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# MUTUAL IMAGES

VOL. 4 – SPRING 2018

JAPAN AND ASIA: REPRESENTATIONS OF SELFNESS AND OTHERNESS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL

**MARCO PELLITTERI & AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA** (KOBE UNIVERSITY, JAPAN; MADE'IN, SAINTE MARIE-LYON, FRANCE).....3-5

### ARTICLES

DECONSTRUCTING JAPANESE AVANT-GARDE AS EPIGONISM

**OLGA ISAEVA** (UNIVERSITY OF BONN, GERMANY).....6-33

JAPAN AND KOREA IN THE MIRROR OF CINEMA: SELFNESS AND OTHERNESS BETWEEN MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND RECURRENT NATIONALISMS

**FABIO DOMENICO PALUMBO** (UNIVERSITY OF MESSINA, ITALY)..... 34-61

SPACES OF SYMPATHY: THE ROLE OF ASIA IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE POPULAR CINEMA

**SEÁN HUDSON** (KYŪSHŪ UNIVERSITY, JAPAN) ..... 62-75

INTERROGATING SELF AND OTHER: MUTUALITY IN THE VISUAL ART OF PREWAR JAPAN

**BARBARA HARTLEY** (UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA).....76-102

### REVIEWS

*PRIMITIVE SELVES: KOREANA IN JAPANESE COLONIAL GAZE, 1910 – 1945* – E. TAYLOR ATKINS

**KARA DISCHINGER** (NAGOYA UNIVERSITY, JAPAN).....103-107

*REWRITING HISTORY IN MANGA: STORIES FOR THE NATION* – NISSIM OTMAZGIN & REBECCA SUTER (EDS)

**CHRISTOPHER P. HOOD** (CARDIFF UNIVERSITY, UK) ..... 108-110

*THE DISASTERS OF PEACE: SOCIAL DISCONTENT IN THE MANGA OF TSUGE TADAO AND KATSUMATA SUSUMU* – EXHIBITED AT THE HONOLULU MUSEUM OF ART

**JAMIE TOKUNO** (INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER, HAWAII, USA) ..... 111-116



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# ***Interrogating self and other: Mutuality in the visual art of prewar Japan***

Barbara HARTLEY (University of Tasmania, Australia)

## **ABSTRACT**

*In pre-war Japan, the visual artist often played a complicit role in the circulation of dominant imperialist and militarist discourses. Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) and Fujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), for example, produced images extolling Yamato military might. This 'might' is evident both in the metonym of Yokoyama's soaring Fuji-san images, often with rising sun ascendant, and in the more realist representation of Fujita's Soviet tanks under assault at Nomonhan by 'triumphant' Japanese troops. Some pre-war and war-time visual art, however, resists being viewed as a conventional 'hagiography of Japan.' This, paradoxically, is especially the case in images depicting sites occupied by Japanese military and capital interests. These images, in fact, often reveal the highly tenuous nature of the discursively constructed border that divided the naichi Japanese self and the gaichi colonised other. Rather they convey a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'other-ed' subject insists on asserting itself. This presentation will provide a detailed examination of three pre-1945 works of visual art and consider how these uncover the mutuality inherent in old notions of self and other in pre-war Japan. The first is a 1937 image entitled 'Kōnan no haru' (Jiangnan Spring) by Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974), a scene from the rural environs of Shanghai featuring two young women in Chinese dress and an Imperial Army soldier mounted on a white horse. The second is a 1942 image entitled 'Shimai heizazō' (Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side), painted in Beijing by Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888-1986). The third is a 1944 work by Tsuruta Gorō (1890-1969) entitled 'Shiganhei no wakare o tsugeru Taiwan no hitobito' (People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops) which depicts indigenous people of Taiwan saluting as their countrymen depart for war. Each image confirms the precarious nature of Japanese discursive practice, revealing instead a mutual interplay that refuses dominance of one subject over the other.*

## **KEYWORDS**

Art; Japan; East Asia; Arishima Ikuma; Umehara Ryūzaburō; Tsuruta Gorō; Gender; Japanese self; Colonized "other".

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## **Introduction: Artistic production and the fiction of self and other**

In pre-war Japan, many visual artists were complicit in the circulation of dominant imperialist and militarist discourses. Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) and Fujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), for example, both produced an array of images extolling Yamato military might. This 'might' was evident in Yokoyama's metonymic representations of Imperial Japan, particularly his soaring Fuji-san images, often with rising sun ascendant. It was also apparent in the more realistic representation of Fujita's Soviet tanks under assault at Nomonhan by 'triumphant' Japanese troops. Produced at the request of the

commander of the 1939 Nomonhan battle (McDonald 2015, 145), which took place near the border of Mongolia and puppet state Manchukuo, Fujita's image completely elided the fact that the Japanese Imperial Army had been roundly trounced during its encounter with Soviet forces.

Some pre-war and war-time visual art, however, resists being viewed in conventional hagiography-of-empire mode. This resistance can paradoxically be especially evident in images depicting sites occupied by Japanese military and capital interests. Images set in these colonial or occupied locations, in fact, often reveal the highly tenuous nature of the discursively constructed border that divided the *naichi*, or mainland Japanese self, and the *gaichi*, or outside, colonised 'other.'<sup>1</sup> Rather, such images convey a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'othered' subject insists on asserting itself and thus exposing, in spite of the extreme violence that characterised the Japanese imperial project, the ultimately precarious nature of that endeavour. This is not in any way, as Leo T.S. Ching discusses with respect to the work of theorist Homi Bhabha, to 'elid[e] the very asymmetrical operation of colonial power relations that constituted the colonizer and colonized in the first place' (Ching 2001, 134). It is to suggest, however, that, in spite of the often-oppressive policies imposed by the colonisers in – as Meiji political heavy-weight, Baron Kato Hiroyuki, declared – the name of progress 'as the offspring of power' (Davis 1996, 113), Japan's aspirations for control were persistently undermined by forms of resistance that the imperial authorities were never able successfully to contain.

This discussion provides a detailed examination of three pre-1945 works of visual art and considers how each work suggests the mutuality inherent in old notions of self and other in pre-war Japan. The first is a 1938 work entitled *Kōnan no haru* (Jiangnan Spring), by Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974), depicting two young women in Chinese dress approached by a Japanese Imperial Army soldier seated on a white horse. The setting is the rural environs of China's Jiangnan region, the area south of the lower regions of the Yangtze River near Shanghai. The second is a 1942 image entitled *Shimai heiza-zō* (Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side),<sup>2</sup> painted in Beijing, by Umehara Ryūzaburō (1888-1986), featuring a

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<sup>1</sup> Endō Masataka notes that the term 'gaichi' derives from those sites of the empire that were governed by other than mainland Japanese law. See Endō, Chapter 4, Section 2 (2013).

<sup>2</sup> In an essay written originally in Japanese by Ikeda Shinobu, translated by Ignacio Adriasola and published in the 2017 edition of the Freer/Sackler Galleries (Smithsonian Institute) publication, *Ars Orientalis*, this work is referred to as 'Chinese Sisters (Kunyan heiza-zu)' (Ikeda 2017, 250).

young woman and her younger sister seated together on a sofa.<sup>3</sup> The third is a 1944 work by Tsuruta Gorō (1890-1969) entitled *Shiganhei no wakare o tsugeru Taiwan no hitobito* (People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops).<sup>4</sup> This work depicts a group of indigenous people from Taiwan saluting their volunteer soldier countrymen as the latter depart for war. Each image confirms the precarious nature of Japanese discursive practice, revealing instead a mutual interplay that refuses the dominance of one subject over the other.

