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Expanding Horizons

Kim Hongdo's *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* and European Inspiration in Korean
True Scenery Painting of the Eighteenth Century

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Art History

By

Nathaniel Harrison Kingdon

2012

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Expanding Horizons

Kim Hongdo's *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* and European Inspiration in Korean
True Scenery Painting of the Eighteenth Century

By

Nathaniel Harrison Kingdon

Masters of Arts in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Burglind Jungmann, Chair

The authenticity of the *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* attributed to Kim Hongdo (1745-before 1818) is contested by scholars. Yi Song-mi argues that the style of the paintings correspond to a European sensibility that was not known in Korea in the late eighteenth century, whereas, Oh Ju-seok does not question the attribution to Kim Hongdo or the early dating of the album to ca. 1788. This debate contests Kim's progressive role in the development of the genre of true scenery painting as well as the extent to which Korean artists utilized European techniques and styles at the end of the eighteenth century.

In order to understand whether Kim's painting is truly an anomaly, I examine the development of true scenery painting through two other major figures, Chŏng Sŏn (1676-1759) and Kang Sehwang (1713-1776), with special attention as to the extent to which they

integrate and expand on tradition. I also compare Kim's album with his set of eight hanging scrolls (ca. 1788) that contain similar techniques, styles, and calligraphic elements. My research indicates that both Chǒng and Kang were keen innovators in the true-scenery genre, experimenting with many of the European techniques and styles that appear in the *Four Districts* album. In addition, Kim's set of eight hanging scrolls confirm that he used a similarly detailed style of painting for other commissions and that there may be calligraphic evidence to prove that the contested album is by his same hand. Although the true origin of the album may never be proven, my research indicates that it sits comfortably within the development of true-scenery painting in the eighteenth century as well as Kim's oeuvre of landscape works.

The Thesis of Nathaniel Kingdon is approved.

Robert Brown

Hui Shu Lee

Burglind Jungmann, Committee Chair

University of Los Angeles

2012

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Expanding Horizons

Kim Hongdo's *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* and European Inspiration in Korean True Scenery Painting of the Eighteenth Century

Introduction

In 1995, the National Museum of Korea in Seoul put on display a rare album of paintings by Korea's most beloved artist, Kim Hongdo (1745-before 1818) under the title *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* (*Kŭmgang sagŭn ch'ŏp*, fig. 1, 19-20).¹ This album, previously known only through photographs, contains paintings of the Kŭmgang region (in present day North Korea) that was the most popular destination for eighteenth-century artists who took an increasing interest in native Korean rather than Chinese scenery as the subject of their landscapes. The scholar Oh Ju-seok [O Chusŏk] traces the rich mythology surrounding the album in his book *The Art of Kim Hong-do*. Ostensibly created for King Chŏngjo (1752-1800) in 1788, his successor King Sunjo (r.1800-1834) gifted the album to his brother-in-law Hong Hyŭnju (1793-1865) in 1809 and it was Hong's older brother, Hong Sŏkju (1774-1842), who wrote a quatrain for every one of the seventy album leaves (Another brother, Hong Kilju [1786-1841] included 23 of the 70 quatrains in the final compilation).² After this early documentation, the album seems to have disappeared into private collections until resurfacing in the National Museum exhibition nearly two centuries later.

More compelling than the history of the album, however, is the startling composition and style of the images themselves. Every scene is meticulously rendered according to a

¹The title "Complete View of Kŭmgang" (*Kŭmgang chŏndo*) is written on the album frontispiece but this is not in Kim's handwriting and should not be understood as the original title given to the work. *Tanwŏn* 242.

²Oh summarizes Hong Kilju's *On the Ocean and the Mountain by Danwon* [Kim Hongdo] (*Tanwŏnŭi "Haesan Ch'ŏp" twie cherŭl talta*) of 1812. Oh 1998, 148-149 (For an English version of Oh's text see Oh 2005) Only sixty leaves, divided into five separate albums of twelve paintings, were loaned to the National Museum exhibition. The ten remaining leaves are scattered among individual collections. *Tanwŏn* 242.

specific viewpoint in the real world and the detailed brushwork is based on a close examination of the natural landscape. Most importantly, the artist employs techniques such as modeling with shade and color, perspective and a low horizon line that are drawn from European painting sources. These peculiarities run contrary to many of the salient aspects of traditional literati painting; that is to say, an emphasis on stylized brushwork, multiple perspectives within a single painting, and an emphasis on the spiritual character of the landscape among others. The art historian Yi Song-mi, finds this discrepancy with traditional landscape forms impossible to fathom in the context of late eighteenth-century Korea. She is unable to locate a similar sense of space and description in Kim Hongdo's greater oeuvre and other contemporary paintings and questions the attribution to Kim as well as the early date of 1788. Oh Ju-seok, by contrast, features the album in his book as one of the great monuments of Kim's landscape paintings.

This debate over the authenticity of the *Four Districts Album* contests the extent to which Korean landscape artists departed from traditional stylistic forms in the eighteenth century. A close analysis of the development of Korean topographical painting, known as *true scenery* (*chin'gyǒng*), reveals that it was a site for stylistic innovation from its very inception. The great pioneer of the genre, Chǒng Sǒn (1676–1759), sought to balance traditional notions of a spiritual landscape with a new, scientific picture of the universe adopted from European astronomy. Kang Sehwang (1713–1791), the prime theorist of true scenery, was even more experimental, applying European painting techniques such as one-point perspective, modelling through chiaroscuro, and bright coloring to his landscape work. It is in this tradition of innovation and experimentation, that we must consider Kim Hongdo's *Four Districts Album*; not as a peculiarity, but as part of a development that extends back to the origins of true-scenery painting in Korea.

True Scenery: Perceiving the Korean landscape

Landscapes of real locations in Korea are known as “true scenery” (*chin’gyǒng*) paintings. The category is sometimes retro-actively applied to paintings before the eighteenth century but the actual term entered the Korean language in the eighteenth century and describes a very specific line of artistic development that continued well into the twentieth century.³ The most salient characteristic of true scenery paintings is that they depict a specifically Korean landscape. In fact, the Korean word for true (*chin*) was used to denote something that was from Korea as opposed to China. Beginning in the late Silla period (668-953), *tangmuk* referred to ink (*muk*) from Tang China whereas domestically produced inks were known as *chinmuk* or “true” ink.⁴ In modern times, the idea of “true scenery” as a distinctly Korean artistic form holds great appeal. Many scholars link “true scenery” to a larger intellectual shift towards native Korean culture after the collapse of the Ming dynasty in 1644.⁵ While this was certainly a watershed moment for Korean intellectuals, most of whom valued Ming China as the peak of civilization, true scenery painting is, at its inception at least, closely linked to the tradition of Chinese landscape painting.

Topographical landscape portraits, to borrow a term from Kenneth S. Ganza,⁶ have been produced with varying degrees of frequency throughout the history of Chinese

³ Yi Song-mi includes Pyŏn Kwansik’s *Pearl Pond in Inner Kŭmgang* of 1960 in her book *Korean Landscape Painting*. Yi 2006, 164. Yi also cites the Chinese emperor Huizong, who praises the Korean painter Yi Nyŏng (Early 12th century) for painting in a different manner than the Song painters, as evidence that Yi Nyŏng may have depicted Korean scenery as early as that 12th century. Yi 2006, 39.

⁴ Yi 1998, 334.

⁵ Yi Song-mi, among others, favors this anti-Qing motivation as a primary reason for Korean artists to turn their attention to Korean subjects. Yi 2006, 93-94)

⁶ Ganza entitles the first chapter of his book, *Journeys of the Spirit*, “The Topographical Landscape Portrait in Chinese Painting.”

painting. The great Confucian scholar Jing Hao (ca. 900-950) contributed the earliest known reference to the term “*chen ching*” (The Chinese rendering of *chin’gyǒng*) in his *Pifachi* (A Note on the Art of Brush) of ca. 900.⁷ However, the term seems to have fallen out of fashion in the centuries after Jing as Chinese artists adopted an increasingly stylized representation of the natural world. In the late Ming period (1520-1644) several artists re-visited the genre. Song Xu (1525-1605) produced an album of scenes of famous places from throughout the entire Chinese empire in 1600.⁸ However, considering the great distances involved, it is unlikely that he painted all of the landscapes on-site. Rather than recount well-known landscapes, Zhang Hong’s (ca. 1580-after 1650) *Scenes from the Yueh Region* of 1639 reads like a travelogue of a beautiful but relatively unfamiliar location.⁹ As these two examples indicate, Chinese topographical landscape portraits encompass a large and disparate collection of projects. Paintings of the artist’s home area, landscapes of remote places and tourist attractions are but a few examples.¹⁰ Korean true-scenery painters by contrast favored “perfect scenery” (*chǒlkyǒng*) that carry historical or literary allusions. The vast majority of these paintings depict the Eight scenic spots of Kwandong (Kwandong p’algyǒng, the Kǔmgang region is included in this area), Seoul and the Han river, Kaesǒng (Sǒngdo), and the Yǒngnam area.¹¹ In addition, they are characterized by a high degree of attention to natural detail that could only have been ascertained by making a physical trip to the location or studying sketches brought back from such an expedition. Although work by artists like Song and Zhang represented a small revival of topographical painting in China, the genre never managed to capture the popular imagination. There was always a bias in China against

⁷ Takeuchi 1989, 10.

⁸ Cahill 1962, 159.

⁹ Cahill 1962, 163.

¹⁰ Ganz 7.

¹¹ Lee 217.

artists who did not paint in the literati tradition and few collectors had a taste for landscapes of real locations.¹²

Topographical landscape portraits in Japan, also known as *Shinkei* (Ko: *chin'gyŏng*) are much closer to true-scenery painting in Korea. In both countries the genre emerged from the techniques and philosophy of literati painting (Ko: *muninhwa*. J: *nanga*). However, *shinkei* seems to develop slightly later in Japan. The great Japanese pioneer of *shinkei*, Ike Taiga (1723-1776) was born over a decade after Chŏng Sŏn (1676-1759) produced his first true-scenery album of the Kŭmgang region in 1711. Similarly, the genre is not widely addressed in literature until Kuwayama Gyokushū (1746-1799) discusses it in the 1790's.¹³ By contrast, Kang Sehwang (1713-1776) in Korea, makes use of the term *chin'gyŏng* in a colophon to his true-scenery painting *Tosan Academy* in 1751.¹⁴ By using the term to describe a painted landscape in the literati or Southern-school style, Kang locates true-scenery in the literati tradition, effectively raising this form of topographical painting to the level of art. Burglind Jungmann raises the possibility that the term *true scenery* may have then entered the Japanese vocabulary by way of Korean scholars and painters who travelled to Japan as envoys in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁵

In addition to the fact that Korean and Japanese true-scenery paintings did not emerge concurrently, the genre developed along divergent stylistic lines in each country. According to Jungmann, Korean true-scenery paintings approximate a more accurate visual representation of the "actual landscape" whereas Japanese painters sometimes only hinted at real locations.¹⁶ Especially relevant to the discussion of Kim Hongdo's album is the

¹² Cahill, 1962 153.

¹³ Takeuchi 1989, 3.

¹⁴ Jungmann 191.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jungmann 196.

manner in which Korean true-scenery painters at the end of the eighteenth century seem to embrace European techniques of modeling and perspective that are more restrained in Japanese examples. Paradoxically, Japanese artists had direct access to European prints through Dutch traders in Nagasaki, whereas Koreans relied on second-hand information of the West from China. One of the earliest Japanese artists to embrace Western painting techniques was Shiba Kokan (1747-1818). He stated that, “Western-style painting ‘paints reality’ [but] Eastern pictures have no accuracy of detail, and without accuracy, a picture is not really a picture at all.”¹⁷ It was Gyokushū, who countered on behalf of the painters working in the “Eastern mode,” ridiculing Shiba’s paintings as “rough and ugly” and likening their supporters to barbarians.¹⁸ Similar arguments over western painting were commonplace in China¹⁹ and by the end of the eighteenth century it seems that the lines between practitioners of the Western and Eastern modes were clearly defined in China and Japan. In Korea, however, as far as we can judge from extant visual and textual material, there were no painters working in the eighteenth century in an exclusively European-inspired form, and there appears to have been little outspoken prejudice towards European techniques in the arts. Perhaps this is the reason why Korean painters at the end of the eighteenth century were able to introduce European techniques into their true scenery paintings without suffering criticism from traditionalists. Although, there is a revival in topographical painting in China and Japan during the eighteenth century, the specific character of Korean true-scenery painting as well as the socio-political environment in which it developed should not be conflated into any greater notion of a pan-Asian movement.

¹⁷ Takeuchi 1992, 143.

¹⁸ Takeuchi 1989, 13.

¹⁹ In China, technical painting in the Western-style was termed “line drawing” (xianfa hua) and was categorically distinguished from the truly artistic paintings by literati (wenren hua). Yang 343.

The eighteenth century saw a dramatic restructuring of Korean society. The Uniform Land-Tax Law (*taedongpŏp*, 1708²⁰), and the Equalized Tax law (*kyunyŏkpŏp*, 1750), both enacted under King Yŏngjo (r. 1724-1776) were intended to ease the financial burden on the peasants. Commoner landlords began to accumulate wealth and, as a result, engage with high culture and the arts to a much more significant degree. Likewise, government licensed merchants in the first half of the century, monopolized the market and amassed great fortunes.²¹ Although their low class background prevented them from attaining the status of a *yangban* (the highest class in the Korean social hierarchy), many cultivated a similarly high-class lifestyle and became active patrons of the arts. As a result, the *yangban* elite no longer wielded absolute control over artistic production and new styles and tastes infiltrated the art market. Some reform-minded Confucian scholars (commonly grouped together as *sirhak*) sought to restructure conservative Chosŏn society from the ground up. They based their arguments in statistical analysis and observations of the peasants and the natural world.

