

Transmitting the Spirit: Korean Portraits of the Late Choson Period

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Introduction

During the Choson period, the art of portrait painting enjoyed great prominence and was valued with high esteem. A wide range of members from the upper classes, namely kings, royal families, high officials, literati elites and high monks, all sat in, hoping to capture their 'divine images' permanently. Often, only the most famous and skillful painters were hired to execute these portraits. As a result, portrait painting of the Choson Dynasty conveys a stylistic refinement and remarkable verisimilitude. Along with its rich historical context, portraits are regarded as invaluable material in the study of Korean painting history.

Surprisingly, this important subject has not been fully examined until the 1980s. Recent scholarship in Korean portraiture has expanded greatly, and these studies add to the richness and complexity of the subject, offering totally new perspectives.¹ However, there are still many unexplored issues to resolve. Some unanswered questions are; what were conditions of executing the paintings actually like? How was the image of a portrait displayed and received? Just what were the roles of the patrons? How specifically did Chinese influences appear in the work?

In order to deepen our understanding of Korean portrait painting, this paper deals particularly with the Chinese influence on Korean portraiture.² This is a subject that has received too little attention because of the lack of thorough study on Chinese portraiture and modern Korean art historians' nationalistic bias toward foreign influences. Using comparative methodology, the similarities and discrepancies between portrait paintings of the late Choson Dynasty and those of the Qing Dynasty will be examined in-depth.

As Richard Brilliant asserted, portrait paintings reflect social, historical and national realities.³

1. Important works are in the form of comprehensive survey of its history by Cho Son-mi, and focused studies of Ojin togam uigwe or the Records of the Superintendency for Painting Royal Portrait by Yi Song-mi as well as Kang Kwan-sik's detailed research of theoretical background and stylistic development of the Korean portraits in 17th and 18th centuries. Also Chin Chun-hyun consulted records on royal portrait in Sungjongwon ilgi or Records of the Royal Secretariat.

Cho Son-mi, Hanguk ch'osanghwa yongu (Study of Korean Portrait) Seoul, Yollhwadang, 1983.

An Hwi-chun, "Hanguk ch'osanghwa kaegwan (Survey of Korean Portrait)" Hoehwa(Kukpo 10) Seoul, Yegyong, 1984: pp.219-222.

Yi Song-mi, Yu Song-ok and Kang Sin-hang, Chosonsidae ojin kwangye togam uigwe yongu (A Study of the Records of the Superintendency for Painting or Copying Royal Portraits of the Choson Dynasty) Songnam, Chongsin munhwa yonguwon, 1997

Kang Kwan-sik, "Chin'gyong sidae hugi hwawonhwa ui sigakchok sasilsong(Visual Reality in the professional painters' work in the late Choson dynasty)" Kansongmunhwa no.49, 1995: pp.49-108.

_____, "Chin'gyong sidae ch'osanghwa yangsik ui kiban(Stylistic foundation of portrait painting in the late Choson dynasty)" Chinkyong sidae vol.2. Seoul, Tolbaegae, 1998: pp.261-317 .

Chin Chun-hyun, "Yongjo, Chongjodae Ojindosa wa hwagadul (Royal portraits and painters during King Yongjo and Chongjo)" So'ul taehakkyo pakmulgan yonbo no.6, 1994: pp.19-72.

_____, "Sukchongdae Ojindosa wa hwagadul (Royal portrait and painters during King Sukchong)" Komunhwa no.46, 1995: pp.89-119.

2. Recently two important researches on this subject were published.

Yi Song-mi, Josonsidae kurim sok'ui soyanghwabup (Western Influence on Korean Painting of the Late Choson Period) Seoul, Taewonsa, 2000.

Cho Son-mi, "Ilbon jongansa mit ch'ongjisasojang ch'osanghwa samjom'e taehayo," Misuljarvo vol. 64, 2000. pp. 45-78.

