Discovering Realism in Chinese Landscape Painting: Shasei 写生 and Okakura Kakuzō's 1893 Journey to China

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China in Okakura

An art historian, critic, nationalist, and spokesman for Asian ideals, Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913) remains one of the most important and complex individuals in the development of modern Japanese thought. A major cultural commentator of his time, Okakura also participated extensively in overseas discourses. He was a popular speaker in the United States and established his reputation as an author through *The Ideals of the East* (1903), *The Awakening of Japan* (1904), and *The Book of Tea* (1906), all of which were published in English and translated into other major European languages; he traveled to Europe, China, India, and the United States and conducted art historical studies, explored art markets, and purchased a large number of artworks. While Okakura cemented his position as a living art authority through overseas promotion of Japan and Japanese culture, the cultures and arts that he had approached, engaged in, and influenced altered his ideas and values in turn.

To Okakura, China was the subject he had been reading about for his personal cultivation, professional investigations, and public service; the art market through which his career as a connoisseur and curator flourished; and the destination of his four journeys (1893, 1906, 1908, and 1912). China had a deep impact on Okakura's art, historical, intellectual, and political values, and became an essential part of his

[•] This paper is revised based on a section in my dissertation entitled "China in Okakura Kakuzō with Special Reference to His First Chinese Trip in 1893," submitted to UCLA in 2006, and was first presented at the International Symposium at Nichibunken in November 2005. I am very grateful for the criticisms from Dr. Ellen Conant after the symposium, and have made many revisions according to her advice. I would like to thank Dr. Inaga Shigemi, who offered detailed, insightful advice, from punctuations to arguments, for the final draft. I am also deeply indebted to Dr. Patricia Fister and her colleagues in Nichibunken, who kindly gave me the opportunity to submit a new version and thus generously spent a lot more time on my work for this publication.

career.1 Historical discourses on Okakura in the twentieth century have highlighted his close relationship to China in other ways. His leading challengers in art history devoted themselves to studying Chinese art and architecture, and China was always involved in the fundamental issues they targeted in his theories. During the 1930s and 1940s Okakura boom, followers of both the pacifist and the romantic sides of Okakura's approaches were engaged with China: the former admired it with deep faith in its glorious past and promising future, and the latter made it the most important "periphery" of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere centered on Japan.

Fundamentally, China was the metaphor and key tool that helped Okakura narrate the Self of Japan and its relationship with the rest of Asia, and conceptualize the new Other—the West—upon modern confrontation with it. The issue of China surfaced significantly in Okakura's early study of Buddhist art, through which he later developed an Eastern counterpart of the Christian model.² It became urgent in the Hōryūji 法隆寺 Debate beginning in 1888,3 when neither the Hellenistic hypothesis nor the nativist theory could offer Japanese art a proper place in world history.⁴

¹ As for the role of China in Okakura's thought, I studied it in my dissertation entitled "China in Okakura Kakuzō with Special Reference to His First Chinese Trip in 1893," submitted to UCLA

² In Okakura's first articulation of Western art history, "Taisei bijutsushi" (泰西美術史, Art History of Taisei), presented at Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō 東京美術学校 (the Tokyo School of Fine Arts) between 1890 and 1892, he clearly identified a compassionate and allegorical medieval art that was spiritually inspired by the worship of Jesus Christ. He not only pointed out the great similarity between medieval Christian worship of Jesus Christ and medieval Japanese Buddhists' enthusiastic practice of Jōdo nenbutsu 浄土念佛 but also advocated artistic celebration of Buddhist legends, as his mentor Fenollosa had always been doing, represented in Buddhist statues and murals in the old temples (Okakura Tenshin, "Taisei bijutsushi," Okakura Tenshin zenshū [Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979-1981], 4:173-178). As early as 1910, Japanese art critic Seki Nyorai (1866-1938) pointed out in his thirteen-page review of Japanese hero Okakura's greatest moments in the West that Okakura applied the Western model of Christianity to develop a Buddhist orientation in East Asian art history (Yomiuri News [September 20-October 8, 1910]). My dissertation studies Okakura's construction of Buddhist orientation in detail.

³ Okakura was first involved in the investigation of Buddhist art in old Buddhist temples in Kyoto and Nara, together with Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) and Kuki Ryūichi (1852-1931), starting in 1884. The official tours were part of the preserving "national treasures" campaign promoted by the Meiji state. There, he witnessed and participated in one of the major debates in modern Japanese history of art and thought—the Hōryūji Debate—beginning in June 1888.

⁴ The Hellenistic theory was primarily advocated by Ernest Fenollosa, who romanticized the Höryūji as a Japanese expression of the Greek style after Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) and called the city of Nara "the museum of central Asia," thus addressing a Eurocentric orientation in the formation of Japanese Buddhist art. The nativist theory, represented by

When facing such a dilemma, Okakura had no other options than to carefully reevaluate China, the cultural metaphor that the Japanese had always used as a reference to define their identity in the past but generally condemned as corrupted and collapsed in the post-Opium War discourses. To Okakura, a proper placement of Japan in the modern world order needed a modern momentum of *jikaku* 自党, ⁵ or self-consciousness, interpreted today as national identity; this momentum could not be completely foreign, or Western in other words, and had to be based on some part of Japan's past, from which China could never be eliminated. As an art historian, critic, and bureaucrat, Okakura picked visual art—*bijutsu* 美術—as the vehicle to transform this modern momentum from antiquity to the present age, thus making the nation-state and the fine arts exemplify each other. Throughout his life, Okakura endeavored to establish Japan's antiquity through visual genres that he proudly called *bijutsu*, and China became key in this construct.

Taking place at a very sensitive moment, Okakura's 1893 trip to China was

scholars like Kosugi Ōnsun (1838-1910) and Kurogawa Mayori (1829-1906), believed that the Shōsōin Treasure House was "made in Japan" or indigenous, thus refusing to subordinate Japanese art to a Greek-Roman tradition. On the Hōryūji Debate, see Inoue Shōichi's study Hōryūji e no seishinshi (Tokyo: Kōbunkan, 1994).

⁵ Okakura Tenshin, "Nihon bijutsushi," Zenshū 4: 109-111.

⁶ As recalled by Hayazaki Kōkichi (早崎梗吉, 1874-1956), Okakura mentioned the idea of traveling to China in late 1892 when Hayazaki came to live as a houseboy at the Okakura house in Nakanekishi (Hayazaki Kōkichi, "Daiikkai 'Okakura Tenshin Sensei o kataru' zatsudankai," The Izura Bulletin [Izura Institute of Art and Culture, Ibaraki University] 7 [October 2000]: 10). Okakura's actual journey took place when the Sino-Japanese tension over Korea was high, and the World's Columbian Exposition (WCE), with his significant contributions to the Japanese exhibits, opened in Jackson Park, Chicago (May-October 1893). That Okakura headed to China a year prior to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (August 1894 to April 1895) instead of going to Chicago has aroused great curiosity among historians. Some argue that Okakura lost the competition with Tejima Seiichi (1848-1918) for the chief executive position in the Temporary Bureau for the WCE and earned himself a trip to China, thanks to Kuki Ryūichi's sympathy, as compensation. Some suggest that the real purpose of Okakura's trip was not simply to investigate Chinese art, as shown in the official record in today's archive, but to pursue an intelligence mission. However, it seems to me that no conclusion can be drawn based on the materials currently available. While we should not overlook the informative nature and role of Okakura's journey, it is too early to argue that Okakura was sent to China rather than Chicago as a spy. I believe, as argued in "Absence in Chicago" in chapter 3, "Okakura Goes to China," of my dissertation, that instead of compensation, Okakura's art investigation trip to China may have been the best "side effect" brought by the enhancement of the fine arts' role through the WCE project. Though Okakura may have been looking forward to the journey since the Hōryūji Debate or even earlier, he had never had a better time for it. Visual (exhibits) and literary (official descriptions of art exhibits and art history) presentations of Japanese fine arts were most directly and deeply involved in the Meiji's political campaigns at that moment. The Chinese trip looks more like a reward than a consolation prize that Okakura gained from his successful participation in the Chicago exposition project.

a milestone in his investigation of Chinese art for the purpose of constructing a Japanese art history and canon. Instead of simply reading classical texts, as he had done from early childhood until his college days as an interpreter for Fenollosa, Okakura enriched his study of China by fieldwork—art investigating and collecting activities in the country—which was unusual among his peers of the first two Meiji decades, for whom China was an imaginary place. Except for the few who traveled there after Japan's 250 years of so-called *sakoku* 鎖国, Meiji Japanese had a fantasy about China based on "imported goods" such as literary texts, artworks, and commodities brought in by trade. What made China "real" (in negative as well as positive ways) were a couple of travelogues by sinologists and some newspaper reports, most of which focused on its post-Opium War crises. Okakura's journeys added a unique perspective to the Meiji delineations of this real China.

