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**Changing images of women: Taisho period paintings by Uemura  
Shoen (1875-1949), Ito Shoha (1877-1968), and Kajiwara  
Hisako (1896-1988)**

Morioka, Michiyo, Ph.D.

University of Washington, 1990

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**Changing Images of Women:  
Taisho-Period Paintings by Uemura Shoan (1875-1949),  
Ito Shoha (1877-1968), and Kajiwara Hisako (1896-1988)**

by

**Michiyo Morioka**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of**

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(Chairperson of Supervisory Committee)

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Michiyo Morioka

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Date June 7, 1990

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Abstract

Changing Images of Women:  
Taisho-Period Paintings by Uemura Shoen (1875-1949)  
Ito Shoha (1877-1968), and Kajiwara Hisako (1896-1988)

Chairpersons of the Supervisory Committee: Professor Paul Berry  
Professor Glenn T. Webb  
Division of Art History

Uemura Shoen, Ito Shoha, and Kajiwara Hisako were Nihonga artists in Kyoto who specialized in bijinga, or paintings of women. This dissertation discusses the lives and art of these three women painters with a particular emphasis on their works of the Taisho period, exploring many social and artistic issues.

The low status of women in Japan was established in the feudalistic society of the Tokugawa period, during which bijinga emerged as an important genre. As Japanese women's position in society began to change vigorously during the Taisho period, bijinga, which traditionally represented women as doll-like beautiful objects, came to be criticized as an art tradition out of touch with the contemporary social reality. With these considerations in mind, the personal histories and works of these three artists are examined. Shoen's art exemplifies a traditional notion of the feminine ideal as codified during the feudalistic period while Shoha and Hisako introduce more modern images of women in concordance to the social changes of the time. The investigation of their Taisho-period works brings to light various issues such as the theme of female nudity, self-portraiture, and paintings with social consciousness.

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## Introduction

Within Nihonga 日本画 (traditional-style modern Japanese painting), *bijinga* 美人画 constitutes an important category. As indicated by its literal meaning, "paintings of beautiful women," *bijinga* exclusively deals with female subjects and derives from a particular tradition within Japanese painting, which traces its origin to the early seventeenth century. The importance of *bijinga* as an independent genre in modern Japanese painting is demonstrated by the fact that many artists have specialized in this subject and established their reputation as *bijingaka* [painters of beautiful women]. In the past, Japanese scholars have written countless books and articles on the topic of *bijinga* and organized numerous exhibitions on this subject. The study of *bijinga* to this date has primarily concentrated on: 1) the discussion of the works of individual artists in the biographical context, 2) a broad overview of its historical development through a survey of key examples,<sup>1</sup> 3) the discussion of its meaning and significance as aesthetic and cultural expression,<sup>2</sup> and 4) the analysis of examples as representative of

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the *bijinga* exhibitions are organized as such. See Seibu Bijutsukan and Nihon Keizai Shinbun Osaka Honsha, eds., *Kindai Nihonga ni miru joseibi-ten* (Otsu and Osaka: Seibu Bijutsukan and Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1985); Asahi Shinbun Tokyo Honsha Kikakubu, ed., *Kindai Nihonga no joseibi-ten* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1977); Nishinomiya-shi Otani Kinen Bijutsukan, ed., *Bi no josei nihyakunen-ten, Nihonga no nagare ni miru* (Nishinomiya: Nishinomiya-shi Otani Kinen Bijutsukan, 1985); Amagasaki-shi Sogo Bunka Senta and Kobe Shinbunsha, eds., *Josei no bi, Kindai bijinga meisaku-ten* (Amagasaki: Amagasaki-shi Sogo Bunka Senta and Kobe Shinbunsha, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> Numerous essays deal with this. For example, see Kurita Isamu, "Bijinga no bigaku," *Sansai*, no. 216 (June 1967), pp. 21-31. Also Kancharu Yasuyuki, "Bijinga no sekai: utsukushii 'jinsei' no hyogen," in *Haru no onna, Taiyo bijinga sirizu*, I (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1982), pp. 123-126.

feminine ideal of the period during which they were produced.<sup>3</sup>

Although Japanese scholars seem to agree unanimously that bijinga is a tradition unique to Japanese art and culture alone, no one has seriously investigated the implication of bijinga as one of the potential indicators of women's position in Japanese society.<sup>4</sup> It is important to acknowledge that bijinga emerged as an important genre during the Edo period when Japan firmly established the feudalistic society based on Confucian patriarchal ideology. In other words, in the male-centered society of the Edo period, "paintings of beautiful women" were produced as representations of feminine ideal predominantly constructed by the controlling male view. Without recognizing this premise, one can fully grasp neither the meaning nor the magnitude of the changes which took place in the development of bijinga in modern Japanese painting.

This dissertation examines the Taisho-period paintings of three women artists, Uemura Shoen 上村松園 (1875-1949), Ito Shoha 伊藤小波 (1877-1968), and Kajiwara Hisako 梶原純佐子 (1896-1988). All three of them lived in Kyoto, were acquainted with one another, and specialized in paintings of women. Their works of the Taisho period present a strong contrast in subject and style providing an opportunity for a comparative

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<sup>3</sup> For an informative study of this topic, see the eleven essays on the images of women which appear in Japanese art of different periods by Minamoto Toyomune and other scholars in Kokubungaku kaishaku to kansho 30, no. 10 (August 1965): 14-107. Also see a series of essays by Miya Tsugio, "Nihon bijutsu ni arawareta joshi, 1-11," Nihon bijutsu kogei, nos. 304, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 317, 320, 323, 325, 327 (January 1964 - December 1965).

<sup>4</sup> This factor has been only implied in the past. See Mizusawa Sumio, "Bijinga to iu mono: josetsu," Sansai, no. 77 (July 1956), p. 5; and Kondo Ichitaro, "Ukiyo-e to bijinga," in the same publication, p. 17. Also see Kusanagi Natsuko, "Kindai joshi gaka ni miru shiki no henshen," in Joshi gaka: Onna no shiki o utau, ed. Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan (Tokyo: Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan, 1986), p. 68.

analysis not only in terms of their personal vision but also in the context of the given social and cultural situation of the time. The Taisho era (1912-1926) represents a short, but dynamic, period of change in Japanese society, during which the modern concept of democracy and individualism stimulated the intellectuals to challenge traditional values. Pertinent to the topic of this dissertation were the changes concerning women's social status. Educated women began to seek professional careers outside their traditionally assigned domestic role, and some Japanese openly criticized the validity of patriarchal system in which women had been socially and politically oppressed. The works by Shoen, Shoha, and Hisako during the Taisho period present diverse images of women, demonstrating a different set of concerns by the individual artists. At the same time, in varying degrees, they manifest the lively spirit of the time, offering special insight into the relationship between art and social forces.

This dissertation opens with a broad overview of Japanese women's social status as codified during the feudalistic era and as it begins to change during the Meiji (1867-1911) and Taisho periods. As an issue important to the topic of this dissertation, attention is given to the social position of women painters in modern Japanese society. Chapter II presents the definition as well as a historical survey of bijinga, ending with the Taisho period when bijinga was criticized as art representing an outworn tradition. In Chapter III, the biographies of the three artists are presented. The personal histories of these painters differ greatly and respectively demonstrate how they negotiated their gender and artistic careers in a field traditionally dominated by men. Moreover, the study of

their personalities reveals their values and views which are crucial to understanding the meanings of their art. The biographies provided here are by no means definitive. As one of the most respected Nihonga artists today, Uemura Shoen has been the subject of many studies in the past. Based on the resources available, I construct a biographical sketch of Shoen to convey her character as accurately and objectively as possible. There has been no major study on the life or works of Ito Shoha except for general introductions on some of her paintings, while many essays have been written on Kajiwara Hisako. I reconstruct Shoha's life story and supplement Hisako's existing biography, using the information found in the Taisho-period publications and gained through the interviews with those who knew them. The heart of this dissertation, Chapters IV and V, discuss the Taisho-period paintings by the three artists, starting with Shoen's art as exemplary of an orthodox concept of feminine ideal and introducing more modern images of women achieved by Shoha and Hisako. The close investigation of their Taisho-period works brings to the surface many issues, among which are the theme of female nudes, self-portraiture, and the tradition of paintings with social messages. By focusing on the issues pertinent to their work, I hope to provide more engaged and involved interpretations of their paintings than were given in the previous studies by other scholars.

The topic of women artists in modern Japan has not been extensively investigated in the past.<sup>5</sup> This dissertation is an attempt to

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<sup>5</sup> Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan organized an exhibition of paintings by modern women artists. Although it is a broad survey which introduces the works by numerous artists, the essays in the catalog evidence the budding interest of Japanese scholars in the various issues concerning women artists. See Josai gaka: Onna no shiki o utau, mentioned above.

elucidate the contributions made by Uemura Shoen, Ito Shoha, and Kajiwara Hisako to the field of Nihonga through their achievements in the paintings of female subjects. By addressing both social and artistic factors involved in their Taisho-period oeuvre, I intend to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their works as the specific products of Taisho culture and society. The ultimate purpose of this dissertation, however, is to stimulate students and scholars into the world of Japanese modern painting by introducing the dynamic character of Taisho-period art. As such, it is meant to offer clues for further research more than providing definitive answers.

## Chapter I: Social Status of Women and Women Painters During the Meiji and Taisho Periods

### 1. Onna Daigaku

The feudalistic government of the Edo period maintained tight control over the populace by dividing them into four social classes. The military class was at the highest of this social ladder, followed by farmers, artisans, and merchants. Within each class people's lives were strictly regulated to ensure social order and guard against revolts. Between the genders, the position of men and women formed a rigid hierarchical relationship. The concept of danson jōhi that men were innately superior to women was part of Confucian doctrines disseminated by the Tokugawa government to achieve a stable society. The social and economic position of women during the Edo period was encapsulated in the Doctrine of Three Obediences (sanju kun):

A woman has no way of independence through life. When she is young, she obeys her father; when she is married, she obeys her husband; when she is widowed, she obeys her son.<sup>1</sup>

Various books of moral instruction were written to be used specifically for the education of women in accordance with the Confucian ideal. They enumerated rules applicable to their daily life and prescribed the law of behavior required of them to fulfill their role in society. Onna daigaku 女大学 [Greater learning for women] by Kaibara Ekken 貝原益軒

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Robins-Mowry, The Hidden Sun: Women of Modern Japan (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 20. Originally found in the writings of Lieh Tzu. See Joyce Ackroyd, "Women in Feudal Japan," Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Third Series, vol. 7 (1959): 57.

(1631-1714), the most influential among such books, was based on the following assumption:

Seeing that it is a girl's destiny, on reaching womanhood, to go to a new home, and live in submission to her father-in-law and mother-in-law, it is even more incumbent upon her than it is on a boy to receive with all reverence her parents' instructions. Should her parents, through excess of tenderness, allow her to grow up self-willed, she will infallibly show herself capricious in her husband's house, and thus alienate his affection; while, if her father-in-law be a man of correct principles, the girl will find the yoke of these principles intolerable. She will hate and decry her father-in-law, and the end of these domestic dissensions will be her dismissal from her husband's house, and the covering of herself with ignominy.<sup>2</sup>

As clearly demonstrated by the above passage, Confucian precepts demanded total subordination on the part of women, and their edification toward this end began early in their girlhood. Once married, a woman was taught to honor with a sense of filial piety her parents-in-law beyond her own since she was to produce posterity to carry the name of her husband's family. In her relationship to her husband, she was expected to regard him "as her lord" and "serve him with all worship and reverence." Among the "five worst infirmities" which afflicted women - indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy and stupidity - stupidity was regarded the cause of the other four. Since this particular malady, which may as well be interpreted as intellectual deficiency, prevented a woman

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<sup>2</sup> This is the opening paragraph of the *Onna daigaku*, part of which is quoted by Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun*, p. 25. Quotations in this paragraph come from the *Onna daigaku* as translated by Basil Hall Chamberlain in *Things Japanese*, 5th ed. rev. (London: John Murray, 1905), pp. 502-508. The same translation is published in *Women and Wisdom of Japan*, with introduction by Takaishi Shingoro (1905; reprint ed., London: John Murray, 1914), pp. 33-46. *Onna daigaku* is believed to be a summary of Kaibara's *Wazoku dojikon*, compiled and published after his death.

from making a good judgment, she was encouraged to "distrust herself and obey her husband" in every significant affair of the family.

In the domain of everyday life, the Onna daigaku imposed multiple rules upon women which expressly limited the freedom of their physical activity:

A woman should get up early and go to bed late, should never lie down during the day, should busy herself about the house, not neglecting her spinning, weaving and sewing. She should avoid drinking much of beverages such as tea or sake, and should never see or hear kabuki plays, kouta, yoruri and other such wanton entertainments. She should avoid going to shrines, temples and other crowded places before she is forty years old.<sup>3</sup>

Instructed to spend much of her time at home under the dominance of her husband and parents-in-law, woman's primary responsibilities lied in domestic activities and producing heirs for her husband's family.

As the family name was carried on exclusively by male members in the patriarchal system of the Edo society, concubinage was an accepted practice to ensure the birth of a son. A woman's role, whether a wife or a concubine, was that of "a belly borrowed to bear sons,"<sup>4</sup> and shichikyo [seven reasons for divorcing a woman] discussed in the Onna daigaku included sterility.<sup>5</sup> Even the utmost effort to observe the rules enshrined in the books of morals did not guarantee a wife's position. A husband could divorce a wife by simply dispensing a document of mikudarihan

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<sup>3</sup> A section of the Onna daigaku quoted by Carmen Blacker, The Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Robins-Mowry, The Hidden Sun, p. 24, from a speech by Soma Yukiko on the history of Japanese women delivered at the College Women's Association Seminar, Tokyo, 1971.

<sup>5</sup> Other reasons included disobedience to her parents-in-law, lewdness, jealousy, leprosy or any "foul disease," gossiping, and stealing.

[three and half lines] stating his reason for divorce. For women, there was virtually no way to leave an unhappy marriage except for escaping to Buddhist "temples of divorce" (engiridera). In the feudal society of the Edo period, the wide-spread teaching of the Onna daigaku based on the Confucian doctrine conditioned the Japanese to accept the discriminatory treatment of women as undisputable. Once established as tradition, it was destined to constrain Japanese women for many years into the modern era.

## 2. Meiji Period

The Meiji government in 1868 restored the emperor as the political leader and launched a rigorous campaign to transform Japan into a "civilized and enlightened" nation. In order to achieve the goal of "shimin byodo" [equality among the citizens of the four classes], the government abolished the feudal class system and instead established a new social structure based on the unit of ie [individual family, or household] through the Family Registration Act (kosekiho) of 1871. Under this system, the koshu [head of the registered family] had to be a man except for special cases in which a family lacked a male member. A koshu carried social responsibilities for his family such as approving a marriage and the place of residency for them. He was designated as the sole owner of all properties which belonged to the family. The title of koshu together with his responsibilities as well as rights was transmitted from a father to the eldest son. This emphasis on ie with patriarchal lineage as a social unit instead of an individual was one of the means for the Meiji government

to unite and control Japanese citizens in their service to the state and the emperor.

As exemplified in the *ie* system, Japanese women remained relegated to second-class citizens even after the opening of the modern period. The Meiji civil code promulgated in 1890 and revised in 1898 legalized the lower status of women,<sup>6</sup> and Meiji women did not fare much better than their predecessors in the Edo period. Women continued to be deprived of political rights. They could not inherit properties. They had no rights over the children. Adultery by a wife could be legally used by her husband as a reason for a divorce but there was no stipulation for adultery by a husband. The practice of concubinage went on, even after official disapproval of polygamy in 1883. Thus even in the "civilized and enlightened" Meiji society, Japanese women continued to be discriminated politically, economically, and socially.

To be sure, there were government leaders who denounced the Confucian tradition of discrimination against women and argued for the principle of *danjo byodo* [equality between men and women] opening the first door toward the path of change. The progressive-minded educator Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1834-1901) was a passionate supporter of this concept. He wrote as early as in 1870, "Man and woman, both are individual human beings standing between Heaven and earth; there is no reason to distinguish the relative importance or dignity of the two," and denounced the practice of polygamy.<sup>7</sup> Fukuzawa wrote many essays on

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<sup>6</sup> See Ikeda Ryoji, "Meiji minpo to josei no kenri," in *Nihon joseishi*, vol. 4, Kindai, ed. Joseishi Sogo Kenkyu-kai (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1985), pp. 41-76.

<sup>7</sup> From "Nakatsu ryubetsu no sho" as translated and edited by Kiyooka Eiichi, *Fukuzawa Yukichi on Education: Selected Works* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1985), p. 37.

the subject of women including the Shin onna daigaku [New greater learning for women] of 1899, in which he criticized the Confucian ethics as unreasonable and discriminatory against women.<sup>8</sup> But even Fukuzawa failed to extend his argument to that of danjo doken [equal rights for men and women]. His belief in equality of all people was conceived in basic humanistic terms, perfectly compatible in his view with the patriarchal system and the clear division of social roles between the genders: his argument was limited to improve women's position within their traditional role.<sup>9</sup>

The most prevalent concept applicable to women's role in society during the Meiji period was the principle of ryosai kenbo [good wife and wise mother] deriving from the traditional Confucian moral but colored with the Meiji nationalistic spirit. The men as fathers and husbands engaged themselves with external affairs while the women stayed home carrying out domestic responsibilities and raising children. Men protected ie from outside, so to speak, and women fortified it from within. Fulfilling their roles as so defined, men and women of Meiji Japan were expected to maintain peace and harmony within their families as a foundation of a stable society and ultimately contribute to the progress of their country. Besides possessing the traditional virtues such as obedience, patience, and gentleness, a Meiji woman had to have a strong sense of patriotism and be "perfect for the nation,"<sup>10</sup> as well.

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<sup>8</sup> See Blacker, The Japanese Enlightenment, pp. 78-89.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 89. For an analysis of Fukuzawa's view on women, see Hirota Masaki, "Bunmei kaika to jousei kaihoron," Nihon jissai, vol. 4, Kindai, pp. 14-29.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted from Robins-Mowry, The Hidden Sun, p. 43.

During the Meiji period, traditional-style Japanese painting was practiced as part of the education appropriate for the upper-class women.<sup>11</sup> The enormous popularity of bunjinga among the officials of the government who were shaping policies for the new society was probably instrumental for this. The literati philosophy of amateur practice as a means of one's self-refinement and cultivation made painting a proper activity both for the men and women of the gentry. Thus, at the Atomi Girl's School in Tokyo, established by a woman painter Atomi Kakei (1840-1926) in 1875 for the daughters of distinguished families, the curriculum included Japanese studies, Chinese classics, arithmetic, calligraphy, music, sewing, flower arrangement, tea ceremony, and painting.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, at the kazoku jogakko [Peers' Girls School], opened in 1885 for aristocratic and other qualified families, they taught a painting class as part of cultural accomplishments required of their students. Noguchi Shohin 野口小庵 (1847-1917), a prominent woman bunjinga artist, was appointed as an art instructor there in 1889 and created a series of textbooks for the students in 1892.<sup>13</sup>

Painting activity was believed to improve the ability of women in performing their domestic responsibilities, as argued in an article published in 1896:

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<sup>11</sup> By "traditional-style Japanese painting" I mean all styles of Japanese painting derived from both native and Chinese traditions including bunjinga and Nihonga [modern traditional-style Japanese painting]. However, the concept of Nihonga as a viable modern school did not appear until the 1880s.

<sup>12</sup> Kakei was a painter trained in the Maruyama style under Maruyama Oritsu (1817-1875) and Nakajima Raisho (1796-1871), and later in bunjinga under Hine Taizan (1813-1869). For her biography, see Sato Aiko, Kindai nihon joseishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu (Tokyo: Kashima Kenkyukai Shuppankai, 1970), pp. 49-77.

<sup>13</sup> "Kijo kaiga no shorai," Kaiga soshi, no. 64 (July 1892), p. 6; and "Gagaku kaitei," Kaiga soshi, no. 65 (August 1892), p. 3.

Unlike men, women of the upper class in particular have abundant time for leisure. . . . If we can introduce them to the art of painting, . . . they will develop artistic sensitivity in composition and placement, forms, and colors, which is applicable to various situations from arranging a garden, decorating the interior of a room, and purchasing utensils. This will contribute to the grace and nobility of their families and refine further the characters of their husbands and children. As women are not actively engaged in affairs outside home like men, they associate themselves with only a limited number of people. Meeting the same people repeatedly, they can quickly exhaust conversation topics. . . . But if women use their knowledge of painting in entertaining guests, their hearts are naturally pure and beautiful, and their words are not spiteful. They are able to conduct conversation and amuse guests endlessly. . . and one can guarantee that painting enhances the virtue of ladies.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, the literati concept of painting for one's self-cultivation had become entangled with the Meiji principle of "good wife and wise mother." Painting functioned exclusively as a leisure activity beneficial for upper-class women in fulfilling their traditional role as originally defined in the Onna daigaku. One must emphasize that it was only traditional-style Japanese painting, along with other indigenous disciplines such as tea ceremony, which was considered appropriate for women to practice. Yoga 洋画, Western-style oil painting, remained off-limits for most women.<sup>15</sup> Its foreign origin and association with the

<sup>14</sup> Noguchi Shoichi, "Kaiga to fuki," Kaiga soshi, no. 117 (October 1896), p. 2. This writer expressed the same opinion on women and painting in an earlier article, "Ronsetsu: kaiga shinkosaku 3," Kaiga soshi, no. 48 (March 1891), pp. 1-2; and no. 49 (April 1891), pp. 1-3.

<sup>15</sup> According to a woman yoga artist, Watanabe Yuko (active early twentieth century), there was hardly anyone beside herself who was studying yoga during the early Meiji period. Watanabe Yuko, "Shojo jidai kara kuro shita yoga," Chuo bijutsu 6, no. 2 (February 1920): 78. By the time the official salon opened in 1907, however, there must have been more female practitioners of yoga, as the names of women yoga artists appear in the catalogues of the official salon exhibitions.

"outside world" designated yoga as "masculine" art in the eyes of the Meiji Japanese.

Both Atomi Kakei and Noguchi Shohin were respected women painters who achieved distinguished social status during their lifetime. There were also numerous other professional women painters with flourishing careers during the Meiji period, the foremost among whom was Okuhara Seiko 奥原晴湖 (1837-1913).<sup>16</sup> Most of them, like Kakei, Shohin, and Seiko, were primarily bunjinga artists active in Tokyo area and came from the upper strata of the society such as samurai or doctor's families.<sup>17</sup> Their lives and careers bridged the transition from the late Edo to the Meiji period and they represented the last generation of women bunjin who had grown in number during the early half of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> They developed into a prosperous career what was a cultural requirement for the ruling-class of the society at the time,<sup>19</sup> and to a large extent, their success was facilitated by the unique artistic

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<sup>16</sup> For a concise biography of Okuhara Seiko and Noguchi Shohin and examples of their work, see Patricia Fister, Japanese Women Artists: 1600-1900, exhibition catalog (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1988), pp.160-181. Many of the women artists who bridged the Edo and Meiji period bunjinga school are almost forgotten today. They must have commanded, however, great prestige during their lifetime. For example, Nakabayashi Seishuku (1831-after 1889), daughter of Nakabayashi Chikuto (1776-1853), held a painting party to celebrate her sixtieth birthday, with 200 people including Seiko and Shohin in attendance. See "Seishuku joshi kanreki shogakai," Kaiga soshi, no. 27 (June 1889), p. 6. For the names of some other women artists of the early Meiji period, see this dissertation, Chapter III, p. 55, note 13.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Shohin was a physician's daughter and Seiko came from a high-ranking samurai family. Kakei's family officially belonged to the farmer class but had a distinguished history as village headman.

<sup>18</sup> For a study of the late Edo-period women bunjin artists, see Fister, Japanese Women Artists, pp. 97-126.

<sup>19</sup> Sasaki Naohiko, "Daansei o ryoga suru kankakuteki sekai," Gekkan bijutsu, no. 5 (March 1976), p. 24.

and intellectual condition of the early half of the Meiji period when bunjinga commanded popularity among the elite government leaders.

Uemura Shoen and Ito Shoha who emerged during the 1890s and 1900s represented the new generation of Meiji-period women painters. They were born after the opening of the modern era and began developing their career as the bunjinga vogue subsided. Shoen was most likely one of the earliest women painters of the Meiji period who came from a non-elite class and chose to specialize in figure painting. If Shoen had been born into an upper-class family or even just an ordinary merchant family headed by a father, it is highly doubtful that she would have been allowed to pursue painting as a career. Raised in a fatherless household which was maintained by a working mother, Shoen's life was less controlled by traditional family values and the Confucian framework of womanly obligations. Besides Shoen's self-determination, the personal strength of her mother, Naka, who worked day and night to support the family and willingly let Shoen enter the painting school despite criticism from relatives, was instrumental in Shoen's initial entry into the painting world. For Naka, it was simply motherly love that allowed her daughter to pursue what she liked best; in spite of her own life as a working mother, the concept of career woman in modern sense was most likely a remote one for her. In the case of Ito Shoha, as the only daughter of a distinguished shrine priest, she was destined to take in a husband who would continue her family name. However, Shoha's father was a culturally accomplished man whose many hobbies included collecting paintings and he did not oppose his daughter's decision to move to Kyoto to study painting. Furthermore, Shoha's father by this time may have

taken a second wife who brought two sons with her, the eldest of whom eventually inherited the family shrine.<sup>20</sup> If this was the case, it freed Shoha from the responsibility of carrying the family name.

### 3. Beginning of Changes

The period between 1900 and 1920 marked the beginning of significant change in Japanese women's position in society. While the philosophy of "good wife and wise mother" continued to dominate the public perception of women's role, women for the first time began to make notable advancement into various professional fields.

One important factor for the change was the increasing availability of secondary education for women during this time, both at koto jogakko [women's high school] and various technical schools. As early as in 1872 the Meiji government had initiated a national education system which required both boys and girls to attend elementary school. But the opportunity for secondary education for women was limited to a small number of private and official institutions until the Girls' High School Ordinance of 1899 required every prefecture to establish more than one jogakko within its administration.<sup>21</sup> The public system of jogakko expanded rapidly during the next decade: in 1901 there were 37 schools with 8,857 students, but in 1912 there were 209 schools with 64,871 students, indicating that education for women was beginning to spread

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<sup>20</sup> From an interview with Mrs. Ito Masako (1914-), Shoha's youngest daughter, on May 8, 1985. The exact year in which Shoha's father married for the second time is not clear.

<sup>21</sup> In 1885, secondary schools for girls opened by the government totaled only nine. Naruse Jinzo, "The education of Japanese women," Fifty Years of New Japan, ed. Okuma Shigenobu, vol. 2 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1910), p. 213.

from upper-class to middle-class citizens.<sup>22</sup> Even though a jogakko was a place where a young girl was essentially taught to become a "good wife and wise mother,"<sup>23</sup> it nevertheless exposed them to the world beyond the confines of their homes and opened a door to gradual awakening of social consciousness. In Kajiwara Hisako's case, it was her art teacher at the jogakko, Chigusa Soun, who first spotted her talent in painting and encouraged her to begin serious training in the field. The daughters of middle-class families with modest income, moreover, were eager to seek job opportunities after graduation from a jogakko to improve their economic condition.<sup>24</sup>

Parallel to the spread of secondary education for women during the last decade of Meiji was the appearance of vocational schools where they offered a training to women in fields varying from pharmacy, foreign languages, to sewing machine operation.<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that the Women's Art School, established in Hongokikusaka-cho, Tokyo in 1900, had a strongly vocational character. Included within its eight divisions were not only Nihonga, yoga, sculpture, but also makie, embroidery, knitting, artificial flower-making, and sewing.<sup>26</sup>

Until this time, working opportunities were extremely limited for Japanese women. Aside from taking a job in traditional domestic service

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<sup>22</sup> Nagahara Kazuko, "Ryosaikenbo-shugi kyoiku ni okeru 'ie' to shokugyo," in Nihon Joseishi, vol. 4, Kindai, p. 161.

<sup>23</sup> The Meiji government policy in women's education was to complete a system in which young women were "given opportunities to build up their character, cultivate virtue, and prepare themselves for becoming useful members of society, worthy wives and good mothers." Naruse, "The education of Japanese women," pp. 213-214.

<sup>24</sup> Nagahara, "Ryosaikenbo-shugi kyoiku ni okeru 'ie' to shokugyo," p. 161.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 162

<sup>26</sup> "Joshi bijutsu gakko no ichijikanhan," Nihon bijutsu 17, no. 13 (January 1915): 49. The makie division was abolished in 1902 and sculpture in 1903.

or working in near-slavery conditions at new textile mills brought about by the industrialization process, there was very little job opportunity. Those who worked were generally forced to do so by financial necessity and working women were looked down upon as the members of the lower class. The only occupations which were socially respectable for women during the Meiji period were teaching and medical nursing.<sup>27</sup> After the turn of the century, as a result of better educational opportunities, more women began to enter the white-collar job market, and at the same time varied types of occupations became available for them. Furthermore, women's need for financial capacity became a serious social issue after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) because of the misfortune of impoverished widows who were stranded without a means of living. Thus the number of women with "job fever" increased even more rapidly during the last five years of Meiji.<sup>28</sup>

#### 4. Taisho Period

Japanese women continued to pioneer their advancement into many occupational fields during the Taisho period. The number of women working in office and clerical jobs increased. Many precedents were set: among them, the first woman taxi driver, elementary school

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<sup>27</sup> The government established the Tokyo Women's Normal School as early as in 1874 to train elementary-school teachers. In 1886 the government opened up opportunities for women to become secondary-school teachers.

<sup>28</sup> This general trend reflected itself in the art school. In 1907 at the Women's Art School, an increasing number of students enrolled in flower-making, embroidery, and sewing divisions, in contrast to less students in Nihonga and *yoga* divisions. And this was attributed to the growing number of women who sought a means to become financially self-sufficient to avoid the tragedy of war widows. See "Joshi bijutsu kyoiku no shinkeiko," *Kaiga zasshi*, no. 246 (October 1907), p. 10.

principal, pilot, and streetcar conductor.<sup>29</sup> The acting profession for women had appeared during the Meiji period but became socially acceptable for the first time during the Taisho period. With an increasing number of working women active in different fields, the term "professional woman" (*shokugyo fujin*) came into popular use. As a basic rule, this term applied to the women whose occupations could be characterized as white-collar, intellectually-oriented, or "modern," and eliminated those who were engaged in manual labor whether in traditional fishing and farming communities or modern factories. Artists and novelists engaged in creative activity were regarded too elite to be included in "professional women."<sup>30</sup> As more and more women from middle-class families began to work during the Taisho period, the condescending attitude toward working women, which had characterized the Meiji society, began to change although slowly. Within one decade into the Showa period, about 1935, the term "professional woman" was to become obsolete.<sup>31</sup>

As seen above, Taisho was the period in which women began to venture outside the social framework traditionally imposed upon them. Foremost among them were the advocates of women's rights who appeared during this period. In 1911, a group of young women led by Hiratsuka Raicho 平塚雷鳥 (1886-1971) established a literary magazine,

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<sup>29</sup> See Nakano Hisao, Senzaki Akio, and Kawata Hiroshi, *Taisho no Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1981), pp. 60-61; and Shimada Atsushi, Noda Shigenori, Tashiro Keiichiro, Iizawa Kotaro, and Miyata Noboru, *Taisho kanjoshi* (Tokyo: Nihon Shosetsu, 1979), pp. 209-210.

<sup>30</sup> Kata Koji, "Shokugyo fujin tojo su," in *Taisho no josei gunzo. Nihon josei no rekishi*, vol. 12, ed. Tsubota Itsuo (Tokyo: Akatsuki Kyoiku Tesho, 1978), p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

**Seito** 青鞵 [Blue stocking] for the purpose of providing a vehicle for women writers to express themselves freely. In several years the group became a leading exponent in the women's liberation movement and began lively discussions about women's issues.<sup>32</sup> Well-educated, highly intelligent, articulate and opinionated, they challenged the traditional social norm and moral ethics for women as established and transmitted by the doctrine of the Onna daigaku, and soon were labeled as the "new women" (atarashii onna).<sup>33</sup> Their opinions and activities gripped the Japanese society and the "new women" suddenly became a popular topic of the mass media during 1913 both as an object of serious discussion and as a target of sensationalist journalism.<sup>34</sup> The members of the Seito group were convinced that marriage was entirely one's personal affair and an obligation neither to the ie, society, nor state. Hiratsuka Raicho in order to demonstrate her conviction refused to register her marriage to the official authority. For their self-assertive lifestyle and outspoken criticism of traditional values, the Seito women were chided by men and women of conservative beliefs as "too wild." The term "new women" carried a provocative connotation of "courageous women with independent spirit and intelligent mind" for the progressive people and "immoral women who do not know their proper place" for the conservatives, in contrast. The group openly discussed in their magazines

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<sup>32</sup> For the study of the Seito group, see Kobayashi Tomie, "Seitose to joshi kaiho no honryu," Taisho oyobi Taishojin 2, no. 1 (January 1978): 131-146; Koyama Michiko, "Seito undo no tenkai to shusoku," in Taisho bungaku no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyu, ed. Naruse Masakatsu (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1968), pp. 173-196.

<sup>33</sup> This term is generally believed to have been invented by a novelist Tsubouchi Shoyo (1859-1935).

<sup>34</sup> Among the major magazines, Taiyo published a special issue in June and Chuo Koron, in July, dedicated to women's issues.

such issues as the compatibility or incompatibility of marriage and career, the meaning of chastity, the problem of prostitution, and abortion. Even though their discussions were carried on largely on conceptual level, and the group short-lived, the arguments by these "new women" stimulated and opened the way for other movements toward the goal of attaining social and political rights for women.

It must be noted that even during this liberalizing trend of the Taisho period the "good wife and wise mother" policy remained pervasive in the education of women and that the majority of the Japanese continued to believe in the absolute importance of marriage over career in women's life. Shimoda Utako (1854-1936), a respected woman educator, championed the conservative school of thought and her opinions strongly influenced the general public.<sup>35</sup> Acknowledging the changing social tenor as reflected by the surging appearance of "professional women," she taught that the most natural "profession" women could have was to be a good wife and wise mother. In her belief, although women were inferior to men in physical strength and intellect, they were more talented than men in managing domestic affairs and raising children. Therefore, Shimoda argued, women should take a strong leadership in the family. To be a "good wife and wise mother" in the Taisho context no longer meant to simply accept a passive and submissive role as did the Meiji-period women. The subtle transformation in the meaning of a "good wife and wise mother" reflected directly the socio-economic changes which were taking place in the Taisho society. As a result of on-going industrialization and urbanization process, Japan saw a

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<sup>35</sup> See Nagahara, "Ryosai kenbo shugi kyoiku ni okeru 'ie' to shokugyo," pp. 171-179.

gradual emergence of the middle-class after the turn of the century. In the urban middle-class family of the Taisho period, the basic family structure tended to be nuclear, in which a husband and a wife acted as near equals with the wife assuming primary responsibility for household affairs. The influence from Western culture which filtered into every aspect of Japanese daily life required a Taisho housewife to be knowledgeable about the most modern techniques and practical skills in the management of domestic affairs. Women's magazine such as Shufu no tomo [Housewife's friend], first published in 1917, disseminated how-to information for housewives on the topics varying from family finance to health care and reflected the new image of "good wife and wise mother."

### 5. Women Painters of the Taisho Period

The Taisho art world mirrored the underlying traditional views of women as well as significant changes occurring in their life. On one hand, the Meiji sentiment of art for women as a means of contributing to the national prosperity continued to be voiced. Kuroda Seiki 黒田清輝 (1866-1924), a yoga artist with an illustrious career, discussed in 1915 the importance of art education for women:

Painting is the basis of development of all decorative arts. . . .  
 Women occupy the central position within individual homes, which are fundamental components of society. Therefore, if we educate our women with artistic thought, the children raised by such women will also acquire an artistic sensitivity. . . . It will eventually promote the development of all fields of decorative arts

in our nation. Therefore art education for women is as equally important as for men.<sup>36</sup>

Although Kuroda's argument reflected the democratic tenor of the Taisho society in the absence of class distinction, it was still based on the age-old premise of women's role as a "good wife and wise mother."