3 Richard Brilliant, Portraiture Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1991: p.11.

The main purpose of this study is also to investigate the interface between art and social life and interpret the stylistic features of Choson portraiture based on the value system of Choson society. This study will shed a light in the artistic exchange between these two neighboring countries. Furthermore, it seeks to explain Korea's reception and modification of Chinese portraits, and finally diagnoses Choson's dual response to Qing art; namely, how Choson disregarded the Qings as a barbarian culture or envied it as an enchanting cultural achievement.⁴

Royal Portraiture

During the Choson period, royal portraits were regarded as the most important type of figural images. They were commissioned from the most famous painters, and subsequently displayed excellent craftsmanship. From the beginning of the Choson Dynasty, kings ordered the painting of royal portraits, and even built Halls of Royal Portraits or *Chinjon* to house them. King T'aejo (r.1392-1398), the founder of the Choson dynasty, had several portraits completed during his reign and enshrined them at several places around the kingdom. These sites include Hamhung where he was born, Kyongju and P'yongyang, the capitals of the ancient kingdoms of Silla and Koguryo.⁵ The third king T'aejong (r.1400-1418) established two more Halls of Royal Portrait for his father King T'aejo in Kaesong, the capital of the previous Koryo Dynasty, and in Chonju, the royal family's ancestral home.⁶ At the Hansong capital, Munso Hall was established specifically to install King T'aejo's portrait.⁷ As a result, there are altogether six Halls of Royal Portrait where King T'aejo's portrait was enshrined. These six halls were destroyed during the Japanese Invasion in 1592, and today only the rebuilt Kyonggi Hall in Chonju has survived the passage of time.

Sonwon Hall was established in the capital in 1430, not only for the express use of the founder King T'aejo but also for his successors.⁸ Sonwon Hall was originally located outside of the palace, and was reconstructed at the northern part of Kyongbok Palace in 1438.⁹ As the Main Hall of Royal Portraits, Sonwon Hall stored many royal images from a long line of kings and queens. In 1469 there were 33 boxes of royal portraits, and in 1548 it was reported that 26 scrolls of King T'aejo's portraits and 9 scrolls of King Songjong's (r.1469-1494) were kept together with many other royal portraits.¹⁰

Unfortunately, most of these precious paintings disappeared, when the palace was destroyed and incinerated, during the Japanese Invasion in the late 16th century. After the war, during the process of reconstructing the palaces in 1618, King Kwanghae (r.1608-1623) temporarily enshrined the surviving royal portraits of King T'aejo and King S'aejo (r.1455-1468) at Nambyol Hall in the southern part of the capital.¹¹ These two portraits managed to weather the destruction of war, as they were kept safe in other locations. King Injo (r.1623-1649) posthumously enshrined a portrait of his father, King Wonjong (1580-1619) at the Nambyol Hall in 1632.¹² After King Sukjong (r.1674-1720) changed its name again into

4. This study relies extensively on material drawn from the Choson wangjo sillok (hereafter abbreviated as Sillok), or the Veritable Records of the Choson Dynasty. CD-ROM version of Sillok helped this author to find records related to the subject. When a record from Sillok is quoted, name of the king, the volume, the year, the month and the date are indicated in order. For example, "T'aejo sillok, vol. 7, 1398.2.26" means "Veritable Records of King T'aejo, volume 7, year of 1398, the second month, the twenty-sixth day." For the convenience, I use the dominical year instead of the reign year of each kings.

Choson wangjo sillok (Annals of the Chosun Dynasty), CD-ROM vol.1-4. Seoul, Seoul Systems Co. Ltd. 1996.

5. Cho Son-mi, (1983) *ibid.*, pp. 110-114. and T'aejo sillok, vol.13, 1398.2.26 and 1398.3.6. I could find many records of Choson portraits by using CD-ROM version of Sillok, but I still owe lots to Cho Son-mi's pioneering study.

6. T'aejong sillok, vol.20, 1410.9.28 and vol.24, 1412.11.15. Saejong sillok, vol.5 1419.8.8 and 1419.8.26.

7. King T'aejo enshrined his wife, Queen Sin'ui's portrait at Inso Hall in 1398. King T'aejong changed the name of Inso Hall into Munso Hall in 1408 and enshrined King T'aejo's portrait in 1410. T'aejo sillok, vol.15, 1398.12.25, T'aejong sillok, vol.16, 1408.8.26 and vol.20, 1410.7.29.

