

## СТАТЬИ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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### **Returned to Korea “Album of Gyeongjae Jeong Seon”**

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In April 2010, Museum of St. Otilien monastery (Germany) transferred “*Album of Gyeongjae Jeong Seon*” to Waegwan Abbey in Korea for permanent loan. Korea during the period of its long history has lost much of its cultural heritage. Numerous artworks are stored in museums all over the world; many of these Koreans are longing to get back. Gyeongjae Jeong Seon (謙齋 鄭澈, 1679–1759) is one of the most important artists in the history of Korean art. This is why the return of his Album attracted a lot of attention and became an example of how Korean artworks may be brought back home. The Album consists of twenty-one painting of different genre including five ‘true-view landscapes’, three idealized landscapes, one animal painting and twelve paintings of historical figures. In this article the journey of the Album to Germany and back to Korea is described. This has been done by examining

the Album, its features and documentary evidence regarding the history of the Album's journey.

**Keywords:** “Album of Gyeomjae Jeong Seon”, chingyongsansuhwa, Norbert Weber

Return of an artwork to its homeland is quite a rare phenomenon; that is why any case of recognition of the need to return an artwork to the people who have created it always attracts special attention of experts and public. Korea during the period of its long history has lost much of its cultural heritage. It has been calculated that nowadays more than 150,000 Korean cultural properties are stored in collections of museums in Japan, USA and Europe. Among them there are numerous masterpieces, such as Goryeo Buddhist paintings that Korean nation is longing to get back. By 2013, about 9,760 cultural properties have been returned to Korea, most of them were returned as a result of negotiations, were purchased or donated [1, p. 56]. To coordinate the return and research of cultural heritage to Korea in 2012 Korean government established Overseas Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation (OKCHF).

In April 2010, there occurred an event of enormous significance not only for Korean art world but the whole nation. Museum of St. Ottilien monastery transferred “*Album of Gyeomjae Jeong Seon*” (겸재정선화첩, Gyeomjaejeong-seonhwacheop) for permanent loan to Waegwan Abbey in Korea. The Album consists of twenty-one painting, all in a very good condition (fig. 1). Gyeomjae Jeong Seon (謙齋 鄭澈, 1679–1759) is one of the most important artists in the history of Korean art, he is acknowledged as a pioneer of the new trend in landscape painting called *chingyongsansuhwa* (진경산수화) — “true-view landscape”. The artist left a big number of works; most of his legacy is stored



Fig. 1. “Album of Kyomjae Chong Son”, exhibition view

in Korea. Only few works are scattered around the world<sup>1</sup>. Jeong Seon got international recognition in 1960-s, after his works were shown in Europe and USA. Several of his works are stored in the museums of Europe and USA today.

Many Korean artworks were taken home by Europeans and Americans. The numbers show that Jeong Seon was not a very popular artist among travelers who visited Korea in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century compared for example to Kim Jun-Geun (金俊根, ?-?), an artist who painted scenes of Korean traditional life for western buyers. That is why the fact that twenty-one painting by Jeong Seon were discovered in one place in Germany and obviously collected by one person cannot but draw attention and raise questions.

The Album was discovered by art historian Yu Joonyoung in 1975. He was working on his dissertation in Germany where he found a book called “In Geumgang Mountains of Korea — In den Diamantbergen Koreas” written by Norbert Weber, the first Archabbot of St. Ottilien Abbey in Southern Germany. In the book Yu Joonyoung found three photos of Jeong Seon’s paintings. In 1975 the scholar visited the Abbey to see the paintings and was lucky to discover not three but twenty-one painting by Jeong Seon combined in one Album. Yu Joonyoung took the picture of the Album and introduced it to Korean scholars in 1976 [3].

The Album apparently was brought to Germany by Father Norbert Weber who visited Korea two times in 1911 and 1925 on a missionary trip. During his stay in Korea Weber traveled around the country and studied traditions and life of Koreans. Weber was obviously fascinated by Korea more than by Japan and Africa he also had travelled. It seems that by nature he was an ethnographer. He carefully collected materials about traditional Korean life, collected artworks and craftworks, took numerous pictures, in order to preserve Korean culture that was under the Japanese colonial rule. He even made two films about his journey to Korea and Korean life (the first one was “Korean Wedding” and the second one — “Korea Country of Morning Calm”, the movies were screened in about 100 German towns and villages).

