

PROBLEMS OF CORPOREALITY IN JAPANESE PAINTING

John TERAMOTO

Indianapolis Museum of Art

Introduction

Maruyama Ōkyo (1733-1795), well known for his emphasis on naturalism and sketching from life, has left a curious work called *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* (*Complete Folio of True Figure Studies*; 人物正写惣本)¹ featuring full scale paintings of men and women depicted nude (pls. 1-4, 7). That fact alone would make the work stand out in the history of Japanese painting. Produced in 1770, it is comprised of three hand scrolls, two of which must be viewed side by side since the figures are depicted across both, with the seam between them as a longitudinal axis. The third hand scroll (pl. 2), inscribed as an "addendum," follows a normal hand scroll format and features bust "portraits" of men, women and children of various ages, and also the curious practice of showing various body parts-and in one case an entire youth-in circular formats. The inclusion of the word *ōju* (by commission) in Ōkyo's signature indicates the work was at the request of another party, but there can be little doubt that it reflects Ōkyo's personal interests and ideas about painting.²

The notations that appear next to the figures confirm that we are looking at bodies of males and females of different ages, including the momentarily confusing image of a sixteen year old *wakashū* (若衆; pl. 3, right).³ The full body image of the old woman (pl. 1) reflects such careful observation that one can easily be persuaded that Ōkyo was looking at an actual model. The other figures, however, display varying degrees of detailed treatment so that they fall somewhere between naturalistic "portraiture" and generic figure painting. The coiffure and hair at the nape of the woman seen from the rear (not shown here), for example, is executed in extremely fine linework, creating the appearance of luxuriant hair. Her body, on the other hand, is smooth and devoid of surface description, and were it not for the tinge of modeling accompanying the line work, the figure would be a simple line drawing.

1. In the possession of the Tenri Daigaku Fuzoku Tenri Toshokan, Tenri-shi, Nara, the scrolls measure 1) 31.4 x 992.0 cm; 2) 31.4 x 1079.0 cm; 3) 31.1 x 1068.7 cm. Ink and light colors on paper. The title *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* is written at the beginning of the first scroll.

2. The scroll is signed "*Meiwa 7 [1770] kanoē no tora, fūyū, Ōkyo ōju*" (7th year of Meiwa, cyclical date, winter, by commission Ōkyo). One candidate that almost immediately comes to mind is the abbot Yūjo from the Emman-in. Hyōgo Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan (Hyōgo Prefectural History Museum) ed., *Maruyama Ōkyo ten* (Special Exhibition Maruyama Ōkyo; Benridō, 1994): 38.

3. In the Edo period (1615-1868) the term *wakashū* came to mostly refer to young men who desired sexual relationships with older men.

Rather than a body with skeletal structure or musculature, her body suggests the consistency of a marshmallow. With its taut curves, the body of the girl with the willow branch (pl. 3) is almost balloon-like in impression. Throughout the work, however, male and female genitals are rendered in emphatic detail (pl. 4).⁴

The work raises several questions ranging from the uniqueness of its format to the artist's intent. Are these finished paintings, and are they really meant to be true to life? Can these paintings tell us about how a major eighteenth century artist like Ōkyo envisioned the human body (not people, just their *bodies*), about his attitudes towards the corporeality of the human body, and what, if any, other significance the body itself held for him? These questions deal with more than just painting since Ōkyo lived and worked in a time of rapid introduction of new and exciting ideas from abroad into a Japan that had previously been shut off from the world. Living and working in Kyoto as an important and well-connected artist whose paintings reveal familiarity with Western modes of visual representation, Ōkyo's figure paintings can most assuredly provide important insights into the imaging and experiencing of the body in Japan prior to the nineteenth century.

"Corporeality" as used in this paper

While the word corporeal refers to the body, it also denotes the nature of material as having physical mass. We are familiar with the use of conventions such as linear perspective and light and shadow effects to create "realistic" illusions of three-dimensional objects existing in space. In traditional Chinese, Korean and Japanese painting, however, light and shadow is absent, at least in the way they are employed in Western art. In the uncommon cases where modeling does occur, it is used to emphasize contours-but there is no "scientifically" based concern with a specific or even consistent light source. Instead, the sense of volume of a body is described using an even line that almost appears to be charged with a tensile strength. When this line is aided by modeling, the sense of volume is enhanced.

Even without shading or modeling, however, proportions, pose, detailed surface texture created through a myriad brush strokes of varying size and intensity can combine to create the illusion of the actual object. The question of corporeality, however, is of interest because it goes far beyond the employment of techniques to create naturalistic illusions; the question concerns not just the appearance of the final product, but indeed with the very manner in which it is seen!

It must be emphasized that here we are concerned with not just any animate or inanimate physical body, but specifically the human body. Consequently the

4. Current published versions of the scrolls have censored out the genitalia and scenes like the depiction of a young boy masturbating. The unedited views presented in this paper are from a line for line copy in the Spencer Museum of Art in the University of Kansas.

focus is on that quality in the paintings that somehow says that the artist's renditions were based on careful observation of the human body. The main focus is to try to know what the artists thought that bodies *were* rather than simply using bodies to show what people *do* (i.e., figure painting).⁵

Of course, the finished product does not necessarily inform us as to what the painter *saw*, since we all see things in different ways. Moreover, artistic style, choice, and intent naturally affect the outcome of the work. Although in the history of Japanese painting the production of works that addressed the question of how bodies *really* looked might indicate that painters closely observed the human body, the absence of such works does not indicate the opposite. Just as in the case of portraiture where the degree of "realism" cannot be used as a measure of "likeness," the finished product does not necessarily tell us what the painter actually saw. In the end it is the artist's rendition-interpretation-which we are viewing. However, it might tell us *how* the artist saw his subject. Moreover, the finished product can certainly inform us as to the artist's interests-what he *wanted* to show and how he wanted to show it, taking into account, of course, the limits of his artistic talent and his knowledge of various techniques to create illusions.

Ōkyo, for example, was well-acquainted with Western modes of perspective and the principles of shading. He made paintings that emphasized linear perspective and that were meant for use in optical devices employing mirrors and lenses to create pictures with a novel that seemed more real. Called in Japanese *megane-e*, these paintings were based on imported Dutch works, or Chinese works that were themselves influenced by Western techniques.

