

# The East Asian Literati Painting Theories of *Sisōhwa* as a Contemplative Practice

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## Introduction

Most of the East Asian literati's academic thoughts were compiled and integrated in the form of *sisōhwa* (poetry, calligraphy, and painting); their painting theories were no exception. They constructed an academic continuity centering on poetry (*si*), calligraphy (*sō*), and painting (*hwa*) theories, through a process of gradual adjustment and rearrangement.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, the literati were scholars while also being artists.<sup>2</sup> They placed importance on spiritual depth as an artistic value in their *sisōhwa*; thus, both the aesthetic sense and spirituality were emphasized.<sup>3</sup>

However, the integrative way of study has been lost or fragmented; East Asian painting as *sisōhwa* is now a discipline separate from writing, poetry, and philosophy. Moreover, the modernization of the East is a process toward Westernization distorted by a Cartesian perspective. It is accompanied by self-centered visuality, and such construction has resulted in a self-forfeit of ways of seeing. The nondualistic perspective of the East has been dichotomized, and Eastern identities have been put into chaos; only its technical function in painting has remained, along with changes in the sociocultural and educational system. Therefore, it is necessary to reconstruct the integrative role of *sisōhwa* in traditional education and to reintroduce the literati's unified way of seeing in a monistic universe as a way to solve the problems caused by the modern dichotomy in Korea.

This paper asserts that the lack of spirituality in East Asian painting comes from the absence of theories related to integration between philosophical

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learning and artistic practice. The integration of learning and artistic practice involves mind–body unification, unlike the technical role of *sisōhwa* in the modern day. This paper examines the East Asian literati's interdisciplinary approach of *sisōhwa*<sup>4</sup> in an effort to recover their spiritual values by focusing on their painting theories.

The literati's theories of painting discussed herein are as follows: (1) in the calligraphy and painting (*sōhwa*) same-origin theory, the three disciplines of poetry, calligraphy, and painting are seen as a figurative language (*hyōngsangneu*) having the same origin; (2) in the theory of oneness of discipline between poetry, calligraphy, and painting (*illyul*), these two areas have a unity of expression; (3) in the theory of delivering a figure's meaning (*üisang*), the role of the literati's figurative language is to reveal its intent through the symbolic meaning of visible figures; (4) in the oneness of brush-stroke theory (*irhwaron* or *irhoengnon*), the process of creating brushstrokes unifies mind/spirit with body/material, connects humans with nature/the universe, and enables the creation of a representation of nature; (5) the vitality of spirit consonance theory (*kiunsaengdongnon*) creates vital energy in a pictorial space; and, finally, (6) *sisōhwa* contemplative practice theory (*suhaengron*) evolved from these five painting theories and was conceptualized by this researcher in her PhD dissertation.<sup>5</sup> The first two theories are concerned with integrative learning through the combined *sisōhwa* process of writing, drawing, and painting. The other four theories are concerned with artistic practice. This is embodied within a unification of mind/spirit with body/matter, so that the literati produced *ki* (life breath or energy) via expressive processes of *sisōhwa* on paper. Thus, this paper focuses mainly on the theories of literati's expressive process regarding their visual practice.

This paper views the East Asian literati as visual artists, and their integrative approach to philosophy and art and artistic practice as a/r/tography, which took on the role of a/r/tographer (artist/researcher/teacher [ART]). Through multiple identities, they achieved a contemporary reinterpretation.<sup>6</sup> Based on their theories about painting, I will attempt to establish a new method with a unified approach of a/r/tography. This researcher, who has a BFA in Oriental painting, also adopts an a/r/tographical identity. Her work as an artist and a researcher can extend to a form of visual and literal expression.

### **The Literati's Fundamental Approaches regarding Their Integrative Learning and Artistic Practice in a Monistic Universe**

The East Asian literati were mainly Confucians and were also influenced by Buddhism and Taoism in traditional education. Their learning practice embraced reading the Confucian classics, composed of the "Four Books" (*Saseo: Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean, Analects, and Mencius*); the "Five

Classics" (*Okyōng: Book of Songs, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, I King*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*); and ink-and-brush writing/painting on paper. Their study of integrating philosophical knowledge and poetic art became a form of artistic practice.

Classical Chinese texts advocate studying books and emphasize practice in everyday living. In particular, Confucian texts exemplify a harmonious union of learning and life. *Lunlyu* (Analects) starts from "learning with a constant perseverance and application [*hakisiseup*]." It also emphasizes that one's knowledge and practice have to be unified in everyday life (*gihaeenghabil*).

The literati also unified their mind/spirituality/universe and body/material/humanity in a monistic universe.<sup>7</sup> This may be seen in Chuangtzu's (360?–286 BCE) dialogue with Huishi (370? BCE), in the seventeenth chapter "Autumn Water" of the book *Chuangtzu*:<sup>8</sup>

- Chuangtzu: A minnow's swimming in the water leisurely is the joy of a fish.  
 Huishi: How do you know the joy of a fish when you are not a fish?  
 Chuangtzu: How do you know I do not know the pleasure of a fish when you are not me?  
 Huishi: I do not know you, as I am not you. Also, it is right that you do not know the joy of a fish as you are not a fish.  
 Chuangtzu: Returning to the fundamental question, "How do you know the joy of a fish?" implies that I already knew the pleasure of a fish. I just came to know it now while I was walking along the beach.