In 1630, Chŏng Tuwŏn (b. 1581) met the Jesuit priest Joao Rodrigues in Tengchow and convinced him to part with books on western astronomy and geography, a telescope, a striking clock and a pair of guns.²² Korean scholars puzzled over foreign items like these, and sought to understand the practical physics behind their operation. A major area of interest was western astronomy because of its practical application in the computation of calendars and meteorological phenomena. As early as 1653, Korea switched its entire calendar system to the Western model.²³ The reform-minded Confucian scholars who championed Western

²⁰ The law was first introduced to Kyŏnggi province in 1608 and was gradually expanded to other provinces. In 1708 it became a national law, enforced throughout the entire country. Eckert 159.

²¹ Eckert 159-161.

²² Baker 219.

²³ China switched to the Western system between 1636 and 1637. Baker 223.

technologies, also applied a type of scientific inquiry to solving many social problems of the day. Instead of relying solely on Confucian texts, many of these progressive scholars sought evidence in greater society and the natural world. This interest in the “low” people and geology contradicts the image of a traditional *yangban* scholar concerned only with abstract theorizing. Similarly, The artists who took up true-scenery painting, stepped out of their studio and visited real locations in Korea in order to observe natural phenomena first-hand. Thus, the eighteenth century saw a broadening not only in the pool of patrons but in intellectual discourse and the techniques available to the artist.

The *Album of the Four Districts*: a snapshot landscape

The *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* reflects the progressive social and scientific attitudes that developed during the latter half of the eighteenth century in Korea. Oh Ju-seok claims that the album was produced for king Chŏngjo to accompany a large hanging scroll painted by Kim in 1788. According to the scholar Hong Kilchu (1786-1841), “the deceased king ordered Kim Hongdo to paint the mountain, and the king kept the 70-page, five-volume album in the palace.”²⁴ Although he does not specify the date, Hong, whose brother was stepson to the king, verifies that an album was commissioned by the throne. Chŏngjo sent Kim Hongdo to the Kŭmgang area twice in 1788 and 1792 and so we can assume that the album was completed in relation to one of these two expeditions.

By comparing *Ch’ongsŏkchŏng* (Ch’ongsŏk Pavilion, fig. 1) from the *Four Districts* album with an image of the same title from Kim’s *Album of the Ŭlmyo Year* [1795] (fig. 2), we can see how the former album breaks with traditional representations of landscape.

²⁴ Oh summarizes Hong Kilchu’s *On the Ocean and the Mountain by Danwon* [Kim Hongdo] (Tanwŏnŭi “Haesan Ch’ŏp” *twie cherŭl talta*) of 1812. Oh 2005, 141-142.

Both images are painted from approximately the same location and describe the same coastal landscape with four pillars of rock jutting up out of the water and a slope leading up to a cliff with a pavilion at the summit. Stylistically, however, the two paintings could not be more distant. Whereas the 1788 painting is characterized by precise lines of uniform thickness with a distinct horizon line and little indication of atmosphere, the painting from 1795 seems to describe a gale, with rough seas, wind-blown trees and a fog that obscures the distinction between sea and sky. The brush-strokes are loose and impart a movement in the painting that is absent in the earlier work. Yi Song-mi is particularly struck by the meticulous use of color in the 1788 painting that serves to further differentiate the sea from the sky from the land as well as the great expanse of space created by the low horizon line. These characteristics, so Yi argues, reflect a distinctly Western understanding of space that was not yet adopted by Korean artists in the late eighteenth century. These observations, as well as the discovery of three other albums containing almost identical compositions, cause her to question the attribution to Kim Hongdo and the early date of 1788.²⁵

Although, Oh Ju-seok briefly raises the question of authenticity²⁶, his decision to include no fewer than nineteen reproductions from the 1788 album and extensive discussion of the album's provenance can be understood as a tacit approval of its authenticity. He does not find the composition and style of the paintings out of place in the late eighteenth century and does not question Kim Hongdo's technical ability to produce such works. Yi Song-mi, by contrast, cannot reconcile the album with other landscapes by Kim Hongdo and other artists from the period and argues that it must have been produced

²⁵ Yi 1998 361.

²⁶ "The sparse imitation seals and incomprehensible ink writings raised doubts as to the paintings' authenticity, but these traces make them more realistic." Oh 2005, 146.

sometime in the early nineteenth century.²⁷ In order to address the album attribution, it is imperative, therefore, to re-examine how Korean artists perceived the landscape in the late eighteenth century and how this perception evolved over the course of the eighteenth century.

Chǒng Sǒn: balancing form and spirit

Chǒng Sǒn is the artist credited with developing “true scenery” as a major subject for painting in the eighteenth century. Born into the *yangban* class, it would appear that Chǒng was destined for a life of scholarship, possibly even a position in government. However, in the increasingly mobile social climate of the early eighteenth century, Chǒng’s family fell on hard times. Most impoverished or “fallen” *yangban* families were able to work hereditary farm land and prevent their progeny from entering into a profession as lowly as that of an artist. Chǒng’s family, however, did not own land and it is a sign of their desperate state that he was allowed to take up the brush.²⁸ Therefore, the earliest champion of true-scenery painting can be understood as, himself, a direct product of the restructuring of society at the turn of the eighteenth century.

In 1716, Chǒng was employed at the court, not as a court painter (*hwawǒn*) but as chief professor (*Kyǒngyosu*) in the department of Astronomy.²⁹ Presumably, his duties involved making astrological and astronomical charts and maps. As we can tell from extant examples,³⁰ Korean astronomers relied heavily on cosmology, principles drawn from neo-Confucianism and ideas of *Yin* and *Yang* from the *Yi Jing*. However, Korean astronomers at

²⁷ Yi 1998, 361.

²⁸ Ch’oe 27.

²⁹ Kang 170.

³⁰ Kang Kwanshik includes a set of charts from the early eighteenth century. Kang 187.

this time also began to incorporate European scientific ideas and practices into their repertoire. Chŏng's true-scenery paintings epitomize this synthesis of traditional philosophy with a European, more scientific approach to the natural world.

In 1711, Chŏng Sŏn painted thirteen landscapes for *Album of P'ungak (Kŭmgang)*³¹ *Mountain in the Sinmyo Year* [1711]. Chŏng's master Kim Ch'anghŭp (1653-1722) led a class trip to the Kŭmgang region in that same year and Ch'oe Wansu speculates that Chŏng may have been a participant.³² By the eighteenth century, the Kŭmgang area was already famous as a scenic destination for travellers and painters. Kim Ch'anghŭp, for example, had already travelled there five times before the 1711 expedition.³³ One leaf from the *Sinmyo Year* album, *Changansa* (Fig. 3), depicts the temple which marks the entrance to one of the most travelled routes through the Kŭmgang mountain range. A stream divides the painting through the center with a jagged mountain range on the right and sloping hills on the left. The temple complex is situated to the left of the stream and a bridge at the bottom center connects the left and right banks. This construction, known as the "Rainbow Bridge" was a famous scenic spot in the area.³⁴ Yi Hagon (1677-1724), who travelled to the same location with Chŏng Sŏn in 1714, remarked on the tremendous height of the bridge at over three hundred "ch'ok."³⁵ It is no coincidence then that Chŏng locates the bridge at the center of the painting and enhances its size, causing it to tower over the small buildings hidden in the trees directly to the left of the bridge. This incredible contrast in scale, however, does not seem out of place in a stylized composition that does not prioritize visual fidelity to the real

³¹ "P'ungak" means autumn foliage and is the name used for the Kŭmgang region during the autumn months. Yi 2006, 100.

³² Ch'oe 29.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ch'oe translates from Yi Hagon's *Tut'ach'o*, volume 14, entitled *Tongyurok* (Hyŏn, Sang-byŏk, and Ha-gon Yi. *Kwanbong Yugo*. Sŏul-si: Minjok Munhwa Chŏujinhoe, 1997. Print, vol. 191, 453-485). Ch'oe, 84.

³⁵ Ibid.

location. Chǒng employs minimal color, white to depict the snowy mountaintops and red for the pillars of the temple, and the brushstrokes are distinct and animated. This emphasis on formal composition, brushstroke and a monotone palette is characteristic of a type of Chinese literati painting known as the Southern School style.

Like all well-trained artists of the period, Chǒng Sǒn studied the Southern school style and was particularly fond of the Guo Xi.³⁶ Chǒng is also known to have referred to imported printed books in order to observe Southern school techniques in copies of paintings in various Chinese styles.³⁷ Han Junghee speculates that printed collections of landscapes such as *Sancai tuhui* (1607), *Haenei qiguan* (1609), *Mingshan tu* (1633), and *Taiping shanshui tu* (1648) may have been critical to the development of Korean true-scenery painting in particular.³⁸ However, the great majority of these prints are highly stylized with huge leaps in perspective between the foreground and background and exaggerated calligraphic brushstrokes. Korean artists may have referred to them to emulate Southern school techniques but there is none of the attention to natural detail that is characteristic of Korean true-scenery painting from Chǒng Sǒn onward.

Through printed materials and textual sources, Chǒng mastered Southern school techniques such as the long, overlapping lines or “hemp-fiber” brushstrokes that mark the ridges in the hillside on the left side of *Changansa* or the horizontal “mi” ink dots used to indicate texture the mountains.³⁹ This kind of stylized brushwork reflects Guo Xi’s insistence on a formulaic approach to landscape paintings according to his specific rules for painting,

³⁶ Ch’oe 27.

³⁷ The most well-known example is Chǒng Sǒn’s *Tao Yuanming Returning Home* from the early eighteenth century. The posture of the standing figure is clearly borrowed from a printed image in *Jieziyuan huazhun* printed in China in 1679.

³⁸ Han 255. Ko Yǒn Hŭi examines similarities between Chǒng Sǒn’s painting and printed materials, focusing on *Haenei qiguan* and *Mingshan tu* in particular. See Ko 73-98.

³⁹ Yi 1998, 343.

as stipulated in the *Linquan Gaozhi*.⁴⁰ Ernst Gombrich criticizes this explicit stylization that acts as a selective screen, admitting only features for which a specific scheme exists. He argues that adapting the real through such a screen distorts the visual fidelity of the painting and causes the artist to see only that for which a scheme exists and ignore the rest.⁴¹

Another observation by Yi Hagon in Chŏng Sŏn's album *Haeak Chŏnsin Ch'ŏp* of 1712, supports Gombrich's conclusion. He writes, "It must be that when inspiration struck [Chŏng Sŏn], he just painted as fancy took him, seeking the most interesting parts without attempting a close resemblance."⁴² If we trust Yi's description of Chŏng's method, then Chŏng both emphasizes certain "interesting" parts over others and pays little attention to the visual resemblance of the physical landscape, in accordance with Gombrich's analysis. However, Gombrich does more than propose the limitations that Southern school practices impose on painting, he argues that the selective screen has a reflexive effect on the artist himself. An artist's technical ability not only determines what he can paint, but how he perceives the real world. Although, Chŏng Sŏn painted real landscapes in Korea, he viewed them through the selective screen of painting conventions from the Southern school.

Chŏng Sŏn's contemporaries however, do not appear to have understood his paintings as selective descriptions of real landscapes. Hong Chungsŏng (1668-1735), a scholar who viewed the 1712 album in 1724 after returning from the Kŭmgang region exclaimed, "I don't know if the clouds and mists have become ink washes or the ink washes have become clouds and mists. It is no different to what I have experienced myself."⁴³ Even though the album was painted in a highly stylized manner after the Southern school, Hong is struck by the paintings' fidelity to the original location. In order to explain this apparent

⁴⁰ Sakanishi Shio translates Guo Xi's "rules for painting" in *Linquan Gaozhi*. Sakanishi 53.

⁴¹ Gombrich 84.

⁴² Ch'oe 84.

⁴³ Ch'oe 31.

paradox, it is important to explore the type of reality that Chǒng describes in his early true-scenery paintings. Gombrich emphasizes the inability of any painting to capture the “appearance” of a landscape. When we travel to a location in the real world, we are able to take up an infinite number of viewpoints and take in a succession of aspects of the scene. In painting, Gombrich argues, the painter is tied to the single viewpoint from his easel and describes objects only from one side, leaving the viewer to guess what is behind.⁴⁴ This limitation is certainly true of western paintings executed in single-point perspective, however, the reality described in Korean true-scenery landscapes is not altogether dissimilar to the notion of “appearance” as Gombrich defines it. If we examine the right portion of the bridge in *Changansa* we can see both the ramp of the bridge from above and the underside from below. This visual anomaly is impossible to reconcile with any single perspective of the landscape. Instead, it seems that Chǒng Sǒn incorporated several different perspectives into the landscape. Burglind Jungmann notes that painters from the East Asian tradition have long attempted to describe their own experience strolling through the landscape in their paintings.⁴⁵ In *Changansa*, we can imagine a progression from the bottom right of the painting, where a traveller might look out over the top of the bridge and to the temples behind, along the bridge, through the temple complex and up along a path demarcated with dotted lines, into the background in the upper center. Having crossed the bridge, the traveller looks back, a perspective from which he can see the underside of the bridge. This multiple perspective technique (also common to Chinese painting) serves to reconstruct the landscape according to its “appearance” as viewed by the painter as he moved through the scene. While the image may not be visually accurate according to one-point perspective, it

⁴⁴ Gombrich 84.