It is doubtful that all women who studied painting at the time shared Kuroda's view, but painting had clearly become a popular hobby by early Taisho. Noguchi Shohin commented on this phenomenon in 1914 with a hint of criticism:

Painting has become a fashionable thing to do today. Regardless of whether or not having a skill, many women paint. . . . A large number of women are active as professional painters and countless women study painting as a hobby. . . . Many study simply because it is encouraged by their parents. No wonder that there are many women who cannot paint in spite of taking lessons.<sup>37</sup>

Many upper-class women practiced painting as a respectable and fashionable hobby. Chuo bijutsu, an important art journal of the time, published three articles under the title of "The practice of painting by high-society ladies" in 1917, in which two countesses and a marchioness were interviewed about their yoga and Nihonga activities.<sup>38</sup> Some viewed with criticism the popularity of painting among women of wealthy families as cultural snobbery. A caricature titled "Procession of a young lady who 'studies' painting" (Figure 1) which appeared in Chuo

<sup>36</sup> Kuroda Seiki, "Fujin to kaiga," Kaiga soshi, no. 329 (January 1915), p. 8. By this time, Kuroda was one of the most politically powerful yoga painters engaged in various administrative positions of official art organizations.

<sup>37</sup> Noguchi Shohin, "Kaiga kyoju ni tsuite," Kaiga soshi, no. 327 (October 1914), p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> See Chuo bijutsu 3, no. 3 (March 1917): 82-83; 3, no. 4 (April 1917): 76-77; and 3, no. 5 (May 1917): 84-85.

bijutsu in 1916 satirized such a young woman.<sup>39</sup> Apparently wealthy, haughty, and probably untalented, she leads a convoluted accompaniment of a bodyguard, in addition to a maidservant and a man servant who carry her Nihonga equipment.

By this time, however, painting was no longer a leisure activity exclusive to upper-class women: it had spread among the young women of middle-class families. The first indication of this had appeared at the end of the Meiji period. A great number of women were painting Nihonga either as a hobby or a prospective career to organize an exhibition of 138 works in 1907 in Tokyo. Most of the contributors to this exhibition were recorded as well-educated women in their early twenties and members of the upper and middle classes.<sup>40</sup> Generally, Nihonga, because of its association with the indigenous tradition, was considered to offer elements of womanly accomplishments as in the art of flower arrangement and tea ceremony.<sup>41</sup> Therefore many parents accepted Nihonga as proper for their daughters to practice, while rejecting yoga as foreign and radical lacking in the traditional sense of discipline. The controversy which ensued over the subject of female nude in yoga during the Meiji and Taisho periods furthermore must have stigmatized yoga as "immoral" in the eyes of many parents.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 5 (May 1916): 69.

<sup>40</sup> Kino Seiho, "Shinshin keishu gaka no saku," Shin shosetsu 12, no. 12 (December 1907): 16.

<sup>41</sup> Preference of Nihonga over yoga by women was clearly demonstrated by the enrollment number at the Women's Art School in Hongo in 1915. Of the entire enrollment of 350, seventy were in Nihonga, and twenty in yoga. See "Joshi bijutsugakko no ichijikanhan," Nihon bijutsu 17, no. 3 (January 1915): 49.

<sup>42</sup> For the discussion of nude in painting, see this dissertation, Chapter IV, pp. 195-205.

Women painters such as Shoen and Shoha were ideal teachers to whom parents could entrust their loving daughters for they were free from danger of sexual entanglements which might occur with male teachers.<sup>43</sup> During the Taisho period, Shoha had consistently over twenty students and Shoen, even more: most came from distinguished families or comfortable middle class backgrounds and very few intended to become professional painters.<sup>44</sup> When Shoen began her study of painting in the 1880s, people considered sewing lessons as most suitable for a young woman of her class. During the Taisho period, Nihonga clearly found a niche among the middle-class families as part of "discipline" or "culture" to benefit their young daughters.

In the professional world of painting an increasing number of women painters appeared particularly in the field of Nihonga during the Taisho period. At the first Bunten of 1907 there had been four women painters in the Nihonga division and three in yoga; but in 1915 there were nine women painters in Nihonga in contrast to two in yoga.<sup>45</sup> All nine painters at the 1915 Bunten who included not only Uemura Shoen and Ito Shoha but also artists of the younger generation specialized in bijinga reflecting the dominant popularity of this genre among women

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<sup>43</sup> It has been suggested that the reason Shoha remained without a teacher between 1915 when Taniguchi Kokyo died and 1924 when she joined Takeuchi Seiho's group is to avoid such danger. From Mrs. Ito Masako on February 9, 1986.

<sup>44</sup> This number was given to me by Mrs. Ito Masako, on June 17, 1985. Shoha wrote that "almost ten out of ten" of her students stopped painting because of marriage. "Wakaki joseigaka no kanashimi," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 9 (September 1924): 14. Also see Kitazawa Eigetsu, "Shoen sensei no omoide," Sansai, no. 437 (February, 1984), p. 53.

<sup>45</sup> This is my tabulation based on the information given in Nittenshi Hensan Iin-kai, ed., Nittenshi, vol. 1, Buntenhen 1 (Tokyo: Nitten, 1980), pp. 33-34, 96-97; and Nittenshi, vol. 4, Buntenhen 4 (1981), pp. 34-38, 172-175.

painters at the time.<sup>46</sup> The tendency for women to work in bijinga continued throughout the Taisho period. To a large degree, Shoen's success in this genre had paved the way to a world of painting for women and caused them to follow her as if bijinga were the only field validated for women painters. At a Nihonga exhibition held at the Mitsukoshi department store in Osaka in 1916, bijinga by women painters were reported to be the biggest crowd pleasers, admired by the "worshippers of women painters."<sup>47</sup> For the Bunten of 1916, there were four hundred entries of bijinga.<sup>48</sup> The popularity of bijinga around this time was closely related to the appearance of young women painters who specialized in this genre. The Taisho society's fascination with women caused young female painters to become the objects of attention and scrutiny in the mass media as if actresses: their activities were often reported, and statements quoted in the "gossip" columns of art magazines.<sup>49</sup>

While the public tended to idolize female painters as elite career women and their works found receptive audience among the popular masses, their qualifications and motivations were viewed by critics with strong skepticism. Nihon bijutsu [Japanese art] acknowledged the importance of modern women painters and published in 1915 an issue,

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<sup>46</sup> They were Ikeda Shoen (1888-1917), Kawasaki Ranko (1882-?), and Kurihara Gyokuyo (1883-1923) from Tokyo; Yoshioka Chigusa (later Kitani Chigusa) (1895-1947), Shima Seien (1892-1970) and Matsumoto Kayo (?-?) from Osaka; Shoen, Shoha and Hayami Shokin (?-?), Shoen's student, from Kyoto. Besides Shoen and Shoha, Ikeda Shoen, Ranko, Gyokuyo, Chigusa, and Seien were consistent participants of the official salon during the late Meiji and Taisho period. The works by Yoshioka Chigusa and Shima Seien, in particular, show interesting diversity during the Taisho period and deserve a serious study in future.

<sup>47</sup> "Goshippu," Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 5 (May 1916): 92.

<sup>48</sup> "Bunten goshippu," Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 11 (November 1916): 75.

<sup>49</sup> An example can be found in "Goshippu," Chuo bijutsu 2 no. 2 (February 1916): 91-92. It reports Yoshioka Chigusa's opinion on what constitutes an ideal husband.

the major part of which was dedicated to the discussion of women artists. Several articles in this issue revealed antagonistic assessments of women artists:

Some say that many women painters today choose the path of art because of female vanity, a need to have a spotlight on themselves in the society. Others suggest that it is because of physical ugliness which prevents them from finding husbands. . . . Of course, it is not necessarily true. But there are many who . . . lack talent, produce meaningless paintings, and pretend to be "new women."<sup>50</sup>

And,

The "woman artist" is a mysterious phenomenon. . . . She may be perceived . . . as a "woman who is pushy" or a "woman who does what she is not meant to do."<sup>51</sup>

The negative image of women painters conveyed in the above two articles clearly echoed the appearance of "new women" which galvanized the Taisho Japanese and reflected how deeply ingrained in Japanese society the traditional notion of the woman's role as mother and wife was.

In the context of the Taisho society, Shoha was literally the ideal of women painters who managed both the traditional role of "good wife and wise mother" and a successful professional career. Even Shoha, however, did not escape mockery. A caricature entitled "Wife and husband team of painters" (Figure 2) appeared in Chuo bijutsu in 1915.<sup>52</sup> The couple depicted here are clearly Nihonga artists wielding a brush over a paper or a silk on the floor. The wife is implicitly soliciting her husband's help: "My darling, my hand slipped, oh what shall I do?" On one hand the

<sup>50</sup> Furukawa Shu, "Keishu gakaron," Nihon bijutsu 17, no. 3 (January 1915): 28-29.

<sup>51</sup> Wakazuki Matsunosuke, "Joryusakka no kachi," Nihon bijutsu 17, no. 3 (January 1915): 22.

<sup>52</sup> Chuo bijutsu 1, no. 2 (November 1915): 99.

cartoon is unmistakably a product of the Taisho period in its depiction of a woman artist who is engaged in creative activity with seeming equality with her husband. But it hints at the persistence of traditional view that a woman's ability is not quite up to the standard of her male counterpart. Though the creator of this cartoon did not name the target couple, there were only two possible models: Ikeda Terukata 池田輝方 (1883-1921) and Shoen 蓑園 (1888-1917), both bijinga artists in Tokyo or Ito Rojo and Shoha in Kyoto.

A more practical and impartial assessment of female artists appeared in 1918 in a moderately conservative women's magazine, Shufu no tomo. Its article titled "Guide to women's professions" introduced various types of occupations relatively lucrative and available to women varying from doctor and journalist to taxi driver and factory worker at a gunnery. It included painter:

A woman painter, after her work is accepted at the Bunten several times, will receive an increasing number of commissions and be swamped by a number of young women from distinguished upper-class families who want to become her students. Among women's professions, it is the most dignified and quite lucrative. However, only a few of the millions who have extraordinary talent can attain this status. If one were to become an art teacher at a women's school, an education can be attained at the Tokyo Art School for Women and the Kyoritsu Technical School for Women. Generally one becomes a student of an established artist. It must be emphasized that only a genius can achieve a truly successful career as a painter.<sup>53</sup>

As evidenced above, painting was clearly established as a respectable profession for women during the early half of the Taisho period, and women artists began to spread their roots within the art world of Japan.

<sup>53</sup> "Fujin shokugyo annai," Shufu no tomo (March 1918), p. 72.

During the later half of Taisho, women painters began to organize independent groups and exhibitions. In 1919 a women's yoga group named Shuyokai [Scarlet Leaf Club] was formed in Tokyo, followed by a Nihonga group, Getsuyokai [Moon Glow Club] in 1920.<sup>54</sup> Toward the end of the Taisho period, women Nihonga painters began to move into other areas outside bijinga.<sup>55</sup> In spite of the steady advancement of women painters, unfavorable opinions continued to appear invalidating their ability. Art magazine, Geien, published an issue in 1920 which focused on women painters. Included were the essays on the women bunjinga artists of the Edo and Meiji periods, representing one of the earliest attempts at the historical study of women artists. The same issue also published short essays contributed by fourteen modern yoga and Nihonga women artists, among whom were Shoen, Shoha, and Hisako. It was the first opportunity offered to contemporary women painters to collectively voice their opinions on their art. Within this enlightened issue, one also found scathing criticism of women painters' lack of talent:

Vanity and jealousy, innate characteristics of women, prevent them from producing great art. . . . People who honestly praise the paintings by women artists at exhibitions are big fools. The hands of their teachers are at least half responsible for their paintings.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> See "Tenrankai geppyo," Chuo bijutsu 5, no. 3 (March 1919): 92; and "Bijutsukai zappo," Geien 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 48.

<sup>55</sup> Okawa Shukun (?-?), Uehara Toho (?-?), and Nagayama Haku (?-?), who made their debut at the official salon in 1918, 1919, and 1922 respectively, specialized in the paintings of birds and flowers. Ikuta Kacho (1889-1978) worked in non-bijinga figure themes and appeared at the official salon in 1925. Increasing diversification among women painters continued into the Showa period.

<sup>56</sup> Yatsu Atari, "Juo mujin," Geien 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 39. It may be reminded that the notion of "jealousy" as woman's "innate characteristic" ultimately goes back to the Onna daigaku in which jealousy was listed as one of the "five worst infirmities" of women.

And,

True art must express pure joy. . . . Women painters are driven to paint because of their loneliness deriving from their failure to find husbands therefore failure to have children. How can we expect them to produce true art!<sup>57</sup>

The above two statements evidence the stubborn prejudice against women as an inferior gender and the tenacity of traditional premise on their social role. At the same time, the underlying tone of resentment perceptible in these essays may have been caused by the unqualified popularity of women artists during the Taisho period. It is significant that Shoen, who had attained the position as the foremost woman painter by this time, criticized the younger women artists for uniformly specializing in the *hijinga* genre and blamed the mass media for giving excessive and unjustifiable attention to their paintings.<sup>58</sup> Women painters, during the Taisho period, made a sweeping appearance unprecedented in the history of Japanese art. Endorsed by the Taisho society's curiosity and interest in women, they attracted enormous public attention. In some cases works by women painters may have been overrated and many of them were quickly forgotten. The accurate and fair assessment of their individual works awaits a serious and thorough study in future.

By the end of the Taisho period, female artists were no longer rare personalities. Women painters such as Shoen and Shoha achieved social status equal with or surpassing their male colleagues. It should be

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<sup>57</sup> Okada Hanyo, "Joryu sakka," *Geien* 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 33.

<sup>58</sup> Uemura Shoen, "Raidosei ni tomu gendai joryu gaka," *Geien* 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 26.

noticed that Shoha began signing her paintings "Shoha" instead of "Shoha, woman" around 1920.<sup>59</sup> For Shoen it took slightly longer. Only after she received the appointment as the first female member of the jury for the Teiten in 1924, did she accept herself as an artist of social equality with that of her male colleagues. Within several years after this appointment, she began to sign "Shoen" instead of "Shoen, woman painter."<sup>60</sup> Unlike these two artists, Hisako who grew up and matured during the Taisho period, most likely could not think of signing her paintings with anything other than "Hisako."

A characterization of women painters in 1926 at the very end of Taisho reveals a light-hearted approach: on the surface it accepts the validity of women painters while in reality it clearly reveals the tenacity of sexist attitude which circumscribes them within a dominant male view:

How gentle a woman painter is! She is not ignorant like a geisha woman, not lowly like an actress, or not unelegant like a woman journalist. A woman painter is beautiful and graceful, pure yet sexy, in fact, very modern without being offensive.<sup>61</sup>

By the second decade of the Showa period, women painters had become firmly woven into the history of Japanese art. Toei in 1936 published an entire issue dedicated to women artists of the present and the past: it included the first serious examination of women artists with a relatively

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<sup>59</sup> Washing Clothes (Kinuarai) and Visit to a Shrine (Miyamode) datable to ca. 1920 have simple "Shoha" signature whereas Sprouts (Futaba) of 1918 is signed "Shoha, woman." For the first two works, see Yoshida Kanpo, Gendai sento shoga bijin gashu (Kyoto: Aotani Bunseido, 1920), nos. 1 and 2. For Sprouts, see Egakareta jesseibi (Tokyo: Dainippon Kaiga, 1981), p. 117.

<sup>60</sup> Waiting For the Moon (Taigetsu) of 1926 appears to be the earliest example with the "Shoen" signature.

<sup>61</sup> Toyota Yutaka, "Kyoto gadan sensha mairi: bijutsu kisha seikatsu no hogokago kara." Chuo bijutsu 12, no. 5 (May 1926): 184.

scholarly approach as well as tributes to the contemporary women painters by distinguished male colleagues.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, painting became a particularly distinguished profession for women during the Taisho period paralleling the general advance made by women into various areas of occupations. Within only twenty years between the 1890s when Shoen and Shoha matured as adults and the 1910s when Hisako received her jogakko education and blossomed as an artist, Japanese society underwent multi-level changes. Public perception of women painters reflected both the obstinacy of controlling male view towards women's social position and dynamic changes which began to challenge that tradition. With the appearance of women artists, the art critics, who were all men, began to discuss the specific stylistic characteristics they thought attributable to paintings by female artists. They often used words such as "graceful" and "gentle" to describe the "female traits" in art and thought there were a set of subject matters particularly well-suited to women artists. It helped the advancement of women artists by acknowledging their contribution and soliciting special appreciation, and at the same time forced many of them to adhere to the framework established by external expectations. The concept of "feminine style" discussed during the Taisho period will be touched upon in the following chapters in conjunction with the paintings by Shoen, Shoha, and Hisako.

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<sup>62</sup> Toei 12, no. 3 (March, 1936).

## Chapter II. Modern Bijinga: Definition and Historical Background

### 1. Definition and Historical Background of Bijinga

Bijinga literally means "paintings of beautiful women." What is encompassed today by this term is quite broad: any painting dealing with women as subjects seems to qualify for bijinga. Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu [Complete works on modern bijinga], 12 vols. (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), includes yoga examples, and exhibitions on bijinga often do likewise.<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, however, bijinga is a genre which evolved from the native Japanese painting tradition.

The origin of bijinga can be traced ultimately to the paintings of customs and manners known as fuzokuga 風俗画 which gained popularity during the late Momoyama and early Edo periods. Fuzokuga, in turn, is believed to have evolved from a category of paintings known as Views In and Out of Kyoto (Rakuchu rakugai-zu 洛中洛外図) (Figure 3) which first appeared during the late Muromachi period. A rakuchu rakugai-zu generally represented a bird's eye view of Kyoto area, and while it included a depiction of human activities, the primary emphasis was given to the representation of famous places and seasonal aspects. Fuzokuga, in contrast, focused on the human elements within a panoramic rakuchu rakugai-zu and treated them as independent themes.<sup>2</sup> During the Kan'ei period (1624-1643) women of the pleasure quarters became a

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Amagasaki-shi Sogo Bunka Senta and Kobe Shinbunsha, eds., Josei no bi: Kindai bijinga meisakuten (Amagasaki: Amagasaki-shi Sogo Bunka Senta and Kobe Shinbunsha, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> A pair of rakuchu rakugai-zu in the Funaki collection already evidences strong interest in the depiction of people enjoying themselves in gay quarters, etc. predicting the appearance of early fuzokuga.

popular theme within fuzokuga. Among the best-known examples are Bathhouse Women (Yuna-zu 湯女圖) (Figure 4) in the collection of the Atami Museum and Men and Women Amusing Themselves (Danjo yuraku-zu 男女遊楽圖) (Figure 5), or the so-called Hikone screen. The low-class prostitutes depicted in Bathhouse Women display defiant, vulgar postures and aggressive facial expressions. In its unadulterated representation of human behavior, the painting expresses the vigorous, worldly spirit which characterizes the Kan'ei fuzokuga. By the Kanbun period (1661-1672) there evolved a single-figure representation of woman, known today as "Kanbun bijin."<sup>3</sup> As exemplified by the work called Beauty on Veranda (Ensaki bijin-zu 縁先美人圖) (Figure 6) in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum, these paintings represent the idealized images of women full of elegant beauty but lacking in the lively human spirit which characterize the Kan'ei fuzokuga.

The school of ukiyo-e prints, which emerged by the end of the seventeenth century inherited the tradition of depicting women subjects and established it as one of its most important themes. Ukiyo-e masters of the eighteenth century created widely varied images of women reflecting the taste and fashion of the period as well as the genius of their individual style. Suzuki Harunobu 鈴木春信 (1724-1770) popularized the dainty, vulnerable type of women (Figure 7). Kitagawa Utamaro 喜多川歌麿 (1754-1806) in turn idolized strongly sensual, languid women with a

<sup>3</sup> Japanese scholars generally accept the chronological evolution of "Kanbun bijin" motif from the rakuchu rakugai-zu via fuzokuga. However, Tsuji Nobuo argues that the depiction of dancing courtesans existed as an independent theme as early as 1610, contemporaneous to the Funaki rakuchu rakugai-zu. See Tsuji Nobuo, "Monofu no tsuma to ukare onna: Momoyama jidai," Kokubaungaku kaishaku to kansho 30, no. 10 (August 1965): 81.

sense of physical maturity and psychological depth (Figure 8). Working slightly later, Torii Kiyonaga 鳥居清長 (1752-1815) established a reputation for his healthy, statuesque women figures (Figure 9). Ukiyo-e prints and paintings which concentrated primarily on women subjects were called bijin-e. Patronized by the common populace, the ukiyo-e school primarily flourished in the city of Edo and continued into the early Meiji period.

One must also note that the realist school, established by Maruyama Okyo 円山応挙 (1723-1798) in Kyoto in the later half of the eighteenth century, also included women subjects in their repertoire. Okyo depicted both Chinese and Japanese women, and his bijin was a synthesis of realism and idealization based on his study of physiognomy and sketching of human figures (Figure 10). More than any other painter before and of his time, Okyo incorporated in his figural rendering an attention to the cubic form and three-dimensional structure of the human body. Okyo's followers transmitted his style - sometimes faithfully adhering to the formula established by the founder and at other times with great flare of individuality - to the modern era.

As noted above, paintings of women subject arose and became established as a category during the Edo period, coinciding with the solidification of the rigid feudalistic system based on patriarchal order. One scholar points out that bijinga flourished in past history during the time when "women were socially most oppressed and denied their humanity."<sup>4</sup> It is precisely because bijinga is a product of patriarchal culture in which women were relegated as inferior and sometimes

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<sup>4</sup> Kondo Ichitaro, "Ukiyo-e to bijinga," Sansai, no. 77 (July 1956), p. 17.

commodified as objects of masculine consumption. The fact that the dominant women subjects in the bijinga tradition, starting with the earliest examples such as Bathhouse Women in Atami and various "Kanbun bijin," are prostitutes and courtesans is a clear testimony to this.

Modern bijinga must be understood in the context of its historical background both in artistic and social realms as it has developed out of a dialogue with the past. Kawakita Michiaki gives the most basic and clinical definition of modern bijinga:

Bijinga is a category of painting which represents an image of a beautiful woman, a type of feminine beauty universally recognized and appreciated, in the context of customs and manners (fuzoku) specific to a given time and place.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, bijinga incorporates a visual record of the customs and manners of the period, which requires a painter to authenticate the period represented by the figure in the painting by elaborating on the details of clothes, hair style, accessories, and such. At the same time, the artist must idealize the figure so that she appears unconditionally "beautiful" to viewer, whether she is sensual and enticing, refined and graceful, or sweet and vulnerable. The framework of bijinga is this synthesis of particularity and universality. Beyond this technical definition, modern scholars find various meanings in bijinga. To some, bijinga encapsulates the drama of "human life" (jinsei) as lived by the figure in the painting and invites the viewer to share the experience

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<sup>5</sup> Kondo Ichitaro and Kawakita Michiaki, Nihon bijinga-sen ge (Tokyo: Toto Bunka Shuppan, 1954), p. 125. Quoted by Hisatomi Mitsugu, "Kindai no bijinga," Sansai, no. 216 (June 1967), p. 3.

transcending time and space.<sup>6</sup> To others, it is a "book of women's fashion" which documents the popular fashion and the feminine ideal as championed by the masses in each period.<sup>7</sup>

Izumi Kyoka 泉鏡花 (1873-1939), a novelist contemporary with Uemura Sho'en, wrote in 1917:

"Yoshi" [Appearance] and "fuzei" [mood/feeling conveyed by one's appearance] must be naturally exuded by the total physical appearance of a woman from her head to toe. Bijinga of our time presents women with pretty faces but completely fail in conveying a sense of style. . . . Women today do not know how to wear kimono so that they can carry themselves gracefully, and consequently painters are having a hard time. . . . Women nowadays have katachi [form] but lack yoshi.<sup>8</sup>

What Kyoka designates as "yoshi" or "fuzei" both have to do with one's physical appearance but they must be underlined by a sense of style which manifests the aesthetics of the period. Kyoka, as a product of the Meiji period, primarily saw bijinga in the context of the Meiji culture. His commentary above indicates that the particular sensibility which had enlivened the Meiji-period women's fuzoku and consequently bijinga was disappearing during the early Taisho period. One may surmise that the essence of bijinga is the embodiment of aesthetics and evocation of the cultural ambience of the period through the image of a woman. At the same time, one must remember that bijinga was traditionally produced for a male audience. As inherent in the term itself, bijinga is based on

<sup>6</sup> Kaneharu Yasuyuki, "Bijinga no sekai: utsukushii 'jinsei' no hyogen," in Haru no onna, Taiyo bijinga siriizu, I (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1982), pp. 124-126; and Kurita Isamu, "Kamen no dorama: bijinga no sekai," in Natsu no onna, Taiyo bijinga siriizu, II (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1982), p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> Ito Shinsui and Kawakita Michiaki, "Bijutsu taikan, 5: bijinga ni tsuite," Sansai, no. 77 (July 1956), p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Izumi Kyoka, "Ima no bijinga no 'yoshi'," Chuo bijutsu 3, no. 5 (May 1917): 75.

the overlapping idea of femininity and physical beauty which is inseparable from the clothes, hair, and decorations which adorn the figure. They represent iconized images of women invariably characterized by physical charm and youthfulness as dominantly desired by men. As dynamic social changes began to affect women's position in society during the late Meiji and Taisho periods, the validity of bijinga inevitably came under serious questioning.

Japanese scholars generally agree that the term bijinga came into use during the Meiji or Taisho period.<sup>9</sup> While the bijinga became a popular painting category during the Taisho period, the term itself appeared in the mid-Meiji period, during the 1880s if not earlier. In 1887, a group of connoisseurs in Kyoto formed the Club for Paintings of Japanese Women Subjects (Yamato Fujin Zuga-kai) and exhibited works by Iwasa Matabei, Ogawa Haryu, Maruyama Okyo, Genki, as well as by the various masters of the ukiyo-e school.<sup>10</sup> The strong interest demonstrated by this group in "the history of customs and manners of the Japanese women of the past, which provides an useful knowledge not only for painters but also for historians"<sup>11</sup> was most likely a reflection of the nationalistic spirit rising in the art world at that time. The same group in Kyoto may have held another "exhibition of bijinga" in the following year.<sup>12</sup> Two years later, in 1892, an "exhibition of Chinese and

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<sup>9</sup> Tsuruta Heihachiro, "Kindai nihonga no naka no bijinga," Aki no onna, Taiyo bijinga siriizu, III (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992), p. 74; and Kanoharu, "Bijinga no sekai: utokushii 'jinsei' no hyogen," p. 123. Kondo Ichitaro and Kawakita Michiaki, Nihon bijingasea, 2d. p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> "Yamato Fujin Zugakai," Kaiga soshi, no. 7 (October 1887), p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> "Bijinga tenrankai," Kaiga soshi, no. 18 (September 1888), p. 6.

Japanese bijinga" was held in Osaka at which most of the ninety-five works on display were from Okyo's time and thereafter.<sup>13</sup> In the three articles which respectively reported these exhibitions, the term bijinga was used to refer to the works of the past masters. At this point, one may tentatively suggest that the interest in the bijinga tradition emerged first in the Kyoto and Osaka area.

As remembered by Kaburaki Kiyokata as "about the time of In Full Bloom by Shoen,"<sup>14</sup> the turn of the century marked the emergence of bijinga as a distinct category within modern Japanese painting. Numerous examples of bijinga by modern painters began to appear representing fresh imagery of Meiji fuzoku in styles less controlled by the past traditions. Uemura Shoen eternalized in Blossoming (Jinsei no hana 人生の花) (Figure 11), 1899, and In Full Bloom (Hanazakari 花盛り), 1900, the image of a young Kyoto bride with quiet beauty on the day of her wedding. Autumn Garden (Shuen 秋園) (Figure 12) by Terasaki Kogyo 寺崎広業 (1866-1919), 1899, represented a young girl of a well-to-do family knitting at a western-style wicker table in a garden. Wearing long hair topped with a large bow, she typified the newest fashion of her time. In its harmonious blend of the traditional and Western elements, the painting captured the syncretic cultural flavor of the late Meiji period. Melancholy of Spring Evening (Shunshoen 春宵怨) (Figure 13) by Kajita Hanko 梶田半右 (1870-1917), 1902, was a Meiji

<sup>13</sup> Iwamoto Enrei, "Osaka wakan bijinga tenrankai," Kaiga zasshi, no. 62 (May 1892), pp. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Kaburaki Kiyokata reminisced that it was after Shoen's In Full Bloom, 1900, that people began to pay serious attention to modern bijinga. Kaburaki Kiyokata, Kitagawa Momoo, and Fujimoto Shozo, "Bijinga o kataru," Sansai, no. 216 (June 1967), p. 16.

version of Rafusen (spirit of plum) in which the Chinese nymph had been transformed into a young woman dressed in a new style of kimono fashioned by the painter. As seen in the strong shading applied to the robe of the figure, Hanko demonstrated a refreshing treatment of the age-old theme in this work. Kaburaki Kiyokata 鏑木清方 (1878-1972) created in 1902 a memorable tribute to Higuchi Ichiyo 樋口一葉 (1872-1896), a short-lived woman writer whom he deeply admired. The Grave of Ichiyo (Ichiyo joshi no haka 一葉地之墓) (Figure 14) embodied the Meiji cultural milieu both in its theme and in the appearance of the young woman. All these paintings respectively captured the spirit and the tenet of the Meiji period in the representation of women figures and heralded the emergence of bijinga in modern Nihonga tradition.

Bijinga flourished after the opening of the official salon, called the Buntan, in 1907, and during the early half of the Taisho period it achieved an unprecedented popularity. Among the many factors which contributed to this, one was the appearance of women painters specializing in this category as discussed in Chapter I. Another was the activity of Takehisa Yumeji 竹久夢二 (1884-1935), a self-taught illustrator, poet and painter working with women subjects. His illustrations began to appear in various publications as early as in 1905. A series of books, which consisted of collections of his illustrations, was published from 1909 to 1911 and achieved phenomenal commercial success. Subsequently, his vagabond lifestyle magnetized the Taisho Japanese and his unique bijinga as exemplified by a work titled House of the Black Ship (Kurofuneya 黒船屋) (Figure 15), ca. 1920, acquired great popularity. Yumeji held a one-person exhibition of his paintings and drawings in

Kyoto in November and December, 1912 in a direct challenge to the Bunten concurrently being held in Kyoto. It has been recorded that several thousand people saw Yumeji's exhibition everyday far surpassing the attendance at the Bunten.<sup>15</sup> Although Yumeji consciously represented himself as a "painter for the masses" and was never taken seriously as a bona fide artist, he was truly unique both in unconventionality of his personal life and the individuality of his art accompanied by phenomenal popular success.<sup>16</sup> In fact, his influence on other artists and contribution to the popularization of bijinga was enormous.

The increasing popularity of bijinga during the early half of the Taisho period led writers and critics to turn their attention to this category. Their commentaries shed light on the concept of bijinga prevalent at their time. One critic argued in 1915:

The bijin [beautiful woman] represented in art must transcend human qualities. . . . It must convey a flavor of art derived and refined from the painter's ideal. One may even declare that a bijin must appear somewhat doll-like in art. A real human being . . . is plagued with base qualities such as vanity. . . .

It is the obligation of an artist to create a bijin cleansed of undesirable human nature, and it is the purpose of art to present to the viewer the image of true feminine beauty free from inferior characteristics.<sup>17</sup>

The one-dimensional equation of truth, beauty, and goodness, suggested here represented a school of thought dominant during the Meiji period. Equally, the strong conviction in the nobility of subject in art expressed

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<sup>15</sup> See Tanaka Hisao, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu (Tokyo: Bijutsu Koronsha, 1983), p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> For the life and art of Yumeji, see Kimura Shigekazu, Takehisa Yumeji, Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979).

<sup>17</sup> Kuzuhara Setsudo, "Joseibi hyogen no mokutoki," Bijutsu no Nihon (December 1915), pp. 13-14.

by this writer was typical of Meiji outlook in which they stressed the importance of art for moral edification of people as fundamental to the prosperity of the state.

Another wrote in 1916:

Bijinga which is closely interrelated with fuzoku mirrors the spirit of the times. . . . Among the contemporary fuzoku, the beauty of women is most clearly conveyed by the appearance of high school girls (jogakusei). They stand for knowledge and virtue, and offer the most desirable painting subject for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation.<sup>18</sup>

By 1916, the secondary education for women was firmly established and jogakusei was symbolic of new breed of educated, intelligent young women. The notion of jogakusei as the most ideal representative of early Taisho-period feminine beauty clearly reflected this social trend. This writer was, although seemingly modern-minded in his acknowledgment of jogakusei, still governed by the notion of moral purpose of painting as evidenced in his equation of beauty, knowledge and virtue. Moreover it is important to note that in his opinion the women subjects in bijinga functioned as the object of "aesthetic appreciation." The two writers quoted above in their insistence on the moralizing function of painting represented the conservative camp of thought. Furthermore, their association of feminine ideal with beauty, even at the expense of their humanity, reveals the continuing sexist view on women which dominated Japanese society. Bijinga, as it was understood and discussed by them, was destined to become the target of criticism during the Taisho period.

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<sup>18</sup> Kusumoto Haruji, "Bijinga no riso to jidai shicho," Bijutsu no Nihon (May 1916), pp. 8-12.

## 2. The Art World of the Taisho Period

The society of Taisho Japan is often characterized by expressions such as "Taisho demokurashii" [Taisho democracy] and "Taisho koseishugi" [Taisho individualism], and the art of Taisho, by what Japanese scholars call "Taisho romanchishizumu" [Taisho romanticism]. It is generally understood as a flowering of the romanticist movement based on the yearning for the freedom of individual expression, which grew strong during the last ten years of the Meiji period. The Meiji government had propagated a sense of nationalism in order to unite the Japanese citizens toward the goal of modernization. Through victories in the Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), Japan gained confidence as a modern industrial nation. During the end of the Meiji period, the Japanese people began to demand true democracy and individual freedom, and Taisho Japan witnessed an explosive reaction to the authoritarianism of Meiji Japan. During Taisho, party government replaced the Meiji political system which had relied on the leaders of several feudal clans responsible for implementing the Meiji restoration. Continual industrialization brought about the appearance of the modern middle class, resulted in urbanization, and established a cosmopolitan culture and new urban entertainment such as the movies, Western-style theater, and department stores. Modern education, which was a privilege for the upper-class during the Meiji period, became more available to the common people, enlarging the population of intelligentsia. Nurtured by this liberal climate of the Taisho society, the spirit of humanism and individualism flourished during the Taisho period.

In the context of the art world, the concept of individualism owed much of its inspiration to direct influence from the West. At the news of the Bunten opening, many Japanese artists returned home toward the closing years of Meiji bringing back first-hand knowledge of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western art of the post-Impressionism era. Furthermore, information on new European art was eagerly disseminated by the literary and art magazines such as Waseda Bungaku, Subaru, Hosun, and Shirakaba. The most influential among them was Shirakaba, established in 1910 by a group of elite young writers. They idolized "the artists who had a total commitment to their art and were faithful to themselves in its pursuit,"<sup>19</sup> and advocated the concept of individualism and subjectivity. They championed artists such as Van Gogh and Gauguin as they saw in them the image of true and ultimate artists whose art prevailed over the hardship and tragedy which marked their personal lives. The most resounding proclamation of individualism was given by a sculptor, Takamura Kotaro 高村光太郎 (1883-1956), in Subaru, in April, 1910. He wrote under the title of "Green Sun" ("Midori iro no taiyo"):

I support the absolute freedom of artistic expression. I believe in the unlimited authority of the artist based on his individuality. Art is ultimately the product of the individual artist. For example, if I see something as green, and someone else sees it as red, I would try to understand how he is treating the redness of it. I would not argue about the fact that he sees it differently from me. Actually, it is desirable that we see nature in different ways. And, I would pay more attention to how he has grasped the essence of nature and how his emotions are truly reflected in his work. If some

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<sup>19</sup> Mushanokoji Saneatsu quoted by Kumamoto Kenjiro, Kindai Nihon bijutsu no kenkyu (Tokyo: Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyusho, 1964), p. 446.

people paint the sun green, I would not laugh at it. There may be a time when the sun also appears green to me.<sup>20</sup>

The proclamation of individual freedom in expression eloquently argued by Kotaro exemplified the tenet of the Taisho art world and underlined the phenomenon called Taisho romanticism. Taisho romanticism was not a specific movement started by a single group or artist. Rather, it was a particular state of mind or attitude shared by the artists based on their belief in the individual freedom. As such, it was far reaching and multi-faceted,<sup>21</sup> touching many artists and affecting their art and life in diverse ways.

