

1. The Development of Japonisme Studies: A Retrospective, Viewed Obliquely¹

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Abstract: This chapter recounts the author’s recollections of how the field of Japonisme studies has developed since the late 1970s. It discusses issues such as the shift in research focus from the influence of *ukiyo-e* on Impressionism to the field of decorative arts and the art historical reevaluation of French Salon painters and their interests in Japanese art. The chapter also discusses how the phenomenon of Japonisme overlapped with the nascent study of East Asian religions in the West by examining the travels to Japan by Henri Cernuschi and Théodore Duret, and Émile Guimet and Félix Régamey. It also proposes new interpretations regarding the incorporation of *ukiyo-e* prints in the work of Édouard Manet and Vincent van Gogh.

Keywords: *Le Japon artistique*, Academy painting in France, Japanese painters in Europe, Émile Guimet, Théodore Duret, Édouard Manet

What I remember as the first international academic conference on Japonisme took place in 1979 in Tokyo. It was organized in conjunction with the exhibition *Ukiyoe to inshōha no gakatachi ten: higashi to nishi o musubu niji no kakehashi/ Ukiyo-e Prints and the Impressionist Painters, Meeting of the East and the West* at the Sunshine Museum of Art in Ikebukuro. The museum was located on the 6th floor of the Bunka Kaikan building, a part of the Sunshine City Complex that included the towering landmark Sunshine 60 Building, which opened the previous year and

¹ This is a modified translation of Inaga Shigemi, “Japonisumu kenkyū no tenkai—hasukai kara nagameta kaiko,” in *Japonisumu o kangaeru—Nihon bunka hyōshō o meguru tasha to jiko/Japonisme Reconsidered: The Other and the Self in Representations of Japanese Culture*, ed. Japonisumu Gakkai (Shibunkaku Shuppan, 2022), 23–41.

at the time of its construction was the tallest skyscraper in East Asia.² This essay begins by looking back at the state of Japonisme studies at that time and then traces subsequent developments in the field.

The proceedings of this groundbreaking international conference were published by Kodansha International in 1980 as *Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium*, with essays mostly in English and a few in French. The table of contents lists the names of prominent art historians, not only those based in Japan but also from France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, a number of whom paved the way for the field that we today call Japonisme. The publication's editor-in-chief was Yamada Chisaburō (1908–84), then director of the National Museum of Western Art in Ueno.³ The majority of the editorial work was undertaken by Ōmori Tatsuji of the Bridgestone Museum of Art (present-day Artizon Museum), widely respected for his unrivaled capacity for foreign languages and editorial skills. At the time, I had just begun a master's degree at the University of Tokyo, and contributed, if only in a small way, to the editing of the catalogue of the aforementioned Sunshine Museum of Art exhibition on *ukiyo-e* and Impressionism.

The great success of the exhibition and the conference led to the establishment in 1980 of a small academic society known as Society for the Study of Japonaiserie (Japonezurī Kenkyū Gakkai). Yamada was president, and influential members at the time of the group's founding included Ōshima Seiji (1924–2006), then working at the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts, and Ikegami Chūji (1936–94), a professor of Western art history at Kobe University.⁴ 1980 was also the year when Ōshima published his pioneering book on Japonisme entitled *Japonisumu—inshōha to ukiyoe no shūhen* (*Japonisme: Around Impressionism and Ukiyo-e*),⁵ in addition to two other landmark studies on Japonisme: Klaus Berger's *Japonismus in der Westlichen Malerei 1860–1920* and Siegfried Wichmann's *Japonismus: Ostasien-Europa: Begegnungen in der Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*.

Both Ikegami and Ōshima were interested in *Le Japon artistique* (36 issues, 1888–91), an important monthly magazine run by S. Bing (1838–1905) that surveyed the art of Japan, complete with color illustrations. They were probably responsible for *Geijutsu no Nihon*, a 1981 Japanese translation of Bing's seminal work, which was

2 The Sunshine City Complex is located next to the major hub station of Ikebukuro; it was built on the former site of the Sugamo Prison.

3 Yamada was already an important scholar of Chinoiserie in the prewar period. In 1973, he edited *Ukiyoe to inshōha*, vol. 18 of Shibundō's well-known *Kindai no bijutsu* series.

4 For more discussion on the state of Japonisme studies in around 1980, see Inaga Shigemi, "Kaisetsu," in Ōshima Seiji, *Japonisumu—inshōha to ukiyoe no shūhen* (Kōdansha, 1992), 355–76. This is the Kōdansha Gakujuetsu Bunko paperback reprint of the original (Bijutsu Kōronsha, 1980).

5 Ōshima Seiji, *Japonisumu—inshōha to ukiyoe no shūhen* (Bijutsu Kōronsha, 1980).

originally produced in English, German, and French.⁶ I still remember attending a lunch meeting as a member of the editorial board in Tokyo attended by Haga Tōru (1931–2020), a scholar of comparative literature and culture at the Komaba campus of the University of Tokyo, and the art critic Segi Shin'ichi (1931–2011). Haga selected me and my slightly senior colleague Kanamori Osamu (1954–2016) to translate several of the essays.

The enthusiasm for Japonisme by Ikegami, Haga, Segi, and others ultimately led to the *Le Japon artistique* translation project. It was sparked by Ikegami's discovery that the French artist James Tissot (1836–1902) was the drawing teacher of Tokugawa Akitake (1853–1910), the shogunate's representative at the 1867 Paris Universal Exposition (Exposition universelle) when he was just thirteen. Ikegami also found a portrait of Akitake by Tissot hidden among the treasures owned by the Mito branch of the Tokugawa family.

As the subtitle "A Retrospective, Viewed Obliquely" here suggests, this chapter reflects my recollections at the time as a novice academic, inexperienced and probably terribly biased. In what follows I will concentrate on three issues. First, I will discuss the gradual shift in research focus in Japonisme studies from the "ukiyo-e and Impressionism" model, as seen in the title of the abovementioned 1979 Sunshine Art Museum exhibition, to an understanding of Japonisme in terms of industrial and decorative arts. Second, I will address the awareness emerging in the 1980s that a fascination with Japan was much more widely shared among French academic artists and Salon painters in ways not acknowledged in the early phase of Japonisme studies. This centered on the progressive painters associated with Impressionism. And finally, I will examine how the phenomenon of Japonisme overlapped with the nascent study of East Asian religions in the West, a topic that has greatly intrigued me in recent years. Together, these discussions will consider how the field of Japonisme studies has evolved over the decades by responding to texts, objects, spaces, as well as other traces that history has left us to uncover.