⁴⁵ Jungmann 203.

represents a version of reality that displays not only what is in front but also, that which is hiding behind.

In addition to providing the viewer with the visual appearance of the landscape, Chŏng Sŏn also seeks to communicate the spiritual experience of the location. In *Changansa*, the stream divides the composition into two equal halves. The gently sloping hillside on the left is constructed with bent brushstrokes, and trees, drawn in a wet stroke that is almost a wash, soften the contours. By contrast, the mountains on the right bank jut up sharply in the frost-edged brushstrokes (*chun*) for which Chŏng Sŏn was well-known.⁴⁶ These complementary mountain styles, represent the balancing forces of Yin and Yang and reflect Chŏng Sŏn's study of the early Chinese text on geomantic forces, the *Yi-jing* (The Book of Changes, ca. 300-200BC).⁴⁷ While we can safely assume that in the real world the visual contrast between the two banks was not as pronounced, Chŏng Sŏn succeeds in representing his thought in the painting. A nineteenth-century scholar who also served as minister of the board of personnel, Yi Wŏnmyŏng (1807-1887), claims that Chŏng Sŏn made the following comment about a fellow painter's work:

“This is really painted well; however, it lacks the true nature. He should find a broken down wall and spread silk over it and observe it morning and evening. Then he will see the shapes of the mountains, high, flat or curved. This will take the form of a landscape. When it has spirit, the meaning will be there... the whole scenery will be natural and not artificial.”⁴⁸

Yi implies that Chŏng is quoting Guo Xi but the quote is actually taken from Shen Gua's *Mengxi Bitan* and attributed to another eleventh century painter, Song Di.⁴⁹ Song is

⁴⁶ Cho'e 84

⁴⁷ Pak Chun-wŏn's *Kŭmsŏk chip* (Collection of Epigraphy) is reproduced in O Sechang's *Kŭnyŏk sŏhwajing*: Pak says that he understands that Chŏng Sŏn likes “Chu Yŏk” (Changes of Chu) and knew the *Yi Kyŏng* [Yi Jing] very well. O 162-163 (or vol. 2, 656). Yi Sŏng-mi also refers to: O Chu-sŏk, *Yet kŭrim iyagi*, Pangmulgwan sinmun, no 306 (Feb. 1, 1997), 3.

⁴⁸ Cho'e 29.

⁴⁹ Roderick Whitfield makes this note in Cho'e Wansu's text. Cho'e 29.

firmly associated with the Southern School lineage and Guo Xi, although an academy painter, was incorporated into the literati tradition by Korean scholars who had a high regard for his painting style and written works. The above quotation, therefore, can be taken as further evidence that Chǒng incorporated Southern school attitudes into his painting theory. His abstract language and tone reflects, above all, the conventions of a literati language. Still, it is striking that the proclaimed father of true-scenery painting, encourages his colleague to paint from an abstract model rather than a real landscape. The true landscape produced by such a method would not be visually comparable to any mountain range in the real world. However, if the artist were successful, the spirit of the painting would reflect a “true” thought that emerged from contemplating the contours of an abstract shape. Of course, Chǒng’s true-scenery paintings are not abstract but relate to real locations in Korea. In *Pifachi* Jing Hao, claims that “life-likeness (*si*) means to achieve the form (*xing*) of the object but to leave out its spirit (*qi*). Reality (*zhen*) means that the forces of both spirit and substance (*ji*) are strong.”⁵⁰ Chǒng paints “reality” as Jing describes it according to its visual form in the physical world and an intangible spirit. Jing’s theories on painting, as stated in the *Pifachi*, became the basis for the “grand style” of Northern Song landscape painting and the book would have been well-known to Chǒng for this reason.⁵¹ Chǒng’s true-scenery paintings from the early eighteenth century are an attempt to synthesize a formal description of a real location with the notion of a spiritual landscape.

If Chǒng Sǒn’s album from 1711 draws heavily on his early training in the Southern school style, many of his later paintings reveal a more personal manner. In 1747 painted the same temple at *Changansa* (Fig. 4) from almost exactly the same position. Again, the stream splits a range of mountains with the temples tucked along the left bank and the Rainbow

⁵⁰ Translated by Munakata Kiyohiko. Munakata 12.

⁵¹ Munakata 56.

Bridge spanning the base of the composition. In many ways the Southern school techniques of hemp-fiber brushstrokes and Mi ink dots, named after Mi Fu (1051–1107) and his son Mi Youren (1086-1165), are more pronounced in this painting. The mountain to the left, for example, is entirely covered by parallel marks and the distant mountains in the center are composed of overlapping brushstrokes. However, the strokes are executed with greater confidence and cohesion and reflect a highly developed personal style. The description of flowing water, in particular, appears as stylized repetitive outlines in the 1711 painting, whereas in the 1747 version Chǒng employs separate brushstrokes of varying speed and strength. Not only does the water appear to flow with a greater degree of naturalism in the later painting but one can almost gauge the speed of the current. This emphasis on tangible reality is also reflected in the temple buildings, which are more comfortably incorporated into the natural landscape, and the believable shape of the mountains themselves. Although there is still a contrast between the pointed mountains on the right and the sloping mountain on the left, the contrast is more subtle and does not challenge the verisimilitude of the scene. Perhaps the most intriguing difference between the two paintings is the description of the rainbow bridge. In the 1747 version, Chǒng Sǒn describes the bridge from a single point, revealing only the underside of the left part of the bridge as one would see it from below and slightly to the right. Gone is the double view from both above and below that is peculiar to the 1711 painting. While the entirety of the 1747 painting cannot be reconciled to a single point perspective as in western painting (How is it possible to see the underside of the bridge and the rooftops of the temple?), the bridge itself, is depicted with a greater attention to visual exactitude. A further implication of this move towards naturalistic description is a scaling back of the spiritual symbolism in the painting. The bridge anomaly and the irreconcilable mountains on opposite river banks in the 1711 painting

disappear and there is continuity in terms of size and foliage between the two sets of mountains. Chǒng is still concerned with implementing theories of the Yijing in his work, but in a much more natural and subtle manner. Although still firmly grounded in the techniques of the Southern school, his later works reflect a new interest in naturalism and visual fidelity to the physical landscape.

This tendency towards naturalism reflects a more scientific investigation of natural forms that Korean scholars found in new European texts imported from China. European science was known under the more general category of “Western Learning” (*Sǒhak*).⁵² By 1601, the Jesuits, under the leadership of Matteo Ricci, had established missions across Southern China and also in Beijing.⁵³ It was in Beijing that visiting Koreans were able to encounter these foreigners for the first time. Gari Ledyard speculates that between 1637 and 1881 there were on average three diplomatic trips from Seoul to Beijing every year.⁵⁴ In 1603 Yi Kwangjǒng (1552-1624) sent a printed map of the world back to Korea that was produced by Ricci himself.⁵⁵ This map had a tremendous impact on Korean scholars, many of whom were not aware of countries beyond their immediate surroundings and believed that China was literally at the center of the world. This revelation may well have contributed to the growing sense of a Korean identity apart from China that I have discussed in relation to the Ming-Qing transition.

Furthermore, maps were clearly integral to the way in which early Korean artists formulated the concept of true-scenery painting.⁵⁶ Chǒng produced *Complete View of*

⁵² *Sǒhak* is variously used to refer to empirical European knowledge such as Science and Engineering, as well as Western religion in the form of Catholicism. Some of the reform-minded Confucian scholars, Yi Ik in particular, made a clear separation between objective science and religion. Eckert 170.

⁵³ O'Malley 336.

⁵⁴ Ledyard 5.

⁵⁵ Han Yǒng-u 96.

⁵⁶ For a complete discussion of the relationship between maps and topographical painting see Jungmann 197-200.

Mount Kŭmgang (Kŭmgang chŏndo, Fig. 5) for his *Album of the Sinmyo Year* (1711). Here, he combines all the major beauty spots in the Kŭmgang region into a single album leaf, adopting a bird's eye perspective and abbreviating the expansive mountain range into a set number of peaks. Each place of interest is identified with small labels so the viewer can get a sense of where they are situated in relation to each other. While this unique format does not represent any scene that Chŏng may have actually viewed, it does reflect a desire to understand the physical layout of the Kŭmgang area. The high perspective, abbreviation of distances, exaggeration of places of interest and labeling all reflect techniques common to mapmaking at the time.

Chŏng continued to apply the format from *Complete View* in paintings of the Kŭmgang region throughout his career. In 1734, he painted another *Complete View of Mount Kŭmgang* (Fig. 6) as a large hanging scroll. Chŏng adopts an almost identical bird's eye perspective and many of the scenic spots, such as the peculiar outcropping at the center (Pulchŏngdae) and the round peak at the top of the range (Piropong), from the 1711 album leaf. However, this later work is described with more attention to the details of the individual peaks and clusters of foliage. The labels are gone and the painting is both more vibrant and naturalistic than the earlier version. The scholar Kang Kwanshik remarks on the peculiar round-shape composition of the mountain range.⁵⁷ Cosmological diagrams from the seventeenth and eighteenth century are similarly composed of concentric circles appear to refer to planets and circulating energy.⁵⁸ As we have already noted, these charts were composed according to neo-confucian and Taoist theory as well as various elements of European astronomy imported from China. Perhaps the most obvious element in *Complete View* that we can associate with a European sensibility is the light blue background that

⁵⁷ Kang Kwanshik 193.

⁵⁸ Kang Kwanshik 187.

outlines the peaks at the top of the painting. This naturalistic coloring of the sky represents a major departure from the 1711 album leaf as well as from other literati paintings in the Southern school tradition. Unlike other Korean artists of the time, Chǒng's position at the Bureau of Astronomy enabled him to view the most topical charts of astronomical phenomenon as well as the latest imports of European astronomical writings. In works such as *Complete View* we see how some of these cosmological ideas were translated into his true scenery paintings.

Artists working at the Korean court were regularly employed to make maps. Kim Hongdo and Kim Ŭnghwan (1742-1789) received orders to copy a map from Japan in 1789 and Chǒng Sǒn would have produced maps of the sky for the Bureau of Astronomy. Cho Sok (Changgang, 1565-1668), who may have been the very first Korean painter to execute true-scenery paintings, commented on a hanging scroll painting of the Kǔmgang mountain range titled: "Comprehensive Chart of the Wonderful Principle (Myori ch'ǒndo)." He said, "If I were a bird flying in the sky and looked down upon it from above, I might see that it is true [to nature]. But if one were to travel and draw what one sees, one must paint the soaring mountain peaks and the twisting valleys as seen from where one is sitting in order for it to be called one's interpretation of the real scene."⁵⁹ The "bird's eye" perspective that Cho describes in the "chart" resembles that which Chǒng Sǒn applies in *Kǔmgang chǒndo*. In addition, the labels that identify the famous beauty spots in Chǒng's painting recall the combination of script and painting that are prevalent in cosmological diagrams from the time.⁶⁰ However, the distinction between maps and true-scenery paintings was vitally important to the artists. In the quotation above, Cho makes the distinction between the

⁵⁹ Recorded in *Hoeŭnjip* by Nam Hangmyǒng (Hoeŭn, 1654-unknown) and translated Lee Taeho. Lee 219.

⁶⁰ Kang Kwanshik includes several cosmological diagrams from the late Chosŏn period. Kang Kwanshik 186-188.

unrealistic “bird’s eye” perspective and paintings executed from a “seated” position on the ground. Cho’s son Chihun (Maech’ang, b. 1637) notes that his father “got off his horse to paint whenever he came across a beautiful spot.”⁶¹ This description implies that Cho not only painted true scenery, but that he sketched outside in the real world. Although we do not have any extant examples of Cho’s true-scenery compositions we can imagine that he painted according to the “seated” perspective that he favors in the above description.

Kang Sehwang was also highly critical of paintings that resembled maps. In an inscription on Kang Hŭiŏn’s *Mount Inwang Seen from Tohwa-dong* from the second half of the eighteenth century, Kang notes that “Painters of true-scenery landscapes are always worried that their painting might look like maps.” He goes on to praise Hŭiŏn for staying true to his artistic principles.⁶² Interestingly, like Chŏng Sŏn Kang Hŭiŏn was employed by the meteorological department and Kang Sehwang’s praise may reflect the fact that Hŭiŏn spent the majority of his time producing maps and charts for the court. Kang may also be referring to criticism by the eleventh-century Chinese artist Guo Xi (c.1020-1090), whose *Linquan gaozhi* was widely read in Korea. Guo claimed that painters who fail to seek out the “quintessential features” of a landscape merely succeed in producing a map.⁶³ Although true scenery paintings are categorically not maps, both genres rely on first-hand observation and description of the natural world. In his true-scenery paintings, Chŏng Sŏn attempts to describe the “real” form of the landscape while remaining faithful to the techniques of the Southern school and the notion of a spiritual landscape.

Korean painters who followed Chŏng Sŏn were acutely aware of the great master’s painting style, especially in the true-scenery format. Thirteen years after his death, in 1772,

⁶¹ Lee 219

⁶² For a full translation see Jungmann 191.

