Canals* (1906) and *The Genesis of the Planets* (1916).

Treaty). He was the first Westerner to receive an official invitation from the Joseon monarch, and during his stay he was given special permission from the government to photograph the palace, as well as the outskirts of Seoul. Before returning to Japan in March 1884, Lowell was given two opportunities to photograph the Joseon monarch and the crown prince on March 10 and 13, 1884 (Yun Chiho 2001, 91-92). Lowell's photos—*His Majesty the King of Korea* and *The Crown Prince of Korea* (Figs. 2, 3 and 4)—were taken at Nongsujeong Pavilion (濃繡亭) inside Changdeokgung Palace (昌德宮), an area often used to welcome foreign envoys. The pictures might even be a reenactment of Lowell's first meeting with the monarch in the wintery month of December 1883, when the king sat behind a western-style desk in an open, carpeted pavilion (Lowell 1885, 158). The three photos were taken in the same location, but in Fig. 2 and Fig. 4, large ceremonial censers can be seen on either side of the pavilion steps. The censers are absent from Fig. 3, indicating that they were purposefully re-arranged during the photography session. In addition to the mindful positioning of the censers, the meticulously arranged space with a western-style carpet and chair demonstrates the conscious effort that went into presenting the Joseon monarch to the world and emphasizing the Joseon Dynasty's positive attitude towards modernization.

Lowell's photos mark the first time that a Joseon monarch attempted to cultivate an image specifically for foreign diplomatic purposes, rather than traditional ritualistic purposes. In 1897, Isabella L. Bird (1831-1904) asked to take King Gojong's portrait on behalf of England's Queen Victoria (r. 1837-1901), and he enthusiastically agreed, again showing great interest in cameras. Thereafter, the king took it as part of his diplomatic duties to have his photograph taken by foreigners (Bird 1898, 259).

Another noteworthy aspect of Lowell's photographs is that they feature the king together with the crown prince. *The Crown Prince of Korea* (Fig. 4) is the only picture taken of Crown Prince Yi Cheok (李拓, 1874-1926, thereafter known as Emperor Sunjong) when he was ten years old. From this point forward, whenever King Gojong was being photographed, he enthusiastically insisted that his son be photographed as well, so that the prince had an equal chance to be recognized and documented by foreigners (Bird 1898, 259-260). Then, starting in

the late 1880s, the king began sitting for portraits together with his son (Fig. 5). Interestingly, around the same time, while the Great Han Empire was being represented by images of the Joseon emperor and his son, the Japanese emperor began posing for official portraits with his empress. According to Japanese art historian Wakakuwa Midori, the idea to create and distribute photographic portraits featuring the Japanese emperor together with his wife was conceived in order to symbolize western-style monogamy, and to demonstrate that Japan was an enlightened, progressive modern country, with a culture similar to that of the West. In contrast, the portraits of King Gojong with his son clearly presented the patrimony of the Joseon Dynasty. While several pictures still remain of Gojong with his son, photos of Queen Myeongseong (posthumously known as Empress Myeongseong, in accordance with King Gojong's pronouncement of the Great Han Empire) are conspicuously absent. Her absence implies that the area in front of the camera was seen as public space. During the 1880s, Confucianism still dominated the collective consciousness of the Joseon people, so the area in front of a male photographer was considered a diplomatic or public arena where only men were allowed to enter.

The National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C. has two portraits of the Joseon monarch (1884), which are marked with the caption "Creator: Higuchi," implying that they were sold and circulated by a Japanese man named Higuchi. One of the two portraits is a cropped photo of King Gojong signed by Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt (Fig. 6). This signature indicates that this picture was most likely an official portrait of the monarch used for executive purposes, as Commodore Shufeldt was a U.S. representative at *Jo-Mi suho joyak* (朝美修好條約, Joseon-U.S. Friendship Treaty) in 1882. These details show that the portrait photographs of the monarch taken in 1884 played an official role in representing the Joseon crown until the 1890s. Among them, Lowell's portrait can be seen as the basis of all the most familiar representations of King Gojong, including Antonio Zeno Shindler's 1892 oil painting *The Joseon King*, and the king's first portrait to be introduced in Japan, printed in the *True Records of the Chinese-Japanese War* (日清戰爭實記, 1894), published at the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war.



