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“An Art History” in 1820 (*Bunsei*-Era): An Essay on the Screen Pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* Temple

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Abstract: In this paper, I examined the “scheme” observed in the screen pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* temple. Conventionally, paintings other than ukiyo-e paintings, especially those by Kyoto artists during the late premodern period have not been studied from this viewpoint, those works will be interpreted.

The wall pictures and sliding screens of the various subtemples that decorate *Daitoku-ji* (Murasakino, Kita-ku, Kyoto City) cover a wide range of times and schools; they stretch from the Muromachi to the late Edo, on to premodern, and from the Soga School to the Kano, the Hasegawa, and the Unkoku. Of them, there are five rooms and 41 panels that contain the screen pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* temple in *Sangen-in Hojo* (the residence for the head priest) (the old Ryusho-ji Guest Hall). They are all ink paintings by Hara Zaichu (1750–1838), a major figure in Kyoto art circles.

Zaichu learned from Chinese and old Japanese paintings and often diverted their designs for his own paintings. This act of “imitation” or “diversion” has led to low evaluations of Zaichu’s paintings from the standpoint of individuality and originality. In the case of the wall and sliding-door paintings of *Sangen-in*, some consider the “Tiger Picture” in the Shicchu room to be merely an enlarged version of the “Dragon-and-Tiger Picture” by Mokkei (Muxi), which has traditionally been passed down at *Daitoku-ji* temple. However, there seem to be some hidden artistic scheme, which was not merely “a diversion of designs.”

For this reason, we first analyzed the screen pictures in every room to find out which originals Zaichu based his works upon and what styles he employed, and then examined the combinations of the rooms to fully comprehend his scheme. As a result, the research clarified that Zaichu had made original works out of screen pictures by the Ami School, the Kano School, and painters of realism (the Maruyama School) by motif, subject, and technique for each room; the whole composition revealed an intent to “assort school-by-school characteristic features.” One may even conclude that by 1820 at the age of 71, Zaichu reorganized those paintings into one large piece of Hojo wall painting — it can be said that most parts of it were produced at *Daitoku-ji* subtemples. That is why we would like to temporarily call it, “An Art History in 1820 (*Bunsei* 3).”

Although the existence of Zaichu’s screen pictures has been well known, no sufficient research has been conducted. Thus, by accumulating analyses and studies, we will be closer to starting to clarify some of the traits Japanese culture is supposed to contain such as “quotation,”

“parody” and “imitation.”

Introduction: The Issues

The current screen pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* are all black ink paintings made by Hara Zaichu (原在中/1750–1838). To be discussed in the following are the traits of those paintings and their characterization in art history.

Hara Zaichu was one of the prominent painters of the generation following Maruyama Okyo (1733–95). Until modern times his academy, the Hara School, had assumed an important position in Kyoto art circles. It was commonly believed that Zaichu’s production process went like this: he learned how to paint from Chinese and Japanese classic masterpieces, or “classic paintings,” and often painted his works by diverting those designs, especially for screen pictures in Buddhist temples.¹

Perhaps due to the reputation of diverting the classic designs in production, the assessment of Zaichu paintings was never very high. The screen pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* discussed in this paper are no exception. There have been few detailed studies on them. However, the author believes that there is a much deeper “scheme” — a contrived quality that cannot be dismissed as superficial — hidden in those paintings. In fact, this very scheme is connected to trends not only in premodern Japanese paintings but also in the history of Japanese culture as a whole.

The main purpose of this study is to discuss the traits of screen pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* and their characterization in art history. To do so, I will outline previous studies, analyze the “subjects” and “styles” of those paintings, and clarify the “scheme” (more specifically “an assortment of school-by-school characteristic features by imitation.”). In this manner, I will introduce the characteristics and artistic charms of those works, which have not been discussed.

Furthermore, I will introduce my personal view on the characterization of “imitation” in our cultural history. This is because I would like to pursue the theory of “imitation” (in the case of the paintings of Hara Zaichu, it was the cause of his low evaluations) in Japanese culture more extensively by focusing on it and reevaluating the emerging distinctive mode.

