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著者	BODART-BAILEY Beatrice M.
journal or publication title	Nichibunken Japan review : bulletin of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies
volume	3
page range	25-44
year	1992-01-01
その他の言語のタイトル	最も荘厳な僧院とその他の名所 : エンゲルベルト・ケンペルの日本画
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15055/00000389">http://doi.org/10.15055/00000389</a>

# The Most Magnificent Monastery and Other Famous Sights: The Japanese Paintings of Engelbert Kaempfer<sup>1</sup>

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*(Received 24 September 1991, accepted 3 October 1991)*

The German scholar Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) came to Japan during the Genroku period as physician to the trading settlement of the Dutch East India Company at Nagasaki. During the two years of his visit he not only took a great amount of scholarly notes and produced a number of sketches but also succeeded in purchasing various small objects, books and maps, as well as a set of fifty finely painted watercolours of famous sights (*meisho e*). This article attempts to place these watercolours within the framework of Japanese art history. Using Kaempfer's description and drawings of Chion-in and the large Buddha of Kyoto as an example, it is argued that these paintings, in line with other contemporary depictions, were merely symbolic representations of famous sights. Kaempfer consulted these paintings when he wrote his famous work on Japan, and when on occasion he forgot that they were stylized portrayals only, he committed errors in his otherwise meticulous description.

*Keywords:* ENGELBERT KAEMPFER, GENROKU PERIOD, JAPANESE PAINTING; *MEISHO E* (PICTURES OF FAMOUS SIGHTS), *MEISHO KI* (RECORDS OF FAMOUS SIGHTS), CHION-IN, KYOTO DAIBUTSU, TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE.

The distinction of being the most magnificent monastery in Japan went, according to the 17th-century traveller Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), to Kyoto's Chion-in. In terms of Kyoto's history the temple had acquired this status relatively recently, even though it traces back its history to the early 13th century.

The temple was founded by Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212), who already as young Tendai monk had moved to a branch temple of the sect to explore ways of reaching salvation beyond the main stream of Tendai teaching. Eventually Hōnen found

1 The author wishes to thank Prof. Shimosaka Mamoru, Curator, and Prof. Kanō Hiroyuki, Curator, Kyoto National Museum as well as staff members of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies for discussing this subject with her and making available research material on the subject. While this article has greatly benefited from their suggestions, the opinions expressed therein are solely the responsibility of the author.

religious enlightenment in the repetition of the words "Hail Amida Buddha" (*namu amida butsu*) and soon, so the tradition goes, the people of the capital climbed the slope to his temple to hear his message. However, when it was realized that he had moved away not only physically from Tendai headquarters but also had left the fold of the sect with regard to his teachings, Hōnen was exiled to Tosa, Shikoku. He was permitted to return to Kyoto in 1211 and died the next year in a temple on the slope where Chion-in is located today in the eastern mountain ranges of Kyoto. The Pure Land Sect (*Jōdo shū*), as this new branch of Buddhism came to be known from the belief that repetition of Amida's name will deliver man into the Pure Land or paradise of Amida upon death, faced persecution initially. Hōnen's tomb was destroyed, but his disciples had taken the precaution of removing his bones. The bones were brought back on the 23rd anniversary of his death and have ever since been the object of worship in that same location.

The temple grew over the centuries, but shared the fate of most others, namely that of being burnt down periodically. When Nobunaga entered Kyoto in 1573, its strategic location on the eastern approach to the city recommended it as camp for his army, and the temple's co-operation and prayers for his victory enabled it to escape the fate of the monastery on Mount Hiei, namely that of total destruction. Instead the temple was modestly rewarded. Under Hideyoshi the temple also increased its holdings, but Chion-in was at that time no more than one of several temples sharing the wooded slope, including that containing Shinran's grave.<sup>2</sup>

## POLITICS AND RELIGION

The temple's rise to fame came with the establishment of the Tokugawa hegemony. In 1603, the year Ieyasu had himself named Sei-taishōgun, Chion-in became his ancestral temple. The slope was cleared of all other temples, including Shinran's grave, and construction of the monastery on three levels, very much as it is known today, was begun. However, in 1633 a fire destroyed the main set of buildings on the middle level and the temple Engelbert Kaempfer saw and which can still be admired today is, with some exceptions, a reconstruction financed by the third shogun Iemitsu, completed in 1639.

