

**An Approach through the theory  
on Art to theory on Painting of Scholars  
of the Korean Practical Science.  
– On the Realism of Seong Ho, Yeon Am, and Da San**

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**Abstract:** This article is an attempt to bring on a discussion on the 'Realism' of Seong-ho, Yeon-am, Da san through the theory of art and painting. The article discusses and look into the dichotomy and contradictions involved in it and its evaluation as a established theory. It also brings out the distinctive characteristics by comparing the literati scholars and practical science scholars and discusses the methods, theories, style, and imagination of the painting in detail.

**Keywords:** Sil-hak (Korean Practical Science), Wha-Ron(Painting Theories), theory of 'the hsiehchen'(寫真論), theory of 'the hsieh-i'(寫意論), theory of 'the drawing from nature'(寫生論), Seong Ho(星湖), Lee Ik(李穡; 1681-1763)/Da San(荅山), Jeong Yak-yong(丁若鏞; 1762-1836)/Yeon Am(燕巖) Park Ji-won(朴趾源; 1737-1805).

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## I. The theory on Painting of Scholars of the Korean Practical Science as a Realism

Scholars of the Korean practical science school 實學 in late Jo-Seon dynasty show an ontology and an epistemology, at least, a scientific thought to surpass the spirit of the times, through their recognition of the objective world and independent consciousness of the reality and is even relevant in the 21st century, too.

They also reflected their opinions on art. Scholars' such as Seong Ho 星湖 Lee Ik 李翼 Yeon Am, Park Ji-won, Da San 茶山 Jeong Yak-yong mainly evolved their thought through the theory of painting. Basically, their theory of painting takes the standpoint of the realism in form, and the actualism in contents.

But, since the theory of painting is just that of a picture, there is a different viewpoint from other genre in the method to discuss the realism and the actualism. These facts are conspicuous to accept the value of 'the hsieh-i 寫意' (to express idea) which had been developed as an opposite concept against 'the form-likeness 形似' and 'the rhythmic vitality 氣韻生動' considered an important aesthetic virtue in traditional oriental painting.

In painting, 'the form-likeness' means to draw an object as it is. And 'the hsieh-i' is interpreted as the meaning of pouring out a painter's will to draw. Therefore, 'the form-likeness' can be equivalent to the objective realism and 'the hsieh-i' to the subjective expressionism, compared with the western theory of art.

But, it need to explain the meaning of 'the hsieh-i' and 'the form-likeness' of the oriental painting in proper terms. It is the distinction between a literati painter and an artisan, painted on two different concepts i. e. of 'the form-likeness' and 'the hsieh-i' and have different views.

Traditionally, the significance of 'the hsieh-i' had been estimated higher than that of 'the form-likeness' by most of the literati painters, and we can find it from the fact that Dong, Qi-chang 董基昌 in Ming 明 had stressed on the superiority of 'the painting of southern school 南

宗畫' having introduced his 'theory of southern and northern schools 南北宗畫論' A remarkable example is *Non Hwa Si* 論畫詩 by So Dong-pa 蘇懂坡 in Song 宋 as where he writes:

Discussing a painting of 'the form-likeness' is a childlike idea. If someone ought to compose a poem in this way, he would become like a man who does not really know a poem.<sup>1</sup>

By the very viewpoint like this, Yeon Am, Park, Ji-Won thought much of 'the hsieh-i' in his theory of painting. However, it is also true that there remains some absurdity in art in the concept of 'the hsieh-i' esteemed high by literati painters. Naturally, the value of 'the hsieh-i' can play its own role when it develops toward itself on the basis of a reality, 'the form-likeness.' In fact, 'the hsieh-i' is more apt to fall into an unskillful painting one in form, and would give undue value to an idea in contents, if not based on the reality. Il Mong 一夢, Lee Kyu-sang 李奎象 in Jung-Jo's, had highlighted this point through the concept on the method of an imperial court painting 院法 by an artisan painter and that of a confucian painting 儒法 by a literati one:

Painter can be classified into two groups. One is the art of drawing by the professional artisan painting contributing to the state and is called imperial court painting. The other is literati painting which does not care for a regularity and a sparseness in stroke of brush like the former one. And it belongs mainly to the confucian painting with the focus on 'a mystic and lofty vitality 神韻.' The fault of the first is trying to resemble the objects made of clay without 'a spirit and air 神采,' and the defect of the second is dim and rough, disorderly and also some unrefined stroke leaving all black around in canvas because of the unskilled technique and bad quality of the chinese ink.<sup>2</sup>

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1. So, Sik 蘇軾. "Non Hwa Si 論畫詩," a part in *You Keom-hwa, Jung Guk Hwa Ron Ryu Pyeon*, Chung Hwa Seo Guk, 1973, p. 51.