After the first visit to Korea in 1915, Weber published a book “Im Lande der Morgenstille” (467 pages, more than 300 pictures) in which he didn’t simply write about what he saw and experienced during his journey but collected materials on the history, culture, religion and society of Korea. One of the main tasks Weber has assigned to himself was to purchase artworks for the museum of his Abbey, which was opened in 1911. That is why in present the museum holds a whole section of Korean art. The Album of Jeong Seon might have been one of Weber’s acquisitions for the museum.

But there is a question: why did Weber choose Jeong Seon’s paintings to take to Germany? We will try to find the answer in the second book he published

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<sup>1</sup> It is known that one folding screen is stored in the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Saint Petersburg and eight works are in Tokyo National Museum in “Album of Korean paintings” [2, p. 49–53].

after the second trip to Korea and the structure of the Album. The book is a story of Weber's journey to Geumgang Mountain. Three pictures of Jeong Seon that Yu Joonyoung discovered were published in this book.

The Album consists of twenty-one painting of different genre including five 'true-view landscapes' for which Jeong Seon is known the most, three idealized landscapes, one animal painting and twelve paintings of historical figures. Diversity of subjects and the quality of the paintings give the chance to see how versatile artist's talent was and discover him not only as a landscape-painter. At the same time, the variety of paintings needs to be explained because traditionally albums were united by one subject. There are eight landscapes in the Album. Most of them are in the first part if we open the Album from right to left. The Numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 (fig. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) are landscapes called *chingyongsansuhwa* — i. e. 'true-view landscapes' depicting actual topographic scenes, the number 4, 6, 8, 9 (fig. 7, 8, 9, 10) are idealized landscapes with figures and cranes. The rest are paintings of historical figures as well as stories from their lives (fig. 11–22).

First of all, there is a question about the order of the paintings. There are two points of view on how the Album should be viewed: from left to right — the traditional way (and it will mean that Weber bought a finished Album) or from right to left — the western way (it will mean that he bought separate works and bound them). This question is important as it may help to clarify whether Weber collected the paintings himself for some reason or bought a finished Album. And also it will help to understand why Jeong Seon captured his attention. Traditional Albums of paintings were opened and appreciated by the viewer from left to right which is opposite to the order of western Albums and books. If we see the Album traditional way, the first painting will be "*Playing Zither at Xingtan*" (행당고슬도, Haengdangoseuldo) (fig. 22) which shows historical scene with Confucius and his disciples on Xingtan. But if we open the Album from right to left the first painting will be the "*Complete view of Geumgang Mountain*" (금강내산전도, Geumgangnaesanjeondo) (fig. 2).

The Album was not bound during the lifetime of Jeong Seon as all the paintings were produced in different time, the quality of the silk, the manner and the signature are different. Apparently, the paintings were combined later only because they had signature of Jeong Seon on them [4]. Yu Joonyoung, the one who discovered the Album and read the book before the rest, thinks that Weber purchased "*Complete view of Inner Geumgang mountain*" and two other paintings of Geumgang at a Japanese tavern near Geumgang on June 7, 1925 [3]. Norbert Weber in his book "*In den Diamantbeigen Koreas*" which he published in 1924 after return to Germany wrote that he and his companions — a married couple Henkel with whom he made a journey to the mountain — went to see paintings of Geumgang by a Japanese artist. Henkel bought two paintings by a Japanese artist: the "*Complete view of Inner Geumgang mountain*" which they presented to Weber and "*View of Nine Dragon Waterfall*" (구룡