Kaempfer's praise of the temple as the most magnificent monastery of the country is generally not echoed in Japanese accounts of the period, such as the various *meisho ki* (records of famous sights) which began appearing in the 17th century.<sup>3</sup> Chion-in

2 For a detailed history of Hōnen's life and Chion-in see Yabunouchi Genzui, *Chion-in shi*, Kyoto, 1937.

3 *Miyako meisho zue*, first published 1780, refers to Chion-in as having "the largest building in Eastern Kyoto" (*raku tō dai ichi no taika*). Akizato Rito, ed., *Miyako meisho zue*, in *Shinshū Kyōto Sōsho*, 23 vols, Kyoto, 1967, VI:275. However works roughly contemporary with Kaempfer's visit, such as *Dekisai kyō miyage*, make no mention at all of its size. Ide Tokihide, ed., *Kyōto Sōsho*, Kyoto, 1934, IV:64-65.

is, of course, included in accounts of the sights of the capital. What the authors of these texts consider worth mention, however, are neither the richly decorated buildings that delighted Kaempfer nor the fact that the shoguns' ancestral tablets were kept here, but the life of the religious founder Hōnen.

The dual aspect of the temple—the political and religious—has already been pointed out by Umehara Takeshi.<sup>4</sup> Kaempfer's description of the temple well reflects this dual nature.

The visit of the foreigner was not a voluntary one. As physician to the trading post of the Dutch East India Company at Nagasaki, Kaempfer accompanied the Dutch delegation on their annual trip to Edo to pay respects to the shogun. During the journey the foreigners were guarded as strictly as they were on the fan-shaped island of Dejima in the harbour of Nagasaki, and generally no sight-seeing was permitted. On the return journey from Edo, however—much to the delight of the foreigners and annoyance of the accompanying officials—the delegation's schedule included a visit to the most notable temples in Kyoto. After admiring the magnificent buildings of Chion-in and paying their respects at the small temple where the shoguns' ancestral tablets were kept, the foreigners descended a "wild mountain slope" to Yasaka Shrine, then known as Gion, or flower temple. Continuing past Yasaka Pagoda they reached Kiyomizu dera both to admire the view and taste the famous spring water. Next on the itinerary was the immense Buddha of Hōkōji, originally constructed by Hideyoshi to rival the famous Great Buddha of Nara. The 17th century visitors could not fail to feel awe as they viewed the statue and the building housing it, which Kaempfer described as the largest in Japan. Superlatives of a different kind were appropriate for the thousand multi-armed gilded figures of Sanjūsangendō, which was the final stop on the tour. The trip was, beyond doubt, calculated to impress the visitors with the splendour of the country, and the country's most splendid temple was Chion-in.

Unwittingly Kaempfer paid tribute to the political aspect of the monastery by measuring its magnificence in terms of the shogun's own buildings. The frontal aspect of the Ōhōjō, he stated, was more splendid than any shogunal castle. As the judgement of a skilled and down-to-earth observer who had just come from an audience with the shogun at Edo, this statement throws light on the appearance of Edo castle on the one hand and the splendour of the monastery buildings on the other. The Ōhōjō together with the attached smaller Kohōjō were built to accommodate the shogun on his visits, and while today the buildings can no longer be compared to Edo castle, they have, in fact, a great many common features with another shogunal castle which Kaempfer did not visit, namely the shogunal wing at Nijō. The architectural layout shows a similar "geese-flight" pattern, the corridors are also of the "nightingale" variety, i. e. making a squeaking noise when trod upon, and the sliding doors are painted in the same style by the same group of Kanō artists.

4 "Chion-in no futatsu no kao" in Umehara, T., Kishi, S. eds., *Koji junrei, Kyoto*, 19, Kyoto 1977, pp.68-78.

Even the garden stretching picturesquely in front of the monastery buildings is believed to have been designed by the man who created that at Nijō castle, namely the tea master and artist Kobori Enshū (1579–1647).

Yet this splendour finds no mention in Japanese contemporary accounts, for it was not accessible to the public. Those Japanese who were granted the honour of admiring it, such as for instance the newly appointed *shoshidai* (governor) of Kyoto, Matsudaira Inaba no Kami Nobuoki, who had been given much the same tour as the foreigners only days before their visit,<sup>5</sup> were as little permitted to write about it as they were about the appearance of the shogunal castle. The guidebooks of the time show the second face of Chion-in, a temple that was remarkable only in as much as it was the site of Hōnen's life and grave.

Just as these accounts treat Chion-in simply as one of the many temples Kyoto could boast of, pictorial records give no indication of the grandeur Kaempfer admired. Generally the two-storied gate and the big main hall, Mieidō, are shown, but nothing indicates their unusual size and little appears of the magnificent buildings which are linked to the main hall by raised corridors and form the backdrop to the scene.