⁶³ Harrist 96.

the court painter Kim Ŭnghwan painted *Complete View of Mount Kŭmgang* (Fig. 7) in the map-like “Complete-view” formula that Chŏng pioneered.⁶⁴ In Kim Ŭnghwan’s version, Changansa and the Rainbow Bridge are easily identifiable at the bottom center of the painting. Like Chŏng before him, Kim adopts an impossibly high perspective in order to fit the entire range of mountains into one frame. He also divides his mountains into two distinct forms: the rounded mounds textured with mi ink dots on the left and the sharp peaks on the right executed in frost-edged brushstrokes. In the inscription, Kim acknowledges his reliance on preceding models: “In the year Imjin [1772], Tamjol tang [Kim Ŭnghwan] painted this for Sŏho [Kim Hongdo] in imitation of the *Complete View of Mount Kŭmgang*.”⁶⁵ Although he does not specify Chŏng Sŏn by name, it is clear that Kim is imitating the late master. The fact that he does not feel it necessary to identify Chŏng as the source of his inspiration is testament to the strength of the association between Chŏng and true-scenery painting in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Other painters would have immediately understood Chŏng as the model for his imitation. As Yi Song-mi points out, this may be the first example of an artist consciously modeling his composition on a Korean rather than a Chinese artist.⁶⁶

The inscription also reveals that Kim gifted this painting to fellow court painter Kim Hongdo. The two Kim’s appear to have entered Tohwaso (The Bureau of Painting for the court) at about the same time (Kim Ŭnghwan was three years older than Kim Hongdo) where they worked together, often in collaboration, for the majority of their careers. Their acquaintance ended in tragedy however, when in 1789 they were charged with a secret mission to copy a map in Japan. Kim Ŭnghwan only made it as far as the southern port city

⁶⁴ Yi 2006 117.

⁶⁵ Yi 2006, 117.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

of Pusan before contracting a fatal illness and Kim Hongdo is said to have continued on to complete the mission on his own.⁶⁷ More than simply a token of friendship between two colleagues, Kim Ŭnghwan's gift indicates the state of true-scenery painting in 1772, firmly rooted in the Chŏng Sŏn style. Just as Chŏng developed his brand of true-scenery painting out of the Southern school tradition, Kim Hongdo could not have painted his own landscapes of the Kŭmgang region without a keen awareness of the work of this late master.

Kang Sehwang: Pushing the formal tradition through experimentation

If Chŏng Sŏn was the father of true-scenery painting, then Kang Sehwang was the greatest ambassador of the genre. He frequently included the term "*chin'gyŏng*" in his writing and often painted true scenes in his own style.⁶⁸ Like Chŏng, Kang was relatively poor for his high *yangban* status. He was unable to support his family on his own dynastic lands and, instead, lived in his wife's hometown. It was only when Kang was appointed an official at the late age of sixty, that he was finally liberated from his financial burdens.⁶⁹ We can imagine that, like Chŏng Sŏn, Kang used his talents as a painter to curry favor at the court. However, king Yŏngjo (1694-1776) himself cautioned him not to rely too heavily on painting lest it overshadow his scholarly activities. Kang took this criticism to heart and gave up painting, at least in the public sphere, until Yŏngjo passed away in 1776.⁷⁰

Also similar to Chŏng, was the way in which Kang trained in the Southern School style by observing printed books imported from China with woodblock illustrations.⁷¹ While there are records of Chŏng's painting teacher, Kim Ch'anghŭp, Kang appears to have been

⁶⁷ O 781.

⁶⁸ Jhunmann 60.

⁶⁹ Byun 240.

⁷⁰ Byun 238.

⁷¹ Byun 240.

entirely self-taught.⁷² In this respect, Kang is exemplary of the amateur artist who was of high status and executed paintings to supplement his scholarly activities. He was a close friend of Yi Ik (1681-1763), a reform-minded Confucian scholar who travelled to Beijing and was aware of western painting techniques, such as linear perspective.⁷³ We can assume that Kang was exposed to western ideas through the foreign books in Yi Ik's library and conversations within Yi Ik's circle of friends. In the late eighteenth century King Chǒngjo, noted that,

“European books have been coming into Korea for hundreds of years. They can be found in all the royal libraries and not in limited numbers either.”⁷⁴

If Kang himself did not own some of these European books, then he would certainly have been able to view copies owned by Yi Ik, if not those in the royal collection. Michael Sullivan argues that illustrated books and engravings were probably more influential in the exchange of European ideas than finished, painted works because they were widely circulated.⁷⁵ When Kang finally visited Beijing himself, in 1784, he pursued his curiosity in western subjects by visiting the Jesuit Cathedral, viewing western paintings and meeting with the Jesuits themselves. Kang's personal writings as well as his friendship with Yi Ik indicate that he was among the most progressive scholars of his time.

Kang Sehwang's *Album of a Journey to Songdo* is one of his most innovative studies in the true-scenery genre. Songdo, a large city just North of Seoul (Kaesǒng in present day North Korea), was the capital of Korea during the Koryŏ (918-1392) dynasty. Kang painted the album for the governor of Songdo, O Such'ae (1692-1759), after touring the region in

⁷² In 1711, Chǒng Sŏn is said to have accompanied his master Kim Ch'anghŭp (1653-1722) to the Kŭmgang region. Ch'oe 29.

⁷³ Jungmann 60.

⁷⁴ Lee, Peter 146.

⁷⁵ Sullivan 58.

1757. One painting from the album *Taehŭngsa* (fig. 8) represents a quite radical departure from the sense of space and description that Chŏng Sŏn exercised according to the principles of the Southern school. Kang paints the inner courtyard of Taehŭng temple from a slightly elevated position and includes the hill behind, topped with peculiar rock formations. The composition is quite balanced, with structural elements on both the right and left, flanking a central temple building. However, Kang draws attention to the temple at the far left by painting it in highly saturated colors and manipulating the rules of perspective to display the intricate architecture under the roof's awning. It is as if he wanted the temple to be the focal point of the painting but also wanted to include the topography of the peculiar mountain in the background. Unwilling to give up either the mountain, the temple or disrupt their authentic arrangement, Kang decides upon an uneasy marriage of the competing elements. As we have seen, Chŏng Sŏn was willing to modify his paintings in order to exaggerate their spiritual or aesthetic effect. By contrast, Kang is determined to paint only what appears in a single line-of-sight.

The decision to depict buildings at such close range and in great detail is itself, highly unusual. The painter Wen Zhengming of the Ming dynasty reminds us that "the most difficult job for a painter is to draw buildings, because buildings require preciseness and detail...if you are not cautious, you immediately become a mediocre artisan."⁷⁶ In Korea as well, architectural drawings were executed by technically proficient court artists rather than *yangban* scholars. Kang tests the limits of these contemporary prejudices further by constructing the image according to western techniques. The arrangement of the three flanking buildings along diagonals, as well as the inclined edges of the roof of the central structure, suggest that Kang attempted a type of one-point perspective composition. The

⁷⁶ Zou 154.

peculiar geometric shape of the mountain with a very linear horizontal and right edge further support this theory. If we connect these suggestive lines, they meet at the angle of the mountain marked by an anthropomorphic rock (Fig. 9). When taken together, this evidence provides convincing proof that Kang applied one-point perspective in this image and may even have drawn perspective lines in order to ensure accuracy. Manuals on perspective were widely circulated in China in the early eighteenth century. The Italian Andrea Pozzo published *Perspectiva pictorum et architectorum* in 1693, which contained detailed instructions, complete with illustrations, on how to apply one and two point perspective to architectural elements. Nian Xiyuao (?-1739) adapted this treatise for a Chinese audience, under the title *Shixue* (Fig. 10) in 1729. A second edition from 1735 included the first reference to the word line-drawing (*xianfa*) which came to be used for drawings executed in western perspective.⁷⁷ Judging by Kang's relatively accurate understanding of one-point perspective in *Taehŭngsa*, we can assume that he must have observed examples in the *xianfa* technique either from manuals such as the *Shixue* or from other printed illustrations.

The image from this album that has generated the most debate among scholars regarding Kang's knowledge of western techniques is *Approach to Yŏngt'ongdong* (Fig. 11). In Kang's colophon at the top right of the painting, he describes the scene:

"The stones at the approach to Yŏngt'ongdong are as big as houses. They are even more surprising because they are covered with green moss."⁷⁸

The tiny figure of a *yangban* scholar riding a donkey with his servant provides a visual indication of the great scale of the boulders that are scattered across the foreground. Behind, mountains accented with *mi* ink dots and stylized trees in the style of Chŏng Sŏn

⁷⁷ Zou 157.

⁷⁸ Yi 2006, 120.

complete the composition. Burglind Jungmann observes that the carefully shaded rocks, with contrasts of dark and light and green hues, resemble western watercolor painting.⁷⁹ We certainly do not find this type of fluid surface description in traditional southern school painting. Kang models his rocks entirely in ink washes without any discernable brushstroke. Even if we read this peculiar coloring solely as a reference to the green moss that Kang identifies in his colophon, his description breaks with tradition. There is a whole arsenal of brushstrokes in the Southern School style that can be applied to suggest foliage, Mi-ink dots being the most obvious example, but a wash is rarely used to represent these features. That Kang most likely associated this type of modeling based on chiaroscuro with western techniques can be verified in an inscription he wrote for the painting *Wind and Rain Deities* (Fig. 12) by Kim Töksöng (1729-1797). Kim painted an aggressive figure bearing a sword and raising his left leg in a kick towards the viewer. In the colophon, Kang recognizes how “[Kim] attained great and exquisite brush strokes and coloring by applying the western style.”⁸⁰ Although, the highly foreshortened left leg may also reflect western training, Kang specifically comments that it is the coloring that he understands to be related to western techniques. Kim uses strong contrasts between light and dark, particularly in the description of the figure’s chest, to give a convincing description of three-dimensionality. When Kang applies these same deep contrasts to the rocks in *Yöngt’ongdong* we can be sure that he consciously chose to use western techniques.

Kang’s *Album of a Journey to Songdo* points to an experimental development in true-scenery painting in the mid-eighteenth century. Whereas Chöng Sön attempted to fuse the visual form of the landscape with its spiritual essence, Kang is primarily concerned with maintaining visual fidelity to the real scene. To this end, Kang explicitly employs European

⁷⁹ Jungmann 72.

⁸⁰ Byun 105-110

techniques such as one-point perspective, modeling through shading and relatively saturated colors. His independence from the court, in contrast to Chŏng and also Kim Hongdo, gave him greater freedom to experiment with unusual painting styles and his personal connections with progressive scholars afforded him access to western products and artworks. While this turn towards verisimilitude in true-scenery painting reflects Kang's link to Yi Ik and the group of reform-minded Confucian scholars and a new interest in Western techniques at the court, the personal influence exerted by Kang, as a unique personality of his time should not be overlooked. Nowhere is this influence more manifest than in the figure of Kim Hongdo.

Kim Hongdo: A most versatile court artist

Unlike Chŏng Sŏn and Kang Sehwang, both of whom were born into high-class *yangban* families, Kim Hongdo was from the middle (Chungin) class in which painting was considered a low but suitable profession. Kang favored Kim from an early age. He relates that "Sanŭng [Kim Hongdo] visited me when he was young, and I would complement him on his skills or teach him how to draw certain things."⁸¹ The scholar Chin Chunhyŏn understands that this period of instruction occurred when Kim was only seven or eight.⁸² However, Kang writes the above recollection towards the end of his life and it is possible, especially considering the gap in their social standing, that he exaggerated his connection to the now famous court artist. However, the two artists did work together in court from around 1773 when Kang was first appointed to a government position. In that same year,

⁸¹ Oh Ju-seok translates from Kang Sehwang's writings (Can be located in: Kang, Se-hwang, and Chong-jin Kim. *P'yoam Yugo*. Kyŏnggi-do P'aju-si: Chisik Sanŏpsa, 2010). Oh 2005, 65.

⁸² Chin 656.

Kim completed *Sinŏnin-to* in response to a subject that Kang proposed.⁸³ Clearly, it was a great help for the young Kim to have such an influential benefactor at court. Based on the stylistic similarities between their landscape paintings it can be presumed that Kang shared some of his observations regarding true-scenery painting.

There are relatively few major landscapes attributed to Kim before 1795 (*Ch'ongsŏkchŏng*), however, in recent years some early paintings with landscape elements have come to light. In 1776, king Chŏngjo assumed the Korean throne from his grandfather king Yŏngjo. Chŏngjo provided Kim with his first major commission in 1765, and when he became king he exempted Kim from court duties, so that he could focus on assignments from the royal household.⁸⁴ His first major assignment was to document the new royal library (*Kyujanggak*) that Chŏngjo built to house his grandfather's collection of books and that would become a major center for policymaking during his reign. *Kyujanggak-to* of 1776 reveals the library at the center, accompanying buildings, and lilly pond within a gated complex, all executed in bright colors and detailed brushwork according to a consistent linear perspective (Fig. 13). Trees dotted around the circumference hint at a natural setting but the rigid architectural rendering of the buildings and the conspicuous absence of any human presence suggest that the painting was intended as a record of the structure and its layout rather than a snapshot of a landscape in space and time. As such, we should refer to it as a documentary painting, rather than a pure landscape. However, the most peculiar element in this work is the distant landscape in the upper quadrant. Unlike the architectural precision of the lower portion, this area is executed in monotone with fluid brushstrokes characteristic of the Southern school. More precisely, the Mi-ink dots and hemp-fiber

⁸³ Chin 657.