### Art and Empire

The Japanese invasion of the Asian mainland was often justified in terms of ‘liberating’ Japan’s Asian brothers from the yoke of western control and creating a Pan-Asian collective to be commanded, of course, by Japan (see, for example, Mitter 2013, 47-48). Japan’s imperial fantasies were also based on a belief in the superiority of Japanese ethnicity derived in part from the Social Darwinist assumptions of European theorists such as Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and Francis Galton (1822-1911). These ideas were embedded in Japanese social thought by, for example, the writings of the conservative, authoritarian thinker and politician, Baron Kato Hiroyuki, referred to above (see, for example, Davis 1996). This is notwithstanding, as Yoshino Kōsaku (2015), among others, argues, the deeply illogical contradictions in notions of ethnic identity. Yet, any putative Japanese grip on a superior sense of national self was always tenuous. In January, 1915, Japan presented its “infamous” (Dull 1950, 151) Twenty-One Demands to China as a means of expanding its political, military and commercial influence in the latter’s territory. The extreme nature of these demands, especially the final five, which “revealed quite clearly that Japan was looking to establish a form of protectorate over the whole [of China]” (Amander and Wood 2016, 45), saw Japan insist on conditions of secrecy, a condition that China instantly contravened. This insistence on secrecy was surely the result of anxiety on Japan’s part at the repercussions that might ensue should the unreasonable pressure being placed on China become known to the international community. Such anxiety hardly suggests an entity

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<sup>3</sup> There are at least two other images with the same title and of similar construction, although the size of the images and the clothing worn by the young women featured differ from the work being discussed here. The image discussed in this article was included in a 1944 collection, apparently compiled by Umehara himself, entitled *Umehara Ryūzaburō Pekin Sakuhinshū* (Selected Beijing Works by Umehara Ryūzaburō) (Ryūzaburō 1944, Image 16 – pages in the collection are unnumbered). Kaizuka Tsuyoshi also notes that the sisters who are the model for this work appear in at least three other images by Umehara. Kaizuka gives their names as Yuling, the elder sister, and Meiling, the younger (Kaizuka 2014, 74). The translated Ikeda essay referred to in the previous footnote also references the names of the two girls (Ikeda 2017, 250).

<sup>4</sup> Some sources give ‘Taiwanjin’ for ‘Taiwan no hitobito’ in the title of this work.

confident of its superior status either in the region or in the world order. With other Great Powers preoccupied by the war that engulfed Europe at the time, no concrete moves were made to prevent Japan gaining the foothold it desired. This is in spite of the fact that Japan's actions did indeed invite the censure of the international community, with Great Britain's representative in China, Sir John Jordan, declaring that "Japan's action towards China is worse than that of Germany in the case of Belgium" (Amander and Wood 2016, 44).

While Japanese expansion occurred steadily for half a century until the late 1930s, the flash-point for all-out war between China and Japan was the July 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident (*Rokōkyō jiken*). Importantly, each image discussed here was produced after that conflict. There is no doubt that, from the time of the 1874 Taiwan Expedition, Japan had conducted what Inoue Yasushi (1907-1991) notes was an ongoing 'war of invasion against China' (1994, 4). Yet, Inoue also notes that, until the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Japan's 'enemy' had been a disparate collection of local and broader forces against whom victory was often 'comparatively easy' (1994, 4). Marco Polo Bridge, however, marked the point at which Japan found itself fighting against a 'unified line of resistance across the whole of China' (Inoue 1994, 4). Inoue's words remind us that in China the eight-year war with its neighbour is referred to as *Zhongguo kangri zhan-zheng*, or China's War of Resistance Against Japan.

Japan was quick to enlist the assistance of artists and other members of the arts community to the official war-time cause. In terms of visual art, the *Rikugun bijutsu kyokai* (Army Art Association) was the organisation formed to promote strategic war objectives through the creation of images that lauded Japanese military exploits. While this association did not come into being until April, 1939 – that is, until after the production of the first image to be discussed here – it was preceded by the *Dai Nippon rikugun jūgun gakkai kyōkai* (The Great Japanese Army Military Painters Association), formed in 1938 (Nara 2007, 86). Furthermore, the *Pen butai* – variously translated at Pen Corps, Pen Brigade or Pen Unit – the members of which were writers and novelists committed to advocating the Japanese imperial cause in literary production, was established in August 1938 (Keene p. 84). In other words, the sense that cultural production could be mobilised in the name of the emperor and the ubiquitous *kokutai*, the national body, had become part of public discourse during the twelve months that followed the Marco Polo Bridge hostilities.



My purpose in bringing these three ostensibly unrelated images together for analysis is to demonstrate that even images produced by different artists at different times of empire and for markedly different purposes share a common thread of mutuality that defies distinctions between self and other. That is to say, regardless of how the artist might seek to define his own self and the self of the nation that he represents through his work, the power of the 'other' being depicted resists any strategy of marginalisation that might be deployed by the powerful individual or collective. Furthermore, in the chronological sequence of the illustrations discussed there is an incremental accentuation of the 'othered' nature of the subjects depicted. From one perspective, this can be explained in terms of the coincidence of the settings of the works being discussed. The Kōnan, or Jiangnan, area south of the great Yangtze River featured in the 1938 Arishima image is a region of economic prosperity where the trope of the cultured young woman could reasonably be regarded as a norm. The 1942 Umehara image of the 'sitting -sisters' was produced in Beijing, then under Japanese occupation and the capital of the puppet government. The war had been progressing for some time and the young women depicted here demonstrate few of the signs of economic advantage that mark their Jiangnan countrywomen. The *shiganhei* (volunteer soldiers) pictured in the third 1944 image are the indigenous people of Taiwan, who had almost no access to the material social resources that supported the cultured appearance of the young women in the Arishima work or even Umehara's less privileged sisters. In fact, Ching has referred to Taiwanese indigenous people as the 'most impoverished and marginalised population in the Japanese colonial hierarchy' (2001, 135). I would argue that this accentuation of otherness and marginalisation by the artist is also a response to Japan's failing imperial project. In other words, as the war on the continent dragged out and the possibility of the empire's ultimate self-immolation began to present itself, artists became more and more committed, in a desperate attempt to disavow the likelihood of disaster, to emphasising the differences between the Japanese self and colonial other. As I will demonstrate below, however, even with the best efforts of artists schooled in the imperative of promoting Japanese dominance, the images here read against themselves and thus refuse any notion of Japanese entitlement.

### **Complicity and Seduction: Homosociality and the Imperial Myth**

Scrutiny of many conventional art history biographies reveals that these publications omit the war years from the record of the artist concerned. It can therefore be difficult to assess the attitude of an artist towards Japan's imperial project. The exceptions, of course, are those artists who openly produced *sensō-ga* or *sensō-kiroku-ga*, official images recording feats in war. These artists include Miyamoto Saburō, creator of the famed 1942 image, *Yamashita, Paashibaru ryō-shireikan kaiken-zu* (The Meeting of General Yamashita and General Percival), a work that drew from a newspaper photograph to show the British High Command ceding Singapore to the Japanese. They also include Tsuruta himself, whose 1942 *Shinpei Parenban ni kōkasu* (Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang), depicted Japanese Army paratroopers landing in preparation for an attack on Dutch oil refineries located near Palembang on the island of Sumatra. Assessing the position of artists such as Arishima and Umehara, whose corpus does not necessarily include a range of works that openly laud Japan's imperial project, can be more complex.

