Beyond Singular Tradition: "Buddhist" Pilgrimage Sites in Late Chosŏn Korea

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Abstract

Different academic disciplines have divergent views on late Chosŏn Buddhism. Many literature scholars and art historians reject the idea that Chosŏn elite travelers could be Buddhist pilgrims, maintaining that the elite justified their trips to Buddhist pilgrimage sites by citing Daoist and Neo-Confucian ideas. Specialists in Korean history and religions, on the other hand, argue that Chosŏn literati were involved with Buddhism in various forms, showing more than philosophical interest in Buddhist doctrine. Pursuing a multi-disciplinary approach that combines art historical and literary evidence while considering the latest historical and religious studies research, this article introduces rarely studied material revealing the wide range of Chosŏn-period Buddhist travelers and their motives for going to Kŭmgangsan. Finally, it focuses on a site-specific analysis of Myogilsang in Inner Kŭmgang, which indicates that at least in some cases routine Buddhist practices were part of a scholar's life. The research presented confirms the popularity of Kŭmgangsan as a Buddhist pilgrimage site in late Chosŏn Korea, supplementing Daoist and Neo-Confucian narratives that currently predominate art history and literature scholarship.

Keywords: Kŭmgangsan, *maaebul*, pilgrimage, Neo-Confucianism, *yangban*, Chosŏn Buddhism, autograph inscriptions

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Kŭmgangsan 金剛山, a mountain range situated between Kosŏng and T'ongch'ŏn in northeastern Kangwŏn-do province, is one of Korea's most culturally and religiously significant mountains (Fig. 1). To date, art historians have offered useful insights on stylistic trends of late Chosŏn (1392–1910) landscape paintings depicting Kŭmgangsan scenery, while literature scholarship has argued for a cultural clash between Buddhist monks and Confucian travelers, culminating, literature scholars say, in attempts by elite travelers to "Confucianize" mountain space (Pak Ŭnsun 1997; Ko Yŏnhŭi 2001; Chŏng 2012, 33; Lee 2014, 119). In a similar vein, scholars have argued that late Chosŏn travelers, by referring to classical Chinese literature, used Confucian and Daoist ideas to justify their trips to Kŭmgangsan (Ahn 2018, 120–122; Pak Ŭnsun 1997, 43; Pak Ŭnjŏng 2020, 112–113; Yang 2012, 261–265). Thus, by focusing on the *yangban*'s academic training framed by Confucian orthodoxy, literature scholars and art historians have thus far presented a very myopic view of Chosŏn literati's approaches to Kŭmgangsan travel.[1]

Anglophone publications in the fields of Korean history and religions in the past two decades have offered a more pluralistic approach to understanding the relationship between late Chosŏn literati and Buddhism (Baker 2014; Daeyeol Kim 2012; Seong Uk Kim 2013, Sung-Eun Thomas Kim 2015 and 2019; Stiller 2008; Walraven 2007). These publications, inspired by Korean scholars such as Han Sanggil, Kim Yongtae, and Pak Pyŏngsŏn, showed the multitude of ways in which Chosŏn *yangban* engaged with Buddhist faith and practice, evaluating Chosŏn Buddhism not only via the criterion of innovation in Buddhist thought but also by using a variety of primary sources of Buddhist material culture. This research has shown that, although Confucianism and Buddhism existed to a certain extent in binary terms in the Chosŏn period, they were not mutually exclusive.

This article seeks to transcend the dichotomies between different academic fields, encouraging researchers in the fields of art history and literature to engage more deeply with scholars from other disciplines who argue that a mix of belief systems in Chosŏn society was the standard, not the exception. My research advances the current understanding of Chosŏn religious practice by discussing pilgrimage-related activities carried out by both elite and non-elite

Figure 1. Location of Kŭmgangsan in late Chosŏn Korea.
Source: map created by author

travelers. Introducing widely ignored written records from monastic gazetteers, literary writings, and previously unknown rock inscriptions examined in situ on the mountain, this article uses art-historical and literary evidence, yet does not support the existing anti-Buddhism paradigm prevalent among art historians and literature scholars. Instead, I follow the understanding of Chosŏn period Buddhism prevalent among scholars of Korean history and religious studies.

Buddhist monasteries and hermitages have thrived at Kŭmgangsan since the late Unified Silla period (668–935), as evidenced by archaeological data. At Changyŏnsa 長淵寺, which is located in the vicinity of Changansa 長安寺 at the western entrance of Kŭmgangsan, a three-story stupa from the ninth century still stands, while recently rebuilt Sin'gyesa 神溪寺 in Outer Kŭmgang (Oegŭmgang 外金剛) also retains a three-story pagoda from the ninth century.[2] Under Mongol rule during the Koryŏ period (918–1392), generous funding from the Koryŏ court and Yuan imperial coffers led to large-scale reconstructions and expansions of monasteries, such as Yujŏmsa 楡岾寺, rebuilt in 1284 with a building area of about 600 *k'an* 間; P'yohunsa 表訓寺, rebuilt in 1320 with the support of Yuan Emperor Yingzong 英宗 (1303–1323, r. 1320–1323); and Changansa, rebuilt in 1343 when Yuan Emperor Shundi 順帝 and Empress Qi/Ki 奇皇后 adopted the monastery as their votive temple (Han Yongun 1977, 1–2, 324; Yi Chŏnggu 1996, 287).[3] From the late Koryŏ to the late Chosŏn period, these three monasteries, along with Singyesa, were continually occupied, and they flourished as the four main monasteries of the mountain. P'yohunsa is located in Inner Kŭmgang (Naegŭmgang 內金剛) along with the since-destroyed Changansa, while the other two, Singyesa and Yujŏmsa, were situated at the edge of Outer Kŭmgang. All four monasteries were located on the floors of the main valleys, while numerous hermitages and caves with varying occupancy were scattered in the side valleys and on the slopes.[4]

Throughout the Chosŏn period, Kŭmgangsan had the largest concentration of Buddhist monasteries and hermitages in Kangwŏn-do 江原道 province, perhaps even on the entire peninsula. Records in the fifteenth-century *Sinjung tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* 新增東國輿地勝覽, the seventeenth-century *Tongguk yŏjiji* 東國輿地志, and the mid-eighteenth-century *Yŏji tosŏ* 輿地圖書, reveal a fairly consistent number of 32–35 temples and hermitages on the mountain (Yi Chongsu 2016, 236).[5] These consistent numbers indicate the strong patronage

by members of the central elite, the royal family, as well as the local population and Buddhist pilgrims that Kŭmgangsan's Buddhist temples enjoyed.

There is one caveat about the material introduced in this article. By analyzing the different types of Kŭmgangsan travelers and their activities, I seek to expand the discussion on Chosŏn period pilgrimage practices. However, I do not mean to say that Kŭmgangsan was a bustling mass pilgrimage site comparable to Taishan 泰山 in Qing dynasty China (1636–1911) or Fujisan 富士山 in Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868). Kŭmgangsan had a narrowly bounded constituency of pilgrims in contrast to other parts of northeast Asia. There were no travel permits in place like on the Tōkaidō 東海道 in Japan, nor were there any taxes collected at inns near the mountain. We do not see the commercialization that was present at pilgrimage sites in late imperial China or Japan; for example, there were no peddlers selling books and paintings like at the Confucian shrine in Qufu 曲阜 (Sloane 2017, 166, 173). Due to economic restraints and lack of manpower, Kŭmgangsan temples' capacity to accommodate visitors was limited. Moreover, the relative absence of inns at the mountain suggests that travelers were significantly fewer, so the Chosŏn government did not see the need to regulate travel.[6]

Although a substantial number of Buddhist pilgrims traveled to the mountain during the late Chosŏn period (and some stayed there for extended periods of time), the journey was arduous and not easily realized. According to Kang Sehwang 姜世晃 (1713–1791), some people flaunted their travel to the mountain, while others who had not yet been there were embarrassed:

> Several people go to the mountain only following others, thinking it is within their line of competency to go there once in their life and bragging to others about their trip as if they returned from a place where immortals live. And those who are unable to go feel ashamed and think they cannot associate with others on an equal footing. (Kang 1979, 255)

Kang's remark indicates that social expectations to see Kŭmgangsan existed, especially for individuals with fewer literary qualifications than himself, and therefore many bragged when they could finally travel to the mountain.

Who Traveled to Kŭmgangsan?

A panoply of epitaphs, autograph inscriptions, monastic gazetteers, and travel accounts shows that Chosŏn period Kŭmgangsan was a common destination for men and women from different social backgrounds. In particular, autograph inscriptions expose our skewed understanding of late Chosŏn-period long-distance travel to Kŭmgangsan, which has so far been largely shaped by travel accounts penned by literati. Rarely mentioning encounters with the lower classes, these travel accounts give the impression that mainly the male elite traveled to the mountain. However, as seen below, a significant (and yet limited) number of non-elites traveled to the mountain provided they had the financial resources to do so.

