Court Paintings During the Taehan Empire (1897-1910): Conflict Between Identity and Modernization

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1. Introduction and Historical Background

The reigns of King Kojong (1864-1905), the 26th king of the Choson dynasty (1392-1910), and his son King Sunjong (1905-1910) span the so-called period of Enlightenment. During this period, King Kojong implemented various measures directed at the modernization of political and social structures. Also during this period, full-scale exposure to Western civilization resulted from a series of reluctant port openings, the first of which took place in 1876, and subsequent unequal trade and commerce treaties.

Experience with foreign imperialist aggressions called for the "enrichment of nation and consolidation of military" termed puguk kangbyong 藩國強兵, which became the basis of national policy. When Korea became the battle field for Russia and Japan and Queen Min was tragically assassinated by the Japanese, King Kojong fled to the Russian legation in February 1896. Resuming his main residence a year later at the subsidiary Kyungwun Palace (the present Doksu Palace), Kojong took from these disturbing events the belief that the most important self-defense measure was to project a strong sense of sovereignty and therefore made himself the first ever emperor in Korean history. In October 1897 Kojong declared himself the emperor of Taehan cheguk 大韓帝國, "Taehan Empire". Subsequent history and records were compiled according to the new reign title Kwang-mu 光武, independently from the Chinese. The Empire survived thirteen years before it was finally annexed by Japan in 1910. Thus, the Empire represented a futile effort to maintain independence right before the fall of the Choson dynasty.2)

From the art historical perspective, these last decades of Choson are generally viewed as a period of stagnation with widespread practice of Southern School painting, not unlike the Orthodox School of the Qing. This art historical assessment has centered upon the intrinsic element such as style rather than extrinsic aspects involving institutional or social changes. Also, art historical research has focused on works by both literati and court/ professional painters depicting the conventional theme of landscape, birds-and-flowers, and figure. This paper focuses on the court paintings that were created on the order of the court for specific occasions. Emphasis will be put on the content of the paintings and analyzing their meaning in the context of institutional and overall socio-political changes during the period of Enlightenment and examining how the paintings communicate the spirit of the time.

First, the structural changes in the Painting Bureau will be examined. Second, the court paintings will be discussed.

2. Painting Bureau and Its Structural Changes


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The duty of court painters was two-fold: 1) painting various conventional themes, such as landscape, figure, and birds-and-flower; 2) painting on order strictly in terms of theme and format.

From early Choson on the painting bureau, Tohwaso 圖畫署 was an office of lower sixth rank under the administrative structure of the Ministry of Rites, Yejo 禮曹. When the artists were called in for special projects like uigwe 儀軌, the ritual regulations, they were grouped as pang 房, so 所, pyolkongjak 別工作, or kongjagiil 工匠秩, but the function of each group does not seem to have been clearly defined. It seems to have been a temporary workshop for a special project. In Qing China, similar terms, such as zuo 作, fang 房, qu 處 were used for subsidiary offices, and the court academy was named as haevunang 開院處 when it became a sub-office of Yangxindian 養心殿. This might have reflected the downgraded status of the painting academy during Qing, but it is not clear whether it was the case during Choson. However, the names of the workshop indicate that until the late Choson, the court status of the artists were not high.

During the Kojong reign, institutional changes were carried out especially after the 1894 Kap-o Reform 甲午更張 when the most radical administrative changes were implemented by the Enlightenment Party which had seized power. After the 1894 reform, Tohwaso came under the supervision of Changyewon 掌禮院, a Bureau of Rites, which was a subdivision of the Ministry of the Imperial Household, Kungnebu 宮內府. The latter was established in 1894 by integrating several existing court offices. The Kungnebu was in charge of all the court affairs, largely those in connection with the execution of royal and ancestral rites. The court rites were the domain of the Ministry of Rites, and as Kungnebu was the principal office in charge of the royal affairs, the painting academy naturally came under the supervision of the new institution. Academic offices such as the royal library Kyujanggak 奎章閣 were also a subdivision of Kungnebu. Other state affairs were handled by the State Council, Uijongbok 懸政府. As the affairs of the court and state were divided, the former seems to have fallen under closer royal supervision than previously, and at the same time the official structure became less rigid and consequently the court painters became solely dependent upon the single patronage of the king.