In a 2017 translated essay that updates and expands her earlier analyses of the male artists of imperial Japan who produced images of women in *shinafuku*, China dress or *qipao*, Ikeda Shinobu effectively argues that the mere absence of *sensō-ga* or *sensō-kiroku-ga* in the corpus of an artist should in no way be interpreted as absence of support for the official position of the time (Ikeda 2017, 246). Referring specifically to Umehara Ryūzaburō, Ikeda notes that even with respect to his depiction of the bodies of women, it would be a mistake to consider the artist's material that 'diverged from' other, more directly propagandistic representations as evidence that 'there was no political meaning or function to Umehara's paintings' (Ikeda 2017, 246). Rather, Ikeda continues, despite their being 'too deeply embarrassed to participate outright in the propaganda machinery serving Japan's total war system' (2017, 246), male intellectuals such as Umehara played an important public role in valorising the empire. Ikeda cites Wakakuwa Midori's analysis of the manner in which male artists in Japan used the nude figure of the woman to 'abandon painting's critique of reality' and to form, recalling the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950-2009) on homosociality, 'an alliance of men' (Wakakuwa cited in Ikeda 2017, 247). This was the very alliance, Wakakuwa had pointed out, on which militarism was based and which then permitted men to 'invade the Asian other' and to 'violently attack and seize control of other peoples' (Ikeda [summarising Wakakuwa] 2017, 247).

Even if it were possible to confirm that certain artists were consciously opposed to the policies of the time, I would argue that they were nevertheless subject to what Saurabh Dube refers to as the ‘novel mythologies of nation and empire’ (2002, 729). According to Dube, these ‘mythologies’ comprise but one element of the ‘enchantments’ of modernity which operate upon the subject and which, regardless of that subject’s conscious stance, ensure that she or he falls under the thrall of the fictional discourses of the nation state.<sup>5</sup> In other words, regardless of whether or not Arishima and Umehara actively resisted policies of empire, both were powerless to completely free themselves from the hypnotic power of the imperial spell. In the discussion that follows, it is my assumption that, notwithstanding the extent to which Arishima and Umehara were or were not avid supporters of the militarist regime, they were nonetheless drawn inexorably into the fictional discourses of nation promoted by that regime.

### **Arishima Ikuma’s *Jiangnan Spring***

Arishima Ikuma, with his brother Arishima Takeo (1878-1923) and half-brother Ton Satomi (1888-1983), was a founding and active member of *Shirakaba-ha* (The White Birch Society). This was an influential literary and artistic group whose members were graduates of the elite Gakushuin Peers School. Operating between 1910 and 1923, the Society emphasised humanist approaches over the naturalism that dominated literary production in Japan at the time.<sup>6</sup> An artist who was also a writer, Arishima studied in Paris as a young man. Inaga Shigemi, in fact, attributes Arishima with being one of the first in the Japanese art world to draw attention to the work of post-Impressionist, Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) (2015, 115). Arishima was a founding member of the *Nikakai* (literally ‘The Second Group’, now known in English as the Society of Progressive Japanese Artists), a break-away group which, while resisting the official government dominance of the art world, operated within largely conservative parameters. In 1924, for example, the group rejected the inclusion of works by the avant-garde MAVO collective in its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition. Ikuma, himself, however, appears not to have been averse to having his name associated with radical

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<sup>5</sup> I have previously argued this in relation to the writer, Takeda Taijun (1912-1976) (Hartley 2013, 188).

<sup>6</sup> Arishima is often excluded from popular accounts of *Shirakaba-ha* presumably on grounds of relative marginality in relation to some of the great names who were members of the group. It is significant, however, that the opening section of Senuma Shigeki’s account of *Shirakaba-ha* activities begins with Ikuma’s return to Japan at the age of 24 by the Japanese count after spending two years in Italy and two years in Paris (Senuma 1997, 25).

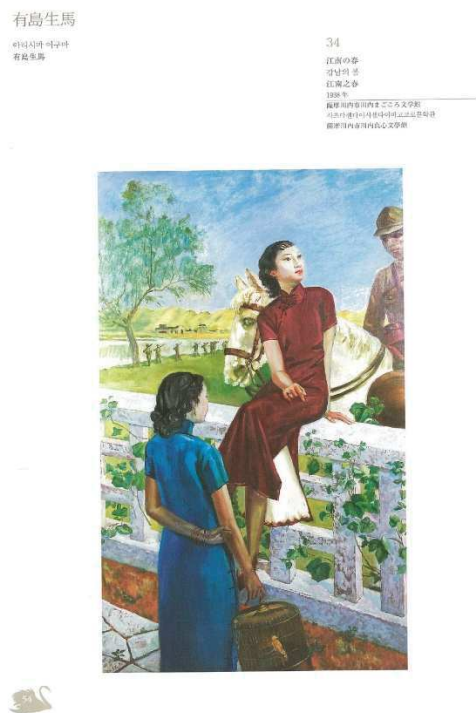
activities and was one of a number of commentators who contributed to an essay collection commemorating murdered anarchist, Ōsugi Sakae (1885-1923) (Ikuma 2013).

Arishima's war-time activity is difficult to ascertain. He is one of the many artists whose biography, as featured in easily accessible publications, provides almost no detail from the late 1930s to mid- to late 1940s.<sup>7</sup> Reminding us that the painter was also a writer of some note, his name is cited on the current website of The Japan P.E.N. Club as the Club's first vice-president upon its formation in 1936, with Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) as president (The Japan P.E.N. Club 2018). In that capacity, Arishima travelled to Paris in 1937 with popular literature writer, Kume Masao (1891-1952), to attend the 15<sup>th</sup> International P.E.N. Congress. His name, however, does not appear in any listing of prominent members of the *Pen butai*. In 1942, Arishima published a translation of selected works by the 1926 woman Italian winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Grazia Deledda (1871-1936). In spite of her own relatively privileged background, Deledda's work depicted the struggles of the people of Sardinia. We are unable to say the extent to which undertaking this translation influenced Arishima's own cultural production, literary or visual. Nevertheless, his interest in the Italian woman's work suggests some degree of affinity with those, either inside or outside Japan, who received few benefits from the imperialist policies of the modern era. Certainly, it is difficult to find evidence of Arishima creating the spiritual peons to empire that came from the brush of Yokohama Taikan or the visual displays of imperial military might that were produced with such fervour by Fujita Tsuguharu. However, it is the very fact that Arishima appears to have been less than overt in his support for the imperial cause that makes the *Jiangnan Spring* image particularly worthy of consideration. That is to say, the fact that an artist who did not blatantly sign up to the cause could produce a work so steeped in imperial discourse suggests the profound emotional and psychological reach of that discourse into the hearts and minds of even less enthusiastic subjects of imperial Japan.

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<sup>7</sup> Omission of such material from publications such as *Shirakaba-ha no wakaudo-tachi* (Senuma 1997) or *Shirakaba-ha no ai-shita bijutsu* (2009, The Art Loved by the White Birch Society), published to commemorate the centenary of the Society's formation, is understandable given that these works confine their information to the artist/writer's activities with the *Shirakaba-ha*, which ceased to exist as a group in 1923. The Arishima Ikuma biography provided on the website of the *Tōkyō bunkazai kenkyū jō* (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties) website, however, has detailed entries for most years until 1937 and then nothing until 1945. Available at: <http://www.tobunken.go.jp/materials/bukko/9364.html>, and accessed on 24 May, 2017.