Shasei in Okakura's Theory of Art

Enriched by his unusual experiences in the country during his four journeys, Okakura's writings on the issue of China collectively form one of the most systematic articulations of his ideas on one subject. Unrestrained in his private life yet highly institutional and political in the public realm, author Okakura was characterized by a willful style and manipulative approaches to his topics, instead of well-knit, consistent statements. Yet Okakura's large number of arguments on China scattered throughout his writings outline interestingly interlinked ideas and theories upon close reading. That is to say, Okakura's essays, lecture notes, speeches, and critiques in which the issue of China was discussed at different times with varied purposes demonstrate a self-made structure with which all his arguments are coherent and logically mutually supportive. He legitimized Japan's artistic

⁷ Marius Jansen challenged the term sakoku in The Making of Modern Japan. While showing a liberal society with very active international cultural and economic exchanges, Jansen argues that "seclusion" and bakufu, "power," were in fact interchangeable terms ([Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000], 91-95). Yet, it is true that Japanese intellectuals' overseas traveling, especially to the Asian continent, was still highly restricted and the varieties of imported Chinese goods were strongly shaped by trade.

⁸ At the time of Okakura's trip, there had been only three Meiji travelogues published: San'un kyōu nikki (棧雲峽雨日記, A Diary of Clouds Hanging between the Mountains and Rain in the Ravines) (1889) by Takezoe Shin'ichirō 竹添進一郎, who traveled to China in 1876; Kankō kiyū (觀光紀游, Travel Record, 1892) by Oka Senjin 岡千仞, who went to China in 1884; and Enzan sosui kiyū (燕山楚水紀游, Travelogues of the Mountains of North China and the Rivers of South China) by Yamamoto Meigai 山本梅崖 (On Meiji sinologists' traveling in China, see Takeuchi Minoru's study, Nihonjin ni totte no Chugokuzō [The Chinese Image to Japanese] [Tokyo: Shūnshūsha, 1966], and Joshua Fogel's study, The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862-1945 [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996]).

heritage with a Chinese foundation in the universality of aesthetic beauty, in which individuals coexisted as equals and with mutual appreciation. He dedicated himself to the creation of a historical context narrated within a Chinese chronological, stylistic, and conceptual framework. To liberate the subordinated Japanese identity from the West, he worked hard to justify it as independent and original through its art stylistic origins, art criticism theories, and artistic techniques.⁹

Okakura's discovery of *shasei*, a Chinese realistic tradition, in 1893 was a crucial part of the identity project. It remains critical because the problem of *shasei* has a fundamental role in Okakura's East Asian art criticism theory, one of the major columns in his creation of a self-made Japanese art history and canon within world history. Furthermore, he identified realism in a historically metaphysicalized art tradition and genre—Chinese ink painting—in the early 1890s when "the dichotomy of idealism and realism in Chinese literati thought," after varied debates in the Tokugawa and early Meiji periods, had been "transmuted from a generic distinction between styles to the incompatibility of aesthetic principles." ¹⁰

Inspired by Ernest Fenollosa, who had articulated Western art criticism criteria in an Eastern format, ¹¹ Okakura, though using a pure Chinese structure from Xie He's 謝赫 ¹² *hualun* (画論, *garon* in Japanese, the theory of painting), intended to

⁹ In my dissertation, I studied such aspects in chapter 2, "Conceptualizing China: The Issue of 'China' in Okakura Before 1893."

¹⁰ Doris Croissant's recent study demonstrates the enduring conflict between East Asian idealism and Western rationalism, represented by realism in art creation, that Tokugawa and Meiji artists and critics had gone through ("In Quest of the Real—Portrayal and Photography in Japanese Painting Theory," in *Challenging Past and Present: The Metamorphosis of Nineteenth-Century Japanese Art*, ed. Ellen P. Conant [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006], 153-167).

¹¹ Fenollosa proposed "Hakkaku" (八格, the Eight Rules) in "Bijutsu shinsetsu" (美術真説, A True Theory on Bijutsu) at Kangakai (鑑画曾, the Art Appreciation Society) in May 1882. In this speech, he used the so-called "Eight Rules," which reminded people of the typical Chinese and Japanese format of literary and artistic criteria, to present his aesthetic values to the Meiji art society.

¹² Artist and critic in the Southern Qi (南斉, 479-502) of the Six Dynasties, Xie He had a significant role in the establishment of classical Chinese art criticism theory. His Liu fa (六法, Six Laws) was based on earlier artistic criteria to evaluate and rank paintings in his essay Guhua Pinlu (古画品録, Ranking Record of Ancient Paintings). They are: qiyun shengdong (気韻生動, kiin seidō in Japanese), gufa yongbi (骨法用筆, koppo yōhitsu), yingwu xiangxing (応物象形, ōbutsu zōkei), suilei fucai (随類賦彩, zuirui fusai), jingying weizhi (経営位置, keiei ichi), zhuanyi moxie (転移模写, ten'i mosha). The interpretations of Xie He's Six Laws have been greatly varied by Chinese intellectuals throughout history, and the first law, qiyun shengdong, has always been the most debatable. Susan Bush gave a careful review of this problem in her study ("Northern-Sung [960-1127]," in The Chinese Literati on Painting: Su Shih (1037-1101) to Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555-1636) [Boston: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1971], 13-22).

present his own version of an East Asian theory. 13 In his "Nihon bijutsushi" (日本美 術史, Japanese Art History) lectures given between 1890 and 1892, Okakura used Xie He's structure and refined and reranked the rules, thus making an updated art criticism theory with modern values and a classical format. Chinese criteria and a Chinese lineage of art critics provided the foundation. Nonetheless, Okakura's narrative of East Asian art criticism theory, though well structured, was far from complete. Struggling with negative views about literati painting, Okakura faced a dilemma: the relationship between lifelike representations of nature and ideals, or in his words, the noble ideas of thought, which had been generally equated with a cultural opposition between Western and Eastern painting.¹⁴ He could not identify a continuous practice of realism in Southern school landscape painting, which he tended to separate from a broadly condemned literati painting lineage and to canonize as the mainstream of Chinese painting. Like his peers, Okakura was unable to see idealism and realism harmonized in one style or one tradition. This did not change until he believed he had discovered shasei Chinese landscape painting in China in 1893.

A Realistic Tradition in Chinese Landscape Painting

Okakura started planning the Chinese trip in late 1892 and left with his assistant, Hayazaki Kōkichi, in July 1893. As shown in his diary, landscapes interested Okakura from the very beginning. Landing at Jinsen 仁川, Korea, the first East Asian city he visited, Okakura was touched by the scenic similarities Korea shared with the ancient Yamato capital of Nara. He also immediately identified waving willows and cypresses that he had seen in the famous Northern Song Chinese artist Zhao Danian's (Zhao Lingrang, 趙大年/趙令穰, active 1070-1100)¹⁵ works (Figure 1). During his

¹³ Some recent studies have carefully examined the Chinese origin of Xie He's Six Laws. Victor H. Mair demonstrates the pair-to-pair parallel relationship between the Six Laws and the Six Limbs in India. Following Tsu-Lin Mei's advocacy in 1990, Mair argued that "the remarkable resemblances between the Six Limbs and the Six Laws," dated around the same time, "are due to cultural exchange" between "two major cultures that were intimate, vibrant contact with each other" (Victor H. Mair, "Xie He's 'Six Laws' of Painting and Their Indian Parallels," in *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Zong-qi Cai [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004], 108).

¹⁴ Croissant, "In Quest of the Real," 153.

¹⁵ Zhao Lingrang was a famed artist of the Northern Song period. A native of Henan, he left many landscape paintings of Kaifeng and Luoyang. Figure 1 is just one example purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in the early twentieth century. We do not know what Okakura viewed before his 1893 journey.

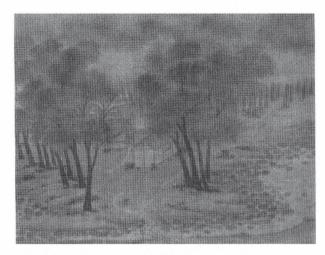


Fig.1 Zhao Lingrang (Danian), *Lakeside Villa in Summer*. Dated 1100. Section of a handscroll, ink and colors on silk, H. 19.1 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Heith McLeod Fund. Published: James Cahill, *The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 20.

three-day trip by boat from Tianjin (天津) to Beijing,¹⁶ Okakura was deeply attracted by Chinese landscapes that he had never seen in Japan: wood fences, shepherds heading home, poplars and villagers in the distant light of the setting sun.

Early August 1893 in Tianjin and the Beijing area was hot and sunny. Surrounded by boatmen's songs from the endless stream of traffic on the Grand Canal, Okakura and Hayazaki Kōkichi sat on the boat, enjoying waving willows in the sunset and observing men taking breaks to grab food from the vendors on shore. Okakura was also sometimes attracted to roofed houseboats and boatmen's families on board. He drew in his sketchbook the rolling boats anchored along the shore (Figure 2). Feeling that he had seen all these views in paintings by Sesshū (雪舟, 1420-1506), Liu Songnian (劉松年, twelfth century, Southern Song), and Yan Ciping (閻次平, act. 1164 - after 1181), Okakura wished to have Hashimoto Gahō (橋本雅邦, 1835-1908), his fellow artist in Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, join him so they could enjoy the landscapes together.

Okakura keenly sensed that the Japanese had failed to recognize a critical aspect of the most important Chinese genre—landscape painting. More specifically, what

¹⁶ They could not take the train to Beijing because of floods and suffered from physical hardships while on the boat (Okakura Tenshin, "Shina ryokō nisshi," *Zenshū*, 5: 16).

¹⁷ Okakura Tenshin, "Shina ryokō nisshi," Zenshū, 5: 20-21.

¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

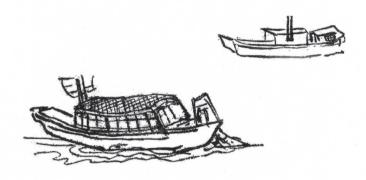


Fig. 2 Okakura's Sketch of Boats on the Grand Canal, Hexi-wu, Tianjin (October 7, 1893).

Published: *Okakura Tenshin zenshū* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 5: 21.

he identified through viewing real Chinese landscapes were instead of photographic reproductions the lifelike characteristics of natural subjects with which Chinese landscape artists composed their interpretations of nature.

By the time he arrived in Beijing, Okakura had firmly categorized Chinese landscape painting as "*shasei-teki* 写生的.¹⁹ Enlightened by his first three days' experience, he claimed that Chinese landscape painting continued a *shasei* tradition and that masters of this genre, including Sesshū, opened up a new field for art creation.²⁰

A concept normally associated with the genre of flower-and-bird painting in Chinese hualun tradition, shasei 写生 had a broader meaning in Japanese. This style flourished in the Tokugawa period, and Japanese garon 画論 studies used it to depict both scenery and human activities. In Japanese texts, the word sei, which literarily means "alive," referred to the nature of Creation (自然/造化, shizen/zōka). As demonstrated by Kōno Motoaki, shasei was used by Tokugawa artists, who were deeply influenced by Chinese hualun, in five ways: seiyi-shasei 生意写生, kyakkan-shasei 客観写生, seimitsu-shasei 精密写生, taikan-shasei 対看写生, and gadai-shasei 画题写生. 22

Artists and critics throughout the Tokugawa period continued to focus on

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Kōno Motoaki, "Edo jidai *shasei*-kō" (A Study on the Edo Concept of *Shasei*), in *Nihon kaigashi no kenkyū* (The Study of Japanese Painting History), ed. Yamane Yūzō Sensei Koki Kinenkai (The Memorial Association of Mr. Yamane Yūzō's Seventieth Birthday) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1989), 399.

²² Ibid., 391-399.

questions such as how visual representation reveals the spiritual characteristics of nature, what is the boundary between abuse of technical refinement and respect for lifelike representation of nature, and how to balance lifelikeness and spirituality.²³ Moreover, the usage of the term shifted in the early Meiji years and was gradually narrowed to refer to sketching as *taikan-shasei*.²⁴

Apparently, Okakura was not fully aware of the foregoing nuances in Tokugawa usage, nor did he acknowledge the modern construction of new terms like *shajitsu* (写美, literally, realistic depiction of the object). Okakura's theory about *shasei* before 1893 was characterized by advocacy of an ideally harmonious yet practically split and hierarchical relationship between true-to-life portrayals of nature and ideas.

In his lectures on "Japanese Art History" (1890-1892), he defined *qiyun shengdong* (気韻生動, *kiin seidō* in Japanese),²⁵ the first rule in Xie He's Six Laws, as "noble thoughts" and the third rule, *yingwu xiangxing* (応物象形, *ōbutsu zōkei*), as *shasei*.²⁶ While a painting with no *shasei* would not be a painting, a work of mere

²³ Ibid., 393-396. In addition to Kōno's study in Japanese, Doris Croissant's essay also carefully examine some of the questions ("In Quest of the Real," 153-176).

²⁴ The meaning of *shasei* started to change in some official contexts from the early Meiji. By the time Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō was established, it had already become the equivalent of "sketch" (for details, see Satō Dōshin, "Painting and Language [Part III]: Three Kinds of Realism, *Shajitsu, Shashin, Shasei," Bulletin of the Faculty of Fine Arts* [Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music] 30 [1995]: 34).

²⁵ As for the English translation of *qivun shengdong*, there have been many different versions. Gao Musen in his study listed five versions that reflected subtle or obvious differences. William Acker translates it as "reverberation of the life breath, that is, the creation of movement," cited by Osvald Sirên in Chinese Painting, Leading Masters and Principles (1:5). Gao calls this interpretation closest to Xie He's age's understanding of the law. The three translations listed in the second version are all close to Tang critic Zhang Yanyuan's interpretation of the law. They are the "resonance of the spirit movement of life" by Osvald Sirên in Early Chinese Painting (1: 32), "Spiritual Element: Life's Motion" by Friedrich Hirth in Scraps from a Collector's Notebook (58), and "Spiritual Tone and Life Movement" by Taki Seiichi in Kokka (No. 244). The third version is "La consonace de l'esprit engender le movement (de la vie)" by Raphael Petrucci in Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art de l'Extreme Orient (89). This resembles Chinese artist Jing Hao's interpretation. The fourth version was translated by Lin Yutang in The Chinese Theory of Art (36) as "A vital tone and atmosphere" representing a Southern Song view. And the fifth is close to the ideas of Fang Xun and his age: Herbert Giles's "rhythmic vitality" in Introduction to History of Chinese Pictorial Art (29) and Laurence Binyon's "rhythmic vitality, or spiritual rhythm expressed in movement of life" in The Flight of the Dragon (12) (see Gao Musen, Zhongguo huihua sixiangshi [An Intellectual History of Chinese Painting] [Taibei: Dongda Chubanshe, 1997], 142-143). In the United States, Alexander C. Soper translates qiyun shengdong as "animation through spirit consonance" (Laurence Sickman and Alexander Soper, The Art and Architecture of China, 3rd ed. [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968], 132-134).

shasei would not reveal the beauty of the subject.²⁷ More than basically separating subjectivity from objectivity, he further argued that East Asian painting considered noble thoughts the most important principle and Western painting regarded realistically depicting things as the most important. In this way, he not only ranked subjectivity and objectivity but also created a hierarchy of the two in East Asian painting and contextualized it in a Western/Eastern paradigm.

In his essay on Maruyama Ōkyo (円山應拳, 1733-1795) published earlier, Okakura highly praised Ōkyo's concentration on flowers, birds, and landscapes in the third stage of his career and called it the beginning of the Maruyama school. He further explained that in this stage, Maruyama placed the greatest importance on *shasei*, took Creation as his teacher, and revealed the secrets of the natural world and its spirits. Thanks to his careful study of natural objects, "mountains, hills, flowers, feathers, and fish scales in his works are extremely detailed and finely described, and his usage of the pen was delicate and the colors were bright yet elegant." To Okakura, Ōkyo's "invention of a new *shasei-shugi*" was as significant as Millet and Corot's new realism that differed from Western orthodox ideas in the French Academy; Ōkyo's achievement in his milieu even surpassed that of Millet and Corot. Okyo's achievement in his milieu even surpassed that of Millet and Corot.

Okakura's lectures and the essay above, written prior to the 1893 trip, show his respect for *kyakkan-shasei*, sketches, and his appreciation of fine depictions achieved by detailed techniques, that is, *seimitsu-shasei*. His comments on Ōkyo's "using Creation as his teacher" recall the emphasis on sketching in *taikan-shasei*; even his positive references to Ōkyo's use of flowers and birds demonstrate a certain openmindedness toward the narrowest usage of the term—*gadai-shasei*, which primarily means sketching limited subject matter. Most important, advocating "sōbi" (双美, "double beauty")—the harmony of a hierarchical pair, realism and idealism—as the

²⁶ Okakura Tenshin, "Nihon bijutsushi," Zenshū, 4: 28.

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ Okakura Tenshin, "Maruyama Ōkyo," *Zenshū*, 4:50. This essay was published in the first issue of *Kokka* magazine on October 28, 1879.

²⁹ Tsuji's study suggests that instead of simply being influenced directly by Western landscape painting, positivism and realism in Maruyama Ōkyo's works came from three sources: his experiences of *megane-e* (peep-show pictures), animal and botanical sketches, and late Mingearly Qing paintings influenced by Western art (Tsuji Nobuo, "The Tradition of Painting 'True-View' Landscapes in China and Japan," *Studies in Art History* [The Department of Art History, Faculty of Letters, The University of Tokyo] 3 [1987]: 57).

³⁰ Okakura Tenshin, "Maruyama Ōkyo," Zenshū, 4: 51.

³¹ Ibid.

eventual goal of artistic creation, Okakura was constantly bothered by two issues. First, he had problems finding realism's roots in Chinese and Japanese classics, or in other words, masterpieces of orthodox genres. This was especially clear when he called Ōkyo's realistic efforts a betrayal of the Kanō school, the established Tokugawa orthodoxy,³² and was hard pressed to find the East Asian sources of realism in Chinese flower-and-bird painting. Second, he had difficulty pinning down the real meaning of and approach to the lofty harmony of the two in practice.

The first issue explains why Okakura, before visiting China, was attracted to two kinds of realistic visual sources in his case study of Ōkyo and his Japanese art history lectures. Today they are called *seimitsu-shasei* in Ming-Qing artists' flower-and-bird paintings and "scientific realism," both of which were developed under Western influence. In his Japanese art history lectures, Okakura worked hard to justify an East Asian tradition in pre-Meiji art by finding a compromise approach between the two. Ōkyo's achievement, in Okakura's view, lay in bringing together Western realism—verisimilitude—and Yuan-Ming-Qing flower-and-bird paintings' technical refinements, which probably best exemplify how the Chinese appreciated lifelikeness of nature, and coordinating Western animal and botanical sketching and Chinese presentations of flowers and birds. Appreciating Ōkyo's "most successful attempt" yet to harmonize the two techniques³³ and even being identified as the successor of his approach,³⁴ Okakura seems to have intended not simply to prove a Chinese adaptation of scientific verisimilitude but also to demonstrate the compatibility of Western and Eastern values in modern art creation.

