

Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn Screen from the Kunstkamera Collection: Question of Attribution

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Abstract In the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstkamera, Saint Petersburg), there is an eight-panel screen attributed to Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn (1676-1759), one of the most important artists in the history of Korean art. Chŏng Sŏn was a pioneer of so-called ‘true-view’ landscapes. Only a few works of the artist are in museum collections outside the Korean peninsula, one of which is the screen in question. Each landscape is signed and bears a seal with the name and pen name of the artist, based on which, presumably, the work was attributed to the artist’s brush. However, the attribution of the work raises questions. Based on a comparative analysis of the screen with other correctly attributed work of the artist, this article suggests that the screen is a forgery and is incorrectly attributed to Chŏng Sŏn. Furthermore, not all eight panels of the screen depict the Kŭmgang mountains, as is indicated in the description of the screen presented in the museum.

Keywords Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn. ‘True-view’ landscape paintings (chin’gyŏng sansu-hwa). Attribution. Kunstkamera. Screen. Korean painting.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Signatures, Seals, and Forgeries. – 3 Technique and Themes. – 4 Conclusion.

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1 Introduction

The permanent exhibition *Korea* at the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) presents a *Screen with Views of the Kŭmgang Mountain Range*, attributed to the famous Korean artist, Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn 겸재 정선 (1676-1759) [fig. 1]. This is the only known work of Chŏng Sŏn in Russia and a rare example of his work stored outside the Korean peninsula. Almost all the surviving works of Chŏng Sŏn are in the collections of public and private museums in the Republic of Korea and the DPRK.

Chŏng Sŏn is a very important artist in the history of Korean art. He worked in different genres: he painted “images of sages” (*kosainmulhwa* 고사인물화), “flowers and plants” (*hwajohwa* 화조화), and “herbs and insects” (*ch’och’unghwa* 초충화). But Chŏng Sŏn is known, first of all, for his ‘true-view’ landscapes, so-called *chin’gyŏng sansuhwa* 진경산수화, images of famous Korean landscapes painted in the special style he created. Prior to Chŏng Sŏn, artists painted mostly fictional landscapes in the style of the works of Chinese artists of the Song and Ming dynasties. Chŏng Sŏn broke the canon of landscape painting, based on Chinese schools, and devoted most of his work to the depiction of Korean nature, developing an original artistic style. The screen was not named by the artist and the Museum adopted *Screen with Views of the Kŭmgang Mountain Range*, presuming that it is dedicated to one theme – the image of the Kŭmgang mountains. It makes the screen an example of ‘true-view’ landscapes.

The screen consists of eight panels. Each panel measures 83 cm in length and 38 cm in width. A landscape of 46 × 32 cm is glued to each panel. Each landscape was painted in ink and light colours on silk. Each of the eight landscapes has a signature and a seal on it. The screen was donated by Dmitry Dobrotin. He worked at Pyongyang Pedagogical University as an adviser from 1952 to 1954. As a sign of gratitude, colleagues and students presented him with the screen, as indicated by the inscription on the first panel:

증정
as a gift
Consultant teacher Dmitry Alekseevich Dobrotin
1954 8월5일
August 5, 1954
평양사범대학 교직원 학생 일동
Teachers and students of Pyongyang Pedagogical University

It is not known exactly who established the authorship of the screen, but in a short note, in a collection of articles published on the 250th anniversary of the Kunstkamera in 1964, Yuliya Ionova presented the screen as an example of Chŏng Sŏn’s painting. Ionova wrote that the landscapes on the screen

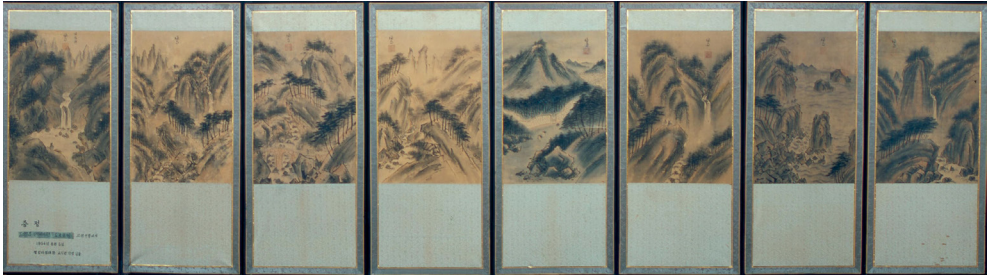


Figure 1 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kŭmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen. Ink and colours on silk, 83 × 38 cm each. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia

in terms of their artistic expressiveness, can be put on a par with the best works of Chŏng Sŏn. (Ionova 1964, 260)

This is the earliest mention of the screen in Russian literature that I found. Ludmila Kireeva studied Chŏng Sŏn's art, she also attributed the screen as a work of Chŏng Sŏn and indicated that this work was similar in style to the artist's landscapes of the 1740s-1750s (Kireeva 2010). The screen is also described in the book by Yuliya Gutarova as an example of Chŏng Sŏn's landscape style (Gurateva 2016, 39). The screen is mentioned in the articles of Pak Chŏng-Ae as an example of works attributed to Chŏng Sŏn from foreign collections (Pak 2016, 151).