The changes in the administration of court painting, including the status of the painters, can be detected through uigwe which is often accompanied by pictorial records of uigwe, uigwedo 儀軌圖. The earliest rite for which the institutional changes were put into practice was the Ritual Regulations for the enthronement rite of King Kojong, the Taerye uigwe 大禮儀軌 that took place in 1897. First, the principal office in charge of the court rites was moved from the Ministry of Personnel, Yejo 更曹 to Changyewon. Kim Kuy-jin 金圭鎬(1868-1933) was bestowed with the highest rank ever for a painter, the Secretary of Kungnebu, Kungnebu chusa 宮內府主事. Also, new titles were created for other court painters, such as Secretary of Painting, Tohwachusa 圖書主事. The title chusa was normally reserved for civil administrative positions of lower sixth rank, and it may have been a measure of promotion to create a secretarial title for what was previously a sub-official post,


Furthermore, the new honorary rank was bestowed upon the court painter for the first time in Choson history, ranging from the third to the sixth rank. This increase in stature of court painters can be attributed to the increase in importance of the function of painting in court affairs, even though the pang or so were still assigned for production of each uigwe. Also, as the painting sections for the uigwe were supervised by Changyewon, the painting academy seems to have gradually become more of a private and loosely organized institution with the promotional appointments directly prompted by royal favor.

It is interesting to note that during Qing dynasty the ranks ranging from lower fifth to sixth were bestowed upon court painters, who were outside the rank system previously. In rare occasion, such as with the case of Lang Shining (1688-1766), third rank was awarded as token of appreciation by Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-1795). Later, towards the end of the Qing, even the second rank was granted, however, the number of court painters gradually diminished due to poor court finances which led to the closing of the painting academy.

Cho Sok-jin is another exemplary case of this advancement for court painters during the period of institutional change. Cho Sok-jin began his career as a court painter in the early 1880s. He was first selected to participate in a technical mission led by the Yongsonsa envoy headed to machinery in Tianjin, China in 1881. The title given to Cho Sok-jin was hakdo, an apprentice responsible for the mechanical drawing of new machinery. The new title became adopted from the Qing court painting bureaucratic structure. From early Choson on, the title saengdo was given to young painters of presumably upper class origin, and it may have been reserved for the Qing court painting bureaucratic structure. From early Choson on, the title saengdo was given to young painters before they became court painters. Cho Chung-muk, who was selected from the Three Banner, was to be trained to become court painters. Institutionally, the Qing court academy was also less formally organized than previous dynasties and no official Academy titles were granted, but the emperor, especially Emperor Qianlong, rewarded artists who were assigned with specifically defined duties with grand salary associated with the governmental ranks.

Cho Sok-jin was given the lower 6th rank in 1895 when he participated in the project of Ritual Regulation of the Funeral Hall of Empress Myongsong, Myongsong huanghu pinjon honjon togam uigwe 明成皇后殯殿魂殿都監儀軌 and again later, completing his mission as the painter-in-charge of copying the portraits of former kings, yongjong mosa togam uigwe 影幘模寫都監儀軌 in 1900 and 1901. He was promoted to secretary of Changyewon for the occasion of making portraits of Emperor Kojong and the Crown Prince in 1902.

The title or rank was a reward of honorary significance rather than an actual official position. Nevertheless the status of court painters seems to have been on the rise along with the increased importance given to the task of painting as necessary tools in the court projects. Many of those who were assigned to do were the painters-in-attendance, ch'abi daeryong hwawon 差僕待令畫員, who were selected through examinations and were called in temporarily for special projects like uigwedo. While serving as painters in attendance, they often worked in close connection with the kings who expressed their personal appreciation by selecting painters for rewards through the periodical promotional tests. Among the painters in attendance during the reign of King Kojong, except for the few like Yi Han-ch'ol 李漢哲 (1808-after 1880), Yu Suk 劉淑 (1827-1873), Paik Eun-pai 白恩培 (1820-?), Cho Chung-muk 趙重默 (? - ?), Kim Ha-jong 金夏鎬 (1793-?), and An Kon-yong 安建榮(1845-?), none of their identities are known at the present. Despite their talents as approved by the office and the king, their court obligation

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6) Yang Boda, Ch'ingdai yuanhua, pp. 28-30.


8) For detailed informations on chabi daeryong hwawon, see, Kang Kwan-sik, op. cit.
seems to have been limited to the service of court ceremony for the duration of the specific projects and other duties such as drawing lines for books, yinch'al 印札 rather than painting creative works.

