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Competition Between Japanese and Chinese Infrastructure Projects in Mongolia

P. V. Kulneva

Abstract

Mongolia is a landlocked country in East Asia, which has a number of advantages related to its geographical location, abundance of natural resources, openness to foreign capital, and dynamic development due to the market reforms carried out in the 1990s. This determines the interest in the country from China and Japan and the inclusion of Mongolia among the platforms of global competition between these largest Asian economies.

Development of Japan-Mongolia and China-Mongolia political and economic relations in the second half of the 20th century and Mongolia's economic progress in recent decades have coincided with increasing competition between Japan and China in the world stage. At present, both countries are important trading partners for Mongolia and sources of capital needed to build its infrastructure and integrate it into global supply and production chains. The study of Sino-Japanese interaction in Mongolia may help us understand how Japan and China compete with each other in the world stage and to specify their areas of specialization and rivalry.

The objective of this research is to show, taking infrastructure projects as an example, how the global competition between Japan and China unfolds in Mongolia. In order to evaluate the current state of economic relations between Mongolia and each of the countries, in the first part, the author traces the history of Japan-Mongolia and China-Mongolia relations from the establishment of diplomatic relations to the present time, focusing on infrastructure projects.

The second part analyzes the interaction between Japan and China in Mongolia in the context of their growing economic competition. The study sheds light on particular areas of rivalry, while demonstrating that Japanese and Chinese projects not only compete but also complement each other.

Keywords: Japan-Mongolia relations, China-Mongolia relations, infrastructure investment, Japan's ODA, ADB and AIIB, competition between Japan and China, Belt and Road Initiative, Mongolia in transport and logistics chains.

Introduction

China and Japan are the world's most influential economies located in the vicinity of Mongolia. Both states have their own history of interaction with Mongolia and play a certain role in its foreign economic and foreign policy relations.

During the 20th century, due to the state borders problem that both countries had at different times with Mongolia (primarily in connection with wars, including the Sino-Chinese war of 1937–1945), Sino-Mongolian and Japanese-Mongolian economic relations were not very active. Positive trends in this area appeared only towards the end of the last century. The increased global competition between China and Japan at that time made Mongolia one of the venues where the interests of the two countries collided.

Despite the low population density and relatively modest economic indicators of this steppe state of East Asia, a number of advantages of Mongolia make it an attractive place for investment by China and Japan and determine the potential of its economic cooperation with these countries. Mongolia has no access to the sea, but one of the sections of the Great Silk Road that once connected East and Central Asia passes through its territory. Taking into account the recently announced ambitious plans of the People's Republic of China to revive the Great Silk Road, Mongolia gets the opportunity

to regain its historical function and become a transit point for goods and energy resources, also expanding its own trade with neighbouring countries. Mongolia's long land border with China and Russia opens up possibilities for transporting goods through numerous border posts. Another important advantage of Mongolia is the variety of mineral resources. The country has large deposits of coal and fluorite, copper, gold, silver and other metal ores. There are also rare earth metals that are used in radio electronics, instrument-making, and nuclear engineering. At the same time, Mongolia's mineral deposits have not been fully studied, and the country continues exploration work. Although Mongolia's economic development is still based on the extractive industry, since the market reforms of the 1990s (not least thanks to Japan's assistance), the country has made a major stride towards economic diversification and openness to international cooperation. As is the case in the world stage, Chinese and Japanese economic projects in Mongolia complement each other in many ways. At the same time, the competition between them makes it possible, using the example of Mongolia, to better understand how the global roles of the two strongest Asian economies are divided. The chosen theme is also important in regard to Mongolia, for which this rivalry is a favorable factor. Thanks to their investments in the infrastructure of Mongolia and of the surrounding region, China and Japan make a significant contribution to the development of Mongolia and help integrate it in global logistics and production chains.

The objective of this study is to use the example of infrastructure projects to show how the global rivalry between China and Japan unfolds in Mongolia. To achieve this objective, the author aims to accomplish the following tasks:

- 1) to trace the history of the development of Mongolia's economic relations with Japan and China in the 20th and 21st centuries and to describe their current state in a comparative way, focusing on infrastructure projects;
- 2) to illustrate the interaction of Japanese and Chinese infrastructure projects in the context of global competition.

In the Conclusion, based on the results of the study, a conclusion will be drawn about the problems and prospects for continued cooperation between the countries in the area under review.

Development of Economic Relations of Japan and China with Mongolia

Japan and China established diplomatic relations with Mongolia at different times, and their economic ties with this country have advanced at different rates. Although the indicators of Japanese cooperation with Mongolia are quantitatively inferior to those of China, they are characterized by relative durability¹, steady growth and clear goals. For instance, Japan provided significant support to Mongolia in the course of the market reforms in the 1990s. Targeted support for specific projects plays an important role in the development of the Mongolian economy, both through Japanese financing channels and through international financial organizations, primarily the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

China's economic relations with Mongolia in the 20th century showed positive dynamics a little later, but they are characterized by a steep increase in indicators and a larger scale. Among other features, it can be noted that the advantages of the territorial and historical proximity of the two countries are clearly shown in the Sino-Mongolian cooperation. Whereas China, along with Russia, has always been among Mongolia's nearest neighbours, cooperation with Japan is carried out in the framework of the "third neighbour" concept.²

¹ Being a country that recovered fairly quickly after the war and embarked on the path of capitalist development, Japan had the opportunity to implement large-scale projects abroad earlier than China. In 1954–1973, the Japanese economy showed phenomenal growth rates, at times exceeding 10 percent, which made it possible to speak about the Japanese "economic miracle."

² Mongolia's foreign policy doctrine aimed at building relations with countries outside the circle of its nearest neighbours (which are China and Russia).

Japan

The mutual claims of Japan and Mongolia related to the war were settled during the period of 1956–1972. It is believed that the decision to establish diplomatic relations was made by the two countries' leaders after the participation of the Mongolian government delegation in the World Expo-70 in Japan (1970). Then, the parties agreed not to raise the issue of reparations anymore and to move on to negotiations on economic cooperation. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established as soon as 1972, after an intensive negotiation process [Nyamtseren 2001, p. 19]. In 1977, Japan and Mongolia signed the Agreement on Economic Cooperation, which made it possible to begin the implementation of the first major joint project – the construction of a factory for the manufacture of “Gobi” cashmere products with financial, personnel, and technological support from Japan. In March 1990, a trade agreement was signed to secure the commitment to increase trade turnover to the highest possible level and facilitate the issuance of necessary permits for the import and export of goods. In February 2001, the two countries signed an agreement on investment promotion and protection, which provided favorable conditions for Japanese businesses in Mongolia. An important event in recent years has been the signing of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between Mongolia and Japan (February 2015), which stipulates, in addition to a phased reduction of customs tariffs, the liberalization of labor and capital movement, the creation of favorable conditions for the protection of intellectual property and other important measures for the development and strengthening of economic ties. Japan was the first country to sign an agreement of this format with Mongolia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia considers Japan to be one of its “third neighbours” with the “strategic partnership” level of relations: Third Neighbours. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia*. 2021. <https://mfa.gov.mn/en/diplomatic/56715/>.

The steps taken contributed to the growth of indicators of Japanese-Mongolian economic cooperation. By 2022, Japan's trade turnover with Mongolia had approached \$5 billion (Japan's imports from Mongolia – \$4.2 billion, exports – \$0.7 billion).³ The amount of accumulated Japanese direct investments in Mongolia currently stands at about \$1 billion. Japan ranks sixth by this indicator,⁴ and, in terms of the number of companies with Japanese capital (680 companies), it comes in fourth after China, the Republic of Korea and Russia [Mongoru keizai gaikyō 2023, p. 19].

Japanese investments are concentrated in telecommunications, banking, industrial production, mining, sales of mining and construction equipment, construction and energy. All enterprises with Japanese capital, working in different industries, provide conditions for improving the Mongolian infrastructure.

Japanese companies have made a significant contribution to the development of the extractive industry, whose products are the main export item of Mongolia. Sumitomo Metal Mining and Mitsui & Co. participated in the development of copper and gold mines in the country. Mitsubishi Corporation owns a 34-percent stake in Areva Minez together with the Mongolian state-owned enterprise Man-Atom and the Mongolian branch of the French industrial company Ogapo S. A., which is engaged in uranium exploration and production. At the same time, Japanese capital has interest not only in the extractive sector, but also in high-tech industries that create added value in the Mongolian industrial sector. In 2010, plans were announced to build, with the participation of the Japanese companies Toyo Engineering Corporation and Marubeni Corporation, an oil refinery in Darkhan near the border with Russia (estimated investment was

³ Gadaad khudaldaany güitsetgel ornoor [Foreign Trade Performance by Country]. *Mongolian Customs Service*. 2023. <https://gaali.mn/statistic/detail/03> (In Mongolian).

⁴ Mongolbank Statistics data. *Mongolbank*. 2023. <https://stat.mongolbank.mn>

\$600 million).⁵ There are also joint projects aimed at optimizing coal extraction and processing.⁶

While Japan occupies a modest position in terms of trade with Mongolia and direct investment and is inferior to its other partners, it is the undisputed leader in providing official development assistance (ODA) to that country.⁷ The projects implemented with ODA include the above-mentioned construction of the Gobi factory, which actually contributed to the creation of a new branch of Mongolian industry and had impact on the structure of Mongolia's exports. In the 1990s, thanks to the Mongolian market reforms, the scale of Japanese ODA expanded, and concessional yen loans were added to its forms such as gratuitous assistance and technical cooperation. In addition to supporting cattle breeding, financing the construction of schools, the supply of medical equipment, assistance to the country in preventing natural disasters, etc., ODA began to include large-scale infrastructure projects.⁸

In the 1990s, Japanese funds were used to modernize railway communications (loan years: 1993, 1994), upgrade the capacity

⁵ Marubeni: Tōyō enji to kyōdō de Mongoru no daruhan seiyusho kensetsu ni sankaku [Marubeni: Participating in Construction of Darhan Refinery in Mongolia Jointly with Toyo Engineering]. *Bloomberg*. 29.09.2010. <https://www.bloomberg.co.jp/news/articles/2010-09-29/L9HPoT6JIJUO01> (in Japanese).

⁶ Mongoru no tabantorugoi tankō de Nichi Mongoru kyōdō jigyō o jisshi e [Japan-Mongolia Joint Project to be implemented at Tavan Tolgoi Coal Mine in Mongolia]. *NEDO*. 17.02.2016. https://www.nedo.go.jp/news/press/AA5_100526.html (in Japanese).

⁷ Official development assistance (ODA) is provided by Japan to developing countries in the post-war period in order to promote economic growth and support modernization. It includes grant aid, yen loans, and technological cooperation. One of the ODA functions is also to compensate for the damage caused to recipient countries during the war [Kovrigin 2012, p. 10].

⁸ Activities in Mongolia. *Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)*. https://www.jica.go.jp/mongolia/english/activities/activity_02.html

of CHP-4 in Ulaanbaatar (1995, 2000), and develop the Shivee-Ovoo coal mine (1996, 1997).⁹ In the 2000s, efforts were focused on transport links. The most ambitious project was the construction of an international airport in Ulaanbaatar. An agreement on the allocation of a concessional loan by Japan for this purpose was signed in 2008, and the construction of the airport began in 2013. Its official inauguration took place in 2021. It is expected that the airport will receive 2–3 million passengers per year. A significant part of investments in transport links (roads, viaducts, interchanges) in recent decades has been aimed at improving access to the airport, this main transport hub of Mongolia.

In recent years, ODA has helped implement a large number of projects which are in line with the latest trends in socio-economic development. They are related to the construction of environmentally friendly cities (air pollution control in Ulaanbaatar, reduction of heating needs, etc.) and the creation of an inclusive society (which implies improving health standards and the quality of other basic social services). Japan continues to provide assistance in promoting market reforms, which is aimed at creating a fair competitive environment and developing capital markets.

By 2001, Japan's ODA had amounted to about 80 percent of all such assistance provided to Mongolia by OECD member countries, and although Japan's share declined slightly in the 2000s, it still ranks 1st among the donor countries providing ODA for Mongolia, overtaking not only the United States and the major economies of Europe and Asia, but also international organizations (Table 1).

It is also important to mention Japan's leading position in the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which is one of the largest ODA donors (see Table 1). The bank was established in 1966 with the direct participation of Japan, which has always been one of its leading shareholders (along with the United States). Until now, only Japanese citizens have held the position of president of the bank.

⁹ Japan's Assistance to Mongolia. *Embassy of Japan in Mongolia*. <https://www.mn.embjapan.go.jp/news/ODAenglish.PDF>

Table 1

The Largest ODA Donors in Mongolia

Ranking	ODA Source	Million US Dollars*
1	Japan	176
2	International Development Association	113
3	Asian Development Bank	87
4	USA	36
5	EU organizations	33
6	Republic of Korea	33
7	Germany	26
8	France	25
9	Switzerland	15
10	Hungary	8

* Mean value for 2020–2021

Source: Aid at a glance charts. Interactive summary charts by aid (ODA) recipients. Mongolia. *OECD – DAC*. 2023. https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDDACAidataglancebyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no&:showVizHome=no

Mongolia became a regional member of the ADB in 1991, when it needed financial support for market reforms. The first aid was provided to Mongolia through the bank in the form of quick loans for basic needs such as purchases of wheat, medicines, fuel, materials and raw products for the construction and manufacturing industries. This was followed by loans to finance the budget deficit and the balance of payments. Throughout the period of Mongolian reforms, the ADB played a leading role in political transformations, the formation of a modern banking sector, infrastructure modernization, environmental improvement, the development of agricultural production and, on the whole, the integration of the country into the economy of the region. The development of minerals and energy has been an important source of financing

in line with Japan's interests. Telecommunications have become particularly important at the present stage. Thanks to ADB funding, mobile network and Internet coverage have significantly expanded, and most Mongolian residents now have access to information and services [Moving Forward Together... 2021, p. 18–27].

In terms of its structure, financing through ADB largely complements Japanese ODA, and the same goals can be achieved through different financing channels. This is clearly seen through the example of the Ulaanbaatar airport. The first major infrastructure loan was given by the ADB in the 1990s specifically for the modernization of the airport. Later, as early as in the 2010s, the airport was rebuilt with the use of ODA – a preferential yen loan from Japan – already in accordance with new needs.

By April 2023, Mongolia's accumulated financial obligations to ADB had reached \$4.14 billion, and 477 projects have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. 80 of them relate to public sector management (total investments of \$877 million), 57 are related to transport (\$695 million), 44 – to energy (\$460 million), 46 – to water supply and other urban infrastructure (\$431 million). Less expensive, but numerous projects are being implemented in healthcare, the financial sector, agriculture, and education. A number of major projects pertain to the development of industry and trade and to currently relevant information and communication technologies. Over the past few years (2017–2022), ADB provided Mongolia with an average of \$308 million annually.¹⁰

The Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program, proposed by ADB in 1997 and aimed at the sustainable development and prosperity of the participating countries, including Mongolia and China, is of great importance for the development of infrastructure in the region. In 2001 to 2022, investments made under the program amounted to \$45.7 billion for 246 projects, of which \$16.9

¹⁰ Mongolia Facts. ADB's Work in Mongolia. *Asian Development Bank*. 2023. <https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/mongolia>

billion were provided by ADB, \$19.4 billion were given by the program's partners, and more than \$9 billion came from the governments of the member countries. Most of the investments go to transport (about 71 percent, or more than \$32 billion), energy (22 percent, or more than \$10 billion) and trade (3 percent, or \$1.4 billion).¹¹

Directly related to Mongolia are 36 projects, including expanding the transport network and improving its safety, modernizing the customs system and training the personnel, solving environmental problems (reducing air pollution from coal-fired power plants, introducing energy-efficient construction technologies), as well as consultations on the country's economic development strategies, assistance in developing trade policies, and assistance in Mongolia's inclusion in the WTO system. The total volume of investments as of 2021 was \$714 million.¹²

It is important to note that the ADB's financial assistance includes promotion of cooperation between Mongolia and China. A number of transport projects, in particular, are aimed at facilitating the transportation of goods between Mongolia and the People's Republic of China and between the People's Republic of China and Russia through the territory of Mongolia. Several projects implemented in the 2000s were targeted at developing Mongolia's regional cooperation with China. In 2006, funds amounting to \$0.8 million were allocated for the development of transport links, ensuring Mongolia's access to Chinese seaports, coordinating the work of customs authorities, energy cooperation, improving the political environment, and joint development of large border cities (the project was completed in 2010). In 2007, \$0.9 million (of which \$0.75 million came from the ADB and \$0.15 million from the governments of China and Mongolia) were allocated for technical aid and assistance in coordinating regional cooperation programs, including consultations and training of senior and middle-

¹¹ CAREC Project Portfolio. *Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC)*. 2022. https://www.carecprogram.org/?page_id=13630

¹² CAREC Countries: *Mongolia*. *Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC)*. 2022. https://www.carecprogram.org/?page_id=8

level government officials of both countries (the project was completed in 2011). In 2009, \$1.5 million was allocated by the ADB for technical assistance in liberalizing and improving the efficiency of trade between small and medium-sized enterprises of China and Vietnam and of China and Mongolia.¹³

China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) established diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1949, but the Sino-Soviet split that began in the late 1950s caused Mongolia to have concerns about its security and sovereignty. It was not until the 1980s that the two countries resolved the issue of border demarcation, and their leaders realized the need to develop trade and transport links. The approaching end of the Cold War also helped to reduce the degree of tension.

In 1985, the countries signed an agreement on civil aviation and soon resumed direct flights from Beijing to Ulaanbaatar. In 1986, they concluded a five-year bilateral trade agreement. In fact, trade on credit has been conducted since 1951, and agreements signed in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s were aimed at simplifying and expanding it. In 1991, the sides signed agreements on investment protection and on the avoidance of double taxation. Exchange of delegations between the countries became more frequent, as did consultations on various issues and areas of bilateral cooperation. In 1994, during the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng to Mongolia, the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation was signed, which consolidated positive trends in the development of bilateral relations.

The natural result of the efforts made was an increase in the indices of Chinese-Mongolian cooperation. By the early 2000s, the trade turnover

¹³ Project List. Mongolia. *Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC)*. 2022. [https://www.carecprogram.org/projects/?page_id=1&paged=1&country\[\]=mongolia](https://www.carecprogram.org/projects/?page_id=1&paged=1&country[]=mongolia)

had reached \$1 billion and continued to grow in the following decades, primarily due to exports from Mongolia to China. This, in particular, was facilitated by China's permission to use the port of Tianjin for Mongolia's access to the Asia-Pacific markets. Currently, China is Mongolia's main trading partner: about 70 percent of Mongolian exports go there. In 2022, Mongolia's exports to China exceeded \$10 billion, and its imports from China amounted to more than \$3 billion.¹⁴

In addition, China is one of the main sources of direct investment for Mongolia: to date, the country has accumulated 5.3 billion dollars' worth of Chinese capital, and, according to the Bank of Mongolia, China is the second largest investor in the country after the Netherlands.¹⁵ As for the number of companies, China ranks first: about 7.5 thousand companies with Chinese capital are registered in Mongolia [Mongoru keizai gaikyō 2023, p. 19]. Chinese investments mostly go to mining, energy, construction, finance, livestock processing, catering, and other industries. Mongolia is an important source of resources for China. After successful exploration work, Chinese oil companies are working in Mongolian oil fields. Since 2001, Dong Sheng Petroleum Mongolia has been producing oil in the Dornogov aimag in the south-east of the country. In 2013, Petro China Daqing Tamsag was given a 20-year license to produce oil in the Tamsag basin, the second largest oil field in Mongolia. The extracted oil is shipped to China, where it is processed, and part of the final product is transported back to Mongolia under a production sharing agreement. Oil production in Mongolia requires transportation infrastructure, which continues to improve. At the same time, there appear opportunities to increase the added value produced in the country. In 2021, the Chinese state-owned enterprise NORINCO concluded an agreement with Mongolia on the construction

¹⁴ Gadaad khudaldaany güitsetgel ornoor [Foreign Trade Performance by Country]. *Mongolian Customs Service*. 2023. <https://gaali.mn/statistic/detail/o3> (In Mongolian).

¹⁵ Mongolbank Statistics data. *Mongolbank*. 2023. <https://stat.mongolbank.mn>

of a 530 km-long pipeline for the transportation of crude oil from the Tamsag basin to the Dornogov oil refinery currently under construction with the participation of Indian capital.¹⁶

Of great interest to China are metals, which are widely found among the minerals of Mongolia. In the framework of the Chinese-Mongolian joint venture Xindu Mining Co., Ltd., located in the east of the country (Sukhbaatar), the parties cooperate in the development of the Tumertiyn Ovoo zinc mine under the “engineering in return for resources” model. The agreement was signed in 1997, and the development of the field began in 2005. To date, the total investment volume is \$50 million. The mine’s capacity is estimated at 300 thousand tons of zinc ore per year with a production period of 25 years [Duiwai touzi hezuo... 2022, p. 27].

Just as Japanese investments, Chinese capital is used not only in the extractive industry, but also in related industries. At the same time, various forms of cooperation create conditions for the exchange of technologies and personnel, increasing the employment of the local population, obtaining resources for the industrialization of Mongolia, and developing transport links.

In addition to the above-mentioned form of cooperation, “engineering in return for resources,” China provides personnel for contract work. In 2021, Chinese enterprises signed 68 contracts worth \$3.8 billion with Mongolian partners, which is 60 percent more than a year earlier. In total, over the entire period of cooperation, about one and a half thousand Chinese workers and specialists of various categories have been sent to Mongolia [Duiwai touzi hezuo... 2022, p. 28].

In 2007, China United Cement Group made investments in the construction of a production line with a capacity of 750 thousand tons of clinker and 1 million tons of cement per year. Currently, the plant employs

¹⁶ Qianshu jianshe cong dongfangsheng zhi donggebisheng 530 gongli shuyou guanda o xiangmu xieyi [Signing of the Agreement on the Construction of a 530-kilometer Oil Pipeline Project from Dornod Province to Dornogovi Province]. *Mongolian National News Agency*. 19.04.2022. <https://montsame.mn/cn/read/295051> (in Chinese).

125 people, including 30 Chinese citizens and 95 Mongolian citizens. Since the launch of production, the company has diligently fulfilled its social obligations, also making efforts to improve the professional and technical skills of the Mongolian personnel [Duiwai touzi hezuo... 2022, p. 28].

In 2014, the Chinese company China Longjian Road and Bridge Co., Ltd. entered the construction market of Mongolia, and it has already completed the construction of several large sections of roadway in the western part of Mongolia with a length of 165.98 and 167 km. Construction work is currently underway on other sites [Duiwai touzi hezuo... 2022, p. 28].

In 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping, during his visit to Mongolia, made a proposal to explore the issue of bringing cross-border cooperation to a new level. After a long period of joint work, in late 2021, the parties signed an agreement on the establishment of the Eren-Hoto–Zamyn-Uud economic cooperation zone [Duiwai touzi hezuo... 2022, p. 28]. It was timed to coincide with the opening of a 900-hectare free economic zone (FEZ) on the territory of Zamyn-Uud in the same year. By 2021, a new highway, a sewerage system, water and electricity supply stations, and a thermal power plant had been built there due to a Chinese soft loan of \$58.8 million.¹⁷ Assistance in the development of the FEZ was also provided by the ADB: in 2020, the bank approved a loan for expenses related to the commissioning of the zone in the amount of USD 30 million. For the ADB, this is part of the previously mentioned broader CAREC regional economic cooperation project.¹⁸

Zamyn-Uud is the largest city on the Mongolian-Chinese border, with a border crossing to China. This is the busiest border crossing, which serves both road and rail transportation, not only between the

¹⁷ A New Free Economic Zone Starts Working. *Voice of Mongolia*. 25.08.2021. <http://www.vom.mn/ru/p/46769>

¹⁸ ADB to Support Economic Cooperation Zone for Mongolia. News Release. *Asian Development Bank*. 19.06.2020. <https://www.adb.org/news/adb-support-economic-cooperationzonemongolia>

two countries, but also between China and Russia, and, in some cases, also transit traffic going further to Europe. This makes the interests of both China and Japan in this area obvious. It is expected that, thanks to the financial support of the two countries, the Zamyn-Uud FEZ will make better use of the potential of the border crossing and will contribute to the development of industry, as well as the transport, logistics, and tourism sectors in Mongolia.

Mongolia is an integral part of the global projects and initiatives being implemented in the region under the leadership and with the participation of the People's Republic of China. The Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013, provides for expanding China's global influence through investments in transport, logistics, and economic corridors covering the territories of more than 150 countries around the world. Mongolia, which has always been in the sphere of China's geopolitical, strategic, and economic interests and plans, is among the countries included in the initiative and has signed a corresponding agreement with the PRC. In 2014, Xi Jinping delivered a major keynote speech in Mongolia, where he outlined the prospects for bilateral cooperation and invited the country to participate in the Silk Road Economic Belt project (the overland part of the initiative aimed at creating trans-Eurasian economic corridors). It is important that the concept of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" echoes the "Steppe Way" infrastructure project, which was initiated almost simultaneously by the Mongolian side [Graivoronsky 2018, p. 55].¹⁹ According to the memorandum signed in 2014 in Beijing, Mongolia is among the "potential founders" of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), created at the proposal of China to finance infrastructure projects in Asia, and is its regional member.

The route map of the Belt and Road Initiative includes the China, Mongolia, and Russia economic corridor. The possibility of creating

¹⁹ The Mongolian "Steppe Way" initiative appeared in early 2014. Its idea is to use the cooperation of Russia and China to create a modern transport, energy, and other infrastructure in the country, which will be used for transit traffic.

such a corridor was first announced at the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Dushanbe in 2014. The idea was put forward by the President of Mongolia and supported by Chinese leader Xi Jinping [Ulagpan 2021, p. 2]. The program with the stages of the project was signed two years later, in 2016, in Tashkent. Like other programs of this kind, it aims to create modern transport, energy and other infrastructures necessary to take advantage of the geographical location of countries in international economic relations. Although each of the participating countries has its own interests (for Mongolia, this is the activation of its own trade flows with Russia and the use of its territory for the transit of goods during cargo transportation between China and Russia, and for China, the convenience of cargo transportation between Europe and the Asia-Pacific countries), the benefits of the project should ultimately be global and multilateral.

Mongolia is also being considered as a territory for the transit of Russian gas to western China through the Power of Siberia-2 pipeline, which is to connect to the Chinese West-East gas pipeline. In July 2022, Prime Minister of Mongolia Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene announced the completion of the feasibility study of the project and the planned start of construction of the pipeline in 2024.²⁰ The project has been discussed for a long time; its implementation has been postponed several times, including due to Beijing's delay in concluding an agreement. This delay, however, is not related to the loss of interest in Mongolia as a convenient territory for the transit of energy resources. According to some assumptions, China's wait-and-see attitude is caused by its desire to get more favorable terms.²¹

²⁰ Power of Siberia 2 to divert Europe-bound gas to China. *Asia Times*. 20.06.2022. <https://asiatimes.com/2022/07/power-of-siberia-2-to-divert-europe-bound-gas-to-china/>

²¹ Gazprom responded to FT data on China's delay in the construction of the Power of Siberia-2. *RBC*. 25.05.2023. <https://www.rbc.ru/business/25/05/2023/646f78319a7947daefb08375>

The trends in the development of cooperation between China and Mongolia remain generally favorable. This is evidenced by China's patronage of Mongolia in many issues of foreign policy and international economic relations. For instance, in 2014, Chinese leader Xi Jinping expressed approval of Mongolia's entry into the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and welcomed its membership in the AIIB.²² The Chinese leader has repeatedly expressed support for Mongolia's participation in the SCO activities.²³

In 2020, Mongolia, with the support of China, became a full-fledged member of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (known as the Bangkok Agreement until 2005).

Interaction of Japanese and Chinese Projects in the Context of Global Competition

Until the early 1990s, it was believed that Japan had every chance to become the first economy in the world, but after the collapse of the “bubble economy” in Japan's stock market and real estate market, a prolonged depression began in the Japanese economy. This period coincided with the rise of the Chinese economy due to the policy of “reform and openness” initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. In the 1990s, the Chinese economy grew at a rapid pace, sometimes with double-digit figures, and there were signs that China would overtake Japan in GDP and become the second largest economy in the world after the United States. As expected, this happened in the 2000s: in 2001, China overtook Japan in GDP calculated according to the purchasing power parity of currencies, and in 2010 – in nominal GDP.

²² China Supports Mongolia to Join APEC. *Global Times*. 09.11.2014. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/890775.shtml>

²³ China, Mongolia pledge more cooperation. *Xinhua*. 11.06.2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/11/c_137245018.htm

As the reforms progressed, China became the most important direct investment area for world economic leaders such as the United States and Japan. Having accumulated enough capital and experience of interaction with the largest economic players, having become a full participant in the globalization process (which was manifested, among other things, in the successful completion of the negotiation process for its WTO accession by 2001), China moved on to the implementation of the “going out into the world” program (Chinese *zou chu qu* 走出去). The “going out into the world” program initiated by the country’s leadership is a well-thought-out policy aimed at increasing direct investment from mainland China, diversifying Chinese products and improving their quality, and promoting Chinese brands in leading world markets. This policy aims not only to increase quantitative indicators, but also to create a Chinese subsystem in the international division of labour. It involves borrowing advanced technologies, close cooperation with nearby newly industrialized countries and territories (including cooperation in exports to third-country markets), trade and contract cooperation with developing countries in order to obtain resources for Chinese industry and infrastructure [Salitsky, Semenova 2016, p. 5–6].

