The Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa Temple (1665) and Their Significance

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Abstract

In 2012, a hoard of materials was discovered inside the statues of the Four Heavenly Kings at Jikjisa temple. These included inscriptions informing us when and by whom the statues were made. This study analyzes these written documents and their significance in the broader context of Korean Buddhist art. A handwritten offering record deposited in one of the statues in particular states that they were made in 1665 by a group of monk-sculptors led by a certain Daneung, who was born, ordained, and initiated into his sculptural career in Jeolla-do province, but was reputedly more active in Gyeongsang-do province during the second half of the seventeenth century. With the identity of the sculptor and date of production confirmed, Jikjisa temple sculptures prove to be a rare example among the sets of Four Heavenly Kings statues made during the Joseon period, and indeed the only one known thus far with clear indicators of which of the four cardinal directions each Heavenly King was positioned under.

Keywords: Four Heavenly Kings, Jikjisa temple, Ssanggyesa temple, Daneung, monk-sculptor, Joseon period, Korean Buddhist art, Buddhist sculpture

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Introduction

Buddhist temples of the Joseon period (1392–1910) generally feature a special gate-hall at their entrance where images of the Four Heavenly Kings (Sacheonwang 四天王) are installed, hence earning this gate the name “gate of the Heavenly Kings” (cheonwangmun 天王門). However, the question of when such gates first began to be built remains unresolved as there is no extant example predating the Joseon period. The oldest example known to us today currently stands at Borimsa temple in Jangheung, Jeollanam-do province, which can be dated to 1515. It is possible that similar gate-halls devoted to the heavenly kings existed well before that of Borimsa temple, though no tangible proof yet corroborates such a conjecture.

The cheonwangmun gate at the entrance to Jikjisa temple in Gimcheon is enshrined with four large statues of the Four Heavenly Kings. Each statue measures between 452 and 470 centimeters in height, and each symbolically watches over its share of the four quarters of the Buddhist cosmos. Grouped into two, each pair is placed at either lateral end of the portal’s interior (Figs. 1 and 2). In 2012, a collection of so-called bokjang (“abdominal storage”) votive objects was found in a hidden repository inside one of the statues, among which was included a handwritten “offering record” (bongangi 奉安記, or barwonmun 發願文) and printed scriptures. Of these findings, the

1. It was during the Unified Silla period (676–935) that images of the Four Heavenly Kings were commonly seen. The images were rendered onto the surfaces of reliquaries or pagodas as symbolic guardians to the relics stored within. The images were also regarded as protectors of the kingdom of Silla as well as the Land of Buddha. A representative example would be the Sacheonwangsa temple completed in 679. During this period, the people of Silla believed that establishing a temple dedicated to the Four Heavenly Kings would ward off invasion by China’s Tang dynasty. Unfortunately, the Four Heavenly Kings that had been enshrined in the Sacheonwangsa temple at the time no longer exist. The oldest remaining images of the Buddhist guardians are engraved on a reliquary discovered in the three-story stone pagoda of Gameunsa temple in Gyeongju, which was built in 682. Thereafter, the role of the images gradually changed from that of protecting Buddhist holy relics to that of repelling evil forces from Buddhist temples.

2. With the exception of the Four Heavenly Kings in Borimsa temple constructed in 1515, other statues of the Joseon period were made during the seventeenth century after the Imjin War (1592–1598).
Before the discovery of the Four Heavenly Kings at Jikjisa temple, the subject had elicited comparatively little scholarly attention due to the lack of historiographical information. The latest discovery of new evidence, however, has encouraged historians to pay closer attention to the cheonwang-mun and the Four Heavenly Kings heritage and to examine their significance in Korean Buddhist art history, as I myself attempt to do in this study.

The discussions in this study can be summarized as follows. First, the discovery of the exact date of the Jikjisa statues provides a valuable clue about various characteristic features of the Four Heavenly Kings statues made in Joseon during the late seventeenth century, and thus establishes a criterion for analyzing many other similar statues made during the late Joseon period but whose exact production dates are unknown. Second, the

*Figure 1. Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple (right wing of the gate).*
*Source: Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.*

*Figure 2. Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple (left wing of the gate).*
*Source: Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.*
Jikjisa statues are an important piece of evidence that could end the controversy over which of the cardinal directions each of the four heavenly deities represent; for example, there are conflicting opinions over whether the guardian carrying a miniature pagoda as his main weapon is in charge of the west or north of the Buddhist universe. Third, the statues raise questions about their creators and at the same time provide clues to answering them. For example, the leading figure among the artists who sculpted the statues in 1665 was a monk-artist based in Jeolla-do province, over 160 kilometers from Jikjisa temple. What made him travel such a long distance? Was it normal for Buddhist artists of the seventeenth century to travel so far for their work? In this study I try to answer these and other questions raised in relation to the Four Heavenly Kings enshrined in Jikjisa temple.

The Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa Temple and Their Hidden Ritual Deposits

Jikjisa temple is located in Gimcheon, Gyeongsangbuk-do province, which was situated some distance from Hanseong (present-day Seoul), the capital of the Joseon dynasty. The temple suffered heavy fire damage during the so-called Imjin War (1592–1598), the seven-year period of turmoil following the Japanese invasion of the Korean peninsula in 1592. The temple was restored during the mid-seventeenth century along with many other Buddhist temples across Korea that were damaged or destroyed during that war (K. Lee 1995). The Buddhists of the period had to rely on cheap and easily accessible materials, such as wood and earth, in their efforts to restore the lost temples where they would console the spirits of people who had died during the war. This also explains why a great majority of the Buddhist statues created during the seventeenth century were made with wood and/or clay and why the Four Heavenly Kings statues in Jikjisa temple are not an exception to this rule, as they were made by applying clay over a wooden

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3. There are several important studies on Buddhist statues of the seventeenth-century Joseon. These include: Choi (2006, 2009), Shim (2006), and Song (2007, 2008, 2012).
armature. Statues of the Four Heavenly Kings in the Joseon period were, almost without exception, enshrined in a gate hall built specifically for them at the entrance to the Buddhist temple. Buddhist temples in Korea traditionally had several entrance gates, of which the *cheonwangmun* gate was the second that visitors would have had to pass through in order to enter the temple.4

Figure 3. Wooden core of the Heavenly King of the East.
Source: Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.

Figure 4. Collection of *bokjang* 腹藏 votive objects of the Heavenly King of the West.
Source: Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.

The images of the four heavenly deities enshrined in the gate building were positioned either standing or seated. As for the Jikjisa temple examples, all are seated in chairs and have a secret depository carved inside their upper body where valuable offerings related to their creation were kept (see Figs. 3

4. Normally, there are three thresholds to the temple. The first of several gates leading to the main precincts of a Buddhist temple is called the *ilo mun* 一柱門 gate, or “single pillar gate.” It was named such because several pillars were laid in a line to appear as a single pillar. The second threshold is the *cheonwangmun* gate, and the third is referred to as the *burimun* 不二門 gate.
and 4). Each of the Four Heavenly Kings at Jikjisa temple features a square face with a thick beard, and wears a lavishly embellished crown and an elaborately decorated suit of armor (Fig. 5); each is armed with one of four symbolic objects, i.e., a *bipa* (a four-stringed, pear-shaped lute), a sword, a miniature pagoda with a prayer flag, and a dragon carrying a wish-fulfilling pearl called a *cintamani* (Fig. 6). Visitors to the temple can see the guardians with (1) *bipa* and (2) sword in the right wing of the gate and those with (3) pagoda and (4) dragon in the left wing (Figs. 7 and 8). Scholars have long been interested in the reason why one of these warrior kings is armed with a musical instrument (that is, the *bipa*), and have come up with differ-

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5. A depository containing various *bokjang* votive objects to Buddha was usually carved inside the body of a Buddhist statue along with an opening. As for the guardian statues of Jikjisa, the depository was placed at the bottom of the chairs on which the guardians are seated and is covered with a wooden plug.

6. The Four Heavenly Kings were armed with several different weapons which vary by period. In Unified Silla, they were usually armed with a pagoda, sword, and spear (Lim 2015, 284–287).
ent explanations. As for the grotesque creatures struggling under their feet

**Figure 7.** Heavenly King with miniature pagoda.
*Source:* Author’s photo.

**Figure 8.** Heavenly King with a dragon.
*Source:* Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.

**Figure 9.** Living souls under the feet of the Heavenly King of the North.
*Source:* Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.