Fig. 5. *The Korean King and Crown Prince* by Taylor Thiriat. 1892. Photogravure printing based on a photograph from "Voyage en Corée," *Le Tour du Monde* by Charles Varat. 1892. (Paris: Hachette).

King Gojong's Portrait within the Media

After Japan defeated the Chinese in the Sino-Japanese war, Queen Myeongseong advocated for stronger ties between Korea and Russia, hoping to prevent Japan from interfering in Joseon political affairs. In response, in 1895, a team of Japanese assassins entered Gyeongbokgung Palace and murdered the queen, forcing the king to take refuge in the Russian consulate in 1896. One year later, Gojong returned to Deoksugung Palace and proclaimed the founding of the Great Han Empire, declaring himself emperor. This series of political events focused international attention on the tense relationship between Japan, Korea, and Russia, and it was at this juncture that King Gojong's portrait began to actively circulate among international magazines, lithographs, and



Fig. 6. *The King of Korea* ("Creator: Higuchi"), taken in the East Palace of Changdeokgung Palace. 1884. Photograph. (Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives).

other media from England, France, Japan, and many other countries. Meanwhile, in Korea, copies of the king's portrait were distributed among the people as a way to boost patriotism. When King Gojong took up residence at the Russian consulate, the Joseon people were left feeling bewildered and distressed. Thus, upon the king's return, his advisors exhorted him to take measures to increase national patriotism in order to restore people's loyalty and allegiance. For example, in the September 22, 1896 issue of *Dongnip Sinmun* (동nip신문), some Korean intellectuals argued that schools should teach students to stand and salute the picture of their ruler and the national flag in order to promote national sovereignty. Hence, the political function of royal portraits underwent another change, as Gojong's image was used to elicit patriotic allegiance within a turbulent political climate.

Interestingly, Christian missionaries were among the first people to exploit the propagandist power of King Gojong's portrait. The November 1896 issue of *The Korean Repository*, published by an American Methodist minister named Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858-1902), featured an article entitled "His Majesty, The King of Korea," with a picture of the monarch wearing traditional white mourning dress, an image in sharp contrast to his previous portraits (Fig. 7).² This photo was taken in 1895 at the Russian legation by Mrs. L. B. Graham of the United States

² *The Korean Repository* was first published by the Methodist minister F. Ohlinger in 1882, and was discontinued later that year. From 1895 to 1898 it was revived by Appenzeller.



Fig. 7. *His Majesty, The King of Korea* by L. B. Graham. 1896. Photograph from *The Korean Repository* in November 1896, p. 423.

legation, after the Japanese assassination of Queen Myeongseong. Then, the Russian diplomat to Korea, Hon. C. Waeber, obtained the king's consent to publish the picture in the magazine. Even though the publisher of the magazine was foreign, this represented the first time that a Joseon monarch had ever permitted his image to be circulated domestically and internationally through mainstream media. The accompanying article describes King Gojong as a highly learned and civilized monarch, in possession of great insight and memory. The article and picture were also published in both *The Kobe Chronicle* (December 14, 1896) and *The Japan Advertiser* (December 16, 1896), with the additional comment "A portrait of a great king with a strong presence." The photo also ran in *The North-China Herald* (a British-published, English-language paper in China) on December 18, 1896, along with this sympathetic caption and quotation from *Hamlet*:

A charming old gentleman for an afternoon tea party. From his appearance, he must be constantly repeating to himself Hamlet's cry of despair,
*"The time is out of joint. Oh, cursed spite
 That ever I was born to set it right!"*

The decision to publish the photo of King Gojong in mourning attire was a reflection of American and Russian criticism of the Japanese assassination of Queen Myeongseong. In addition, the accompanying article praised King Gojong as an enlightened ruler, further emphasizing the attempt to keep Japan politically in check. Still, King Gojong must have been quite anxious to restore the tarnished image of his reign to have submitted to being photographed in his mourning dress, and then have the picture published internationally.