Early Examples of Corporeality in Japanese Painting

The topic of technique and stylistic choice might be given historical context through looking at earlier examples in Japanese painting from the standpoint of interest in the physical nature of the body, that is, corporeality. Painting in the latter twelfth century began to exhibit an increased interest in graphic realism. A highly enigmatic group of paintings, executed by different hands and popularly referred to as the "Scroll of Illnesses" (*Yamai no sōshi*), features people suffering from a variety of physical ailments. As demonstrated in the painting of a hermaphrodite (pl. 5a), the more graphically detailed of the paintings capture a feeling of body mass and volume. Moreover, naturalistic body proportions and articulations of limbs and

5. As opposed to simply using the body for narrative, emblematic or decorative purposes. Although Ōkyo was well versed in them, traditionally, Japanese artists have demonstrated little concern for scientifically derived concepts of lighting and perspective. Thus, here, I must separate my use of the term "corporeality" from the concept of visual realism.

joints are illustrated to a degree never before seen in Japanese art (and arguably never again seen until the 18c). Despite being imbued somewhat with caricature and stylization, the figures reflect the painter's ideas of how to draw a human. The depictions are surely founded upon the artist's carefully observing how the human body looks and how it works. And more importantly, they serve as evidence of artistic interest in doing so.

As a matter of fact, painters of the period carry over the same interest in "realistic" depiction to the portrayal of unreal beings, endowing them with physicality. The "Scroll of Hungry Ghosts" (*Gaki zōshi*) illustrates the wretched fate of those reborn as *gaki* ("hungry ghosts"), ethereal manifestations of karmic wrongdoings condemned to never-ending hunger and thirst. Though imaginary or mythical beasts, demons, and even *gaki* already appeared in pictorial form early on, never were they presented as such concrete, corporeal images as those offered here. We see not only that the skin has texture and substance as it is ripped away from their bleeding bodies by marauding birds (pl. 5b), but also that the bloated bellies of the *gaki* contain entrails. In another scene from the same work showing *gaki* feeding in a graveyard, we also see human corpses in various stages of decay.

The physical decay of the corpse acts as the unifying theme of the "Nine Stages in the Decay of a Corpse," a Buddhist theme tied to the concept of severing worldly attachments. One of the earliest known examples, roughly dated to the twelfth- to thirteenth-centuries, indicates a certain sense of familiarity with actual appearances.⁶ Beginning with the image of a stunning beauty and followed by the depiction of her fresh corpse looking as alluring as a sleeping beauty, the subsequent scenes chronicle the material degradation of the corpse and the eventual scattering of the bones by wild animals (pl. 6). Although not included in the present version, it is normal for illustrations of this theme to indicate in the final scene the eventual returning of the bones to ashes and dust.

It is often pointed out that natural disasters followed by pestilence and

6. The *Konjaku monogatari shū* contains two interesting stories about the "realism" of paintings by the famous artist Kudara no Kawanari in v. 24, no.5 "Kudara no Kawanari, Hida no Takumi to idomu koto" (百濟川成、飛弾の工と挑む語). In the first he hires someone to look for a run away servant. The searcher says that without knowing the servant's face there is no way he could find him 「顔を知らずしては何でか搦めむ」. Kawanari sketches the run-away boy's face, and by means of that likeness the hired person is able to identify and catch the boy. The second story tells how Kawanari has fun taking revenge on a master carpenter, Hida no Takumi, who had earlier played a trick on him. He invites the carpenter to his home, but pretends to be absent and has a servant let the visitor in. When Hida slid open the door to one of the rooms he was shocked to see a large, black and bloated corpse. The stench of the decaying body assaulted him and with a cry of dismay he fled from the room. Hearing the cry Kawanari emerges to call his visitor back. The trembling carpenter was amazed to learn that what he had seen was just a painting Kawanari had executed on the sliding panels of the room. See *Konjaku monogatari shū, Honchō sezoku bu ichi* in Sakakura Atsuyoshi, Honda Giken, Kawabata Yoshiaki, annot. *Shinchō Nihon koten shūsei* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1978), pp. 115-16.

drought made dead bodies a common site in the capital at the time. Moreover, to avoid ritual pollution associated with death, masters frequently had servants (and sometimes even family members) removed from the household and then left to die in an isolated spot, or laid out in open designated areas. In the *Gaki zōshi* graveyard scene mentioned above, the corpse in the wooden coffin must have been carried there after death, but the dead woman on the rush mat, with a bowl next to her head, was left there while still alive. At any rate, it is highly credible that the artists had actually observed and were quite familiar with how dead and decaying bodies looked; and as stated above, there were likely plenty of opportunities to do so.

Jinbutsu seisha sōhon (Complete Folio of True Figure Studies)

Returning to the work by Maruyama Ōkyo, the reason for the peculiar format is probably the easiest to surmise. I believe that the format allowed Ōkyo to include a series of large-scale figures (approximately 150 cm) in scrolls that could be easily handled and just as easily stored away. Any surface around two meters in length and seventy centimeters in width would be adequate for opening the scrolls to any desired section for viewing.

We might also interpret the singularity of the format, however, as indicating that Ōkyo's present intention in dealing with the human body was to do something novel and unique. This interpretation is supported by the large scale of the figures and the fact that they are naked. Until modern times the nude was not a genre of Japanese art. Furthermore, the appearance of any unclothed figures had been extremely rare in earlier Japanese painting.⁷ By the eighteenth century that was no longer true. But even then, pictures of nude men and women fell almost exclusively within the realm of pictures associated with the floating world, or *ukiyo-e*. That does not appear to be the case here.

The range of figures with accompanying notations identifying their ages and sex (and in the case of the *wakashū* a gender role) suggests that Ōkyo is doing some sort of survey, possibly along the lines of eighteenth century encyclopedic interests.⁸ This would also certainly fit in with his theories of painting based on sketching from life.⁹ Ōkyo stressed the importance of multiple sketches from a variety of

7. In addition to showing innocent children, other examples of naked bodies belong to people in less than happy situations such as losers in gambling or victims in Hell. There is also the erotic scroll called *Kanjō no maki* (Initiation Scroll), also known as *Koshibagaki zōshi* (Brushwood Fence), ca. 1171. For a fraction of a scene see Ienaga Saburō, *Painting in the Yamato Style*. Trans. John M. Shields. Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art series, v. 10 (New York, Tokyo: Weatherhill, Heibonsha, 1973), p. 152.

