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Travelling Images in the Global Context: A Case Study of the Short-Lived 18th century Akita Ranga Painting School in Japan

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Abstract

By exploring early available travelling Western illustrations, image sources for the Akita Ranga painters in eighteenth century Japan, this article attempts to show how they developed, merging Japanese traditional Kanō school aesthetics, new realistic Chinese trends for still-life images, and Western type illusionism, using Japanese traditional pictorial materials. The Akita Ranga school's inventive compositional framework is the consequence of interaction with European models traced back to the famous Vesalius anatomy images with landscape, finally reaching Europe via *ukiyo-e* prints, forming a full circle of the migration of images.

Resume

En explorant les illustrations occidentales disponibles de l'époque, sources d'inspiration pour les peintres d'Akita Ranga du 18^e siècle, cet article tente de montrer comment ils ont fusionné les esthétiques japonaises de l'école Kanō, le nouveau courant du réalisme chinois, et l'illusionnisme occidental, en utilisant des matériaux traditionnels japonais. La composition inventive de l'école Akita Ranga résulte des interactions avec des modèles européens incluant des images d'anatomie de Vésale avec paysage. Elle revient en Europe via les estampes *ukiyo-é* et réalise ainsi une circulation en boucle des images.

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Introduction¹

The short-lived Akita Ranga school,² the first important Western-influenced painting school in eighteenth-century Japan, is considered a by-product of *Rangaku* (Dutch learning)—a flourishing intellectual phenomenon mediated by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which facilitated a global diffusion of Western sciences. In Japan, the study of Western sciences was conducted by means of the Dutch language and accompanied by a rich array of travelling images. The Akita Ranga school was formed of young samurai painters originating in the Akita domain, who had the opportunity to be exposed to copper engravings of these scientific images then in circulation.

Relying on previous studies of the school,³ the present article is the result of a three-year iconographical investigation into Akita Ranga artworks, including research conducted at local museums in the Akita region, with the conscious intention to explore the mobility of visual culture in the global context vis-à-vis the local. The aim of this study was to re-situate the artworks of the Akita Ranga school within the broader context of global art history, taking a comparative perspective which demonstrates the connections between the local artworks and the travelling image sources that were current within the international arena at that time. The research took place in three phases.

In the first phase of the research, I explored Western illustrations available during the Edo era (as well as Chinese relevant image sources), including

Vesalius and Valverde's anatomy, Dodonaeus's flora, Jan Jonston's fauna, and Gerard de Leiresse's manual on painting.

The second phase aimed at identifying connecting points between the school's artworks and relevant image sources, such as the perspective images related to Chambord Castle's double spiral staircases, originally designed by Leonardo da Vinci, in France, the mythological motifs for the Marble Gallery of the Frederiksborg Castle, in Denmark, and the herbal images connected with Shinobazu pond, in Tokyo, Japan.

The final phase sought to confirm that the school's inventive compositional framework was the consequence of its interaction with European models, and in particular with Vesalius' anatomical figures portrayed within a landscape setting. The history of Akita Ranga's artworks with their inspiring travelling images would later come full circle, when the school's compositional framework, inspired by European models, reached Europe through the mediation of *ukiyo-e*, Japanese wood-block prints, further illuminating the global circulation of images. By exploring travelling image sources for the Akita Ranga painters, this article attempts to show how they developed their unique style by merging Japanese traditional Kano school aesthetics, new realistic Chinese trends for still-life images, and Western type illusionism and using Japanese traditional pictorial materials. It will trace back the full circle trajectory of these travelling images as they circulated around the globe.

Background

Since 1642, during the Edo period, although there were some links with other locations such as Ryukyu and Korea, Japan was officially closed, except for the trading post at Dejima in Nagasaki, which was the location of a Dutch factory and the only contact point with the outside world. Dejima was under strict government control, and until 1858 only the Dutch and the Chinese had exclusive trading rights with Japan. In the 1720s, however, there was a relaxation of the ban on the import of

¹ In this article, Japanese persons' names are given in the Japanese order: family name first and given name next.

² There are long discussions about whether it is appropriate or not to call the group of painters of Akita Ranga a school, and this has still not been determined. However, in this article, the term "school" is used, because at some points the artists of Akita Ranga formed a specific unit with a specific style, even if it lasted no more than ten years.

³ The first serious study of Akita Ranga school was initiated by the painter Hirafuku Hyakusui who published *Nihon yōga shokō* (*The Dawn of Western-Style painting*) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1930). Since then the research has been conducted by local, and later, national scholars, while it was neglected by Western academics until recently when research by both Western and Japanese scholars intensified as seen in Hiroko Johnson's pioneering study: *Western Influences on Japanese Art: The Akita Ranga Art School and Foreign Books* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2005), Imahashi Riko's extensive analytical study: *The Akita Ranga School and the Cultural Context in Edo Japan* (English Translation, Tokyo: LTCB International Library Trust/International House of Japan, 2016), and Kobayashi-Sato Yoriko's article: "Japan's Encounters with the West through the VOC" in Thomas Dacosta Kaufmann and Michael North (eds.), *Meditating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

non-Christian books, which led to the development of *Rangaku*, or “Dutch Learning” mania, among Japanese elites. This affected various aspects of society and cultural practice, including Japanese painting methods and subject matter.

In this historical context, a group of Akita Ranga painters was formed in the late eighteenth century.⁴ Akita, at that time, was a geographically remote domain in the North of the main Japanese archipelago, far from the main cultural centres. Akita was seemingly not a favourable location for this early appropriation of Western techniques and style, compared to Edo, the prosperous capital and stimulating cultural centre, or Nagasaki, the only contact point with Western novelties at that time. However, the area was rich in copper, which the Dutch sought to regularly secure for their needs through annual negotiations with the Tokugawa *bakufu*.

Like the leaders of other copper-producing domains, the Lord of the Akita domain Satake Yoshiatsu 佐竹義敦 (1748-85), who was an excellent painter under the artist name of Satake Shozan 佐竹曙山,⁵ played an important role in the tough negotiations over the Dutch demands. These particular economic-political circumstances favoured Akita, enabling this region to catch up with the cultural novelties introduced further south, and to be informed about the most advanced technology of the Edo period.

When the copper production from the domain's mines declined, Lord Satake Shozan summoned the scholar Hiraga Gennai 平賀源内 (1728-80), an influential geologist, physicist, and engineer, from Edo to the Akita domain in 1773 in order to improve production.⁶ Hiraga Gennai, who was also a prominent expert on Western pictorial techniques, met, on this occasion, Odano Naotake 小田野直武

(1750-80), in Kakunodate, Naotake's hometown and, it is said, taught him the principles of Western-style painting techniques such as *chiaroscuro*. With this decisive encounter, Naotake would go on to become the most important painter of Akita Ranga. The artists of the Akita Ranga school, through their strong intellectual curiosity and artistic talent, and under stimuli from the West, would invent a new illusionistic style of painting while continuing to employ Japanese media (pigments on silk/paper).

Realism in Eighteenth-Century Japan

The Akita Ranga style was partially affected by the new realistic Chinese style, introduced by Shen Nanpin 沈南頻 (1682-after 1760), a Chinese painter who came to Nagasaki in 1731.⁷ It was known especially for its use of auspicious motifs – mostly plants, flowers, and birds. Much appreciated by the intelligentsia among *Rangaku* scholars, this Chinese style was diffused all over Japan by Japanese followers such as Sō Shiseki 宋紫石 (1715-86), who lived in Edo, and who probably transmitted this style to Naotake, who had social contact with him in Edo through Hiraga Gennai.

However, the most influential form of realism which reached Japan was Western realism, seen through imported Western books from the 1720s to the 1760s. These Western books contained accurately depicted illustrations and copper prints, which appear to have influenced the Japanese appropriation of Western art. Japanese intellectuals and artists who were highly attracted to these images copied them, whereby they tried to comprehend the Western manner, without any instructor.

Naotake, the leading painter of the Akita Ranga school previously mentioned, was one of them, and he probably started his career as a painter by copying Western copperplate prints. Furthermore, during the eighteenth century the introduction of western optical instruments like glasses, lenses, and mirrors, via Holland (or more probably first

⁴ Major followers of the Akita Ranga painting school in the Akita domain were as followed: Satake Yoshimi 佐竹義躬 (1749-?), Tashiro Tadakuni 田代忠国 (1757-1830), Ogitsu Katsutaka 荻津勝孝 (1746-?), Odano Naoshige 小田野直林 (1772-1841) -Odano Naotake's second son, and Tōshi Kenshō 藤氏憲承 (?-?) - not identified. See Takehana Rintarō, *Gashu Akita Ranga* (Akita Ranga Illustrated) [Akita: Akita Sakigake Shinpōsha, 1989], 147-151.