8. Saejong sillok, vol.12, 1430.11.22.

9. Saejong sillok, vol.81, 1438.5.19

10. Yejong sillok, vol.6, 1469.6.27 and Myongjong sillok, vol.8, 1548.10.10.

11. Kwanghaegun ilgi, vol.130, 1618.7.19.

12. King Injo ordered to enshrine King Wonjong's portrait at Nambyol Hall and changed its name into Sung'un Hall

Yonghui Hall in 1690, it became the new Main Hall of Royal Portraits located inside the capital and continuously expanded along with the addition of royal portraits of later kings.¹³ However, since Yonghui Hall was outside the palace grounds, it posed somewhat of an inconvenience for kings wishing to visit the site. Thus King Sukjong set up another Hall of Royal Portraits inside the palace in 1695.¹⁴ The new Sonwon Hall is next to the main official building Injong Hall, and it was more convenient for kings to go and to observe the ancestral ceremonies. From that time on, these two halls co-existed until the early 20th century. Like Yonghui Hall, Sonwon Hall had been repeatedly enlarged for to display the portraits of later kings. In 1900, by adding the royal portrait of the first ruler King T'aejo, Sonwon Hall was awarded a position of importance equaling that of Yonghui Hall.¹⁵ However, a big fire broke out in that year and all the royal portraits in the hall were burned. Right after the disaster, the royal portraits were copied from other versions and reinstalled at the repaired Sonwon Hall.¹⁶ In 1921, the royal portraits at Sonwon Hall and Yonghui Hall were all evacuated and removed to the new Sonwon Hall, which had been built by Japanese occupants just outside of Ch'angduk palace.¹⁷ Much to our regret, in 1950 the portraits housed in these halls were destroyed in the middle of the Korean War at a shelter in Busan.¹⁸ Only the remains of King Yongjo's (r.1724-1776) half-length image and several other half-burned scrolls have survived the ordeal.

Therefore, it is difficult to compare in detail, extant Choson royal portraits to the artistic likenesses of Chinese emperors'. The extant portrait of King T'aejo was copied in 1872 after an earlier version and keeps the style of the early Choson period (fig.1). It is similar to the portrait of the first Ming Emperor Taizu in the collection of National Palace Museum in Taipei in terms of stylistic features, such as seating posture, rendering of drapery, facial expression, placement of carpet and overall compositional configuration (fig. 2). Since Choson overthrew the Koryo Dynasty, which had maintained a close tie with the alien Mongol regime of the Yuan China, it established instead a new intimate and persistent diplomatic relationship with the just-emerging Ming China. Thus the intensive cultural exchange between early Choson and Ming continued, and the similarities of the two monarchs' images reflect such a relationship.

In contrast, remaining portraits of Choson kings do not show any distinctive relationship with that of the Qing emperors'. While a half-burned portrait of King Ch'olchong shows a three-quarter view with Korean mat and the reliance on linear drawing of his face, a portrait of the Qing emperor Qianong in the collection of National Palace Museum in Beijing represents frontal view with Chinese carpet and the application of shading on the face. It is important to note that there was an intense communication between the two capitals, Hansong and Peking. It is recorded that Choson officials' portraits by Qing or Western painters were often consulted as references when a royal portrait was made in Korea.¹⁹ Also the style of Chinese portraiture frequently appears within many high officials' portraits. However, in spite of these circumstances, Choson royal portraits have not been influenced much by the Qing style.

In the early phase of the late Choson period, Koreans considered Qing China, which was established by the alien Manchu people and had repeatedly invaded Korea, as a regime dominated by a culturally inferior barbarian conqueror. As a result, Korean art and culture during this period of the 17th century, adhered steadfastly to the earlier tradition rather than adapt to the new influences from Qing. Royal portraits may have been rendered with the conservative style under such a political atmosphere. However, the Korean's view of Qing China gradually changed during the 18th century. The portraits reflect a necessity for a more complex understanding of this reaction against Qing portrait style.

We also need to look at this phenomenon in terms of the political function of the royal portrait.

but the name Nambyol was continuously used. *Injo sillok*, vol.26, 1632.3.9.

13. *Sukjong sillok*, vol.22, 1690.10.27. The diagram of Yonghui Hall in *Yonghuijon uigwe* shows seven rooms. Lee Ch'an and Yang Po-kyong, *So'ul ui yetchido (Old Maps of Seoul)* Seoul, So'ulhak yonguso, 1995. fig. 100.

14. *Sukjong sillok*, vol.53, 1713.5.9.

15. Cho Son-mi, (1983) *ibid.*, p.124.

16. The diagram of Sonwon Hall in *Chinjon chunggon togam uigwe* shows seven rooms. Lee Ch'an and Yang Po-kyong, *ibid.*, fig.101.

17. *Tonggwoldo*, Seoul, Munhwajae kwanriguk, 1991: p.159.

