Image of Gagaku Seen in “Nishihama Goten Bugaku No Zu”: Meaning and Function of Gagaku of Tokugawa Harutomi

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This article focuses on Tokugawa Harutomi’s movements around the Gagaku. Tokugawa Harutomi was the 10th feudal lord of the Kishu domain. And this article examines what the Gagaku music and the musical instruments meant to him and how he was involved in Gagaku by analyzing “Nishihama Goten Bugaku No Zu” (owned by Wakayama City Museum) in detail.

The painting of “Nishihama Goten Bugaku No Zu” (owned by Wakayama City Museum) is almost the same as the content of “Gakutan: Nishihama Goten Bugaku No Ki” written by Motoori Oohira, scholar of the Kokugaku, from the Kishu domain. Therefore, it was considered that the painting showed the scene of the Bugaku held by Tokugawa Harutomi in October of the 6th year of the Bunsei era (1823). However, there are some differences between the painting and the content of the “Bugaku No Ki”, and there is a possibility that the Bugaku held on another day was shown in the painting. As a result of focusing attention on the difference in depiction of seasons and making a detailed survey of the existing historical materials, it was found that the painting might depict the Bugaku held at Nishihama Goten in March of the 10th year of the Tempo era (1839).

In addition, as a result of analyzing the details further, it is pointed that Nishihama Goten was depicted as a graceful “garden painting” with a specific image of “Bugaku” and as a political space in which the master-servant relationship is clear. It is also assumed that Harutomi intended to position himself as a person having strong power culturally and politically by using such a court noble’s residence as depicted in classical paintings for the image of the garden and overlapping the picture of Harutomi himself with the picture of a court noble or the emperor. This is deeply related with the position of Harutomi after he went into retirement at Nishihama Goten. With the intent of the shogunate, Harutomi had to reluctantly hand over the position of domain lord to his daughter’s husband, and to him, Nishihama Goten was a “palace” as a substitute for “castle”.

In other words, it seems that this painting was depicted with the intention of showing that Nishihama Goten was a political and cultural center by solemnifying Nishihama Goten as a graceful place using the image of “Bugaku” and that Harutomi was a strong person of power who dominates the place.

Key words: Nishihama Goten Bugaku No Zu, Tokugawa Harutomi, Bugaku, Nishihama Goten, Japanese harp