

Ōsaka Zu Byōbu (Scenes of Osaka) and Europe

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It is my great pleasure to deliver an address as an author of the present forum, and also as a member of the research project for *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu* which is introduced later.

1.

In Japan, the year 2007 was very memorable year for *byōbu* or folding screen, led by three remarkable events. The first was the exhibition titled “Special Exhibition Kanō Eitoku: Momoyama Painter Extraordinaire” at the National Museum of Kyoto; the second was the exhibition titled “Biombo: Japan Heritage as Legend of Gold” which toured the Suntory Museum of Art in Tokyo and the Osaka Municipal Museum of Art; and the third was the international symposium titled “Reading the newly discovered *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu*” under the auspices of the Asahi Newspaper and Kansai University (Fig.1). These events appealed *byōbu* as a significant aspect of Japanese culture afresh to the public.

Of these three events, the exhibition of Kanō Eitoku’s paintings was particularly remarkable in its unprecedented large scale (Fig.2). The exhibition showed a number of his *byōbu* masterpieces including *Rakuchū Rakugai Zu Byōbu (Scenes in and around the Capital Kyoto)* and *Karajishi Zu Byōbu (Chinese Lions)*.

Kanō Eitoku (1543-1590), a great master of painting in the Momoyama



Fig.1



Fig.2

period, inheriting the family atelier developed by his ancestors including great-grandfather Masanobu (1434-1530) and grandfather Motonobu (1476-1559), gained his fame by contracting to produce murals for a number of temples, shrines, and castles. Particularly during his 30s and 40s, Eitoku worked for a number of large-scaled architectural projects including Azuchi Castle of Oda Nobunaga, Osaka Castle and Jurakudai Palace of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and the palace of the Retired Emperor Ōgimachi. According to

Honchō Ga Shi (The History of Painting in Japan), Eitoku's paintings were popular among feudal lords to decorate golden walls of their residential interior. Because of their attachment feature to architecture, not many murals have survived till now. Instead, his works in portable formats such as *byōbu* and *fusuma* or sliding screen have survived, among which the *byōbu* paintings including *Rakuchū Rakugai Zu Byōbu (Scenes in and around the Capital Kyoto)* and *Karajishi Zu Byōbu (Chinese Lions)* are particularly reputed his masterpieces.

Azuchijō Zu Byōbu (Azuchi Castle), one of his renowned *byōbu* paintings, deserves special attention in respect of that it was delivered to the Pope by the Tenshō Boy Mission (1582-1590). The report made by the *byōbu* research team of Azuchi town in Shiga prefecture in 2007 has come to draw interests on *byōbu* in the international level. Dr. Vande Walle will discuss this matter in today's forum.

It is generally considered that *Azuchijō Zu Byōbu (Azuchi Castle)* depicted Azuchi Castle with the seven-storied dungeon and its environs. The work was handed over to a Jesuit Missionary Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606) in the next year of its completion in 1580. Although its whereabouts is still unknown, the evidence by another missionary Luis Frois (1532-1597) gives a clue to that *byōbu* paintings were frequently delivered to Europe. He said;

Walls are embellished with a sort of ornament called *byōbu*, not decorated with tapestries as in Europe. A number of *byōbu* paintings are shipped from Japan to India every year, some of which have already reached Portugal and Europe. These *byōbu* paintings show a variety of subjects and motifs on gold background (*Frois's History of Japan*).

The evidence may show as to how *byōbu* gained popularity as Biombo in Europe.



Fig.3

Another exhibition “Biombo: Japan Heritage as Legend of Gold” exhibited 101 works of *byōbu* that are held inside and outside Japan, including 22 *byōbu* paintings held by the Suntory Museum of Art (Fig.3). The exhibition showed different perspectives from the special exhibition of Kanō Eitoku’s paintings not only by contextualising the history of *byōbu* in Japanese culture but also by exhibiting export *byōbu* sets.

The exhibition consisted of several thematic sections. One section, titled “Namban Cultural Exchange through

Folding Screens,” introduced famous genre paintings such as *Nijū-hachi Toshi Bankoku Ezu Byōbu* (*Twenty-eight Cities and the World*) and *Taisei Ōkō Kiba Zu Byōbu* (*Western Kings on Horseback*). Another section, titled “Screens Presented to Foreign Countries,” exhibited the works that were presented mainly to Korea and the Dutch Republic as official gifts. Produced by the official painters of the Kanō and Tosa schools at the command of the Tokugawa Shogunate, these paintings include a variety of subjects such as warriors, genre, and birds and flowers, among which *Fuji Makigari Zu Byōbu* (*Hunting at the Foot of Mt. Fuji*), *Shiki Kōsaku Zu Byōbu* (*Farming Scenes in the Four Seasons*), and *Karita Kari Akikusa Zu Byōbu* (*Geese in a Harvested Field and Autumn Grasses*) are particularly notable.

Furthermore, the section which was titled “Folding Screens That Crossed the Seas” attempted to reproduce *Gion Sairei Zu Byōbu* (*the Gion Festival*) in a single big panel. Originally as a *fusuma* or sliding screen paint-

ing unit, the work was separated into three sections and mounted as *byōbu* units respectively that were parted in Japan, Germany and the US.