The Belt and Road concept fits in with these priorities and is a gesture demonstrating China’s global ambitions not only in the economic but also in the global political arena on the way to creating a multipolar world promoted by the PRC. Despite the stated goals of the AIIB founders to cooperate with other organizations and the intention to make joint efforts for the sustainable development of the region, the establishment of the Chinese-led bank in 2014 was immediately perceived warily by other actors. In 2015, the American *Foreign Policy* journal wrote that the AIIB poses a threat to the global economic world order and expressed fears that the era of US dominance with the so-called “Bretton Woods institutions” (IMF, World Bank, WTO) is coming to an end. The issue is China’s sole decision-making on the allocation of financial flows and the establishment of Chinese standards of trade and investment. *Foreign Policy* warned that the emergence of the AIIB could lead not to multipolarity, but to the formation of two economic

blocs in Asia: one led by China, and the other led by the United States and Japan.²⁴

In the same year, the Japanese newspaper Nikkei wrote about the Japanese government's intention to dramatically increase lending to infrastructure projects in Asia through the ADB and other organizations in order to counter the AIIB. At the same time, judging by the report of the Japanese newspaper, the Japanese side does not see a contradiction in the simultaneous existence of the two banks, since several dozen countries that are members of the ADB joined the AIIB at the same time. Japan's membership in the AIIB was considered a real prospect at the time.²⁵

The voices in support of Japan's accession to both the AIIB and China's Belt and Road initiative were indeed quite strong. In 2017, Nikai Toshihiro, Secretary General of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, known for his pro-Chinese position, indicated after his visit to Beijing for the summit on the Belt and Road initiative the intention of the Japanese authorities to join the bank. According to the politician, Japan is closely monitoring its work, and the only question is how quickly it will make a decision on membership.²⁶ According to the assessment of the Institute of Developing Economies of the Japan Foreign Trade Organization (IDE Jetro), by 2017, most of the AIIB projects (17 out of 24) had actually been implemented jointly with other organizations, including the World Bank, ADB, EBRD, and others. That is, there was no

²⁴ The AIIB Is a Threat to Global Economic Governance. *Foreign Policy*. 31.03.2015. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/31/the-aiib-is-a-threat-to-global-economic-governance-china/>

²⁵ Setsuritsu junbi susumu 'AIIB' Nihon wa dō suru? [Preparations for Establishment of "AIIB" are Underway. What will Japan do?]. *Nikkei*. 22.05.2015. <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZZO75366460X00C14A8000078/> (in Japanese).

²⁶ Japan's ruling party heavy weight signals readiness to join AIIB: *Nikkei. Reuters*. 16.05.2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-silkroad-japan-idUSKCN18B2S9>

reason to speak about the bank's monopolization of the lending market for infrastructure projects [Chūgoku "ittai ichiro"... 2018, p. 5].

However, Japan's accession to AIIB has not yet taken place. The reason for the difference of opinion in the Japanese government is doubts about the reliability of the lending mechanism, transparency of the bank's management with the decisive vote of China, taking into account the environmental and social problems of the recipient countries. A certain role is probably played by the US pressure exerted on Japan in the context of tensions existing between Beijing and Washington.²⁷

Interestingly, China has been a regional member and shareholder of the ADB since 1986 and has repeatedly demanded that it be given greater voting rights as a developing country. Nevertheless, its role is insignificant. As of 2022, China owns only 6.4 percent of the capital and is one of the largest borrowers of the bank (second after India by the accumulated total amount of assistance received and the first by the number of projects). Thus, the division of functions and hierarchy is maintained between the AIIB and the ADB.

Here we can also note some differences in the specializations of the two banks announced initially. While the ADB's goals are broad, and it strives for sustainable development and prosperity of the entire region primarily through poverty eradication, the AIIB considers its mission to achieve sustainable development by investing in the "infrastructure of the future." The functions of the banks do not coincide, but with regard to the development of the region's infrastructure, they undoubtedly overlap, and the desire of each of the parties – both Japan and China – to gain access to an alternative channel of investment indicates their increasing rivalry in the 2000s.

The same applies to the ADB CAREC program and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. While the program focuses on sustainable economic development, the Belt and Road megaproject is primarily

²⁷ Japan split on joining AIIB bank, caught between US, China. *Reuters*. 20.03.2015. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-aiib-japan-idUSKBNoMGo7Y20150320>

related to transport links (although one implies the other, both sea and land routes of the Chinese megaproject will be created with a focus on environmental issues, human capital, and peaceful development of the regions involved).

The increasing competition between Japan and China is also evidenced by the nature of the projects being implemented. Although the countries' investments in transport infrastructure cover different areas and routes, these routes will inevitably overlap (like the CAREC program, the Belt and Road initiative includes communication with the countries of Central Asia, and one of the CAREC economic corridors partially coincides with the China, Mongolia, Russia economic corridor). Ultimately, the distribution of freight flows between the largest economic centers will depend on the created network of motor roads and railways, and the map of land communication in the region.

Also indicative is the order in which projects of a similar profile are initiated and implemented. Like the establishment of the AIIB, which was undoubtedly conceived by China as an alternative to the ADB and other financial institutions, the Belt and Road initiative also challenged Japan in those areas where it had already been active in the 2000s (this applies, in particular, to the previously mentioned ADB projects on optimizing communication between Mongolia and China). Although Japan indicated its presence in the region earlier, China's goals are larger and more ambitious. Currently, both countries are simultaneously increasing their investments. Japan retains its already taken positions and high-tech specialization, while at the same time trying to raise its cooperation with Mongolia to a new level. It is significant that the conclusion of the EPA agreement between Japan and Mongolia followed shortly after the announcement by the PRC of its intention to create the China, Mongolia, Russia corridor. One of the factors that hold back the growth of Japanese investments in Mongolia is the high degree of uncertainty and imperfection of legislation in that country. The Embassy of Japan in Mongolia points out that Japanese companies face a lack of guarantees and unpredictability of partner behavior, difficulty in accessing information, lack of transparency of regulation, unlawful

interference of officials in the activities of companies, corruption, and other risks.²⁸ The business environment in Mongolia remains quite unfavorable for the Japanese, but, at the same time, it is not so unusual for Chinese companies and government agencies. Together with the geographical proximity and closer historical contacts with Mongolia, this gives China certain advantages.

The task of creating a modern transport cluster in the region is not easy and is designed for a long period of implementation. In the meantime, the true object of interests and the field of competition between the two countries is not so much infrastructure as natural resources and markets, access to which is provided due to this infrastructure. Another task facing the countries is to maintain and optimize the existing production clusters in the region, which requires them to make efforts to develop convenient logistics.

Issues leading to a conflict of interests are increasingly becoming a cause of tension. In 2006, the Chinese media accused their Japanese colleagues of publications discrediting Sino-Mongolian relations and overestimating the prospects of Japanese-Mongolian cooperation, allegedly in order to gain wider access to Japan's development of Mongolian minerals.²⁹ The Japanese media often criticize the Chinese mega-project "Belt and Road," which is accused of being an attempt to control transport routes from China and drag the participating countries into a "debt pit." In 2013, pointing out the rising standard of living and expanding access to services for an increasing number of Mongolian

²⁸ Mongoru de tōshi katsudō o okonau Nihon kigyō ni taisuru ankēto shūkei kekka [Summary Results of Questionnaire for Japanese Companies Investing in Mongolia]. *Embassy of Japan in Mongolia*. <https://www.mn.emb-japan.go.jp/news/jpb422.html> (in Japanese).

²⁹ Wei zhengduo menggu kuangchan kaifaquan riben eyi lijian zhongmeng guanxi [Japan Maliciously Drives a Wedge Between China and Mongolia in Order to Compete for Mongolia's Mineral Development Rights]. *Sina*. 04.08.2006. <http://finance.sina.com.cn/j/20060804/13292793251.shtml> (in Chinese).

people, the online edition of the Chinese newspaper *Renmin Ribao* wrote about the growing competition with Japanese small and medium-sized enterprises in the food market.³⁰

But while the Mongolian market as such is quite small (the country's population does not exceed 3.5 million), it is of much greater interest to establish access to larger markets, in the long term – with the successful implementation of the CAREC program and the Belt and Road Initiative – to the markets of Central Asia and Europe. China as one of the CAREC participants is closely monitoring its implementation, trying to correlate the goals set by the ADB with the main components of the Belt and Road megaproject.³¹ The Belt and Road initiative also continues to be in the field of vision of Japanese business and officials, who are watching it with wariness and interest.

Conclusion

The expansion of economic cooperation between Japan and China with Mongolia indicates the growing competition between the two countries, which is related both to the short-term results of the ongoing projects and their expected more global effects.

However, it should be taken into account that, in many cases, the projects of China and Japan complement each other, and this means not only competition, but also complementarity. The most obvious example of complementary projects is Japan's financing of the construction of an

³⁰ Riben zhongxiao qiye qinglai mengguguo yu yu zhongguo shangpin zhengduo shichang [Japanese SME Favor Mongolia and Want to Compete with Chinese Products for the Market]. *People.cn*. 18.11.2013. <http://japan.people.com.cn/n/2013/1118/c35463-23576311.html> (in Chinese).

³¹ Zhongya quyue jingji hezuo di 16 ci buzhangji huiyi zai tajikesitan dushangbie juxing [The 16th Ministerial Meeting of CAREC Held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan]. *Belt and Road Portal*. 30.10.2017. <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/xwzx/hwxw/32135.htm> (in Chinese).

airport in Ulaanbaatar, and China's financing of roads leading to it.³² There is an example of Japanese-Chinese cooperation in the extractive industry. In 2014, a consortium of Chinese Shenhua Energy, Japanese Sumitomo, and Mongolian Energy Resources won a tender for the development of one of the world's largest coal deposits Tavan Tolgoi (which was subsequently canceled due to a protest from the Great State Hural). The efforts of the parties to develop infrastructure in the area of the Zamyn-Uud border crossing and in other territories also undoubtedly complement each other. The entire infrastructure created with the participation of the two countries can form a convenient and modern transport cluster in the future.

The intention of productive cooperation between the parties is reflected in the agreements on 52 joint projects between enterprises and government agencies of Japan and China signed during the Japan-China Forum on Cooperation in Third-Country Markets, held in October 2018 in Beijing.³³

In general, the region's demand for infrastructure investment is very high, and, according to some estimates, it could not be fully satisfied even if several international financial institutions worked there.³⁴ Despite the overlapping interests of Japan and China, this makes the search for investment areas a relatively easy task for them, and the competition we see in Mongolia is rather a reflection of a more global rivalry.

³² China and Japan's Investment Competition in Mongolia. *The Diplomat*. 01.08.2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/china-and-japans-investment-competition-in-mongolia>

³³ Daisangoku kyōryoku wa seiji no sanbutsu kyūgoshirae kadai sanseki [Cooperation with Third Countries Is a Product of Political Relations. Many Urgent Tasks]. *Mainichi Shimbun*. 26.10.2018. <https://mainichi.jp/articles/20181027/k00/00m/020/135000c> (in Japanese)

³⁴ The AIIB Is a Threat to Global Economic Governance. *Foreign Policy*. 31.03.2015. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/31/the-aiib-is-a-threat-to-global-economic-governance-china>

But this does not mean that the countries should not monitor the economic and political situation in the region in order not to miss their opportunities. In 2016, after the conflict with China over the invitation of the Dalai Lama to Mongolia, Mongolia, which was in dire need of resources due to the debt crisis, chose Japanese financing.³⁵ This means that when a promising niche for investment is vacated, it can immediately be occupied by another party. Ultimately, the competition between China and Japan is in Mongolia's favour, as it makes it possible to obtain capital from another source in the event of deteriorated relations with one of the partners. At the same time, Mongolia itself has a lot of work to do to improve the investment climate.

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³⁵ China and Japan's Investment Competition in Mongolia. *The Diplomat*. 01.08.2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/china-and-japans-investment-competition-in-mongolia>

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Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's Russian Policy

K. Tōgō

Abstract

Prime Minister Abe Shinzō inherited Russian policy from his father, Abe Shintarō, former Foreign Minister who endeavored to improve substantially Japan-Russia relations with Gorbachev. Consequently when Abe was reelected as Prime Minister in December 2012, Russian policy was one of his highest policy objectives.

This analysis follows chronologically how his policy developed during the eight years of Prime Minister-ship until September 2020 when he retired. It gives overall perspectives on how he enlarged the scope of relationship from economic, cultural, security, ultimately tackling the most difficult issue of peace treaty negotiations. In November 2018 at his meeting with Putin in Singapore he proposed to resolve the territorial issue based on the 1956 Joint Declaration and for a while the negotiations proceeded well. But soon after, the two sides came apart in furthering closer ties.

Two years after his retirement Abe was tragically assassinated. But in these two years, Abe left a testimony over his policy he covered as Prime Minister, to groups of journalists. *Hokkaido Shimbun*, which followed most meticulously Abe's Russian policy published already a ground breaking book while he was still alive, including an important interview Abe made in December 2021.

But another group of journalists primarily of *Yomiuri Shimbun* made a long interview on Abe's overall policy agendas, Russian policy being one of the focal points, narrated surely without any anticipation of his tragic ending. *Yomiuri* Journalists published in 2023 all Abe's account, which Abe surely expected

to be published in much later stage. This paper's analysis is primarily based on those so far little-known *Yomiuri* narrative.

The author concludes that what remains as most impressive is Abe's conviction that drastically improving relations with Russia is in Japan's national interest and his tireless energy to have pursued his wide and deep scope of Japan's relations with Russia including the most difficult issue of a peace treaty conclusion.

Keywords: Abe Shinzō, Abe Shintarō, 1956 Joint Declaration, Japan-Russia relations, Japan-US Security Treaty, Abe-Putin Nagato Meeting, Abe-Putin Singapore Meeting

Introduction

In August 2020, Abe Shinzō was in his 8th consecutive year as prime minister but his health was deteriorating due to ulcer in large bowel, (medical name: Gastric Ulcer Colitis). On August 24, he just became the prime minister with the longest tenure, starting from the pre-war Meiji Constitution, and still his tenure as the President of the Liberal Democratic Party remained until September 2021.

But on August 28, he held a press conference and declared that, due to his declining health, he would resign. His comment on policy matters and on what he regretted to not have achieved was very short. He just said: "it is my extreme regret of not being able to resolve the abduction issue. It also breaks my heart of leaving the post with unfulfilled task on the conclusion of the peace treaty with Russia, and the revision of the constitution."¹ He resigned on September 16, 2020.

To me, Abe's reference to Russia was particularly striking. Abduction issue certainly remains regrettable, but, against Kim Jong Un, there was a limit of what he could have done. Constitutional revision may also be

¹ Shushōkaiken shōhō [Detailed Report of Prime Minister's Press Conference]. *Kyodo Tsushin*, 28.08.2020.

regrettable but he has actually made a fundamental change by changing the interpretation of Article 9. The collapse of his negotiations with Russia remains a truly regrettable issue.

Abe Shinzō's awakening experience with Russia originates from the meeting between his father, Abe Shintarō, with Gorbachev in January 1990. Shinzō was his father's private secretary then. Abe Shintarō, former Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Nakasone Cabinet, requested Gorbachev "to resolve difficult issue between the two countries with wisdom, while you are the general secretary of the CPSU." In April 1991, Gorbachev visited Japan as the President of the Soviet Union and met Shintarō again, when his health was deteriorating seriously due to terminal cancer. "All the more so, it was a moving meeting of warmth and friendship which left a lasting impact on me to realize my father's unfulfilled political agenda." [Abe 2006, pp. 34–37].

Abe could not achieve much during his first prime-ministerial term, which ended quickly (September 2006 to September 2007) because of his health problems due to gastric ulcer colitis. But when he came back as prime minister in December 2012, he did not waste his time to take up Russia as one of his priorities. In the eight years during his second tenure, he did his best to improve relations with Russia, ranging from cultural, economic, security, and culminating in the conclusion of the peace treaty. But, despite his all-out efforts, he clearly did not reach his final objective, as he lamented on August 28, 2020.

In less than two years after his resignation, on July 8, 2022, Abe was tragically assassinated, causing a wave of shock throughout Japan and the world. Even not knowing about his tragic ending, Abe left quite a lot of testimony about his work as the prime minister with the longest tenure in the history of constitutional Japan.

On Russian policy, Abe gave a long interview to *Hokkaido Shimbun*, published on December 26, 2021. *Hokkaido Shimbun* added this interview to the outcome of its reporting already published in September 2021 and added other factors such as the Ukrainian War and Abe's assassination and published its comprehensive version in December 2022 [Watanabe 2022].

Journalists in *Yomiuri Shimbun* made their own efforts. In February 2023, they published their own version based on interviews lasting 18 times and 36 hours of recording. [Abe 2023] This book was supplemented by another book entitled the *Official Reader*. [Yachi 2023] These two books covered all aspects of Abe's policy, but the Russian part constituted one of the highlights of his foreign policy agenda.

In particular, within the *Official Reader*, the part written by Yachi Shotarō, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Director of the National Security Bureau under Abe, and Teshima Ryūichi, a former NHK journalist known to be close to Abe and Yachi, comprises quite an interesting analysis of Japan-Russia relations. Thus, this essay chooses, among others, the two latest *Yomiuri* books as the main guideline to narrate Abe's Russian policy.

Chapter One: Abe's Russian policy begins to move March 2013 – March 2014

“My first visit to Russia as prime minister took place in April 2013. I asked Mr. Mori, – former Prime Minister and Putin's best friend in Japan,² – to meet President Putin prior to my visit to smooth out the ground of our talks. In the Joint Communiqué we agreed to seek for a ‘mutually acceptable solution (of the peace treaty).’ This visit became the starting point of my territorial negotiations with Russia.” [Abe 2023, p. 182]. Abe took with him a large-scale economic mission, which started serious exchange of views with their counterpart. On security matters, the two sides agreed to establish a “Two-Plus-Two” mechanism, which existed, thus far, only with the U.S. and Australia [Tōgō 2017, p. 226].

“My second visit was made to Sochi, in February 2014, at the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics. I thought it a good opportunity to talk to Putin, because the U.S. and European countries absented to protest

² Note by the author of this essay.

the Russian policy of punishing homosexuals. Putin greeted me at the entrance of the Presidential Residence with an Akita-breed dog called Yume. When I smoothed the dog, Putin teased me saying: 'Be careful, he might bite you.'" [Abe 2023, p. 182–183].

But soon after this opening ceremony held on February 7, the Maidan revolution exploded in Kiev from February 19 to 21. Ukrainian incumbent President Viktor Yanukovich was ousted from Kiev, resulting in Russian annexation of Crimea. Under the leadership of President Obama, the G7 began imposing sanctions against Russia. The Japanese government joined these sanctions, but, under Prime Minister Abe's strong guidance, always as the last and with minimal scale, on March 18, April 29, August 5, and September 24 [Tōgō 2015, pp. 218–231]. Nevertheless, due to these sanctions, intimate contacts between the two governments nearly collapsed.

But, in the course of the year 2014, Prime Minister Abe did his best to keep up his channel of dialogue with President Putin:

1. On August 31, at the International Judo Championship in Chelyabinsk, Yamashita Yasuhiro, golden medalist of the Los Angeles Olympics, passed on Abe's goodwill message to Putin.

2. On September 10, former Prime Minister Mori Yoshirō conveyed Abe's personal letter and good-will message to President Putin.

3. On September 21, on Abe's birthday, Putin made a phone call of congratulation, which was reciprocated on October 17 by Abe on Putin's birthday.

4. On October 17, at a meeting under the auspices of ASEM held in Milano, the two leaders had a 10-minutes talk.

5. On November 9, at a meeting under the auspices of APEC Summit, the two leaders had an extended meeting, in which an agreement was reached to invite President Putin to Japan [Tōgō 2015, pp. 229–230].

Chapter Two: Recuperation of Active Russian Policy May 6, 2016 at Sochi

On May 6 2016, Abe visited Sochi to recuperate his energy aimed at Japan-Russia relations.

“President Obama was against my visit. In March, when I visited America to attend a nuclear security summit, I told him that I would meet Putin in Sochi. He told me that ‘I would not go if I were you.’ Since Japan was exercising sanctions after Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, he might have been concerned about the emergence of disunity among the G7. But I told him that ‘Japan and Russia do not have a peace treaty. I need to change this situation, so let me decide what to do.’ Some bitter atmosphere emerged. President Obama might have been offended and I was warned by American officials not to go. But I did.” [Abe 2023, p. 218].

“Why did I insist on going to Russia? In the 1956 Joint Declaration, it was prescribed that Habomai and Shikotan shall be transferred after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty. Matsumoto Shunichi and Shigemitsu Mamoru, the Japanese negotiators, thought that Habomai and Shikotan should be transferred to Japan, but then-U.S. Secretary of State J.F. Dulles intervened to prevent them from accepting that offer. At the time of the Cold War, the U.S. did not want drastic improvement of Japan-Soviet relations. Since then, there have emerged such views in Japan that there is no hope for the negotiations and Japan needs to stick to its maximum position to demand the four islands in a bunch.

But then the Soviet Union changed into Russia, and it became a G8 member. Just adopting the policy of a head-on clash does not meet Japan’s national interest. Furthermore, China began to rise and strategic environment around Japan changed substantially. The largest security threat now comes from China. Alliance with the U.S. alone is not sufficient. Facing China and North Korea, I thought that there is absolute need to improve relations with Russia. I have spoken extensively on China at Sochi and elsewhere to President Putin, but I could not get his frank views on China.

Putin did not spare words in criticizing the U.S. On one occasion, when I told him that, under Trump, the U.S. antagonistic policy to Russia may change, Putin just said: 'Yes, I think I can talk to Trump, but I have no illusions about the U.S. as a whole.' He was always careful of saying anything negative about China." [Abe 2023, pp. 216–219].

"At any rate, there are Russians living on these islands. We need to engage in common economic activities, and let them think that 'it is nice to be with the Japanese.' We need to engage Russians as a whole through joint economic activities in the Far East or so. We agreed on a new approach of the Eight-Point Economic Cooperation Plan in Sochi, including energy, Far Eastern development, transport. This was all proposed to ensure better understanding of Japan among Russians." [Abe 2023, p. 217].

At this Sochi meeting, upon Abe's proposal, the first *tête-à-tête* meeting with the presence of interpreters only took place. [Komaki 2020, p. 160].

Chapter Three: Putin's Visit to Nagato and Tokyo December 15 and 16, 2016

"I was fully cognizant of the importance of Putin's visit to Japan because no head of state is willing to visit a foreign country with which one has a territorial problem. I invited President Putin to my home town, Nagato in the Yamaguchi Prefecture, first of all to entertain him in a relaxed atmosphere. I planned to have as long as possible for a *tête-à-tête* meeting. On substance, I proposed joint economic activities on the four islands, with the same spirit of a new approach as agreed in Sochi in May. I planned to establish a 'special economic system' which would not derogate respective legal position. I showed a letter by a woman, former islander, or pictures of the islands when Japanese and Russians lived together, to show that these are images of future cooperation. I think he was impressed." [Abe 2023, pp. 240–241].

In summing up the outcome of the Nagato negotiations, the Japanese Foreign Ministry distributed to the press two papers: the first

one, covering the simplified procedure for former islanders to make graveyards visits; and the second one, on the joint economic activities on the islands, including possible areas of cooperation.

One can assume that the contents of these two papers were debated thoroughly, but clearly it reflects only the Japanese position, not necessarily fully agreed by the Russian side. But, as if to fill in that vacuum, at the concluding press conference held in Tokyo on December 16, Putin made an unexpected sudden intervention. Partly because simultaneous interpretation did not work well, the Japanese press could not grasp the thrust of Putin's remarks, but later it was put up in full in the Presidential Home Page as follows:

1. (Regarding the major aspects of territorial negotiations) We should stop this historic ping-pong of taking back and forth these islands.

2. We should act to achieve the final objectives to transform these islands from islands of dispute to islands of connecting Russia and Japan, as was proposed by Prime Minister Abe.

3. If we follow the process proposed by Prime Minister Abe, we shall be able to create conditions to ultimately conclude the peace treaty.

4. If someone says that economic connections are most important, that is not so; in my view, the conclusion of the peace treaty is most important [Tōgō 2017, pp. 237–240].

As was said, Putin's statement at the press conference saved the visit from lacking meaningful results. But, before moving to the next chapter, two things need to be added to show the fragile basis on which this visit stood.

First, just a month prior to the visit, in the Japanese media, serious reports which obviously would have negative impacts began suddenly floating. On November 9, S. Yachi, Director of National Security Bureau, met Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council. Patrushev asked Yachi whether, if the islands were transferred to Japan, the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty would apply to these islands. Yachi apparently said "yes." On November 19, at the Abe-Putin meeting in Lima, Peru, under the auspices of an APEC Summit, Putin raised this issue and questioned Abe rigorously. Neither the exact content of the

Yachi-Patrushev meeting nor of the Abe-Putin meeting is confirmed, but this is apparently the first incident when security issues appeared seriously in Abe-Putin talks [Watanabe 2022, p. 217].

Second, after the Nagato meeting, joint economic activities, which became the most important outcome at Nagato, failed to produce any tangible results for nearly two years. There was a consensus that it was essential that Japanese side would send an expert mission to the four islands to investigate plausible joint activities. The first delayed mission was sent for five days (June 27 – July 1, 2017). On September 7, at the Abe-Putin summit meeting in Vladivostok, the two sides agreed five priority projects: maritime products, green house vegetation, tourist tours, wind generated electricity, and reduction of garbage. At the end of October 2017, the second mission was sent to investigate these priority projects, but barriers preventing the implementation of the agreement still remained high. Various systemic, practical, and legal barriers remained unresolved. In fact, the first and only one of these priority projects, a tourist tour, materialized as late as in 2019 to Kunashiri (October 30 and 31) and Etorofu (November 1) [Watanabe 2022, pp. 245, 260, 276, 305–308].

Chapter Four: The Singapore Meeting November 14, 2018

“On September 10 at the Eastern Economic Forum held in Vladivostok, President Putin threw an audacious ball to me. ‘Let us conclude the peace treaty without any pre-conditions by the end of the year,’ he said. I could not immediately grasp his intention; so, when I left the Forum for a while, I told him that I need to resolve the issue of ownership of four islands, so I cannot accept. But because (in reality) Putin asked me in public ‘What is Japan’s ultimate policy?’ I decided to jump into my ultimate position. Japan-Russia Joint Declaration is a public document which has the validity of an international treaty. Taking a neutral position, it is unreasonable that we ignore this treaty. I decided to come back to this starting point.” [Abe 2023, pp. 326–327].

In reading Abe's own account, it is clear that Putin's statement on September 10, 2018 triggered his audacious proposal in Singapore. But some observers say that it was precisely Abe's behavior on that day at the Forum prior to Putin's statement which triggered Putin to make his 'peace treaty first' proposal.

Let me quote the account of Komaki Akiyoshi, an *Asahi Shimbun* reporter:

1. On the podium, there was also Xi Jinping, the Mongolian President Batturga, the Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon.

2. Abe made the statement which emphasized that, thanks to Japan's assistance, Russia gained much, as if to highlight the backwardness of Russia.

3. The joint economic activities on the islands, which he boasted about, had not produced any results for nearly two years yet.

4. Asking Putin to confirm, in front of this audience, the joint wish for the conclusion of the peace treaty might have caused an impression to utilize international pressure against Russia – a mistake Japan has committed so many times." [Komaki 2020, pp. 19–22].

Let us come back to Abe's own account on the Singapore meeting: "In the *tête-à-tête* meeting with Putin, I recounted my father's meeting under terminal cancer with Gorbachev in April 1991, and how he stood up from his wheelchair and thanked Gorbachev for having created the basis of true friendship. I told Putin that many people in my fathers' generation lost their lives in the war. So, my father, as was his responsibility as a survivor, was determined to conclude a peace treaty, the last remaining point on the agenda, and normalize relations with the Soviet Union.

I told President Putin that I too, since I had a stable political basis at home, wanted to open audaciously a new world with him. From there I moved on to the issue of the 1956 Joint Declaration. Putin responded then that 'Conclusion of the peace treaty is a historic task. Resolution of territorial issue is beneficial to both peoples.'

In preparing the Singapore meeting, I informed Putin about our intention to go back to the 1956 Joint Declaration. We discovered that Sergei Naryshkin was working as the head of the Foreign Intelligence

Service (SVR in Russian³). He visited Japan many times and has some knowledge on Japan. His counterpart in Japan was Kitamura Shigeru, Director of Cabinet Intelligence Office. Kitamura informed Naryshkin and conveyed thoroughly my intention to go back to the 1956 Declaration.

During our meeting in Singapore, I raised the issue of a possible placement of American forces in the transferred territory. I told Putin that ‘Hypothetically, this issue might exist. But where were the Americans, including during the Cold War period? They were in Okinawa, the warmest area, located furthest from Hokkaido. Hokkaido is defended by Japan Self-Defense Forces. How can the U.S. place their forces in the transferred islands, which are colder and even more remote than Hokkaido?’

In the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, on the one hand, it is prescribed that the ‘U.S. cannot establish its bases without the consent of the Japanese side’. But, in the Manual produced by the Japanese MoFA, it is also indicated that ‘there is a problem with entering into an agreement with the Soviet Union about not placing American forces in the transferred territory.’⁴ So I spoke frankly about the Status of Forces Agreement, saying that, ‘Given my extremely friendly relations with President Trump, Trump would not object if I commit myself ‘not to place American forces in the transferred territory.’ Trump is already

³ SVR (Sluzhba Vneshnei Razvedki) – Foreign Intelligent Service (Russia).

⁴ Author’s note: Nichibei chii kyōtei no kangaekata [How to Consider the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement], originally published as a classified document by MOFA, was re-published by *Ryūkyū Shinpōsha* on December 8, 2004. This re-published version includes the key Note 16 on page 31, translated into English by the author as follows: “Based on these considerations, as a condition of reversion of the Northern Territories, granting the Soviet Union a legal commitment in general terms ‘not to place American bases in the returned Northern Territories’ would create a problem from the point of view of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and its Status of Forces Agreement.”

complaining that the American burden on U.S. bases is too heavy. Putin responded that ‘It is a clear explanation. There is no problem.’

In December, we had a meeting in Buenos Aires. We agreed that the two sides would aim to come to an agreement at the G20 Heads of State Osaka Meeting to be held in June 2019. Putin stated that ‘We can start a foreign ministers’ meeting from tomorrow’ and said jokingly to Lavrov, who was sitting next to him, ‘You are just drinking whisky since you have nothing to do! It is not good for your health. Should you drink, it must be vodka!’

I consider this point the closest one where the Japan-Russia relations reached under my tenure. It was truly a great opportunity to reach an agreement based on the two islands transfer. But, when negotiations started in 2019 under foreign ministers and vice-ministers, the Russian side returned to fundamentalism.” [Abe 2023, pp. 326–331].

Chapter Five: Collapse of Abe-Putin Negotiations Beginning of 2019 – September 2020

In the narratives made after his resignation, Abe acknowledges that negotiations from early 2019 did not move smoothly. But one can see that he was paying attention not to rebuke President Putin personally for the rising difficulty of the negotiations.