The official salon, which had been established in 1907, began to represent the conservative stream of art and numerous private art groups appeared in opposition to it as exemplified by the Second Section Group (Nikakai) in yoga, established in 1914, and the Association of Creative National Painting (Kokuga Sosaku Kyokai 国画创作协会) in Nihonga, in 1918. On one hand the styles of Post-Impressionism and Fauvism inspired Japanese painters to utilize color and form expressively both in yoga (Figure 16) and Nihonga (Figure 17). On the other hand, reflecting the humanistic sentiment of the period some artists turned their attention to the social outcast as a worthy subject of their paintings. The compelling image represented in Deranged Woman (Kyojo 狂女) (Figure 18) by Tokuoka Shinsen 徳岡神泉 (1896-1972) typified this

<sup>20</sup> The excerpt of the article quoted by Kawakita Michiaki, Kindai bijutsu no asgare, Nihon no bijutsu, vol. 24 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1963), pp. 94-95.

<sup>21</sup> Kagesato Tetsuro, "Taisho jidai no roman shugi bijutsu," in Taishoki no bijutsu: roman shugi no tenkai, ed. Hamamatsu-shi Bijutsukan (Hamamatsu, 1986), p. 102. The discussion of Taisho romanticism by Japanese scholars remains basic and general. There is a tendency to explain all art movements during the Taisho period under the umbrella term of "Taisho romanticism" without clarifying the specifics. One awaits future research on this subject.

trend. Self-portraiture became a wide-spread practice, at least among the yoga artists, as a means for self-investigation, as exemplified by the works of Kishida Ryusei 岸田利生 (1892-1929). For some artists the way of life itself was their way of asserting individuality. Takehisa Yumeji led a vagrant life throughout his career while Hata Teruo 葵テロヲ (1887-1945) lived among prostitutes capturing the wretched condition of their life in his powerfully expressive painting (Figure 19).

In the category of bijinga, the Taisho emphasis on individual subjectivity of the artist made traditional bijinga, which was based on the notion of universal beauty, increasingly untenable. At the same time, the humanistic sentiment as well as the social changes which were affecting the lives of Japanese women cast criticism on the representation of women as doll-like creatures and demanded instead the depiction of women as human beings capable of feelings and emotions. It was increasingly difficult to perceive women simply as objects of "aesthetic appreciation" as was customary in the traditional bijinga.

Already in 1914 Kinoshita Mokutaro 木下幸太郎 (1885-1945), a poet contemporary with Kajiwara Hisako, wrote:

I have seen many examples of bijinga by artists such as Kiyokata, the Ikedas, Uemura Shoen, Kurihara Gyokuyo, Hirota Hyappo, Kawasaki Ranko . . . and they represent splendidly variety of physical appearances to the delight of viewers. However, it would be too much and too cruel to ask those painters to capture in their paintings and show us the beauty of real human beings, the beauty of real women.<sup>22</sup>

Mokutaro was clearly dissatisfied with the framework of traditional bijinga in which the external beauty of women was glorified in idealized

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<sup>22</sup> Kinoshita Mokutaro, "Biboroku," Bijutsu shingoo 14, no. 1 (November 1914): 31-32.

images. He rejected the moralistic equation of beauty, goodness, and truth in art and demanded more humanized, therefore, more truthful depictions of women.

The criticism of bijinga by Kinoshita Mokutaro at least suggested his acceptance of bijinga as what it was, however critical and reluctant he may have been. But the opinion expressed by an art critic in 1924, ten years after Mokutaro's comment, was an outright rejection of bijinga:

Bijinga does not fit in today's society any longer. We should simply call it "onna no e" [paintings of women].

"Beautiful woman" of the new era does not simply mean a good-looking woman with a pretty face but a woman who is full of rich human qualities.<sup>23</sup>

The above comment clearly reflected the changing image of women during the Taisho period. Meiji women had abided by the philosophy of the Onna daigaku and for them virtue was synonymous with obedience and submission. In contrast, Taisho women, as result of better education, were more active in professional fields and were eager to express themselves more freely as exemplified by the activities of the Seito group. In fact some Japanese were beginning to accept women as equally human and complex as male members of the society. Yet it must be remembered that the teachings of the Onna daigaku was by this time a part of established tradition and an integral part of the Japanese society.

Caught in the larger cross current of traditionalism and modernism, Taisho Japan was transforming itself into a truly modern society characterized by complexities and diversities in social and economic

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<sup>23</sup> Shinno joji, "Onna' no e no koto," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 7 (July 1924): 55.

realms as well as in the operation of the everyday routine life. The Taisho artists accordingly viewed the world around them in a multi-dimensional way. Their perception of women was no exception to this. The examples of bijinga during the Taisho period demonstrate diversification of the woman subject in multiple directions. More specifically, the large number of women painters active in this field as well as the increasing number of potential female viewers from the educated middle class formed a new social factor which challenged the fundamental premise of bijinga as a product of masculine society primarily created for male consumption. We will see through examining the lives and works by Shoen, Shoha, and Hisako how women painters negotiated their social position and shaped their artistic achievements during this period of dynamic changes.

## Chapter III: Biographies

### 1. Uemura Shoen

#### Early Years

Shoen was born on April 23, 1875 as the second daughter of a tea-leaf merchant Uemura Tahei 太兵衛 and his wife Naka 仲 . Her given name was Tsune 津福 . Her sister Koma was four years older. Tahei passed away two months before Shoen was born. In spite of the persistent suggestion to remarry from the concerned relatives, young Naka remained resolute about bringing up her daughters by herself. During the daytime she managed the Chikiriya, the tea-leaf shop left by her husband, and at night she sewed kimono for her neighbors. Hard-working and strong-willed, Naka was a loving parent to Shoen. Like most women of her generation, she had shaven eyebrows. To shave off eyebrows, or to have "blue eyebrows" (*seibi*) as Shoen called them, together with blackening of teeth, was a custom practiced by Kyoto women since the Edo period to signify their marital status and motherhood.<sup>1</sup> Shoen grew up watching Naka carefully tend her "blue

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<sup>1</sup> The word *seibi* does not appear in Japanese dictionaries. It may be either a local expression used in Kyoto during the Meiji period or a term invented by Shoen. The history of these customs is unclear. Blackening of teeth, *haguro*, was considered a part of makeup among the court ladies of the Heian period. It became a sign of adulthood during the middle ages, and finally during the Edo period it was practiced among the women of the common class to signal their adulthood or married status. By this time, the term *ohaguro* was more commonly used. Even less is known about shaving of eyebrows. Kyoto women of the Edo period shaved off eyebrows, as a basic rule, during pregnancy, whereas women in the Edo area shaved off eyebrows automatically as they blackened teeth. However, the practice of these customs seems to have varied widely among different social classes. See Kuge Tsukasa, *Kesho Mono to ningen no bunkashi*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku, 1978), pp. 271-283.

eyebrows" to keep the gentle glow of their pale color, and they came to symbolize for Shoen not only the memory of her mother so dear to her heart but the essence of beauty cherished in the lifestyle of old times.<sup>2</sup>

As manifested by Naka's practice of shaven eyebrows, the life of ordinary people in early Meiji Kyoto was still strongly perfumed by the customs and manners of the late Edo period. The Chikiriya was located on the bustling Shijo street in the heart of Kyoto. To be able to acknowledge and enjoy green tea of high quality was an important part of Kyoto people's life, a proof of their refined taste, regardless of their social and economic status. Thus a tea-leaf shop such as Chikiriya functioned as if a leisurely salon for connoisseurs of tea who included not only people of merchant class but also Buddhist priests, Confucian scholars, artists, and tea masters.<sup>3</sup> Customers were welcomed with a friendly greeting accompanied by a cup of tea and invited to stay for socializing. In this small shop permeated with aroma of tea, young Shoen spent many hours with her mother watching people come and go. By the time she entered the Kaichi Elementary School at the age of seven, she had already discovered pleasure both in viewing and creating pretty pictures. Shoen reminisced years later:

Upon returning from the school, I went and sat in my mother's shop and spent the rest of the afternoon drawing. Sometimes I copied beautiful Edo-style woodblock prints my mother bought for me. The tea-leaf shop was located on the very busy Shijo Street and people constantly stopped in to buy tea. As I

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<sup>2</sup> Shoen's respect and love for her mother and the lifestyle of early Meiji Kyoto is fully expressed by the fact that the collection of her essays and memoirs, first compiled in 1943, was titled Seibisho [Book of blue eyebrows].

<sup>3</sup> The description of the Chikiriya in this paragraph is drawn from Shoen, Seibisho (Tokyo: Sansaisha, 1972), pp. 85-86.

was always drawing behind a counter, people began to talk about me as "the little girl at the tea-leaf shop who is always drawing and doodling." There were a great variety of customers at the shop. An old man with beautiful white hair found out that I was fond of painting and often showed me colorful pictures of cherry blossoms. He was a botanist, Sakurado Tamao, who specialized in cherry blossoms. Then, there was a young painter who gave me drawings of bamboo and orchid. He had come to Kyoto to study bunjiinga.<sup>4</sup>

Nearby Chikiriya was a small rouge shop managed by a pretty young woman.<sup>5</sup> With well-practiced motions, she gracefully dished out traditional rouge with an iridescent effect used in Kyoto, into small containers which individual customers had brought with them. Young Shoen watched the women customers who frequented this little shop and admired the beauty of their traditional-style coiffures. It was in this friendly and comfortable ambience of the old Shijo neighborhood that Shoen spent her early years. Familiar images of Kyoto people and the centuries-old customs, which had become a fabric of their life, were firmly embraced by Shoen to be later expressed in her art.

In 1887 at the age of thirteen, Shoen enrolled in the Kyoto Prefectural School of Painting (Kyoto-fu Gagakko 京都府画学校). Although strongly criticized as impractical and useless by her relatives, Shoen's love for art was recognized by Naka who supported her decision to study painting formally. This school had been established by the prefectural government in 1880 as the earliest professional art institution in Japan where both Japanese- and Western-style painting were taught. It was the first attempt by Kyoto painters to bring together various

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<sup>4</sup> Uemura Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, ed. Shiokawa Kyoko (Tokyo: Kyuryudo, 1985), pp. 179-180.

<sup>5</sup> The description of this rouge shop comes from Shoen, Seibisho, p. 152.

schools of painting in order to put to practice a more structured and unified method of teaching. They sought to break away from the system of the old days in which the art of painting was strictly transmitted from teacher to disciple in separate schools. The Kyoto Prefectural School of Painting consisted of four divisions: East for the "native" traditions such as the Yamato-e and Maruyama-Shijo style, West for the Western-style painting, North for the Chinese ink painting tradition transmitted and transformed by the Kano and others, and South for the scholar painting tradition, bunjinga.<sup>6</sup>

Although the reasons are not clear, Shoen enrolled in the North division and became a student of Suzuki Shonen 鈴木松年 (1848-1918), the head teacher of the North division at the time. Shonen was a son of Suzuki Hyakunen 百年 (1825-1891) who established the Suzuki school at the end of the Edo period. Shonen's paintings, generally characterized by uninhibited and powerful brushwork, led people to nickname him "Ima Shohaku," or "Shohaku of our time."<sup>7</sup> By nature he was a stubborn and uncompromising man but for Shoen and other students he was a compassionate teacher. The enrollment at the school was designed to last for three years and the curriculum consisted of six classes, two for each year. The first class for a student of the North division such as Shoen was to learn how to draw vertical and horizontal lines. Then the second class

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<sup>6</sup> The school exists today as the Kyoto City University of Arts. For the detailed account of the Kyoto Prefectural School of Painting at its inception, see Kanzaki Kenichi, Kyoto ni okeru Nihongashi (Kyoto: Kyoto Seihan Insatsugaisha, 1929), pp. 19-23; and Sakakibara Yoshiro, Maruyama-Shijo no nagare, Kindai no bijutsu, vol. 25 (Tokyo: Shibundo, 1974), pp. 32-46.

<sup>7</sup> Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan, ed., Kyoto gadan Edo matsu Meiji no gajintachi (Kyoto: Aatosha, 1977), p. 248. For another brief discussion of Shonen's life and art, see Harada Heisaku, Bakumatsu Meiji Kyoraku no gajintachi (Kyoto Shinbunsha, 1985), pp. 80-101.

was to draw simple compositions of flowers and grass and copy models of small landscape paintings given to the students by the teacher. In such a way they gradually progressed to more complex compositions so that in the latter half of the third year they could work with figural subjects.<sup>8</sup> Since the time of doodling at her mother's shop, Shoen's primary interest had been figure painting. In order to accommodate Shoen's desire to study the figure, Shonen allowed her to visit his private school to study examples of figure paintings in his collection. During this time, wanting to see as many examples of figure painting as possible, Shoen frequented exhibitions, temples and shrines, and even auctions, where she examined, sketched, and copied the paintings on view.

When Shonen resigned from his position at the Kyoto Prefectural School of Painting in 1888, Shoen withdrew from the school and became one of Shonen's private students. Around this time Shonen gave her her painter's name, Shoen. Sho, the character for "pine" was taken from his name and En meaning "garden" or "farm" symbolized a field where they cultivated fine tea leaves. A sketch portrait of Shoen (Figure 20) by a fellow student, Saito Shoshu, dated to about 1888, vividly captures the temperament of the young painter. Dressed in thoroughly traditional style and seated in upright position on the floor, young Shoen conveys a strong-minded personality through her distinct eyebrows, closed lips, and eyes looking straight ahead.

The 1880s, during which Shoen began her study of painting, was a pivotal period for the development of modern Japanese painting. During the initial decade of Meiji, the Japanese goal to assimilate Western culture

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<sup>8</sup> Sakakibara, *Maruyama-Shijo no nagare*, pp. 43-44.

and technology caused yoga, Western-style oil painting, to suddenly become the most prestigious school. Bunjinga, Chinese-inspired literati tradition, also flourished along with yoga, for the new leaders of the government had inherited from the previous period the practice of cultural accomplishments based on Chinese studies. The second decade of the Meiji period, however, witnessed a gradual emergence of nationalistic sentiment in the art world of Japan. Among the various factors responsible for this, the most remarkable was the activity of Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), who came to Japan to teach philosophy and economics at the Imperial University in Tokyo in 1878. Enamored by Japanese art, Fenollosa soon began to champion the legacy of traditional Japanese painting.<sup>9</sup> During the 1880s, Fenollosa advocated the need to revitalize Japanese painting tradition, and his crusade eventually led to the establishment of the Tokyo Art School (Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko) where Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 (1862-1913) inspired his students toward the goal of modernizing Japanese painting. The term Nihonga came into common use during the late 1880s in order to distinguish modern Japanese-style painting from yoga and older traditional styles of Japanese painting.<sup>10</sup>

Shoen, then, entered the art world during the transitional period when the concept of Nihonga as a viable modern school of Japanese

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<sup>9</sup> Slightly earlier than Fenollosa's campaign, the Meiji government had decided to promote Japanese arts as export commodities to the West as a result of a positive reception of Japanese traditional arts at the Vienna World Exposition in 1873. But the opinion of a respected Western scholar played a decisive role in the renaissance of Japanese traditional arts.

<sup>10</sup> Nihonga, however, can be used as a blanket term to designate all styles of Japanese painting as opposed to yoga.

painting began to emerge and take hold. At that time, professional women painters with an established career were rare in Kyoto.<sup>11</sup> During the first half of the Meiji period, most women who had achieved recognition in the field of painting were active in Tokyo, the political capital of the Meiji government. At the Oriental Painting Exhibition held in Yokohama in 1887, one of the early nation-wide painting exhibitions in modern Japan, fifteen women painters received awards: fourteen were from Tokyo and one, from Ishikawa prefecture.<sup>12</sup> Most of the Tokyo women painters worked in the bunjinga tradition reflecting the vogue of the time.<sup>13</sup> Shoen was one of the new generation of women painters who began to appear in the mid-Meiji and among the earliest to specialize in bijinga.<sup>14</sup> Her emergence as a figure painter and popularization of this

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<sup>11</sup> Shoen mentions the name of Iwai Ranko as one of the few professional Kyoto women painters, forty years older than Shoen and active as late as the 1890s. See Shoen, Seibisho, p. 57. She was probably a bunjinga painter judging from the title of her painting Landscape in rain (Uchu sansui) listed in "Kyoto Kogyo Bussankai kaiga jushosha," Kaiga soshi, no. 51 (June 1891), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> See "Yokohama tenrankai jusho jinmei zenkan no zoku," Kaiga soshi, no. 4 (1887), pp. 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Oriental Painting Association (Toyo Kaigakai) commissioned three twelve-fold screens depicting twelve months in each and exhibited them in December 1888. One of the screens was painted by twelve women painters active in Tokyo area. Eleven names were recorded in "Kaiga tenrankai kiji," Kaiga soshi, no. 21 (December 1888), pp. 5-7; and "Daisankai kaiga tenrankai," Kaiga soshi, no. 23 (February 1889), pp. 6-9. Out of the eleven painters, seven worked in bunjinga: Nakabayashi Seishuku (1831-after 1889), Takabayashi Hokoku (1840-1894), Takemura Koai (1852-1915), Okuhara Seisui (1852-1921), ~~Watanabe~~ Seiran (1855-1918), Sugiura Gyokushu (1863-?), and Sakuma Seikoku (1868-?). One of them, Atomi Kakei (1840-1926) worked in the combination of bunjinga and Maruyama-Shijo styles, and another, Atomi Gyokushi (1859-1943), was trained in the Maruyama-Shijo style. Two are not identifiable at this point: Sugiura Chingai and Tomita Katei.

<sup>14</sup> There were several other women students under Shoen. One of them was Nakai Baien (before 1879-1941) who also seems to have specialized in bijinga judging from the title of her painting Beauty (bijin-zu) listed in "Daisankai Seinen Kaiga Kyoshinkai," Kaiga soshi, no. 88 (June 1894), p. 5.

category of painting coincided with the decline of bunjinga, primarily a landscape tradition, after the 1890s.

The 1890s were young Shoen's period of learning and blossoming as a painter. Throughout the early half of 1890s, Shoen submitted her works to various national and local exhibits. Shoen's first important recognition came when Women of the Four Seasons (Shiki bijin-zu 四季美人図) (present whereabouts unknown) received an award at the Third Industrial Exposition held in Tokyo in 1890. The work was purchased by a visiting British prince, and the news made young Shoen an instant celebrity in the art world. Shoen was only fifteen. The success of this painting led the Japanese government to select Shoen as one of the fourteen women artists to send their paintings to the Chicago World Exposition of 1893.<sup>15</sup> This was a great honor for Shoen because she was chosen along with the older, renowned Tokyo bunjinga artists such as Noguchi Shohin and Atomi Kakei. For this commission, Shoen created her second Women of the Four Seasons and it received the second award at the exposition. It is not certain whether or not the painting of the same title (Figure 21), datable to ca. 1892, is the particular work sent to Chicago, but at least it represents Shoen's style of this period. Although the individual activities in this version differ from Shoen's description of the first Women of the Four Seasons, these two must have been similar in composition.<sup>16</sup> Juxtaposed in the ca. 1892 version are four women each

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<sup>15</sup> Of the fourteen artists, eight were to be from Tokyo, four from Kyoto and Osaka, and two from the field of yoga, indicating that women painters predominantly existed in Tokyo area. "Nihon fujin-kai kaiga shuppin," Kaiga zenshi, no. 65 (Aug. 1892), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Shoen describes the painting in Seibisho, pp. 52-53. A small study of Women of the Four Seasons, ca. 1890, is extant and published in Seki Chiyo, Uemura Shoen, Kindai no bijutsu, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Shibundo, 1972), p. 22. The activities of women in this study do

engaged in a different activity. The youngest woman dressed in the most colorful costume is seated in front of a koto. In her obvious youthfulness, she symbolizes the season of spring. Diagonally placed behind her, on the right, is another woman fanning herself with a round fan. Appropriate to the season of summer, her uppermost kimono is transparent. Facing toward her but positioned slightly in the back on the left is the third woman writing calligraphy, probably a poem inspired by the beauty of the autumn season. Finally, an older woman is depicted behind the third figure looking at a hanging scroll of snow-covered landscape. The brush lines which describe the folds and wrinkles of the women's garments are still tentative and harsh, lacking the fluidity of her brushwork in later paintings. The colors used on the clothes of the three older women are uniformly somber: blacks, greys, dark greens, and browns. Shoen intends to bring out, by contrast, the youthfulness of the woman in the foreground who is dressed in the green-and-blue robe decorated with more intricate designs under which the bright red undergarment is visible. The overall effect of this color scheme, however, is a feeling of disharmony between the young woman and her three older counterparts. In her mature examples of multiple-figure composition, Shoen will achieve an exquisite sense of color through which she integrates more successfully the figures into a compositional unity. The women depicted here represent the appearance of the contemporary women of the Meiji-

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not match with Shoen's description of the 1890 painting. However the same composition based on the zigzag placement of the figures is seen both in this study and the ca. 1892 version.

period. In the subject matter and composition, however, the painting indicates Shoen's study of ukiyo-e school paintings.<sup>17</sup>

In 1893, Shoen, with the permission of Shonen, began to study with Kono Bairei 幸野樸篔 (1844-1895), one of the most respected artists in Kyoto at the time with a flourishing private school of his own. The reason for Shoen's decision to change her teacher at this point is not clearly understood except that she wished to expand her artistic training.<sup>18</sup> Bairei was more aware of the changes occurring after the Meiji Restoration than Shonen. He had a keener understanding of the need to modernize the Nihonga world and was one of the artists instrumental in the opening of the Kyoto Prefectural Painting School in 1880. Bairei's forward-looking attitude made him an effective teacher to many young artists in Kyoto and he nurtured those who were to become leaders of the next generation. Bairei's paintings were diverse in style: he had inherited both the realism of the Maruyama school and poetry of the Shijo school.<sup>19</sup> For young Shoen, after having been exposed to Shonen's bold and sometimes coarse style, the challenge was to learn the "softer" style of Bairei characterized by elegant brushwork and the decorative use

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<sup>17</sup> Comparison with Women Engaged in the Four Scholarly Activities (Bijin kinkishoga-zu) by Katsukawa Shunrin is suggested by Seki Chiyo. "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," Bijutsu kenkyu, no. 195 (November 1957), p. 160.

<sup>18</sup> This is Shoen's own explanation given in Seibisho, p. 121. In light of well-known personal antagonism between Shonen and Bairei, Shoen's switch to Bairei seems mysterious. My suggestion is that Shoen was becoming personally involved with Shonen, whose son she was to give birth to in 1902. Under such a circumstance, it would have been difficult to carry on a teacher-student relationship.

<sup>19</sup> For his biographical information and the analysis of his painting style, see Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan, Kyoto gadan Edo matsu Meiji no gaiintachi, pp. 240-243; Harada, Bakumatsu Meiji Kyoraku no gaiintachi, pp. 144-158. For his biography, see Muramatsu Shofu, Honcho gaiinden, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1941), pp. 243-284.

of color.<sup>20</sup> Bairei died in 1895 only two years after Shoen began studying with him. By this time, however, Shoen felt confident that she was beginning to achieve her individual style.<sup>21</sup>

After Bairei's death, Shoen began her training with Takeuchi Seiho 竹内西鳳 (1864-1942), one of the four most prominent students of Bairei. Shoen's decision to study with Seiho was fortuitous and beneficial for her career. Seiho was not only an extraordinary painter and open-minded teacher but an artist with political astuteness. He was to become one of the most powerful Nihonga painters during the Taisho and Showa periods. Inheriting Bairei's future-looking attitude, Seiho involved himself even more rigorously in order to modernize the Maruyama-Shijo tradition. One way to achieve this goal, Seiho believed, was to abandon the custom of relying on models and copies transmitted by the past masters and return instead to one's direct observation of nature. It was probably Seiho's emphasis on studying objects in real life that led Shoen to paint contemporary themes based on observation around this time, such as Family Gathering (Kazoku danran 家族団欒) (Figure 22) in 1897. In this painting, for instance, the wrinkled facial feature and awkwardly bent-over posture of the old man conveys a strong sense of realism<sup>22</sup> in perfect concordance with the realistic nature of the theme itself.

Around this time, Shoen began to expand her repertoire to include historical subjects such as Yoshisada Listening to a Koto (Yoshisada

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<sup>20</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 123

<sup>22</sup> Seki, "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," p. 163.

chokin 義貞聴琴 ) in 1895.<sup>23</sup> Historical paintings were extremely popular from the end of the 1880s through the 1890s, the period marked by the rising sentiment of nationalism in Meiji Japan. On the one hand, it reflected the tenor of the Japanese society which had time to reflect upon its historical past after successfully achieving the initial stage of modernization.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, it represented the Nihonga artists' search for new subject matter which could express the emerging national spirit. First popularized by the Tokyo artists in the circle of Okakura Tenshin, the interest in historical themes quickly spread to Kyoto. Shoen's paintings of contemporary naturalistic subject and historical themes demonstrated her awareness of the newest trend in the Nihonga world and her eagerness to explore all aspects of modern Nihonga.

Shoen was determined by this time to make a career out of painting, and for this goal she made an uncompromising effort.

When I began studying [with Seiho], I found myself among so many students already accomplished and well-known. I resolved to myself to work very hard. In order to save time, I stopped putting my hair up in an elaborate style. Instead, I wore a simple kushimaki (plain hair style, a simple bun held with a comb).

Our teacher emphasized sketching and we often went on long sketching trip carrying our lunches. I didn't want to be left behind by men. I even went on an overnight sketching trip with them.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The theme of this painting comes from an incident described in the Taiheiki, a war chronicle written in the fourteenth century. In the scene represented by Shoen, a warrior named Nitta Yoshisada is listening to the sound of koto played by a court lady, whom he was to marry later. For a visual reference, see Seki, Uemura Shoen, plate 24.

<sup>24</sup> Kawakita Michiaki and Takashina Shuji, Kindai Nihon kaigashi (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1978), pp. 119-120.

<sup>25</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 127.

Surrounded by mostly male students, Shoen even tolerated the awkward situation of going on an overnight trip in order to place herself on equal footing with them. Furthermore, to abandon the traditional hair style, for Shoen, virtually signaled renunciation of ordinary womanhood. However, Shoen was by no means a precursor of liberated women who began to appear during the Taisho period. She did not choose a painting career over traditional womanhood based on the modernistic conviction of individual freedom as one of women's rights. Shoen became a painter because she was driven by her love of painting. In order to prove herself in the men's world, Shoen was compelled to work extra hard. The self-absorbed image of Shoen around this time was vividly remembered by Nishiyama Suisho (1879- 1958), a student of Seiho:

When I went for a walk, I often came across a young woman with kushimaki hairstyle completely absorbed in sketching. It was Miss Uemura. Even at a theater, while everybody was enjoying the performance, I would suddenly notice a woman sketching with concentration the scene on the stage. Her diligence and hard work really amazed me.

When our teacher Seiho completed a painting, Miss Uemura always made a miniature copy of it. . . . She quietly came to her teacher's house at the crack of the dawn before any student staying at his house or any family member was awake, and sat in front of the painting copying it diligently. Miss Uemura copied and studied not only figure paintings by her teacher but also those of landscapes, flowers and birds and everything else. . . . Her commitment to the study of painting astonished everyone.<sup>26</sup>

The singlemost important work from this period was Blossoming (Jinsei no hana 人生の花) (Figure 11) from 1899. The painting was based on an actual scene Shoen observed and represented a young bride

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Seki, Uemura Shoen, pp. 31-32.

and her mother on the day of the wedding. In this work, Shoen concentrates on the two figures eliminating the background depiction. The use of forceful calligraphic line, typical of Meiji-period work by Shoen, is prominent in the description of their garment. Two figures are placed in the right side of the composition and boldly cut off by the frame as if they have just stepped into the painting. The young bride conveys her gentle beauty through her downward gaze and submissive posture in contrast to the mother who proudly leads the way. The bride, shown in profile, is adorned with a white bridal hat, black formal kimono, and colorful brocade sash. Her lips, shining in red and green, show the effect of the Kyoto-style iridescent rouge. The mother's sash is tied in front and she wears a small kerchief over the front part of her hair. Both women hold their hands hidden within the sleeves of their kimono. Meticulously and lovingly depicted by Shoen in great detail, the painting eternalized the beauty and mood of late Meiji Kyoto as reflected in the customs and manners of the time. A monumental representation of a modern subject enlivened by a bold composition, the painting projected refreshing contemporariness. It was clearly an early masterpiece in Shoen's oeuvre. In Full Bloom (Hanazakari 花盛), painted in 1900, was virtually the same composition on a smaller scale. Shoen sent this work to the exhibition sponsored by the Japan Art Institute (Nihon Bijutsuin) in Tokyo that year. The Japan Art Institute, which had been established in 1898 under the leadership of Okakura Tenshin, was an important group of Tokyo artists. They represented the most progressive-minded Nihonga painters united in their determination to update the Japanese painting tradition. Shoen's decision to send her work

to their exhibit indicated both her ambition and growing confidence as a painter. In Full Bloom shared a second prize with works by the talented Institute members such as Yokoyama Taikan 横山大観 (1868-1958) and Hishida Shunso 菱田春草 (1874-1911), as well as Shonen, Shoen's old teacher. Literally unknown in Tokyo until this time, Shoen's reputation as a young woman painter of bijinga began to reach beyond Kyoto with the success of this painting. Young Kaburaki Kiyokata 鍬木清方 (1878-1933) saw In Full Bloom at the exhibit. So impressed by the beauty of this painting, he became seriously interested in bijinga,<sup>27</sup> and eventually established himself as the most respected bijinga artist in Tokyo.

During the last decade of Meiji, roughly the 1900s, Shoen firmly established herself as a master painter. This period was also marked by a critical event in her personal life, the birth of her son Shintaro in 1902 fathered by Shonen, her first teacher. At the age of twenty-seven, Shoen, a woman painter with a blossoming career - this alone was enough to attract public attention - became a single parent. Although their relationship was a common knowledge in the Kyoto art world, no one chided Shonen, who was married to another woman. For Japanese society was still governed by the traditional moral codes of double standard. It was permissible of men to have extramarital affairs. Especially men of high social ranks, of which Shonen, the "master painter," was one, were almost expected to demonstrate their sexual prowess as a sign of their social and political power. For Shoen, it was a different story. Chastity

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<sup>27</sup> From Kiyokata's statement originally published in Sansai, no. 216 (June 1967), and quoted by Shiokawa Kyoko, "Shoen sanko," Aki no onna. Taiyo bijinga siriizu, III (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1982), p. 84.

was believed to be one of the principal virtues for women, and to have a child out of wedlock could have made Shoen a social outcast. In fact, there were some people who regarded Shoen unworthy of entrusting their daughters to study painting with.<sup>28</sup> And there may well have been those who refused to purchase her paintings for what they believed were ethical reasons, as suggested by Miyao Tomiko in her novel based on Shoen's life.<sup>29</sup> How Shoen reconciled herself as an unmarried mother will never be known. Typical of a Japanese woman of the old school, who was taught to endure hardship with silence, Shoen sealed her emotions within herself and never revealed her feelings about her personal life. It must be emphasized here that the single parenthood, although an antisocial event in a woman's life during the late Meiji period, was not a deliberate challenge by Shoen to the established norm and moral of the society. It was utterly consequential to Shoen's existence as a painter who happened to be a woman in private life. What distinguished Shoen from many other women of her time was her strong conviction in the inner fortitude of women. Shoen believed that it was an essential element which enabled them to lead a dignified life regardless of their role in society. Ultimately, it was through her personal strength, her reputation as a painter, and unwavering support from her mother that Shoen managed to survive through this difficult time of her life. One may point out also that society "forgave" and tolerated more readily Shoen's single parenthood

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<sup>28</sup> From an interview with Mrs. Makino Mikiko (1903-) on February 9, 1986. Mrs. Makino wanted to study painting with Shoen in 1918, but based on an advice from a family friend her parents sent her to Ito Shoha. During the Meiji and Taisho periods, as is still true today, Shoen's status as a single mother stigmatized her.

<sup>29</sup> Miyao Tomiko, *Je no mai ge* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1982), pp. 224-226.

than it may have other women, since Shoen had deviated from the commonly expected and accepted norm of womanhood in the first place by choosing to become a professional painter. Whether to shield herself and her family from public curiosity or to demonstrate her confidence in her art - possibly both - she had her mother close the Chikiriya in 1903 and began to support her mother and son by brush alone. Despite the ostracism incurred from some people, Shoen's artistic reputation was such that women students flocked to study painting under her.<sup>30</sup>

By late Meiji, Shoen was already looked upon as a master-painter of bijinga. In a book on contemporary painters published in 1903, Shoen was described as follows:

Shoen excels in figure depiction. This is impressive because the figure is the hardest subject even for male painters. . . .<sup>31</sup> (the underline is my own)

As demonstrated by the above statement, the works of women artists at that time were often evaluated and their talent measured on the premise that they were naturally inferior to the standard set by men. What enabled Shoen to compete in the world of art against such prejudice was her extraordinary sense of determination and dedication. The innermost feeling which propelled Shoen during this period of life was fully expressed when she painted Courtesan Kiyu (Yujo Kiyu 遊城遊) (Figure 23) in 1904. Kiyu lived in Yokohama at the end of the Edo period when Western nations were pressuring Japan to end its closed-door policy. Compelled to take an American man as a client, she committed suicide,

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<sup>30</sup> Bijutsu shingo (1903), quoted by Iijima Isamu, Uemura Shoen, Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), p. 84.

<sup>31</sup> Shunran dojin and Shugiku dojin, eds., Tosei gaka hyobanki (Tokyo: Bunrokudo, 1903), p. 68.

leaving a poem of protest that she would not shame herself by entertaining a foreigner. A humble courtesan, Kiyu became a heroine through her death and epitomized the anti-Western nationalist sentiment of her time. In Shoen's painting, Kiyu is seated in the center shielded by a screen behind her. Three-dimensional space is skillfully defined by the juxtaposition of the figure, a lantern, a table, and finally a screen which is placed to enclose the figure and other objects. The compressed feeling achieved by this composition enhances the sense of despair imparted by the heroine. The painting demonstrates both Shoen's interest in complex composition and her technical ability to integrate the narrative content and the spatial organization into a harmonious whole. Kiyu's expression is withdrawn and somber. She has just placed her farewell poem in front of her and is about to draw a short sword from the brocade cover. It is a painting which ostensibly testifies to Shoen's nationalistic spirit. The more important message, however, was meant for other women of her time that "women must live with courage and strength."<sup>32</sup> This was, in fact, her deepest personal conviction, with which she bore the social stigma as an unmarried mother and thrust herself toward the successful career in the world dominated by men.

The type of strength and dignity which characterized Shoen herself can be illustrated by a telling incident which occurred in 1904. At an exhibition where Courtesan Kiyu was displayed, someone maliciously soiled with a pencil the face of the figure. Shoen was simply "ordered" to clean it by an organizing official of the exhibition. Angered by this rude treatment, which she thought reflected their disrespect for a woman

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<sup>32</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 106.

painter, Shoen refused. Surprised by Shoen's strong reaction, the official returned later with a written apology from the organization for the lax management.<sup>33</sup>

This painting is also a good example of how Shoen, a woman painter, handles a subject of a courtesan, a representation of a woman for sale as a sexualized commodity. Shoen operated as a woman artist with values imposed by masculine society. Working within the field of bijinga, she did not entirely reject the traditional subjects of courtesans and women entertainers. But her paintings of such women are small in number. Moreover, as exemplified by Kiyu, Shoen does not focus on the erotic beauty of her subjects. By emphasizing the presence of the mind, Shoen prevents her courtesan from becoming a mere sign for a female body for sale. One may argue that the subject of Kiyu, deriving from a particular historical incident, should naturally differ from ordinary representation of courtesans. However, even in a representation of a woman entertainer without a specific historical or literal context, such as Tempo-Period Geisha Woman (Tenpo kagi 天保歌妓) (Figure 24), dated 1935, Shoen de-emphasizes the sensual aspect of the subject. In this work the figure stands erect, holding up the end of her robe with her left hand, and turning her head to the back. Though she is indeed beautiful and feminine in her appearance and gesture, she projects a sense of dignity instead of coquetry through her upright posture and lifted head. Shoen once wrote, "Even when depicting a geisha, I want to represent a woman with a will of her own and a sense of pride rather than simply

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 107-108.

pretty and bewitching."<sup>34</sup> Here lies the essence of Shoen's bijin as a creation of a woman painter. Not just beautiful, they are often imbued with moral strength and self-dignity, with which they do not easily succumb to men's propositions.