From this point of view, Seong Ho, Lee, Ik emphasized 'the hsieh chen' (寫眞the transposition of details of a surface), Da San, Jeong Yak-yong focused on 'a drawing from nature寫生' in their theory of painting.

Therefore, it is possible to say that the way of argumentation in presenting the theory of painting by scholars of the Korean practical science school is the difference of focus on, "where is the spirit of art?" This question was genuinely required in the times of the Korean practical science according to its time and space of a painting, not that of opinions on "what is a painting?"

Now, let's examine the theory of painting by Seong Ho, Yeon Am, Da San under these assumptions.

## II. Seong Ho, Lee, Ik's theory of 'the hsieh chen寫眞論'

Seong Ho 星湖 Lee Ik (李翼; 1681-1763) is known a representative scholar of the Korean practical science school, who proposed the Korean practical science as a concept of 'an administrating the state by the practice 經世致用' in late Jo-Seon dynasty. Also, he had his own opinion on painting like many literati scholars in Jo-seon dynasty. Especially, he had written a funeral address for Gong Je, Yun Du-seo, with whom he had kept on a good company, through Ok Dong 玉洞 Lee Seo 李翬 his elder brother, and had expressed such phrase as "my good friend" in the epitaph of Su Un 岫雲, Yu Deok-jang 柳德章, his acquaintance, who was famous for 'bamboo painting.' We can say that his good friendship with eminent painters helped him to develop an appreciative view toward paintings.

Moreover, Lee, Ik had written a postscript to many picture, including "Sa U Cheop Bai 四友帖跋," "Hwa Byeong Bal 畫屏跋," "Woa Yu Cheop Bal 臥游帖跋," "Do San Do Bal 陶山圖跋," "Seo Mu I Gu Gok Do 書武夷九曲圖," "Bal Ga Jeon Su Jang 跋家傳繡帳" and so forth. And

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2. Lee Kyu-sang. "Hwa Ju Rok," *Il Mong Go*.

he had shown his view of a learned literati composing a poem in pictures including “Tu Ge Do 鬪鷄圖,” “Je Hwa Seon 題畫扇,” “Man Su Un Ong Sa Seo 挽岬雲翁四首” etc and also, proposed the theory of painting in “Bal He Dong Hwa Cheop 跋海東畫帖” an “Non Hwa Hyeong Sa 論畫形似.”<sup>3</sup>

In brief, Lee Ik’s theory of painting is that of ‘the hsieh-i’ which treats importantly ‘a drawing from nature’ to depict an object correctly under the opinion which makes much of ‘a real fact 實事’ and ‘an actual gain 實得.’ These facts can be evidently found in his famous theory of art, “Non Hwa Hyeong Sa”

According to So, Dong-pa’s poem, “they say that it is enough to achieve the sameness of an appearance only. But, I think this is no better than a childlike opinion. Describing only the scene before his eyes, he can not be granted a true poet who understands the essence of a poem.” These words of So Dong-pa’s motivated the painters’ of the coming generation so much that it became a doctrine and painted in light Chinese ink. So, this theory also create inconsistency when it comes to essence of the objects. Therefore, saying that you may not draw object similar in the appearance of an object and describe the real scene in composing a poem, does it sound logical! There is a scroll of bamboo painting in chinese ink by So Dong-pa in my house, in which branches and leaves are just like a living bamboo altogether. It is, what they call, the very ‘hsieh chen.’ As a spirit exists inside shape, if the appearance is not same with a real object, how can carry the spirit in shape well? Dong-pa’s words means, “there is not a splendor in painting without an expression of an inner spirit, in spite of being similar

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3. On Lee Ik’s theory of painting, there is no special article. But “the viewpoint of a painting in late Jo-Seon dynasty -Especially, on the view of a painting of the korean practical science school” by Hong Seon-pyo(*San Su Hwa*, vol. II. Chung Ang IlBoSa, 1982. pp. 221-226) and “the study on the theory on art of the korean practical science school ‘near Kyung Ki’ in late Jo-Seon dynasty -Especially, on Lee Man-boo, Lee Ik, Jung Yak-yong” (a thesis for a doctor’s degree in SungKyunKwan graduate school. 1988) by Kim Nam-hyeong have partially treated on Lee Ik’s theory of painting.