In fact, Tokugawa *Ranga* 蘭画 artists, as noted by Doris Croissant, had been trying hard to bring a "high degree of realism of lost Chinese prototypes" back to the genre of portraiture.³⁵ Meanwhile, literati artists like Gion Nankai (祇園南海, 1677-1751), Ikeno Taiga (池大雅, 1723-1776), and Kuwayama Gyokushū (桑川玉洲, 1746-1799)

³² Ibid., 49.

³³ Ibid., 51.

³⁴ Kinoshita Nagahiro suggests that *Nihonga* painters tried to adapt some European techniques in their works after encountering Western paintings, and their path of adaptation was what Maruyama Ōkyo of Kyoto and Watanabe Kazan (1793-1841) of Edo had actively pursued by the end of the Edo period ("Okakura Tenshin and *Nihonga*," in *Nihonga: Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting, 1868-1968*, ed. Ellen Conant in collaboration with Steven D. Owyoung and J. Thomas Rimer [St. Louis: The Saint Louis Art Museum, 1995; Tokyo: The Japan Foundation], 100).

³⁵ Doris Croissant shows in her recent study that Tokugawa *Ranga* artists joined Ōbaku Zen priests to restore a lost Tang realistic tradition in Chinese painting. While developing a Western verisimilitude, European methods in painting, with a term called *shashin* (写真, meaning "reproducing the true appearance"), they also practiced traditional Chinese and Japanese skills to achieve realistic results in portrait painting ("In Quest of the Real," 154-158).

had also already recognized certain realistic elements in Ming and Qing Chinese landscape paintings. Gion Nankai acknowledged the experimentalism that Western science inspired in late Ming-early Qing painting, especially in the pictures of celebrated tourist sites. Kuwayama Gyokushū, influenced by Shen Hao's (沈 瀬, 1586-?) hualun, clearly realized the significance of nature in his use of seiyishasei. However, their visions in this regard made no substantial difference in Edo discourses on Chinese art and theory. Artworks in the literatistyle were generally idealistic; practitioners of the style, though very active and influential, were marginalized from Tokugawa art orthodoxy. To Okakura, they were unsuccessful, nonmainstream amateurs with great ideals; some of their efforts to bring out the significance of realism, if not totally unknown, do not seem to articulate values regarding fidelity to nature.

In 1893, Okakura discovered *shasei* through comparing real Chinese landscapes with Song paintings he had previously viewed. As he noted and appreciated while standing in the picturelike *shu-zhong* (蜀中, Sichuan area), visual presentations in Chinese landscape paintings that were believed to be derived from ideals actually came out of the natural world.³⁸

Okakura's *shasei* speaks for a Chinese realism that was celebrated in Song masterpieces in China, respects real subjects in the natural world and formal lifelikeness of nature in visual representations, but does not strive for scientific verisimilitude in representing the natural world. While the popular usage of *shasei* referred to "sketch," as pointed out by Satō Dōshin, by the time Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō was established, ³⁹ Okakura's *shasei* had gone beyond sketching from nature to refer to a subjective usage of sketches of nature. It values formal representations of nature, but not merely in an objective, scientifically realistic way. It encourages artistic use of sketches as sources to reveal the spirituality of nature. That is to say, it honors artists' subjectivities through offering freedom to reconstitute visual components from sketches with personal perspectives. Moreover, Okakura found that masterpieces of the most important Chinese classical genre, landscape painting, not just flower-and-bird painting, were *shasei-teki*. This greatly expanded his perspective.

³⁶ Tsuji Nobuo, "The Tradition of Painting 'True-View' Landscapes in China and Japan," 46-55.

³⁷ For details on Shen Hao and Kuwayama Gyokushū's ideas about *shasei*, see Kōno Motoaki, "Edo jidai *shasei*-kō," 396-398.

³⁸ Okakura Tenshin, "Shinakō zattei," Zenshū, 5: 154.

³⁹ Satō Dōshin, "Painting and Language (Part III): Three Kinds of Realism, *Shajitsu, Shashin, Shasei*, 34.

Lifelike portrayals of nature, more than images from *funpon* (粉本, pictorial studies) and human imagination, mattered in the orthodox East Asian genre.

Interestingly, constantly finding scenic views that he believed must have touched Chinese masters' hearts and inspired their brushwork, Okakura further associated Japanese masters, not only Sesshū but also Kanō Motonobu (狩野元信, 1476-1559), with Chinese landscapes, and even tried to imagine what Koseno Kaneoka (巨勢金岡, master of early yamato-e in the tenth century) would have done if he had a chance to deal with these landscapes. 40 His reference to Kanō Motonobu is reminiscent of his "Nihon bijutsushi" lectures, in which he repeatedly confirmed Kanō masters' dedication to mosha (摸写, reproducing masters' works), especially of Sesshū's paintings and funpon manuals. 41 By aligning another Kanō artist with Sesshū, who now had been confirmed as *shasei*-istic, Okakura apparently intended to emphasize the use of nature as a source for the Kano school's funpon and argue that the Tokugawa art orthodoxy shared the same artistic heritage as the medieval canon, and moreover, that this heritage was characterized by the practice of realism. Meanwhile, by discussing Chinese and Japanese ink painting masters and a Japanese yamato-e 大 和絵 master together in dealing with Chinese landscape, he certainly moved beyond the genre of Chinese-style ink painting and blurred the regional boundaries created by different styles of Chinese and Japanese visual portrayals of landscapes.

These efforts demonstrated a change in Okakura's approach to East Asian realism: instead of seeking realism in the Kanō school's betrayer Ōkyo, as he had before 1893, he now turned to a reevaluation of the orthodoxy itself. Such a change was significant because the art history of Japan, even that of East Asia, needed its own heritage of realism to confront the Western realistic tradition. To carry on Japanese tradition, Sesshū's realism needed an orthodox successor, and this was the Kanō school. Okakura understood that the Kanō reflections he identified with Chinese landscapes did not prove that a realistic approach was used. To artists like Kanō Motonobu who had never been to China, associations with real Chinese

⁴⁰ In Sichuan, Okakura found many interesting visual spots. At *Chao-tian Guan* 朝天関, he wrote about three attractive views. One was what Kanō Motonobu would be dreaming of; the second kind of landscape must have inspired Mi Fei (米芾, eleventh century) to make his famous Mi dots (米点) and was a typical foggy rain scene with Southern-school flair; the third must have made Xia Gui and Sesshū excited, and even Koseno Kaneoka would probably add some more layers of green (Okakura Tenshin, "Shina ryokō nisshi," *Zenshū*, 5: 93). Okakura called *Jianmen Guan* 剣門関 the place where Sesshū would be shedding tears and Ma Yuan would feel deeply touched in his heart (Ibid., 96).

⁴¹ Okakura Tenshin, "Nihon bijutsushi," Zenshū, 4: 128, 133, 135.

landscape demonstrated nothing but their loyalty to their *funpon* manuals passed down from Sesshū and their deep faith in Sesshū's legacy and genealogy. Even in the case of Kano Hōgai (狩野芳崖,1828-1888), the Meiji master and pioneer artist in the *Nihonga* 日本画 movement, serious realistic technique in his early career did not guarantee a breakthrough in *funpon*, and his use of realistic methods apparently did not become master Hōgai's style later. ⁴² Okakura intended to outline a *shasei* tradition from Song painting to orthodox Japanese landscape painting, from Sesshū to the Kanō school, and make Chinese realism the root of East Asian realism. No longer would he have to devise a premodern tradition of realism for Japanese art history; he had solved his first dilemma in the construction of a Japanese art history and canon.

The second problem of Okakura, the true meaning of realism and therefore its compatibility with idealism, indicates that a Chinese realism was invisible prior to his 1893 trip. In fact, Okakura may have been one of those using *shasei* to mean "sketch" in Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō's curriculum, but his conceptualization of the term was far from believing that Chinese landscape painting respected realistic sketches from nature.

In a way, the concept of *shasei* was everywhere in the classical art critiques that Okakura had read, but he did not see such a Chinese realism. This may be attributed to two personal reasons. First, his knowledge of Chinese *hualun* was far from thorough and comprehensive, compared to that of Tokugawa literati artists and critics with a strong Confucian educational background. The realistic nature the term signified and to what extent and in what realm formal depictions of nature were practiced remained very ambiguous to him. Most important, Okakura's conceptualization of the Zen philosophy that supported his spiritual meditation and aesthetics played a critical role in shaping his interpretation of Chinese classics and *hualun*. In his Japanese art history lectures, Okakura evaluated the quality of Chinese

⁴² Hōgai was fascinated with *shinkei-zu* (真景図, paintings of true views or the real natural world) in the 1840s and 1850s. He not only drew many sketches for his creation but also used realistic techniques in these works. One example is *Magaseki shinkei zukan* (馬関真景図卷, *True Views of Magaseki*) in 1842. Later, he further applied these skills in his public service as a survey map maker in the 1860s. More intriguingly, while he demonstrated a strong interest in Western verisimilitude by creating from Western photographs in 1882, Hōgai's *Chichūkai shinkei zu* 地中海真景図, *True View of the Mediterranean*), except for the Western subjects like a sailboat and a church, to his own surprise, greatly resembles Sesshū's work. (On this point, see "Sakuhin kaisetsu," in *Kanō Hōgai*, Vol. 1 of *Kanbasu Nihon no meiga*, ed. Inoue Yasushi, Kawakita Michiaki, and Takashina Shūji [Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1993], 98).

and Japanese landscape painting merely by its symbolic nature and expression of the artist's mind or spirit.⁴³ He also oversimplified the entire canon of Japanese landscape painting from a spiritual perspective that characterized *shinga* (心画, painting of the mind or spirit, popular around the end of the fourteenth century to the mid-fifteenth century) by Gozan Zen monks, and completely overlooked seventeenth-century Ōbaku Zen priests' striving for verisimilitude in portrait painting.⁴⁴ He expanded his personal perspective on Chinese philosophical values to a metaphysical ideology in Chinese and Japanese landscape painting.