His interview to *Hokkaido Shimbun*, published in December 2021, is the first example: “In Buenos Aires, Putin agreed to proceed with what we had agreed in Singapore. But, after that, negative views rose on the Russian side, and his position slid backwards. It is regrettable, but even Putin cannot decide easily.”⁵

Then his memoir gives the same line of explanation: “From the beginning of 2019, when negotiations started, Lavrov and Morgulov

⁵ Abe motoshushō ryōdo kōshō shohō [Detailed Reports of Former Prime Minister Abe on Territorial Negotiations]”. *Hokkaido Shimbun*, 26.12.2021. P. 5.

began destroying the negotiations. Russian side insisted that 'As the prerequisite to the negotiations, the Japanese side should recognize that the four islands belong legitimately to Russia.' Since the Soviet Union occupied these islands after Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration, that cannot be accepted by Japan.

They also raised hard claims regarding the Japan-US Security Treaty and missile defense. Putin seemed to have made efforts so as not to block the negotiations, but it looked like he did not succeed. I did my best to explain, but I might not have succeeded in wiping out Russian distrust against the U.S. In 1989, at the time of unification of Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia did not join NATO. But later they did, and now American missile defense system Aegis Ashore is placed in Poland and Romania. They are aimed at Iran but the Russian side considered that they were aimed at Russia too. Putin must have these things in mind as well." [Abe 2023, pp. 329–332].

In contrast to this, Yachi Shotarō, a trusted aide to Abe, first as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and then the first Director of the National Security Bureau, made a clearer denunciation of the Russian position as a whole. Yachi retired from the position of the Director of National Security Bureau in September 2019, but as early as on January 24, 2020, stated the following in a televised BS program: "Russian position was to ask the Japanese side 1) to acknowledge that the Northern Territories became Russian territory as a result of World War II; 2) withdrawal of all foreign troops from Japan; and 3) unconditional conclusion of a peace treaty. They were all 'non-starter' for us and we do not have any mobility." [Watanabe 2022, p. 311].

S. Yachi made an on-the-record lecture to a monthly magazine KOKEN, published in December 2020, and made the same remarks: "We conducted twenty and more summit meetings with Russia. Prime Minister Abe took up this issue on all occasions and had serious debate with President Putin. But the Russian side gradually hardened their position. Currently, Russia shows such a position as if they have no intention to resolve this issue.

They now claim that 1) Japan should recognize as an objective fact that the Northern Territories became Russian territory as the result of World War II as the prerequisite of negotiations. This is totally unacceptable; 2) all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Japan. This means to nullify the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. From the point of view of Japan's own security, this absolutely cannot be accepted; 3) to conclude the peace treaty first and tackle the territorial issue later. If we conclude the peace treaty first, the Russian side will entirely lose their incentive to resolve the territorial issue. We cannot conclude peace treaty under such conditions.”⁶

Yachi Shotarō appears once more in the Official Reader to the Memoir of Abe Shinzō, in a dialogue with Teshima Ryūichi, a former NHK correspondent known as an expert on intelligence and foreign policy. The only point Yachi emphasized in this debate was the profound shadow of Russia-U.S. relations that has affected Abe's policy regarding Russia:

“Working in actual diplomacy with Russia, I felt a gigantic wall which transcended the actual conduct of diplomacy. While we conducted foreign policy under Abe, the U.S.-Russia relations deteriorated rapidly. It was said that the ‘U.S.-Russia relations are at their worst since the end of the Cold War.’ The traces of this exacerbation coincide accurately with the exacerbation of territorial negotiations. If the U.S.-Russia relations warm up, there might be a possibility for the warming up of territorial negotiations. But, at this point, there is no basis for optimism at all.” [Yachi 2023, pp. 36–37].

As if to supplement the moderate tone of Yachi's statement in this Reader, Teshima Ryūichi left a four-pages sharp note about the untold part of the last stage of failed negotiations between Abe and Putin:

“If a part of the four islands would fall under the governance of Japan, theoretically there would emerge a possibility that the

⁶ Shōtarō Yachi. Uizu korona no kokusai jōsei to Nihon gaikō [International Situation and Japan's Foreign Policy With Corona]. *KOKEN Seminar*, December 2020, Issue 685. <https://koken-publication.com/archives/875>

U.S. bases would be located there after the Japan-U.S. consultations. But the Russian side will never accept such an eventuality of American bases placed in the transferred territory. Therefore, Japanese diplomats needed to resolve this issue with the Russian side prior to the concluding part of the negotiations. Fully cognizant of this situation, the Japanese side began its concrete preparation: to obtain an assurance by the U.S. 'not to place American bases in the transferred territory' and to transmit this assurance to the Russian side to eradicate their justifiable concern.

The Japanese side proposed to the Russian side to start consultations on security matters, with a view primarily on the issue that there shall not be American bases after the transfer of the islands. But, to the puzzlement of the Japanese side, not only was there no positive reaction of the Russian side, but this well-intended proposal also received wide public exposure aimed at giving precisely the opposite result, implying that there is a possibility of American bases being placed in the returned territory.

Alerted by the emerging situation, the Japanese side sent a representative to Moscow to check what was going on. It became clear that this 'disinformation' reached Kremlin and caused the President's anger. Who and why could have caused these things is a story covered with heavy mist and totally hidden.

But whatever the truth is, one cannot but deny that this carefully orchestrated 'intrigue' had the overwhelming power of wiping out the territorial negotiations conducted under Abe and Putin." [Yachi 2023, pp. 48–51].

Finally, in order to amplify the seriousness of R. Teshima's conclusion and the difficulty of finding out what really took place then, let me quote a Japanese newspaper article related to this subject:

Asahi Shimbun in December 2016 reported that: "At the Yachi-Patrushev meeting in the first half of November in Moscow, Patrushev asked Yachi whether there is a possibility of American bases placed in the two islands transferred according to the 1956 Joint Declaration. Yachi

answered that ‘there is a possibility.’ According to several Japanese government sources, Yachi’s answer was a perfectly justifiable one, but Putin made it an issue in Lima.”⁷

Conclusion

This essay tries to reconstruct the late former Prime Minister Abe’s policy towards Russia from available public information. There are three points I would like to make in conclusion.

First, I tried to mobilize all public information available in Japan, primarily in Japanese-language sources, that I could reach, but, since I was not a recognized member of the Japanese negotiations team, the scope of my analysis is bound to be partial. I recognize my limitations but just hope that, nonetheless, I managed to draw Abe Shinzō’s picture worth presenting in the English language.

Second, as is amply shown in this analysis, despite all-out efforts by Abe, he could not have realized the final objectives of concluding the peace treaty. I think Abe’s strategy in pursuing his Russian policy, which consisted in starting with a wider area of culture and economy, then security, and then reaching the most difficult issue of the peace treaty in the end was correct and it was the only possible approach for a successful negotiation with Russia. Because of the exacerbating U.S.-Russia security relations, the last stage of his negotiations nearly collapsed. It was truly regrettable, but perhaps Abe did his best and, under the mismatch of his policy and the international situation, there was little he could do.

Third, nevertheless, what remains as most impressive is Abe’s conviction that drastically improving relations with Russia is in Japan’s national interest. Based on his conviction, he tirelessly pursued implementing his Russian policy objectives. It is so regrettable that his

⁷ Hōnichimae, kyōkō shisei de kugi, Pūchin shi [Mr. Putin Wedged a Hardened Position Before the Visit]. *Asahi Shimbun*, 14.12.2016. P. 2.

objectives failed, but what we can learn and think in relation to Japan's future is the righteousness and validity of his policy conviction. Especially after Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Kishida adopted a basic policy to align with Ukraine, the U.S., G7, and NATO, at the expense of Japan's policy which it pursued particularly after Gorbachev and which focused on the Russian Federation. As the war in Ukraine seems to be dragging for 2024 and possibly longer, I think it is absolutely essential to put oneself in Abe's thinking and think hard: 'how would Abe have reacted in the present situation?' I do think that this mental exercise is useful to all policy makers and intellectuals who are related to or interested in this war.

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**On the History of the Japanese Book:
Two Illustrated Woodcut Editions of the *Seiashō*
(*Notes by a Frog From a Well*)
by Poet Tonna (1289–1372)**

M. V. Toropygina

Abstract

Secular book printing began to spread in Japan since the beginning of the 17th century. From the middle of the 17th century, woodcut was completely dominant. The repertoire of publications was wide, including old texts written long before the Tokugawa period. Since commercial printing assumed that the book would be bought, only relevant old texts were published. The printed edition significantly expanded the circle of book readers. The *Seiashō* (*Notes by a Frog from a Well*) by Tonna (1289–1372) belongs to the *karon* genre (treatises on poetry) and is a guide for aspiring poets writing *waka* (Japanese songs). The text was published for the first time in 1648 and the first illustrated edition appeared in 1686, reprinted in 1709. The illustrator is believed to be Hishikawa Moronobu (1618–1694), although the book does not contain the artist's name. The second illustrated edition dates back to 1752. This edition uses illustrations by Tachibana Morikuni (1679–1748). In both editions, illustrations are made on separate sheets, occupying a whole page. The illustrations are monochrome and include a drawing (a landscape illustrating the text of the poem) and an inscription of the poem at the top. An analysis and comparison of these two editions makes it possible to see some trends related to both printing itself and a number of more general cultural issues. The understanding of authorship receives a “visible” embodiment: in the first edition, neither the author of the text, nor the artist are identified, while the colophon of the second edition contains the

names of both. During the time that has elapsed between the release of these two editions, the role of illustrations has grown significantly. The edition from the end of the 17th century contains 24 illustrations, and the book was made in such a way that it can exist in a version without illustrations; there, illustrations play a supporting role. The edition of the mid-18th century contains 80 illustrations, and they can be distributed in the text of the book or concentrated in one place, making this edition close to the *ehon* books.

Keywords: Japan, Tokugawa era, book printing, illustration, *waka*, *karon*, Tonna, *Seiashō*, Hisikawa Moronobu, Tachibana Morikuni.

The history of the Japanese secular woodblock book begins in the 17th century. In the first decades, most books were printed from movable type, but, by the middle of the century, printing had become almost entirely made with woodblocks. Among the reasons for the “victory” of woodblock printing were its cheapness, the ability to make additional printings over a very long period of time, and the ease of including illustrations in a book. The first published books were very similar to manuscripts, only with time there appeared special elements of printed books, not typical for manuscripts, such as the title page or the advertising appendix. Although the technology of woodblock printing did not change much during the Tokugawa period, the presence or absence of the name of the text’s author and artist, information on the title page and the colophon, and announcements of expected or already released books can often provide interesting historical information. Today, many Tokugawa period editions can be consulted on the Internet, which has greatly expanded the possibilities for research in book history.

The repertory of books published in the 17th and 18th centuries was very broad, including many old works that had existed in manuscripts until then. This publication analyzes and compares two illustrated editions of poet Tonna’s (1289–1372) *Seiashō* (*Records of a Frog from a Well*; the title can also be understood as *Notes of an Incompetent Man*).

The main aim of the publication is to consider the specific features of these editions in a broad cultural context, primarily in the context of the history of the Japanese book.

The poet Tonna and his work *Seiashō*

The text of *Seiashō* belongs to the genre of *karon* (歌論, “poetological treatises,” or *kagaku* 歌学, “study of poetry”). “Poetry” here means *waka* 和歌, “Japanese songs”. *Karon* texts do not have any single, definite structure; they may contain theoretical statements concerning the origins of poetry, give practical advice on composition, include numerous examples of poems, talk about poetic techniques, etc. There is a great variety of *kagaku* texts. Aristocrats, monks, samurai, almost every famous poet have texts related to *karon*. The *Nihon Kagaku Taikei* (*The Great Collection of Japanese Poetic Treatises*), edited by Sasaki Nobutsuna (1872–1963) and published between 1956 and 1963, consists of 10 full-length volumes. Scholars consider the key texts to be works by such *waka* poets as Ki no Tsurayuki (871?–946?); Mibu no Tadamine (life years unknown); Fujiwara no Kintō (966–1041); Fujiwara no Toshiyori (1055–1129); three great representatives of the Mikohidari school of poetry: Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204), Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241), Fujiwara no Tameie (1198–1275); Kamo no Chōmei (1154–1216), Abutsu-ni (1221? –1283), Shōtetsu (1381–1459). The name of Tonna also stands in this line. Tonna was an extremely influential figure in the poetic circles of his time. He was a disciple of Nijō Tameyo (1250–1338) and thus a representative of the Nijō school of poetry, the eldest branch of the three into which the Mikohidari school of poetry was divided. Tonna (born Nikaidō Sadamune), descended from a prominent samurai family, he became a monk while young, but never held a position in the Buddhist hierarchy. Tonna is the protagonist of a number of episodes in another work of the *karon* genre, *Shōtetsu Monogatari* (*Conversations with Shōtetsu*). Shōtetsu was a representative of a different school of poetry, so his judgment of Tonna is ambiguous, but his poetic talent is certainly recognized by Shōtetsu.

Tonna was not able to become a candidate to compile an imperial anthology due to his ancestry, but fate had it that Tonna was not the sole compiler, but the person who completed the anthology. This is the *Shinshūishū* (*New Selections*), the nineteenth imperial anthology, of which Nijō Tameakira (Tameaki, 1295–1364) was appointed compiler in 1363. Tameakira passed away without completing the compilation, and it was Tonna who completed the work. According to Konishi Jin'ichi, it was Tonna who was the main compiler: “Since he had a too low court rank, Tonna worked as an ‘assistant,’ but in fact he was the main compiler of the anthology” [Konishi 1986–1991, Vol. 3, p. 389]. The *Shōtetsu Monogatari* says the following about this: “As for Tonna, at that time, Tameakira was compiling *Shinshūishū*, but Tameakira died during the compilation without finishing the work, then, whether from the section “Miscellaneous” or “Love,” Tonna continued the compilation, so he must have records” [Besedy s Shotetsu 2015, p. 248].

Tonna enjoyed the patronage of the Ashikaga shoguns and the regent-*kampaku* Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388), a poetic authority of his time. In 1363, together with Nijō Yoshimoto, he wrote *Gumon Kenchū* (*Clever Answers to Stupid Questions*), a work on *waka* poetry. The essay is written in the *mondō* (question and answer) form, consisting of Yoshimoto's questions and Tonna's answers. Tonna was also interested in *renga* poetry and is among the authors of the *Tsukubashū* (*Tsukuba Mountain Collection*). Tonna is credited with two poetry collections, *Sōanshū* (*The Grass Hut Collection*) and its sequel, *Shokusōanshū*. Tonna is known in the history of poetry as one of the Four Heavenly Kings of Poetry of his time. A school of poetry tracing its lineage back to Tonna existed also during the Tokugawa period.

Seiashō, like many other texts in this genre, is a kind of textbook for people engaged in poetry, mainly, of course, for those just entering the field. Stephen Carter, in his preface to *Just Living: Poems and Prose of the Japanese Monk Tonna*, calls this text a “comprehensive pedagogical work” “in which he copied for his students important passages from earlier works by masters of the past on variety of topics, adding a few comments of his own and a section of chatty anecdotes,

bits of lore, and advice (*zōdan*) from his own experience over the years” [Carter 2002, p. 8].

Seiashō dates from about 1360–1364. The text consists of six parts (*maki*), in which Tonna cites early texts on poetry, gives a large number of example poems, and tells stories of the poetic milieu.

The first part is entitled *The Visage of Verse* (*fūtei-no koto*), it opens with a quote from Fujiwara-no Kintō’s *Shinsen Zuinō*: “A song’s soul (*kokoro*) should be profound, and its form (*sugata*) pure and clear”. This part cites the most important texts on poetry, including *Toshiyori Zuinō* (*Toshiyori’s Poetic Guide*), *Korai Fūteishō* (*On the Old and New Poetic Style*) by Fujiwara no Shunzei, a number of works by Fujiwara no Teika, *Yakumo Mishō* (*Secret Records of the Emperor*) by Juntoku-in (1197–1242, on the throne in 1210–1221). The second part deals with the technique of *honkadōri* (following the original song). The third part discusses poetic vocabulary. The fourth and fifth (the shortest part, the text of which has variant readings) parts are about famous places, *meisho*. The text of these parts is accompanied by a large amount of poetic material taken from anthologies and recordings of poetry tournaments. Of particular interest to modern researchers is the sixth part of the work, where the author has placed literary legends and anecdotes. This part is partially translated into English by Stephen Carter [Carter 2002, p. 181–222].

Compared to other *karon* texts, many of which were first published only at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries,¹ the *Seiashō* was published quite early – the first edition dates back to 1648. The book was published in Kyoto by Hayashi Jin’emon (林甚右衛門).² This edition was issued without illustrations. The first illustrated edition appeared 38 years later, in 1686.

¹ In 1708, a 10-volume edition entitled *Waka Kogo Shimpishō* (*Secret Old Language Records of Japanese Songs*) was published in Kyoto by the Izumoji Izuminojō publishing house.

² The edition is published on several sites on the Internet, for example: [Seiashō 1648]. https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko30/bunko30_d0123/index.html

Illustrated Edition of 1686 and the Reprint of 1709

Even before the age of printing, many genres of Japanese literature were represented by illustrated manuscripts: *emaki* scrolls, stitched illustrated books (for example, many works of the *otogi-zōshi* genre existed as *Nara-ehon* manuscript books). *Karon* texts were not accompanied by illustrations in manuscripts, so illustrations are rare in editions of these works as well. Illustrated editions of *Seiashō* are rather an exception to the general rule.

The colophon of the first illustrated edition gives the date of the book and the publisher, the Edo publisher Hon'ya Seibee (本屋清兵衛).³ The names of the author and the artist are not indicated either at the beginning of the book or in the colophon.

The book was republished in 1709, and the colophon lists two publishers, Masuya Kisuke (升屋喜助, Edo) and Murakami Seizaburō (村上清三郎, Osaka). The book is published in five volumes. The volumes of Japanese editions are traditionally not very large, due to the peculiarities of stitching. Each of the first four volumes contains one part (*maki*) of the work. The last volume contains two parts – the fifth and the sixth (Fig. 1). The books are bound using the *fukuro toji* (*sack*) method, i.e., each sheet is folded in half to form a book sheet *chō*, and the pagination in the book is counted on these “double pages” (Fig. 2).

The absence of the name of the author of a text (as well as the name of the artist) in early printed books is a common phenomenon. Printed books inherited the rules by which manuscripts were created, and manuscripts did not include the author's name; authors' names were obligatory only for poetic texts. At the same time, if an older text was printed from an existing manuscript, previous colophons were copied in it.⁴ The first book catalog, which, in a certain sense, breaks

³ See, for example, the book known as “Takatsukasa book,” preserved in the Imperial Library [*Seiashō* 1686]. <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100245078/>

⁴ On the colophons in Japanese manuscripts, see [Goreglyad 1988, p. 260–262].



Fig. 1. *Seiashō*. 1709.
Private collection.



Fig. 2. *Seiashō*. 1709.
Fukuro toji brochure.

the tradition of the absence of authors' names of texts, is the book catalog of 1670.⁵

From the end of the 17th century, the names of the authors of texts begin to appear sporadically in books. This applies to both the names of literary authors and the names of artists. The first artist to be named in some of the books he illustrated was Hishikawa Moronobu (1618–1694), and it is to this artist that the illustrations in *Seiashō*⁶ are attributed.

The name of Hishikawa Moronobu invariably appears in works devoted to the Japanese book. Art historians focus primarily on the line in Moronobu's drawings. Edward Strange, author of *Japanese Illustration: A History of the Arts of Wood-cutting And Colour Printing in Japan*, published in 1897, wrote that "Moronobu's style is distinguished by its simplicity and caligraphic excellence of line." [Strange 1897, p. 7].

E. V. Zavadskaya in her book *Japanese Art of the Book (7th – 19th Centuries)* notes that a new stage in the history of the Japanese book is associated with the name of this artist. "The artistic merit of the book increasingly began to be determined by the skill of the artist-illustrator. This revolution in the history of the art of the book was connected above all with the activities of Hishikawa Moronobu. He transferred

⁵ On the names of authors in early publications, see [Kornicky 1998, p. 225–239; Moretti 2021, ebook].

⁶ See the data in *Nihon Kotenseki Sōgō Mokuroku Dētā Bēsu*, Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books. <https://base1.nijl.ac.jp/~tkoten/>

to woodblock prints the elegance and beauty of lines characteristic of classical Japanese painting. The artist illustrates many books, he is attracted by books about theater, theater programs. He creates a new type of book album (*gaфу*), in which illustrations are given almost without text and gallant scenes “read” as a story” [Zavadsкая 1986, p. 120].

Moronobu participated in the creation of many books (Kobayashi Tadashi names the number 150 [Kobayashi 1992, p. 70]), illustrated both the classics and works of contemporary literature.⁷

Moronobu is also known for his illustrations of poems. Joshua Mostow, author of several books and articles on illustrated books of the Tokugawa period, quotes Moronobu’s record that he transferred “the heart of the poems into pictures – *uta no kokoro wo we ni*” [Mostow 1992, p. 344; Mostow 1996, p. 10].

Poems are illustrated either with a portrait of the poet or with a drawing of the poetic text itself. The division is, of course, arbitrary, since an illustration may include both elements.

The tradition of poetic portraits originates from several 13th-century illustrated scrolls depicting poetic geniuses (*kasen* 歌仙), such as *Satake-bon Sanjū Rokkasen Emaki (An Illustrated Scroll of Thirty-Six Geniuses of Japanese Poetry – Book of Satake)*, *Narikane-bon Sanjūrokkasen (Thirty-six Geniuses – Book of Narikane)*, and *Agedatami Sanjūrokkasen (Thirty-six Geniuses of Japanese Poetry on Tatami)*. Later, a special role in the tradition of depicting poetic geniuses (the images were called *kasen’e* 歌仙絵) was played by the artist Kanō Tan’yū (1602–1674), who repeatedly turned to depicting various series of “poetic geniuses,” and it is the images of poets made by Kanō Tan’yū that are the model for artists of the following generations [Matsushima 2003].

⁷ Illustrations for *Soga Monogatari (The Tale of the Soga Brothers)* go under Moronobu name, they are reproduced in the translation of the work by V.A. Onishchenko, published in 2016 by the Hyperion publishing house [Povest’ o brat'yakh Soga 2016].

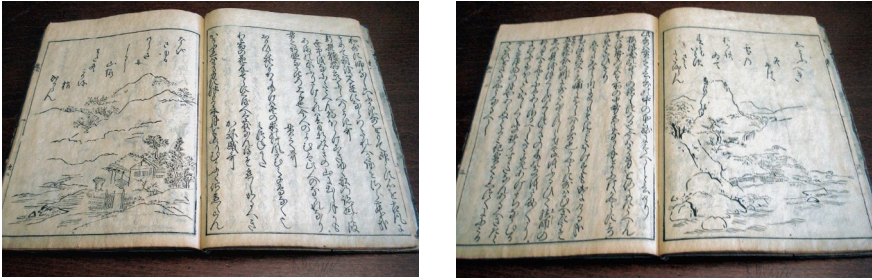


Fig. 3–4. *Seiashō*. 1709. Two first spreads with illustrations in the first volume of the edition.

Japanese poetry was linked to the visual arts through the poetic genre of *byōbu-uta*, especially popular at the time of the first imperial anthology, the *Kokinshū* (*Collection of Old and New Japanese Songs*). Thus, Ki no Tsurayuki (as well as other poets of the time of *Kokinshū*) was especially celebrated for his *byōbu-uta* poems, i.e., poems that were written to be used together with an image (usually a landscape image) as interior decoration. Later, this connection between poetry and image experienced several bright pages (see [Watanabe 2011]).

Among Hishikawa Moronobu's illustrations of poems one can see different approaches to page design, to the use of text in the illustration, and to the interpretation of the poem itself.

The illustrated edition of *Seiashō* is organized as follows. There are a total of 24 illustrations in the edition, which occupy 12 double pages. The illustrations are distributed evenly throughout the first four parts, with 6 illustrations per part. The illustrations are on separate sheets, i.e., there are two spreads with illustrations in a row. First, we see an illustration on the left side of the spread and then on the right side of the next spread (Fig. 3–4).

Illustrations have separate pagination. The pagination of an illustration has three designations: at the top is the volume number, in the middle is the number of the illustrated sheet in the volume, and at the bottom is the place of the illustration in the volume. Sheets with illustrations are designated as “additional,” “following” the corresponding

sheet of the book. By volume they are labeled as follows: first volume 次; second 又, third 續, fourth 又. The adopted pagination (as well as the absence of the artist's name in the colophon) makes it possible to make the book both illustrated and to leave the text without illustrations (examples of such editions can be found on the Internet).

Each volume illustrates the poems quoted in the text; the illustrations, in all cases, are set off not far from the poem in the text.

The table below presents the poems illustrated in the book.

Illustration	Text of the poem in the illustration	Modern transcription of the text of the poem	Meaning of the poem	Author and the source of the poem
1-1-2-l	なをさゆる けしきにし るし 山桜 また冬こもる 梢なるらん	<i>nao sa yuru/ keshiki ni shirushi/ yamazakura/ mata fuyu komoru/ kozue naruran</i>	In nature – signs of the cold. The buds on the twigs of the mountain cherry tree are still shackled as in winter.	Fujiwara no Suetsune (1131–1221). <i>Roppyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 13.
1-1-2-r	しとふへき 冬には雪の おくれみて 春ともいはす さえわたる らん	<i>shitofubeki/ fuyu ni wa yuki no/ okureite/ haru to mo iwazu/ sae wataruran</i>	As if longing for winter the snow won't come down. You can't tell it's spring, it's cold all around.	Fujiwara no Iefusa (1167–1196). <i>Roppyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 14.
1-2-6-l	霜さゆる 庭の木の葉を ふみわけて 月は見るやと とふひとも かな	<i>shimo sayuru/ niwa no ko no ha o/ fumiwakete/ tsuki wa miru ya to/ tou hito mo kana</i>	If only someone would walk by on the fallen leaves of a garden glistening with hoarfrost, and ask: “Are you looking at the moon?”	Saigyō (1118–1190). <i>Mimosusogawa Utaawase</i> , № 43.

1-2-6-r	山川に 獨はなれて 住おしの 心しらるる なみのうへ かな	<i>yamakawa ni/ hitori hanarete/ sumu oshi no/ kokoro shiraruru/ nami no ue kana</i>	Only the waves know the sadness of a living by a mountain river, lonely, far away from everyone duck's heart.	Saigyō. <i>Mimosusogawa Utaawase</i> , № 44.
1-3-10-l	秋あさき 日かけに夏は のこれとも くるるまか きは 萩の上風	<i>aki asaki/ hikake ni natsu wa/ nokore tomo/ kururu magaki wa/ aki no uwakaze</i>	Though it is still summer but under the pale rays of the fall sun the wind is already bending the fall grass outside the fence in the evenings.	Nobusada (Jien, 1155–1225). <i>Ropyyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 312 (<i>Gyokuyō Wakashū</i> , № 455).
1-3-10-r	時雨には 色もかはらぬ 高砂の 尾上の松に 秋風そふく	<i>shigure ni wa/ iro mo kawaranu/ takasago no/ onoe no matsu ni/ akikaze zo fuku</i>	Under the drizzling rain the fall wind is blowing even in the crown of the evergreen pine tree Takasago Onoe.	Fujiwara no Ariie (1166–1216). <i>Sengohyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 1520.
2-1-2-l	おもふとち そこともい はす 行暮ぬ 花の宿かせ 野への鶯	<i>omoudochi/ soko to mo iwazu/ yukikurenu/ hana no yado kase/ nobe no uguisu</i>	The evening had descended while the friends were wandering, one cannot tell where. Give them the shelter among the flowers, oh, reed warbler of the field!	Fujiwara no Ietaka (1158–1237). <i>Shinkokinshū</i> , № 82.

2-1-2-r	たれをけふ まつとはな しに 山影や 花のしづくに 立そぬれたる	<i>dare o kefu / matsu to wa nashi ni/ yamakage ya/ hana no shitsuku ni/ tachi zo nuretaru</i>	Today I wasn't expecting anyone, just stood in the mountains and got drenched with dew of the flowers.	Fujiwara no Yoshitsune (1169–1206). <i>Sengohyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 333.
2-2-6-l	山風の 吹ぬるからに 音羽川 せきいれぬ 花も 瀧の白浪	<i>yamakaze no/ fukinuru kara ni/ otowakawa/ sekiirenu hana mo/ taki no shiranami</i>	As the wind blows, surmounting the dam, Otowa River, turns into flowers of white waterfall waves.	Fujiwara no Masatsune (1170–1221). <i>Sengohyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 334.
2-2-6-r	朝日かけ にほへる山の 桜花 つれなくき えぬ 雪かそ見る	<i>asahikage/ nioeru yama no/ sakurahana/ tsurenaku kienu/ yuki ka to zo miru</i>	In the light of the morning sun, do the fragrant blossoms of the mountain sakura tree not seem like cold unmelted snow?	Fujiwara no Ariie. <i>Sengohyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 441, (<i>Shinkokinshū</i> , № 98).
2-3-11-l	かはれたた わかるる道の 野への露 あわれにむ かふ ものもおも わし	<i>kaware tada/ wakaruru michi no/ nobe no tsuyu/ aware ni mukau/ mono mo omowaji</i>	If one would change and on the way, parting, not think that the dew in the field is a sign of misfortune.	Fujiwara no Teika. <i>Roppyakuban Utaawase</i> , № 713.
2-3-11-r	岩くらの 小野の秋津に 立雲の はれすも鹿の 妻をこふらむ	<i>iwakura no/ ono no akitsu ni/ tachikumo no/ harezu mo shiki no/ tsuma o kouramu</i>	May the clouds that rose from Iwakura Ono to Akitsu not dissipate, still the deer seeks his wife.	Hamuro Mitsutoshi (1203–1276). <i>Kameyadono Goshu Utaawase</i> , № 22.