Rehabilitation of the Decorative Arts

It was not until the early twentieth-first century—two decades after the release of the Japanese translation of *Le Japon artistique*—that art historians in Japan took note of the color illustrations of ceramics in Bing's publication. Until this time, this aspect of the journal had received little attention outside a small circle of ceramics

6 Samyueru Bingu, *Geijutsu no Nihon*, ed. with the cooperation of Japonezurī Kenkyū Gakkai (Bijutsu Kōronsha, 1981).

specialists. Drawing on Imai Yūko's groundbreaking doctoral research,⁷ I identified several of these images from the ceramics section of *Kanko zusetsu* (*Illustrated Discourse on Ancient Objects*), an earlier publication with lithographic illustrations compiled by Ninagawa Noritane (1835–82) of 1876–80. *Kanko zusetsu* appears to have been conceived as a book for overseas connoisseurs and collectors.⁸ Bing was apparently meticulous in considering which ceramics should be included in *Le Japon artistique*, and I was convinced that he relied on Ninagawa's authority, not only for the illustrations but also for the accompanying commentaries. Furthermore, this confirmed the existence of an international distribution network linking Ninagawa to Bing and Western collectors, including the American Edward S. Morse (1838–1925). One must also note that Bing was the author of the “Ceramics” chapter in *L'Art japonais* by art historian Louis Gonse (1846–1921). Published in 1883, the two-volume *L'Art japonais* was the first comprehensive book on Japanese art.

In retrospect, the decision in the 1970s to organize an exhibition on the Japanese influence on nineteenth-century French art that emphasized the connection between *ukiyo-e* and Impressionism was rather arbitrary. At the end of the nineteenth century, Impressionism had yet to establish a mainstream reputation in the art world, and *ukiyo-e* prints were not the only objects from Japan that enjoyed widespread popularity in France. In other words, this pairing of “*ukiyo-e* and Impressionism” and its prominence in the art historical discourse retroactively projected the modernist art historical narrative still dominant in the late 1970s to recount the origins of the popularity of Japanese objects in the nineteenth century. While it is true that Bing competed with Japanese dealers, such as Hayashi Tadamasu (1853–1906), who were in the business of buying and selling Japanese art in the West, the focus of dealers, including Hayashi, was never solely on *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Ceramics and bronzes garnered more attention in the market, an attitude to which the Meiji government's policy of promoting industrial development and exports contributed.

Up until the 1970s, the decorative and applied arts were generally not taken seriously as objects of art historical study, and they were excluded from mainstream research that privileged painting and sculpture. It was not until the advent of postmodernism in the 1980s, and particularly in the 1990s, that researchers began

7 Imai Yūko's PhD dissertation was later revised and published as *Tōgei no japonisumu* (University of Nagoya Press, 2016).

8 Museums in Europe and the United States, including the British Museum in London, purchased copies of the original edition of *Kanko zusetsu*. See Inaga Shigemi, “Seiō moderunite ni taiji suru Nihon no dentō kōgei: Anri Foshiyon ryō taisen kanki no kōsatsu o michibiki ni,” in *Ōkan no kiseki: Nichifutsu geijutsu kōryū no 150 nen*, ed. Miura Atsushi (Sangensha, 2002), 241, 265; Inaga Shigemi, “Arts et métiers traditionnels au Japon face à la modernité occidentale (1850–1900): A l'écoute d'Henri Focillon: quelques observations préliminaires,” in *Trajectoires d'allers-retours: 150 ans d'échanges artistiques franco-japonais*, ed. Miura Atsushi (Sangensha, 2013), 122–34.

to shift their interest to these previously neglected areas. With the declaration of “the end of modernity” in the last few decades of the twentieth century, it was as if the mine of resources for art historical study—rooted in modernist values that privileged Impressionism as the origin of “modern painting”—was being exhausted. From that point onward, scholars began to feel the need to uncover the historical realities of the second half of the nineteenth century that had long been hidden by the modernist paradigm. This paradigm shift, a concept famously coined by Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–96) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962),⁹ was also characterized by art historians as “revisionism.” In retrospect, it was not entirely devoid of the reactionary and negative nuances existing within political connotations of revisionism.

Japonisme at Official Salon Exhibitions

The shift in research trends toward a historical reevaluation of the decorative arts and applied arts corresponded with the art historical reappraisal of nineteenth-century academic art in the 1980s, which included the reevaluation of Japanese artists who studied under academic painters in France. An exhibition in Japan that symbolized this paradigm shift was *Kindai Furansu kaiga no tenkai to Yamamoto Hōsui: Meiji jūgonen Pari/Yamamoto Hōsui and the Development of Modern French Painting: Paris Circa 1882*, an inaugural exhibition held in 1982 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu. Rather than focus on the expected topic of Impressionism, the show instead centered on Yamamoto Hōsui (1850–1906), a Western-style oil painter from Gifu Prefecture, during his years in Paris (1878–87). The art historian Yamada Chisaburō recommended me as an interpreter for the month-long field research in France in preparation for this exhibit. At the risk of sounding boastful, this is how a young graduate student interpreter such as myself ended up as a member of the group who drew up the exhibition list, prioritizing the most talked-about works at the Salon exhibitions in the late nineteenth century over Impressionist paintings.¹⁰

While we were conducting research in France in preparation for the Hōsui exhibition, preparations were underway in Paris for the opening of the Musée d’Orsay in 1986. Geneviève Lacambre, then the chief curator at the Museum d’Orsay, escorted us to a room in the basement of the Palais de Tokyo closed to the public that stored a collection of works by academic artists. Many of these individuals had long been relegated to regional museums where they were mostly forgotten.

9 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, 1962).

10 For behind-the-scenes stories about the preparation of this exhibition, including related illustrations, see Inaga Shigemi, “Gyustāvu Morō to kame,” *Tosho* (September 2018): 2–7.

Lights illuminated the works that were set against a background of green velvet cloth hanging from the ceiling. I clearly recall the shiver that ran down my spine at the sight of works so vividly brought to life.

Another institution visited with the hope of securing loans was the Musée de Bordeaux. The museum's painting *Rolla* (1878) by Henri Gervex (1852–1929) hung almost hidden in the shadows of a back stairwell. During Hōsui's time in Paris, the Salon rejected this nude painting of a prostitute, apparently due to its immorality. This only made the work even more celebrated, however, prompting Princess Mathilde Bonaparte (1820–1904) and others to visit the artist's residence to view it. I distinctly remember, as if it were only yesterday, how the director of the museum strongly expressed his displeasure when we broached the possibility of borrowing it, calling the work “a shame to the museum.”