In late Chosŏn period Korea, people from the upper and lower classes traveled daily, both short and long distances. Throughout every region of the Korean Peninsula, merchants and peddlers went from market to market and from town to town to sell their goods, peasants visited close friends living nearby, and slaves ran errands for their masters within and outside their daily surroundings. Still, while people from lower social classes certainly had heard of a famous mountain named Kŭmgangsan, they usually had neither the financial means nor the leisure time to travel long distances to visit it. Therefore, it seems that elite travelers mostly encountered people from Kŭmgangsan's neighboring villages. Kang Sehwang, for example, writes:

> Today's peddlers, day laborers, and old village women who are following each other's heels to ravines in the East, what do they understand about the mountain? Using the remark that "[there were those who lied to people that once they view the mountain] they would not fall into the evil paths at death" [Ch'oe Hae] blamed the heart [of those who deceived them]. (Kang 1979, 254)

Kang Sehwang uses Ch'oe Hae's 崔瀣 (1287–1340) authoritative voice to suggest that Kŭmgangsan's Buddhist monks and their strategy to promote the mountain as a place to gain merit are to blame for the mountain's popularity as a travel destination. However, Kang's remark does not help us gauge the

visitors' exact numbers or their regional backgrounds. The people he encountered could have simply come from nearby villages, visiting their home monastery. Therefore, Kang's comment is a typical example of the vague and sometimes derogatory remarks that elite travelers made about travelers from lower social classes. His comment also seems to suggest that only the lower social strata entertained the idea of praying for better rebirth, but elite travelers might have had similar hopes.

One social group that elite travelers regularly report in their accounts, oftentimes with great admiration and respect, are Buddhist monks. For Buddhist monks, particularly highly educated meditational monks, pilgrimage was part of their lives. It was (and still is) common for Buddhist monks practicing meditation to travel to mountains far from their home monastery to find a new place for practicing meditation for one or more retreat seasons. In the Chosŏn period, renowned monasteries at Kŭmgangsan, such as Mahayŏn 摩訶衍 and Yujŏmsa, were part of this system.

Elite travelers frequently encountered Buddhist monks from the southern regions visiting Kŭmgangsan. When Hong Paekch'ang 洪百昌 (1702–1742), a well-to do literatus who did not pass the *munkwa* 文科 exam, traveled with his father to Kŭmgangsan in 1737, he encountered many monks from the Yŏngnam 嶺南 region (today's Kyŏngsang-do 慶尙道 province), one of the most affluent regions in late Chosŏn Korea, and an active place of Buddhist practice with hundreds of Buddhist monasteries and hermitages (Hong Paekch'ang ca. 1800, 42). The monks Hong encountered were visiting Mahayŏn, famous for its meditation retreats, where they were stopping on their way to the next retreat, or were perhaps staying for the entire season.

Monks were not the only travelers who went to Kŭmgangsan for Buddhist practices. Indeed, members of the royal court paid regular visits to several Buddhist monasteries and hermitages at Kŭmgangsan. Serving as proxies for members of the royal family, court ladies and palace servants regularly traveled to Kŭmgangsan to attend Buddhist rituals, taking with them incense, tea, and banners, the expenses of which were borne by the royal household treasury. For example, in the late seventeenth century, rituals attended by servants of the royal household were conducted twice a year at Yujŏmsa's royal votive chapel, in front of the three portraits of the former Chosŏn kings Sŏnjo 宣祖

(1552–1608, r. 1567–1608), Injo 仁祖 (1595–1649, r. 1623–1649), and Hyŏnjong 顯宗 (1641–1674, r. 1659–1674).[7] In addition, court-ladies reportedly stayed at a nunnery called Ch'ŏngnyŏn-am 靑蓮庵 in Inner Kŭmgang, which raises the possibility that higher-ranking or retired court-ladies could take a leave from palace duties and visit Buddhist monasteries for their own benefit.[8]

Not only court ladies but female travelers of various social classes traveled to Kŭmgangsan for their own and their family's spiritual benefits. Nam Hyoon 南孝溫 (1454–1492) saw a widow from a scholarly elite family (*sajok* 士族) from Suwŏn who funded a Buddhist ritual performed by several hundred monks at Ch'ŏndogam 天德庵 in Inner Kŭmgang (Nam Hyoon 1996, 79). In 1432, married women were reported traveling in large numbers to temples in Kŭmgangsan despite a ban on married women visiting temples in the mountains.[9] Judging from Hong Paekch'ang's early eighteenth-century account about groups of women traveling from as far as Hosŏ 湖西 (present-day Ch'ungch'ŏng-do 忠淸道), it seems likely that the ban on married women continued to be ignored throughout the late Chosŏn period (Hong ca. 1800, 42).

Like their male counterparts, late Chosŏn women wanted to see the mountain in person to build their cultural capital, which shows that religious motivations for mountain travel cannot easily be separated from social or cultural motives. Some women managed to leave a trace of their presence at the mountain or to document their travel experiences. For example, a woman whose carved autograph inscription I discovered at Kŭmgangsan is Ch'oe Songsŏldang 崔松雪堂 (1855–1939), a court lady, devout Buddhist, and the nanny of Crown Prince Ŭimin 懿愍 (1897–1970). She had her name carved at a prominently located boulder in Ten Thousand Falls Ravine (Manp'oktong 萬瀑洞) when she traveled to Kŭmgangsan in 1915 (Fig. 2). Another is Kim Kŭmwŏn 金錦園 (1817– ca. 1856), who was either a noblewoman or a courtesan, and claims to have traveled to Kŭmgangsan in 1830 and left records of her journey (Kim 1996). Still another famous case of female travel to Kŭmgangsan is a late eighteenth-century entertainer named Mandŏk 萬德 (d.u.), who helped the population of Cheju Island during a famine and, as a reward, King Chŏngjo 正祖 (1752–1800, r. 1776–1800) granted her a state-funded trip to Kŭmgangsan (*Chŏngjo sillok* 45:47a [1796/11/25]).

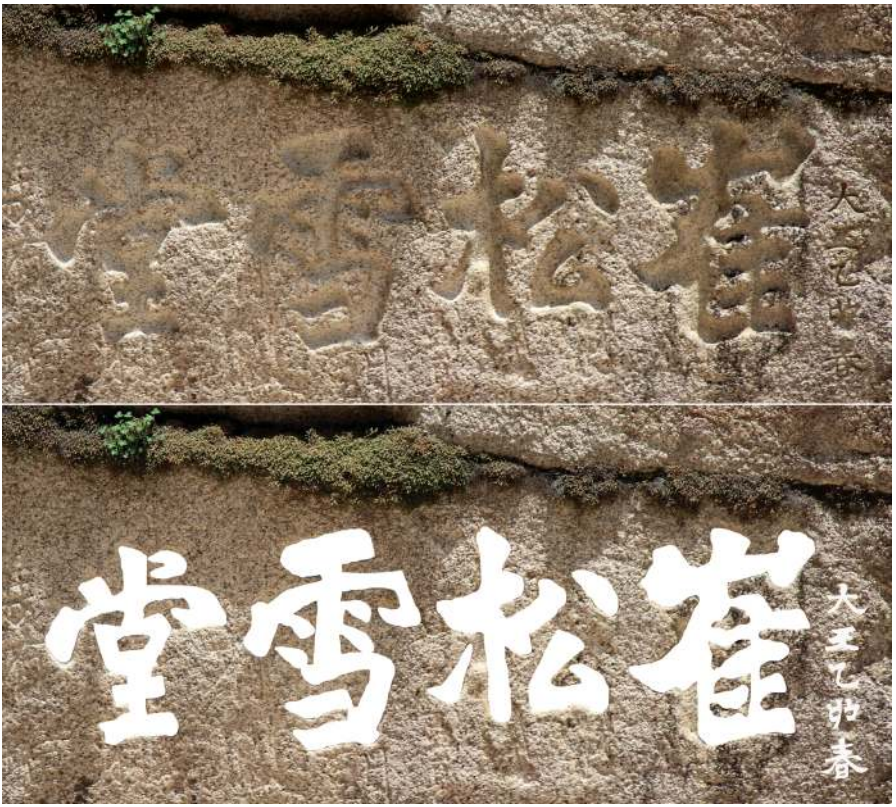

Figure 2. *Ch'oe Songsŏldang*, carved autograph (original and enhanced) by court lady Ch'oe Songsŏldang 崔松雪堂 (1855–1939), dated 1915. River boulder, Manp'oktong, Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province.
Source: photograph by author