3-1-2-l	おもひ出は おなじなかに めにかへるまで 心にのこる 春の明ほの	<i>omoide wa/ onaji nagame ni/ kaeru made/ kokoro ni nokoru/ haru-no akebono</i>	Until I return to see it again, in memories, stay in my heart, spring dawn.	Nobusada (Jien). <i>Ropyyakuban</i> <i>Utaawase</i> , № 118.
3-1-2-r	帰る鴈 かすみのう ちに 聲はして ものうらめ しき 春のけしきや	<i>kaeru kari/ kasumi no uchi ni/ koe wa shite/ monourameshiki/ haru no keshiki ya</i>	Isn't it bitter? The spring landscape, when the geese cry out in the mist as they fly home.	Nyōbo 女房. <i>Sengohyakuban</i> <i>Utaawase</i> , № 361.
3-2-6-l	うちむれて すみれつむ まに とふひ野の 霞のうちに けふもくら しつ	<i>utimurete/ sumire tsumu ma ni/ tobuhino no/ kasumi no uchi ni/ kefu mo kurashitsu</i>	We gathered together and picked violets. Thus in the mist of the fields of Tobuhi we spent the day...	Fujiwara no Suetsune (1131–1221). <i>Ropyyakuban</i> <i>Utaawase</i> , № 63.
3-2-6-r	雲のいる とお山鳥の おそ桜 心なくも のこる花かな	<i>kumo no iru/ too yamadori no/ osozakura/ kokoro nagaku mo/ nokoru hana kana</i>	In the distant cloudy mountains the long, like a pheasant's tail, late sakura blossoms will stay in your heart for a long time.	Munetaka Shinnō (1242–1274). <i>Shokukokin</i> <i>Wakashū</i> , № 185.
3-3-11-l	こきよせて とまとま りの 松風を しる人かほに いそくたくれ	<i>kogiyosete/ tomaru tomari no/ matsukaze o/ shiru hito kao ni/ isogu yufugure</i>	We ferry up. The evening hurries the wind in the harbor blowing the familiar faces of travelers.	Fujiwara no Teika. <i>Shuigūsō</i> , № 2081.

3-3-11-r	世をうしと おもひける にそ 成ぬへき 吉野のおくへ ふかく入なは	<i>yo o ushi to/ omoikeru ni zo/ narinubeki/ yoshino no oku e/ fukaku irinaba</i>	He must be soaked up by the sorrows of the world as he headed deep into the Yoshino Mountains.	Saigyō. <i>Mimosusogawa Utaawase</i> , № 43.
4-1-4-l	立わかれ いなはの山の 峰におふる 松としきは いまかへり こん	<i>tachiwakare/ inaba no yama no/ mine ni ofuru/ matsu to shi kikaba/ ima kaerikon</i>	Broke up. But if I hear from the pine trees born on the Inaba Mountains that they are waiting for me, I will return immediately.	Ariwara no Yukihiro (818–893). <i>Kokin Wakashū</i> , № 365 (<i>Hyakunin Isshu</i> , № 16).
4-1-4-r	音羽川 せき入て落す 瀧つせに 人の心の 見えもする哉	<i>otowakawa/ seki irete otosu/ takitsuse ni/ hito no kokoro no/ mie mo suru kana</i>	The Otowa River collides with an obstacle and collapses in a waterfall. This is also what the human heart looks like.	Ise (years of life unknown). <i>Shūiwakashū</i> , № 445.
4-2-12-l	ふしみ山 松かけよりも 見わたせは あくる田面に 秋風そふく	<i>fushimi yama/ matsukage yori mo/ miwataseba/ akuru tanomo ni/ akikaze zo fuku</i>	When look out from behind the pines of Mount Fushimi, the autumn wind blows there in the dawn field.	Fujiwara no Shunzei. <i>Shinkokin Wakashū</i> , № 291.
4-2-12-r	松かけの 入海かけて しらすけの みなとふき こす 秋の潮風	<i>matsukage no/ irumi kakete/ shirasuke no/ minato fukikosu/ aki no shiokaze</i>	An autumn sea wind walks over the waves of Shirasuke Harbor, where pine groves stretch into the bay.	Kujō Motoie (1203–1280). <i>Shokukokin Wakashū</i> , № 1564.

4-3-17-l	和歌の浦に 塩みちくれは かたをなみ あし辺をさ して 田鶴鳴わたる	<i>waka no ura ni/ shio michi kureba/ kata o nami/ ashibe o sashite/ tazu nakiwataru</i>	In Waka Bay, when the tide swallows up the shoal, the cranes head for the reeds with a cry.	Yamabe no Akahito (years of life unknown). <i>Man'yōshū</i> , № 919.
4-3-17-r	駒とめて なほ水かはん 山ふきの はなに露さふ 井出の玉川	<i>koma tomete/ nao mizu kawan/ yamabuki no/ hana ni tsuyusafu/ ide no tamagawa</i>	I will stop the horse and give it water mixed with the dew of yamabuki flowers from the Tamagawa River in Ide.	Fujiwara no Shunzei. <i>Shinkokin Wakashū</i> , № 159.

* The first digit means the volume number, the second digit means the illustration number, the third digit means the place of the illustration in the volume, 'l' means the left page of the spread, 'r' means the right page of the spread.

** The recording of the poem (hieroglyphics and kana signs) is given as it is given in the illustration in the book.

*** One of the possible sources for the poem is provided.

The illustrations are monochrome woodblock prints (*sumizuri-e*), consisting of a drawing (a landscape by genre) and a recording of a poem. The poem is inscribed at the top of the illustration and is not accompanied by any explanations. The drawing and the illustration are not separated by any special graphic elements, they are placed on the same plane.

The scenes depicted in the drawings follow the scenes described in the poems. The images show the whole “material” world that is present in the text; this is the most accurate translation into graphic language of the poem’s images.



Fig. 5. *Seiashō*. 1709. Illustration 1-2-6-r is a poem by Saigyō.



Fig. 6. *Seiashō*. 1709. Illustration 4-3-17-l is a poem by Yamabe no Akahito.

The people in the illustrations are depicted in Heian era clothing, making the images “historical.”

The method of recording poems is *chirashigaki* (scattered characters). Such a record goes back to *byōbu-uta*. However, the text of the *byōbu-uta* poem was not inscribed in the image but written on a separate sheet. *Sikishigata* 色紙形 (*sikishi* 色紙) sheets are square or close to square, vertically oriented. Writing on such a sheet could be a work of art itself and, despite the set format, was quite diverse. For the heyday of the *waka*, the principles of recording poems were an important issue. For example, advice on how to record poems is contained in what is considered the first work on calligraphy, *Yakakutei Kinshō* (*Records of the Instruction of the Night Crane*) by Fujiwara no Koreyuki (1139–1175). The text shows that the structure of the poem was important to the scribes, and that one should record the poem in accordance with this internal structure. Koreyuki writes:



Fig. 7. *Seiashō*. 1709. Illustration 2-3-11-1 is a poem by Fujiwara no Teika.



Fig. 8. *Seiashō*. 1709. Illustration 3-2-6-1 is a poem by Fujiwara no Suezune.

“The way songs are written. If two lines, one line 5-7-5, another line 7-7. If three lines, one line 5-7, second line 5-7, third line 7” [Jubokudō Sanbushū 1989, p. 7].⁸

However, the recording of a poem, in which the internal structure of the poem is easily grasped, was not compulsory. In the heyday of *waka* poetry, the recording of poems, practiced by participants in poetry tournaments and gatherings, could reflect, for example, membership in a particular school of poetry. There was a practice of recording a poem in four lines, with three signs in the fourth line, which did not reflect the internal structure of the poem [Toropygina 2020, pp. 226–235].

All the poems illustrated in *Seiashō* are recorded using the rhythm of the poem. The recording often emphasizes the division of the poem into two parts (it was the presence of such two parts in Japanese song that

⁸ For the English translation of Koreyuki’s text, see [De Coker & Kerr 1994].

gave rise to new poetic genres: the linked lines of the *renga*, the tercets of *haiku*). The recording does not mix the lines of the poems; each makes up its own calligraphic block. The recording of the poems uses mostly kana characters, but there are no entries without Chinese characters (see Table). Accordingly, the poems are easy to read.

Already at this time, illustrated books can be divided into two main types. The first one can be called “books with illustrations” (*e-iribon*), these are books in which a relatively small number of illustrations accompany the text, playing a subordinate role to the text. Another type is *ehon* books, in which the illustrative material is the main element, and the text accompanies the pictorial series [Kobayashi 1992, p. 70]. The first illustrated edition of *Seiashō* is certainly a “book with illustrations,” where the illustrations help the perception of the text. The book appears to be meticulously designed and masterfully executed.

Illustrated edition of 1752

A little more than half a century passed between the appearance of the first and the second illustrated editions of the monument. However, the new illustrated edition differs significantly from the previous one. The first page shows an important difference: the title of the work and the author’s name – Tonna – appear before the text (Fig. 10).

The colophon of the new edition includes, in addition to the publisher’s name, the names of the text’s author, Tonna Hōshi (designated 撰師⁹), the artist Tachibana Morikuni (畫圖), and the engraver Fujimura Zen’emon (彫工). The latter’s name appears in many books, including a number of books where the artist is Tachibana Morikuni.

⁹ Peter Kornicki in *The Book in Japan. A Cultural History From the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* explains that the character 撰 is the most frequent among the characters denoting the author of a text. Kornicki explains this by a tradition taken from Chinese texts [Kornicki 1998, p. 227].



Fig. 9. *Seiashō*. 1709.
The first page of the edition.



Fig. 10. *Seiashō*. 1752.
Kobe University Library K911-104-T.¹⁰
First page of the edition.

The date “1752” is put in several editions published by different publishers. Iseya Shōsuke 伊勢屋庄助 (Kyoto, in this edition, *Kōto* 皇都), Izumiya Kitarō 泉屋喜太郎 (Osaka, in this edition, *Naniwa* 浪華). There is also a reprint dated the same year (from the Iseya Shōsuke edition). This is the only edition that has a title page 扉 with the title *Kaihō Shimpan / Seiashō* 懷寶新版/井蛙抄 (*Treasure Collection – New Edition / Seiashō*).¹¹

Already at the time of the first illustrated edition, illustrations were an important element of many books; by the time of the second edition, their importance had increased considerably.

¹⁰ An Internet edition with the CC BY license: <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100306373/viewer/>

¹¹ An Internet publication: *Seiashō (Kaihō Shimpan / Seiashō)*. 1752. <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100210941/>

The artist of this edition was Tachibana Morikuni (1679–1748). Morikuni was an artist of the Kanō school, but he is particularly well known in art history as a book illustrator. Morikuni became famous for a number of books that served as guides for amateurs who wished to learn to draw and for young artists.

E.S. Steiner writes about the drawing manuals published by Morikuni as the predecessor books of the famous *Hokusai Manga* (*Hokusai Drawings*) by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) [Steiner 2014, p. 74].

E.V. Zavadskaya notes that it was Morikuni who actively created *ehon* books, in which the text plays a role subordinate to the visual series [Zavadskaya 1986, pp. 148–149].

Researchers agree that Morikuni had a great influence on both his contemporaries and the artists of subsequent generations. Books with illustrations based on Tachibana Morikuni's originals were published after his death. *Seiashō* belongs to such books published after the artist's death, so it is likely that Morikuni did not determine its overall design.

In its structure the new illustrated edition is similar to the first one: the illustrations are made on separate sheets, they are monochrome reproduced woodcuts, but in the new edition the text-illustration ratio is quite different than in the first one. The number of illustrations in this edition is 80 (the first edition had 24). The pagination of text and illustrations is separate, and the binding of an illustration to a particular place in the text is not indicated in the pagination. As the colophon gives the name of the artist, it is not possible to publish the book without illustrations, but they could be concentrated in one place, thus creating a “book of illustrations” within the edition.¹²

The 18 poems illustrated by Moronobu and Morikuni are the same. It was common for illustrations of this time to follow well-known models. Artists used the ideas of their predecessors, however not mechanically, but on the basis of their own objectives. A “classic”

¹² See *Seiashō*, 1752. <https://kotenseki.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100258736/>



Fig. 11. *Seishō*. 1709. Artist Hishikawa Moronobu.



Fig. 12. *Seishō*. 1752. Artist Tachibana Morikuni.

example of such creative borrowing is Hishikawa Moronobu's illustrations for Ihara Saikaku's (1642–1693) book *Kōshoku Ichidai Otoko* (*The Love Affairs of a Single Man*), which were based on Ihara Saikaku's own drawings.¹³ In some cases, Morikuni does follow Moronobu in the composition of his illustrations, but his drawings always differ significantly from those of Moronobu.

Fig. 11-12 are illustrations of a poem by Fujiwara no Masatsuge (Tabl. 2-2-6-l).

The recording of poems in the illustrations in the new edition does not always follow the usual principles of *chirashigaki* recording, which

¹³ Russian translation by I.V. Melnikova, published by Hyperion Publishing House, is illustrated with drawings by Ihara Saikaku [Ihara Saikaku 2020]. For a comparative analysis of drawings by Ihara Saikaku and Hishikawa Moronobu, see, for example, [Mostow 1996, p. 101–103].



Fig. 13. *Seiashō*. 1709. Artist Hishikawa Moronobu.



Fig. 14. *Seiashō*. 1752. Artist Tachibana Morikuni.

presuppose a different indentation of graphic lines from the upper margin of the sheet. The composition of the illustration with the poem by Fujiwara no Yukihiro (Tabl. 4-1-4-1, Figs. 13-14) is taken by Morikuni from Moronobu's illustrations, but the recording of the poem differs considerably: almost all lines of the poem are placed at the same distance from the upper margin of the sheet.

In most of Morikuni's illustrations (as in Moronobu's illustrations), the poem is placed on the same plane as the figure, but, in a number of illustrations, the plane of "clouds" is used to record the poem (Morikuni often uses this element at the bottom of the figure as well).

Fujiwara no Ietaka's poem (Tabl. 2-1-2-1, Fig. 15-16) is illustrated in both books. In the 1752 edition, it is the only poem recorded in *man'yōgana* (characters used as phonetics).

It is rare for a poem to be recorded in five lines (the recording corresponds exactly to the internal structure of the poem). The poem



Fig. 15. *Seiashō*. 1709. Artist Hishikawa Moronobu.



Fig. 16. *Seiashō*. 1752. Artist Tachibana Morikuni.

by Taira no Kanemori (?–991), which was included in the imperial anthology *Shūishū*, is recorded in this way in the illustration (Fig. 17).

かそふれは我身につもるとし月を送りむかふと何いそくらん
kazofureba / waga mi ni tsumoru / toshi tsuki o / okuri mukau to /
nani isoguran

As I count the years and months that pile up on me... What's the hurry to see them off and meet them?

An unusual one, from left to right, is the inscribing of a poem by Fujiwara no Teika (Fig. 18). This poem was placed in the imperial anthology *Shintokusenshū* (*New Imperial Anthology*), and it is the poem that the author placed in his famous anthology *Hyakunin Isshu*, *One Hundred Poems of One Hundred Poets*.



Fig. 17. *Seishō*. 1752. Artist Tachibana Morikuni.

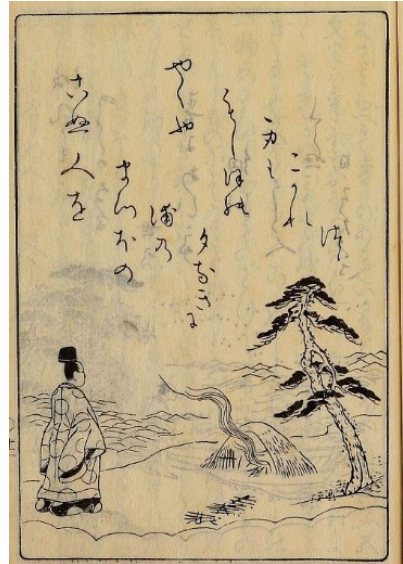


Fig. 18. *Seishō*. 1752. Artist Tachibana Morikuni.

こぬ人をまつほの浦の夕なきにやくやもしほの身もこがれつつ
 konu hito wo / matsuho no ura no / yūnagi ni / yaku ya moshio no /
 mi mo kogaretsutsu

Waiting for the unarrived beloved in the evening silence of Matsuho no ura bay, burning as if salt were being evaporated from seaweed.

In general, the illustrative material of the 1752 edition lacks the unity that is characteristic of the illustrations of the first illustrated edition of *Seishō*. It is difficult to say whether this is due to the use of available material (let me remind that the book was published after the artist's death) or whether it was in accordance with the plan of the creators. Perhaps the noted instances of unusual recording of poems were meant to attract the reader's attention.

Conclusion

A comparison of the two illustrated editions of *Seiashō* shows the direction in which Japanese printing was moving in the late 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries, namely, the increased value of illustrative material. In both editions, the same principle of construction is applied: the illustrations to the poems are made on separate sheets and have separate pagination. However, in the first case, the pagination of illustrations indicates that they can be excluded, the book can be published without illustrations, and the illustrations are subordinate to the text. In the second case, an edition without illustrations cannot exist (the artist's name is indicated in the colophon), and the separate pagination of illustrations makes it possible to concentrate them in one place, turning a book with illustrations into an edition consisting of two elements: a book of illustrations and – separately – the text. The book illustrated by Morikuni does not have the usual *ehon* title element of the time, but it is close to the *ehon* books.

In the time between the publication of the two illustrated editions of *Seiashō*, there was a significant change in the understanding of “authorship,” a certain reassessment of the contribution to the book of the people who create it. This is related, of course, to the broader cultural context; printing is only one area in which the change in attitudes towards the author is noticeable, but it is in the book that these attitudes become “visible.” The late 17th century edition lacks the names of author and artist, and the colophon notes only the publisher (in both the edition and the reprint). The 1752 book places, besides the name of the publisher, the names of the authors of the text and illustrations, as well as the name of the engraver. In addition, the author's name appears before the text.

The *waka* poetry to which the *Seiashō* text is dedicated was a phenomenon of the distant past for readers of the Tokugawa era, but editions and reprints of the *Seiashō* text attest to its relevance and popularity during this period.

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Symbolism in Shiba Kōkan's (1738/1747–1818) Painting *The Meeting of the Three Sages of Japan, China, and the West*

E. K. Simonova-Gudzenko

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of a little-known scroll by the 18th century Japanese artist Shiba Kōkan¹. The provenance of the scroll and the reasons for its poor study are considered. The main attention is paid to the analysis of the history of the scroll and the symbolism of three elements of images on it: wave, triad, and flame-fire.

These three elements are important components of the Japanese cultural and artistic code, forming it since ancient times while changing over time and retaining their significance in contemporary culture. The multiple meanings of the symbolism of the images on the scroll allow us to propose at least two possibilities for its interpretation: as a separate and independent work and as an illustration of the artist's diary-pamphlet written by him at the end of his life. In this article, we deal primarily with the first possibility.

The duality of the perception of the wave and the sea in the cultural code is reflected in the scroll. The islanders realized the sea not only as a physically surmountable barrier, but also as a kind of translator of information. The central part of the scroll depicts a meeting at the table of three wise men from Japan, China and the West, which is analogous to the illustration of the famous Chinese parable *Three Wise Men Tasting Vinegar*. The article analyzes in

¹ Hereinafter, the colon after a vowel denotes its value, which in Japanese is a meaning-distinguishing factor.

detail the portraits of the three participants of the meeting, considers possible prototypes of the Japanese character and the collective images of the Chinese and the European ones, confirmed by the carefully studied symbolism of their appearance, as well as the objects spread out in front of them.

The burning Buddhist pagoda depicted at the top of the scroll and the three groups of people trying to extinguish it seem to be an allegory for the gathering around the table. It is also seen in the use of different ways and means of extinguishing the fire by groups of Japanese, Chinese, and Europeans. It seems that the scroll also has Buddhist connotations. The image reflects the irony, mockery, and laughter, which are among the characteristics of Edo culture. The final part of the article speculates on the possible dating and authorship of the scroll.

Keywords: Shiba Kōkan, scroll, *rangaku*, wave, fire, three wise men, *mon*, pump.

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I would also like to express my gratitude to L. M. Ermakova for her constructive criticism and valuable feedback, which contributed to enhancing the quality of this research.

In cherished memory
of Viktor Sanovich, our friend and mentor

“Japanese people have a diversely smart mind,
kind heart, and tenacious memory. <...>
They are seekers of all kinds of wisdom”.
Cosmographia 1670. Chapter 70.

«Японские люди многосмышлены,
добродразны, памятны. <...>
Всяких премудростей искатели»
Космография 1670. Глава 70

The Tokugawa era (1603–1868), like any other in the history of Japan, has its own peculiarities. One of them in the 18th and early 19th centuries was the fascination with the achievements of Western civilization and their mastering, first of all, of the fields of natural sciences, medicine, and technology. As a result, a system of European knowledge about man and nature was formed, which was called *rangaku*, or the Dutch studies. Scholars of this direction, the *rangakusha*, studied the Dutch

language, medicine, astronomy, technical achievements, and translated works on the above sciences from Dutch to Japanese. “Most *rangakusha* were primarily interested in medicine, which had the widest practical application (the concept of medicine included botany, chemistry, and other natural sciences). Many were also engaged in astronomy, which was encouraged by the government, interested in compiling an accurate calendar” [Nikolaeva 1996, p. 151]. However, the Japanese were impressed not only by the science and the technical achievements of the Europeans, but also by the fine arts. Thus, the famous artists Shiba Kōkan, Hayashi Shihei (1738–1793), and Hiraga Gennai (1728–1780), who practiced traditional types of painting and engraving, became major masters in the genre of European painting (*yōga*). Mastering the artistic techniques of Western masters was viewed by Japanese artists of the Tokugawa era in an obligatory connection with the pursuit of Western sciences. They depicted Western technical innovations and their devices, plants, animals, humans, illustrated anatomical encyclopedias, were interested in the achievements of Western geographical thought and cartographic skills, and drew maps.

One of the most important painters of the *yōga* genre was Shiba Kōkan (born Andō Kichi(ji)rō (Katsusaburō))², who has been called “the father of Western painting in Japan”. He received the traditional art education of the time. As a boy, he was trained at the Kanō school of traditional Japanese painting, but very soon he moved on to study with the master Sō Shiseki (1715–1786) of the Nampin school, specializing in the Chinese *flowers and birds* genre. Calvin French notes that, during his studies, Kōkan also gained knowledge of Chinese classics and poetry [French 1974, p. 19]. Moreover, Kōkan paid attention to the engravings of Suzuki Harunobu (1724–1770), which made a great impression on him. It is believed that, shortly before the master’s death, he became his unofficial pupil [Nikolaeva 1996, p. 157]. It is surprising that, having

² *The Dictionary of Japanese Artists* lists numerous pseudonyms for Shiba Kōkan: Fugen Dōjin 不言道人, Harushige 春信, Kokan 江漢, Rantei 蘭亭, Shumparō 春波楼. Please refer to [Roberts 1980, p. 88].

already gained fame as a master of the Chinese painting style, he began to cut and print engravings in the style of Harunobu and even to sign them with the master's name, as was customary among students belonging to the workshop of a prominent artist. However, he soon took his own name, Harushige, with which he began to sign his prints, although he continued to work in a style very close to that of Harunobu [French 1974, p. 29–33]. Through his acquaintance with Hiraga Gennai (1728–1780), a pharmacist, inventor, painter, ceramist, writer, and one of the most notable men of his time, Shiba Kōkan began to study Western painting and learned about copper engraving. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that it was Hiraga Gennai who imparted to the young man the first notions of the Western sciences, *rangaku*. During his lessons with Hiraga Gennai, Kōkan met Odano Naokata (1749–1780), a young painter from Akita Domain, who, as researchers believe, had a greater influence on Kōkan in the field of painting than Gennai [French 1974, p. 80].

Like many talented people of his time, Shiba Kōkan showed great talent in a variety of fields and left a great legacy, both artistic and literary. He wrote a treatise entitled *Discourses on Western Painting*; wrote and illustrated the *Explanations of the Copernican Theory*³; illustrated books on the natural sciences; created the world map *Chikyū Zenzu* (1792)⁴, the first copperplate map of the world in Japan, and the first to be printed in two hemispheres rather than an oval projection: prior to this, world maps had been modeled on Matteo Ricci's map⁵. (It is generally accepted that copperplate printing is more accurate than wooden printing.)

³ Kopperu temmon zukai 刻白爾 (コッペル) 天文図解.

⁴ 地球全図 Chikyū zenzu (Map of the whole world). Japanese & Chinese Classics // Kotenseki Soga Database of Waseda University Library's Collections. *Waseda University*: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru11/ru11_00809/index.html

⁵ World map by Matteo Ricci – 坤輿萬國全圖 Kūnyú Wànguó Quántú (Map of numerous countries), 1602. The world map was made by the Catholic missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) at the request of the Chinese Emperor Wanli (1563–1620).

The bibliography of Japanese, Western, and Russian studies devoted to the works by Shiba Kōkan is extensive, covering various aspects of his activities, but still predominantly artistic. Among many Japanese researchers, perhaps, one of the most devoted to his hero is Naruse Fujio, author of *Shiba Kōkan* [Naruse 1977] and *Shiba Kōkan shōgai to gagyō – sakuhinten* (*The Life and Artistic Works of Shiba Kōkan – an exhibition of works*) [Naruse 1995]. However, the scroll discussed here is not found or mentioned in the studies of this specialist. In Western historiography, the above-mentioned monograph by Kelvin French *Shiba Kōkan. Artist, Innovator and Pioneer of the Westernization of Japan* [French 1974] can be considered the most comprehensive study so far, while among the relatively recent ones we should mention the remarkable study by T. Screech *With Lenses in His Heart* [Screech 2002], a significant part of which is devoted to Shiba. In Russian Japanese studies, the greatest attention to the personality and work of Shiba Kōkan was devoted by N. S. Nikolaeva in her book *Japan-Europe. Dialogue in Art* [Nikolaeva 1996]. None of these studies mentions the scroll we consider in this article. Information about the artist is full of contradictions and uncertainties. Researchers agree that Shiba Kōkan was an indefatigable experimenter, a man of versatile talents, a scientist, artist, and naturalist.

The scroll *The Meeting of the Three Sages of Japan, China and the West* (silk, 102.2 x 49.3 cm, ink and color painting) ⁶ has long been of little interest to researchers of the artist's work. The article is devoted to the provenance, history, and exhibition of the scroll by Shiba Kōkan, and analyzes the history and symbolism of the three images on it: a wave, a triad of sages, and a fire. These three images are important components of the Japanese cultural and artistic code formed since ancient times. They have been influenced from the outside and changed over time but retain their significance in contemporary culture. Studies of images from past epochs and other cultural traditions present

⁶ There is also another title of the painting *The Meeting of Japan, China and the West*.

a special difficulty due to the fact that they were understandable, easily readable by compatriots and contemporaries, while for us, after hundreds of years, they, coming from another time and another cultural space, often look incomprehensible and sometimes mysterious. Accordingly, all our conclusions are tentative; we offer them as hypotheses with a greater or lesser degree of probability⁷.

Perhaps the poor study of the scroll can be explained by the fact that it was unknown until it appeared at Christie's auction in 2001. The auction abstract briefly describes the two parts of the painting, mentioning the three representatives of Japan, China, and Europe (possibly Holland) gathered around the table. More details are given about the upper part of the scroll, on which representatives of the three civilizations are fighting the flames of a burning pagoda-like building.



Fig. 1. Shiba Kōkan. *The Meeting of the Three Sages of Japan, China, and the West*. Source: Minneapolis Institute of Art: www.artsmia.org⁹

⁷ In our study we do not consider the peculiarities of the master's artistic style.

⁸ I thank D. Hotimsky for the scan of the scroll, without which this study could not have taken place.

Literally a few words are devoted to the objects lying on the table in front of the participants of the meeting. The conclusion draws attention to the fact that *The Meeting of the Three Venerable Ones* is a variant of the popular image of the unity of the three faiths represented by Buddha, Laozi and Confucius, or the image of the triple union of Buddha, Laozi and Jesus common among representatives of the Japanese school of *rangaku* of the 18th century” [Christie’s auction 2001].

At the auction, the scroll was acquired for the Ruth and Sherman Lee Collection, and in 2002–2003 was presented at an exhibition of the collection in several museums in Japan, for which a catalog, *Delightful Pursuits: Gems of the Lee Collection at the Clark Center Institute of Japanese Art*, was produced [Ishida & Yamamoto 2002, p. 196–197]. Perhaps, it contains the most detailed description of the scroll. It is noteworthy that, at the end of the article, the authorship of the painting is doubted: “Although the manner in which the rocks are depicted demonstrates the traditional style of painting, the effects of light and shadow show a mastery of realism that could only be mastered by an artist intimately familiar with Western painting. The scroll has a sign: “Shumparōjō 春波楼上 [Shumparō’s workshop] Kōkan Shiba Shun kore-wo utsusu” 江漢司馬峻寫之 [redrawn by Shiba Kōkan]”, and seals: one in the shape of a calabash with the letters “*shi*” 司 [engraved] + “*ba*” 馬 [inscribed], while the other in the shape of a square with the text “Shun in 峻 [illegible (印)]”⁹. These signatures and seals are apparently intended to attest to the authorship of Shiba Kōkan, “the father of the Western style (*yōga*) of painting in Japan,” but there is not a single work by the artist with such signatures and seals among the confirmed works. So is the stylistics of the painting, which is somewhat different from other works painted by Siba Kōkan himself. Many aspects of this scroll, including the individual traits of the characters depicted and the relationship between the upper and lower parts of the painting, as well as some unusual stylistic devices, fill it with fascinating mystery, delight and testify to the uniqueness of the work” [Ibid.].

⁹ 春波楼上江漢司馬峻 之春波楼上江漢峻写之

If we bring to notice the text of the caption (“this [scroll] was copied by Kōkan Shiba Shun in the workshop of Shumparō”), it would be possible to view the scroll as an illustration of Shiba Kōkan’s essay *Shumparō Hikki* ¹⁰. The name of the author of the notes, Shumparō, is one of Shiba Kōkan’s artistic pseudonyms. The artist wrote this diary at the end of his life. In this work, he not only reflected on life and creativity, but also criticized the orders and customs established in the country. In this article, we will try to present several versions of possible interpretation of the symbolism of the scroll.

In 2004, the scroll could be seen at the exhibition *Contacts: The Encounter between Asia and Europe 1500–1800* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Again, its description, albeit very concise, appears in the exhibition catalog of the same name: “...the scroll depicts three men of science from Japan, China, and Europe discussing scientific problems, [while] behind them three groups of also Japanese, Chinese, and Europeans are trying in various ways to put out a fire. The artist, probably Shiba Kōkan, the father of Western painting in Japan, combines Japanese and European styles of painting to create a unique depiction of the meeting of cultures and technologies.” [Jackson & Jaffer 2004, p. 5]. The scroll is dated to the end of the 18th century, attributed to the brush of Shiba Kōkan both in the attribution under the illustration and in the description of the painting.¹¹

In the following years, the painting was often published in print media and on websites, but usually only the lower part of it, which depicts a meeting between representatives of Japan, China, and the West. Neither monographs nor articles devoted to the scroll could be found at the moment, with the exception of an article by G. Tarantino in an Italian historical journal in 2016 [Tarantino 2016]. Probably, until 2013, when

¹⁰ I would like to thank Prof. Mashimo Atsushi for his proposed version of the interpretation of the images on the scroll, which we will discuss below. Although we cannot accept everything in his version, it certainly opens up new dimensions and possibilities in the interpretation of the scroll.