18. Cho Son-mi, (1983) *ibid.*, pp.166-167.

19. Cho Son-mi, (2000) *ibid.*

Choson kings frequently used royal portraits to manifest their authority and to consolidate the legitimacy of the royal household.²⁰ They often wished to make more royal portraits of themselves and their ancestors, and hoped to hold more ritual ceremonies with these images, only to be opposed and resisted by scholar-officials. Scholar-officials often tried to prevent rulers from increasing their power with these images. The royal portrait in the Choson Dynasty was very political in itself and was wielded as an important, powerful political tool. Thus, most of the traditional discourse on the royal portrait and its artistic agenda is based on the power struggle between kings and scholar-officials or between different political factions. In this struggle, the attitude toward Qing China was often raised as a critical issue. Therefore, the intentional rejection of the Qing portrait style should be interpreted in a more complex political context.

Portrait of High Officials

Second in importance to the royal portrait, was the effigy of high officials. According to both Korean and Chinese tradition, when officials enrolled on the Merit Subject or *Kongsin* roster, they were awarded a portrait by the government. In the Choson Dynasty, there were 28 Merit Subject titles bestowed from 1392 to 1728.²¹ Mostly patriotic officials who saved the country from foreign invasion, loyal retainers who protected the state from uprising, or statesmen who supported a king during political purges, all these Merit Subjects received honorable titles, sizeable rewards and lots of hereditary privilege, not to mention, a portrait.

Additionally, when high officials grew to be 70 years old, they became a member of the Office of Elders or *Koroso*. The Elder Subjects were each presented with a staff, a chair and a portrait from the king. These portraits were often mounted in the form of an album. Besides the portraits of Merit Subjects and Elder Subjects, high officials also commissioned many portraits of themselves to commemorate special occasions. They appear wearing different official robes and informal costumes. As the number of these portraits of high officials is enormous, we are able to trace the Chinese influences in detail.

Relationship between Choson and China

The Choson Dynasty maintained a close relationship with both the Ming and Qing Dynasties.²² This is a good example of how the tributary system served each side - both as a political tool and a security mechanism, and as a channel for trade and cultural exchange. The Koreans, by showing gestures of submission and providing tribute, obtained security and autonomy from China.

However, during the transitory period from Ming to Qing in the 17th century, Choson's diplomatic policy was inconsistent because the Choson government was divided into pro-Ming and pro-Qing factions. Choson had enjoyed intimate connections with Ming China. On the other hand, most Choson people looked down on the Manchus as unlettered "barbarians," but King Kwanghae and a group of officials realized the newly emerging power of the Manchu force. They carried out a new policy that was much more favorable to the Qings. However, an opposing group pulled off a coup, overthrowing King Kwanghae's government. In 1623, the new king Injo was enthroned; thereby an anti-Qing faction prevailed at court, resulting in a fatal Qing invasion of Choson in 1637. After their defeat by the Qings, Choson was forced to establish a new tribute relationship with their latest conquerors.

Korean tribute missions to China during the Ming and Qing periods were comprised of three congratulatory embassies each year. And there were many other special embassies as well. Korean tribute missions to Qing typically consisted of about thirty officials, but the whole entourage might have been comprised of 200 to 300 people. The entourage normally included an envoy of ministerial rank, a vice-envoy, secretary, translator, scribe-calligrapher, painter, groom, servants, porters and slaves. Korean envoys usually began their journey following a land route from Hansong to Peking. Some paintings depicting this travel still survive to this present day. The entire trip took about five months and Koreans

²⁰ Insoo Cho, "Portraits of Monarchs and Merit Subjects," in Youngsook Pak ed., *Patrons and Art in Korea* London, Saffron Books, 2002 (in press)

²¹ *Minjok munhwa taebaek kwa sajon* vol.2, Songnam, Hanguk chongsin munhwa yonguwon, 1991. pp.793-796.

²² Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote ed., *The Cambridge History of China vol.8, part 2*, pp. 272-300.

Chon Hae-jong, *Hanjung kwangaesa yongu* Seoul, Iljisa, 1970

Chindanhakhui ed., *Hanguksa* vol.3, pp.107-115. vol.4, pp.82-115, Seoul, Ulyumunhwasa, 1965

Gari Ledyard, "Yin and Yang in the China-Manchuria-Korea Triangle," *China among Equals* Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1983: pp.313-353.

might have stayed in Peking for up to 60 days. In Peking the Koreans lodged at the Hall of Jade River in the southeastern part of the city and had a chance to see the Chinese emperors. Envoys From Foreign Countries painted by Qing court painters depicts Choson envoys attending a ceremony held in the imperial palace. During the 250 years of the Choson and Qing relationship, the total number of Korean tribute missions reached close to 700.