8. The notations also contain information on the use of pigments and ink in the depictions.

9. See, eg., illustrations from his "Album of Sketches from Life" (*Shasei zatsuroku chō*; 写生雜録帖) and other sketch albums in Sasaki Jōhei, ed., *Ōkyo shasei gashū* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1981). The *Shasei zatsuroku chō* is in the collection of Sakata Fusanosuke. Ink and light colors on paper. Various pages inscribed with dates corresponding to the years 1771-72.

angles in order to be able to depict a subject realistically; he believed, "by way of a single thing [know] a multitude of things; by way of a multitude of things, create one thing."¹⁰

It seems reasonable that the circular formats that appear in the third scroll relate to telescopes and mirrors, as suggested by Sasaki Jōhei. The fascination with lenses and different modes of seeing was also a popular eighteenth century phenomenon. Ōkyo advised his students to use telescopes to observe animals and mirrors to study the human body; that is, as aids to view what otherwise might be difficult or impossible to see.¹¹ Round mirrors might explain the circular formats for some of the views (like the mouths, pl. 2c), although this does not fit all equally well.¹²

The paintings make use of modeled line work in describing the volume of the figures and also to capture the sagging skin, wrinkles and bony quality of the old man and woman (her shoulders, elbows, collarbones and hips; his shoulders and spine; pl. 1). Degrees of finer line work are used to depict body hair and coiffures. Yet, the figures do not share the same degree of attention to detail or visual persuasiveness. The face of the man in his forties borders on caricature (pl. 7b). Elaborate treatment of facial and other body hair, however, bring the picture back to the realm of body study. Other male figures have clear body definition featuring pectoral and abdominal musculature (pl. 7c).

The bodies of the younger females, unlike that of the old woman, are done with the barest minimum of descriptive detail. Except for their fingers and toes, they are almost totally lacking in articulation; and their main defining features are their intriguing expressions (pl. 3). This contrast cannot be explained away simply by attributing wrinkles to age. There is undoubtedly emblematic "baggage" attached to the renditions-what a youthful female body looks like in the mind's eye versus actual physical appearance. The emphasis on form and surface texture-or more correctly, the lack thereof-may likewise be interpreted along the lines of symbolic significance rather than accurate representation. Smooth, unblemished, featureless, it is as if forms were dressed in white body stockings doubling as skin. These female figures would not in themselves suggest sketching from real live models, but seem to be ideal reconstructions, reminiscent of Diderot's idea of the relativity of perfection and the artist's task of creating ideal beauty.¹³ Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the *wakashū* shares the same qualities of depiction as his female counterparts.

10. 「以一品渡數品、以數品為一品」. Ibid., p.149, and also pls. 57-69.

11. Ibid., pp. 149-50.

12. It is possible that the circular formats may also be a stylistic conceit used as a unifying motif.

13. See Barbara Stafford's use of Diderot's theories in, "Marking," in *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), esp. pp.283-86.

Idealistic Reconstructions or True Sketches from Life?

Sasaki has also pointed out the importance of the role that physiognomy played in Okyo's philosophy of painting.¹⁴ The *Sansai zue*,¹⁵ imported into Japan around 1609, contains information on physiognomy and was considered by Ōkyo as an important book in the study of painting. In short, the philosophy upon which physiognomy is based is that people have different body and facial structures and characteristics that can be read by the knowledgeable observer to tell their fortunes. Of course, by reading the form and color of a person's body, an understanding also can be gained of that person's state of health—even spying ailments announced by symptoms not obvious to the untrained eye. Thus great importance is placed upon observation of form and shape, especially that of the face, discerning in great detail various differences. Secondly one must be able to distinguish subtle differences in color. Describing the difficulty of this task, the *Sōgaku hakki* (相学発揮)¹⁶ says it is like distinguishing the difference in color of snow covering frost, and frost lying atop snow. In sum, the practice of physiognomy is predicated upon precise and detailed observation. And the "scientific basis" of physiognomy rests upon the empirical analysis of the information accumulated through these methods.

It is clear that Ōkyo used principles of physiognomy in depicting the faces of figures in his paintings.¹⁷ Are we then looking at an array of faces constructed on physiognomic principles, or are we looking at actual people sketched from life? There definitely seems to be a difference between the realism of his nature studies and the humans in the *Jinbutsu*; and so it appears that in drawing humans, a distinction is being made in the application of theory and practice. For all the emphasis on realism and naturalism, it is clear that there are limits to what he chooses to depict (we may argue that there are limits to *what* he sees because of *how* he sees them—but the naturalism of his plant and animal sketches would seem to argue against this). He chooses to ignore texture and details and concentrate on the skilful capturing of form and sense of volume through outline. But the fingers have no joints, no bones. Also, in the detail of hands, the woman's hand is impossible to be seen in that angle (the thumb is wrong unless it was turned around on her hand; pl. 3d).

14. Most of the following information is taken from Sasaki, "Edo jidai no geka sho oyobi sōsho to jintai hyōgen no kankei-Maruyama Ōkyo no jinbutsu kenkyū josetsu," in *Tetsugaku kenkyū* 47, no. 8 (1984), pp. 474-80.

15. Contained illustrations of a vast variety of subjects ranging from astronomy and geography to fauna and flora in 106 volumes. Compiled in 1607 by Wang Qi.

16. By Noda Nagakatsu in 3 volumes. Published in 1778 (An'ei 7). Also known as *Shinjinron sōgaku hakki* (神心論相学発揮).

17. *Ibid.*, especially pp. 477-79.

Ōkyo is going back and forth between detailed naturalistic depiction (and description) and stylized representation. Rather than describing his paintings as life-like, it may be more correct to say that he infuses them with a kind of life, but at the same time they are polished and refined, stylized and even abstracted to suit his purposes. What is his purpose? To make paintings-paintings featuring a new figure style born from the grasp of human anatomy that he gained from careful observation. His finished paintings have a different look (pl. 8). His figures, defined volumetrically through naturalistic form, proportion, and selective attention to detail, twist and turn in believably in space without resorting to western ideas of light and shadow. Even non-figure paintings, as seen in popularly known examples such as his "Pine Trees in the Snow," in the Mitsui Bunko, or his 1776 "Peonies and Peacock," owned by the Imperial Household Agency, reveal the same concern with detail and precision of form. Using abstract patterning, or gold leaf and other decorative effects serves to deny space within which the figures can exist, and this in turn negates their volume. The effects of the resulting visual and psychological tension wonderfully charge and enliven the works. Combining the natural with the abstract and decorative is one of the hallmarks of traditional Japanese painting, and Ōkyo exploited and advanced it magnificently. The refined atmosphere of his finished paintings were selling points to his clientele, and so removing the rawness from his figures was done intentionally.

We must ask, however, if the *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* falls into this category, and whether the above suffices to account for the oddity of this work. The images certainly appear more finished than sketches, but then we confront the problem of the graphic depiction of genitals; they appear quite "raw" compared to the rest of the illustrations. And there remains the question of why the figures display *varying* degrees of attention to detail. What other reason can there be for not executing the figures so that they are more corporeal in final effect, more closely reflective of the human body's physicality?