1. Previous Studies and Conventional Evaluations

1-1 Hara Zaichu

The brief introduction of Hara Zaichu in current art history typically go like this:

“Hara Zaichu learned painting under Ishida Yutei (or Maruyama Okyo, according to another theory). He studied the classic works of Chinese and Japanese masters. Having digested them as his own, he established a distinct style that was precise, well harmonized, and rich, and became

¹ For example, the part about Hara Zaichu in “Gajo-Yoryaku” (The History of Paintings) Vol. 4 is the following (quoted from “A Complete Review of Japanese Paintings;” partially modified):

「原在中字子重號臥遊、平安人、法明人古蹟筆墨冲潤名馳遠近、其子在正字子學早世惜未大就、次子在明傳家學名於時」

the head of the Hara School. He was capable of handling all kinds of subject matter ranging from landscape, human figures, flowers-and-birds, animals to Buddhist and Shinto deity paintings, portraiture, and even ema (illustrated wooden plaques) in both styles of Chinese painting and yamato-e native Japanese painting. His name was in the “Heian Jinbutsu-shi (Who’s Who of Kyoto in the Edo Period)” from 1775 (*An’ei* 4) through 1830 (*Bunsei* 13). His address was Ogawa Nakadachiyuri Kita, Shogoin Village, Yoshiya-machi Choja-machi Sagarumachi. He was buried at the *Tensho-ji* temple (Sanjo Agaru, Teramachi, Nakagyo-ku).²

Unfortunately, the works of Hara Zaichu have not been properly evaluated considering the high standing of his name, and there are several good reasons for that.

First, the immediate impression from his paintings is rather quiet and low-key. In other words, they have clean-cut and earnest qualities. Those qualities, however, can lead to “stiffness” in artistic styles, and furthermore, even to blandness. Let us compare the impression from paintings of Zaichu to that of his contemporaries. Maruyama Okyo had highly realistic painting techniques and his reputation as the leader with a new style was already established; Goshun (or post-Goshun Shijo School painters) possessed the season-oriented lyrical quality; Zaichu’s life-time rival, Ganku, was known for his bold, exciting, and openhearted style; in earlier times, Ito Jakuchu was reputed to have bizarre yet brilliant ideas. In contrast to these, Zaichu’s earnest and serious impression paled in comparison.

Yet, there is another reason for this. There is no doubt that the act of “diverting designs” and “imitation,” which is the chief theme of this paper, was the greatest cause for the not-so-favorable assessment of Zaichu’s works. To put it differently, from the standpoint in art history of valuing the “individuality and originality of the artist,” Zaichu is always evaluated on different turf. Frankly, his works will always receive low marks.

It was also unfortunate that Zaichu paintings had been stored at prestigious temples such as monzeki temples (whose abbot was always a member of the imperial family) and thus were not open to the public; opportunities to hold exhibitions and to conduct research have not included his works.

Despite those circumstances, there have been studies on Zaichu’s paintings based on a wide range of research activity, such as those by Tsugiyoshi Doi, Tamehito Reizei and Shinichi Miyajima. Although this paper is also based on those studies, they invariably found the act of “design diversion” and “imitation” unfavorable.³

For this reason, the screen pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji*, a series of Zaichu’s major works, have not been introduced in detail. There are even discrepancies in the titles of his paintings.

2 The Exhibition Catalog of “Kyoto Painters Are Blooming of Hundreds of Flowers.” The Museum of Kyoto, 1998 (partially quoted from the review by Tamehito Reizei).

3 Zaichu-related main exhibitions and studies are the following: “A Prestigious School in Kyoto; Hara Zaichu and His School,” Exhibition Catalog. Kyoto Prefectural Library and Archives, 1976.; “Edo-Era Screen Pictures in Kyoto.” Kyoto Prefectural Cultural Properties Protection Fund, 1978.; “Hara Zaichu Pictures Exhibition Catalog.” Kyoto Onshi Museum (Kyoto National Museum), 1943.; Doi, Tsugiyoshi. “Works of Hara Zaichu.” *Essays on Premodern Japanese Paintings*. Kuwana Bunseido, Kyoto, 1944. Doi, Tsugiyoshi. “About Hara Zaichu.” *Bi-to-Kougei (Beauty and Crafts)*, 205–207. Kyoto Shoin, Kyoto, 1974. Matsuo, Katsuhiko. “A Study of Hara Zaichu.” *Bijutushi (Journal of the Japan Art History Society)*, Vol. 114. 1983.

At any rate, it seems there has been no study that examined the entire composition of *Hojo* screen pictures. Thus, in the following, I will express my views on them based on the field research I have conducted.

1-2 *Sangen-in* and *Ryosho-ji*

Sangen-in was built in 1589 (*Tensho* 17) with Shunoku Soen as its resident priest; the construction was made possible by funds from Ishida Mitsunari, Asano Yoshinaga and Mori Yoshinari. Although *Sangen-in* is currently located west of *Daitoku-ji Hatto*, it was originally located farther west, south of *Soken-in*.⁴

Upon hearing of *Sangen-in* sliding-door paintings, one may think of the landscape painting by Hasegawa Tohaku (one famous episode: while Monk Shunoku was out, Tohaku drew a landscape painting on a sliding door that had been mica-printed with paulownia patterns). The paintings had left *Sangen-in* in the Meiji era. They are currently stored in *Entoku-in* in Higashiyama and the Raku Museum.