Choson envoys would not only carry tribute items to Qing emperors but also things to barter privately with merchants while en route and in Peking. The Qing policy of seclusion only allowed Choson an unequal tributary trade, which served to seriously weaken the Korean economy. However, the tribute trade was of unparalleled importance as a channel for cultural exchange. Choson embassies brought back lots of books and other cultural items.²³ Many Korean folding screens of bookshelves contain lots of imported Chinese books and antiquities, popular among Choson scholars at that time.

Many Choson envoys to China wrote travel diaries. Those to Ming were usually titled Choch'onrok or Record of Audience with the Emperor. About 40 of these records still exist. Additionally, Choson envoys to Qing also wrote travel diaries, which are often called Yonhaengrok or a Travel Record to Peking, and we know more than 500 of those works.²⁴ The change of title from the Record of Audience with the Emperor to the Travel Record to Peking also reflects Koreans' unwillingness to recognize the Qing rulers' legitimacy as a Chinese emperor, namely the Son of Heaven. These diaries mainly consisted of detailed information on the experiences and observations of a new culture, scholarly exchange, encountering with Western culture, Chinese customs and historical monuments. Usually one court painter was included as a member of the regular embassy party. It is not known what this painter's mission was exactly, but he could have easily become acquainted with Chinese paintings during his trip. Occasionally, envoys would even bring back their portrait executed by a Chinese painter, together with other Chinese artworks they acquired.

Korean Portrait by Ming Painters

In order to understand Korea's responses to Chinese portraiture, I will examine the early Choson portraits by Ming painters before discussing the relation between the late Choson and Qing. It is difficult to trace Chinese influences in Choson and Ming periods because not many Korean portraits of high officials dating before the 16th century exist today. Portraits of Shin Suk-chu and Chang Mal-son, both in 15th century works, are the most famous examples of the remaining work. These works can only indicate a possible relation between early Choson and Ming portraits. A portrait now in Souanji Japan was once misidentified to be a Korean portrait. However, it has recently been reattributed to be a Ming portrait completed in the late 15th century. The Souanji portraiture is different from early Choson works in terms of posture, frontal view and costume design. Usually Korean portraits exhibit a person in a three-quarter view, with their hands hidden in their sleeves. Chinese portraits, on the other hand, show a frontal view, while exposing the hands.

There currently exist several portraits of Korean officials depicted by a Chinese painter from the 17th century. Chong Kon-su (1538-1602) visited China as an envoy in 1597. The portrait of Chong Kon-su displays the style of Ming portraiture well, especially with the frontal view and exposed hands (fig.3). In the facial expression, a portrait of Chong Kon-su reveals Ming style clearly by using of shading instead of line drawing for the facial expression.

Another Korean, Kim Yuk (1580-1627) went to Peking as an envoy in 1636 and had his portraits done there. According to his diary, he arrived in Peking on the seventh month of 1636, not via a land route but through a sea route because Hongtaiji, the Qing Emperor Taizong, had established Qing and occupied Northeastern China. In the twelfth month of that year the Qing army crossed the Yalu River and attacked Korea. Korea surrendered after 45 days of resisting in a fortress near the capital. This urgent situation forced Kim Yuk to stay longer in Peking than was attended, and he did not return to Korea until the sixth month of the next year. During his long stay in Peking, Chinese painter Meng Yongguang and Hu Bing painted his portraits (fig. 4).

Meng Yongguang's work shows the typical style of Ming portraiture with frontal view and rendering of face with warmer-red color. This portrait seems to have been viewed widely after Kim Yuk brought it back to Korea since many documents mentioned this work, including King Sukjong's eulogy, which is in

²³. Kang Myong-kwan, Choson hugi sojok'ui su'ip yutonggwa changsoga'ui ch'ulhyon, Choson sidae munhak yaesul'ui saengsonggonggan Seoul, Somyong, 1999: pp.253-276.

²⁴ Im Ki-chung ed., Yonhaengrol chonjip 100vols, Seoul, Dongkuk University Press, 2001

the upper right corner. Another portrait of Kim Yuk by Hu Bing also remains. He recorded in his diary that it took about a month to finish this portrait and he paid a goat, a goose, three tales of ginseng and three Korean fans for the portrait.²⁵ This painting became famous among Choson officials. It also contains the King's eulogy. However, it seems not to have had much influence on Choson painters since any similar Korean portrait with landscape background is not known to us. Even though, it was considered a popular composition in China.