A Contemporary Example of "Corporeal Painting"

It may be helpful to compare the *Jinbutsu* with another contemporary depiction that too appears based on careful observation of the human body. The work is a visual record of the dissection of the corpse of a criminal named *Heijirō*, carried out in 1783, and presided over by the physician Koishi Genshun (1743-1808). Commonly known as *Heijirō-zu* (*Heijirō* illustrations), it is a finished version by the painter, Yoshimura Ranshū (1739-1816), of sketches done on the spot by Ranshū and two other artists.¹⁸ Mounted as a hand scroll, several copies were made

18. Murakami Ōdō and Makino Shūzō.

of the work, including a copy by Ranshū's son, Yoshimura Kōkei (1769-1836).¹⁹

The significance of the comparison is enhanced because Ranshū was a fellow disciple of Ōkyo under their master, Ishida Yūtei; and Ranshū's son, Kōkei became one of Ōkyo's students. It is expected, therefore, that they shared in common a tradition of being able accurately to record what they saw, and in this case, at least ostensibly, imbued with the intention to do so. It is understandable and far from coincidental that painters from Ōkyo's school of painting would be in demand to record dissections.²⁰ The same attitudes of sketching from life based on careful observation were of prime importance in the project. But recording the vision involves a manner of seeing as well as a manner of painting. We know how Ōkyo painted the human body. We would like to gain some insight into how he saw it. But first, we need to take a brief look at the Heijirō paintings.

Though these artists can be conceived of as essentially acting as cameras, recording in visual form what the doctors were seeing—the artists and physicians becoming one—that was not the case here.²¹ As Kuriyama Shigehisa has emphasized, anatomy requires a special manner of seeing. Vision must be guided by texts or teachers—in short, one needs an educated eye. It would not do for the anatomist simply to "pry open a corpse and stare blankly at bone and blood, fat flesh, and tangled tendons."²² Yamawaki Tōyō (1705-62; the father and teacher of Genshun's own teacher), who carried out the first officially sanctioned dissection of a human corpse in Japan in 1754, had been advised in his youth to satisfy his curiosity about the human anatomy by dissecting otters. It was believed that otters were anatomically similar to humans.²³ By the time Genshun presided over the Heijirō dissection in 1783, however, he had already participated in the dissection of one hundred

19. Ranshū's hand scroll is in the possession of Takeda Kagaku Shinkō.

20. Sasaki, "Edo jidai no gekasho," pp. 471-72.

21. I should point out that they literally were just looking. In the famous dissection twelve years earlier in Edo that led to the first translation of a Western anatomy book into Japanese, the actual dissection was carried out by a member of the eta class while the samurai looked on (called *kanzō*). In that case the knife was wielded by a 90-year old man who, by his own account, had performed a number of dissections since his youth. Describing the process, one of those present said, "They would cut open the body and point out such organs as the lungs, the liver and the kidneys and the observing doctors simply watched them and came away....With no sign tag attached to each organ, all they could do was listen to the dissector's words and nod." See Sugita Genpaku, *Dawn of Western Science in Japan*, 29-30. Genpaku says that after pointing out the heart, liver, and various other organs, he pointed to some tissues and said that he did not know what they were but had always been present in every dissection he had performed. They turned out to be the main arteries, veins, and suprarenal glands. The old man commented, "In my past experience of dissection, the doctors present never showed puzzle or asked questions specifically about one thing or another." Ibid.

22. Shigehisa Kuriyama, *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), pp.127-8.

23. Nihon Gakushi-in Nihon Kagakushi Kankōkai, ed., *Meiji zen Nihon igakushi*, 1978 reprint, v.1 (Tokyo: Nihon Koigaku Shiryō Senta), p.85.

corpses.²⁴ It was the artists, then, who confronted with a view never before encountered, had to call upon their vision (a combination of optical observation mental framework) to record what they actually saw. We can assume that the painters looked closely at the unfolding, emptying and reduction of the human corpse before their eyes (otherwise their presence would have been meaningless). Yet inaccuracies in the renditions have been pointed out, with attention called to the fact that the Heijirō images, or *Heijirō-zu*, still show strong influence from earlier, pre-Western modes of thought and understanding.²⁵ The existence of discrepancies within the final visual product that resulted from this eyewitness process emphasizes the importance of seeing.

The paintings are executed in fine line work and employ various colors. The corpse and the different organs at various stages in the dissection are too crisp and clean to be very realistic, though to some extent this should be expected from its nature as a record. Except for recognizable body parts such as limbs, hands, feet, head and torso itself, the various organs could be odd mineral formations, plants, flowers, nuts-essentially nature studies. Of course, these cannot be completely dissociated from the overall picture, which also features torn flesh, flayed skin and the occasional indication of blood.

Live versus Dead: *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* and the *Heijiro-zu*

The most obvious difference between the *Heijirō-zu* and the *Jinbutsu* is live bodies versus a lifeless corpse. Yet that distinction is meaningless for our purposes if it rests primarily on the difference between standing bodies with open eyes and a prone body with head cut off and entrails exposed. Such a distinction falls into the realm of the emblematic or narrative, and says nothing about corporeality.

In fact, Ōkyo's live figures appear more blanched or bloodless than the corpse. Except for in the case of the two elderly figures, the skin of the full-length men and women displays a minimum, even an absence, of texture. Smooth, white and unblemished, the skin is almost translucent. Were it not for the naturalistic proportioning and the strong form achieved through outline, the figures would seem completely to lack substance. They hover between the realms of physicality and formal design.

In contrast to this ambiguous physicality, the *Heijirō-zu* captures not only the corporeality of the exterior of the body, but also its interior. Within the external jacket of ruddy skin there is a mass of organs and entrails, each possessing its own

24. Yamamoto Shirō, *Koishi Genshun* (Tokyo: Nihon Rekishi Gakkai, 1967), p. 69.

25. Sakai Shizu, in Nihon Ishi Gakkai, ed., *Zuroku Nihon iji bunka shiryō shūsei*, v. 2 (Tokyo: San'ichi Shōbō, 1977) comment on "Heijirō-zu," p. 37.

outer layer of tissue distinguishable from its inner matter, which again can be isolated and opened to reveal more inner matter. Thus, for the internal organs, too, a clear distinction is made between their exteriors and interiors, appropriately rendered with texture and contours. The human body here appears extremely substantial; its depiction differs markedly from that of the *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*.