*Jiangnan Spring* was produced after the Nanjing Massacre, at which time the determination of the Japanese Empire to impose its brutal will onto the Chinese mainland was indelibly confirmed. Censorship systems, of course, forbade the spread of such information except in terms most glorious to imperial armed forces, as evidenced in the highly sanitised 1940 oil on canvas, *Nankin nyūjō* (Triumphal Entry into Nanjing), by Kanokogi Takeshiro (1874-1941). Nevertheless, the violent nature of the Imperial Army's activities on the continent was impossible to completely suppress and was, in fact, celebrated by some as just treatment of recalcitrant Chinese. In spite of the fact that he must have had some sense of this reality, Arishima attempts in this work to create a melange of Japanese military benevolence and agreeable Chinese response. Arishima's image perhaps represents what the artist hoped what might be, rather than what he must surely to some extent have realised was the case. Regardless of intention, however, intimations of Japan's lust for power and China's refusal to be subject to this lust reverberate throughout this deceptively pleasing and seductively appealing work.



**Fig. 1.** Arishima, I. (1938) *Kōnan no haru* (Jiangnan Spring) [no medium given]. In: Fukuoka-shi Fukuoka Ajia Bijutsukan (Fukuoka Asian Art Museum). (2014) *Kanten ni miru kindai bijutsu: Tōkyō, So-ru, Taipei, Chōshun* (Titled in English: *Toward the Modernity: Images of Self and Other in East Asian Art Competitions*). Fukuoka: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, 54.

The *Jiangnan Spring* image has a clear military focus. Although two young women are centred in the foreground, the viewing eye is arguably first drawn to the young man on the white horse in the right foreground as a result of the striking intrusion of the animal into the frame. This Japanese Imperial Army figure cannot but remind us of the Shōwa Emperor, whose uniformed image riding astride his white mount was in wide circulation by this time.<sup>8</sup> To the left of the frame, above the girl in the blue *qipao* (China dress) and marching with rifles on their shoulders along a river bank, are a line of what we presume, given the presence of the figure on horseback, are Japanese troops. While the image clearly does not conform to the usual *sensō-ga* that record Imperial Army feats of glory, the military presence gives the work a loose connection to that genre. Furthermore, like those images designed to induce viewer devotion to the Empire, this work is a fantasy that attempts to elide reference to the oppressive nature of the regime that was, at the time, rolling out across the continent. The imperatives of this regime were evident in the self-explanatory ‘annihilation policies’ that Herbert Bix (2000, 365) notes were instituted to ‘pacify’ guerrilla activity in China’s Hebei Province and which culminated in the notorious ‘Sankō sakusen’ (Three Alls Policy – kill all, burn all, loot all). This expression neatly sums up much Japanese military activity on the Chinese mainland.<sup>9</sup> That the Nationalists themselves often scorched the earth as they retreated from the invading Japanese does not diminish the brutal nature of Imperial Army policies.<sup>10</sup>

Why do our eyes move to the figure on horseback? Firstly, the fact that the figure is partially concealed paradoxically gives it a level of prominence. Furthermore, the horse on which this figure sits projects into the centre of the image and thereby draws our focus away from the young women in the foreground. The size of the figure is also of interest. Although behind the young women, the body of the male appears to be marginally larger than that of the women. This may be a factor of gender. Yet, we know that Nationalist commander, Jiang Jie-shi (Chiang Kai-shek; 1887-1975), derogatively referred to the Japanese as ‘dwarf bandits’ (Mitter 2013, 81), a term derived from the historical scorn with which Japan was regarded by both China and Korea (Sun 2012, 88). There is

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<sup>8</sup> Examples of the sorts of images that were in circulation at the time can be seen in the front photographs featured in monographs by Yamada Akira (Yamada 1990; Yamada and Kōtsuke 1991). The image in the sole-authored Yamada work is from 1928, while the image featured in the Yamada/Kōtsuke publication is from 1940. Suzuki Yoshiko (2014, 258) also notes the resonance of the emperor in this element of Arishima’s image.

<sup>9</sup> An account of this policy is given in Himeta and Chen (1989).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Mitter (2013, 111-112 and 204) for details of Nationalist troops torching cities in retreat.

a sense that the ever so slightly enlarged body size here may be an attempt to neutralise insults of this nature directed towards Imperial Army troops. The facial expression of the figure on horseback, furthermore, is masked. Unlike a number of war-time images in which laughing Japanese soldiers patronisingly indulge small Chinese children,<sup>11</sup> there is little benevolence here. Rather the expression borders on sullen. Why might this be so? The answer is perhaps found in the body language of the young woman positioned in the centre foreground of the image.

Arishima's girls are elegantly cultured, giving no hint of any Social Darwinist notion of China as inferior. In conversation with Haniya Yutaka (1909-1997), post-war novelist and Imperial Army conscript, Takeda Taijun (1912-1976), noted how during his tour of duty between October 1937 and October 1939, well-educated and refined Chinese girls, some of whom could speak French, were recruited as sex slaves to service Japanese troops in local *pai-ya*, Imperial Army slang for brothel (Takeda and Haniya 1973, 363-364). Takeda's words invoke the elegant pair pictured here and we cannot but wonder about the later fate of these sophisticated, porcelain-skinned young women. Each wears a *qipao*, one of deep red and one of light royal blue. While the garment of the seated girl is slit fashionably to above the knees, it is nonetheless modestly lined. The attire and the modern hairstyles of the young women are reminiscent of the attire of a younger Soong Mei-ling (1897-2003), who, at the time of the image's production, was the wife of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and thus the most powerful woman in China. This resonance of political might and resistance to Japan by powerful Chinese women is balanced by the fact that one figure holds a caged yellow bird, seemingly an oriole. While Wolfram Eberhard notes ambiguity around the bird as a symbol in China (1983, 39), the joyous call of the oriole suggests happiness and friendship. Eberhard further points to auspicious associations with the colour yellow

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<sup>11</sup> Images of this nature can be viewed in the Chapman University, Frank Mt Pleasant Library of Special Collections and Archives. See, for example, the following site (Accessed on 22 March 2017): <https://calisphere.org/item/8ce81cb251462454e7ebb1c0f6201083/>. One particularly intriguing example appears in the Asahi Shimbun collection entitled *Asahi shinbun no hizō shashin ga kataru sensō* (The War as Told by Iconic Asahi News Photographs). This image appears in a photograph showing war-time art world luminaries such as Fujita Tsuguharu judging the second *Seisen bijutsuten*, Sacred War Art Exhibition, held in June, 1941 (Asahi shimbun-sha 'Shashin ga kataru sensō' shuzai han 2009, 106-107). The painting, which can also be viewed on the Hakodate Central City Digital Library archives, at this address: <http://archives.c.fun.ac.jp/fronts/tableChild/postcards/pc100035>, is by minor artist Futaesaku Tatsuo (1916-1988). Entitled *Shinnichi kyōiku* (Pro-Japan education), the image gives a scene from a primary school classroom in which young children are happily gathering around a figure, presumably their teacher, who nevertheless wears military uniform. Although their attire strongly suggests that that the children are Chinese, the blackboard teaching material is similar, perhaps identical, to that which would have been taught to mainland Japanese children at the time, featuring illustrations with words such as hat, ball and soldier written in the *katakana* script.

in terms of the image of the Yellow Dragon and its relationship to the mythical first ruler of China, Huang-di, the Yellow Emperor (1989, 322).<sup>12</sup> From a different perspective, as Suzuki Yoshiko suggests however (2014, 258), there may be significance in the fact that the bird is caged. Does the curtailing of the activity of the bird imply Japan's power over China? And what, moreover, is the attitude of these two women towards the figure on the horse, here the representative of the great Empire of Japan which has set itself the task of liberating Asia through the commission of unspeakable atrocities that included violent rape? Notwithstanding the intimations of amiability that may reside in the yellow oriole, the image has an interesting ambivalence on this point.