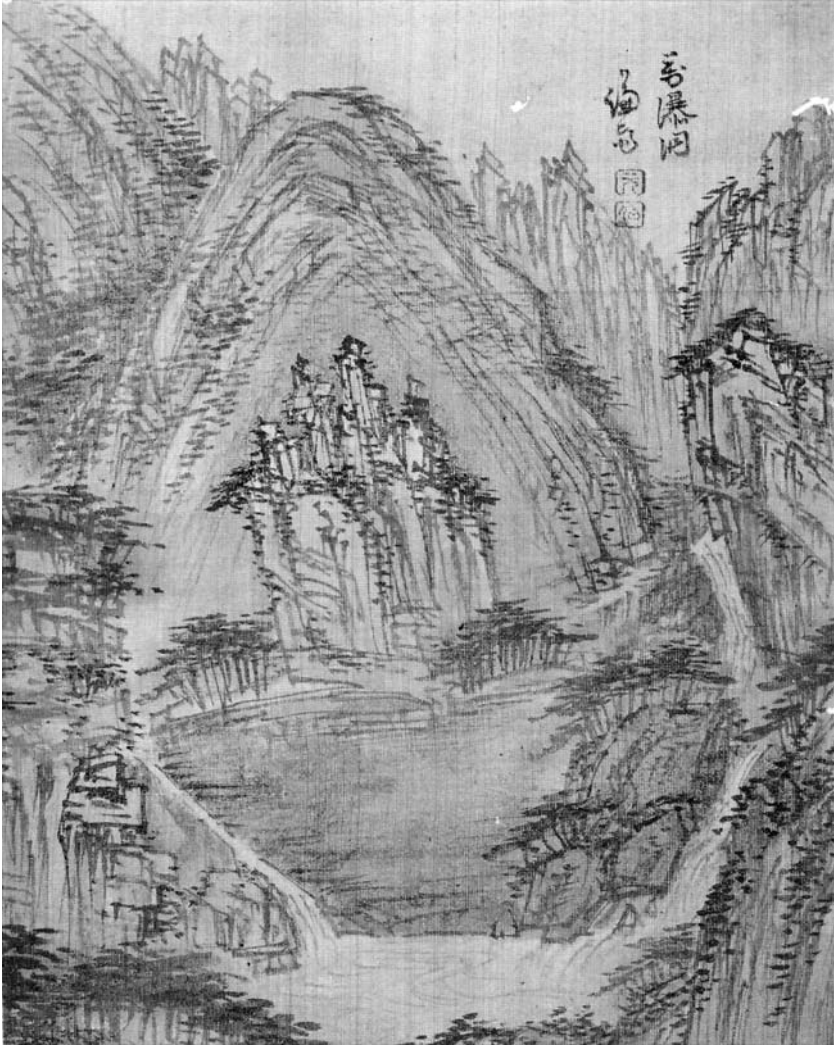


Fig. 2. Jeong Seon, “Complete View of Inner Geumgang Mountain”  
Ink and color on silk, 33 × 54.3 cm, National Museum of Korea, Seoul

폭도, Guryongpokdo) (fig. 4). Weber himself, as Yu Joonyoung understood, bought two works by Jeong Seon at the same place, the “*View of Nine Dragon Waterfall*” he gave to Henkel and left the “*Complete view of Inner Geumgang mountain*” for himself. According to this interpretation of Weber’s words made by Yu Joonyoung, Weber and his friends purchased and collected the separate



*Fig. 3. Jeong Seon, Ten Thousand Waterfalls and Valleys*  
Ink and color on silk, 29.4 × 23.4 cm

paintings by Jeong Seon during the trip to Korea and the Album probably was bound by Weber before he left Korea in Western style [3].

At the same time, Son Chi-Hun found some misinterpretation in Yu Joonyoung's translation of the paragraph about the paintings' purchase. In his translation, Weber did not give Henkel Jeong Seon's paintings, but wanted to