### Middle Years

In 1907 the Japanese government established the Bunten, the official exhibition modeled after the French salon. On the one hand, the Bunten gave an opportunity to Japanese artists to compete on a national scale regularly and made the public in general more art-conscious. On the other hand, the social prestige associated with the official exhibition was of such enormity that the acceptance by the Bunten was considered a spectacular feat worthy of mention in a newspaper. It could literally triple the price of one's work overnight.

For the first Bunten held in 1907, Shoen submitted her Long Evening (Nagayo 長夜) (Figure 25), a representation of two women of the early Edo period reading by a lamp clearly echoing ukiyo-e style, and received the third award. The older woman dressed in dark-colored kimono is arranging the light while the younger one is absorbed in reading. The feeling of evening is conveyed by the darkness which gently envelops the ground beneath the figures. Shoen's early exposure to figure painting was through looking at individual sheets of ukiyo-e prints and reading books with ukiyo-e illustrations with her mother.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>35</sup> Shoen recalls frequenting a ukiyo-e print shop (ezoshiya) called Yoshikan starting at the age of five or six. See Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 37-38. Soon after entering the elementary school, Shoen with her mother often read Takizawa Bakin's novels

Shoen may have projected the cherished memory of her childhood into the figures in this painting. It is clear that Shoen drew inspiration from the style of Nishikawa Sukenobu 西川祐信 (1671-1751), an ukiyo-e artist active in Kyoto during the early half of the eighteenth century. The appearance of the women in Shoen's painting corresponds roughly to the Kyoho era (1716-1751) as suggested by a Japanese scholar,<sup>36</sup> concurrent to Sukenobu's time. As exemplified by the figure in Beauty Standing by a Clock (Figure 26), Sukenobu's women are characterized by a gently rounded face and convey a sense of sweetness and innocence: they are believed to have represented the Kyoto ideal of feminine beauty of his time.<sup>37</sup> Shoen's women in Long Evening display a resemblance to Sukenobu's in their plump face, narrow crescent-shaped eyebrows, and tiny mouth. However, Shoen modernizes Sukenobu's bijin through naturalistic proportioning and establishing a sense of form underneath their clothes. The faces and hands are rendered with fine outline of even

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illustrated by Hokusai and made it her habit to copy the illustrations. See Seibisho, pp. 39-41, and also Seibisho sonogo, p. 112.

<sup>36</sup> Seki, "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," p. 167. The hair style of the older woman is identifiable as the "kogaimage" which became popular during the late seventeenth century. See Yoshida Kanpo and Ueda Sadao, eds., Nihon joso hensenshi (Tokyo: Sodo Shuppankyoku, 1979), pp. 84-85. The lower part of hair which extends with strong curve as seen in both figures in Long Evening became popular during the Genroku period (1688-1704) and disappeared after the mid-eighteenth century. See Minami Chie, Nihon no kamigata (Kyoto: Shikosha, 1980), p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> "Sukenobu bijin" is described by a Japanese scholar as follows: "Different from the style of Edo ukiyo-e, Sukenobu's style lacks immediate feeling of reality. His images are a synthesis of ideal and reality. His women convey a mild-mannered, graceful, and refined feeling, and reflect Tosa lineage in their rounded face, soft and plump body which seem utterly boneless like a willow branch." See Oka Naomi, "Sukenobu izen: Edo jidai no kamigata bijinga ni tsuite," Ukiyokai 1, no. 3 (1936), p. 21. Miya Tsugio points out that Yanagisawa Kien (1706-1758) in his Hitorine praised Sukenobu style and suggests that Sukenobu's bijin with a round face and an air of innocence represented the Kyoto ideal woman of his time. See "Kamigata no onna," Nihon bijutsu kogei, no. 325 (October 1965), pp. 32-39.

thickness. In contrast, the lines which describe the clothes change in thickness to represent the folds of the garments as well as to impart a sense of volume to the figures. Colors on the women's garment are applied heavily but they are delicately and tastefully balanced between the bright and the somber avoiding a garish expression. Perhaps the most successful element in Long Evening, as praised by Kaburaki Kiyokata, is its composition, daring in its simplicity and asymmetry.<sup>38</sup> The figures are pulled to the lower left corner and the frame of the picture cuts off the lamp in front of them while a large empty area occupies the upper right corner. Elimination of the background makes the viewer focus on the figures and evokes the feeling of quietude and stillness.

Shoen's artistic reputation, which had been steadily growing since the turn of the century, culminated with this Bunten acceptance. Shoen was productive. She became one of the major participants of the salon, and her works were consistently accepted at the Bunten throughout the early half of the Taisho period. They displayed an ambitious diversity in composition and subject within the field of bijinga as exemplified by Moonlight Shadow (Tsukikage 月影) (Figure 27), dated 1908, Firefly (Hotaru 螢) (Figure 28), 1913, Preparing To Dance (Maijitaku 舞仕度) (Figure 29), 1914, Flower Basket (Hanagatami 花かたみ) (Figure 30), 1915, Night of Lunar Eclipse (Gesshoku no yoi 月蝕の宵) (Figure 31), 1916, and Flame (Honoo 焔) (Figure 32) in 1918.

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<sup>38</sup> Iijima, Uemura Shoen, p. 111. The comment by Kiyokata was originally published in "Uemura Shoen-ron," Sansai 1, no. 2 (October 1946): 19.

In 1909, Shoen published a book of her paintings, Shoen bijingafu [Collection of bijinga by Shoen], and in the following year she was selected as a judiciary member for the Tatsumigakai and held that position until 1914. The Tatsumigakai, a prestigious painter's organization established in Tokyo in 1899 held study meetings and exhibitions regularly. At the end of Meiji, the group was particularly prosperous with more than 1000 painters from all over Japan participating in the exhibit.<sup>39</sup> An invitation to become a judiciary member meant the acknowledgment of one's nationally acclaimed reputation. At the age of thirty-five, clearly, Shoen acquired a status as not only a superb bijinga painter but one of the foremost Nihonga painters in Japan.

In order to climb the social ladder in the art world, Shoen continued to make an uncompromising effort. Her daily life revolved around painting activities, as captured in her son's memory of their life in the years 1907 and 1908:

It was a quiet house where I lived with my grandmother, mother, and aunt. Everyday five or six women students came to work in the room adjacent to the entrance hall. . . . Sometimes I could hear the faint voices of their conversation, but generally silence dominated the room and only the sound of washing brushes in water could be heard. The entire second floor of the house was used for my mother's studio and bedroom. My mother stayed upstairs day and night except the time for meals. As she always remained upstairs, I referred to her as "my mother who lives on the second floor." She did nothing but paint and the everyday household chores were taken care of by my grandmother and aunt.

I was completely raised by my grandmother and aunt . . . . Sometimes my mother left home saying to us, 'I am off to the museum now'. She wore kihachijo (yellow silk cloth striped with

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<sup>39</sup> For the Tatumigakai, see Asano Nagatake, Kobayashi Yukio, and Hosokawa Goryu, eds., Genshoku Meiji hyakunen bijutsukan (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1967), p. 584.

darker color) kimono and black coat with family crests, carried a copper yatate (a portable ink and brush container) and a small sketchbook wrapped in a cloth. Her hair was kept in a neat kushimaki style and she wore light make-up on her face.<sup>40</sup>

Shoko's description vividly conveys the image of his mother attentive to her feminine physical appearance, yet intensely involved in her art with no time for daily activities of motherhood. Shoen was carrying the traditionally masculine role as the head of the family, providing them with financial security. In the late Meiji Japanese society where women's abilities and responsibilities were defined in the strictly domestic term, a woman painter, engaged in the profession hitherto regarded as masculine, had to work harder just to prove her seriousness and competence. There was no concession or special accommodation made by the society for the woman of Shoen's position. Furthermore, as an unmarried mother, Shoen was practically denied the luxury of enjoying her own motherhood in public. Her only legitimate social identity being that of a painter, Shoen was compelled to concentrate on her career, relegating the responsibilities of motherhood to other women in her family.

Nothing better demonstrates Shoen's drive for and steadfast dedication to art than her sketchbooks, which were most important possession for her. When young, she had made a habit of going to the Gion Festival, also called the "Screen Festival," during which the merchants of the Gion area proudly displayed their heirloom screens. Shoen was there with her sketchbook in her hand year after year to study old masterpieces. Her visit was so consistent that eventually the local people began to regard her warmly, as if the festival was incomplete

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<sup>40</sup> Uemura Shoko, "Haha o omou," in Uemura Shoen gashu (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1972), p. 184.

without Shoen's presence. Even on the holidays Shoen did not stop. On one New Year's day, traditionally the most important holiday celebrated in Japan, Shoen went to the museum and surprised the officials by spending an entire day to sketch the paintings on exhibition.<sup>41</sup>

During the 1910s, Shoen continued to flourish. In a book on contemporary painters published in 1913, Shoen was introduced as a "master painter at the prime of life."<sup>42</sup> With social recognition came financial security. Chuo bijutsu in 1916 designated Shoen as the wealthiest woman painter in Japan at the time.<sup>43</sup> In 1914 Shoen built a traditional-style house of impressive size in Takeyamachi and named her studio within the complex as Seikaken [Studio of Living in Mist]. It was a name suggested by Seiho, for Shoen's lifestyle totally committed to painting reminded Seiho of a recluse or an immortal who lived distanced from the world of ordinary men and existed by consuming nothing but mist.<sup>44</sup> In 1916, Shoen earned the right to exhibit her work at the Bunten unconditionally, an extremely honorable status for a painter. That year, she was chosen as one of the painters who demonstrated their painting skills in front of the empress when her majesty visited the Bunten exhibit. She was given the same honor two more times during the Taisho period: in Kyoto in 1917 and 1918. Clearly by mid-Taisho, thirty years after she began her study of painting, Shoen had at last attained social

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<sup>41</sup> The Kyoto National Museum opened in 1897.

<sup>42</sup> Fukuma Kenshu, Meiji gashi Taisho gaka retsuden (Tokyo: Tomita Bunyodo, 1913), p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> "Gaka no choja," Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 1 (January 1916): 62.

<sup>44</sup> According to Shoen, she used the seal of "Seikakenshu" [Master of Seikaken] on the paintings of Chinese-style figures and other Chinese-inspired paintings in large scale. Seibisho, p. 81. For example, the seal can be seen on Komachi Washing the Paper (Soshi arai Komachi) dated 1937, in the collection of the Tokyo University of Arts.

and economical status equal or superior to her male colleagues. With financial security and professional fame firmly achieved, Shoen could now spare some time for a hobby. She began studying yokyoku in 1914 under Kongo Iwao, a noted noh performer. Soon the themes from noh play began to appear in Shoen's paintings and remained an important source of inspiration in her art for the rest of her career.

Shoen's works of the Taisho period signal both her maturity as an artist and her attempt to meet a new challenge posed by the changing artistic tenor of the time. Thematically, they can be divided into two categories: the depictions of anonymous women figures in the fuzokuga/bijinga tradition and the representations of fictional heroines. Works which belong to the first category such as Firefly, 1913, Preparing to Dance, 1914, and Night of Lunar Eclipse, 1916, illustrate Shoen's feminine ideal. As represented by the women engaged in a dance practice in Preparing to Dance and those enjoying nature in Night of Lunar Eclipse, Shoen's women subjects are almost invariably upper-class, impeccably embellished to be beautiful, and endowed with a sense of elegance and refinement. They fulfill graciously their womanly obligations and embody feminine virtue such as gentleness and grace. In short, they personify the teachings of the Onna daigaku. Stylistically, Shoen's Taisho-period works display a penchant for smoother, less pronounced lines in the depiction of garments, moving away from the use of strongly calligraphic lines which characterizes her Meiji-period paintings. At the same time, her palette begins to brighten up, demonstrating Shoen's ability as an exquisite and sensitive colorist. Both

of these stylistic features contribute to the sense of refinement emanated by Shoen's images of women.

Shoen's Taisho-period works which depict the heroines from literature represent her response to the changing artistic climate of the time. The Taisho era was a time of dynamic changes in Japanese art world when both yoga and Nihonga artists were gripped by the notion of individualism. The young artists began to demand that modern painting must directly express one's inner feelings uninhibited by the established formula in subject matter and style. They launched upon various groups and movements independent from the official salon. In Kyoto, it was manifested most strongly in the philosophy of the Association of Creative National Painting (Kokuga Sosaku Kyokai), established by a group of young Nihonga artists in 1918.<sup>45</sup> The group led by thirty-year-old Tsuchida Bakusen 土田麦僊 (1888-1936), one of Seiho's students, therefore, Shoen's colleague, encouraged "honest" and individualistic expression unhampered by tradition. Some of Bakusen's representations of woman subject illustrate what he sought to achieve. Hair (Kami 髪) (Figure 33), dated 1911, was, in the context of its time, a bold representation of female sensuality as epitomized by the exposed arm and the full representation of the supple, curvilinear form of her thigh and leg.<sup>46</sup> The correct proportion and the three-dimensional treatment of the figure make her physicality immediate and palpable. Women Divers (Ama 女) (Figure 34), 1913, exemplified Bakusen's embrace of Gauguin's

<sup>45</sup> For the most complete study on this group, see Tanaka Hisao, Nihonga ryoran no kishitsu (Tokyo: Bijutsu Koronsha, 1983).

<sup>46</sup> Kato Kazuo and Uchiyama Takeo, Murakami Kagaku/Tsuchida Bakusen, Gendai Nihon bijutsu zenshu, no. 4 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1972), p. 116.

art as well as his challenge to the newly emerging theme of nude. No one prior to this time had defied the Nihonga tradition with such expressly "primitive" style. The striking diversity in theme and style demonstrated by these two works of woman subject, separated only by two years, in itself indicates not only the modern-mindedness of Bakusen but the restless artistic climate of the time in general.

Shoen's literature-inspired paintings depict the images of women in love and form a group of the most emotional works in her oeuvre. Young Woman Miyuki (Musume Miyuki 娘深雪) (Figure 35), 1914, derives from a theme in loruri (ballad drama usually recited with the accompaniment of a shamisen). Omae お万 (Figure 36), 1915, represents one of the heroines from Five Women Who Loved Love, considered a masterpiece by a seventeenth-century novelist, Ihara Saikaku. Flower Basket (Figure 30), 1915, and Flame (Figure 32), 1918, are both based on themes from noh plays. Among them, Flame, in its representation of a ghost of a woman tormented by jealousy, is the most unusual in theme and the most powerful in the emotional weight. Inspired by Aoi no ue [Lady Aoi] in yokyoku, the painting shows an image of a ghost pathetic and agonizing yet hauntingly beautiful. The death of Shoen in January, 1918 may have caused the unusual emotional outburst in Shoen's work;<sup>47</sup> or the painting may have expressed her own feeling of jealousy stemming from a love affair which could not be consummated.<sup>48</sup> As discussed in detail in Chapter IV of this

<sup>47</sup> Seki, Uemura Shoen, p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> Miyao Tomiko writes about the love affair between Shosui (the character based on Shoen) and a younger man in Jo no mai ge, pp. 90-234. It is generally accepted that

dissertation, however, Shoen's paintings of fictional heroines of the early half of the Taisho period, which culminated in Flame, collectively represent her effort to fulfill the demand for "modern" expression within the limitation imposed by the bijinga category and her aesthetic conviction.

During the latter half of the Taisho period, bijinga was on the verge of becoming obsolete in views of the social and cultural changes. Reflecting uncertainty in the direction of her art, after Flame of 1918, Shoen ceased to participate in major exhibitions. She spent most of her time during this period fulfilling the back order of private commissions. The only exception to this was 1922 when she submitted Yokichi 楊貴妃 (Ch. Yang guifei) (Figure 37) to the reorganized official salon now called the Teiten. Toward the end of the Taisho period, as the liberal spirit of Taisho Japan began to dissipate, Shoen re-emerged with new confidence in her art and began defending the virtue of traditional bijinga. In 1924, Shoen was appointed as the first female jury member for the Teiten, and in 1926, she began submitting her works to public exhibitions once again.

### Late Years

The last two decades of Shoen's life - the 1930s and 1940s - witnessed the maturity of her art and a comfortable family life. Her son, Shoko, who had become a young, promising painter specializing in the theme of birds and flowers, married in 1928. On his wedding day, Shoen was dressed in exactly the same manner as the proud mother figure she

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Miyao wrote this episode based on the letters written by Shoen during the Taisho period.

had depicted in Blossoming thirty years earlier.<sup>49</sup> Soon Shoen's family began to expand with the arrival of grandchildren.<sup>50</sup>

In 1934 Naka passed away after seven years of illness. She was eighty-six years old. In the course of Shoen's life and career, Naka's existence had provided the principal source of inspiration and the fountainhead of spiritual strength. This, Shoen acknowledged with gratitude of the highest kind an artist could express: "My mother, who gave birth to me, also gave birth to my art."<sup>51</sup> Mother and Child (Haha to ko 母子) (Figure 38) painted in the year of Naka's death is tour de force dedicated to her memory. A graceful woman of a well-to-do family holds her infant son lovingly. Her profile reveals shaven eyebrows and blackened teeth, traditional signs of a married woman and mother. She is impeccably dressed in a summer kimono of pale green color against which the lavender of her underkimono revealed around her neck creates an exquisite color harmony. The black of her hair is echoed by her black sash, together giving strong accents to the overall light tonality of the painting. The sense of refinement imparted by the figure is enhanced by the delicate beauty of the bamboo shade decorated with a design of birds and flowers in silk embroidery. Shoen demonstrates consummate technical skill in the tactile description of various elements such as the brittle bamboo shade, the woman's silky hair covered with a transparent

<sup>49</sup> Shoko, "Haha o omou," p. 189.

<sup>50</sup> One of the four grandchildren, Uemura Atsushi (1933-) is a Nihonga artist in Kyoto today working in birds-and-flowers theme like his father. The three generations of this artist family were honored with an exhibition of their works in 1989. See Yomiuri Shinbun Osaka Honsha, ed., Bi no nagare sandai: Uemura Shoen, Shoko, Atsushi-ten (Osaka: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1989).

<sup>51</sup> Shoen's statement often quoted by Japanese scholars. From Seibisho, p. 147.

kerchief, the soft skin of the baby, and the coarse sash. The radiant beauty of this painting is achieved through Shoen's technical perfection, elegant sense of composition and color but above all derives from the tenderness of the theme as encapsulated in the loving gaze of the woman showered upon her son. The shaving of one's eyebrows and blackening of teeth were customs denounced by a renowned educator Fukuzawa Yukichi, soon after the beginning of the Meiji era, as a vestige of a feudalistic society.<sup>52</sup> As Japan continued to modernize itself, the custom began to disappear and by the time Shoen painted Mother and Child, it was virtually obsolete. Shoen never considered shaven eyebrows as evidence of social discrimination against women. She could only see beauty in them; she saw in their delicate pale blue the beauty of modesty and humbleness, the beauty of woman who found total fulfillment in her role as a wife and mother. Shoen believed that the women of late Edo and early Meiji Kyoto represented the distant world preserved especially for her to paint. Increasing Westernization of women's appearance in hairstyle and clothing which began to occur during the Taisho period seldom appealed to her.<sup>53</sup>

Shoen's anti-modernist look on women's customs and manners was paralleled by her artistic conviction:

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<sup>52</sup> Hirota Masaki, "Bunmeikaika to josei kaihoron," Nihon joseishi, vol. 4, Kindai, ed. Joseishi Sogo Kenkyu-kai (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1982), p. 14. Fukuzawa ridiculed the custom as "deforming and defacing" one's natural form given by the heaven in a short essay titled "Katawa musume" published in 1872. This essay can be found in Fukuzawa zenshu, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Kokumin Tosho, 1926), pp. 369-372.

<sup>53</sup> One exception was recorded by Shoen. Once Shoen encountered in a train two beautiful sisters wearing Western clothes and Western hairstyle. However, what Shoen saw in their gently curled hair was a "Japanese sense of beauty," and the refined appearance of the women reminded her of the Tempyo-era court ladies. See Seibisho, pp. 18-23.

I want to create a painting which radiates nobility and purity like a jewel.

It is my sincere wish to produce an image which affects the viewer in such a positive way that it cleanses and purifies the viewer's mind.

A painter should work with the deep conviction that he or she has the power to influence people through painting. . . .

What I want to accomplish in my bijinga is to create the ultimate paintings which combine truth, goodness, and beauty. My paintings are not simply faithful portrayals of beautiful women in reality. Rather, I try to express my own ideal of feminine beauty and womanhood while paying attention to realistic representation.<sup>54</sup>

In her emphasis on idealization and belief in the moral power of her painting, Shoen remained a painter of the old world. Absolute technical competence and beauty of imagery were essential in her art.

At first glance, Shoen's paintings seem to present a paradox in her life: her celebration of women who find fulfillment in their traditional role as wife and mother stands as contradiction to the choice she made for herself in real life. Yet for a woman painter whose social values and beliefs were constructed by the patriarchal views of traditional Japanese society, it was not a contradiction. Even though Shoen's determination to pursue artistic career itself may be regarded as a challenge to the society in the context of her time, feminist conviction of our times was clearly beyond Shoen's conception. Shoen was not intentionally defying the established social order either by choosing to become a painter or through the images of women she painted. The only challenge Shoen posed was that woman should neither belittle themselves nor be belittled by others no matter how they functioned in society. Shoen in her late

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<sup>54</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 92-93.

years summed up her art in her often-quoted statement, "I spent my entire life playing with anesama dolls."<sup>55</sup> On one hand, as Tomioka Taeko interprets, to call one's life-long pursuit a "play" demonstrates commendable humbleness, which in reality manifests her unshakable confidence in herself and art.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the statement gets to the heart of Shoen's art as a product of a traditional-minded woman painter. Anesama dolls are Japanese paper products shaped and dressed as brides. Playing with such dolls was, for little Japanese girls, one way to learn to conform to the expected feminine role of wife and mother. In Shoen's mind, then, to produce the images of bijin in her paintings was an act associated with the established feminine realm. Indeed, at first glance, her bijin are "dolls," embellished and adorned for display, the very images of Japanese women who were taught to be mindless and selfless in the feudalistic society. Yet Shoen fortifies her bijin with a sense of dignity and inner strength. As such, her bijin are icons of her feminine ideal, transcending individuality and humanity. They represent the idealized images of women, whom men cannot easily violate and women should emulate. As a woman whose consciousness was shaped by the feudalistic ideology, it was the only way Shoen could reconcile her gender and her commitment to bijinga, which was inherently characterized by the sexist constructions and definitions of women's role and virtue.

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<sup>55</sup> Shoen is said to have made this statement to Kaburaki Kiyokata. Kawakita Michiaki, Kawakita Michiaki bijutsu ronshu, vol. 5, Kindai hyakunen no sakka (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1978), p. 205.

<sup>56</sup> Tomioka Taeko, "Uemura Shoen: Onna ga kaku onna," Mizue, no. 801 (October 1971), p. 88.

One of the best-known works of Shoen's late period, Opening Dance (Jo no mai 序の舞) (Figure 39), dated 1936, demonstrates her principal conviction in her bijin. It is a depiction of a young woman performing a dance. She is dressed in a long-sleeved kimono and her hair is immaculately done in the traditional style. She stands alone with her back straight and her eyes quietly looking ahead. Her left hand is lightly clasped by her side while her right arm is extended in front holding a fan in her hand. She exudes an air of self-confidence. Even the bright redness of her kimono seems to augment the nobility and intelligence of her character rather than her sensuality. The painting was Shoen's favorite image in which she felt that she successfully translated into a visual image her ideal beauty of womanhood:

I wanted to express a sense of inner strength lodged within a woman, which cannot be violated by anything or anyone. I feel that this painting conveys the somewhat classic, graceful and proper feeling.<sup>57</sup>

"Classic, graceful and proper feeling" associated with the ideal image of woman in Shoen's words could be directly applied to characterize Shoen herself in her last years. Inoue Yasushi (1907-), an aspiring novelist at the time, recorded a strong impression of his meeting with Shoen at her house in ca. 1942:

I was kept waiting for about five minutes. Then the sliding door opened and Shoen appeared. Without exaggeration, I thought she was more beautiful and lively than any image in her painting. She must have been about sixty-seven or eight, but she seemed utterly ageless. . . . She spoke very politely but clearly. . . .

When leaving, I put on my shoes in the entrance hall and turned around. I noticed that Shoen had stayed in the corridor

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<sup>57</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 111.

behind the entrance hall. She was sitting there quietly facing toward me. When I bowed, she responded with a deep gracious bow. . . .

It was an unusual way of seeing off someone, I thought. One could interpret it either as a very subservient and humble gesture, or a cool and unfriendly way of saying goodbye. At any rate, the beautiful image of Shoen quietly seated on the floor lingered in my memory. I visited Shoen twice afterward and each time, she saw me off in the exactly same manner.<sup>58</sup>

As remembered by Inoue with the keen sensitivity of a novelist, Shoen in her old age was a graceful figure who imparted a quiet sense of dignity (Figure 40). She embodied in herself the language of the beauty and charm of old Kyoto where customs and manners were intricately bound with propriety.

During the last two decades of her life, Shoen produced not only large-scale exhibition pieces but numerous smaller works in the category of okubi-e in the ukiyo-e tradition, depicting a figure only above the chest. In her okubi-e type works, Shoen seems to take pleasure in incessantly rearranging the pose, changing kimono and hair accessories of the figure. Although they generally depict a woman in a seasonal context and represent the most predictable group of paintings in Shoen's oeuvre, they display diversity in composition and never show a sign of slackened attention to technical perfection. The best of them, moreover, qualify as little masterpieces. Waiting for the Moon (Taigetsu 待月) (Figure 41), dated 1944, is exquisite in the beauty of the deep blue, in the subtlety of composition, and evocation of a peaceful yet melancholic mood. In contrast, Snow Flakes (Botanyuki 牡丹雪) (Figure 42), also dated 1944,

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<sup>58</sup> Inoue Yasushi, "Uemura Shoen," Geijutsu shincho 4 (October 1953): 177. Inoue interviewed Shoen when he was working for the Mainichi Newspaper. In 1950 he received the coveted Akutagawa prize and commenced his life as a full-time novelist.

displays a dynamic composition characterized by a series of contrasts and balances. By concentrating the figures in the lower left corner, Shoen enlivens the large, empty space most effectively. The umbrellas set at different angles activate the space three-dimensionally. The strong directionality of the figure in front is balanced by the second figure who turns her face to the opposite direction. The two figures counterbalance each other in configuration as well as in color. The emphasis is clearly on the figure in a green dress, whose face is shown in full view. Yet, what makes this composition rich and exciting is Shoen's treatment of the lower left corner where the second figure is represented. The interplay among the color areas within this figure, the shapes of the negative spaces which flank the figure, and the flat area of her snow-covered umbrella as juxtaposed against the black inner area of the other umbrella and the sash of the figure in front creates an exquisite formal statement.

In her last years Shoen achieved a remarkably modern visual statement as exemplified by the two highly acclaimed works: Dusk (Yugure 夕暮 ) (Figure 43) in 1941 and Late Fall (Banshu 晩秋 ) (Figure 44) in 1943. Dusk was a tribute to her deceased mother and Shoen captured in this painting grace and tenderness of common-class Kyoto woman. It portrays a middle-aged woman threading a needle in the fading daylight. The image of a woman engaged in such a mundane domestic chore had not appeared in Shoen's oeuvre before. Kaburaki Kiyokata responded to this painting with great enthusiasm, describing it as the first image by Shoen, "which reveals the true beauty of the figure

without the adornment of formal dress."<sup>59</sup> Stylistically, the painting represents a greater tendency toward simplification in line, color, and composition which characterize Shoen's works of the last two decades. In this particular work, the simplicity of color scheme, united in the basic tone of ochre, creates the melancholic mood of the early evening and brings out the beauty of the black, red, and green placed around the figure. The lines are reduced to minimal importance and busy patterns are absent from her garment. Shoji screens are skillfully used to create a sense of depth, to frame the figure and enhance her organic form, and to divide up the surface plane of the painting. Our eyes focus on the shapes and patterns created by the flat areas of color and grid pattern of the shoji, as if it were an abstract design. Yet the strength of this painting exists in Shoen's ability to integrate aspects of formal design and evocation of rich mood. Shoen had steadily ignored the modern trend of Nihonga after the mid-Taisho period. Yet pursuing her traditional ideal, she achieved surprisingly modern and uniquely individual visual expression at the end.

Shoen made her first and only trip abroad in 1941. Accompanied by a younger artist Mitani Toshiko 三谷+糸子 (1904- ), she spent two months in China traveling and sketching. In 1945, when Japanese involvement in World War II entered its last phase and the danger of air raids on Japanese islands became the reality, Shoko persuaded her mother to move to their vacation house in a rural area in Nara. There Shoen lived quietly in a house named Reikinso [House of Crane's Cry]. By

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted by Kawakita Michiaki, "Uemura Shoen," in Uemura Shoen gashu (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1972), p. 181.

the time the war ended, Shoen had become fond of the rustic environment of the Reikinso and she spent the rest of her life in Nara.

In 1941, Shoen was appointed as a member of Imperial Office of Arts and in 1944 as an Imperial Art Counselor. Shoen received the Cultural Decoration, the highest honor bestowed upon an artist in Japan, in 1948. She was the first woman artist to be so honored. Her contribution to modern Nihonga through her unique achievement in the field of bijinga was fully recognized. On August 27, 1949 Shoen died of lung cancer. After cremation, Shoen's family found her right hand almost completely intact in bone structure, whereas her left hand did not retain its form.<sup>60</sup> One is compelled to believe that the sturdiness of Shoen's working hand demonstrated in such an unexpected way was a physical confirmation of her lifelong dedication to the art of painting.

## 2. Ito Shoha

### Early Years

The city of Ise in Mie prefecture is located to the southeast of Kyoto and several hours away by train today. The city is best-known as the site of the Ise Shrine, the ancestral shrine of the imperial family, with a history which is believed to go back to the fourth or fifth century. Not distant from the Ise Shrine is the Sarutahiko Shrine, the home of Ito Shoha. Shoha was born on April 24, 1877 to the priest Futami Teikan and his first wife in Uji, part of present Ise City. In the book on the

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<sup>60</sup> Uemura Atsushi quoted by Enchi Fumiko, Gei hitosuji ni, *Jinbutsu Nihon no joseishi*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1977), p. 215.

history of the Mie Prefecture, published in 1916, appears the following introduction on the Sarutahiko Shrine:

Located within the estate of the Futami family in the town of Urata. Enshrines the god, Sarutahiko, who is in charge of purifying the land. Commonly known as Uji Doko. The present Futami family is an ancient and respectable family as they trace their lineage all the way back to Ota no mikoto who is the descendent of Sarutahiko.<sup>61</sup>

Coming from such a respectable family, Shoha's father was socially prominent in the local community and was commonly known as Uji Doko Teikan. Shoha's given name was Futami Sato 二見佐登. There were two children before her but both died in infancy. Being the only child, her parents brought her up lovingly and generously as if she were both son and daughter.<sup>62</sup> Shoha was a bright child, quick to learn. There was a hint of precocity about her which distinguished her from other children. It has been said that when Shoha was four years old, her father gave her a pair of prince and princess dolls made from cedar. Little Shoha kept looking at and examining them for three days with attentiveness and thoroughness uncharacteristic of a four-year-old youngster. Shoha attended the Daiichi Elementary School (present Kinshu Elementary School) in her hometown. After graduating from the elementary school, Shoha commuted to the town of Futami, two miles away, to study Japanese literature (kokubungaku), and to Yamada, one mile away, to learn judo. The study of Japanese literature was most appropriate for a

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<sup>61</sup> Omori Koshu, Mie-ken fudo shiseki (1916; reprint ed., Tokyo: Rekishi Toshosha, 1979), p. 30. The Sarutahiko Shrine today is managed by Uji Doko Teikan, who is the son of Shoha's step-brother.

<sup>62</sup> The biographical information on young Shoha in this paragraph comes from her youngest daughter, Mrs. Ito Masako (1914-), through an interview conducted on February 9, 1986.

daughter of a Shinto priest who carried on the tradition of the indigenous religion. As for judo, Shoha's father recommended its practice to her, whom he regarded weak in health, to strengthen her constitution. It took considerable persuasion for the judo teacher to accept Shoha as his student as she was the first girl sent to him. As exemplified by his decision to send his daughter to train in judo, traditionally defined as a masculine sport, Shoha's father was an open-minded man.

When Shoha was about seventeen, around 1894, she began to study painting formally under an Ise painter named Isobe Hyakurin (1835-1906). By this time, Uemura Shoen had achieved her first public recognition when her Women of the Four Seasons was purchased by a British Prince in 1890. Although only two years younger than Shoen, Shoha's initiation into painting was considerably later. Hyakurin was by profession a prominent Shinto priest who held a series of positions at the Ise Shrine from 1871 to 1891.<sup>63</sup> It is highly likely that Shoha was introduced to Hyakurin through her father's association with the Shinto community. Fond of painting since youth, Hyakurin had studied with not only a local painter named Hayashi Sorin 林棕林 (?-?) but also Hasegawa Gyokuho 長谷川五峰 (1822-1879), a Shijo-school painter in Kyoto, who trained under Matsumura Keibun 松村景文 (1779-1843).<sup>64</sup> By the time Shoha became a pupil, Hyakurin had achieved reputation as a painter of historical subjects.

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<sup>63</sup> Jingu Chokokan, ed. Kyodo no gaka sannin-ten, exhibition catalog (Ise, Mie: Jingu Chokokan, 1966), no pagination. This exhibition represented the works of three painters from Ise: Gessen (1741-1809), Hyakurin, and Shoha.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Little is known about Hayashi Sorin except that he was a priest at the Ise Shrine. Araki Tadashi, Dainihon shoga meika taikan, vol. 2, Denki gehen (1934; reprint ed., Tokyo: Daiichi Shobo, 1980), p. 2165.

