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Chinese and Japanese Literati Painting: Analysis and Contrasts in Japanese Bunjinga Paintings

Qun Dai
Bard College

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Chinese and Japanese Literati Painting: Analysis and Contrasts in Japanese
Bunjinga Paintings

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
Qun Dai

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Qun Dai

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Introduction Chinese Source of the Literati Style

This project is mainly concerned with late 18th century Japanese literati paintings produced during the Edo period (1615-1868). First I will define the literati style as it evolved in China. In chapter one I will analyze the Japanese literati style and make a contrast historically, politically and artistically between the styles in China and Japan. Then in subsequent three chapters I will discuss how and why this style became important in Japan during that era, and the sources of the art and I will analyze the evolution of style and mentoring relationship of seven typical Japanese literati painters: Gion Nankai (1677-1751), Sakaki Hyakusen (1697-1752), Yanagisawa Kien (1704-1758), Ike-no Taiga (1723-1776), Yosa Buson (1716-1783), Uragami Gyokudo (1745-1820), and Okada Beisanjin (1744-1820). I will explain the evolution process of Japanese literati paintings, or *bunjinga* paintings, by comparing the painters' styles-- strokes and colors, themes and functions of their literati paintings.

Chinese literati painting, which was composed by the educated elite, including scholars, poets and intellectuals, is comprised of both calligraphy and painting. From the Tang Dynasty (618-906), intellectuals, gentlemen-scholars, and masters of literature and poetry often tried their hand at painting. For example the first and most famous was Wang Wei (699-759) who was a high government official, poet and also a landscape painter. Later in the Song dynasty Su Shi (1037-1101) and Mi Fu (1051-1107), also high government ministers, calligraphers and literati, formulated a new ideal in which the style of the paintings was more important than a realistic portrayal of the subject. From the beginning literati painting was linked to Confucian thought because the early painters were educated men who had learned the Confucian classics to qualify

for a government position at court. In this way knowledge of Confucian literature- both history and poetry- became an important part of the literati painters training.

It was not until the Yuan dynasty, when China was under Mongol control (1206-1368) that literati painting became widespread. With no imperial patrons, and no real market for their works, artists had to paint for themselves. Literati painting is in general monochrome ink compositions on paper that treat landscape in a more abstract style using the calligraphic technique to make the landscape forms. Rarely are there narrative details, or color, usually large literary inscriptions of a personal nature occupy a large part of the compositions. The themes also frequently have associations with poetry.¹

Therefore, Chinese literati painting, which is also called the Southern School painting or *wenrenhua* in Chinese, is a kind of painting that scholars like. It derives from Chinese feudal hierarchy called "*Scholar-official*". Michael Sullivan wrote a detailed description for the derivation of Chinese literati painting. The background of Chinese literati painting was being introduced:

During these prosperous years, when painters were occupied with Buddhist frescoes, portrait painting, and other socially useful activities, their hearts, if not their feet, were roaming the hills and valleys far from the glitter of the capital. By the beginning of the Tang (618-907 AD), the tradition of landscape painting---which had been born in the Six Dynasties (220-618 AD)² and was later to rise to such supreme heights---had advanced little, partly because of the ever-increasing demand for Buddhist icons and partly because artists were still struggling with the most elementary problems of space and depth. But during the Tang dynasty these difficulties were mastered.³

Under this background, when these difficulties were solved and settled down, scholar-official painting was established. Sullivan proposes that the first school was led by court painter Li Sixun

¹ Michael Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 114-190.

² G. Fernández, "Ming Huang's Journey to Shu," accessed December 23, 2016, <http://www.theartwolf.com/landscapes/li-zhaodao-ming-huang-journey-shu.htm>

³ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 140.

(651-716) and Li Zhaodao (675-750), who was the son of Li Sixun. This school was using a technique of precise lines in combination with decorative mineral colors which was derived from earlier painters, Gu Kaizhi (344-406) and Zhan Ziqian (545-618).⁴ This is so-called Northern School painting. The other school, the Southern School, is what this project is mainly going to talk about, was a painting type led by the eighth century poet-painter Wang Wei, the painting manner of this school was called “Monochrome landscape painting in the *pomo* (“broken ink”) manner,⁵ it was also called Southern School painting.

First formulated in the Northern Song period (960-1127)---at which time it was called *shidafuhua* (士大夫画, scholar-official painting)—by the poet-calligrapher Su Shi (1037-1101)(苏轼), the ideal of the literati painting was finally and enduringly codified by the great Ming dynasty critic and painter Dong Qichang (1555-1636) (董其昌), who identified two great lineages of painters.⁶ He (Dong Qichang) established a set of categories of Chinese painting, labeling orthodox, academic painting as Northern, and freely executed, expressive painting as Southern, *nanga* in Japanese.⁷

Therefore, two schools, Northern School and Southern School, of landscape painting were eventually established.

Characteristically, paintings of the Northern School were objective and detailed (realistic depictions of figures, landscape, plant, bird and animal were subjects), while those of the Southern School were subjective and free (interpretations of mainly landscapes).⁸

In China from the Song dynasty to modern times, the art of *wenren* (*wenren*, J. *bunjin*), the class of scholars, connoisseurs, and literary men, was prized for its

⁴ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Li Sixun”. Accessed December 10, 2016. <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Li-Sixun>

⁵ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, 140

⁶ *Literati Painting Southern School, Wenrenhua* from Cultural China. <http://arts.cultural-china.com/en/62Arts13450.html>

⁷ Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 285

⁸ Dianne T. Ooka, “Ike-no Taiga: Paintings in the Collection,” *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 66 (305). Philadelphia Museum of Art: 28–44. (1971). 30

creative freedom.⁹

According to this, the most important character which constructs the skeleton of literati painting is “freedom”.

The above-mentioned literati painting is a kind of painting that scholars like and there are three reasons why. The first one is that because this kind of painting puts more emphasis on the inner feeling rather than the superficial beauty which can just be seen on the surface of the painting. These paintings are often characterized as subjective, which implies that these paintings are abstractive.

The aim of these artists was not to depict nature realistically—that could be left to the professionals—but to express themselves, to “satisfy the heart.” They spoke of merely “borrowing” the literal shapes and forms of things as a vehicle through which they could “lodge” their thoughts and feelings.¹⁰

Therefore, for the literati, the shapes or forms of things are just a tool, the essence of their paintings is what the viewers should be paying their attention to.

Another reason why scholars like this form of painting is because the painters are not professional painters, and coincidentally this painting form does not require painters to be good at realistic painting technique. Therefore, they are free to express themselves without any concern of making a product to sell. People do not expect to see perfect realistic painting technique in literati painting. Because of their Confucian education, skill at calligraphy and style of art are supremely important. A particular term for their style of painting arose---in Chinese, *wen-jen-hua*. From the Yuan dynasty description for literati painters---“art of literary men”, it implies that they were not professional; what they were professional about was literature and

⁹ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 285

¹⁰ *Literati Painting Southern School, Wenrenhua* from Cultural China <http://arts.cultural-china.com/en/62Arts13450.html>

literary kinds of subjects, that is, their major concerns were not the same as professional figure painters. So painting was something they did for themselves, it was a way to express themselves.

Rather than technical proficiency, literati artists cultivated a lack of affectation in an attempt to tune in to the rhythms of nature.¹¹

First of all, this represents the attitude of literati painters who do not care if their techniques are proficient or not, because they see that as an affectation, which is exactly what they do not want to have. What they really want to have is the real feeling for the nature, and by using such a technique to freely relate to nature. Therefore, the rhythms of nature are what they pay attention to, rather than the representational concerns. Literati artists originally used different styles and techniques as they desired. The most important thing was to dig out the spirit of the thing when they were painting. That is why people describe the literati painters as “subjective” rather than the “objective” work of Northern painters.

In this amateur painting mode of the scholars, skill was suspect because it was the attribute of the professional and court painter. The scholars valued spontaneity above all, even making a virtue of awkwardness as a sign of the painter’s sincerity.¹²

In short, real feelings are what they want, they do not really care what technique they use to express their real feeling. The non-proficient is a sign of sincerity. In other words, they prefer imperfectly expressing objects with real feelings rather than perfectly expressing objects superficially.

¹¹ Lee Jay Walker, “Japanese Art and Bunjinga (Nanga): the Influence of China and Korea in the Edo Period,” Tokyo: Global& Japan News of Modern Tokyo Times. Published on February 15, 2016. Accessed March 13, 2016 <http://moderntokyotimes.com/?p=4332>

¹² *Literati Painting Southern School, Wenrenhua* from Cultural China <http://arts.cultural-china.com/en/62Arts13450.html>

Additionally long calligraphic passages are found written on actual literati paintings and the link between artists and calligraphy is a long one. This practice can be traced back to ancient China, even before the Song period, there were a lot of men who were masters of many arts, for example, Ts'ai Yung (132-192 CE) who lived in Eastern Han dynasty mastered in music, calligraphy, astronomy and mathematics;¹³ Chi K'ang who was an essayist, zither player, calligrapher, and painter as well; and Tai K'uei who was also master of a lot of arts.¹⁴ Due to this tradition, and the identity of the literati painters who were scholars and good at writing, with a tendency of adding poetry on their painting evolved.

First they discovered the common nature of calligraphy and painting, and finally arrived at the judgment expressed by Su Tung-p'o when he wrote on a painting of bamboo by his friend Wen Yu-k'o (Wen T'ing): "What is not used up in poetry overflows to become calligraphy and is then transformed to become calligraphy and is then transformed to become painting"---a statement that places poetry at the center of this artistic trinity.¹⁵

Therefore, calligraphy occupied a huge part in the literati paintings, and for the Chinese literati painters, the ability to write beautifully was quite necessary, because Chinese think calligraphy had its own artistic value in itself.¹⁶ Also they thought the viewers could see the character of a man in his writing. The third reason why scholars like this kind of painting is the importance of calligraphy. They smartly combined the two and made them appear in one painting, which produced a special flavor: paintings with words on them, and the words could give explanation about the paintings.

¹³ David R. Knechtges, Chang Taiping, *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature (vol.I): A Reference Guide, Part One*, (Brill Publishers, Leiden and Boston, 2010), 60-63

¹⁴ Yoshiho Yonezawa, Chu Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, (New York: John Weatherhill, 1974), 127

¹⁵ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 128

¹⁶ Ooka, "Ike-no Taiga," 30

This kind of painting had been occupying the mainstream of Chinese painting over a thousand years. Its artistic vitality and cultural influence has increasingly attracted the attention of worldwide art circles, even cultural circles. The literati painting was introduced into Japan, Korea and for a time it became a representative painting form in East Asian art circles. As a common painting form, it became a special for representing the Asian humanitarian spirit and a means of personal expression combining painting and calligraphy.¹⁷

¹⁷ Tong Xinxin, "Literati Painting: The Comparison between Japanese Literati Painting and Chinese Literati Painting," <http://www.doc88.com/p-7139849296863.html> (2007), 1

Chapter 1 The Evolution of Japanese Literati Style of Art

Southern painting was also referred to in Japanese as “*nanga* painting”, i.e. Japanese literati painting or *Bunjinga* was a style that originated in China and took on new connotations in Japan, where the society and culture were markedly different.