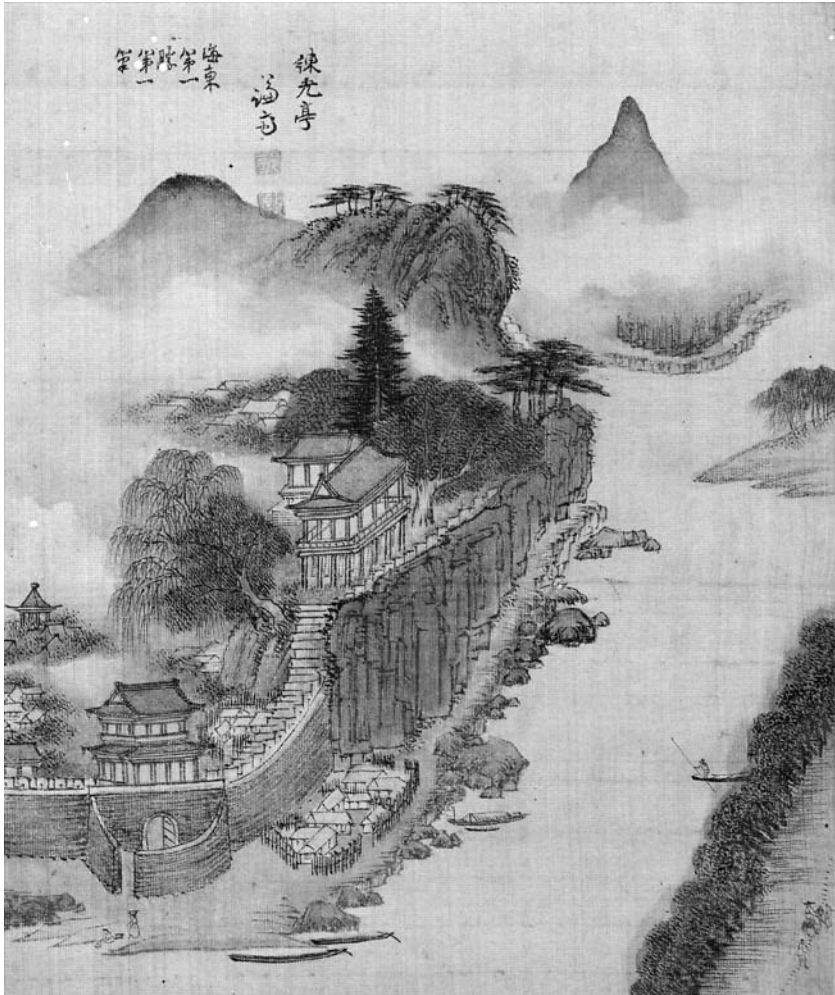


Fig. 4. Jeong Seon, “View of Nine Dragon Falls”  
Ink and color on silk, 29.6 × 23.4 cm

draw paintings on the same subject as the Japanese artist did and present it to Henkel. Weber’s watercolors on these subjects were also published in his book (fig. 23) [5, p. 113].

Obviously, Jeong Seon attracted Weber’s attention as a landscapist and an artist of Geumgang Mountain. Weber, just as other Europeans who visited the mountains, was fascinated by them; he took pictures of the mountain, painted it in watercolors. In his book, he published two reproductions of Jeong Seon’s works



Fig. 5. Jeong Seon, “Ryongwangjeong Pavilion”

Ink and color on silk, 28.7 × 23.9 cm

depicting the mountain, his own watercolors and one painting by the Japanese artist he had received from Henkel. If he bound the Album himself, it would explain why the Album starts with the “*Complete view of Inner Geumgang mountain*” and continues with two other pictures that depict famous spots of Geumgang.

The “*Complete View of Inner Geumgang Mountain*” seems to be the main work by Jeong Seon for Weber, as he wrote about this work, compared it to the work of Japanese artist and published it in his book. The painting belongs to



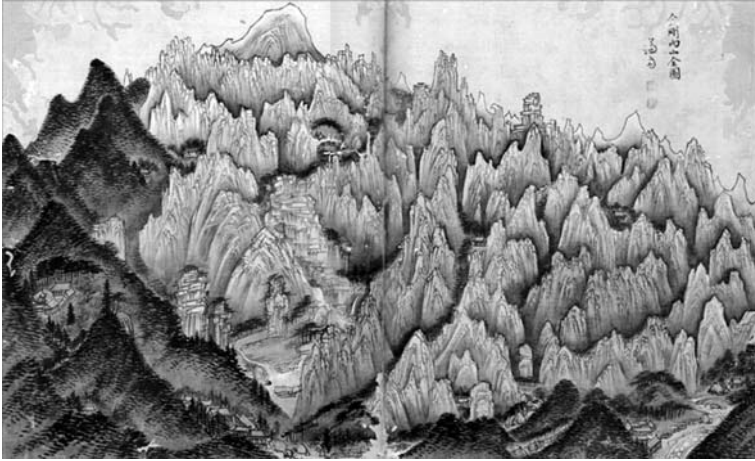


Fig. 6. Jeong Seon, “Apgujeong Pavilion”