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7. I believe that Joseon statues of the Heavenly King armed with a lute are related to Tibetan Buddhism, which was introduced into China during the last phase of the Yuan period (1279–1368). As for the Heavenly King armed with a miniature pagoda, in previous research I examined the Khotan Kingdom of Central Asia, which worshiped the Heavenly King of the North as an ancestral god and guardian deity. Since early times, Khotan enshrined the Heavenly King of the North as the guardian deity of the country. According to Khotan accounts, this Heavenly King performed numerous acts on behalf of the Khotan Kingdom. For instance, when Khotan was submerged, the Heavenly King of the North brought the land out of the water, and he also protected a precious pagoda that had arisen from the ground. For these reasons, the Khotan may have created a large number of Heavenly King of the North statues holding a miniature pagoda, establishing the notion of Heavenly King of the North (or Vaisravana) in Central Asia. For more on this, please see my thesis (Lim 2010a, 86–115).
some historians use the term **saengnyeong** 生靈 (living soul) to refer to them because they resemble humans but are not actually being human beings. These ominous beings that are being trampled under the feet of the Heavenly Kings are depicted in a great variety of postures to represent the ordeal they suffer.

The statues of the Four Heavenly Kings at Jikjisa temple were made by sculpting clay over a wooden armature made from a large log. Each wooden core has a depository created by hollowing out its inside in order to store valuable items related to the creation of the guardians, including written or printed scriptures and prayers. The depositories made by carving out the bottom of the chair on which the guardian is seated, are 300 to 340 centimeters deep, and their openings were covered with a flat wooden plug to protect the **bokjang** votive objects stored inside (Fig. 10). Unfortunately, however, three of the four depositories were looted, resulting in the loss of valuable materials related to the history of the statues and the temple, including the offering records, which would have contained detailed information on the production dates of the statues and the artists who participated in their production. The fourth depository belonging to the Heavenly King of the West survived the pillage and has been preserved in its original condition along with the **bokjang** votive objects in its depository, including the offering record.

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8. As for the creatures squirming under the feet of the Four Heavenly Kings, please see I. Chang (2013).
9. The living creatures struggling under the feet of the Four Heavenly Kings are traditionally **saengnyeongiwa**, although those depicted by the Buddhists of Joseon varied. As for the characters and roles of the **saengnyeongiwa**, please refer to Lim (2014).
10. The log used for the armature of the Four Heavenly Kings statues corresponds to the backbone of the human body.
that contains valuable information about the creation of the Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple.

It is generally believed that the offering record (Fig. 11) discovered in the depository of the Heavenly King of the West is one of several copies of a prayer; the remaining copies would have been stored inside the other three statues.\(^\text{11}\) The prayer contains detailed information on the Buddhists who participated in the production of Jikjisa temple’s Four Heavenly Kings statues, though it is the date of production and the artists who created them that particularly interest scholars. According to the prayer’s text, the statues were completed in 1665 by ten monk-sculptors whose names are then listed.\(^\text{12}\) However, three names from the list are no longer legible due to the deterioration of the paper. It is particularly regrettable that the missing names include that of the head artist who led the monk-artist group as this detail often provides a wealth of information about the style and techniques of a specific sculptural work. Fortunately, slight vestiges of brushstrokes that possibly spell out the head artist’s name have survived and are located at the edge of the large hole (Fig. 12), which I have interpreted as reading “Daneung

![Figure 11. Offering record of the Heavenly King of the West.](source: Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.)

![Figure 12. Detail of part of Figure 11.](source: Photo courtesy of Jikjisa temple.)

\(^{11}\) Each of the Buddhist statues forming a group, which were made during the Joseon period, tended to contain the same offerings, including the offering record.

\(^{12}\) The works of Buddhist art made for religious purposes during the Joseon period were created by artists who were also monks.
This conclusion is based on several observations. First, the remaining fragments of the characters written on the wooden armature of the statue representing the Heavenly King of the West provide a reliable clue (Fig. 13). The 2012 finds also led to the discovery of—in addition to the offering record left by the devoted Buddhists who commissioned the icons—a passage written in ink which reads: “A monk from Songgwangsa temple in Jeolla-do came to Jikjisa temple to make the statues of the Four Heavenly Kings in 1665.” I found the passage to be important in relation to the identity of the monk-sculptor who led the project to create the Four Heavenly Kings in Jikjisa temple because Daneung, like the monk-sculptor who led the project at Jikjisa temple, was also a monk-sculptor who was born and raised in Jeolla-do. Second, although “Daneung” was a monk from Jeolla-do, he was also active in Gyeongsang-do, engaging in various art projects taking place at great distances from his home (Jo 2013; M. Lee 2013). There is evidence to show that there are at least four works remaining in Gyeongsang-