In addition to this “kitschy” and controversial painting, others lent to the Gifu exhibition were the large ovoid *Drunken Bacchus and Cupid*, a relatively early work by Hōsui's teacher Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), who was notoriously scorned in the early 1980s as the “reigning emperor” of the École des Beaux-Arts, which according to modernist standards of judgment had become synonymous with art made in “bad” taste. There was also *Phaedra* (1880) by Alexandre Cabanel (1823–89), who also taught at the École, and *The Pope and the Inquisitor* (1882) by Jean-Paul Laurens (1838–1921), who was recognized as “the last history painter” in France and was a mentor to the oil painter Kanokogi Takeshirō (1874–1941). These French painters were the “masters,” representative art celebrities of their time who exercised their authority as jurors at France's official annual art exhibition, as members of the Académie des beaux-arts, and as full professors at the École. Works by these academic painters were first seen in Japan in Gifu in 1982.

Hōsui is best remembered for *Urashima* (1893–94), a large oil painting created after his return to Japan and today housed in the Gifu museum. The subject for this tableau is in keeping with the most revered in Western academic art at that time—namely, episodes from history and classical mythology—but is transplanted to Japan by drawing from local myth. He was likely inspired to do so as a result of his training under Gérôme, who in turn was a master of the Orientalist mode. From rendering Orientalist landscapes of Egypt and the Middle East, Gérôme moved eastward; he painted, for example, an official record of a meeting between a Siamese ambassador and Napoleon III (1808–73) at the Fontainebleau Palace. Gérôme's reach extended even further afield to include the Far East, as in his painting *Japanese Imploring a Divinity*.¹¹ The Buddha depicted at the top of the stairs in this oil painting is in my

11 The current location of this painting is not known to the author. It was sold at a Christie's auction that closed on January 1, 1970. It is reproduced as no. 482 in Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme: With a Catalogue Raisonné* (Sotheby's Publications, 1986), 288.

opinion a composite of the Ueno Great Buddha (Daibutsu), known from commercial souvenir photographs at the time, and the so-called “Great Buddha of Meguro” that was brought to France from Japan by Henri Cernuschi (1821–96) (see below). Gérôme appears to have taken the foreground figure in a Shintō priest-like robe from Katsushika Hokusai’s *Katsushika’s Picture-book of New Patterns for Various Trades* (*Shōshoku ehon Katsushika shin hinagata*) (1836).¹² The painting also illustrates plum and cherry trees in full bloom, an impossibility in actual seasonal terms, suggesting nonetheless the influence of the Ueno Park landscape.¹³

“Japan” Boomerangs Back to Japan via Japonisme in Europe

The reevaluation of academic painting also repositioned Japonisme within the broader context of the reciprocal artistic relations between Europe and Japan. One example was the *Nihonga* (Japanese-style painting) artist Takeuchi Seiho (1864–1942), who visited Gérôme’s studio while in Paris for the 1900 Universal Exposition. Gérôme apparently criticized Japanese artists for their poor understanding of anatomy. It would be easy to imagine that Seiho saw Gérôme’s *Cock Fight* (1846), then displayed at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris and today in the collection of the Musée d’Orsay. As such, it could be conjectured that Seiho’s own *Cock Fight*, a later work from 1926 (National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo), was painted in response to, and perhaps as a way to counter the humiliation he felt in Paris. In a similar vein, the left screen of Seiho’s pair of gold-leaf folding screens, *Tiger and Lion* (fig. 1.1), must have been produced as a challenge directed at the French master, then reputed to be the best painter of lions. Seiho created the work immediately after his return to Japan in 1901, basing it on life drawings that he made at European zoos. He would continue to paint lions throughout the remainder of his career.

A similar sense of rivalry with European academic painting can also be seen in the early works of Yoshida Hiroshi (1876–1950) before his recognition as a printmaker. In my view, the subject of a nude female figure taming lions in their den in Yoshida’s 1909 tableau *Seika* (fig. 1.2)—translated as *Quintessence* or *The Spirit of Flower*—was derived from works by Gérôme such as *Whoever You Are, Here is Your Master* (1889), an allegory of Love (the Greek god Eros) that depicts a winged child subduing tigers

12 Hokusai’s image can be viewed at <https://pulverer.si.edu/node/307/title/1/3>; it appears on p. 5.

13 Inaga Shigemi, “Jan Reon Jerōmu no ‘Budda’ to ‘Shishi,’” *Japonisumu kenkyū/Studies in Japonisme* 32 (2012): 70–73. On other aspects of Japonisme in the work of Gérôme and other official painters, see Miura Atsushi, *Utsurisumu bijutsu: Japonisumu, Koran, Nihon kindai yōga/Art en migration: Japonisme, Collin, peinture japonaise moderne* (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2021).



Figure 1.1. Takeuchi Seiho. *Tiger and Lion*, 1901. Left screen of a pair of six-panel folding screens; ink, color, and gold on paper, 166.4 × 371.0 cm. Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Tsu. ↵



Figure 1.2. Yoshida Hiroshi. *Quintessence or The Spirit of Flower (Seika)*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 157.6 × 270.6 cm. Tokyo National Museum. Gift of Yoshida Fujio. Integrated Search System for the National Museum Collection, https://colbase.nich.go.jp/collection_items/tnm/A-11499?locale=ja. ↵

and lions.¹⁴ The seated woman in Yoshida's painting was probably appropriated from Gérôme's *Working in Marble, or The Artist Sculpting Tanagra* (1890; Dahesh Museum of Art, New York).

¹⁴ The current location of this painting is not known to the author. It was previously in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, and sold at Christie's on November 2, 1995. For a reproduction and more information, see no. 361 in Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, 130, 262–63.

Scholar Inatomi Keiko believes that *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (1614–16) by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640; National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC) is a possible source of inspiration for Yoshida's *Seika*.¹⁵ One of the lions in Rubens's work is in *Theatrum universale historiae naturalis* by Jan Jonston (1603–75). This large volume of copperplate engravings, commonly known in Japan as *Dōbutsu zufu* (*Illustrated Catalogue of Animals*), was introduced to Japan in the 1770s when Hiraga Gennai (1728–80) and his circle of *rangaku* (“Dutch learning”) scholars were active. The same lion later appeared, albeit positioned in reverse, as the subject of a hanging scroll painted by Odano Naotake (1749–80), the samurai painter and practitioner of Akita *ranga*, literally “Dutch painting,” which were Japanese paintings made in the European style during the later Edo period.¹⁶

These examples from Hōsui, Seihō, and Yoshida demonstrate that there was more than just a one-directional transfer of French academic art to Japan from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century.¹⁷ In fact, they reveal a multidirectional vector of cultural exchange between East and West. Japanese oil paintings such as Hōsui's *Urashima* were formed in part by the Orientalism of the Paris Salon and the Japonisme of France. Seihō's *Cock Fight* was an extension of this cross-cultural current, while Yoshida's *Seika* invites a study of the longer history of artistic exchange between East and West dating back to the eighteenth century.