¹¹ I thank A. I. Yusupova for the opportunity to use the exhibition catalogs.

the private collection of Japanese art by Ruth and Sherman Lee, which included the scroll, was transferred to the Minneapolis Museum of Fine Arts, it was difficult for researchers to access it.

In his article *Disasters, Emotions, and Cultures: the unexpected sign of Siba Kōkan (1738–1818)* G. Tarantino tells the story of the scroll's appearance for the first time at Christie's auction in 2001, its sale, and its fate [Tarantino 2016]. Unfortunately, however, his work is rife with inaccuracies. The author does not mention the 2002 exhibition catalog, emphasizing that the scroll was first reproduced in 2004 in the book *Contacts: The Encounter between Asia and Europe 1500–1800* (edited by A. Jackson and A. Jaffer). There are also some inaccuracies in the description of the scroll. For example, when interpreting the figures seated at the table, Tarantino points out that the hand of the Japanese man, clearly a samurai, is resting on the hilt of a katana, a traditional curved Japanese sword with a single-sided sharpening and a long hilt for two-handed grip. He goes on to emphasize that only samurai, the military nobility of the Middle Ages and early modern times, were allowed to carry swords, although there was little need for them in the calm, peaceful Tokugawa era [Ibid., p. 659]. However, even on the reproduction of the scroll with which we had to work, it is quite clearly seen that the samurai's left hand rests on the fan's tip, not on the hilt of the sword. The folding *suehiro* fan,¹² literally “expanding towards the end,” is traditionally a metaphor for development, blossoming. The fan, like the ceremonial *kataginu* with family emblems and the white snake on the arm, was probably intended to indicate that the young samurai depicted belonged to a noble military clan.

G. Tarantino also offers a version of the dating of the scroll, believing that the scroll could have been written after the second edition of the

¹² *Suehiro* 末広 is a small folding fan, a symbol of samurai power and status. The literal translation of the hieroglyphs means “end – wide”, possible interpretation is “gradual expansion, development” (*Japanese Russian Dictionary*. Suehiro: <https://japanese-words.org/dictionary/view/49788>).

Anatomical Atlas *Kaitai Shinsho* (*New Book of Anatomy*)¹³ in 1798, when the image of a human skeleton was first printed [*Ibid.*, p. 661–662]. However, this assumption is doubtful, because the image of the skeleton is already present in an earlier copy of the Atlas of 1774, kept in the Science Museum in Tokyo.¹⁴ In the Japanese edition of the Atlas, the illustrations were copied by Odano Naotake and taken not only from the work of Johannes Kulmus (1689–1745), but also from the editions of the Spanish anatomist Juan Valverde de Amusco (1516–?), Dutch physician Godfried Bidloo (1649–1713), while the primary source of all these works was the work of the famous Flemish surgeon, the founder of scientific anatomy A. Vesalius (1515–1564). The scroll shows an anatomical atlas open on a table in front of the European.

We have not yet managed to find in the world historiography neither the history of creation, nor storage, nor any detailed description of the scroll. In addition to all the above enigmas, there is the multivalent symbolism of the image on the scroll.

Let us turn to the image. It consists of two almost equal parts: the upper part is a scene of a fire, while the lower part is a meeting at a table of representatives of three cultures: Japanese, Chinese, and European. Each part can be reproduced quite independently, which is probably why only one part, mainly the lower one, is often published as an illustration of the “meeting” – the mutual influence of East and West. The artist placed the parts together, perhaps viewing the upper image as an allegory or metaphor for the lower one – three groups of people, representing the same peoples as those at the table, are involved in putting out the fire.

Let us try to consider and analyze the main elements of the images on the scroll.

¹³ 解體新書

¹⁴ Kaitai Shinsho // Wikipedia. The free encyclopedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaitai_Shinsho#/media/File:First_Japanese_treatise_on_Western_anatomy.jpg

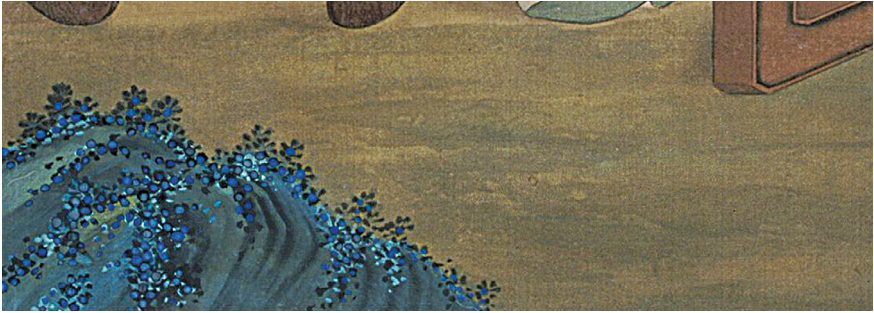


Fig. 2. *The wave*. Fragment of Shiba Kōkan's scroll
*The Meeting of the Three Sages of Japan,
China, and the West*.

In the left corner of the lower part of the scroll, a blue-colored wave draws attention, and the wave has a rich semantics in Japanese culture. Painted clearly and colorfully, the wave looks a bit strange here, given that it rolls up on the surface on which the table where the heroes of the image are seated, giving the impression that the table is standing directly on the seashore, at the water's edge.

The wave is somewhat stylized, but still it seems that it is depicted traditionally and is similar to the ornament *ryūsuimon*, (*running water, waves*),¹⁵ widespread in medieval Japanese art, which originated in ancient times. It is found on ceramic vessels of the Jōmon period, and then on bronze *dōtaku* bells [Iofan 1974, p. 22]. The ornament is used widely on fabrics, ceramics, etc. One of the versions of its origin claims that it is related to the most important elements of world ornamentation, such as zigzag (wave), meander. The wide spread of the ornament in the

¹⁵ Ceramics 流水紋土器 *ryūsuimon doki*. For example, the depiction of a wave in Hokusai and on *ryūsuimon* pottery reveals similarities (Hokusai-no “ha” to Jōmon doki wa guruguru Uzumaki kyōtsūten [Hokusai’s “Wave” and Jōmon ceramics have in common the depiction of a whirlpool]. *Japan Waraku Magazine*: <https://intojapanwaraku.com/art/1546/>).

island country is quite understandable, as it was in maritime ancient Greece, where it is often found.¹⁶

As the study shows, there is nothing random in the painting. Perhaps, water in the lower part of the painting and fire in the upper part symbolize two of the five elements (*wu-xing*), the main categories of Chinese philosophy, according to which water defeats fire, in contrast to Buddhist ideas about all-consuming, purifying fire. It can also be assumed that the depicted wave emphasizes the remote, island position of Japan, on whose land the three heroes of the painting are gathered.

The image of the sea and waves, from ancient times to the present day, is often found both in the Japanese written tradition and in fine art, which is quite natural for an island culture. The sea was perceived ambiguously by the islanders, and the duality of its perception in the cultural code, we believe, is reflected in the scroll.

The sea symbolized Japan's distance from the mainland with its high culture. However, the islanders learned how to overcome the barrier, which earned them respect at the court of the Chinese emperor. In the chronicle of the Chinese Tang Dynasty, in the references to the arrival of Japanese embassies in 702 to the court, the Chinese emperor's command is given: "It is necessary to gather a feast in honor of Japanese envoys, because their [the ambassadors'] state is located far away, but they still arrived, having overcome the stormy, cold sea, to present gifts to the court"¹⁷ [Quan Tang wen].

The inhabitants of the islands realized the sea not only as a physically surmountable barrier, but also as a kind of information transmitter. Various ideas, beliefs, and knowledge came to the distant archipelago despite the sea or with its help.

¹⁶ It is believed that the ornament "meander" is one of the most ancient symbols of the elements, the name is associated with the hydronym of the winding river Meander in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Refer to: D&P Holding: <http://www.dpholding.ru/dosie/?action=photo&id=384>.

¹⁷ I thank M. V. Grachev for his help in finding information on the reception of Japanese embassies in China.

It should be noted that, in the works of Shiba Kōkan, the image of a wave rolling up, splashing on the shore, is quite common. In the world art criticism, there is a widespread view that the artist's picture *View of the Coast of Shichirigahama in Kamakura, Sagami Province* (1796), originally written as a votive, cult image and hung in Atago Shrine in the city of Edo, could be seen by Hokusai, and it influenced his famous print *The Great Wave of Kanagawa*. Kōkan made a total of 12 such images and presented them to Shintō shrines. T. Clark emphasizes that the eccentric artist made this gesture for the sake of attracting people's attention to the European painting style [Clark 2017, p. 15]. It seems that not only his aspirations to popularize the Western style of painting are important here, but also the fact that, in the painting, he depicted the landscape of one of the sacred places of the archipelago – the seashore with a view of Mount Fuji and the sacred island of Enoshima. It is also significant that the artist chose Shintō shrines to exhibit his paintings. This interpretation may seem far-fetched, but I dare to suggest that the wave depicted on our scroll is a kind of allusion to Shiba's votive depiction placed in Atago shrine,¹⁸ which is dedicated to protecting the people of Edo from fires.

It seems that the scroll also contains Buddhist connotations, not always obvious, but allowing us to assume such a concept: nowadays, the sea brings to Japan unprecedented knowledge and inventions of the West, but there is a significant precedent for it: in ancient times, the sea became a transmitter for Buddhist teachings brought from India through China. This is told, for example, in the legend from *Konjaku*

¹⁸ Large votive paintings in frames, called *daiema* 大絵馬, begin to be placed in shrines in the Muromachi era (1336-1573) (Wikiwand.Ema: <https://www.wikiwand.com/ja/%E7%B5%B5%E9%A6%AC>). Atago-jinja was founded in 1603 by Tokugawa Ieyasu on Atago Hill in the present-day Minato district of Tokyo and is believed to have been built to protect the city's residents from fires. The main deity worshipped at the shrine is Homusubi-no-kami, the deity of fire.

Monogatari [Konjaku Monogatari shū 1974, p. 27–29],¹⁹ replete with toponyms: one tengu,²⁰ being in India, heard in the sounds of distant waves the recitation of a Buddhist sutra and decided to find out where such waves are, to prevent the pronunciation of the sutra. All along the way, as he flew from India, over China and the Sea of Japan, over Hakata harbor in Tsukushi, over Moji outpost, over provinces and rivers, he kept hearing the increasing sounds of the Buddhist sutra as he approached, until he reached Lake Biwa in Ōmi Province and, at the foot of Mount Hiei, he found the Four Heavenly Kings (*Shiten'ō*),²¹ the guardians of the Buddha's law, sitting on the bank of a stream with their attendants. The water of the stream was the source of the sounds he heard from afar. The kings said that the spring sings a sacred text, so it is protected as a sacred place for the learned monks of Mount Hiei. Tengu is then reborn in the form of a man and becomes abbot of the Jōdoji Monastery.²² This story may have served Shiba as material for comparing two powerful streams of cultural borrowing.

¹⁹ This interpretation of the wave symbolism would not have appeared in the article without the prompting and help of V. S. Sanovich, a connoisseur of Japanese literature. In the archive of the departed Japanese scholar was found a rough translation of the above legend from *Konjaku monogatari* (1077).

²⁰ Tengu 天狗 (from Chinese *tiangou*) – “heavenly dog”, in Japanese mythology, folklore, folk beliefs – a teratological creature; depicted as a man of enormous height with a red face, long nose or beak and wings (in a fairy tale, he flies with the help of a miraculous fan), in the clothes of a mountain wizard (*yamabushi*); endowed with great power, hostile to fertility [Mify narodov mira 1982, p. 536].

²¹ *Shiten'ō*: 四天王 – *Four Heavenly Kings* guarding the sides of the world. According to Buddhist cosmology, they reside on the slopes of Mount Sumeru. In the interpretation of the legend, one can see the inherent tradition of the Japanese religious complex to “transfer” the localization of Buddhist heroes and plots to the territory of the Japanese islands.

²² Jōdoji is one of the Buddhist temples on the grounds of Enryakuji Monastery on Mount Hiei in Kyoto, founded in the late 8th and early 9th century by the monk Saichō (767–822).

While studying Western sciences, Shiba Kōkan, like other rangaku figures, was sometimes critical of Buddhism and Confucianism. He criticized Confucians and Buddhists for their lack of scientific knowledge: "...if one does not know the natural sciences, how can he pretend to know something else..." [French 1974, p. 148], but it is known that he spent the last years of his life in the Zen monastery Engakuji in Kamakura. Only the *kami* deities Kōkan treated more favorably, as he wrote: "Our [country] is the Land of the Gods, and there can be no other faith than Shinto in it" [Ibid.].

In the main, central part of the scroll, a meeting at the table of three scientists-sages of Japan, China, and the West, is depicted. The analogy in the depiction of the representatives of the three cultures with the illustration of the famous Chinese parable *Three Wise Men Tasting Vinegar* is pointed out in the Christie's auction abstract [Christie's auction 2001].

Let us remind the summary of the parable. Three great sages, Kongzi, or Confucius (left), Buddha (center), and Laozi (right), stand around a barrel of vinegar and taste it.²³ Kongzi has a sour expression on his face, Buddha has bitterness on his forehead, and only Laozi is smiling. Vinegar in this case is interpreted as a symbol of life/vitality. To Confucius, vinegar tasted sour because in the present time, man on earth has stopped following the Way of Heaven, which the whole universe follows. To Buddha, the taste was bitter since life on earth is filled with attachments and desires that lead to suffering. Laozi alone was quite satisfied with the taste because he recommended not to turn away from reality, from the "perishable world," and advised to merge with it. From the Taoist point of view, bitterness and disappointment come from an ungrateful mind.

In the scroll we are considering and in its possible Chinese prototype, the accents are arranged differently. In traditional

²³ One of the meanings of the hieroglyph 酢 is "thanksgiving (to the gods)" [Big Chinese-Russian Dictionary 1983, p. 745]. Rituals of thanksgiving to the gods were performed with offerings and libations of wine. Probably, vinegar as a derivative of wine retained its sacredness and symbolism.



Fig. 3. *Three Sages*. Fragment of Shiba Kōkan's scroll
The Meeting of the Three Sages of Japan, China, and the West.

illustrations of the parable, the Buddha is the central figure, often depicted larger than the other two sages. On our scroll, however, the Japanese man is a little larger. Traditionally, in the vinegar barrel image, all three figures are positioned without being in any pronounced proximity to each other or separate from each other. In our scroll, the Japanese and the European are seated close to each other, while the Chinese is somewhat apart.

The subject of the parable *Three Wise Men Tasting Vinegar* has probably been popular in Japan for centuries and has become an element of the Japanese cultural code. The great Sesshū (1420–1506) in his triptych *The Three Creeds and the Lotus Pond* (*Sankyō hasu ike*)²⁴ also depicted this subject, slightly altering the composition of the Chinese

²⁴ 拙宗等揚筆 三教・蓮池図 Juemon-blog-archives. Sesshū : <https://juemon.com/blog/archives/4927>

version. He placed Buddha and Laozi sitting side by side, and Confucius not only opposite them, but at a distance from both, with his back to the viewer and looking away. In addition, the artist reinforced the Buddhist component with two additional parts depicting lotuses, the sacred flower of Buddhism, symbolizing wisdom, spiritual purity, enlightenment, and nirvana. It seems that, in this triptych, the Buddhist monk Sesshū expressed his adoration of Buddhism, a teaching, from his point of view, not comparable to other spiritual concepts. It seems that the author of the scroll might have considered the Sesshū triptych as a prototype rather than Chinese illustrations.

The Japanese islanders' perceptions of the triad were broadened by the introduction of mainland religious teachings, which made it possible to interpret the triad as part of a multicomponent polyreligious complex. Perhaps one of the most common interpretations was the projection of the Buddhist triad onto the trinity of "native deities," and one of the first religious-philosophical justifications devoted to "the correlation of the three borrowed religious-philosophical teachings (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism)" was monk Kūkai's work *Three Teachings Show and Direct* (797) [Kukai 2005]. It is curious that another stage of reinterpretation of the triad probably occurred during the period of borrowing the achievements of Western culture starting from the 16th century, and not under the influence of Christianity, which was not accepted everywhere and not completely, but mainly of European scientific thought. It seems that our scroll is an example of this rethinking, especially as the image continues to change over time under the influence of new scientific, ideological, and other preferences.

It seems that, even though we do not know whether this is the first time that a meeting of representatives of the three cultures was depicted on the scroll, the idea of such a composition seems to have been present in Japanese culture at least in the eighteenth century. Later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the same composition of participants, but in a modified form and with a narrower aspect, namely medicine, is found on the scroll *Portraits of the Four Founders of Medicine of Japan, China,*

and Europe.²⁵ While in Shiba Kōkan's scroll the medical aspect was also represented by an anatomical atlas open on the table in front of the European, a bouquet of medicinal plants next to the Chinese, and a white snake, a Taoist symbol of immortality, on the hand of the Japanese. Such attention to medicine seems quite logical, since it was medicine that was one of the main turning points from which the comprehension of Western culture in Japan began.

Let us return to our scroll. The central figure of the company gathered around the table is the Japanese, and not only because he is located in the center and painted somewhat larger than the other two characters, but he is also distinguished by the meticulousness of his depiction. Art historians have noted that the face of the Japanese is drawn in an extremely realistic manner and is probably a portrait of a person well known to the artist, while the images of the Chinese and the European are more likely to be collective images of scholars in China and the West, without specific prototypes [Ishida & Yamamoto 2002, p. 196].

The scroll depicts a young man of noble descent, as evidenced by the ceremonial dark blue *kataginu* ²⁶ with white family emblems,

²⁵ 医道四祖画像. The scroll depicts Oonamuchi-no-mikoto and Sukunabikona-no-mikoto in the top row, two deities of the earth's organizer, who, according to *Nihon Shoki*, "joined forces, merged hearts, and established ways to cure diseases." In the bottom row are Hippocrates (ca. 460–370 B.C.), an ancient Greek physician and philosopher, the "father of medicine," and Shen-nung (Yandi, Yaowan), one of the most important cultural heroes of Chinese mythology, patron of agriculture and medicine. The scroll is dated 1850. Researchers associate it with the Nakatsu domain in Buzen province (present-day Oita prefecture), known for the study and practical mastering of Western medicine methods during the Tokugawa period [Oita rangaku jishi 2005, p. 54]. The image of the *Four Founders of Medicine* was shared with the author by A. M. Dulina.

²⁶ *Kataginu* 肩衣 is a sleeveless shirt with exaggerated shoulders, an element of Edo-era samurai clothing.

a black kimono, probably denoting the importance of the moment of the meeting, a fan, and a white snake wrapped around his right hand, which rests on the tip of a folding *suehiro* fan. The white snake on the right wrist is probably a reference to ancient Taoist beliefs. According to them, the white snake is a symbol of immortality and wisdom. The white snake was also a symbol of the goddess Benzaiten, one of the Shichifukujin,²⁷ or *Seven Gods of Happiness*. The Japanese man's left hand rests calmly on the table.

The family emblem (Jp. *mon*), even if it is not associated with the Japanese depicted, must be thought to belong to a vassal of one of the most enlightened clans of the time. It is noteworthy that the possessions of the family were located in the northeast of Japan archipelago, not in the southwest, where the most enlightened, “pro-Western” part of Japanese intellectuals concentrated around Nagasaki. The most probable initial image of the emblem could correspond to two clans: Ishioka-han and Ishikura-han.

The Ishikura domain was in Kōzuke province (present-day Gumma Prefecture), but information about the clan that possessed this domain is uncertain.²⁸ Ishioka clan owned the lands of Fuchū in Hitachi province (present-day Ibaraki Prefecture), included in the larger domain of Mito, which belonged to one of the three branches of Tokugawa [Kinsei hansei hankō daijiten 2006, pp. 329–330]. The second daimyō of Mito, Tokugawa Mitsukuni, created in 1657 the Shōkōkan, a historiographical society that laid the foundation

²⁷ Benzaiten 弁財天 is a goddess of wealth, arts, and love, one of the seven gods of happiness and good fortune (Shichifukujin). Derived from the Indian goddess Sarasvati, according to the Rigveda, who defeated the three-headed Vritra (Ahi), she is often depicted surrounded by snakes. The second character in the Japanese spelling of the goddess's name 財 “wealth/money” clearly indicates that she is the giver of financial good fortune.

²⁸ I thank A. A. Rechkalova, a rare specialist in Japanese heraldry, for her help in identifying the emblem on the kataginu, and A. M. Gorbylev for information on the Ishioka 石岡藩 and Ishikura 石倉藩 clans.

of the Mitogaku trend.²⁹ The domain was famous for its highly educated samurai. Perhaps because the Japanese in the portrait was a representation of a real person, some carefully drawn details were deliberately distorted by the author of the scroll, which is related to the Edo-period prohibition for artists, writers, and playwrights to depict representatives of noble clans among their characters.

Still, the hints made by the artist allow several assumptions to be made. The artist could have depicted an emblem of an insignificant family, unrelated to the person depicted. Let us assume that the prototype could be Odano Naotake (1750–1780), with whom Shiba Kōkan, despite the differences in social class, was friends. In addition, we see some similarities with the portrait of Odano.³⁰ Odano was a vassal of daimyo Satake Yoshiatsu (1748–1785) of the Akita domain, while Kōkan was a simple citizen. Both artists underwent similar stages of training, beginning at the Kanō school, then mastering *ukiyo-e*, working in the style of Suzuki Harunobu, trained in Chinese painting with Sō Shiseki, and introduced to Western painting through Hiraga Gennai. Odano Naotake died young but managed to inscribe his name in the history of Japanese art by establishing, with his lord, the Akita-ha school of Western-style painting.

In 1773, Satake Yoshiatsu sent Odano to Edo to study metallurgy, but the young man spent most of his time studying Western painting. In 1774, Odano was asked to illustrate a book by Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757–1827) on *rangaku*, or *Western sciences*.” It must be emphasized that

²⁹ Mitogaku, or the Mito school, originated in the domain of Mito (present-day Ibaraki Prefecture) in 1657, when the second head of the house, Tokugawa Ieyasu's grandson, Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628–1700), established the Shōkōkan Library, and a community of scholars emerged to research the country's history and Shintō beliefs. Mitsukuni commissioned them to compile the *Dai Nihonshi (History of Great Japan)*.

³⁰ I express my gratitude to T. I. Redko-Dobrovolskaya, who shared her bold guess, which seems quite reasonable, that the prototype of the Japanese man on the scroll could be Odano Naotake.

the daimyo of Akita patronized his vassal because he did paint too and was interested in Western painting. When Odano began to study and master Western painting, Shiba Kōkan was still practicing *ukiyo-e* prints. Based on surviving documents, Calvin French notes that it was Odano who introduced Shiba Kōkan to the basics of Western painting [French 1974, p. 79–84]. The emblem, possibly belonging to the Ishioka/Ishikura family, points to the possessions in the northeast of Honshu Island, where the domain of Akita was located.

Let us also consider the version that the scroll is an ironic, perhaps even satirical illustration of the *Notes of Shumparō*, in which case in the depicted Japanese one can see a portrait of Matsudaira Sadanobu (1759–1829), which, albeit indirectly, is indicated by the family emblem on the *kataginu*. The emblem, as already stated, very likely belonged to the Ishioka clan, of the Fuchū Domain, Hitachi Province. The history of the domain shows that, in 1700, it was given to the 5th son of the founder of the Tokugawa *bakufu*, Matsudaira Yoritaka (1630–1707), and was ruled by the Matsudaira clan (Mito branch) until the *bakuhan* system was abolished in 1871. In this reading, the white snake on the Japanese man's hand can be interpreted as an allusion to Matsudaira Sadanobu's financial reforms, which formed an important part of the so-called Kansei reforms (1789–1793).³¹

Let us also reveal the assumption expressed by the authors of the catalog of the Ruth and Sherman Lee collection that the portraits of the Chinese and the European are collective portraits. In the portrait of the Japanese, the artist limited himself to the image of the hero, while he felt it necessary to supplement the portraits of the Chinese and the European with objects indicating their occupation and social status. Let us turn to the objects laid out on the table.

In front of the Chinese man, there is a vase with plants on the left and a *ruyi* scepter, a symbol of scholarship and high social status,³² and

³¹ Interpretation by Prof. Mashimo Atsushi.

³² The scepter *ruyi* 如意 (literal translation “as you wish”) is one of the most benevolent symbols. In fine art, if a brush symbolizing a scholar or official

a scroll, apparently Confucian, on the right. The bouquet consists of two medicinal plants, aconite and a species of buttercup,³³ which confirms the hero's scholarly pursuits, most likely medicine. The Confucian character of the image is reinforced by the pose of the portraitist – hands hidden in the sleeves. A significant part of Chu Lung-hsing's article is devoted to a detailed analysis of the pose, when the arms are folded on the chest, hands closed with sleeves, symbolizing Confucian modesty and humility. Examining the self-portrait of Shiba Kōkan (created in 1810), on which the artist depicted himself in a similar pose, the Taiwanese art historian compares it to the portraits of Shen Zhou (1427–1509) and Toyo Oda

and a silver money boot are added to the image of the scepter, it means a wish for professional and social success and growth [Eberhard 1986, p. 318]. It seems that the scroll drawn next to the scepter indicates that the portrait shows a scientist, and the headdress and a fragment of a red shoe show that the person depicted can be a high-ranking official, most likely a scientist in public service. I am grateful for hints in determining the scepter to K. M. Tertitsky.

- ³³ *Buttercup quelpaertensis* (also *Ranunculus quelpaertensis* (H. Lev.), Nakai, *kitsune no botan* (キツネノボタン, “fox peony”) is a medicinal, highly toxic, analgesic plant. *Corydalis yanhusuo* is a subdivision of the buttercups, of poppy order, which used against inflammatory and neuropathic pain. *Aconitum* (ウズ, 烏頭, 於宇, 布須伊毛, 伊布須) is a highly toxic plant, an analgesic. The scientific name of the genus *Aconitum* comes from the name of the city of Akone (Aconae) in Greece, where, according to myth, Heracles, performing his twelfth feat, brought out of the underworld Cerberus, the watchdog of Hades, a monster with three heads: barking, the dog scattered a whitish foam on the meadows, from which grew flowers that received malignant power. Ancient scientists called aconite “the Mother Queen of Poisons”. It must be handled with extreme caution, as the poison, even in simple contact with the plant, penetrates the body. In Tibet, aconite is considered the “king of medicine” because it helps with severe diseases where other remedies are powerless. For help in identifying plants, I thank Georges Metallier, a specialist in the historical flora of China.

(1420–1506) [Chu 2008, p. 4–5]. The high ethical qualities of the Chinese man are emphasized by the leopard skin on the stool on which he sits. The leopard in China is a symbol of courage and valor, it was also attributed the ability to expel evil.³⁴ The Chinese participant's clothes, headdress, and a fragment of a shoe show that he is a capital official. We would like to draw attention to the fact that shoes, even if only a small fragment, are shown only on the portrait of the Chinese.

As the marker of the European, the artist chose an anatomical atlas, unfolded on a page depicting a human skeleton. Citing the opinion of Timon Screech, a well-known expert on the history of Japanese art, the authors of the catalog of the Ruth and Sherman Lee collection believe that the scroll depicts Lorenz Geister (1683–1758), a German botanist, anatomist, physician, surgeon, and founder of German surgery [Ishida & Yamamoto 2002, p. 196]. His main work, *Surgery*, was translated into Japanese and became famous in Japan.³⁵ Several explanations can be offered for the discrepancy between the portrait of the European physician and the author of the opened book: either, at the time of writing the scroll, the artist was not yet aware of the existence of a translation of Geister's work, but the surgeon's name was known to him; or he wanted to emphasize in this way that there were many learned men in the West who knew, practiced, and taught surgery; or, unlikely as it may seem, he simply did not have a portrait of Adam Culmus. In our opinion, G. Tarantino's remark about the ironic accent that marks the image of the skeleton on the scroll deserves attention. In the original atlas, from which the Japanese edition of the book is supposed to be redrawn, both arms of the skeleton are stretched along the torso, while, on the scroll, the left

³⁴ The leopard skin was a mystery for a long time, which M. V. Grachev helped to unravel.

³⁵ The translation was made from the Dutch edition of *Heelkundige Onderwijzingen enz.* (Amsterdam, 1755). Individual sections were first translated under different titles in 1792 and were distributed only to physicians; the complete translation was published in 1825.

arm of the skeleton is bent at the elbow and directed to the side, while the right arm is stretched along the body. G. Tarantino notes that such a pose is often found in Dutch male portraits [Tarantino 2016, p. 663], such as in the portraits by Frans Hals (1650s).

The European is depicted wrapped in a brown cape, his white shirt with a soft tie, a pink vest, a white cuff, and a wig on his head are also visible. The thoroughness of the depiction of the wig, shirt and vest does not suggest that the artist did not know the other components of the European costume; more likely, he did not find it necessary to depict them, which is why he “wrapped” the European in a cape.

The chair on which the European sits is a marvelous creation, a kind of combination of a European chair and a Chinese stool, where the backrest, upholstery, and three bizarrely curved legs do not correspond to each other. The only explanation for the appearance of such a “furniture monster” in the image can be the assumption that the artist has not seen the European chair and imagined the design as he could.³⁶ However, this assumption has a basis only if the picture was painted before the artist's trip to Nagasaki and his visits to the homes of Europeans, since there are still drawings by Shiba Kōkan in his work *Journey to the West* (1794)³⁷ depicting chairs. There also remains the possibility that the scroll was not authored by Shiba, but by an unknown artist; or that the appearance of such a “chair” is an irony of the artist, as is the joke with the skeleton.

In the upper part of the scroll, the artist depicted a burning building and people trying to put it out. The tongues of flame devouring the structure, which resembles a pagoda or temple gate,³⁸

³⁶ I am grateful to E.V. Volchkova for her help with the definition of a “European” stool.

³⁷ Sayu ryodan 西遊旅譚.

³⁸ According to the concept proposed by Prof. Mashimo Atsushi, this is not a cult building, but a secular one, rather the residence of a high-ranking official, possibly Matsudaira Sadanobu. In our opinion, there are no sufficient grounds for such an assumption at the moment.