While Okakura did not doubt that in essence, Chinese artists and critics in their *hualun* advocated the harmony of idealism and realism, the workings of and approach to this duality had never been clear to him. Like Tokugawa artists and critics, Okakura had been struggling with this ambiguous relationship.

In addition to personal reasons, Okakura's reading of Chinese *hualun*, with a nineteenth-century idealistic appearance, also reflected an interesting distortion of the Japanese conceptualization of Chinese art and art criticism, especially the key concept of *sha'i* (写意, *xieyi* in Chinese, rendering the idea). Literally, *xieyi* meant techniques such as outlining a subject with brief, rather than detailed and descriptive, lines. In general, it meant art practices primarily using such techniques. But most frequently, *xieyi* was widely used to denote a creative principle, emphasizing the author's subjectivity. Introduced to Kamakura Japan and initially interpreted by Gozan monks, *icha'i* was first proposed by late Tang artist and critic Zhang Zao (張璪, eighth century) and further developed by Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037-1101) in the Northern Song period. Instead of abstraction, Japanese art historian Kōno Motoaki identified a lost *shinkei-shugi* (真景主義, true-viewism), a realistic tradition, in Su Shi's *shasei* theory. Such a tradition was also studied in Chinese art historian Zhou Jiyin's 周積寅 careful reading of classical Chinese *hunlun* texts.

Su Shi's true-viewism was not only applicable to the genre of landscape

⁴³ Okakura Tenshin, "Nihon bijutsushi," Zenshū, 4: 111.

⁴⁴ For Ōbaku Zen priests' lifelike portraits under Ming influence in the late seventeenth century, see Doris Croissant's essay "In Quest of the Real" (155).

⁴⁵ Kōno in his study gave the three definitions of the term. The usage centered on *shin* (), mind or spirituality) and subjectivity is listed as the second one (Kōno Motoaki, "Edo jidai *shasei*-kō," 408).

⁴⁶ For Japanese theories of landscape painting, see Tsuji Nobuo, "The Tradition of Painting 'True-View' Landscapes in China and Japan," 124-128.

⁴⁷ *Shayi* literarily means "depicting mind" in Chinese art theory. Kōno Motoaki defines Su Shi's theory as "objective *shayi*"—expressing mind or spirituality upon a careful observation and study of real landscapes (Kōno Motoaki, "Edo jidai *shasei*-kō," 404-406).

painting; it generally argued for a high appreciation of being "true to nature." In fact, as happened to many Chinese and Japanese art critics of later generations, Su Shi is misunderstood; his realism is overlooked even now by major art historians in the West who interpret his verses, such as "if anyone discusses painting in terms of formal likeness, his understanding is close to that of a child" (論画以形似, 見与児童 鄰), out of context. These studies conclude by "disparaging representational painting overall"⁴⁹ in reading the first line of one of Su Shi's two colophons, *Shu yanling* Wang-zhubuo suohua zhezhi (書鄢陵王主簿所画折枝, Writing for the Painting of Twigs by Wang Zhubuo of Yanling), but miss the key point Su Shi intended to make. That is his appreciation of formal lifelikeness, argued in the fourth line—"Bian Luan's birds are sketched from nature, Zhao Chang's flowers convey spirits" (辺鸞雀写生, 趙昌花伝神)"50 —and demonstrated in the magic power of a realistic touch—adding a tiny red spot of flower essence on the green leaves—in his last verse (誰言一点紅, 解寄無辺春). To Su Shi, realism depends on artists' understanding of how real plants grow, twist, and turn, how bamboo grows, how birds stretch their legs and necks, and how bulls hold their tails while fighting.⁵¹ "Inaccuracies in forms," that is, mistakes in copying nature, ruin the entire painting; real artists understand li (理), "the inner nature of things," whether the subject matter has a "constant form," like men and animals, or does not, like rocks, bamboos, trees, mists, and clouds; "infinite variations" of subject matter in visual presentations, though "never alike, and yet

⁴⁸ Zhou Jiyin has carefully studied Su Shi's writings on the issue and put freely quoted verses back in their original contexts. Like Kōno, Zhou argues that Chinese art critics after Su Shi had misled later interpretations of Su's art theory by missing Su's advocacy of *shasei* (Zhou Jiyin, *Zhongguo hualun jiyao* [中国画論輯要, Major Selection of Chinese *Hualun*] [Nanjing: Jiangsu Meishu Chubanshe, 1998], 163-166).

⁴⁹ Croissant, "In Quest of the Real," 155.

⁵⁰ Bian Luan was a Tang artist who was famous for his flowers, birds, bees, butterflies, trees, and twigs. Zhao Chang was a flower-bird artist of the Northern Song period.

⁵¹ Su Shi's advocacy of realism is everywhere in his writings. When saying that a tiny red spot of flower essence on the green leaves invites unlimited imagination about the beauty of spring, he meant to address the importance of adding a realistic touch, which only good observers of nature would understand, to complete the painting's role of conveying the spirit of nature. He refused to paint bamboo section by section as other artists did, since this is not how bamboo grows, as recorded in Mi Fei's (米芾, 1051-1107) *Hua-shi* (画史, History of Painting). (As for the above points, see Zhou Jiyin, 163-166). Su Shi also commented in *Dongpo tiba* (東坡題跋, An Epilogue by Dongpo) on Huang Quan (黄筌, c. 903-965) and Dai Song's (戴嵩, Tang artist) mistakes in painting a bird's simultaneously stretching legs and neck and depicting a sticking-out tail of a fighting bull, respectively. He argued that gentlemen should keep learning and inquiring to gain true knowledge of subject matter.

always appropriate," are "true to nature and satisfying to human spirit."52

While artists and critics were attracted to Su Shi's emphasis on spirituality in art creation, few realized that he meant to free art creation from the concentration on overwhelming detail and technique that he believed had misled late Tang and early Song painters. He drew artists' and viewers' attention to the subjectivities behind technical presentations and called for a careful study of nature to reveal the spirituality of Creation. He condemned both a doctrinal emphasis on technical details and a simply metaphysical approach to subject matter.⁵³

Art critics of later generations have misunderstood Su Shi by applying philosophical values of their own in reading and interpreting him. Many of them picked up his verses out of context; many more were influenced by the metaphysical values that were popular along with the blooming of Southern Song Confucian learning in the post-Song era, and selectively canonized Su Shi's art theories with a spiritual orientation. One major case was Gozan artists, trained by their Chinese Zen mentors, who failed to understand realism in landscape painting because, as Kono also argues, they applied their metaphysical concerns of spiritual practice to artistic creation. While Sesshū, the only Japanese who had visited China and experienced Chinese landscapes at the time, seemed to get the idea right and carefully studied Chinese landscapes, the great atmosphere his works shared with Chinese masters and the sketches he left hardly convinced the Japanese of the significance of realism. His works remain appealing with a Chinese flair, a kind of technical refinement or even conceptual advancement that could be attributed to his training under Chinese masters in the country. As for his sketches, they were canonized into funpon, thus losing the realistic value they seemed to convey.

In his periodization and characterization of Chinese art history, Okakura was fascinated by both the glories of Northern Song landscape paintings and the so-called abuse of technical refinement in Southern Song academic paintings, especially of the flower-and-bird genre. He was apparently not aware that artistic indulgence in technical trivialities was already a critical concern in late Tang and early Northern Song art creation and *hualun*. Okakura simply inherited a biased overgeneralization

⁵² Su Shi made such points in *On Paintings in the Qingyin Temple*, which discusses the difference between subject matter with and without constant forms (Lin Yutang, "Su Tung-P'o: The Rise of the Literati School," *The Chinese Theory of Art: Translations from the Masters of Chinese Art* [New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1967], 94-95). I use Lin Yutang's translation of this piece because it keeps the original text complete to demonstrate Su Shi's key point that painting should be both "true to nature" and "satisfying to human spirit."

⁵³ Kono Motoaki, "Edo jidai shasei-ko," 404-406.

about post-Northern Song Chinese art articulated in the Northern school-versus-Southern school discourse by later Chinese and even Tokugawa artists and critics. Believing that Southern school artists sought noble ideals in landscapes while Northern school artists were dedicated to technical details, he made subjectivity superior to technical refinements and landscapes more important subject matter than flowers and birds. While appreciating Sesshū's accomplishment in expressing noble spirituality, Okakura concluded with no concrete meaning that Sesshū's works revealed the "spiritual aspect" of nature. By the time he left for China, Okakura had confirmed an antagonism between realism and idealism in the genre of landscape painting and expansively encoded it in a West/East paradigm.