Taste for Europe in Japan, Taste for Japan in Europe

In my undergraduate thesis (1979), I attempted to analyze how the Western rendition of pictorial space, especially the use of geometric linear perspective, was digested and reinterpreted by Akita *ranga* painters prior to Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858), and other late Edo-period artists, and how such Japanese adaptations of Western pictorial space were then reexported and utilized in new forms in nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁸ Representative compositions of Akita

15 Inatomi Keiko, “Yoshida Hiroshi ‘Seika’ ni tsuite,” in *Tanjō 140 nen Yoshida Hiroshi ten*, ed. Chiba City Museum of Art (Mainichi Shinbunsha, 2006), 253–59.

16 Odano was also known for reproducing the illustrations for the Japanese translation of *Anatomische Tabellen* by Johann Adam Kulmus (1689–1745), published as *Kaitai shinsho* (*New Book of Anatomy*) in 1774.

17 Since that time, scholars, including Chelsea Foxwell, Takashina Erika, Manuella Moscatiello and Miura Atsushi, have overcome this “one directional transfer” and yet the model of “reciprocal transfer” should be replaced by “spiral model” as proposed by this author. See Inaga Shigemi, “Ōshūkōro kara intānetto e: Nichifutsu bijutsu sōgo kōryū no hyakugojū nen,” in *Umi o koeru akogare, Nihon to Furansu no 150nen/Connections: 150 Years of Modern Art in Japan and France*, ed. Poora Bijutsukan Gakugeibu (Poora Bijutsukan Gakugeibu, 2020), 6–10.

18 Inaga Shigemi, “La réinterprétation de la perspective linéaire au Japon (1740–1830) et son retour en France (1860–1910),” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (1983): 29–49.

ranga depict dramatically contrasting fore and far compositional grounds while dropping the middle ground, as seen in *Shinobazu Pond* (1770s; Akita Museum of Modern Art) by Odano Naotake or *Pine Tree and Chinese Bird* (late 1770s; private collection) by the artist and feudal lord Satake Yoshiatsu (1748–80), which portrays a brightly colored bird seated on a pine tree with a lake in the distance.

This compositional format was elaborated upon by Hokusai in his illustrated books *Hokusai Sketches* (*Hokusai manga*, 1814–19, 1834–78) and *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* (*Fugaku hyakkei*, 1834–35), the latter popularized by Hiroshige in his print series *One Hundred Famous Views in Edo* (*Meisho Edo hyakkei*, 1856–58) and again in fin-de-siècle France. In volume 3 of *Hokusai manga* (1815), Hokusai used a method of perspective imported from the West that he labeled the “rule of division into thirds” (*mitsuwari no hō*). This method involved dividing the composition horizontally into three equal, clearly demarcated parts, one at the point where the ground plane meets the water margin and another at the horizon line, with the use of two vanishing points rather than the customary one (fig. 1.3). By means of these “transgressions” from the rules of standard linear perspective, Hokusai introduced a new dimensional plane to standard pictorial compositions. By substituting two points located at a measurable distance for the customary single vanishing point, he successfully abolished the infinite.

If we follow the rules of perspective drawing, Hokusai’s method is not only incomprehensible but patently incorrect. And yet, it was Édouard Manet (1832–83), an “elder brother” to the Impressionists, who was moved to respond to this Japanese-style deconstruction and modification of standard Western academic pictorial grammar. My assertion—some might say contention—has yet to be accepted by Manet specialists, but if we take the “rule of division into thirds” found in *Hokusai manga* and apply it to Manet’s *On the Beach, Boulogne-sur-Mer* (1868; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts) (fig. 1.4), for example, we see how the composition in the latter is neatly divided by the line of lapping waves and the horizon line into three distinct bands. Furthermore, Manet’s whimsical arrangement of people on the beach lacks the compositional cohesion preferred in Western paintings at the time, but similar examples are easily found in *Hokusai manga*.¹⁹

In addition, if we are to separate it vertically into a triptych, Manet’s horizontal composition in *On the Beach, Boulogne-sur-Mer* unexpectedly becomes three independent compositions. A similar scheme is identifiable in Manet’s *View of the 1867 Exposition Universelle* (1867; National Museum, Oslo). Both paintings were created from three distinct compositions that disappear and merge into one when

19 Miura Atushi suggests another reading of Manet’s Japanese sources. See Miura Atsushi, “Manet et le plein air sur les rivages de la Manche,” in *L’Impressionnisme: du plein air au territoire*, ed. Frédérique Cousiné (Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2013), 113–31.

