



Fig. 1. Gilt-bronze incense burner of Baekje from the Neungsan-ri temple site in Buyeo, Korea. Baekje. Height: 61.8 cm. (Buyeo National Museum).

Taoist Iconography of the Baekje Gilt-bronze Incense Burner

Park Kyungeun
Associate Curator, National Museum of Korea

Introduction

In 1993, archaeologists recovered a large and magnificent gilt-bronze incense burner (Fig. 1) from the site of an ancient Buddhist temple in present-day Buyeo, in South Chungcheong Province. The censer, now in the collection of the Buyeo National Museum and registered as Korean National Treasure 287, was created during the late Baekje Dynasty (百濟, 18 BCE-660 CE). It is shaped like the mythical Mt. Baksan (博山, Ch. Boshan), and its decorative details have strong Taoist associations. This article discusses the background, symbolism, and Taoist associations of the censer, which ranks among the most important Korean archaeological finds of the past twenty-five years.

Over its nearly 700-year period, the Baekje Kingdom had three different capitals: Hanseong, near present-day Seoul (18 BCE-475 CE); Ungjin, present-day Gongju (475-538); and Sabi, present-day Buyeo (538-660). The latter period is now known as “Sabi Baekje” (泗泚百濟). The Buyeo area is bounded by mountains to the north and east, and by the Baekma River to the west; the ancient capital itself was enclosed within the walls of Naseong Castle. To the east of the castle lies the Neungsan-ri Complex of Ancient Tombs, which is believed to be the burial site of the kings of Sabi Baekje.

During the 1992 excavations of a paddy field at Neungsan-ri, an ancient Buddhist temple site was discovered between the castle and the tomb complex.

In 1993, during the second archaeological investigation of the temple site, the remains of an ancient workshop were excavated. Near the smoke vent of the workshop, a wooden water tank was found, and the gilt-bronze incense burner was discovered inside the water tank, along with fragments of roof tiles, earthenware vessels, and jade objects. Other items recovered from the site included glass beads, materials and tools for crafting jade objects, and various types of metal objects, including filigree ornaments, open-work ornaments, and fragments of wind chimes.

The lid of the gilt-bronze incense burner is shaped like Mt. Baksan, the sacred mountain that is frequently depicted by Taoist incense burners. Censers shaped like Mt. Baksan are known in Korean as *baksan hyangno*; in Chinese, they are called *boshan xianglu* or *boshanlu* (博山香爐 or 博山爐), and in English, they are sometimes referred to as “hill censers.” Such censers have rarely been found in Korea. Because of its rarity, size (61.8 cm in height and 11.85 kg in weight), artistic sophistication, and diversity of pictorial details, this censer has attracted considerable scholarly attention (Yun Mubyeong 1994; Choi Eungchon 1999; Jo Yongjoong 2000; Park Kyungeun 2000; Kim Jarim 2006).

The censer consists of three components: the lid, the bowl, and the base. The lid is shaped like a series of mountain peaks, topped by a phoenix with its wings spread as if in flight. This mythical bird is known as a *bonghwang* in Korean, or a *fenghuang* (鳳凰) in Chinese. The bowl is decorated with lotus petals in high relief, and the pedestal is shaped like a

dragon. The three components were cast separately and then subsequently joined together. The bowl and base are connected by a short, thin rod that runs from the dragon's mouth through a hole in the bottom of the bowl, where it is secured with a small tube. A variety of animals and human figures can be found among the mountain peaks on the lid, including people in diverse poses, wild animals (e.g., tigers and wild boars), imaginary creatures, as well as trees, rocks, stream, and mountain paths. Five birds and five humans with musical instruments appear near the top of the lid, just below the phoenix. Each of the lotus petals on the bowl frames a figure of an animal or person; the represented figures include water-fowls, crocodiles, lizards, flying fish, four-legged animals that live near streams, as well as two immortals wearing long hats and robes made from feathers. Forming the base, the coiled dragon raises its head so that the end of its snout nearly touches the bottom of the bowl.

In order to better understand the background and production of the Baekje incense burner, it is necessary to examine the traditional meaning of the motifs, including the ways in which their meaning changed over time. Furthermore, it is important to understand why the Baekje incense burner was used in Neungsan-ri temple of Baekje, and how its motifs operated in the context of production and consumption of the censer. An analysis of those reasons will enhance our understanding of the censer's production, function, and purpose, as well as the intentions of those who created and used the censer.¹

This paper investigates the traditional meaning of the Taoist motifs represented on the incense burner, including the ways in which the Baekje interpretation of those motifs differed from the Chinese tradition. Moreover, by exploring both the reasons for the censer's creation and the context of its use within the socio-political context of the late Baekje, this paper argues that the censer was meant to serve as a political symbol representing a new type of Taoist worldview.

¹ *Fragrance of Korea* (Korea Foundation 2005), a catalogue with English text about the Baekje censer, unfortunately failed to consider the context and background of the production of *baksan hyangno* in Baekje or the originality of the Baekje censer, which surpassed the tradition of Chinese *baksan hyangno*.