But we are still left with the more physical images of the elderly figures, where there is a greater emphasis on bone structure (they appear *bony*)-the heads are knobby and uneven, and there are clear indications of the skin's roughness and texture. We find no trace of the creamy white smoothness of the younger figures. In fact, the renditions come closer to the yet to be dissected corpse of the *Heijirō-zu* than they do to the depictions of the younger figures. Assuredly the epidermis of the corpse appears almost "rubbery" for want of a better word. There is no sense of translucency or transparency, but somehow there is a definite sense of lifelessness. The difference between Okyo's body studies and the *Heijirō-zu* is that the body in the latter is more meat-like. The contrast between the renditions of old and young calls to mind Charles Baudelaire's (1821-1867) explanation that the purpose of talc in his time "was to hide all the blemishes that nature has so outrageously scattered over the complexion, and to create an abstract unity of texture and color in the skin, which unity, like the one produced by tights, immediately approximates the human being to a statue, in other words to a divine or superior being."²⁶ Are we allowed to read into the different manners in which Ōkyo painted his figures a celebration of the beauty of youth? Or, is there a connection between Ōkyo's studied rendition of the elderly subjects and their proximity to death? One may wonder if Ōkyo was consciously or subconsciously making "mortality uniquely visible" through picturing "pathetic patterns of bodily decay," in a sense performing the opposite role of cosmetics and the idealizing artistic eye in eighteenth century Europe as described by Barbara Stafford.²⁷

Body and Death versus Sex and Life

If that is the case, the emphasis on genitalia in the *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* might also be an emphasis of vitality, by way of sexuality. The *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* is not an erotic work, but it most definitely has sexual themes. Rather than being overtly erotic the figures in *Jinbutsu* could perhaps more correctly be described as pregnant with innuendo.

The erotic component of the *Jinbutsu* is not hard to discern. The pairing of erect penises and female genitals, the inclusion of the youth masturbating (pl. 7c)

26. From "In Praise of Make-Up," quoted in Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p. 289

27. Stafford, *Body Criticism*, p. 283.

have obvious connotations. In fact, the faithful line-by-line copy of the *Jinbutsu* owned by the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas,²⁸ has line drawings of three scenes of couples involved in sexual intercourse, possibly added by someone other than the copyist, and probably dating to the early nineteenth-century. But in addition to the erotic connotations of the scrolls, the erect penises and ejaculating boy are also powerful symbols of the living. In this sense, the contrast between the whiteness and purity of the flesh with the graphic rendering of the sex organs recalls contemporaneous erotic prints and paintings by artists such as Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1806), who brought the *shunga* tradition and its message of celebration of life to new heights.

It is clear that in many instances-and maybe in general-that despite the scientific and medical aims of anatomical dissection, the implication of mortality was meaningfully present. Interestingly an 1826 copy of the *Heijirō-zu* in the Clendening Medical History Library of the University of Kansas Medical School appears paired with a version of "Nine Stages in the Decay of a Corpse." There is no statement as to the artist's reason for pairing the themes, but the relationship between the two is not difficult to discern. Both deal with the human body and with death. Interestingly, the depiction of the skull and bones in the "Nine Stages" follows an older tradition that predates anatomy in Japan, so that the artist is consciously adhering to a conceptual tradition or is copying an earlier work. At any rate, in the quest to know the unknown, the curiosity driving the desire to anatomize cuts up the body into ever smaller pieces, until nothing recognizable as "body" remains. The message is the same as that of the Buddhist precepts in which the body disintegrates to nothing. The inclusion of a stupa at the end of the "Nine Stages" keeps the idea of life and death at the fore. Yamawaki Tōyō also enshrined the spirits of the corpses that he dissected.

In so strikingly depicting the genitals, is Ōkyo making a statement about vitality that augments the infusion of life in his figure style?²⁹ Is there a connection between his view of his older subjects and their evident mortality with waning sexual powers? In an even larger context, Ōkyo would not be alone in considering the genitals as symbols of vitality that acted as talismans against death.

Conclusion

The overall idea of several nude full-length views of male and female figures

28. Artist Unknown. "The Complete Book of True Figure Studies," late 18c-early 19c. 96.25.

29. Although Ōkyo's students were employed in recording dissections because of their painting abilities, there are no known anatomical and medical illustrations attributable to Ōkyo's hand, nor is there evidence that he himself ever participated in such projects. See Sasaki, p. 470.

of different ages suggests a survey or comparative study. This is buoyed by the "Addendum" with its lineup of busts of more men and women viewed from diverse angles and accompanied by notations of their ages, followed by studies of various body parts (mouths, hands, legs) arranged singly or in groups according to type. This is certainly in character with Ōkyo's opinion that rather than depending on one's master or on prior models, one should observe the outside world and make countless sketches from life in order to learn the principles of things.³⁰ At the same time, given Ōkyo's status and knowledge of Western painting methods, it would not be at all odd to place him in the context of the intense curiosity to find new ways of seeing the world—the fervor to know—that became so evident in eighteenth-century Japan from the Kyoho era (1716-1735) on. The fascination with optical devices from the telescope and other magnifying lenses that allowed one to see what the naked eye could not, to the *camera obscura*, which allowed for viewing scenes in emphatic perspective in ways so different from traditional pictures, might be reflected in Ōkyo's circular motifs or the youth in the circle viewed in overhead foreshortening.

As Sasaki points out, this mirrors the same spirit of experimentation and actually witnessing things with one's own eyes that characterized the newly encountered Western sciences—and that especially can be seen in the desire to dissect corpses among Japanese physicians of the time. There is indirect evidence, such as Ōkyo's painting of a skeleton seated in meditation,³¹ offering tantalizing clues to Ōkyo's familiarity with Western anatomical texts, or their Japanese versions.³² Sasaki draws an indirect connection between Ōkyo and the world of dissection through the latter's words about the importance of considering the "limbs, torso, bones and flesh" in order to paint a body with concreteness.³³ Sasaki conceives of the *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* as resulting from a reversal of the anatomizing process, with the human body being built up as layer after layer is put back on.³⁴ The problem remains, however, that we do not really see this in the work, except for the depictions of the aged persons. The other bodies, as discussed earlier, are seen in a different way—or at least depicted in a way that edits their corporeality.

30 *Banshi*, "Hibunroku," 1768. See Sasaki, "Edo jidai no geka sho," p. 485, n. 22.

31 Done in ink and light colors on paper and owned by the Daijōji, Hyōgo-ken. Undated, but from the shape of the seals and the fact that two seals are affixed, a date of 1787 has been suggested. See Hyōgo Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan, exh. cat. (1996), pl. 48, p. 108.

32 It is very likely that Ōkyo was acquainted with anatomical illustrations in both imported Western texts and also native Japanese works like the *Jinshin renkotsu shinkei zu* (True Illustration of the Human Skeleton; 人身連骨真形図) and the *Zōshi* (Treasury of Determination; 蔵志). See Sasaki, "Edo jidai no geka sho," pp. 469-70. The former was written in 1741 by Negoro Tōjaku, after he studied the unburied bones of two criminals who had been executed by burning in 1732.