Yet another example of the dissemination of the king's portrait involved an advertisement in a special issue of *Geuriseudo Sinmun* (기독교신문, "The Christian Newspaper") from July 15, 1897. The paper was owned by Horace G. Underwood, a Presbyterian missionary from the U.S., who published a special issue to commemorate the monarch's birthday, in which he offered a free photolithograph of the king with the purchase of a one-year subscription. The actual photo has not survived, but the evidence of the promotion provides an important clue about how the king's portrait was employed by mass media. The motive behind this promotion was not as simple as it initially appeared, as Underwood was not simply hoping to distribute copies of the royal portrait or increase the circulation of his newspaper. In fact, the promotion was linked to a massive Christian worship service that Underwood was planning for the king's birthday. With the portrait and the commemorative service, attended by more than 2000 people, Underwood was emphasizing that King Gojong's royal authority had been bestowed by God, and that Christianity was the religion of loyalty and patriotism (Yi Manyeol 2001). Underwood needed the king's full, enthusiastic support to spread Christianity in Korea, so he organized the special service and distributed the royal portrait to show Gojong that he had the unconditional support of the Christian church.

While the distribution of the royal portrait in *The Korean Repository* was meant for Westerners, the photo in Underwood's newspaper targeted the Joseon people in an effort to build up public opinion. Notably, Underwood's photo was released while the king was secluded at the Russian consulate, preparing to proclaim the founding of the Great Han Empire. Considering that the king gave Underwood permission to print this specific picture around a

month before the publication, it would seem that the purpose of this photo went beyond Underwood's plan to propagate Christianity. Specifically, it was part of a strategic plan enacted by the king and his advisors to arouse the nation's patriotic fervor as Gojong prepared to declare himself emperor.

Commercialization and Regulation of the Royal Portrait

By the time he announced the founding of the Great Han Empire in 1897, Emperor Gojong was well aware of the political capacity of his pictures. In that case, what context were his portraits produced and distributed in, as he began urgently strengthening his sovereignty? In the West, the *carte de visite* (small cards bearing a person's photograph) became widespread in the 1860s, and national leaders actively used photographic images to portray themselves as new rulers of modern states. For example, Queen Victoria, rather than taking the conventional route and posing for a traditional portrait by herself, opted for an intimate photograph with her husband. By allowing this new portrait to be merchandized, she was recreating her image to represent herself as the queen of a new modern state (Homans 1998). On the other hand, the Emperor of Japan used his portrait as a political tool during the Meiji period. Instead of being merchandized like the photo of Queen Victoria, the Japanese emperor's portrait was sanctified. The Meiji government commissioned an official portrait of the emperor, which was then distributed nationwide to be hung in public institutions and schools under strict regulation and management, with various protocols involved (Taki Koji 2002). Through such consecration, the photo became a visual means for promoting the uniquely Japanese nationalism that transformed the emperor into the godhead.

The situation in Korea presented yet another example. As mentioned, the monarch clearly recognized the mainstream power and the political capacity of his photographs. However, even when he was founding the Great Han Empire, Gojong did not attempt to strengthen his dominion by producing or distributing any "official" portraits of himself. Clearly, some basic conditions limited the production and distribution of royal portraits in Korea, such

as the lack of technical expertise, the substandard photographic technology, and the underdeveloped mass media. In fact, royal portraits were primarily merchandized by either Westerners or the Japanese.

The most widely disseminated image from the Great Han Empire was the photo entitled *The King and the Crown Prince of Korea* (Fig. 8), estimated to be from around 1900. Throughout the duration of the Great Han Empire, this picture was frequently reprinted and circulated in virtually every type of print media, including newspapers and textbooks. In the photo, the emperor wears the military uniform of the Commander-in-Chief, while the crown prince wears the military uniform of the Vice Commander-in-Chief, in accordance with the new national codes for royal attire that had recently been established. The full dress military uniform worn by Emperor Gojong announced to those at home and abroad that he was a modern ruler with full command over the military and naval forces of the Great Han Empire.



Fig.8. *The King and the Crown Prince of Korea* (postcard), published by Karl Lewis, a photographer in Yokohama, Japan. Period unknown.



Fig. 9. Postage stamp commemorating 1902 as the 40th year of Emperor Gojong's reign. Printed in *Korean Postal History 1884-1905* by Meiso Mizuhara. 1993. (Tokyo: Japan Philatelic Society Foundation), p. 284.

On the other hand, his son's gaze and posture are both somewhat askew, giving him an unsettled look that does not convey a strong positive image of the Great Han Empire. At the bottom of the postcard is the name of the photographer, Karl Lewis, who manufactured and merchandized this picture from Yokohama, Japan.³ At the start of the Meiji Restoration, Yokohama was home to a large industry producing pictures exclusively for foreigners, generally consisting of Japanese landscapes or pictures of geishas. Emperor Gojong's portrait was produced and sold alongside such souvenir items, confirming that he only allowed foreigners to take his photograph for diplomatic purposes and was not directly involved with the dissemination of his image.