In a broad sense, *bunjin* means “man of letters,” someone who is literate; but it always seems to have implied a familiarity with Chinese learning and culture.¹⁸

However, *nanga* is a Japanese translation of the Chinese term for southern style painting, *nan-shu-hua*, which does not refer to geography but to the Southern School of Zen Buddhism, which advocated sudden enlightenment. Later Chinese critics of the seventeenth century considered it the proper stylistic model for aspiring literati painters, because of the casual feature of literati painting.

Its brushwork was described as bland, amateurish, spontaneous, and expressive of the noble ideals of the *wen-ren*. Subjects were various, but landscapes and symbolic literati plants (plum, bamboo, pine, orchid, chrysanthemum) were most frequently favored. *Nan-shu-hua* was the opposite of the “northern style,” which was considered decorative, detailed, and superficial, and which was practiced by professional artists.¹⁹

Chinese literati painting was introduced into Japan through three different sources. First Obaku Zen priest-painters immigrated to Japan after the founding of the Qing dynasty in 1644. Secondly there were Chinese professional and amateur painters living in the port of Nagasaki,

¹⁸ Patricia J. Graham, “Lifestyles of Scholar-painters in Edo Japan,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 77 (7). Cleveland Museum of Art: 262–83. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25161293>. (1990). 262

¹⁹ Graham, “Lifestyles of Scholar-painters in Edo Japan,” 263

the only place foreigners were allowed to live. Thirdly there were a great many paintings and block-printed manuals of painting styles imported from China.²⁰

As Chinese literati painting was finally systemized by Dong Qichang, in Japan, there was also a person, Ogyu Sorai, who started the literati painting, and also called for the combination of painting and calligraphy.

The beginning of *bunjinga* in Japan can be traced to the teachings of several men, most notably the philosopher Ogyu Sorai (1666-1728), who emphasized the Chinese idea that calligraphy and painting were the accomplishments of the truly literate person. Sorai, a scholar of the Kogakuha, or Ancient Studies School which set itself in opposition to the orthodox Neo-Confucianism of the shogunate academy, studied the written sources of Confucian thought in their linguistic and historical context, and was one of the first theoreticians to place a value on the study of literature, both prose and poetry, and the practice of calligraphy, for the individual Japanese intellectual.²¹

Therefore, the Japanese *bunjinga* painters and Chinese literati painters have the same pursuit. They all agree with the formation of calligraphy and painting existing in one painting. Moreover, they have same consciousness of painting: to express inner feelings or the spirit.

At a theoretical level, the *bunjin* painters attempted to imitate Chinese literati painting and deliberately avoided the Kano style of the Tokugawa Shogunal official school, which was based on the Chinese imperial academic painting. In this sense, more than 'style', the *bunjin* aspired to achieve the 'spirit' of the Chinese Southern School artists who deliberately avoided using the Northern School style. The paintings of the Japanese *bunjin* and the formation of *bunjin* identity involved layers of irony and confusion. The Japanese *bunjin* painters copied styles and motifs after various Chinese models and formulated a new visual tradition at a time of restricted trading policy, and most of these models consisted of non-literati materials. This irony and contradiction, in turn, made the Japanese literati copy unique and evoked a sense of 'originality'²²

²⁰ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 286

²¹ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 285-286

²² Kazuko Kameda-Madar, "Copying and Theory in Edo Period Japan (1615-1868)." *Art History* 37 (4): 708–727. Accessed February, 2016. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8365.12111/abstract> (Article published online: 14, AUG, 2014). 714

As mentioned above, Chinese literati painters do not agree with the way of northern professional painters, whose painting was considered shallow and affected. This is the same way Japanese *bunjinga* painters considered the professional Kano school, which was comprised of professional painters who had perfect painting techniques and formal painting style learned in workshops. Kano School painting style was same as Chinese northern painting, being bright in color and magnificent in style, but their paintings are lack of personal, private emotion.

What is more, the subjects used by Japanese literati painters were the same as what Chinese literati painters had used. For example, the “Four Gentleman”, which are the plum, bamboo, orchid and chrysanthemum, favorite subjects of Chinese literati painters, frequently used by Japanese *nanga* painters. For instance, “*Plum Blossoms*”, by one of the pioneers of Japanese *bunjinga* painters, Gion Nankai; and “*Orchid Pavilion Gathering; Autumn Landscape*” by one of the most famous *bunjinga* painters of second generation, Ike-no Taiga.

Differences Between Chinese and Japanese Literati Painting

Chinese literati painting was the basis of Japanese *nanga* paintings, which afterwards formed its own special style, therefore, I also want to discuss the difference between these two. One of the first differences, which is quite important, is the living circumstances between Chinese literati painters and Japanese *nanga* painters.

Unlike their Chinese counterparts, the Japanese *bunjin* were not necessarily carefree artists and scholars from wealthy, bureaucratic backgrounds, and many had to sell their work to make a living.²³ The most outstanding difference lay in the nature of their governing classes. In China the governing class was the shih-ta-

²³ Walker, “Japanese Art and Bunjinga (Nanga),” 2

fu (scholar), or bureaucracy, a peculiarly Chinese institution. In Japan the governing class consisted of professional warriors under the leadership of the shogun, or military dictator.²⁴

In China the military class was subordinate to the *Shih-ta-fu*, but in Japan the *jusha* (Confucian scholars) were employees of the military rulers. Therefore, Scholars were in charge in China while a military dictator was in charge in Japan. Politically, these two countries were absolutely opposite. The different living circumstances between two countries are why the social status of Chinese literati painter is higher than Japanese *nanga* painter. This must, partially, have affected the quality of their paintings, because sometimes, painting for living, they have to sell their paintings. The other difference between Chinese and Japanese literati painting is the difference of becoming a literati painter or a *bunjinga*.

The Chinese used their equivalent term, *wen-ren*, to define scholars who passed an examination to become a learned government bureaucrats of the *shi-da-fu* class. In Japan there was no such test of competency for being regarded as a *bunjin*.²⁵

What is more, different conceptions of literati painting between two countries' painters caused the different points of view when they see the painting. The name, *wen-ren*, or *bunjinga* in Japanese, for Japanese, is just a name for painting by literati, whereas, it is granted a meaning of "higher level" in the sight of Chinese literati painters, who are proud of the express-inner-feeling-way when they make paintings.

The Chinese used the term *wen-ren-hua* (literati painting) to define the art created by their literati, implying that it was distinct from---and better than---that of professional painters because it was produced by amateurs who used it as a means of spontaneously expressing their inner spirit. The Japanese today use the term *bunjinga* to define all the Japanese literati painters, but although some references

²⁴ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, Page 13

²⁵ Graham, "Lifestyles of Scholar-painters in Edo Japan," 262

to it exist in early nineteenth-century literati painters' documents, it is unclear exactly when and how widely it was employed earlier. Still, the term was generally associated with artists who favored an amateurish, diluted ink style derived from the Chinese literati.²⁶

Additionally, Literati painting in China became fixed on the Southern style which dominated in the Yuan dynasty (1280-1368) in the fourteenth century. On the other hand, Japanese literati painting was not limited to the Southern but open to many influences, such as the Southern Sung (1127-1279) academic painting and the Che-school painting of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).²⁷ “...in the strict Chinese sense of the term there were no literati in Japan.”²⁸ Therefore, *bunjinga* is just a name for Japanese literati painters. The third difference between two countries' literati painting is that even though Japanese literati painting was invented by using the model of Chinese literati paintings, even its subjects, the painting technique and painting style are quite different. Differences in the painting styles are caused by natural differences, for example, different weather or scenery gives the painters different feelings and points of view to see them, even when they quote the same objects from the Chinese literati painting models, their feeling for the objects when they draw them will not be the same as Chinese painters draw them.

The Beginning of Literati Style art in Japan

²⁶ Graham, “Lifestyles of Scholar-painters in Edo Japan,” 262

²⁷ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 14

²⁸ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 13

With the end of the five hundred years of civil war, the Japanese Tokugawa government (1615-1868), which was also called the Edo period, introduced the Confucian ideology to reform society. Therefore, the importance of Confucian thought in Japan became very firm, as were its cultural values, which informed the political system of government. Most important was education and learning. Learning the Confucian classics, it was hoped, would produce a moral, well-informed elite to assist in governing, and to provide a moral, non-warrior culture for the general populace. “...the evolution of an economy based on money, which elevated the merchant to new heights of wealth and power.”²⁹ It thus can be seen, this period was prosperous and peaceful, culture and economy were highly developed under the ruling of the military government of the Tokugawa shogunate. The mercantile culture also embraced Confucian learning and values. Literati painting became strong among the educated elite population. “These new ideas from the continent coincided with the growing popularity of Chinese studies in Japanese society...”³⁰

Since the mid-eighteenth century, the ruling Tokugawa family had a Confucian-based political system. There were a lot of schools teaching the culture of China.³¹ One of the first theoreticians, Ogyu Sorai (1666-1728), had been spending a lot of time to minutely study Confucian thought, literature, prose and poetry and calligraphy. This represented a shift in emphasis in education from the aim of producing men skilled in both *bu*, the martial arts, and *bun*, culture, to a focus on culture---a knowledge of history and literature, the ability to write in

²⁹.Ooka, “Ike-no Taiga,” 28

³⁰ Peter C Swann, *The Art of Japan: From the Jomon to the Tokugawa Period*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1966), 105-180

³¹ Walker, “Japanese Art and Bunjinga (Nanga),” 4

several different styles, including Chinese prose and poetry, and the skill to write these on paper or silk in a form not only pleasing to look at but also expressive of the writer's character.³²

Therefore, this was beneficial to the spread of Chinese culture, as well as establishing a firm basis for the spread of Chinese literati paintings in Japan. All Japanese *bunjinga* painters admired Chinese culture, calligraphy and poetry; a lot of them grew up in Chinese cultural atmosphere in Japan because their educated blood relatives, their father, mother, or even their father's friends admired Chinese culture. Therefore, so to speak, all of *bunjinga* painters are not unfamiliar with Chinese culture even when they were very young. For example, Ike-no Taiga, who was one of the most famous Japanese literati painters, started at age seven to study calligraphy. By the age of eleven, he is said to have been extremely proficient in both Chinese and Japanese styles of calligraphy. At twenty-two, he had mastered the five formal tradition styles---cursive draft script, semi cursive script, standard script, seal script, and clerical script. He was already a well-known calligraphic master before 22 years old.³³ Under these circumstances, a prosperous economy and profound Chinese cultural foundation, Chinese literati painting was being accepted by Japanese society was consequent.

However, even though there was Chinese cultural basis in Japan, during the Edo period, a policy of Japan was unexpectedly put into practice. The policy, which is same as what occurred in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), is *Sakoku*, that is, locked country. The government policy forbade traveling to China. Therefore, Japanese literati painters had no choice but to study the literati painting techniques by emulating the imported Chinese literati paintings. This, undoubtedly restricted Japanese literati painters from studying true Chinese literati paintings in China. Politically, the status quo of Japan at that time clearly created a huge dilemma for the

³² Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 285

³³ Ooka, "Ike-no Taiga," 31

Japanese literati painters who wanted to fully study Chinese literati painting. But one good thing was that Japan was only open to two countries for trade under *Sakoku*, and China was one of them, and Chinese paintings were brought to Japan.