33. *Ibid.*, n. 20.

Rather than true-to-life sketches from nature, most of the figures are idealized reconstructions. Since the differences visible between Ōkyo's bodies and the Heijirō paintings are not attributable to differences in school or style, they must reflect differences in purpose, attitude, and interpretation. Many questions still remain as to the meaning of the *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*; but through its rich complexity the *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon* suggestively explores the problems of sketching from life in a manner that reaches well beyond the techniques of visual naturalism. Whether or not Ōkyo was primarily concerned with the development of a new figure style, the record he left behind is pregnant with implications about the human body and how he saw it. The contrast between youthful bodies, aged ones, and those in between, goes beyond wrinkles and bony frames. The translucent whiteness suggests freshness and purity. And then again, the latter is contrasted with graphic, close-up views of genitalia. The emblematic significance of these elements is intricately tied to and informed by ideas of physiognomy, eroticism. Without presuming to read Ōkyo's mind, we can find evidence of curiosity as to the distinction of male versus female, young versus old, life, and by extension, death.

34. This is reminiscent of Alberti's advice along similar lines: "To get the right proportions in painting living creatures, first visualize their bony insides, for bones, being rigid, establish fixed measurements. Then attach tendons and muscles in their places and finally clothe the bones and muscles with flesh and skin. You may object that...a painter has no concern with what he cannot see. So be it, but if to paint dressed figures you must first draw them nude and then dress them, so to paint nudes you must first situate the bones and muscles before you cover them with flesh and skin in order to show clearly where the muscles are." Cited from A. Hyatt Mayor, *Artists and Anatomists* (New York: Artists Limited Edition, 1984), p. 10, in Kuriyama, 115.

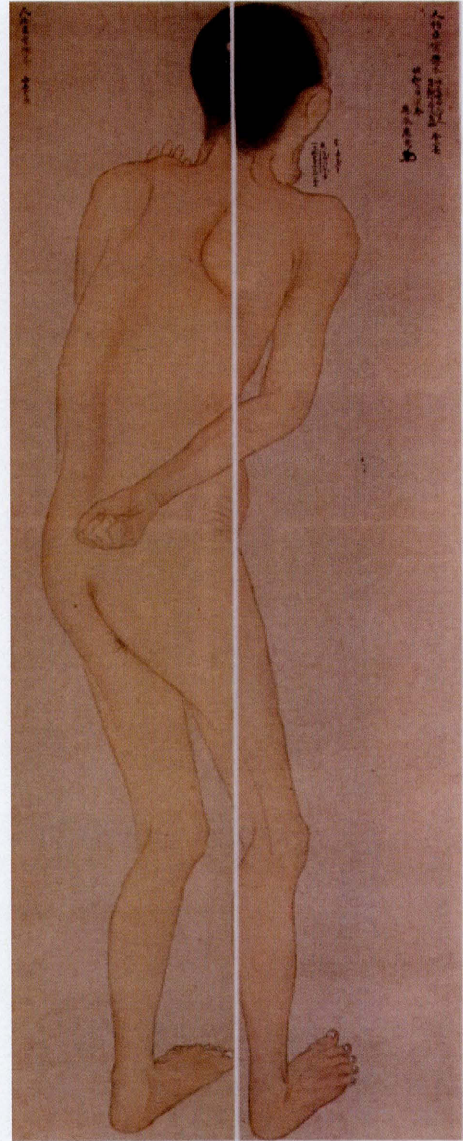
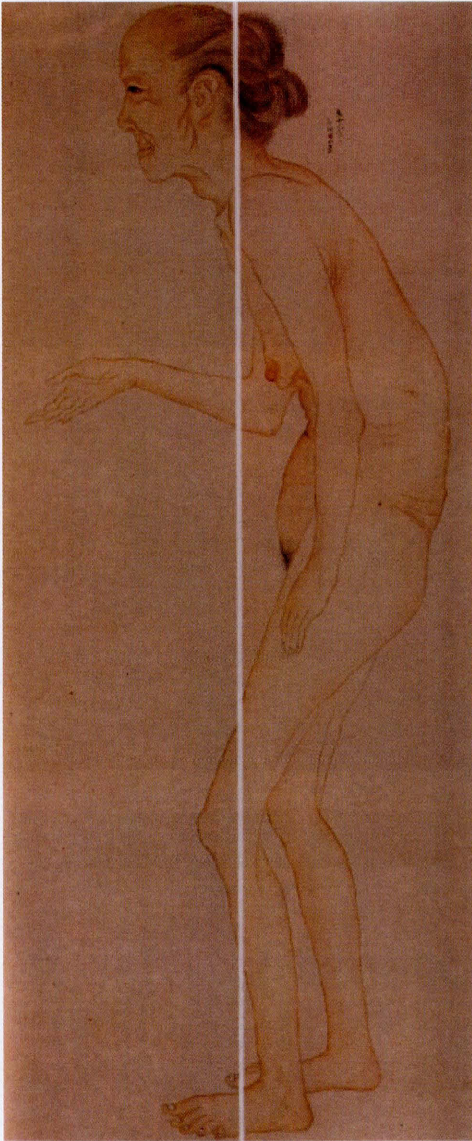
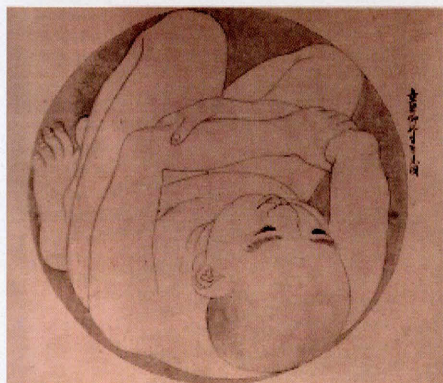


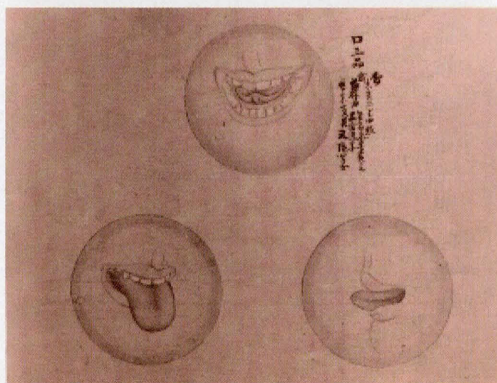
Plate 1. Maruyama Ōkyo. *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*. Detail. Tenri Daigaku Fuzoku Tenri Toshokan, Tenri-shi. After Hyōgo Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan ed., *Maruyama Ōkyo ten* (Benrido, 1994), p.34.