Due to the few documented cases of female and non-elite travelers, it is difficult to determine how frequent long-distance travel to Kŭmgangsan was among the lower social groups since travel account authors and official records rarely mention these groups. Hong Paekch'ang's travel account is an exception. From a wealthy family that belonged to the Namin 南人 faction, Hong expresses an unusual interest in non-elite travelers, perhaps in order to distinguish his travel record from those by Noron 老論 scholars primarily interested in conveying their own cultural activities (Kang 2014, 11). He offers rare informa-

tion about non-elite travelers as he met people from remote regions such as Hamgyŏng-do 咸鏡道 province and P'yŏngan-do 平安道 province, and also from the capital region of Kyŏnggi-do 京畿道 province. During a conversation with other visitors staying at Mahayŏn, Hong discovered he was the only traveler from Hanyang 漢陽 (today's Seoul). Explaining this circumstance, he reckoned that Hanyang's literati had government jobs and were too busy to travel, or were not interested in traveling, while Seoul's lower classes had neither the time nor the financial means to travel:

> There is a reason people from Hanyang do not have time to travel. Those with government jobs are engaged in the glorious path, the scholars are absorbed in old patterns, the lower classes are busy staying alive and are not free one day in a year. And since there are no groups of monks in Hanyang, it is clear that no people from Hanyang are in today's gathering. (Hong ca. 1800, 42)

While Hong writes about seeing and talking to many travelers, he was particularly fascinated by encountering a mother and her 34-year-old son. Obviously impressed by the man's devotion, he vividly describes the details of the encounter with Paek Kyusam 白圭三 from Pyŏktong 碧潼 in P'yŏngan-do province. Prior to the Kŭmgangsan pilgrimage, Paek had organized a pilgrimage for his elderly mother to Myohyangsan 妙香山, a sacred Buddhist mountain in their home province, paralleling a travel experience of Hong Paekch'ang who had also visited Myohyangsan with his father in 1722. To enable his mother to see Kŭmgangsan as well, Paek Kyusam had sold family assets for a second time. They walked from their hometown in the northern border region near the Yalu River all the way to Kŭmgangsan, which took them two months (Hong ca. 1800, 16).

Hong Paekch'ang's rare record about non-elite travelers is extremely valuable because it proves that there were some individuals traveling long distances to Kŭmgangsan during the late Chosŏn period. Furthermore, while Paek, like his mother, might have had religious motivations to see the mountain, he may have also accompanied his mother to gain a local reputation for outstanding filial piety. Thus, Paek's case again shows that social and religious motivations for travel were easily intertwined.

Which particular social group the Paeks belonged to is unknown; perhaps they were landlords or merchants. In the late Chosŏn period, being non-elite did not necessarily imply lack of wealth. In fact, the Paeks must have been quite affluent in order to afford a four-month trip, and they needed the leisure to realize such plans. The second character of Paek Kyusam's given name, *sam* 三 ("three"), indicates that he was the third son in his family. Hence, he probably had elder brothers who took care of local matters while Kyusam accompanied his mother on yet another pilgrimage.

Buddhist Pilgrims' Motivations

One of the main motivations for a Kŭmgangsan pilgrimage was the hope of improving one's chances for a better rebirth, a direct reference to Buddhist faith, as indicated by Kang Sehwang's above-mentioned comment. A wide range of primary material, including literary records, architectural structures, as well as popular tales, reinforce Kang's perception, and suggests that both the lower classes and literate people shared this aim. Literatus An Kyŏngjŏm 安景漸 (1722–1789), who visited Kŭmgangsan in 1774, recorded a conversation he had with his friend during his stay at Changansa, which could indicate one of his reasons for traveling to Kŭmgangsan. He writes:

> "[Here at Kŭmgangsan] we get cleansed from the filth of the mundane world," to which his friend replied: "We do not get cleansed from the filth of the world, but rather by staying here, we form a connection with the clean karmic condition of the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss."[10]

Hong Paekch'ang seems to have engaged in Buddhist practices himself, suggesting that this might have been more common among elite travelers than is currently assumed. He writes that at the abandoned hermitage of Chinbul-am 眞佛庵, he wiped the altar clean and lit incense, and wrote on the wall of the hermitage: "I came here and cleaned up the place, lit incense, and entertained the Buddha (餉佛)" (Hong ca. 1800, 13; Kang 2013, 29), indicating that Hong venerated the Buddha at several waypoints in Kŭmgangsan.

Monastic architecture and popular tales provide additional information about Pure Land belief being an important incentive for pilgrims. For example, in addition to the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss Hall (Kŭngnakchŏn 極樂殿), a hall dedicated to Amitābha commonly found at temples throughout Korea, P'yohunsa additionally constructed a Dragon Boat Hall (Yongsŏnjŏn 龍船殿). The P'yohunsa monks were obviously catering to visitors who wanted to imagine riding the dragon boat to paradise.

A foundation legend points to the tradition of non-ordained devotees staying for extended periods in one of Kŭmgangsan's hermitages and temples in order to gain merit for a better rebirth. "Lay practitioner Pak Pin (Pak Pin kŏsa 朴彬居士) riding the dragon boat (*yongsŏn* 龍船)" (Pak Pin kŏsa yongsŏn ŭl t'ada) places concerns about rebirth as the main motivation for staying at the mountain. According to this story, a layman, Pak Pin, founded Boat Hermitage (Sŏn-am 船庵) in the northern part of Inner Kŭmgang where he chanted the Buddha's name for thirty years, after which he rode to Amitābha's Pure Land in a dragon boat (Chŏng 2005, 295). Residents of Sŏn-am evidently based their practice on Pure Land belief, the most likely reason the hermitage was named "Boat Hermitage," and why the mountain pass in which their hermitage is located was named Paradise Valley (Kŭngnakchae 極樂岾) (Mun and Yi 2004, 210).

In the late Chosŏn, female relatives of monks stayed at their monasteries, a practice that seems to stem from earlier traditions. Changansa had a burial stupa for the mother of the eminent late Koryŏ/early Chosŏn monk Muhak (1327–1405) (無學和尙母親浮屠), indicating that she had once lived and died there (Han 1977, 322–323). As recently as the 1890s, British traveler Isabella Bird-Bishop (1831–1904) met the grandmother of one of the P'yohunsa monks who had built a house for herself in the monastery grounds, "in order to die in its quiet blessedness" (Bird-Bishop 1970, 140).

A tale seemingly amplifying a Pure Land belief linked to Kŭmgangsan appears in almost every late Chosŏn period Kŭmgangsan travel account. There is the story of Ming (1368–1644) Chinese envoys traveling from afar to see the mountain: In 1404, in a conversation with court officials, King T'aejong 太宗 (1367–1422, r. 1400–1418) asked why the Chinese Ming envoys always wanted to visit Kŭmgangsan. He had heard the common saying that for the Chinese,

"they wish to be born in the land of Koryŏ so they can see Kŭmgangsan in person" (wŏnsaeng Koryŏguk, ch'ingyŏn Kŭmgangsan 願生高麗國, 親見金剛山). Left State Councilor Ha Yun 河崙 (1348–1416) responded by saying that the Chinese would like to be reborn in Korea to see Kŭmgangsan because it is located in the land of the East, as written in the Buddhist Canon (*T'aejong sillok* 8:15a [1404/9/21]).[11]

Augmenting the fable of Ming Chinese envoys who were willing to die in order to see Kŭmgangsan, late Chosŏn period writers enthusiastically document more detailed versions of the story.[12] In one case, literatus Nam Hyoon 南孝溫 (1454–1492) reported that the Chinese envoy Zheng Tong 鄭同 had visited Kŭmgangsan and said: "Since this area is a Buddha-sphere (*pulgyŏng* 佛境), I want to die here so I will be reborn in the land of Chosŏn and see the world of the Buddhas," and then threw himself down to drown in the deep Pyŏkp'a Pool (Pyŏkpadam 碧波潭) at the foot of a cliff where Podŏk-am 普德庵, a hermitage dedicated to Avalokiteśvara worship, is located (Nam 1996, 67; Yi Manbu 1995, *pyŏlchip* 3:12a).

This drowning tale may remind specialists of East Asian religions of the suicidal activities of Kumano pilgrims, but there is insufficient evidence to prove that Kŭmgangsan pilgrims committed suicide in order to be reborn into a pure land similar to the practice at Nachi Beach en route to the Kumano kodō 熊野古道 in Japan (Moerman 2008, 37–38).[13] Nevertheless, Pure Land Buddhism-related practices at Kŭmgangsan discussed elsewhere most likely prompted this anecdote (Stiller 2019). Moreover, the tale attracted pilgrims to Kŭmgangsan, as it made them believe that they had succeeded in seeing a mountain that allegedly even the Chinese died to see.