### A CASE OF MISTAKEN EVIDENCE

The set of fifty finely painted Japanese watercolours of famous sights, which Engelbert Kaempfer acquired during his stay in Japan 1690–92 and took back with him to Europe, conforms to this pattern. If one compares the depiction of Chion-in with that of other temples contained in the same set, one finds no indication that what is portrayed here is the “most magnificent monastery” of the country. While Kaempfer described the main hall as being as large as a European cathedral, the size of the people surrounding it in the painting make it appear to be no larger than an ordinary building.<sup>6</sup>

Kaempfer must have been aware that the pictures were not drawn to scale, but he either never noticed or forgot that they were also incorrect with regard to architectural detail. In other words, later when he consulted the paintings to write his account of Japan, he failed to realize that they were no more than a poetic and symbolic portrayal of reality.

Kaempfer's misinterpretation of the paintings led to a curious mistake in his otherwise painstaking description of the temple. In the manuscript of his work on Japan, which was published posthumously in 1727 in a slightly altered version as *The History of Japan Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam, 1690–92*, Kaempfer recorded the number of columns supporting the enormous tiled roof of the main hall of Chion-in as just about half the figure it actually is. He asserted

5 Chion-in shiryō hensanjo, ed., *Chion-in shiryō shū*, Nichiran, Shokanhen I, p.68.

6 British Library, SL 5232, f.16. See illustration.

that there were five rows of six columns in the inside, and a total of seven rows of eight pillars if the outside rows of columns are added.<sup>7</sup> The building, which has not been structurally altered since Kaempfer saw it, has, as the graph shows, ten rows of twelve columns, less a number of columns in the center to provide uninterrupted space for the assembly of worshippers and clergy. The count of ten and twelve columns along the outside wall is exactly double the number Kaempfer noted for the inside columns.

An important consideration in finding an explanation for this curious mistake is the fact that Kaempfer had to take notes secretly or write down at night what he had observed during the day. The notes of his sight-seeing trip in Kyoto are no longer extant, but one can imagine that they were as sketchy and difficult to decipher as the small drawing he made of Chion-in's layout. Here also important information is missing, such as the explanation of the letters with which he marked the buildings.<sup>8</sup>

At the time Kaempfer apparently counted the rows of columns only from the corner of the building up halfway the length of the building to the centrally placed doors. In other words, he counted only half their number: a natural thing to do when time is short. Later he must have compared his notes with the Japanese painting and found that the number of columns shown there did not match his own count. In the painting seven columns support the outside corridors on the narrow side of the building, while he had recorded only five columns for this side. Kaempfer knew that he could rely on his own counting and came up with what must have sounded like a logical explanation for the discrepancy: ignoring any indications there might have been in his notes that his figures presented only half the count, he concluded that the number of columns shown on the painting were those on the outside and that he had counted those on the inside. Consequently his numbers were smaller by two on each side.

Kaempfer makes a similar mistake when describing the temple's two-storied Sanmon. The number of columns he notes in his manuscript is in accordance with the painting, but not with reality.

### A CASE OF MISTAKEN INTERPRETATION

Not only did Kaempfer fail to correctly assess the nature of the paintings, but so, it appears, did scholars who have only recently begun to write about them.

Although the paintings were part of the founding collection of the British Museum, they had never appeared in any exhibition or been commented upon until after I discussed their existence with staff members of the Oriental Collection in the autumn of 1987. One reason was, no doubt, that they had not been deposited in the

7 British Library, SL 3060, f.371v.

8 British Library, SL 3060, f.526.

appropriate section of the Museum like other articles of Japanese origin in Kaempfer's collection, but remained in the Western Manuscript Room with his hand-written material. In addition to the unusual location, a misleading description of the contents of the particular folio in which they are kept, published in the *British Museum Quarterly*, might have deterred any scholar in search of Japanese paintings from examining the material.<sup>9</sup>

Since the paintings were not disturbed for some 200 years, they startle the observer with their relative crisp and new condition and vivid colour. This fact might have led to the opinion that in style they belonged to a later period and to their designation as *meisho zue*.<sup>10</sup> I would like to argue in this brief article that the paintings should be regarded as *meisho e* (and not *zue*) and that they are very much in the tradition of the Genroku period in which Kaempfer visited Japan.

Most reference works date the general usage of the expression *meisho zue* to Anei 9 (1780) when the highly successful work *Miyako meisho zue* was published.<sup>11</sup> The innovating features of this and the works that followed it, such as *Edo meisho zue* of 1829, were that they represented the famous sights with a Western-inspired realism. Gone are the traditional silver and gold clouds and partial and symbolic representations. The layout of temple compounds and the buildings themselves are shown with a map-like accuracy. The medium is generally the monochrome woodblock print.<sup>12</sup> The set of fifty paintings brought back by Kaempfer does not fit into this category.