This dialogue contains references to two layers: one is a real situation in the realm of the visible, separate from the self, in which the speakers are talking while walking across a bridge and a minnow, as a visible thing in objective reality, is swimming leisurely in the water; the other is that the fish is connected to Chuangtzu as a subject of the imperceptible aspect of nature. Chuangtzu's mind is not objectified by the object but instead unified with the object; thus, there is no distinction between Chuangtzu and the fish in the moment. That is, the two worlds are inseparable but represent the real and the unreal in a monistic universe. Chuangtzu remarks that people like Huishi see/understand humans and nature in a dualistic world if they think of only the first layer of the visible as truth. He then criticizes the egocentrism of anthropocentric dualism through the metaphor of their dialogue.

Chuangtzu possesses poetic sensibility in a monistic world, and his ideology as a Taoist influenced many literati. Such a monistic approach influenced the skills of *sisohwa*, in which the character was drawn by ink-and-wash painting (*sumukhwa; sumie* in Japanese). It follows that even the literati's materials (inks, brushes, and papers, each of different kinds with different characteristics) are called *munbangsau* (four friends: brush, ink, paper, and ink stone), and their subjects are called "four gentlemen" (*sagunja*: plum,

orchid, chrysanthemum, and bamboo, respectively). The literati's written expressions of their philosophical thoughts, literature, and visual language in the form of *sisōhwa* art were viewed as one in their tradition.

### The Literati's Painting Theories in Their Integrative Study

#### *The Sōhwa Same-Origin Theory: Its Development and the Integrative Role of Philosophical Text and Artistic Image*

From the beginning of the literati's literary endeavors, their literature and art played the same role, as an expressive medium of writing and drawing/painting with brush strokes, since Chinese characters had developed as a figurative language (*hyōngsanguneu*) from a mixture of pictographs and ideographs. The Chinese word *hyōngsang* (形象; figure) is a compound word of the characters for the form (*hyōng* 形) of the visible and of the invisible image (*sang* 象).

Literature on the theory of painting first began to be composed in the Wei-Jin (265–80 CE) northern and southern dynasties (265–589) from the fourth century in China.<sup>9</sup> Zhang Yanyuan (815–77, Chinese art historian) suggested in his *Lidaiminghuaji* (Record of Famous Paintings in History) that "the theory of calligraphy and painting are the same substance [*sōhwatongch'elon*] and the same principles of a writing brush's application are used in calligraphy and painting [*sōhwayongp'iltongpöplon*]." He attempted to uncover the origin of calligraphy in the mysteries of ancient legends<sup>10</sup> from the Xia (2100–1600 BCE) and Shang dynasties (1700–1046 BCE) in the first chapter, "Discourse on the Origin of Calligraphy and Drawing/Painting [*Nonseohuajiwonryu*]." Later, these came to be seen as two separate forms, one used to convey linguistic meaning through literature and the other to convey form through painting,<sup>11</sup> even though the literati developed them as a unified form in *sisōhwa* as a figurative language.

Later, many literati developed this theory, and the process of expansion and complexity in the field of calligraphy and painting;<sup>12</sup> Zhào Mèngfū (1254–1322) and Shitao (1642–1707) are considered the most representative. Zhào Mèngfū believed that calligraphy and painting were originally the same (*sōhwaponlaetong*). In his book *Huayulu* [Treatise on Painting], Shitao also claims the same origin for calligraphy and painting in the seventeenth chapter, "In Addition to Calligraphy [Kyōmchachang]."

Yōngkil An explains that the concept of origin in the theory of same origin in calligraphy and painting has three parts: (1) they are one in the original meaning; (2) they both originate in the mind; and (3) they unite with each other in the creation process.<sup>13</sup> Because of this feature, the literati's use of *sisōhwa* as a practice of visual and textual expression produced many literary theorists and artists. The same-origin theory in calligraphy and painting was connected to the oneness of discipline theory, which has endured in the *sisōhwa* tradition.

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### *The Oneness of Disciplines Theory as a Self-Expressive Medium*

The first chapter of the *Taoteking* (Tao and Virtue Classic), one of the major texts of Taoism written by Laotsu (600–470 BCE), states, “The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao.”<sup>14</sup> Such a statement shows the limitations of spoken language to express oneself. Such ideas made the literati deliver their ideas using metaphors of the visible in poetic and visual language.

In addition, the literati’s writing and painting activity, using brushstrokes based on the theory of calligraphy and painting derived from the same origin, has been influential. Jing Hao (early tenth century) wrote in his *P’ilpōki* (Laws of Calligraphy) that a painting is a brushstroke (*huajaheukya*). The character for painting is pronounced *hwa* and the character for brushstroke as *heuk* (a smack, like cutting with a sword), which means that brushstroking is not painting, even though they are written using the same character. In particular, the brush made it possible for the literati to write, draw, and paint within one brushstroke in a pictorial space. It is not like using a computer or a ballpoint pen. This is why calligraphy has been known by different names in different nations in East Asia: “written art [*seoyeu*]” in Korea, “written method [*seobeob*]” in China, and “written way [*seodo*]” in Japan.