In 1878 (*Meiji* 11), *Sangen-in Hojo* removed the old buildings and inherited the buildings of *Ryosho-ji* that had been at the present site. The paintings discussed in this paper were originally in the *Ryosho-ji* Guest Hall.

The current *Ryosho-ji*, one of the *Daitoku-ji* subtemples, is the training *dojo* of the *Daitoku-ji* School. However, this highly prestigious temple that was selected as one of the Ten Monasteries, was originally founded in 1309 (*Enkyo* 2) primarily by Nampo Jomin (Daio Kokushi; *Daitoku-ji* Founder Myocho's mentor) in the old site of the Seiryō-den in Saikyo Yasui (currently in Ukyo-ku), which had been donated by the Emperor Gouda. Often being damaged by fire, the temple was especially badly devastated in the war flames of the Onin War; it was moved next-door to west of *Daitoku-ji* in 1539 (*Tenbun* 8). In 1816 (*Bunka* 13) *Ryosho-ji* burnt down. According to the historical plaque of the *Ryosho-ji* Guest Hall, which has been stored in *Sangen-in* (Data 1), the temple was rebuilt the next year. However, it was terminated in the Meiji period; it was decided that the Guest Hall would be preserved as *Sangen-in Hojo*. Later in the Taisho period, *Ryosho-ji* was rebuilt in the old *Tenzui-ji* site.

In other words, the *Sangen-in Hojo* was originally the Guest Hall of the reconstructed *Ryosho-ji* in 1817 (*Bunka* 14). Its screen pictures, a little behind the buildings, were made known in 1820 (*Bunsei* 3) when Zaichu was 71 as seen from the *rakkan* (the signature and seal of the artist; it can also include the date, location, pseudonym, etc.) of writer Hara Zaichu (to be mentioned later).

2. Analysis of the Screen Pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji*

The *Sangen-in Hojo* follows the basic floor plan of Zen hojo (the abbot's residence) architecture (See the *Sangen-in Hojo* Floor Plan [1]). Six rooms are arranged with the *Butsuma* (Buddhist Altar Room) in the center. An ink painting is drawn on each of the sliding-door

4 Concerning the history of *Sangen-in* and *Ryosho-ji*, the author referred to *Murasakino Daitoku-ji* by Torao Sato (Sado Bunko 6, Kawara Shoten, Kyoto, 1961).

panels and the wallpaper in those rooms. Let us examine them in order while focusing on the “subject of work” and “style” in terms of the “imitation of classic masterpieces” and “the diversion of designs.” In short, let us see what motifs were used and in what style.

2-1 *Shicchu*: The Picture of “Dragon and Tiger” as “A Mokkei Copy” (Fig. 1)

Shicchu, the room in front of the *Butsuma*, is an important room where Zen Buddhism ceremonies are held. In this room, the work is “Dragon and Tiger,” mythical creatures often depicted as protectors of Buddhist teachings. The dragon controls the “rain” and the tiger controls the “wind.” The two symbolize the “heavens” and “earth” respectively as well as their paired state.

Now, have you seen the picture of this tiger before? One clue is the *rakkan* “摸牧溪画” (A Mokkei Copy) (Fig. 7). But even without the *rakkan*, if you have some knowledge of art history or of ink painting, you know that this tiger is based on the “Fierce Tiger” picture on the left side with the note “虎嘯而風烈” (If the tiger boasts, the wind becomes stronger), which is currently preserved in *Daitoku-ji* as Mokkei “The Dragon and the Tiger” (hanging scroll). Mokkei’s hanging scroll is transferred here as a screen picture in a perfectly identical state. This technique was Zaichu’s forte. Incidentally, the “Tiger” picture is dated “咸淳己巳牧溪” i.e., the year 1269, by Mokkei. This dragon and tiger picture belonged to the Ashikaga shogun family for the painting has the “Tenzan” seal (the collector’s seal of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu); it was a famous Chinese painting that had been greatly valued since the Muromachi period. Especially, Mokkei was the most important Chinese painter in those days for artists in Japan. He was one starting point for the advancement of Japanese ink painting. Thus, this tiger picture clearly reflects that Zaichu studied classic Chinese paintings and diverted the designs for his own works.

Now then, what is depicted on the panel that faces the Tiger painting (Fig. 2)?

The title of this picture in *Shicchu* has often been called “Waves and the Tiger.”⁵ However, I believe that the correct one should be “Dragon and a Tiger.” It is certainly true that what we see are clouds and waves and no dragon is painted in the picture. Yet, the pitch-black clouds and angry waves suggest the presence of a dragon in the sky. This is the case of an “absent pattern” (留守模様) or presenting an attribute. This unusual design can be also observed in Ike Taiga’s “Picture of Rising, Billowing Clouds.” This painting with an “attribute” of a dragon is accompanied by a poem depicting the content.

