A Basic Examination of Hasegawa Settan’s “Folding Screen Depicting Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons”

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This paper provides a basic examination of Hasegawa Settan’s “Folding Screen Depicting Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons” ("Shiki-kosaku-zu-byobu"), kept in the collection of the Saga Prefectural Museum and of great interest as an artwork that presents a realistic depiction of a farming village in southern Kanto at the end of the Edo Era. It is thought that this screen was commissioned in 1838, when Settan was 61 years old, by Fukuhara Takamine, a landlord who lived in Watauchi village, Sagami Province who is known as the author of “Sochu ryouon kiryaku”. The composition of the folding screen, which shows the Fukuhara family residence painted large on both the left and right panels, the cultivation of rice which had just begun in large rice paddies in Fukuhara’s garden, another scene of Fukuhara’s garden depicting the hulling of harvested rice and the storing of the rice in a storehouse, celebrates the prosperity of the Fukuhara family, which commissioned the screen, and by depicting the lives of villagers as well suggests the prosperity of the village thanks to the Fukuhara family. Furthermore, in depicting the storage of rice that is paid as tax in a communal village storehouse and the loading of rice for transportation to town, the screen also celebrates prosperity under the reign of the Tokugawa shogunate. Despite the depiction of extreme detail and the somewhat problematic way in which farming implements are drawn in this screen, as an artwork that presents a realistic portrayal of farming and folk customs in southern Kanto at the end of the Edo Era this folding screen holds great value as research material for studies on the history of agricultural technology and folk customs.