After Gojong officially proclaimed himself emperor, various emblems of the newfound state were promoted, but they did not include any portraits of the emperor. For example, in 1902, a stamp was issued to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Gojong's ascension to the throne, but rather than a portrait of the sovereign, it showed the *wonyugwan* (遠

遊冠), a traditional royal crown worn by Joseon kings on special occasions (Fig. 9) (Jeong Gyo 2004, 64; Mok Suhyeon 2004, 26-73). Gojong's image was not even featured on the nation's banknotes, which were instead decorated with other symbols of the Great Han Empire, such as the eagle, pear blossom, and Namdaemun Gate. According to Constance Taylor, the Joseon people thought it disrespectful to use the monarch's image on everyday items like money and stamps, which were easily dirtied from being passed back and forth (Taylor 1904, 37).

Actually, around this time, the use of the emperor's image became subject to regulation to prevent it from being recklessly merchandized by the public. In 1901, Murai Brothers Company (村井兄弟商會), a Kyoto-based tobacco company that entered the Korean market in 1899, tried to boost their cigarette sales by putting images of celebrities, dignitaries, and monarchs, including Emperor Gojong, on their cigarette packs. This action apparently did not go unnoticed, because from June 25 to 27, 1901, in both *Hwangseong Newspaper* (황성신문) and *Jeguk Newspaper* (제국신문), the following regulation appeared several times in large print: "From this time forward, it is prohibited to print any images of Emperor Gojong." At that time, it was a common marketing ploy to package products with pictures of famous people, such as well-known *gisaeng* (Korean female entertainers). But with the palace preparing for a large-scale celebration of Emperor Gojong's reign in 1902, they clearly frowned upon having a picture of the emperor equated the same status as other celebrated individuals, particularly a *gisaeng*. This episode offers evidence of the preventive measures taken by the palace to maintain the sanctity of the crown.

Imperial Symbols of the Great Han Empire

Portraits of the monarch were most actively produced in various mediums during the period from 1899, when the first modern constitutional law of the Great Han Empire was announced, until 1902. The latter year marked the 40th anniversary of Gojong's reign, and extensive preparations were made to commemorate this occasion. In 1901 and 1902, the palace held two separate events to produce official portraits of the emperor, resulting in a total of seven royal portraits. Examples include *Portrait of*

³ A contemporary western hand, signed with the initials N. N. V. has added in ink: "These are the rulers whose powers are, reading from left to right, zero and $\sqrt{\text{zero}}$. The Japanese take care of their country (Korea) for them."

Emperor Gojong by Hubert Vos (Fig. 10), the first oil painting ever painted in Korea, and *Portrait of Emperor Gojong* (高宗御眞) (1901) by Chae Yongsin (蔡龍臣) (Fig. 11). The portrait which best exemplifies how the monarch wanted himself to be seen is Joseph de la Nézière's *Official Portrait of the Korean Emperor* (Fig. 12), completed in 1902. According to the *La Vie Illustrée* from January 29, 1904, this image is not a photograph of the emperor, but a photograph of de la Nézière's painting of the emperor.

According to de la Nézière's personal records of his experience in Korea in 1902, when he asked to sketch a drawing of the emperor's face, Emperor Gojong entered wearing his imperial robes and sat on the royal throne, backgrounded by a large folding screen of the *Irworobongbyeong* (日月五峯屏, a royal folding screen showing a sun, moon, and five peaks, which represented the authority of the Emperor). The artist wrote that Emperor Gojong, in his golden robes, "matched well with the sun, moon, and mountains, to create a wonderful sight." His painting (Fig. 13) was executed in bright golds and oranges, capturing the distinctive quality he mentioned.

This portrait shows the emperor, adorned in his royal robes, sitting in the recently constructed Junghwajeon Hall (Han Yeongu 2002, 1-21). When Gojong returned from the Russian legation, he resided at Gyeongungung Palace (now Deoksugung Palace). At that time, Jeukjodang Hall was temporarily being used as the main hall where state affairs were conducted, but the space was rather cramped, with low ceilings. In fact, it was so small that neither the royal throne nor the royal folding screen could be installed. Thus, the emperor ordered the construction of Junghwajeon Hall to serve as the new main hall, in order to show off his imperial authority and sovereignty. So the space depicted in de la Nézière's painting represents the emperor and his authority.