Also, looking at the technique used to paint those black clouds, one can see it is the “dripping” technique (*Tarashikomi*). This well-known ink painting technique was first developed by Tawaraya Sotatsu. Its purpose was to depict waterside flowers and the damp and humid quality of the air. Amazingly, Sotatsu managed to characterize a Mokkei (*Muxi*) painting as a Japanese painting by developing an original ink painting technique for conveying the abundant sense of moistness across the panel, which was probably the biggest reason that Japanese had loved Mokkei (*Muxi*) paintings. From this fact, one can see the lineage from “Mokkei (*Muxi*) to Sotatsu” as one of the major currents in the history of Japanese ink painting. If this is so, the

5 Cited above. Matsuo, Katsuhiko. “Edo-Era Screen Pictures in Kyoto.” (Kyoto Prefectural Cultural Properties Protection Fund, 1978).

technique for the black clouds reflects the relationship between Mokkei and Sotatsu as well.

To summarize, Zaichu noted “A Mokkei Copy” in the rakkan, and certainly copied the designs of a Mokkei scroll and then enlarged the picture to fit the larger dimensions of the room. Not only that, there seemed to be a scheme suggesting a transition from a Chinese painting to a Japanese one. In the picture of a face-to-face confrontation between a dragon and a tiger, one can see a parallel development in the history of ink painting in Japan.

Let us sit in the *Shicchū* room facing the *Butsuma* room. On the left, we can see the tiger with his legs firmly placed on the ground and with the right front paw thrust forward, while twisting the upper body and glaring at us. From the right front direction, a black cloud begins to threaten us, and a large wave occurs in front of us. We can feel the imposing presence of the invisible (never painted) and restless dragon; the tension between the dragon and the tiger feels as if it is resonating throughout the entire *Shicchū* room. This spatial effect must have been the primary aim of the artist. And one characteristic of this picture is that the artist, by copying the classic masterworks, is preparing multilayered art appreciation for the viewer.

Here, allow me to digress a little.

Q: Why didn't Zaichu paint the dragon?

A: Because the name of the subtemple was “*Ryōshō-ji*” (dragon-flying temple); the dragon has already flown away.

The image “the dragon has flown away” provides an important clue when looking at the panels in the other rooms. That is because the technique used here was to describe how the birds fly between the rooms, thus interconnecting the rooms in terms of the afterimage.

2-2 The Other Four Rooms — An Assortment of School-by-School Characteristics

The other four rooms surrounding the *Shicchū* room are comprised of features that serve to review the history of ink painting in Japan.

2-2-1 Jōkan Ichi-no-ma (First Chamber): A Picture of Monkeys in Deep Mountains (Fig. 4)

The motif of the *Jōkan Ichi-no-ma* is the scenery of late autumn in deep mountains. It consists of two focuses — monkeys crowding around a giant pine tree and a pair of thrushes against the backdrop of a waterfall. The picture of “Monkeys at Play” depicting a group of gibbons, a favorite subject in ink painting, immediately conjures up Mokkei (Muxi)’s “Avalokitesavara, Monkeys, Crane (triptych),” another renowned piece that has been preserved at *Daitoku-ji* temple. The way the monkeys (gibbons) move and play is similar to that in Hasegawa Tohaku’s monkey pictures and that of works by Kano Shōei of *Jukō-in*, *Daitoku-ji*. It could be Zaichū’s playful homage to Mokkei; the shape of pine branches is a reversed version of the one painted by Mokkei (Muxi). There has been a theory that in the “Avalokitesavara, Monkeys, Crane” by Mokkei (Muxi), the monkey symbolizes the love between a parent and his (or her) child, and the crane in the bamboo forest symbolizes the love between a married couple. Thus, one may interpret that the thrush who holds a flower in its mouth in front of the waterfall on the

southern side of this room is depicted in place of that crane.

Now, the *rakkan* written in this room says “倣狩野元信筆意” (After Kano Motonobu) (Fig. 8). So evident is the atmosphere based on the “simplified cursive style” that was developed by Kano Motonobu (Motonobu later established the canon of Japanese paintings by synthesizing ink painting and native *yamato-e* styles in the Muromachi period). However, it is also true that it is difficult to distinguish the motif of Motonobu’s works from that of this picture. On the other hand, it explains the meaning of the “after” in the *rakkan*. Unlike the aforementioned tiger picture by Mokkei in the *Shicchu* room, what is pursued here is the ideal way to “follow the intent of the artist” rather than just to “copy the picture.” The difference in the way of expression of *rakkan* reflects the difference in the way of painting.