The Japanese, and Okakura's, conceptualization of Chinese landscape painting and *hualun* had three historical reasons. First, as Okakura himself understood in 1893 during the journey, the Japanese "idealization" of China was a misapprehension acquired from limited literary and visual sources. Such a limited image, formed while "viewing flowers through the water," he wrote, had a lot to do with insufficient Sino-Japanese communication. ⁵⁴ Likewise, rhetorical measures, such as analogies used in literary presentations, also caused misapprehensions in the Japanese perception of Chinese landscapes, as recognized in his essay "Shina no bijutsu." Okakura used Tang poet Li Bo's (李白, 701-762) verse "White hair three thousand feet long" as a striking example of hyperbole that caused misunderstanding. ⁵⁵

In fact, Sino-Japanese cultural relations had always had limited literary and visual connections. As in the case of Sesshū, not until they had experienced real Chinese landscapes could Japanese fully apprehend the visual presentations in Chinese landscape paintings. Throughout history, the idea that "art should display the essence of nature" had always appeared in Japanese art criticism and Japanese interpretations of Chinese *hualun*. But as we have seen in the case of Okakura before 1893, it was difficult for the Japanese to come to grips with the complex issues of nature and realism. Meanwhile, the visual and textual sources to which Okakura had access also deeply influenced his reading and conceptualization of Chinese artworks. Primarily, he viewed secondhand or thirdhand visual and verbal portrayals of the natural world of Chinese landscapes.

Second, the way that Chinese paintings and *hualun* were adapted in Japan greatly influenced the Japanese perceptions of them. ⁵⁶ Chinese *hualun* experienced

⁵⁴ Okakura Tenshin, "Shinakō zattei," Zenshū, 5: 141.

⁵⁵ Okakura Tenshin, "Fukuroku 2. Shina no bijutsu," Zenshū, 3: 506.

transitions throughout history. In landscape painting, Tsuji Nobuo's study indicated four stages: art theories of the Six Dynasties revealing the values of an ethereal Taoism (represented by Xie He's classical realism, in Kao Musen's 高木森 theory); theories of the Five Dynasties and Tang dynasty characterized by naturalism; the Northern Song advocacy of harmony of subjectivity and objectivity in *zhenjing*-ism (which Kao Musen calls neonaturalism 新自然主義), and a subjective orientation, represented by the Yuan-Ming literati style.⁵⁷

Transitions and their dynamics, however, meant little when chronological boundaries were eliminated. *Zhenjing*-ism of the Northern Song dynasty, brought to Japan by Chinese Zen artists, was broadly accepted as a subjectivity-centered art theory; it remained on a lofty, metaphysical level. Thereafter, major stages of Chinese *hualun* came to Tokugawa Japan with the adoption of Yuan-Ming views, in which different theories about art creation were examined and interpreted with a primary focus on subjectivity. Without the general context in which one theory was developed to answer the other, Okakura, like most Japanese artists and critics, had a hard time comprehending the discrepancy between Su Shi's intentions and major post-Song interpretations of his theory.

A result of the Tokugawa adoption of Chinese art theories, the subjectivity orientation in post-Southern Song art discourses dominated Japanese perceptions of Chinese landscape paintings and Chinese hualun. Another consequence was reflected in the Japanese view of the relationship between Northern Song landscape painting and the literati style of the post-Song period. Japanese critics either fancied the literati style, appreciating Yuan-Ming artists' search for the Song shitaifu (土大夫, scholarly officials) legacy of knowledge, morality, status, and leisure, or harshly criticized their works as corruption and abuse of the noble shidafu ideal. In both cases, zhenjing-istic concern with nature in Su Shi's xieyi was lost in a highly idealistic literati tradition roughly defined and practiced later. While literati artists failed to recognize the Chinese appreciation of nature, those like Okakura who opposed the literati style did not identify its key problem as missing shasei. Harshly critical, Okakura had always intended to separate literati style from reputable Southern school painting

⁵⁶ Except for the misinterpretation of Chinese true-viewism upon the introduction of Chinese ink painting, Kamakura and Muromachi artists also failed to understand that black ink was used for shade and outlining and should be applied as one of the pigments together with other colors in paintings. (My point should be attributed to a meeting with Satō Dōshin about the Japanese transplanting of Chinese ink painting techniques at Tokyo National University of Arts, October 2001, Tokyo, Japan.)

⁵⁷ Tsuji Nobuo, "The Tradition of Painting 'True-View' Landscapes in China and Japan," 114-123.

that flourished in the Northern Song era. He objected to it for very complicated reasons. First, since Okakura was striving to define Japanese art according to officially patronized schools and genres, Edo literati painting was very hard to fit into his categorization. Second, he obviously applied Confucian Sinocentrism (華夷論) in reading Chinese history and believed that the so-called barbarian Mongolian and Manchurian regimes deprived Chinese artists of creative freedom. Third and most important, he took a tough stand about this genre's technical crisis. Saying that literati painting had "no bones" (無骨), Okakura keenly targeted its hackneyed and stereotyped use of *shayi* symbolism.⁵⁸

However, Okakura did not further strengthen this argument by carving out realism from Song art theories and differentiating it from later generations' interpretation centered on subjectivity. In a way, without the nuances of spirituality, lifelikeness of nature in Chinese landscape painting was lost, and the duality of realism and idealism had become an empty, abstract ideal. Interestingly, while excited about his discovery of a Chinese realistic tradition, Okakura seems to have become more negative than ever toward Tokugawa literati artists, who tried to reveal the spiritual characteristic of nature. To Okakura, literati painting, which Japanese copied as a corrupted, "boneless" nanga 南画 or bunjinga 文人画, no longer represented the mainstream of late imperial Chinese painting; nor was it simply a decadent break with the Song legacy of ink painting in certain historical stages. He understood that real masters respected nature rather than using imaginary scenes for the purpose of expressing their subjectivities; Chinese ink painting had never abandoned respect for nature even when the hackneyed literati style boomed in the post-Song areas that he had condemned. In this sense, Okakura's discovery of a Chinese realism helped him not only better understand Song zhenjing-ism but also clarify Ming-Qing literati style's relationship to Chinese ink painting.

The third historical reason responsible for the absence of realism in Okakura's conceptualization of Chinese landscape painting and *hualun* was the Tokugawa intellectual environment. Among all, the popular adoption of a metaphysical Chinese

⁵⁸ By saying "no bones," Okakura did not seem to attack counter-linelessness, since a counter-lineless style was exactly what *Nihonga* artists had practiced in the "*Mōrō-tai*" (朦朧体, "hazy" style) during the decade after 1899. In fact, the term "no bones" in Chinese *hualun*, as Kōno's study shows, had been used to refer to one of the three kinds of *shayi* (*xieyi*)—technical *shayi*. In other words, "no bones" meant using *shayi* not as a creating principle or concept but as a stereotyped technique. To Okakura, a technical *shayi* allowed artists to indulge in private whims and jeopardized the foundation of art creation.

orthodoxy, *Cheng-Zhu* Learning 程朱理学 from post-Song China, ⁵⁹ contributed a great deal to the Japanese subjectivity-centered reading of Chinese paintings and *hualun*. Zen Buddhism had widely spread metaphysical aesthetic values since medieval times; neo-Confucianism and the literati legacy had also enforced an idealistic impression of Chinese ink painting in general. A deep admirer of Zen aesthetics and a strong critic of the literati style, Okakura inherited the absence of realism through engagement with both.

Impact of the Discovery of Shasei

Okakura's discovery of *shasei* in China did not bring chaos to his art historical theory. While ranking realism beneath idealism, Okakura, as an advocate of "noble thoughts" and "the spirit of the time" 時代精神, never intended to deny the value and significance of realism. Instead, on his first journey to China in 1893, his encounter with a Chinese realistic tradition expanded his perspective on art. It confirmed a "Chinese vision" in his visual interpretation of Chinese characteristics; helped him modify his theoretical articulation of the dichotomy of realism and idealism in his 1890s lectures; enriched the *Nihonga* movement in which he was deeply engaged; and to a certain degree shaped his art collecting agenda in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

As the following discussion will show, here and there a "Chinese vision" appears in Okakura's journey in the days after his stay in Beijing in 1893, and this helps explain what attracted his attention in Chinese landscapes and from what kind of nature he read Chinese spirituality. Okakura began as a tourist who explored sites with stereotyped images from his particular "guidebooks," mainly Chinese paintings and art students' manuals. Created by professional artists, these images prepared Okakura to explore China not as a blind novelty hunter fascinated by so-called Chineseness, as were some nineteenth-century Westerners. Instead, he reapplied the visual frameworks of his guiding Chinese images to find interesting subjects for his sketchbook and Hayazaki's camera during the journey, and in response developed

⁵⁹ Although Chinese Confucian ideology was not practiced as orthodoxy in the political realm, Confucianism greatly flourished in the Tokugawa society (for Confucianism and Tokugawa ideology, see Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570-1680* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985]). More than a knowledge system that contributed to philosophical and literary studies, Confucian learning, especially of the *Cheng-Zhu* school, the Yangming school 陽明学, *Kogaku* (古学, Philology), and even the scholarship conducted in Kaitokudō (懷德堂) of Osaka, had deeply influenced Tokugawa intellectuals' political and economic values and practices.

a "Chinese vision" to confirm the Chinese characteristics he had previously conceptualized, using these visual components.