to the appearance.” I would like to suggest that “there should be expressed a spirit in painting, and if not alike still less the appearance, how can say they are same? and if there is not a splendor in thing, how can be a thing as it is?”<sup>4</sup>

He remarked that ‘the hsieh-i’ and ‘the presenting mental images 傳神’ can have a significance only in basing on ‘the form-likeness’ and ‘the shieh chen.’ It is noteworthy that he commanded a tangible expression of ‘the hsieh chen’ in here. Maybe, it seems that his critics aimed at the style of the literati painting falling into a mannerism and reckless admirers for it spreaded to some extent in the painting circle in those days. His critics do have meaning in warning against the prevalence of an idea. We can regard his critics in the same context with Park Kyu-su 朴珪壽’s theory of ‘the form-likeness’ after a hundred years against the style of the literati painting by some followers to Chu Sa 秋史.<sup>5</sup>

So, in his “Mu I Gu Gok Do 書武夷九曲圖,” Lee Ik reacts in a resolute manner, that a landscape painting not depended on ‘a true scenery 眞境’ is nothing but a kind of cheating technique.

Seeing a landscape paintings in ancient and modern times, surprises us. Because there are the depiction of every falsehood and eccentricity. It is responsible for drawing the strange scenery only in order to delight people, there is no such a scenery in anywhere. Even if a spirit is asked to travel around the universe, is it possible to find such a scenery somewhere? Compared to human being’s affair, it is nothing but a cheating by the concoction and fabrication of a lie. So, for what we should take such a thing?<sup>6</sup>

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4. Lee Ik. “Non Hwa Hyeong Sa,” *Seong Ho Sa Seol*, vol. 5 (*kuq yeok seong ho sa seol II*, Min Jok Mun Hwa Chu Jin Hoe, 1977, p. 187. The original is ‘Seong Ho Jeon seo 星湖全書’ 5. Yeo Kang press, 1987. p. 148).
  5. Yu Hong-jun. “Hwan Je, Park Kyu-su’s theory of painting and calligraphy,” *Te Dong Go Jeon Yeon Gu*, vol. 10, 1993, pp. 1051-1062.
  6. Lee Ik. “Mu I Gu Gok Do Bal,” *Seong Ho SeonSang JeonJip*, vol. 56 (Han Guk MunJip ChongGan199, 1997, p. 533).

Additionally, Lee Ik maintains his theory of 'the hsieh chen' wrote that 'the pi-i(筆意 a brush meaning) is able to be alive in Dong, Qi-chang's landscape painting owing to an exact depiction, in spite of putting it first in 'the hsieh-i.'

Dong Qi-chang's painting expresses his in most thoughts giving up an image about the object. He contained his natural temper on the tip of brush after completing a picture in mind so that there is nothing inconsistent with a true landscape even a stream and a hill in his picture<sup>7</sup>It happens either to emerge or to cease suddenly, thus, people say that there remains a 'pi-i' in his picture.<sup>7</sup>

'A mystic and lofty vitality' and 'a pi-i' can have a powerful effect only when they should be founded on 'a hsieh chen.' According to his theory, the most important reason that we should not to disregard 'the hsieh chen' is for the purpose of keeping an original real looks of its own should lose. He had introduced the case of a trivial dauber's fallacy in rustic area, as a good example. In "Go Geum Mun Jang古今文章" of *Seong Ho Sa Seol*.

Our pictures are similar to those of a clumsy dabber in a rustic area. Coping likely the imitations only without seeing the real object, they drew an irrelevant flower and the leaves of a japanese apricot tree and the branch of a willow to the peach tree, of which I am not aware of, owing to the wrong shape from the real thing and for the lacking of the standard on colour.<sup>8</sup>

The reality pursued by Lee Ik is in a very strict sense as above mentioned. But, his theory of 'the hsieh chen' does not be restricted to this extent. He had demanded that painting should attain the level

7. Lee Ik. "Je Dong Hyun Je Hwa," *Seong Ho Seon Seng Jyeon Jip*, vol. 56 (Han Guk MunJip Chong Gan 199, 1997, p. 532).

8. Lee Ik. "Go Gum Mun Jang," *Seong Ho Sa Seol*, vol. 30 (*Seong Ho Jeon Seo 6*. Yeo Gang press, 1987, p. 1139).

of the western painting in the reality with an excellent shading and a perspective and so forth, have seen the inflow of the western painting by envoys who had been to Yeun Kyung in those days. In "Wha Sang Yo Dol" 畫像拗突 of *Seong Ho Sa Seol*, Lee Ik argues that "there should be concave and convex expression in picture."