Guo Xi (1001–90) suggested that there is a “coincidence of poetry and picture [*sihwailchi*], poetry and immortality [*sisunilchi*], picture and immortality [*hwasunilchi*]”. In his *Linqian Gaozhiji* (Essay on Landscape Painting), he says that to practice ink-and-wash landscape painting (*sumuksansuhwa*) is to practice nature.<sup>15</sup> Su Shi (1036–1101) comments on the painting of Wang Wei (700–760) as “a painting being in the poem, a poem being in the painting” (*sichungyuhwa, hwachungyusi*).<sup>16</sup> Ch’anhun Lee points out that the literati’s intention with a landscape painting (*sansuhwa*) was to expose the energy and spirit of nature in an ink-and-wash painting.<sup>17</sup>

The literati’s ideal, expressed in the form of landscape paintings drawn with ink and a brush (*sumuksansuhwa*) was to live in harmony with nature in woods and mountains. *Sumuksansuhwa*, which also began to grow during the Wei and Jin periods, was influenced by metaphysics (*hyōnhak*) during this time. Kim defined this style as the oneness of disciplines theory in which poetry, calligraphy, and painting have a unity of expression, that is, the expression of one’s literary nature as a self-expressive medium.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Literati’s Painting Theories in Artistic Practice**

#### *The Theory of Imagery Message (Üisang): The Literati Expressed and Delivered Their Thoughts through the Symbolic Meaning of an Image*

The literati’s *sisöhwaa* as a figurative language (*hyōngsangneu*) was developed from the Six Dynasties period (220 or 222–589 in China), in which the literati expressed themselves through poetry texts and pictorial images.<sup>19</sup> Yanyuan Zhang emphasizes “depiction of the artist’s mind [*sauj*]” and insists

that one's intention has "priority over a brushstroke [*üichaep'ilsön*]" in his *Lidaiminghuaji*.<sup>20</sup> Since Zhang wrote this work, many literati have pointed to the theory of imagery message (*üisang*, delivering metaphysical meaning of one's inner mind through a figure) as the representative theory of *sisōhwa*.

According to Lee, the literati delivered their ideas visually in the *sisōhwa* by borrowing from nature's visible forms.<sup>21</sup> The *sisōhwa* contains the artist's intention based on the theory of imagery message. For example, Suǒnán Zhèng (1241–1318) was a royal and one of the literati at the end of the Sung Dynasty (960–1279). He was adept in drawing intentions of things he deplored. For example, his orchid paintings symbolize how he would not plant an orchid on the unclean land of another people (sometimes referred to as the Mongols or the "northern barbarians"), as well as how he was unable to live on an earth ruled by the Yuan Dynasty (1280–1367). His orchid is an orchid with its root exposed" (*nogeunran*) called by Zhèng "The Orchid Leaves His Intention [Zhèng Suǒnánziyoueui]," which is the symbolic art of antiestablishment and resistance of that period.

Kim pointed out that Yantu Pu in his *Huàxuéxīnfǎwèndá* (Questions and Answers about One's Mind's Law in Learning a Painting) during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) emphasizes the function of one's intention, which has priority over a brushstroke, to be the most important aspect, even though he emphasizes the energy of the ink and a brush.<sup>22</sup> Even a circle in a picture is not just a circle but a direct expression of one's mind and a symbol that means one is clinging to the circle and the circling of life; the circle can be alive due to its symbolic meaning of the imperceptible world and the artist's lively brush strokes.<sup>23</sup>

The Sun (*Chán* in Chinese, *Zen* in Japanese) Buddhist sect (*sunjong* in Korean) was based on the *mahayana* (Great Vehicle) investigation of emptiness (notably by *nagarjuna*); the term *gong* (*sunyata*, "void" and "emptiness") is a synonym in Buddhist philosophy. Such ideals were expressed by the use of empty white space (*yōpaek*) and the mist technique that often appeared in the literati's *sisōhwa*. Both of these symbolize one's imperceptible state and function to unify the composition in the pictorial space. This is the reason that ink-and-wash painting without colors was the basis for the literati's artistic expression, in which the artistic materials were fused to produce the new beauty of ink-and-wash paintings.

When artists practice *sisōhwa*, they refer to the *sagunja* because of their characteristic features. For example, the orchid among the four gentlemen not only represents the figure of the orchid, which is characterized by its subtle perfume and tender but strong leaves, but also contains the symbolic meaning of the orchid.

*Sisōhwa* served to connect the worlds of the visible/matter and the invisible/spirit in a monistic universe through the symbolic meaning of the visible. It is natural that the symbolic role of *sisōhwa* allowed display through

the form of a book or a scroll, where one could touch the art work, to deliver and communicate with the literati's intention in East Asian traditional culture.

*The Vitality of Spirit Consonance (Kiunsaengdong) Theory:  
The Literati Put the Focus on Creation of Ki*

The theory of imagery message was related to the painting theory of soul transmission (*chōnsin*) by many literati, even though there have been many discussions about this theory by scholars. Gu Kaizhi (famous for the concept of *cheonsang-jeoni* in his book)<sup>24</sup> was the first of the literati to conceptualize "transmit a subtle gain" (*cheonsang-jeoni*). *Cheonsang* is the shortened word from "a subtle gain through lived experience [*cheonsang-myodeuk*]." *Jeoni* means that an artwork is transmitted by the artist's ideas and emotions, as experienced and understood by *cheonsang*.<sup>25</sup> Gu Kaizhi's points regarding the theory of soul transmission (*chōnsin*) are (1) drawing the true state of an image delivering the artist's soul (*chōnsin-sacho*), (2) drawing the artist's spirit with figures (*ihyōng-sasin*), and (3) achieving the subtle by transmitting the artist's ideas (*cheonsang-myodeuk*) through lived experience.<sup>26</sup>