⁸⁴ *Kyŏnghyŏndang Sujak* of 1765, depicts a banquet held by king Yŏngjo that enhanced the crown prince, Chŏngjo's political standing. Oh 2005, 79.

brushstrokes employed in the mountains and especially the trees, executed with a single vertical line and horizontal stroke, recall Chǒng Sǒn's style of landscape painting. The distinction in style between the majority of the painting and this uppermost addendum is stark and, above all, demonstrates Kim's great versatility as an artist.

In addition to several dated paintings like *Kyujanggak-to*, that contain landscape elements⁸⁵, it is clear that Kim Hongdo also produced true-scenery landscapes before 1795.

O Sech'ang claims that Kim Hongdo and Kim Ŭnghwan were ordered to travel to the Kŭmgang region in 1788 and return with a painting.⁸⁶ Kang Sehwang provides a first-hand account of this trip:

"In the fall of 1788, my eldest son was appointed Busa in Hoeyang, and I visited his office. Mount Kŭmgang is in the Hoeyang region, about 130 li from the office building. At that opportune time, Ch'albang Kim Ŭnghwan and Ch'albang Kim Hongdo were visiting nine counties in the northeastern part of the country to capture the beautiful landscapes on their canvas."⁸⁷

Both accounts specify that Kim Ŭnghwan accompanied Kim Hongdo on the expedition. The fact that the former Kim died the following year, further corroborates the date of 1788. According to Oh Ju-seok, The two painters completed a 50-meter colored scroll which is no longer extant today.⁸⁸ In 1792 the scholar Sǒ Yugu (1764-1845) records that King Chǒngjo ordered Kim to return to the Kŭmgang region: "Having received the orders from the king, Kim spent fifty days on Mount Kŭmgang and painted the 12,000 peaks and Kuryong Waterfall... the importance of this painting should not be overlooked simply because it follows the typical court painting style and uses bright colors."⁸⁹ Sǒ's description

⁸⁵ Kim Kumja also cites: *Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden*, 1778 and *Kiryǒ Wǒnyu-to*, 1790, as containing Landscape elements. Kim 187.

⁸⁶ O Sech'ang quotes the genealogy of Kim. O 781.

⁸⁷ Oh Ju-seok translates Kang Sehwang's: "Seeing off Ch'albang Kim Hongdo and Ch'albang Kim Ŭnghwan." (Can be located in: Kang, Se-hwang, and Chong-jin Kim. *P'yoam Yugo*. Kyǒnggi-do P'aju-si: Chisik Sanǒpsa, 2010). Oh 2005, 154.

⁸⁸ Oh 2005, 141.

⁸⁹ Quoted by Oh Ju-seok. Oh 2005, 141.

of Kim's large painting, containing 12,000 mountains, indicates that it probably followed a "complete view" formula, similar to Kim Ŭnghwan's *Complete View of Mount Kŭmgang* in imitation of Chŏng Sŏn. However, the fact that it was comparable to court paintings and included bright colors would seem to distance it from Chŏng Sŏn's painting style with its high regard for Southern School painting philosophy. In addition to these two assignments, Kim produced two dated albums of the Kŭmgang region from the *Ŭlmyo* (1795) and the *Pyŏngjin* (1796) years. We cannot be sure whether these albums were created in the Kŭmgang region or whether they were adopted from previous sketches. His painting style appears to vary from album to album, perhaps reflecting his fluctuating personal situation as well as the particular nature of each commission. Consequently, the problem of authenticity for *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* largely hinges on whether it can be associated with stylistic and compositional features from other paintings from one of these trips to the Kŭmgang region.

As mentioned above, it seems probable that Kim adopted Chŏng Sŏn's "complete view" formula for the large hanging scroll and he appears to have followed Chŏng's perspective in several of the album leaves. Kim's *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng*, which I mention in the introduction, is painted from an almost identical spot to that from which Chŏng painted his work of the same title in 1755 (Fig. 14). Both display the characteristic pillars of rock jutting out of the water, as well as the northern side of an exposed cliff with a structure at the head. Although this similar composition in itself may not be considered peculiar (visitors to the Kŭmgang area generally followed a strict itinerary, stopping at particular stations renowned for great views) we can also find similarities in the stylized thatched rocks and frothing water, as well as the small figures, drawn in outline. The differences, however, are much more pronounced. Chŏng's trees at the bottom right are executed in large wet brushstrokes

and contrast with the fastidious row of trees to the far right of Kim's painting. Also, Chŏng's rapid brushstroke is evident in the manner in which the vertical lines in the cliff and columns taper at the ends. Kim's lines by comparison, do not reveal anything about his painting method. Where Kim colors large areas of his painting, Chŏng uses a muted palette, only emphasizing the pavilion on the cliff with dashes of red pigment. Perhaps the most important contrast is in the different approaches to perspective. As in *Changansa*, Chŏng uses multiple perspectives to give the impression that the viewer is both looking down on the scene from above while at the same time at eye level with the pavilion. There is also no horizon line; the waves simply fade into the distance. Kim, by contrast, utilizes a very distinct single point perspective (compare the perspective of the pavilions) and a low horizon line that gives the impression of a great expanse of space, a quality that is difficult to locate in any of Chŏng's extant paintings.⁹⁰ A closer comparison, can be found in the temple building at the center of Kang Sehwang's *Taehŭngsa* bounded by very distinct perspective lines. The diagonal lines that define the roof and base of Kim's pavilion, are clearly not parallel, but are slightly inclined towards a single point of perspective. If we take Chŏng's work as representative of true scenery painting in the eighteenth century it would be truly difficult to accept the 1788 date for Kim's album. However, Kim's more immediate predecessor, Kang Sehwang, was already experimenting with a European sense of naturalism in landscape as early as the 1750's. While, Kim adopts a more refined and measured style, the European techniques that he employs are no great departure from those that we find in works by Kang Sehwang.

Furthermore, it is highly probably that Kang was not Kim's only source for European artistic techniques. Oh Juseok believes that Kim may have travelled to China in 1780 to

⁹⁰ This is Yi Song-mi's primary reason for questioning the album's authenticity. Yi 1998, 361.

participate in Emperor Qianlong's seventieth birthday celebrations. In the poem *On a Taoist Immortal Riding on a Turtle that Makes Rain* by Chŏng Yagyong (1762-1836), one of the most prominent reform-Confucian scholars at Chŏngjo's court, Chŏng writes:

"Yŏnam Park Jiwŏn wrote a strange account of his trip to China.
This story was painted by Tanwŏn Kim Hongdo."⁹¹

If Kim did travel to China in 1780, he would have been familiar with Western painting styles by the time he executed *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* in 1788. However, Chŏng Yagyong gives no indication as to whether Kim Hongdo painted the record of Park Jiwŏn's trip while he was in China or back in Korea. A more convincing argument can be made for Kim travelling to China in 1789. *The Record of Daily Reflections* from that year documents Minister Yi Sŏngwŏn's (1725-1790) preparations for his trip to Beijing:

"As a government envoy to china, Yi Sŏngwŏn asked, 'I need to take Kim Hongdo and Yi Myŏnggi this time, but it is impossible with their current titles. I shall take Kim as my military officer and Yi as an additional member of painters,' and his request was granted."⁹²

This record states in no uncertain terms that Kim Hongdo was given official permission to travel to China. However, there are no supplementary records to confirm his departure or return from the mainland. This late date of 1789 seems to indicate that Kim travelled to China after he completed the Kŭmgang album. In China, Kim would have been able to view Jesuit paintings and Chinese court paintings in the European style. However, Kim's position as a painter in the court would have afforded him ample opportunity to view Western style paintings in the royal collection. Kang Sehwang may also have introduced him to collections and works by reform-minded Confucian scholars like Yi Ik. By the late eighteenth century, it is likely that Kim had been exposed to many Western style paintings and was capable of reproducing the perspective and sense of depth in his own work.

⁹¹ Translated by Oh Ju-seok from Chŏng Yagyong's *Yŏyudangchŏnsŏ*. Oh 2005, 102.

⁹² Oh Juseok translates from the *Record of Daily Reflections* (Ilsŏngnnok): 13th year of Chŏngjo's reign (1789 year, 8 month, 14 day). Oh 2005, 162.

Eight Hanging Scrolls: A court-style landscape

The attention to natural detail in the *Four Districts* album can also be observed in a set of eight hanging scrolls from the Kŭmgang region (c. 1788)⁹³ Kim Hongdo's depiction of *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* (Fig. 15) from this set, seems to bridge the Chŏng Sŏn tradition and the more experimental works by Kang Sehwang and the *Four Districts* album. Here we see a new perspective of Ch'ongsŏkchŏng from the South. The enormous columns of rock dominate the foreground with the familiar pavilion on the hill behind and an isthmus of land stretching back into the far distance. Chŏng Sŏn applied color sparingly, only highlighting the temple's architrave in red, and Kim's hanging scroll is entirely in monochrome. Moreover, the horizon in both works is near the top of the painting, as if the scene were stretched to cover the entire oblong format. The paintings both finish in a row of mountains that hint at a horizon line but the artists do not extend a physical line across the water to indicate this boundary. In contrast, *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* in *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* includes a very definite horizon line that divides the leaf almost entirely in half. Despite these many affinities with the Chŏng Sŏn's painting, Kim employs a greater precision in his brushwork in the hanging scroll. Chŏng uses single, long brushstrokes in a downward movement to indicate the columns of rock, whereas, Kim is careful to note every crevice in the structure with horizontal and vertical brushstrokes. There is no directionality to Kim's lines and although, they vary slightly in width and strength, they do not imitate the vibrancy of Chŏng's brushwork. As such, Kim's painting is closer to a purely visual depiction of actual

⁹³ The eight hanging scrolls are in the Kansong Museum collection under the title: *Eight Scenes of the Kwandong Region*. In addition to *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng*, *Myŏnggyŏngdae*, *Pibongp'ok*, *Myŏngyŏndam*, *Ongch'ŏn*, *Kŭmrangul*, *Kuryongyŏn* and *Yŏngrangho* all correspond to scenes that also appear in the *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang*.

topography. Kim Kumja associates this characteristic with a court style and speculates that the hanging scroll was completed before Kim Hongdo moved away from the court to accept an official position in 1792.⁹⁴

Kim Hongdo wrote the inscriptions on all eight scrolls and it is highly unlikely that the King himself would view a painting with writing by a lowly artist. We can assume that it was instead produced for a member of the court, perhaps after another royal commission.⁹⁵ As previously noted, Hong Kilchu claims that the *Four Districts* album was produced for the king and was kept in the palace. The precise, unaffected lines, that we recognize as typical of the court style in the hanging scrolls, appear in *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* from the album. The columns are again constructed with horizontal and vertical strokes and both paintings indicate the rocks on the sea bed with an identical hatched pattern. In addition, the water frothing around the cliffs, the modeling of the rounded mountains as well as the umbrella-shaped trees, are similar in both paintings. This comparison provides further stylistic evidence that the album was produced for a member of the court, if not for the king himself. The stylistic differences between Chŏng Sŏn's painting and the two works by Kim Hongdo may reflect differences in taste between patrons from the court and the laity.

Another factor that may have contributed to the move away from Chŏng Sŏn and the Southern school in Kim Hongdo's landscapes, is the exercise of sketching on location. Although Chŏng Sŏn also spent a great deal of time in the Kŭmgang region sketching outside, Kim, with his greater exposure to Western art and specific instructions from the court, may have placed more emphasis on visual fidelity to the physical location. We can understand this new trend of painting on location as accompanying a renewed interest in science and

⁹⁴ ie. On his first trip to the Kŭmgang region in 1788, this would make them the earliest examples of his landscape work. Kim 192.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

geology in this period. Pak Sedang (1629-1703) was one of several reform-minded scholars who observed nature in order to improve farming methods for the common people and others like Han Paekkyom (1552-1615) produced geographical treatises.⁹⁶ This move away from introspective scholarly pursuits to action in the “real world,” may have inspired artists to also look to nature for their subject. Although we have few sketches by Chŏng Sŏn and Kim Hongdo from their excursions to Kŭmgangsan we can imagine that these studies may have been similar to those by their contemporary true-scenery painter Ike Taiga (1723-1776) in Japan. Taiga’s *Ashikura* from *Diary of the Journey to the three peaks* of 1760 (Fig. 16), displays the outline of a mountain range as it appeared to his eye. Melinda Takeuchi suggests that in such sketches, Taiga “rejects established formulas in model books to come to terms directly with the problem of transferring the configuration of a great sweeping slice of nature to paper.”⁹⁷ Although it is difficult to compare Chŏng Sŏn’s paintings with this sketchy method, it is easy to imagine that the outline of the hillside, columns and horizon line in Kim Hongdo’s *Ch’ongsŏkchŏng* were based on such a sketch if not painted entirely on location. Gombrich emphasizes that “the more a painting... mirrors natural appearances, the fewer principles of order and symmetry it will automatically exhibit.”⁹⁸ Accordingly, Taiga’s sketchy impression of the landscape, as in Kim’s more polished album leaves, minimalizes the calligraphic effect of line bringing it closer to a “snapshot” description of reality. Lee Taeho argues that many of Kim’s true-scenery paintings, when compared with the actual sites could have been “captured in a camera’s viewfinder.” By contrast, Chŏng Sŏn, seems to rely more on memory more than sketches.⁹⁹ While Taiga and Kim may well have undertaken similar preparatory sketches, the two artists incorporated their drawings into a final painting

⁹⁶ Eckert 171.