Okakura's "Chinese vision" is mainly about compositional methods and subject matter that made artworks Chinese; it is a perspective that Chinese artists use to skillfully pick and recompose visual components sketched from nature. In addition to the large number of literary descriptions in his brief diary, he left many valuable visual images of Chinese landscapes. His sketch of Qishan 岐山 in Shaanxi 陕西 province (Figure 3) is reminiscent of Xia Gui's (夏珪, Southern Song) work *A Pure and Remote View of Streams and Mountains* (Figure 4). With very similar



Fig. 3 Okakura's Sketch of Qishan of the Qin Mountains (October 3, 1893). Published: *Okakura Tenshin zenshū* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 5: 72.

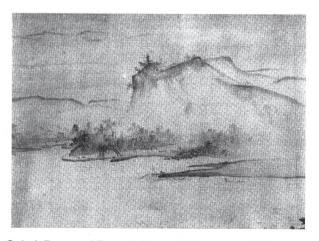


Fig. 4 Xia Gui, A Pure and Remote View of Streams and Mountains. Section of a handscroll, ink on paper, H. 46.5 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. Published: James Cahill, The Lyric Journey: Poetic Painting in China and Japan (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 18.

compositions, Okakura's sketches of Fushun-dian (復順店, Figure 5) and Changqiao-pu (長橋舗, Figure 6) present an ideally landscaped Chinese "garden" with weeping poplars and beautiful foliage reflected in the running water. All indicate that Okakura framed Chinese landscapes with the compositional methods and subject matter that he knew from viewing masterpieces prior to the journey.

As Okakura's assistant, operating a costly camera for the first time, Hayazaki took photographs that very likely reflected Okakura's interests and perspective. For instance, Okakura was interested in Chinese boats, a frequent subject in landscape paintings, and made sketches of boats in Tianjin, Shaanxi (Figure 7), and Sichuan ([1]], Figure 8). Not surprisingly, there were four pictures—two taken in Shaanxi and two in Sichuan—of boats among Hayazaki's photos (Figure 9).

The sketches and photos also show to a certain degree how Okakura perceived and confirmed Chinese spirituality, that is to say cultural characteristics. On the photo list that Okakura published after his trip, there are 135 images in total, including 18 of architecture (mainly monasteries), 28 of sculptures, and 89—two thirds of the entire collection—of landscapes. Among these, there are only 13 images showing some interesting towns (6) or local cultural events and scenes of daily life (7). As suggested by the poetic titles normally seen in Chinese landscape paintings, the majority focus on mountains, rivers, trees, bridges, stones, caves, historical plank roads, boats sailing, etc. Ancient gates and castles (Figure 10), mountains (Figure 11), and country roads are also common. A roughly paved road leads toward

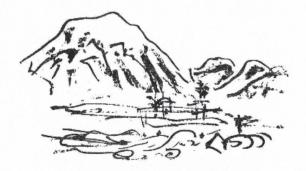


Fig. 5 Okakura's Sketch of Fushan-dian, Shaanxi Province (October 12, 1893). Published: *Okakura Tenshin zenshū* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 5: 77.

⁶⁰ Hayazaki did not leave a reference to the location where it was taken. However, since the Tianjin boat had a rectangular roof and the Sichuan one was double-paddled, it is most likely that the photo was one of the two taken in Shaanxi.



Fig.6 Okakura's Sketch of Changqiao-pu, Shaanxi Province (October 12, 1893). "This is a small landscaped garden, with weeping poplars and beautiful foliage reflected in the running water. Very nice!" wrote Okakura Tenshin. Published: Okakura Tenshin zenshū (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 5: 77.



Fig. 7 Fishing Boat outside Gaicheng County, Shaanxi Province (October 20, 1893). Published: Okakura Tenshin zenshū (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 5: 91.



Fig. 8 Double-paddled Boat outside Guangyuan County, Sichuan Province (October 24, 1893). Published: Okakura Tenshin zenshū (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980), 5: 95.

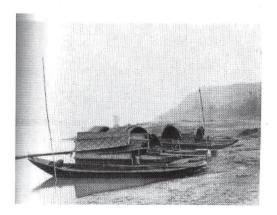


Fig. 9 Boats on the Shore (picture taken by Hayasaki Kōkichi).

Published: *Okakura Tenshin arubamu*, compiled by Nakamura Sunao (*Izura bijutsu sōsho*, supervised by Ibaraki Daigaku Izura Bijutsu Bunka Kenkyūjo) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000), 68.

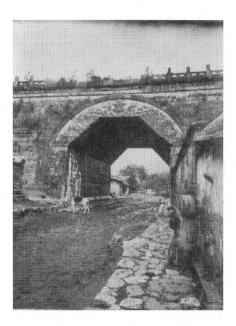


Fig.10 Juyong-guan, Suburb of the City of Beijing (picture taken by Hayasaki Kōkichi).

Published: *Okakura Tenshin arubamu*, compiled by Nakamura Sunao (*Izura bijutsu sōsho*, supervised by Ibaraki Daigaku Izura Bijutsu Bunka Kenkyūjo) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000), 67.



Fig.11 A Mountain Path in Sichuan.

Published: *Okakura Tenshin arubamu*, compiled by Nakamura Sunao (*Izura bijutsu sōsho*, supervised by Ibaraki Daigaku Izura Bijutsu Bunka Kenkyūjo) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000), 68.

a village in the distance, a bumpy dirt road heads straight into the woods (Figure 12), and a beautiful dirt trail swaggers off across the vast land (Figure 13). Most of

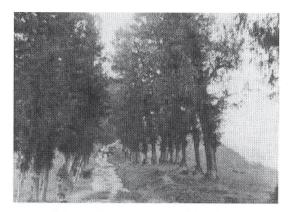


Fig.12 A Road in Henan Province.
Published: *Okakura Tenshin arubamu*, compiled by Nakamura Sunao (*Izura bijutsu sōsho*, supervised by Ibaraki Daigaku Izura Bijutsu Bunka Kenkyūjo) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000), 68.

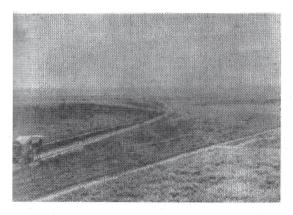


Fig.13 Leyou-yuan (Rakuyū-en in Japanese), a Suburb of the City of Xi'an. Published: *Okakura Tenshin arubamu*, compiled by Nakamura Sunao (*Izura bijutsu sōsho*, supervised by Ibaraki Daigaku Izura Bijutsu Bunka Kenkyūjo) (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2000), 68.

the images indicate that Okakura was eagerly framing real Chinese landscapes with the Chinese compositional perspective and subject matter with which he was very familiar.

Okakura's knowledge of realism acquired in China did not turn him away from his metaphysical meditation as a Zen and Taoist practitioner or stop him from theoretically advocating spirituality in art creation. Instead, as argued earlier, finding a Chinese realistic tradition helped him make a substantial theoretical jump over the frustrating construct of East Asian realism in his anti-Hellenistic creation of a Japanese art history and canon. Okakura's promotion of *rekishiga* (歷史画, history painting) and dedication to the *Nihonga* movement later well demonstrate that, reinforced by his exposure to Hegelian aesthetics and Western neoclassicism, ideas—the subject matter's spiritual characteristics or the creator's subjectivity—remained crucial in his theory. Nonetheless, the 1893 journey in China gave him a new perspective on how ideas can be portrayed and revealed with high respect for nature. The relationship between nature and visual presentations was no longer abstract in his mind; neither was the relationship between idealism and realism simply Eastern versus Western.

In his speech "Modern Problems in Painting," given nine years later (1904) in St. Louis, ⁶¹ Okakura clearly denied the simple categories of idealistic, romantic, and realistic tendencies and epochs over the history of East Asian art. He further argued that "the painting of the extreme Orient, with its high reverence for pure design, at the same time has a profound respect for nature," yet "the Eastern artists did not arrive at the same results in depicting nature as your (Western) artists did." He summarized that "it would be untrue to say that Eastern art is idealistic, as it would be false to say that Western art is realistic … it would require calling the Fleming realistic because he is so true or the Chinese idealistic because he paints such ethereal landscapes."

Okakura further clarified his interpretation of the relationship between realism and idealism. Calling nature "a mask under which reality is hidden," he believed that "true knowledge arrives at this deeper significance of things, and art in presenting them catches this inner spirit." Okakura discussed technical issues such as Eastern approaches to spirituality, the elimination of details "founded on a sense of the value of suggestion in presentation," the intimate and cooperative relationship between the artist and the spectator in the game "played by two people," the role of Eastern technical methods in determining artists' approach to nature, and the reliance

⁶¹ Okakura gave this speech at the Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904. It was published in 1906 in *Congress of Arts and Science* (ed. Howard J. Rogers, Vol. III, *History of Language, History of Literature, History of Art* [Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1905]). Trimmed to fit the magazine, it was published in *International Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (July 1905) with a new title, "Modern Art from a Japanese Point of View." This slightly revised version became the original of the German and Japanese translations. (For details, see "Kaidai," *Zenshū*, 2: 503-504.)

⁶² Okakura Tenshin, "Nature in East Asiatic Painting," Zenshū, 2: 144-145.

⁶³ Ibid., 145.