In this vein, the third concept of "a subtle gain" means not drawing until one gains the spirit of the object through the process of "fusion between the subject of artist's mind and the object [*chukaekkyoyung*]" and "unification between the subject and the object [*chukaekhapil*]," where the artist's ideas, emotions, and imagination are fused into the essence of the object.<sup>27</sup> The theory of *hyōngshin* (*hyōng*, which indicates matter/figure/body, and *shin*, which indicates universe/spirit/soul, are combined, but the character *shin* is more grounded; *hyōng* is activated by *shin*) was developed from the earlier Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE). Chuangtzu's point was influential.<sup>28</sup>

Gu Kaizhi's emphasis is on the highest spirit transmission through unification between the subject and object in terms of mind–body unification. Naturally, Gu Kaizhi holds that the vitality of *ki* is the foremost element in the literati's paintings, although the rules for painting were presented only in respect to figure painting in his time.<sup>29</sup> This is the point where the theory of imagery message is connected to the theory of soul transmission and developed by the concept of *ki* related to the literati's painting. The literati gave *ki* priority rather than the formal beauty of a painting and have considered *ki* foremost in *sisōhwa* since then.

The earliest theory of soul transmission was practiced by Zong Bing (375–444) and Saheik (490–530) as "the theory of vitality of spirit consonance [*kiunsaengdongnon*]" in the Southern Qi era (479–501). Zong Bing extends the object of vitality from human figures to "mountains and water [*sansu*]." Saheik is known as the progenitor of East Asian painting theory. He presents *hwayukpōp* (the six canons of painting) in his *Guhuapinlu* (Old Record of the Classification of Painters).<sup>30</sup> They are (1) the vitality of spirit resonance

(*kiunsaengdong*); (2) structure in brushstroking (*kolpōpyongp'il*); (3) in accordance with how the objects draw their form (*üngmulsanghyöng*); (4) according to nature, lay on the colors (*sulyupuch'ae*); (5) division and planning mean composition (*kyöngyöngwich'i*); and (6) in transmitting copies, transmit what is drawn (*chönimosa*).<sup>31</sup> Saheik's vitality of spirit resonance is the first order in the six canons of painting. He expresses the lively spirit and energy existing in the image of a painting.<sup>32</sup>

Saheik's theory was developed and succeeded by the literati theories on painting and modified the theory of vitality of spirit consonance by Zhang Yanyuan in the middle of the ninth century. Jīnghào in the Five Dynasties (907–60) succeeded it with his six needs (*yukyo*) in *P'ilbōpkii* (Record of Brushstroke Laws). He writes that one should clear one's mind to focus only on the object and depict the object concentrating on one's mind, which the state of one's mind unifies with the object and forgets the self.

When the literati concentrated on *sisōhwa* practice, it was the moment of doing (*yuwi*) with one's intention that came from nondoing (*muwi*) or forgetting one's intention. The literati's painting theories assumed a posture of unification between a subject and an object (*chukaekilch'e*) grounded in a monistic and organic universe. Lee pointed out that the literati thought the most important result was to express the lively vitality of the universe.<sup>33</sup> Lee indicates that Guo Ruo in the Sung Dynasty (960–1279) was an advocate of the theory of vitality of spirit consonance as inherent energy in creating a subject.<sup>34</sup> To gain vitality in painting, the literati felt the tension of the hand holding the brush and the energetic rhythm of the brushstroke while concentrating on mind and body unification. This is the moment that conveys the artists' internal expression with mind and body unification. On the whole, when the literati practiced *sisōhwa*, the process of painting established an integrative connection that started from the mind, moved through brushstrokes made with the hand, and culminated in the creative energy, *ki*, endowing life in a monistic universe. This point will be amplified with Shitao's theory of the oneness of brushstroke.

#### *The Oneness of Brushstroke Theory: The Literati's Creative Process of Holistic Embodiment through Unification between One's Mind and Body, the Material and the Universe*

The Chinese Sun monk painter Shitao developed a "oneness of brushstroke" painting theory in his book *Huayulu* (Treatise on Painting).<sup>35</sup> He writes, "By means of the one brush stroke, man is able to create a greater entity in miniature without losing a bit of it."<sup>36</sup> According to his theory of the oneness of brushstroke, which is also the title of the first chapter of his book, a line begins with a single brushstroke connected to one's mind and is completed by creating a universe through one's body with that same stroke in the pictorial space.<sup>37</sup> In this way, mind, body, brush, and paper are connected. In the

sixth chapter, "Wrist Movement" (*Unwanchang*), Shitao discusses the basic method in using a brush: the wrist should be free when the mind's apprehension is the spirit carefully observing natural objects, and the spirit should be everywhere. With this one unique brushstroke, the artist creates something where before there was nothing; thus, *ki* in a pictorial space is created and creates a universe in terms of the one brushstroke theory.

The literati's process of *sisohwa* practice was the self-experiential unification between the universe and the self, as well as the connection of the nondoing and doing in the mind and body in a monistic universe. Such embodiment of the harmonious moment is an artistic and spiritual state of wholeness and mindlessness and is brought into the process of creating a world with *sisohwa*. It is the literati's creative process of self-expression that unifies nature/the universe and humans in a pictorial space. Shitao's theory of the oneness of brushstroke was, in essence, the idea that a stroke, as it begins in one's mind, represents the creation of a universe and the point at which a picture comes alive. In the second chapter, "Liberation from Methods," Shitao explains how the literati developed their own painting method spontaneously as the artistic process of creation unfolded, liberating them from the constrictions of the method they were taught and had assimilated. The literati's inner process of creative moments, in essence, integrated the artist's mind/body and the whole world and then produced *ki* in a pictorial space. This is why Shitao's theory of the oneness of brushstroke can be called the creation theory in painting.