⁹⁷ Takeuchi 1989, 40.

⁹⁸ Gombrich in Cahill 1982, 22.

⁹⁹ Lee 220-222.

in different ways. As Takeuchi points out, Taiga's seminal true-scenery painting *True View of Mount Asama* (ca. 1760) was based on a combination of two sketches from the *Dairy of the Journey to the Three Peaks*.¹⁰⁰ The final painting, therefore, does not represent a single viewpoint but multiple perspectives of the same location. It is this type of multiple perspective that Kim categorically denies in his paintings for the *Four Districts* album in which most of the paintings can be linked to distinct viewpoints in the Kŭmgang region. Kim's painting, therefore, in approaching a high level of visual fidelity with the landscape, necessarily de-emphasizes the stylized brushstrokes and orderly principles of the Southern school.

In my discussion so far I have attempted to demonstrate that following the development of true-scenery painting in the eighteenth century, an artist with the experience and resources of Kim Hongdo would have possessed the technical ability to complete the paintings in *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang*. However, Yi Song-mi's argument against attributing the paintings to Kim Hongdo is based on the artist's personal oeuvre and the difficulty in reconciling these works with other extant paintings. While the *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* hanging scroll is technically similar to the leaves from the album, how is it possible to reconcile the other *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* painting, dated to the ŭlmyo year (1795) and described in the introduction? The calligraphy in the upper left-hand corner of this leaf indicates that the album was given to Kim Hant'ae (penname: Kim Kyŏngnim, b. 1762) in August of 1795.¹⁰¹ Unlike the hanging scroll, this painting is executed from an almost identical viewpoint to the leaf from *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* and observes a similar color scheme. However, the brushstroke is much freer and the stormy atmosphere serves to obliterate the horizon line. As Kim Kumja points out, the long, wet brush-line in

¹⁰⁰ Takeuchi 1989, 18.

¹⁰¹ Tanwŏn 245.

this painting can be observed in Kim's figure paintings of Taoist and Buddhist themes from the same period.¹⁰² Just as the precise brushwork in the hanging scrolls reflect the type of painting Kim produced for the court, this type of looser brushwork is typical of Kim's work after he accepted the official position outside of the court in 1791. The year of 1795 was particularly difficult for Kim, as he was stripped of his government post and briefly jailed for abusing his power. He was soon reinstated at court but Kim Kumja speculates that this work may have been produced to help his family through the hard times.¹⁰³ The fact that Kim Hant'ae, the recipient of the album, was only a minor figure at court supports the notion that Kim Hongdo entertained a great variety of commissions during this period. Not only is the literati style Kim employs in this album more palatable to scholarly tastes but the fast, stylized brushwork could have been completed in a short period of time. In contrast, the unusual compositions and deliberate brushwork that mark the *Four Districts* album, would have taken a great deal more time and concentration. More than simply an example of the artist's stylistic development over time, the difference between the 1795 work and the painting from *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* may be due to differing tastes of patrons. Kim's landscapes for King Chŏngjo were to be precise snapshots of the "real world," whereas his work for the laity had to cater to literati tastes.

Yi Sŏngmi's argument against the Kim Hongdo attribution is entirely based on stylistic discrepancies but she stops short of suggesting who might have authored the album and when. Instead, she proposes that the album is one of a series of albums based on woodcut prints that were disseminated during the nineteenth century. She has discovered no fewer than five albums with leaves that are almost identical to the *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* paintings. Two albums, *Album of Sea and Mountains* (Haesan-to Ch'ŏp)

¹⁰² Kim, 191.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

containing 40 leaves, and *Album of a Kŭmgang Journey While at Rest* (Kŭmgang Wayu Ch'öp) containing 30 leaves, are both undated and attributed to Kim Hongdo. In *Album of Sea and Mountains*, *Ch'ongsökchöng* is again represented with almost every line precisely reproduced (Fig. 17).¹⁰⁴ Minor discrepancies can be noted in the stylized waves, which appear larger in *Album of Sea and Mountains* and extend all the way to the horizon without diminishing in scale. This peculiarity, coupled with the medium of ink on paper (rather than silk) suggests that this image was copied from *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* rather than the other way around. If it was derived from a woodblock print, we can imagine that the imprint clearly defined the horizon line and the physical landmasses but the artist was forced to fill in the stylized waves without referring to the original. A third album *Album of Travel to the East* (Dongu Ch'öp) is made up of 28 leaves by an unknown artist. It belonged to the well-known scholar official Yi Pungik (1804-1887) who travelled to the Kŭmgang region in 1825 and used the album to illustrate poems and diary entries he composed during the trip.¹⁰⁵ This album and *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* both contain a view of *Pearl [Cataract] Pond* (Chinjudam, Figs. 18, 19) from the edge of the water in front of a small waterfall with rocky mountains rising up to either side and the distinctive needle-like peaks jutting up in the background which Chöng Sön conceived as a motif for the Kŭmgang region. However, unlike *Album of Sea and Mountains*, the physical forms, while derived from the composition in *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang*, do not correspond identically. We can note the bloated rendering of the rounded mountain form in the upper left or the tree in the lower right among other minor differences. It seems highly probable that the identical compositions were based on woodblock prints, but it does not necessarily follow that *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* was produced as a model for the

¹⁰⁴ Yi 2006, 146.

¹⁰⁵ Yi 2006, 150.

woodblocks. Based on the silk medium and the attention to color and detail, it is unlikely that the leaves were used as a models for woodblock prints as Yi Song-mi suggests.

The primary difficulty in accepting Yi's argument is that she fails to address the similarities between *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* and the eight hanging scrolls. *Kuryong Pond* (Kuryong Yŏn) another famous tourist site in the Kŭmgang area, also appears in both formats (Figs. 20, 21). Unlike the two *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* works, this subject is painted from a similar perspective in both renditions, about level with the ridge of the waterfall, far above the round pool at the bottom. In both images, the waterfall does not exactly bisect the painting but is set slightly to the left so as to accommodate the large mountain peak that rises on the right side. This peculiar composition probably reflects a Chŏng Sŏn-like desire to emphasize Yin and Yang in the falling water and the rock face, thrusting upward.¹⁰⁶ This choice to center the composition around the waterfall and the mountain in both versions hints at a common author. Having already compared the two versions of *Ch'ongsŏkchŏng* it should come as no surprise that Kim's brushwork in the hanging scroll is slightly more animated and slightly less precise than in the work from the album. The attention to topography, which is characteristic of all of the images in the album, can be noted in the way in which the waterfall twists at the bottom as it flows over the rocks. This natural peculiarity is not attended to in the hanging scroll, where the water flows straight downward without any deviation. Again, this difference is probably due to the taste of different patrons. The hanging scrolls were most likely produced for a member of the court in Kim Hongdo's free time whereas the album may have been a court commission for the king himself.

¹⁰⁶ Chŏng Sŏn also painted this scene (*Kuryongyŏn*, Yi Hak collection, undated) but the waterfall is more central and the juxtaposition between waterfall and mountain is less explicit. Ch'oe 119.

Calligraphy: Tracing Kim Hongdo's hand

The inscriptions on the hanging scrolls also provide examples of Kim Hongdo's calligraphy that would not have changed a great deal based on the type of commission. Although the calligraphy on the leaves in the *Four Districts* Album is widely thought to have been added at a later moment, some characters bear a close resemblance to Kim's handwriting from the scrolls.¹⁰⁷ The character "kŭm" (Chinese: *jin*) for example, appears twice in the sets of hanging scrolls and once in a leaf from the album (Figs. 22, 23). The width of the brushstroke varies greatly even between the two examples from the same set of hanging scrolls, a discrepancy that may simply be the result of using different brushes. More peculiar, however, is that all three characters are written at a similar angle, lower to the left and higher to the right. We can also note that the lower radical is positioned closer to the left stroke of the upper radical "in" (Chinese: *ren*), with much more space between the radicals on the right side. That same radical "in" appears once again in both the set of hanging scrolls and the album. In all these examples there are considerable similarities in the angle of the first stroke relative to the second as well as the particular curve at the beginning of the second stroke, that starts almost horizontal to the picture frame before dipping downwards. Although, this evidence is far from conclusive, the similarity between the two sets of calligraphy does suggest that we question the popular belief that the titles were added to the album leaves at a later date. In fact, a thorough comparison of the calligraphy on the album leaves with Kim's extant works may be the best hope we have of definitively establishing the authenticity of this work.

¹⁰⁷ The National Museum Catalogue from 1995 claims that the calligraphy is spurious but does not provide a detailed explanation. Tanwŏn 242.

Conclusion

Although the paintings from the controversial album are not identical in terms of style and composition to extant landscapes by Kim Hongdo or other true-scenery paintings from the period, the attribution does not seem so far-fetched when we take into account, the manner in which the true-scenery genre developed over the course of the eighteenth century. Socio-economic factors such as the restructuring of society, a new scholarly interest in the natural world, and western painting techniques imported from China, among others, contributed to new sets of demands from patrons and new technical skills among artists. The Chǒng Sǒn style of landscape, heavily reliant on Southern School philosophy, does not represent the standard mode of painting but the first stage in an ever-changing approach to true scenery. Kang Sehwang challenged the formal approach to landscape by experimenting with European artistic techniques. In Kim Hongdo's *Album of the Four Districts of Kǔmgang*, we find the culmination of this progressive strain of development; an album that approximates a "snapshot" of a scene from a specific location. Yi Song-mi does not fully acknowledge the development of true-scenery painting in conjunction with European artistic techniques. Instead, she locates the state of landscape painting in Korea at the end of the eighteenth century around the image of *Ch'ongsǒkchǒng* from 1795. However, if we consider Kim's greater oeuvre, specifically the hanging scrolls which have many similarities with the album, we might consider the 1795 leaf to be the anomaly among his true scenery paintings rather than the other way around. The virtuosic brushstroke, lack of a horizon line, and stylized waves suggest a nostalgia for the Chǒng Sǒn style which seems out of place in the progressive decade at the end of the eighteenth century. Additionally, it is implausible that the album leaves were intended as model compositions

for woodcuts because the forms are so carefully colored and modeled, and many of the “copies” are not identically proportional. With the additional evidence from the hanging scrolls, which are similarly precisely drawn with relatively uniform lines and provide reliable samples of Kim’s calligraphy, it becomes increasingly problematic to dismiss the album as a Kim Hongdo original.

To scholars of Kim Hongdo, it should not come as a surprise that he was capable of producing such a “modern” work. Kim was perhaps the most versatile artist of his time, variously filling court commissions to produce decorative still-life paintings, portraits and maps, and appealing to literati tastes outside the palace with paintings of literary gatherings and poetic themes. In fact, his ability to master so many disparate techniques, may be the most compelling evidence for his hand in *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang*. If not Kim Hongdo, then who would have been proficient enough to complete such a work in the eighteenth century or even the beginning of the nineteenth? However, accepting such an album as an eighteenth century work must cause us to re-evaluate the technical and theoretical state of landscape painting at the close of the era. Rather simply the continuation of the Chŏng Sŏn landscape style, Kim Hongdo and his contemporaries appear to have adopted a new attitude to true scenery painting that emphasized topographical detail over brushwork, a single perspective over multiple, and a desire to strive for visual fidelity to the physical location rather than imbuing the scene with a spiritual energy. If we accept Gombrich’s claim that the artist views the world through a scheme dependent on his technical abilities, then the attribution of *Album of the Four Districts of Kŭmgang* to Kim Hongdo greatly expands the vista of artists in the late eighteenth century.