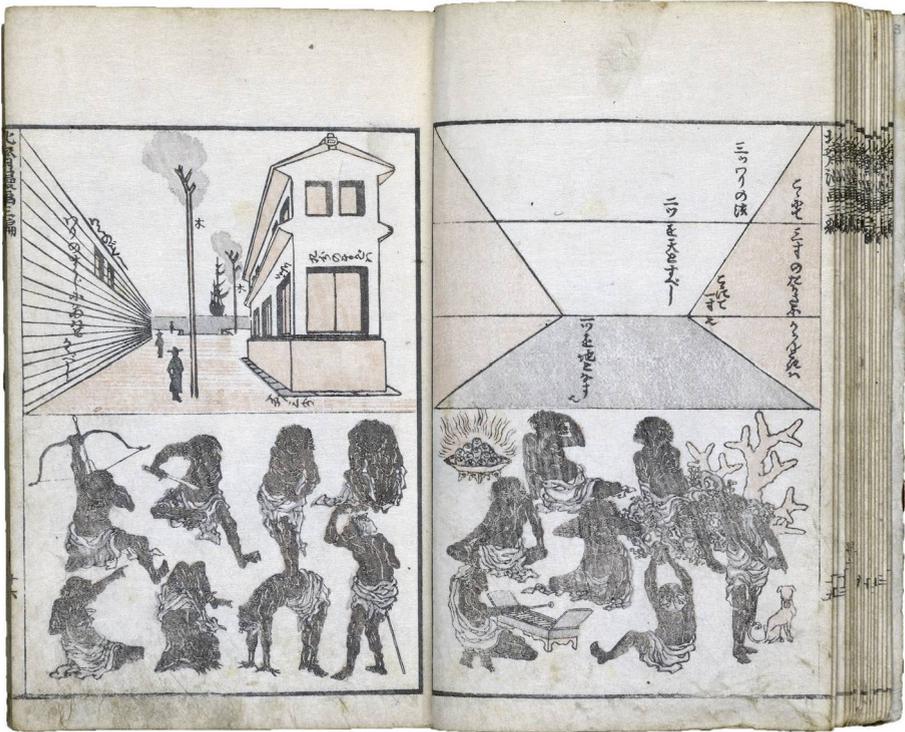


Figure 1.3. Katsushika Hokusai. Pages from *Hokusai Sketches (Hokusai manga)* illustrating "mitsuwari no hō." Vol. 3, *Hokusai manga* (1814). Smithsonian Libraries and Archives. ↵



Figure 1.4. Édouard Manet. *On the Beach, Boulogne-sur-Mer*, 1868. Oil on canvas, 32.39 × 66.04 cm. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. ↵

they are lined up. The 1:2 horizontally rectangular proportion of these paintings, c. 32.4 × 66 cm for *On the Beach, Boulogne-sur-Mer* and 10.8 × 19.6 cm for *View of the 1867 Exposition Universelle*, is not dissimilar to the proportions of an *ōban*-format woodblock print triptych (c. 38 × 26 cm each sheet). This therefore begs the question: could Manet have seen woodblock print triptychs and surreptitiously applied this popular Japanese format in his own work? In *Rest* (1871; RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island), Manet portrays Berthe Morisot (1841–95) in a white dress and seated on a sofa, with a triptych of *Princess Tamatori at the Dragon King's Palace* (*Ryūgū Tamatori hime no zu*, 1853) by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861) behind her. This is depicted as a picture-within-a-picture, as if to implicitly demonstrate his knowledge of *ukiyo-e*.²⁰

In thinking about Manet's link to Japan, the journalist and art critic Théodore Duret (1838–1927) immediately comes to mind. It was Duret who first established the pernicious (from the revisionist's point of view) "sophistry" of the "*ukiyo-e* and Impressionism" narrative, complete with multiple instances of what may be regarded as "false testimony."²¹ Indeed, Duret was the focus of my doctoral dissertation research in France. Duret and his banker and republican friend Henri Cernuschi, having barely survived the Paris Commune of 1871, famously traveled westward, crossing North America and landing in Yokohama on their round-the-world trip from September 1871 to January 1873. Duret's *Voyage en Asie* (1874) recounts how the two men aggressively purchased and carted away a nearly five-meter-tall bronze statue of the Amitābha (Jp: Amida) Buddha that had been left exposed to the elements at the temple Banryūji (also known as Iwaya Benten) in Tokyo's Shimomeguro district.²² The episode is also documented in *Nikkan*, a volume of records kept at the temple Zōjōji in Tokyo's Shiba district. Entries dated October 2 and 3, 1871, describe the work in detail, including its sale price of 500 *ryō*. In 1872, this large Buddha icon was transferred to the Cernuschi residence near the Parc Monceau in Paris, which, after Cernuschi's death in 1896 and in accordance with his will, was bequeathed to the city of Paris and became the Musée Cernuschi. The Amida statue came to be known as the "Great Buddha of Meguro" (fig. 1.5), and Gérôme used this as a model for his painting *Japanese Imploring a Divinity*.

20 See illustrations on pp. 26, 27, 45, in Inaga Shigemi, *Nihon bijutsushi no kindai to sono gaibu* (Hōsō Daigaku Kyōiku Shinkōkai, 2018).

21 Inaga Shigemi, "Théodore Duret, du journaliste politique à l'historien d'art japonisant, contribution à l'étude de critique artistique dans la deuxième moitié du XIX^e siècle et au début du XX^e siècle" (Atelier national des thèses, 1989, microfiche), 926. See also Inaga Shigemi, "Théodore Duret et le Japon," *Revue de l'art*, CNRS n. 79 (1988): 76–82.

22 Théodore Duret, *Voyage en Asie* (1874), reedited as *Japon interdit* (Nicolas Chaudun, 2013), 55–61. See also Inaga Shigemi, "Théodore Duret et Henri Cernuschi, journalisme politique, voyage en Asie et collection japonaise," *Ebisu*, no. 19 (Winter 1998): 79–94.



Figure 1.5. "Great Buddha of Meguro" (Amida Buddha), Edo period. Bronze. Musée Cernuschi, Paris. ㊦

The "Exodus" of the Amitābha Buddha and the Bodhisattva Seishi

The year, I believe, was 1983. Bernard Frank (1927–96), chair of Japanese Studies at the Collège de France, was then in Japan and making telephone calls to temples all over Meguro, asking about the "Great Buddha of Meguro," which by this time had been housed for over a century at the Musée Cernuschi. Frank's investigations verified that indeed the aforementioned Banryūji was the original site of the museum's statue. Yoshida Tetsuyū, the temple's abbot, had heard only rumors from his predecessor that the statue had been taken abroad, but its location was unknown. Out of the blue Yoshida received a telephone call from Frank, a fluent Japanese speaker. Not long afterward, the head priest and his entourage traveled to

Paris in order to hold a service before what was once the temple's principal image (*honzon*). I was then a student in Paris and along with Omota Keiko served as an interpreter for the dignitaries in attendance at the welcome reception and other related events at the Musée Cernuschi.

Why was the disappearance of such a large bronze Buddha—one carried off to foreign shores—not a topic of discussion within Japan's scholarly community at the time? A simple answer is that objects made in the Edo period fell outside the historical time frame for governmental designation as an Important Cultural Property—in other words, they were not old enough to be considered significant in terms of Japan's cultural heritage. Such objects were afforded little art historical value in the 1980s and therefore examples like this were of minimal interest to Buddhist art specialists. Even today, basic information regarding the statue's date of production is still missing from the Musée Cernuschi website, despite the fact that the massive lotus pedestal is inscribed with the names of donors who sponsored its casting and therefore a clue to its date.