Throughout the Chosŏn period, reclusive scholars resided at the monasteries of Kŭmgangsan, supporting the notion that Chosŏn elites were not universally contesting the Buddhist faith. One of the earliest references to this custom is a record mentioning a mid-fifteenth century scholar whose Buddhist name was Chach'ŏng 自淸. His name appears in a list of donors in a document commemorating the re-casting of Yujŏmsa's grand bell in 1469. Furthermore, early Chosŏn elite scholars such as Kim Sisŭp 金時習 (1435–1493) and Yi I 李珥 (1536–1584) resided at Kŭmgangsan's hermitages or became Buddhist monastics (U 2004, 109–110).

During their stay at Kŭmgangsan the literati studied a variety of religious texts. Ŏ Yubong 魚有鳳 (1672–1744), for example, brought with him a copy of the Śūraṅgama-sūtra (K. Sunŭngŏmgyŏng 首楞嚴經) and read it in his idle time at Kŭmgangsan, attesting to the fact that at least some late Chosŏn literati were interested in Sŏn Buddhism (Ŏ Yubong 2009, 12: 650). When Hong Paekch'ang visited Kŭmgangsan in 1737, he learned from resident monks at Mahayŏn that a scholar named Mun (Mun *ch'ŏsa* 文處士) from Yŏngnam had lived at Paekhwa-am 白華庵 in 1735, where he studied the Daoist meditation text Yellow Court Classic (Hwangjŏnggyŏng 黃庭經).[14] Prior to his death at Mahayŏn in 1735, Mun shared his insights with the resident monk Hwawŏldang Sŏngnul 花月堂 性訥 (Kang 2013, 192). The tradition of residing at Buddhist monasteries to study and prepare for government exams also continued to some extent throughout the late Chosŏn period but has not yet been confirmed for temples at Kŭmgangsan.[15]

Some resident scholars such as Mun might have been motivated to live at a temple to study ancient classical texts or Daoist texts rather than follow Buddhist practices. However, many literati residents seem to have also been Buddhist devotees. The stupa garden at Changansa includes two epitaphs dedicated to reclusive scholar-cum-monk Songwŏldang *ch'ŏsa* Nagwŏn 松月堂 處士 樂圓 (ca. eighteenth century) and reclusive scholar Yi Ch'unsang 李春長 (1743–?), who passed the military exam in 1784 and whose family hailed from P'yŏngch'ang in Kangwŏn-do province (Han 1977, 322). The fact that one of these scholars had a dharma name, and that burial stupas were erected for them in the monastery's stupa garden, suggests that both individuals resided at the monastery at some point in their lives and contributed largely to the designated temple out of Buddhist devotion and faith. This evidence from Kŭmgangsan supports existing research on this topic (Lee 2007; Sin 2002, 85).

Apart from individual aspirations, participation in large-scale Buddhist ceremonies could be another explanation for travel to Kŭmgangsan. Hong Paekch'ang observed a ritual ceremony attended by hundreds of monks and lay devotees at Yujŏmsa. Judging from the performative character and the

kind of instruments used during this ceremony, Hong could have witnessed a section of a Water-Land Assembly (Suryukchae 水陸齋). He writes:

> While male and female devotees lined up separately, the monks moved from the outer ring to stand as a wall. Once the drum and gong were struck, followed by cymbals, the male devotees arose and danced; at the second drum and gong strike, followed by cymbals, the assembled monks rose up and danced; at the third drum and gong strike, followed by cymbals, the female devotees arose and danced. Eventually, the groups following each other, mingled, and swirled and jumped about under the moonlight. (Hong ca. 1800, 22)

How far participants of this ceremony had traveled to attend the ceremony is unclear. Most likely, the majority of them came from nearby villages, while a few groups of men and women, including perhaps the group of women from Ch'ungch'ŏng-do province whom Hong had met at Mahayŏn, traveled from further away in order to participate in this event.

The Myogilsang Buddha in the Late Chosŏn Pilgrimage Context

One of the most famous waypoints of the Kŭmgangsan pilgrimage, Myogilsang 妙吉祥, is a fifty-foot-tall rock relief of a Buddha (*maaebul* 磨崖佛) carved from the façade of a cliff facing the Hwagaedong River in the northwestern part of Inner Kŭmgang (Fig. 3). Until the early seventeenth century, a hermitage called Myogilsang Hermitage (Myogilsang-am 妙吉祥庵) had been located adjacent to the site, and its resident monks were in charge of performing daily rituals to the divinity as well as catering to travelers.[16]

So far, art-historical scholarship has focused exclusively on the stylistic characteristics of the relief sculpture and the stone lamp placed in front of it (Yi T'aeho 2012, 178ff.). In the following, I examine the Buddha relief along with previously unknown inscriptions that had been carved next to it, thereby integrating a systematic stylistic and iconographic study of the site along with an analysis of its spatial context. The findings of this case study support my

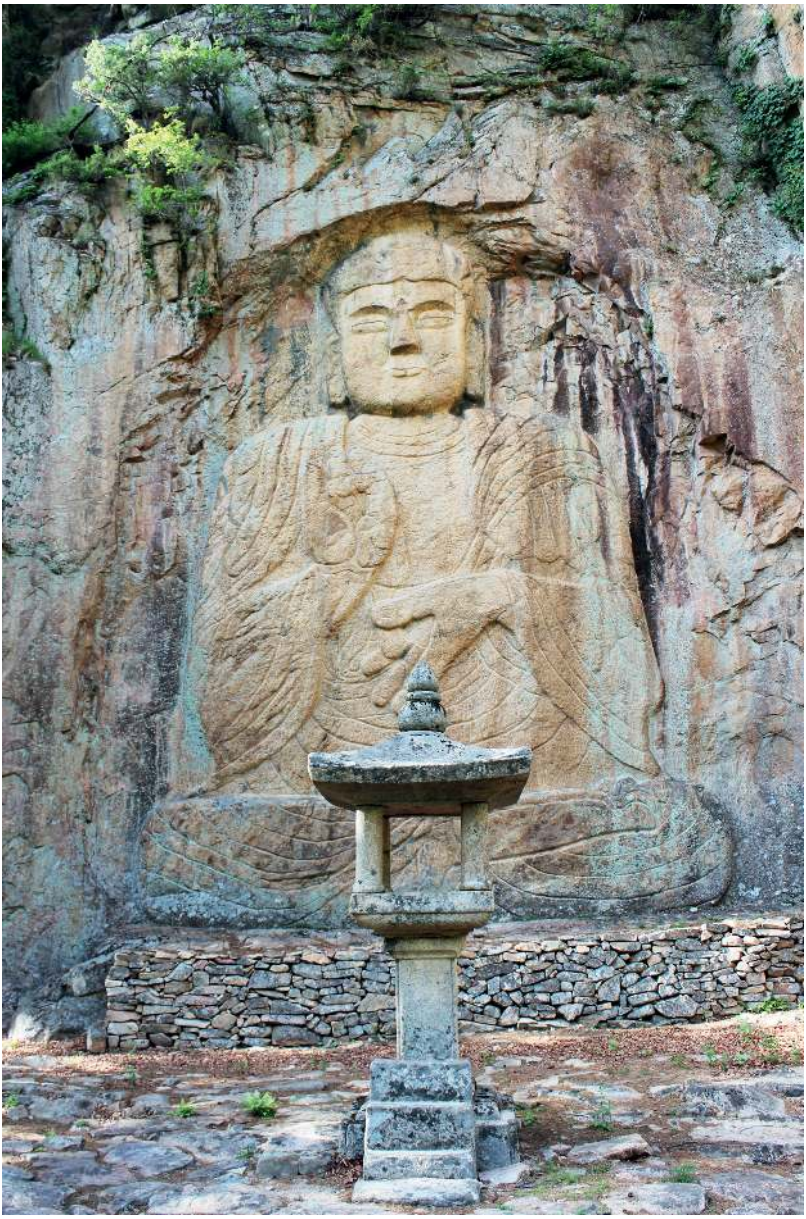

Figure 3. Myogilsang Buddha (1315), Koryŏ period (918–1392). Rock-cliff carving, Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province.
Source: photograph by author

claim that the mountain was an important Buddhist pilgrimage site that catered to a wide range of individuals from various social backgrounds.

The Myogilsang rock cliff relief features a flatly carved silhouette with wide shoulders and disproportionately large hands displaying the teaching mudra (*sŏlbŏbin* 說法印). The head is topped by a subtle protrusion (K. *pulchŏng* 佛頂, Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*), while the upper elongated torso is framed by broad, angular shoulders and flatly stretched legs. The stone lamp in front of the Buddha features a short, quadrangular main pillar and four columns resembling bamboo stalks supporting the jewel-topped roof. These features indicate that the lamp is a later, simplified version of early Koryŏ period lamps such as the one built in 1018 at Kaeguksa 開國寺 in Hwanghae-do 黃海道 province, having a longer main pillar framed by stylized lotus leaves and a better balance between the upper and lower sections of the structure (Yi T'aeho 2012, 181).