I. Sabi Baekje and the Neungsan-ri Site

In 538, King Seong (聖王, r. 523-554) moved the Baekje capital from Ungjin to Sabi, where the surrounding mountains and Baekma River offered advantageous natural defenses, while the vast plains proved an excellent economic resource. In preparation for the capital's transfer, Sabi was constructed as a planned city with an infrastructure that included the town, royal palace, government office buildings, various production facilities, and roads. In conjunction with the transfer, King Seong restructured the Baekje state, reorganizing the Buddhist sects, creating a hierarchy of sixteen ranks for government officials, and implementing the *bang-gun-seong* system (方郡城制, the new governing system of regional provinces) and the twenty-two departments of the central government. All of these initiatives were intended to consolidate the ruling order and royal authority, thus reviving the nation. Under King Seong, Baekje had regained its former territory in the Han River basin, though that territory was soon lost to the Silla Kingdom (新羅, 57 BCE-935 CE). In the wake of that loss, King Seong launched an attack against Silla, but he was killed in 554 at the battle of Gwansanseong Castle, a crushing defeat for Baekje. His son Prince Chang (昌王), who insisted on that war, and also fought in the battle, succeeded him as King Wideok (威德王, r. 554-598), and subsequently spent much of the mid-sixth century trying to stabilize the nation amidst the tremendous political pressures resulting from his father's death and the military defeat at Gwansanseong Castle.

In 1995, a stone sarira reliquary was excavated from the remains of a wooden pagoda at the Neungsan-ri temple site (Fig. 2). The inscription on the front of the reliquary states that the Buddhist temple was built in 567, commissioned by King Wideok and his sister. However, the results of the full excavation of the site suggest that some buildings, including the lecture hall and workshop, were actually built in the mid-sixth century, prior to 567. The two-story lecture hall, which was located at the highest elevation point of the temple grounds, had two rooms, which was unusual for a Buddhist lecture hall. The west room had a stone base where ancestral tablets were likely placed. The unique configuration of the lecture hall recalls structures of Dongdaeja (東臺子) where large-scale ancestral rites were performed during the



Fig. 2. Stone sarira reliquary from the Neungsan-ri temple site in Buyeo, Korea. Baekje, 567. Height: 74.0 cm. (Buyeo National Museum).

Goguryeo Dynasty (37 BCE-668 CE), suggesting that some buildings constructed prior to the inscribed date of 567 may have been used for such rites (Kim Jongman 2000). In the mid-sixth century, King Wideok sought to overcome Baekje's political crisis and strengthen the royal power through various measures at both the domestic and international level. Therefore, it seems likely that those efforts included the construction of a group of buildings (which later became a Buddhist temple) next to the tomb complex at Neungsan-ri, where King Seong is believed to have been buried. The temple was likely intended as a place for ancestral rites to be carried out and for Buddhist rituals to offer prayers for the happiness of King Seong in the afterlife.

II. Taoist Iconography of the Baekje Incense Burner

I. Sacred Mountains and Immortality

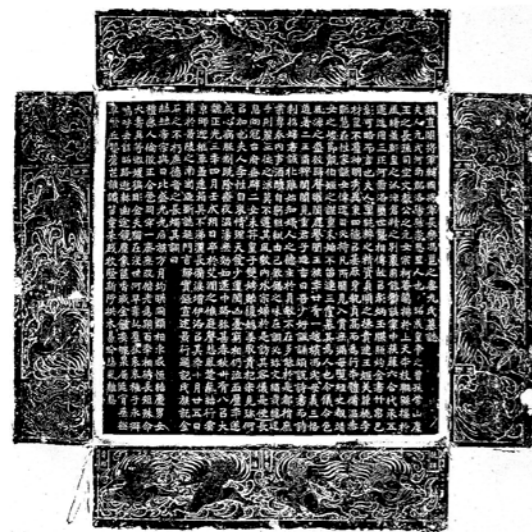
The ten peaks that encircle the base of the censer's conical lid ascend in four tiers. Various animals inhabit the peaks, including elks, snarling tigers, an

elephant with a small figure on its back, wild boars with their tongues extended, a monkey licking its paw, feral dogs striding around the ridges, a bird swallowing prey, and some type of beast biting a snake. This frightening world of wild beasts living according to the law of the jungle is a type of imagery traditionally associated with depictions of the sacred mountains of the immortals, and is a motif typically encountered on Chinese *baksan hyangno* from the Han Dynasty (漢朝, 206 BCE-220 CE).

Most intriguingly, the inhabitants of this wild kingdom include some creatures with both animal and human features. Such mythical beings represent Taoist spirits, who were believed to have special powers. Two of the creatures are beasts with ghastly faces, shaggy manes, and talons like those of a bird of prey (Fig. 1a). The creatures wear short pants, but are nude from the waist up, and they run upright on two legs, waving their arms. Images of such creatures were more widely used in East Asia from the fifth through the seventh centuries, and frequently appear on walls or artifacts from excavated tombs in China and Korea. For example, twenty-two such creatures appear on an epitaph tablet and its cover of Lady Yuan, the wife of Feng Yong (馮邕) and a Yuan clan member of the Northern Wei Dynasty (北魏朝, 386-534) (Fig. 3, dated 522, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Other examples of this motif can also be seen on artifacts of the Northern Dynasties (北朝, 386-581), including the epitaph cover of Hou Kang (侯剛, 526, printed in Juliano 1980); the epitaph cover of Gou Jing (苟景, 528, the Xi'an Beilin Museum); and on the painted ceilings of Mogao Cave 249 (late Northern Wei Dynasty to early Western Wei Dynasty) and Mogao Cave 285 (Western Wei Dynasty [西魏朝, 535-556]), in Dunhuang in China's Gansu Province. In Korea, the motif can be seen in tomb murals from the Goguryeo Kingdom, such as the Deokheung-ri tomb (dated 408), the Tomb of the Four Guardian Deities in Tonggu tomb complex, and Ohoe Tomb 4 and 5 (Fig. 4, Park 1999). Professor Nagahiro Toshio (長廣敏雄) reports that such creatures are known in Chinese as *weishou* (畏獸), or in Korean, *oesu* (Nagahiro Toshio 1969). References to *oesu* can be found in various texts of ancient China, including the Taoist text *Shanhaijing* (山海經, *Classic of Mountains and Seas*), the present form of which dates to the Han Dynasty, and such Tang-Dynasty (唐朝) texts as *Zhen-guan gongsi huashi* (貞觀公私畫史, *History of Public*



Fig. 1a. Oesu figure.