A waterfall is painted in this room. Another waterfall is arranged on the partition between the *Butsuma* and the *Gekan Ichi-no-ma*, the room on the other side of it. Just as the waterfall cascades down from a steep cliff high above, the *Butsuma* (i.e. Buddha’s Seat) is shown to be at the highest location in this Hojo floor plan. Furthermore, the *Ichi-no-ma* on each of the *Jokan* and *Gekan* sides show relatively high landscapes such as the Deep Mountains. The *Ni-no-ma* (Second Chamber), by contrast, shows lower landscapes such as the Waterside. Thus, the entire Hojo composition is expressed in a ranked shape with the *Butsuma* at the top.

2-2-2 *Jokan Ni-no-ma* (Second Chamber): Picture of Flowers and Birds (Ground) (Fig. 6)

The *Jokan Ni-no-ma* is composed of three parts of flower-and-bird paintings. Painted on the west side is the “Taihu Rocks and a Peacock,” which is reminiscent of some works by Maruyama Okyo, and even of some classic Chinese masterpieces that he must have studied. “Plum Trees and a Bulbul” on the southwest side, I suspect, is similar in style to the designs developed by the Nagasaki School. Actually, the picture is more in parallel with the thrush with a flower in its mouth in the *Jokan Ichi-no-ma* room; though the kind of the bird is different, the distinctive way the bulbul “eats a flower” is depicted in a similar manner. The geese in the *Gekan* room are also contrived in a similar way. But in this case, the technique employed is the effect to make the birds “fly in a succession of afterimages” from one room to another. “Chrysanthemum and a Quail” on the southeast side is a picture adopted from the Sung academy-style painting. In Japan, this style was popular from the Tosa School to the Edo Rimpa School. If we flipped over the shapes of the quail from its flight to landing, they would turn into a picture by Sakai Hoitsu.

Now, assuming the sources of the three designs to be the Maruyama Okyo School (realism), the Nagasaki School and the Tosa School, they were all based on exotic Chinese flower-and-bird paintings. By and by, those schools successfully Japanized them in the Edo period. Those were the three ideal ways to juxtapositionally arrange designs of “Chinese paintings” in that period. Perhaps because of that, the seasons shown in this room conflicted with each other. Although no season is applicable to the peacock, camellia and plum are natural features of early spring; bulbul, chrysanthemum, and quail are autumnal features. We may interpret this as coexisting seasonal transitions from spring to autumn. But my guess is that Zaichu put priority on the three juxtapositional arrangements above seasonal consistency. As if to compensate for that scattered image of the composition, scores of small birds are racing across eight screen panels from right to

left. This trend is often observed in Zaichu paintings. Those birds fly around as if they are Zaichu's alter egos; they seem to be interconnecting the three different designs.

2-2-3 Gekan Ni-no-ma (Second Chamber): Picture of Flowers and Birds (Waterside) (Fig. 5)

Located on the other side of the *Shicchū*, the *Gekan Ni-no-ma* features a summer waterside landscape. This is a flower-and-bird picture focused on "Willow Trees and a Heron," "Ducks," and "Reeds and Geese." In the "Willow Trees and a Heron" on the north side, the image of the heron is almost completely identical to the heron picture of *Daitoku-ji Hojo* that Kano Tanyu had painted; it is the reverse image of a *sugito-e* (painting on a cedar-made sliding door) preserved at the *Shojuraigo-ji* temple. The reference for the flying geese in the "Reeds and Geese" on the west side could be four-seasons flower-and-bird folding screens by Sesshū, or flower-and-bird folding screens by Shugetsu of the same school. Many of the other motifs adopted in this room are those modeled after ink painting in the Middle Ages, which can be traced back to the Edo Kano School. However, the whole atmosphere of this room must remind most people of the flower-and-bird folding screen (currently preserved in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts). No-ami is said to have recomposed it by collecting various different motifs in the scheme to study "All Chinese paintings" including those by Mokkei.

In either room of the *Jokan* and *Gekan*, the *Ni-no-ma* contrasted two similar examples of Japanese flower-and-bird paintings from the Middle Ages and Premodern times, which had derived from the designs and styles of Chinese flower-and-bird paintings. Those rooms we have observed so far lacked depth in terms of panel composition, compared even with Zaichū's works from the same period. In a sense, horizontal juxtaposition is their characteristic and that is because of the way the composition was arranged to display individual designs.

2-2-4 Gekan Ichi-no-ma (First Chamber): A Snowy Mountain Landscape (Fig. 3)

The *Jokan Ichi-no-ma* shows a picture of a Snowy Mountain Landscape. A realistic technique is used here to deftly describe the pine trees with snow on top; by utilizing the original color of the paper, ink is only partially applied to create the effect of accumulated snow. At first glance, one can tell it is the technique used for a snow mountain landscape in Okyo-style realistic paintings. While the perspective level at the snowy pine trees remains low, the way the flock of geese fly away high in the sky is described in such minute detail the viewer may not detect them clearly. This technique, as mentioned previously, is employed to create a double-sided connection between the screen panel on this side of the room and the geese in flight on the *Ni-no-ma* side; the artist would interconnect room-by-room relations for their significance. Painted on the partition next to the *Butsuma* is a waterfall cascading from the top of the mountain, which is Buddha's Seat just as in the *Jokan Ichi-no-ma*. However, the difference is that this waterfall shows the touches of realism that Zaichū had inherited from the paintings by Maruyama Okyo.