Based on the stylistic features of both pieces, previous scholarship dated the Myogilsang Buddha vaguely to the tenth/eleventh century (Yi T'aeho 2012, 178). However, Pae Yonggil 裵龍吉 (1556–1609) refers to the Myogilsang Buddha's production date as the fourth lunar month of 1315, which is the fourth year of King Ch'ungsuk's 忠肅 (1294–1339) reign (Pae 1996, 224). The date 1315 is plausible due to the Buddha's stylistic features. With its full cheeks, the robust body covered by a robe with parallel garment folds draped over both shoulders that are more angular than those of Southern Song or thirteenth-century Koryŏ Buddha images, it resembles the Amitābha Buddha painting in the Matsuodera 松尾寺 collection, which is dated 1320.[17] Both works are similar in terms of hand gesture, the sloping curves of the sleeves, the thin waist belt, and the exposed right foot sole.

In addition, it stylistically resembles the 42-foot tall Tŏkchusa 德周寺 *maaebul* at Wŏraksan 月岳山 in Ch'ungch'ŏng-do 忠淸道 province in terms of its low relief, the graphic depiction of garment folds, the angular, trapeze-shaped nose and deep angular carving of eyebrows with narrow, elongated eyes and quadrangular ears, as well as its emphasis on hand gestures. The Tŏkchusa Buddha is currently dated to the eleventh century, but due to its similarities with the Myogilsang Buddha it should be dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Fig. 4). In both cases, the carving is executed rather stiffly, as can be seen in the stylized lines that form the inner and outer robes

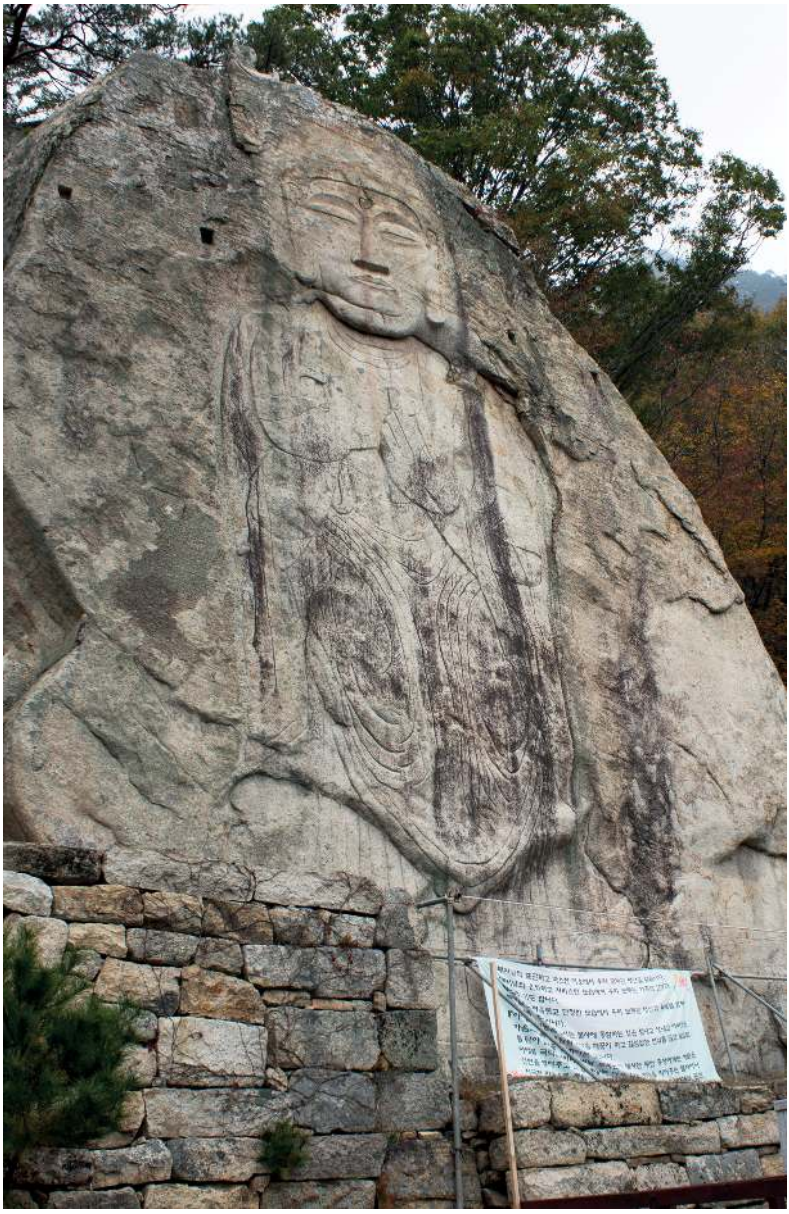

Figure 4. Tŏkchusa Buddha, Koryŏ period (918–1392).
Rock-cliff carving, Wŏraksan, Ch'ungch'ŏng-do province.
Source: photograph by author

as well as the edges of the Buddha's shoulders and knees. The rough quality of the carving indicates provincial craftsmen rather than highly skilled artisans sent by the royal court. Further research is needed to substantiate this theory, but it is possible that the craftsmen who carved the Myogilsang Buddha were itinerant artisans active throughout the peninsula, and may have been connected to an artisan tradition from the area of present-day Ch'ungch'ŏng-do province. As a recent study by Mun Myŏngdae revealed, sculptors from Chŏlla-do province were commissioned to work at temples as far as Kangwŏn-do province, where Kŭmgangsan is situated (Mun 2015, 13–33).

Scholars have not conclusively identified who the Myogilsang Buddha represents. Judging from its hand gestures, the figure may represent Amitābha Buddha, which would support my impression that many pilgrims were motivated by the idea of improving their chances of rebirth in a Pure Land. However, some scholars have argued that the inscription to the left of the image, "Wonderful and auspicious" (Myogilsang 妙吉祥), written and carved by Yun Saguk 尹師國 (1728–1809), governor of Kangwŏn-do province in 1788, refers to the Korean pronunciation of three Chinese characters that describe the meaning of the Sanskrit words for the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (*miao* 妙 for *mañju* and *jixiang* for *śrī*) (Fig. 5). Nevertheless, the image's iconography follows the conventions for depicting a Buddha rather than a Bodhisattva.

Chosŏn travelers like Pae Yonggil 裵龍吉 (1556–1609), Yi Manbu 李萬敷 (1664–1732), and Yi Kyŏngsŏk 李景奭 (1595–1671), refer to the Myogilsang Buddha as Maitreya Buddha, and also mention that the top of the cliff, from which Myogilsang was carved, was known as the Maitreya Rock Ledge (Mirŭktae 彌勒臺) (Pae 1996, 224; Yi Kyŏngsŏk 1996, 384; Yi Manbu 1995, 53). Government official Cho Pyŏnghyŏn 趙秉鉉 (1791–1849) also saw the inscription "Maitreya" carved below the image of Myogilsang (Cho Pyŏnghyŏn 2009, 539). To complicate matters further, a fourth interpretation was made by Ch'oe Namsŏn 崔南善 (1890–1957) in 1928 and by Yi T'aeho in 2012. Both scholars assume that the figure must represent the Vairocana Buddha because it is located on the path leading to Vairocana Peak (Pirobong 毘盧峯) (Yi T'aeho 2012, 191).

Figure 5. *Myogilsang,* carved calligraphy (original and enhanced) by Yun Saguk 尹師國 (1728–1809), carved to the left of the Myogilsang Buddha (1788), Chosŏn period (1392–1910). Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏ-do province.
Source: photograph by author

Ultimately, it is likely that the Myogilsang Buddha had multiple identities, a feature quite common in Buddhist visual culture, illustrating that Buddhist figures adjusted to the changes of Buddhist practice. Based on the literary evidence listed above, however, in Chosŏn period Korea the Myogilsang Buddha appears to have been strongly identified as a Maitreya Buddha while its previous identity during the Koryŏ period might have been that of an Amitābha Buddha. As a central traffic point between the inner and outer parts of the mountain, the Myogilsang Buddha was a likely destination for many travelers of different beliefs.