⁵ In this article, his artiste name, Satake Shozan, is used.

⁶ See the *Report prepared by Ooyama Rokuzaemon 大山六左衛門 and Oota Itayuu 太田伊太夫*, Akita's retainers in Edo (dated: June 25, 1774), in Archives of Akita Prefectural Library. Cited by Takehana in *Gashu Akita Ranga* (Akita Ranga Illustrated), 114.

⁷ Tsuruta Takeyoshi, “Sō Shiseki to Nanpinha (Sō Shiseki and the Nanpin School)”, *Nihon no bijutsu* 7. No. 326 (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1993), 18.

via China), had a significant impact on Japanese notions of sight.⁸

Long before the painters of the Akita Ranga School, a strong interest in Western artistic techniques, particularly the one-point perspective, was displayed by several Japanese artists. Called *uki-e* 浮絵 (perspective pictures),⁹ these perspective pictures, such as interior scenes of *kabuki* theatres, had been drawn and printed by Japanese artists since around the late 1730s. Developing from *uki-e*, the *megane-e* 眼鏡絵 (lens pictures), are designed, unlike the *uki-e*, to be viewed through an optical apparatus.¹⁰ The optical apparatus with lenses was used to more accurately create an illusion of depth, such as illusions created by Western techniques of perspective and *chiaroscuro*.

The first *megane-e* perspective image, a scene of Kyoto, was produced around 1760.¹¹ Afterward, several prints were created directly, by adapting European prints. Fascinated by the Western manner already seen in these perspective images, the painters of the Akita Ranga school accommodated themselves to the Western manner of displaying perspective, soon after Hiraga Gennai's first initiation into the use of that perspective. According to studies of the *megane-e* paintings by Oka Yasumasa (1992),¹² Naotake himself produced several *megane-e* landscapes of famous sites in Japan such as Enoshima, Mitsumata and Shinobazu-pond.¹³ Naotake also created two paintings of famous views of Mt. Fuji,¹⁴ supposedly derived from his *megane-e* paintings.

⁸ Timon Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart. The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).

⁹ Matthi Forrer, "From Optical Prints to *Ukie* to *Ukiyoe*. The Adoption and Adaptation of Western Linear Perspective in Japan", in *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, eds. T. D. Kaufmann and M. North (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 245-266.

¹⁰ Two kinds of apparatus were introduced via Holland to Japan: *zograscopes* (fitted with a large lens and a mirror) and peep boxes (fitted with a much smaller lens). See Forrer, "From Optical Prints to *Ukie* to *Ukiyoe*", 260.

¹¹ For the development of these Japanese *megane-e* images, Maruyama Ōkyo 円山応挙 (1733-95), painter active in Kyoto, played an important role.

¹² See Oka Yasumasa, *Megane-e Shinkō: Ukiyo-e shi tachi ga nozoita seiyō* (New Thinking on *Megane-e*: Ukiyo-e Artists' View of the West) [Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1992], 131-141.

¹³ See Imahashi, *The Akita Ranga School and the Cultural Context in Edo Japan*, 120-121. Odano Naotake's *megane-e* landscapes are, among others, *Enoshima* (Museum Yamato Bunkakan), *Mitsumata* (Tenri Central Library).

¹⁴ Odano Naotake's two paintings (color on silk) of Mt Fuji are housed in the Akita Senshu Museum of Art and the Akita Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, respectively.

***Kaitai Shinsho* (New Anatomy Book)**

As the Lord of the Akita domain, Shozan alternated living for a year in Akita and a year in Edo, becoming acquainted with the highly intellectual circle of *Rangaku* scholars in Edo, who regularly acquired novelties. Shozan supposedly intended to introduce Gennai to Naotake, knowing that scholars of Dutch learning, such as Sugita Genpaku 杉田玄白 (1733-1817)¹⁵, were to work on the translation and publication of the *Kaitai Shinsho* 解体新書 (*New Anatomy Book*) and that the commission of its illustrations would go to Naotake.

At the end of 1773, Shozan ordered Naotake to depart from Kakunodate and travel to Edo in order to further study Western pictorial techniques with Gennai. Soon after that, Naotake provided the illustrations for a prestigious new scientific publication, *Kaitai Shinsho*. Published in 1774, this Western anatomy book, the first in Japan, was a translation in Japanese¹⁶ of the Dutch version of a German anatomy book by Johann Adam Kulmus: *Ontleedkundige Tafelen* (Amsterdam 1734). This was certainly Naotake's first opportunity to seriously study Western-style realism, since he had previously been trained mostly in the traditional Kanō school in the Akita domain,¹⁷ as had other samurai painters at the time. Naotake referred to available Western prints provided by Sugita Genpaku and others in making his illustrations for the *Kaitai Shinsho*, some of which are from Gerard de Lairese's illustrations for Govard Bidloo's *Anatomia Humani Corporis* (*Ontleding des menschelyken lichaams*, Amsterdam 1690),¹⁸ and contain accurate anatomical details with *chiaroscuro*.

One of the most interesting elements of the *Kaitai Shinsho* is its title page, with the nude figures of Adam and Eve (Fig. 1), probably the first example

¹⁵ Sugita Genpaku, convinced that the western drawings of human organs were much more accurate than the Chinese ones, formed a team of Japanese experts to translate the Dutch anatomy book, Johann-Adam Kulmus' *Ontleedkundige Tafelen*.

¹⁶ Correctly the translation was into Sino-Japanese vocabulary "Kango" written in Kanji including Japanese-made Chinese words invented by Sugita Genpaku.

¹⁷ There were Kanō school masters in the Akita domain in the 18th century. See Takehana, *Gashu Akita Ranga*, 116.

¹⁸ For example, Naotake illustrates *Dissection of Arm* which is a copy after a copperplate engraving by Gerard de Lairese (1641-1711) illustrating Govard Bidloo, *Ontleding des menschelyken lichaams* (1690).