13. One of the documents discovered in the body of the Heavenly King of the West at Jikjisa temple contains a list of ten artists who participated in the creation of the images, including Gwanghak, Sagyu, Seongyeol, Tangmil, Sawon, and Beopcheong, in addition to the head artist, which may be interpreted as Daneung. Among these, there are only three monks whose names can be found in relation to other pieces: Seongyeol, Tangmil, and Beopcheong. Among the three, Tangmil and Beopcheong had also worked with Daneung for the construction of a Yongmunsa temple sculpture in 1684.

14. There are two Buddhist temples named Songgwangsa, one in Suncheon, Jeollanam-do province, and one in Wanjoo, Jeollabuk-do province.

15. The pedestal of a Buddhist statue enshrined in Bonghwangsa temple in Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do, was made by Daneung in 1692. It contains an inscription stating that the creator of the statue was “a monk from Wibongsa temple in Jeolla-do.”
do in whose creation he played a leading role. Third, it is possible to infer from the remaining fragments of the two characters representing a name that it could have originally spelt “Daneung.” The period during which he was active in Gyeongsang-do corresponds to that during which the Jikjisa statues were made. This fact coincides with the view that the name of the monk who headed the group of artists on the project for the Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple was indeed Daneung.16

As mentioned earlier, Daneung was born in Jeolla-do and ordained into the Buddhist priesthood at a temple in that province situated about 160 kilometers from Jikjisa temple. While no records have been discovered to show when he arrived in Gyeongsang-do, it is known that he stayed in that province for a long period, participating in religious art projects commissioned by many local Buddhist communities all across Gyeongsang-do. As for what compelled Daneung to move to Gyeongsang-do and participate in and supervise these Buddhist sculptural works, a more detailed discussion will be given in the following section.

The 2012 discovery also resulted in the uncovering of documents containing information about the cardinal directions represented by the Four Heavenly Kings as well as the artists who sculpted the statues and the date of their production. Unlike the offering record, which was only found in one statue, these documents were discovered in two of the four statues—those armed with a lute and a miniature pagoda (Fig. 14). Inscriptions on the plugs covering the depositories of *bokjang* votive objects and on the inner surfaces of the depositories (Fig. 15) were also discovered, revealing that the guardians with lute, pagoda, and sword were in charge of the North, West, and East, respectively. The last guardian, accompanied by a dragon, should therefore be in charge of the South although there is no inscription confirming this point. A more detailed discussion of this will be given in the following section.

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16. As for Daneung’s activities as a Buddhist monk-artist, a paper by M. Lee (2013) provides detailed information, although there is no discussion of the Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple.
Termination of the Controversy over the Cardinal Directions of the Four Heavenly Kings: Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa Temple

The relationship between the Four Heavenly Kings and the four cardinal directions has long been one of the most heated topics among historians engaged in studies of the Buddhist guardians of the Joseon period. For some, the cardinal directions represented by the guardians are closely connected with the symbolic objects they are armed with. The guardians appear in various Buddhist structures and artifacts in the Goryeo (918–1392) and Joseon (1392–1910) periods, and historians have agreed that the guardian armed with a “miniature pagoda” always represented the Heavenly King of the North during the Unified Silla and Goryeo periods (Lim 2010a, 2011) (Fig.
The controversy began, however, when scholars found that some of the guardians armed with a miniature pagoda made during the Joseon period were marked as the “Heavenly King of the West.” Opinions on this matter are largely divided into two schools of thought. One views the above case as simply an error and therefore to be disregarded. The scholars who support this view insist that the guardian armed with a pagoda should be regarded as the Heavenly King of the North regardless of the other names given to it by later generations (C. Chang 1996). They believe that the principle dictating the “guardian armed with a pagoda is the Heavenly King of the North” continued to be maintained from the Unified Silla to the Joseon period. On the other hand, there are other scholars who support the view that the name of the guardian carrying a “miniature pagoda” was changed to the “Heavenly King of the West” during the Joseon period (Lim 2005, 2010b).

These two contrasting views have remained a source of constant tension although it was the first view that was initially dominant in the scholarly community. But the situation has recently changed as an increasing amount of evidence appears to support the view that the “guardian deity
armed with a miniature pagoda is in fact the Heavenly King of the West.”