Fig. 4. *The fire*. Fragment of Shiba Kōkan's scroll
The Meeting of the Three Sages of Japan, China, and the West.

are drawn similar to the images of fires on scrolls of the 13th and 14th centuries.³⁹

However, I see allegory not only in the depiction of the strength or, conversely, the failure of Buddhism, but also in the depiction of the three teams involved in extinguishing the fire, representatives of the same cultures as of those sitting around the table.

³⁹ *Jigoku Sōji Emaki (Illustrated Scroll of Notes from Hell)*, 12 c., *Kitano Tenjin Engi Emaki (Illustrated Scroll of the Life of Kitano Tenjin)*, 13 c., *Hōgen monogatari Emaki (Illustrated Scroll of the Tale of Disturbance of the Hōgen Years)*, 14 c., *Shūro Jigoku Ezu (Picture of Underground Dungeons From the Bell Tower)*, 17 c. I am grateful to N. N. Trubnikova for the proposed list of illustrated scrolls of medieval fires.

In the center, a group of five Europeans extinguish a fire with a fire hose connected to a pump. To the right, on a dais, between three large barrels of “water” is a group of seven mighty, half-naked Japanese, who, with their look and dress (“aprons”), are similar to *sumō* wrestlers. They calmly observe what is happening. In the annotation of the Christie’s auction catalog, the author drew attention to “Japanese standing aside, using water for ablution” [Christie’s auction 2001]. This explanation seems ill-founded, and it is not clear what ablution we can talk about. On the left, above the Europeans but below the Japanese, there is a detachment of Chinese with a commander on horseback and his subordinates, some of them running around with small vessels (basins) in their hands, pouring fire. Both the Chinese and the Japanese are depicted carrying banners. This seems to be an illustration of the technical superiority of the Europeans, while the Chinese operate in the old-fashioned way. The Japanese watch them with a touch of superiority, apparently demonstrating their unwavering faith in *kami*, since the depiction of them as *sumō* wrestlers, as well as *shimenawa*, (*the sacred rope*)⁴⁰ with which the barrels are tied, refers to native Japanese beliefs and ancient rituals.

The carefully drawn contents of the barrels, however, bear little resemblance to water, but rather to some solid substance. In the Tokugawa era, *sumō* competitions were also held in Buddhist temples, called *Kanjin sumō*.⁴¹ The competitions were held to collect alms for

⁴⁰ *Shimenawa* 注連縄 is a rope of rice straw enclosing a sacred place.

⁴¹ *Kanjin sumō* 勧進相撲. *Kanjin* (Buddh. benefactor), a collection of donations for religious needs. *Sumō* is a type of martial art that originated in the Japanese islands in antiquity, was performed at Shintō shrines, and was part of *matsuri* rituals. During the Tokugawa era, bouts began to be held in Buddhist temples in order to raise donations for the construction of new temples and the repair of destroyed ones. Between 1648 and 1742, this activity was banned by the bakufu, and when the ban was lifted, competitions were held regularly in Edo in winter and spring, in Kyoto in summer, and in Osaka in fall.

the construction and repair of Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines. During these competitions, large sacks of rice were placed around the dueling site to make a circle barrier, later four poles were placed at the corners with a roof stretched between them. By placing fire barrels loaded with rice on the scroll, the artist was probably showing that, while the Europeans and the Chinese were fighting the fire, the astute Japanese were already preparing to hold competitions to raise donations to rebuild the pagoda destroyed by the fire. In this image, the artist is again ironic, but this time with regard to his compatriots.

I would like to say a few words about the fire pump and the hose. The catalog of the Ruth and Sherman Lee collection draws attention to this unit. The authors note that a similar image is found on one of the screens of *Southern Barbarians* (1797) from the collection of the National Library of France, and, in *Nagasaki Kembunroku*, or *Diary of Nagasaki* (1797), there is a detailed description of this mechanism and its name – “an unusual mechanism for water movement (*mizuage kiki*)” – is given [Ishida & Yamamoto 2002, p. 197]. Fires in the history of Japan were one of the most frequent and destructive disasters, with cities particularly suffering from them. Edo, the largest and most populous city in the country, suffered more often and more than others. During the 265 years of the Tokugawa era (1603–1868), historians count more than 1,500 fires, of which about 50 were large. The Meireki fire of 1657 was the worst, killing more than a hundred thousand people. It left a deep trace in memory and was reflected in fine art and literature,⁴² and in 1772 there was another great Meiwa fire.

Fire prevention measures were provided for when the shogun's castle was built, but the rest of the city, especially where ordinary citizens lived, remained unprotected until the early 18th century, before measures in the form of fire brigades introduced by Shogun Yoshimune (1684–1751). The Meiwa fire of 1772 was extinguished using inefficient

⁴² *Musashi Abumi* by Asai Ryōi (?–1690), novels by Ihara Saikaku (1642–1643), engravings by Utagawa Kunisada (1786–1865) and others.

hand-held wooden fire pumps called *ryūdōsui*.⁴³ The scroll probably depicts a pump from the *Brandspuyten-boek*, a fire-fighting training manual by the Dutch artist and inventor Jan van der Heijden (1637–1712), which Shiba Kōkan may have seen while traveling to Nagasaki. The machine seen by the artist must have impressed him so much with its technical capabilities that he considered it a kind of emblem of European achievements along with medicine.

Overall, the scroll is filled with numerous symbols and hints. Even our primary research allows us to draw some conclusions. The realism and thoroughness of the details of the image, we think, show us important elements of the cultural code of the eighteenth-century Japanese, emphasizing their changes over time. Let us name the main ones:

1) a sea wave, demonstrating the surmountable remoteness of the archipelago in relation to spiritual concepts and knowledge;

2) a triad, or three figures sitting at a table – a Japanese, a Chinese, and a European, the characters' poses and objects lying on the table symbolizing the most important spiritual components for a Japanese of the 18th century: honor, nobility (the face of a samurai), inclination to development, wisdom (a *suehiro* fan, a white snake on the wrist of a Japanese); scholarship (a scepter of *rūyi*, a scroll, a vase with medicinal plants), courage (a leopard skin), modesty (the pose of a Chinese); the latest knowledge and technical inventions (anatomical atlas, a European's fire hose and pump);

3) flame/fire.

Many of the images on the scroll may have Buddhist connotations: a wave; a Japanese man placed in the center of the depicted encounter, as if he were an incarnation of the Buddha; a burning structure resembling a Buddhist pagoda; *sumō* wrestlers, and barrels of "rice."

⁴³ *Ryūdōsui* 竜吐水: <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%AB%9C%E5%90%90%E6%B0%B4> History of firefighting in Japan: the Edo period (1600–1868): <https://fire-truck.ru/encyclopedia/istoriya-pozharov-i-pozharnogo-dela-vyaponii-period-edo-1600-1868-godyi.html>

It seems that, if the author of the scroll was Shiba Kōkan, the scroll was painted in the artist's late years, when he converted to Buddhism and lived in a Buddhist monastery. However, a parsing of the symbolism on the scroll shows that the author was more likely to believe in the polyreligious complex characteristic of the archipelago's inhabitants throughout their history.

Irony, mockery, and laughter, which characterize the Edo period culture, are reflected in the scroll. There are ironic hints in the change in the posture of the skeleton in the drawing of the anatomical atlas, the chair on which the European is sitting; the Japanese as sumō wrestlers and the fire barrels filled with rice rather than water; and, if one accepts the version that Matsudaira Sadanobu is depicted, then it is possible to interpret the depiction of the Japanese as ironic and caricatured. If the scroll was indeed made as an ironic illustration for one of Shiba Kōkan's last works, *Shumparō Hikki*, it seems important to note that it nevertheless reflects the ancient traditional ideas of the inhabitants of the Japanese islands regarding the sea wave, fire, the triad, and so on.

Perhaps the three types of culture – Japan, China, and the West – represented twice in the painting, in the main part and in the allegory, represent to some extent the three main components of the artist's work: Chinese painting, late medieval Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, and Western painting.

Although the dating and authorship of the painting are uncertain, it seems that if it was painted by Shiba Kōkan, it was done in the second half of his life; and if it was created by someone else, it was probably by someone close to him, perhaps his student, who knew the life, interests, and hobbies of the master well.

Let us try to speak on behalf of the artist, the author of this painting: "From across the distant blue sea, just as Buddhism once came to Japan, now, in new times, previously unheard knowledge and devices have come. They have been created by strange long-nosed people, with "taking-off" hair, speaking a difficult and little understood language. They have outstanding knowledge and complex

mechanisms, and we are not always able to understand and appreciate them yet, but still we too have qualities worthy of appreciation: honor, courage, and wisdom”.

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Dostoevsky in Japanese Translations: The Problem of Textual Images

U. P. Strizhak

Abstract

The phenomenon of “Japanese Dostoevsky” is the subject of active discussions in literary studies all over the world. One of the central issues discussed is the problem of the textual images in the works of F.M. Dostoevsky. The use of digital humanities’ technologies, the methods of corpus and computational linguistics makes it possible to formalize literary analysis’ tasks to state the texts’ problems in the language of algorithms. In this article the mechanisms of the transformation of textual images in Dostoevsky works in the Japanese representation will be considered. Different linguistic means are used to analyze the perception of the concept “love” as love-affection or love-passion, and concept “strange” as human essential or social characteristic in Russian and Japanese. Such analysis will help also to highlight the peculiarities of the “new translation school” that adheres to the strategy of domestication, making the foreign text more readable.

Keywords: Dostoevsky, Japanese translations, textual image, corpus study, quantitative literary studies

Introduction

The popularity of Dostoevsky in Japan has traditionally been the subject of study around the world. Translations of his works into Japanese continue to provoke numerous discussions among the translators and literary scholars. The phenomenon of “Japanese Dostoevsky” can be

found in various spheres of philological discourse: Dostoevsky's artistic style, his religious and philosophical beliefs, plot lines, the historical and cultural background of the problematic issues of his works, etc. One of the major discussion topics could be addressed to the problem of Dostoevsky's textual images: the origin of Sonya Marmeladova's sacrifice, the nature of Prince Myshkin's charm, the influence of slavery on Smerdyakov's behavior, and the specific motives of Raskolnikov to confess his crime – these and other debatable issues are discussed in the academic research field.

Over the past two decades, the confrontation between two translation schools has intensified in Japan. First is the traditional translation school, which tends to preserve the flavor of the source text. Second is the new translation school, which tends to simplify the source texts to popularize the world classical literary heritage. The most prominent representatives of the new translation school include such famous translators as Kameyama Ikuo, Ura Masaharu, Mochizuki Tetsuo (Russian literature); Anzai Tetsuo and Nanjo Takenori (English literature); Okazawa Shizuya and Sakayori Shin'ichi (German literature); and Kudo Yōko (French literature). Their translations quickly became best-sellers which led to the crucial battle of two schools.

As a result of this confrontation, from 2007, the Japanese media hosted heated debates calling for “the enjoyment of great writers in new translations” under the slogan “Updated classics – now you can read them”.¹ This confrontation led to fierce debate around the figure and legacy of Dostoevsky on the contradiction between traditional academicism from one side and new strategies to win over the “ordinary inexperienced reader” from the other. This confrontation sometimes entailed bold assessments: from the admiring reviews of the new school emphasizing “mistakes, but wonderfully outrageous mistakes,” or: “when looking at the page there is a feeling of freshness,” to bewilderment at the recent proclamation of such slogans as “the bright and cheerful

¹ Nihongo bukkureto 2007. *Kokuritsu kokugo kenkyūjo*: https://mmsrv.ninjal.ac.jp/nihongo_bt/2007/doukou/sinbun/topico2/

Dostoevsky,” “Dostoevsky as a product” [Fujii & Nakashima 2012, p. 24, 49]; so far as to directly accuse fellow Japanese translators from the other camp of myth-making and trickery. In response to these accusations, Numano Mitsuyoshi notes that “Kameyama’s new translation is written in a fresh, contemporary idiom that is relatively easy to read” and in total “recent translations aim for reader-friendliness” [Numano 2012, p. 189–190]. In order “to explain this explosive boom” in Dostoevsky’s translation, Tawada Yōko asks if Dostoevsky’s texts can “be translated in such a way that it reads smoothly and fluidly like a bestseller?” and says the new translations of Dostoevsky are “easily accessible and had a good rhythm [...] the odors and dust of a foreign society are suppressed [...] characters are readily distinguishable from one another despite their inconsistencies” [Tawada 2009, p. 2].

The aim of the new translation school is a “resurrection” of translated classical literature in Japan to refresh hard-to-understand texts with “light and simple words that will reach the very heart of the Japanese reader who might otherwise get lost in the authoritative pronouncements of the classics” (from advertising materials of the Kōbunsha publishing house). However, this often leads to some simplification of texts and sometimes to semantic losses. Such conclusions are most often drawn based on the traditional methods of literary analysis: the slow reading, the observation, comparative and compositional genre analysis, stylistic features of texts, etc.

Traditionally, literary analysis uses mainly the qualitative research methods listed above. It should be considered, however, that with the development of digital technologies, such research methods as the *linguistic study of literary texts* are gaining momentum: the digital identification of various trends, statistically significant patterns, etc. using corpus and computational linguistics. Such digital linguistic approaches tend to be in high demand in the study of plot dynamics, the analysis of the rhythmic organization of texts, and the grammatical and lexical features of a writer’s individual style (frequency and distribution of lexical units, preferences for parts of speech and verb forms), etc. This work examines the peculiarities of the Japanese perception of textual

images in the works of Dostoevsky based on a digital corpus analysis.

The development of instrumental and methodological bases for processing and analyzing corpus texts based on the computational methods makes it possible to use the quantitative data for literary interpretation. Literary texts are difficult to formalize; as for *facts*, they can easily be extracted and transformed from text into numbers; but it is much more difficult to extract *meanings* in any formalized form. Today digital literary analysis deals with problems of varying degrees of complexity: from simple technical problems of the digitization and processing of literary heritage to more complex processes of thematic modeling, stylometry, rhythmic organization of prose and poetic texts, classification and clustering of characters, and the sentiment analysis of the text, etc.

The first conceptual digital tasks facing quantitative literary studies were given in the Russian introduction to [Moretti 2013] as the possibility “to open the way to testing hypotheses and experiments based on digital methods [...] The quantitative basis here is not the main goal, but an empirical platform for analysis; numbers leading to meanings, to large-scale conclusions not about a discrete series of canonical texts surviving in culture, but about a continuous space of forms, styles, and genres” [Moretti 2016, p. 15]. Examples of specific digital tasks are initially offered in [Moretti 2013]: “literary scholars analyze a stylistic structure-free indirect style, the stream of consciousness, melodramatic excess, whatever. But it’s striking how little we know about the genesis of these forms. Once they’re there, we know what to do; but how did they get there in the first place? [...] No one really knows. By sifting through thousands of variations and permutations and approximations, quantitative stylistics of the digital archive may find some answers” [Moretti 2013, pp. 164–165].

This study is based on textual material from the author’s Russian-Japanese parallel corpus of Dostoevsky translations. The principles of creation of the present corpus are as follows. It includes the original sentences in Russian from the novel *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky and their five translations into Japanese, done between 1914 and 2015.

The data was balanced according to chronological criteria using the simple proportional quotas: Yonekawa Masao in 1914 (hereinafter referred as Id1), Nakamura Shōzaburo in 1934 (Id2), Kimura Hiroshi in 1970 (Id3), Mochizuki Tetsuo in 2010 (Id4) and Kameyama Ikuo in 2015 (Id5). This range represents three translations from the twentieth century (Id1, Id2 and Id3) and two from the early 21st century (Id4 and Id5); the latter are the representatives of the new translation school. Corpus data includes, among other indicators, elements of meta-marking – attributed information about the author, translator, and the text, allowing for a diachronic analysis of the different choices of the five translators. So, in this study, we use parallel texts as source for studying the peculiarities of the translators' individual style and their Japanese perception of the original text. Firstly, we consider the words used to represent some key concepts of Dostoevsky.

The Concept of “Love” in Constructing Textual Image: Dostoevsky vs. Japanese Vision

The concept of *love* in Japanese is differentiated in detail linguistically. Kindaichi Haruhiko notes that, generally, feelings and emotions in Japanese have many shades, calling them “specific narrow meaning” or “delicate shades of meaning” [Kindaichi 1978, p. 176]. There are several basic Japanese words with the meaning of “love,” which differ in the intensity and nature of this feeling. According to the results of the recent word frequency analysis, “For the concept 愛 *ai* ‘love’, the most frequent collocations include *God, compassion and pity, friendship and affection, parents and children, friend, kinship*; and for 恋 *koi* “love”: *feeling, admiration, sex, attraction*” [Strizhak 2023]. These two basic concepts developed gradually within the historical changes of Japanese society, when the concept of 愛 *ai* emphasized care and affection, while 恋 *koi* emphasized attraction between people.

Corpus data collected from “The Idiot” and their Japanese translations in general confirmed these data. The results of quantitative and contextual analysis of the corpus examples showed that the word 愛 *ai* is perceived in the Japanese consciousness as love-affection having a wide range of addressees and a positive connotation. The meaning of the word 恋 *koi* conveys love-passion; its structure emphasizes the semantics of sensual and carnal pleasure, strong attraction, self-centeredness, and physical influence. Confirming this, the parallel corpus data demonstrated both the unity and variety in the translators’ choice of words “love,” extracted from *The Idiot*. For 愛 *ai*, the translators agree when conveying into Japanese the concepts of ideal, love without selfishness, forgiveness, love for God, love for all humanity: *Is it possible to love everyone, all people, all your neighbors – I often asked myself this question? [...] Love is above any insult, above any personal indignation [...] to love without selfishness, to love not for yourself, but for the one you love [...] love makes people equal*, etc. [author’s translation].

In the translation of *love* as 恋 *koi*, a unity between translators can be found, for example, in the following scene, revealing the carnal, real essence of a woman in love: *Aglaya Ivanovna loved like a woman, like a person, and not like an abstract spirit*. Another example of 恋 *koi*: four translators out of five use it in the brutal formula “life for love” in Hyppolite’s warning to Myshkin that he faces retribution for his wrong love choice: 恋には恋 *koi ni wa koi* “Love for love. [You took Nastasia Philipovna from him. He will murder Aglaya Ivanovna].” Both examples show love as a dramatic love-passion, far from the ideas of understanding and forgiveness, as would be the case with 愛 *ai*.

The next examples show the *variety* of understanding of translations for *to fall in love*:

(Id1) ～に迷った he got lost in her

(Id2) ～に思いをかけた he gave his feelings to her

(Id3) ～に熱をあげた he gave his heat (passion) to her

(Id4) ～に惚れこんだ he fell in love with her

(Id5) ～にぞっこんだ he admired her

Different approaches are found here: (Id1) emphasizes the idea of “no way out” for Prince Myshkin; (Id2) and (Id3) carry a hidden meaning of the special strength of feeling, which is especially due to the characters 熱 *netsu* “heat, passion” and 懸 *kakeru* “to do something with special passion and diligence”; (Id4) and (Id5) give more colloquial versions *horekomu* and *zokkon* of the original idea of *falling in love*. These five variations show the complexity of the concept associated by Japanese people with the “first step in love,” with the everyday manifestation of this powerful feeling which is rarely openly expressed in traditional Japanese culture. The tendency is that the intensity of the expressed feeling increases sequentially from (Id1) up to (Id5), starting from more abstract and broad meanings “to lose, to think, to give” up to the explicit terms in (Id4) and (Id5): *horekomu* meaning “to be enamored, captivated by” and *zokkon* coming from the ancient 心底 *sokokon* “the very bottom of the heart” therefore connotating “total irresistible love.” This also can illustrate that (Id4) Mochizuki Tetsuo and (Id5) Kameyama Ikuo represent the new school, explicitly stating the open manifestation of love.

The same difference between the two schools is visible in the next several examples describing the *mistress* status of Nastasia Filippovna. The first and the most convincing example is the following. *Aglaya ran to him the very next day after he left her, while he was sitting with his mistress* [author’s translation]: to convey the meaning of the word *mistress*, which is used here as “a woman having an extramarital sexual relationship, especially with a married man,” Japanese translators choose two different ways: (Id1) (Id2) (Id3) used the Japanese equivalent 情婦 *jōfu*, which has a well-established connotation of physicality and sexuality. It is noteworthy that this word does not contain any variant of “love” and consists of two characters 情 *jō* “feeling, passion, empathy” and 婦 *fu* “woman, with the focus on her respective gender and social [wife] identity,” resulting in the total meaning of *jōfu* as “[a man’s] woman for passion.”

In contrast to this, (Id4) and (Id5) use the word 愛人 *aijin*, which connotes less passion, more deep feeling with the flavor of an illegal

secret connection with a married partner. As a result, the textual image of Nastasia Filippovna – originally a femme fatale – is clearly differentiated in the two groups of translations, being much more dramatic in the new school translations as a “secret woman for love.”

Other examples indicating the role of *mistress* in the structure of Nastasya Filippovna’s textual image (in total seven entries of her status as *mistress* in the novel, e.g. *The worst thing is that he openly keeps his mistress*) confirm the same tendency: (Id1) (Id2) (Id3) in total use *jōfu* or *koibito* (also love-passion as mentioned above) in 86 percent (18 entries out of 21) while (Id4) (Id5) applicate *ajin* for her in the same ratio, 86 percent (12 entries out of 14).

The representation of her textual image as a *rival* in love to Aglaya was also transformed over the 100-year diachronic period and acquired new subtle shades of *love* in the recent translations. The traditional school of (Id1) (Id2) (Id3) use the simple basic equivalent 競争者 *kyōsōsha* “rival,” which has no difference whether used in sport or in love; in contrast, (Id4)² and (Id5) use a strong word for rival 恋敵 *koigataki* “love enemy,” explicitly highlighting the “love struggle.” This may also indicate the tendency of the gradual detailing of the love sphere in modern everyday Japanese. The use of 恋 *koi* here also proves by contradiction the essence of 愛 *ai*, which is non-competing love with no rivals.³

A similar trend of changing the understanding of a concept, connected with “women” in the new translation school can be seen with the issue of “the role of women in society.” The classical translations of this concept in (Id1) (Id2) (Id3) prefer the version 婦人問題 *fujin mondai* which highlights the idea of feminine nature (due to the character 婦, which emphasizes the traditional gender role in Japanese society. The new translation school tends to focus on the opposite connotation

² In (Id4) it is accompanied by the phonetic clue *raibaru* from Eng. rival, which gives a more modern flavor as a loanword.

³ The term 愛敵 *aiteki* in Japanese has the only meaning ‘Love your enemy’ in the context of Christianity.

of a feminist agenda using the collocation 女性解放問題 *josei kaihō mondai* “the emancipation question” when translating the concept of “the feminine question.”

Essential and Social in the Nature of ‘Strangeness’ in Japanese Translations

Another key idea of Dostoevsky is the problem of “self and others,” which is a widely debated issue in Japan as well. Takahashi Seiichirō notes that it “put questions to Japanese readers as to one’s own self and the means of enlightenment” [Takahashi 2004, p. 77]. In *The Idiot* the concept of “alienation” from the world is paradoxically combined in two textual images: Hippolyte, an atheist and nonbeliever, claiming “I am the sole outcast,” being separated from and humiliated by the crowd in one of the key scenes of the novel, and Prince Myshkin, who gets upset several times in the story because of his “being outside” of the surrounding world and his inability to fit into society. According to R. Lord [Lord 1967, p. 36], Myshkin “has short-circuited the normal paths of living” and is afraid of normalness: the mere thought of life “full of normal individuals remains intolerable.” As in [Saisu 2017, p. 85], “Hippolyte suffered from the fact that he felt like he did not understand people or sounds, a miscarriage of nature. Myshkin also had this feeling. Such feelings are born from internal nihilism, and Myshkin understands the suffering of nihilists, therefore he can feel the pain of other people.” No doubt this is an important feature of both characters, constructing their textual images.

To describe this psychological state of the heroes, Dostoevsky firstly uses the word *chuzhoi* “stranger, alien” in the meaning close to “outlier,” as in “a person or thing situated away or detached from the main body or system.” In Japanese translations, it is translated descriptively 縁も (ゆかりも) ない (他人) “the other with no connections,” which fits well the textual image of both heroes, underlying their detachment from society. The second expression to describe the “alienation” of a person

is the physiologically accented *vykidysh* “miscarriage,” and Japanese translations of this concept are inherently different. The classical variant is 除け者 *nokemono* “a person who is excluded and removed being unfit,” emphasizing the idea of rejection. In contrast to this, Kameyama Ikuo in (Id5) offers a literal variant 死産児 *shisanji* “miscarriage” with the characters “dead,” “born,” and “child,” maybe connoting loss as the essence of Prince Myshkin’s existence. It sounds very specific and creates a painful feeling despite his overall textual image being “a wonderful man.” So, Japanese readers have two different types of creation/person/character to perceive in the two translation schools: one is *rejected* and *removed* by the environment; the other is *lost* by nature.

More discrepancies are observed when conveying the concept of “alien, strange” in another context. Dostoevsky uses *chuzhoye* when describing the foreign environment “killing” Myshkin on his way abroad. Myshkin, being unfit for Russian reality, has a similar feeling regarding foreign reality, saying that *the strange* (*chuzhoye*) was killing him: “My first impression was a very strong one, repeated the prince. When they took me away from Russia, I remember I passed through many German towns that weighed terribly upon me; I could understand that it was all foreign and strange.” [The strange was killing me]. [author’s translation]. If we explore the details of meaning of five Japanese translations, we find four different interpretations of *the strange that kills*: (Id1) (Id3) 見なれぬもの[がぼくを苦しめた] *unusual, unacquainted, not used to, not comfortable things/persons/objects*

(Id2) 異なったもの[が僕を苦しめた] *different things/persons/objects*

(Id4) よその国のもの[に打ちのめされかけた] *things/persons/objects from another country*

(Id5) 無縁なもの[に殺されようとしていた] *unrelated things/persons/objects*

Four sides of the phenomenon of “the strange” are distinguished here. The question of which interpretation better corresponds to Dostoevsky’s original idea is beyond the scope of this study. Here I show that the extensive polysemantics in Japanese for the concept

“strange” gives Japanese translators a wide scope for its interpretation. In turn, the range of Japanese translations makes us think about the multidimensionality of this concept: what actually is the nature of *the strange*? Strange as different in its essential features (natural aspect); strange as outside a given community (physical aspect); strange as unusual is a psychological aspect and strange as a lack of communication (social aspect). This diversity of choice provides great opportunities and enriches the language of the target text; on the other hand, such shades of meaning oblige the translator to choose one option, which can confuse *the complex formation* of the textual image of the characters. In fact, in the Japanese perception of the textual image of Prince Myshkin in his *otherness* we have four different types of strangeness which may make the reader think deeply about the nature of his alienation from any society.

Thus, the analysis of the concept of “love” as a tool for the construction of textual images, firstly, confirmed that the Japanese perception of this concept differentiates selfless love-affection and self-centered love-passion; secondly, the textual images of the heroes and feminine concepts associated with them in the novels often differ depending on whether the translator belongs to the classical or new school of translation. Recent translations construct the female image of Nastasya Filippovna more essentially, not just as the “woman for passion” but revealing the complex concept of a secret irresistible love with the flavor of empathy; these “new” images are more dramatic and influenced by the social change in the way feelings are expressed. The textual representation of Prince Myshkin in his strangeness also differs depending on the translator, and this concept of “strange” in relation to him varies between “alienation from society” and “essential alienation,” which makes the reader wonder about the nature of *otherness*.

“To Save” or “To Be Saved”: The Author’s Language or the Reader’s Language?

Exploring the example above of “the strange was killing me,” we can also detect a difference in Japanese sentence structure, demonstrating the alternation of two interpretation strategies: foreignization and domestication. The domestication strategy, according to L. Venuti [Venuti 1995, p. 20], is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values,” bringing “the author back home” in contrast to the foreignization strategy as “an ethnodeliant pressure” on those cultural values “to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad.”

In the example above, the classical school uses the foreignization strategy retaining a text close to the original, and the new school fundamentally change the structure, shifting the focus from *the strange* that kills to a human: *it kills him* becomes (Id4) *he was overwhelmed by* ～に打ちのめされかけた *ni uchinomesarekaketa* and (Id5) *he was about to be killed by* ～に殺されようとしていた *ni korosareyō to shita*. Such passive voice language patterns, when attention is focused on the object passively accepting the impact of external forces (here – *the strange*, that guides a person’s behavior), are highly conventionalized in Japanese. Corpus analysis demonstrates this asymmetry *to kill* → *to be killed* and shows the difference in the ‘subject-object-action’ triad between two schools of translations. For example:

Terrible impressions [suddenly overtook Rogozhin and thereby] *saved the prince from the inevitable knife blow*.

(Id1) (Id2) (Id3) 恐ろしい印象が [...] 公爵を救った *osoroshii inshō ga [...]* *kōshaku wo sukutta* “the terrible **impressions** saved the prince from the inevitable knife blow”

(Id4) (Id5) それによって公爵は [...] ナイフの一撃を免れた・逃げれることができた *sore ni yotte kōshaku ha [...]* *naifu no ichigeki wo manugareta/nigerareta* “the **prince** escaped the knife blow because of this” (was saved because of this)

Something was haunting him, [and it was reality, not fantasy].

(Id1) (Id2) (Id3) あるものが彼を追及していた・彼につきまとして
aru mono ga kare wo tsuikyū shite · tsukimatotte “**something was pursuing him/following him**”

(Id4) (Id5) 何ものかに付きまといわれて・追われており *nani mono ka ni tsukimatowarete · owarete* “he is **being followed/chased by something**”

All corpus data generally confirm the tendency mentioned above: the new school tends to shift the focus from the inanimate subject to the person. As a result of such domestication, the original text of Dostoyevsky is fundamentally transformed, focusing on the person and their state with less emphasis on the causation, e.g.: an irresistible desire **captured** the prince → the prince **was captured by** an irresistible desire / the prince **became a slave of** an irresistible desire; something unpleasant seemed **to hurt** the prince → the prince felt as if **he had been hurt by** something unpleasant; a terrible fear **attacked** me → **I was attacked by** a terrible fear, etc. These examples illustrate and clarify that the result and not the process, a state and not an action tend to be emphasized in Japanese. Such an interpretation brings the original Dostoevsky text closer to the Japanese reader: the less the action is focused upon, the more Japanese-like the text is (Numano Mitsuyoshi calls such strategy a “reader-friendly approximation” in [Numano 2012, p. 189]). This may contribute to the discussion of such a widely debatable feature of Japanese in its preference not to indicate something intensive as a process, but to present it as a resulting state; and this is one of the main differences of the new school of translation.