Fig. 4. Oesu figure from the northwest corner of the burial chamber of Ohoe Tomb 4, Jian, China. Goguryeo. *Joseon Yujeokyumul Dogam* (조선유적유물도감). (Pyeongyang: Joseon Yujeokyumul Dogam Compilation Committee, 1990).Fig. 3. Rubbing of an epitaph tablet of Lady Yuan, the wife of Feng Yong. Northern Wei Dynasty (dated 522, now housed in Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Upper: *Complete Works of Chinese Art, Paintings* vol. 19 (中國美術全集 繪畫編 19). (Beijing: Xinhua Bookstore, 1988). Lower: "Genealogy of the Iconography of Ghosts" (鬼神圖の系譜) by Nagahiro Toshio from *Study of Art of the Six Dynasties* (六朝時代美術の研究). (Tokyo: Bijutsu shuppansha, 1969).

and Private Art during the Zhenguan Era) by Pei Xiaoyuan (裴孝源, active c. 639) and *Lidai minghua ji* (歷代名畫記, *Record of Famous Paintings through the Ages*) by Zhang Yanyuan (張彥遠, c. 815-c. 877). According to these records, *oesu* were typically associated with exorcism during China's Jin Dynasty (晉朝, 265-420). According to Professor Nagahiro, various forms of ghost imagery were gradually integrated into *oesu* motifs during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (南北朝, 420-589), until *oesu* eventually came to be regarded as nature deities with control over natural phenomena, including storms (Nagahiro Toshio 1969; Kosugi Kazuo 1977; Bush 1974; Hayashi Minao 1985; Yun Mubyeong 1994; Park Kyungeun 1999).

The Baekje incense burner also features three mythical creatures with human faces but the bodies of birds or animals (Fig. 1b). In *Baopuzi* (抱樸子, [Book of the] *Master Who Embraces Simplicity*), a fourth-century Taoist text from the Eastern Jin Dynasty (東晉, 317-420), Ge Hong (葛洪, 283-343) writes that beings with the face of a human and the body of a bird are called either *qianqiu* (千秋, Kr. *cheonchu*), meaning "a thousand autumns," or *wansui* (萬歲, Kr. *manse*), meaning "ten thousand years." Ge Hong also specifies that such names were befitting of Taoist immortals, who were thought to enjoy eternal life.

An excellent contemporaneous depiction of *cheonchu* and *manse* can be found on a tile (Fig. 5)



Fig. 1b. Mythical creature with human face and bird's body.



Fig. 5. Tile inscribed with "cheonchu" and "manse," excavated from the Dengxian Tomb in Henan Province, China. Southern Dynasties. (Author's photograph).

excavated from a tomb at Xuezhuang village in Deng County (鄧縣), Henan Province (hereafter, the Dengxian Tomb), which dates to the late fifth century (Juliano 1974). An inscription reading "*qianqiu*" (千秋, Kr. *cheonchu*) appears immediately to the left of the



Fig. 1c. Posu figure.

creature with a human face and bird body, while the inscription for "*wansui*" (萬歲, Kr. *manse*) appears immediately to the right of the creature with the head of an animal and the body of a bird.

Another mythical creature can be seen at the lower edge of the Baekje incense burner's lid, under the tail of the *bonghwang* (Fig. 1c). Various authors have identified this creature as a *posu* (鋪首, Ch., *pushou*), a term typically referring to a monster mask represented on door handles (Hayashi Minao 1985; Yun Mubyeong 1994; Park Kyungeun 2000). The *posu* looks downward so that we see the top of its head; between its two curved horns, there are three small triangles arranged in a tiered pattern that echoes that of the mountain peaks. The *posu* has circular curls of hair, paws that appear on either side of its head, and a diamond-shaped tail that extends upward. This *posu* closely resembles a related Chinese image found on

Fig. 6. Rubbing of *Posu* figure from a stone door excavated from a tomb in Hu Qiao, Jianshan, Danyang, Jiangsu Province, China. Southern Dynasties, c. 495. *Cultural Relics* (文物), 1980, 2.

a door (Fig. 6) excavated from a Southern-Dynasty tomb in Huqiao, Jianshan, Danyang City, Jiangsu Province (Nanjing Museum 1980, 1-17). The similarity between the Chinese *posu* image in Figure 6, which dates to around 495, and the *posu* on the Baekje incense burner suggests that Baekje art may have been influenced by the art and culture of China's Southern Dynasties (南朝, 420-589). On Han-Dynasty bronze vessels and *baksan hyangno*, *posu* figures often bite the handles on either side of the bowl. The Baekje incense burner has no handles, however, and the *posu* figure appears only once on the lid. *Posu* figures also frequently appear on or near the entrances of early tombs or on the tombs' ceilings; notably, they are found on the northern part of the ceilings, and north was the direction from which evil spirits were believed to come. As such, the *posu* figures on ancient tombs were likely intended to ward off evil spirits or other dangers. For example, a *posu* figure can be seen on the northern part of the ceiling in Sasinchong Tomb of the Goguryeo Dynasty, located in Tongguo, China (Park Kyungeun 1999). On the Baekje incense burner, the *posu* figure appears under the tail of the *bonghwang* that is atop the lid. Since the *bonghwang* is estimated to face south, the *posu* faces north, which indicates that it was meant to protect the sacred mountain, which symbolizes the Taoist paradise. As such, the world of the sacred mountain represented on the incense burner includes various creatures of paradise that were commonly depicted in Chinese and Korean tombs of the fifth and sixth centuries.