There were different titles for court painter, such as hwawon 畫員, hwasa 畫師, chosongso hwawon 造成所畫員, chosongso hwawon 造成所畫員, pangwae hwawon 方外畫員 or pangwae hwasa 方外畫師. The latter two titles emerged during the reign of King Sunjo 純祖(r. 1801-1834) and hwasa along with pangwae hwawon and pangwae hwasa presumably indicated non-residence painters. In the Tohwaso section in National Code, Kyongguk taejon 經國大典(1485) and The Great Codes of Rite, Taejon huit'ong 大典會通(1865), sonhwa 善畫, sonhui 善繪, hwasa 畫史, hwasa 畫員 are differentiated in the order of lower sixth, lower seventh, lower eighth, and lower ninth rank respectively. No specification exists to indicate whether they were a permanent court painter or called in from outside temporarily. Nevertheless, during the reign of King Kojong, the number of pangwae hwasa increased. At the same time, the total number of the academy painters were the largest during the Kojong and Sunjong reign. Perhaps due to an increase in court projects and decrease in court financing the temporary employment might have used to augment the increased activity.

Also, the duty of court painters, at least for those of certain status, was not confined within the boundaries of the court. Cho Sok-jin was also able to work his way to profit when he painted for commercial galleries like Hansong sohwagwan 漢城畫館, the like of which began to appear around the early 1900s. These changes in institutional condition and structure began to serve as a direct or indirect factor in the collapse of the stylistic border between court painting and popular painting, which was a new phenomenon in 19th century Korean painting.

3. The Duty of Court Painters and the Nature of Court Paintings

Court painting by its definition may comprise, in a general and broader sense, all the works created by palatial painters. However, in this paper, the genre is narrowed down to its functional definitions: one definition centers around maintaining documentary records of court ceremonies for archival purpose, the uigwedo; the other has the dual function of documenting and displaying for ceremonial purpose, usually in the screen format, and carries its own artistic merit as well. In many cases, both uigwedo and the screens were made simultaneously for a single rite. Among the assignments of the court painters, making portraits of the king guaranteed the highest stature.

Uigwedo

The pictorial records of ritual regulations uigwedo includes the scenes of procession, called panch'ado 班次圖 that provide detailed documentation of participants with official titles, and description of the event with architectural setting in some cases. Sometimes illustrations of individual ceremonial paraphernalia called tosol 圖說 are included, adding to the degree of formality of the event. Among the various duties of court painters, the production of uigwedo seems to have been confined to a special group of painters aside from the painters-in-attendance mentioned above, as most of the names that are listed as having participated in uigwedo are not known otherwise. Besides making pictorial records of rites, court painters and artisans were called in to decorate a variety of ceremonial equipment, including the seals, sedan-carriers and ceremonial screens. In many instances, several uigwe were produced. One was made for
previously, during King Yongjo’s rule, twelve ceremonies were devoted to presentation of titles. The next eighteen times during Kojong and Sunjong’s reign.

There are various kinds of uigwe: state funeral (kukjang 國葬), royal wedding (karye 嘉禮), visiting shrines and sacrificial services (sanmeng bumyo 山陵廟, honjon 魂殿), designation of heir apparent (ch’akbong 冊封), birthday or other ceremonial feast (jinchant 迎宴, jinyon 迎宴), making portraits of king and crown prince (ojin yejin tosa 御真露異圖寫) or copying portraits of former kings (yongjong mosa 影幀模寫) and presentation of posthumous titles to former kings and queens (jonho 奉號 or siho 誥號).

Contents and frequency of uigwe

The combined forty-six year reign of King Kojong and Sunjong produced a significant increase in the records of rites as can be seen in the List of Uigwe (List 1). 12) The total number carried out was approximately ninety-two (eighty-six during the Kojong reign and six during the Sunjong reign), the number of which is closely challenged only by those held during the reign of King Yongjo 英祖(1725-1776). Yongjo had the longest single reign during Choson, and a total number of eighty-four rites are recorded to have been held during his rule. Why were rites held more frequently during the reigns of King Kojong and Sunjong that marked the end of a dynasty, than in any other period of rule?

Among the various kinds of rites, the rite of Presentation of Posthumous Titles of Kings, ch’ujonho togamm uigwe 追崇號圖編儀軌 was offered most frequently, approximately eighteen times during Kojong and Sunjong’s reign. Comparatively, during King Yongjo’s rule, twelve ceremonies were devoted to presentation of titles. The next most frequent rites held were Correction of the Simplified List of Royal Genealogy, Sonwon boryak sujong 修正: sixteen times during King Kojong’s rule and twenty-one times during King Yongjo’s rule. The uigwe of Royal Genealogy generally did not include illustration, but the rites of ch’ujonho were recorded with large numbers of illustrations, especially the one that took place in 1899, the Ritual Regulations of Presentation of titles to Taejo, Jangjo, Chongjo, Sunjo, and Yikjong, Taejo jangjo chongjo sunjo yikjong ch’ujon si uigwe 太祖莊祖正祖純祖翼宗追崇時儀軌, which will be discussed below.