From 1641 onwards only a few Chinese and a handful of Dutch were allowed to live in a very closely circumscribed settlement on Deshima Island near Nagasaki...they were able however to pass on medical knowledge...³⁴

Japanese painters also came to deeply know Chinese literati painting because of an illustrated book called *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden*. One of the reasons why Japanese *bunjinga* painters acquired the necessary techniques of *nanga* paintings is because of these imported paintings. One is *Bazong huapu* (*J. Hasshu gafu*); the other one is *Jieziyuan huazhuan* (*J. Kaishein gaden*). “The third and undoubtedly the most important source for Japanese knowledge of *nanga* painting was a group of block-printed manuals illustrating models for depicting plants, trees, rocks, mountains, and human figures in the styles of various Chinese masters. Of these the most influential were the *Bazong huapu* (*Pa-chung hua-p’u*, *J. Hasshu gafu*), *The Eight Albums of Painting*, published in China in the 1620s and the *Jieziyuan huazhuan* (*Chien-tzu-yuan hua-ch’uan*, *J. Kaishein gaden*), *Mustard-Seed-Garden Manual of Painting*, printed in two installments: the first, a set of five volumes on landscape, in 1679; the second, two albums dealing with bamboo, plum blossoms and bird-and-flower motifs, in 1701. Each of these works found its way to Japan, and the demand for both was such that new editions were printed in Japan, the *Hasshu gafu* in 1672 and the *Kaishien garden* in 1748. Many literati artists are known to have had copies of one or both works and to have used them as guides to the basic theory and techniques of literati painting.³⁵ These two books of paintings were broadly

³⁴ Swann, *The art of Japan*, 182

³⁵ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 286

emulated. Through the emulation of the two books on paintings, the first generation of Japanese literati painters emerged.

Chapter 2 First Generation of Japanese Literati Painters---the importation of Chinese painting style

First Generation of Japanese literati painters can be described as artists who were imitative of the Chinese style of literati art. The work of Gion Nankai (1677-1751), Sakaki Hyakusen (1696-1752) and Yanagisawa Kien (1706-1758) was based on Chinese literati paintings that were brought into Japan by Chinese Buddhist monks and merchants in the early 18th century. This kind of painting attracted Confucian scholars who were well educated in Chinese literature and poetry.³⁶ Therefore, the first generation of Japanese literati painters was considered the pioneers of literati painting in Japan. They came from upper class families. Gion Nankai and Yanagisawa Kien were from samurai families, and Sakaki Hyakusen was from a *chonin* or well to do merchant family from Nagoya.³⁷

They exemplify the two polarities of *nanga* artists in Japan: on the one hand the samurai-literatus unappreciated in his own time, and on the other the professional painter.³⁸

These literati painters imitated Chinese literati paintings, and the new style spread via their paintings, attracting in Edo society and painting circles.

Using facsimile of Chinese painting books like *The Eight Albums of Painting* and *Mustard-Seed-Garden Manual of Painting*, they learned the style and technique of literati painting.³⁹ They did not express their own personality in their work but rather copied. However,

³⁶ Robert Treat Paine and Alexander Soper, *The Art and Architecture of Japan*, (England: Penguin books, 1974), 236

³⁷ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan: The Artist and the City (1615-1868)*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 67

³⁸ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 286-287

³⁹ Paine and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of Japan*, 236

they have made a contribution in establishing an important foundation in the formation of Japanese literati painting.⁴⁰

Among the early Japanese literati painters, Sakaki Hyakusen (1697-1758) was the one who was quite familiar with Ming-Qing culture and Chinese literati paintings.

Literati artists identified with Chinese scholar-amateur painters of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (the fourteenth-nineteenth centuries), and adopted many of the themes and styles favored by them.⁴¹

I intend to put Sakai Hyakusen as the first one of the first generation Japanese literati painters, because he is different from the other two literati painters and his experience was quite special. According to his biography, we can see that actually his ancestors were Chinese and immigrated to Japan just a few generations before he was born. Sakaki Hyakusen was born in Nagoya in October, 1697. His father ran a pharmacy called “The Eight Immortals Hall”, in imitation of Chinese Daoist institutions of medicine.⁴² His family undoubtedly remained in contact with the mainland through the importation of Chinese herbs and medicines, and possibly of books and paintings as well.⁴³ Therefore, his family in Nakasaki has close trade relations with China. When he was really young, he already had a lot of chances to be close with Chinese books, paintings and so on. It shows us that Sakaki Hyakusen had an intimate relationship with Chinese books and literati painting history.⁴⁴ At the age of 20 he left Nagoya, lived for a while in Ise as a poet of Japanese *haiku* style poems, then when he was thirty, he went to Kyoto, where he stayed for the rest of his life, selling paintings as a professional painter until he died.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Tong, “Literati Painting,” 11

⁴¹ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 67

⁴² Tong, “Literati Painting,” 12

⁴³ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 288

⁴⁴ Tong, “Literati Painting,” 12

⁴⁵ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 288



Fig. 1. Sakaki Hyakusen: *The First and Second Visits to the Red Cliffs*. Edo period, Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk; 98 x 38.1 cm (38 5/8 x 15 in.). Donated to the Minneapolis Institute of Art by the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation in 2015

His relationship with Chinese culture is evident in his painting. *The First and Second Visits to the Red Cliffs*, is executed on paper with ink, on a pair of six-panel *byobu*, or folding screens. The work, painted in 1746, marks the beginning of his maturity as a painter, evidence of the influence of Chinese art is in his use of a famous sinified theme, the two poems that record the Sung dynasty poet-scholar Su Dongpo's (Su Tung-p'o) two excursions made in 1082 to the range of red cliffs along the *Yangtze* River. The inscription describes the subject of this painting:

The weather is pleasant and there is a plenty of food and wine. Su writes: letting the boat go where it pleased, we drifted over the immeasurable fields of water. I felt a boundless exhilaration, as though I were sailing on the void or riding the wind and didn't know where to stop. I was filled with a lightness, as though I had left the world and were standing alone, or had sprouted wings and were flying up to join the immortals.

There are a few phrases, which clearly display the Chinese religious concepts of Daoist. First is “*wu wei*” in Chinese, which means “letting things take their own course” for example, “letting the boat go where it pleased”, “riding the wind and didn't know where to stop”, and the image of the crane. Penelope Mason explained:

At the time of the second visit Su is no longer sure that he doesn't envy the immortals (who used to ride a crane). He whoops like a crane and tries to climb to their realm at the top of the cliffs, but becomes afraid and retreats. As he and his friends row away, a crane---Taoist symbol for an immortal---flies overhead and later, in a dream, he is visited by the immortal in human form who asks the poet if he enjoyed his excursion...⁴⁶

Not only the theme is Chinese, but the style is also. In the middle panels the rhythm is slowed, the ink lines lightened, and in the left two panels the theme is concluded with a passage of low rolling hills. In the left screen the moment has passed. The crane is flying away, and we see Su gazing after him, the Red Cliffs now impossibly steep and convoluted behind him. In the staccato treatment of the dark, heavy forms to the left, we can almost sense the trembling of the trees and the ringing of the mountains that caused him to retreat back to the mortal world.” James Cahill in his study of Hyakusen also has pointed out how close his work is in style and theme to the paintings of Chinese artists working in Suzhou.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 288-289

⁴⁷ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 289-290



Fig. 2. Sakaki Hyakusen: *Wind and Rain of Mountain in Autumn*. Unclear size.

Among the extant artworks of Sakaki Hyakusen, the wind and rain theme is prominent. For example, in his Painting of *Wind and Rain of Mountain in Autumn*, he adopts Chinese brush method: he uses dots and thin lines to depict a mountain and river, and a very thin red color in the surrounding space to try and make the mountain, wind and rain. The noise of waterfall stands out. He perfectly depicts the emotion of figures, and the relationship of figures and mountain and river, giving a feeling of flowing. The flexible brushstroke is fresh and alive. The character of this painting is a representation of rain. The painter uses ink drops and a numbers of fine lines to show the rain dropping down in a slanting fashion. The color of ink looks sometimes diluted (light) and sometimes strong, expressing how fast and heavy the rain was. The tips of trees sway and incline to left, giving the impression of the atmosphere -- strong winds and heavy rain.

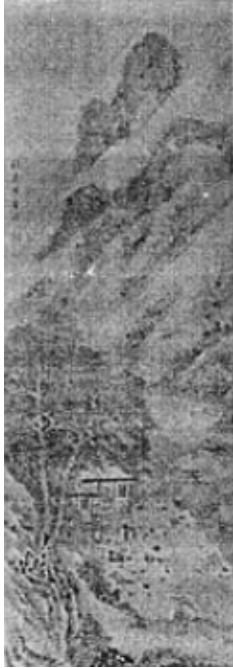


Fig. 3. Sakaki Hyakusen: *Landscape Painting of Wind and Rain*. Unclear size.

In another Hyakusen's painting called *Landscape Painting of Wind and Rain*, the rain was depicted much heavier, but in this painting the heaviness of the rain is not expressed via the hues of the ink but by leaving blank areas. Several slanting lines reach from up to down, the right top to lower left. This reminds me of a scene in the natural world. Because the rain is so strong, people can hardly see anything. In these two works, the same theme of rain and wind was expressed in two different ways which reflects two things: one is the affection of Hyakusen for the rain and wind theme, the other is that Hyakusen expressed the same theme in two different ways by adjusting the amount using of the ink and the thinness of the lines. Based on this, we know that he was a really good painter who knew how to carefully express the distinctions of

same scene in two different environments. For example, he clearly knows how to interpret the rain when it is not so heavy and he knows how to interpret the rain when it is very heavy.⁴⁸

The depiction of rain and wind scenery in traditional Chinese literati painting was not as direct as that of Japanese painters. Chinese literati painters usually implied rain by painting the fresh air after raining and the natural scenery instead of directly painting the rain and wind. For example, the *Painting of Wind and Rain in Xi Shan* by Meng Wang (1308-1385) and the *Painting of Wind and Rain* by Wen Zhengming (1470-1559), demonstrate an indirect expression of the rain scenery. Only a minority of Chinese paintings done by professional artists directly express actively raining, snowy or windy scenery. This is because this artistic style is not acceptable for Chinese literati painting circles, because this kind of paintings does not correspond with Chinese classical aesthetics, which are abstract, non-narrative, quiet, secluded, deep. Japanese painters, whereas, love to see the dynamics of the rain on the paintings.

Sakaki Hyakusen loved to study Chinese painting technique, he especially excelled a painting technique which is called *Mi dot* which is a frequently-executed technique in Chinese literati painting. He often used this technique, much more than his contemporaries, and this is a sign that Japanese literati paintings were making progress technically.

⁴⁸ Tong, "Literati Painting," 13



Fig. 4. Sakaki Hyakusen: *Landscape Painting of Waterfall*. Unclear size.

In his *Landscape Painting of Waterfall*, two scholars stand beside a bank of a stream by a waterfall, one of them looks up to the waterfall, pointing out a pavilion on the opposite mountain. The whole painting, except for applying the very thin light red wash, is made of sketch lines and dots: the lines are fluent, with contour lines, and some dots for moss. This technique of flowing dots and wrinkled-texture strokes had not been used before. Therefore, this was a technical breakthrough of Japanese literati painting.