Another important observation is when the two translation schools interpret Dostoyevsky’s ideas in the same way. It could be said that such unity (in violation of the cultural and language norms of the Japanese text) shows the most stable fragments of the original textual image, as it remains unchanged. In this sense, it could be guessed that all translators recognize the image of Nastasya Filippovna as the strongest one in the novel, because even the inanimate causes associated with her actions or belongings have a strong impact on those around her, which is reflected in the Japanese translations.

First, the image of Nastasya Filippovna influences Prince Myshkin the most from the very beginning of the story. Starting from her face on the portrait: *something was hidden in that face and struck him just now*; then the first glance at her: *his first impression almost never left him*; her face *struck him even more now*. Throughout the story, this impact continues unabated and even becomes stronger: *that month in the provinces, when he saw her almost every day, had a terrible effect on him*. Nastasya Filippovna has a strong impression on the other characters of the novel as well. For example, on the passionate Rogozhin: *her appearance produced a marvellous effect upon him*. In her young years she had a strong effect on her patrons: *Nastasya Filippovna's reply astonished both of the friends (patrons)*. This unity in the choice of interpretation by Japanese translators once again proves by language means that Nastasya Filippovna herself, and even her portrait have a magical effect and strong impact on everyone around her.

The same unity of interpretation is found with the other key concepts of the novel as well, e.g. “**love makes people equal**”: (Id1) (Id2) (Id3) (Id4) (Id5) 愛は人を平等にする *ai wa hito o byōdō ni suru* “**love makes people equal**.” Another striking example is the moment describing Myshkin’s painful feeling of happiness and insight during an attack of epilepsy in a collision with Rogozhin: “an extraordinary inner light illuminated his soul” became (Id1) (Id2) (Id3) (Id4) (Id5) 異常な・驚くべき内側からの光が彼の心を照らした *ijōna/odoroku beki uchigawa kara no hikari ga kare no kokoro o terashita* “an abnormal/amazing inner **light illuminated his soul**.” The strength of feeling, the importance of this moment is one of the key points for the textual description of the mental and physical characteristics of Myshkin’s personality – perhaps this is the reason to retain this “inner light” in the very focus of the moment as the main subject of the sentence.

To compare, we can also observe the same kind of translator unity in the two key scenes of another novel of Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*. The first powerful concept to guide human behavior is “love”: in the finale scene of the novel, in the proclamation

“*Love resurrected them*”, “love” is interpreted by all translators as the strong external force retaining the main subject of the sentence: 愛が彼ら・二人を復活させた・蘇らせた *Ai ga karera futari o fukkatsu saseta/yomigaeraseta* “*Love brought them back to life.*” Second is the scene of Sonya and Raskolnikov reading the Gospel and his confession of the crime: *An unfamiliar feeling [...] rushed into his soul in a wave and immediately softened it:* [...] 感情が、彼の心・胸へ波のように押しよせて・満ちあふれて [...] 彼の心を柔らげた *kanjō ga kare no kokoro/mune he nami no yōni oshiyosete/michiafurete [...] kare no kokoro wo yawarageta* “*feeling like a wave flooded/overflowed his heart/chest, and instantly softened his heart.*” In literary studies, the significance of these two scenes is emphasized many times; see, e.g., the discussion in [Blake 2006, pp. 260–265] about Sonya’s interaction with the Gospel narrative, where E. Blake defines this Bible story as multivalent, providing “that a higher justice will prevail through God’s direct intervention in human affairs” [Ibid., p. 265]. K. A. Stepanyan notes that this is an indication of the Path to Christ, and Sonya “seemed to see the event described by Ioann with her own eyes” [Stepanyan 2007]. It could be presumed that, in the Japanese version, such significant situations and powerful feelings, expressed in Dostoevsky’s texts, are such irresistible forces that even the domestication-oriented new school retains these ‘linguistically non-friendly’ original patterns unchanged, probably to underline their importance.

Conclusion

To investigate why great controversies about the Japanese translations of Dostoevsky have not subsided, we analyzed five translations of the novel *The Idiot* using corpus analysis methods to identify the degree of their divergence, and to find possible reasons for such discrepancies. Three main conclusions were drawn.

Firstly, the analysis of the concepts “love” and “strange” as tools for the construction of textual images confirmed that the Japanese

translations of these concepts differ significantly. Love-affection or love-passion and “strange” as an essential human feature or as a social characteristic are used by the traditional and new translation schools respectively to shape the textual images of the heroes. Secondly, corpus analysis confirmed that the new school predominantly adheres to the principles of domestication, bringing the foreign text closer to the Japanese reader and making it more readable. As a result, the new “Japanese-like” textual images sometimes look more dramatic or less active than the original but are more understandable for the Japanese reader. This results from the tendency not to indicate something intensive as a process, but to present it as a resulting state. In the Japanese vision, Myshkin and other characters are persons who “sense” and “feel” more than they “act.” This conclusion may be a starting point for more research on the Japanese understanding of Dostoevsky’s images. Third, corpus analysis revealed several images and concepts that were not the subject of domestication because of their key literary importance to the text: the less transformed the textual image, the stronger it is in the Japanese perception. Corpus data highlight the domesticable and non-domesticable scenes in the Japanese understanding, either the particular concepts like “love,” “insight,” “inner soul light,” etc., or the textual image in total.

Digital corpus analysis made it possible to identify some tendencies in the construction of the textual images in different Japanese translations of Dostoevsky. Statistically significant patterns in the description of the textual images in the novels *The Idiot* and *Crime and Punishment* confirmed in general the data of the qualitative literary analysis of Japanese translations, but also made it possible to draw new non-trivial conclusions about the essence of the translations of the new school, about the features of the textual images in the Japanese perception. This is the potential of digital corpus methods in literary studies: using corpus data in the literary analysis of Japanese transformations of Dostoevsky’s textual images provides researchers with a new tool and scope for analysis.

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Towards a Phenomenology of Awe: *Suspension of Disbelief for the Moment* and Takarazuka Revue's Sublimation of Ruptures

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Abstract

This paper aims at critically observing the alternating concatenation of seasonally inspired numbers and Japanese legends from time immemorial in the show *Sek Kashō* (「雪華抄」, *Snowflake Anthology*), staged by the Japanese all-female musical company Takarazuka Revue's Flower Troupe in late 2016. The goal is to disclose some of the strategies employed by Takarazuka Revue's administrators in pursuing a necessary agenda of breaking with the tradition while steadily moving forward towards a future of self-reinvention, without disappointing the deeply conservative fans' vast community. The analysis occurs both historically and systematically: on the one hand, the year 2016 was a "bridge" year between 2015, with its two major reconfigurations of the decade-long image of Takarazuka Revue as a bastion of *shōjo* culture firmly anchored in a delusional past and its stubborn rejection of common sense as well as historical reality, and 2017, with its blatant reconfiguration of soft power priorities in terms of theatrical representation; on the other hand, *Sek Kashō* itself is a symbolical gem of Takarazuka Revue's most typical features, signifying an effective yet dignified statement of not so much criticizing the past, but releasing oneself from its almighty grasp so that one can change the direction of the present towards a type of future different than the familiar flows of history so far.

Keywords: mass-media, performativity of culture, live performance(s), annihilation of identity, invented tradition(s), transcendence of history

1. Introduction: Pragmatic love, visionarism, and discipline

The initial idea of this paper stems from a convivium on education, Japan, and the future of the world held at the beginning of 2022. It was one of those spontaneous intellectual gatherings at a time when the global pandemic seemed both to regress and to throw new challenges while people were doing their best to cope with whatever might come their way. Then again, countless reports on Japan's "uniqueness and homogeneity and timeless ethereality" tried to make sense of the nation's – its politicians, its population, its economists and business-managers – stubbornness in clinging to outdated norms and regulations. Famously inflexible in facing uncomfortable truths and in adopting the strategy of rather ignoring problems than courageously addressing them, the clock-bomb of socioeconomic collapse has uninterruptedly been reminding Japanese citizens of the necessity to reevaluate their own systems and to start exploring new avenues of moving towards the future. In this process, the first step becomes the reconsideration of the relationship with the past and with the construction of traditions and cultural representations meant to secure Japan's privileged position among nations as unchallengingly special. One such point of rigid self-definition is the stance towards nature and, more particularly, towards seasons with their purported significance within Japan's classic hierarchy of aesthetic and ideological orchestration.

This paper aims at critically observing the alternating concatenation of seasonally inspired numbers and Japanese legends from times immemorial in the show *Sekkishō* (「雪華抄」, *Snowflake Anthology*), staged by the Japanese all-female musical company Takarazuka Revue's Flower Troupe in late 2016 at Takarazuka Grand Theater from November 11, 2016 until December 13, 2016 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from January 2, 2017 until February 5, with Senna Ayase 仙名 彩世 and Asumi Rio 明日海 りお in the lead-roles. The goal is to disclose some of the strategies employed by Takarazuka Revue's administrators in pursuing a necessary agenda of breaking with

the tradition while steadily moving forward towards a future of self-reinvention, without disappointing the deeply conservative fans' vast community. The analysis occurs both historically and systematically: on the one hand, the year 2016 was a "bridge" year between 2015, with its three major reconfigurations of the decade-long image of Takarazuka Revue as a bastion of *shōjo* culture firmly anchored in a delusional past and its stubborn rejection of common sense as well as historical reality, and 2017, with its blatant reconfiguration of soft power priorities in terms of theatrical representation; on the other hand, *Sek Kashō* itself is a symbolical gem of Takarazuka Revue's most typical features, signifying an effective yet dignified statement of not so much criticizing the past, but releasing oneself from its almighty grasp so that one can change the direction of the present towards a type of future different than the familiar flows of history so far. Fierce pragmatism in facing historical advancement on the global scale and radical responsibility in the proactive reinvention of the self are the two major ideological strategies inaugurated by *Sek Kashō*: the display of "Japanese elegance" in the spirit of *nihonmono* (Japanese-style performance) unfolds gracefully on-stage, starting with the glorious scenery of spring, the glittering waves of summer, the autumn moon, the fascinating world of dancing snowflakes and culminating in the overwhelmingly blooming cherry blossoms, intertwined with famous legends and folk-tales, and sends a message of honoring the past while building up a future in the service of freedom as the fundamental meaning of life – life being itself the most valuable asset one possesses and could ever possess.

Additionally, this paper focuses on the necessity to develop a sense of pragmatic love by means of its phenomenological experience as awe in theater so that audiences learn to embrace – rather than reject, as traditionally taught – their budding or, respectively, their blossoming uniqueness. "Awe" is understood as an existential attitude which allows the consistent exploration of one's individual embedding into the ecosystem, be it external or internal, in a lighthearted, non-judgmental manner; this puts "awe" in direct correlation to the "sublime" as described by Robert Greene (2001, 2018) in his writings: a combination

of Romain Rolland's and Sigmund Freud's "oceanic feeling" and the Stoics' understanding of one's mortality as expressed in "memento mori." Particularly efficient in the practice of discovering, experimenting, and mindfully expanding the boundaries, challenges, intricacies of "awe" has proven the proactive attendance of performances with little to no prior extensive explanations, so that a mental-cognitive loop emerges, in which performers and audiences are engaged in a spiral-like process of empathic communication – and, to a certain degree, of mutual learning.

Accordingly, the current analysis encompasses the three dimensions of "awe" as corporative entertainment in the manner in which it is comprised in live performances as educational protocols during the past five to seven years: humanity's experience of emulating nature; the acceptance of imperfection and impermanence as existential paradigms; self-sacrifice and the protection of others in the hope for a better future one might not – shall not – live to enjoy. The performance *Sekakashō: Snowflake Anthology* from 2016 serves as the independent variable in the anthropological laboratory: the live performance at the intersection of the Japanese and the American visions of life, love, and humanness conveys overwhelming messages of past reluctance to see beyond a static identity model with the simultaneous subliminal push towards understanding one's own impact on the world. In doing so, it reveals the individual's propensity to becoming a self-stylizing architect capable to grasp freedom in the name of radical responsibility, so that he/she turns from a "victim of history," to whom "life happens," into an active agent in the creation – or co-creation – of the future and of reality. Important elements in the analytical pursuit are the architecture of the sublime and the dynamics of controlled ecstasy as enacted by Takarazuka Revue and culminating in the cathartic display of Romain Rolland's and Sigmund Freud's "oceanic feeling" with its juxtapositions of power and seduction, of genuine charisma and hard-labored excellence, of openly marketed self-confidence and intimately negotiated degrees of humility.

To this outcome, I proceed in three steps: firstly, I explain the function and history of Takarazuka Revue as a sociocultural phenomenon embedded in specific politico-economic contexts and

subject to relentless technological progress and educational paradigms. Secondly, I observe the temporalities circumscribing the importance of nature and of seasonal referentiality in Takarazuka Revue's performance strategy in 2015 and 2017, under the pressure of developing fresh visions of and for the future. Thirdly, I delve into the mechanisms of rewriting the relevance of seasons and their paradigmatic relationship with classic legends, tales, rituals, thus elucidating the function of the nature as an abstract concept within the protocol of an increasing vulnerabilization of the human individual throughout modernity. The discussion of the "vulnerable self" takes into account three major challenges of late-modern individuation and/or self-actualization – compassion, courage, commitment, – which allow for historical referentiality while promoting a wide spectrum of choices and individual accountability. The conclusion wraps up the necessity to address vulnerability as a strategy to attain self-reliance and healthy maturity by delivering strength in authenticity and self-awareness of one's own responsibility in late-modern Japanese society as well as Takarazuka Revue's role in representing vulnerability, proactively propagating it, and eventually leading to its implementation on a real-life scale – by incorporating the past as an intellectual construction, not by retreating into it out of reluctance to accept the present.

Methodologically, I draw on 20 years of empiric-phenomenological fieldwork on Takarazuka Revue and on the slippery domain of Japanese and global mass-media. The phenomenological experience is socio-culturally contextualized, emulated on Takarazuka Revue as a discursive mass medium and a performative display of an authentic self and resistance against conformity, uniformity, and the alleged superiority which comes from their association. Hence, it reveals the highest level of existential transcendence: the consumerist strategies visible in the Japanese society of late modernity turn out to be plain symptoms of a forever-postponed confrontation with the individual reality, and not a sustainable solution in terms of personal fulfillment and/or social cohesion [Allison 2013, p. 17, Sugimoto 2013, p. 25]). I observe the multiple layers of the Takarazuka Revue's administration and self-

orchestration as cumulative symbols of Japanese mass-media and of Western live-action productions and as cultural phenomena arrested in the stress ratio between visual representation and musical intertwining, between arts and mass media, embedded in bureaucratic structures of administration and self-organization such as the release politics, the economic supervision of brand-related consumption, the socio-cultural management of actresses and fandom, and the performances themselves and their meta-narrative concatenations [Kawasaki 1999, Uchino 2000, Watanabe 1999]. I rely on extensive fieldwork with long-term participatory observation and empirical data collection; my sources consist of extensive performance attendance, archive research of Japanese documents and informal discussions as well as interviews with Japanese producers – Takarazuka Revue actresses, staff (directors, composers, assistants, teachers, etc.) – and with Japanese and Western fans, experts, and other consumers of products of popular culture, both domestic and international. These rendered unexpected insights into the mechanisms of production, consumption, perception, assimilation and reproduction of media phenomena in Japan. Taking into account the fact that the Japanese media industry is extremely vivacious and almost painful in its superficiality with a calculated momentary impact on audiences, Takarazuka Revue's longevity with more than 100 years of uninterrupted activity is a powerful reminder that determination, hard work, and persistence are worthy assets in the hierarchy of human values – although not always forthrightly advertised as such. Fostered with loving care in the educational process, such values lead to a healthy sense of self which then allows for vulnerability to flourish. In this understanding, vulnerability refers to the ability to display and perform authenticity (more commonly known as “to be one's true self”) both towards oneself and towards others, despite Japan's prevalent sociocultural pressures to wear symbolic masks and to play predetermined roles.

The following lines, therefore, strive for the clarification of whether the production and promotion of vulnerability is achieved by the instrumentalization of fundamental values such as determination, hard-work, and persistence, or, rather conversely, whether the

representation of vulnerability encourages the development and proactive employment of these values, by observing Takarazuka Revue's performative representation of seasons and their configuration as the essence of Japaneseness throughout Japan's history with the resulting "death of vulnerability" in human individuals. Demystifying nature and unifying our shared human condition into a coherent whole has turned from a delusional gesture of self-aggrandizement into a quotidian quest with unlimited possibilities. Hence, a new type of "educational ecology" emerges: the major goal of education through arts is to accompany and occasionally guide consumers on the journey of self-exploration towards discovering one's inner potential, attaining it and generously expanding it towards self-actualization (Abraham Maslow) or individuation (Carl Gustav Jung). This transcends the Humboldtian or Rousseauian model of education's goal of preparing individuals for the adjustment to society's requirements based on its collective expectations and measured by their potential contribution to it.

2. Takarazuka Revue's marketing of awe as corporative entertainment

Within Japan's highly corporative and unpredictably volatile entertainment industry, Takarazuka Revue has established itself throughout the decades as an important reference system, with equally stable ideological and aesthetical standards and serving, simultaneously, as a dynamic example of the power of hard-work, insight, and persistence – compounded by kindness and a sense of responsibility hardly ever taken into account when it comes to cultural products as a means to implement and transmit a specific set of values across generations. Founded in 1912 by Kobayashi Ichizō 小林一三,¹

¹ Kobayashi Ichizō (1873–1957), Japanese industrialist and politician, one of the most influential and progressive entrepreneurs in prewar Japan. He is best known as the founder of the Hankyū Railways Company in 1907 with its main terminal at Umeda station in Osaka and for his successful development

one of the most prominent entrepreneurs and businessmen in prewar Japan, the unusually popular all-female musical theater Takarazuka Revue started as a small theatrical arrangement set-up to attract more customers in the relatively isolated city of Takarazuka with its hot-springs (*onsen* 温泉) and its fresh air, provided by the surrounding forests on the majestic mountains and as part of an economic-political project to develop the North-Western area of Osaka within the rapidly emerging industrialized society.

The Company² developed within a few years from the initial small organization of 16 teenage girls, who had their first performance at a theater converted from an indoor swimming pool in a building attached to the main hot-spring resort, into an increasingly successful enterprise carrying various denominations throughout the decades: a dynamic institution with a strictly stratified corporative structure. The initial *Takarazuka Shōkantai* (宝塚唱歌隊 Takarazuka Choir) turned into *Takarazuka Shōjo Kageki Yōseikai* (宝塚少女歌劇養成会 Takarazuka Company for the Training of Girl's Revue) and became increasingly popular, so that even an own 2-year training institution – Takarazuka Music School 宝塚音楽学校 *Takarazuka Ongaku Gakkō* – was founded in 1919; eventually, in 1940, it changed its denomination into the current Takarazuka Revue [Company] (宝塚歌劇[団] *Takarazuka Kageki[dan]* [Tsuganesawa 1991, pp. 22–36; Watanabe 2002, pp. 29–33].³ With

of the railway infrastructure in an adverse region in the northern part of Kansai (Western Japan) through the implementation of residential areas along the railway line, an amusement park, a department store at the railway terminal as well as, in time, the main attraction: the Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka [Iwahori 1972, p. 47; Watanabe 1999, p. 39].

² Takarazuka Revue is the mass-media phenomenon whereas Takarazuka Revue Company is the fiscal entity. Takarazuka Revue administrators did not possess a specific level of fiscal awareness before 1945 so that they changed the names of the institution several times in accordance with the political tendencies of the time.

³ Since 1919, the exclusive, very competitive two-years Takarazuka Music School (宝塚音楽学校 *Takarazuka Ongaku Gakkō*) delivers yearly 40

two massive theaters with over 3,000 seats in the major metropolitan areas of Eastern and Western Japan, Takarazuka/Osaka and Tokyo, built in 1924 and 1934 respectively, and five ensembles spanning ten performances weekly during the whole year, encompassing a huge variety of topics and manners of tackling those topics, Takarazuka Revue Company has come to be recognized both as a mirror of Japan's tumultuous 20th century and an important source of inspiration, as it reputedly facilitates – or essentially mediates – the import of non-Japanese, mostly Western, cultural assets into Japan and to its Japanese audiences. The unusually strong dialectics of the relationship between Takarazuka Revue administrators and its mostly fan-based audiences has led, in recent times, to more profound analytical approaches of a business-model relying on “deep-fandom” [Jenkins 2012, p. 36] – that is, those faithful fans who support a specific phenomenon throughout the years, instead of dissipating their money, time, and emotions on a variety of entertainment tools, which might be labeled as “surface-fandom”: there are, of course, clear disadvantages to this business orientation, but its most obvious advantage is the profile clarity of the cultural institution beneath “deep-fandom” which emerges as a strong identification model and existential paradigm – while challenging prevalent standards of “fan-service” in Japan.

At the center of the sociocultural phenomenon embodied by Takarazuka Revue stays *otokoyaku* (男役 namely “female impersonator of male roles”, literally “man-role”), a highly ambivalent construction combining Western physical allures with Japanese inner qualities and exemplifying once again the powerfully (in)famous hybrid identity painstakingly epitomized in the slogan *wakon yōsai* – the basis and crux of Japanese modernity (和魂洋才, “Japanese spirit/roots, Western technology/ knowledge,” initiated in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration

(female) graduates who join the team of ca. 350 actresses performing on Takarazuka Revue's stage. Similarly to Takarazuka Revue (Company), Takarazuka Music School changed its official denomination several times since its inception. The current name dates back to 1946.

[Jaundrill 2016; McClain 2002]). In tandem with *otokoyaku*'s representation of masculinity on Takarazuka Revue's stage and public advertisement, *musumeyaku* 娘役 (literally: "daughter-role" with the subliminal image of "maiden") refers to female impersonators of female roles in Takarazuka Revue [Etō & al. 2007, p. 32; Ueda 1976, pp. 34–42]. Both *otokoyaku* and *musumeyaku* are subsumed to the category of "actress," while their denomination within the Takarazuka Revue Company and its related contexts is *seito* (生徒 pupil) or *takarasienne* (タカラジェンヌ), introduced by the director Shirai Tetsuzō (白井鐵造, 1900–1983), who compared the cute, graceful Takarazuka Revue actresses with the beautiful Parisiennes at Moulin Rouge [Robertson 1998, p. 104; Stickland 2008, p. 57]. Within the extremely strict hierarchy of Takarazuka Revue's educational and performance system, the concept "golden combination" refers to the *otokoyaku-musumeyaku* pair (in Takarazuka Revue jargon: "topstar[s]") at the top of every of the five actively performing ensembles. It is important to mention that, while the acting staff is exclusively female, the administrative staff is to a great extent male, and was exclusively male from Takarazuka Revue's inception until 1999 [Tsuganesawa 1991; Watanabe 2002]. This clear-cut separation of functions has been playing a fundamental role in Takarazuka Revue's evolution and its preoccupation with staging evolving patterns of sociocultural delineation and belonging as well as its dialectically pragmatic adaptation to the expectations of audiences while subtly influencing their tastes, preferences, life choices. As to be shown further below, in centering upon *otokoyaku*'s construction of masculinity and her dramaturgic versatility of reformulating both historical figures and regular citizens, Takarazuka Revue displays Japan's global ramifications long before the awareness of international impact had entered the "Japanese mind" with the simultaneous dissolution of past referential systems.

3. The premises of the sublime and its performative temporalities

3.1. *Sakura* (2007): From 2006 to 2008

The exploration of the architecture of the sublime as displayed in *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology* from late 2016 and its symbolical instrumentalization as transition must be pursued in the context of a similar – and similarly unique – performance from the year 2007, *Sakura* (the first part of the typical performance *Cherry Blossoms/Secret Hunter: There Is Nothing in This World I Cannot Steal* 『さくら/シークレット・ハンター：この世で、俺に盗めぬものはない』 *Sakura/Shikuretto Hantā: Kono Yo de, Ore ni Nusumenumono wa nai*), staged by star troupe at Takarazuka Grand Theater from March 23, 2007 until April 30, 2007 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from May 18, 2007 until July 1, 2007. Like *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology*, *Sakura* was supposed to mediate a potentially smooth progression from the year 2006 with the overwhelming retirement of three cult topstar-*otokoyaku* of the previous years – Waō Yōka 和央 ようか (Cosmos Troupe), Kozuki Wataru 湖月 わたる (Star Troupe) and Asami Hikaru 朝海 ひかる (Snow Troupe) – which almost naturally ended an era of what might be regarded in hindsight as the climax of post-*The-Rose-of-Versailles* decades (since 1974), towards 2008 – a year in which two groundbreaking performances were staged as pilot-projects of the Cosmos Troupe with its subliminal association with progress and forward-movement. Moreover, like *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology*, *Sakura* included exclusively gorgeous, breath-taking costumes in Japanese traditional style with typically Japanese choreography and, to a staggering extent, Japanese music in the Takarazuka Revue classical manner of adapting it to Western orchestra. *Sakura* was meant to symbolize the necessity to bid farewell to the past and to move on to a future modeled on different paradigms than prior ones. Nevertheless, unlike *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology*, *Sakura* remained a minor performance, probably due to the abrasive novelty of the year 2008,

in which the performative pilot-projects clashed against audiences' expectations and conservative ideals too brutally: *A Morning Breeze: The Challenge of Shirasu Jirō, the Samurai-Gentleman* (『黎明の風：侍ジェントルマン白洲次郎の挑戦』 *Reimei no kaze: Samurai Gentleman Shirasu Jirō no Chōsen*, staged at Takarazuka Grand Theater from February 8, 2008 until March 17, 2008 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from April 4, 2008 until May 18, 2008), attempts too obviously to renegotiate Takarazuka Revue's postwar performance strategy of not ever staging modern and contemporary performances centered upon Japan as well as Asia while employing classical, archetypal models of masculinity as symbolized by Shirasu Jirō, one of the most important businessmen in postwar Japan, and therefore acutely re-actualizing the *wakon yōsai* [Japanese spirit, Western knowledge/technology] slogan which he embodies in his synthetic figure. Though educated at famous schools in England, Shirasu Jirō bares his soul for Japan's welfare and defies Douglas MacArthur with the words: "Japan has lost the war, but that doesn't mean Japan has been enslaved." He dashes like a "morning breeze" through the turbulent twentieth century, firmly determined to devote himself entirely to Japan's postwar reconstruction and to the restoration of its sovereignty.

On the other hand, the next performance by the Cosmos Troupe which went on testing the waters of innovation, both in terms of challenging the U.S.-Japanese relations and of overcoming historical humiliation, was *Paradise Prince* (『パラダイス・プリンス』 *Paradaisu purinsu*, staged at Takarazuka Grand Theatre from September 26, 2008 until November 3, 2008, and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theatre from November 21, 2008 until December 27, 2008), which employs the classical technique of geographical displacement to confuse, or avoid, censorship: topstar-*otokoyaku* Yamato Yūga plays Stuart Green Menfield, a promising and talented painter from an upper-class American family with a long tradition of successful artists. Stuart leaves his well-groomed home to make his own luck in the world of animation, in the present-day U.S.: the opening scene, where Stuart wanders across the United States from New York to Orange City, obviously the Mecca of the *anime* world,

while singing “Do not give up your dreams; even if today everything goes wrong, there is also tomorrow,” is iconic in its self-referentiality. After several petit-bourgeoisie adventures, Stuart Green Menfield is shown in the homely finale watching his own successful television *anime* series together with his wife and their (obligatory) two kids. It includes, of course, obvious insinuations to Japan as the *anime* stronghold worldwide, and its efforts to propagate and implement its cultural assets. Instead of becoming the beginning of a new era, the year 2008 turned into the prelude to an era of stagnation and decline for Takarazuka Revue, which managed to start recovering in the second half of 2013 and fully celebrated its centennial in 2014 with “safe” performances neither challenging nor reinvigorating the status quo but validating audiences’ expectations and needs.

3.2. 2015’s three pivotal performances

Then again, the necessity to reformulate Takarazuka Revue’s reputation both in terms of ideological orientation and aesthetic pursuits was active, so that the year 2015 showcased three performances which did – this time successfully – manage to gradually help audiences navigate change and progress towards the farewell to the past which would be *Sekdashō: Snowflake Anthology* in late 2016. The first such performance was *1789: The Lovers of Bastille* (『1789 : バスティーユの恋人たち』 *1789: Basutīyu no koibitotachi*, Moon Troupe, staged at Takarazuka Grand Theater from April 24, 2015 until June 1, 2015 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from May 12, 2015 until July 2, 2015) based on the eponymous original French musical *1789: Les Amants de la Bastille* with music by Rod Janois, Jean-Pierre Pilot, Olivier Schulteis, William Rousseau, and Dove Attia and produced by Dove Attia, Albert Cohen, and François Chouquet. World-premiered on October 10, 2012 at Palais des sports in Paris, *1789: The Lovers of Bastille* essentially rewrites the storyline and historical orientation of the blockbuster *The Rose of Versailles* as it is a love story between star-crossed lovers: Olympe, an aristocrate, and Ronan, a farmer, in times of the French Revolution.

There are several fundamental differences between the original French performance, 1789: *Les Amants de la Bastille*, and its Japanese Takarazuka Revue version, 1789: *The Lovers of Bastille*. On the most superficial level, in the French version, the human dimension of the characters overshadows the historical events, while in the Japanese performance the historical events are in the foreground, with the love story itself serving as an additional element to highlight the discrepancies between the old and the new historical periods circumscribing the French Revolution. In order to analyse and comprehend the function of these differences, it is important to take into account the fact that, while the French Revolution marked the ideological beginning of modernity with its declaration of human rights, stating the position and definition of the human being both as an individual and as an entity belonging to an immediate community [Bauman 2000], Takarazuka Revue displays on stage the role of the history and of the community as prevailing over individual destinies, and, in doing so, actively re-constructs the human being as an “enlightened” existence from the point of view of the Japanese standards and classical views. The sociocultural, economic, and political background of this performance re-negotiates the parameters which defined the European modernity and, consequently, the Western modernity at its very roots. Within this process of emotional channelling of historical messages, Takarazuka Revue carefully constructs a world of soft, colourful dreams within the grasp of social actors, and encourages the faith in change, as a voluntary act of raising the awareness of the audiences [Kawasaki 2005].