There are no noteworthy early academic studies about the statue, except an article from 1903 in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* by Frederick Dickins (1838–1915), a British Japanologist acquainted with Duret. The only contemporary newspaper article that I found during my research in the 1980s, prior to the advent of the Internet, reports a rather comical anecdote, describing, for example, how at Yokohama, the ship's main engine transporting the statue had to be repositioned to compensate for the extra weight or how the statue was unloaded in Marseille and further transported by locomotive, only to have its head get stuck in a train tunnel.

Clear trace on the right arm of the Buddha, which is raised in the gesture (*vitarka mudra*) of teaching and intellectual discourse, indicates that the statue had been severed around the wrist. Duret also noted that they initially took this severed limb as “collateral” or “proof of purchase” until the rest of the statue could be shipped. Such damage notwithstanding, the exodus of the Great Buddha of Meguro to Paris was probably fortuitous. Had it remained in Japan, it would have been melted down for scrap during the Asia-Pacific War (1941–45).

In 1876, some five years after Duret and Cernuschi's visit to Japan, Émile Guimet (1836–1918), another French collector and an industrialist-turned-amateur scholar of comparative religions, arrived in Japan with the artist Félix Régamey (1844–1907) with the declared intention of studying Japan's religious traditions. Guimet acquired a vast collection of Buddhist statues and implements, presumably made easier following the passing of an executive order in 1868 in Japan separating Shintoism and Buddhism and the movement to ban Buddhism since 1872. His collection, however, was left in storage after his death, particularly after 1928 when Guimet's institute for the study of world religions was transformed into France's national

museum of Asian art, the Musée Guimet (present-day Musée national des Arts asiatiques–Guimet) in Paris.

In the 1970s, Bernard Frank resolved to conduct a comprehensive survey of Guimet's long-neglected historical collection of ritual objects amassed during his trip to Japan. He began to exhibit them in the museum's annex, reconstructing the sculptural ensemble of the Buddhist mandala that Guimet commissioned (see below). Later, in 1989, Frank found a statue of the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Jp: Seishi) among the Buddhist statues that Guimet had brought back from Japan. The following year he asked Kuno Takeshi (1920–2007), an historian of Japanese Buddhist art then visiting Paris, for his expert opinion on the statue. Kuno was able to confirm that the technique employed to make the work dates to the early Kamakura period (1185–1333). Further research revealed that the statue was from the temple Hōryūji in Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture, where it would have been paired with an image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Jp: Kannon). They were created in 1231 by the great Buddhist icon-maker Kōshō (dates unknown) and consecrated the following year. At one time, these two images flanked the Amitābha Tathāgata (Jp: Amida Nyorai), the principal icon located in the Nishinoma (West Room) of the temple's Main Hall (*hondō*), yet somehow the statue of Seishi entered Guimet's collection.²³

Régeamey, Kyōsai, and Van Gogh

It is now widely acknowledged that during their Japan sojourn, Guimet and Régamey visited the home of the artist Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–89), where Régamey and Kyōsai engaged in a drawing contest, creating impromptu portraits of each other.²⁴ Although it is difficult to substantiate, I am convinced that Vincent van Gogh (1853–90) was aware of this Franco-Japanese “portrait-making” session. It is possible that Vincent's dream of establishing a community of artists with Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) and others in Arles was at least in part inspired by this exchange between Régamey and Kyōsai. As Régamey's name appears in Vincent's letters to his younger brother Theo (Theodorus van Gogh, 1857–91), there is no doubt that Vincent was aware of Régamey's trip to Japan. There was no written correspondence between the Van

23 Berunāru Furanku, *Nihon bukkyō mandara*, trans. Furanku Junko (Fujiwara Shoten, 2002), 270–90. See also Bernard Frank, *Le panthéon bouddhique au Japon. Collections d'Émile Guimet* (Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1991).

24 See Inaga Shigemi, “Kaisetsu,” in *Ferikkusu Regame, Nihon shaseichō*, trans. Hayashi Kumiko (Kadokawa Shoten, 2019), 345–46. Kyōsai's portrait of Régamey and Kyōsai by Régamey is reproduced in Keiko Omoto and Francis Macouin, *Quand le Japon s'ouvre au monde, Émile Guimet et les arts d'Asie* (Gallimard, Découverte, 1990), 73 (Régamey by Kyōsai), 132 (Kyōsai by Régamey).

Gogh brothers during Vincent's time in Paris, creating a major gap in the record of their lives during this period.

There are additional pieces of circumstantial evidence. Vincent's letters to Theo and the artist Émile Bernard (1868–1941) spoke of the idea of exchanging art among fellow painters and producing an accordion-style bound booklet into which they might include sketches of their work. I have been wondering over the past thirty years if Vincent in fact viewed any albums consisting of privately commissioned *surimono* prints during his time in Paris. Might these have served as an inspiration for this imagined, but never realized, booklet? This point has not been investigated by Van Gogh scholars due to the lack of documentable evidence, yet I am especially intrigued by three *surimono* print albums that Duret entrusted to his friend Maurice Joyant (1864–1930) when Vincent lived in Paris and today in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris.²⁵ These albums were compiled by a *kyōka* (literally “mad verse”) circle in Edo that commissioned famous artists, including Hokusai, Torii Kiyonaga (1752–1815), Kubo Shunman (1757–1820), Chōbunsai Eishi (1756–1829), and others, to illustrate their poems. One accompanying image by Santō Kyōden (1761–1816) depicts the poets dressed as the Seven Deities of Good Fortune (*Shichifukujin*) crossing the Sumida River by boat. Nothing, however, is known about the original Japanese owner of Duret's volumes, a man by the name of Nagashima Masahide.

Joyant was a friend of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) and worked with Theo van Gogh at Boussod et Valadon & Cie, at that time the leading art dealer in Paris. It can be conjectured that through this connection Vincent may have had the chance to view the Japanese prints kept under Joyant's supervision. While it is impossible to know if the Van Gogh brothers studied Duret's print collection firsthand, I am inclined to believe that Vincent had opportunities to see bound *surimono* print albums in Paris. Duret and Vincent van Gogh were also linked in other ways. In his later years, for example, Duret made a name for himself as one of the earliest biographers of Manet, the Impressionists, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Van Gogh.

It would be useful here to include a further note on the developments in studies on Kawanabe Kyōsai, the artist with whom Régamey exchanged a portrait during his trip to Japan. Kyōsai, along with Shibata Zeshin (1807–91) and Watanabe Seitei (1851–1918), was one of the three most celebrated living Japanese artists in the

25 This set, consisting of three *surimono* albums, is fully reproduced in *Bibliothèque nationale, Paris*, vol. 8, *Hizō ukiyoe taikan/Ukiyo-e Masterpieces in European Collections*, ed. Narazaki Muneshige (Kōdansha, 1990). On the relevance of these albums for Van Gogh, see Inaga Shigemi, “Ōshū de mottomo yūmei na Nihonjin geijutsuka: Hokusai,” *Hon no mado* (May 2005): 12–15; Inaga Shigemi, *Nihon bijutsushi no kindai to sono gaibu*, 86–89, esp. figs. reproduced on p. 88; Inaga Shigemi, “Théodore Duret et Henri Cernuschi,” 79–94, see figs. 9 and 10.