In the record of an exhibition held by the local artists of the Mie prefecture in 1895, the name of Futami Satoko appears with a painting titled Chrysanthemum (Kiku 菊).<sup>65</sup> This is perhaps the earliest exhibited piece by young Shoha, and it suggests that after one year of study with Hyakurin, Shoha's painting was accomplished enough to be shown at a local exhibit. In 1896 a large-scale special painting exhibition was held in Ise to celebrate the sixtieth birthday of Hyakurin.<sup>66</sup> From Kyoto, prominent Maruyama- as well as Shijo-school painters of the time came to commemorate this occasion, one of whom was Morikawa Sobun 森川悳文 (1847-1902).<sup>67</sup> Sobun had studied under Hasegawa Gyokuho together with Hyakurin. At the time of his visit to Ise, Sobun was an established painter in Kyoto known as a transmitter of traditional Shijo style rather than an innovator. In particular, he had a reputation for his mastery of orthodox brush technique. He taught at the Kyoto Prefectural Painting School between 1888 and 1895 and was commissioned in 1893 to compile a textbook of brush methods for the art classes at elementary and middle schools.<sup>68</sup> Shoha must have been introduced to Sobun at the birthday party for Hyakurin. Around 1897, increasingly serious about studying painting, she went to Kyoto to train under Sobun. She was about

<sup>65</sup> See "Suikosha daiikkai tenrankai," Kaiga soshi, no. 106 (November 1895), p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> "Isobe Hyakurin no kanreki shoga-kai," Kaiga soshi, no. 119 (December 1896), p. 4. According to this article, the exhibition was attended by 600 guests while many prominent painters of the time such as Noguchi Shohin, Kishi Chikudo, Tomioka Tessai, and Suzuki Shonen, sent in their paintings for this occasion.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Kyoto-shi bijitsukan, Kyoto gadan Edo matsu Meiji no gajintachi, pp. 271-272.

twenty years old. Shoha's father is said to have been supportive of her daughter's decision as he himself was an admirer and collector of art.<sup>69</sup>

Shoha studied under Sobun as one of his live-in students for several years and from him received her first painter's name, Bunko. During this period, according to the family record, Shoha painted Young Girl (Shojo 少女) in 1898 for which she received the third place at the fifth exhibition sponsored by the Japan Painting Association (Nihon Kaiga Kyokai); Picking New Sprouts (Wakanatsumi 若菜つみ) in 1899; and Emperor Godaigo (Godaigo tenno 後醍醐天皇) in 1900.<sup>70</sup> It is clear that Shoha was concentrating on figure painting within several years after she began studying with Sobun and demonstrated a considerable talent. A painting titled Immortal Child (Kiku jido 菊施童) (Figure 45) now in the collection of the Sarutahiko Shrine has a Bunko signature suggesting that it was painted sometime between 1898 and 1900. A medium-sized hanging scroll, it represents a Chinese boy immortal in a landscape. Thoroughly traditional in subject and style, the painting evidences an accomplished brush technique ranging from the rough brushwork which defines rocks, and a modulating linear technique which depicts the robe, to a fine, thin line used to outline the face and hands. It was likely in the area of brush technique that Shoha learned most from Sobun. In 1899 or 1900, Shoha suffered from jaundice and returned home to Mie. The several years Shoha spent studying under Sobun were not particularly

<sup>69</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako, on May 8, 1985. By this time, it seems that Shoha's birth mother had died and she had a step-mother. Shoha's decision to leave home for Kyoto may be due to some difficult situation in her family.

<sup>70</sup> This information comes from the biographical note transmitted to Shoha's family. It was given to me by Mrs. Ito Masako on April 17, 1985.

pleasant for her because of the harsh treatment she received from Sobun's wife.<sup>71</sup> She may have used the excuse of illness to leave Sobun's tutelage.

By the end of 1901, Shoha was back in Kyoto studying under Taniguchi Kokyo 谷口香嶽 (1864-1915). By this time Sobun was seriously ill and unable to paint: this may have given a legitimate excuse for Shoha to choose a new teacher instead of returning to Sobun.<sup>72</sup> Both at Sobun and Kokyo's schools, Shoha was the only woman student,<sup>73</sup> a testimony to the scarcity of women students in the Maruyama-Shijo school at the end of the nineteenth century. Taniguchi Kokyo was one generation younger than Sobun and a student of Kono Bairei. At the turn of the century, Kokyo was regarded, together with Takeuchi Seiho, as one of the most promising new leaders of Kyoto Nihonga world.<sup>74</sup> In particular, Kokyo was renowned as a painter who enlivened the tradition of historical painting by achieving a new sense of realism in the description of space, volume, and movement.<sup>75</sup> Kokyo gave his young woman student the new painter's name, Shoha.

Shoha's early works under Kokyo largely dealt with historical and literary themes: among them, Women Defending the Fortress (Shiro o mamoru onnatachi 城を守りし女達) (Figure 46), ca. 1902, and Escape of the Heike Clan to Dazaifu (Heike Dazaifuochi 平家太宰府落) (Figure 47), dated

<sup>71</sup> The painter's wife was persimonious and unkindly making Shoha work around the house as if a servant. From Mrs. Ito Masako on April 17, 1985.

<sup>72</sup> Sobun was unable to paint during the last two years of his life, i.e., 1901 and 1902. Kanzaki, Kyoto ni okeru Nihongashi, pp.100-101, note 8.

<sup>73</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako, on May 8, 1985.

<sup>74</sup> For a biographical sketch and discussion of his paintings, see Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan, Kyoto gadan Edo matsu Meiji no gaiintachi, pp.251-252.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

to 1906, are still extant.<sup>76</sup> Women Defending the Fortress is a two-fold screen. It represents the women of the tumulus period engaged in battle with bow and arrow. Whether it is based on a specific historical or legendary incident is not certain. It is an intriguing subject which derives from the ancient period predating the introduction of the patriarchal system in Japan. Judging from the nature of other works of this period by Shoha, however, it is unlikely that Shoha was making a social comment on the women's role. Rather, this particular subject was probably inspired by the strong nationalistic sentiment prevalent during the late Meiji-period in Japan. In the composition, one woman in the right, clearly the leader of the group, is pointing toward her left, while the second figure, to the opposite. The third figure crouching on the floor is tying a string around her sleeve and the two women in the far back are on guard. The figures are imbued with a naturalistic sense of movement as they stretch, bend and twist in space. By applying the gofun (thick white pigment) to the inner surface areas of the robes worn by the two figures in front, Shoha creates an illusion of shading to convey the three-dimensional form of the figures. The directional composition of the two main figures achieves a sense of tension and confrontation as if symbolic

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<sup>76</sup> The title of other works recorded are Atsumori, 1902; Lady Iga (Iga no tsubone), 1903; Parting (Aibetsu), 1904; Genji Yugao, 1905; and Quiet Retreat (Yukyo), 1907. Atsumori must have represented the tragic young warrior Taira no Atsumori (1169-1184); and Lady Iga, a beloved concubine of the ex-Emperor Gotoba (1180-1239). Genji Yugao must have been a literary subject deriving from the Tale of Genji. Parting may be the same the work called Matsurano Sayohime, once in the collection of Yamazoe Tenkodo, Kyoto. I had the opportunity to see the black-and-white photograph of this work. It depicted a grief-stricken woman waving a scarf from the top of a large rock. It was clearly based on the legend of Matsurano Sayohime who saw off her lover sail to Korea from a mountain. For the story of Matsurano Sayohime, see Takamura Itsue, Dainippon jisei jinmei jisho (1942; reprint ed., Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu Oraisha, 1980), p. 508.

of the ongoing power struggle in the war. The sense of tension is further heightened by the sharp linear accents created by the shape of the long bows pointing towards different directions. The disparate poses of the three figures overlapping one another in a narrow space in the background enhances the sense of confusion, characteristic of a battleground. It is a work which demonstrates that Shoha was a painter of accomplished technique and compositional talent at the age of twenty-five.

Escape of the Heike Clan to Dazaifu, is a more complex multi-figure composition set in a landscape. It is based on a historical incident of the twelfth century and represents a procession of the Heike people fleeing after defeat by the rival Genji clan. A long line of people proceed to the left along the rocky beach lined with pine trees. Dwarfed by the old giant trees on both sides, the exaggeratedly small scale of the figures symbolizes the transient nature of human existence. This scene from the distant past is made compelling by the skillful handling of spatial expression and naturalistic rendering of the figures. Shoha keeps the horizon line low and achieves a feeling of spatial recession to the right by gradually diminishing the sizes and changing the tonality of the trees and figures. The soldiers, women, children, and the elderly, display a variety of naturalistic, convincing poses and their feet sink into the sand underneath with the weight of their body. Their facial expressions are somber and stoic conveying the sense of resignation and tragedy. Thus, although presented in the horizontal format of yamato-e hand scroll, Shoha's work is imbued with a sense of realism distinct from the old tradition.

Both Women Defending the Fortress and Escape of the Heike Clan to Dazaifu prove that Shoha was learning well from her teacher, Kokyo. Dealing with themes relating to war, Shoha was capable of achieving contrasting expressions in composition and mood. During the period of 1902 and 1911, Shoha continued to have her paintings accepted at the New and Old Art Exhibition in Kyoto (Kyoto Shinkobijutsuhin Tenrankai ), steadily gaining recognition in the Kyoto art world.<sup>77</sup> While Uemura Shoen was clearly the best-established and best-known woman painter in Kyoto at the time, Shoha was quietly establishing her status as a serious woman painter.

Shoen and Shoha were acquainted with each other as members of an all women sketching group. Shoen recalled in her memoirs:

There were several women students in Shoen's school. I became good friends with Nakai Baien. There were six of us in a sketching group: Baien, myself, and Futami Bunko of Kokyo's school - she changed her name to Shoha afterward then took on the name Ito when she married much later - Mutobe Kiho, and Oguri somebody of Keinen's school. We were relatively close in age and decided to go on a sketch trip once a month.

There were neither cars nor trams then. Sometimes we prepared our lunches, put on straw travel shoes, and left together around four o'clock in the morning for Kurama or Ujidahara area.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The list of her works accepted at this exhibit according to the family record:

1902	<u>Atsumori</u>	certificate of merit
1904	<u>Parting</u>	fifth place
1905	<u>Genji Yugao</u>	fifth place
1906	<u>Escape of the Heike Clan to Dazaifu</u>	fifth place
1907	<u>Quiet Retreat</u>	fifth place
1908	<u>Mother and Child</u>	fifth place
1909	<u>Hide and Seek</u>	forth place
1911	<u>Caged Bird</u>	fifth place

<sup>78</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, p. 108. Nakai Baien (?-1941) is an older sister of Nakai Sotaro (1879-1966) who was an influential art historian in Kyoto during Taisho and Showa. Mutobe Kiho is said to have been a mistress of Takeuchi Seiho. See Shogyodon

It is not clear when and how often these sketch trips took place. At least, the time remembered by Shoen must have been 1901 or early 1902, immediately after Shoha became Kokyo's student, because Shoha is referred to as "Bunko of Kokyo school." Around this time, Shoha developed a strong friendship and shared a house with Mutobe Kiho, who was also a Shinto priest's daughter and a student of Seiho,<sup>79</sup> mentioned by Shoen above. Shoen's memoir cited above indicates that a small number of serious young women painters existed in Kyoto at the turn of the century and some were forming a sense of comradeship transcending the different teachers they had. From late Meiji through early Taisho, until Shoha achieved her own popularity, Shoen acted as a friendly senpai [senior] and gave various advice to Shoha.<sup>80</sup>

In June, 1905 Shoha married Ito Rojo 伊藤鷺城, a fellow student of Kokyo, who had come from Himeji. Rojo was a Christian, but there was no opposition from Shoha's family to their marriage on the religious grounds, and their union proved to be a long, happy one. Their first daughter Tomoko was born in 1906 and they had two more daughters, Yoshiko, in 1910 and Masako in 1914. Throughout late Meiji and Taisho, both Shoha and Rojo kept painting activities side by side. A review of the exhibition held by Kokyo's students in 1913 gives us a glimpse of their work at the time:

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Taigyoro Shujin, "Efude motsu onna: Teiten shuppin o mae ni seru Kyoto gadan no keishu sakka," *Daimai bijutsu* 3, no. 9 (September 1924): 48.

<sup>79</sup> Shogydon Taigyoro Shujin, "Efude motsu onna: Teiten shuppin o mae ni seru Kyoto gadan no keishu sakka," pp. 48-49.

<sup>80</sup> But when Shoha began to concentrate on bijinga later, Shoen implicitly accused Shoha of following her footsteps. From Mrs. Ito Masako, on July 1, 1985.

Rojo's Festival Day (Matsuri no hi 祭の日) represents the divine horses displayed during the Aoi Festival. While the accurate depiction of the horse gear is the highlight of this painting, Rojo is also able to imbue an air of classical nobility to the figure of the groom. It is a clear indication that Rojo is making notable progress in painting. Selecting Merchandise (Shinasadame 品さだめ) by Shoha represents a high-ranking maidservant shopping through the window covered by a bamboo blind. Shoha is able to not only convey the elegant mood of the figure but also execute a detailed depiction of the embroidered coat of the figure. Her superb technique and careful attention to detail particularly deserve recognition. It is fortuitous that Rojo and Shoha, unlike Ikeda Terukata and his wife, are able to retain their individual styles in figure depiction.<sup>81</sup>

Rojo was primarily a painter of historical subjects particularly skilled in the depiction of warriors and horses. Shoha, as indicated by the subject mentioned in the above commentary, was working with biinga themes by this time. The mention of her "superb technique and careful attention to detail" testifies to her accomplished skill and calls to mind Shoen's meticulous painting style.

At the end of the Meiji period, Shoha was a promising woman painter whose name was known locally through her works displayed at the New and Old Art Exhibition in Kyoto. National recognition was more difficult to achieve. Between 1908 and 1914, Shoha almost every year submitted her painting to the Bunten but acceptance eluded her.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> "Jiyakai kaiga tenrankai," Kyoto bijutsu, no. 27 (1913), p. 19. Ikeda Terukata (1883-1921) and his wife Shoen (1888-1917) were both accomplished biinga painters in Tokyo. Their paintings were extremely close in style sometimes indistinguishable from each other's.

<sup>82</sup> The list of paintings rejected at the Bunten according to the family record:

- 1908 Bamboo Dragonfly
- 1909 Night of the New Year's Shrine Visit (Hatsumode no yoru)
- 1911 Selecting Merchandise (Shinasadame)
- 1912 Story of Biwa
- 1913 Blackened Teeth

Although the paintings have not survived, the titles of her paintings known today indicate that Shoha during this time was moving away from historical themes. Bamboo Dragonfly (Omocha tonbo 玩具トンボ), 1908, and Hide and Seek (Kakurenbo かくれんぼ), 1909, most likely represented children playing. Those two works as well as Mother and Child (Haha to ko 母子), 1908, may have been inspired by the birth of Shoha's first daughter in 1906. The titles of some other works indicate bijinga subject. Selecting Merchandise (Shinasadame 品さだめ), 1911, is probably the same work displayed at Kokyo's students' exhibit in 1913 discussed above. Story of Biwa (Biwaki 琵琶記), 1912, represented the heroine of a fourteenth-century Chinese drama wandering in search of her husband. Shoha was to paint the same theme in 1921. Blackened Teeth (Hagurome はぐろめ), 1913, it is safe to presume, represented the fuzoku of a married woman of the Edo period. Woman Insect Vender (Onna mushiuri 女虫売), 1914, which likewise dealt with the Edo-period fuzoku, was a subject Shoha was to repeat in Evening (Yugure 夕ぐれ), 1932, for the official salon. Caged Bird (Kago no tori かごの鳥), 1911, probably represented a woman for it is an euphemism for a kept woman, i.e., a concubine or mistress.

Shoha was keenly aware of the rising popularity of bijinga at the time. In fact, any aspiring woman painter would have known Shoen's reputation and work. As the Bunten began in 1907, woman-painters of Tokyo led by Sakakibara Shoen (later Ikeda Shoen) (1888-1917) and Kawasaki Ranko (1882-1918) began to make their names known through their bijinga. They were clearly inspired by Uemura Shoen's success.

Shoha could not ignore this new phenomenon and decided also to work in bijinga. Shoha's bijinga turned out to be in demand, for she held a one-person bijinga exhibit in the spring of 1914.<sup>83</sup>

### Middle Years

Shoha prospered during the Taisho period. In particular, 1915 was a memorable year in Shoha's career. Her Preparing to Paint (Seisaku no mae 制作の前) (Figure 48) was not only accepted by the Bunten but given third-place honors. Believed to be a self-portrait, the painting depicts a young Nihonga woman painter seated on the floor. The figure is surrounded by painting equipment such as a large piece of paper mounted on a board, brushes, water container, and numerous small plates. Dressed in a simple dark blue kimono, the painter appears to be contemplating in preparation for her new work. Many books are opened, piled, and scattered in front of her, and the opened pages of the book in her hand shows combs and a mirror. It is a matter-of-fact representation of a woman painter busy working in her studio. During this year a great number of bijinga, both by men and women painters, were exhibited side by side at the Bunten. Placed among the many bijinga which concentrated on the doll-like beauty of women with the emphasis on their external appearances, Shoha's work attracted much attention for the freshness of its theme and the unembellished treatment of the woman subject.

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<sup>83</sup> See Kyoto bijutsu, no. 32 (1914), p. 28.

The portrayal of a woman painter, or an image of a working woman, could not have appeared at a more opportune time. For during early Taisho, the Japanese society witnessed a vigorous women's movement while an increasing number of "professional women" stimulated lively discussions on the women's role in society. However, Shoha was not consciously promoting the image of an elite professional woman to stir up a controversy on women's issue. The relatively small scale of the figure in the painting de-emphasizes the impact of her presence, making her appear "modest" to the viewer. Her gentle demeanor likewise bespeaks of conformity to the traditional definition of feminine virtue. Like Shoen who embraced values imposed by masculine society, Shoha did not question the validity of women's position established within the patriarchal system. She cherished her role as wife and mother and thrived on the public acceptance of herself as an artist who also fulfilled traditional womanly obligations. Nevertheless, her very decision to choose herself as a subject for a painting indicates positive consciousness about herself as an individual. It was precisely the type of consciousness women in the pre-modern Japanese society had been denied. In this, Preparing to Paint was precisely a product of its time.

Shoha's career was further boosted in 1916 when she achieved another triumph at the Bunten through her painting titled Newspaper Serial (Tsuzukimono つづきもの) (Figure 49). The most celebrated work in Shoha's oeuvre today, it represents a woman in the kitchen eagerly reading a serial novel in a newspaper in the early morning. Visible in the background is part of a kitchen typical of a Taisho-period middle-class family. The traditional wood stove and iron rice cooker are juxtaposed

with the gas stove, a sign of modern technology. Towels hang on a bamboo pole suspended on a wall and a calender adorns a pillar. Echoing this mundane setting, the woman is dressed in her everyday wear, a simple blue cotton kimono. Placed beside her is a toothbrush and a towel enhancing the sense of ordinariness conveyed by the scene. Furthermore, lively, "pretty" colors, which are the basic hallmark of bijinga, are absent in this painting. Although Shoha used a model for the figure, the subject itself represented Shoha's own everyday routine.<sup>84</sup> No other woman painter had produced such a straightforward image of a middle-class woman engaged in a modest, daily activity with such a convincing sense of naturalism. In its refreshing rendition of a contemporary everyday scene, Newspaper Serial exemplified the new type of bijinga, unlike the aristocratic style exemplified by Shoen, with which common people could easily identify. Generally critics and public received the painting with enthusiasm, and Shoha became the darling of the masses.<sup>85</sup>

With her success at the Bunten, Shoha seems to have joined the elite class of Kyoto painters. Soon after 1915, with a reputation as a nationally recognized painter, Shoha began to take private students. Her school was prosperous and the number of students consistently exceeded twenty: some were young daughters and relatives of distinguished families such as the famous politician of the time, Saionji Kinmochi (1849-1940).<sup>86</sup> In 1917, she was given the honor of painting in front of

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<sup>84</sup> Mrs. Ito Masako, quoted by Akutagawa Kiko, "Tsuzukimono," Yomiuri Shinbun, 9 May 1982.

<sup>85</sup> Some criticized the detailed depiction of the background as excessive. Ishii Hakutei, "Bunten no Nihonga," Chuo bijutsu, no. 11 (November 1916): p. 6; and Kaburaki Kiyokata, "Jinbutsuga," in the same publication, p. 18.

<sup>86</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako, on July 1, 1985.

the empress along with four other painters: Uemura Shoen, Takeuchi Seiho, Tomioka Tessai (1836-1924) and Yamamoto Shunkyo (1871-1933). The other four had far more illustrious and established careers than Shoha and to be summoned for this occasion signified great honor and social prestige for her. Shoha received a similar honor in 1923, this time painting for a princess.

Shoha basically centered her artistic career on the official salon. When the Association of Creative National Painting was established in Kyoto in 1918, Shoha had already achieved recognition at the Bunten. Furthermore she felt that the anti-establishment radicalism of the group was not appropriate for women and remained as a distant observer.<sup>87</sup> This clearly reflected Shoha's conservative perception of her own gender. Although she exemplified the emerging class of modern professional women through her success as an artist, her self-esteem as woman artist was firmly anchored within the traditional definition of femininity. To be assertive or "radical" to the point of rigorously defying the established order of society, for Shoha, was against womanly virtue of modesty and docility.

Shoha was listed as one of the founding members of the Japanese Painters' Group for Freedom (Nihon Jiyu Gadan) when the group was formed in November, 1919. The group consisted of sixteen Kyoto Nihonga painters who represented the conservative trend. They felt alienated from the official salon when it reformed its structure in 1919 to accommodate the newest trend initiated by groups such as the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

Association of Creative National Painting.<sup>88</sup> Invited by some of the painters, Shoha seems to have joined the group without a strong conviction and quickly regretted it,<sup>89</sup> for she withdrew from the group only several months later, in January 1920.<sup>90</sup> Several reasons can be suggested for Shoha's quick withdrawal from this group. First, and perhaps most important, may have been a political reason. Takeuchi Seiho, the most powerful leader of Nihonga artists in Kyoto, denounced the movement as reactionary while he fully supported the Association of Creative National Painting. In the world of Kyoto Nihonga, it was not wise to incur Seiho's wrath if one were to pursue a career as a professional painter. The second reason may be an artistic one. Shoha perhaps realized that she did not agree with the staunch conservatism propagated by the group. Indeed, Shoha's paintings such as Preparing to Paint, 1915, and Newspaper Serial, 1916, seemingly innocuous to our eyes today, were refreshing renditions of contemporary life-style of Japanese women in the context of the early Taisho period. Both signaled "modernity" in subject matters, capturing the aspects of the Taisho culture and society which gave its period a particular character.

During the Taisho period, Shoha maintained a steady pace and continued to submit her work to the official salon and other major

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<sup>88</sup> Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 260. For the activity of this group, also see Kanzaki, Kyoto ni okeru Nihongashi, pp. 219-221. The reorganization of the Bunten to the Teiten in 1919 was brought about as the result of the appearance of many independent art groups during the Taisho period, which explicitly or implicitly criticized the Bunten. The purpose of this reorganization was to incorporate artists from even the anti-Bunten groups to establish an all-round national exhibit. See Hashimoto Kizo, Kyoto gaden (Tokyo: Sansaisha, 1968), pp. 83-85.

<sup>89</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako, on July 1, 1985.

<sup>90</sup> Kanzaki, Kyoto ni okeru Nihongashi, p. 220.

exhibitions. Sprouts (Futaba ふたば) (Figure 50), 1918, represented a heart-warming image of a mother and a daughter planting seedlings in flower pots. Typical of Shoha's style at the time, it is an unpretentious depiction of an everyday scene which could be associated with any middle-class family. Summer (Natsu 夏) (Figure 51), 1920, was a new version of her self-portrait in which the painter dressed in casual western clothes was shown leaning against the window of her studio.

In 1921, Shoha turned away from familiar contemporary themes and returned to a literary subject, Story of Biwa (Biwaki 琵琶記) (Figure 52), the subject which she is recorded to have painted in 1912. The theme is based on a Yuan novel of the same title by Komei (or Guoming in Chinese) (1305?-1359) in which a faithful woman travels around by playing a biwa (pipa in Chinese) in search of her missing husband. The painting was exhibited at Japan-France Art Exchange Exhibit and donated by Shoha to the French Government in 1922. A black-and-white postcard, which is the only visual document of this work today, indicates that it was an ambitious work. In a vertically elongated format, the heroine is represented playing her biwa in front of a gate. With a downward gaze, she appears somber and withdrawn. Farther back from the gate and a wall behind her is a portion of a round window: the curving lines of the gate and the window gently echo the outline the figure. Shoha's husband, Rojo, described the painting in detail when he sat in for an interview for Shoha because she was busy painting:

The composition represents Shogoro playing a biwa in front of a gate. . . . Above the wall is an extended portion of a paulownia tree. Its fruit is ripe and hangs from the tree onto the tiled-roof of the wall. paulownia fruit and leaves have fallen on the ground

enhancing the lonely feeling of the autumn scene. The robe of the figure, dating to the T'ang period, is made from coarse cotton. As she is in mourning, she wears subdued colors: her coat is grey and her trousers are white.<sup>91</sup>

Rojo's description above suggests the somber and quiet color scheme of the painting. Even when dealing with a literary theme, Shoha seems to have been avoiding the use of bright, decorative colors which were associated with the traditional *bijinga*.

For a Japan Art Exhibit sponsored by Daimai Newspaper Company in 1922, Shoha sent a work titled *Hating the Mirror* (*Onkyo* 怨鏡) (Figure 53).<sup>92</sup> Today we can only examine a postcard made from the painting. In this work, a woman, probably of the early Edo period, is represented in the center with a mirror in her hand. Her facial features are unattractive to the point of grotesquerie and contrast against the beauty of her garment. She is clearly lamenting her lack of physical beauty. Too literary and melodramatic as a pictorial representation, the work is not entirely successful. The attempt to disassociate beauty from a woman subject demonstrates Shoha's awareness of the rising criticism of *bijinga* as merely pretty and superficial representations of women. At the same time, the basic concept of "hating the mirror" derives from the traditional premise that women must be physically beautiful and be concerned with their outward appearances. Thus the work indicates Shoha's effort to accommodate a challenge to create a more "humanized"

<sup>91</sup> "Bijutsu kisetsu o hikaete 15: *Biwaki no Shogoro o kaku Ito Shoha-shi*," *Kyoto Hinode Shinbun*, 1 October 1921. The similar description is given by Shoha in "Shina shosetsu biwaki no onna shujinko o daizai to shite Teiten shuppin o kaku Ito Shoha joshi no shosoku," *Kyoto Nichinichi Shinbun*, 26 September 1921.

<sup>92</sup> The study for this painting was published in *Teshi to geijutsu*, no. 121 (December 1923).

image of woman, while it also reveals her indebtedness to the values established by the masculine society, which in the first place created the tradition of *bijinga*. At any rate, the work demonstrates that Shoha was very eager to explore subjects of womanhood even beyond naturalistic concerns which underlined her work during the Taisho period.

In 1922 also, Shoha sent Milking a Goat (Yagi no chichi 山羊の乳) (Figure 54) to the Teiten. Again we can only see the postcard reproduction of this work today. It represents a middle-aged farm woman milking a goat in a contemporary rural setting. Continuing her commitment to naturalistic themes, Shoha captures a moment in the routine activity of a humble farmer's life. Wild flowers blossoming on the ground and a green meadow stretching into the distance instill the painting with a peaceful bucolic mood, rather than a sense of hard labor associated with farm work. Shoha's oeuvre during the Taisho period, discussed above, clearly demonstrate that she was creating paintings of women subjects quite distinct from the images of upper-class women eternalized in Shoen's art.

During the Taisho period, Shoha's reputation as an artist eclipsed that of her husband's. Rojo, although a frequent participant at the New and Old Art Exhibition in Kyoto during late Meiji, never achieved national recognition. However, Rojo must have been a man of easy nature not threatened by the extraordinary success of his wife. In 1921, he willingly sat in as surrogate for Shoha at an interview when she was busy painting; and his articulate, detailed description of Shoha's painting in process demonstrates a very close working relationship between the two

of them.<sup>93</sup> Throughout the Taisho period he continued to paint historical themes specializing in military subjects.<sup>94</sup> And as late as 1928 he was active and well-known in the Kyoto art community: an article in a local art magazine published during that year describes him as a "friendly and good-natured" man.<sup>95</sup>

It is noteworthy that while Shoen's mother, Naka, provided her with a spiritual support and assistance in the operation of daily life, enabling Shoen to flourish as an artist, Shoha's husband, Rojo, gave encouragement and understanding to Shoha's art, taking the back seat in career to his wife. One may argue that Shoen, because of her unorthodox private life as an unmarried mother, felt compelled to expound on moral principle through the idealized images of women in her paintings. Shoha, in contrast, fulfilled the "normal" womanly obligations in conformity with the moral codes of the society. For her, it was not a matter of exigency to extensively demonstrate her moral stance in art. To be sure, the painting such as Story of Biwa, 1921, can be interpreted to convey a moral message in its representation of a chaste wife. However, the subjects of Shoha's Taisho-period paintings, which make her an unique and memorable artist, are those which are freely drawn from the scenes of her daily life. Secure in her position as a wife-mother-artist, Shoha's professional and private realms often overlap each other, resulting in more ordinary and less idealized images of women.

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<sup>93</sup> See "Bijutsu kisetsu o hikaete 15: Biwaki no Shogoro o kaku Ito Shoha-shi." According to an interview with Mrs. Ito Masako on February 9, 1986, Rojo often helped Shoha paint the background scene.

<sup>94</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako on February 9, 1986.

<sup>95</sup> See Shimizu Sei, "Kyoto gadan meika homonki," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 196 (April 1928), pp. 8-9.

Shoha was prosperous throughout late Taisho and early Showa. She built a large house near the Imperial Palace around 1920. In 1921, she had close to forty students ranging in age from fifteen to forty; many parents of young women were reported to have chosen Shoha as a teacher for their daughters as they could trust her personal integrity.<sup>96</sup> Financially established, Shoha was able to afford several maidservants to help with house chores.<sup>97</sup> With their help, Shoha struggled to juggle her career and family life. Her children had to be content with meals prepared by the servants, and they never saw their mother attending school events.<sup>98</sup> Shoha, however, did not hesitate to abandon her work when a family crisis or an important family event required her attention. She did not send any work to the official salon in 1924 when her youngest daughter was hospitalized<sup>99</sup> and in 1926 when her eldest daughter was married. Society seems to have looked upon her kindly during such times for they were legitimate excuses for a "mother painter" who managed both career and family life. One magazine even reported the illness of Shoha's daughter as worthy news.<sup>100</sup>

Throughout the Taisho period, after her success at the Buntan, Shoha remained an extremely popular woman painter. Newspapers and women's magazines often requested interviews with her. In particular, the conservative women's magazine, Fujin gaho, frequently reported

<sup>96</sup> "Shi to shi shufu to shitenno kyohanteki keishu gaka," Yomiuri Shinbun, 24 September 1921.

<sup>97</sup> From Mrs. Ito, on February 9, 1986.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ito Shoha, "Wakaki joseigaka no kanashimi," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 9 (September 1924): 15.

<sup>100</sup> "Gadan fubun," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 130 (August 1924), p. 20.

Shoha's activities from the later part of Taisho to the beginning of Showa.<sup>101</sup> One must remember that although the Taisho period was a time when women began to assert their individuality, the conservative current based on the ideal of "good wife and wise mother" still dominated Japanese society. Shoha had achieved her place in both worlds. Her successful career in a field which was socially respectable and still new to women was balanced by her traditional role as a wife and mother of three children. This combination of modernity and tradition made Shoha an exemplary woman in the eyes of Taisho Japanese. Public perception of Shoha at the time can be summed up in an article published in a newspaper in 1921 under the heading of "Model woman painter both as a teacher and housewife":

The behavior of some women painters [with loose morals] invite accusations as if they are acting like their male counterparts. This is most deplorable when one considers the basic nature of women. There is one respectable woman painter, however, who stands free from this criticism and her name is Shoha. . . . Coming from a dignified Shinto family in Ise, Shoha's conduct is respectable and she represents the best example of what a Japanese woman should be. The way she manages a household of three children and continues to revere her husband as the head of the family [in spite of having her own successful career] mirrors the teachings of Onna daigaku. She is the pride of Kyoto city. . . . Many parents feel secure about sending their daughters to Shoha because of her impeccable moral character. . . .<sup>102</sup>

The article illustrates that the ideal of Onna daigaku still prevailed even in later Taisho and that Shoha's moral character as a traditional woman was just as important as, if not more than, her artistic achievement.

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<sup>101</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako on February 9, 1986.

<sup>102</sup> "Shi to shi saufu to shite no kyohanteki keishu gaka."

Besides her ideal social standing, Shoha was a woman of pleasant appearance (Figure 55) and possessed considerable personal charm as described in a magazine article in 1928:

She is polite, graceful, and very charming with feminine manners. Indeed she deserves her reputation as a woman painter.<sup>103</sup>

Quite clearly, besides impeccable moral character, feminine personality as codified by the dominant masculine view, was an important component of an ideal woman painter.

### Late Years

In 1928 she joined the Chikujokai, a group of painters under the guidance of Takeuchi Seiho, among whom was Shoen. The Chikujokai was the largest and most prominent study group in Kyoto. Ever since her teacher Kokyo died in 1915, Shoha had remained independent.<sup>104</sup> The decision to join Chikujokai at this late point - Shoha was fifty-one and well-established as an artist - may have been politically motivated to ensure her place in the Kyoto art world. Or else, she may have truly felt a need for a teacher.

Shoha remained artistically active until World War II participating in both the official salon and the Kyoto City Art Exhibit. In 1931 she was given the honor of exhibiting her work free of jury at the official salon. Her paintings of the early Showa period display a strong emulation of the classical tradition, turning away from her naturalistic

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<sup>103</sup> Shimizu Sei, "Kyoto gadan meika homon-ki," *Toshi to geijutsu*, no. 173 (January 1928), p. 25.

<sup>104</sup> It has been suggested that Shoha worked independently to avoid getting involved romantically with a teacher, who always had to be male at her time. From Mrs. Ito Masako and Mrs. Makino Mikiko, in an interview conducted on February 9, 1986.

themes centered on ordinary people. As early as in 1925, Shoha had chosen a classical subject in Hallway (Kairo 廻廊) (Figure 56), sent to the Teiten in that year. A representation of a group of court ladies in an architectural setting, the work was clearly inspired by the yamato-e handscroll tradition. A whole-hearted embrace of yamato-e style was even more strongly evident in Court Ladies and Autumn Grasses (Akigusa to miyazukaeseru onnatachi 秋草と宮仕之女子達) (Figure 57), dated 1928. Represented in bird's-eye perspective, seven women and one young girl are shown in various poses among autumn grasses and flowers, clearly following the classical style exemplified by the Tale of Genji scroll. Meticulous attention is paid to the detailed depiction of costumes and flowers, but the composition is mediocre and brushwork is not her best. In Lady Autumn Lover (Akikonomu no chugu 秋好中宮) (Figure 58), dated 1929, Shoha focused on a single figure and continued the yamato-e-inspired style seen in the Court Ladies of the previous year.

From the 1930s come examples of Shoha's strong works of the early Showa period. Extant today, is Lady Iga (Iga no tsubone 伊賀の局) (Figure 59), dated 1930. A subject Shoha painted first in 1903, it is a representation of a historical figure, a beloved mistress of the retired Emperor Gotoba (1180-1239). A dispute over a large territory the emperor gave to her was one of the incidents which eventually led to the battle of Jokyu (Jokyu no hen) in 1221, as the result of which the Emperor Gotoba was defeated by the Kamakura government and exiled to Oki Island.<sup>105</sup> In the painting, the heroine, who was originally a dancer

<sup>105</sup> For a historical account of this incident, see Ishii Susumu, Kamakura bakufu, Nihon no rekishi, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1965), pp. 348-392.

named Kamegiku, stands in the center holding a fan in her hand as if ready to commence a dance for her exiled emperor. The part of the fence visible on the right is broken and the ground shows signs of neglect covered with wild grasses and plants. The desolate background enhances the sense of melancholy conveyed by the figure who seems unattentive to her disheveled hair. The basic color scheme based on blue and green reminds us of the style of yamato-e and imbues the painting with a classical feeling. Shoha demonstrates her superlative brush work in the depiction of long, cascading hair of the figure and the flowing lines of grass blades in the background. Furthermore, her treatment of the transparent garment with meticulous details testify to her consummate technique.

More plebeian in subject matter was Evening (Yugure 夕ぐれ) (Figure 60), submitted to the Teiten of 1932. One commentary gave a positive review:

It depicts an insect vender under a willow tree, the fuzoku of the middle Tokugawa period. Using masterly technique, the painter represents a refreshing and beautiful image. . . .<sup>106</sup>

An old color reproduction of this painting shows a woman standing beside her portable stall. Enveloped by an approaching darkness of the evening, she is alone with her insects. She is represented in three quarters back view and her face is covered with a scarf. Choice of such a humble subject, even though of the distant past, suggests Shoha's persistent interest in finding a woman subject from the ordinary social class.

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<sup>106</sup> Takeuchi Umematsu, quoted in Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed., Nittenshi, vol. 10, Teitenhen 5 (Tokyo: Nitten, 1983), p. 494. This comment was originally published in Haikaijitsu (December 1932).