The young woman seated could be executing a turn of the head in order to gaze at the magnificence of Japan in the form of the military figure on the horse. On the other hand, her oblique line of sight suggests that she may be deliberately refusing to engage that magnificence.<sup>13</sup> The figure with its back to the viewer is even more ambiguous. We cannot see her gaze but perhaps she looks at the soldier on the horse. On the other hand, a mere millimetre hint of the artist's brush that gives a downward turn to the corner of the figure's right eye – which the viewer can clearly see – creates the impression that she too refuses the invader's gaze to look instead in the vicinity of her companion's hands. This resistance on the part of the two women to engage the rider's line of sight, we might speculate, is the source of his slightly sullen countenance.

In an incisive re-reading of the 1961 novella, 'Sebunchin' (Seventeen) by Ōe Kenzaburō (b. 1935), Michele Mason discusses the desire of the masturbation-obsessed, seventeen-year-old right-wing protagonist of that work. Mason notes that at the height of his excitement, this young man – a stereotypical puny weakling – fantasises about his body being transformed into a muscular vision of hegemonic masculinity that draws the envious attention of other young men and the admiring gaze of young women (Mason 2017, n.p.). Mason notes that while the protagonist may appear to desire to be the object of the gaze, this desire is compounded by the fact that his body is 'the subject of the sentence' (Mason 2017, n.p.). In other words, 'it is his imagined manly physique that works

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<sup>12</sup> Eberhard nonetheless also notes that 'in recent decades, the term yellow to denote pornographic literature and film has come into use' (1983, 322). Yoshikuni Igarashi discusses the significance of the term yellow in the title of *Kiroyi karasu* (1957, Yellow Crow), the first colour film by director Gosho Heinosuke (1902-1981). Here, Igarashi cites from a 1953 article by Asari Atsushi, entitled 'Shikisai to seikaku' (Colour and personality), which notes that the colour yellow indicates a desire for 'affection and reminiscence,' in addition to 'an inadequate amount of love' (2016, 45).

<sup>13</sup> Suzuki (2014, 258) notes that the gaze of this girl does not intersect with that of the figure on the horse.



its power over the girls to summon their sexual longing' (Mason 2017, n.p.).<sup>14</sup> The body of the figure on the horse in Arishima's image operates in much the same way to demand the longing of the young Chinese women depicted. We can conclude that the refusal of these young women to comply with this demand, by directing their gazes away from the figure, at best disappoints the male on the horse or at worst incites violence at some point after the instant captured by the artist.

Here we see an early example of an interaction in which Japan's desire to dominate is ultimately thwarted. There is no celebration of or welcome for these troops. In fact, the image invokes Parks Coble's observation that few so-called Japanese collaborators in the occupied 'Lower Yangzi' would have taken that path if 'other alternatives' had presented themselves (2003, 210). These young women do not resist the invaders. Nor, however, do they welcome them. Nicely complimenting the beauty and poise of their figures, their attitude is one of indifference. And while the artist has attempted to conceal this indifference with tropes such as ivy-covered western style lattice fencing, the bucolic image of the background village, the clear blue sky and the distant mountain range, ultimately the ruse unravels. The putatively inferior other refuses the judgment of the dominant self to assert in turn its own individuality and self-value.

In one respect, the image also precisely fits the *shinafuku*, or China dress trope, as discussed by Ikeda Shibobu (2007, 2008; 2017). Noting a penchant among Japanese painters for models in this form of attire, Ikeda argues, in much the same way that Mason does concerning the protagonist of 'Seventeen', that these figures 'functioned as the "Other" that helped male artists to construct their own subjectivity' (2008, 347). Although her 2008 article, from which this quote is taken, refers particularly to the manner in which Japanese artists clothed Japanese women in qipao as 'a possible bulwark against the West' in the construction of a national identity for Imperial Japan, her comments on both China and woman as the 'Other' are particularly relevant here. Ikeda discusses the manner in which 'China, as a rather difficult, colonial "Other", alternated with the image of yet another "Other," namely "woman," serving as an object of control for the Japanese male' (2008, 348). In this image, rather than alternating, the two "Others" identified by Ikeda – 'China' and 'woman' – are overlaid, a process that arguably geometrically heightens the impact of both. Ikeda also cites commentary by Daimaru Hiroshi to the effect that, recalling the reference to Soong Mei-ling above, the qipao was seen as a way for Japanese

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<sup>14</sup> Mason also notes how the protagonist seeks to 'claim the respect' of the boys around him.

women to modernise without complying with western norms (2008, 369-372). This was in spite of the negative discourse that circulated about backward and unhygienic China, the so-called “Sick Man of Asia” (Heinrich 2008, xiii). In this sense, the two young women in Arishima’s image might be regarded as models for their sisters in Japan.

In commentary to Arishima’s image that appears in the publication produced for the *Kanten ni miru kindai bijutsu: Tōkyō, So-ru, Taipei, Chōshun* exhibition, Suzuki explains that *Jiangnan Spring* was exhibited in New York in 1939 (Suzuki 2014, 258). Suzuki notes that those who viewed the image there may possibly have agreed with critic Tanaka Jun’s impression of the work as, ‘[a member of] the occupying military that has occupied the area in peace and who amicably interacts with local people’ (Suzuki 2014, 258). She further points to the fact that written – we might say wistfully – on the back of the work was a statement in English that read: ‘Peace Amidst War by IKUMA ARISHIMA 1939’ (Suzuki 2014, 258).

### **Umehara Ryūzaburō’s *Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side***

The second image to be discussed is by iconic artist Umehara Ryūzaburō who, like Arishima Ikuma, was associated with the White Birch Society. Arishima was certainly recognised for the quality of his visual production. He was, nevertheless, a lightweight when compared with Umehara, once a student of Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and a giant of the twentieth century art world in Japan.

Although an intellectual who may have wished, in terms of the discussion above, to distance himself from the more overt excesses of the militarist authorities, Umehara’s activities nonetheless fuelled the operation of the imperial machine. He was often a judge for official art exhibitions and was appointed an Imperial Household Artist in July 1944 (Ikeda 2017, 243). At a time, furthermore, when paper and coloured ink were almost impossible to procure, the artist was able to publish a folio-sized collection of 25 opulently-coloured prints of his Beijing images (Ikeda 2017, 241). He happily, moreover, took advantage of the benefits of Japanese control of key parts of the continent to travel to China, particularly Beijing, in order to combine leisure with artistic pursuits. Umehara first visited China in 1929, when he travelled to Shanghai and its surrounds. In 1939, however, he made a brief detour to the country’s past and future capital after travelling to Manchukuo as a judge in a government sponsored art gathering held that year in Changchung (then Shinkyō, meaning ‘new capital’). So enamoured was he with Beijing that, between 1939 and 1943, Umehara undertook six extended visits of several

months each to the city, amounting in total to a duration of more than a year and a half (Tomiyama 1988, 38-39). It was during the 1942 visit that he painted the image of the sitting sisters referred to here.