Fig. 5. Sakaki Hyakusen: *Landscape Painting of Meilin*. 1747, Unclear size.

His *Landscape Painting of Meilin* from 1747 used even more of the dotted wrinkled-texture technique, and we hardly see the contour lines on the painting; the whole painting completely uses the ink dot to make the shadow effects and the quality of the ground.⁴⁹

Sakaki Hyakusen executed the *Mi dot* painting technique in his three paintings which mentioned above. This painting technique was frequently used by the subsequent generations of painters, especially in the third generation, one of representative painters, Uragami Gyokudo who had been largely executing this technique in his paintings.

⁴⁹ Tong, "Literati Painting," 12-13

Next I want to introduce two other pioneers of first generation of Japanese literati painters. The reason why I put them together is because they were both samurai painters. And also, Gion Nankai was Yanagisawa Kien's mentor.

“Nankai was the eldest son of a doctor attached to a *han* in Wakayama prefecture. Born and raised in Edo, he received an excellent Confucian education in the shogunal academy, and in 1697, after his father's death, he moved to Wakayama as an official Confucian teacher. Three years later he was stripped of his stipend and exiled from the *han* for some offense never recorded. For the next ten years he lived in exile and supported himself by teaching calligraphy. In 1710 he was pardoned, probably so that he might serve as a translator when an embassy from Korea visited Japan. Later he became retainer to a *daimyo* and was put in charge of educational administration in the latter's domain. After his pardon he began to paint, drawing randomly upon many sources, the printed manuals in particular.⁵⁰

One of his extant artworks is *The Imitation of a Landscape Painting of Tang Liuru*. Based on the historical records, when he was 35 in 1711 in Edo, he had once copied the artworks of Chinese Yuan Dynasty painters, Meng Wang (1308-1385) and Yin Tang (1470-1524). Yin Tang composed a painting called *The Landscape Painting of Tang Liuru*, thereby this painting by Gion Nankai is an imitation of painting of Yin Tang.

⁵⁰ Tong, “Literati Painting,” 11



Fig. 6. Gion Nankai: *The Imitation of Landscape Painting of Tang Liuru*. Unclear size.

The layout of *The Imitation of Landscape Painting of Tang Liuru* obviously used the model books for painting that were imported from China, for example, the *Mustard-Seed-Garden Manual of Painting*. The forms of the mountain, stone, trees, and seals are all similar and the layout of the painting is reasonable. But the lines of the surface of the mountains and stones are not very smooth, even are a little bit blunt. The stroke is not very flexible, there is much use of the hook stroke, less wrinkled-texture strokes, and the dots and lines do not change a lot. The

distant mountain was painted with color painting directly on the paper without first painting the skeleton of the mountain beforehand with Chinese ink brush. The mountain was painted with a technique called “yunran” which was originated from China, its function in here was to distinguish the bright side and dark side of the landscape form. Dark ink color was applied with fewer layers. In this painting, he mostly painted the branches of the tree with the strokes the Chinese describe as the “deer antlers” stroke and painted the branch with very few “crab-legs” stroke. There were a lot of dry branches, he hardly painted the leaves and there was only a little bit of moss on the top of the mountain. It is easy to see that the painting skill of Gion Nankai was not proficient, and his ability of copying was not very good.⁵¹



Fig. 7. Gion Nankai: *Plum Blossoms*. Hanging scrolls; ink on paper; 1740s.

However, in another painting called “*Plum Blossoms*”, he once again used the flying-white calligraphic technique, i.e. “yunran”. Painted in 1740s. This was a later work, which was executed with better technique.

⁵¹ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 287

(In this painting) we see a strong contrast between the vigorous strokes of the branches executed in the flying-white technique, and the small, delicately rendered petals of the plum blossoms. Flying white (*J.hihaku*) is a calligraphic brushstroke in which the dark ink is interspersed with the white of the paper. The inky brush tip is split as the stroke is made, allowing white to show between black outlines. The white areas of paper that appear within the bold ink outer edges of the flying-white stroke form a counterpoint to the white areas enclosed within the round outlines of the petals, emphasizing the delicacy of the blossoms.⁵²

Therefore, more varied painting techniques were executed in this painting than the paintings he composed before.

As Gion Nankai's student, they have a lot of common points. First, they both were samurai painters, as already mentioned. Second, they both were exiled and were pardoned.

That the two pioneers of *nanga* painting who came from the samurai class should have been so severely punished for youthful misconduct may indicate that their interest in arts and letters, though sanctioned by one faction of influential Confucian scholars, was not viewed in so favorable a light by their *han* lords.

Yanagisawa Kien (1704-1758) was born in Edo to the chief retainer of the Yanagisawa family; Kien was well educated and received numerous favors from his *daimyo*, including the right to adopt the Yanagisawa name.

As a painter Kien was something of a dilettante. His works range from literal depictions of flowers in the album--leaf format and more relaxed vertical landscapes, to extremely expressive painting of bamboo executed with his fingers. One example of a bamboo painting is executed in green pigment on dyed indigo blue paper. "A stalk of bamboo bends across the upper third of the surface, its curve echoed by the down-pointing leaves. Escaping from the leaf cluster, a single thin stem arcs downward, its leaves forming a subtle accent in the lower right area of the picture. Kien's signature in gold and his seals in red---prominent to the left of the thin stem---stabilize the composition."⁵³

⁵² Tong, "Literati Painting," 11

⁵³ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 287

Kien was also interested in the Chinese realistic painting style called “*Nanping*”. He studied painting technique with a now unknown painter, and most of the artworks he left were decorative or realistic paintings. Since the Chinese literati painting style had already been introduced into Japan for a while, and due to the scholastic accomplishments of Kien, it was comparatively easy for him to accept literati painting and start to compose paintings with literati painting subjects. But his paintings still had a strong realistic quality as well as a decorative quality.⁵⁴



Fig. 8. Yanagisawa Kien: *Bamboo*. Hanging scroll; pale green on indigo-blue paper; mid-18th century.

For example, the painting *Bamboo*, which is a color painting painted on a dark blue paper. The jade green bamboo is extremely well-defined. The structure of this painting is very

⁵⁴ Paine and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of Japan*, 237

simple, on this tall paper, the bamboo slants in a parallel pattern in the upper part of the paper, and for the sake of balance, there is another branch hanging down. Even though this is a literati subject, the bamboo is still very realistic with a strong decorative style.⁵⁵

Nankai was a samurai and Confucian scholar and Kien came from a well-to-do military family. Both men were unable to escape the confines of mere emulation of Chinese literati painting. Looking at the history of Japanese literati painting, the early period which can be seen as an era of “imitation style”, has very few extant paintings. But those few examples show signs of imitation, and the painting technique was not proficient. The lines of the paintings are very rigid, not smooth at all, relying on the use of the hooking line, with little variety in the dots and lines. But in this period, the style of Japanese literati painting was complicated: most of the paintings were not pure Chinese *nanga* paintings, but also including the landscape painting of Jin-Tang style and Northern painting and so on. Although the precursors of Japanese literati painters did not understand Chinese literati paintings very well and were not proficient in using the technique, they played an important role for the Japanese literati paintings in the future.⁵⁶

The second generation is the mature period of Japanese literati painting. The first generation purely absorbed the style of Chinese painting, no matter if it was the Northern painting or Southern painting style. The second generation, while improving the Chinese painting technique that they had already have, also absorbed western painting style and technique.⁵⁷ For example, the artists Ike Taiga; and the haiku painter Yosa Buson also appeared, and made Japanese literati painting officially become an independent clique which had their own style.

⁵⁵ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 288

⁵⁶ Tong, “Literati Painting,” 14-15

⁵⁷ Swann, *The Art of Japan*, 194

Chapter 3 The Second Generation of Japanese Literati Painters

The second generation of artists marks the mature period of Japanese literati painters. Through their precursors' practice and exploration, Japanese literati painters after the middle of 18th century attained a higher level---they gradually fused their own tastes and personalities into their own paintings.⁵⁸ The representative painters of the second generation of Japanese literati painting were Ike-no Taiga (1723-1776) and Yosa Buson (1716-1783). They were professional artists like Hyakusen, accepted commissions and sold their work for a living.⁵⁹ Ike-no Taiga and Yosa Buson were the recognized literati painters. But even though they lived in a small artistic community in Kyoto, they were not close and their styles of painting were totally different.⁶⁰

Ike-no Taiga, who was a businessman in Japanese Tokugawa shogunate period, was born in Kyoto in May 4th, 1723. His father died when he was little. Unlike the first generation literati painters, he was not from an upper class family, but from the "peasant class". His father who worked for the mint in Kyoto died when Taiga was four years old. Two years later he began to study the Chinese classics, and calligraphy, at which he was proficient.⁶¹ In his own time he was highly appreciated, today he is considered to be one of the outstanding calligraphers of the Edo period. In his early teens he and his mother maintained a commercial painting shop, for which he produced fans decorated in the Ming style illustrated in the *Hasshu gafu (The Eight Albums of Painting)*.⁶² Although Ike-no Taiga was a professional painter, he was attracted by poems and

⁵⁸ Brenda G. Jordan, *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets; Talent and Training in Japanese Painting*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 116

⁵⁹ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 290

⁶⁰ Tong, "Literati Painting," 15

⁶¹ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 69

⁶² Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 290

calligraphy very much, and he was very talented in these. He started learning calligraphy when he was little, and he was one of the representative calligraphers in the Edo period.⁶³

He also had the talent to be a scholar. Like Sakaki Hyakusen, he studied various Ming-Qing painting styles, and at the same time, he also had studied Japanese Muromachi era 15th century painters' ink and wash painting and the Japanese decorative style. Ike-no Taiga started painting when he was around twenty years old. In 1738 Taiga began his studies with Yanagisawa Kien. During this early period, until 1749, Taiga did not exclusively make literati art. He was also influenced by the decorative style of Ogata Korin.

Although no direct evidence linking the two artists can be found---Korin died in 1716 and Taiga was born in 1723---a connection may have existed through Taiga's father, who worked in the mint for a certain Nakamura, possibly the same Nakamura who acted as Korin's patron. Scholars also see the influence of Japanese Zen painting of the 15th century Muromachi period, in his early work...⁶⁴



Fig. 9. Ike-no Taiga: *Volumes From Red Cliff to Tung-T'ing Lake*. 56.9 x 298.4cm.

⁶³ Paine and Soper, *The Art and Architecture of Japan*, 237

⁶⁴ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 290

For example, *Volumes From Red Cliff to Tung-T'ing Lake* is a landscape painting which was executed with references to the decorative style of Ogata Korin. It depicted the scenery from China's *Red Cliff to Tung-T'ing Lake*. For rendering the hill stones and the trees growing in the middle of the mountain, Ike-no Taiga probably used sketchy lines, because of the contour line of the hill stone is tough and the lines are compact and meticulous. This painting adopts the resplendent and magnificent painting style of Momoyama mid 16th century period, notably in the large-sized golden color ground, which endowed the painting with noble and opulent feelings. The golden paint, red, green, ultramarine etc. brilliant colors executed in this painting bring out the flamboyant decorative character of that style of painting.⁶⁵ But the colors in his six-panel screen of 1749, *First Visit to the Red Cliffs* are much brighter than the largely monochrome Muromachi painting---red ochre and indigo predominate, with accents of green, yellow, and scarlet. In addition both the composition and the brushwork resemble those especially the 15th century work of Mincho and Shubun. Therefore, we can clearly see the stylistic comprehensiveness of Ike-no Taiga's painting.