The work was attributed by the museum, based on the presence of signature and seals on each landscape, with which the artist marked his works, and because the plot is similar to the landscapes of Chŏng Sŏn, known in the USSR from North Korean art books. Mentioning the well-known works of Chŏng Sŏn, Ionova referred to the album, *Cultural Monuments of Korea*, published in Pyongyang in 1957, where reproductions of Chŏng Sŏn's landscapes, with views of the Kŭmgang mountains were printed (Ionova 1964, 261). However, when comparing the screen with the accumulated knowledge of the artist available to us today, doubts about the authenticity of the works arise. A significantly larger amount of available material on the work of Chŏng Sŏn and Korean landscape paintings, as well as my visual analysis of the works of Chŏng Sŏn in the museums of the Republic of Korea, allows us to challenge the original attribution. Based on the analysis of the technique, this article will show that the screen in question is not a genuine work of Chŏng Sŏn, but most likely a forgery created around the end of the nineteenth century. Doubts about the authenticity of the work are supported by the fact that the screen was presented to a foreigner, Dmitry Dobrotin, in Pyongyang. Ionova wrote that the works of Chŏng Sŏn

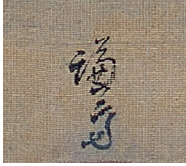
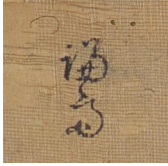
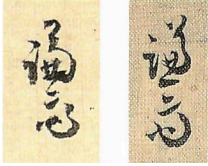
enjoyed great love of the people, his works were carefully stored and passed down from generation to generation, like family treasures. (261)

Only a small part of the artist's heritage is kept in the museums of the DPRK today, the main part is in collections in the Republic of Korea. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine that the North Koreans presented a genuine work of such an important artist to a foreigner, not even a museum, but to a private person who took the work with him to his homeland. Also I will show that not all eight panels of the screen depict the Kūmgang mountains, as is indicated in the description of the screen presented in the museum.

2 Signatures, Seals, and Forgeries



As noted above, each of the eight panels has a two-character signature with the artist's pen name, Kyömjae (謙齋), and a seal with his name, Chông Sôn (鄭歎). The art album, *Collection of Korean Artists of the Chosôn Era*, presents photographs of Chông Sôn's works and 42 signatures of the artist from various paintings (Chông 2017, 279-81). Comparing the characters of the inscriptions from the screen with those presented in the *Collection*, I can conclude that in general, they have a visual similarity to the original ones. But the form of the signature from the screen is simplified, the characters lack the movement of the brush, the structure of the strokes cannot be identified. The characters are carefully written but look more like they were copied but not written freely, because the one who copied them did not know how to write it but simply copied what was unknown to him. The signature on the fifth panel differs from the other seven signatures of the screen, is elongated, the volume in the second of the two characters is lacking [tab. 1].

Table 1 Signatures from the screen and original signatures of Chŏng Sŏn

Signature. Screen. Panel No. 5	Signature. Screen. Panel No. 1	Decryption	Original signatures of Chŏng Sŏn
		謙齋 (겸재) Kyŏmjae	

The two character (鄭歎) seals with the name of the artist are the same on all eight panels. Chŏng Sŏn used several seals with his name and pen names throughout his life. The seal that looks similar is found on several of the artist's works. However, the second character on the seals from the screen, in contrast to the seals on other works by the artist, looks more rounded [tab. 2]. Let's also pay attention to the size of the seals. On the artist's original works, seals are often smaller than the signature, while on the screen, on the contrary, the seals are larger than the signatures. According to South Korean researchers, Hong Sŏn-P'yo (Hŏ 2020) and Jinsŏng Chin-Sŏng (Chang 2009, 130-4), large seals are found on forgeries of works by artists of the Chosŏn era (1392-1897), as well as on the works of Chŏng Sŏn. But in general, it can be said that the signatures and seals on the landscapes of the screen have a visual resemblance to those found on the works of Chŏng Sŏn, the authenticity of which is not in doubt among researchers. And it means that the one who forged the screen wanted to pass the screen off as an original work.

Table 2 Seals from the screen and Chŏng Sŏn's original seals

Seal from the screen	Decryption	Chŏng Sŏn's original seals
	鄭歎 (정선) Chŏng Sŏn	

However, even the signatures and seals that are difficult to distinguish from the original do not guarantee the authenticity of the works. The South Korean art historian Ahn Hwi-Joon (An Hwi-Jun), in an article on the problems of studying the work of Chŏng Sŏn, writes that it is necessary to distinguish between originals, copies and forgeries in the surviving numbers of works attributed to the

artist (An 2012, 25). The legacy of Chŏng Sŏn is complex, since he himself, being unable to fulfil orders received in large numbers, involved his son and students in the creation of paintings (Chang 2018, 319). It means that even works signed by the artist himself may not belong to his brush. It is also known that the works of Chŏng Sŏn were forged already during his lifetime. The testimony of Kwŏn Sŏp (1671-1759), a collector, ardent admirer and contemporary of Chŏng Sŏn, has been preserved, in which he admitted that he bought the artist's work, but it turned out to be a forgery. However, Kwŏn Sŏp decided to depict the painting as authentic and put it into the same album along with Chŏng Sŏn's original works (Pak 2019, 148). Kwŏn Sin-Ŭng (1728-87), the grandson of Kwŏn Sŏp, recalled that he painted a landscape in the style of Chŏng Sŏn, put it in one album with the works of the master and showed it to friends, rejoicing that they could not distinguish the original from the fake (Pak 2019, 148). Other artists, as well as his students, worked in the style of Chŏng Sŏn.

Chŏng Sŏn's paintings were popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially landscapes with views of the Kŭmgang mountains. The influence of the 'true-view' landscapes by Chŏng Sŏn is noticeable not only in the work of his students, but also in the works of a number of major and lesser-known artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially those who painted the Kŭmgang mountains: Kang Hui-Ŏn 강희언 (1738-unknown), Kim Tŭk-Sin 김득신 (1754-1822), Ch'oe Puk 최복 (1720-unknown), Chŏng Hwang 정황 (1734-1800), Kim Ŭng-Hwan 김응환 (1742-89), Kim Sŏk-Sin 김석신 (1758-unknown), Kim Ha-Jong 김하중 (1793-1875), etc. In South Korean art history, the concept of *chŏngsŏnp'a* 정선파 'the school of Chŏng Sŏn' is used (Yi, Kim 2007, 190-1). It is known that until the middle of the twentieth century, a collection with woodcuts of twenty landscapes of Chŏng Sŏn was in circulation in Korea. This collection served as a kind of textbook for those who wanted to depict mountains in the style of Chŏng Sŏn (Pak 2019, 148-9).