Besides, Lee Ik did not look over the cultivating functions presented in a picture, as the scholar of the Korean practical science of 'an administrating the state by the practice.'

Lee Ik emphasized on public utility that "there is nothing as good as a portrait in pictures, because it can deliver a spirit and depict the looks so as that it makes a person represented an admired object.<sup>9</sup> His theory of 'the hsieh chen' is a method for carrying out such artistic function throughly. Lee Ik made very clear this point in his "Bal He Dong Hwa Cheop" 跋海東畫帖"

When I see the picture books of old and new days I find it just as a strange landscape of misty scenery, flowers, birds, bamboos, stone etc. Because they are arranged in eccentricity only, so their meaning has no better significance than a feast for eyes, how could a true gentleman feel interest in it? At best, it would result in a loss of will in spite of appreciating many books of pictures with beautiful decoration. But, since real things have no definite form and mind, and no fixed trace of works.

How to transform and express, it all depends on my hand. A benevolent man will be called to be benevolent and a wise man to be wise, but, people does not know what they have said day by day. Thus, a man who has an appreciative eyes it can make his spirit to act freely and concentrate in the picture, so that he comes to fall into 'the true scenery' 真境.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, he asserts that his theory of 'the hsieh chen' is the way to find the real looks, and it needs the serious approach make it

9. Lee Ik. "Bal He Dong Hwa Cheup," *Seong Ho SeonSang JeonJip*, vol. 56 (Han Guk MunJip ChongGan 199, 1997, p. 535).

10. Ibid.



to appeal to an emotion, not a superficial one through a simple sense of appreciation.

### III. Park Ji-won's theory of 'the hsieh-i'(寫意論)

There has been a number of study on Yeon Am 燕巖 Park Ji-won(朴趾源; 1737-1805)'s literature and thought of literary arts.<sup>11</sup> But a serious study on the theme of his theory on painting contained his aesthetic speculations has not been tried except a partial reference of it. As his other essays, Park, Ji-Won thoughts on painting, unlike other theorist, is concealed in other contexts which have not an apparent subject and theme. For example, they are revealed in documents such as "Nok Cheon Gwan Jip Seo 綠天館集序," "Bul I Dang Gi 不移堂記" or in letters like "Hwang Do Gi Ryak 黃圖記略," "Yeo Seok Chi 與石癡" within *Yeol Ha Il Gi* 熱河日記. Consequently, his theory of painting is not in the table of contents in *Yeon Am Jip*. And it may be possible that his theory of painting could not get much attention for the difficult symbolic and metaphysical expression in text.

Yeon Am, Park Ji-won's theory can be summarized with an actualism and 'a creating a new in reference to the old 法古創新.' His famous story on a landscape painting in *Yeol Ha Il Gi* enables us to support such assumption. The following story stems from "Nan Ha

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11. A helpful articles for the study on Park, Ji-won's theory of painting are "Park Yeon Am's epistemology and aesthetic sense" (*Han Guk Mun Hak Yeon Gu* 11. Han Guk Han Mun Hak Yeon Gu Hoe, 1988) by Lim Hyeong-taek, and "Yeon Am, Park Ji-won's style of thought and literature of prose" (the article for a doctor's degree in seonggyungwan graduate school, 1992) by Kim Hyeol-jo etc. And also, "Yeon Am, Park Ji-won's theory of painting and view of a literary truth" by Lee Am (*Min Jok Mun Hak Sa Yeon Gu* 7, a part in *Min Jok Mun Hwa Sa*, 1995) and "the viewpoint of a painting in late Jo-Seon dynasty -Especially, on the view of a painting of the korean practical science school" by Hong Seon-pyo (*San Su Hwa*, vol. II. ('Han Guk eui Mi'12), ChungAng IlBoSa, 1982.) etc are the articles concerned with Park Ji-won's theory of painting.

## Beom Ju Gi 濼同亞海記.”

The people in the boat are talking, “rivers and mountains are like a picture,” its delightful scenery. Hearing that, I say, “you know neither rivers, mountains nor a picture. How could rivers and mountains appear from a picture? Well, a picture derived from rivers and mountains. Now, to say ‘resemble,’ ‘alike,’ ‘similar to’ altogether means to be the same with, but if compared the similar things, though they may appear as the same but it would never exactly the same.”<sup>12</sup>

This story is mentioned in *Dong Ge Jip* by Jo Gyi-meong, in brief, he makes clear that an art should be based on the objective substance, and objective realism as well. In case of “Yang Hwa 洋畫” after observing the wall painting on cathedral in Yeun Kyung, he admired its excellent realistic depictions, it shows that he relied upon the realism.