Korean Portrait by Qing Painters

Portraits of Korean officials by Chinese painters seemed to be more prevalent within the Choson and Qing exchange. There are many records of these kinds of images in various documents. In 1650, when Yi Man-yong (1604-1672) visited Peking as a vice-envoy, he commissioned his portrait to be painted by Hu Bing, the same painter who made Kim Yuk's portrait.²⁶ When Kim Yuk's grandson, Kim Suk-chu (1634-1684) went to Qing as an envoy in 1682, he asked Jiao Bingzhen, a famous Qing court painter, to depict his portrait.²⁷

In 1712, Kim Ch'ang-up visited Peking as an escort to his brother Kim Ch'ang-chip who was an envoy. He left a detailed record about his brother's portrait by Chinese painters:

Searching for a painter to execute my brother's portrait, I was introduced to Luo Yan from Jiangnan area. He came to Peking in order to paint a mural in the palace. However I was not satisfied with Luo Yan's work. Lou's portrait was only decorative and lacked vitality. Another painter Wang Xun painted my brother's portrait again. Although Wang Xun's work was better than that of Luo Yan's, it was still not perfect, as 64 year-old Wang's dim eyes and trembling hands made him too feeble to execute the work flawlessly. The price for the portrait was 16 tales of silver, and Wang asked one tale as a starter fee. I heard that there were many portrait painters, and that the prices would differ from painter to painter. One could obtain an excellent portrait for eighty tales of silver. This indicates how low Wang's skill was, as valued at only 16 tales per picture. My brother did not order a final version of his portrait and brought back only the draft to Korea.²⁸

Another example, when Yi Duk-su visited Qing in 1735, the Qing painter Shi Yu painted his portrait. Yi Duk-su recorded that Shi Yu was from Nanjing and well known in the field of portraiture. Two years later, in 1737, when Kim Chae-ro (1682-1759) visited Qing, he heard that the same Chinese painter Shi Yu had skillfully depicted a portrait for the vice-envoy, and so he also called on Shi Yu to paint his portrait. Even Western painters who stayed in China as missionaries made portraits for members of the Korean envoy.

Unfortunately, not many of these works remain. Recently Kim Chae-ro's portrait by Shi Yu has been found (fig. 5). It was bequeathed to his descendants along with his diary, and it is an important example, illustrating just what kind of Qing portraits affected Choson ones. Kim Chae-ro sits on a chair covered by leopard skin with a frontal view. His hands are hidden in his sleeve, and the folded drapery is depicted with chiaroscuro. In his face, volume is expressed with a subtle shading of color. Later, a eulogy bestowed by King Chongjo was added to the upper right part of the painting.

Chinese Influence on Choson Portraits

As we have already noted, during the late Choson Dynasty, portraits by Chinese painters were brought to Korea and had an influence on Korean painters and patrons on a much greater scale than before. Some late Choson portraits took the frontal view perspective, which was a typical style of Chinese portraiture. For example, the portraits of Nam Ku-man (1629-1711), Chun Il-sang(?-?), Kim Suk-ju(1634-1684), Sin Yik-sang (1634-1697), Yi Man-won (1651-1684) and Yi Chong-song (1692-1759) depict a strict frontal view (fig. 6). As mentioned before, Choson portraits usually took a three-quarter view, while the Qing portraits preferred a frontal view. Therefore, we can infer that Choson

²⁵) Kim Yuk, Chokhyong'ilgi. (Kukyok yonhaengrok sonjip vol.2 reprint 1967) pp.350-358.

²⁶) Yi Man-yong, Solhaejip

²⁷) Kim Sok-chu, Sik'amjip

²⁸) Kim Ch'ang-up, Yonhaeng'ilgi (Kukyokyonhaengrolsonjip vol.4 reprint 1967) pp.231-278.

portraits made from a frontal view may have some relation to Chinese portraits. However, as we can see from Yi Chong-song's portrait, the facial expressions are still quite different. It continues a traditional linear drawing style and a light shading technique rather than the thick and vivid coloring of Qing or Western chiaroscuro. In order to achieve this facial expression well, paint was applied on the reverse side. For the smooth gradation of red, different tones of red and white paints were applied to the back of the silk. As a result, the final work displays a rather pale face.

