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PARK, Seong Hee. Historical Significance of *Elegant Gathering at Kenkadō Hall* by Kimura Kenkadō: Representation of Japanese Literati in Japan and Korea in the Late-eighteenth Century

Literary works of Elegant Gathering at Kenkadō Hall (property of the National Museum of Korea) was produced by Kimura Kenkadō (1736–1802), a cultured man of Osaka, at the request of Seong Dae-jung (1732–1812), a senior secretary among Korean envoys of 1764. This work comprises several elements: a title, afterword, and postscript by Daiten (1719–1801), a painting (*Elegant Gathering at Kenkadō Hall*) and a poem on the subject by Kenkadō, and poems on the subject by Japanese literati who kept company with Korean envoys. *Elegant Gathering at Kenkadō Hall*, (hereafter referred to as “this painting”), by Kimura Kenkadō, is the only painting contained in this work. In this study, I discuss the historical significance of this painting, which spread the visual image of Japanese literati to the literati society of Korea, including viewpoints of both Japan and Korea.

First, I state the significance of this painting as a literati painting in the context of early paintings of Kenkadō. It was painted when Kenkadō was twenty-nine years old. From the composition and details of this painting we can grasp the influence of various elements such as the styles of Japanese senior painters like Ike Taiga, among others, expressions of Ming and Qing dynasty paintings that were available at that time, printed materials imported from China, Japanese woodblock-printed books, and so on, that Kenkadō had absorbed in his early painting studies. This painting is the outcome of balancing two sides; one is the Korean mission’s request of Kenkadō to make a record of the real situation, and the other is the desire of the painter to express himself as a member of the literati.

In this painting, the spring-day scene in which peach flowers bloom has been painted with delicate brushwork. The poetry meeting (*Kenkadō-kai*) takes place in Kenkadō’s study (*Kenkadō*) built on the reedy shore of Naniwa. There is a spring scene of Osaka, which was called the riverside district, with the big city of the late-eighteenth century in the background. It depicts the figures of the relevant people realistically. The two themes of this painting (the dawn of spring in Naniwa and the elegant gathering at Kenka) were the result of the request of Seong Dae-jung, but that was not its only purpose. All the scenes of this painting act to express Kenkadō himself as a member of the literati, and to assert that. Particularly, the expression of space that refers to motifs of places of scenic beauty contained in *Sancai Tuhui* (volume entitled “Geography”), vivid coloring with blue and green, and so on, draw our attention. These are believed to be Kenkadō’s creation methods that he adopted in this painting in order to represent a strong archaic style evoking and orientation toward China.

Second, I analyze this painting from the point of view of its reception, focusing on the Korean side as the recipient. Because this painting was the most highly praised early modern Japanese painting among Korean literati of the same era, it occupies a special position in the early modern history of Japan-Korea relations mediated by painting. This painting traveled to Korea immediately after its production and was widely viewed by the intellectual network of Seoul. The date of its introduction was the late eighteenth century, which was the turning point of external recognition by the intellectuals of the late Joseon dynasty, and it functioned as a “representation of Japanese literati.” Upon examining the relevant records noted by Korean literati such as Yi Deok-mu (1741–1793) and others, we can understand that they sympathized with “the reclusive life in the city” image of Japanese literati, and felt the same quality of consciousness. In addition, this painting has an important meaning that caused a new trend of international interchange among the next-generation Korean intellectuals from the late-eighteenth century to the early-nineteenth century: the so-called “overseas relationships through literary art” (*Kaigaibokuen*). This painting should therefore be highly esteemed by contemporary viewers, too.

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