The main *bonghwang* stands at the very top of the lid, above five birds that rest on five peaks. The five birds likely represent the lords of the five great mountains of the five directions (i.e., the four cardinal directions and the center). Historical records, such as volume 49 of *Zhoushu* (周書, *Book of Zhou*), indicate that, during the reign of King Seong, Baekje people believed in the sacredness of the three mountains of the immortals and the five great mountains (三山五岳), and they held rites for the lords of the five great mountains (Kim Sootae 1998). The five lords and the five great mountains were primary elements of the ancient harvest rituals, along with the Emperor of Heaven (天帝). As for the birds, volume 23 of *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, *History of the Three Kingdoms*) records the following: "In the twentieth year of King Onjo (溫祚王, 2 CE), the king built a platform for prayer. When he performed rites for heaven and earth, five



Fig. 1d. Hunter on horseback.

exotic birds flew to him." King Onjo (溫祚王, r. 18 BCE-28 CE) is regarded as the founder of the Baekje Kingdom, and the five birds were likely considered to be celestial messengers representing the five lords.

In addition to these mythical creatures, the mountain-shaped lid of the censer also features various human figures. One figure of particular note is an equestrian hunter with bow and arrow (Fig. 1d). Combined with the holy mountain motif, this motif sometimes appeared since the Han-Dynasty, suggesting the influence of the nomadic culture of the tribes of northern China and Mongolia (Wenley 1948-9). The hunter motif is believed to have originated from ancient sacrificial hunting rituals that were held in gardens representing the sacred mountains of the immortals. Such rituals were intended to ward off evil spirits and to honor celestial and ancestral deities (Munakata Kiyohiko 1991).

2. Lotus and Rebirth

The lower part of the main body of the incense burner is covered with three rows of lotus petals, each with eight petals with their tips pointing outward (Fig. 1e).² Twenty-six different creatures can be

² *Baksan hyangno* from the Eastern Han Dynasty were often decorated with a configuration of four petal-like images between the bowl and the pedestal, as evinced by censers excavated from the Houzhang zhuanchang (後張磚廠) M4 tomb in Luoyang, Henan Province, China (housed in Yanshi Shangcheng Museum); from tombs in Pyeongyang, Korea (Printed in Buyeo National Museum, 2013, fig. 142); and an incense burner excavated from Ye County, Shandong Province, China (printed in Erickson 1989, fig. 33). From the late fifth century on, the main bodies of



Fig. 1e. Main body.

found among the lotus petals, including birds, crocodiles, lizards, flying fish, four-legged animals with wings, as well as two immortals wearing long hats and feathered robes. The edges of the petals are engraved with thin short lines, matching the mountain peaks on the lid.

The lotus motif, which passed from West Asia to East Asia, figures among the primary symbols in various creation myths. Although the lotus is typically associated with Buddhism, in India, the association between the lotus and the creation of the world predates Buddhism. According to the ancient Hindu text *Taittiriya Brahmana*, at the beginning of time, nothing existed except water, which was covered with green lotuses. Prajapati, the Creator, walked into the water and discovered the earth, and then divided the earth into segments that he then spread over the green lotuses, thus creating the world. Lotus blossoms open at sunrise and close at sunset every day, which makes them natural symbols for rebirth and light. As such, ancient people frequently decorated tombs with lotus motifs in hopes of attaining eternal

baksan hyangno were typically decorated with lotus petals, as seen in the Baekje incense burner (Erickson 1989).

life and rebirth of the deceased.

Baksan hyangno are believed to have been used in rituals associated with the royal family during the Han Dynasty. During the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, they were used in funerary ceremonies and in Buddhist rituals, eventually becoming Buddhist ecclesiastical paraphernalia (Fig. 7).³ Although lotus motifs are usually associated with Buddhism, the association between the Baekje incense burner and Buddhism remains highly ambiguous. Other than lotus petals, the censer does not feature any other Buddhist symbols. As mentioned, the censer was recovered from the site of an ancient Buddhist temple, but succeeding excavations have demonstrated that the site might have been used for royal rituals prior to 567, the estimated date of the establishment of the Buddhist temple. Considering the site's dual purpose, it would be premature to de-

³ *Baksan hyangno* can be seen in a ceremonial procession scene that appears on tiles recovered from Qijiacun Tomb (Southern Dynasties, Changzhou Municipal Museum 1979, 32-48), which is located in the southern suburbs of Changzhou, Jiangsu Province, as well as on a tile excavated from the Dengxian Tomb in Henan Province (Juliano 1980). Depictions of *Baksan hyangno* also occur on some Buddhist steles dating to the Northern Dynasties.



Fig. 7. Trubner stele excavated from Henan Province, China. Eastern Wei Dynasty. Height: 308 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art).

clare the Baekje incense burner a Buddhist relic.

Various East Asian cultures have traditionally believed that all things were created from *ungi* (雲氣, translated as “sacred clouds”). Some scholars have suggested that, with the introduction of new plant designs, cloud motifs evolved into designs of lotus blossoms and scrolls (Doi Yoshiko 1964; Hayashi Minao 1989; Jo Yongjoong 2000). In that context, the immortals and other creatures on the bowl and the lid might be interpreted as issuing from the lotus blossoms, symbolizing rebirth or reincarnation. As such, the censer itself may represent a paradise in the traditional East Asian worldview.