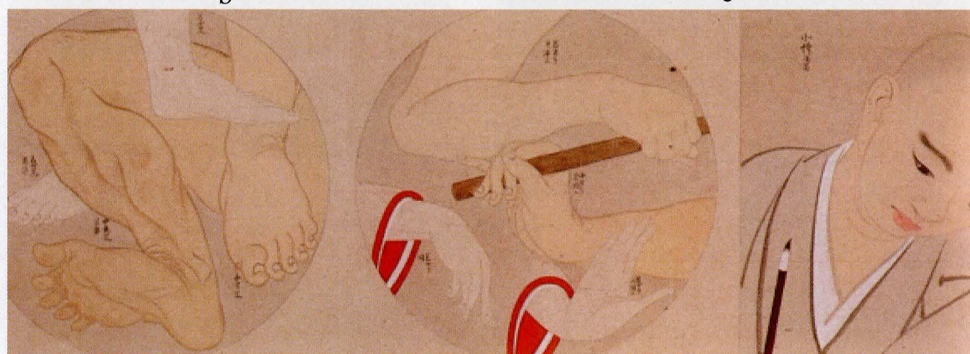
a



b



c



d

Plate 2. Maruyama Ōkyo. *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*. Detail. Tenri Daigaku Fuzoku Tenri Toshokan, Tenri-shi. (a,d) photo after Hyōgo Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan ed., *Maruyama Ōkyo ten*, p.39; (b,c) photo after Sasaki Jōhei, *Ōkyo shasei gashū* (pls. 142, 143)

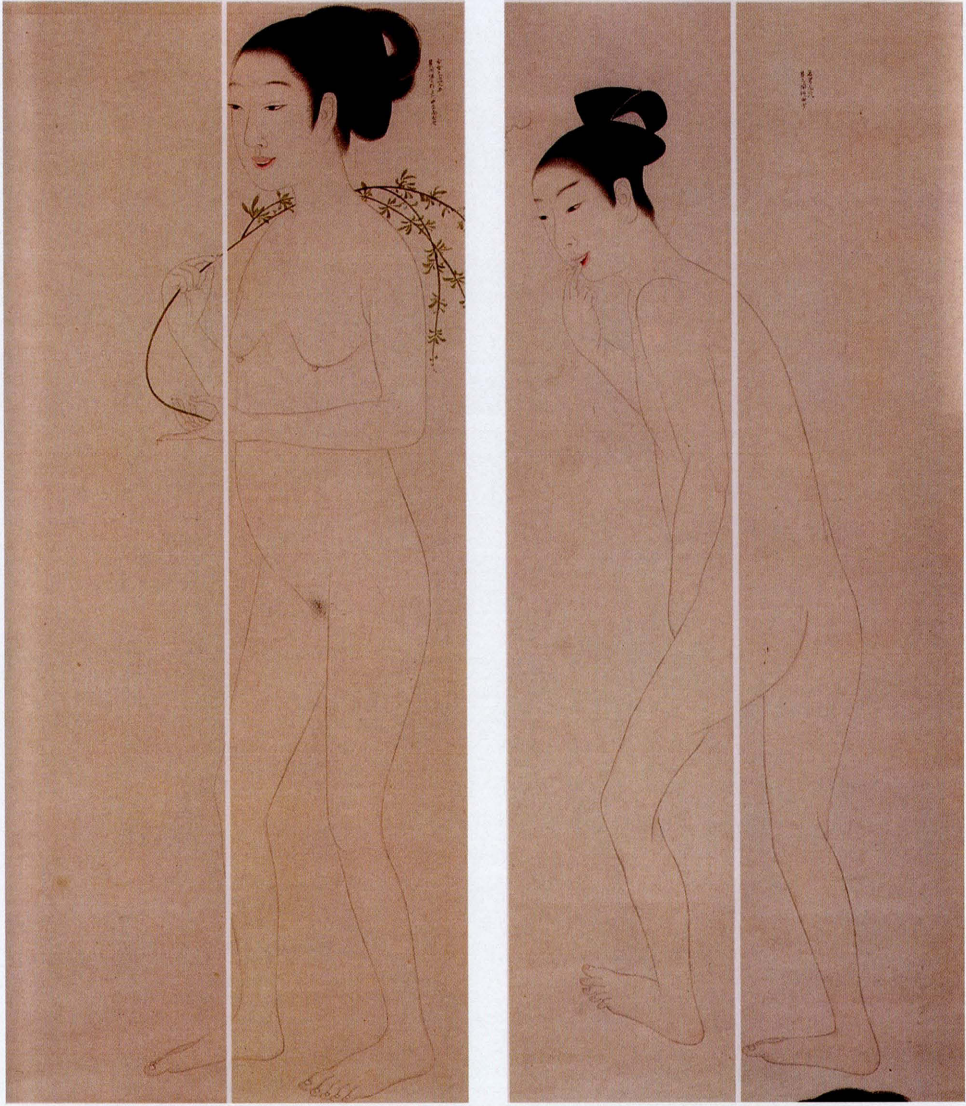


Plate 3. Maruyama Ōkyo. *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*. Detail. Tenri Daigaku Fuzoku Tenri Toshokan, Tenri-shi. After Hyōgo Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan ed., *Maruyama Ōkyo ten*, p.36.



Plate 4. Anonymous. Copy of Maruyama Ōkyo's *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*. The Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas.



Plate 5. (a) Detail from *Yamai no sōshi*. Kyoto National Museum. Photo after Komatsu Shigemi ed., *Gaki zōshi, Jigoku zōshi, Yamai no sōshi, Kusōshi emaki*, in *Nihon emaki taisei* series, v. 7, p. 83; (b) Detail from *Gaki zōshi*, Kōmoto-bon, Tokyo National Museum. Photo after Komatsu, p. 12.