In Korea, especially in the nineteenth century, there was a widespread practice of copying or creating works in the style of revered masters of Chinese and Korean painting. The most famous example is Chang Sŭng-Ŏp (1843-97), the renowned artist of the second half of the nineteenth century, who copied the scrolls of Chinese masters from the collection of his patron, Lee Ŭng-Hŏn (1838-unknown). Creating works in the style of famous masters, the artists honed their skills and paid tribute to their forebears. In addition, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the demand for works of art among different segments of the population was growing, the practice of creating forgeries spread. Since the eighteenth century, in the centre of Seoul, near the Kwangt'ong Bridge, there was an art market where one could buy screens, album sheets, scrolls of various quality, by famous intellectuals, courtiers, and professional or street artists. Orig-

nal works, copies and forgeries were presented on the market. To pass off works as original, seals and signatures were forged. The supply grew as the demand for antique works of art increased, both among Koreans themselves and among foreigners. The British, Americans, Germans, Russians, as well as other travelers, missionaries, and those who came to Seoul to work, or at the invitation of the royal court, purchased works on the market for their personal collections and took them home when it was time to return to their homelands. That is why nowadays, in the collections of Western museums and libraries, there are originals and forgeries of albums, scrolls, screens, and other works by Korean artists, including Chŏng Sŏn. At the moment, Western collections have a number of works attributed to the brush of Chŏng Sŏn, brought by foreigners: the Freer Art Gallery in Washington (5 works); the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts (2 works); the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (5 works); the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (2 works); the Munich Ethnographic Museum (1 work); the British Library in London (2 albums); the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (1 album).¹

Let's look at four albums bought by foreigners in Korea, at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: *Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn's Album*, from the collection of St. Ottilie's Monastery in Germany, two albums from the collection of the British Library, and *Kyŏmjae's Album* from the Library of the London School of Oriental and African Studies. These works serve as examples of paintings on the market that were sold as Chŏng Sŏn's original work.

Kyŏmjae Chŏng Sŏn's Album was bought in Korea by the German missionary Norbert Weber (1870-1956). Weber visited Korea in 1911, and also in 1925. In 1927, he published *In den Diamantbergen Koreas* (In the Diamond Mountains of Korea), in which he described his journey to the Kŭmgang mountains. In the book, Weber wrote that, during the trip, he acquired two landscapes by Chŏng Sŏn, and later arranged them into one album with other works of the artist which he bought in Korea. The existence of the album became known in 1974, when in the archives of the museum of the monastery of St. Ottilia, it was discovered by the South Korean researcher, Yu Chun-Yŏng (Yu 2013). In 2005, the album was loaned to Waegwan Abbey in the Republic of Korea for permanent storage. This album consists of twenty-one works on different subjects: five 'true-view' landscapes, three fictional landscapes, one work in the genre of 'animals and plants' and twelve images of sages (Khokhlova 2020, 308). Each album leaf is signed and sealed, the works in the album differ in qual-

¹ The information is based on the data from the articles by Pak Chŏng-Ae and Ludmila Kireeva. See Pak 2019 and Kireeva 2006.

ity, but so far, the question of the authenticity has not been raised. This album serves as an example of what kind of Chŏng Sŏn's works were introduced to the market at the beginning of the twentieth century. There is no information about the price of the works, but because the German missionary purchased twenty-one leaves for his collection, it can be assumed that it was reasonable.

The first of the albums now in the British Library was bought in Korea at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Alfred Burt Stripling (1838-1904), who participated in the development of mining sites on the Korean Peninsula. The album consists of seventeen works of different sizes, made in different techniques and on different subjects: fictional landscapes, 'true-view' landscapes, images of sages, 'flowers and birds', 'grass and insects' (Pak 2016, 158-9). The album was purchased from Stripling's heirs by the British Library in 1913. On the cover, there is the inscription *Chŏng Sŏn's Album*, the works are signed, and there are seals similar to those used by the artist.

However, the researcher Pak Chŏng-Ae, after conducting a comparative analysis of signatures and inscriptions, as well as the technique of works, concluded that the album could not belong to the artist's brush and was a forgery (144). It should be noted that, as far as I can judge by the reproductions presented in the article by Pak Chŏng-Ae, the landscapes of the Kŭmgang mountains from this album were painted by an artist familiar with the style of Chŏng Sŏn. There are no glaring errors in the technique, the works are done quite accurately, the author of the album apparently tried to create good quality artwork that could be attributed to Chŏng Sŏn. At the same time, Pak Chŏng-Ae wrote that the works could not be original, because she claimed that

they lack clarity, the connection between the elements of the image is broken, with a noticeably poor technique. (143)

Pak Chŏng-Ae concluded that the works in the album were painted by at least six different artists at different times, while each painting was supposedly signed and sealed with seals similar to Chŏng Sŏn's own. Weathered silk was used to decorate the album to enhance the effect of antiquity. This album serves as an example that works masquerading as Chŏng Sŏn's work were on the market in Korea at the turn of the century.