In 1748, he journeyed from Kyoto to Matsushima and back, stopping along the way to climb Mount Fuji and to spend several weeks in Edo, where he made a name for himself by executing finger paintings.⁶⁶ That was when he was 20 or so, he made a lot of finger paintings in the Edo region. Ike-no Taiga learned finger painting by imitating Yanagisawa Kien's works. However, there are two differences between them. This was the style of Yanagisawa Kien's ink-bamboo, but Ike-no Taiga had used it to paint many subjects. For example, he made birds and flower, figures and mountain and rivers and so on. The other difference was that technically Ike-no Taiga was much better than Kien, because Kien only used his finger-tips to paint, while Taiga

⁶⁵ Tong, "Literati Painting," 17

⁶⁶ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 290

used every part of his hand to paint, even his palm. The lines of Taiga's finger paintings express the quality of brush line, which is rigid and sharp. But Taiga's shortcoming was that he could not paint long lines; the lines he painted were short and not smooth, not soft and flowing enough, therefore, it could not be applied to large-sized paintings, which confined the full expression of images.

In addition to finger paintings, Ike-no Taiga in his youth also painted a lot of landscape paintings from a copybook. These paintings imitated the style of the stones, trees, and leaves in a quite simple style. After he was thirty years old, Ike-no Taiga started forming his own personal style of painting, and eventually finished the formation of his personal painting style around the age of forty.⁶⁷ By that time he had combined a number of artistic style into a unique and distinctly personal style his own. Of the earliest works in which his mature style is a pair of six-panel screens of 1763, *Orchid Pavilion and Banquet on Dragon Mountain*.



Fig. 10. Ikeno Taiga: *Orchid Pavilion and Banquet on Dragon Mountain*. 1763. Pair of six-panel byōbu; ink and color on paper.

These Chinese themes are from the official history of the mid-fourth century of Six Dynasties period. The Orchid Pavilion was the place of a literary party held by the famous

⁶⁷ Stephen Addiss, *How To Look at Japanese Art*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 71-72

calligrapher Wang Xizhi. He requested each of his 42 famous poet friends to write a poem every time a cup in the stream passed by them. *Banquet on Dragon Mountain* illustrates the story of Meng Jia, who attended a picnic organized by Huan Wen. Meng having drunk a lot of wine did not realize he lost his cap, a symbol of his high office. Huan Wen got the cap and commanded another member of the party to compose a verse ridiculing Meng. Meng replied with his own verse, a most excellent poem, and won the admiration of the group. These two scenes share an integrated style and dramatic compositions. There is in the Banquet screen a large mountain in the left foreground and in the distance a village can be seen on the right. The brush is different for the mountain, with its densely packed tree and rock motifs, and the open space and sketchily depicted village which provides a strong sense of space. There also is reference to an event of the ancient past in a modern setting. The method used to delineate the trees and rocks in the foreground consists of single ink lines frequently repeated and flat washes of color, a technique derived directly from woodblock prints.⁶⁸

The formation of his painting style also reflected his ardent love of nature. He loved to travel a lot, to visit the famous mountains; he crossed all over Japan and climbed Fuji Mountain, he even make fun of himself, saying that he “traveled a lot, read a bit”. He painted lots of landscape paintings in traditional Chinese painting style and captured scenic spots and historic sites. His own special painting style is called “真景画”,⁶⁹ *True Pictures*. In addition Taiga was taken with which he experience in Kyoto. It was in his fashion there, and its influence is clear in his painting *True View of Mount Asama*.

⁶⁸ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 291

⁶⁹ Tong, “Literati Painting,” 17

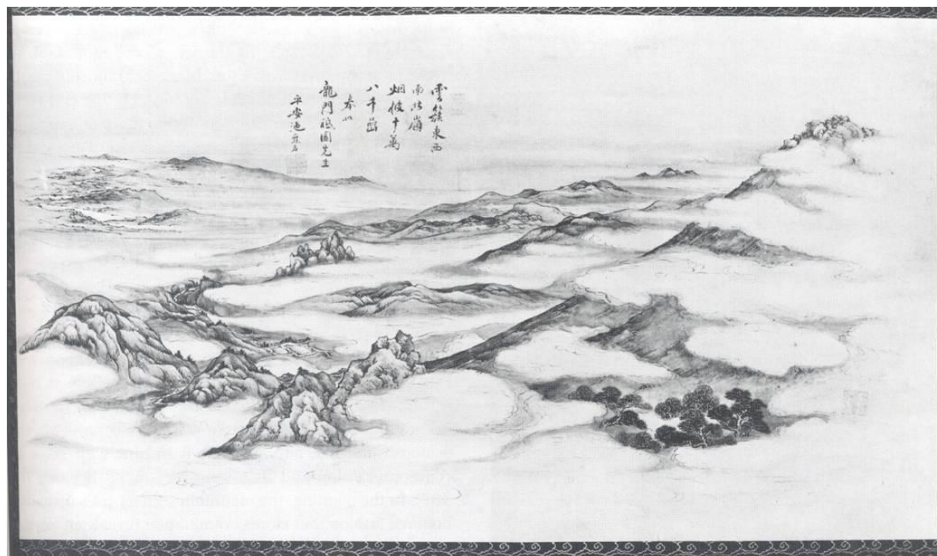


Fig. 11. Ike-no Taiga: *True View of Mount Asama*, 1760.

It is most likely that he saw copperplate etchings because using Western techniques of perspective, because the hanging scroll depicts fine lines similar to etched lines and light washes to create what purports to be the actual appearance of Mount Asama in Shigano prefecture.

However, as Melinda Takeuchi has demonstrated, this painting has greater importance than just a reflection of Western models. Its formal title is *Asamagadake shinkeizu*, *True View of Mount Asama*, and it is the first painting identified as a *shinkeizu*, a genre of landscape painting that combines the idea of factual representation, the long tradition of landscape depiction on which the artist is drawing, and finally the Chinese concept of a painting reflecting the character, the “spirit resonance,” of the artist. As Takeuchi points out, *True View of Mount Asama* combines in a believable composition two different views of a mountain landscape.⁷⁰ At the horizon line in the upper right section of the painting, there is a reworking of Taiga’s sketch of Mount Fuji, while the lower right passage has been taken from a separate drawing of Mount

⁷⁰Melinda Takeuchi, ““true” Views: Taiga's Shinkeizu and the Evolution of Literati Painting Theory in Japan”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 48 (1). [Cambridge University Press, Association for Asian Studies]: 3–26. (1989). 16-20

Asama. That this work has been accepted for so long as a literal representation of a particular landscape is a testament to Taiga's artistic gifts. The poem inscribed in the upper part of the picture was composed and written by Taiga after climbing Mount Asama in 1760. Clouds billow in the four directions: The mist breaks---ten thousand and eight peaks{appear}. Heian Mumei {the painting name Taiga adopted in 1750} dedicates this to the esteemed and venerable Master Gion {either Gion Nankai or his son}.

The second part has been interpreted as a statement of Taiga's belief that this painting is not only a landscape but a reflection of his character, a response to a "benediction" given to him by this mentor Nankai.⁷¹ A few paintings from his mature period, like those mentioned above show that often his were not purely literati paintings. In other works as well he brought literati painting subjects into Japanese traditional art. In the above examples, he fused with the painting character of Japanese ink wash painting of Muromachi period and Edo era decorative painting, in a unique painting style, therefore, he could be considered as comprehensive painting master, but strictly speaking, he did not belonged to any painting clique.⁷²

In addition to Nanga style paintings, he also was inspired by Chinese Northern painting, Japanese Zen painting, and Chinese Jin-Tang Dynasty style paintings. Speaking of the comprehensiveness of Ike-no Taiga's painting style, I also want to talk about the reason why Japanese literati painting, as a derivative painting form of Chinese literati painting, kept foothold in the world painting circle. We can see the representative Chinese objects were being frequently used in Japanese literati paintings. However, when we see a Japanese literati painting, it usually was executed with Japanese painting technique or something that could represent the Japanese features while they used Chinese objects to draw a painting. For example, a painting which was

⁷¹ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 290-291

⁷² Tong, "Literati Painting," 15

called “Moonlight Bamboo” by Ike-no Taiga, was executed the Japanese Rimpa or decorative technique of *Tarashikomi*.⁷³



Fig. 12. Ike-no Taiga: *Moonlight Bamboo*. ca.1758-60

It is interesting to note that this technique was frequently used among *Rimpa* artists but was barely used by literati painters. This technique was used by dropping ink in wet puddles on the paper, to make the wide bamboo trunks by looking fascinating with intriguing mixed color effects. However, this way of dropping ink was considered by calligraphers as against the rules of calligraphic art, because they think this will ruin the line, made the line vague. But Ike-no Taiga as a calligraphic prodigy at a very early age who had a great achievement in it in his mature undoubtedly did a great job in this “dangerous zone”. Indeed, he definitely broke the rules of calligraphy, but it resulted in good effects. The patterns and shading on the broad bamboo trunks display their aged, weather-worn state, and above all, the effect of an evocative moonlit night. Even we are not able to see the moonlight in this painting. However, through the

⁷³ J. Edward Kidder, *The Art of Japan*, (London: Century Publishing House, 1981), 290

great technique of Ike-no Taiga executed in this painting, we see the moonlight somewhere in the spare space, which was much better than drawing the moonlight, because it leaves us space to imagine and even though there is no moonlight draw in this painting, Ike-no Taiga through the comparison of objects in the painting, implied us the existence of the moonlight.

Although no moon appears in the paintings, the exquisite ink shading evokes the moonlight on the bamboo trunks and leaves, particularly around the clusters of leaves at the top of the two central panels.⁷⁴

Moreover, the problem of the bamboo leaves which were too scattered; it right is where the beauty of this painting is at. Ike-no Taiga deliberately reduced the amount of the leaves to leave us the space to imagine the moonlight and at the same time to create the serene mood of the night in the circumstances of not ruining the natural essence of bamboo. Otherwise, too many leaves would ruin the serene feeling by giving the viewers a crowded sense. By the way, this painting was painted in the folding screen format which is very Japanese. And, on the first panel of this painting, there is a seven-syllable poem. “...*(which translated in English as) Playing the koto [zither] in a bamboo grove, the moon comes from a thousand miles away.*” This sentence of the poem was considered as an echo of a poem of Chinese famous poet of Tang-Dynasty, Wang Wei (ca. 701-761).⁷⁵

In this painting, we can see a Chinese subject, bamboo, but this painting was executed with Japanese painting techniques of the *rimpa* style. Moreover, the painting format was very Japanese.