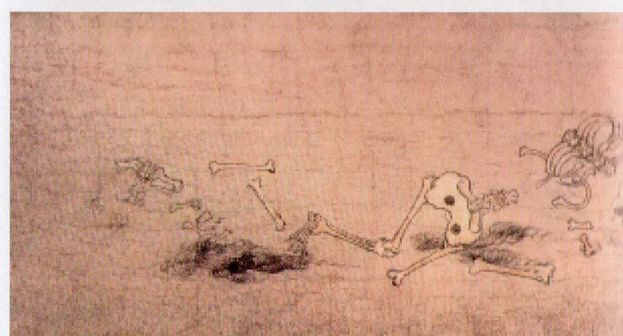
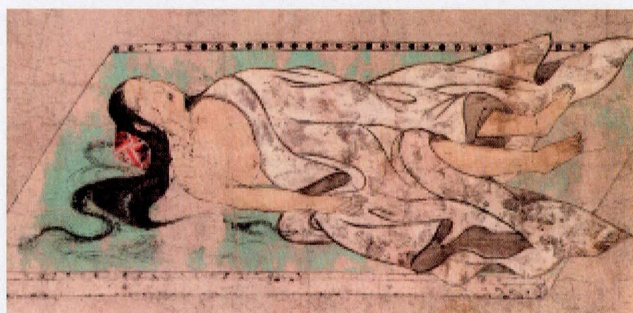


Plate 6. Details from *Kusōshi emaki*. Private collection. Photos after Komatsu, pp. 110-19.

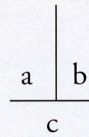
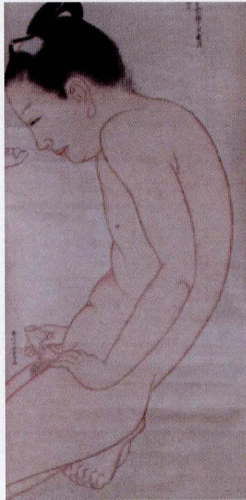


Plate 7. (a, c) Details from copy of *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*. Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas. (b) Maruyama Ōkyo, *Jinbutsu seisha sōhon*. Detail. Photo after Sasaki, *Ōkyo shasei gashū*, pl. 140.

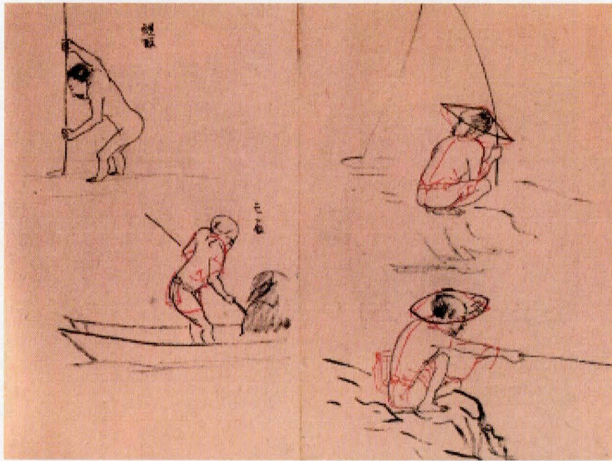
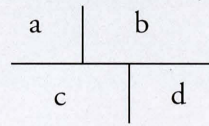


Plate 8. (a, b) Details from Maruyama Ōkyo, *Guo Ziyi*. Daijōji, Hyōgo Prefecture. Photos after Hyōgo Kenritsu Rekishi Hakubutsukan, *Maruyama Ōkyo ten*, pp. 102, 104. (c, d) Details from Maruyama Ōkyo, *Biwako Ujigawa shasei zu*. Kyoto National Museum. Photos after Sasaki, *Ōkyo shasei gashū*, pls. 121, 122.

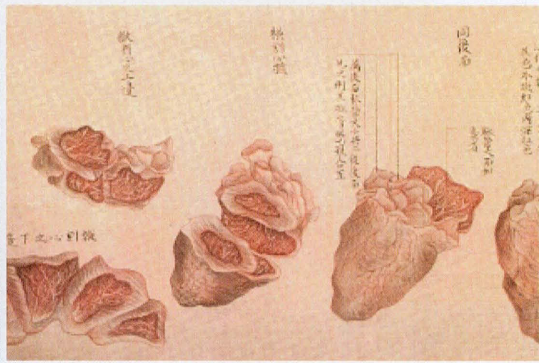
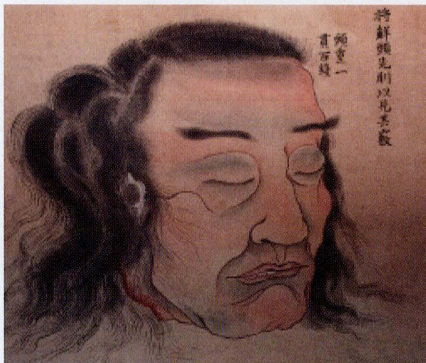
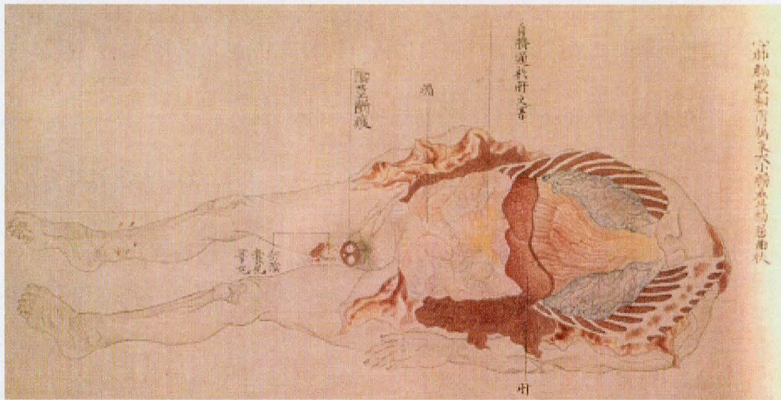
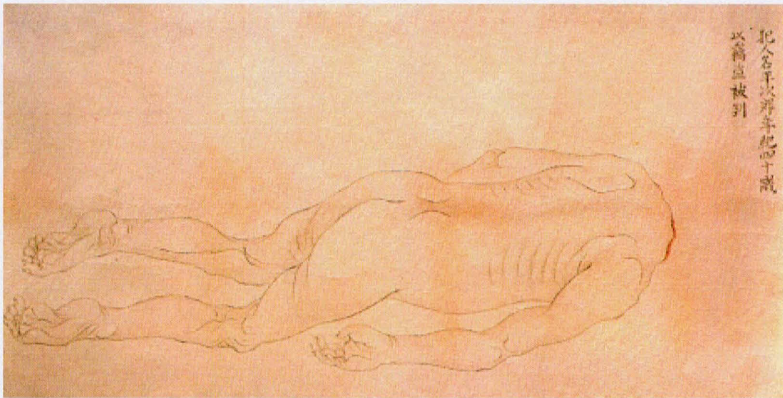


Plate 9. Yoshimura Kōkei. Details from copy after Yoshimura Ranshū, *Heijirō zōzu*. Photos after Nihon Ishi Gakkai ed., *Zuroku Nihon iji bunka shiryō shūsei*, v. 2, pp. 39-46.