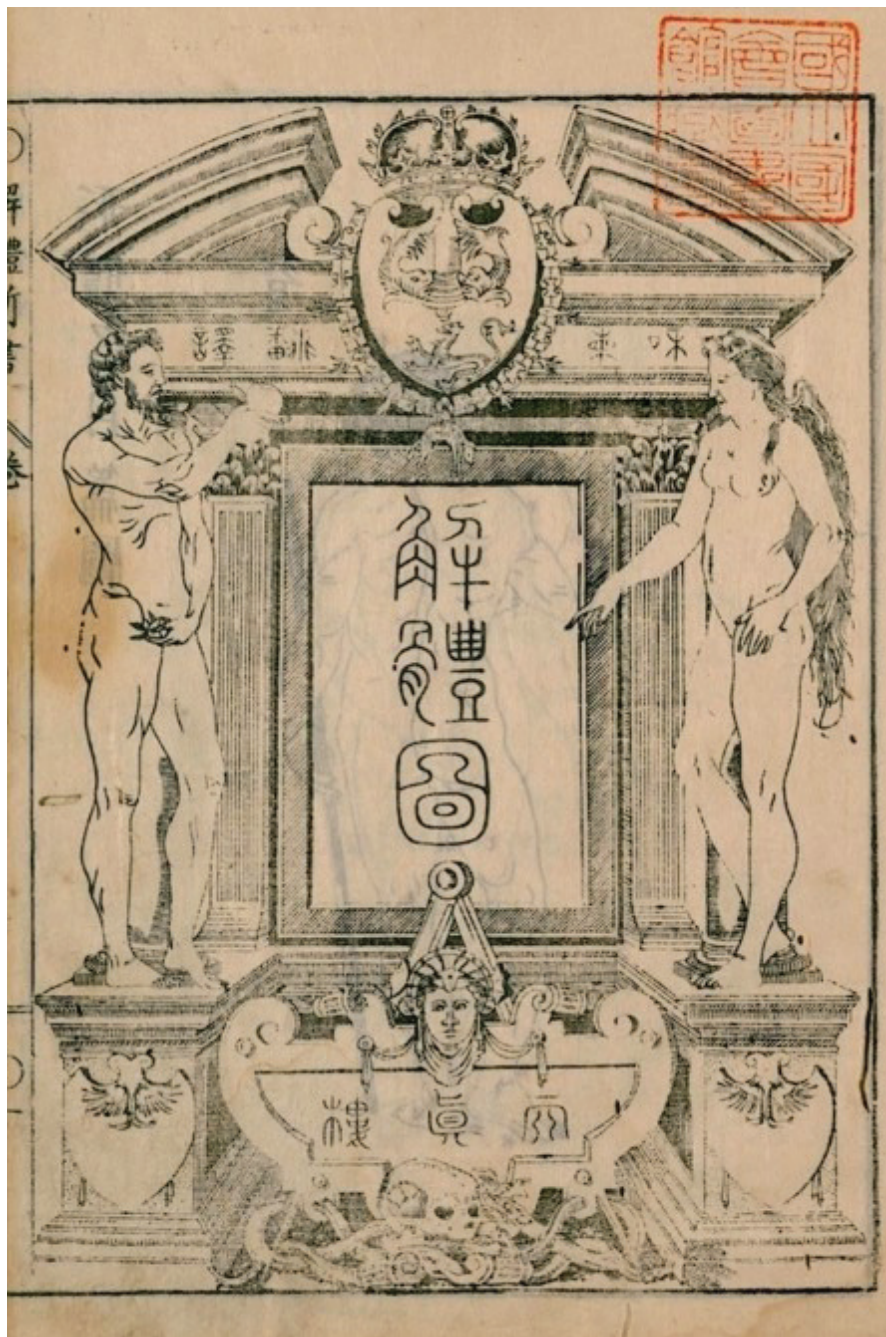


Figure 1. Odano Naotake. Cover page of *Kaitaishinsho*, 1774. National Diet Library, Japan.

of Western nude figures in Japan. In designing this title page, Naotake was largely inspired by the frontispiece of a Flemish edition of the anatomy book, *Anatomie* by Juan Valverde de Hamusco,¹⁹ first published in 1568 in Antwerp. According to my recent

investigation and examination of a copy of *Anatomie* by Valverde, housed today in the Akita Senshu Museum of Art, the only extant copy²⁰ of *Anatomie* (Fig. 2) known in Japan from the period, it seems that the frontispiece of the 1583 edition, not that

¹⁹ Juan Valverde de Hamusco (c.1525-87) is a Spanish anatomist, famous for his work: *Historia de la composicion del cuerpo humano*, first published in Rome, 1556.

²⁰ This copy of the 1583 edition, not complete, some pages missing, is now housed in the Akita Senshu Museum of Art.

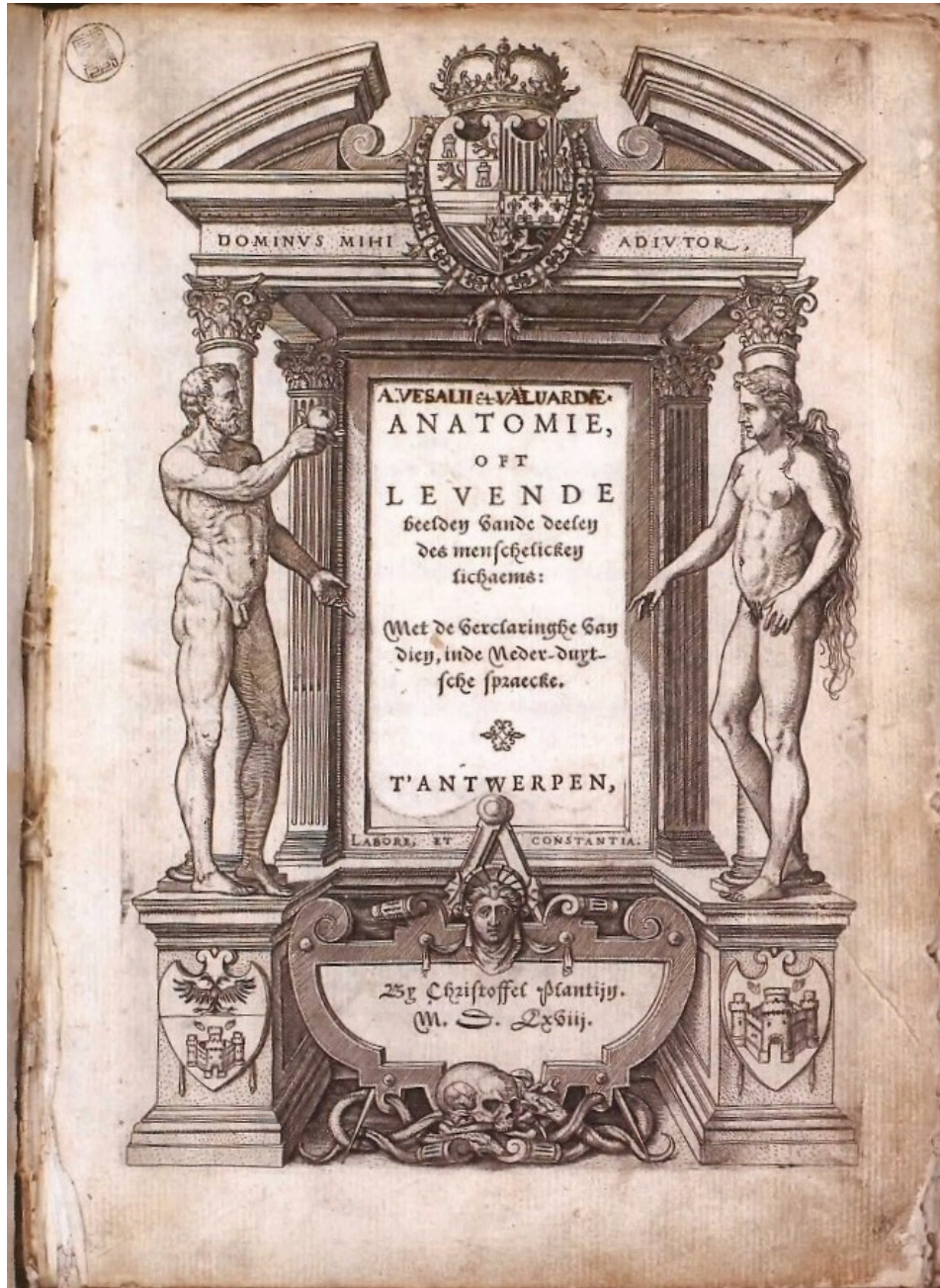


Figure 2. *Anatomie* (Valuerda) 1568, Frontispiece. Akita Senshu Museum of Art (Inami Book).

of the 1568 edition, served as Naotake's image source, given that this copy was owned by Dr. Inami 稲見, an official high-ranking physician of the Akita domain who studied Western medicine and who was a constant companion of Lord Satake.²¹ This

copy of *Anatomie* contains two authors' names, which are handwritten in Latin on the frontispiece: "A. VESALII Et VALUERDAE".²² The presence

²¹ See Abe Kuniko, "Investigation of Image Sources: Odano Naotake's Illustrations of *Kaitai Shinsho* and Valuerda's *Anatomie*", *Journal of the Institute for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration*, vol.11 (2020): 43-56. The copy of *Anatomie* formerly owned

by Dr. Inami and his descendants includes David Van Mauden (Sworn Medical Doctor and Surgical Prefector of Antwerp)'s *Bedieninghe der Anatomien, Dat is Maniere ende onderrichtinghe* . . . published in 1583, while the cover page of the copy is the same as the 1568's edition. The copy, called "Inami Book", has some missing pages, but not the pages Naotake might have copied for the illustrations.

²² *Ibid.*



Figure 3. *Anatomie* (Valuerda) 1568, "Diaphragm." Akita Senshu Museum of Art (Inami Book).

of Andreas Vesalius as a co-author legitimates the assumption that some illustrations for the famous anatomy studies for *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543) would be included,²³ even though simplified and modified, as seen in the illustration of a skeleton standing in an allegorical pose.

²³ The first edition of the Flemish book *Anatomie* (1568), compiled and published by the publisher Christophe Plantin in Antwerp, does not show the authors' name on the cover page. The large part of this book is from Valverde's anatomy book which was based on Vesalius's anatomy book and its illustrations (Valverde was accused by Vesalius as for this plagiarism).