Besides being the popular messenger of change, Takarazuka Revue and its actresses have become the very symbol of change: in an audacious move, the function and significance of the French Revolution as the foundation of Western modernity is extracted from an original French rock-opera and transformed into a Japanese modernity project – an unexpected gesture to design national progress and individual self-actualization.

The second revolutionary performance reflects even more efficiently this stress ratio between the past and the future as an

inevitable necessity while highlighting war as a calamity to be kept at bay in the character of Radames, the young officer in the Egyptian army, from the performance *A Song for Kingdoms* 『王家に捧ぐ歌』 *Ōke ni sasagu uta*, staged in 2003 by Star Troupe and restaged in 2015 by Cosmos Troupe. The director of the performance, Kimura Shinji 木村 信司, based the plot-line on opera *Aida* from 1871, composed by Giuseppe Verdi on a libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni. Star Troupe's Radames' *otokoyaku*-actress Kozuki Wataru 湖月 わたる, one of the cult-*otokoyaku* in recent decades, delivers a warrior figure keen on peace, fully aware that wars bring only misery and loss of human lives. The obtrusive appeal to preserve peace at any cost and to avoid war was at the time politically motivated, the year 2003 having been a difficult turning-point year for Japan as political tensions had arisen due to the US pressure to send units of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) overseas in support of the U.S. military mission in Iraq, increasingly dividing a population famously regarded by outsiders and perceived by itself as a reputed monolith [Benesch 2014, Sugimoto 2013].

The public debate, energetically fueled by mass-media on all levels, ended with the victory of those few vigorously promoting the deployment of Japanese troops to Iraq – which was officially promised on December 9 by then-prime minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō “for reconstruction efforts” – and despite the overwhelming opposition of a vast majority of the population throughout the nationally negotiated process of reinterpreting the postwar constitution to employ the JSDF exclusively for “self-defense,” as the denomination itself asserts. An unusually message-impactful performance, staged in 2003 from July 11 until August 18 at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka and from September 19 until November 3 at Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo, this version focused intensely on the romantic trio between Radames, Amneris, the daughter of the king of Egypt played by topstar-*musumeyaku* Dan Rei 檀 れい, and Aida, the Ethiopian slave girl, who is disclosed to be, in fact, the princess of Ethiopia, played by secondary-topstar *otokoyaku* Aran Kei 安蘭 けい: therefore, the human drama is highlighted, rather than the phenomenon of war itself, which slides into the background.

Nevertheless, when *A Song for Kingdoms* was re-staged in 2015 (from June 5 until July 13 at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka and from July 31 until August 30 at Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo) by Cosmos Troupe (宙組 *sora-gumi*) – formed in 1998 and associated with progressive plots, often conveying pilot-projects in attempts to test audiences' limits – the message of the performance changed radically, from the imperative commandment to preserve and protect peace in the name of the human right to a life in freedom to the open acknowledgment that war might be at times necessary for restoring peace [Eagleton 2003]. Radames was played by topstar-*otokoyaku* Asaka Manato 朝夏 まなと, who generally portrayed warm-hearted masculine characters, so that her version of Radames emanated a sense of compassion and vulnerability, and, in combination with topstar-*musumeyaku* Misaki Rion's Aida, the focus shifted towards the impossible choices leaders have to face and the heavy responsibilities which come with their privileged position. While war cannot be avoided, good leaders can make it short and less destructive.

The third revolutionary performance was supposed to urge audiences to rethink Japan's historico-geographical position as well as its continuous delusional referentiality to the premodern past: Snow Troupe's *The Night When the Stars Met* (『星逢一夜』 *Hoshiai Hitoyo*), staged at Takarazuka Grand Theater from July 17, 2015 until August 17, 2015 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater from September 4, 2015 until October 11, 2015, was directed by Ueda Kumiko, and had Sagiri Seina and Sakihi Miyu in the lead roles of a provincial samurai named Amano Haruoki, also known as Kinosuke, compelled to live at the central court in Edo (nowadays Tokyo) due to his exceptional ability to read the stars, and his childhood sweetheart Sen. Sen belongs to the oppressed farmers' majority living in unfathomable poverty, and ends up marrying their common friend: *The Night When the Stars Met* opens the series of performances questioning the almighty ideology of the stress-ratio between *giri* (social obligations) and *ninjō* (individual emotions; [McClain 2002, p. 173; Mason and Caiger 1979, pp. 84–87]), circumscribing the vast majority of dramatic plots

in premodern Japan and immutably permeating the current social reality. The tragic story of this romantic triangle reverberates in the collective subconscious of contemporary predominantly female Japanese audiences with subliminal instructions of compassion and resistance. It also brings forth the increasing awareness that returning to the past, even symbolically, even as a means to withdraw from current realities at times too uncomfortable to deal with, is not an alternative anymore and that decisive action, proactive gestures of liberation and empowerment are both existentially necessary and pragmatically inevitable [Anderson 1998]). Thus, in the fragile, slender stature of the *takarasienne* as individuals and as a collective, one can discover a dynamic alternative to the late-modern Japanese everyday life, infused with Western influences, dominated by consumerism, suffocated by excess and surplus.

3.3. 2017's three *parimono* and Paris' relevance

The transition Takarazuka Revue's administrators were pursuing through *Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology's* staging in late 2016 turned obvious from the very beginning of the year 2017 at Takarazuka Grand Theater, which included three *parimono* performances out of the total of nine performances per year, reinvigorating the tradition initiated by *Mon Paris* in 1927, plus a celebratory performance organized, managed and financed yearly by the affiliated company Takarazuka Creative Arts titled *TCA Special*: in the case of 2017, it was *Takarazuka Special 2017: Je t'aime Revue – 90th Anniversary of Mon Paris* (『タカラヅカスペシャル 2017 : ジュテーム・レビュウーモン・パリ誕生90周年ー』 *Takarazuka Special 2017: Je t'aime Revue – Mon Paris tanjō 90-shūnen*) and involved the Flower, Moon, Snow, Cosmos troupes and several superior members, who performed at Umeda Arts Theatre Main Hall on December 21 and 22, 2017. Its unveiled celebration of a performance which both announced and instilled the aggressive war politics of expansion and conquest while re-defining the dynamics of modernity and progress subliminally accesses memories of supremacy and questions public statements of love, cooperation, and understanding, as openly displayed

by the colorful, magnetic world of Takarazuka Revue [Hashimoto 1999]. It might be precisely this cacophonous orchestration of acceptance and respect, on the one hand, and superiority and perfectionism, on the other hand, which mediates a superficial image of alternative modernity in the realm of compassionate communication, while quietly promoting “the Japanese dream”, whichever this might be, as the necessary paradigm shift in late modernity.

Mon Paris (『モンパリ : 我が巴里よ』 *Mon Pari: Waga Pari yo*) by director Kishida Tatsuya (1892–1944) was Japan’s first revue patterned upon Western models and, more specifically, emulating the Moulin Rouge-type of musical-theatrical mass entertainment: the train-dance 汽車踊り *kisha odori* appears as the foundation of the later line-dance ライン・ダンス *rain dansu*, typical for any Takarazuka Revue performance: the train-dance referred to a dance towards the end of many performances, in which 20 to 30 actresses danced while carrying costumes with train-wheels on their trousers and imitating through their body movements the forward-movement of a train. There were the three keywords of “*ero-guro-nansensu*”, which defined the so-called Shōwa modernism of the 1920s and which contributed to a powerful shift in the Japanese perception of self and others. That shift would lead, eventually, to the subsequent movement of militarization and political expansion of the 1930s and 1940s [Watanabe 2002]. More than it is comfortable to publicly declare nowadays, the all-female musical theater Takarazuka Revue played a fundamental role within this process, as its extremely popular performance *Mon Paris*, clearly, obtrusively established a standard of displaying the self and the others, with Japan and its population at the very core of the project of modernity [Watanabe 1999]. A typical “traveller’s tale”, *Mon Paris* included a vast diversity of themes, from the orientalist worldview accompanying the political preoccupation with military expansion and economic empowerment to the slightly sexualized freedom of Japan’s roaring 1920s and their creative movement(s) based on the unusual display of eroticism, grotesque fantasies of the human life and confrontational debates slightly touching the nonsensical fashion of the European avant-garde [Kawasaki, 2005].

The *parimono* genre emerged: *Parimono* signifies those performances located in Paris, France's capital. *Mon Paris* supported and propagated Japan's budding militarist, colonialist, fascist policies by means of sociocultural appropriation and numbing and was highly successful, being restaged repeatedly until 1945 [Hashimoto 1999]. *Mon Paris* has continuously provided nostalgic undertones and ideologic orientation since its world-premiere, in spite of never being re-staged after Japan's surrender in August 1945, but after *The Rose of Versailles*' world-premiere in 1974 and starting with 1977, every 10-year anniversary is flamboyantly celebrated. Since *Mon Paris* in 1927, Paris is the most represented location in Takarazuka Revue performances, resulting in the *parimono* subgenre, with the French Revolution being the most prevalent topic and historical setting (e.g., *The Rose of Versailles*).

The three *parimono* performances premiered in 2017 displayed different aspects of the French capital: *Le Chateau de la reine* (*The Queen's castle*) tackles the experiences of a group of Japanese tourists in Paris, a crucial shift from the postwar dramaturgic politics of refraining from representing Asia or Japan in modern times. *Le Chateau de la reine* was performed by the Cosmos Troupe with Asaka Manato and Misaki Rion in the lead roles, at Takarazuka Grand Theater between February 3, 2017 and March 6, 2017 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater between March 31, 2017 and April 30, 2017. It is a clear return to Kobayashi Ichizō's ideal of Takarazuka Revue as a theater for the average people and representing them, their ideals, and their yearnings. Staged by the Cosmos Troupe, the youngest troupe among the five performing troupes, founded in 1998, and thus the carrier of most progressive contents, at the meta-narrative level [Kawasaki 1999, p. 63], the performance suggests the metamorphose of the theatrical medium "Takarazuka Revue" back into an instrument of reflecting, promoting, propagating, implementing, and thus providing alternative role-models and existential paradigms to audiences within the neo-liberal undercurrents crisscrossing Japan's public discourse in 2017 – (in)famous for its increasingly conservative tendencies.

A similar message of loyalty and confidence is contained in the next performance carrying the English title *All for One*, with a plot centered

on the adventures of the three musketeers and of d'Artagnan, but completely independent from the Alexandre Dumas' original (who is not mentioned at all). *All For One* was performed by the Moon Troupe with Tamaki Ryō and Manaki Reika in the lead-roles, at Takarazuka Grand Theater between July 14, 2017 and August 14, 2017 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater between September 1, 2017 and October 8, 2017. In their staging of the unconditional loyalty for France under Louis XIV, the Sun King, the members of the Moon Troupe, the oldest and most conservative troupe founded in September 1921, which is known among fans for its meticulous handling of group performances [Kawasaki 1999, p. 71], address the concept of friendship and endurance while subtly fulfilling the transition from brotherhood to *hakuai/yūai* in the translation process of the ideal of the French Revolution of 1789, even if it re-locates it temporally roughly 100 years ahead.

The answer to the rhetorical question of what friendship can provide within the very fabric of society lies in the performance *Robespierre: On the Road Full of Light* depicting Maximilien Robespierre's efforts to bring up order in the aftermath of the French Revolution. *Robespierre: On the Road Full of Light* was performed by the Snow Troupe with Nozomi Fūto and Maaya Kiho in the lead-roles, at Takarazuka Grand Theater between November 10, 2017 and December 15, 2017 and at Tokyo Takarazuka Theater between January 2, 2018 and February 11, 2018. Associated with dreamy, airy stage representation, the Snow Troupe, founded in July 1923, gives life on stage to the chaos of the post-Revolution, leading to the Reign of Terror and culminating, eventually, with the execution of its very initiator, Robespierre. Thus, it lays the subliminal premises for the *wakon wasai* ("Japanese spirit/roots, Japanese technology/knowledge") strategy, with friendship (*yūai*) and kindness (*yasashisa*) as core parameters of a new paradigm of humanity, which transcends the (Western) modernity – having been emulated by Meiji technocrats into the *wakon yōsai* ("Japanese spirit/roots, Western technology/knowledge") slogan [Mason & Caiger 1979]. Unlike the (Western) modernity project, based on efficiency and competitiveness and prioritizing economic growth and technological progress over political

stability [Anderson 1998], the Japanese solution brings into foreground cooperation and compassion as sociocultural parameters, compounded by integrity and harmony as tools to attain and keep peace, both within nations and, more importantly, between/among nations.

Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology from late 2016 incorporates this dimension of the theatrical performance, which allows for freedom of expression and exploration of potential worlds. It also delves into new ways of interpretation of familiar circumstances. The Japanese version of stage representation as provided by Takarazuka Revue, though, raises more questions than it attempts to answer, not least due to its unilateral view of history and historical circumstances. In light of recent events and increasingly strained political relationships both with its Asian neighbors and its Western (particularly French and U.S.) counterparts, it seems as if Takarazuka Revue possesses an uncanny ability to foresee history's development and to reflect it *avant-la-lettre* on its shiny stage. It also distracts from quotidian challenges: the problem remains, of course, the fact that the world at large is a far less shiny stage – and far less favorable to the Japanese view of reality than Takarazuka Revue would gladly want to convince its audiences.

4. Controlled ecstasy: 2016 and *Sek Kashō*'s gentle ruptures

Historically speaking, the year 2016 brought forth nothing special: the same old political rifts, globally, directly or indirectly impacting domestic developments. In Takarazuka Revue's case, one major performance continued the distancing process from the models of the past, particularly those related to the Edo period: *Rurouni Kenshin* (『るろうに剣心』) from early 2016 (February 5 – March 14 at Takarazuka Grand Theater in Takarazuka, and April 1 – May 8 at Takarazuka Theater in Tokyo) of the Snow Troupe with Sagiri Seina as Rurouni Kenshin and Sakihi Miyu as Kamiya Kaoru. An emblematic case of “media transfer” or “cross-mediality” (starting as a popular *shōnen* manga by the mid-1990s with sequels in the early 2010s, including an additional light novel in

1996, evolving to a cult television animation series and six OVAs targeted at the same *shōnen* audience from 1996 until 2001, and four live-action movies in 2012, 2014, and 2021), the *Rurouni Kenshin* brand remains in the consciousness of the 1990s' teenagers as a symbol of faith and empowerment, in strong contradiction with Japan's realities of the so-called "lost decade."

Conversely, Takarazuka Revue Company's staging of *Rurouni Kenshin* in 2016 had to overcome two major challenges – the (predominantly) female audience and the limitations of the theatrical genre. For non-Japanese audiences unfamiliar with Takarazuka Revue's complicated background, the sense of futility and emotional frugality conveyed by the performance *Rurouni Kenshin*, which was one of the most successful performances of Takarazuka Revue's recent history, running with closed ticket houses since the first day of the ticket-pre-sale, is magnified by the austere stage design, reminding intensively of those fleeting moments of togetherness and acceptance and in striking contrast with other typical Takarazuka Revue performances. In Takarazuka Revue's *Rurouni Kenshin*, the cathartic experience of the live performance is backed by a specific social-political agenda reinforced by aesthetic-ideological patterns reminiscent of the Japanese establishment, and slowly but decisively complying with the prevalent ideologies of the *wakon wasai* ("Japanese spirit/roots, Japanese technology/knowledge") policies openly promoted by the Abe administration in those years: a reinvigoration of modernity and humanity as a tender, soft endeavor, characterized by a more compassionate, more profound communication and interaction between human actors both within the same society and among different societies.

Even more stunning, therefore, is the fact that *Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology* turned out to be such a pivotal performance, embedded in the traditional structure with a quasi-insignificant and conventional theatrical play *The Golden Desert* (『金色の砂漠』 *Konjiki no sabaku*) tackling the hardly unveiled star-crossed love-story between a princess and a slave – in itself, nothing short of cheap drama and strong contradictory emotions. Combined with *Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology*, though, in

the powerful staging of the Flower Troupe – subliminally associated both with solid tradition and with its proximity to classic Western opera and equally being the oldest extant performing ensemble, *The Golden Desert* appears as a shocking contrast, compelling audiences to rethink their emotional proclivities and mental priorities.

The official translation of *sekkashō* is “Snowflake Anthology”, but its literal meaning is a combination of 雪, or snow, with the Japanese reading of *yuki* and the Sino-Japanese reading of *setsu* 華, or flower, with the Japanese reading of *hana* and the Sino-Japanese reading of *ka*, and 抄, or excerpt, with no Japanese reading and Sino-Japanese reading of *shō*. “Sekkashō” would therefore mean “an excerpt of snow and flowers” or “an excerpt of snow-flowers” with the possible figurative meaning of “an excerpt of snowflakes.” *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology* is composed of seven segments, which follow, on the one hand, the yearly cycle of seasons with their particularities in Japan, and reminisce, on the other hand, of legends, stories, familiar encounters between fantasy and reality which dissolve the fourth wall of traditional performances and create a sense of belonging and warmheartedness as well as unconditional communication between performers and audiences.

Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology opens with a *Prologue: Red Plum, White Plum* (「プロローグ：紅梅白梅」) which gorgeously displays in a full symphony of colors and sounds what might be labeled “Japanese splendor.” The entire ensemble is gathered on stage when the lights go on and the fluid movements unfold in the dynamic rhythms alternating with moments of pensive reflection. The music is a typical Takarazuka Revue combination of pentatonic sonorities and symphonic orchestration clearly of Western orientation, thus dialectically highlighting Japan’s (in)famous hybridity. Gorgeous costumes appear against the background of impressive stage designs which, again in the Takarazuka Revue emblematic style, underscore technological versatility and geographical stability. Memorable melodies flow in a mesmerizing polyphony of voices and instruments within a joyous oscillation between solo articulations and chorus numbers, once again generously showcasing the meanwhile legendary technical abilities of Takarazuka Revue’s performers, both as

individuals and as a collective. The second segment, *The Camelia Flower* (「花椿」) is a stunning solo number of *buyō* 舞踊, or Japanese classical dance, brought forth by one of Takarazuka Revue's veteran performers Matsumoto Yūri 松本悠里, who had joined Takarazuka Revue as a *musumeyaku* in 1957 and had been active until 1974 in Snow Troupe and thereafter until her retirement in 2021 as a superior advisor. Throughout her career, she had been known particularly for her gracious abilities in Japanese traditional dance – which she elegantly reiterates in *Sekakashō: Snowflake Anthology*.

The music is exclusively Japanese, bringing together *koto* sounds and irregular rhythmicities reminiscent of the *jo-ha-kyū* principle (序破急, “beginning, break, rapid”), which originated in ancient court music, also known as *gagaku* 雅楽, and had been theorized by Zeami for Nō theater: striving to explain the movement patterns of all things, *jo-ha-kyū* refers to the slow progression of events, their subsequent, brief acceleration, which culminates into an explosion, ending abruptly. A refreshing contrast is the next number, *The Hawk and the Eagle* (「鷹と鷲」), which assembles on stage the main *otokoyaku* performers of the Flower Troupe impersonating warring birds in spring on the lookout for dominance and hierarchical structures. The music is engaging and unexpectedly powerful, with the electric guitar leading the discourse in a clearly rock'n'roll style while the rather sparse stage architecture allows for the open demonstration of choreographic virtuosity: on the one hand, the lead-*otokoyaku* Asami Rio decisively monopolizes the entire development of the scene; on the other hand, the ensemble of *otokoyakus* supports and encourages her conduct in an equally discrete and seemingly aggressive manner, so that the general impression is one of dynamic competitiveness, playful togetherness, strength and coordination, respect and trust. It is during such performance fragments that audiences, as individuals and as a collective, begin to sense the level of commitment and generosity enacted by Takarazuka Revue actresses.

A more complex structure is delivered by the fourth segment, *Tanabata Fantasy* (「七夕幻想」), which starts with a quasi-realistic reproduction on stage of the tradition also known as the “Star Festival”

(星祭, *hoshi-matsuri*) on the evening of July 7 each year, when young people gather in nature, usually by the riverside, and express their mutual affection, dressed up in *yukata* (summer kimono): the legend of Chinese origins (Qixi Festival) reenacted by Tanabata celebrates the meeting of the deities Orihime 織姫 (“Weaving Princess”) and Hikoboshi 彦星 (“Cowman” or “Cowherd Star”, literally “Boy Star”), represented by the stars Vega and Altair respectively, which are separated by the Milky Way (*Amanogawa* 天の川 in Japanese, literally “heavenly river”) and are allowed to meet only once a year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month of the lunisolar calendar.

This legendary meeting is then orchestrated on stage into one of the most touching sequences in Takarazuka Revue’s recent history: the alternance between reality and fantasy finds itself challenged by the dissolution of boundaries between dream and the actual world, in a manner similar to legends and fairy-tales which seamlessly intertwine with our quotidian lives. Then again, the next number, *Waves and Flowers* (「波と華」), faithfully reproduces on stage the Yosakoi Soran Festival, taking place every summer in Sapporo on Japan’s northern island of Hokkaidō: the specificity of this particular festival among Japan’s numerous similar celebrations seems to be the combination of music employing a Yosakoi percussion instrument called *naruko*, *a small wooden clappers used initially to keep birds away from the vegetable garden or rice fields*, and a folk song stemming from Hokkaidō and referred to as *soran bushi*, which is an ancient type of song apparently invented by northern fishermen. In addition, the modern interpretation of the *awa odori* dance associated with the *soran bushi* *dance, which mimics fishermen pulling nets, in which the dancers punctuate their steps with naruko, creates a dynamic impression of waves flowing and ebbing, but under human control*. On Takarazuka Revue’s stage, this illusion of control and generous cooperation as well as proactive coexistence with nature is generated by the presence of the entire ensemble and its highly coordinated participation in the musical and dancing conglomerate, which is projected onto the magnificent stage design reproducing Hokkaidō’s lush nature in summer.

The last two segments remind of two crucial aspects of human existence as embedded in the universal circuit: for once, the sixth section, *The Tale of Kiyohime* (and Anchin, 「清姫綺譚」), reactualizes the Heian period tragic story of Kiyohime, the young lady who had fallen in love with Anchin, a Buddhist priest, who lied and betrayed her; consequently, she chased him and got so angry that eventually she metamorphosed into a snake and ended up burning Anchin to death within the bell in which he had hidden at the temple Dōjō-ji. This time, a symbolical stage design is chosen compelling audiences to let their imagination wander based on their previous knowledge and their own sensitivities. Anchin's frailty and Kiyohime's strength are presented in a light more appropriate with current ideologies, so that Anchin's cowardice and Kiyohime's unbridled passion appear as complementary, not mutually exclusive. Altogether, it is a genuine masterpiece of simultaneously bringing back into collective consciousness the lively dramatism of folk-tales and legends and of questioning their unconditional interpretation as repositories of tradition and continuity rather than mirrors of humanity's shared experiences and transcendental condition.

This becomes even more obvious in the *Finale: Dream Fantasy of the Blossoming Cherry Flowers* (「桜花夢幻」), which reunites the entire crew of the flower troupe in a slow, ascendent progression towards the climactic farewell peppered with pink petals falling from above: while deluding ourselves with beautiful sounds and soothing rhythms might seem like the best instant gratification one can get in terms of escaping crushing or at least uncomfortable quotidian realities, facing those realities, learning to solve them or to face them with courage and honesty appears as the sustainable solution in the long run. Anew, Takarazuka Revue delivers its serious, impactful messages by means of soft suggestions which turn, over time, in imminent certainties which need to be addressed and cannot be hidden in denial, rejection, or passive aggressiveness. Furthermore, it chooses the pathway of delicate reinforcement of tradition which subsequently transforms into its own final solidification and then disappearance. The goal of such a procedure is less to replace the old with the new and more to transcend the old in

the new so that continuity, rather than rupture, emerges – even when ruptures are, de facto, history’s inevitable results.

Superficially, *Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology* highlights

“Japanese natural aesthetics” – with the theme of Japanese elegance, a magnificent picture scroll presented in dance that unfolds gracefully. Starting with the glorious scenery of spring, then the glittering waves of summer, the autumn moon, and then from a pure silver world of dancing snowflakes to an ode to the riotously blooming cherry blossoms, the dazzling scenes build up one after another. The Japanese time-honored legends are woven together with modern essence and arranged in the Takarazuka style into an ambitious *nihonmono* revue, splendidly extolling the beauty and allure of the four seasons. (Takarazuka Revue Company, official advertisement, 2016:23)

In-depth, *Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology* is a swan’s song: it replaces the typical show, which is an intrinsic part of the performance layout counterbalancing the theatrical piece which, with very few exceptions, is of rather questionable musical-dramaturgic standards but of extremely high technical, visual and entertainment – a.k.a. calculated emotional impact on audiences – principles. It also subtly, inconspicuously, quietly, bids farewell to what had come to be imagined as “Japan,” “Japanese aesthetics,” “Japanese spirituality”: a fully ideological conglomerate of ideas, imaginaries, projections imported from various geographical and historical sources and integrated within an eclectic system through the process of what Claude Lévi-Strauss labeled “bricolage,” which ended up japanizing those very ideas, imaginaries, projections without delivering, in fact, elements for the construction of a coherent, convincing, autonomous sense of national identity and global belonging. *Sek Kashō: Snowflake Anthology*’s smooths out the farewell between what had been so far a beautiful delusion and the honest reality of what needs to be done – and like in the case of two lovers who love each other profoundly but are also aware of their incompatibility, regardless of the reasons, teaches a crucial lesson in letting go with integrity, compassion, and, perhaps equally important, with grace. I would argue that the gracefulness in *Sek Kashō*:

Snowflake Anthology conveys a state of awe as child-like curiosity and ecstasy in front of the unfolding world while enjoying the present moment, which turns this otherwise quite conventional *nihonmono* show into an archetype able to tectonically shift paradigms.

5. Conclusion: “Oceanic feeling” and the celebration of feminine excellence

Sekdashō: *Snowflake Anthology*’s sublimation of ruptures by including them into the musical-visual flow of dramaturgic architecture perpetuates and even reinforces the function of arts as mediators of Wordsworth’s “suspension of disbelief for the moment” and simultaneously sublimates historical transitions into quotidian experiences. This connects softly with Romain Rolland’s and Sigmund Freud’s “oceanic feeling” as “a sensation of eternity and a feeling of being one with the external world as a whole, a sentiment of being limitless, unbounded”, (as explained in their letter exchange [Freud 1927, 1929]): a sort of fragmentary vestige of the type of consciousness possessed by an infant who has not yet learnt to differentiate him-/herself from other people and from things surrounding him/her. To be sure, Takarazuka Revue’s cathartic elements reminisce to a certain degree of the mystic experiences of Ramakrishna (who had served as initial inspiration for Rolland’s expression “oceanic feeling”); in addition, the entire phenomenon, the way it has been promoted, advertised and marketed at least since the mid-1970s, encourages indeed the unconditional immersion into the “magical world of love and dreams,” which it is supposed to embody, but distances itself from being an atemporal appearance, which hinders its audiences from participating in everyday life. On the contrary, Takarazuka Revue’s administrators and ideologues have been constructing it as a refuge-like universe with the function to both reflect Japan’s continuous reality and to deliver necessary inputs in pushing the development of the daily activities and occurrences towards the greater goal of historical-geographical relevance: Takarazuka Revue is a place to stop, rest, and

learn, so that moving forward is not only possible but also productive and constructive; it is not a parallel dimension.

Accordingly, the “oceanic feeling” disseminated by Takarazuka Revue, a process in which *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology* has become a central piece, is meant to inspire self-aware agency and autonomous thinking, as encompassed in the performative display and educational practices resulting in the “feminine excellence” humbly, pragmatically, and dialectically manifested by the *takarasienne*, as individuals and as a collective. Unlike the mystical origins of Rolland’s experiences of “oceanic feeling,” Takarazuka Revue grounds its performance, advertisement, and marketing strategy in the immediate realities of the palpable world and by no means attempts to replace those realities with delusional claims of eternity, oneness, unconditional surrender to divine consciousness, which were, and still are, core prerogatives of those promoting that type of experiences. Decisively distancing itself from them, Takarazuka Revue aims at an integration of entertainment as a tool and as an ideal within the more globally relevant vision of a Japan belonging to the international community instead of isolating itself from it. This is, possibly, an extension of Kobayashi Ichizō’s ideal of Japan encapsulating Paris, and therefore (Western) modernity, via Takarazuka Revue, and subsequently proposing its own version of both Paris and modernity – more humane, more beautiful, and definitely (more) Japanese.

In its celebration of feminine excellence as the core of transcendental experiences which do not imply the loss of self but the transcendence of self through the access to collective generosity, empathy, gratitude, *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology* tenderly suggests the pathway away from socioeconomically implemented regulations of femininity and masculinity as well as from their consequent political preservation towards self-sufficient models of individuality – as humans and as a nation – to emulate, in a first step, comparable paradigms of Western nations, and to serve, at a later stage, as an alternative to those paradigms.

Being itself the larger-than-history phenomenon that it has been constructing throughout the decades, Takarazuka Revue (Company) can

afford the luxury to question prevailing models of “doing business” in Japan and to step over the boundaries of what is domestically acceptable in terms of public discourse: on the one hand, it is the most technologically advanced institution of mainstream media, both domestically and globally, a characteristic powerfully underscored by the incredibly high level of training in performance skills of its students and actresses; on the other hand, it possesses the most comprehensive architecture as external design and internal configuration clearly circumscribing outlined ideologies and their corresponding aesthetics, unlike similar appearances in Japan, some of them highly successful, e.g., Studio Ghibli, which have been developing according to the principle of adding new structures to already existing ones without bothering to address the foundations, at least once in a while.

One can identify, indeed, throughout Takarazuka Revue’s centennial history basic frameworks which seem to delineate its mechanisms, functions, features, being periodically reviewed in light of factual events and trends, so that a firm grasp can be maintained on its extrinsic reputation and its intrinsic constitution. From this perspective, *Sekkashō: Snowflake Anthology* emerges as a pivotal performance, comparable solely with 2007’s *Sakura* but essentially much more influential, bringing forth the vital necessity to leave behind the past not by nullifying it but by letting go of it with kindness and warmheartedness, acknowledging the imperative to live in the present moment while temporally suspending one’s judgment so that clarity, honesty, and self-awareness can arise, and celebrating individual excellence as the core foundation of collective excellence – in short, fundamentals for a future of compassionate pragmatism, courageous commitment, and creative awe.

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