The tradition of *meisho e*, on the other hand, dates back to the 9th century in Japan. Although such paintings are no longer extant, an entry in *Kokin Wakashū* notes that two particular poems were composed on the topic of a folding-screen painting in the Eastern palace of the "Nijō Empress" (*nijō kisaki*) depicting autumn leaves floating on the Tatsuta river.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the centuries Tatsuta was famous for its red autumn leaves. Its beauty inspired not merely courtly poets, but later also a man of the people, Ihara Saikaku, who at the sight of large heaps of red peppers in the markets of Edo remarked, "Although we are in the province of Musashi, we can well imagine ourselves to be gazing down from the top of Mt. Tatsuta."<sup>14</sup> Kaempfer's set of paintings also includes a picture with all the traditional elements of the famous scene: the river, the shrine and of course the sightseers admiring the scarlet leaves.

However, Saikaku's rather worldly comparison of the red leaves of Tatsuta to the piles of red peppers at the market obscures the fact that *meisho* were, in the first

9 Basil Gray in *British Museum Quarterly*, 18 (1953), pp.21-22.

10 Sakakibara Satoru, "Shokoku meisho zue," in catalogue *Doitsujin no mita Genroku jidai, Kenperu ten*, 1991.

11 I.e., Sanshōdō, ed., *Dairin jiten*.

12 See also Yamori Kazuhiko, "Meisho zue o megutte" in *Meisho keibutsu*, vol. 10 of *Nihon byōbu e shūsei*, Kodansha, 1980, p.136-141, on this topic.

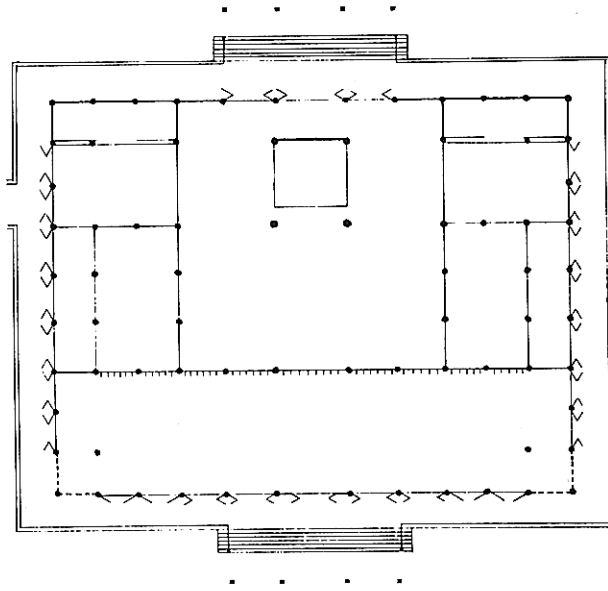
13 Chino Kaori, "Meisho e no seiritsu to tenkai," *Meisho keibutsu*, p.115; Helen C. McCullough, trans., *Kokin Wakashū*, Stanford University Press, 1985, p.72.

14 Stubbs, Takatsuka, trans., *This Scheming World*, Tuttle, 1965, p.127.



Chion-in, Kyoto, from a set of 50 *meisho e* brought back from Japan by E. Kaempfer.  
By courtesy of the British Library. (Sloane 5232, f. 16)

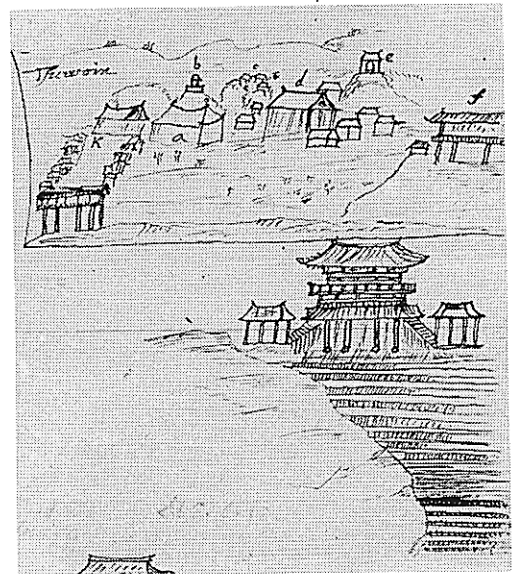




Ground plan, Mieidō, Chion-in Kyoto of 1639. (From *Nihon kaji bijutsu zenshū*, vol. 25, P. 99.) Kaempfer's count : five times six columns



Mieidō, Chion-in, from *Miyako Warabe*.