The second album was bought in Korea by Homer Bezaleel Hulbert (1863-1949), an American missionary, scholar, educator, journalist, and politician who played a prominent role in Korean history in the early twentieth century. While in Korea, he amassed a collection of items and books, some of which were sold to the British Library, including *Chŏng Sŏn's Album*. Hulbert lived in Korea for more than

twenty years, participated in the political life of the country, wrote articles about politics, the economy of Korea, and published several texts in which he discussed art and culture. He noted that Korean art is inferior to Japanese and Chinese, not to mention the Western tradition, so

there is no need to waste time and effort on learning how to look at and enjoy Korean painting as the Koreans do. (Pak 2019, 178)

The album in his collection is notable for its poor technique and seems to serve as proof that Hulbert was not very interested in Korean art. The album consists of twenty-four works: 19 leaves depicting insects, small animals, four on the theme of *sagunja* ‘four noble plants’ and one landscape. The title on the cover is *Chŏng Sŏn’s Album*. There are no seals or signatures on the works, the inscription on the cover is the only indication that the album was sold as a work by Chŏng Sŏn. Of all the works in the album, only the leaf with the image of a squirrel is an original work or a good copy of Chŏng Sŏn. The landscape and the ‘four noble plants’ are painted to a reasonable level but have nothing in common with the works and style of the artist. The rest of the works, as Pak Chŏng-Ae writes, “are more like sketches made by a child’s hand” (176). In general, the authors of the album did not attempt to make the artwork look remotely like authentic pieces by Chŏng Sŏn. Perhaps the authors did not set themselves such a task, but the seller, having collected several works in an album and writing the name of the artist on the cover, passed them off as original work by Chŏng Sŏn.

The album from the collection of the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London was donated by the heirs of the English entrepreneur Frederick Anderson (1855-1950) in 1950. Anderson had not been to Korea, he bought the album, presumably, in Shanghai, where he lived for more than ten years and bought Chinese, Japanese and Korean antiques for his collection. The cover of the album, as in the case of the two described above, has the name *Kyŏmjae’s Album*. It consists of ten works: fictional landscapes (3), ‘true-view’ landscapes (6), ‘animals and birds’ (1). All the album leaves have a seal like those used on the original works of the artist, but the seal, like on the screen in question and on several fakes of Chŏng Sŏn’s works, is larger than the signature. Some of the works have a signature like the original signature of Chŏng Sŏn (Pak 2016, 142). After conducting a visual comparative analysis of the technique and composition of the works from the album with the original works of Chŏng Sŏn, Pak Chŏng-Ae concluded that despite the rather high level of the artwork, the works are copies or fakes based on the works of Chŏng Sŏn (149).

Thus, the works of Chŏng Sŏn already began to be copied and forged during his lifetime. In the nineteenth century, forgeries ap-

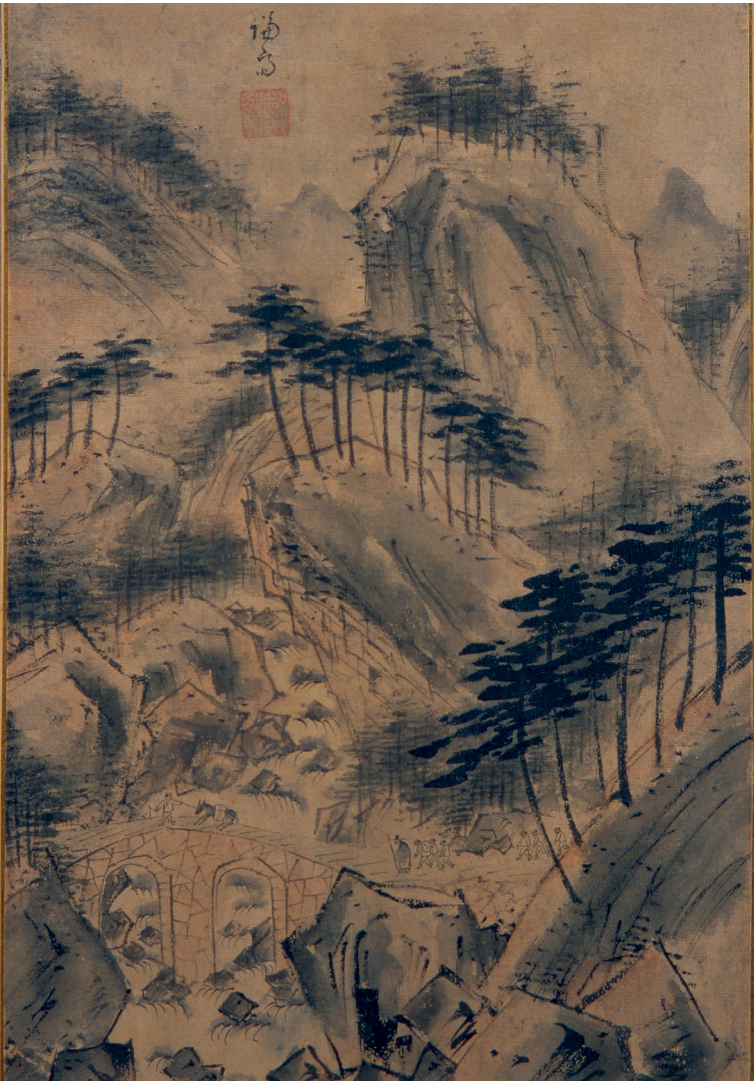


Figure 2 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kūmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 3. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Figure 3 Chŏng Sŏn, *Haejumasŏk* (Haejuma Rock). Ink on paper, 57.3 × 88.7 cm. National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

peared in response to the demand for art, both among Koreans themselves and also among travelers. Europeans at that time often did not have sufficient knowledge and, as in the case of Hulbert, sometimes even the desire to distinguish fakes from originals. Perhaps the authenticity of the works did not matter much to those foreigners who bought works by Korean artists for their collections. But the presence of a signature or the albums with the name of a famous master of the eighteenth century could attract buyers and served as a reason for the seller to ask for a higher price. The considered cases of forgery of the works by Chŏng Sŏn make it possible to doubt the authenticity of the works attributed to his brush, even though they are signed and sealed. My main argument in favour of the fact that the screen from the Kunstkamera is not the original work of Chŏng Sŏn is the style, technique, and confusion in the themes of the landscapes.