⁷⁴ Sadako Ohki, “What Makes Japanese Painting Japanese?”. *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*. [Yale University, Yale University Art Gallery], 64–81. (2007), 68

⁷⁵ Ohki, “What Makes Japanese Painting Japanese?” 70

(Therefore, this serene bamboo painting) not only shows his virtuosity of scholar painter's ink art but also exhibits his learning from different art tradition like *rimpa* of highly sophisticated design. The painting makes us viewers hear the rustling of the leaves, see the moonlight without the moon, and imagine Taiga's encounter with the Chinese master Wang Wei of the eighth century through a poem. The talk will elucidate the infinite possibility of ink art enhanced by the use of empty space.⁷⁶

At the same time, as a great calligrapher, his ability of calligraphy was obvious. Moreover, he is a fantastic haiku painter and poet. To illustrate this we look at two paintings, one is called *A Black Dog and a Boat*, the other one is called *Man Eating Sweet Potatoes*.

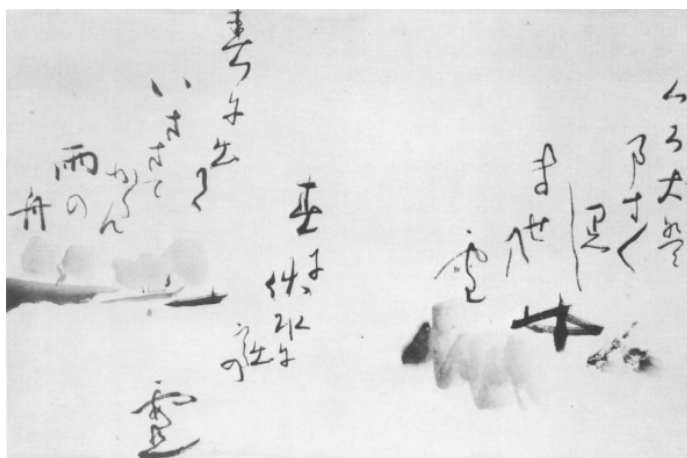


Fig. 13. Ike-no Taiga: *A Black Dog and a Boat*. Hanging scroll; ink and slight colors on paper.

⁷⁶ Sadako Ohki, "Ike Taiga's Moonlight Bamboo: The Creation of Ma (Time and Space)," (New Haven: The Yale University Art Galley. Published in April 9, 2014), Accessed in September 22, 2015. <http://calendar.yale.edu/cal/opa/default/today/default/CAL-2c9cb3cc-4335d58d-0143-b6045c7a-00007e97bedework@yale.edu/>



Fig. 14. Ike-no Taiga: *Man Eating Sweet Potatoes*. Hanging scroll; ink on paper.

They are both comprised of a painting and a *haiku* poem. Also, certainly, we can see the various influences from various painting styles. This first painting has two poems and two sketches painted with black ink, while the trees have brown trunks and pale blue-gray foliage. The two *haiga* depict different seasons, winter and spring, they suggest the four seasons. We can see the connection, the feeling of continuing, between these two seasons. And the calligraphy from right side to the left side is very graceful, and flowing. The two subjects, winter and spring, separated the poem and the pale wash leads the eyes of viewers to the beginning of the second poem, which unifies the works. The poem on the right reads: A black dog who is growing blacker and staring at the white snow that covered the fence. Thereby, the black dog and the whiteness of the snow became an obviously contrast. We can see from this painting the influence of Zen Buddhism that Taiga once studied. This composition that haiku matched *haiga* was really satisfying in aesthetic and intellectual stimulation. The second poem basically says: “Coming to the river with an excited mood caused by the unfreezing river which means the spring was

coming. At this very moment of spring day, shall I rent a raining boat?" From this poem, an idyllic mood can be felt. And this poem presents us a beautiful scene of a landscape surrounded by the fog and light spring rain. In the painting, we can see the riverbank, boat, and unclear appearance of trees surrounded by the mist. The poem and the sketch echoed each other, so the poem interpreted the sketch while the sketch depicted the sense of the poem intended to express.⁷⁷

In the second painting which was called "Man Eating Sweet Potatoes", we can see his humor in this painting. Totally painted in ink, the work displays a fantastic technique of handling the brush. This painting was composed when he was mid-forties, approximately ten years before he died. Although this painting presented the feature of *haiga*, the accompanying poem is not a *haiku* whose standard form is 5-7-5 syllables, instead, it consists of two parallel couplets. The possible meaning of this poem is: The man who eats sweet potatoes do not want to be popular, He who is eager to succeed, must guard his happiness. The calligraphy of this poem was not very standard from the point of view of literary style, but for aesthetics, it was a pleasing artwork, with its free but controlled brushstrokes, lively movement across the page, and an air of abandon, it seems as if this is Taiga's composition, although it does not bear his signature. As an artwork, the outlines of the calligraphy of the poem are wonderful, full of freedom, from it, we can figure out that he was a unfettered artist. In the sketch, a man who wearing a cap with a pointed top, supports his fat body with his right elbow, and chews his sweet potatoes happily. The subject of this painting is very simple, just a man wearing clothes eating potatoes, but from the strokes we can clearly see the clothing folds, the mustache, his lying in bed pose and even his facial expression which is precise, neat, funny, and accurate at the same time. It is not exaggerated

⁷⁷ Ooka, "Ike-no Taiga," 37

drawing. The man of the painting, to be honest, is not handsome. This is what Ike-no Taiga used to do freely sketch the scene.

It has been suggested that his insistence on portraying ugly types came about as a reaction against the traditional beauties being painted by the realists of the Maruyama school and the beauties depicted in the ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Taiga uncompromisingly painted nature as he saw it---for this reason, too, he must have found it difficult to portray mankind idealistically.⁷⁸

He perfectly fulfilled the principles of “true-view pictures” that he created, the essence of whatever he painted on the paper by means of its original real form.

Yosa Buson, unlike Ike-no Taiga, the other literati painter of second generation, was almost exclusively a haiku poet and painter. His paintings are often considered as *haiga* “...(which is) a style of painting that attempts to capture the impressionistic and humorous quality of haiku poetry.”⁷⁹ Speaking of the humorous quality of haiku poetry, “he injected a sense of humour from his brush.”⁸⁰ His studying of haiku started in 1735 when he was in Edo. He studied haiku with various masters, the most famous one is a pursuer of Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), Hayano Hajin, who died in 1742. By 1751 he was established in Kyoto, and perhaps met with Sakaki Hyakusen, the *chonin* pioneer of *bunjinga*, who was also a *haiku* poet. However, Buson was self-taught as a painter, using for his models Chinese painting manuals and Chinese and Japanese paintings available to him, and he started painting around 40 which was very late and he did not reach full maturity as an artist until late in life. The paintings produced between 1778, when he

⁷⁸ Ooka, “Ike-no Taiga,” 38-39

⁷⁹ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 294

⁸⁰ “Yosa Buson.” *Asian Art*, March 23, 2012. Accessed April 1, 2016.
<http://www.asianartnewspaper.com/article/yosa-buson>

began to sign himself *Shain*, and his death in 1787, are outstanding in quality. They blend three stylistic elements with the assurance of a master: the themes and lively brushwork of Chinese painting, the free and lyrical recording of the natural world as he saw it, and finally, the spontaneity and humor often found in his poetry. Buson loved Basho's *haikus*, and made several illustrations based on his poetic diaries.



Fig. 15. Yosa Buson: *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. ca. 1780; Folding fan mounted as a hanging scroll; ink and color on paper.

The most famous are these illustrations from his diary in his handscroll format *Oku no hosomichi*, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, which begins:

The months and days are the travelers of eternity. The years that come and go are also voyagers. Those who float away their lives on boats or who grow old leading horses are forever journeying, and their homes are wherever their travels take them. Everything about me was bewitched by the travel gods and my thoughts were no longer mine to control. The spirits of the road beckoned and I could do no work at all. My dearest friends had all come to Sampo's house the night before so that they might accompany me on the boat part of the way. When we disembarked at a place called Senju, the thought of parting to go on so long a journey filled me

with sadness. As I stood on the road that was perhaps to separate us forever in this dream-like existence, I wept tears of farewell. I could barely go ahead, for when I looked back I saw my friends standing in a row, to watch me perhaps till I should be lost to sight.⁸¹

Using ink and light color on paper, he draws in a free and sketchy way the scene in which Basho and his friend Sora begin their wanderings. Basho is frankly portrayed as an old stooped man dressed as a priest, facing friends who are bidding them farewell. In addition to establishing the two monkish travelers as the protagonists, and their adventures as the subject matter of the scroll, this treatment sets the melancholy, somewhat sentimental tone of the scroll.⁸²

Yosa Buson was whole-heartedly a *haiku* poet, he even had been supporting himself to write *haiku* by selling his paintings. Actually he was usually referred to as a *haiku* poet rather than a painter, and he was really attracted by Chinese poems and usually transformed some for his own use. "*His experimental poems have been called "Chinese poems in Japanese"...*"⁸³ And his enthusiasm for Chinese culture can also be felt in the following painting, which is called "Spring Mountain, Passing rain".

⁸¹ Donald Keene, *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, (New York: Grove Press, 1955), 363-64

⁸² Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, Page 294

⁸³ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Yosa Buson". Accessed January 8, 2016.
<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Buson>



Fig. 16. Yosa Buson: *Spring Mountain, Passing Rain*. ca. 1775; Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk.

There are no travelers on the narrow path that curves through the tall trees. Buson's landscape painting shows a path that perhaps suggests his desire for a road leading to a home he did not have. In this painting, we can see a path that going somewhere, but for the viewer who does not know where it was going, it implies Yosa Buson's real situation, because Yosa consistently avoided talking about his birth, Everything about his birth is unclear, we do not know who his parents were, we only know he was born in a village called Kema in Settsu where is the present Osaka located. Therefore, after his childhood, he kept traveling, a lifestyle following Matsuo Basho (1644-1694) who is Yosa's beloved haiku poet. He started painting in a

professional way in 1756, and painted in a various styles, even though he was not trained officially, but because of his identity of poet, he was a very sensitive painter.⁸⁴

It is clear that Buson was good at rendering different atmospheric effects in his landscapes. He has the ability to minutely reflect the atmosphere of the scenery he wants to depict. For example, in the painting, “Spring Mountain, Passing Rain”, the mountain was surrounded by the thick fog or cloud, and the atmosphere here is vague, cold and quiet. Exactly echoing the title of this painting---the mountain of Spring while the rain was just passing, this give the viewers a feeling of fresh air that one can only smell while spring is coming, it is cold, but full of hope. This was presented by Yosa when he using the soft indigo blue to paint the mountain while the tree trunks are of a brownish color. We can see the tree in the foreground is unbelievably tall, which implied the season of growing, of spring coming, expressed by the fast-growth of these trees. Like the painting by Ike-no Taiga called “the Moonlight Bamboo”, the mountain, the rain and spring, derived from Chinese landscape paintings. However, the value of these paintings is in the drawing.