West. By the 1970s, however, their names were long forgotten by the general public. Kyōsai's name was only known to a few specialists and enthusiasts in the mid-1980s, different from his great popularity today. At that time, art historians Yamaguchi Seiichi and Oikawa Shigeru joined forces to find and examine Kyōsai's works, and I had the privilege of accompanying them during their stay in Paris in the mid-1980s.

As mentioned above, there was a lack of interest among Japanese art historians in the Buddhist art of the Edo period entering overseas collections during the nineteenth century, such as the "Great Buddha of Meguro," and this attitude also extended to Meiji-era export art. In the 1980s, Yoshida Mitsukuni (1921–91) of the Institute for Research in Humanities at Kyoto University presented pioneering work on the study of universal expositions.²⁶ Art historians were yet to make the connection between universal expositions and the contemporaneous fascination with Japanese art and culture in the West, which since the 1980s has been widely accepted.

Travelogue Illustrations as Historical Record

Régey's sketches of the various sites in Japan that he and Guimet visited have long been largely dismissed as the hobby work of a dilettante, in particular the paintings he made relating to Japanese religion and based on the scenes he witnessed firsthand. These images are in Guimet's *Promenades japonaises* (1880) and *Le Japon en images* (1905), compiled by Régamey two years before his death. It is noteworthy that Régamey recorded the physical likenesses of the prominent Japanese figures he met. For instance, Kuki Ryūichi (1852–1931), a top member of Meiji Japan's arts administration, met Guimet as early as 1873 at the Vienna World Exposition (Weltausstellung), and again in 1878 at the Paris Universal Exposition (Exposition universelle). A few years earlier in Japan, Régamey painted a portrait of Kuki as a tousled-haired young man in a business suit. Régamey also produced a portrait of Kyoto's then vice governor Makimura Masanao (1834–96), who was instrumental in arranging his and Guimet's visits to temples and shrines in Kyoto.²⁷

In Kyoto, Guimet and Régamey met several prominent Buddhist figures, including Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911) and Akamatsu Renjō (1841–1919), and they took part in a dialogue with representatives of various Buddhist sects on October 26, 1876, at the Hiunkaku Pavilion at the Kyoto temple Nishi Honganji. Guimet questioned them on six religious themes: divine creation, the role of the Creator, the meaning

26 Yoshida Mitsukuni, ed., *Zusetsu bankoku hakurankaishi: 1851–1942* (Shibunkaku, Shuppan, 1985); Yoshida Mitsukuni, ed., *Bankoku hakurankai no kenkyū* (Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1986).

27 The portraits by Régamey are reproduced in Omoto and Macouin, *Quand le Japon s'ouvre au monde*, 85.

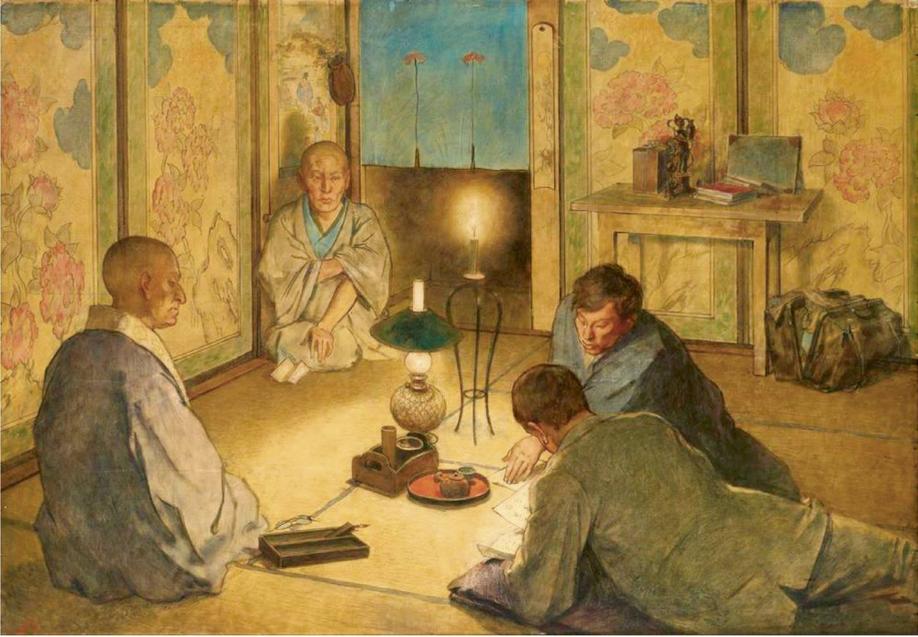


Figure 1.6. Félix Régamey. *Two Shingon Sect Priests in Kyoto, Explaining to Émile Guimet the Qualities of Their Dogma*, c. 1877. Oil on canvas, 135 × 180 cm. Musée national des Arts asiatiques–Guimet, Paris. © Grand-PalaisRmn (MNAAG, Paris)/Thierry Ollivier/distributed by AMF. ㄱ

of prayer, the function of miracles, the afterlife, and morality. Many of his discussion points were grounded in a Christian worldview, such as the concept of “the Creator,” and therefore they were not well understood by the Buddhist attendees. The Japanese transcripts (and French translations) reveal that the dialogue was not especially fruitful, at times outlining doctrines that were not relevant to the topics under discussion.²⁸

Régamey nonetheless created a painting of the session (fig. 1.6). It is a valuable document for its realistic and vivid depiction of the scene, and we can identify, for example, Kondō Tokutarō (1856–1920), seated on the right, from his distinctive facial features known from contemporary photographs in Guimet’s possession. Kondō studied in Lyon and contributed to the modernization of the textile production in Kyoto by introducing the jacquard technique to weaving workshops in Nishijin and other parts of the city. He later served as the president of Ashikaga Industrial School (Ashikaga Kōgyō Kōtō Gakkō) in Tochigi Prefecture, a vocational school recognized for its weaving and dyeing programs.

²⁸ On these exchanges, see Frédéric Girard, *Émile Guimet: Dialogue avec les religieux japonais* (Éditions Findakly, 2012).