Kaempfer's rough sketch of Chion-in.  
A key to the lettering does not exist.  
By courtesy of the British Library. (SL 3060, f. 526)



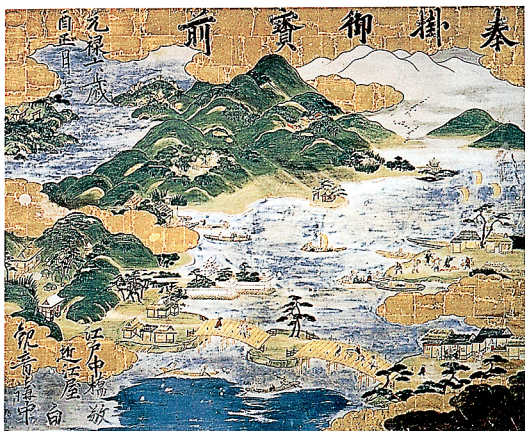
Tatsuta shrine (British Library, Sloane 5232 f. 15).



Shirahige shrine (British Library, Sloane 5232 f. 23).  
The shrine is barely visible in the background: the travellers have become the focus of attention. Kaempfer had made a black and white copy of the people and boats in the foreground with the intention of having it reproduced as copper plate to illustrate his work.



The large bridge at Seta (*Seta no karahasaki*), painting on wall of alcove, from "Eight Views of Ōmi" at Kashtuji, Kyoto.

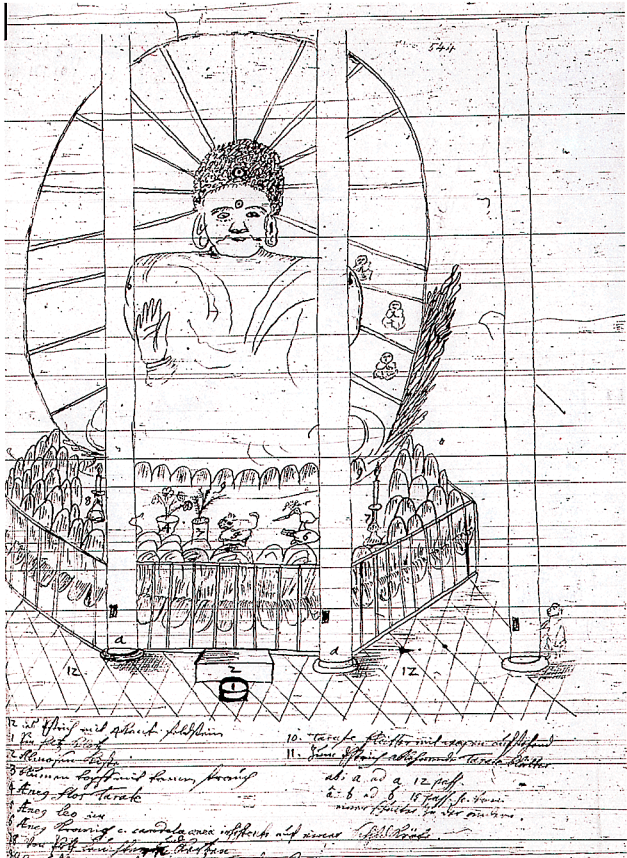


The large bridge at Seta in a depiction of the "Eight Views of Ōmi," *Ema, Chōmeiji, Ōmi Hachiman Shi, Shiga*.

Kaempfer described this double bridge as being 300 and 40 Paces long respectively. Common to both the painting for commoners and aristocracy is the unproportionally large portrayal of people.

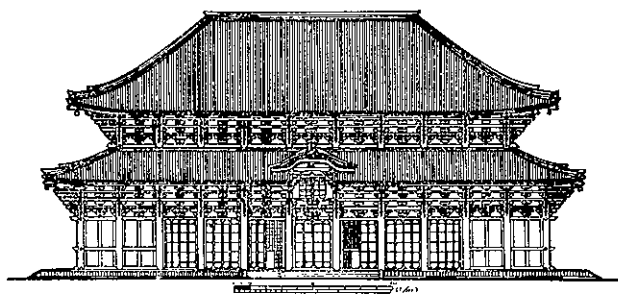


The hall of the large Buddha at Hōkōji, Kyoto. By courtesy of the British Library. (Sloane 5232, f. 42)

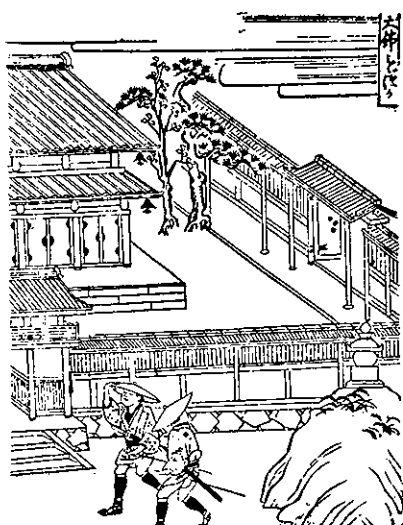


Kaempfer's drawing of the Large Buddha of Hōkōji, Kyoto.