The comparison of the two reign periods extends further. During both periods, codes on rites were amended. The Supplementary to Codes of Five Rites, Kukjo sok orye ui 國朝續五禮儀 (1744), was published during King Yongjo, while during King Kojong, the Great Codes of Rites and Codes of Six Ministries, Yukjon jorye 六典條例(1867) were issued.

The two periods, however, differ fundamentally. The first half of the eighteenth century has been often described as a so-called period of “Renaissance”, while the second half of the nineteenth century is characterized by internal and external disturbances that brought five hundred years of the Choson dynasty to a close. Then what was the common motive behind the large production of uigwe of similar nature during these contrasting periods?

When Choson became the battlefield for Eastern and Western imperialists, like China during the Opium War, the Kojong court held costly court ceremonies in high frequency and commissioned elaborate record-making. The motive can be broken down into factors internal and external.

Kojong was selected to be the adopted heir of Prince Hyo-myong (1808-1830) by the prince’s wife who was later given the title Dowager Empress Sin-jong 神貞皇后(1808-1890). She ruled as Regent until the third year of King Kojong. Kojong may have felt that Dowager Empress Sin-jong was his most important mentor. He ordered numerous rites resulting in fifty-six posthumous titles for the Empress.

Since Kojong was not originally direct heir, his foremost

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concern was to establish an orthodox genealogy that began with the founder King T'aejo and continued uninterrupted down to himself. The Royal Genealogy was amended sixteen times, each time made official through elaborate rites. After declaring himself the Emperor of the Taehan Empire, Kojong re-titled five kings - T'aejo, Changjo, Chongjo, Sunjo, and Ikjong - posthumously in 1899. Among these five kings, Changjo and Ikjong (prince Hyomyong), however, never actually ruled. Changjo, popularly known as Prince Sado, was son of Yongjo, who is believed to have made his son starve to death in a rice barrel, while Prince Hyo-myong died in his youth. Thus, Kojong's intention was clear. By posthumously enthroning the two princes Sado and Hyomyong as kings, he severed the orthodox lineage and established a new genealogy, placing himself in the prestigious line linking five kings starting from Tae-jo, the founding King, who was also titled Emperor Ko Ikjong and Changjo were also titled Emperor along with five other kings. The rite was recorded on the grandest scale with ninety pages of illustrations.

Like Kojong, Yongjo was also an adopted heir to King Sukjong (r. 1675-1720), and it becomes clear why the rites to amend the Royal Genealogy were offered twenty-one times during Yongjo's reign. The two reigns of King Yongjo and Kojong faced a common concern and challenge to legitimize and solidify royal power, and the uigwe testify to the general spirit of the time. The amendment of the Codes of Rites can also be interpreted as an attempt to solidify royal authority.

The attempts to enhance royal prestige were also externally motivated. In the face of external aggressions, the court was divided between two opposing factions: the Conservative and the Enlightenment Party. Enlightenment policy centered around modernization, meaning adoption of western technology and institutional and social reforms with emphasis on the military, while the Conservatives held on to the preservation of traditional values. Declaration of the Taehan Empire was in essence a symbolic gesture combining the contrasting views of the time but with national independence still as the primary concern. First, Kojong had to put an end to two thousand years of cultural dependency on China. Second, to secure independence in the future, Kojong had to modernize the country.

The Ritual Regulations of Grand Rite (fig. 1) of 1897, is a literary and visual account of the dynastic concerns. For the first time in Choson, a rite of this sort was held, and it is ironical that the most grandiose state ceremony was conceived when the court was confined to the smallest domain, in the subsidiary palace adjacent to the Russian legation. In the memorial presented to the king justifying the State Ceremony, independence, thought to have become only nominal due to imperialist interventions in the national affairs, constituted the utmost concern. The first section is devoted to careful visual and literary description of imperial seals (fig. 2), seal boxes, tables and flag-staff, that were all intended to convey imperial status comparable to

1. Front Cover, Taeryeuigwe, 1897, hand colored woodblock print, 44.2 x 31.7cm. Kyujanggak collection.

2. Seal of Emperor, Seal of Taehan depicted in "Illustrated manual (dosok)," Taeryeuigwe, 1897, hand colored woodblock print, 44.2 x 31.7cm. Kyujanggak collection.
Seal of Emperor being transferred to the Altar of Heaven in “Procession of officers (Panch'ado),” Taerye uigwe, 1897, hand colored woodblock print, 44.2 x 31.7cm. Kyujanggak collection.