3. Dragon and *Bonghwang* Connecting Heaven and Earth

At the top of the lid, a bird alights with its wings spread, as if having just descended from above (Fig. 1f). The bird represents a *bonghwang* (鳳皇, Ch. *fenghuang*, generally translated as “phoenix” in English). Notably, the bird on the Baekje censer closely resembles one that appears on a Chinese molded tile from the Dengxian Tomb in Henan Province; the tile is inscribed with “鳳皇” in the lower right corner (Fig. 8), clearly identifying the image as a *bonghwang*. The physical features of the birds are nearly identical: the comb of a rooster; an S-curved neck; a *cheokmok* (尺木, Ch. *chimu*), or mane-like spike of feathers at the back of the neck, textured with short lines; outstretched wings that curve gracefully upward; and a long tail that also curls up towards the heavens. Professor Hayashi Minao (林巳奈夫) has shown that the

comb and long tail symbolize the dignity of the *bonghwang* (1966), which was believed to be a celestial messenger that appeared from above when humans became immortals and ascended to heaven (Guo Moruo 1933; Sofukawa Hiroshi 1979). With its wings outstretched and its long tail pointing upward, the majestic *bonghwang* atop the lid can be interpreted as a messenger of the Emperor of Heaven, claiming the sacred mountain as the world of its master.

The sacred mountain represented by the lid of the Baekje incense burner might be Gollyun Mountain (崑崙山, Ch. Kunlunshan), one of the mythic moun-

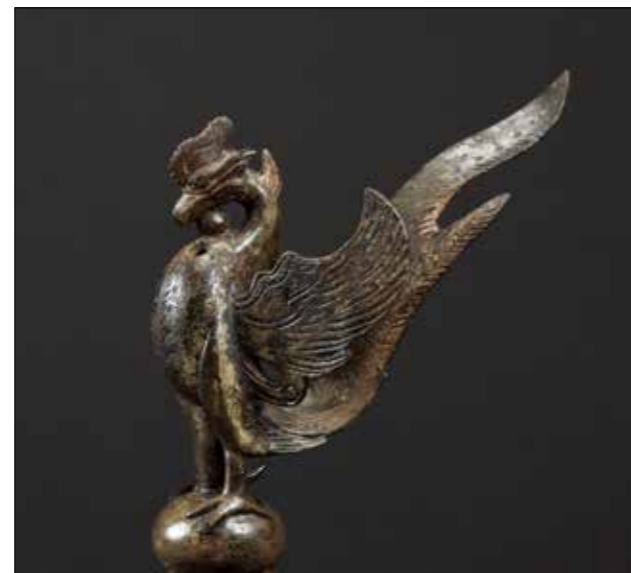


Fig. 1f. *Bonghwang* figure.



Fig. 1g. Dragon pedestal.



Fig. 8. Pictorial brick inscribed with “*bonghwang*” excavated from the Dengxian Tomb in Henan Province, China. Southern Dynasties. (Author's photograph).

tains of the immortals. According to *Shizhou ji* (十洲記, *Notes on the Ten Island Continents*), a Chinese text believed to date to the Six Dynasties period (六朝時代, 220-589), Gollyun Mountain has an inverted pyramidal shape with steeply inclined sides, and it is occupied by fearsome carnivorous beasts. *Shanhaijing* describes Gollyun Mountain as a mysterious, treacherous place surrounded by powerful currents of water in which even birds' feathers sink. Ancient *baksan hyangno* represented this inaccessible sacred peak by placing the wider bowl of the censer atop a slender pedestal.

In ancient times, dragons, such as the one at the base of the Baekje censer (Fig. 1g), were also commonly associated with the sacred mountains. According to *Chu Ci* (楚辭, *Songs of Chu*) and *Shanhaijing*, the sacred mountain of the immortals can be reached by riding on a dragon. This belief is supported by a painting on a T-shaped piece of silk (Fig. 9) and by murals from ancient tombs that show human figures (presumably the tomb occupants) riding dragons to the world of the immortals. Many animals, including cranes, deer, tigers, and *kirin* (麒麟 Ch. *qilin*), were believed to be vehicles of the immortals. However, according to *Shiji* (史記, *Historical Records*), traditionally ascribed to Sima Qian (司馬遷, c. 145 or 135 BCE-86 BCE), only dragons were able to reach Gollyun Mountain. All these records indicate that dragons were believed to connect heaven and earth.

III. Baekje Metalworking Techniques and Production of the Baekje Incense Burner

Chinese-style *baksan hyangno* first appeared in Korea in the early centuries of the Common Era (Fig. 10). In particular, fragments of *baksan hyangno* have been excavated around Pyeongyang from tombs belonging to the ruling class of the Nangnang (樂浪, Ch. Lelang) Commandery. In 108 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (漢武帝, r. 141-97 BCE) established Four Commanderies (漢四郡) in Korea, including the Nangnang Commandery, which controlled the area around present-day Pyeongyang. Mountain-shaped incense burners discovered inside the tombs of Nangnang leaders (e.g., Seokam-ri Tomb 9 and 219 and Jeongbaek-dong Tomb 88) were embellished with various motifs, including four-petal flowers, turtles, and phoenix (Buyeo National Museum 2013,



Fig. 9. Painting on T-shaped silk, excavated from Tomb 1 of Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan Province, China. Western Han Dynasty (Hunan Provincial Museum). *Tomb 1 of Mawangdui in Changsha* (長沙馬王堆1號漢墓). (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1976).