Further comparative study of anatomy images of this "Inami" copy with Naotake's anatomy illustrations for *Kaitai Shinsho* revealed that Naotake appears to have copied six illustrations of *Anatomie*: one image of the spinal nerve in "TAB.III.LIB.VII", two images of the cervical spine- frontal view and profile view in "TAB.V.LIB.I.", one image of the whole spine in "TAB. VI. LIB.I.", and two images of the human diaphragm in "TAB.VII. LIB. II" (Fig. 3). The latter images are simplified images of the famous "Muscle Man" series of Vesalius' *Humani Corporis*



Figure 4. Odano Naotake, *Kaitaishinsho* 1774. "Diaphragm" detail. National Diet Library, Japan.

Fabrica,²⁴ and it seems obvious that Naotake produced a Japanese version (Fig. 4) inspired by these image sources. Consequently, the connection with the image sources from Vesalius' anatomy becomes more evident in the process of appropriation of western techniques by Naotake as reflected in his later artworks. It can be claimed that *Kaitai Shinsho*'s illustrations were more or less adapted copies traced by Naotake from original copper engraving prints, from purely mechanical anatomy images, as well as ones in allegorical poses with landscape, as seen in the books of Vesalius and Valverde, to

the Adam and Eve figures of the latter's title page. Naotake's acquisition of western pictorial techniques, such as rendition of three-dimensionality, perspective, chiaroscuro, and modelling thus appears to have started through this work for the anatomy book. I would even venture to go further and assert that the famous Akita Ranga compositional scheme "Far and Near", which I will discuss later, might have been inspired by Vesalius's "Muscle man" series.

Imported Western Books

Today, several copperplate prints, which Naotake possessed, are studied for their relationship to Naotake's artworks. Upon his arrival at Edo, and taking on the responsibility to illustrate the Japanese

²⁴ In the 17th century, Andreas Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* was introduced to Japan. It is reported that Vesalius's "fabrica" was presented to Inoue Masashige 井上政重, a magistrate of Nagasaki, by a commissioner for the Dutch East India Company in Nagasaki, in 1656. See Yōrō Takeshi, "Edo no Kaibō zu" [Anatomy books in Edo], in *Edo no naka no kindai: Akita Ranga to Kaitai Shinsho* [The Modern in the Edo Period: Akita Ranga and The New Anatomy Book] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1996), 189-228, esp. 219.

version of the *New Anatomy Book*, Naotake learned Western pictorial techniques from Western book illustrations, as mentioned earlier.

At that time, in Japan, *Rangaku* scholars like Hiraga Gennai, and *daimyōs* (feudal lords) like Satake Shozan, who were interested in *Rangaku*, were even more enthusiastic about collecting Western books, which they circulated among themselves. For example, Gennai owned eight imported books²⁵, most of which were Dutch, including Jan Jonston's fauna (*Naeukeurige beschryving van de Natuur der Viervoetige Dieren, Vissen en Bloedloze Water-Dieren, Vogelen, Kronkel-Dieren, Slagen en Draken*, Amsterdam 1660), Noël-Antoine Pluche's *Spectacle of Nature* (*Schouwtoneel der natuur, of Samenspraaken over de bysonderheden der natuurlyke histori*, Amsterdam 1748, 14 vols.), as well as Emmanuel Sweerts's botanical illustration book (*Florilegium: tractans de variis floribus, et aliis indicis plantis ad vivum delineatum; in duabus partibus, et quatuor linguis concinnatum*, Amsterdam 1631). Richly illustrated, some in colour, these Western books that Gennai possessed must have been available to Naotake as pictorial image sources during his six-year stay in Edo. Naotake himself acquired a variety of copper prints, including even a hand-coloured print of a scene of *Lisbon after the Earthquake* (1757). While studying these Western pictorial sources, it seems he never literally followed Western models. Nevertheless, his paintings plainly show the clear influence of copper engravings with their fine delicate hatched lines for shading, and it is reasonable to assume that the Western pictorial techniques Naotake acquired were transmitted to his superior, Satake Shozan, since it is commonly understood that Shozan learned Western style painting directly from Naotake who was ordered to work with him in 1778 as an official painter in service to the lord.²⁶

²⁵ See Haga Tōru, "Dodonaeus and Tokugawa Culture: Hiraga Gennai and Natural History in Eighteenth-century Japan", *Dodonaeus in Japan* (eds) W.F. Van de Walle and Kasaya Kazuhiko (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 242-255, esp. 244.

²⁶ See Naruse Fujio, *Sataka Shozan: Ga no yō taru ya nitaru o tōtobu* (Satake Shozan: Painting Values Naturalism) (Kyoto: Minerva Shobō, 2004), 72; Imahashi, *The Akita Ranga School and the Cultural Context in Edo Japan*, 122-123.

Shozan's Western Art Theories

Satake Shozan, lord of the Akita domain, was a skilled painter who created remarkable paintings. However, the most significant exploit of Shozan is the writing three essays in 1778: compiled in his *Sketchbooks*, these essays are Japan's first art theories based on Western Art: *Gahō Kōryō* 画法綱領 (Summary of the Laws of Painting), *Gato Rikai* 画図理解 (Understanding Painting), and *Tanseibu* 丹青部 (Colours).²⁷ These theories were probably formulated through Naotake's experiments, which reflected Hiraga Gennai's teaching, because in *Gato Rikai*, Shozan quotes Hiraga Gennai explicitly, stating:

Kyukei (Hiraga Gennai) says that the human body is set within a circle, having the navel as its axis. When a baby is in the stomach, it breathes in the same way as fruit breathes through the stems. Human eyes are also spherical in shape. Therefore, everything we see is based on the divisions of the circle. This is the beginning of the theory of painting.²⁸

Moreover, as a concrete example of human figures, Shozan also made a page of "An Ideal Proportion of a Woman", a copy after a copper plate engraving illustrating Gerard de Lairesse's *The Art of Painting in All its Branches* (*Het groot schilderboek*, Amsterdam 1707), which indicates that "the height of the body measures eight heads".²⁹ This imported book of Lairesse's was largely studied by *Rangaku* scholars at the time as a relatively comprehensive visual source for learning the Western manner of illustration.

In his written work, Shozan attempted to formulate the rules of Western linear perspective. To make his theory easily understandable, he included schematic drawings³⁰ for *Gato Rikai*, showing the essential points of Western illusionism. Some drawings depict, for example, a horizon line, the heaven (sky), and the earth, to explain how to illustrate a horizon line according to the principles of Western

²⁷ These three theoretical texts of Shozan are compiled in his *Sketchbooks* (3 volumes), now owned by the Akita Senshu Museum of Art. The whole text in Japanese was translated in English in H. Johnson, *Western Influences on Japanese Art*, Appendix, 157-164.

²⁸ English translation is by H. Johnson, *Western Influences on Japanese Art*, 115.

²⁹ Lyckle de Vries, *How to create beauty: De Lairesse on the theory and practice of making art* (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2011), 72.

³⁰ For these drawings, see Naruse, *Sataka Shozan*, 2004, 123-128; Johnson, *Western Influences on Japanese Art*, 115-119.

vanishing point perspective, and how vantage points in such perspective can vary. Others show the principle of the range of 1/8 view, the perspective principle of a circle, and how to make an octagon and a perspective drawing of an octagon.

While the origin of the drawings of polygons in perspective might go back to the fifteenth-century perspective drawings of Leon Baptista Alberti and Piero della Francesca³¹, it is more natural to suppose that these drawings in perspective by Shozan (in his *Sketchbooks*) might have been inspired by Dutch image sources, such as the perspective drawings from *Gronde onderrichtinge in de Optica ofte Perspective Konste* (Instruction in Optics and Perspective Arts) by Hendrik Hondius (Amsterdam 1622). Some scholars believe that Shozan might, in the first instance, have referred to Chinese books that were translations of Western ideas by Italian Jesuits³², who were active as missionaries in China during the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. Indeed, in China, before the eighteenth century, Western techniques had already been introduced: Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), an Italian Jesuit, around 1600, and after his death, Castiglione (1688-1766), also an Italian Jesuit, known as an architect and a painter, had already introduced Western pictorial techniques including linear perspective.