Procession of Carnage carrying the seal of emperor,” Taerye uigwe, 1897, hand colored woodblock print, 44.2 x 31.7cm. Kyujanggak collection.

that of the Chinese emperor. The procession scene shows the changes in administrative structure, especially within the military as shown by the modern uniform and the titles (figs. 3, 4).

The first visual account of the modernization of the military is recorded in the Ritual Regulations of State Funeral of Queen Min, posthumously known as Empress Myongsong, which took place in 1895. The scale of the illustration is extensive, covering fifty-six pages, and in the procession, a flag, which has been used as the national flag, was inscribed as a flag of the large battalion, taedaegi (大隊旗).

During Kojong’s reign, the rites for copying the portraits of the former kings were conducted three times, and creating portraits of Kojong and Sunjong once. During all of Choson, only seven rites of copying the portraits were held, which means the court of Kojong invested special interest in the preservation of portraits. Although in 1902 portrait copying was prompted by a fire to the Hall of Royal Portraits in 1901 and the need to restore them, such frequent copying of portraits can also be viewed in the context of compiling imperial history.

In terms of frequency, sacrificial rites during Kojong’s reign at ancestral shrines and tombs totaled eighteen occurrences, which was matched by the number of those during the Yongjo reign. Again, the records of rites demonstrate that the foremost concern during the time immediately before the final collapse of Choson was to formally realign and reinstate the royal lineage and ensure its survival, both on an internal and external front. Or, it may have been a measure of self-affirmation for Kojong, who had been caught in the midst of a power struggle between his father Taewongun, the Regent, and his wife, Queen Min. Kojong was also caught in the struggle between the need for modernization and preservation of old values: between the task of protecting sovereignty and independence, and subordination to outside forces in exchange for modern technology or for aid to win the internal power struggle. The underlying issue was identity on a personal and national level, that is the legitimacy of Kojong’s rule and Taehan Empire, under the name of independence.

**The style of uigwedo**

The style of the uigwedo of Taehan Empire shows no innovation, but rather repetitiveness or a more archaic version of the earlier formula, as if rigid formality and symmetry were to serve as the symbol of imperial status,

Yi Tae-jin sees that there were two flags created during King Kojong in 1882 - royal flag, ogi (국기) and flag for mass, mingi (명기) or kwann mingi (冠冕旗) - and that the flag of large battalion meant flag of the mass. See, Yi Tae-jin, “Taehan cheguk ui hwang chejong kwa...”
equal with the Chinese court. The prototype for uigwedo, especially the scene of procession, can be found in earlier paintings, such as the tomb paintings of Koguryo or more recently the scenes of envoy to Tokugawa Japan (fig. 5). The latter, completed either by Korean or Japanese painters, depicts more or less a consistent viewpoint, while from very early on in the 17th century (fig. 6), the processional scene of uigwedo were arranged with a multi-perspective view showing the precise line-up of each figure, depicted in profile and back view like a battle formation, chentu (fig. 7). Such diagrammatic compositional arrangement of figures can date back to Eastern Zhou bronze vessels (fig. 8). The uigwedo of Taehan Empire is even more diagrammatic. The artistic objective was less descriptive and more symbolic of the solemnness of the rites.

During the Qing, there was a similar increase in the recording of imperial events at both the official and private levels with the emperors placed at the center of attraction, serving also as portraits. Manchu may have had a similar need to enhance royal prestige in order to rule over the Han Chinese. However, as can be seen in the famous "Painting of Southern Inspection Tour of Emperors Kangxi" or "Horsemanship" (fig. 9), the events were recorded in full-scale painting of narrative nature in the realistic style, due to the presence of European painters like Lang Shining 彭世寧 (1688-1766) and Ai Qimeng 艾啓蒙 (1708-1780).

The realism that marked the court painting of 18th century Qing China did not appear until late 19th century in Choson although there were frequent envoys sent to Beijing in the 18th century. Rather, the records of imperial events rendered in map-like documentary format were more prevalent during the reigns of Kojong and Sunjong. Even when they were rendered in full-scale painting, the objective was not story-telling but formal historic documentation. Adoption of the archaic mode of spatial representation may have been intentional to serve the need to affirm the historical continuity.