Myogilsang Rock Inscriptions

During field research at Kŭmgangsan, I studied over eighty rock inscriptions carved on either side of the Myogilsang Buddha. Most of these inscriptions are autographs, a common feature of late Chosŏn-period travel destinations. Signatures were commonly written in ink by the travelers and chiseled by local engraver-monks and/or secular masons. I was able to identify the autographs of 38 individuals, dating from the early seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, through a prosopographical analysis. Expressing identity through place, these travelers had engaged in the performative practice of carving their names in order to create locational capital to show later visitors who had visited the place before them.[18]

Among the autograph inscribers are "Myogilsang" writer Yun Saguk with his father, Yun Kyŏngnyong 尹敬龍 (1686–1743), his eldest son, Yun Chaegŭp 尹載伋 (1750–?), and his nephew, Yun Chaehŭi 尹載僖 (1754–?). Apparently, they visited the site together in 1788 when Yun Saguk was governor of Kangwŏn-do province. To the bottom left of Yun Saguk's Myogilsang's inscription are the autographs carved by postal station officer (*ch'albang* 察訪, a junior sixth rank) Han Yŏnggyu 韓永逵 and his brother Han Yŏnggŏn 韓永建. The two brothers (or cousins) visited Kŭmgangsan most likely when Yŏnggŏn worked as postal station officer from 1799 to 1802 in Inje county (Inje-gun 麟蹄郡), which lies a few miles south of Kŭmgangsan (Fig. 6).

Included in the autograph clusters are a group of three late-eighteenth- to early-nineteenth-century *chungin* 中人 friends, Pak Iho 朴履孝, Hong Sŏkp'il 洪奭弼, and Yi Chadam 李子潭 (Fig. 7). According to the *Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 承政院日記, Pak Iho served as a royal court scribe in the 1780s and 1790s while Hong Sŏkp'il served in several positions, for example as an archivist at the Military Training Command (Hullyŏn togam 訓鍊都監), in the 1810s and 1820s (*Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi*, *Chŏngjo* 8 [10/28/1784]; *Sunjo* 14 [12/25/1814]). Such previously unstudied autograph inscriptions enrich our understanding of late Chosŏn period travel by revealing the names of travelers from different social backgrounds who left personal marks at the mountain.

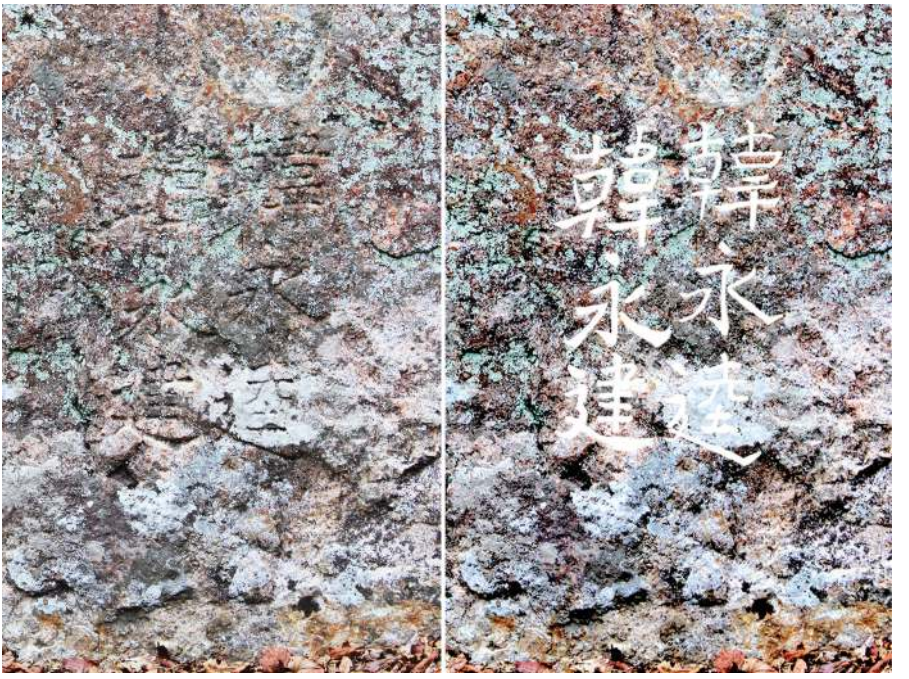

Figure 6. Autograph cluster (original and enhanced) of postal station officer Han Yŏnggyu 韓永逵 and Han Yŏnggŏn 韓永建, carved to the right of the Myogilsang Buddha, 1799–1802, Chosŏn period (1392–1910), Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province.

Source: photograph by author

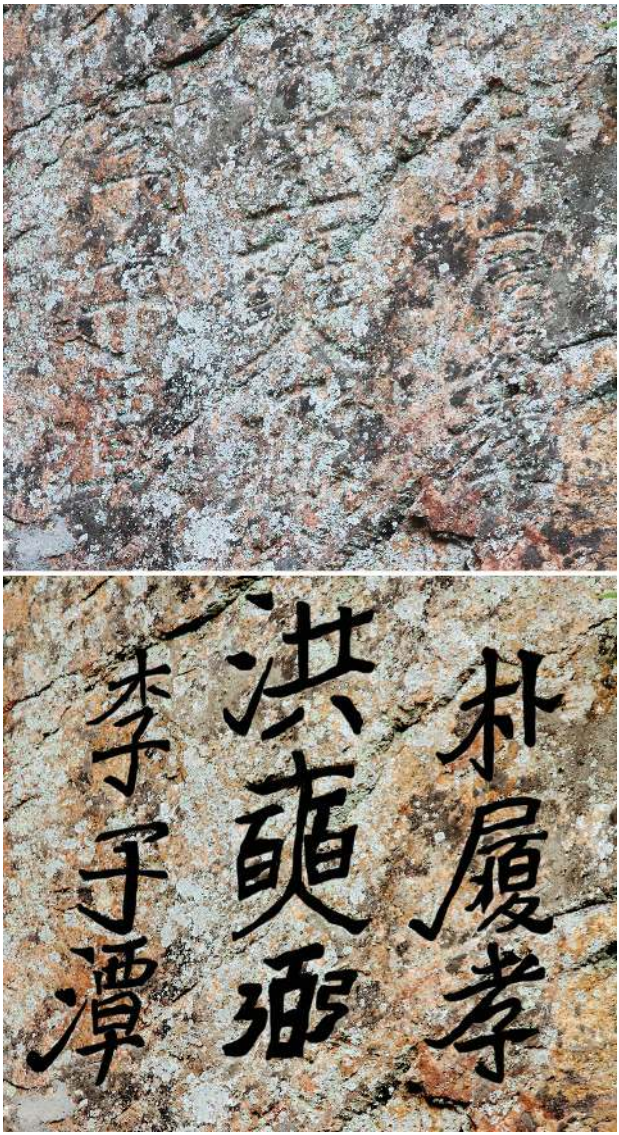

Figure 7. Autograph cluster (original and enhanced) of *chungin* friends, Pak Iho 朴履孝, Hong Sŏkp'il 洪奭弼, and Yi Chadam 李子潭, carved to the right of the Myogilsang Buddha, late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, Chosŏn period (1392–1910). Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province.
Source: photograph by author

Another carving that stands out is located to the lower left of the Myogilsang rock cliff Buddha. It is a 15-inch-high figure incised into the rock with its body directed toward the Buddha (Fig. 8). This image by a nineteenth-century scholar (further discussed below) was incised hundreds of years after the Myogilsang Buddha had been carved. Professor Yi T'aeho claims that the image is a portrait of a kneeling scholar-official who venerates the Buddha by holding both hands in *añjali mudrā* (*hapchangin* 合掌印) in front of his chest (Yi T'aeho 2012, 180). In fact, the robe and horsehair hat (*tongp'agwan* 東坡冠) resemble the garment of late Chosŏn period scholars; for example, the robe worn by Sŏ Chiksu 徐直修 (1735–?) in his portrait by court painters Yi Myŏnggi 李命基 (active late 18th century) and Kim Hongdo 金弘道 (1745–1806) in 1796 (Fig. 9). However, another perspective about the figure's position and hand gesture may suggest a different interpretation. A direct examination of the inscribed image shows that the figure holds his arms at his waist, and his arms and hands are covered by both sleeves, as is appropriate demeanor for a literatus. Indeed, the figure may not be kneeling but is likely standing, holding a pointed *kyu* 圭 ceremonial tablet, similar to that held by attendant figures in late Chosŏn Buddhist painting, in front of his chest (Fig. 10).