Additionally, in 1729, Nian Xiyao 年希堯 had edited *Shixue* 視學 (Study of Perspective), a translation of Andrea Pozzo's work on perspective: *Perspectiva Pictorum et architectorum*, published in Rome between 1673-1700. The Chinese first edition of 1729 is without illustrations and its revised edition of 1735 includes some plates and graphs. Although they were supposed to be banned in Japan because of their association with the Jesuits, many intellectuals of the time were apparently familiar with them.³³ Yet Shozan makes no reference to Pozzo's work translated in Chinese. Instead, he

might have depended on direct Western sources. Shozan's series of technical drawings compiled in his *Sketchbooks*, probably all related to perspective principles, also includes a page depicting the use of a compass to make divisions in a circle and shows how to make latitudinal and longitudinal lines, and it ends with a curious drawing of a double spiral staircase.

Double Spiral Staircase

It is most intriguing that Shozan drew such a double spiral staircase (perspective & plan; Fig. 5), of which an original drawing was made by the Italian architect and theorist Jacopo da Vignola in his work, "*Le Due Regole della Prospettiva Pratica*" (*Two Rules of Practical Perspective*), posthumously published with notes of Egnatio Danti in 1583.

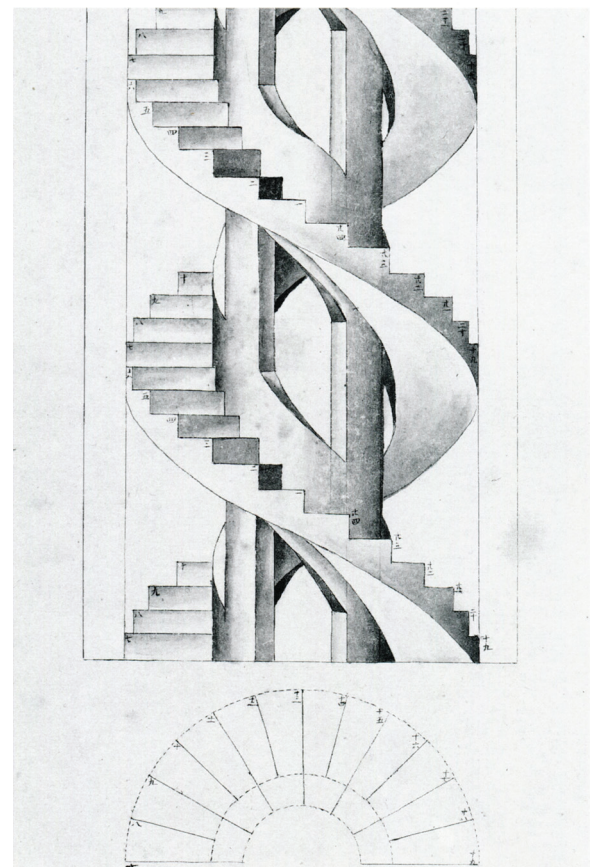


Figure 5. Shozan, Double Spiral Staircase, drawing on paper, 18th c. Akita Senshu Museum of Art, Japan.

³¹ For example, Shozan's drawing of *Octagon in perspective* (in his *Sketchbooks*) looks like the drawing of "Foreshortening of a geometrical pattern" from Piero della Francesca's *De Prospectiva pingendi*, Parma, Biblioteca Platina, MS 1576, fig. 29. For Alberti and Piero's theories of perspective, see Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical themes in western art from Brunelleschi to Seurat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 21-35.

³² Forrer, "From Optical Prints to *Ukie* to *Ukiyoe*", 245-266.

³³ Naruse, *Satake Shozan*, 2004, 123.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Vignola's theory book was widely translated and distributed all over Europe. A copy of a double spiral staircase drawing closely resembling Shozan's drawing is found in the English book *Practical Perspective, or Perspective made easie* (1670), published by Joseph Moxon, an English geographer and printer specialising in mathematical books and maps. Moxon writes in his book that the most famous example of the double spiral staircase's execution is the one in Chambord Castle, originally designed by Leonardo da Vinci. According to Kobayashi Bunji (1975),³⁴ Moxon's *Double spiral staircase* in plan and elevation might be a possible source for Shozan, and this interpretation is still today the standard explanation. However, it seems more plausible to us that Shozan's drawing might have been taken from a Dutch edition, rather than an English one like Moxon's.³⁵ One example that points in this direction is Shozan's drawing which closely resembles a copy drawing of the double spiral staircase (plan and elevation; Fig. 6) of Vignola found in the abovementioned Dutch book, *Grondige onderrichtinge in de Optica ofte Perspective Konste* by Hendrik Hondius. The two images, Shozan's and Hondius', look formally identical, even in the details of the numbering of each step, except that Shozan's uses Japanese numerals. Why then did Shozan want to include this drawing in his theoretical texts? It is questionable whether this drawing was really needed to explain how to show perspective in his theoretical essay, or whether this drawing was used as a plan, which, according to Screech, was presumably for the purpose of constructing a double spiral staircase inside the tower he planned to build in his new residence in Edo.³⁶

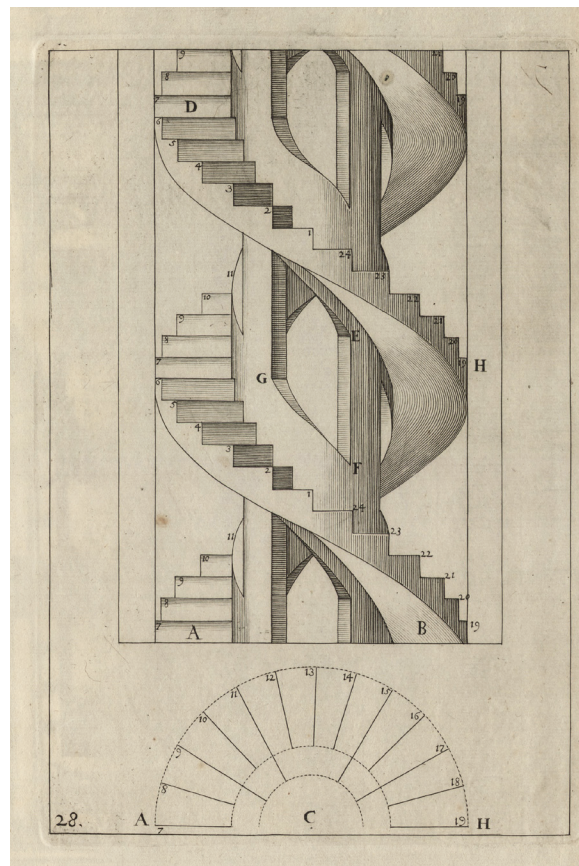


Figure 6. Hendrik Hondius I, Double helix shaped staircase, 1622, engraving, from Series: *Grondige onderrichtinge in de Optica ofte Perspective Konste*. Public Domain photo: HathiTrust.

Shozan's Dutch Seals and Fantastic Creatures

We know that Shozan was exposed to a variety of European travelling images which inspired his creativity not only in painting and compiling art theories, but also in his Dutch seals with European letterings. He used, in total, five Dutch seals: two of which were probably imported, the three others of his original designs.³⁷

Shozan executed a tiny but beautiful landscape painting (Fig. 7) in 1778–1779 based on a copperplate print after the original painting *The Good Samaritan* by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625; Fig. 8),

³⁴ Kobayashi Bunji, "Shozan no Niju Rasen Kaidan-zu ni tsuite" [About the drawing of a Double Spiral Staircase by Shozan], *Bijutsu-shi* 88 (1973): 105-111.

³⁵ Screech, *The Lens Within the Heart*, 222 and note 38, 282; Yasuhiko Isozaki, *Edo jidai no Ranga to Ransho* [Ranga paintings and Dutch books in Edo era], vol. 1, (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2004), 262.

³⁶ Ibid. In his book, Screech speculates about Shozan's attempt "to replicate Vignola's triumph in his Edo mansion", given that in 1796 a double-helix stair was constructed to serve the three-storey tower of the temple of Seishu-ji in Aizu Wakamatsu, in Japan.

³⁷ See Takehana, *Gashu Akita Ranga*, 126. An extant letter (dated the 17th day of the 11th month, now in a private collection) signed by Shozan to his seal-maker reveals that Shozan asked him to make three Dutch seals. See also Johnson, *Western Influence on Japanese Art*, 74.



Figure 7. Shozan, *Scenery by Lake*, Color on Silk, 18th c. Akita Senshu Museum of Art, Japan.



Figure 8. Copper plate engraving after Jan Brueghel the Elder: *Good Samaritan*, n.d. British Museum.