Fig. 10. Bronze mountain-shaped incense burner, excavated from Tomb 9 at Seokam-ri, Pyeongyang, Korea. Nangnang Commandery Period. Height: 20.3 cm. (National Museum of Korea).

178-184). Excavations at a site in Pyeongyang yielded a mould of the lid that would have simplified the production of large quantities of jars with the mountain-shaped lid, suggesting that such jars were once produced on the Korean Peninsula. After the demise of the Nangnang Commandery in 313 CE, some elements of Chinese-style Nangnang culture were introduced to Baekje; even so, no *baksan hyangno* had been found in Korea until the discovery of the Baekje gilt-bronze incense burner.

Among the three kingdoms that ruled the Korean peninsula in the early centuries of the Common Era (i.e., Goguryeo, Silla, Baekje), Baekje was most active in making exchanges with China and introducing advanced culture and products from abroad. Records of interactions between Baekje and China's Liang Dynasty (梁朝, 502-587) can be found in various historical texts, including volumes 3 and 54 of *Liangshu* (梁書, *Book of Liang*); volume 26 of *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, *Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms*); and volume 7 of *Nanshi* (南史, *History of the Southern Dynasties*). According to those records, during the reign of Baekje's King Seong (r. 523-554), the Liang Dynasty sent Baekje a copy of the Buddhist Nirvana Sutra, along with a renowned scholar of China's *Shijing* (詩經, *Classic of Poetry*), and painters, craftsmen,

and other artists. King Wideok established close diplomatic ties with several Chinese states, negotiating five times with the Southern Dynasties, six times with the Northern Dynasties, and four times with the Sui Dynasty (隋朝, 581-618). Based in part on the advanced culture and production techniques imported from China, Baekje developed its own style of ceramics and metalwork in the sixth and seventh centuries. For example, Baekje's unique interpretation of Chinese ceramic jars is evident in a silver sarira jar from the site of Wangheungsa Temple in Buyeo (enshrined in 577) and in two sarira jars—one gold and one gilt-bronze—from the site of Mireuksa Temple in Iksan (enshrined in 639, Fig. 11) (Yi Songran 2009; Joo Kyeongmi 2014). The sarira reliquaries from the Mireuksa Temple site show the advanced metalworking techniques that Baekje artists developed, including casting, forging, and chasing. In particular, the gold and gilt-bronze sarira jars, lavishly decorated with chased designs, feature an innovative arrangement of decorative motifs that rarely occurs on Chinese artifacts.

In China, the peak of *baksan hyangno* occurred during the Han Dynasty, several centuries before the creation of the Baekje censer. Most sixth-century Chinese censers are ceramic vessels that take the simplified form of flowers or Buddhist *cintamani* (Fig. 12) (Erickson 1989). Even so, it should be noted that, to date, no *baksan hyangno* with the detail and sophistication of the Baekje incense burner has been discovered in China.

The Baekje incense burner can also be distinguished from its Chinese counterparts by its distinctive Taoist imagery. As discussed, the Baekje censer features such mythical creatures as *cheonchu*, *manse*, *oesu*, which more commonly appeared on the walls of fifth- and sixth-century tombs. Also, instead of featuring only the traditional motifs of winged immortals or primitive hunters, the Baekje incense burner also features more civilized human figures who seem to be practicing meditation. As such, the censer reflects how the understanding of the Taoist world was changing in the fifth and sixth centuries. The figures on the incense burner seem to be Taoist hermits on the holy mountain. Wearing long robes and carrying walking sticks, they stroll on the mountainside, wash their hair in performing their ablutions, gather herbs, or meditate under a tree (Fig. 1h). The fourth-century Taoist text *Baopuzi* explained various means



Fig. 11. Sarira reliquaries excavated from west pagoda of the site of Mireuksa Temple in Iksan, Korea. Baekje, c. 639. Height: 13.0 cm (right: gilt-bronze jar). (National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).



Fig. 12. Celadon mountain-shaped incense burner, excavated from Shaxi Gongshe, Yongfeng County, Jiangxi Province, China. Southern Dynasties. Height: 18.8 cm. *Masterpieces of Jiangxi Provincial Museum* (江西省博物館 文物精華) (Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 2006).

of attaining immortality, including residing on a sacred mountain, following an herbal diet and “elixir” rather than eating grains, meditating for self-cultivation, and practicing special breathing techniques. The practices discussed in this book of Taoist theory and principles had significant influence on Taoist beliefs and rituals after the fourth century. The Baekje



Fig. 1h. Meditating human figure.

incense burner reflects those changes, differentiating it from Chinese *baksan hyangno* of the time.

Where and how was the Baekje incense burner made? Since its discovery, scientific analyses have been conducted on the Baekje censer, as well as on other relics excavated from the temple site at Neungsan-ri (Kang Hyungtae, Yu Heisun, and Kwon Hyeoknam 2000; Kang Hyungtae, Ko Minjeong, and Kim Yeonmi 2013).