The wall paintings of Songgwangsa's 松廣寺 Avalokiteśvara Hall (Kwanŭmjŏn 觀音殿) are excellent for comparison with this rock carving. Situated on both sides of the hall, they feature court officials of different court ranks holding a *kyu*, their bodies directed towards the Avalokiteśvara sculpture in the center of the hall (Fig. 11). The creator of the portrait next to the Myogilsang Buddha, Yi Chomuk 李祖默 (1792–1840), must have been familiar with this type of iconography in Buddhist painting. Hence, he depicted himself in official ceremonial garb, orienting his body towards the Buddha.[19]

Yi Chomuk was a literati painter, calligrapher, and art collector, a *yangban* from the Chŏnju Yi Kangnyŏnggun 江寧君 descent group (Yi 1823, 51; Yi 1877, 1:10a; 2:4b–7b). His grandfather Yi Ch'angsu 李昌壽 (1710–?) and his father, Yi Pyŏngjŏng 李秉鼎 (1742–1804), had very successful careers as high-ranking government officials. His father, for example, served as governor of Hamgyŏng-do province in 1800 and as Minister of Works in 1802, and accumulated great wealth (*Sunjo sillok*, 1:20a [1800/08/20]); 4:34a [1802/09/06]). However, since his father was impeached several times due to political strife, Yi Chomuk abandoned the idea of becoming a government official and instead

Figure 8. Yi Chomuk's 李祖默 (1792–1840) portrait at Myogilsang (1818). Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province.
Source: sketch by author

Figure 9. Yi Myŏnggi 李命基 (d.u.) and Kim Hongdo 金弘道 (1745–1806), *Portrait of Sŏ Chiksu* 徐直修 (1735–?) (1796), Chosŏn period (1392–1910). Hanging scroll, colors on silk, 148.8 × 72.4 cm.

Source: National Museum Seoul, Korea (acc. no. 덕수5688). Open access image downloaded at http://emuseum.go.kr/

Figure 10. Anonymous. Detail of *Kṣitigarbha and the Ten Kings* (Chijang siwang 地藏十王), eighteenth century, Chosŏn period (1392–1910). Banner painting, color on silk, 138.3 × 131.5 cm., Kyŏnggi-do pangmulgwan.
Source: Sŏngbo munhwajae yŏn'guwŏn, comp., *Han'guk ŭi purhwa* (Kyŏngnam Yangsan-si: Sŏngbo munhwajae yŏn'guwŏn, 1996), vol. 39, *Kuk kongnip pangmulgwan p'yŏn*, fig. 18-4.

Figure 11. Anonymous, *Senior First Rank civil government officials bowing their heads towards the Buddhist altar* (1903), Chosŏn period (1392–1910). Westside mural, Kwanŭmjŏn 觀音殿, Songgwangsa 松廣寺, Chŏlla-do province.
Source: photograph by author

spent his entire life pursuing the arts of poetry, calligraphy, and painting (Hwang 2004, 106).[20]

Yi traveled to Kŭmgangsan in 1818, where he not only had his portrait carved at the Myogilsang Buddha but also had his name carved across the Three Buddha Rock (Samburam 三佛巖) (Fig. 13). On-site research confirms Yi Chomuk's written record of having his portrait carved at Myogilsang:

> Carved my portrait adjacent to Myogilsang. The inscription reads: "Follower of the Dao Yukkyo Yi Chomuk, who extensively traveled to all the scenic sites of Kŭmgangsan and also carved his portrait into the mountain rock on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month of the *muin* year [1818]." I also wrote fourteen characters with a large brush on the western wall and had them carved: "The place where the Lord of Twelve Thousand Peaks, Yi Chomuk, meditates." (Yi Chomuk 1877, 51: "Chŭng Namyŏng taesa")

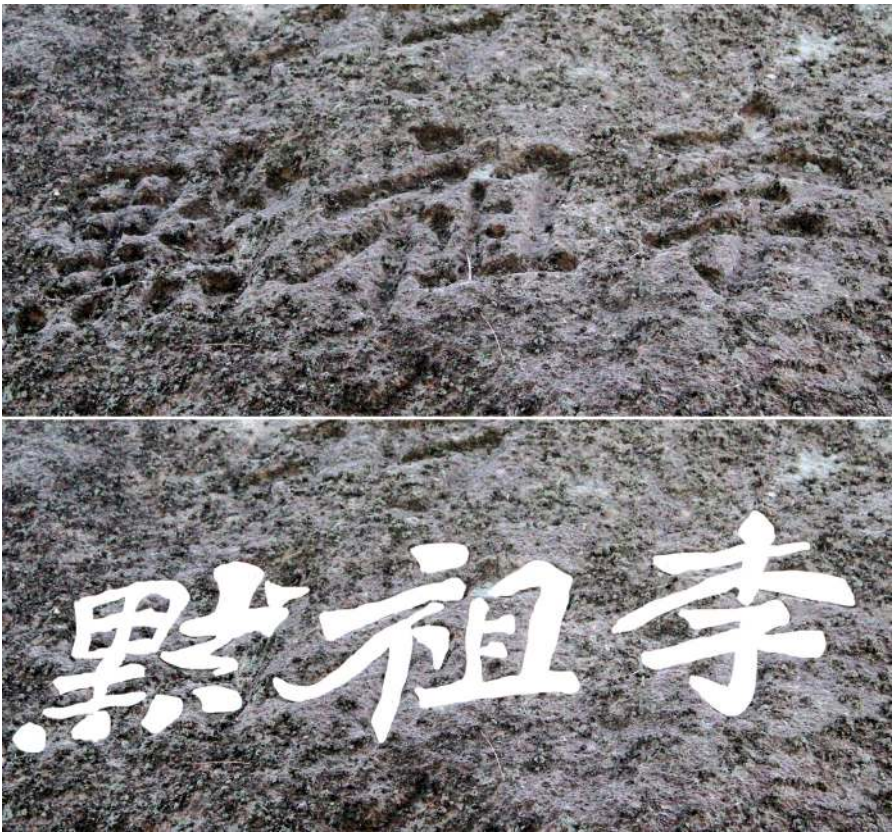

Figure 12. Autograph (original and enhanced) by Yi Chomuk 李祖默 (1792–1840) (1818). Samburam 三佛巖, Inner Kŭmgang, Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province. *Source*: photograph by author

Sections of the inscription are still visible, carved from right to left, top to bottom, on the right side of the portrait. Although some of the characters have eroded, one can still recognize "万二千峰 主人六橋 … 參禪處" of the original phrase "万二千峯主人六橋李祖默參禪處" (Fig. 12).

It may seem odd that a late Chosŏn literatus had his portrait carved next to a Buddha image. Yet, this may not have been quite so odd for Yi Chomuk considering that he sent his portrait painting to Chinese scholar Weng Fanggang's 翁方綱 (1733–1818) son Weng Xingyuan 翁星原 (a.k.a. Weng Shukun 翁樹崑,

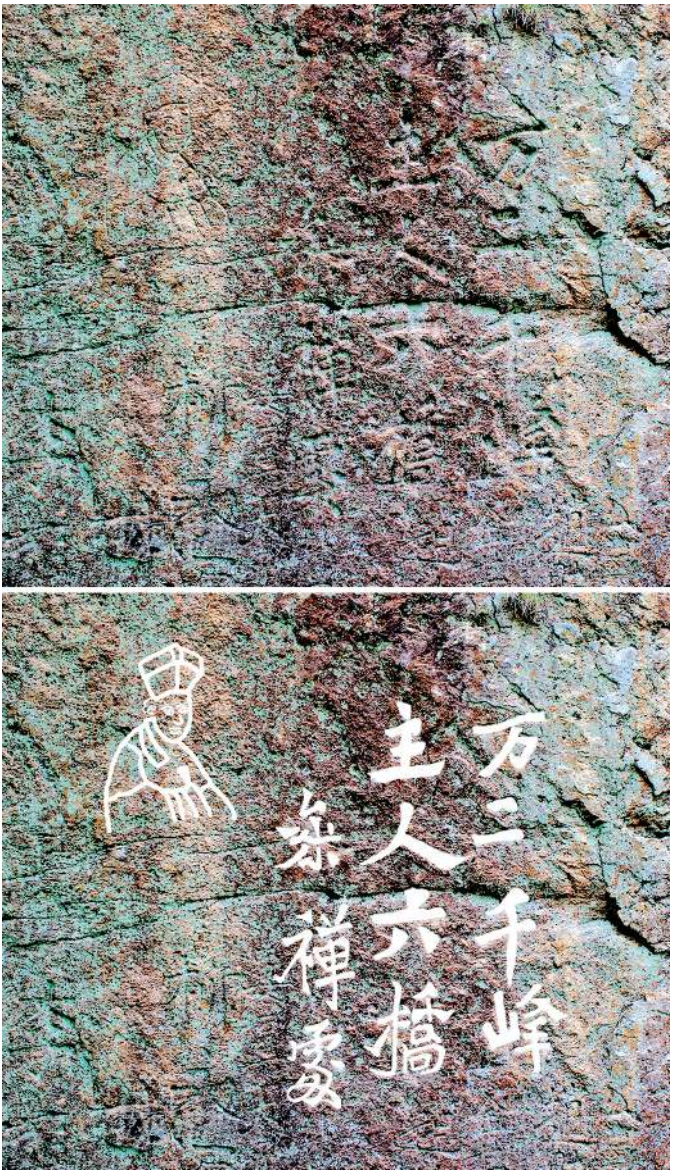

Figure 13. Inscription and portrait (original and enhanced) by Yi Chomuk 李祖默 (1792–1840), carved to the left of the Myogilsang Buddha (1818), Chosŏn period (1392–1910), Kŭmgangsan, Kangwŏn-do province.