Portraits and Screens
Realism, defined by physical likeness rather than life-likeness, was the first attraction of Western painting. Next was the concept of space as presented from the one-point perspective. The major turning point in adoption of these new methods of painting can be attributed to the transitory visits made by painters like Antonio Schindler (?-?) or Hubert Vos (1855-1935) who came to Korea in 1899. Kojong had his portrait done by both Schindler (fig. 10) and Vos (fig. 11). What is striking about the portraits is not only the photo-realism, but also how the King is portrayed standing in a momentary pose with the palatial compound in the background or in the middle of steps that run diagonally, the view of which reduces the degree of formality. Both paintings may have been done based on photographs (fig. 12), the technique of which was introduced towards the end of the 19th century. A similar kind of casualness also began to appear in formal portraits by court painters (figs. 13, 14, 15). Besides the realism evident in these three portraits, the strict signs of formality are noticeably beginning to fade: the hands are exposed instead of being tucked in the sleeves, or two feet are portrayed asymmetrically, or two hands are placed on each lap in a momentary relaxed pose. The sitter's direct eye contact with the viewer is very different from the distant gaze that marked earlier portraiture (fig. 16).

The timelessness that was the hallmark of royal portraits is replaced by the sense of immediacy and the physical presence of the sitter. The uigwe of 1902, the Ritual Regulations of Making Portraiture of King (fig. 17), records that both Kojong and the Prince had several sitting sessions at Chong-gwan Hall 靜觀軒 of Kyong-wun Palace, which may have also contributed to an increase in sense of
Portraits have significance beyond mere figure painting. They represent or convey the royal presence in itself, and in this sense, they belong to the category of history painting.

Gradual disintegration of the painting bureau when it was integrated with the larger office of the imperial household and the convocation of outside painters responsible for temporary assignments resulted in diffusion of court art beyond the palatial boundaries and infusion of popular art into the court. The Western concept of precision, when applied to portraiture, resulted in specificity close to popular art, and there is a certain down-to-earth expression in the direct gaze of the King in the portrait. The portraits of Kojong and Sunjong reflect the spirit of the time: a struggle or transition between conservatism and modernization, that was evident not only in their policies to reform the political and social structures but also in the cultural sphere.

The court ceremony was also painted in screen formats. Sometimes, painting was done in strict archaic formula (fig.18) with map-like spatial representation as seen in uigwaedo. One-point perspective was sometimes utilized (fig.19) as well, yet not consistently. This means, by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the basic technical methods of Western painting were well introduced into Choson. But the choice between the old and the new was deliberate. The Western painting style signified progression, while the traditional formula had a symbolic meaning of sovereignty and self-reliance. At the same time, the ornamental quality as seen in ceremonial screens (fig.20) are consistent with the so-called folk-painting of the late Choson, linking the art of the court and the popular world close together.

4. Conclusion

The study of court painting during the last decades of the Choson dynasty presents two concerns that governed the policy of the time: 1) conservatism as a projection of national independence externally and enhancement of imperial power internally; 2) modernization through adoption of foreign technology and governing system. In terms of painting,
Celebration for Seventieth Birthday of Empress Myonghon, 1901, 1D-fold screen, color on silk, each panel, 177.3 x 51.7 cm, Museum of Palace Relics.

*uigwaedo* demonstrates the conservatism in its rigid formality. The full-scale paintings, especially the portraits of King Kojong and Sunjong, provide the characteristic features of the transitional period shifting from East-centered to West-centered pictorial value centering on visual and physical exactitude and spatial expression projected from a one-point perspective.

Integration of the Painting Bureau with the Ministry of the Imperial Household may have contributed to the rise in stature of the court painter, but the institutional change may have also caused the subordination of individual creativity to faithful partaking of what the court envisioned as the means of enlightenment towards modernization. The court painters of the last half century of the Choson dynasty may have been the last and the most versatile artists, with the range of their work spanning from mechanical drawing to spontaneous painting, from the realistic style to the decorative and the abbreviated style of the Southern School. Their diverse tasks was what the transitional period of institutional changes and social reform required of painters in the service of the court. The content and the style of *uigwedo* of *Taehan cheguk* demonstrated that the concern of the time was to express the identity of the ruler, nevertheless, it was during this time that the well-being of the masses was also serious concern and the period prepared the way for coming of the modern society.
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