				
Segutter vol Beminnen	Segutter vol Beminnen	Siozan Signet	Siozan Schildereij	Zwaar Wit

Table 1. Shozan's Dutch Seal prints (CG reconstitution by the author) - "Siozan Signet"; "Siozan Schildereij"; "Zwaar Wit" are of Shozan's own design.

which was owned by Naotake.³⁸ The lower part of the inscription of the title, *Good Samaritan*, is cut off in the version Naotake possessed. In Shozan's painting, Brueghel's original European scenery is simplified and transformed into a natural Japanese landscape with a lowered horizon. Shozan rendered the space with Western style one-point perspective, with shading modelled after the hatching techniques used in copperplate engraving and found in Naotake's paintings as well. What is more interesting for us in this landscape painting by Shozan is that we find a disproportionately large seal imprint with leaves and a phrase in Dutch "Segutter vol Beminnen" (tentatively translated as "sea-gods full of love"; Table 1). This Dutch seal was probably an imported one, like another similar Dutch seal of which the imprint is found in other Shozan's paintings. These two seals are almost identical, having the same lettering and motifs, but at a closer look we can observe slightly different details. Though Shozan used these two quasi-identical Dutch seals, we have not found any reliable sources of information about them. It is uncertain whether Shozan understood Dutch or other European languages. However, it is certain that Shozan recognized the meaning of the words inscribed in the Dutch seals: "sea-gods full of love". Did Shozan identify himself with the beloved Sea-god, as the dignified samurai lord of the Akita Domain? This earnest enthusiasm about European letterings finally led Shozan to have several similar but original Dutch seals made, based on his own designs.

Illustrated here is an example of one of the Dutch seals he designed himself. When Shozan copied the illustrated page of "The Second Part of the Northern Celestial Hemisphere" from Noël-Antoine Pluche's *Schouwtoneel der Natuur...* (originally published in French: *Spectacle de la nature*), with zodiac signs and figures, he even copied the inscriptions and captions in French and Dutch, "Le Pole Septentrional / Tropique / Le Cercle Equinoctial / Seconde Partie De l'Hemisphere Celeste Septentrional / Tweede Deel Van Den Halven Noorder-Hemel-Kloot"³⁹. This copy drawing of Shozan's, which has gone missing⁴⁰, contains his draft for his new Dutch seal, which reads "Siozan Sinynet" (possibly meaning Siozan Signet; Table 1) with a decorative lettering of the letter "s" of medieval type, different from other "s" letterings he used for his seals. From this example, among others, it seems to us he tried to adopt a variety of lettering types.

Another Dutch seal Shozan designed is one of a tripod. Within this motif is found the following lettering: "Siozan schildereij" (Table 1), which is three-dimensionally displayed following the curved body of the tripod. Although the use of a tripod as a motif for this seal is rather of Chinese inspiration, his wide use of drawings from European prints, and the resemblances in his other works, make it possible to speculate on one of them as being his image sources for designing Dutch seals.

³⁸ Now in a private collection in Japan. About the identification of the print see Kobayashi-Sato, "Japan's Encounters with the West through the VOC", note 60.

³⁹ Johnson, *Western Influence on Japanese Art*, 101.

⁴⁰ This Shozan's drawing is illustrated for the first time in Hirafuku Hyakusui, *Nihon yōga shokō (Dawn of Western Painting in Japan)* (1930). Today the original drawing is missing.



Figure 9. Frederick de Keyser (designed by), Sea-goddess (Amphitrite or Galatea), engraving, 17th c. Rijksmuseum.

Travelling Images: Fantastic Creatures

The last example of the Dutch seals Shozan designed is characterized by a dolphin and seaweed, which supposedly demonstrates a connection with other European travelling images: the copperplate engravings from *Nouveau Livre des Dieux et Deesses De la Marine de l'invention de Henri de Caïser / Bouckje van Zeegoden en Godinnen Geinveteert door Hendrik d'Caïser* (New booklet of Sea-Gods and Goddesses designed by Hendrick de Keyser). The original prints of these series of fantastic creatures were apparently shared by Naotake and Shozan for compiling respective "Sketchbooks".⁴¹

The author, "Henri de Caïser" or "Hendrik d'Caïser", of the original drawings of the prints is Hendrick de Keyser (1565-1621), a Dutch architect, who gave the original drawings to King Christian IV of Denmark to serve as models for the decoration of the front marble gallery of Frederiksborg castle, today's Museum of National History of Denmark. There, we can examine 'in situ' the reliefs of the gallery based on Keyser's original designs.⁴²

⁴¹ There were three compiled *Sketchbooks* of Naotake: one now housed in the Akita prefectural museum, one in a private collection, one missing.

⁴² In August 2018, I was able to investigate on-site the reliefs of the Marble Gallery at the Frederiksborg castle in Hillerød. Today's castle is a reconstruction undertaken in

This series of prints of sea-gods and goddesses, for which the copperplate engraving was executed by C. Danckerts (engraver and publisher),⁴³ consists of 12 sheets with numbers. These include No. 1: Title page with a male and female couple of mermaid-like Centaur-Tritons, No. 2 (on the copper print it is erroneously numbered as 4): Diana, No.3: Neptune, No.4: Ceres, No.5: Galatea (Fig. 9), No.6: Proserpina, No.7: Mars (Fig. 10), No. 8: Venus, No.9: a male Centaur-Triton with a lyre, No. 10: a female Centaur-Triton Nereid with a shell horn, No. 11: a male Centaur-Triton, and No. 12: a female Centaur-Triton with a trident. According to Isozaki Yasuhiko,⁴⁴ engraving No. 5, showing Galatea with a pair of dolphins, Nos. 10, 11, and 12, showing the spiralled tails of Nereid, Centaur-Triton, and a female Centaur-Triton with a trident, may have been sources of inspiration for the abovementioned

1863 after the devastating fire of 1859. Some original sculptural works of the Marble Gallery that survived the fire have been stored in the museum. See E. Neurdenburg, "Hendrick de Keyser en het Beeldhouwwerk aan de Galerij van Frederiksborg in Denemarken", in *Oudheidkundig Jaarboek* 12, no.1/2 (December 1943): 33-41; Meir Stein, "The Iconography of the Marble Gallery at Frederiksborg Palace" in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol.35 (1972): 284-293.

⁴³ Stein, "The Iconography of the Marble Gallery at Frederiksborg Palace", 285. The inscription on the cover engraving No.1 reads [C. Danker exc.]. There is another version, republished by Justus Dankerts.

⁴⁴ Isozaki Yasuhiko, *Edo jidai no ranga to ransho – Kinsei nichiran hikaku bijutsushi* [Dutch style painting and Dutch books – Comparative History of Art of Modern Netherlands and Japan]. Vol 1 (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2004), 238.



Figure 10. Frederick de Keyser (designed by), Sea-god (Jupiter or Mars), engraving, 17th c., compiled in Shozan's *Sketchbooks*. Akita Senshu Museum of Art, Japan.

Dutch seal designed by Shozan, which reads “Zwaat wit” (Table 1), in incorrect Dutch.

These travelling images (a complete set of 12 prints) had supposedly reached Japan before being shared by Naotake and Shozan. Today, three of these (Nos. 1, 2, and 5) are missing. We do know, however, that six of these prints (Nos. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) were owned by Shozan⁴⁵ (these are now in the Akita Senshu Museum of Art, Japan) and three other prints (Nos. 3, 4, and 6) were owned by Naotake (and are now in a private collection in Japan).⁴⁶ It is possible that the images of fantastic creatures might have had a strong impact on both Shozan and Naotake, and also, eventually, their circle. In particular, the print showing the title, with a couple of female and male Centaur-Tritons, which is missing today, is similar to the image of a merman and mermaid

⁴⁵ Hirafuku Hyakusui, a painter of Akita who made the first serious study of Akita Ranga movement, mentions these prints glued on one of the three “*Sketchbooks*” by Shozan. See Hirafuku Hyakusui, *Nihon yōga shokō* (*Dawn of Western Painting in Japan*) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1930), chapter 5.