Despite the change, the first view is still strongly supported by a number of historians who insist that the discovery of only a small number of records made in the Joseon period does not effectively change the original principles because the records could easily be the result of an error on the part of those who made them.

The new evidence found in 2012 within the bodies of the Four Heavenly Kings enshrined in Jikjisa temple supports the view that the guardian deity carrying a pagoda as his main weapon is the Heavenly King of the West. I believe that this new evidence is sufficient to make a strong case that will put an end to the controversy over the cardinal direction represented by the guardian armed with a miniature pagoda.

There was, however, one question which had to be answered before arriving at this conclusion. Namely, how did the Heavenly King of the North of the Goryeo period come to be changed to the Heavenly King of the West in the subsequent Joseon period? I was greatly interested in this issue and conducted the relevant research (Lim 2010b, 86–95), from which I concluded that the change could date to the period of prosperity enjoyed by Tibetan Buddhism during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The strong influence of Tibetan Buddhism upon Buddhists in the Ming period led to the creation of new Buddhist icons that reflected the Tibetan influence. In Tibetan Buddhism, “the West” had always been the most important of all the cardinal directions, which explains why the “Heavenly King of the West” was given a “miniature pagoda,” the most powerful of the four weapons with which the four protectors of the world of the Buddhist Law could be armed. The background to the situation is treated in the Ming period text, Zhu Fo shizun Rulai Pusa zunzhe mingcheng gequ 諸佛世尊如來菩薩尊者名稱歌曲 (Famous Songs of the Names of the World-Honored Tathagatas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats; referred to as Mingcheng gequ for short), pub-

17. Representative examples of this view that the Heavenly King of the West is the one armed with the miniature pagoda concerns the Four Heavenly Kings of Songgwangsa temple in Suncheon (ca. 1628) and Tongdosa temple (1724) in Yangsan.
lished during the Ming dynasty in 1417. Remarkably, the Ming court sent the book to the Joseon dynasty, where the Buddhist monks were urged to peruse and memorize its contents. King Sejong (r. 1418–1450), for instance, had the Buddhist monks of his dynasty recite its contents at receptions of Ming envoys and established the study of the book as a prerequisite for applicants wishing to sit for the state examinations. Remarkably, the guardian carrying a miniature pagoda appeared as the Heavenly King of the West, as evidenced by an illustration contained in the book (Fig. 17). I concluded from my research that the book played a crucial role in the process of connecting the miniature pagoda with the Heavenly King of the West, and therefore it was after the introduction of new Buddhist icons from Ming China that Buddhist artists of Joseon began to depict the Heavenly King of the West as the guardian armed with a miniature pagoda (Lim 2010b, 86–97).

Figure 17. Page from the *Mingcheng gequ* (1417), Bogwangsa temple, Sokcho, Korea.

Source: Author’s photo.

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18. According to the preface of the extant *Mingcheng gequ*, the earliest version of this work is the one published on April 17 of the 15th year of Emperor Yongle 永樂帝 (1417). Full-text versions of this book are housed at both Keimyung University and Dongguk University in Korea (Yim 2009, 6–7). In 2016, an edition of the *Mingcheng gequ* was found at Bogwangsa temple in Sokcho, Korea, which was the same version of the book published in 1417. For Figure 17 in this paper, I use an image from this edition.

19. Around 1,300 copies of the *Mingcheng gequ* were imported to Joseon during the three years from 1417 when it was first published. This included some 100 copies in 1417 (*Tae-jong sillok*, 20th day of the 12th lunar month, 1417), 1,000 copies in 1418 (*Sejong sillok*, 4th day of the 9th lunar month, 1418), and 30 boxes of copies in 1419 (*Sejong sillok*, 28th day of the 12th lunar month, 1419).