Clouds and figures drawn on the wall and the ceiling in the midst of cathedral could not be grasped by a normal thinking and expressed in words.

There was something stimulative to my eyes with a flash like lightening when I observed it. I disliked them (figures in painting) to penetrate and look into my heart. I felt, they whispered in my ears before I tried to hear something. I was ashamed and afraid of to be revealed something hidden in my heart.

Suddenly, they seems to make sound like a thunder in silence. Getting near and seeing it, I could observe only thin ink with an awkward and rough way in the space among ears, eyes, nose and mouth. And the gap in mustache and skin, muscle were outlined beautifully. It seemed to be alive and to wriggle, because the harmony of the yin-yang was so natural that a bright place and a dark spot could be emerged spontaneously in picture.<sup>13</sup>

12. Park Ji-won. “Nan Ha Beom Ju Gi,” *Yeol Ha Il Gi*.

13. Park Ji-won. “Yang Hwa,” *Yeol Ha Il Gi*.

As above, Park Ji-won payed tribute of praise on a realistic depiction with a verisimilitude. However, he thinks that the essential of painting can not be completed by the simply realistic method like this. He pursuit is 'the hsieh-i' than to the real. This fact is revealed obviously in the prologue of "Yang Hwa" quoted previously.

It is natural that painter can not to draw the inside of the object other than the outward shape of it. There are various shapes of being distant and close, or protrude and hollow, or large and small in things. So, an excellent painter just commands simple brushing with a few lines in the space among the shapes. Thus, there were not detailed lines in the mountain and not waves in the river, not branches in tree. It is, what we called, the method by 'the hsieh-i.'<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned above, Park Ji-won recognized the importance of 'the hsieh-i.' In his "Bul I Dang Gi" 不移堂記. So, his estimation of "Muk Me Do" 墨梅圖 by Sim, is not very good. Sa-jung for the lack of 'the hsieh-i.'

When the scholar Lee, Gong-Bo(Yeun Am's uncle in law) retired from his official post, he composed a poem on Japanese apricot flower and was given "Muk Me Do" by Shim Dong-hyeon (Hyeon Je, Shim Sa-jung) to use it as a subject matter. Then, he said to me with a smile, "His painting is nothing peculiar, it is the very his method of painting that only draw similar to the object." I asked, "why do you despise his painting? I think he is a good painter to draw the object just alike. Then, he answered "for some reason."<sup>15</sup>

Lee Gong-bo, Park Ji-won's devaluation of Shim, Sa-Jeong's painting to a trivial drawing suggests that his method of art is inclined

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14. Park Ji-won. *ibid.*

15. Park Ji-won. "Bul I Dang Gi," *Yeon Am Jip.*

toward 'the hsieh-i.' Of course, it does not imply that his cognition of an object is ideological. But, He proposed the theory of 'the hsieh-i' in the sense that painter should make an effort in order to project the inner reality without missing a substance in recognizing subjectively of an objective thing. He had mentioned the concept of 'the ching境' in his poem and prose, making his theory of 'the hsieh-i' more clear. Let's see the following from "Jong Buk So Seon Ja Seo鍾北小選自序."

What is 'the Ching境' on earth? A wave is not observed in distant river and trees are not seen in a remote mountain and also, a man from a distance makes us unable to see his eyes. A man indicating with his finger is a speaker and a man with folded arms is hearer. If there is a profound and abstruse meaning in a picture, it is impossible to discuss 'the Ching境' in the prose.<sup>16</sup>

Professor Kim Hyeol-jo, interpreted the concept of 'the ching' as 'the i-ching意境,' cited as 'a picture lacking of a profound and abstruse meaning畫無遠意.'<sup>17</sup> If Park Ji-won's theory of 'the hsieh-i' accepts the above standpoint, it is possible to say that his theory is almost equal to realism. That is to say, even if his theory may be a realism, it is similar to the realism concerned with 'the hsieh-i,' but not a descriptive one. And following episode which cites to Lee Gong-bo's speaking from his "Bul I Dang Gi" explains well his 'hsieh-i' and 'i-ching' by a symbolic method.

