

Korean Paintings Amidst “Chinese-Style Paintings”: Japanese Reception and International Circulation of Paintings of Peninsular Origin

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A number of Korean paintings of both Buddhist and secular subjects have been preserved over centuries in Japanese archipelago. These paintings of peninsular origin present an indispensable base when constructing the narrative history of Korean painting, because they contain most of the extant works from the Goryeo and the first half of the Joseon period.

In general, these paintings have been identified as Chinese in pre-modern Japan with a name of famous painters as Wu Daozi, Zhang Sigong, Li Longmian, Mao Yi, and so on, as a result of traditional Japanese connoisseurship and viewing system for the imported paintings from the Muromachi period onwards.

One may evaluate in negative their lives as migrants with ambiguous national origin, however, we cannot ignore the fact that misattribution to famous Chinese painters have made possible for these imported objects to remain until today with high value and sometimes they even have functioned as a canon in creative reproduction of Japanese arts as in case of Ito Jakuchu.

With this in mind, my talk illuminates the diaspora of the paintings of peninsular origin with more positive concerns. Their border-crossing or transcultural journey and the reception history over the times and spaces – from their birth in the original contexts, their moving to Japan over sea, their evaluation as Chinese paintings, the circulation to the West, the discovery of their peninsular origin, their returning and exhibition at home, and so on – should be discussed with a description opened to both local and global contexts, and as a consequence it will be proved to be new type of narrative that relativizes the narrow and institutionalized narrative of national art history.