Ink and color on silk, 29.2 × 23.4 cm

“true-view landscapes”; it depicts an overall view of inner area of Mountain Geumgang, so-called Naegeumgang. Jeong Seon created more than nine paintings of Inner Geumgang during his lifetime including the most famous masterpiece. The artist combined different angles to create a comprehensive view. In reality, all of the features depicted here cannot be seen from a single perspective. Jeong Seon deliberately remade the real view to include all famous places and temples which were visited by everyone who made a journey to the mountain. The painting shows the usual route of a traveler. It starts from the lower right corner, where stone bridge Pihongyo is located and ends on the highest peak Pirobong. Crossing the bridge, the traveler gets to the first temple Changansa, after following the paved trail he sees the most famous sight of peaks, waterfalls, temples etc. Jeong Seon captured all the famous places on one picture despite the fact that his painting did not correspond to the reality. He did this because his aim was not simply to create the view of the mountain but to depict the travel itinerary.

Geumgang since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the site of pilgrimage for certain Korean intellectuals who desired to discover so called *chongi* (天機) — “secret of the universe” through contemplation of the beauty of Nature [6, p. 52–60] Jeong Seon created the view of Geumgang for these intellectuals so that they could keep on enjoying the mountains after their journeys. Also his paintings served as a substitute for those who could not visit the mountains. There was a concept *wayu* (臥遊) — “lay down and enjoy” which means enjoying views of mountains and rivers without leaving the house [7]. Jeong Seon created Albums of Geumgang for the intellectuals to remember and enjoy again the places they have visited.



*Fig. 7. Jeong Seon, “Crane and Pine Tree at Sunrise”*

Ink and color in silk, 29.1 × 22.3 cm

The order of the paintings, as Park Eun-Soon indicated, seems to reflect the route of Weber’s journey in Geumgang [4, p. 113]. He documented the route. Weber made the same course of journey in Geumgang as intellectuals did in times of Jeong Seon. He could have acquired the painting as a memento, but it seems that there was more than just desire to “lay down and enjoy”. Weber wrote about the painting, compared it to the work of the Japanese artist he also pursued, made a kind of critical review of the works. He wrote about Jeong Seon’s work that the composition (placement of the mountains) being done well while the coloring and perspective were wrong. In general, Weber concluded



*Fig. 8. Jeong Seon, "Boy Playing Pipe on Water Buffalo"*  
Ink and color on silk, 29.7 × 22.3 cm

that Jeong Seon's painting in spite of the divergence from the reality successfully depicted the peculiar beauty of the mountain.

Evidently, for Weber who was not familiar with Korean traditional art, the laws of perspective and visual resemblance was the main criterion. And a composition with obvious reshaping of reality was strange for him. Despite the fact he wrote that himself he would continue work in realistic manner, he recognized the talent of the artist to show the viewer the dignity and peculiarity of Geumgang [4, p. 113].



Fig. 9. Jeong Seon, “Man on a Donkey on a Stormy Day”  
Ink and color on silk, 29.7 × 23.5 cm

There are two more paintings of Geumgang, i. e. “*Ten Thousand Waterfalls and Valleys*” (만폭동도, Manpokdongdo) (fig. 3) and “*Nine Dragon Falls*” (구룡폭도, Guryongpokdo) (fig. 4). These paintings depict the most famous sites of Geumgang that intellectuals praised for their beauty. The artist created several paintings of these places. In the Album, the paintings are arranged according to the travel route.

The next painting, i. e. “*Crane and Pine Tree at Sunrise*” (일출송하도, Ilchulsonghado) (fig. 7) may also be related to the travel route. Travel always ended on the seashore of the Japanese Sea. This painting can be the image of



Fig. 10. Jeong Seon, “Returning Home on a Donkey”  
Ink in silk, 25.9 × 16.9 cm

the view a traveler might have seen when leaving Geumgang. It is hard to say whether it is a ‘true-view landscape’ or not, more likely that it is not the depiction of a real view. But the picture conveys the lyric mood of a traveler leaving the mountains. This might be the reason why it is placed after the true views of the mountain.