Finally people began to pay attention to the fact that Zaichū had left his name only in the *rakkan* in this room (Fig. 9). The title was recorded, "*The Picture by Hara Zaichū, a Seventy-One-Year Old Man.*" When Zaichū was 71 years old, the year was 1820 (*Bunsei* 3). As we saw in "A Mokkei Copy," and "After Kano Motonobu," Zaichū did not have the *rakkan* bear his name in other rooms though his own seal was always pressed. Therefore, as I will discuss in

the following, this particular *rakkan* has significant implications — much more than recording the production date and the name of the painter of screen pictures.

2-3 The Entire Composition of the *Hojo*

Now that we have made the rounds of the Hojo rooms, let us examine the entire composition of the Screen Pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* Temple (See Data Two: Hojo Floor Plan [2]).

- The locations of the pictures in each room are mainly the heavens and earth, deep mountains, and waterside.
- As for the subjects of the pictures, landscape, flowers and birds, and animals are distributed in each room.
- The four seasons are arranged in each room.
- The interlinked relationship between the rooms is tightly maintained using the “imagined” or “visually associated” movements of motifs.
- The rooms are distinctly characterized by having the *Butsuma* in the highest position, *Ichino-ma* (First Chamber) in an upper position, and the *Ni-no-ma* (Second Chamber) in a lower position.
- The pictorial source of imitation in each room is derived from classic masterpieces (primarily the sliding screens and hanging scrolls that had been imported to or passed down in *Daitoku-ji* at that time).
- An eclectic collection of Japanese paintings with their titles, motifs, and techniques are displayed on a school-by-school basis.

This series of pictures shows the development of the history of Japanese ink painting, which includes schools of Chinese-style painting such as Mokkei (Muxi) style, Muromachi-period ink painters, the Ami School, the Sesshu School, Kano Motonobu, the Kano School, and the Hasegawa School, in addition to the Tosa School, the Okyo School, literati painting, and the Rimpa School.

To put it simply, those *Hojo* screen pictures are indeed “masterworks of ink painting.” They can also be regarded as “a world of ink painting history” or “a self-reference with painted works on the history of painting.” The artist, Hara Zaichu, never made strong assertions on his original style. However, it is safe to say that he introduced the advancement of Japanese ink painting in the entire Hojo building by editing and composing past works; his position has already been established in the history of painting. As far as I know, nobody has done what Zaichu did in the history of painting. That is why I would like to call it “An Art History of 1820 (*Bunsei* 3).”

I also believe that this will immediately evoke our interest in the “history of art.”

3. The Scheme and its Characterization

Before assessing the scheme of assorting *Sangen-in* screen pictures as “a school-by-school masterwork” and characterizing it in art history, I would like to outline the past studies of screen pictures.

In the past, mainstream studies of screen pictures were discussions on their style and the artist (in a way, it is like running a background check on the work). I do not say this negatively; it is just a fundamental work in art history. In recent years, more focus has been put on the relationship of screen pictures with architecture; more individual works have been studied as an interpretation such as “research on artistic contrivances” in screen pictures. For instance, finally, there have been discussions on the contrivances and intents observed in screen pictures of *Daijo-ji* Guest Hall and *Kotohiragu Omote Shoin* by Maruyama Okyo.⁶

Now then, what views or perspectives will be offered to the research on the history of screen pictures, by the scheme of “assorting school-by-school characteristics” in *Sangen-in Hojo*?

First, looking back on the premodern history of paintings, one can immediately see that this kind of “school-by-school assortment” will be regarded as having a peculiar existence. In the premodern history of screen pictures, there was no production attitude such as this. For example, it was simply unthinkable to adopt styles of other schools in the production process of screen pictures for Kano School painters.⁷ Realistic paintings by Maruyama Okyo would have been the same. In other words, the fundamental principle of premodern schools of paintings was to strive to unify them with original conventions and styles.

Going further back in history, the Ami School (that Zaichu had referred to when producing the *Sangen-in* screen pictures) flourished and the Kano School was founded in the Muromachi period. At that time, in a general “climate of worshiping Chinese things” and a tendency to respect Chinese paintings, the styles of prominent Chinese painters such as Baen (Ma Yuan), Kakei (Xia Gui), and Mokkei (Muxi) were perceived as the “brush styles” (筆様) of individual painters, and Japanese painters produced pictures based on that understanding. The same method is known to have been employed to produce ink screen pictures as well. Thus, the production of ink screen pictures was “brush-style” oriented or painters were studying only the characteristic features of Chinese painting schools.