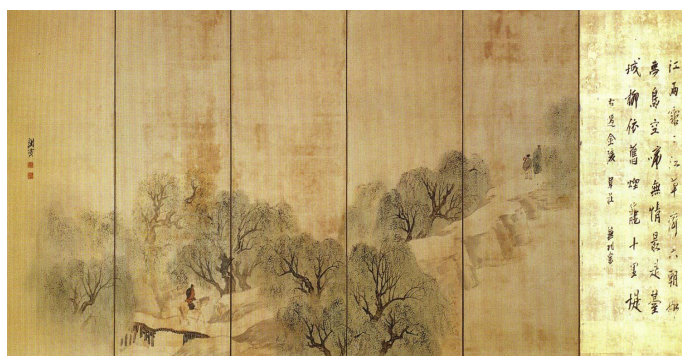


Fig. 17. Yosa Buson: *Thatched Cottage in a Bamboo Thicket and Returning in the Shade of Willows*. ca. 1778-83; One of pair 6-fold screens; ink and color on paper.

⁸⁴ Ohki, “What Makes Japanese Painting Japanese?” 71

A pair of six-panel screens from this period revealed Buson's more Chinese style -- *Thatched Cottage in a Bamboo Thicket* and *Returning in the Shade of Willows*. Each screen presents a scene of figures moving through the landscape on five panels and a Chinese poem written on gold paper on the sixth. The thatched cottage of the left screen is a subject Buson painted more than once, and it can be assumed that the entire scene was based on a section of the countryside around Kyoto, but the theme of a young man coming to visit the scholar who is reading in his simple study is one time-honored in Chinese art. Furthermore, although the final effect of the painting is soft, atmospheric, and evocative of human emotions, the composition is more complex and the brushwork more detailed and dependent on small repetitive brushstrokes than is the rule in the artist's less formal styles.



Fig. 18. Yosa Buson: *Bare Peaks of Mount Gabi*. ca.1778-1783; handscroll; ink and color on paper.

Buson's most personal style can be seen in the short hand scroll *Bare Peaks of Mount Gabi*. Although the theme of the painting is taken from a poem by the Chinese poet Li Po describing the moonlit appearance of craggy Mount *Omei* in *Sichuan* province, the style of the painting owes little or nothing to Chinese precedents. Beginning with the boldly written title, followed by

Buson's signature and seals, the painting unrolls to the left, revealing the peaks of mountain after mountain---the form of each delineated in dark gray *sumi* ink, filled in with thin red ochre, and each completely different in shape from its predecessor---until across a narrow void the climax of Mount *Gabi* is reached, a sharply triangular mountain thrusting upward into the gray, ink-washed sky. At the very end a sliver of a moon is made by leaving one area of the paper untouched by color. The most remarkable aspect of this painting is the element of surprise. The moon, so important in Li Po's poem that he included it in the title, appears in Buson's work as a new motif, following a series of freely brushed mountain peaks. These were not just mountain peaks, but peaks bathed in moonlight.

So that nothing would detract from the impact of the moon as the final element of the scroll, Buson did not include it in his title, and he shifted his signature and seals from the conventional placement at the inner edge of the end of the scroll to the beginning, just to the left of the four-character title. Here, as in the *haiku* quoted above about the line of geese, Buson played upon his audience's knowledge of *emaki* conventions to jolt them into a new perception of the natural world.⁸⁵

In short, this is the second generation of Japanese literati painters, are much better in painting technique than the first generation. They formed their own painting style with unique Japanese features. Except for the subjects that are same as Chinese literati painting, the use of the brush, the style and format, style etc. are derived from various native sources. Next a third generation appeared. The most apparent distinction between the second generation and the third generation are these painters socialized with each other. They often had informal meetings to

⁸⁵ Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 294-295

exchange thoughts or talk about painting and poetry, which is actually closer to Chinese literati painters in lifestyle.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Peter C Swann, *A Concise History of Japanese Art*, (New York: Kodansha International Ltd, 1979), 260

Chapter 4 The Third generation---The Climax of Japanese Literati Painting in Japan---Uragami Gyokudo, Okada Beisanjin.

The momentum of the literati style of painting continued into the 19th century, and the artists who espoused it created lifestyles for themselves that were much closer than their Japanese predecessors' to the ideal of Chinese literati.⁸⁷

According to this, the third generation of Japanese literati painters are much closer to the Chinese than the previous two generations, whether in their lifestyle or in the execution of painting technique. The traces of Chinese literati painter on Japanese literati painter are more and more evident.

This generation was living in a much more vivid lifestyle than their predecessors'. They would, from time to time, gather together to execute a party, in which they would compose poems and write calligraphy and then they would exchange their opinions about their works, and during these kinds of party, wine is the necessary beverage. This is much like Chinese literatus, who used to drink a lot, and compose poems or paint after drinking. For example, Bai Li, who was a well-renowned Chinese Tang dynasty poet, had a famous relationship to alcohol, in other words, he liked to compose with the stimulation of alcohol. In the third generation, there also a well-noted literati painter, Uragami Gyokudo, who, was like Bai Li, drank a lot, and wrote calligraphy after drinking. About his drinking habit, Yukio Lippit written:

It is Gyokudo's reputation as the drunken painter par excellence that makes him such an intriguing case study in literati pictorialism.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Manson, *History of Japanese Art*, 295

⁸⁸ Yukio Lippit, "Uragami Gyokudo: An Intoxicology of Japanese Literati Painting." In *Dialogues in Art History, from Mesopotamian to Modern: Readings for a new Century*, edited by Elizabeth Cropper, 166-187. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, (2009), 168

Uragami Gyokudo (1745-1820), who was also named Hyouemon Gyokudo, was a Japanese literati painter and famous zither player. As a zither player, he had been taking lessons since he was young, and continued his study of zither playing after he inherited his father's occupation as a retainer of Lord Ikeda of Okayama. He also studied Neo-Confucianism and Southern painting.⁸⁹ But he felt that he was closer to classical Chinese and Wang Yang-ming's philosophy.⁹⁰ He severed his relationship with the Lord by resigning his retainer identity in 1795 wandering around Japan and settled down in Edo and revived *gagaku*, which was imperial court music. As a literati painter, he was basically self-taught, he was good at drawing natural scenes and he became a well-known painter. Based on his understanding of the literati painting canon and his painting skill, he was a representative painter of *nanga*, i.e. Southern Painting. He had a keen appreciation of nature. After sightseeing, he reproduced what he had seen in an amazing degree of naturalism.⁹¹ In his painting titled *Forbidden to the Vulgar*, we can see his usage of ink, sometimes it was executed thick, sometimes light, and he used discontinued lines to depict objects, rather than using a continual line.⁹²

⁸⁹ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 76

⁹⁰ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 89

⁹¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Uragami Gyokudo". Accessed January 16, 2016. <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Uragami-Gyokudo>

⁹² Joan Stanley-Baker, *Japanese Art*, (London: Thames&Hudson Ltd, 2000), 176-177.



Fig. 19. Uragami, Gyokudo: *Forbidden To The Vulgar*. handscroll; ink on paper; Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund 1964. hanging scroll; ink on paper, With mount: w. 67.20 cm (26 7/16 inches); Painting only: 134.60 134.60 x 51.10 cm

He uses short lines that display a strong dynamic. We can see from this painting the spontaneity of the brushstrokes and his use of ink is in a very dry and rough way.⁹³ And the horizontally compressed letters imply that it is clerical script. The horizontal strokes give the impression of movement. Even though Uragami Gyokudo's technique originated from the Chinese Southern School, the thick lines that are frequently used in this painting are different from Chinese style. And he used broad and ink-saturated strokes and the *Mi dot*, a Northern Song painting technique, which he used to execute on painting mountains and trees.⁹⁴ The foliage which was drawn in the foreground was executed by using layered brushstrokes. Most of the time, he used the *Mi dot* to draw trees, the space among leaves gives viewers an impression of airiness. Some contemporary painters from other painting cliques draw trees in a different way, which gives the viewers a totally different visual perception.

⁹³ Uragami Gyokudo, "Forbidden to the Vulgar," <http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1964.367>

⁹⁴ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 72

For example, painters from Kano school will draw trees with a very soft technique visually, which means when they draw trees, they will use large amount ink strokes to fill the forms rather than painting with dots. For example, a magnificent painting called *Birds and Flowers of The Four Seasons* by Kano Motonobu of Kano School.



Fig. 20. Kano Motonobu: *Birds and Flowers of The Four Seasons*. Ink, color, gold, and gold leaf on paper; Image: 63 1/4 x 142 in. (160.7 x 360.7 cm) Pair of six-panel folding screens; Momoyama period (1573–1615), second half of the 16th century.

This painting is executed with black ink and brilliant colors. First of all, from first glance, it is quite different from literati painting, because of the brilliant color and also the treatment of painting objects, the prolific pictorial elements represent the Kano School's style, also we can see that the treatment of trees are so different between Kano School and *nanga* school.⁹⁵ The Kano school's style is rigorous and noble, which is not casual at all. However, *nanga*'s style is very casual and technically not rigorous, it is even rough on technique, but it forms its own style which is quite attractive. Because without the limitations of a set stylistic technique, *nanga* painting is much better suited for painters to express their feeling freely. Therefore, *nanga*

⁹⁵ Kano Motonobu, "Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons." *Seasons*<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/44523>

painting is rough but at the same time, attractive. There are two reasons why literati painting is attractive: they are much closer to what the natural view really feels like. Also they are three-dimensional, which is not like Kano school's paintings which are two-dimensional. Essentially, literati paintings give viewers an impression of poetic rendering of aspect of the landscape.

Uragami Gyokudo's manner of painting a tree is basically comprised of the *Mi dot* and very short lines, which in some ways will give viewers a feeling that they are looking at a tree in the nature, with space among leaves and movement caused by the vitality of the brush stroke. There is also a sense of authenticity.

Looking at his technique, we see the way he uses dots, which is the common painting technique that almost all literati painters use. This *Mi dot* painting technique is originated from China.⁹⁶ Moreover, we can see that the outline of the mountain is drawn by using short lines piled up layer by layer, then the trees under the mountain are executed with dots and comparably shorter lines. Lines are executed horizontally, which displays the spirit of mountain, steady and stocky.

(As for Uragami Gyokudo's work) Most are landscapes conjured up through an accumulation of rapid, horizontal, and abbreviated brushstrokes combined with rhythmically peppered dabs that result in shimmering, kinetically charged representations.⁹⁷

This is the most common character of Uragami Gyokudo's paintings. This kind of impression of movement can be clear seen and felt in the next painting.

⁹⁶ Tong, "Literati Painting," 27

⁹⁷ Lippit, "Uragami Gyokudo," 168



Fig 21. Urugami Gyokudo: *Hazy Mist Captured amid Mountains (Roen jakuji zu)*. c.1815; vertical hanging scroll; ink on paper; Idemitsu Art Museum, Tokyo.

This painting is also by Urugami Gyokudo called *Hazy Mist Captured amid Mountains* is unique in the vitality of the brush of it. His style is obvious in the execution of the dots and the usage of the ink, which is sometimes light, sometimes thick, sometimes obscure sometimes lucid, which perfectly expresses the blurring sense of fog. The tree in the foreground is very clear and the mountains, which are comparably further away, are a little bit obscure. A few mountains appear behind these and he just uses a few brushstroke to draw the outline of it.⁹⁸ There are three parts in the painting, foreground, background, and some obscure objects behind the background. We can see the usage of ink is not the uniform. Because if we are in that foggy weather and look up to a mountain, the bottom is impossible to see, only the top of it can be seen. Therefore, this painting is naturally poetic and visually enjoyable.