Paintings number 5 and 7 are also true-view landscapes (fig. 5, 6); they show the views of the biggest cities of Joseon: Seoul and Pyongyang. The first one, “*Ryongwangjeong Pavilion*” (연광정도, Yeongwangjeongdo) (fig. 5) depicts



Fig. 11. Jeong Seon, “Old Chancellor Leisurely Gazing at the Garden”  
Ink and color on silk, 32 × 21.8 cm

the landscape of the central district of Pyongyang with the main landmarks, i. e. the bank of Daedong river, Daedong Gate, Moran Peak and Yongwang pavilion in the center. And the “*Apgujeong Pavilion*” (압구정도, Apgujeongdo) (fig. 6) depicts a pavilion located in Seoul near the Han River, where intellectuals liked to spent time enjoying the beauty of nature and arts. Both paintings are created in a similar manner, very different from the landscapes of Geumgang. Jeong Seon with his very delicate and fine brushwork created lyrical and poetic mood which differs essentially from the expressive manner of Geumgang paintings. Both



Fig. 12. Jeong Seon, "Zhang Zai amongst Banana Leaves"

Ink and color on silk, 29 × 23.4 cm

paintings were created using linear perspective, but the features in the foreground are bigger than objects in the background. This confirms the fact that Jeong Seon was familiar with western artistic technique and tried to apply it to his art.

The Numbers 6, 8, 9 are idealized landscapes with figures (fig. 8, 9, 10). A figure of a man on the nature background, landscape and the human are similar in size. The "Boy playing Pipe on Water Buffalo" (가우취적도, Gauchwi-



Fig. 13. Jeong Seon, "Lin Bu Looking at a Crane"

Ink and color on silk, 29.1 × 23.4 cm

jeokdo) (fig. 8), "Returning Home on Donkey" (기려귀가도, Giryeogwigado) (fig. 9), "Man on a Donkey on a Stormy Day" (풍우기려도, Pungugiryeodo) (fig. 10), the plots of the paintings are traditional, and symbolize escape from the madding crowd and the harmony and peacefulness of life in the lap of Nature. These stories were especially popular in 16–17<sup>th</sup> centuries when Korea experienced a series of political upheavals and wars.