I (Lee Gong-bo) has kept company with Lee Won-ryeong (Neung Ho-gwan, Lee In-sang) from childhood. Once I asked him to draw a big cone pine tree in front of Je Gal Gong-myeong's shrine and send him a scroll of silk to him. After a long gap of time, received his prose with a great delight drawn in 'the old cal-

16. Park Ji-won. "Jong Buk So Seon Ja Seo," *Yeon Am Jip*.

17. Kim Hyeol-jo. "Yeon Am, Park Ji-won's style of thought and literature of prose" (the article for a doctor's degree on seonggyungwan graduate school, 1988, p. 286).

igraphy style of Jeon seo' 古篆子, I urged him to send the picture, also. Then, he smiled and said to me, "didn't you realize yet? I've already sent it to you." Taken by surprise, I replied, "what I got last time was only your prose written in calligraphy style of 'Jeun seu,' maybe, you are forgetting it" Then again he said with a smile, "a big cone pine tree exists inside it."<sup>18</sup>

Park Ji-won have described the unity of poetry, calligraphy and painting. But, nothing is added about the symbolic explanation. It seems that he does not evolve the significance of 'the hsieh-i' and 'the i-ching' as a positive theory of literati painting. Generally speaking, Park Ji-won was not an excellent admirer of picture and was not a critic also. So, It is difficult to justify his statement that he regarded Sim Sa-jung as a plain painter of a realistic style. In fact, It is proper that Park Ji-won's comment cited above is not so much that of theorist or critic on painting as the aesthetic attitude to it in the sense of aesthetic epistemology. As a result, his theory of 'the hsieh-i' can be understood as the product of a contemplation from recognizing seriously the truth. It is apparent in the following statement of a Japanese apricot flower from his letter to Jeong Chyeol-jo 鄭喆祚.

There is a discussion about the fruit only, not flower in reference to the Japanese apricot blossom in "Si Kyeong 詩經" and "Seo Kyeong 書經." Composing a poem on Japanese apricot flower, we try to sketch not only the appearance but its spirit through imagination and cannot be compared with colors, fragrance. In the end it gets farther from the real object, instead of being splendor and magnificent.<sup>19</sup>

Employing the above concept Park Ji-won took the way to seek 'the mind-likeness 心似' and 'the i-ching' through 'the hsieh-i' free from 'the form-likeness' for a desirable one.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, It is possible to

18. Park Ji-won. "Bul I Dang Gi," *Yeon Am Jip*.

19. Park Ji-won. "Yeo Seok Chi" 4, *Yeon Am Jip*.

see that his theory of 'the hsieh-i' is more near to the realism concerned with 'the hsieh-i' than the ideal theory of presenting a mental image as it originates from the process of an earnest inquiry into a realism.

#### IV. Da San, Jeong Yak-yong's theory of 'the Drawing from Nature' 寫生'

Da San 茶山, Jeong Yak-yong (丁若鏞, 1762-1836) has been much adored as a great scholar in late Jo-Seon dynasty for his scientific orientation of thought, who accomplished a comprehensive survey of the Korean practical science. Moreover, he achieved an authority in poetry and literature also, had his own thought on music. Being good at science and literary arts, he also had valuable opinion on painting and often painted as hobby. As a scholar to study the Korean practical science for his philosophical paradigm, he had an imposing view of his own on the essence of painting.<sup>21</sup>

Jeong Yak-yong's theory of painting is pretty scholastic as Sung Ho, Lee Ik's. His theory of painting is very logical and speculative because it comes from a questing attitude to the science of painting, not as a learned literati to enjoy calligraphy and painting. He made

20. Lim Hyeong-tek (ed). *I Jo Si De Seo Sa Si*, vol. II. Chang Jak Gwa Bi Pyeong Sa, 1992. p. 15.

21. The research materials on Jeong Yak-yong are as follows. *Da San Si Yeon Gu* (Chang Jak gwa Bi Pyeong sa, 1986) by Song Je-so is concerned with Jeong Yak-yong's literature and poetry, And *Han Guk Eum Ak Tong Sa* (Il Jo Gak, 1984) by Song, Bang-Song and "Da San, Jeong Yak-yong's Eum Ak Sa Sang" (A part in Yun Sa-sun, *Jeong Yak-yong*, Koryeo Uuniversity Press, 1990, pp. 379-384) by Min Ju-sik treat about Jeong Yak-yong's thought of music. And also "Jeong Yak-yong's Sa Sil Jui hwoe hwa gwan" (*Jo Seon Hu Gi Hwoe Hwa Eui Sa Sil Jeong Sin*, Hak Go Je, 1996) by Lee Te-ho researched and analyzed in detailed on Jeong Yak-yong's theory of painting. Jeong Yak-yong's theory of painting cited in here is requoted from professor Lee Te-ho's writings.

critic an ideal approach which emphasizes 'the hsieh-i,' and he attached much importance to 'the drawing from nature' and reality relying on a real fact like other scholars' opinion on painting. In this way, his theory of painting takes the same view to those of Seong Ho and Lee Ik's.