20. *Sejong sillok*, 11th and 12th days of the 12th lunar month, 1419.
Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa Temple and Woodcarving Sculptors of Late Joseon

It was in 1665 that a monk-sculptor named Daneung completed a project for the production of the Four Heavenly Kings commissioned by Jikjisa temple. No record remains to inform us about the dates of birth and death of the monk-sculptor Daneung. The oldest record discovered so far with respect to his activities as a sculptor is in the list of sculptors responsible for the Buddhist statue that was made at Songgwangsa temple in Wanju in 1656. His name comes eleventh in a list of the names of thirty artists who participated in the production of the statue (CHA and RIBCH 2008a, 2:256; Park 1999, 44–45). Considering that his name appears relatively late in the sequence on the list and that he continued to work until 1705, he was probably quite young and one of the novice monk-artists when he participated in the Songgwangsa project. His last recorded work is the Four Heavenly Kings commissioned by Ssanggyesa temple in Gyeongsangnam-do, which were completed in 1705 (CHA and RIBCH 2008b, 1:243). The records of 1656 and 1705 reveal that Daneung worked as a sculptor for fifty years at the very least. Considering that the average life expectancy of a Korean person during the Joseon period was less than fifty, and assuming that he lived an extraordinarily long life, Daneung would probably have been in his late teens or early twenties when participating in the 1656 Songgwangsa project.

Daneung became a Buddhist monk at Wibongsa temple, situated only three kilometers from Songgwangsa temple in Wanju, Jeolla-do. As mentioned above, the earliest extant record about his life as a sculptor concerns his activities at Songgwangsa in 1656. The second oldest record about his artistic activities is found among the materials discovered with the Four Heavenly Kings at Jikjisa temple, statues that were made in 1665 by a group of monk-artists led by Daneung. Thus, records reveal that it had only taken him about ten years to emerge as a “head artist.” The records suggest that he was in his late twenties or early thirties by the time he carried out this project. The fact that Daneung was given an opportunity to head a group of nine artists for such a huge project at a comparatively young age suggests that he had already become a widely-acknowledged monk-sculptor by this time.
One may wonder then why a young monk who was ordained as a Buddhist priest and started a career as an artist in Jeolla-do had to travel such a long way to work in Gyeongsang-do. History suggests that there was a lot of work for an artist to do in Jeolla-do in the middle and latter part of the seventeenth century when Daneung was most active as a monk-sculptor. That being the case, there should be some explanation as to why he chose to leave home and work in a distant place.

Joseon in the seventeenth century was in the midst of a difficult situation. The end of the Imjin War was followed by efforts to restore Buddhist temples, statues, and paintings that had been destroyed during that conflict, many of which have survived intact to the present day. Some recent examinations of the bokjang votive objects kept in the depositories of Buddhist statues, which were created during this postwar period have revealed some of the names of the monk-artists who made them (Choi 2009; Song 2008). According to studies on their lives and work, the monk-artists of the Joseon period did not limit their activities to a specific area but instead formed groups and traveled based on the requirements of their clients. Considering the nomadic practices of the monk-artists of the time, it does not appear unreasonable for an artist such as Daneung, who had roots in Jeolla-do, to have worked in Gyeongsang-do (Song 2008). But his involvement in many projects in an area far from his home for an extended period of time is worth noting because the great majority of his contemporaries did not favor working far from their places of origin.

It is now a well-known fact that Daneung had a patron, the Buddhist monk Singyeong 神鏡 (?–1706), who was an influential figure among the Buddhist communities in Gyeongsang-do, as revealed by records linking his name to the creation of several significant Buddhist statues (M. Lee 2013). These records reveal that Singyeong was not an artist but a top-tier administrative official, or jeungmyeong 證明 (literally, “certifier”), whose main task was to supervise every aspect of a Buddhist statue project and to ensure that all the details were completed according to the established principles. It is highly probable that Singyeong chose Daneung for his projects although how the two monks first came to be acquainted is not yet known. Despite the fact that the two monks’ names appeared together for the first time on
the offering record made in 1684, scholars believe that they began to work together long before that year. According to records discovered thus far, five of the six projects that Daneung conducted in Gyeongsang-do as head sculptor were supervised by Singyeong.

It seems that the first project in Gyeongsang-do undertaken by a group of sculptors led by Daneung, who had worked in Jeolla-do in 1656, was the one that created the Four Heavenly Kings in Jikjisa temple in 1665, as suggested by an inscription inside the Heavenly King of the West which reads, “[These statues] were made in 1665 by a group of monks from Jeolla-do” (Fig. 13). While the offering record found within one of the Four Heavenly Kings does not contain Singyong’s name, it is generally accepted that there had been some sort of connection between Daneung and Singyeong before the project and that the latter played a crucial role in the former’s continuing productivity in Gyeongsang-do. Regrettably, there is a significant lack of information regarding the relationship between Singyeong and Jikjisa temple as there has yet to be any evidentiary discoveries of the nature of that relationship.