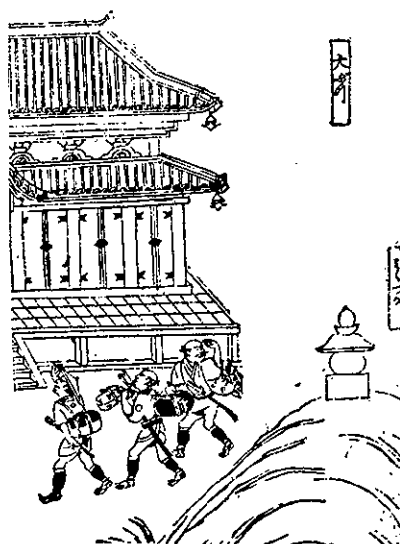
(British Library, Sloane 3060, f. 544) Note the size of the figure on the right.



The Hall of the Great Buddha, Hōkōji, Kyoto.  
The building as Kaempfer would have seen it. (From *Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan*, ed., *Kyōto Shaji Chōsa Hōkoku*, Kyoto, 1987.)



From *Dekisai Kyō Miyage*



From *Miyako Warabe*



From *Yamashiro Meisho Jisha monogatari*



instance, places of pilgrimage. From earliest times unusual natural phenomena, be it the perfect cone of Mount Fuji or an oddly shaped rock, were believed to be sacred and became the object of religious worship in Japan. Thus the natural beauty of a sight and its religious significance were in most cases closely linked. Of the fifty *meisho e* Kaempfer brought back from Japan, only two do not depict places of worship, namely those showing Nijō castle and the famous thoroughfare at Shijō in the heart of Kyoto.

*Meisho e* are thus believed to have their origins in religious art, in particular the genre known as *shaji sankei mandara* (mandala of pilgrimages to temples and shrines) such as the Kiyomizu and Yasaka Hōkanji mandala.<sup>15</sup> They are in this respect related to *tsuki nami* and *shiki e* (monthly and seasonal pictures), but differ in as much as the latter began to include secular subjects already at an earlier date.<sup>16</sup>

The general trend of secularization of art, however, did not bypass, but only found a more subtle expression in, *meisho e*. In the depiction of famous sights, temple and shrines began to be surrounded by people very obviously enjoying the beauty of their surroundings. The portrayal of the buildings became more schematic, while that of the people gained in importance. This reflected a secularization of life in general, and the mental conflicts this change of attitude initially created are well illustrated in the literature of the time. For instance, in Zeami's drama *Yuya*, the heroine, Yuya is neglecting her responsibility to her sick mother enjoying an excursion to admire the cherry blossoms at Kiyomizu dera, only to find that by visiting the temple, she inadvertently receives the blessings of the deity and thus is led back to the path of duty.<sup>17</sup> The combination of pilgrimage and pleasure trip was becoming socially acceptable.

Another aspect of the secularization of famous sights and their depiction can be observed in the close connection between *meisho e* and the courtly art of poetry composition. As has already been shown above, it is mostly thanks to this connection that early records of their existence are available. One of the most frequently cited examples of early *meisho e* are those that decorated the walls and sliding doors of a palace built for the emperor Gotoba between 1205 and 1207. The paintings were lost when the palace was destroyed, but the poet Fujiwara Teika, who supervised the composition of poetry on the theme of the paintings, noted the circumstances in his diary *Meigetsuki*.<sup>18</sup>

An example of *meisho e* used for interior decoration closer to the time Kaempfer visited Japan is furnished by the documents recording alterations and reconstructions of the imperial palace. It is noted there that when the daughter of the second shogun

15 Kiyomizu dera sankei mandara, private collection; Yasaka Hōkan-ji mandara, Hōkan-ji, Kyoto. See Takeda Tsuneo, "Saireizu to yūyakuzu no haikai" in exhibition catalogue *Momoyama jidai no sairei to yūyaku*, Kobe, 1986, pp.81-82.