In great contrast from the above work was Temple Visit on the Thirteenth Year (Jusan mode 十三詣) (Figure 61), 1936. It is a two-fold screen, which represents a mother and daughter of a well-to-do merchant family of the late Edo period.<sup>107</sup> Jusan mode was a traditional custom in Kyoto in which thirteen-year old boys and girls paid a visit to the Kokuzo bosatsu (Akasagarbha) at the Horinji temple in Saga on the thirteenth day of the third month of the lunar calendar. This, they believed, would result in good fortune and wisdom. In Shoha's work, the young girl on the left stands with a mirror to her back. For this special occasion, she is dressed in her best. The moss-colored kimono is decorated with an exquisite design of a landscape with cherry trees. In keeping with the muted color of the robe is her white sash decorated with a fan design in green, ochre, and blue. These subdued colors are juxtaposed with the vivid orange and red of the undergarment creating a striking color contrast. Her elaborate outfit is matched by her hair ornamented with numerous accessories. The mother figure on the right, elegantly dressed in browns and grays, is checking the appearance of her daughter for one last time before their visit to the temple. Visible behind her is perhaps an offering of food and sake to the Kokuzo. It is an ambitious and unusual work in Shoha's oeuvre for its almost obsessive attention to the description of the costume. At the same time, the work demonstrates Shoha's flawless technique in the uncompromising depiction of details. It is a bijinga in its most orthodox sense for the

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<sup>107</sup> This is the correct title and date of the painting according to the family record and Mrs. Ito Masako. It has been often mistitled as Mother and Child (Haha to ko). See, for example, Seibu Bijutsukan and Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, eds., Kindai Nihongani miru joeshibitan (Osu: Seibu Bijutsukan and Nihon Keizai Shunbunsha, 1985), plate 10.

beauty of its image and assiduous attention to the appearance of the figures.

The lack of proper visual material other than the small postcard-size reproductions makes it difficult to capture a comprehensive view of Shoha's works of the Showa period before the war. However, during the 1930s and early 1940s, as exemplified by the three works discussed above, Shoha seems to have focused largely on women subjects representing the Edo-period fuzoku and occasionally worked with historical figures.<sup>108</sup>

Shoha's participation in large exhibits ceased after World War II. However, she continued to paint small-scale works. In 1949 she was still well-known enough to be written about in an article concerning her husband's death on August 8, 1948.<sup>109</sup> In 1960, at the age of eighty-three, Shoha participated in the Exhibition of Kyoto Women Painters (Kyoraku Joryu Sakkaten) with a small work titled Viewing Plum Blossoms (Kanbai) and was featured in a newspaper; she was then showing only five or six small paintings annually at non-government exhibitions.<sup>110</sup> In her late years she was generally considered an "orthodox" bijinga artist filling the place left vacant by Shoen.<sup>111</sup> Shoha died at the age of ninety-one in 1968.

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<sup>108</sup> The titles of Shoha's some other works of this period are: Blackened Teeth (Hagurome), 1938; Visit to a Shrine (Kamimode), 1939; Wife of Yamanouchi Kazutoyo (Yamanouchi Kazutoyo no tsuma), 1940; Nursemaid (Chibit), 1942.

<sup>109</sup> Toyota Yutaka, "Haru wa medetashi Kansai bijingadan santai," Shin Nippon bijutsu dokuhon, no. 18 (1949), p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> "Hachijusan-sai de jonetsu no saikan: Ito joshi," Kyoto Hinode Shinbun, 16 November 1960.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Kajiwara Hisako

#### Early Years

Kajiwara Hisako was born in Kyoto on December 22, 1896 as the second daughter of Kajiwara Isaburo. Her given name was Hisa 久. She had one elder sister, one younger sister and brother. The Kajiwara family managed a sake-brewing business in the Chion-in Furumonzen-cho in the Higashiyama district and Hisako was brought up in a comfortable environment of this well-to-do merchant family. In 1903, Hisako entered the Yusei Elementary School where she excelled in all subjects but particularly in art, calligraphy, and compositional writing.<sup>112</sup> In 1906, when Hisako was ten, her mother passed away.<sup>113</sup> The death of her mother at such an early age certainly meant loneliness for Hisako. At the same time the absence of mother, who would normally prepare a daughter with a strict discipline for her future role as a wife and mother, may have allowed Hisako to grow up with a less traditional attitude.<sup>114</sup>

In 1909 she entered the Rokuhara Middle School and went on to the Second High School for Women in Kyoto (the Kyoto Daini Koto

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<sup>112</sup> Sato Aiko, Kindai Nihon joseishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu (Tokyo: Kajima Kenkyusho Shuppankai, 1970), pp. 192-193.

<sup>113</sup> Four sources provide Hisako's biographical information: Sato, Kindai Nihon joseishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu, pp. 191-210; Uchiyama Takeo, Gogyo rokujunen kinen: Kajiwara Hisako-ten (Osaka: Sankei Shinbunsha, 1979), no pagination; Fujita Takeshi and Baba Kyoko, Kajiwara Hisako/Hirota Tazu/Kitazawa Eigetsu, Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu, vol. 7 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), pp. 74-80; and Shiokawa Kyoko, Saikan hitosuji (Tokyo: Kyuryudo, 1987), pp. 91-142. Among these, only Sato maintains that it was 1906 when Hisako's mother died. Sato, Kindai Nihon joseishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu, p. 193. The other scholars present the date of her mother's death as 1909. I follow Sato's information as it is the earliest biography based on an interview with the painter.

<sup>114</sup> Fujita and Baba, Kajiwara Hisako/Hirota Tazu/Kitazawa Eigetsu, p. 75.

jogakko) two years later.<sup>115</sup> By this time, secondary education for Japanese women had become more readily available. Twenty years younger than Shoen and Shoha, Hisako grew up in a more "civilized and enlightened" society in which the Japanese had undergone various transitions toward the goal of modernization. However, in the context of late Meiji, women's opportunities for higher education were still limited to the members of the privileged class and well-to-do-families. As a daughter of a wealthy merchant family, Hisako was able to receive higher education. In addition, Hisako's father sent her to take lessons in womanly disciplines such as tea and flower arrangement after regular school hours.<sup>116</sup>

During her years at the jogakko, Hisako became interested in painting and also began to study poetry in traditional waka form under a poet named Yoshii Isamu. Hisako admired Yosano Akiko 与谢野晶子 (1878-1942), a leading woman poet of the Romanticist movement, who established her reputation with a passionate and expressive literary style. Soon she began sending her poems to literary magazines under the name of Hisako, which she was also to adopt for her painting later.<sup>117</sup> Hisako which includes the character of hi 緋 [scarlet] is vicually far more expressive and assertive than her real name Hisa meaning "permanence." It was an apt choice for a young woman who was to choose painting as her life-time profession.

<sup>115</sup> Sato, Kindai Nihon Joseishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu, p. 193. Other scholars maintain that Hisako entered a jogakko in 1909.

<sup>116</sup> Sato, Kindai Nihon Joseishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu, p. 194.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

It is generally believed that Hisako's art teacher at the jogakko, Chigusa Soun 千穂早雲 (1873-1944), was the first to recognize her artistic talent and encourage her to study painting seriously. Today, not much is known about Soun's life or his work. He was trained as a Nihonga painter under Takeuchi Seiho. He also received instructions on oil painting technique from Asai Chu (1856-1907), a prominent yoga artist in Tokyo who moved to Kyoto in 1902 and established the Kansai Art Institute (Kansai Bijitsuin) in 1906.<sup>118</sup> It is not clear how early Soun began studying with Asai Chu, but in 1906, Soun established the Heigokai [The Association of the Heigo Year] with four other Nihonga artists, who were equally interested in oil painting technique, and exhibited their works twice a year in Kyoto: their activities continued until early 1913.<sup>119</sup> Young Hata Teruo, who was to achieve notoriety for his maverick lifestyle and for his poignant images of prostitutes and other women during the Taisho period, also was a member of the Heigokai in 1910.<sup>120</sup> During that year both Teruo and Soun attended the Nameless Society (Mumeikai), a study group of artists and art historians in Kyoto to discuss the newest ideas of art introduced from the West. Association with such groups as the Heigokai and the Nameless Society suggests that Soun was among the most progressive-minded artists in Kyoto at least at the end of the Meiji period.

None of the paintings by Soun from this period seems to remain today. At least, it is known that for the first Buntan held in 1907 Soun

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<sup>118</sup> Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 100.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

sent a work titled Return Road (Modorimichi 戻道), a representation of a laborer and a cheap saloon hostess, and was promptly rejected.<sup>121</sup> The choice of such a working-class theme together with an interest in oil painting technique indicates Soun's commitment to realistic subject and style at the time. Years later Hisako remembered Soun's words directed at her:

It is meaningless to paint only images of women just looking pretty. Only if you are capable of painting women who look like they could bleed when cut, will I help you study painting.<sup>122</sup>

From Soun, Hisako learned that painting was not just creating decorative pictures but depicting the truth about human life. His teaching profoundly influenced Hisako in the course of her painting career during the Taisho period.

Upon graduating from the girl's school in 1914, Hisako became a student of Kikuchi Keigetsu 菊池契月 (1878-1955) at the recommendation of Soun. Because of her academic excellence, the principle of her jorakko had hoped that she would pursue teaching as a career.<sup>123</sup> But strongly encouraged by Soun, Hisako decided to study painting. By this time, a woman painter was no longer a rare species but Hisako's father understood the difficulty of building a successful career as a professional painter. With a firm pledge from Hisako that she would commit herself to painting as earnestly and sincerely "as a nun devotes herself to the

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<sup>121</sup> Shogyodon Taigyoro Shujin "Efude motsu onna: Teiten shuppin o mae ni seru Kyoto gadan no keishu sakka," pp. 50-51.

<sup>122</sup> Shiokawa, Saikan hitosuji, pp. 93-94.

<sup>123</sup> Shogyodon Taigyoro Shujin, "Efude motsu onna: Teiten shuppin o mae ni seru Kyoto gadan no keishu sakka," p. 51.

Buddha,"<sup>124</sup> Hisako's father consented to her wish. The details of Hisako's training under Keigetsu are unclear. But, Keigetsu was one of the Kyoto artists of his generation who were seriously engaged in the on-going modernization process of Nihonga during the Taisho period. Moreover, he is known to have been open-minded toward his students' art. Hisako was to formally remain as Keigetsu's "student" for forty years until his death in 1955.

It is not certain what kind of training Hisako received under Keigetsu. His works of the early Taisho period indicate his ambitious, experimental attitude in their diversity. On the one hand, he dealt with naturalistic subjects based on common themes taken from everyday life around him, as demonstrated by Old Woman (Ouna 媪) and Evening (Yube 夕べ), both dated 1914. In contrast, Urashima 浦島 created in the following year, was a highly decorative work. Both in its nature of the subject taken from a traditional children's story in Japan and in bold stylization, it represented an antithesis to the works of his previous year.<sup>125</sup> Although contemporary with Shoen, Keigetsu was, at least during the Taisho period, more aggressive in his experiment with new styles and subjects. Thus it is likely that he encouraged his own students to cultivate strongly individualistic statements in their art.

In examining Hisako's works of the Taisho period, one cannot overemphasize, besides the influence of progressive-minded teachers, the fact that she was younger by twenty years than Shoen and Shoha. Unlike

<sup>124</sup> Sato, Kindai nihon joseishi, vol. 6, bijutsu, p. 195.

<sup>125</sup> For the reproductions of his works cited in this paragraph and a discussion of his life and work, see Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, ed., Kikuchi Keigetsu-ten (Kyoto: Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1982).

the two older artists who matured during late Meiji when the patriarchal ideology of pre-modern Japan still dominated the society, Hisako grew up at the time when some men and women openly began to challenge the existing social norm and forced women's issues to surface. Hisako's adolescent years at the jogakko coincided with the very period when the Seito was launched as an all women's literary magazine, which quickly became synonymous with women's liberation movement. Yosano Akiko, who contributed her poems and essays to the Seito, was well-known for her poetry which defied masculine dominance and celebrated female sexuality. Hisako's admiration of Akiko's poetry indicates that she had a vastly different perception about the meaning and the role of her own gender. Indeed, Hisako's Taisho-period paintings reveal the consciousness of the painter who was not bound by the traditional view on women.

Paintings by Hisako from the early period are small in number. But they clearly illustrate new images of women as perceived and expressed by a woman painter with self-awareness. Among them, Woman on a Certain Day (Aru hi no kanojo 或日の彼女) (Figure 62), dated 1916, is purported to be her self-portrait. The decision to depict herself as a subject for art, as in the case of Preparing to Paint, 1915, by Ito Shoha, signals the emergence of modern ego in the painter. In Hisako's painting, we see a young woman seated in a chair and absent-mindedly looking out toward the viewer. Her knees are slightly apart, her hands casually rest on her lap, and one of her feet is carelessly placed on top of a slipper. The figure is remarkably free from the traditionally defined feminine demeanor to the point of appearing sloppy. Through

the individualized and unidealized pose, the figure projects a striking sense of frankness and a feeling of real human being, as if she "could bleed when cut." The sense of informality conveyed by the figure is enhanced by the newspaper thrown on the floor. We are made to feel that the painting represents a specific moment from the life of this young woman. It is evident that from early on Hisako's painting displayed a markedly different characteristic from the idealized treatment of women common in bijinga.

In 1918, a group of Nihonga artists in Kyoto formed the Association of Creative National Painting as a manifestation of their discontent with the conservatism of the official salon. The artists of this group, commonly known as the Kokuten, believed that one could only create a truly modern work by being faithful to nature and to oneself, and not to tradition. Hisako must have felt a strong affinity with their philosophy, for she submitted her work to their first exhibit without consulting her teacher, Keigetsu.<sup>126</sup> At the age of twenty-two, Hisako made a remarkable debut. Her painting titled Train Station in Early Evening (Kureyuku teiryusho 暮ゆく停車場) (Figure 63) was selected as one of the fifteen paintings out of 381 entries submitted to the Kokuten in 1918.

In Train Station, Hisako represents a woman, a tired waitress, resting on a bench at a station after a day's work. It was based on an actual scene Hisako observed. Clearly the woman is a member of the low class, for she wears a simple dark-colored kimono and her hair shows little adornment. She leans on her umbrella as if unable to sit up straight. Her eyes are unfocused and her lips, slightly parted. Through her pose

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<sup>126</sup> Uchiyama, Kaizawa Hisako-ten, no pagination.

and facial expression, she conveys a strong sense of mental and physical exhaustion. In the painter's refusal to transform the woman subject into a false image through idealization, one can sense her sympathy toward her subject. The theme of this painting is not glorification of feminine beauty but the reality of a socially underprivileged working-class woman. As such, the painting cannot be categorized as an example of bijinga in its strict definition.

In 1920 Hisako sent Old Clothes Fair (Furugiichi 古着市) (Figure 64) to the official salon and was accepted. The Kokuten group did not require absolute allegiance to the group and the painters were free to participate in any exhibition. The decision to participate in the salon may have been the result of practical advice from her teacher, Keigetsu, who centered his activity on the salon. The acceptance of one's work by the salon still carried social prestige, vital for a painter's successful career and life. Besides, the official salon had reformed itself in 1919 under the name of the Teiten to accommodate the avant-garde trend propagated by the Kokuten and its success. Seemingly, they were more receptive of the newest trends in painting.

Thereafter, Hisako continued to depict working women throughout the Taisho period and established a particular reputation at the Teiten for unidealized but sympathetic images of women. Her first entry to the salon, Old Clothes Fair, represented a woman selling used clothes at a street fair. Her dark reddish complexion indicates a person who constantly works outdoors: her disheveled hair, plain face and ungraceful posture mark her as a member of the low class burdened with everyday existence. Unidealized facial features take on a strange appearance as

result of the shading applied to the face, an influence from oil painting technique. The choppy, awkward lines which describe the folds of her garment echo the lack of elegance about the figure. The clash of strong colors such as black, purple, pink, yellow, and orange juxtaposed with grays enhance the feeling of lowliness and vulgarity imparted by the figure. The image, although lacking in a refined and sophisticated sense of beauty, appeals to the viewer by conveying a strong feeling of human warmth.

Old Clothes Fair was followed by Dressing Room of a Traveling Troupe (Tabi no gakuya 旅の楽屋) (Figure 65) in 1921 in which a tired-looking actress was depicted reading in a cramped dressing room. In 1924, it was Night of Omizutori (Mizutori no yoru 水取夜) (Figure 66), a brooding image of a geisha smoking a pipe in a resting room. In the following year, Hisako chose a somber image of an entertainer in Young Woman Singer (Musume gidayu 娘義太夫) (Figure 67). Archery Room (Yaba 矢場) (Figure 68), dated 1926, was a representation of a homely-looking woman attendant at an archery game center. Hisako's paintings of this period consistently dealt with women of working class near the bottom of the society. So obsessed with the images of plebeian-class women, Hisako is said to have painted similar images even on shikishi requested privately.<sup>127</sup> During this period, Hisako was thoroughly disengaged from the traditional bijinga. Even in her paintings of women entertainers, traditional bijinga subjects as symbolic of feminine beauty, her objective is to convey the pathos of their life behind their profession. The painter's refusal to idealize her women subjects does not simply

<sup>127</sup> Aizaka Gesshi, "Moderu no shi," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 9 (September 1924): 32-35.

signal her rebellion against bijinga tradition in which physical beauty is an important attribute of femininity, or against the values which derive from the male-centered society. Hisako's commitment to the underprivileged subjects demonstrates her strongly humanistic stand based on the awareness of social inequality and her determination to convey truthfully the wretched reality of the displaced women in society. By representing the women of lower classes without elevating them into a falsified ideal of beauty, Hisako seeks to humanize the images of women and broaden the meaning of femininity and beauty.

Although all the works mentioned above were accepted at the salon, they were not the most favored pieces by the official jury. A respected art critic of modern times, Kanzaki Kenichi, left a following commentary in 1936 looking back on Hisako's works of the Taisho period:

After participating in the Kokuten, Hisako turned to the salon. She concentrated on particularly decadent female subjects such as a vagrant woman in the lonely outskirts of a town and an actress of a troupe traveling through the provinces. Her style was characterized by dramatic color schemes and strong shading, apparently an influence from yoga. The official salon which represented the orthodox school did not welcome Hisako's paintings.<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, after 1926, Hisako experienced a difficult period at the Teiten. Her paintings were successively rejected in 1927, 1928, 1929,<sup>129</sup> and nothing is known about these three works. Her unorthodox paintings

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<sup>128</sup> Kanzaki Kenichi and Omeri Tomihei, "Gendai keishu sekka gaikan," Toei 12, no. 3 (March 1936): 55.

<sup>129</sup> Sato, Kindai Nihon jesshishi, vol. 6, Bijutsu, p. 202. Other scholars claim that Hisako remained artistically dormant during this period due to problems in her private life and did not submit paintings to the Teiten. See Uchiyama, Kaiiwara Hisako-ten, no pagination; Shiokawa, Saika hitosuji, p. 98; and Fujita and Baba, Kaiiwara Hisako/Hirota Tazu/Kitazawa Eigetsu, p. 77.

were not coveted by the government or museums for their collection. Most of Hisako's salon pieces are believed to have been purchased by one private patron and many of those works were destroyed or lost during the war.<sup>130</sup> Only a few paintings by Hisako from the Taisho period survive today. At least, it is certain, as exemplified by the style of Old Clothes Fair and as indicated by Kanzaki's comment above, that some of Hisako's Taisho-period paintings of unconventional subjects were matched by unorthodox technique influenced by oil painting.

Soon after her first participation in the official salon, if not sooner, Hisako must have become acquainted with Ito Shoha. A photograph taken in ca. 1921 shows nine women including Hisako, Shoha, six other young women painters, and Hisako's older sister. The occasion of their visit was to look at the wall paintings of the Golden Hall (kondo) at the Horyuji in Nara.<sup>131</sup> Hisako kept in touch with other women painters and developed a particularly close friendship with Kitani Chigusa 木谷千種 (1895-1947), a fellow student of Keigetsu.<sup>132</sup> By the end of the Taisho period, Hisako had attained the leading position among young women painters in Kyoto. In 1925 a group of six young women painters in Kyoto decided to form a study group.<sup>133</sup> They neither consulted with nor

<sup>130</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko (1917-), on December 13, 1986. Mrs. Goda was a student of Hisako from about 1934 on. Her mother and uncle knew Hisako since the time Hisako entered the jogakko and her family used to own many of the Taisho-period paintings by Hisako.

<sup>131</sup> The photograph accompanies an essay by Kajiwara Hisako, "Omide no arubamu," Nihon bijutsu, no. 107 (1974).

<sup>132</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko on December 13, 1986. Kitani Chigusa was a painter in Osaka. After studying with Kitano Tsunetomi, she joined Keigetsu's school in 1919. She is also known by her maiden name, Yoshioka. For her biographical sketch, see Kanzaki and Omori, "Gendai keishu sakka gaikan," p. 55 and pp. 57-58.

<sup>133</sup> The group included Torii Michie, Tanaka Koen, Morikawa Seiha, Goto Hideyo, Takeuchi Tsuneo, and Yamanishi Yoshie. As their first meeting was held on August 2,

invited Hisako to join. Offended by the lack of acknowledgment, Hisako is said to have exerted her influence to crash the newly formed group.<sup>134</sup> The gossip nature of this story casts doubt on the authenticity of its information. At least it suggests that Hisako was viewed as a woman painter of proud personality and considerable political power by this time.

In 1924, twenty-eight year old Hisako published a book of poetry titled Aizakagoe. A collection of young Hisako's love poems, the book turned out to be a commercial success after one newspaper gossiped that Hisako was romantically involved with the leader of the Kokuten, Tsuchida Bakusen.<sup>135</sup> As shown by the photograph (Figure 69) taken in the late 1920s, Hisako was an attractive woman of delicate physique. Attentive to her appearance, she was always dressed in kimono of the most fashionable taste.<sup>136</sup> Young and attractive, unmarried and committed to one of the most respected professions, Hisako at the time was regarded as one of "new women" (atarashii onna) who refused to conform to the established social expectations. Hisako herself seems to have disdained the traditional concept of marriage, occasionally hinting at possible liaisons with married men.<sup>137</sup>

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1925, they seem to have named their group Second Day Group (Futsukakai). See "Bijutsukai shosoku, 2," Daimai bijutsu 4, no. 9 (September 1925): 58; and "Kyoto gadan kaiko ichinen," Chugai tsushin bijutsu tokushu 1, no. 1 (February 1926): 58. Very little is known about these painters today except that Morikawa Seiha was once a student of Ito Shoha.

<sup>134</sup> "Tokusen goshippu," Chugai tsushin bijutsu tokushu 1, no. 1 (February 1926): 86.

<sup>135</sup> "Bijutsukai shosoku," Daimai bijutsu 3 no. 9 (September 1924): 41.

<sup>136</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko on December 13, 1986.,

<sup>137</sup> From Mrs. Ito Masako on February 9, 1986.

When requested by a magazine to send a verbal and pictorial self-portrait in 1926, Hisako declined to submit a drawing but described herself in the following words:

I am perhaps a bit cynical and difficult. A woman's life finds its meaning in being beautiful but one cannot always have that beauty. My paintings directly reflect my personality.<sup>138</sup>

It is an enigmatic statement but it reveals a somewhat skewed self-perception held by Hisako. The self-image of being "cynical and difficult" may mirror not so much her own feelings as the way the society viewed this attractive woman painter who shunned marriage and concentrated on painting the images of down-and-out women. Perhaps, her statement can be interpreted as a protest against the society which measured women's virtue in terms of external beauty and expected "normal" women to accept marriage as the most proper way to fulfill womanhood.

Ultimately, Hisako chose to remain unmarried in order to continue her career as an artist: she feared that most men interfered with their wives' careers and became exploitative when married to professional women painters.<sup>139</sup> Unlike Shoen, whose single parenthood did not reflect her personal conviction, Hisako clearly made a conscious choice and took a stand in the matter of marriage. Hisako was earnest about her painting. As customary of a successful painter, Hisako began taking her own students during the latter half of the Taisho period, probably sometime after 1920, her first participation in the Teiten. Even then, she limited the number of her students to only five or six so that she could

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<sup>138</sup> Kajiwara Hisako, "Jigazo," Chugai tsushin bijutsu tokushu 1, no. 2 (March 1926): 58.

<sup>139</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko, on December 13, 1986.

concentrate the larger portion of her energy on the production of her own work.<sup>140</sup>

### Middle Years

In 1930 Hisako's painting titled Hot Spring in a Mountain (Yama no yu 山の湯) (Figure 70) was accepted by the Teiten. Although the details of this painting cannot be examined in the small black-and-white representation available today, we can see that it represented a young woman in a bathrobe crouching by the water in a rustic bathhouse structure. The rusticity of the setting still hints at the possibility of a troubled life story of the woman. However, the theme is far more orthodox in contrast to her earlier paintings, for woman in a bath is a recurring theme in modern bijinga, which ultimately goes back to the ukiyo-e tradition.<sup>141</sup> The first indication of a change in Hisako's art had been noticed earlier in 1926: at an exhibition held by the students of Keigetsu during that year, Hisako exhibited Return From Home (Satoyori kaerite 里より帰つて). The painting has been lost but a commentary given on this work points out a change in Hisako's painting:

Kajiwara Hisako presents a work which has become modest and orthodox. Some people may call this a sign of "improvement." However, it does not show her characteristic individualism.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> For examples, Bath (Ideyu), 1918, by Kobayashi Kokei, Woman with Tattoo (Irezumi no onna), 1919, by Kaburaki Kiyokata and Fragrance of Bath (Yu no kaori), 1927, by Ito Shinsui.

<sup>142</sup> Nitta Kinjo, "Dainikai Kikuchijuku-ten-hyo," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 151 (September 1926), p. 22.

The "modest and orthodox" quality noticed by the above writer is difficult to discern without seeing the actual painting. But in the context of Hot Spring in a Mountain discussed above, it can be understood as disengagement from the paintings with strong social messages toward greater assimilation of the traditional concept of bijinga.

Rain at a Hot Spring (Ideyu no ame いで湯の雨) (Figure 71), accepted by the Teiten in 1931, is also "orthodox" in its content and style. In this two-fold screen, Hisako represents a middle-aged woman standing with an umbrella in front of a wood building with a lattice window, probably a bath house. In the lower left corner is a mist caused by the steam of the hot bath water. Visible in the upper right corner, above the woman's umbrella, is a branch of cherry blossoms. In this quiet scene, the woman stands alone holding a red-brown Japanese umbrella. She seems lost in thought quietly looking down toward the ground. Her hair is done in a simple western style. She wears a light-blue coat decorated with plant motifs and a grey-white kimono decorated with various patterns. The colors in this painting are subdued and enhance the sense of quietude. The use of a fine, steady line of even thickness, evident in the description of the garment, imbues the figure with quiet elegance. Although Hisako refrains from embellishing her woman and underplays her beauty, the work can be categorized as an example of bijinga.

The transformation in her painting certainly must not have occurred overnight. The period between 1926 and 1930 was a turning point in Hisako's life and career, and there are many possible reasons for the change in her art. The most important may have been an economic reason. Due to the world-wide economic depression which gripped Japan

in 1929, Hisako's father became bankrupt. By then, her older sister and younger brother were married. Therefore Hisako took in her father and younger sister and began supporting them. With an obligation to help her family during this financial crisis, Hisako was no longer able to paint whatever subject she pleased. She had to sell and she had to produce the type of paintings which sold.<sup>143</sup> Around 1930, Hisako became an art instructor at Osaka Prefectural School of Vocation for Women. This may also have been prompted by financial necessity. Once put in the position of an educator, Hisako may have felt compelled to refrain from socially controversial themes in her paintings. Secondly, Hisako may have been affected by the much larger sense of change which was engulfing Japanese society as a whole. The liberal mood of the Taisho society had been sustained partially by the economic prosperity during and after World War I (1914-1915). However, the post-war prosperity collapsed by 1921 and the Japanese economy began to fall into a depression. The great earthquake of 1923 which destroyed the Tokyo area marked the end of Taisho optimism. The world-wide depression of 1929 paralyzed the Japanese economy and a military-backed government began to amass power during the 1930s. The sense of uncertainty which gripped the Japanese society during the opening years of the Showa period (1926-1989) was symbolized by the suicide of the talented writer, Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927), who is believed to have taken his own life because of the "inexplicably insecure feeling" about future.<sup>144</sup> The

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<sup>143</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko, on December 13, 1986.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted by Kawakita Michiaki, *Meiji Taisho no Gagan* (Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1964), p. 231.

changing mood of the society was quickly mirrored in the world of art. The Association of Creative National Painting which led the avant-garde movement of the Taisho-period Nihonga ceased its activity in 1928. The romantic yearning for individualism quickly dissipated and cool, restrained style inspired by classical tradition, generally known as "neo-classicism" (shin kotenshugi 新古典主義), began to dominate Nihonga.

By 1933 when Hisako formed a group called Nanakusakai with six other women in Osaka and Kyoto area,<sup>145</sup> the transformation in Hisako's art was complete. Interviewed during that year, Hisako disclosed:

When I was much younger, I was often drawn to extremely decadent themes. I must have been attracted to the literary content of painting. It is with a feeling of regret that I admit that these days I don't feel excited at all about the decadent type of subject.<sup>146</sup>

The change of attitude which Hisako expressed "with a feeling of regret" above seems to have been viewed as a positive sign by the critics at the time:

In the last few years, Hisako has been starting over with a more rehabilitated style of painting. She has abandoned needlessly flaunting subject matter and has been demonstrating devotion to painting. Sensible people now have great expectation for her art. Girl in the Spring Clothes (Harugi no shojo), which she showed at the Kyoto City Art Exhibit, displayed a strong sign of comeback.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> See Kanzaki Kenichi, "Nanakusakai: Hakkai shukugen sonota," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 230 (May 1933), pp. 24-30.

<sup>146</sup> Kajiwara Hisako, interviewed by Kanzaki Kenichi, "Nanakusakai: Hakkai shukugen sonota," pp. 29-30.

<sup>147</sup> Kanzaki and Omori, "Gendai keishu sakka gaikan," p. 55. Girl in the Spring Clothes mentioned by Kanzaki here is not known today.

It is important to note that Hisako herself looked back at the themes of her Taisho-period paintings as "decadent," and that her works of the early 1930s were regarded to show a "rehabilitated style" by this critic. Together, the two comments above mirror the more conservative artistic tenor of the early Showa period.

Since 1930, Hisako continued to participate in the official salon. In 1933, Hisako painted Weaving (Hataori 機織) (Figure 72). The painting in the form of a two-fold screen represents a Korean woman working at her large loom. Such a foreign subject was rare among Hisako's oeuvre.<sup>148</sup> The appearance of a Korean theme at this time clearly reflected the emerging interest among some Japanese in Korean culture and art. Korean themes began to appear frequently in Japanese artists' work during the 1930s, and Hisako herself had the opportunity to visit Korea prior to this painting.<sup>149</sup> The geometric shape and angular lines of the loom is contrasted against the organic, curvilinear form of the figure. The colors are used with restraint, the only bright colors being the vivid light green of the textile on the loom, the figure's blue garment, touches of bright red in her hair and underdress, and colorful threads on the spools. The lines which delineate the loom and the figure are thin and precise. The clarity of the composition, the serene silhouette of the figure, restrained color and controlled line, achieves an austere expression entirely different from the emotional style of Hisako's Taisho-period paintings. The stylistic characteristics displayed by Weaving and

<sup>148</sup> So far, I am not aware of any other painting by Hisako which deals with non-Japanese subject.

<sup>149</sup> Uchiyama, Kaijvara Hisako-ten, no pagination. Red (Heisho) by Tsuchida Bakusen, dated 1933, exemplifies this trend.

also by Rain at a Hot Spring may have been as a result of influence from Hisako's teacher, Keigetsu.<sup>150</sup> Keigetsu was at the time producing works marked by austere composition, controlled use of color, and severe, iron-wire line, as exemplified by Girl (Shojo 少女) (Figure 73), 1932. Both Hisako's and Keigetsu's works of the early Showa reflect the penchant for restrained style prevalent at the time.

During the 1930s, Hisako also began to depict women of upper-class families. Duet (Sokyoku 雙曲) (Figure 74), dated 1937, represents two young women playing instruments. Quietude (Seikan 静閑) (Figure 75), 1938, depicts a young woman painting flowers in Nihonga style. In their imagery of upper-class women engaged in elegant leisure activities, these paintings echo the theme which characterizes Shoen's bijinga. Thus, Hisako's paintings of the 1930s signify a complete turning away from the expressive subjects which dominated her Taisho-period work. In 1935, she held a private exhibition at which she displayed small-scale works representing women in the entertainment business in Kyoto such as maiko and geisha.<sup>151</sup> the subject upon which she was to concentrate much later. In 1940, Hisako held another one-woman exhibit in Osaka. During the 1930s, with her new success at the official salon and with a new style of painting, Hisako seems to have finally achieved wide-scale acceptance of her art. Her identification with bijinga and the public's readiness to accept it seems to indicate that the traditional notion of femininity persisted in Japanese society and that they were

<sup>150</sup> Uchiyama, Kaiiwara Hisako-ten, no pagination; and Shiokawa, Saikan hitesuji, p. 99.

<sup>151</sup> Kanzaki and Omori, "Gendai keishu sakka gaikan," p. 55.

fundamentally more comfortable with representation of women as beautiful beings to be adored.

### Late Years

As soon as the official salon was revived under the name of the Nitten in 1946 after World War II, Hisako began to participate regularly. Among Hisako's works of this early Nitten period are some memorable images of modern Japanese women. Evening Coolness (Banryo 晚涼) (Figure 76), dated to 1947, received the highest honor at the official salon of that year. It represents a woman seated in a wicker chair with a round fan in her hand. Slightly heavy-set, the woman is middle-aged. She is well-dressed and refined but remains approachable in her relaxed and comfortable posture. Gently encompassed by the faint darkness, she appears to be enjoying the cool air of the evening. Within the generally neutral color scheme based on off-white, greys, and browns, the vividness of her yellow-and-black sash and blue fan add accent to the painting. Unlike her paintings of the 1930s, Hisako now eliminates the background depiction altogether and concentrates on the monumental representation of the figure. Hisako's woman subject does not convey youthful beauty or the moralistic message which characterizes Shoen's images of women. Through her sense of presence and maturity, the figure is expressive of broadened meaning of feminine beauty.

Flowers (Hana 花) (Figure 77), dated to 1951, represents a young woman kneeling on a floor with a bouquet lying next to her. It was a work inspired by the sight of Hisako's student who brought flowers to

her.<sup>152</sup> The woman's hair is arranged neatly in Western style, and she wears a modern dress, the moss-green color of which seems to bring out the youthfulness of the figure. Her ears are adorned with green earrings and her left middle finger, with a ring capped with a blue stone. She wears bright red lip stick and her fingers are manicured in light red. This is an image of a thoroughly modern Japanese woman. With her back erect and looking straight toward her left, she conveys a sense of self-confidence, intelligence, and well-being. Hisako uses fine, smooth lines to outline the figure and firm, crisp lines to depict the folds and wrinkles of the garment. The clean brush lines and tasteful color scheme imbue the figure with a sense of refinement. Robust, healthy, and elegant, Hisako's woman upstages the beauty of the flowers and emits an air of optimism and modernity. Her beauty seems to signify the coming of the new era for Japanese women who at last attained full political rights in 1945. Equally, Camera (Kamera カメラ ) (Figure 78), dated to 1953, represents a new image of Japanese woman perfectly comfortable in Western clothes and competent with new technology. Entirely devoid of provocative social content which was the hallmark of Hisako's oeuvre during the Taisho period, her works immediately after the war are characterized by monumental representations of contemporary young women from the middle and upper class. Through their modernity and self-confidence, they represent the feminine ideal of post-war Japan.

Hisako began seeking subjects with increasing frequency from professional entertainers after mid-1950s. As exemplified by works such as Dance (Mai 舞) (Figure 79), 1969, and Standing Woman (Ritsunyo 立女)

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<sup>152</sup> Uchiyama, Kaiwra Hisako-ten, no pagination.