Quantitative analysis of bronze and gilt specimens taken from the Baekje censer revealed that its bronze alloy consists of 81.5% copper (Cu), 14.3% tin (Sn), and less than 0.1% (each) of various other impurities, including lead, silver, nickel, cobalt, antimony, and iron (Kang Hyungtae, Yu Heisun, and Kwon Hyeoknam 2000⁴). Meanwhile, quantitative analysis of the gilt-bronze halo collected from the workshop site at Neungsan-ri (Fig. 13) found that its bronze alloy consists of 81.6% copper, 11.3% tin and 0.91% lead. Lead is believed to be an impurity in this instance, as its ratio is less than 3%. The results show that the halo was made from a bronze alloy very similar in composition to that of the Baekje censer. It would appear that Baekje metalworkers

⁴ Some portion (around 4.1%) is unaccounted for due to oxidation and erosion.



Fig. 13. Gilt-bronze halo collected from the workshop site at Neungsan-ri, Buyeo, Korea. Baekje. (Buyeo National Museum).

understood that bronze is harder than pure copper, and that an alloy of copper and 12-16% tin would yield bronze that is even harder still. Analyses of the isotope ratio of the galena (lead sulfide; the primary ore from which lead is obtained) in the censer and the halo revealed that the lead in both artifacts likely originated in the Okcheon metamorphic zone near Buyeo (Kang Hyungtae, Ko Minjeong, and Kim Yeonmi 2013). Lead-isotope ratio analysis has limited accuracy, but the similarities in alloy composition and zone of origin certainly increases the likelihood that the incense burner and the halo were produced in Buyeo using the same materials and combined in the same proportion.

Conclusion

The Baekje incense burner reflects the Chinese tradition of *baksan hyangno*, which depict a sacred mountain populated by hunters, wild animals, mythical creatures, and dragons carrying people to the world of the immortals. However, the Baekje censer includes new types of figures not seen in Chinese *baksan hyangno* since the Han Dynasty, including hermits in meditation, immortals wearing long hats and flying through the air, and heterogeneous creatures. In particular, the unique landscape of the Baekje censer reflects the changing view of the Tao-

ist world of the immortals. Rather than repeating the traditional representation of winged immortals, the Baekje censer features hermits following the prescriptions of *Baopuzi* in practicing special breathing techniques and meditations and in eating herbs instead of grains.

During the Han Dynasty and in the ensuing years, *baksan hyangno* is thought to have symbolized the power of the ruler, who was believed capable of communicating with heaven and the world of the immortals. As the model of encompassing all things from all directions, the censers also represented the ruler's absolute sovereignty over all existence. Extant Chinese *baksan hyangno* reveal that the context of the production and use of such censers changed after the Han Dynasty, however. In particular, the incorporation of Buddhist elements led to a weakening of the censers' symbolic value and association with absolute power. The Baekje incense burner stands as a notable exception to this change.

Excavations and research have determined that the group of buildings was constructed at Neungsan-ri some time before 567. At that time, King Wideok faced a political crisis due to Silla's crushing defeat of Baekje in the battle of Gwansanseong Castle, which resulted in the death of his father, King Seong. During the reign of King Seong, Baekje reorganized its ritual system and strived to consolidate royal authority by performing rituals honoring heaven and the ancestors. In the sixth century, the need to assert royal authority and the divine right of kings, both living and deceased, became even greater, which perhaps led to an increased emphasis on religious ritual. Therefore, the temple at Neungsan-ri likely was intended as a memorial for King Seong, who had revived the nation and asserted absolute royal authority. In that context, the Baekje incense burner can be interpreted both as a symbol of royal authority and as a product of the socio-political milieu of the sixth century, a time when Baekje actively developed its cultural and religious capacity through the import of advanced culture from the continent. ㄸ

TRANSLATED BY CHUNG EUNSUN

This paper is an edited and abridged English version of "Iconography of the Gilt-Bronze Incense Burner of Baekje," previously published in 2013 in *The Gilt-Bronze Incense Burner of Baekje* (백제금동대향로), the exhibition catalogue by Buyeo National Museum.

Selected Bibliography

- Bush, Susan. 1974. "Thunder Monsters and Wind Spirits in Early Sixth Century China and the Epitaph of Lady Yuan." *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston 72: 367.
- Buyeo National Museum. 2013. *Instrument for Prayer: The Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje* (하늘에 올리는 염원, 백제금동대향로: 발굴 20주년 기념특별전 도록). Buyeo: Buyeo National Museum.
- Changzhou Municipal Museum (常州市博物館). 1979. "Bricks Unearthed from Qijiacun Tomb in the Southern Suburbs of Changzhou" (常州南郊戚家村畫像磚墓). *Cultural Relics* 3 (文物 3).
- Choi, Eungchon (최응천). 1999. "Iconography and Dating of the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje: In Comparison with Relics Excavated from the Site of the Ancient Buddhist Temple at Neungsan-ri" (백제 금동용봉향로의 조형과 편년 - 능산리 출토유물의 비교를 중심으로). *Dongwon Journal of Art* 2 (국립박물관 동원학술논문집 2).
- Doi, Yoshiko (土居淑子). 1964. "Plant Designs Appearing on Stones Excavated from the Yinan Tombs, Shandong Province" (沂南畫象石に現われた一植物界文様について). *Study of Art History* 3 (美術史研究 3).
- Erickson, Susan Nell. 1989. *Boshanlu Mountains and Immortality in the Western Han Period*. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Minnesota.
- Guo, Moruo (郭沫若). 1933. *Compilation of Oracle Bone Inscriptions* (卜辭通纂). Tokyo: Bunkyo.
- Hayashi, Minao (林巳奈夫). 1966. "Genealogy of the Iconography of *Bonghwang* (*Fenghuang*)" (鳳凰の圖像の系譜). *Journal of Archeology* 52-1 (考古學雜誌 52-1).
- _____. 1985. "Certain Aspects of Beast-shaped Door Handles and *Posu* (*Pushou*)" (獸鑲·鋪首の若干をめぐって). *Journal of Oriental Studies* 57 (東方學報 57).
- _____. 1989. "Iconography of Qi Expressed in Chinese Ancient Relics" (中國古代の遺物に表現された氣の圖像的研究). *Journal of Oriental Studies* 61 (東方學報 61).
- Jo, Yongjoong (조용중). 2000. "The Great Baekje Gilt-bronze Incense Burner Excavated at Neungsan-ri in Buyeo" (백제금동대향로에 관한 연구). *National Museum Journal of Arts* 65 (미술자료 65).
- Joo, Kyeongmi (주경미). 2014. "Arrangement and Significance of Buddhist Relics in the Stone Pagoda from the Site of Mireuksa Temple" (미륵사지 석탑 사리장엄구의 구성과 의의). *The Journal of Baekje Research Institute* 59 (백제연구 59).
- Juliano, Annette. 1974. *Teng-Hsien: An Important Six-Dynasties Tomb*. Ph.D. dissertation. New York University; 1980. rpt. Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers.
- Kang, Hyungtae (강형태), Yu, Heisun (유혜선) and Kwon, Hyeoknam (권혁남). 2000. "Scientific Analysis on the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje from the Site of an Ancient Buddhist Temple at Neungsan-ri, Buyeo" (부여 능산리사지 출토 금동대향로의 과학분석). *Temple Site: Report of Investigation on Historical Remains of the Buyeo National Museum* (陵寺: 국립부여박물관 유적조사보고서). Buyeo: Buyeo National Museum.
- Kang, Hyungtae (강형태), Ko, Minjeong (고민정) and Kim, Yeonmi (김연미). 2013. "Alloy Composition and Characteristics of Gilt Layer of the Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje from the Site of an Ancient Buddhist Temple at Neungsan-ri"