Images



Figure 1. Attr. Kim Hongdo, Ch'ongsökchöng, ca. 1788ⁱ



Figure 2. Kim Hongdo, Ch'ongsökchöng, 1795ⁱⁱ

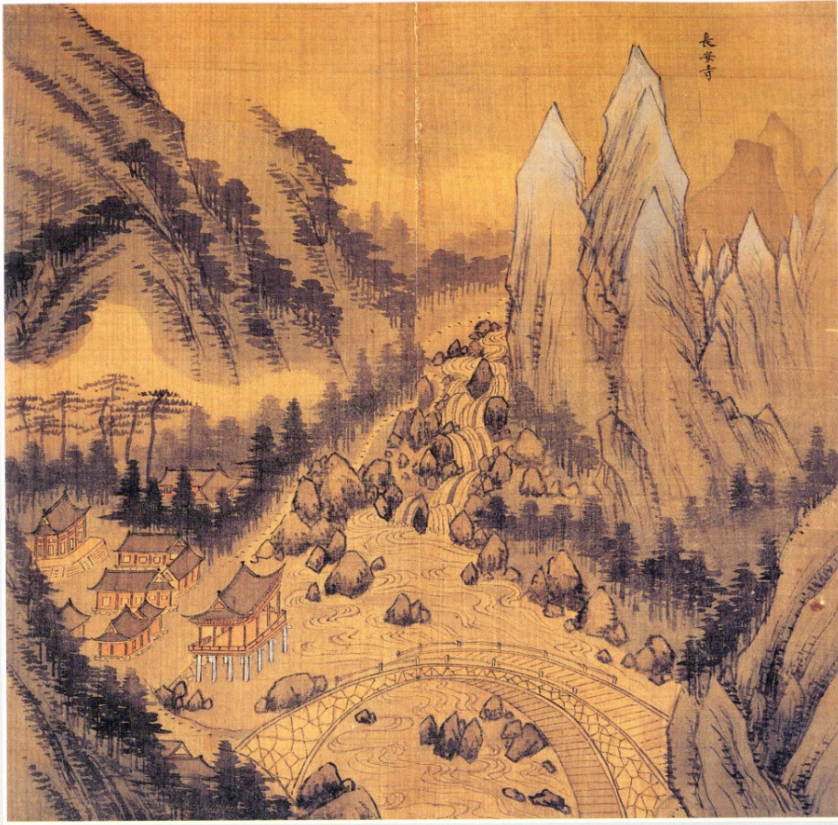


Figure 3. Chŏng Sŏn, Changansa, 1711ⁱⁱⁱ



Figure 4. Chŏng Sŏn, Changansa, 1747^{iv}



Figure 5. Chŏng Sŏn, *Complete View of Mount Kūmgang*, 1711



Figure 6. Chŏng Sŏn, *Complete View of Mount Kūmgang*, 1734

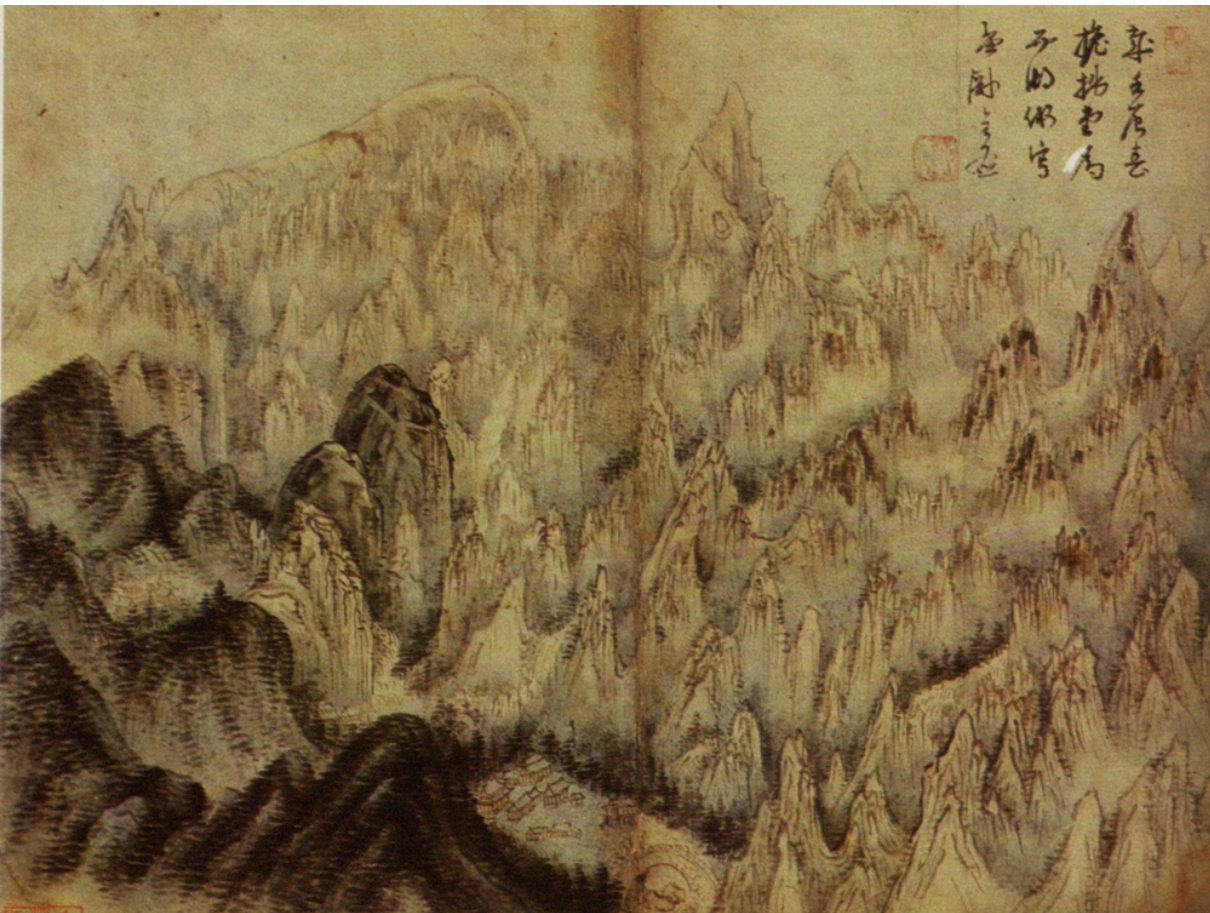


Figure 7. Kim Ŭnghwan, Complete View of Mount Kūmgang, 1772^v

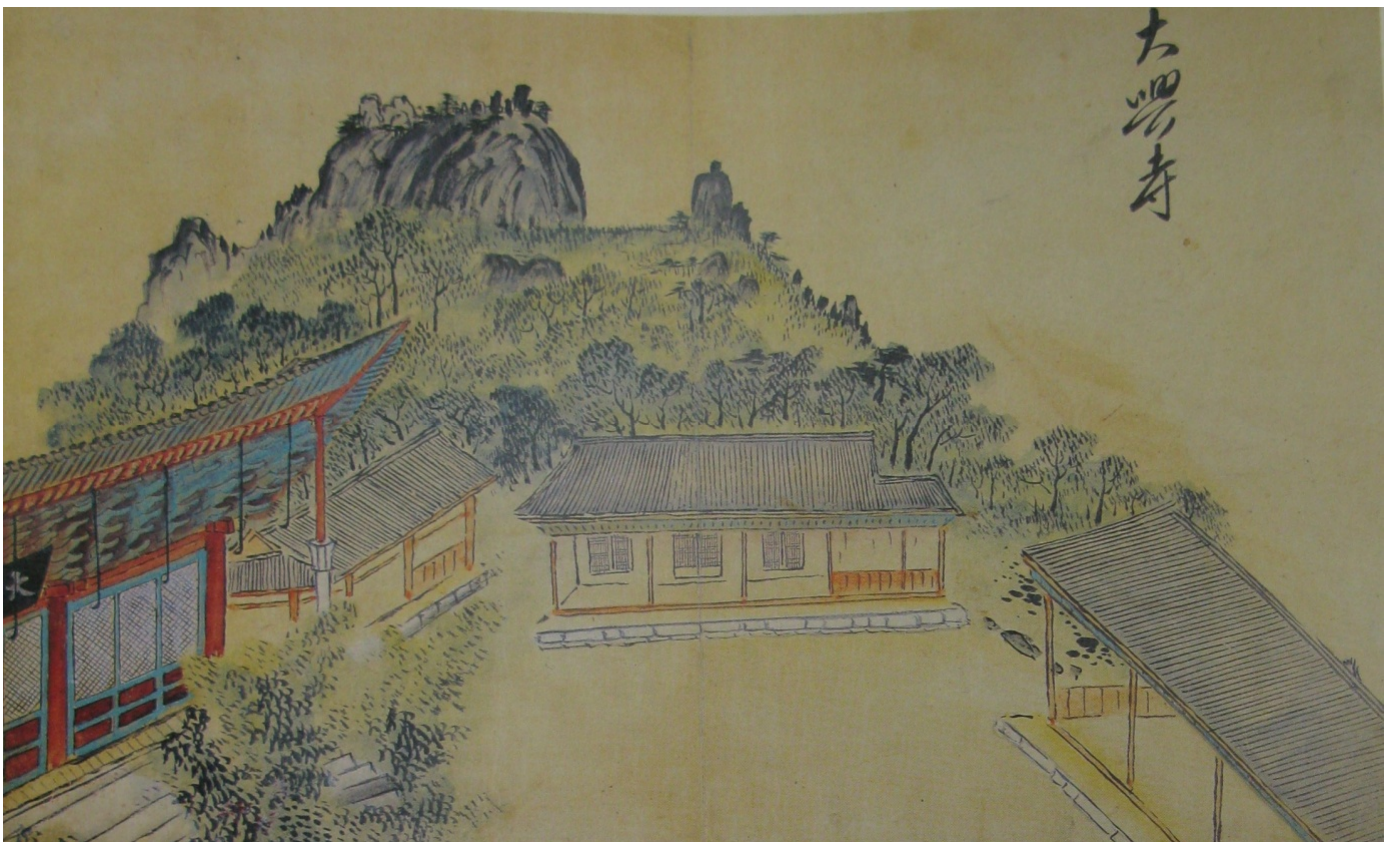


Figure 8. Kang Sehwang, Taehūngsa, 1757

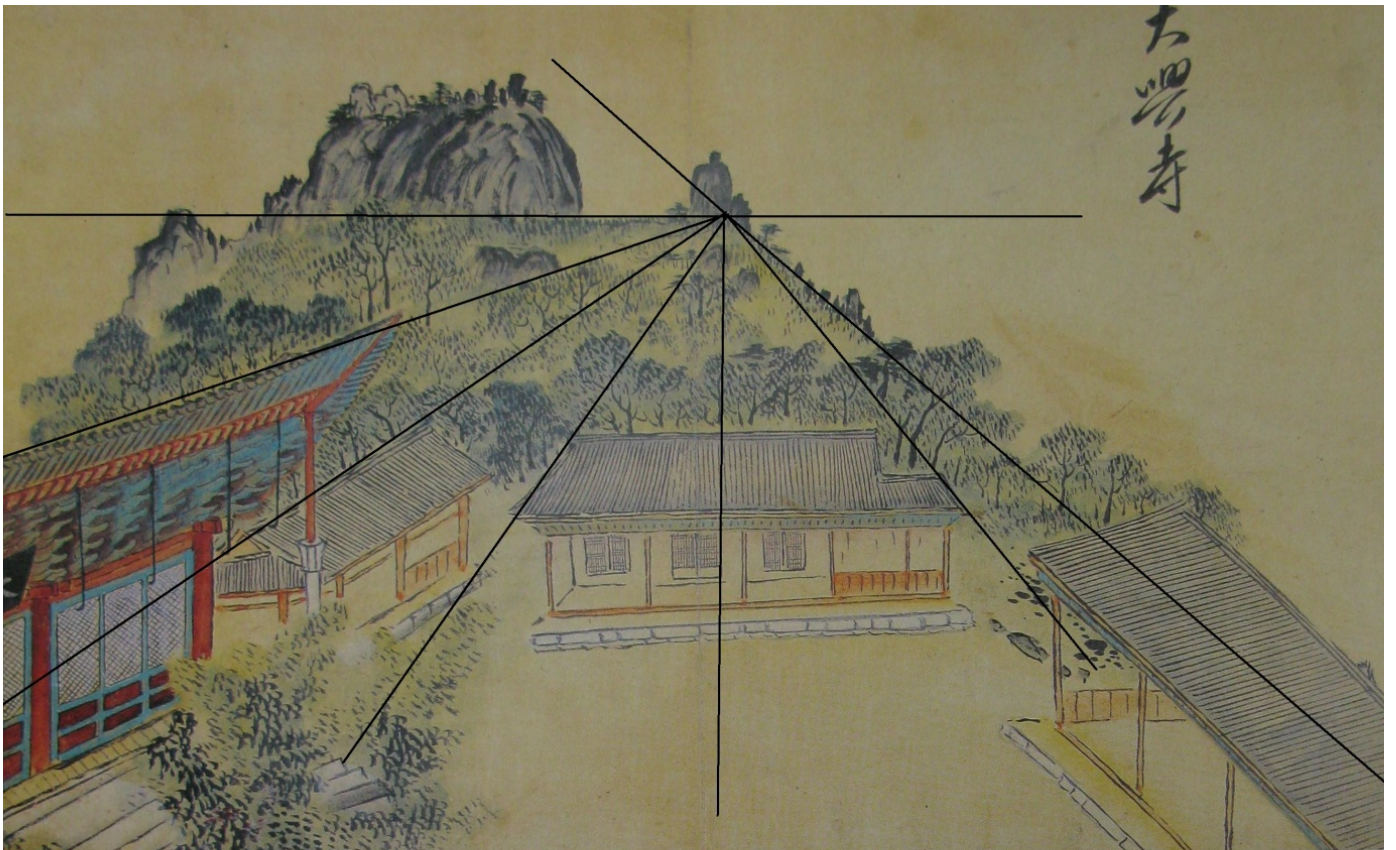


Figure 9. Kang Sehwang, *Taehŭngsa*, 1757 (with perspective lines)

