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The *Triptych with the Miracles of Christ* in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne: A New Interpretation of the Images and the Dating of the Picture

This article focuses on the *Triptych with the Miracles of Christ* altarpiece, a joint work by the so-called Minor Masters, an example of late 15th century Flemish art relatively unknown up until now in Japan. The author, Hiraoka Yôko, focuses on the unique quality of the composition of the central panel, while using a persuasive and detailed iconographic methodology to relate the entire triptych to the sacraments and rebirth, and indicate that Peter, emphasized in the composition, was a symbol of the Roman papacy. Then, she interprets the motif of Peter's conferring blessings as appealing for the approval of the Roman papacy, and thus succeeds in lining the painting's subject to the political and social situation of the period of its production.

The factors that linked altar paintings to the social milieu of their day were the models for the "hidden portraits" painted into the composition. The careful identification of these sitters through the adept use of the portraits, portrait sketches and other visual materials available from this period is one of the fascinating points of this article. And yet, at the same time, one cannot deny the uncertainty that accompanies such identification. However, Hiraoka's effective use of cultural historical motifs such as the playful heraldic devices and the device of the Order of the Golden Fleece, eliminate any such doubts and it appears that the majority of the identifications are fully appropriate. The author indicates that the historical information on the identified sitters is reflected in the iconographic subject matter in the composition, and overturning the opinions of earlier western scholars on the subject, offers a new possibility concerning the commissioner of the work.

Namely, Hiraoka effectively proves that the commissioner was Philip of Cleves, a central figure in the anti-Hapsburg forces, who lived in the tumultuous period in which Flanders fell under the rule of the Hapsburgs, a foreign power.

This article thus aids the painting's iconographic interpretation, and presents the work's meaning and detailed function at the time of its creation through the author's deep examination of the elements of cultural and political history that intersect with the work if not actually contained in the work. It must also be mentioned that this detailed study further almost completely confirms the production date of the work.

Regardless of the fact that this period is little known in Japan, the tumultuous early pre-modern period in Europe, which was beginning to undergo reorganization thanks to the vigorous activities of the independent city states, was an important historical turning point, and thus must not be overlooked in the history of Western art, even if it was not a period associated with great masters. It goes without saying that this article is a major achievement in terms of its provision of a powerful new interpretation that supercedes earlier theories about the works that were emerging in noteworthy regions during this period, and for its raising of the standard of Western art history research in Japan. For these reasons the committee applauds the efforts and accomplishment of Hiraoka Yôko and awards her the *Bijutsushi* Article Prize.