As mentioned earlier, Daneung would probably have been around age thirty by the time he was making the Four Heavenly Kings statues for Jikjisa temple in 1665. It is extraordinary that he was given the task of head artist and was able to complete the job so successfully at such a relatively young age. After the Jikjisa project, Daneung continued to work as head artist for another forty years or so, involving himself in the production of a wide variety of Buddhist statues that included Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and guardian deities such as the Four Heavenly Kings.21 Through this and previous research, I have determined that Daneung was involved as head sculptor in a total of six projects, although I feel certain that the figure represents only a small portion of his actual achievements and that previously unknown works will continue to be discovered (see Table 1).

Of Daneung’s works known to date, the first consisted of the Four Heavenly Kings statues he made for Jikjisa temple, and the last of another group of the Four Heavenly Kings completed in 1705 and enshrined in the

21. Regarding the monk-artists under the influence of Daneung, see M. Lee (2013, 178).
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The two groups of statues render the same subject of the Four Heavenly Kings and thus provide scholars with an interesting source of knowledge with respect to the art of sculpture achieved by Daneung over a period of forty years. Each of the figures in both groups features a square face and long torso, showing that the monk-sculptor managed to maintain a remarkably characteristic and consistent style over four decades (Figs. 18 and 19). His style stands out when his Heavenly Kings are compared with those of Songgwangsa temple in Suncheon and those of Sutasa temple in Hongcheon, cheonwangmun gate of Ssanggyesa temple in Hadong (Figs. 18 and 19).
Figure 18. *Left*, The face of one of the Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple; *right*, the face of one of the Four Heavenly Kings of Ssanggyesa temple.

*Source*: Author’s photos.

Figure 19. *From left to right*: Four Heavenly Kings at Songgwangsa temple in Suncheon (ca. 1628), Jikjisa temple in Gimcheon (1665), Sutasa temple in Hongcheon (ca. 1676), and Ssanggyesa temple in Hadong (1705).

*Source*: Author’s photos.
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which were made around 1628 and 1676, respectively (Fig. 19). If compared with another set of Four Heavenly Kings he manufactured in 1705, it becomes evident that Daneung’s works have certain characteristic features in common, such as small faces relative to the body, facial features that are not overly exaggerated, and the presence of a long torso.

Conclusion: Historical Significance of the Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa Temple

The statues of the Four Heavenly Kings in Jikjisa temple have been preserved almost intact in their original condition for about 350 years. In 2012, a hoard of materials was discovered within the bodies of the statues, revealing when and by whom they were made. In this study, I have tried to analyze the written materials revealed by these discoveries to improve our understanding of the significance of the statues in terms of Korean Buddhist art history. I found from the materials, which include the offering record kept at the depository of the statues, that the statues were made in 1665 by a group of monk-sculptors led by a monk named Daneung, who was born and initiated into the Buddhist priesthood and sculpture tradition in Jeolla-do, but was most active in Gyeongsang-do during the second half of the seventeenth century. I then reached conclusions regarding the head of the religious art project commissioned by Jikjisa temple, naming Daneung as lead sculptor, by examining the remaining fragments of his name on the offering record as well as other historical details about his life and art known thus far. I have also presented evidence that I expect will help end the controversy over which cardinal directions each of the four Buddhist guardians represented during the Joseon period. Finally, I have concluded from the examples of Daneung and his colleagues that in late Joseon period monk-artists often travelled to different parts of the country to meet the demands for their artistic skills under the conditions of their patrons.

22. Neither group of statues contains offering records, and hence their production dates are based on the records kept by the temples they belong to.
The Four Heavenly Kings of Jikjisa temple made in 1665 prove to be rare examples of Heavenly King statues whose date of production can be confirmed. The dates for most of these Four Heavenly Kings statues are conjectured on the basis of separately made records. The Jikjisa statues are the only known examples to date that provide clear information about when and by whom they were made and the cardinal directions they are connected with. This alone serves as strong motivation to regard them as works occupying a special position in the history of Korean Buddhist sculpture.

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23. One exception may be the Four Heavenly Kings of Songgwangsa temple in Wanju, which were created in 1649, but the offering record providing the date of their production was not kept in a secret depository in the statues’ torsos but in their headgear.
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