In the traditional aesthetic of portrait painting in China and Korea, "transmitting the spirit" or *Chonsin* was the most significant element. As Gu Kaizhi, the famous figure painter in the fourth century in China, mentioned in his writing that conveying one's inner personality is more important than realistic likeness. Therefore, the faithful rendering of face was the most important issue in Choson portrait technique, and it varied from period to period. In the early 17th century, the facial expression of Choson portraits shows shading based on concept rather than vision. For example, the portrait of Yi Hang-bok emphasizes his high nose and cheekbone by using a reddish shade, and increases the three-dimensional quality.²⁹ On the other hand, from the late 17th century, some portraits show a different style in the rendering of faces. In a portrait of Yi Shi-baek in the early 18th century, the convex parts of the face are highlighted, while the concave elements are shaded. Another example is Song Shi-yol's portrait in the late 17th century. Since in many cases of this period, paint was applied on the reverse side of the silk and only slight touches were added to the front, the face gave a limpid impression with slight shading, clear outlines and almost pale transparent skin. Drapery is also rendered with simple lines, an overall style that continued into the 18th century. Differing from Qing, a three-quarter view prevailed continuously in the late Choson period.

Nonetheless, in the 18th century another style of portrait depiction appeared, favoring the illustration of a life-like face with strong shading. This style clearly indicates the Chinese influence. As we can see from the portrait of Kwon Sang-ha in the 18th century, who was a disciple of Song Shi-yol, the face is darkened by a deep brown, and one cheek is emphasized to be darker than the other. It is obviously different from the earlier style. Another example of Cho Hang-chin's portrait in the 18th century shows the high parts of face highlighted, exhibiting a clear three-dimensionality (fig.7). While a kind of hyperrealism that captured even the spots and scars in one's skin indicates the relationship with Qing portraits, also the thick and repeated touches of color resulted in a rather opaque facial expression.

Judging from the examples enumerated above, we can assume that two different portrait styles co-existed in the late Choson period. One is more indigenous and traditional, and the other is foreign and new. Sometimes these two styles were mixed and appeared together in the same work. In order to understand this situation more clearly and to realize the extent of Chinese influence, we need to investigate Koreans' response to Chinese portrait style by examining various written documents.

Korean Response to Chinese Portrait Style

When Choson royal portraits were executed, Chinese portraits were used as reference upon occasion. However, indigenous traditions and the characteristics of Choson style were still emphasized. In 1713, King Sukjong discussed the making of his portrait with his officials, and decided not to use a Chinese-type carpet but a domestic mat with flower and dragon designs instead, as it was more appropriate to depict these elements in a realistic manner. Portraits of King Yikjong and King Sunjo both are late 19th century works and have the Korean mat instead of a foreign carpet. This style also influenced the portraits of high officials. While Yi Hu-won's portrait in the early 17th century has a Chinese-type carpet, Oh Myong-hang's in the 18th century shows Korean mat. This realistic approach might be related to the atmosphere of nationalistic emphasis on painting at that time. For example, landscape painting tended to depict Korean scenery, not Chinese. While Shim Sa-chong followed Chinese style, Chong Son represented local scenery of Diamond Mountain. This topographic landscape style of expressly depicting natural Korean scenery became very popular later on. During this era Korean intellectuals possessed deep understanding about Qing culture, and through Qing they became acquainted with Western culture as well. However, when Koreans were surprised by Western painting in Beijing, they still hesitated to accept it as a model.³⁰ Kim Sang-ch'ul (1712-1791) brought a portrait by a Western

²⁹ Kang Kwan-sik, p.275

³⁰ Yi Song-mi, (2000) *ibid.*

Craig Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) pp.172-188.

painter from Beijing in 1771, which King Chongjo consulted when commissioning his royal portrait in 1781. At that time, King Chongjo remarked that although the outer appearance was very similar the body was too small.³¹

We can also mention the fact that a Choson envoy, who had his portrait done in Peking was not fully satisfied with the Chinese-style portrait, and some time later had a new one made by Korean painters. As we have seen already, Kim Chang-chip did not finish his portrait in China and made a new one after he returned to Korea as you see on the right. He was satisfied with this portrait by the Choson painter. Kim Sok-ju had his portrait painted by Jiao Bingzhen, one of the most famous Qing painters of that period. Yet he also criticized it, pointing out the discrepancy between the image and himself. He could not stand a technique that rendered a face dark and spritless through repeated brush strokes.³² When Yi Duk-su brought back his portrait by Qing painter Shi Yu and showed it to his friends, they said that the eyes and mouth were quite different even though the overall atmosphere was similar. Kim Chae-ro's portrait, done by the same Chinese painter Shi Yu, may help us to imagine Yi Duk-su's portrait. Yi Duk-su explained that he had suffered eye trouble in Peking, yet he could not understand why his mouth looked round and droopy. When he became a member of the Office of Elders his new portrait was executed by the court painter, and he was finally satisfied with how the portrait accomplished "transmitting the spirit."³³