The fundamental role and task of a literati's painting were to devise and express unification of nature and humans, when viewed in this perspective. It was no other than unifying the limitless energy, life, and spirit of nature with the spirit of the self. That is, expressing their mind and concentrating on the process while connecting this energy into a picture were the ways to make the picture alive and to understand how *ki*, the energy of nature, is produced through the unification between humans and nature. *Murailch'e* means that an object and a subject are unified, that there is no boundary between them. The brush made of animal hair reacts sensitively to one's mind and body on paper; thus, these characteristics of the brush make it possible to deliver the literati's invisible energy on paper. At this point, the element of *ki* in *sisohwa* endows life into the materials of ink, brush, and paper. In the literati's unified world, where everything, even images, was alive with the source energy, *ki* generates and maintains all things in a monistic universe. This moment unifies the artist, the materials, and the universe; as a result, these paintings seem alive.

The vitality of a painting comes from the artist's mind through the literati's artistic practice, while the image of the painting that the artist makes resembles the artist's personality. Naturally, Shitao's theory of the oneness of brushstroke shows how the literati's *sisohwa* practice of self-expression

on paper unified their minds with spirituality and materials, wherein the vitality of *ki* is generated by the artistic process. Thus, to gain the vitality of a painting, an artist must practice how to transmit his spirituality through concentrating on the process of unifying his mind, body, and materials.

#### *The Literati's Sisohwa Contemplative Practice toward Their Spiritual Enlightenment and Aesthetic Harmony in Everyday Living*

The literati's artistic practice allowed them to see, feel, and express their inner minds when they were brushstroking. This process of self-experiential unification was a way to concentrate on seeing while stopping thought. That is, their sense of self disappeared as well.<sup>38</sup> This state closely relates to the literati's *kwan* 觀 (see/observe/view and appearance) practice in meditation.

The literati thought that humans' carnal greed menaces our lives. This is the reason that the nobles and the sages enjoyed the zither, books, and paintings, to discard their greedy desire. A goal of *kwan* practice as a part of the literati's meditation was to see one's true nature by becoming aware of our attachment to objects of the senses and to move toward an empty mind (*musim*, a blank mind, is the state of unity with nature) in Buddhism. The doctrine of not-self (*mua*), the doctrine of emptiness, an empty mind, and nondualism (*puli*) are related to one's detachment from the visible, which is always changing. It is said in Sun Buddhism that one should be free from self-centered fantasy among visible things.

Such was the literati's ideal as expressed in *sisohwa*, and it became particularly pertinent during times of chaos and war caused by people's materialistic attachment to the visible world and their "eyeless state." Hakuin (1686–1768, a Japanese Zenga painter and monk) depicted people's eyeless state in his series of paintings "Blind Men Crossing a Log Bridge."<sup>39</sup> Blind men are crossing toward another place via a log bridge, but the far end of the bridge does not even reach the other side.

The first step of *kwan* practice is to realize directly the ultimate truth, which transcends the realm of the senses. Laotsu's *do* (all matter) is able to see the true nature of all matter as long as one's mind is in a state of emptiness and quiet (*hōchōng*).<sup>40</sup> Chuangtzu's "emptying one's mind [*simchae*]" and "sitting quietly and forgetting [*chwamang*]" as methods of contemplative practice mean that one can unify with *do* and grasp it when one's mind is made vacant through cleansing. *Do* and oneself are connected through having an empty and quiet state of mind. The self transcends one's attachments.

The state of an "empty and quiet mind" in *kwan* practice is to concentrate on seeing, which involves meditating on the state of *chikwan* 止觀 (literally, "stopping looking"). This means stopping the self-centered conceptual way of intentional looking toward the materialistic fantasy of the visible world. It consists of moments in which even the distinctions between doing and not-doing, thinking and not-thinking disappear. Frederick Franck, the author

of *The Zen of Seeing: Seeing Drawing as Meditation*, exclaims, “Not to look-at, mind you, but to see!”<sup>41</sup> The process of brushstroking was a Sun meditative state of quietness, emptiness, and pureness of one’s mind. Thus, the literati’s drawing state is also similar to meditation practices.<sup>42</sup> *Sisōhwa* practice is an art that furthers the progress of spiritual practice toward enlightenment in its most advanced form, which is rooted in the artist’s personal enlightenment.