⁶⁴ Ibid.,146-147.

on memory instead of models.⁶⁵ Compared to his ambiguous assessments about Sesshū's "getting the truth of Creation" in the early 1890s, Okakura's statement in St. Louis demonstrates a very conscious effort to transcend the realistic/idealistic and Western/Eastern paradigms and to balance fidelity to nature with subjectivity in art creation. Okakura asserted that Eastern realism, which was primarily derived from Chinese *shasei*, was a different realistic tradition from the Western one standing for modern rationalism.

Since Okakura was not an artist himself, his practice of a Chinese realism can be viewed through both his collecting habits and some Meiji *Nihonga* artists' application of realism, an important topic that shall be more thoroughly studied elsewhere.

Okakura gave extremely harsh criticism of Yuan-Ming-Qing Chinese paintings in general in his 1890-1892 lectures in Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, 66 but became an enthusiastic dealer and curator of Yuan-Ming-Qing Chinese paintings after his second Chinese journey in 1906. Yuan-Ming-Qing landscape paintings were purchased as treasures and installed in the galleries of the Fine Arts Museum, Boston, where he served as curator (1906-1912). It seems to me that the contradiction between Okakura's early theory and later practice has a lot to do with his recognition of a Chinese realistic tradition in Chinese landscape painting during the 1893 journey. 67

A glimpse of Yokoyama Taikan's (横山大觀,1868-1958) interesting approaches to realism at the varied stages of his career provides a way to look at what Okakura may have delivered to his circle about practicing realism in making *Nihonga*.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 146-147, 149.

⁶⁶ Okakura portrayed a Chinese chronology from prehistory to modern age with a fashionable threefold division used in modern Western history and art history: antiquity, medieval, and modern ages. While carefully approaching ancient and medieval Chinese art with great passion and enthusiasm, he accentuated a historical break between medieval and modern Japan based upon developing intellectual and religious values. Moreover, art development and transitions in post-Song China faded as a parallel in Okakura's version of modern Japanese art history. Although he believed that the spirit of modern self-consciousness originated in a Chinese model, Okakura occasionally credited Yuan (1279-1368) art when narrating its Japanese parallel. While he understood the profound influence of Ming/Qing literati style and realistic practices over the Genroku/Kyōho and Tenmei/Kansei periods in Tokugawa Japan, respectively, he gave no position to Ming (1268-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) models in portraying a self-conscious, modern Japan (Okakura Tenshin, "Nihon bijutsu," *Zenshū*, 3: 143, 74-75, 110, 145).

⁶⁷ Of course, Okakura purchased many more Yuan-Ming-Qing paintings than Tang-Song works also because in the early twentieth-century Chinese art market, paintings of earlier periods were quite limited in availability. I discuss this point more in my dissertation.

Learning and teaching painting in Tokyo and Kyoto in the 1890s as a young fellow of the Hashimoto Gahō (1835-1908)/Okakura circle in Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, Taikan offered realistic depictions of all the major visual components in *Sondō kan en'ō* (村童観猿翁, *Village Children Watching an Old Monkey*, 1893) (Figure 14). While Taikan had greatly benefited from *funpon* study, ⁶⁸ his work seems to have been composed with full utilization of sketches of pine tree trunks, leaves, flowers, a cow, and a monkey.

Another approach is shown in Taikan's famous piece *Kutsugen* (屈原, Qu Yuan in Chinese, 1898). A typical history painting dealing with an eminent historical figure, it certainly expresses the artist's "true heart" with "a native figure-painting style that

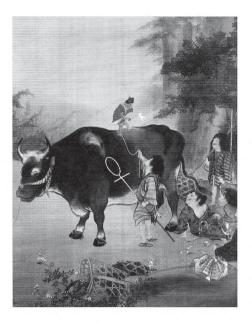


Fig.14 Yokoyama Taikan, *Village Children Watching an Old Monkey*. Dated 1893. Section of a handscroll, ink and color on silk, 110.5 x 180.8 cm. Art Archive of Tokyo National School of Arts, Tokyo. Published: *Yokoyama Taikan*, Vol. 1 of *Kanbasu Nihon no meiga*, ed. Inoue Yasushi, Kawakita Michiaki, and Takashina Shūji (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1993).

⁶⁸ Taikan spent a long time studying *koga* (古画, old paintings), including Chinese masterpieces, as a student of Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, and developed the skill of producing images from *funpon* (Kondō Keitarō, "Taikan to Usen," *Yokoyama Taikan*, Vol. 7 of *Kanbasu Nihon no meiga*, ed. Inoue Yasushi, Kawakita Michiaki, and Takashina Shūji [Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1993], 85-86).

would be as compelling as that of the West."⁶⁹ In dealing with a historical subject like Qu Yuan, Taikan had no option but to "sketch" from literary classics.⁷⁰ To do so, he carefully studied Qu Yuan's poems, especially *The Mountain Spirit* 山鬼.⁷¹ In this work, hero Qu Yuan's (389-278 B.C.) skin, hair, and clothes were all described with realistic techniques. Standing atop the mountain in whistling wind, in the setting of *The Mountain Spirit*, Qu Yuan is surrounded by gloomy, dark sky and floating clouds gathered beneath (Figure 15a). In the background, we see carefully arranged vanilla plants that Qu Yuan frequently used to symbolize noble men and as the natural setting in his poems (Figure 15b). Apparently, what makes this history painting "real" are not only the realistic techniques used in drawing the figure and plants but also the careful selection of actual natural subjects of the *Chu* 楚 area upon close reading of Qu Yuan's poems.

Taikan became more established as a major artist of the Okakura circle during his "Mōrō-tai" (朦朧体, "hazy" style) decade (1899-1909) and later turned to more traditional subject matter after he "prestigiously grew as a judge of the government-sponsored Bunten 文展." Despite negative responses from Japan, Taikan, as pointed out by Maria Wattles, successfully directed his "hazy" style toward foreign viewers in the decade following 1899. In his later dedication to more traditional subject matter, we see both highly symbolic uses of brushwork and realistic depictions in his Shōshō hakkei (瀟湘八景, Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, 1912) (Figure 16a-d). The Chinese boats of varied styles in four of the eight panels immediately indicate that Taikan gave boats extra attention, as did Okakura in 1893 (Figures 7, 8, 9). It is certain that Taikan had made sketches of boats during his 1910 journey to China, and used them, with his own perspective on China, as visual components in the work. More than interesting interpretations of Okakura's shasei, these landscapes present the distinctly indigenous aura of the subject, the Chinese characteristics in these cases, which Yokoyama Taikan had captured.

⁶⁹ Doris Croissant argues that history painting carries three tasks: to express artists' true hearts, to preserve the Japanese identity, and to develop a native figure-painting style ("In Quest of the Real," 165).

⁷⁰ Taikan's "sketch" from poetry is a very important issue and shall be carefully compared with Fenollosa's objection to a harmonious relationship among three major genres—painting, poem, and calligraphy—in literati painting, which I have briefly studied in my dissertation.

^{71 &}quot;Zuhan kaisetsu," *The 100th Anniversary of the Japan Art Institute: The Linage of Modern Japanese Art* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1998), 44.

⁷² Maria Wattles, "Yokoyama Taikan," in *Nihonga: Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting, 1868-1968,* 333-334.

⁷³ Ibid.

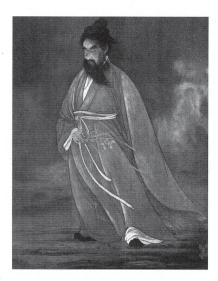


Fig.15a Yokoyama Taikan, *Qu Yuan*. Dated 1898, detail. Ink and colors on silk, 132.7 x 289.7 cm. Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima.

Published: *Yokoyama Taikan*, Vol. 1 of *Kanbasu Nihon no meiga*, ed. Inoue Yasushi, Kawakita Michiaki, and Takashina Shūji (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1993).



Fig.15b Yokoyama Taikan, *Qu Yuan*. Dated 1898, detail. Ink and colors on silk, 132.7 x 289.7 cm. Itsukushima Shrine, Hiroshima.

Published: *Yokoyama Taikan*, Vol. 1 of *Kanbasu Nihon no meiga*, ed. Inoue Yasushi, Kawakita Michiaki, and Takashina Shūji (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1993).

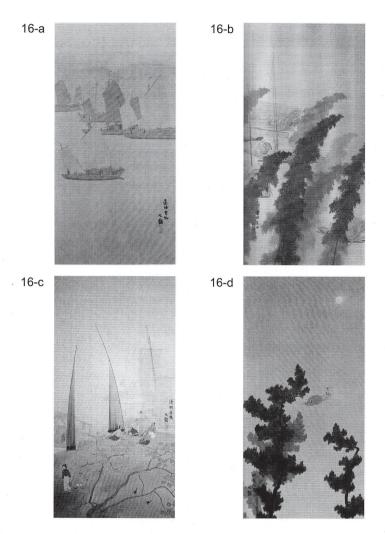


Fig.16a-d Yokoyama Taikan, *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers*. Dated 1912, four scenes from eight panels. Hanging scrolls, ink and colors on silk, 114.4 x 60.6 cm. Tokyo National Museum.

Published: *Yokoyama Taikan*, Vol. 1 of *Kanbasu Nihon no meiga*, ed. Inoue Yasushi, Kawakita Michiaki, and Takashina Shūji (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Sha, 1993).