16 I.e., the set of "Manners and Customs of the Month," six sheets, Tokyo National Museum.

17 Takeda, *op. cit.*, p.82.

18 Takeda Tsuneo, "Meisho keibutsu no tokushitsu to tenkai," *Meisho keibutsu*, p.107.

Tokugawa Hidetada, Kazuko (Tōfukumon-in, 1607-78), entered the palace as imperial consort, the women quarters were decorated throughout with *meisho e*. Some of the paintings are believed to have later been transferred to Kashūji in Kyoto, and these constitute today some of the few remaining examples of *meisho e* in domestic architecture.<sup>19</sup>

The portrayal of famous places was, however, not limited to paintings on screens, walls and doors. Sets of paintings on individual sheets, very much like those brought back by Kaempfer, are believed to have been numerous. They might well have preceded these larger art works and served as inspiration and reference when the latter were composed. Common to both appear to have been copy books which outlined for the artist the essential elements of the famous sights which might not have been known to him personally.<sup>20</sup> In fact it is assumed that the painted screens known as *raku chū raku gaizu* originated as a collection of individual paintings of famous sights, which were copied upon screens and linked with gold and silver clouds. The earliest known set of individual sheets portraying *meisho e* bears the seal of Kano Motonobu (1476-1559),<sup>21</sup> thus making it contemporary with the earliest known example of *raku chū raku gaizu*, dated to around 1520-30.<sup>22</sup> It is highly likely, however, that sets of individual paintings existed earlier and have simply not survived like the early examples on screens and walls, which are known through literary sources only.

A suggestion of how these individual sheets might have been displayed is given in a six-fold screen on which a total of twenty-four fan-shaped leaves portraying "Manners and Customs of the Month in Kyoto" have been pasted. Like the above-mentioned set of individual sheets, the work bears the seal of Kano Motonobu.<sup>23</sup>

With the beginning of the 17th century came the publication of illustrated *meisho ki* (records of famous sights). This may be taken as an indication of both the fact that there was a growing number of well-to-do people who could afford to spend time and money on leisure activities and that this new class of mostly townspeople had adopted the interest of the aristocracy in *meisho*, or famous sights. The illustrations of these popular works fully develop the trend noted earlier, namely that of increasingly paying attention to the people who visit the famous sights rather than the sights themselves. Buildings are often only partially shown, and the people that surround them are mostly depicted nearly as tall as the buildings themselves. No attention is paid to architectural detail. What is provided for the reader is not a pictorial record of a location, but a symbolic representation, much as in the West the elongated triangle of the Eiffel Tower indicates that the scene portrayed is Paris. The same mode

19 Takeda Tsuneo, "Meisho keibutsuzu . . ." p.109.

20 Exhibition catalogue *Momoyama jidai no sairei to yūyaku*, Kobe, 1986, p.92.

21 Scenes In and Around Kyoto, 24 sheets in two albums, private collection.

22 Machida screen, Scenes In and Around Kyoto, National Museum of Japanese History.

23 Kōen-ji, Kyoto.

of portrayal was also adopted by another depiction of famous sights catering to the taste of the common man: those found on *e-ma*. The term literally means “horse-picture,” for these paintings on wood, at times several meters large, originally depicted horses and were donated to temple and shrines instead of the animal itself. Later however, subjects varied according to the kind of benefits the donor was seeking from the gods, and famous sights were at times shown. Thus an *e-ma*, measuring 145.8 cm by 176.6 cm, believed to have been donated by a merchant from the province of Ōmi who was operating a business in Edo, depicts the eight famous sights of Ōmi. In this painting the famous double bridge of Seta, which Kaempfer describes as being the largest bridge in the country, has shrunk considerably in size and the eight famous sights are indicated in schematic terms only.<sup>24</sup>

Kaempfer’s set of fifty Japanese paintings conforms in important aspects to this style adopted in the portrayal of *meisho e* designed to appeal to a wider public.

The proportional discrepancies that exist between buildings and people in Kaempfer’s *meisho e* are very much apparent, for instance, when one compares a reconstruction of the hall of the Great Buddha of Hōkōji and Kaempfer’s own drawing of the statue on the one hand with the painting he brought back to Europe on the other. The schematic representation adopted by the artist resembles, for instance, that found in *meisho ki* published before and after Kaempfer’s stay in Japan, such as *Miyako Warabe* of Manji 2 (1659), *Dekisai Kyō Miyage* of Enpō 5 (1677), and *Yamashiro Meisho Jisha Monogatari* (undated, approx. 1730). The discrepancy between painting and reality in the case of Chion-in has already been discussed. In contrast to the lively assembly of people in the *meisho e* of Kashūji, which were produced for the imperial palace and are attributed to the painter Kanō Mitsuoki, figures are kept simple in line with the ability of the painters that catered for a plebeian clientele.