Seeing toward awakening comes through artistic practice of *sisōhwa*. Xú Fùguān (1904–82) points out that Guo Xi did not continue to live in seclusion and understood his painting theory as a practice of a spiritual emancipation.<sup>43</sup> First of all, the literati as painters had to reach a high yet naïve state of spirituality through strict contemplative practice. Akiyama Terukazu points out that, through the spirituality of a painting, the monks composed not only metaphysical treatises but poetry full of sparkling wit. At the same time, they practiced or appreciated painting as a means of spiritual exercise.<sup>44</sup> The painting is both self-expression and, at the same time, a process of moving forward to such a state.<sup>45</sup>

The literati saw themselves in a new light, directly understanding the unity between their objective nature of thoughts and their subjective minds of feelings. The literati’s process of making brushstrokes was a way of not only embodying a self-experiential spiritual integrity but of unifying their philosophical learning and aesthetic living as long as one enjoyed the process of art activity by oneself. Lee Zehou, a Chinese aesthetician, comments in his introduction to *A History of Chinese Aesthetics* that harmony and unity based on the spiritual unity of Eastern philosophy is characteristic of Eastern art. He points out that the riches of ancient humanism and artistic sense constitute the highest state that exists in the union of nature and human beings.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, the literati’s *sisōhwa* process and the aesthetic subject are unified and purified their emptied minds, moving toward aesthetic contemplation. Such contemplative process of artistic practice was closely related to the aesthetic sensibility. This state of aesthetic being is expressed in the beauty of “non-two” (*pulimi*), a paradoxical notion in Buddhism that there are neither two nor one; in Confucianism, the beauty of moderation (*zaongyong*, the doctrine of the mean); and in Taoism, the beauty of not-doing (*muwimi*) and the beauty of profundity (*yuhyeonmi*).<sup>47</sup>

This process provides holistic harmony of the creative self—the way by which the heart/mind can achieve sagehood while integrating learning and living.<sup>48</sup> The holistic integrity of *sisōhwa* as the literati’s learning practice was a tool to reach the highest level in their lives. Given that *sisōhwa* practice became everyday living itself, *sisōhwa* practice was living, and the art of *sisōhwa* was the aesthetics of everyday life. Such an attitude generated aesthetic harmony, and their aesthetic harmony of holistic integrity combined philosophy, art, and life. A member of the literati was more than a scholar moving toward his ideal of the three perfections or Byungnam Oh’s

(a Korean aesthetician) normal person as new person perspective<sup>49</sup> or, in Dissanayake's contemporary term, an "aesthetic human."<sup>50</sup> The literati's *sisōhwa* practice effectively used the integrative learning of *sisōhwa* toward not only spiritual enlightenment but aesthetic harmony in everyday living.

The attainment of *sisōhwa*'s "three perfectionists" (*samchōl*) came to indicate a highly cultured scholar with artistic sensitivity. It became the standard for the literati's artistic expression and way of life. By practicing *sisōhwa*, the literati ultimately found their true selves through self-expression in a pictorial space. Indeed, a visual self-expression is a creation of the artwork. In particular, the materials connect to the artist's inner mind. The *ki* of an image is produced by the personality of the artist in *shishuhua*. Min Jusik explains how *sisōhwa* exposed the artist's personality in East Asian poetry theory.<sup>51</sup> Recently, the spirit appearance theory (*kisang-non*), based on "one's mind and body as the same [*simsimilyōl*]," was presented by Minhwon Cho at the 2015 Spring Symposium of the Korean Society of Eastern Art Studies held at Sōngkyunkwan University, Seoul, Korea.<sup>52</sup> This means that an artwork reflects an artist's personality in the same way that calligraphy does (*sōyōkiin*).

Practicing *sisōhwa* through the literati's painting theories is an accumulation of contemplative moments in which the monistic universe connects to an individual and everything is unified. The literati's learning was to find the self through *sisōhwa* contemplative practice. Thus, the theory of *sisōhwa* contemplative practice as a form of study has evolved.

### **The Old Future: The Literati's *Sisōhwa* Contemplative Practice to Train a Unified Way of Seeing**

The literati's painting theories in their integrative learning and artistic practice meant that they practiced with a mind and body connection unifying everything, as follows:

- (1) The literati's unified approach combined their philosophical ideas and artistic expression under a theory of calligraphy and painting of the same origin;
- (2) Their *sisōhwa* as art delivered the symbolic meaning of a nonperceptible world in a monistic universe;
- (3) Their expression through visual and literary languages according to *uisang* theory was based on a unity of emotion and reason. As a result, the literati's fundamental approaches of *sisōhwa* were apprehended directly through both intellect and wisdom;
- (4) Their artistic practice connected the mind, body, and materials, while creating *ki* in the literati's pictorial space;
- (5) Their artistic process trained their contemplative practice of concentrating on the process of seeing while brushstroking. This is the moment that unified everything in the vein of the oneness of brush-

stroke theory, so that their working process became the creation of a universe in the pictorial space and prepared for the unification between humans and nature/the universe as a creative human being;

- (6) Their artistic process helped the literati move toward an empty mind of enlightenment;
- (7) Their artistic practice is the self-experiential embodiment of the learning process toward aesthetic harmony and spiritual practice in living; ultimately, *sisōhwa* contemplative practice theory merged reason and emotion, nature and humans, and knowledge and life and focused on the meditative state of the literati's brushstroking process that connects everything in a nondualistic universe. That is, the literati perceived with a unified way of seeing through *sisōhwa* contemplative practice.

The literati's *sisōhwa* contemplative practice covered not only philosophy and the authoritative Confucian texts but also art, literature, and the forms of *sisōhwa* as a basic discipline.<sup>53</sup> *Sisōhwa* contemplative practice theory can serve to train students not only to see well and find a creative and artistic self through artistic skills, self-expression, appreciation, and communication, but also to unify the mind and body connection through an artistic practice toward enlightenment. It is a way to practice how to stop thinking and concentrate on seeing and, in a moment, to unify everything. It trained the literati in a unified way of seeing the true nature of things, including themselves, in aesthetic harmony and spiritual enlightenment in a monistic universe. This is the nature of the East Asian literati's education, which produced an integrative discipline of philosophy and the arts of poetry, calligraphy, and painting. The unified way of learning and living in aesthetic harmony with nature was sustained by the *sisōhwa* practice of traditional literati education.