3 Technique and Themes

The landscapes on the screen were painted in the same style, and they might belong to the brush of a single artist. But there are several distinctive features of these landscapes from Chŏng Sŏn's 'true-view' landscapes which are obviously different. First, the artist applied ink wash to add volume to the mountains, rocks, and stones. The slopes of the mountains were painted with dark ink. Parts of the surface of the slopes remain unpainted, and some parts are carelessly painted. The manner of depicting stones and hills by using rough shadings differs from Chŏng Sŏn's style. In the original works of Chŏng Sŏn, the mountain slopes are often completely painted over [figs 2-3].

Second, the slopes are highlighted, the volume of the mountains is modelled using a kind of *chiaroscuro*. But highlighted parts of mountains are not found in the original works of Chŏng Sŏn; he did not use contrasts of light and shadow to achieve a sense of volume in modelling. His hill and mountain shapes are painted more evenly [figs 4-5]. Meanwhile, highlighting is found in landscapes of the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, in the landscape paintings of the court artists, Kim Su-Gyu (nineteenth century) and Kim Ha-Chong (1793-1875). This technique, in my opinion, was a way to rethink the *chiaroscuro* and volume in modelling that artists learned from the available samples of Western paintings. But it is not typical for landscape paintings of the eighteenth century.

Chŏng Sŏn developed a distinctive artistic language for depicting Korean nature. The main features of his style are the combination of vertical, long, nearly parallel hemp-fibre (*p'imajun* 피마준) brushstrokes used to depict the texture of earth and *mi* ink-dots applied horizontally to the surface of mountains and hills to paint vegetation and folded-ribbon strokes to depict rocky surfaces (Yi 2000,

344). In the original works of Chŏng Sŏn, the mountain slope is often completely painted over, hemp-fibre texture strokes and *mi* ink-dots are added over the painted part. These strokes and 'dots', the main characteristics of Chŏng Sŏn's style, are poorly applied in the screen. Chŏng Sŏn used falling vertical lines to depict the rocky peaks of the Kŭmgang mountains. On the landscapes of the screen, very few of these strokes were used and even the protruding cliffs of the Kŭmgang mountains are not painted with dry folded-ribbon strokes as Chŏng Sŏn would do. And very few *mi* ink-dots were used in the folding screen. The forgeries of Chŏng Sŏn's paintings, identified by South Korean researchers, are generally characterized by poor technique and lack of understanding of how to use the strokes and 'dots'. This is also distinctive in the landscapes on the screen from the Kunstkamera museum.

Now, I will show that not all the panels of the screen depict the Kŭmgang mountains. There are no inscriptions on the screen to determine the subject of the works, the only exception is the landscape on panel no. 1. There are three characters, *Punsŏltam* 噴雪潭, on it with the name of one of the famous views of the Kŭmgang mountains. Ionova wrote that eight of the landscapes on the screen are united by one theme - "the beauty and grandeur of the Kŭmgang mountains", Kireeva and Gutareva agreed (Ionova 1964, 261). It means that all eight landscapes were believed to be views of the mountain range.

Many of Chŏng Sŏn's 'true-view' landscapes are depictions of the Kŭmgang mountains. These are the most famous mountains on the Korean Peninsula, a source of national pride. Chŏng Sŏn, his patrons and contemporaries visited and praised the beauty and energy of the mountains in poetry and paintings (Ko 2007). Chŏng Sŏn created numerous views of the mountains to meet the huge demand among his contemporaries (Chang 2018, 319-21). The Kŭmgang mountains are distinguished by their characteristic protruding sharp crystalline-shaped bare rocks, so the landscapes of this subject are recognized primarily by the presence of the rocky peaks. It can be assumed that the main theme of the screen was determined because bare rocky peaks are painted on three of the eight landscapes: nos. 1, 2, and 4.

Let's take a closer look. Pine trees on landscapes nos. 2 and 4 are painted in rows on the slopes of the rocks [figs. 6-7]. This depiction of trees is typical of Chŏng Sŏn's 'true-view' landscapes and brings the screens' landscapes closer to the artist's works, and also indicates that the screens' author was familiar with Chŏng Sŏn's style and tried to copy it. Meanwhile, on panel no. 2, a narrow waterfall is depicted. Waterfalls, as the distinguished and praised spots of the Kŭmgang mountains, often act as a central element in his landscapes. Schematic representation of a waterfall, as in landscape no. 2, with no emphasizing of the features of the relief and the water flow, are not present in the artist's landscapes. Nevertheless, the landscapes



Figure 4 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kūmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 8. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Figure 5 Chŏng Sŏn, *Waterfall in Yŏsan*. Ink and colours on silk, 100.3 × 64.2 cm. National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