The portrait of Kim Chae-ro by Shi Yu, seemed to have been rejected by his descendants. His other portraits, often found in an album form, show a different image. Until quite recently, the portrait of Kim Ch'i-yin, son of Kim Chae-ro, was mistaken for a standard image of his father (fig.8). But the portrait in the album helps us to correct this misidentification.

However, the reality was somewhat different from these intellectuals' discourses. In spite of these rejections of the Qing style by kings and scholar-officials, they still held a wide and pervasive influence in Korea to some degree. Many Korean portraits in the 18th and 19th centuries accepted the Qing style selectively: for example, shading, realism and coloring. The portrait of Oh Chae-sun (1727-1792) in the late 18th century represents both stylistic features. Shading was applied but not as dark as Chinese portraits. The color scheme for the face is less dramatic. As a result, the picture tries to achieve resemblance and spirituality at the same time. It is a hybrid of indigenous and foreign styles. This phenomenon can be easily found in other genres of Korean paintings of this period. This is a large folding screen titled Panoramic Scenery of the City, recently displayed at a special exhibition in National Museum of Korea for the first time. By depicting many people with architecture and landscape background, it clearly indicates its debt to Chinese models, such as the Qingming Festival or Southern Inspection Tour in terms of the overall composition and the subject matter. However, it obviously depicts daily life of Korean people with specifically Korean genre painting style even while it is based on the Chinese model and adapts Chinese elements. For example, the architecture is Chinese style, but the figures are Korean.³⁴ In this painting, the Koreans lives in a Chinese house. The building is still Chinese style with small tiles and a short-edge roof. Similar to some late Choson portraits, it also shows an ambivalent mixture of two cultures.

However, an interesting turnover occurs in the mid 19th century, and a new style with darker coloring and repeated minute strokes became more popular. It is a positive adaptation of Chinese style, and continued until a new photographic technique was introduced in the 20th century from Japan, the newly emerging imperial power.

Conclusion

Korean portraits of the late Choson Dynasty had developed a unique tradition based on its indigenous artistic convention and receiving Chinese influences. Especially, through many tributary envoys to Qing China, a new style of Chinese portraiture, which had adopted Western techniques, was introduced and stimulated Choson painters. In the process of adaptation and modification of this Chinese style, Korean painters and patrons showed a somewhat ambiguous attitude. These complex and often conflicting responses to Chinese portraits - an admiration of their realism accompanied by a criticism of their lack of the spirit - paralleled Choson's dual approach to the Qing -barbarian and powerful empire.

³¹) Yi Song-mi, (2000) *ibid.*, p.89

³² Kang Kwan-sik, *ibid.*, pp. 283-283.

³³) Yi Duk-su, Sodangjip

³⁴ Yi Su-mi, "Taepyeong songsido sogo," Pungsohwa. Seoul: National Museum of Korea, 2002:pp.246-255

In reality, however, the Qing had become more powerful and sinicized. Many Choson intellectuals had to approve the cultural achievement of the Qing. As we have seen, the stylistic differences between the Choson portraits and those of Ming and Qing are clearly distinguishable until the 18th century, but it became not so obvious after that. The portraits in the 19th century show the cross-breeding of the two cultures. This tendency of mimicry should be interpreted not as a passive imitation but as a constant negotiation in the process of Sino-Korean artistic interaction. In the study of Korean painting, it is important to distinguish the traditional aspects of the Choson portraiture from the foreign influence of Qing style. As such, the amalgamation and hybridism of these two aspects need to be redefined as a presence of locality. In order to answer these questions more precisely, we will need to undertake a deeper investigation of Korean painting, as well as that of Qing portrait art.

<Plates>



fig.1 Portrait of King T'aejo
fig.2 Portrait of Emperor Taizu



fig.3 Portrait of Chong Kon-su

fig.4 Portriat of Kim Yuk



fig.6 Portrait of Yi Chong-song



Portrait of Kim Chae-ro



fig.7 Portrait of Cho Hang-chin

fig.8 Portrait of Kim Ch'I-yin