⁴⁶ These prints in Japan are all the more valuable today because the Museum of National History of Denmark does not possess any original copies of the prints from the seventeenth century, according to the information orally provided by the museum during our investigation. The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Rijksmuseum house several prints of the series (executed by Justus Dankerts).

couple image found in Jan Jonston's book,⁴⁷ and might be connected to Naotake's mermaid drawing, that is mentioned in the *Rokumotsu Shinshi* (Record of six items),⁴⁸ published in 1786. This record is compiled of similar drawings of a merman and a mermaid couple, which were produced by his contemporaries, such as Shiba Kōkan 司馬江漢 (1747-1818).

The abovementioned six copper prints of sea-god images were carefully preserved by Shozan, pasted into his *Sketchbooks* (volume III), along with his three essays of art theories previously mentioned. According to Johnson who scrutinized the relationship between Shozan's *Sketchbooks* and *Schouwtoneel der Natuur* by the French naturalist Noël-Antoine Pluche, Shozan probably wished to compile a scientifically oriented encyclopaedia in colour, rather than making sketchbooks to be used as references for painting, since he might have

⁴⁷ Jan Jonston, *Naeukeurige beschryving van de Natuur der Viervoetige Dieren, Vissen en Bloedloze Water-Dieren, Vogelen, Kronkel-Dieren, Slangen en Draken* (Amsterdam 1660).

⁴⁸ *Rokumotsu Shinshi* 六物新志 (1786) wrote by Ōtsuki Gentaku 大槻玄沢 (1757-1827), a Rangaku scholar, introduces six items as medicines: Mermaid, Unicorn, Mummy, Saffron, Nutmeg, *Eburiko* (mushroom).

intended to make scientific entries on *Insects and Seashells* as volume I, *Fish and Birds* as volume II, and *Art theory and Flowers* as volume III, using reference books of natural science.⁴⁹

In addition, Shozan's art theories, based on Western art, are also reflected in Akita Ranga paintings, especially those made by the school's leading painter, Naotake who contributed much to the invention of the famous Akita Ranga compositional scheme.

Compositional Scheme

While applying Western pictorial techniques, Naotake also invented a unique and striking arrangement of motifs in space with the use of perspective for the landscape. Naotake did not adopt a typical Western style space structure, composed of foreground, middle ground, and background, for creating natural transitional recession. He eliminated, instead, the middle ground. The foreground would be reserved for traditional Japanese motifs, such as flowers and birds in close-up, which were seen as auspicious signs. In the background, he set motifs with a horizon line, probably borrowed from Western landscapes, yet greatly reduced in size, and painted from an aerial perspective in soft tones with fine hatching lines. With such a juxtaposition of motifs, dramatically different in size and tone in the foreground and the background, this allowed for the creation of a sensational recession. According to Inaga,⁵⁰ Naotake conceived this compositional scheme "as a tool of *differentiation*, exaggerating the heterogeneity between what is near and what is far away". This scheme, unique in its time, became the most appealing compositional style of the Akita Ranga school.

The best demonstration of this point can be seen through analysis of Akita Ranga hanging scroll masterpieces, such as Shozan's *Pine Tree and Parrot* (Fig. 11), and Naotake's *Hawk* (Fig. 12). The



Figure 11. Satake Shozan, *Pine Tree and Parrot*, Color on silk, Hanging scroll, 18th c., Private Collection. (on deposit with Akita Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Japan).

contrast between the near object and distant landscape is underlined in both these hanging scroll paintings, and also in the hanging scroll painting by Naotake, *Peony in the Basket* (Fig. 13), in which the landscape is painted in tones too delicate and

⁴⁹ See Johnson, *Western Influence on Japanese Art*, 97-128 (chapter 4: Shozan's Sketchbooks and the Schouwtoneel der Natuur).

⁵⁰ Inaga Shigemi, "Reinterpretation of the Western Linear Perspective in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan," in W. F. Vande Walle and Kasaya Kazuhiko (eds.), *Dodonaeus in Japan. Translation and the Scientific Mind in the Tokugawa Period* (Leiden: Leuven University Press, 2001), 149-165, esp.159.



Figure 12. Odano Naotake, *Hawk*, Color on silk, 18th c. Private Collection. (on deposit with Akita Senshu Museum of Art, Japan).

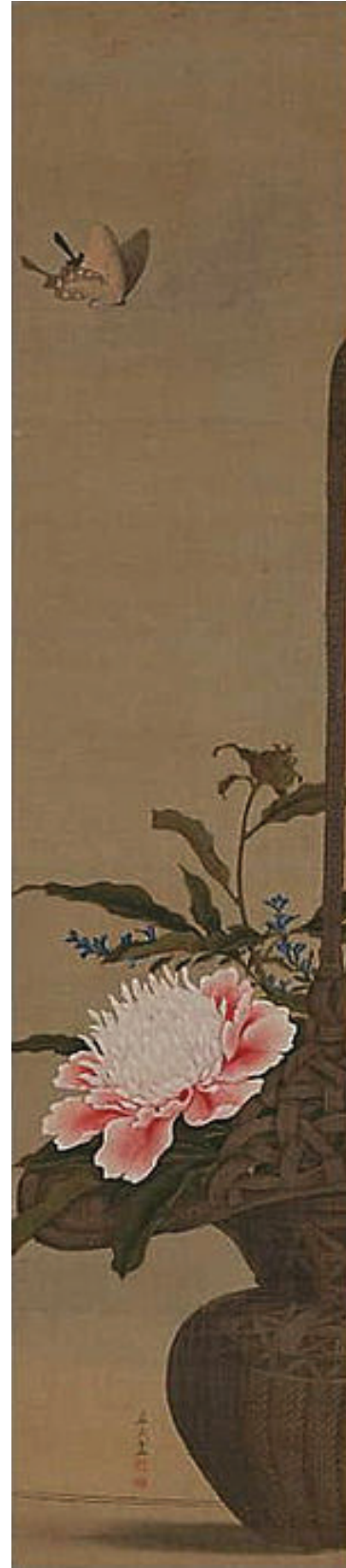


Figure 13. Odano Naotake, *Peony in the Basket*, Color on Silk, 18th c. Akita Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Japan.



Figure 14. Odano Naotake, *Shinobazu Pond*, Color on silk, ca.1778, Akita Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Japan.

pale to be perceived clearly. The foreground always contains a large object in close-up and this compositional scheme reflects the idea of Shozan, who wrote in *Goto Rikai*, “It is natural for the human eye to see things large when they are close to us and small when they are far away.”⁵¹

Another painting by Naotake, the most famous painting of Akita Ranga, *Shinobazu Pond* (Fig. 14), shows a more natural rendition of Western-style perspective for the landscape. In this highly sophisticated painting, as auspicious elements, Naotake placed three potted flowers: a Peony (red and white), Sage officinalis (blue), and Calendula officinalis (yellow). These flowers are all medicinal plants, showing Naotake’s particular interest in

the study of herbal medicine that was flowering in Japan at that time, as seen in Hiraga Gennai’s enthusiasm.⁵² These large motifs of potted flowers, placed in the foreground with casting shadow, are intentionally rendered in close-up. He also places in one fixed light source, which comes from the right, in order to emphasize the focal point in the landscape of the background. In utilising this approach, the painting could be considered as a “still life-landscape”.⁵³

⁵² Imported western herbal books and encyclopaedias such as R. Dodonaeus’ *Cruydt-Boeck* (1608) and E. Sweerts’ *Florilegium* (1631) owned by Gennai were available for Naotake. For Official sage and Calendula officinalis, colourful western herbal books like B. Basillius’ *Hortus Ystettensis* (1613) were supposedly used as references. Yamamoto in his article speculates about the combination of these three plants: Salvia, Calendula and Peony as medicinal plants effective against gynaecological disorders, which might have connection with the marriage of the daughter of Satake Shozan, for which this *Shinobazu pond* might have been realized as a gift. See Yamamoto Takeshi, “Akita Ranga (Western-style Art of Akita) upon an Uninitiated Cultural Background”, *Kokusai Nihongaku*, [August 2010], 275-289.

⁵³ Inaga, 159. Inaga calls the composition of the Akita school “a still life-landscape combination”, “which marked the birth of a new genre in the history of Japanese painting.”

⁵¹ Satake Shozan, *Goto Rikai* in *Sketchbooks* (Akita Senshu Museum of Art). English translation is by Johnson, *Western Influence on Japanese Art*, appendix, 160.

Japonisme

Although practiced in the Chinese art tradition, including its use in the Shen Nanpin school, as well as in the Japanese traditional Kanō school, the compositional close-up element was employed for the first time by the Akita Ranga school, in conjunction with the horizon line in the far distance, to indicate perspective.