- (능산리사지 백제금동대향로와 금동광배의 합금조성 및 도금층 특성). *Instrument for Prayer: The Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje* (하늘에 올리는 염원, 백제금동대향로: 발굴 20주년 기념특별전 도록). Buyeo: Buyeo National Museum.
- Kil, Kitae (길기태). 2009. "Construction of a Buddhist Temple at Neungsan-ri by King Wideok of Baekje and Religious Service" (백제 위덕왕의 陵山里寺院 창건과 祭儀). *Baekje Culture* 41 (백제문화 41).
- Kim, Jarim (김자림). 2006. "Style of the Baekje Incense Burner from the Viewpoint of *Baksan Hyangno*" (백산향로를 통해 본 백제금동대향로의 양식적 위치 고찰). *Study of Art History* 249 (미술사학연구 249).
- Kim, Jongman (김종만). 2000. "Ancient Temple Sites at Neungsan-ri, Buyeo" (부여 능산리사지에 대한 소고). *Silla Culture* 17/18 (신라문화 17/18).
- Kim, Sootae (김수태). 1998. "Construction of the Buddhist Temple at Neungsan-ri, Buyeo During the Reign of King Wideok of Baekje" (百濟 威德王代 扶餘 陵山里 寺院의 創建). *Baekje Culture* 27 (백제문화 27).
- Kosugi, Kazuo (小杉一雄). 1977. "Formation of Images of Ghosts" (鬼神形狀の成立). *Study of Art History* 14 (美術史研究 14).
- Munakata, Kiyohiko. 1991. *Sacred Mountains in Chinese Art*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Nagahiro, Toshio (長廣敏雄). 1969. "Genealogy of the Iconography of Ghosts" (鬼神圖の系譜) and "Garden of the Six Dynasties" (六朝の苑圃). *Study of Art of the Six Dynasties* (六朝時代美術の研究). Tokyo: Bijutsu shuppansha.
- Nanjing Museum (南京博物院). 1980. "The Huqiao Tomb and the Jianshan Tomb: Two Tombs of the Southern Dynasties in Danyang County, Jiangsu Province" (江蘇丹陽縣胡橋建山兩座南朝墓葬). *Cultural Relics* 2 (文物 2).
- Park, Kyungeun (박경은). 1999. "Monster Images Expressed in Ancient Tombs of the Three Kingdom Period" (한국 삼국시대 고분미술의 괴수상 시론). *Onji Collection of Treaties* 5 (溫知論叢 5).
- _____. 2000. "Iconography of the Image of Ascending to Heaven in *Baksan Hyangno*" (백산향로의 昇仙 道상 연구). *Study of Art History* (미술사학연구) 225/ 226.
- Sofukawa, Hiroshi (曾布川寛). 1979. "Image of Kunlun Mountain and Ascending to Heaven" (崑崙山と昇仙圖). *Journal of Oriental Studies* 51 (東方學報 51).
- Wenley, A. G. 1948-9. "The Question of the Po-shan-hsiang-lu." *Archives of the Chinese Art Society of America* 3.
- Yi, Songran (이송란). 2009. "Production Method and Designs of Gold Sarira Jar Excavated from the Site of Mireuksa Temple" (미륵사지 금제 사리호의 제작기법과 문양 분석). *Proceedings of the Conference of the Research Institute for the Mahan-Baekje Culture of Wonkwang University* (원광대학교 마한백제문화연구소 학술발표논문집).
- Yun Mbyeong (윤무병). 1994. "Taoist Elements Appearing in the Art of Baekje" (백제미술에 나타난 도교적 요소). *Religion and Ideology of Baekje* (백제의 종교와 사상), edited by South Chungcheong Province Government. Daejeon: South Chungcheong Province Government.