(Figure 80), 1970, these works represent the women who have preserved the age-old fuzoku of traditional Japan in their profession. It has been pointed out that Hisako, in her last stage of career, turned to the women entertainers because she could no longer find the kind of feminine beauty she wanted to depict in the ordinary women of modern Japan.<sup>153</sup> This suggests both Hisako's personal sense of displacement as a bijinga artist and the gradual death of bijinga as a vital art tradition during the last thirty years of her life. Bijinga as a product of patriarchal society lost its fundamental significance in the democratized society of post-war Japan. Moreover, in the increasingly Westernized, modernized, and diversified society, the concept of bijinga as a representation of universal feminine ideal became difficult to achieve. One may suggest that its function of representing feminine beauty in the context of fuzoku was largely transmitted to the art of photography, which could capture the images of women without sacrificing diversity and individuality of the subjects.<sup>154</sup> Bijinga became reduced to an empty tradition in which its original meaning could be only superficially fulfilled by representing professional entertainers dressed in the traditional costume and hair style, who echoed in artifice the feminine ideal of past Japan. Hisako's adherence to bijinga in her late years was probably caused by the external expectations on her art. From the late 1950s, Hisako became one of the important artists at the official salon and her reputation was based on her achievement in the field of bijinga. She was a member of the jury in

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<sup>153</sup> Uchiyama, Kaiiwara Hisako-ten, no pagination.

<sup>154</sup> Photographed images of women which adorn the covers of Japanese magazines today represent the vestige of bijinga tradition in this art form.

1958, 1962, 1966, and 1972 for the salon. Meanwhile she also served on the jury for the Kyoto City Art Exhibit in 1964, 1968, and 1973. Once identified and accepted by the society as a successful bijinga specialist, Hisako was compelled to work in that category to answer the demand for her bijin and maintain her status of prominence.

Among Hisako's late-period works, one painting titled Shower (Yudachi 夕立) (Figure 81), dated 1967, stands out for its arresting image and suggestive content. It represents two women in a room dressed in simple cotton robes. One woman looks out from the window absent-mindedly at the falling rain while another is seated on the floor arranging her hair with fixed attention. The strong contrasts observed in the activities, postures, and the black and white robes of the figures make this painting a particularly successful visual statement. The painting was based on a scene at a cheap brothel on Oki Island where poverty-stricken women of unkempt appearance waited for clients to arrive by boat from the mainland: It was a scene Hisako had witnessed thirty years earlier.<sup>155</sup> The women in Hisako's painting are well-groomed and far distant from the pathetic prostitutes she must have observed in actuality. But the appearance of the two women is relatively modest, and the background depiction imbues the painting with a sense of everyday reality, lacking in Hisako's single-figure representation of professional entertainers. The two women seem to exist isolated from the outside world yielding their life to the passing rain. The original source of the

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<sup>155</sup> Fujita and Baba, Kaijwara Hisako/Hirota Tazu/Kitazawa Eigetsu, p. 114.

subject and the melancholic mood conveyed by the scene calls to mind Hisako's Taisho oeuvre.<sup>156</sup>

Hisako never married. After her father died in 1953, Hisako continued to live with a younger sister who had sacrificed the dream of becoming a novelist in order to help Hisako pursue her painting career.<sup>157</sup> Hisako died in January, 1988. During the last five years of her life, she did not grant an interview, due to a series of illness, injury, and hearing difficulty caused by old age. Toward the end of her life, she mostly remained bed-ridden. The people who were close to Hisako fiercely shielded her from public exposure to honor the reputation of a woman painter who was a brilliant "new woman" in her youth and maintained a long, celebrated career thereafter.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko on December 13, 1986.

<sup>158</sup> My own requests for an interview between the years 1985 and 1987 were consistently denied.

## Chapter IV. Women of Traditional Japan: The World of Uemura Shoen

### 1. Orthodoxy of Shoen

#### Shoen's Feminine Ideal

At the end of the Meiji period, Shoen commanded a nation-wide reputation as a leading woman painter who specialized in bijinga. By the time the Bunten opened in 1907, she had been painting for almost twenty years and had achieved the technical ability to create ambitious compositions in large scale. Shoen's paintings of the Taisho-period display the flowering of her art based on the synthesis of many figure styles of the past and maturity of her technical skill. Thematically they can be grouped into two categories: the representations of anonymous women in the bijinga/fuzokuga tradition and the depictions of specific fictional characters. The first category of anonymous bijin most manifestly illustrate Shoen's feminine ideal.

Night of Lunar Eclipse (Figure 31), dated 1916, is a pair of two-fold screens which represents the women of the late Edo period. In the left are two young women and an older woman accompanied by a small boy. The women are viewing the reflection of a lunar eclipse in a hand mirror while the boy playfully looks toward the viewer through his mother's transparent black coat. On the right is the graceful figure of a middle-aged woman who is walking towards the left. The landscape elements are reduced to the bench, rocks and bamboo in the right screen. The shadows of the figures faintly visible on the ground indicate the fading moonlight before the total eclipse. The sense of excitement conveyed by

the active movements of the figures on the left are contrasted with the serene, graceful profile of the figure in the right. In her commanding sense of elegance and polished beauty, she is clearly the central figure of this composition.

In order to create the image of this figure, Shoen sketched Kujo Takeko (1887-1928), an aristocratic woman poet renowned for her beauty who was studying painting under Shoen at the time. As typical of Shoen's approach, however, the figure in the painting is not a faithful portrait of Kujo Takeko:

I didn't reproduce the exact physical features of the model in the painting as a yoga painter may have done. The image in my painting is the synthesis of best parts from various sketches. I asked Mrs. Kujo to pose standing, sitting, etc. and sketched her from the side, back and various directions.<sup>1</sup>

True to the basic canon of bijinga, Shoen's women are idealized images even when they are based on actual living models. Facial features are not individualized, and blemishes and wrinkles are never shown. The faces of the women, equally composed of crescent-shaped eyebrows, slender eyes, gracefully profiled nose, and bud-like small mouth, are virtually interchangeable regardless of their age and represent Shoen's ideal feminine type.

In Shoen's paintings, the figure types are differentiated not by physiognomical features but by the type of hair style, clothes, accessories, poses and gestures. In the Lunar Eclipse, the figure on the far left is the youngest as she wears a long-sleeved bright-colored kimono decorated with large plant motifs and a sash with a bold design of peacock feathers.

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<sup>1</sup> Shoen, Seibisho senjogu, ed. Shiokawa Kyoko (Tokyo: Kyuryudo, 1985), p. 77.

In her hair, she displays a variety of exquisite hair ornaments. Her gestures are open, vivacious, and youthful without losing the sense of elegance. The tall figure who holds the mirror in her hand is slightly older. She is dressed in an ochre-color kimono of simple checker pattern and marine-colored sash decorated with a white-dotted pattern. The ornaments in her hair are simpler and less in number. The small portion of bright red undergarment visible below her neck suggests the relative youthfulness of this woman. Through her mild pose, she conveys a sense of maturity. The figure in the purple kimono with the black sash is next oldest as suggested by the quiet color combination of her clothes. The oldest woman wears a plain black coat and dark green kimono; her blackened teeth and shaven eyebrows indicate that she is a married woman and mother.

Shoen's treatment of the oldest woman is subtly but clearly different from others. She is represented with a greater sense of naturalism: bending forward to look into the mirror, she displays a less elegant posture in contrast to the more controlled, staged poses of other women. Furthermore, her face and body are only partially visible behind another figure. The main subjects in Shoen's bijinga are always young or mature but never old. The older women, who are less idealized and subordinated in composition, function to enhance the beauty of young women. This emphasis on youth is a paramount principle in bijinga, and it ultimately reflects the traditional notion of feminine beauty entangled with youthfulness.

The synonymy of bijin and youthful beauty is also illustrated by Shoen's other multiple-figure compositions in which women of different

age groups are juxtaposed. Moonlight Shadow (Figure 27), dated 1908, depicts the contemporary fuzoku of the Meiji period. It represents a mother and two daughters enjoying the beauty of the moonlight and the shadow of a pine tree cast by it. Of the three figures, organized around the pillar and a wall, the focus is clearly on the young woman crouching in the foreground. Her elegant profile is represented in full while the older woman stands partially hidden behind the pillar and the wall. One also notices that the mother figure is depicted with greater freedom in her facial expression as she looks up toward the moon. Shoen applies impeccable technique to represent the beauty of hair style, accessories, and kimono with an eye for details. In particular, the layered costumes decorated with intricate designs, which adorn the young woman, are assiduously and meticulously depicted. With her immaculate coiffure, smooth, pearly-white complexion, dainty hand gesture, and graceful pose, the crouching young woman embodies in her whole demeanor and appearance the ideal feminine beauty of her time and her creator.

The same basic scheme is applied to another multiple-figure composition, Preparing to Dance (Figure 29), 1914. This two-panel composition represents women of the Meiji period engaged in a dance performance. A single standing figure in the left panel is contrasted with three seated figures in the right. The woman on the left, ready to commence a dance, is clearly the youngest as she is dressed in the bright colors of lavender and orange. Separated from the others and represented in a full standing view, she is the focal figure in this painting. Among the seated women, the tsuzumi [hand drum] player is tuning her instrument while the singer with a fan in her hand is conversing with the

third figure. Their relaxed attitude by contrast emphasizes the sense of mental concentration conveyed by the standing figure. Grouped together through their actions and poses, these slightly older women function to enhance the beauty of the young dancer. Although Shoen used a maiko to model for the dancer figure in this work,<sup>2</sup> she represents her subject with the particular type of coiffure associated with young women of the upper-class.<sup>3</sup>

Women represented in Shoen's paintings are almost always the members of well-to-do families. Their hair is perfectly groomed, and their skin, flawless and white. Their delicate hands are free from the hardship of physical labor. Embellished by beautiful clothes and accessories, they epitomize the ideal feminine deportment in their grace, elegance, and refinement. Invariably engaged in the elegant leisure activities of watching the moon light, eclipse, dancing, etc., they never venture out from the feminine realm as codified in the patriarchal society. Shoen's women find total fulfillment of their womanhood in the role of virtuous wife and mother. The presence of older women as mothers juxtaposed with younger women in Moonlight Shadow and Lunar Eclipse symbolically reinforce the proper cycle of traditional womanhood.

Furthermore, the uniformly doll-like faces of Shoen's women, devoid of strong emotions, are symbolic of Japanese women who were placed in total subordination in traditional society. To be "self-willed" is synonymous with being "capricious" according to the teachings of the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> The dancer wears the takashimada style. Iijima Isamu, Uemura Shoen, Gendai Nihon Bijinga Zenshu, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), p. 112.

Onna daigaku.<sup>4</sup> Submission and docility being the paramount feminine virtue, women learned to suppress their feelings and to be inexpressive of their emotions. The extent to which Shoen herself had been shaped by this traditional value is implicit in her statement below:

"Eyes are as expressive as spoken words," they say. But in reality, the eyebrows convey one's inner feelings more honestly than the eyes or the words uttered through a mouth. . . .

Eyes can be closed and a mouth can be shut. But even then, the eyebrows do not fail to express the feeling of joy or pain felt by the person. . . .

The most difficult area of execution in bijinga, I think, is the depiction of the eyebrows.<sup>5</sup>

Shoen goes on to describe the beauty of eyebrows, which is the main theme of her discussion. But the statement above inadvertently reveals how much she herself was the product of the Confucian values which operated in the patriarchal society. To read one's feelings through something as subtle as the expression of one's eyebrows clearly illustrates how thoroughly the virtue of reticence and restraint had conditioned the behavior of Japanese women.

Shoen's women are morally impeccable. As the members of upper-class families, they abide by the established social and moral codes more strictly than their lower-class sisters. Virtuous and respectable, their primary social identity and responsibility lies in their position as wives and mothers. They do not advertise their sensuality in public, thus fundamentally differing in class from the multitude of courtesans eternalized in the art of the ukiyo-e tradition. As a bijinga specialist,

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<sup>4</sup> See this dissertation, Chapter I, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Uemura Shoen, Seibisho (Tokyo: Sansaisha, 1978), pp. 3-4.

Shoen continued to draw inspiration for her painting from the ukiyo-e tradition throughout her career.<sup>6</sup> And it is in these ukiyo-e-inspired works that we can see her objection to comply with the fundamental premise of the ukiyo-e bijin, many of which were produced for the erotic interests of male viewers.

Firefly (Figure 28), dated 1913, is a large composition, a representation of a woman preparing a mosquito net for the night. She wears a blue cotton robe tied with an orange sash at her side. Noticing a firefly which wandered into the room, she stops her hands momentarily. With no back-ground depiction, it is a simple, yet well-calculated composition with a focus on the figure. The direction of the leaning upper torso of the woman is echoed by the diagonal line of the rope holding up the corner of the mosquito net. The counterbalance is given by her right arm, her gaze, and her sash which extend in the opposite direction. Placed roughly where those lines of opposite directions may converge, the delicate hand gestures attract the viewer's attention. The dominant colors of blue and green create the feeling of a cool summer evening and, together with the restrained use of orange on the net and sash, enhance the tasteful and elegant appearance of the figure.

Shoen demonstrates her technical finesse in the depiction of the tactile qualities of objects. The peculiar texture of the transparent yet weighty mosquito net, the silky softness of the woman's hair, and the coarse, crisp material of her sash are convincingly represented. The design of lilies on her robe is executed with an use of the tarashikomi

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<sup>6</sup> Seki Chiyo, "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," Bijutsu kenkyu, no. 195 (November 1957), p. 160.

technique indicating that Shoen's study of past styles included the Rimpa school. The lines which define the folds of her kimono and the mosquito net are smooth while several angular and modulating lines are used in the folds of the sash to express its coarse texture. Shoen lays color over the ink outline and avoids the appearance of strong black line. The manner in which the smooth fluent lines are integrated with color areas helps achieve a softer visual impression and contributes to the tender mood of the figure.

A woman juxtaposed with a mosquito net is a theme derived from ukiyo-e. Many masters produced images of a summer evening with a woman and mosquito net.<sup>7</sup> They are often suggestive of an erotic encounter between a man and a woman as exemplified by Utamaro's Komurasaki and Gonpachi (Figure 82). In Shoen's Firefly, the woman standing in her nightwear, can be symbolic of such erotic pleasure. However, the manner in which Shoen represents this figure demonstrates that such is not the artist's intention. In its basic compositional scheme, Shoen's work is close to a painting by Utagawa Toyohiro, Beauty Hanging a Mosquito Net (Figure 83). Comparison of these two works illustrates that Shoen's woman is considerably more "modest" in her appearance. Toyohiro's figure shows an exposed neck, and her both arms are revealed to the elbows. Her undercloth is visible in front through the opening of her kimono while her sash hangs languidly over her front. She is a seductive figure in concordance with the tradition of ukiyo-e bijin produced for male viewers. In contrast, Shoen is less willing to show the

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Beauty in a Mosquito Net by Miyagawa Choshun, Ukiyo-e, Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu, vol. 17 (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1968), plate 107 (detail).

flesh of her bijin. Her left arm, exposed to the elbow, is covered by the mosquito net and her neck, with her right sleeve. The sash firmly holds up its shape and her undercloth is properly hidden beneath the kimono. In a subtle way, Shoen manipulates and "de-eroticizes" her subject. Only the slightly opened kimono front of the figure gives a touch of sensuality without vulgarity.

In Shoen's own words, the figure represented in Firefly is a "woman of a respectable family" of the Tenmei period (1791-1798).<sup>8</sup> Thus, she purposefully emphasizes the upper-class status and nobility of the figure overriding the suggestion of an erotic theme inherent in the treatment of this subject in ukiyo-e. Through delicate facial features, exquisite hand gestures, graceful pose, and more than anything else, through the sense of propriety and modesty, the figure represents feminine beauty associated with the upper-class women.

Slightly earlier than Firefly, Shoen produced two other works, Long Evening, 1907 (Figure 25), and Sound of Crickets (Mushi no ne 虫の音) 1909, (Figure 85), both of which evidence a strong influence from the fuzokuga/ukiyo-e tradition. Together, they indicate that Shoen was consciously emulating the ukiyo-e lineage during the very late Meiji and early Taisho periods. During the late nineteenth century, the art of ukiyo-e received critical acclaim in Europe and a great number of prints were being exported abroad.<sup>9</sup> This foreign recognition "legitimized"

<sup>8</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, pp. 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Hayashi Tadamasu, a Japanese art dealer active in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century, exported 166,000 ukiyo-e prints to Paris between 1890 and 1901. See Segi Shin'ichi, "Hayashi Tadamasu: Bridge Between the Fine Arts of East and West," in Japanisme in Art, ed. The Society for the Study of Japonisme (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1980), p. 169.

ukiyo-e and led the Japanese to turn their eyes to this native tradition.<sup>10</sup> Possibly related to this resurrection of ukiyo-e tradition was the revival of the early Edo culture in Japan during the mid-1900s. Portrait of a Lady (Aru fujin no shozo) (Figure 84), 1907, by a yoga artist, Okada Saburosuke (1869-1939), documented this trend in its portrayal of a woman who wears hairstyle and kimono with a bold design associated with the Genroku period (1688-1703).<sup>11</sup> Strong stylistic influence from ukiyo-e and fuzokuga began to appear in modern paintings during the last several years of the Meiji period to continue during the Taisho period.<sup>12</sup> Shoen's infatuation with fuzokuga/ukiyo-e tradition during the late Meiji and early Taisho periods seems to reflect, if not precede, the reinvestigation of this tradition by modern Japanese artists.

Even in Long Evening (Figure 25), which manifestly displays an influence from the ukiyo-e tradition, Shoen's treatment of women figures reveals her objection to present them as mere objects of sensual pleasure. Long Evening, her exhibition piece for the first Bunten, represents two

<sup>10</sup> In 1898, a large exhibition of ukiyo-e prints and paintings was held in Tokyo: 241 works displayed there included many hijinga. "Ukiyo-e tenrankai no kaijo," Kaiga soshi, no. 136 (May 1898), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Nagai Shin'ichi, "Kindai Nihon no josei: Meiji, Taisho, Showa jidai," Kokubungaku kaishaku to kansho 30, no. 10 (August 1965): 102. Kaburaki Kiyokata also painted a work called Image of Genroku (Genroku no omokage) in 1904.

<sup>12</sup> In Kyoto, an ukiyo-e exhibition was held in 1911 sponsored by a group called Yamato-e Association; and subsequently another group of connoisseurs held ukiyo-e exhibits from 1917 on, if not earlier, throughout the Taisho period. Several younger Kyoto painters produced paintings strongly influenced by fuzokuga and ukiyo-e during the early 1910s. See Tanaka Hisao, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu (Tokyo: Bijutsu Koronsha, 1983), pp. 121-125. Also a large-scale exhibition of ukiyo-e was to be held at the National Museum in Kyoto in 1915. "Kuzen no ukiyo-e tenrankai," Kaiga soshi, no. 321 (April 1914), p. 7. Kaburaki Kiyokata produced a work titled Women Kabuki (Onna kabuki) in 1910 echoing the style of early fuzokuga. The Taisho-period artist regarded ukiyo-e as art which conveyed with honesty the true human condition. To them it represented the art of "honne" (truthfulness).

women reading a book by a lamp. The work is a tribute to the eighteenth-century Kyoto master of ukiyo-e, Nishikawa Sukenobu, as evidenced by the hair style and facial features of the women, which exemplify the type of bijin associated with Sukenobu. Well-dressed and sufficiently educated to engage themselves in reading, Shoen's women figures belong to the middle or upper class. Moreover, Shoen desensualizes her bijin by subtly manipulating her composition. Comparison of Shoen's work with Hair (Figure 33) by Tsuchida Bakusen, dated 1910, makes this point clear. Bakusen's painting also derives from a ukiyo-e subject and represents a woman seated in front of a mirror. In this work, the artist emphasizes the female form by exposing her left arm and revealing to the full the curvilinear shape of her thigh and folded leg beneath the garment. Naturalistic proportion and a sense of volume achieved by the figure makes her physicality tangible. At the end of the Meiji period, Bakusen's painting was considered as a daring portrayal of female sensuality.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, Shoen conceals the rounded configuration of the younger woman's bent leg by her sleeve and hides the larger portion of the older woman's hip and thigh by overlapping the younger figure. By obscuring the sensual curve of the female form, unlike Bakusen who accentuates it in his painting, Shoen intends to prevent her bijin from becoming overtly seductive or erotic.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Kato Kazuo and Uchiyama Takeo, Murakami Kagaku/Tsuchida Bakusen, Gendai Nihon bijutsu zenshu, vo. 4 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1972), p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> This is a consistent feature in Shoen's paintings: Shoen never allows her figures to reveal fully the curvilinear profiles of their hips and folded legs.

The tendency to reduce the eroticism of women figures is also evident in Sound of Crickets (Figure 85), dated 1909.<sup>15</sup> It is perhaps the most "decadent" work among Shoen's oeuvre in its subject and stylistic reference. It represents an interior scene of a brothel in which three courtesans on a veranda are listening to the song of insects while two men seated in the back of the room are enjoying the music of an old shamisen player. Such a depiction of the world of pleasure recalls to one's mind the Kan'ei-period fuzokuga exemplified by the so-called Hikone screen (Figure 5). In fact, direct references to the motifs in the Hikone screen abound. Shoen's blind shamisen player has strong resemblance to the one in the screen. The man next to the musician wears a garment decorated with the identical design as that of the man reading a letter in the screen, and they are remarkably close in their posture. Furthermore, the designs on the kimonos worn by the standing courtesan behind a pillar and the one seated with her back toward viewer can also be found in the Hikone screen. Shoen demonstrates here an ability to utilize architectural elements most effectively and organize a group of figures in a complex interior/outdoor setting. The faces of the standing courtesan and of the man next to the musician are partially concealed by a pillar and a bamboo shade respectively, creating an

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<sup>15</sup> Generally, this painting is identified as the work which Shoen submitted to the fourteenth New and Old Art Exhibition in Kyoto, in 1909. However, the same work is dated as 1907 in Uemura Shoko, ed., Uemura Shoen (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1975), pl. 8. Shoen created almost identical composition titled Autumn Evening (Aki no yo) in 1908 and showed it at the thirteenth New and Old Art Exhibition. It is puzzling that Shoen would have exhibited the nearly identical compositions at the same exhibition for two years consecutively. Shoen painted another work titled the Sound of Crickets for the exhibition of the Japanese Arts Association in Tokyo in 1907. The correct date for this painting is difficult to determine at this point.

element of enigma. Such a skewed quality is rare in Shoen's work. The sweeping brush lines with strong modulation used to render the garments tend to be simplified and abstract without losing their descriptive function completely: they are endowed with more expressive quality than the descriptive brushwork typical of Shoen's style. It leads one to think that Shoen was experimenting with a more forceful, expressive style to capture something of the uninhibited, exuberant spirit of the Kan'ei fuzokuga.

The similarities are only superficial. The women in the Hikone screen display a diversity of poses and gestures. But they are uniformly suggestive of eroticism through highly provocative body language. They freely intermingle with men and most of them are seated in a strongly seductive posture with their legs wide apart. The subject of the Hikone screen is the worldly interaction between men and women disguised as the four noble scholarly activities. In contrast, Shoen's courtesans are more restrained, well-mannered, and completely separated from male figures. They lack the sense of vivacity and vitality which characterizes the Hikone women. In their controlled behavior, they seem cognizant of the viewer. The theme of Shoen's painting is not erotic pleasure, but an evocation of rich seasonal mood, through the ephemeral beauty of bush clover which gently curtains the foreground, through the enchanting song of insects which captivates the humans, and through the cool autumn breeze which silently pushes back the bamboo shade.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Even taking into consideration the difference in the norm of social behavior between the seventeenth-century women depicted in the Hikone screen and those of Shoen's time, her treatment of women in *Sound of Crickets* is markedly restrained. For example, compare this work with *Time of Lighting Up a Lamp*, 1912, by Ikeda Shoen, in

The fact that she chose to represent courtesans in Sound of Crickets seems to imply that Shoen was not deeply disturbed by their social reality as women whose bodies were used as sex commodities. It is most likely that the "courtesans" in this painting simply meant traditional women figures to Shoen. Having grown up with the values and views imposed by the patriarchal society, Shoen did not have the strong feminist awareness to question the fundamental social meaning of the subjects she represented. But the subtle way in which she manipulates the composition and tempers the representation of the female figures in order to reduce their eroticism and enhance their respectability reveals Shoen's resistance to what she thought was the denigration of women. Later in her life, Shoen expressed that her goal was to achieve the image of women who "cannot be violated by anyone, or anything."<sup>17</sup> Her desensualization of female figures in her most strongly ukiyo-e influenced works of the late Meiji and early Taisho periods already evidences her conviction.

Scholars often characterize Shoen's bijin as moralistic and unapproachable. Some even interpret the suppression of eroticism in her art as her negation of fundamental human reality including her own sexuality.<sup>18</sup> Shoen was not rejecting eroticism as abhorrent human

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which she also represents a scene of a brothel based on a Kan'ei-period fuzokuga. In contrast to the painting by Uemura Shoen, Ikeda Shoen's work conveys the erotic atmosphere of a brothel through the strongly languid and coquettish poses of women whose clothes hang loosely on their bodies. Time of Lighting Up a Lamp is reproduced in Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed., Nittenshi, vol. 2, Buntenhen 2 (Tokyo: Nitten, 1980), pp. 426-427.

<sup>17</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Tomioka Taeko, "Uemura Shoen: Onna ga kaku onna," Mizue, no. 801 (October 1971), p. 88.

nature. But she was opposed to the traditional premise of bijinga in which the erotic potential of women was often treated as the most salient denominator of femininity. Thus, she created the images of women whose beauty emanated from their moral certainty rather than sensuality. Thoroughly traditional-minded, Shoen embraced the Onna daigaku without ever recognizing its oppressive and discriminatory definition of women's role. Thus, Shoen's goal in her painting was to elevate, rather than humanize, women to ideal beings as the embodiment of the teachings of the Onna daigaku, whom men were to respect and women were to emulate. As a woman painter who specialized in bijinga, which often represented women as erotic objects for male viewers, this was the way in which she negotiated her own traditionality, gender, and art.<sup>19</sup>

Shoen's traditionalist view on feminine beauty is illustrated by her fondness of the customs and manners of the Edo period as exemplified by the women in Lunar Eclipse:

I have painted the customs and manners of many different periods. The greatest in number among my works, I think, are the paintings which depict the customs and manners of the Tokugawa period.

The middle to late Tokugawa period particularly appeals to me. . . . Young women of that time genuinely seem to have maintained gentle and modest feminine manners. Combs and hair ornaments of their time as well as other accessories were exceptionally well-crafted with great variety in design. At any rate, when I begin to think about painting a new work, the customs

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<sup>19</sup> It is not surprising that Shoen's favorite ukiyo-e artists were Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770) and Miyagawa Choshun (1682-1752). See Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, p. 26. Besides erotic images, both artists created women figures characterized by a sense of grace and refinement, which must have appealed to Shoen.

and manners of the late Tokugawa period come to my mind with great fascination.<sup>20</sup>

"Young women," "gentle and modest feminine manners," and well-crafted accessories of the Edo period, mentioned by Shoen, are all important components of her bijin and ultimately reflect the traditional notion of femininity inseparable from youthfulness, gentle demeanor, and external beauty.

The late Edo-period fuzoku Shoen so admired still remained alive and intact in Kyoto during the early Meiji period. Shoen believed that it was her mission and privilege to record the appearance of the Meiji-period woman:

The appearance of people who shopped at the stores [around the Shijo Street during the early Meiji period] still retained the strong Edo flavor. . . . I'd like to think that it is the world left only to me to depict. . . .

When I realize how quickly the life around us is changing, my feeling grows stronger that I must record the fuzoku of that time for the people of later generations.<sup>21</sup>

Shoen's attraction to the Meiji fuzoku was precisely for its vestige of the Edo culture and not for the exotic flavor or novelty of the newly introduced Western civilization. Unlike Kaburaki Kiyokata who often recorded the syncretic fuzoku of the Meiji period in his works such as Autumn Evening (Shusho 秋宵) (Figure 86), 1903, and Bride-to-be (Totsugu hito 嫁ぐ人) (Figure 87), 1907, Shoen was consistent and adamant in her admiration for the unadulterated native tradition of Japan. Except for a few instances, women, dressed in the Western

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 59-60.

<sup>21</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 152-153.

fashion, appeared unattractive to Shoen.<sup>22</sup> Even after more Japanese women began to adopt Western fashion toward the end of the Taisho period, Shoen remained loyal to the indigenous tradition. In this respect, Shoen was anti-modern and anti-Western.<sup>23</sup> While images of Chinese beauty occasionally appeared in Shoen's oeuvre,<sup>24</sup> references to Western culture remained entirely excluded. Underneath her love of traditional Japanese *fuzoku* was her notion of feminine ideal underlined by Confucian moral virtue.

Shoen herself remained old-fashioned in her manners in everyday life. Even her own simplified hairstyle which she adopted in order to save time for painting conformed to the basic traditional aesthetic. She cherished and practiced the modesty and humbleness of Japanese women with which they had long been taught to graciously accept their role as subservient to men. Tajika Kenzo (1903-) recalled about Shoen when she and her son Shoko attended lectures on Chinese Classics given by Nagao Uzan (1864-1942) during the 1920s:

There were all kinds of pupils under Uzan. . . . Because I was young in age, I made a habit of sitting in one of the back-row seats. . . . Shoen and Shoko always arrived early but took seats even farther back than mine. Shoen let her son take a better seat than hers. In spite of the fact that she was probably the most famous person among the pupils there, she sat at the very back and quietly listened to the lecture by Uzan. As a woman pupil, she may have felt compelled to act in concordance with the social rules, and such behavior was very natural to her. She had a sense of modesty

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<sup>22</sup> Shoen, *Seibisho sonogo*, p. 29; and *Seibisho*, pp. 18-23.

<sup>23</sup> Even when Shoen traveled to China in 1941, she purposefully sought out Chinese women with traditional hair style for sketching purposes. See Shoen, *Seibisho*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>24</sup> For example, *Yokichi*, 1922; and *Spring (Shun'en)*, 1935. Both are reproduced in Iijima, *Uemura Shoen*, plates 16 and 17.

and propriety: she was the kind of person who never allowed herself to flaunt her intelligence or beauty openly.<sup>25</sup>

As illustrated above, Shoen was a woman of orthodox values. The only and decisive unorthodoxy about her was that she was a woman painter and single mother. She compensated for this unorthodoxy by extolling the moralistic images of women in her painting and emphasizing propriety in everyday life. The ideal womanhood she could not fulfill in her own life, she realized in the images in her paintings.

### Orthodoxy of Shoen's Technique

Shoen's orthodox and moralistic ideal of women was matched by her style which relied on the traditional rules of painting. Shoen's penchant for orthodoxy was unequivocally manifested in her admiration for Maruyama Okyo (1733-1795):

His calm, dignified style, and his absolutely consummate technique, I truly admire. The hurried lifestyle of our time makes it almost impossible to create ambitious masterpieces (comparable to Okyo's). The artists of Okyo's period must have engaged themselves in painting at a leisurely pace so that they could spend sufficient time to create a work which really satisfied them.<sup>26</sup>

It is questionable whether the artists of Okyo's time always worked "at a leisurely pace" as Shoen believed. But her admiration for Okyo's "calm dignified style" and "absolutely consummate technique," she transmitted into her own painting. Okyo's Courtesan Eguchi (Eguchi no kimi 江口君) (Figure 10) represents the famous courtesan/bodhisattva as a woman

<sup>25</sup> Tanaka Ichimatsu, Uemura Shoko, and Tajika Kenzo, Uemura Shoen: Sono hite to seijutsu (Tokyo: Yamatane Bijutsukan, 1978), p. 71. Shoen's study of Chinese classics under Uzan began around 1899.

<sup>26</sup> Shoen, Sebisho sonogo, p. 31.

with a commanding sense of presence. It is an idealized image of a woman who conveys a sense of dignity, nobility, and elegance through her erect posture and immaculate facial features. The figure stands for the "embodiment of aristocratic beauty"<sup>27</sup> which also underlines Shoen's feminine ideal. The flawless linear description and meticulous coloring demonstrated in Okyo's painting are characteristics inherited by Shoen after many generations of painters between them. Shoen herself described her painting technique as follows:

My painting basically belongs to a minutely executed style (*mitsuga*), and I can never create a painting in a short time with several sweeping strokes. I must think and decide on a composition and draw many preparatory drawings before finally starting the actual painting. It takes many days.<sup>28</sup>

Shoen's production technique ultimately goes back to Okyo who relied on a careful progression from sketches to preliminary drawing to painting.<sup>29</sup> While Okyo's followers before Shoen's time must have practiced the same technique, Shoen shared with the founder of the realist school the innate artistic temperament: perfection and propriety, tenacity and steadfastness.

Essential to Shoen's orthodox style was superlative brushwork. By the end of the Meiji period, Shoen had mastered not only the basic brushwork of the Maruyama-Shijo school but various other types of brush techniques. Moonlight Shadow (Figure 27), 1908, evidences Shoen's accomplishment in the descriptive brushwork of the Maruyama-Shijo

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<sup>27</sup> Sasaki Johsei, "Okyo and the Maruyama-Shijo School," trans. Murase Miyeko and Sarah Thompson, in Okyo and the Maruyama-Shijo School of Japanese Painting (The St. Louis Art Museum, 1980), p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, p. 175.

<sup>29</sup> Sasaki, "Okyo and Maruyama-Shijo School," p. 30.

school and exemplifies Shoen's style of the late Meiji period. The lines which depict the garment of the seated figure are angular and calligraphic; they change in thickness, turn and bend sharply. They not only define the folds and wrinkles of the garment but also impart a feeling of weight to the figure. Tsuketate brushwork used to represent the shadow of the pine trees on the veranda also testifies Shoen's mastery of the technique associated with the Maruyama-Shijo school. Sound of Crickets, dated 1907 (Figure 85), evidences the use of smooth but strong outlines with extreme modulation, different in quality from the descriptive line of the Maruyama-Shijo school. In Blossoming, 1899 (Figure 11), Shoen uses the horinuri technique of the Rimpa school on the outline of the garments in order to avoid the heavy appearance of black ink line on black color area. Besides the linear brush technique, Shoen was also accomplished in the Rimpa tarashikomi technique as demonstrated in the depiction of the flower design on the garment of the figure in Firefly, 1913 (Figure 28), and of the rocks in Lunar Eclipse, 1916 (Figure 31).

During the Taisho period, strong calligraphic brushwork begins to disappear in Shoen's work. Instead, Shoen's lines become finer, smoother, and more flowing with less modulation. The standing figure in Preparing to Dance (Figure 29) illustrates this characteristic. The lines which describe her garment are thin and fluid. Moreover, Shoen de-emphasizes linear definition by laying thick color over the ink outline. At the same time, she applies a greater amount of shading technique to render hair, eyebrows, and eyes. The resulting expression is visually softer, more

refined and elegant, contributing to the image of feminine ideal Shoen seeks to achieve.

In spite of the changing quality of lines in her work, Shoen's use of line remains orthodox in the sense that the field of color is always bound meticulously by line. Moreover, in her best works, Shoen's lines define the figures three dimensionally, convey the tactile feeling of the materials, and express the personal character and mood of the figures. In Lunar Eclipse, the lines used in the depiction of the folds and outlines of the garment of the young woman on the extreme left are confident and firm. The relatively strong visibility of the lines here seems to energize the figure, enhancing the sense of her active movement and youthfulness. In contrast, Shoen keeps the lines on the garment of the figure in purple less conspicuous by integrating them in the same overall tonality. As a result, the figure conveys a more controlled mood and a sense of maturity.

For Shoen, brush technique was one of the crucial elements of painting. She wrote in Seibisho:

Many young painters today sketch and copy using pencils, but I am more comfortable with brush and ink as I have always used them. You must use a brush in creating the final painting. Therefore, if you make a habit of sketching and copying with brush and ink, you gradually improve the quality of your brush line. Using a brush rather than a pencil will contribute to your training.<sup>30</sup>

Nothing better demonstrates Shoen's superlative brushwork than the rendering of the hair of her figures. The combination of shading and fine linear description used by Shoen derives from the naturalistic technique

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<sup>30</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 67.

of the Maruyama-Shijo school. Her virtuosity in kegaki [depiction of hair], however, was exceptional and incurred much admiration from other professional painters.<sup>31</sup> Shoen defines each strand of hair by consummate linear execution. By repeating supple, flawless linear brushwork over shading, she achieves the naturalistic appearance of arranged coiffure and the resilient texture of human hair. Depiction of hair was particularly important in Shoen's art. It was not only because long, black hair was traditionally an essential component of Japanese feminine beauty but also because, for Shoen, immaculately groomed traditional hairstyle symbolized moral virtue of women.