The idea of placing enlarged motifs in the near picture plane probably originated from the European tradition of etching illustrations of fauna and flora found in encyclopaedias and other academic books. Nevertheless, my iconographical investigation has led me to reconsider that Naotake's first contact with Western illustration was more specifically through the illustrations of anatomy books, including those of Juan Valverde de Humasco, largely inspired by Andreas Vesalius's book, as mentioned previously. The famous illustrations of Andreas Vesalius' anatomy book *De humani corporis fabrica* especially, take a similar approach to those of the Akita Ranga painters in regard to the arrangement of objects: a close-up object in the foreground (human body) with a cast shadow, a horizon line, and an extremely reduced panoramic landscape with perspective in the background.

Unfortunately, The Akita Ranga school disappeared after less than ten years in existence. In 1780 Naotake died at the age of 32 soon after Gennai's death. Five years later, in 1785, Shozan died at the age of 38. There were no direct disciples of these leading artists, so this marked the end of the Akita Ranga school and it soon became forgotten. Nevertheless, this school had an influence on other contemporary artists, such as Shiba Kōkan, previously introduced, who learned the Western style from Naotake in Edo. Kōkan was greatly inspired by Shozan's *Gahō Kōryō* for his own *Seiyō Gadan* (Dissertation on Western Painting), expanding on many of Shozan's ideas. Because of its widespread appeal, it is not surprising that compositional elements of the Akita Ranga school can be seen as reminiscent in later, nineteenth-century prints, such as Katsushika Hokusai's *Thirty-Six views of Mt. Fuji*, which

featured the iconic "Great Wave off Kanagawa," and also Ando Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, in particular, which are famous for his bold placement of large close-ups of objects in the foreground in strong contrast with recessed objects or landscape further away in the background, such as, among others, *Inside Kameido Tenjin Shrine*, *Plum Garden in Kameido* and *Horikiri Iris Garden*. Known as one of the most important stimuli of the Japonisme movement, these Japanese woodblock prints reached nineteenth-century Europe. The 18th century *ukiyo-e* artists had no direct lineage with Akita Ranga school. However, through comparative studies of some of their artworks, we can see that James McNeil Whistler, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and particularly Henri Rivière, with his *Thirty-Six Views of the Eiffel Tower*, or Vincent van Gogh with *The Sower*, or Paul Gauguin with *Vision after the Sermon*, explicitly show influences from Japanese woodblock prints,⁵⁴ reflecting Akita Ranga's Far and Near composition.⁵⁵ The Westernized pictorial movement in Japan would eventually, and indirectly, return by mediation of travelling *ukiyo-e* images to revolutionize Western art in the late nineteenth century. The travelling images that had first inspired the Akita Ranga painters were clearly themselves of European origin, and with the ensuing enthusiasm in Europe for Japanese design, brought about through the importation of *ukiyo-e* in the 19th century, we can see the full completion of a circle of influence. With this established, future studies need to focus on Naotake's *megane-e* landscapes of famous sites in Japan such as *Enoshima*, or views of Mt. Fuji, since we know that some of these also went to Europe.⁵⁶ For example, *Mitsumata*, one of the derived

⁵⁴ See Mabuchi Haruko, "Ukiyo-e within Western Art", in Ichikawa Nobuya et al. (eds), *The Hara Yasusaburo Collection: Hiroshige Vivid*, exhibition catalogue (Tokyo: TBS, 2016), 44-46.

⁵⁵ See Naruse Fujio, "Edo kara Pari e – Akita Ranga kara Seiyō kindai kaiga e" [From Edo to Paris – From Akita Ranga to the Modern Western Paintings], in *Kikangeijutsu* 11 (Winter 1977): 86-105; Inaga Shigemi, "Seiyō hakurai no shoseki jōhō to Tokugawa Nihon no shikaku bunka no henbō : 1730 nendai kara 1830 nendai ni kakete" [Illustrating the imagination: Western books and the transformation of visual culture in Tokugawa Japan 1730-1830], in *Nihon kenkyū*, no. 31 (October 2005): 13-46.

⁵⁶ About Naotake and his perspective paintings, see Imahashi, *The Akita Ranga School and the Cultural Context in Edo Japan*, 116-129. Several perspective images (landscapes) produced by Odano Naotake were found in European art markets during the 20th century.

landscape examples of perspective images by Naotake, was owned by Louis Gonse (1846-1921), a French art historian who specialized in Japanese art, who was chief editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, and a principal player in the Japonisme movement in France. Interestingly, this artwork was passed to an art gallery in Berlin and brought back to Japan in the 1930s,⁵⁷ while five other *megane-e* perspective landscape paintings assumed to be by Naotake, believed to have reappeared in the European art market during the 20th century, have also returned to Japan. These, for a long time in a private collection, have been housed by the Akita Senshu Museum of Art since 2019, opening up an inviting opportunity to begin further study.

Conclusion

The Age of Exploration, of European overseas expansion, might be considered as Japan's second historical period of international encounter with foreign cultures, sciences, and arts, following its much earlier connection with the rest of the world via the Silk Road.

The sources of Western art, brought principally by the Dutch VOC travellers to Japan during the eighteenth century in a non-Christian context, played a vital role in the process of appropriation of Western visual culture, as seen in the works of Akita Ranga painters. It was not simply by imitating the techniques of the Western art they encountered, but by seeking rather to synthesize them with Japanese and Chinese traditions, and inventing the first refined hybrid compositional framework, that these artists created a real turning point in transcultural history. For fuller understanding of the Akita Ranga school's aesthetic quality, artistic value, and

historical meaning, it is necessary to reconsider and resituate this art within a global historical context rather than viewing it as an independent Japanese phenomenon, since it is only by considering this holistic, global and complex context of the migration of images, that the origin and consequent historical significance of the local, short-lived Akita Ranga school can be clarified and more fully appreciated.

As mentioned at the very beginning of this essay, research about Western influences on the Akita Ranga school had already been conducted prior to this particular study, and so the most specific objective of this study is not so much to demonstrate that Akita Ranga was deeply influenced by Western images, but rather to discuss specific questions, namely exactly how, and through which specific travelling images, this influence can most clearly be seen. Images such as the meticulously executed scientific anatomy drawings of Valuerda's *Anatomie* and Keyser's fantastic sea creature series where the concrete inspiration for Naotake and Shozan's works and ideas are found.

A further claim is that Naotake's absorption of Western style stemmed from his work around the anatomy book *Kaitai Shinsho*, which was the first significant commission for which he was responsible. His illustrations were accurately, and wondrously executed through his intense concentration on analysis and execution, and what I read as his strong passion, at the very beginning of his career. For this reason, I argue that Akita Ranga's Far-Near compositional scheme may have been largely inspired by Valuerda's drawings, and indirectly by Vesalius's landscape pictured behind a close-up 'muscle man', as seen in the "Inami book", a copy of Valuerda's *Anatomie*, in the possession of the 18th century Akita's official physician.

Finally, all these travelling images, circulating in time and space around the globe, can be seen to inspire different visual cultures through the process of copying, or sometimes of an artist's own visual culture's metamorphosis, as it encounters new multicultural sources. The refreshed visual cultures are then able to become a novel stimulus for the

⁵⁷ This painting is now housed in the Library of the University of Tenri, Nara, Japan. On the container box of the painting is found the inscription in Japanese: "The painting is from the former collection of Gonse, passed to the art dealer in Berlin Tikotin over 20 years ago". See Hayada Ichiro et al., "Kanzō yōgaku kankei shiryō mokuroku I yōganobu (1)" [List of Western learning related documents of the permanent collection I Western style paintings (1)], *Bibulia Toshokan hō*, vol 75, 1980. The Berliner art dealer must have been Felix Tikotin whose collection is found today at the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art, Haifa, Israel. Research about eventual sales records of the painting from the former collection of Gonse to Tikotin, as well as from Tikotin to a Japanese buyer is to be done.

birth of new travelling images, as seen in the case of Japonisme, with reminiscent echoes of its own self-reflected elements, in a kind of 'mirror effect'. With the return of some Akita Ranga paintings executed by Naotake from Europe to Japan, it is likely that we will again see a complete and circular trajectory of travelling images, which will again reframe creative values in contemporary aesthetics. It is to be expected that this will lead again to a creative transfer and evolution of ideas through the global circulation of images in future.