The school-oriented style was established after painters moved from the “brush style,” which had been the individual style of Chinese painters, to the “painting style” on an individual basis. After systematizing those styles based on individual styles, that is, upon establishing schools such as the Kano, the Hasegawa, and the Unkoku, the history of screen pictures would next reach the grand and stable period of Momoyama.⁸ In premodern times, that school system began to be further subdivided while adopting occasional new influences. In that climate, concepts such as a “school-style oriented” view would hardly be generated.⁹

6 Typical studies of this trend include Johey and Masako Sasaki. *A Study on Maruyama Okyo*. (Chuokoron Bijutsu Press, 1996).

7 For examples other than screen pictures, “After the Classic Paintings” by Kano Tanyu is well known. For this painting, refer to Kageyama, Sumio. “Kano Tanyu: Learning from Old Paintings.” *MUSEUM*, 410. Tokyo National Museum, 1985.

Needless to say, the production of screen pictures to decorate castle walls, temples and the *hojo* building of Zen temples was the most important job for the painters (professionall painters, to be exact). The production system that had been established chiefly by the Kano School in the late Muromachi period became the canon in the premodern era. And, though the establishment of realism by Maruyama Okyo in late premodern times brought a breath of fresh air in the history of screen pictures, it never generated a new development. This is because what had happened were merely an adherence to the previous framework and a “refinement” of painting techniques. Perhaps Okyo belonged to the last generation who had decorated the era of screen painters. The era of screen pictures as the most important profession had passed as the Edo period was coming to a close. Thus, the new system of exhibitions and art museums supported by the logic of “art history” would become the workplace for the painters.

The scheme of assorting “school-based characteristic features” seen in the screen pictures of *Sangen-ji* existed during those changes, which reflects a historical aspect of ink painting and art by the year 1820 (*Bunsei* 3).

From the standpoint of the viewer, the screen pictures of *Sangen-ji* exist as if this masterwork was painted for the sake of art appreciation of art history researchers some 200 years later. Those pictures are quite befitting materials to “explain paintings” in art seminar classes. This sense of pleasure cannot be felt unless one is equipped with some knowledge of art history or paintings. What does it mean to us?

There were two major currents in painting in the late premodern age: realistic painting and literati painting. The main “sales point” of the school of realism then, the Okyo School, was to produce art works that were easily appreciated. They focused on painting techniques and creating an artistic atmosphere on the panel. The meaning of the title, motif or subject matter was set aside, so even if the viewer did not understand its meaning, he or she could still appreciate the painting. Literati painting, on the other hand, was based on Chinese literature and focused on being art for educated people. So, if the meaning of the title or motif was unknown, the horizon of appreciation could hardly open.

Considering that background, the viewer can normally appreciate this masterpiece by Zaichu as a neat, clean-cut set of flower-and-bird pictures and landscape pictures. On this point, Zaichu is a follower of the Okyo School. At the same time, some would remind us that Zaichu did compose this work by “assorting characteristic features of various schools.” One can still enjoy them without this knowledge. Yet, it would further deepen the sense of appreciation if he had. The focus on whether or not one understands is not relevant for the title or motif. Nor is it

8 Tsuneo Takeda. *Studies in Japanese Shoheiga of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, Tokyo, 1983).

9 In premodern times, one method of learning from other schools and producing one’s own paintings was to learn Chinese painting in *bunjin-ga* (literati painting). The other way was like Zaichu’s, painters such as Tani Buncho and Sakai Hoitsu in the Edo period freely learned from other schools and produced works in various styles. Thus, one of the main reasons for the change in premodern paintings could be learning from other schools. This will be a future assignment for the author.

relevant for technique and atmosphere, either. It is about the extent of knowledge in art history. What is required here is art appreciation worthy of that knowledge. Those screen pictures must have looked rather odd and peculiar in that context. Another question is: how did people in those days view this scheme? Unfortunately, we cannot hear the voices of viewers of that era. However, I believe that Buddhist temple personnel or parishioners who had frequented the *Sangen-in Hojo* were able to understand the scheme to some degree.

Now, I come to think of a framework in premodern literature and theater called “realm and scheme.” If applied here, this framework, which used to mean the relationship between the vertical thread and horizontal thread in premodern stage plays, worked like this: there was a limited set of rules and regulations for *Zen hojo* screen pictures, such as flower-and-bird ink paintings and landscape motif; the artist was given a golden opportunity to utilize his scheme within those limitations. Zaichu responded to this chance by presenting *Sangen-in* the scheme of “assorting all-school characteristics by copying old classic paintings.”