*Sisōhwa* contemplative practice theory played a role in the physical embodiment that harmoniously unified the fragmented. Today, *sisōhwa* as art and its contemplative practice theory as basic training in education can play a role in solving the modern problems of self-centered visual limitation distorted by Cartesian perspective. Cheolgyu Lim comments that we have lost "the good eyes of the past, but it is possible to see it."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, postmodernists as described in the book *The Trans Parent Thread* searched for an alternative to the Eastern holistic way of thinking:

Early Modernist attitudes dealing with wholeness, unity, and non-hierarchical ways were fertilized by Buddhist, Tao and Hindu writings.... The literati began to consider this way of thinking, especially the Asian holistic attitude toward nature, as a serious alternative to European Romanticism and Rationalism.<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, the literati's focus on the mind's painting emphasized spirituality, as shown in Dong Qichang's (1555–1636) theory of reverence

of the Southern School paintings but deviated from Northern School paintings (*sangnamp'yōmbungnon*). He emphasizes spirituality in the literati's *sumukhwa* (ink-and-wash painting). Over time, the spirituality in *sisōhwa* was overly emphasized, and the role of art was functionalized along with modern changes. Its integrative role of philosophical ideas and artistic expression became lost and separated into philosophy and art. Even the role of art separated into poetry, calligraphy, and painting, as mentioned previously. Naturally, the practice of traditional literati art now functions on the painting's formal beauty alongside Western standards, even though its implementation in modern art education would lead to a unified way of seeing with integrative learning and artistic practice to resolve the problems of the modern fragmented society.

But the basic implications of *sisōhwa* can be recovered as a contemplative practice. First, *sisōhwa* contemplative practice theory in traditional education needs to be a harmonious fusion of philosophy, literature, and art in order to utilize *sisōhwa* as a basic discipline. Second, *sisōhwa* as a self-expressive art was a tool to deliver the literati's intentions through symbolic meaning of the visible. Such a symbolic role of images connected the visible and the imperceptible in a monistic universe, thus functioning as communication. This has to be recovered within a modern parlance not only in art but education. Third, the literati viewed everything as being interconnected and as possessing *ki* of the natural world, which is a method of brushstroking to capture a unified moment while seeing with the right hemisphere of a brain. This point has to be researched in terms of a brain science.<sup>56</sup>

The role of *sisōhwa* contemplative practice in East Asian traditional education can be revived with the modern application of these three implications. Specifically, the goal is not only art education but teaching how to see well, that is, in the unified way of seeing in education. It is still relevant today as the "old future," old but new. This paper asserts that it is valuable to recover *sisōhwa*'s function as a primary education for a modern counterbalance.

## Notes

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1. *Sisōhwa* theory includes the literati's poetry/literature theory (*siron/mullon*), calligraphy theory (*sōron*), and painting theory (*hwaron*), but this paper focuses on East Asian literati's painting theories.
2. Hereafter, terms for poetry, calligraphy, and painting will be referred to as *sisōhwa*, and the term *literati* is used not only for scholars or philosophers but also for artists.
3. China, Japan, and Korea share many cultural attributes in general terms. The literati's training comprised the basis of education in the traditional societies of these three countries.

4. Chinese words are written according to their pronunciation in the case of Chinese proper nouns; otherwise, Korean pronunciation is used in this paper. The sentences from Korean books are translated by the author.
5. HyunKyoung Shin, "Art as Visual Literacy in the Literati's *Sisōhwa* (Poetry-Calligraphy-Painting): Self-Expressive Visual Education as a Primary Discipline" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2012).
6. Mindy R. Carter and Rita L. Irwin, "Between Signification and Illumination: Unfolding Understandings of an A/r/tographical Turn on Practicum," *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 15, no. 3 (2014): 1–19.
7. HyunKyoung Shin, "Restoration of Monistic Universe and Shishuhua Practice," *Eastern Art* 20 (2012): 327–58.
8. Even though it is hard to categorize philosophers, such as Chuangtzu, as *sisōhwa* artists because their original manuscripts have not survived, East Asian philosophies are included in the *sisōhwa* category through their shared medium of brush and ink. In particular, Chuangtzu was a highly respected scholar among the literati who shared the nondualistic perspective in the earliest period.
9. The fourth century is the time period of Gu Kaizhi (344–406) who was famous as one of the first "Three Perfections" in China.
10. Cāngxié (c. 2650 BCE) is said to have invented Chinese characters from the tracks of birds and animals found in the sand or snow.
11. Younghwan Hur, *Chungkukhwalon* [Chinese Painting Theory] (Seoul: Seomundang, 1988).
12. Yǒngkil An, "The Formation and Meaning of the Theory of Same Origin of Calligraphy and Painting," *Misulsahak* [Reviews on Art History] 21, no. 2 (2004): 5–22.
13. An, "The Formation and Meaning."
14. Lao-Tzu, *Taoteching*, trans. Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2007).
15. Hur, *Chungkukhwalon*, 67–71.
16. Su Shi, *Tong-p'a-che-pal* [Tongpa Su Shi's Poetry Inscriptions], Chapter 5.
17. Ch'anhun Lee, "A Study on Oriental Aesthetics Appearing in Chinese Painting Theory," *Taetongch'olhak* [Great Unity Philosophy] 55 (2011): 229.
18. Paekkyun Kim, "Sisōhwallyul: On View from Media," *Mihak* [Korean Aesthetics] 48 (2006): 1–17.
19. Chōnghūi Kim, "Acceptance and Development of Euisang Theory in the Theory of Oriental Painting," *Chohyōngyesulhakyōnku* [Journal of Science of Art and Design] 14, no. 2 (2008): 81–102.
20. Cited in Hur, "Chungkukhwalon," 36.
21. Jinoh Lee, "The Expression of the Buddhist State through Linguistic Figuration and Art," *Hankukmihakesulhak* [The Journal of Aesthetics and Science of Art] 23 (2006): 29–61.
22. Paekkyun Kim, "Huaxuexinfawenda and Painting Theories in the Early Qing Dynasty," *Hankukmihak* [Korean Aesthetics] 35 (2003): 1–28.
23. This was the theme of my 2016 solo exhibition, "Let's Play with a Circle Drawing!" at Sai Art gallery, in Seoul, Korea.
24. Gu Kaizhi, *Hwaundaesangi* [The Records of Painting Hwaun Mountain].
25. Lee, "A Study on Oriental Aesthetics," 220.
26. Lee, "A Study on Oriental Aesthetics," 219.
27. Lee, 220.
28. Lee, 218.
29. Gu's concept of the theory of soul transmission was exempted by the literati's ink-and-wash paintings at that time, even though the literati's painting theories focused on just such painting.
30. Saheik's document dates back to the "Six Canons of Painting" in Buddhism in India; he applied it to calligraphy.
31. Margaret Medley, *A Handbook of Chinese Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