The aim of the artist was not to portray reality, but merely the characteristics with which the famous sights were firmly associated in the popular mind. Scenes illustrated in Kaempfer’s *meisho e*, such as Mitarashi and Kurama Fugo Oroshi, might leave the modern viewer guessing “whether they were named after certain festivals or customs that were well-known in Japan in Kaempfer’s time but now rarely or never held or practised”,<sup>25</sup> but in the minds of Kaempfer’s Japanese contemporaries such questions did not arise. As the example in Saikaku’s writings suggests, they were well known, not just by the aristocracy but also by the townspeople who bought his novels. Moreover, they were part of the standard repertoire discussed in the *meisho ki*, the popular travel literature of the period.<sup>26</sup>

Kaempfer’s set of *meisho e* lacks the vitality of the *meisho e* of Kashūji or, for instance, of the famous screens with their frenzied dancers produced earlier in the

24 Ōtsu shi rekishi hakubutsu kan, ed., exhibition catalogue: Ōmi no e ma, 1991, pp.32, 70.

25 Y. Y. Brown, “Kaempfer’s Album of Famous Sights of Seventeenth Century Japan,” *The British Library Journal*, Spring 1989, 15:1, p.98.

26 For instance, the index of *Kyōto Sōsho* lists 26 works referring to Kurama in one way or another.

century. It is unlikely to have been painted by one of the great artists of the period, but is most probably the product of a studio which catered for people with more modest taste and means. Akin to the publication of the *meisho ki* and paintings on *e-ma*, the set of fifty watercolours Kaempfer brought back from Japan document the diffusion of cultural and artistic values formerly reserved for the aristocracy to a broader segment of the population, a development also well documented in the field of literature and the performing arts.

However, if Kaempfer's set of *meisho e* represent, as it were, a plebeian version of the paintings enjoyed by the aristocracy, one may wonder why similar sets are not at hand to furnish comparison.

Part of the answer is that so far little research has been done on the subject. While paintings and literary sources indicate that well-to-do merchants did purchase expensive art objects, it appears that no existing piece of such art can actually be shown to have been produced for this kind of clientele. Again paintings and accounts such as Kaempfer's indicate that the inside walls of merchant houses were covered with patterned gold and silver paper, but actual examples have, to my knowledge, not been located by scholars, nor has the subject been made a topic of research.

Analogous to the imitation of aristocratic culture in other spheres, one may conclude that sets of *meisho e*, like the one purchased by Kaempfer, were used for interior decoration; in other words, they were glued on screens, walls, and sliding doors. If this were so, then most of such sets would have been lost when the houses were remodelled or destroyed. Just as Kaempfer's documents furnish information which was so well known at the time that it was not thought worth recording and has since been lost in Japan, the items he brought back may similarly be objects which were so common, that they were not considered worth preserving.

### THE ODD NUMBER

There remains, however, one problem. A set of fifty art works is uncommon in Japan. There are precedents for sets of fifty-five, like Tōdaiji's *Kegon gojūgo sho e* and *Kegon gojūgo sho emaki* (Fifty-five pictures of sights of the Kegon sect and scroll of fifty-five sights of the Kegon sect), and of course Hiroshige's fifty-three stages of the Tōkaidō consists of fifty-five sheets. A set of sixty would also be a possibility, in as much as it would be made up of five sets of twelve sheets, just like the set of paintings bearing Kanō Motonobu's seal, mentioned above, consisted of two sets of twelve sheets. The hypothesis that Kaempfer's set originally consisted of more than the existing fifty paintings is also supported by the fact that a number of standard *meisho*, such as Kiyomizu dera, are not depicted in the set. If the set had originally consisted of fifty-five sheets, this would have been regarded as odd in Europe, and one can well imagine that either Kaempfer himself or later his nephew decided to reduce the number to a more common figure, i. e. fifty. The remaining five would have made a good present for a high-ranking benefactor and they might well still be preserved to-day in some noble's collection.

The paintings Kaempfer brought back from Japan may not be great works of art and hence of overwhelming interest to the art historian. However, they do furnish important insights into an area about which so far relatively little is known, namely the everyday life of the large number of towns people of the Edo period, those people who created the culture generally cherished today as that of “traditional Japan.”

最も荘厳な僧院とその他の名所：エンゲルベルト・ケンペルの日本画

ベアトリス・M・ボダルト-ベイリー

要旨：ドイツの博物学者のエンゲルベルト・ケンペル(1651-1716)はオランダ東インド会社、長崎商館付きの医師として元禄三年(1690)九月から元禄五年十月まで日本に滞在した。その二年の間に膨大な研究資料を集めるとともに多くの挿絵を描いた。また様々な本、地図、美術品、道具を購入した。ケンペルが日本から持ち帰った物には五十枚の名所絵も含まれていた。本論文の目的は、ケンペルの知恩院と方広寺の大仏の記述によって、これらの名所絵の特徴と美術史上の位置を検討することである。