I believe that the artistic activity using that framework, which is the display of Japanese cultural traits in paintings “tradition, adaptation, and creation” is indeed Zaichu’s picture production. And the most successful example is the *Sangen-in* screen pictures. For this reason, the present value of those pictures lies in the fact that this tour de force of school-by-school characteristics presents us, helps us see and think about the most important issue, i.e. the relationship between tradition and creation.

On the other hand, if we further recall the framework of “realm and scheme,” we can point out many cases of the would-be scheme turning into the realm. In the case of Kabuki plays, for example, it is the relationship between *Taiheiki* (*Records of Great Peace*), *Chushingura* (*The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*), and *Yotsuya Kaidan* (*The Yotsuya Ghost Story*). However, history did not proceed as the potential suggested. The era of screen pictures was just about to end. On the other hand, still, the screen pictures of *Sangen-in Hojo* are “a history of screen pictures through screen pictures.” Therefore, its historical status is worthy of the end of an era.

Postscript

This paper was written based on the oral presentation “An Art History in 1820 (*Bunsei* Era); An Essay on the Screen Pictures of *Sangen-in*, *Daitoku-ji* Temple” at The 5th Hokkaido Art Society Convention on March 19, 2005 at the Hokkaido Museum of Modern Arts Hall.

■ Data (1)

The Historical Plaque of the Old *Ryusho-ji* Temple Currently Preserved at *Sangen-in*

(Front):

大日本國平安城北瑞鳳山萬歲龍翔禪寺客殿再建

皇風永扇 民物康寧 佛日增輝 法輪常轉

文化十四年丁丑夏六月 住持比丘宗宣謹白

The Reconstruction of the *Ryusho-ji* Temple Guest Hall

June 1817 (*Bunka* 14) Resident Priest

■ Data (2)

Room Name	Title of Work	Number of Panels	Chief Motifs	Location	Seasons	Related Painting Styles and Schools
Shicchu-no-ma (in Front of Butsuma)	Dragon-Tiger Picture	14	Tiger, Bamboo, High Clouds-Raging Waves	Sky and Ground	—	Mokkei Style, Sotatsu School, Ike Taiga
Jokan First Chamber	Picture of Monkeys at Play in Deep Mountains	5	Thrush, Waterfall, Monkey, Pine Trees	Deep Mountains	Autumn	Chinese-Style Painting, Kano School, Hasegawa School
Jokan Second Chamber	Flower-and-Bird Picture (Ground)	8	Peacock, Taihu Rocks, Peony, Bulbul, Plum, Camellia, Quail, Chrysanthemum	Ground	Spring, Autumn	Premodern Painting-Style, Okyo (Nagasaki) School, Tosa School
Gekan Second Chamber	Flower-and-Bird Picture (Waterside)	8	Heron, Willow, Ducks, Reeds, Myna, Geese, Reeds, Bamboo	Waterside	Summer	Muromachi Ink Painting-Style, Ami School, Sesshu School (Kano Tanyu)
Gekan First Chamber	Snowy-Mountain Landscape Picture	6	Waterfall, Snow, Pine, Flock of Geese	Snowy Mountains	Winter	Realistic Painting Style, Maruyama School, Hara School

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Sangen-in Hojo Floor Plan

Gekan Ichi-no-ma (First Chamber) ③ Waterfall “Snowy Mountain Landscape” (Winter) Snowy Mountains, Snowy Pine Trees, Flock of Geese	Butsuma [Buddhist Altar Room]	② Jokan Ichi-no-ma (First Chamber) Waterfall Thrush (holding a flower in its mouth) “Monkeys at Play In Deep Mountains” (Autumn) Pine Trees Gibbons
Bamboo, Rose, Heron, Myna, Geese, Mandarin Duck Reed Duck Willow Heron Day Lilly “Flowers and Birds” (Summer) Gekan Ni-no-ma (Second Chamber)	Waves Bamboo Dragon (Black Clouds) “A Dragon and a Tiger” (sky) (ground) Tiger Raging Waves Shicchu [Room In Front of the Butsuma] ①	Peacock, Peony, Taihu Rocks, Bamboo, Sparrow (Small Bird) Camellia Plum (Flower-Eating) Bulbul “Flowers and Birds (Ground)” (Spring) (Autumn) Jokan Ni-no-ma (Second Chamber) Chrysanthemum Quail Rocks

(Front Yard)

(The titles and motifs of screen pictures are written. — denote the location of the artist's signature and seal: ① A Mokkei Copy, ② A Copy After Kano Motonobu, ③ “By Hara Zaichu, Seventy-One-Year Old Man”)

According to demands of the possessor of the works, this WEB version can not afford the pictures (Fig. 1-9). About these pictures, see, *“Journal of the Graduate School of Letters” Vol. 1 February 2006 (in Print)*