32. Lee, "A Study on Oriental Aesthetics," 224.
33. Chongsang Lee, "Tongyangui Kisasangkwa Kiunlon Yonku" [A Study on *Ki* Ideology in Orient] (PhD diss., Dongguk University, 1989).
34. Lee, "A Study on Oriental Aesthetics," 229.
35. Yongok Kim, *Soktohwalon* [Shitao's Painting Theory] (Seoul: Tongnamu, 2002.). In particular, Sun ink paintings and theories, grounded in Taoist-informed Buddhism, are categorized as literati painting and theories. Sunjung 禪宗 (the Sun Buddhism sect), informed by the nondualistic perspective of philosophical Taoism in the Eastern traditional culture, cannot be taught through conceptual distinctions. Thus, Sun Buddhists utilized paintings as a way to deliver their beliefs to ordinary, illiterate people. They used ink and brush on paper, and their paintings shared the same characteristics as *sisōhwa*; these monks were regarded as the most talented scholars in their communities. Most Sun monks were included in the ranks of the literati.
36. François Cheng, *Empty and Full: The Language of Chinese Painting* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994), 124.
37. Shin, "Restoration of Monistic Universe and Shishuhua Practice," 127.
38. Words derived from the Chinese character *mok* 目(eye) are *kwan*, *kyōn* 見 (see/observe and behold/perceive) and *kak* 覺 (awake), which are related to seeing/be aware of one's self-centered blindness.
39. Stephan Addiss, *The Art of Zen: Paintings and Calligraphy by Japanese Monks, 1600–1925* (New York: Abrams, 1989), 102–29.
40. Eun Young Lee, "A Study on the Lao-tzu's Aesthetic Thought from the Concept of XuJung and Educational Implications for Art Education," *Misulgoyoyuk* [Art Education Research Review] 28, no. 4 (2014): 101–22, at 103.
41. Frederick Franck, *The Zen of Seeing: Seeing/Drawing as Meditation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 2.
42. Franck, *The Zen of Seeing*.
43. Quoted in Hur, *Chungkukhwalon*, 71.
44. Akiyama Terukazu, *Japanese Painting* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1990), 104.
45. Lee, "A Study on Oriental Aesthetics," 238.
46. Lee Zehou, *A History of Chinese Aesthetics* [*Chungkukmihaksa*], trans. Deokju Gwon (Seoul: Korean Textbook Ltd., 1993), 24–30.
47. These four characteristics of beauty in the literati's art come from a lecture on "Oriental Aesthetics," presented in 1978 by Prof. Kim Jeungkil at Seoul National University.
48. Chenyang Li, "The Confucian Conception of Freedom," *Philosophy East and West* 64, no. 4 (2014): 902–19.
49. Byungnam Oh, *Aesthetic Lecture* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2003), 518.
50. Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
51. Jusik Min, "The Problem of Correlation between Work of Art and Personality," *Eastern Art* 31 (2015): 75–102.
52. Minhwon Cho, "Kisanglon" (the theory of personality) and "Soyokiin" (the calligraphy resembles the artist). The theme of the symposium was the relationship between the artist's work and his/her personality.
53. This fact is relevant to teaching drawing and painting with the right hemisphere of the brain, but this theme is not dealt with within this paper.
54. Cheolgyu Lim, *NunüYöksa, NunüMihak* [A History of Eyes, Aesthetics of Eyes] (Seoul: Hankilsa, 2004), 65.
55. Gail Gelburd and Geri DePaoli, *The Trans Parent Thread: Asian Philosophy in Recent Art* (Hempstead, NY: Hofstra University and Bard College, 1990), an exhibition catalog, 15.
56. This theme will be dealt with in a future paper.