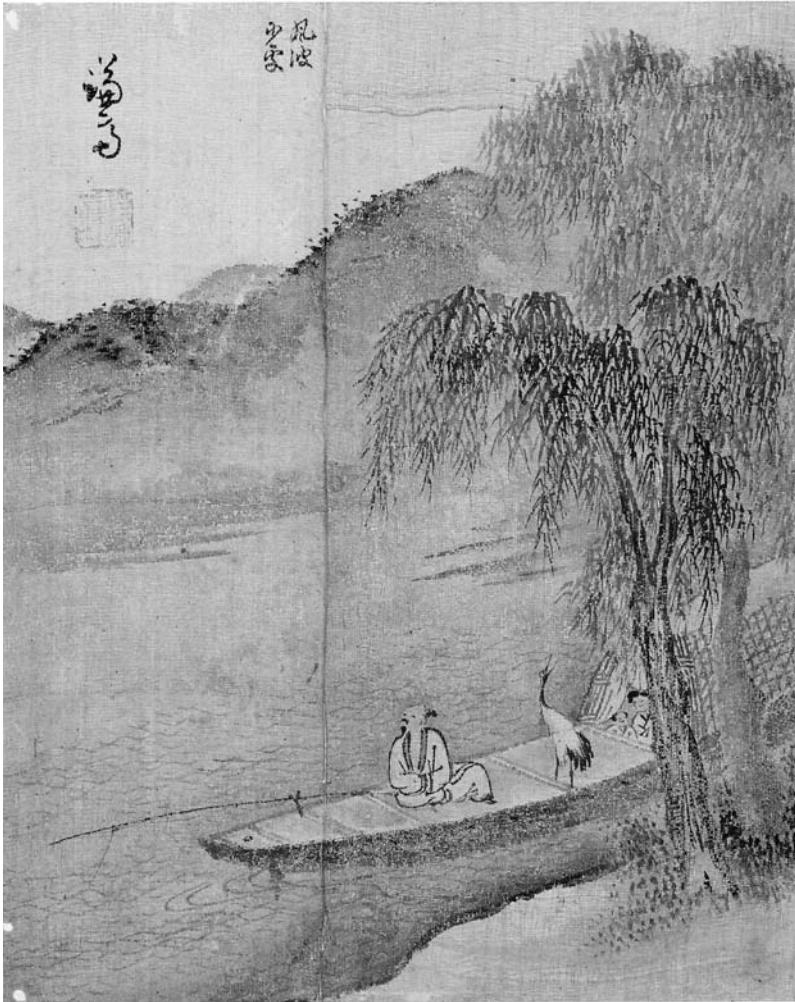




Fig. 14. Jeong Seon, “Boat on the Fu River”

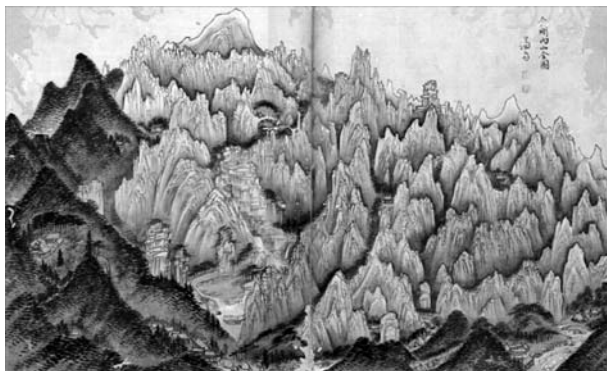
Ink and color on silk, 28.5 × 23.4 cm

Another twelve paintings of the Album depict stories and episodes involving historical figures (fig. 11–22). Neo-Confucianism was the dominant ideology of Joseon Dynasty and it has reached a high level of development in 17–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Jeong Seon produced many paintings showing eminent Chinese Confucian scholars from history. It was believed that through these paintings viewers could learn valuable lessons and assert their determination to stay true to Confucian values. These stories were painted by different artists for many



*Fig. 15. Jeong Seon, “Enlightened Scholar Idling on a Boat”  
Ink and color on silk, 29.4 × 23.5 cm*

centuries, it was especially popular in 16–17<sup>th</sup> centuries when Korea experienced a series of political and social upheavals, its own iconography was developed. That's it why the viewer who knew the main keys could easily recognize the figure and the story, as well as the lesson, the message the painting taught. Jeong Seon used his own pictorial vocabulary to visualize the Confucian stories more vividly, by elaborating the gestures and expressions of the figures and realistically capturing the background landscape.



*Fig. 16. Jeong Seon, "Huapyoju"*  
Ink and color on silk, 29.4 × 23.5 cm



*Fig. 17. Jeong Seon, "Napping in a Thatched Hut on a Spring Day"*  
Ink and color on silk, 28.7 × 21.5 cm



*Fig. 18. Jeong Seon, “Receiving a Book at Night”*

Ink and color on silk, 29.6 × 23.4 cm

All the works are made in the same manner, the style and form are very similar, and likely the paintings were originally from one Album [8, p. 116]. The first paintings of a historical figure is of Confucius teaching his disciples, it is followed by a depiction of Laozi (老子) delivering a lecture on the Tao Te Ching (道德經), and then scenes from the lives of Zhuge Liang (諸葛亮; 181–234) and Liu Bei (劉備, 161–223). Other pictures convey stories of Confucian scholars of Northern Song such as Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033–1107), Zhang



Fig. 19. Jeong Seon, “Riding an Ox through a Pass”

Ink and color on silk, 29.6 × 23.3 cm

Zai (張載, 1020–1077) and Sima Guang (司馬光, 1019–1086) who maintained their values and integrity despite political oppression.

Why are the paintings in the same Album with landscapes which have absolutely different meaning and show the opposite side of Jeong Seon? We find no answer in Weber’s books; he didn’t mention these paintings. He only used them as a decoration for initials in his book “In Korea Geumgang” (fig. 24). But this



*Fig. 20. Jeong Seon, "Pine Trees in a Hamheung Palace"*

Ink and color on silk, 28.9 × 23.3 cm

fact gives the confidence to say that it was Weber who acquired the paintings in Korea and took them to Germany where he worked on his book.