Jeong Yak-yong's theory of 'the drawing from nature,' above all, is well represented in his "Bal Chui U Cheop跋翠羽帖" along with his maternal uncle, Yun Yong's painting.

These four books of painting are made by the last Tae Hak Seng太學生, Gun Yeol君悅. Some of the artists used to scorn him for the reason of his longing for a painting as bird's caring for her feathers, so, his books of painting were named for Chui U翠羽. Its subject matter involved flowers, trees and animals, insects.

In greater part of his picture, things resemble nearly the real object and they are exact, delicate and more vital in expression. These pictures of his are beyond the mediocre poor painter's on which they would take pride in "drawing a meaning, not a shape," using a rough brushing and ink monochrome and also, with an eccentricity. It is said that Yun Gong caught a butterfly and a dragonfly to make a minute observation and then to delineate exactly same with a real form and shape before working out his drawing.<sup>22</sup>

So Jung, Yak-yong wrote a poem in "Mo Ge Ryeong Ja Do母鷄領子圖" by Byeon Sang-byeok卞相璧, who was excellent at the realistic depiction.

As Byeon Sang-byeok was called a Byeon-cat, he is famous for painting of cat. — Minute description of shapes is in very detail and real and a powerful spiritual vitality is vivid — normal painters use only rough brush in painting a landscape.<sup>23</sup>

22. Jeong Yak-yong. "Bal Chui U Cheop," *Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, 1st Si Mun Jip (*Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, vol. II. Yeo Gang press, 1985. p. 492).

This critic means to blame painters who depend upon 'the hsieh-i' only for their attitude to look down on the method of painting by minute stroke of brush. And through this realistic point of view, he criticized Kang Se-hwang's painting of bamboo, who had put a great stress on the canons of painting. Following statements are selected from "Bal Sinjong Hwangje Mukjukdo Jang Ja跋神宗皇帝墨竹圖障子."

This scroll of bamboo painting in chinese ink was drawn by Sin Jong in Ming. It is the excellent method of painting a bamboo that leaves are keeping their exact shapes, though they are arranged intricately and mingled with but they are not in chaos. Being different from each other and scattered, a picture can not accomplish to represent the real form and shape. It is possible to succeed in the expression of its spirit, as far as the real form and shape of the object which is represented does not lose its reality. Recently, Kang, Pyo-Am drew one or two branches of bamboo, and painted three or four leaves in shape of the letter 分 and 𠂇 in painting a bamboo. This is not so much 'painting of a bamboo' as a 'picture of bamboo.'<sup>24</sup>

Distinguishing 'the picture of bamboo' from 'painting a bamboo,' as pointed above, he emphasizes on the method to draw a picture, namely, 'a drawing from nature.' So, naturally, he reproaches Kang Se-hwang's painting of bamboo for the lack of pursuing to draw from nature. To this extent, Jeong Yak-yong gave way to the theory of a realism and that of 'a drawing from nature.' But, it remains to be seen that how far the critics accept his views. At the same time there are few works he ranked high but actually are inferior in artistic quality. It results from the fact that he is a scholar of the Korean practical science rather than a learned literati.

23. Jeong Yak-yong. "Je Byeon Sang Byeok Mo Ge Ryeong Ja Do," *Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, vol. VI (*Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, 1st. pp. 436-437).

24. Jeong Yak-yong. "Bal Sinjong Hwangje Mukjukdo Jang Ja," *Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, 1st Si Mun Jip (*Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, vol. II. p. 488).



Jeong Yak-yong like Seong ho, Lee Ik, insisted that the scientific observation should be positively served. He demanded even accuracy like a camera, in addition to Lee Ik's proposal to use the western method and perspective of painting.

Well, on a sunny day, setting up a pair of convex lens and hanging a white curtain down at a distant spot after making a hole in a dark room, we can see an image which is reflected just alike through lens. Trees, bamboos and flowers, rocks, buildings and so forth are reflected upside down on the curtain. The same image with real objects in colour, form and shape makes a curious spectacle not to be accomplished by even art by Go Ge-ji or Yuk Tam-mi owing to their vividness in detail. For painting an exact picture without missing a hair, what can be better method than this?<sup>25</sup>

After all, Jeong Yak-yong's theory of a reality was the level to require a scientific and objective precision. We can meet with the extremity of the theory of reality in late Jo-Seon dynasty from the fact that such accuracy was called for painting, setting it aside whether this method will succeed or not.