2.

In terms of transformation from one format to the other, *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu* also shows a good example. Originally mounted as an eight-panel unit, this *byōbu* now embellishes the Indian Room of Eggenberg Castle in Graz, Austria (Fig.4).

Today the replica of *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu* in the form of an original eight-panel unit is exhibited here (Fig.5). In spite of its replicative character, this replica is the only example in a *byōbu* format because each of the original panels is now separated. Here the history of *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu* is briefly traced while its subject-matter will be discussed in detail in this forum by Dr. Ehmecke.



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6

Situated in the ancient Austrian city of Graz, Eggenberg Castle was commenced in 1625 by the first Prince of Eggenberg Hans Ulrich (1568-1634) who became a member of the House of Habsburg after his provincial career (Fig.6). The castle was fashioned into the present baroque style by his son Johann Anton (1610-49).

Dr. Barbara Kaiser, Chief Curator of Eggenberg Castle of the Joanneum Museum of Styria, who discovered and introduced *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu*, noted the

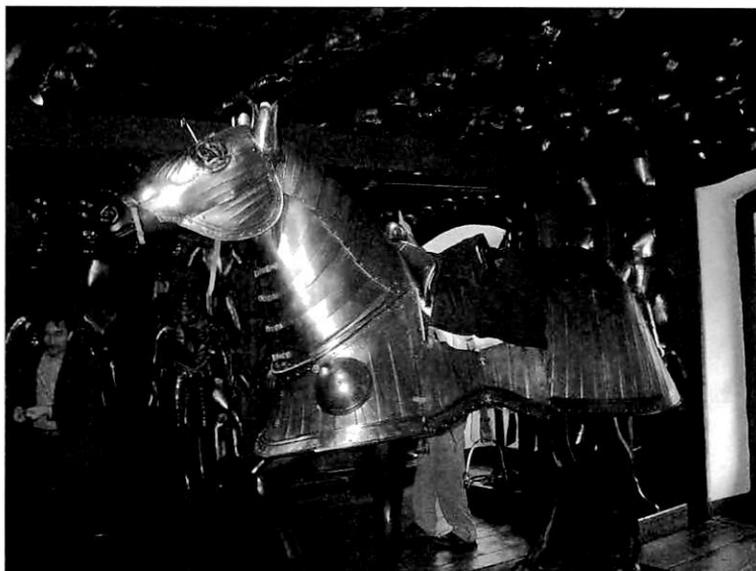


Fig.7

contemporaneity of Hans Ulrich with Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-98). Similar to Hideyoshi who flourished in the Warring State period, Hans Ulrich dedicated his life to frontier troubles with the Ottomans. More than one thousand pieces of the collection of arms and harnesses in the Armoury Museum of Graz tell a warlike character at the time of Hans Ulrich (Fig.7).

It is not known as to how and when this *byōbu* reached Eggenberg Castle. One possibility is the time of the third Prince Johann Seyfried (1644-1713) who was a great patron of art (Fig.8). He was assigned to add twenty-four rooms to the castle, each of which was decorated with the mural paintings depicting the biblical and mythical subjects. According to Dr. Kaiser, it is likely that "a Spanish folding screen in Indian style" referred to in the inventory which was made at the time of his death may be identified as the very *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu*.



Fig.8

According to Dr. Kaiser, the *byōbu* was purchased in Wien from a merchant of Antwerp although the actual route as to how the *byōbu* reached Wien is still in vague. Therefore, the movement of *byōbu* inside Europe will be a significant issue to be examined.

Later on, the castle was succeeded by the sisters of Maria Elenora and Maria Theresia. When the castle was renovated in the rococo style by Elenora in 1750, each panel of the *byōbu* unit was separated and mounted on the wall. Moreover, the panels became sur-

rounded by chinoiserie mural paintings by local painters, showing the orientalism at that time (Fig.9).

After the World War II, Eggenberg Castle became a part of the Joanneum Museum of Styria, consisting of thirteen Museums. During the restoration of the castle in the year 2000, Chief Curator Dr. Kaiser threw a light on *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu* in relation with the *byōbu* investigations in the Schönbrunn Palace. In collaboration with Japanese specialists, eight panels were dismounted and restored. Furthermore, the panels were reproduced in the form of an original unit and photographed. As a result of throughout investigation, the *byōbu* was identified as it depicts Osaka Castle and its environs under the Toyotomi rule. The lecture given by Dr. Franziska Ehmcke of the Cologne University in October 2006 at Kansai University promoted the value of *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu* to the public. The agreement on research partnership among the Kansai University Research Centre for Naniwa-Osaka Cultural Heritage



Fig.9

Studies, Joanneum Museum of Styria, and Osaka Castle Tower in June 2007 has set forward with a more detailed study of *Ōsaka Zu Byōbu*.

Reference:

Barbara Kaiser, *Schloos Eggenberg*, Landesmuseum Joanneum and Christian Brandsttten Venlag, 2006

Remarks:

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