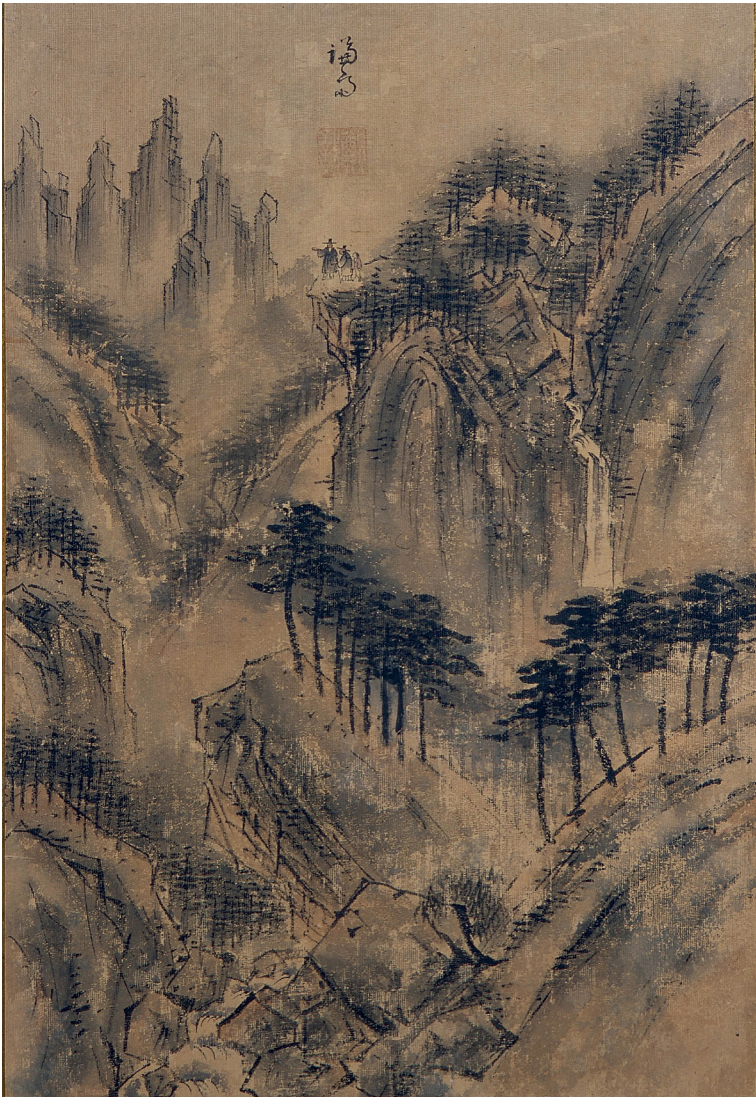


Figure 6 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kūmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 2. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Figure 7 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kŭmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 4. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia

in nos. 2 and 4 can be considered as images of the Kŭmgang mountains because the rocky peaks are very distinguishable.

Sharp, bare rock peaks are also painted on landscape no. 1, and it has an additional inscription: three characters, *Punsŏltam* 噴雪潭 [fig. 8]. The characters help us to understand which place is depicted. *Punsŏltam* is the name of a famous view in the Kŭmgang mountains. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the mountains were a popular place to travel among the aristocratic elite and secondary status group called *chung'in* 중인 (Stiller 2021, 7). There was a route along which travelers climbed the mountains, it included picturesque gorges and waterfalls, Buddhist temples and other monuments of Buddhist culture. Landscape no. 1 shows a traveler who is contemplating a waterfall against the backdrop of rocky peaks. However, the depicted view doesn't have much in common with the actual place and with the landscapes of other artists who painted the *Punsŏltam*, for example, Chŏng Su-Yŏng (1743-1831)'s *Punsŏltam* 분설담.

At the same time, the landscape is similar to the *Chinjudam* (眞珠潭) landscape, discovered in 2019, in Japan, and attributed to the brush of Chŏng Sŏn [fig. 9].² The names of the two landscapes do not coincide, but the compositional similarity is obvious: the location of the mountain peaks in the background, slopes to the left and right, a pond, an image of a waterfall divided into two streams by a boulder, etc. The *Chinjudam* landscape has a three-character inscription saying that it depicts a famous view of the Kŭmgang mountains. The depicted landscape is similar to the real area, the name of the area corresponds. The landscape on panel no. 1 differs from the real view of the area and is compositionally similar to the indicated *Chinjudam*. It is difficult to explain such a coincidence. Perhaps the author of the screen wanted to depict one of the famous views of the Kŭmgang mountains, but there was confusion with the name. Thus, the landscape from the first panel of the screen can be an image of the Kŭmgang mountains, however, not *Punsŏltam*, but *Chinjudam*.

Panel no. 3 [fig. 2] depicts a landscape similar in composition to the works on panel nos. 2 and 4. However, it lacks the protruding sharp peaks of the Kŭmgang mountains. In the lower right corner, a stone bridge is depicted, along which a company of travelers crosses a mountain stream. The bridge deserves special attention. In the Kŭmgang mountains, the Pihong Bridge was built near the Chang'an Buddhist temple. The bridge was destroyed during the Korean War (1950-53). The image of the bridge is found in several 'true-view'

² Regarding the authenticity of this landscape, there are also different points of view. Professor Ch'oe Wan-Su, the expert on Chŏng Sŏn, vouched for its authenticity (Hŏ 2020). The image is published here: https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/09/16/2019091600190.html.



Figure 8 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kūmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 1. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia

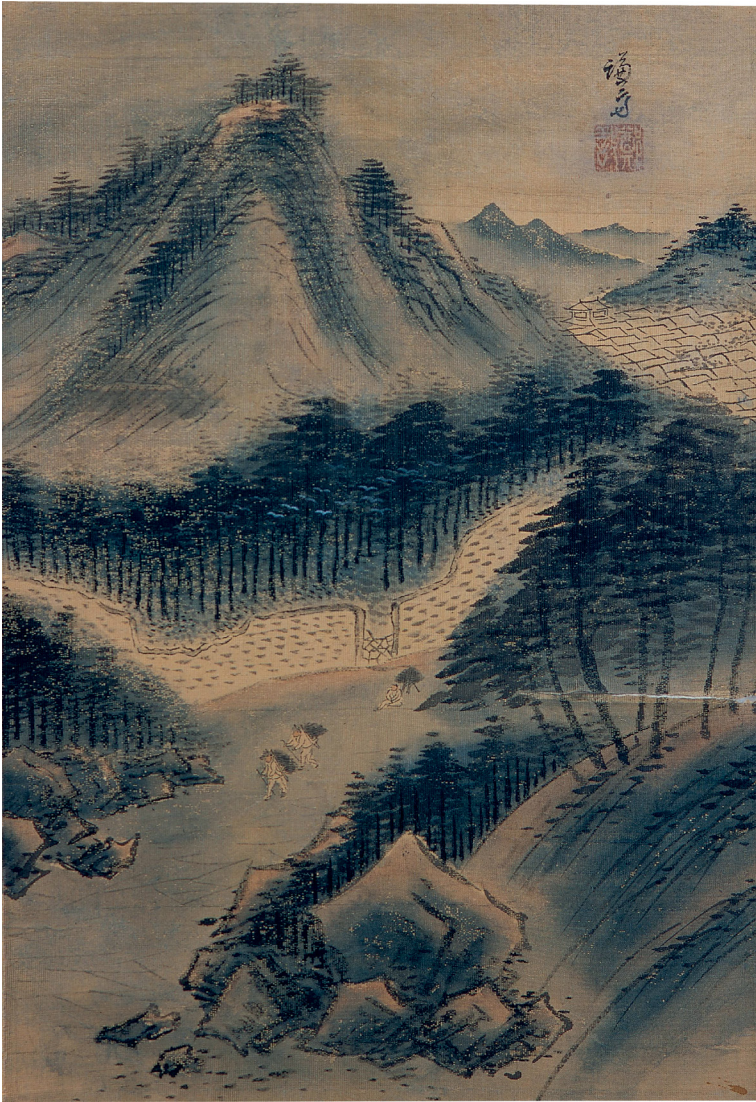


Figure 9 Anonymous, *Screen with the Views of the Kǔmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 5. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia



Figure 10

Chŏng Sŏn, *Ŭnamdongnok*, 1740-41. Album leaf from *Album of Views in the Capital and Suburbs*. Ink and colours on paper, 31.4 × 30.3 cm. Kansong Art and Culture Foundation, Seoul, Republic of Korea

landscapes by Chŏng Sŏn, with a view of the temple or an overview of the mountains, such as the *Changansa* (1711), from the collection of the National Museum of the Republic of Korea and the *Pihong Bridge at Changansa Monastery* (1747), from the collection of the Kansong Art and Culture Foundation. The Pihong bridge was a single span without arches, while the screen depicts a stone bridge with two arches. The bridge led to the temple. Chŏng Sŏn and other artists usually depicted the temple next to the bridge. Still, no sign of the temple is seen on the landscape in question. Thus, the landscape on panel no. 3 can be called an image of the Kŭmgang mountains only if there was another stone bridge in the mountains besides the Pihong Bridge. In the landscape, a group of travelers is depicted. On the bridge, a servant boy pulls a donkey which is resisting with all its might. The image of a stubborn donkey is not found in the ‘true-view’ of Chŏng Sŏn but is a frequent narrative element of sixteenth-seventeenth century landscapes: the most famous example is the scroll entitled *The Boy and the Donkey*, by Kim Si (1524-93).³

3 The scroll is in the collection of the Leeum Museum of Art in Seoul.

The landscape on panel no. 5 is one of the most fascinating works of the screen [fig. 9]. In *Album of Views in the Capital and Suburbs* (*Kyŏnggyo myŏngsŭng ch'ŏp* 경교명승첩) by Chŏng Sŏn (1741), there is a similar landscape titled *Ŭnamdongnok* [fig. 10]. The compositional similarity is obvious: a high central hill, a dilapidated wall-enclosure in the central part and a dense forest strip behind it, a road, a low hill with pine trees in the lower right corner, and dense buildings in the upper right corner with a high pavilion. It has been established that the landscape *Ŭnamdongnok* is a view of Seoul; the buildings in the upper right corner look like a densely populated metropolitan area, the tall building is presumably one of the pavilions of the Kyŏngdŏk Palace, and the wall in the central part of the work is the crumbling fence of the Kyŏngbok Palace, destroyed during the Imjin War (1592-98) (Ch'oe 2009a, 198). Landscape no. 5 repeats the features of *Ŭnamdongnok*. Let's note that the fence crumbled in the same place in both works. The passage is equally littered with stones, which gives the confidence to assert that landscape no. 5 is not a view of the Kŭmgang mountains, but a view of Seoul, painted based on *Album of Views in the Capital and Suburbs*.

Landscapes nos. 6 and 8 are typical examples of paintings on the theme of 'contemplating a waterfall', a popular theme in Chosŏn period [figs 4, 11]. These are fictional landscapes in Chinese style, the main character of which is the contemplative hero watching a waterfall in solitude. Travelers on the high bank enjoy the beauty of falling water. Waterfalls, as I mentioned above, were especially important spots of the Kŭmgang mountains, picturesque water flows, admired by generations of literati. But I did not find similar waterfall depictions among the numerous landscapes that glorify the beauty of the Kŭmgang mountains. There are no references to the Kŭmgang mountains in these landscapes. The Buddhist monastery in the upper left corner of landscape no. 6 connects it with the fictional landscapes even more since a Buddhist monastery with a tall pagoda is a frequent feature of fictional landscapes and does not appear in views of the Kŭmgang mountains. I assert that landscapes nos. 6 and 8 should be known as landscapes of a fictional type, but not as views of the Kŭmgang mountains.

Landscape no. 7 depicts a seashore [fig. 12]. Among Chŏng Sŏn's works, there are several landscapes with views of the coast of the East Sea, which travelers liked to visit. I did not find a similar composition among Chŏng Sŏn's landscapes, but since his seascapes depict the views of the East Sea, and due to a lack of strong arguments, I will not refute the statement that the view of the East Sea from the Kŭmgang mountains is depicted. However, let's note the negligence of the technique: the waves are depicted with several lines and ink wash, which is not typical for Chŏng Sŏn's seascapes. The master mostly painted waves with long and thin lines, as, for example, in



Figure 11 Anonymous, *Screen with View of the Kūmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 6. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia

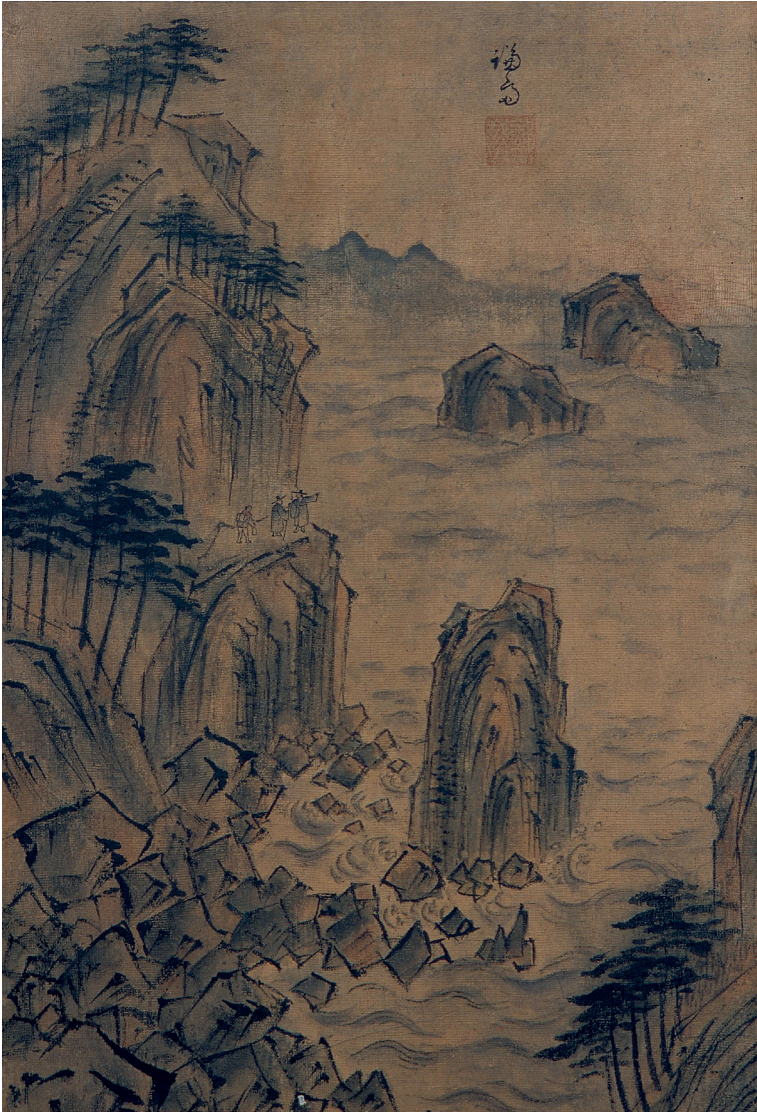


Figure 12 Anonymous, *Screen with Views of the Kūmgang Mountain Range*. Nineteenth century. Eight-panel screen, panel no. 7. Ink and colours on silk, 46 × 32 cm. Kunstkamera museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia

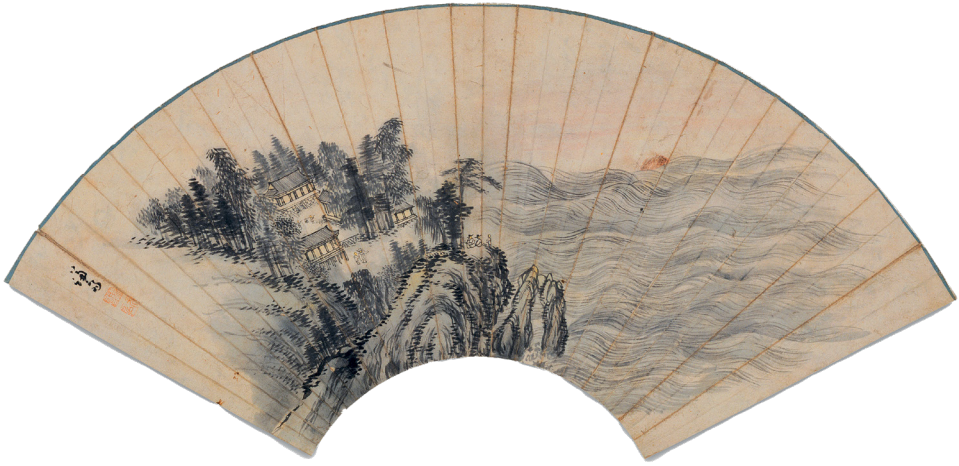


Figure 13 Chŏng Sŏn, *Naksansa*. Ink on silk. National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

the famous seascape of Chŏng Sŏn, *Naksansa*, from the collection of the National Museum of Korea [fig. 13]. The stones in the lower left corner are painted roughly and carelessly and look like a chaotic heap of stone blocks. Such carelessness is not typical for Chŏng Sŏn's landscapes.

Thus, I conclude that landscapes nos. 1, 2, 4, 7 can be called views of the Kŭmgang mountains. In landscape no. 3, there is no evidence to call it an image of the Kŭmgang mountains. Landscape no. 5 is a view of Seoul, landscapes nos. 6 and 8 are fictional landscapes in Chinese style, on the theme of 'contemplation of a waterfall'.

4 Conclusion

The screen from the collection of the Kunstkamera is not an original work of Chŏng Sŏn, even though the landscapes are signed and bear a seal. Albums from English collections attributed to Chŏng Sŏn prove that the forgers copied the artist's signature and seal to convince the buyer of the authenticity of the pieces. The technique and imperfection prove that, even though the author of the screen knew the main features of Chŏng Sŏn's 'true-view' landscapes, he lacked the understanding of how to perform and use it. I also showed that not all eight landscapes of the screen, as was believed, are images of the Kŭmgang mountains.

The screen from the Kunstkamera is an important example of Korean landscape painting, and it proves how important Chŏng Sŏn's 'true-

view' landscapes were in the history of Korean painting. Contemporaries and subsequent generations of artists copied and forged his works for their own needs. The significance of Chŏng Sŏn's work, hundreds of landscapes in his style and fakes, add intrigue and make the screen from the Kunstkamera an important artwork of Korean culture.

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