Source: photograph by author

1786–1815). Weng was delighted with the portrait painting yet requested to see the full body of Yi Chomuk. Yi went to extreme lengths by having a portrait sculpture of himself made and tried to send it to Weng through the Chosŏn embassy. However, while staying in Liaodong, embassy members abandoned the sculpture despite receiving generous funding from Yi Chomuk (Yi Yuwŏn 1884).

By having his portrait carved next to an image of a Buddha, it could be inferred that Yi Chomuk created an alter ego that would eternally venerate the Buddha at Kŭmgangsan in his stead. Although the exact reasons for his carving are unclear, circumstantial evidence suggests that Buddhist rituals and texts were part of Yi Chomuk's life. He writes that on his birthday, while he was staying at his summerhouse, he held a simple ritual for the image of Avalokiteśvara carved on his ink stone, and, together with a monk named Namgyŏng 楠景, he chanted the Śūraṅgama-sūtra (Yi Chomuk 1877, 1:13a). And late in life, when Yi had lost his home and lived in a room in someone else's house, he reportedly had nothing in his room but the entire set of the Lotus Sutra (Yi Yuwŏn 1884). Seen in this context, his inscription and portrait alongside the Myogilsang Buddha point to the fact that Buddhist practice was part of his life, and that he carved his portrait in order to be eternally in this Buddha's presence. Yi Chomuk's behavior and carved portrait are extremely valuable since they indicate that at least some late Chosŏn literati traveled to Kŭmgangsan not only for leisure but were in fact Buddhist pilgrims.

Conclusion

Visual and written material discussed in this article shows that Kŭmgangsan remained an attractive Buddhist pilgrimage site throughout the late Chosŏn period, in spite of many scholars' assertions that the activities were based solely on Daoist and Neo-Confucian ideas. Stele inscriptions, travel records, popular tales, as well as rock reliefs and autograph inscriptions reveal that Kŭmgangsan attracted Buddhist travelers from different social backgrounds in addition to a variety of secular and religious motivations. This study supports existing scholarship in Korean history and religious studies about *yangban* travelers'

interest in Buddhist practice, calling for the need for scholars of literature and art historians to consider more interdisciplinary, comprehensive methodologies for examining Chosŏn period elite travel.

Pioneering the study of a spatial history of Kŭmgangsan, this article also discussed pictorial and textual forms of rock inscriptions adjacent to Buddhist sites. These inscriptions, which exist abundantly throughout the Korean mountains, are an as yet unrecognized resource that should be considered in any future study of Chosŏn period Buddhist art and architecture for a deeper understanding of visitors' travel practices and interactions with religious sites.

Notes

1 In this article, the administrational term *yangban* will be used in a general sense to refer to elite strata of late Chosŏn society.

2 Kŭmgangsan is part of the T'aebaek Mountain Range (T'aebaeksan 太白山), which stretches along the eastern part of the Korean Peninsula. A basic feature of the T'aebaek range is its division into a steep eastern slope and a much more gradual western slope. This divide runs north to south through the middle of Kŭmgangsan. The more gently sloping western half is known as Inner Kŭmgang, located in the district of Hoeyang 淮陽, while the steep slopes of the eastern half are referred to as Outer Kŭmgang, located in the districts of Kosŏng 高城 and T'ongch'ŏn 通川.

3 One *k'an* describes an area of 2.4 × 2.4 m^2 (= 5.76 m^2 or 62 sq. ft.). Accordingly, 600 *k'an* would be equivalent to around 3,456 m^2 or 37,200 sq. ft.

4 Most of Kŭmgangsan's monasteries and hermitages were destroyed during the Korean War, for example Changansa, which was a North Korean prisoner-of-war camp during the Korean War, and held 700–800 South Korean and 80 American prisoners prior to its destruction (see Morris-Suzuki 2010, 151). Only P'yohunsa, Chŏngyangsa, Podŏk-am and a few smaller hermitages survived and were repaired.

5 In contrast to larger monasteries such as Changansa and P'yohunsa, which had a few dozen large timber constructions with tiled roofs, hermitages were often just thatched-roof shacks, which became dilapidated once they fell out of use. Therefore, while the number of temples remained fairly stable throughout the Chosŏn period, the number of hermitages fluctuated quite a bit since hermitages were constantly abandoned and rebuilt.

6 See chapter 1 of my forthcoming book published with University of Washington Press.

7 In 1697, second censor Yŏ P'iryong 呂必容 (1655–?) petitioned that the commemorative rituals performed for the former Chosŏn kings at Yujŏmsa and the annual pilgrimages performed by the royal palace servants and court ladies to Kŭmgangsan be prohibited. The king ordered the portraits buried but did not prohibit the pilgrimages. See *Sukchong sillok* 31:6a (1697/01/12).

8 Kim Kŭmwŏn mentions two court ladies residing at a nunnery in Inner Kŭmgangsan, which could mean that the members of the royal family had sent them to Kŭmgangsan to sponsor and attend rituals. See Kim Kŭmwŏn (1996, 483); also, Kim Haboush (2008, 294–295).

9 The governor of Kangwŏn-do province was ordered to strictly prohibit the travel of women in the mountains since Ming envoys were about to visit Kŭmgangsan. See *Sejong sillok* 57:15a (1432/08/01).

10 Kŭngnak 極樂 (Skt. Sukhāvatī), i.e., Amitābha's Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

11 Relating a passage in the *Hwaŏm kyŏng* 華嚴經 (Skt. *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*) to a mountain in Korea is a late Koryŏ period Korean invention. See prologue in my forthcoming book.

12 While members of Yuan and Ming embassies did go to Kŭmgangsan in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to perform Buddhist ceremonies on behalf of their rulers, the idea that they wanted to be reborn in Korea to see the mountain is an early Chosŏn invention. See endnote 13.

13 Not only mid- and late Chosŏn period travelers, but also twenty-first-century writers often refer to several variants of this story, taking its content at face value, and even crediting Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) as the originator of this story, see Ahn (2018, 117). In present-day scholarship, the authenticity and Chinese roots of the drowning story have not yet been challenged since they highlight Kŭmgangsan's fame beyond the Korean Peninsula and reinforce Korean cultural identity. However, so far, in Chinese literary source material from the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, I have not found any evidence of this fable. The two earliest existing sources are the Chosŏn royal court record dated 1404 and Nam Hyoon's travel account written in 1485. On the basis of these findings, the often-repeated tale of the Chinese who wish to be reborn in Korea appears to be an early Chosŏn period myth invented by scholars to validate Kŭmgangsan as a spiritually powerful and auspicious site.

14 The term *ch'ŏsa* 處士 refers to a scholar who temporarily lived at a Buddhist temple.

15 For the late Koryŏ and early Chosŏn period practice to send one's children to Buddhist monasteries to study, see John Duncan (2000, 255).

16 Hong Inu 洪仁祐 (1515–1554) had lunch at Myogilsang Hermitage in 1553. In 1572, Yang Taebak 梁大樸 (1544–1592) passed the night there. When Yi Kyŏngsŏk 李景奭 (1595–1671) went to see the Myogilsang Buddha in 1651, the hermitage was deserted. By the late seventeenth century, all that remained of the hermitage were the foundation stones and stone steps. See Hong (1996, 120); Yang (1996, 207); Yi Kyŏngsŏk (1996, 384); Yi Manbu (1995, 53 [*pyŏlchip* 3:13a]).

17 The Matsuodera painting is published in Ch'oe (2013, 304).

18 In a forthcoming book with University of Washington Press, I discuss in greater detail the different forms of autographs found at Kŭmgangsan.

19 For Yuan and Ming Chinese examples, see *Zhongguo siguan bihua quanji* 中國寺觀壁畫全集 (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2009–2011), vol. 2, Fig. 24; *Baoning si Ming dai shuilu hua* 宝宁寺明代水陆画 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), Fig. 134; for late Koryŏ period examples, see *Koryŏ purhwa taejŏn* 高麗佛畵大展 (Seoul: Kungnip chungang pangmulgwan, 2010), Fig. 66 and 69; for eighteenth-century/early nineteenth-century Chosŏn period examples, see *Han'guk ŭi purhwa* 韓國의 佛畵 (Kyŏngnam Yangsan-si: Sŏngbo munhwajae yŏn'guwŏn, 1996), vol. 40, Fig. 17 and 22.

20 Later, Yi Chomuk spent all of his father's money and went bankrupt due to excessive collecting activities and the purchase of expensive gifts for prominent scholars of the Qing, such as Weng Shukun 翁樹崐 (1786–1815).

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