Throughout his various sojourns in Beijing, Umehara created canvases of Beijing landscapes, the majority of which feature orange Chinese-style roofs emerging from the deep green of forest-like surrounds. Particularly well-known is *Shikinjō*, The Forbidden City, which Umehara entered into a 1940 exhibition, one of a raft of official events held that year in Japan to commemorate the 2,600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what was claimed to be the birth of the mythical emperor, Jimmu. This and similar images are memorable for the fact that, while troops were engaged in a bloody conflict across China, which is estimated eventually to have claimed the lives of between 14 and 20 million (Mitter 2013, 387) or even between 20 and 30 million (Lary 2017, 1) soldiers and civilians, Umehara was able to ensconce himself comfortably in Beijing from whence he went about his work in a way that erased any suggestion of the turmoil that gripped the region. Or, as Ikeda observes, in spite of the fact that Umehara visited the continent during a time of war, like his rival for the title of most popular painter of the era, Yasui Sōtarō (1888-1955), he was successful in ‘completely avoiding such subject matter [as] battlegrounds [or] the everyday lives of soldiers’ (Ikeda 2018, 246). Instead, the artist preferred ‘to charm spectators’ – even after ‘the Sino-Japanese War had descended in quagmire’ – ‘with depictions of women in ethnic dress’ (Ikeda 2018, 246).

While in Beijing, Umehara noted that he painted landscapes in the morning and images of people after lunch (Tomiyama 1988, commentary to Image 11). The ‘people’ referred to were almost inevitably women and girls. In order to do this, he would invite models to his room (Ikeda 2017, 241). The two girls, the sitting sisters, who appear in this work were recruited in that way. Umehara recalled in 1973 how enjoyable it was to ‘call beautiful young women [the artist uses the Chinese term *guniang*] to my lodgings to paint’ (Umehara 1973, prologue: also cited in Tomiyama 1988, 39). Tomiyama Hideo, in fact, cites the observation by Umehara that one of the attractions that drew him to Beijing was the beauty of the city’s young woman, in particular their facial features and interesting clothing (Tomiyama 1988, commentary to Image 11).

The ‘sitting sisters’ image features the distinctive orange and green colour combination that marks many other Umehara works produced in China, such as the Beijing roof series noted above. Influenced initially by his teacher Pierre-Auguste Renoir and then

by Paul Cézanne and other post-Impressionist French artists, Umehara's style features distinctively rough *impasto* brush strokes – he would create a sensation in the 1950s by squeezing paint directly from the tube onto a canvas (Ogawa 1971, 121) – in addition to modernist visual elements such as the sofa on which the featured pair are seated. While reclining nudes – recalling the Wakakuwa analysis cited above – had been an Umehara speciality in the 1920s, seated women, generally fully clothed, held a particular interest for the artist while in Beijing.

We might analyse this painting, too, from the China dress perspective. This is in spite of the fact that the skirt lengths, long sleeves and sombre colours of the sisters' attire suggest that the work partially resists Ikeda's analysis of the Japanese male penchant for the China dress as a blatant device to orientalise and sexualise the women so featured (Ikeda 2008, 372). Yet, like many Umehara Beijing images, there is a tension in this work that is not necessarily evident in images by other Japanese artists of women in China dress. This is apparent if we compare the representation of the sisters with *Ginpei no mae* (1925, *Before a Silver Screen*), by Kobayashi Mango (1870-1947), one of the most iconic works in the China dress genre. In that work a Japanese woman with modern permed hair wearing a brilliantly embroidered royal blue two-piece sits side-on with her right side to the back of a wooden chair across which she drapes her right arm. With her hands clasped, her left arm hangs down to her lap. Her style, as Ikeda also notes (2008, 361-363), is relaxed and comfortable, suggesting that she has no objection to being made the object of the gaze of the artist or the viewer of the work. The figure is centred in the image, adding to a sense of calm and order, and thus to the woman's 'viewability'.

Umehara's strategy of seating his girls to one side of the sofa, a trope that repeatedly appears in his images of Beijing women, creates a sense of random imbalance that is absent from Kobayashi's carefully constructed work. This imbalance underscores that fact that, as in Ikuma's *Jiangnan Spring* image, the gaze of young women here refuses to comply with Japanese expectations of the superior self and dominated other. In an article on China dress imagery production in China during the war, Ikeda also notes the determined look on the faces of the sisters under discussion (2007, 115; cited also by Kaizuka 2014, 74), while the 2017 translated expansion of her 2007 analysis further discusses the manner in which Umehara's Beijing women and girls 'brazenly star[e] back at the viewer' (2017, 240).

To Ikeda, this element of the artist's work suggests alternate fear and fascination, in addition to an insistence on sexualising as 'Other' the woman being depicted. In her 2017 discussion, Ikeda in fact refers directly to the image presented here. These sisters, she notes, 'wear striking black outfits and possess powerful gazes; their crossed arms end in large hands. There is nothing meek about them' (2017, 249). While there is no doubt that the pair have links to more eroticised Umehara images of Beijing women and girls, or '*kunyan*' (to borrow Ikeda's term derived from the Chinese, *guniang*),<sup>15</sup> I wish to read this image from a slightly different perspective.

Like the Kobayashi China dress figure referred to above, the girl to the right of this image – the older sister – looks away from the viewer, replicating the indirect gaze that is often featured in depictions of women in visual art. Yet, where the Kobayashi subject looks dreamily with a vapid gaze at some point in space, perhaps as an indirect ploy to diffidently welcome the artist's attention,<sup>16</sup> the figure here appears to deliberately avoid the gaze of the painter (and the contemporaneous viewer) who is a member – regardless of the degree of overt support demonstrated for the regime – of the invading Japanese Empire. The work was produced in 1942, the year that was the high point of imperial grandeur and also of the all-out implementation of the Three Alls policy discussed above. In addition to the damage of the initial strike, this policy was committed as far as possible, as Himeta Mitsuyoshi and Chen Ping (1989, back cover inset map) point out, to creating a *mujinku*, or area in which humans were fundamentally unable to survive, across much of the area north of Beijing. The older girl is of an age to be *au fait* with the details of precisely how Japanese troops have wreaked havoc on her homeland, particularly with respect to the brutality of the treatment of girls and young women. The arm she places around her sister suggests a desire to protect the younger girl from sexual violation.

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<sup>15</sup> The Japanese reading of the Chinese '*guniang*,' meaning girl, is often given as '*ku-nyan*.'

<sup>16</sup> It is not possible within the scope of this article to pursue the possibility that the woman subject turns her gaze away from the male artist and viewer as a strategy to deal with the discomfort or even shame that she feels at being constructed as spectacle.



**Fig. 2.** Umehara, R. (1942) *Shimai heiza-zō* (Sisters Sitting Side-by-Side) [oil and mineral pigment on paper]. In: *Umehara Ryūzaburō Pekin Sakuhinshū* (Selected Beijing Works by Umehara Ryūzaburō). Tokyo: Ishihara kyūryūdō, image 16 (no page numbers provided).

The younger girl, however, is more defiant. Not yet old enough for the modern hair-style of her sibling, she is perhaps too young to know fear. With a slightly-veiled, yet nonetheless fierce undercurrent to her expression, she stares directly at the viewer, arms folded assertively. Her expression simultaneously invokes the anger, frustration and contempt generated by being peremptorily summoned to act as a model. We have already noted Ikeda's observation, regarding Umehara's Beijing *kunyan*, or young women, works generally, on the attention given by the artist to 'the brazen stare[s]' of his subjects. Here, too, the artist clearly sought to convey the intensity of this as-yet-adolescent girl's irate glare. Her hands, it is obvious, are disproportionately large. Tomiyama notes that the artist found this 'humorous' (1988, commentary to Image 11). Rather than humorous, I view these hands as Umehara's unconscious response to the girl's expression and the power inherent in that determined gaze. With these hands she will challenge and perhaps destroy the invading male – and all that he represents – who seeks to objectify her.