The variety of works can be explained by Weber's desire to collect as many works by Jeong Seon as he could find. But we cannot ignore the fact that Weber never mentioned even the name of Jeong Seon in his books. It seems that the artist interested him only as a landscaper. If Weber was interested in Jeong Seon



Fig. 21. Jeong Seon, "Old Cypress at the Shrine of Confucius"

Ink and color on silk, 29.5 × 23.3 cm

art he would have obviously found out his name and have written more about him in his books and diaries. This may mean that he bought the finished Album because of Geumgang pictures.

For more than fifty years the Album has been exhibited in Museum of the Abbey. In 1977 the abbot of the monastery decided to restore the Album which was damaged by time and moth. Since then the Album was no longer in the museum as it was kept in a safe. In 1999, Kay E. Black and Eckart Dege



*Fig. 22. Jeong Seon, "Playing Zither at Xingtan"*

Ink and color on silk, 29.4 × 23.3 cm

studied the Album and published an article on it in the "Oriental art" journal [9, p. 38–51]. This was the time when the world found out about its existence. New York Christies offered the abbey about five million dollars for the Album but the abbey refused the offer to sell the Album.

In October 2005, i. e. 80 years after, the Album was returned to South Korea through permanent loan. It was Son Chi-Hun priest of Waegwan Abbey who made it possible. He persuaded the German abbey to consider the return of the Album





Fig. 23. Norbert Weber, “Complete view of Geumgang Mountain”,  
“Nine Dragon Waterfall”  
Watercolor, Illustration from “In den Diamantbergen Koreas”



Fig. 24. Initials from N.Weber’s “In den Diamantbergen Koreas”

to Korea and Korean people. After conferring with the abbey's council of the elders, in 2010 the Archabbot of St. Ottilien Abbey saying that "the Album will be more appreciated and cherished in Korea than in Germany" decided to return the Album to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abbey's first entrance to Korea [5, p.113]. It was the final return of "Album of Gyeongjae Jeong Seon". The same year the Album was shown to Korean public for the first time during an exhibition dedicated to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the artist's death. In November 2013, the OKCHF organized an exhibition named "The Album of Gyeongjae Jeong Seon" Returned to Korea" in National Palace Museum of Korea and published collection of articles titled "Album of Gyeongjae Jeong Seon Returned to Waegwan Abbey". (왜관수도원으로 돌아온 겸재정선화첩, Waegwansudowoneuro doraon Kyomjae Jeong Seon hwacheop) This is a rare case when a masterpiece is returned to its homeland so easily and willingly. Many hopes that the return of the Album will serve as an example for the return of Korean cultural properties.

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## **Вернувшийся в Республику Корея «Альбом Кёмчжэ Чон Сона»**

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В апреле 2010 года Музей монастыря Святого Оттилиена в Германии передал альбом художника Кёмчжэ Чон Сона (謙齋 鄭敵, 1679–1759) на постоянное хранение в аббатство Вэгван в Республике Корея. Корея лишилась большого количества предметов культурного наследия за свою историю. В музеях по всему миру хранятся памятники корейской культуры, многие из них корейцы хотят вернуть на родину. Кёмчжэ Чон Сон — это один из наиболее прославленных и важных художников в истории корейского искусства. Возращение его альбома в Республику Корея привлекло много внимания и стало примером того, как корейские предметы культурного наследия могут вернуться домой. Альбом состоит из двадцати одного произведения художника разных жанров, включая «пейзажи подлинного вида» *чингён сансухва*, три вымышленных пейзажа, одно произведение жанра «цветы-птицы», двенадцать изображений великих мудрецов прошлого. В статье рассмотрено путешествие альбома Кёмчжэ Чон Сона в Германию и обратно в Республику Корея. Проанализированы произведения, которые вошли в альбом, а также документальные свидетельства, имеющие отношение к истории перемещения альбома.

**Ключевые слова:** Кёмчжэ Чон Сон, «Альбом Кёмчжэ Чон Сона», *чингён сансухва* «пейзажи подлинного вида», Норберт Вебер.

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