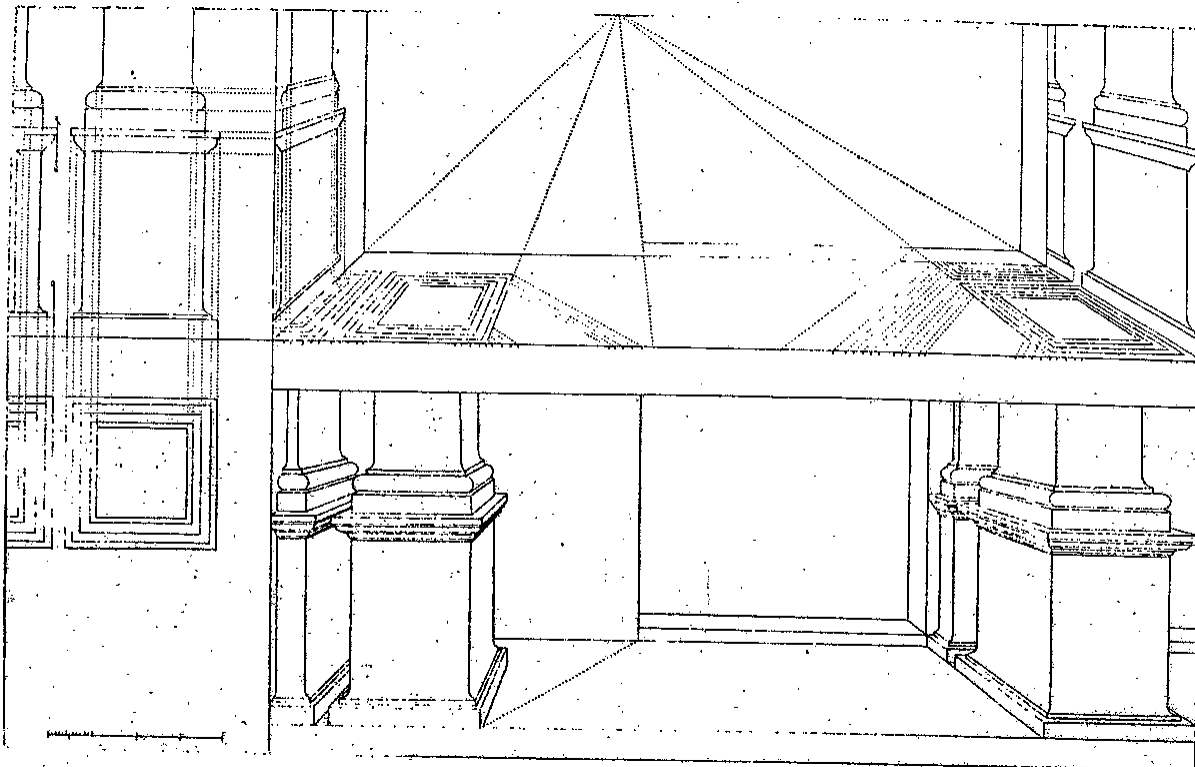


Figure 10. Nan Xiyao, from the *Shixue*, Early 18th century



Figure 11. Kang Sehwang, *Approach to Yöngt'ongdong*, 1757



Figure 12. Kim Tök-söng, *Wind and Rain Deities*, Late 18th century



Figure 13. Kim Hongdo, *Kyujianggak*, 1776^{vi}



Figure 14. Chöng Sön, Ch'ongsökchöng, 1755^{vii}



Figure 15. Kim Hongdo, Ch'ongsökchöng, ca. 1788^{viii}

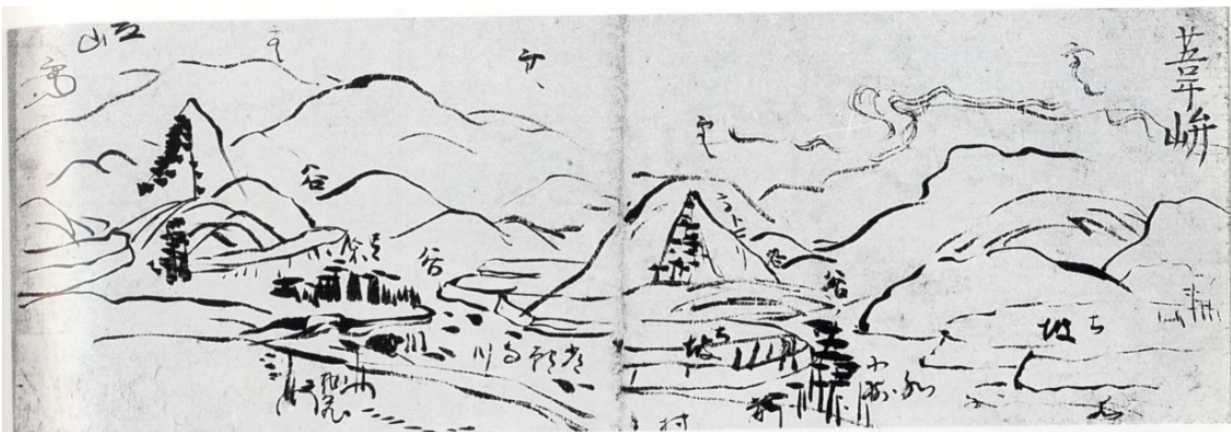


Figure 16. Ike Taiga, Ashikura, 1760.^{ix}

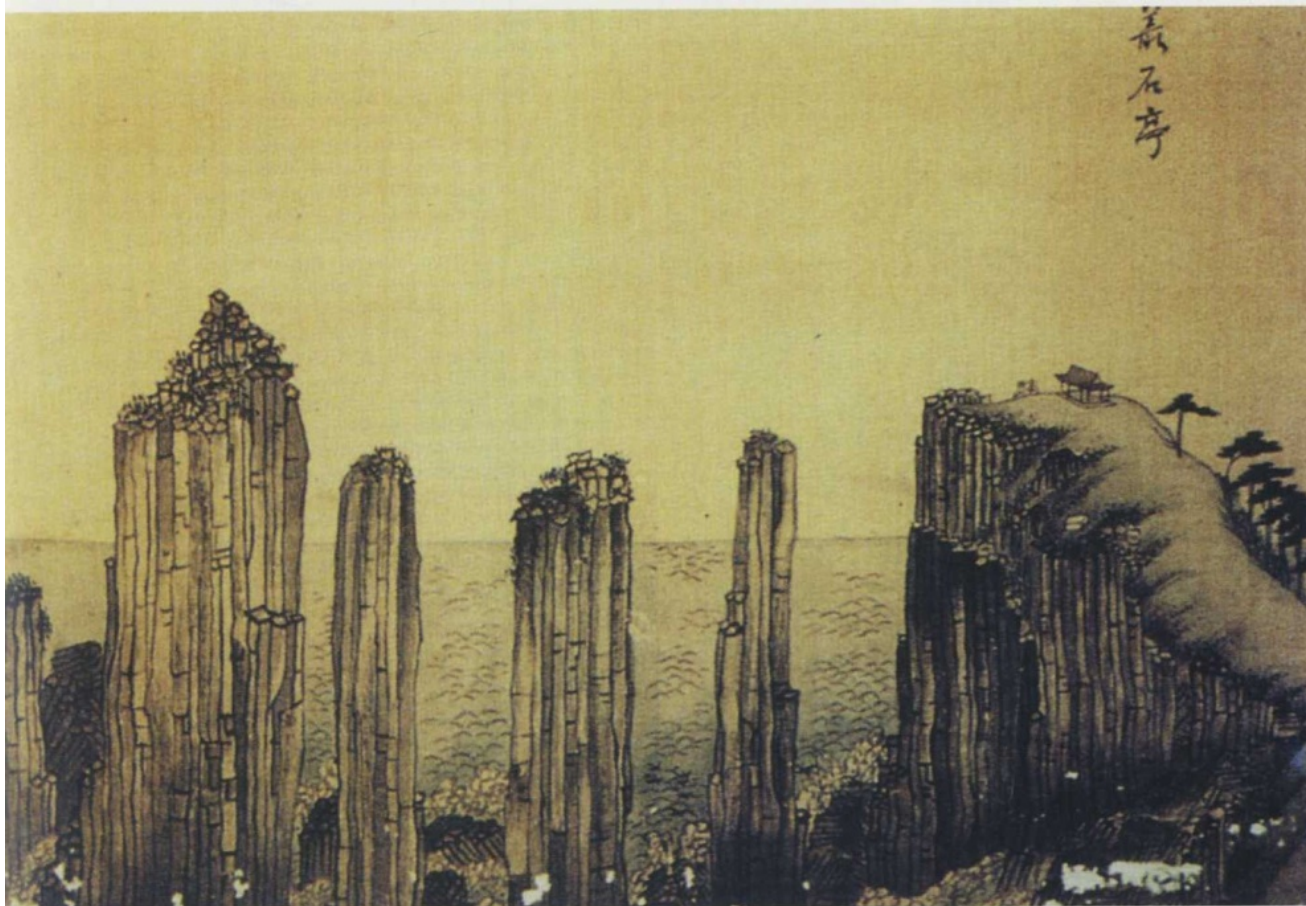


Figure 17. Attr. Kim Hongdo, Ch'ongsökchöng, date undetermined.^x



Figure 18. Unidentified artist, Chinjudam, ca. 1825.^{xi}

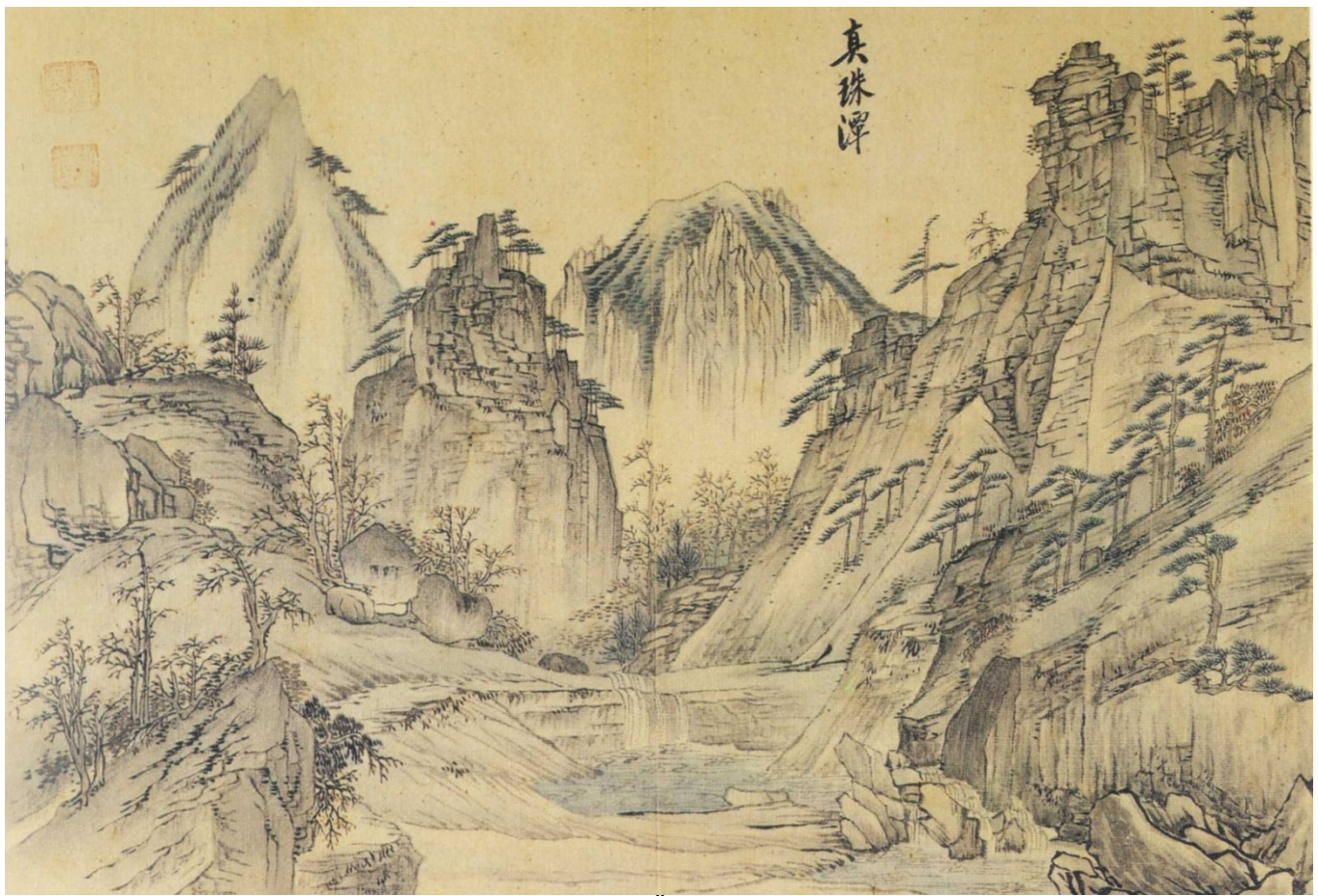


Figure 19. Attr. Kim Hongdo, Chinjudam, ca. 1788.^{xii}



Figure 20. Attr. Kim Hongdo, Kuryong Yŏn, ca. 1788.^{xiii}

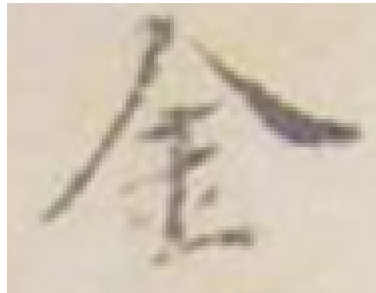


Figure 22. Kim Hongdo, Calligraphy from Hanging Scrolls, ca. 1788



Figure 23. Attr. Kim Hongdo, Calligraphy from Album of the Four Districts of Kūmgang

Figure 21. Kim Hongdo, Kuryong Yŏn, ca. 1788^{xiv}

ⁱ Yi 2006, 146.

ⁱⁱ Yi 2006, 147.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ch'oe 85.

^{iv} Ch'oe 87.

^v Yi 2006, 116.

^{vi} Oh 91.

^{vii} Ch'oe 145.

^{viii} *Tanwŏn* 51.

^{ix} Takeuchi 1992, 41.

^x Yi 2006, 147.

^{xi} Yi 2006, 149.

^{xii} Yi 2006, 148.

^{xiii} *Tanwŏn* 42.

^{xiv} *Tanwŏn* 52.

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