I argued above that, as the war situation intensified, artists attempted to strengthen the boundary between the Japanese self and other. Approaching this possibility from a different angle, Ikeda suggests that Umehara's attachment both to Beijing buildings and

*kunyan* in exotic Chinese dress deepened as anti-Japanese sentiment spread. Ultimately, she sees endeavours of this nature – and the reception of Umehara’s work by literary icons such as Kobayashi Hideo (1902-1983) – as ‘none other than the aestheticization of war’ (Ikeda 2017, 258).

### **Tsuruta Gorō’s *People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops***

The final image for discussion is *Taiwan People Farewelling Volunteer Soldiers*. This work is by Tsuruta Gorō, the artist better known for the 1942 work referred to above, *Shinpei Parunban ni kōkasu* (Divine Soldiers Descend on Palembang). The *Palembang* painting is of a squadron of 60 or 70 Japanese parachutists floating to the ground against a pale blue sky dotted with pink and lemon cumulus clouds. Three figures in the foreground are already engaged in combat. Like Umehara’s sitting sisters, the Palembang image was painted in 1942 at the apogee of imperial grandeur. The *Taiwanese People* work, however, was a 1944 production. In July of that year, Saipan fell with Japan fighting to the last man. In private, there were those in the military who knew that this left Japan ‘vulnerable’ (Kingston 2014, n.p.).

Tsuruta’s mission at this time of challenge was to buttress the Empire by demonstrating the devotion of these humble imperial subjects – the indigenous people of Taiwan – while nonetheless emphasising their difference from ‘authentic’ Japanese. Confirming their distance from civilised *naichi* or mainland life, the figures are crudely dressed, with one boy naked. It is this boy, ironically, who waves the Japanese flag. As James Clifford suggests in his discussion of how anthropology ‘once looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or non-historical’ (1988, 23), this diminution of the degree of ‘civilised’ appearance of a group being observed is a well-known device for confirming the authority of the observing party. Furthermore, as Aaron Gerow argues with respect to the complex images presented in early twenty-first century Japanese cinema dealing with warships, it is precisely because such visions of imperial might have ‘only been effected through certain compromises and ideological contortions’, that they tell as much about the ‘obstacles faced’ by Japanese nationalism as of any gains (Gerow 2006, n.p.).<sup>17</sup> It does not need to be said that the lifestyle deprivation experienced by the people depicted was

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<sup>17</sup> Gerow’s reference is to the new-nationalism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I would argue that the idea is equally applicable to Japan’s imperial project.

undoubtedly exacerbated by exploitative imperial policies which, in the case of indigenous people in Taiwan, required a ratio of 1 to 57.5 police to residents when, in other parts of the island, this ratio was 1 to 963.1 (Ching 2001, 136).

The '*shiganhei*' referred to in the title of Tsuruta's work are likely to be the Takasago *giyūtai*, literally the Takasago 'hero corps'. Takasago was the generic name given by imperial Japan to the indigenous people of Taiwan. Recruited and trained in jungle warfare under conditions of strict secrecy (Huang 2001, 225), these volunteers were superficially regarded as loyal subjects of the Empire. In fact, as Chih-huei Huang notes in his analysis of oral testimony narratives by former members of the group, many were infused with a sense of *yamato-damashi* – Japanese spirit (2001, 223). Huang quotes Walis Piho, a surviving former volunteer, who recalled how he and other young men of his settlement prepared to serve by forming a group to study Japanese under the auspices of the 'Speak the National Language Movement' (Huang 2001, 230). In doing so, they undertook activities that included the recitation of the *Kyōiku chokugo*, the Imperial Edict on Education, and the *Gunjin chokuyu*, the Imperial Edict on Military Personnel. That their acceptance for military service was considered an honour for the community as a whole is evident from Piho's recollection, which startlingly invokes the scene in Tsuruta's work:

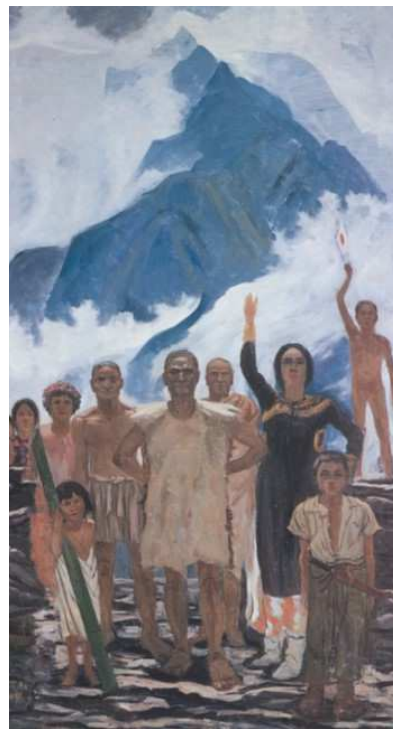
On the day of our departure, all of the tribe came to see us off. They stood along the roadsides waving the *Hinomaru* flag. I felt extremely proud to be a Japanese military man. (Walis Piho, a.k.a. Yonegawa Nobuo, Second Takasago Giyūtai, cited in Huang 2001, 230)

Explaining the difficulty that faced Takasago returnees following the collapse of the empire and Jiang Jie-shi's assumption of power in Taiwan, Huang notes how even forty years after the end of the war, these veterans declared that *yamato-damashi* would never die among the former volunteers (2001, 235). He explains this as a 'battlefield trick' which, by valorising the outstanding bravery of the Takasago soldiers and their ability to assist Japanese troops to survive under the direst conditions, created an illusion of 'reversal and elevation in the hierarchy' between coloniser and colonised (2001, 240). This illusion, of course, was completely without substance.

Leo T.S. Ching incisively probes the complexity of the relationship between the indigenous people of Taiwan and the Japanese Empire, demonstrating the deep and painful tensions inherent in testimonies of the kind discussed by Huang (Ching 2001). Also



noting an emphasis among surviving Takasago volunteers on ‘Japanese spirit’ (2001, 169), or Huang’s *yamato-damashi*, Ching nonetheless refutes the accepted Japanese wisdom that the people of Taiwan, including the indigenous people, were much more receptive to imperial rule than, for example, the people of the Korean peninsula. Critically problematising this assumption through the use of narrative texts, Ching maps the trajectory of the construction of the indigenous people of Taiwan ‘in the cultural imagination of the colonisers’ from ‘savagery to civilised’ through processes of ‘*dōka* and *dōminka*, assimilation and imperialisation’ (2001, 4). Noting that this transformation was for no purpose other than ‘the convenience of the empire’, Ching (2001, 4) cites Ozaki Hotsuki (1928-1999) to point out that any notion of equality and fraternity merely authorised colonised people ‘not to live as Japanese, but to die as Japanese’. Ozaki’s insight reminds us that the Takasago volunteer death rate was very high (Huang 2001, 248).<sup>18</sup>



**Fig. 3.** Tsuruta, G. (1944) *Shiganhei ni wakare o tsugeru hitobito* (People of Taiwan Farewelling the Volunteer Troops) [no medium given]. In: Asahi shimbunsha (Asahi News). (1996) *Asahi bijutsukan: sensō to kaiga* (Asahi Art Gallery: War and Visual Art), Vol. 21 (9) [Tsūkan 126], image 44 [images unpagged].

<sup>18</sup> Acknowledging the difficulty of accuracy, given the secrecy that surrounded Takasago military activities, Huang nonetheless estimates an approximate survival rate of about 15% (2001, 248).