The “Panthéon Bouddhique” and the Contemporary Relevance of Esoteric Mandalas

During his stay in Japan, Guimet commissioned Yamamoto Shigesuke (dates unknown), a Kyoto-based sculptor of Buddhist imagery, to make a copy of the famous and still extant three-dimensional mandala housed in the lecture hall of the temple Tōji. This assemblage of statues was originally envisioned by Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi, 774–835), the founder of the esoteric Buddhist Shingon lineage, and completed four years after his death in 839. It represents Kūkai’s unique “mandala of the two realms” (*ryōkai mandara*) theology, integrating the Diamond World (Jp: Kongōkai; Skt: Vajradhātu) and the Womb World (Jp: Taizōkai; Skt: Garbhakośadhātu). Guimet paid 626 yen for these replicas, which were completed in 1878. The resulting twenty-one wooden statues perhaps lack the power of the original assemblage, but they were embellished with gold and sumptuous in appearance. They were shipped to Paris via Lyon, where they were exhibited at the 1878 Paris Universal Exposition.

The mandala later entered the Musée Guimet collection, and a century later, in 1978, Bernard Frank took responsibility for its restoration and reinstallation at the Museum’s annex that has since been named the “Panthéon bouddhique” (“Buddhist Pantheon”). In 1989, the mandala was displayed in the special exhibition, *Yomigaeru Pari Banpaku to rittai mandara ten/Paris World’s Fair Revived and the Three-Dimensional Mandala* at the Seibu Department Store in Tokyo’s Ikebukuro district. In 2003, NHK also broadcast a program on this replica mandala entitled *600 Buddhas Icons that Crossed the Sea: Japan as Seen by Émile Guimet in 1876 (Umi o watatta 600tai no shinbutsu Meiji gnen Emīru Gime ga mita Nihon)*.²⁹

Guimet was known to invite monks from Japan to demonstrate religious rites and rituals at the museum, which also served as an institute for the study of world religions. On February 21, 1891, two monks from the Kyoto temple Nishi Honganji, Koizumi Ryōtai (1851–1938) and Yoshitsura Hōgen (1865–93), conducted a memorial service for Shinran (1173–1263), founder of the True Pure Land (Jōdo Shinshū) lineage. Some two years later, on November 13, 1893, the Shingon monk Doki Hōryū (1854–1923) performed the *gohōraku* rite, which Régamey recorded in a pastel drawing that is in the museum collection.³⁰ Two months before in September, Hōryū had participated in the Parliament of the World’s Religions held in Chicago. He frequently corresponded with the scholar of natural history, Minakata Kumagusu (1867–1941), who was in London at the time. Their exchanges led to the development

29 I was among those who provided behind-the-scenes assistance in gathering materials for this program; it was rebroadcast in 2021 and was well received.

30 This painting can be viewed at https://art.rmngp.fr/fr/library/artworks/felix-elie-regamey_le-moine-toki-horyo-de-la-secte-shigen-officiant-au-musee-guimet-le-13-novembre-1893_pastel_1893.

of fresh views on the world, on science, and even on life and death—all based on the mandala.³¹ A century later, their observations remain relevant.³²

A critical reevaluation of these intellectual exchanges between East and West can also lead to a fresh methodology in a research field that I call “sensory culture” (*kankan bunka*). Senses are integral to our experience of beauty, and the word “aesthetics” has conventionally been translated into Japanese as *bigaku*, or the “study of beauty.” But there is a need to return to its origins in the Greek notion of *aisthētikos*—that is, as relates to perception by the five senses and to reexamine it from that perspective of “body and mind.” The fact that Buddhist studies has moved in new directions away from, for example, a philological focus on Buddhist sutras and their interpretations, and has expanded into the study of ritual practices such as those of esoteric Buddhism, also confirms this development in the study of “sensory culture.”³³ Furthermore, recent developments in *Bildwissenschaft* and neuro-aesthetics are paving the way for our understanding of new aspects of brain science and cognitive science problematics.

Japonisme was not just a passing fashion in the European art world in the second half of the nineteenth century, as is evident above from the considerable scholarly attention generated by the recent publication of correspondence between Doki Hōryū and Minakata Kumagusu.³⁴ The cross-cultural exchanges that took place between Japan and the West at that time, seen in the influences on the decorative arts, the official Salon exhibitions, the Japan/Japonisme exchange, and the nascent studies in comparative religion, promise fresh avenues of inquiry that may be of great relevance today as we experience a major epistemological transformation beyond modernity. Since my involvement as a young scholar in the 1970s, the field has evolved tremendously and made advancements, involving scholars from Europe, North America, and Japan. Much more than a subject for historical research into the past, therefore, Japonisme can serve as a transnational model for the intellectual and the spiritual, and can lay the groundwork for a future paradigm shift in critical consciousness.³⁵

31 For more on Doki Hōryū and modern Buddhism, see Oda Ryōsuke, *Ninifuni* (Sayūsha, 2009); Yoshinaga Shin'ichi, *Shinchigaku to bukkyō* (Hōzōkan, 2009).

32 See Inaga Shigemi, “Weg (Dō)—Rahmenlosigkeit—Verlauf. Eine Reflexion auf ‘Japanisches’ in der Kunst,” in *Bilder als Denkformen, Bildwissenschaftliche Dialoge zwischen Japan und Deutschland*, ed. Yasuhiro Sakamoto, Felix Jäger, and Jun Tanaka (De Gruyter, 2020), 127–44.

33 For more on “sensory culture,” see Inaga Shigemi, *Sesshoku zōkeiron, fureau tamashii, tsumugareru katachi* (University of Nagoya Press, 2016); Inaga Shigemi, ed., *Kumonosu jō no mumyō: denshi jōhōmō seitaikeika no shinshinchi no shōrai* (Kachōsha, 2023).

34 Minakata Kumagusu, *Doki Hōryū ōfuku shokan*, ed. Iikura Shōhei (Yasaka Shobō, 1990).

35 Regarding my use of “paradigm shift” in this essay, see Inaga Shigemi, “‘Aida’ no tetsugaku ni mukete: jinbunchi no saiteigi to fukken no tame ni—geijutsu kōi saikō ni mukete, zanteiteki na oboegaki (jō, chū, ge),” *Aida*, no. 255 (September 2020): 12–21; no. 256 (November 2020): 28–35; no. 257 (March 2021): 28–33.

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Japan and Japonisme

*The Self and the Other in
Representations of Japanese Culture*

*Edited by
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