Urugami Gyokudo is a fantastic musician as well, he likes playing *gugin*, which also called seven-stringed zither. Urugami Gyokudo start painting since he was 42 years old, before that, he totally dedicated himself to music and poem. In the repertoire list of *gugin*, there is a musical

⁹⁸ Paul Berry, "Front Matter". *Monumenta Nipponica* 43 (4). Sophia University. (1988). 505

composition called *gao shan liu shui* in Chinese. *Tall Mountains and Flowing Water* which is also the name of one of his paintings. The inspiration might be coming from his experience of playing Chinese zither. On the aspect of playing Chinese zither and his lifestyle, he was influenced by the famous Chinese poet T'ao Yuan-ming (365-427), because T'ao Yuan-ming also a Chinese zither player and an alcoholic-addicted poet.⁹⁹

Uragami Gyokudo is famous for his drinking habit, Yukio Lippit's article: *An Intoxicology of Japanese Literati Painter* analyzes the relationship between Uragami Gyokudo's painting and his alcoholic habit. According to Yukio Lippi, alcohol was important to Uragami Gyokudo in two aspects: one is the condition after drinking, the other one is that alcohol hampers the capability of people's actions, making them clumsy, which is what Uragami Gyokudo wanted. The alcohol could deskill the technique of the painter, that is, amateurism was brought about by alcohol.

The later paintings (of Uragami Gyokudo's) are frankly expressive of his innermost feelings, revealing his melancholia and even, sometimes, his utter rage, According to Tanomura Chikuden, they were the products of Gyokudo's alcoholic indulgence, incurred by his resignation, perhaps, but also related to other besetting problems that caused him discouragement and anguish.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, we can see a lot of emotions in Uragami Gyokudo's painting. They are expressed in a very natural but outrageous way.

Uragami Gyokudo is on the side of famous 17th Chinese century literati Dong Qi-chang, who called professional painters as ““*the demon world*” of painting.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, keeping to amateurism actually is to be sharply demarcated from the so-called demon world. Moreover they

⁹⁹ Berry, “Front Matter,” 505

¹⁰⁰ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 91

¹⁰¹ Lippit, “Uragami Gyokudo,” 169

deliberately try their best to make their paintings look like they are painted by an amateur by not using expensive professional painting material and not drawing elaborately.¹⁰² Indeed, in the two painting above, we cannot see detailed expression, just the outlines of the objects. Yukio Lippi said:

Ironically, over time those qualities most prized in literati discourse, such as clumsiness, awkwardness, and blandness, came to be most readily captured through the attributes of proficiency, facility, and dexterity.¹⁰³

Without elaborate ornamentation, those emotional expressions are freely drawn. We can clearly see, every stroke, even if it is rough, has its meaning. The layout of the painting is organized, which is not at all just some disordered brushstrokes being painted when the painter drunk. Therefore, I think this is why literati paintings have their own charm. Personally, I think literati painting is better suited to fully express emotions than professional painting, because literati painting has no limitations of technique. The purpose of literati painting is just for scholars to express their feelings,

Another painter who was a contemporary of Uragami Gyokudo, as well as a friend of Uragami Gyokudo is Okada Beisanjin (1744-1820). They met each other frequently at literati parties. Okada was an orphan, who was adopted at a very young age. Before 1775, he ran a small store that mainly sold rice and grain, which was where his art name came from. His art name is Beisanjin, which literally means man of a mountain of rice. He is like his contemporary, Uragami with similar interests-- art, music, good discussion and drinking. There is a painting by Beisanjin, called *The Residence*. This work perfectly depicts their familiar lifestyle---getting together and composing music and drinking sake. This work was produced in 1793, it narrates a

¹⁰² Lippit, "Uragami Gyokudo," 169

¹⁰³ Lippit, "Uragami Gyokudo," 169

story of a scholar-artist, Chikuden, who was fond of the free lifestyle of literati painters and really loves to closely connect with each other in intimate parties. The technique executed in this painting is bold strokes in dark ink, and lines painted in pale tones that look very delicate, which showed us a moonlit night.

There are three comparable paintings, Beisanjin's *Scholars Preparing Tea*, *The Voice of a Spring Resounding in the Valley* and Uragami's *Building a House in the Mountains* which was painted in 1792.



Fig.22. Okada Beisanjin: *Scholars Preparing Tea*. Hanging Scroll; Ink and Light Color on Paper; Unclear present location.



Fig. 23. Uragami Gyokudo: *Building a House in the Mountains*. Hanging scroll; Ink and color on paper (silk); Unclear present location.



Fig. 24. Okada Beisanjin: *The Voice of Spring Resounding in the Valley*. Hanging Scroll; Ink on paper; Composed in 1814; Edo Period.

The paintings are all monochrome ink paintings of a landscape, Uragami does not use thin lines to outline the objects, he just uses short lines to draw the shape of the object. For example, “Forbidden to the Vulgar”, we cannot see any thin lines in a continuous outline, all we can see is a plenty of short lines accumulated layer by layer by forming the shape of the object’s outline. Stylistically, Uragami’s short lines and dots form a dynamic, vivid or even aggressive view. Beisanjin uses thin lines to display the outline of the objects, and the painting looks softer, more fluent. Especially the painting “The Voice of a Spring Resounding in the Valley”, the execution of thin line in this painting makes a contrast between the mountain, trees, and river. We can see the thin line for the river, and the dots for the trees behind houses, and lines for the houses. Okada Beisanjin’s work is much calmer than Uragami’s. He paints the stream with a fluent thin line implies the slow speed of stream flowing. Both of them use blank areas of paper expressively and this use of blankness derived from the first generation Yanagisawa Kien, who

drew a painting called *Bamboo*, within which we can see a few bamboo leaves, and a lot of blankness for the viewers to imagine. This is a feature of literati paintings, which means literati painters will not paint like professional painter, showing all the details to the viewers, on contrary, literati painters would prefer to leave blankness for the viewers to feel and imagine.



Fig. 25. Okada Beisanjin: *Visiting a Friend in Autumn*. Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper; 72 3/4 x 18 3/8in. (184.8 x 46.7cm); The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art.

In this is a painting by Okada Beisanjin, we can see in the left corner on the top, an inscription, which translated in English means:

The water swirls beneath the pilings of
 the house on the river,
 the clouds encircle the mountainsides,
 on every branch the red leaves of autumn,
 the wooden gate opens to the guests.

As the way what the third generation painters paint, three-plane spatial landscape The use of ink varies sometimes it is light, suggesting distance then suddenly the ink amount is darker and clearer. The brushstrokes are sometimes brusque and naive, but build a vivid atmosphere. This painting, as well, reflects financial or commercial social context of Osaka which was very good. The city was flourishing at that time. Tanomura Chikuden (1777-1835) once comment on this painting:

Are not what one could call technically accomplished, but he made pictures that are like a sudden revelation of nature's meaning within the heart.

Indeed, every stroke is not very careful, but every stroke has its own inner power forms this vibrant emotionally natural painting.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, the painters of the third generation was much more closer to Chinese literati painters in lifestyle, and the painting style of the third generation is much more close to the canon of pure literati painting. As we can see, from the first generation to the generation, the decorative style, a little bit Northern School painting style and some other painting styles even Japanese tradition painting style, which are all not belonged to literati painting, could

¹⁰⁴ Okada Beisanjin, "Visiting a Friend in Autumn,"
<http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/45394>

continuously be detected in the paintings of the first two generations. However, when the third generation Japanese appeared, they put more emphasis on the inner feeling expressing than the first two generations. One painter of the third generation, Uragami Gyokudo, was a delegate of third generation. We are not able to see any decorative element in most of his paintings, even he influenced by the second generation painters and inherited the three-dimension painting technique which was introduced into Japan during the second generation of Japanese literati painter, for example, Ike-no Taiga's *True view of Mountain Asama*, from which we can feel the effect brought by three-dimension: foreground, the middle part of the painting and background, which made paintings more attractive. The wispy blurring effect brought by the background which executed by three-dimension fully expressing the poetic meaning of literati painting. The three-dimension painting technique can be seen in most of Uragami Gyokudo's paintings, also can be seen in Okada Beisanjin's paintings. Their paintings are all very stylistically frugal, however, furthest expressed their deepest inner feeling.

Conclusion

All in all, China is the derivative country of Japanese literati painting. In 18th century, Chinese literati painting was imported into Japan, which started the establishment and development of Japanese literati painting, that is, Chinese literati painting was the inspiration for the Japanese.

We can see the imitation and similarity between Japanese and Chinese literati painting. There are opposing styles of painting in China the realistic professional Northern style and the more abstract and poetic amateur Southern kind of painting. In Japan they have *bunjinga* painting and the professional Kano school painting, dominated by gold and decorative texture patterns. These two respectively symbolize the Southern painting and Northern painting.

In terms of technique Japanese artists adopted the texture strokes invented and perpetuated in literati painting. First is the *Mi dot* of Mi Fei (1051-1107) of the Song dynasty which is favored by the second generation, and this technique was broadly used by one of the third generation painters, Urakami Gyokudo. Looking at his painting, we can see the dot is everywhere, thereby the vivid dynamic was created. Important too are the short brush strokes and sinuous contour lines as well as the poetic use of blank space. Contrasts of dark patches of ink work and misty washes are also present in both groups of artists. Also characteristic of literati painting is the presence of sometimes long calligraphic inscription which often convey some intimate sentiment.

There were three generations of Japanese literati painters. I classified them as the first period of imitation; the mature period or second generation, and the last generation which is the peak period of the Japanese literati painting. The paintings of first generation are obvious imitations of the Chinese model. The second generation improved their technique and at the same time, added

a lot of techniques from various native styles. In the third generation, no matter technique or lifestyle, is much closer to Chinese literati painter, being even bolder and freer as for example, the paintings of Uragami Gyokudo.

What is more, the relationship among three generations is quite obvious, Gion Nankai is the mentor of Yanagisawa Kien who briefly taught Ike-no Taiga for two or three years. Although the two masters of the third generation were both self-taught, they were indirectly influenced by studying paintings of Ike-no Taiga.

At last, all three generations of literati had an overt hostility for professional painters referring to their paintings as affected and superficial. They thought their skill was inferior. According to Yukio Lippi's article, third generation painters even invented a way to deskill their painting. The main characteristics of Japanese literati painting are freedom, with emphasis on expressing their inner feelings, being totally subjective. This Nanga artists, outside of the professional ateliers were an independent painting clique of the urban scene.

Also we can see the strong personality within Japanese literati painting. Although Japanese literati paintings originated from Chinese, a diverse painting style evolved. Hopefully this project has shown how imitation was followed by periods of increasing freedom of expression. When the third generation of artists painted, there was more direct contact with China and their paintings therefore are infused with a deeper connection to the original style and at the same time a greater freedom of style. Therefore, "*This diversity in Japanese literati painting stems from the fact that the character of the Japanese literati was quite different from that of their Chinese counterparts.*"¹⁰⁵ This stylistic diversity within Japanese literati paintings and the glamour of literati painting itself make this painting clique live long.

¹⁰⁵ Yonezawa, Yoshizawa, *Japanese Painting in the Literati Style*, 14

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