The royal folding screen, with its sun, moon, and five peaks, was not the only imperial symbolism represented in the portrait. On top of his *hwangnyongpo* (黃龍袍, golden royal robe), Emperor Gojong wears a golden sash and a medal of the highest honor that was established during the Great Han Empire: *geumcheok daehunjang* (金尺大勳章). The choice to use *geumcheok* (金尺, golden scale) as a symbol of the Great Han Empire goes back to the old legend that King Taejo, the first king of the Joseon Dynasty, had a dream before he became king, in which he received

a *geumcheok*. After Taejo's kingship was established, the golden scale came to symbolize rule over heaven and earth (*Gojong sillok*, fourth month, fourth day, 1900; Jeong Gyo 2004, 22). In other words, this portrait is a virtual collage of both traditional and modern imperial symbols: the newly-constructed Junghwajeon Hall, the gold throne, the royal folding screen, the gold robe, and the medals with the gold scale. Therefore, the painting strongly reinforces the divine legitimacy of the imperial throne. But at the same time, the emperor's military-style medals worn over the traditional royal robe indicate that the Great



Fig. 10. *Portrait of Emperor Gojong*, by Hubert Vos. 1899. Oil on canvas, 91.8 x 198.9 cm. (Permanently consigned to National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea).

Han Empire was no longer a kingdom stuck in the past, but an emerging empire joining the ranks of the international order. As a westerner, de la Nézière was almost certainly unaware of the traditional Korean iconography behind the royal portrait, and so just faithfully painted what he saw. Thus, this portrait reveals exactly how Emperor Gojong wanted to be represented: as an absolute ruler inheriting the legitimacy of the Joseon Dynasty, as well as a sovereign of a modern nation.

This particular portrait also illustrates how Emperor Gojong and the Japanese emperor differed



Fig. 11. *Portrait of Emperor Gojong* (高宗御眞), by Chae Yongsin (蔡龍臣). Early 20th century. Light coloring on silk, 180 cm x 104 cm. (National Museum of Korea). The original painting was painted in 1901, but it has been lost. This is a surviving painting based on the original.



Fig. 12. *Official Portrait of the Korean Emperor*. 1903. Photograph of a painting by Joseph de la Nézière from *La Vie Illustrée: Journal Hebdomadaire* (Paris: Felix Juven) on January 29, 1904.

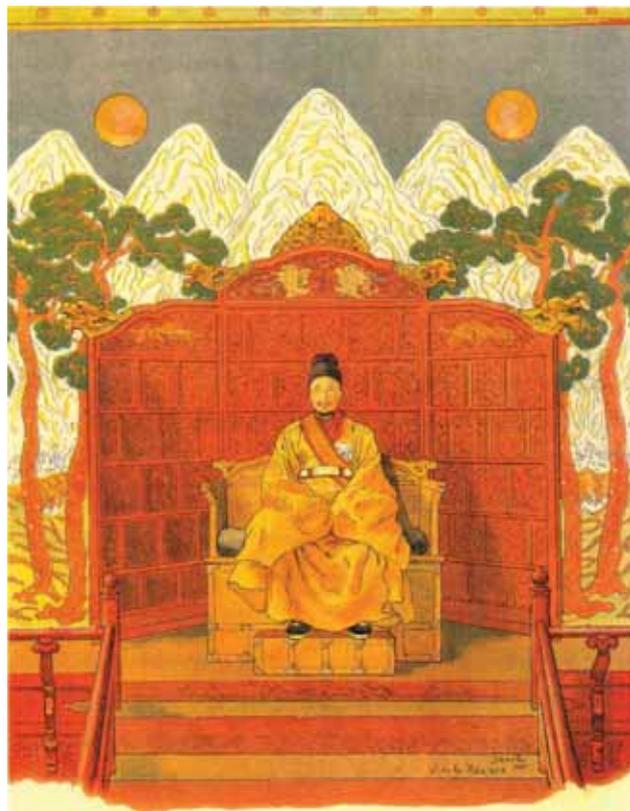


Fig. 13. *The Land of the Morning Calm, Official Portrait of the King* by Joseph de la Nézière. 1903. Illustration from *L'extrême-Orient en Images: Sibérie, Chine, Corée, Japon* (Paris: Felix Julien).