Recalling the devastation of the Three-Alls Policy, while also presaging the scorched earth that Japan would become by war's end, the landscape in this image is in marked contrast to the verdant green of Arishima's *Jiangnan Spring*. Viewers may wonder how the farewelling people of Taiwan have come to gather in such a desolate place, which surely cannot be their home. The rising steam and barren land suggest volcanic surrounds unsuitable for human habitation. From one perspective, the rather wooden poses of a number of the figures match the environment created by the artist, although the central male's glaring expression suggests both his pride and anger at being forced to play the dispossessed in such a setting. It is, however, the energy and clear dignity that emanates from the woman on the right that contests any intent to mark the group as inferior, yet devoted, other.

With a stance that recalls the Statue of Liberty, this figure also brings to mind the woman profiled in the famed image entitled *Liberty Leading the People* by French Romantic School figurehead, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863).<sup>19</sup> In that work, the figure of Marianne, representative of the freedom and reason of France, leads her followers across the barricades. Although Tsuruta travelled to Europe, he did not engage in the lengthy French experience enjoyed by some artists of the time, most famously Fujita Tsuguharu, and he may have been less familiar than the latter with the canons of French art. Nevertheless, given the European flows that circulated throughout the art world of Japan, he would almost certainly have been familiar with Delacroix's corpus. And when we compare the background structure of the two works and the fact that both Marianne and a boy behind her to the right are raising their hands, gestures that are replicated in Tsuruta's image, we cannot but consider the possibility that the Japanese artist took inspiration from the French master.

There are, of course, significant differences between Delacroix's work and Tsuruta's image. Any influence is much less striking, for example, than that, often cited, of Delacroix's *Christ Asleep During the Tempest* (1853) on the 1943 work by long-time Paris resident, Fujita, entitled *Soromon kai'iki ni okeru beihei no matsuro* (The Final Hours of American Troops in the Solomon Seas) (Sandler 2001, 204; Earhart 2008, 373). As noted above, Tsuruta's mission was to emphasise the devotion of the indigenous peo-

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<sup>19</sup> I am indebted to a participant in a December, 2016, collaborative research meeting held at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, organised by Professor Liu Jianhui, for this suggestion.

ple of Taiwan to the empire while leaving no doubt that a clear boundary existed between the superior Japanese self and this inferior alien other. Yet, in its echo of the revolutionary theme of Delacroix's work, we detect an instability in Tsuruta's image that invokes the analysis by both Ching and Huang concerning the ambivalent status of the aboriginal people of Taiwan during the imperial era. The raised hand of the woman – the Taiwanese Marianne – might suggest victory on the part of the volunteers and the Empire. This was undoubtedly the conscious intent of the artist. Given the manner in which the Japanese suppressed the indigenous people of Taiwan, however, we are strongly motivated to view the woman as advocating for the freedom and reason of her own indigenous Taiwanese 'nation' and as encouraging the others around her to rise to this cause. This ambivalence recalls what Norman Bryson has identified as incongruity in Delacroix's own work. Discussing *The Captivity in Babylon* (1838) by the French artist, Bryson notes how the presence of a harp in the image 'can be claimed equally by two interpretative grids', one being the Psalms and the other the Orphic lyre (Bryson 1984, 199). Bryson then argues that '[e]ach has sufficient inaugural power to claim the harp as off-spring, yet neither can realise the claim, and in that failure of master-discourse to "attach" the harp to itself there emerges the possibility that the rival claimants [...] may themselves be mutual transformations, in a flow of constant metamorphosis where no co-ordinate is truly primal or stable' (1984, 199-200). I would argue that this type of instability of 'meaning' of the visual image, which Bryson labels 'contradictory signposting' or 'reversing directions' (1984, 200), applies well to the Tsuruta image being discussed.

In the Delacroix original, Marianne leads her followers across a pile of bodies felled in the battle for liberty. While there are no corpses in Tsuruta's image, the scorched earth arguably suggests, as previously noted, the wasteland created both by Japan's invasion of China, while also being a portent of the Allied attacks on Japan. The landscape can further be read as invoking the toll of the struggle of the indigenous people of Taiwan. Ching and Huang both acknowledge that some indigenous people in Taiwan felt a strong connection to the Empire and mourned Japan's defeat. Nevertheless, the harsh hand of Japanese authority was also a cause for resistance.

Importantly, in terms of this discussion, the woman has a dignity and presence that contests her being viewed as in anyway subservient to her imperial masters. Like the women in the Arishima and Umehara images, with her powerful gesture, this woman,

too, insists on the integrity of her identity, refusing to concede the right of the invaders to dictate the terms of any contact encounter. Strong and resolute, she takes the lead among the figures depicted, and silently and solemnly confirms her human rights. In this way, like those of the young women in the *Jiangnan Spring* and the sitting sisters from Beijing, her figure conveys a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'other-ed' subject insists on asserting the legitimacy of its own self.

### **Conclusion**

John Dower reminds us that imperial Japan's mobilisation for war was driven by '[s]elf-styled patriotic renovationists' who drew on 'subterfuge, intimidation and fait accompli to achieve their ends' (Dower 2007, 17). Their ascendancy was guaranteed by entering into 'potent alliances of corporate, bureaucratic and political interests while vesting unprecedented power in the military,' and by shoring up domestic support 'through masterful manipulation of the newly emergent mass media' (Dower 2007, 17). Without doubt, imperial Japan was grounded in an inextricable connection between the military, capital and the state, nicely expressed in the Baron Kato Hiroyuki comment cited above on progress 'as the offspring of power'. Japan, of course, had little desire to share that power except in circumstances such as the puppet government model, which guaranteed that the other party would comply unhesitatingly with the empire's demands.

Yet, notwithstanding the efforts of these 'patriotic renovationists', the empire failed spectacularly. This was in spite of the mobilisation of every imperial subject, including those from the worlds of art and culture, to contribute to victory in total war. In spite of the subtle and not-so-subtle pressure being applied, some artists were reluctant to demonstrate overt enthusiasm for the cause. Others were delighted, however, to produce material that extolled Japan's military might.

Cultural products, nonetheless, are slippery items that often defy the intention of the artist involved. Military officials in imperial Japan made Herculean efforts to ensure that all art during the eight years of Japan's war against China, and then the War in the Pacific, complied with stringent guidelines designed to ensure that the public viewed only material that supported and glorified the activities of the country's armed forces. It is ironic that the three images discussed here, each by a recognised member of the art world, reveal the manner in which the notion of empire was often ephemeral. It may be misleading to claim that the efforts of those who sought to impose 'correct

thought' came to nought. Nevertheless, in the end, attempts to induce right and proper attitudes and action often dissipated in the face of quietly subversive, as much as overtly violent, defiance. Across its colonial regime – including the various iterations of colonisation such as puppet government – Japan sought to establish strong boundaries of superior self and inferior other. Yet when we view the images discussed above, we can see the porous nature of these boundaries. This porosity is foregrounded in the disinterested gazes of the young women from Jiangnan, in the suppressed resistance evident in the direct glare of the younger of the two Beijing sisters, and in the grace and dignity of the Taiwanese indigenous woman farewelling her confreres to war. Even as Japan left a trail of devastation across the regions it occupied or invaded, many of the country's leaders continued perversely to extoll the imperial project as bringing peace to and liberating the people of the continent. Perhaps the failure of Japan to grant true liberty and equality to the figures depicted in the works discussed here, and to those in the communities that they represent, was the principal reason for the empire's defeat.

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