Nevertheless, Jeong Yak-yong produced no works drawn from nature, but landscape painting and a flower and birds one in style of the southern literati painting in practice, that's why he sometimes is suspected of contradicting his own theory of painting. But, it is proper to say that there is not a contradiction between his theory and his practical works of painting. Because, his paintings belongs to learned literati's but painted as a hobby, at the same time he discussed about world painting as a professional.<sup>26</sup> There is an obvious evidence of this judgement in the following poem from "Heui Jak Cho Ge Do戲作荇溪圖."

25. Jeong Yak-yong. "Chil Sil Gwan Hwa Seol," *Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, 1st Si Mun Jip (*Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, vol. II. p. 138).

26. Lee Te-ho. *ibid.* p. 422.

When Ja Cheom(So Dong-pa) had lived in exile at Nam-He, he made more effort to draw a A-Mi mountain. Now, I would like to draw a 'Cho Ge Do.' But, there is no artisan painter in the world. So, who will try to draw a picture as an experiment in future? I'm drawing with an ink monochrome on 'a fenben(粉本, a draft)' Covered with the vestiges of chinese ink, it seems to paint in black all around. Many times, I change 'the fenben' again and again, my skill gets better gradually but the shape of mountain and the colour of river become more obscure. Notwithstanding, I paint a picture with boldness on silk and then hang it on the northwestern wall in a guest room.<sup>27</sup>

Da San, Jeong Yak-yong separated his painting the one painted as a hobby and the one painted professionally. Therefore, his actual painting is not inconsistent with his theory of painting, and also, his theory of a reality does not lose its reputation.

## V. The Scholars and Theories of Painting in 18th Century: Influence on Society

Seong Ho, Yeon Am, Da San's theory of painting, who were the representative scholars of the korean practical science school in late Jo-Seon dynasty, can be defined as the theory of realism in nature, in its natural state, 'the oriental theory of realism,' even though there are some differences in method and logic.

This theory of art influenced the contemporary painting in a very positive way. In general 18th century painting in Korea have four distinct characteristics:

- 1) The genesis of a genre painting: Gong Je. Yun Du-seo, Kwan A Je, Jo Young-seong

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27. Jeong Yak-yong. "Heui Jak Cho Ge Do," *Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, 4th Si Mun Jip (*Yeo Yu Dang Jeon Seo*, vol. I. p. 277).

- 2) The raising of 'the landscape of a true scenery眞境山水': Kyeom Je, Jeong Seon and his school
- 3) The prevalence of the style of literati painting: Heon Je, Shim Sa-jeong, Neung Ho-kwan, Lee In-sang
- 4) The emergence of 'the western painting style太西法': Pyo Am, Kang Se-hwang

Dan Won, Kim Hong-do are the most appropriate painter to represent the Korean Practical Science School of painter in the Joseon dynasty, because they cover these four characteristics. Scholars of the Korean practical science school also got in touch with literati in other science schools, too and shared the theory of painting and the opinion with the scholars.'

- 1) Lee Ha-gon's theory of 'a hsieh chen'
- 2) Jo Young-seok's theory of 'a drawing from nature'
- 3) Jo Gyi-meong's theory of 'a mystic and lofty vitality'
- 4) Lee Ku-sang's theory of the painting method in imperial court, and that of Confucian painting.

These facts imply that the thought and the spirit of scholars of the Korean practical science school in the 18th century have a strong influence both over art and society as well. In other words, their thoughts could be taken as a progressive administration, not as a resistive force for reformation.

The above propounded theory by practical science school, even in 21st century seems as relevant as any contemporary theory. Materialism was never the focus of their art and classified it into two categories- realism and idealism keeping the social relations in the fore. Realism was supported by progressive thought to innovate and pursue for a better life.

This theory presents a careful and prudent theory of art by the scholars of the Korean practical science, we must learn its hidden wisdom to embrace the significance of 'the rhythmic vitality' and 'the hsieh-i' and 'the presentation of a mental images' which are sub-

ject of disregard as an ideal theory.

The soul of this theory could be called as 'the inner realism' or 'the oriental realism.' And it is the responsibility of modern period artists to implement this theory into practise in the 21st century art and society, which is more commonly called, an 'IT society.'

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