Fig. 14. *Eduardo Chiossone's Model of the Japanese Emperor*. 1888. Photograph. (Banknote and Postage Stamp Museum, Tokyo, Japan).



Fig. 15. *Meiji Emperor's Portraiture* (明治天皇 御眞影) by Uchida Kyuichi. 1889. Photograph of Eduardo Chiossone's black-and-white sketch of the Japanese Emperor. (Imperial Household Agency, Japan). Printed from *Tenno no shozo* (天皇の肖像, *Emperor's Portraiture*) by Taki, Koji (多木浩二). 2002. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten).

in their feelings towards producing portraits. The Japanese emperor did not intervene in any part of the production and distribution of his official portrait. He did not enjoy being photographed and did not feel comfortable wearing his newly issued Western-style uniform. Therefore, when the time came to produce a new portrait for official use in 1888, the Italian painter Eduardo Chiossone (1832-1898), who was invited to Japan to help design the first modern Japanese banknote, was asked to make a covert sketch of the emperor. Chiossone then took his black-and-white sketch of the emperor's face and merged it with a photograph of himself in an imperial military outfit (Fig. 14), before finally making another black-and-white sketch of the composite. The completed work was then photographed, and the resulting image is still used today as the Meiji Emperor's official portrait (Chiba Kei 2002, 114) (Fig. 15). In this impressive portrait, the Japanese sovereign sits confidently, filling the frame with his presence, with one hand tightly gripping a sword and the other resting on a table. This picture, being a composite of Chiossone's body and the emperor's face, literally shows the "emperor with a Westerner's physique," which was the manifestation of the type of sovereign

the Japanese people were seeking at the time: an emperor possessing hegemonic masculinity. Thus, this image strongly represented the modern nation Japan was striving to become. With bureaucratic strategy, this official portrait of the Meiji Emperor became a symbol of national unity. But it was the Meiji government, and not the emperor himself, who transformed this portrait into an idol to be worshipped by the nation.

On the other hand, unlike the Japanese emperor, Emperor Gojong was heavily involved in the creation of his portrait and actively modeled for both the camera and the canvas. Yet his images were not proactively utilized within the political arena. In terms of iconography, the portrait of the Japanese emperor adopted the traditions of Western portraiture, including the convention of showing the subject in three-quarters view. Thus, the final image succeeded in idealizing the emperor as a symbol of culture, masculinity, and the modern state. On the other hand, Emperor Gojong looked directly at the viewer while surrounded by traditional royal symbols that overshadowed the modern motifs in his portrait. In the end, those details served to reinforce his image as a traditional king.

Conclusion

This paper has examined many aspects of the production and distribution of King/Emperor Gojong's portrait from the 1880s to the 1900s, including the conception and context of the images, the shifting motivations behind the images, and their political capacity. During this period, portraits of the monarch were mostly created by Westerners, and the driving forces behind their distribution and process were just as diverse as the different styles of the portraits themselves. Notably, King Gojong was the first Joseon monarch to be photographed, and also the first to have his royal portrait circulated among the masses. Despite the fact that he was primarily photographed by foreigners, these images functioned outwardly as emblems representing the Joseon nation, while inwardly serving to elicit loyalty and allegiance among the *Gaehwapa* (開化派, Enlightenment Party) group of reformers, the general public, and the emperor's own political party.

The mass printing and distribution of royal portraits, as well as the changing awareness towards their political function (albeit slim), presented the opportunity to analyze the internal conditions in which this new visual medium was introduced and received at the beginning of the 20th century, as Korea entered a new modern age. However, the development of the political discourse of King Gojong was distinctly limited by the lack of photographic and printing technology, as well as the disappointing development of mass media, which was not advancing as smoothly as expected. As a result, King Gojong endeavored to use his portrait to strengthen his imperial power and bolster the traditional functions and protocols behind the crown. During King Gojong's reign, protocols related to the production of royal portraits were rapidly changing, even as many other traditions were being reinforced. As new forms of media emerged during King Gojong's reign, the traditional functions of royal portraits were not replaced with new roles, but those functions were expanded, as the portraits took on new political signification. ㄱ

TRANSLATED BY YUN HEEJIN

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