The technical perfection in brushwork was combined with a superb sense of color and exceptional compositional talent in Shoen's work. In Firefly, Shoen clothes the figure in a blue kimono with an orange sash and juxtaposes her with a green mosquito net. She harmonizes the two dominant colors of blue and green by keeping light their tonality. The light orange of the sash gives just enough sense of warmth to the figure without creating too strong contrast. The orange color is echoed in a darker tone in the upper hem of the green mosquito net to give a visual accent. Furthermore, the green and orange combination is repeated in a hair accessory worn by the figure. Thus Shoen uses colors not only to imbue the figure with a sense of refinement and elegance but also to achieve balance and harmony within the composition.

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<sup>31</sup> Particularly Kaburaki Kiyokata and Tsuchida Bakusen. See Kimura Sehachi, "Shoen sensei," Sansai, no. 36 (November 1949), p. 32; and Yamaguchi Genshu, "Uemura Shoen," Aoto, no. 19 (May, 1937), p. 39.

Shoen's versatility in composition can be illustrated by two examples, both produced in 1910. Puppeteer (Ningyo tsukai 人形つかい) (Figure 88) is a pair of large hanging scrolls which demonstrate Shoen's ability in multi-panel compositions. In contrast, Cherry Blossom Viewing (Hanami 花見) (Figure 89) is an example of how Shoen utilizes effectively an extremely elongated vertical format. In Puppeteer, the left half represents an interior of a room where a puppeteer and a musician are performing against the backdrop of sliding doors. In the right half, the exterior of the room is shown where a young girl is seated peaking into the performance through the opening between the sliding doors. She joins momentarily a group of women and children who enjoy the performance in the room. The slightly opened doors juxtaposed with figures inside and outside create a sense of spatial depth. At the same time, the geometric and austere appearance of the doors enhance the graceful posture and organic form of the young girl. The dramatic and striking contrast in spatial expression between the right and left halves of this pair, achieved by the placement of the figures and the doors, fully demonstrates Shoen's ingenuity in multi-panel composition. Each half can be viewed as complete in itself while together they compliment one another and create a harmonious whole.

In Cherry Blossom Viewing (Figure 89) Shoen handles an entirely different compositional challenge. She represents in this elongated format five women and five umbrellas under a blossoming cherry branch. Open umbrellas which cover the lower-half of the painting lead viewer's eyes from the foreground to the middle to focus on the figures. The real theme of this work is the beauty of traditional coiffures displayed by the

women in various different angles.<sup>32</sup> As if to echo the figures, umbrellas are also set at different angles from one another. They activate the three-dimensional space and create a sense of depth in the painting. Through a clever juxtaposition of oval shapes and organic human forms, Shoen achieves a rhythmical and harmonious composition in this difficult format.

As Shoen calls her paintings "minutely executed style," hers are clearly the products of long process during which she makes many preparatory drawings, adjusting compositions and deciding on colors. In the final work, the naturalistic, precise depiction of the physical features, hair accessories and garments are achieved through accomplished brushwork and heavy coloring. Assiduous attention to the outer appearance of the figures is essential to bijinga, for it is a means of characterizing and differentiating the individual figures in rank and age and to recreate the authentic fuzoku of the period. In Shoen's case, the orthodoxy of her technique is inseparable from the images of the proper and perfect women she creates in her paintings. Technical perfection achieved in her work is symbolic of her moral commitment to the act of painting and ultimately the moral perfection of the women she represents.

#### Critical Reviews of Shoen's Work During the Late Meiji and Early Taisho Periods

The art world of Japan during the last five years of the Meiji period and early Taisho was gripped by enthusiasm for modernism. Early Meiji

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<sup>32</sup> Iijima, Hemura Shoen, pp. 111-112.

had marked the first period of transition, when the capacity of Western realism to reproduce the optical reality of nature practically paralyzed the Japanese art world. The very end of Meiji signaled the second period of transition with a new impetus from European art. This time, the influence from the West was not so much with the way of seeing as with the way of thinking. Japanese artists faced a fundamental issue of what art must mean to them. With the news of the opening of the Bunten, many Japanese artists returned home from Europe introducing first-hand knowledge of Post-Impressionism. The literary magazine, Shirakaba [White birch], established in 1910, also disseminated the newest information on European art introducing the artists of the Post-Impressionist era. Kuroda Jutarō (1887-1970), a yōga painter recounted the enthusiasm of the young artists in Kyoto:

The Shirakaba movement was chiefly aimed at literary circles but we can see spin-offs from it in the artistic world and its influence is not inconsiderable. Not only the Western-style painters but all the young artists of Kyoto waited for the latest issue of this monthly magazine. As the publication date for the new issue approached, we would go time and again to the bookstores, and finally, breathing in the smell of the still damp ink, we would submerge ourselves in the critical biographies of the latest artists to be introduced, such as Courbet, Manet, Cezanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin; and we would gaze at the reproductions of their works. The Post-Impressionists were especially strong at this time and ideas about their work were fundamental inspiration to us. Rejecting tradition, we asserted our individuality and we cannot deny this remarkable influence.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted by Stephen W. Kohl, Yoko Matsuoka McClain, and Ryoko Toyama McClellan, The White Birch School (Shirakabaha) of Japanese Literature: Some Sketches and Commentary, ed. G. Ralph Falconeri, mimeographed (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1975), p. 18.

Modernism for them was synonymous with individualism and anti-tradition. Kuroda's account vividly conveys the sense of eagerness and passion which united the yoga and Nihonga painters in their quest for new expression.

The surge of modernism gave birth to a series of small art groups in Kyoto between 1909 and 1912: Nameless Society (Mumeikai), Black Cat Society (Kuronekokai) also known as "Sha Noaru" (chat noir), and Mask Society (Kamenkai) or "Ru Masuku" (Le Maske). At the meeting of these groups, young Kyoto artists and art historians engaged themselves in lively discussions on theories of modernism.<sup>34</sup> Three yoga and two Nihonga painters who formed the Mask Society held an exhibit in May 1911. Their catalog vividly reveals the sense of infatuation with which they embraced the new concept:

Eugene Carriere wrote for Rodin, "La Transmission dela pensee par l'art comme la transmission dela vie oeuvre de passion et d'amour." Keeping this statement in mind, we create our works. We hope that besides our humble paintings, our exhibition itself represents the act of passion and love. Ondulation of line and arlequinade of color in a painting reveal the emotions of the painter. Likewise, we believe that our exhibition itself is our play, love, life, and artistic creation.<sup>35</sup>

The two Nihonga artists of this "super-modern" group were Tsuchida Bakusen and Ono Chikkyo, both promising students of Takeuchi Seiho at the time. In seven years after the Mask Society exhibit, they were to

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<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of these groups, see Seki Chiyo, "Kuronekokai Kamenkai nado oboegaki: Meiji matsunen ni okeru Kyoto gadan no ichidoko," Bijutsu kenkyu, no. 232 (1964), pp. 207-238; and Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, pp. 104-111.

<sup>35</sup> From an excerpt quoted by Seki, "Kuronakokai Kamenkai nado oboegaki: Meiji matsunen ni okeru Kyoto gadan no ichidoko," pp. 211-212.

form the Association of Creative National Painting the most individualism-oriented Kyoto Nihonga group of the Taisho period.

Studying under the same teacher with Bakusen and Chikkyo, Shoen was unquestionably aware of the newest concept of modernism centered on the discussion of individualism and artistic freedom. Yet, Shoen's paintings were staunchly anchored to the past tradition of bijinga. It was inevitable that Shoen and her work began to represent part of the "tradition" the young artists rebelled against.

Already in 1907, Shoen's Long Evening was criticized for the lack of individual originality:

This painting invites strong criticism. . . . Just because it is fuzokuga, must a painter follow the old style of fuzokuga to this extent? If so, where is the originality of the painter? The painter revives the style of Sukenobu and Choshun . . . and there is no originality. It is not worth appreciating as painting.<sup>36</sup>

Two years later, in 1909, Takeuchi Seiho, Shoen's teacher at the time, characterized Shoen's painting style as conservative and uninventive. In reference to Shoen's work titled Willow and Cherry (Ryuo), dated 1909, Seiho wrote:

As a whole, this work is not much different from her previous works. She continues to study and work with a steady pace of her own. She pursues her path untiringly and does not change her characteristic style. As result she creates neither an exceptional masterpiece nor a sloppy, poor-quality work. She consistently produces paintings full of feminine characteristics, that is, of careful and laborious handling. As usual, this painting

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted by Seki, "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," pp. 167-168. From comments jointly given by Ishii Tenpu, Yasuda Yukihiro, and others, which originally appeared in "Daiikikai bijutsu tenrankai gohyo," Bijutsu shingo 4, no. 17 (1907?).

displays meticulous and sensitive attention to every square inch of its surface but it lacks an innovative element or notable progress.<sup>37</sup>

Seiho recognizes Shoen's steadfast effort and technical perfection, yet in his opinion her works represent merely passable consistency, lacking in bold innovation.

In order to understand what Seiho meant by innovation at that time, we must turn to a work by Nonagase Banka 野長瀬晩光 (1889-1964), one of the young Nihonga painters in Kyoto. In 1911 Banka painted Young Girls Wearing Long Coats (Hifu kitaru shojo 被布着長少女) (Figure 90),<sup>38</sup> a representation of five girls dressed in colorful kimono coats and a small boy in Western clothes. The most remarkable feature of this painting is the execution of the designs on the girls' coats which are drawn by free-hand technique in watercolor as if scribbling. Juxtaposed with the traditional media and technique applied to the faces of the girls, the expressive drawing in a foreign medium creates strange, incongruous appearance to modern eyes. Yet in its very incongruity the painting represents one essence of late Meiji modernism. Combined with exotic references such as a Western doll, Western-style parasol, a clown on the floor, Western clothes of the little boy, the scribble-like drawing clearly expresses the anti-traditional attitude of the painter. In late Meiji, the complete freedom demonstrated in such a defiant manner in Banka's painting had absolutely no precedent or context in Nihonga. Its

<sup>37</sup> Takeuchi Seiho, "Tenrankai shokan," Kyoto bijutsu, no. 16 (1909), p. 16. His comment suggests that painting represented an older woman with a willow tree and a younger one with a cherry tree.

<sup>38</sup> For a color reproduction, see Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, ed., Kyoto no Nihonga, 1910-1930: Taisho no kokoro, kakushin to sozo (Kyoto: Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1986), plate 65.

audacity made him a super-modern to the point of heresy. Seiho weighed to the maximum the originality of this work:

Young Girls Wearing Long Coats is a painting with a modern flavor: it displays newness in sensual color expression in the depiction of the coats and suggests successfully the emotions of the girls. Unfortunately the facial depiction needs to be better handled. He has a problem finishing them. . . . This painting is very unique and I have great expectations for the painter's future.<sup>39</sup>

In spite of the technical deficiency he observed, Seiho valued the painting for its original, inventive quality.

At the time, Seiho was one of the most respected Nihonga painters in Japan. Although trained under a Shijo-school painter, Seiho had mastered various traditional styles of Japanese painting in order to achieve a "synthesis of techniques of all schools."<sup>40</sup> His synthetic style of the early 1890s had been as radical and shocking at the time as Banka's free drawing technique was in 1911. In his synthesis, Seiho did not exclude Western-style painting. He was among the earliest Nihonga artists who traveled through Europe, and in 1901, upon returning from a six-month trip to Europe, he changed the "sei" character of his name to to incorporate the character meaning "west." Then, he astonished everyone by creating landscape paintings based on European motifs exemplified by a pair of screens titled Spring in Holland and Autumn in Italy (Oranda shunko, Itari shushoku). Seiho even painted one oil painting titled Scenery of Suez (Suezu no keshiki) in 1901.<sup>41</sup> One can

<sup>39</sup> Quoted by Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 115. Originally published in Kyoto Hinode Shinbun, 9 May 1911.

<sup>40</sup> Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

safely argue that during the Meiji period Seiho was one of the most progressive-minded artists in Kyoto who challenged the tradition to the extent possible by a painter of his generation. What he could not accomplish, he encouraged younger artists to carry on. He hoped that they would shape the modern idea of individualism in concrete visual terms of painting. It was in this respect that Seiho championed Banka's Young Girls Wearing Long Coats in 1911. More than anything else, he recognized the ability of the young painter to leap away from tradition with such seeming ease and achieve thoroughly individualistic and thus "modern" expression. In this, Seiho believed, lied the future potential of the young painter and the future development of Nihonga.

The examples of Shoen's paintings during the last five years of Meiji and early Taisho period display diversity of expressions within the framework of bijinga based on her study of various painting styles of the past. She was particularly accomplished in inventive composition, tasteful color scheme, and superbly controlled brushwork. However, these accomplishments were no longer enough to qualify her as a "modern" artist. Critical reviews on the works by Shoen during the early Taisho period are unanimous in their praise of her technical finesse, while some echo Seiho's criticism in their dissatisfaction with her conservatism. They also reveal prejudice against and pre-conception about women artists. In reference to Firefly, 1913, wrote a critic:

There is not much feeling in the work. Only impressive technique. Firefly by Shoen, however, demonstrates harmony of color and sureness of line. Shoen indeed excels other women painters.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Kawano Kokoku, "Nika no shosaku," Bijutsu shinpo 13, no.1 (November 1913): 17.

The lack of "feeling" criticized above may pertain to the lack of expressive content, or the lack of sensuality normally expected of this type of female representation. Moreover, the comment reveals the tendency of male critics to evaluate women painters as a separate group as if a different standard should be applied to their art. Preparing to Dance, 1914, was praised for its "refined and gentle quality in figure depiction and in coloring."<sup>43</sup> It was also voiced that only a woman-painter could have conceived and executed such beautiful depiction of kimono.<sup>44</sup> In actuality, attentive representation of kimono is not a gender-specific characteristic in art: many bijinga artists, both men and women, were accomplished in detailed depictions of costume. But the Taisho-period critics often associated decorativeness with women artists as a prominent feature of feminine style, reflecting the traditional notion of femininity entangled with beauty.

The most insightful pair of comments on Shoen's art come from 1916. In this year, she painted Night of Lunar Eclipse and was selected as one of the artists who could submit a work to the Bunten without going through the jury process. It was an honor bestowed upon only a handful of painters each year. The Chuo bijutsu featured an article on Shoen and other selected painters after the Bunten decision. On this formal occasion, two prominent painters, Kaburaki Kiyokata and Kikuchi Keigetsu,

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<sup>43</sup> Shajo Giro, "Dainachikai Bunten gohyo," Bijutsu shinpo 14, no. 1 (November 1914): 46.

<sup>44</sup> Matsumoto Sotaro, quoted by Takeuchi Tsutomu and Kurata Kimihiro, Takeuchi Seiho/Uemura Shoen, Gendai Nihon bijutsu zenshu, vol. 13 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1973), p. 119.

contributed their opinions on Shoen's art.<sup>45</sup> Their comments contrast greatly in their assessment of her art and reveal diversity of viewpoints during the Taisho period. Kiyokata was sympathetic:

Shoen's works since early times have been received by the Tokyo viewers more favorably than the works of any other Kyoto painter. . . . Long Evening which Shoen submitted to the first Bunten was a high-quality work. After that, Shoen's Bunten pieces did not fully demonstrate her characteristic ability. . . . Night of Lunar Eclipse of this year is a long-awaited work which displays Shoen's remarkable technical skill to its full extent. So impressive is this work that even those who have not paid much attention to her work before are lauding and praising her now. I have had a great admiration for Shoen ever since I saw In Full Bloom and Sound of Crickets. . . .

I hope that Shoen will maintain her womanly interest and continue to utilize her special talent with which she represents so beautifully the modest and graceful women of Kyoto: I would like to see her keep on working within this particular category.

Keigetsu was critical:

I don't have much to say about Shoen because I don't know the painter personally. . . .

Among her works, there has not been one work which deeply moved and appealed to me. . . .

Shoen's work of this year, which I saw in Tokyo the other day, appears to be a good painting. . . . Her work seems to steadily improve year after year. But that "improvement" means simply the refinement of the Maruyama-Shijo tradition: beautiful to look at and technically superb, but lacking something more important. Up to this moment, my impression of Shoen is limited to "a woman-painter with consummate technique and refined sense of color." That is not sufficient ingredient for great art. I hope that she will develop further in the future [to become a true artist].

The above statements by the two men clearly reflect the contrasting artistic and personal temperament of each artist. Kiyokata admired

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<sup>45</sup> The following quotations come from "Uemura Shoen-shi," Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 12 (December 1916): 13-14.

Shoen's art ever since he saw In Full Bloom in Tokyo in 1900, and produced many memorable examples of bijinga thereafter. In his praise of Shoen's representation of "the modest and graceful women of Kyoto," he reveals his own traditional view on feminine ideal and his affinity toward Shoen's art. In 1912, Kiyokata lamented about his art saying "I don't entirely belong to the older school, but I can't quite keep up with the younger generations, either."<sup>46</sup> Kiyokata's words truthfully and eloquently express the dilemma of the artists of his generation caught up in the midst of changing times, as Shoen was also. The "remarkable technique" demonstrated by Shoen was an important element for the artists of Kiyokata and Shoen's generation, and particularly for bijinga specialists. However, that same quality, technical achievement, was no longer sufficient to fulfill the requirement for great art of the more progressive-minded artists represented by Keigetsu. His comment echoed Seiho's criticism in 1909 that Shoen's work lacked inventiveness in spite of technical perfection. In the changing art world of the Taisho period, Shoen was faced with a serious challenge in her art. Her paintings of fictional heroines, which date from the early half of the Taisho period, represent her response to this challenge, as we will examine in the following pages.

## 2. Women in Love: Themes from Literature

### Five Women Who Loved Love (Koshoku gonin onna)

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted by Sakai Saisui, "Shin jidai no sakka 8: Kaburaki Kiyokata-shi," Bijutsu shingo 11, no. 12 (October 1912): 2.

Among Shoen's oeuvre of the Taisho period, four paintings represent well-known female characters in literature: Young Woman Miyuki, 1914, Oman and Flower Basket, both dated 1915, and Flame in 1918. Produced within the period of five years, all of them focus on the theme of women in love and form a group of most explicitly emotional works in Shoen's entire career.

Oman (Figure 36) is a small hanging scroll which represents one of the heroines from the Five Women Who Loved Love by Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693). Saikaku, considered today as a great novelist, lived in Osaka and started out his literary career as a haiku poet. He began concentrating his energy on writing novels after the success of his first prose work, The Life of an Amorous Man (Koshoku ichidai otoko), published in 1682.<sup>47</sup> Five Women Who Loved Love, written in 1686, is regarded as Saikaku's masterpiece. The novel consists of five separate stories of women in love, all of which are modeled on historical incidents. Shoen's painting of Oman, based on the fifth episode in Saikaku's novel, reportedly made a pair with Oshichi by Kikuchi Keigetsu,<sup>48</sup> which represented the heroine of the fourth story in Five Women.

In Saikaku's story, Oman is a young beautiful woman who lives in Satsuma, the southernmost province. She falls in love with a handsome man named Gengobei. Her love, however, is unrequited because Gengobei is committed to pederasty. Gengobei proceeds to have two affairs but in

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<sup>47</sup> For a brief discussion of Saikaku's novels and his literary style, see Donald Keene, World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600-1867 (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1976), pp. 167-215. For an English translation of Five Women, see Wm. Theodore de Bary, trans., Five Women Who Loved Love (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1956).

<sup>48</sup> Seki Chiyo, Uemura Shoen, Kindai Nihon no Bijutsu, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Shibundo, 1972), p. 50. The whereabouts of Keigetsu's work is unknown.

both cases his young lover dies mysteriously. Overcome with sorrow, he decides to give up amorous affairs and live as a hermit-priest. Upon hearing this, Oman disguises herself as a young man and travels to see Gengobei. Instantly charmed by this beautiful "young man," Gengobei consents to giving a pledge of commitment. When Gengobei discovers Oman's true gender, Oman reminds him of the pledge and confides her love for him. Moved by Oman's passion and sincerity, Gengobei agrees to consummate her love. The couple experience a temporary hardship but Oman's parents eventually accept their marriage. Gengobei and Oman live happily thereafter with wealth bestowed by Oman's parents.

In Shoen's painting (Figure 36), a young heroine is represented disguised as a man: she wears man's clothes, carries a sword, and wears young man's hairstyle as indicated by the shaven crown of her head. A bamboo hat lies behind her on the left and the ginkgo leaves scattered on the ground suggest the autumnal setting. A passage from Saikaku's novel helps us better understand this image:

... Oman bade farewell to her friends as if to leave the world for a nunnery. In secret she clipped her own hair to make it look like a boy's. She had already taken care to get suitable clothing and was able to transform herself completely into a mannish young lover. Then, quietly, stealthily, she set out, bound for the Mountain of Love.

As Oman stepped along she brushed the frost off the bamboo grass, for it was October, the Godless Month, yet here was a girl true to her love. A long way she went, far from the village into a grove of cedars which someone had described to her. At the end of it could be seen the wild crags of a cliff and off to the west a deep cavern, in the depths of which one's mind would get lost thinking about it. Across a stream lay some rotten logs - two, three, four of them, which were barely enough to support her. . . . Beyond, on a

little piece of flat land, was a lean-to sloping down from the cliff. .

..  
 She was disappointed to find the priest gone. "I wonder where to?" she asked, but there was no one there to tell her, nothing at all but the lonely pines, and nothing for her to do but wait. . . .<sup>49</sup>

Shoen's painting most likely represents Oman at the end of this perilous journey, now waiting for Gengobei. The sinuous posture and the self-embracing gesture of the figure reveals her feminine identity. The S-shaped configuration of her body bending, twisting, and turning in space seems symbolic of her inner turmoil. Her facial expression, characterized by down-cast eyes and slightly parted lips, is suggestive of anxiety and expectation about the approaching encounter with Gengobei. She is anxious yet frightened. Shoen relies on a quiet color combination of gray and green to convey the serious intention of the heroine. Only touches of red visible around her neck and waist give bright accents. Soft overall impression of the figure comes not only from the subdued colors but also the diffused depictions of her lips, eyebrows, and eyes.

The appearance of Saikaku's Five Women in Shoen's work reflects the popularity of of this theme among Nihonga painters during the Taisho period. In mid-Meiji, during the late 1880s, Saikaku's works began to stimulate the interest of Japanese novelists. The translation of Five Women Who Loved Love into modern Japanese appeared in 1890, and the novel was a subject of extensive discussion in the December issue of Waseda bungaku, 1906.<sup>50</sup> Reflecting this trend in the literary world, the

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<sup>49</sup> de Bary, Five Women, pp. 213-214.

<sup>50</sup> See Teruoka Yasutaka and Noma Mitsutoshi, eds., "Kindai ni okeru Saikaku kenkyu," in Saikaku, Kokugo kokubungaku kenkyushi taisei, vol. 11(Tokyo: Sanseido, 1961), pp. 33-54.

female characters from Saikaku's Five Women began to appear in Nihonga during the late Meiji period. It was during the Taisho period, however, when the Japanese artists fully embraced them as subjects of their paintings. Their great appeal is demonstrated by the fact that four young women painters of Osaka established a "Saikaku Study Group" in 1916 and exhibited paintings in which they depicted the heroines of Five Women.<sup>51</sup> In order to understand their fascination with Saikaku's novel, we must first familiarize ourselves with the stories of Five Women.

All five heroines in Saikaku's novel represent women who place love over social code and family obligations. For their love of love, Saikaku's women, except for one, meet tragic end. The first is the story of Onatsu, a beautiful sister of a prosperous merchant in Himeji, who falls in love with Seijuro, a handsome young man employed by her brother. They elope but are quickly captured. Seijuro is executed for having committed the crime of seduction and kidnapping. Onatsu, out of despair and sorrow, becomes temporarily mad, but eventually enters a temple as a nun to pray for the soul of Seijuro. The painting titled Onatsu by Saikaku (Saikaku no Onatsu 西鶴の夏) (Figure 91) by Shimazaki Ryuu appeared at the first official salon of 1907, possibly the earliest rendition of this subject in modern Nihonga. Later Ikeda Terukata painted Deranged Onatsu (Onatsu kyoran 赤夏狂乱) (Figure 92) during the mid-1910s.<sup>52</sup> More unusual is the joint work by Nonagase Banka, Hata Teruo,

<sup>51</sup> Oman by Shima Seien, Oshichi by Yoshioka Chigusa, Onatsu by Okamoto Koen and Osen by Matsumoto Kayo. These women painters were all students of Kitano Tsunetomi. See "Goshippu," Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 4 (April 1916): 98; and "Tenrankai geppyu," Chuo bijutsu 2, no. 6 (June 1916): 113.

<sup>52</sup> This particular work was based on a dance drama of the same title, created by Tsubouchi Shoyo, which ultimately took inspiration from Saikaku's Five Women. See

and Takehisa Yumeji, titled Onatsu and Seijuro (Onatsu Seijuro 赤夏清十郎) dated 1917, representing the scene in which the two lovers consummate their love unaware of a peeping tom.<sup>53</sup>

The heroines of the second and third episodes are married women who commit adultery. The second story evolves around Osen in Osaka, who marries a cooper. For a while they lead a happy life. However, a tragedy unfolds when Osen is unjustly accused of having an affair with a maltster by his jealous wife. Out of vengeance, Osen decides to have a real affair with him. Osen's husband finds out and Osen is compelled to commit suicide while the maltster is executed. The heroine of the third story is Osan, who marries an almanac maker in Kyoto. While her husband is away on business, Osan teases Moemon, a servant, who is in love with one of Osan's maids and ends up having an affair with him. They elope from Kyoto but are captured and executed.

The fourth story, the most moving in its mixture of passion and innocence, is that of Oshichi, the beautiful daughter of a grocer in Edo. When a fire destroys her home, Oshichi and her family take refuge at their family temple. There Oshichi meets and falls in love with a young samurai, Kichisaburo. Prevented by her parents, Oshichi is unable to see Kichisaburo. Believing that another fire will give her an opportunity to see her lover again, Oshichi commits arson, one of the most serious offenses at the time. Oshichi receives the punishment of death by

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Amagasaki-shi Sogo Bunka Sentaa and Kobe Shinbunsha, eds., Josei no bi: Kindai Nihon bijinga meisaku-ten (Amegasaki: Amagasaki-shi Sogo Bunka Sentaa and Kobe Shinbunsha, 1986), entry for plate 28.

<sup>53</sup> Reproduced in Wakayama Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, ed., 1910 nen-dai ni okeru Kyoto Nihonga no shindoko (Wakayama: Wakayama Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1976), plate 29.

burning. Kichisaburo tries to commit suicide but eventually enters a temple as a priest. Kaburaki Kiyokata is recorded to have painted in 1911 a pair of scrolls titled Oshichi and Kichisaburo (Oshichi to Kichisaburo お七と吉三郎),<sup>54</sup> and Ikeda Terukata painted in 1912 Oshichi (Figure 93) in which the young woman is shown perched on a ladder of a fire watch tower.

The last story involving Oman is the only one among the five which has a happy ending.<sup>55</sup> The actual incident for Oman's story was most distanced from Saikaku in time and location among the five stories, and the real-life Oman and Gengobei are believed to have committed double suicide.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, one scholar argues, the character of Oman is more strongly than the others the creation of Saikaku's imagination and, consequently, a spokesperson most expressly for the writer's message: impetuous and determined pursuit of love out of one's independent will.<sup>57</sup> Certainly, episode after episode in Five Women, we are introduced to the type of woman who "makes the advances, forces the issue, decides what must be done in a crisis."<sup>58</sup> It is this forwardness which makes Saikaku's women extraordinary in the context of his time.

<sup>54</sup> Fukunaga Shigeki, Kaburaki Kiyokata, Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), p. 124.

<sup>55</sup> This may reflect the theatrical conventions of Saikaku's time or literary methods used in linked-verse composition. See Richard Lane, "Saikaku's 'Five Women'," in de Bary, Five Women, p. 259.

<sup>56</sup> For the discussion of the historical records of the five incidents, see Teruoka Yasutaka, Koshoku gonjin onna, Gendaigoyaku Saikaku zenshu, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1976), pp. 279-291; and de Barry, Five Women, pp. 231-263.

<sup>57</sup> Shirokura Kazuyoshi, Saikaku no bungei, (Kofu, Yamanashi: Yamanashi Eiwa Tanki Daigaku Kokubungaku Kenkyushitsu, 1974), p. 259.

<sup>58</sup> de Bary, Five Women, p. 33.

The Japanese who lived in the feudalistic society of the Edo period were bound by the rigid class structure and social code. The Confucian doctrine taught the virtue of absolute loyalty to one's lord and filial piety to one's parents. Within a family, the patriarchal order ensured the indisputable authority of the male members. Marriage in the feudal society functioned as an institution to maintain the correct family lineage and allowed little personal freedom in the affair of love. For excessive individual freedom could disrupt the proper family lineage in accordance with social hierarchy and ultimately undermine the foundation of the feudal system. The continuation of family name was of utmost importance, and women whose primary responsibility in society was to bear children, were required to remain chaste to maintain the legitimate family blood line.

Placed in this social context, passion for love which characterize Saikaku's women, can lead to nothing but a tragic end. Their tragedies are made palpable by the fact that they derive from actual incidents. Infidelity by married women was a criminal offense and they were punished to death along with their lovers. This is the fate which befalls upon Osan, the wife of almanac maker, in the third story of Five Women. If the husband found his wife and her lover in the act of adultery, he could legally kill them both. Thus, the heroine of the second story, Osen, commits suicide when her husband finds her with her lover. For she knows that she would be killed by her husband on the spot anyway. Single, unattached women, were deprived of rights to choose their spouses on their own will. Hence, Oshichi's love affair takes a tragic turn in spite of her unmarried status. In her case, her act of naive belief that

a fire will bring another chance to see her lover, leads to arson and receives the severest punishment of death by burning. On the other hand, Onatsu's story sheds light to the strict social hierarchy maintained during the Edo-period. A servant who eloped with his master's daughter was charged with a crime of seduction and abduction, punishable by death. Thus, what should be a simple love affair between a man and woman, from our modern point of view, has a tragic course in the story of Onatsu and Seijuro.

Whether Saikaku intended Five Women Who Loved Love to be a strong social criticism or simply an entertaining novel is a matter of dispute among the scholars. At least it is certain that Saikaku's heroines are bold women who challenge the morals and law in consummation of love and pay for the consequences. For Saikaku, as de Bary asserts, "this boldness is what makes a woman great, more than her beauty."<sup>59</sup> In the same way, for the Taisho Japanese, what made Saikaku's women infinitely fascinating must have been their spirit of self-assertion and willingness to stake their lives for being truthful to their passion and desire. In this respect, there is a clear parallel between Saikaku's heroines and the "awakening" women of the Taisho period. Many Japanese women during this period, including intellectuals and aristocrats whose actions counted most in this matter, made news by asserting their rights to marry men of their own choice. Yosano Akiko, the most prominent woman poet in modern Japan, and Matsui Sumako (1886-1919), the best-known actress of the Taisho period, were among those who pursued their future husbands on their own terms. Hiratsuka

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Raicho, the leader of the woman's liberation movement, denounced the conventional marriage system as a product of feudalism, and refused to register her marriage. Even the highborn women, whose social position allowed them to have the least freedom in their lives, began to behave with increasing boldness to assert themselves. Yoshikawa Kamako (1890-1921), a daughter of a count and married to a womanizing husband, eloped with her private chauffeur and attempted a double suicide in 1917. Yanagihara Akiko, a member of a distinguished aristocratic family and is better known for her poet's name, Byakuren, abandoned her arranged marriage to a millionaire husband and eloped with a young political activist of socialist conviction in 1921. She published her proclamation of divorce addressed to her husband in a newspaper: "Hereby I bid you a farewell. You have denigrated the human dignity of women with the power of money. I leave you in order to protect and further develop my individual freedom and dignity. . . ."60 In a way, these women were the modern counterparts to Saikaku's bold women. Unlike Saikaku's women who were driven to their action by their instinct and passion, however, the Taisho-period Japanese women who rebelled against the society largely chose to do so with awareness of and conviction in their individual human rights, as exemplified by Byakuren's letter.

Young women painters of Osaka who formed a Saikaku study group in 1916 must have felt a strong affinity with the heroines of Five Women. At least it is safe to presume that they could identify emotionally and

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<sup>60</sup> Excerpt of this letter is published in Nagahata Michiko, Honoo no onna: Taisho josei seikatsushi (Tokyo: Shinhyoron, 1981), p. 141.

romantically with the distant forerunners of "awakened women." It is doubtful, however, that Shoen depicted a Saikaku theme as an affirmation of the triumph of personal love over feudalistic society. As discussed in the preceding section of this dissertation, Shoen extols in her paintings the images of Japanese women who honor the Confucian moral code and find complete fulfillment of their womanhood in the domestic role as wife and mother. Nothing can be more distant from Shoen's feminine ideal than Saikaku's self-willed women who violate the social more in order to consummate their passion. Then, Shoen's choice of a Saikaku theme must be based on reasons other than an endorsement of bold, self-assertive women portrayed in Five Women Who Loved Love.

Shoen was aware of the unfavorable comments on her art during the late Meiji and early Taisho periods, which criticized her paintings as conservative lacking in innovation and modernity. By selecting a fictional heroine in love, Shoen sought to achieve a painting of new woman subject which allowed an expression of greater emotional depth. From the end of Meiji, modern-minded Nihonga painters were searching for new themes which "expressed their personal ideas about life" rather than following traditionally established subjects "such as 'bushclover and deer' and 'moon and cuckoo'."<sup>61</sup> Thus, those who specialized in figure began to select the characters from plays and novels for the subjects of their works. This trend was discussed in an art magazine in 1907 as a new practice which had appeared as early as 1906 among the members of

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<sup>61</sup> "Kaiga no shinkeiko," Kaiga soshi, no. 240 (April 1907), p. 19.

Ugokai in Tokyo.<sup>62</sup> Kaburaki Kiyokata and Ikeda Terukata who painted the image of Oshichi in 1911 and 1912 respectively were members of Ugokai and shared an interest in theater in the tradition of ukiyo-e school. The appearance of a Saikaku heroine in Shoen's oeuvre in 1915 reflects this trend among figure painters to represent a subject related to literature. Given this background, Shoen's choice of Oman is a reasonable compromise for her. Within the fictional realm of Five Women, Oman would be the least offensive character in Shoen's moral view. She violates no major social law and her action is approved by her parents at the end. Besides, Oman is the only woman among the five who proceeds toward her goal in a well-prepared manner and finally outwits her man. In some way, Oman's sense of determination to achieve her goal and capacity for perseverance to that end are personal traits which also characterize Shoen herself.

Shoen at least during the early half of the Taisho period regarded herself as a forward-looking artist rather than a traditionalist. When the official salon split the Nihonga section into First (traditional school) and Second (modern school) Sections during 1912 and 1913,<sup>63</sup> Shoen submitted her works to the Second Section (Firefly in 1913), indicating her self-estimation as a modernist. Thus, Shoen's choice of a Saikaku theme derives from her desire to be more expressive and be "modern"

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<sup>62</sup> Ryokaku, "Gadai to shite shichu no jinbutsu to shijo no jinbutsu," Kaiga soshi, no. 247 (November 1907), pp. 4-5. The author actually mentions Museikai [Voiceless Society] but judging from the context, he must mean Ugokai, which was established in 1901 in Tokyo.

<sup>63</sup> This resulted from the politics within the official salon. See Asano Nagatake, Kobayashi Yukio, and Hosokawa Goryu, eds., Genshoku Meiji hyakunen biutsukan (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1967), pp. 435-436.

within the field of bijinga, rather than signaling her affirmation of the forerunners of "new women." This argument can be reinforced by examining Shoen's other literature-derived works from this period.

### Themes from Joruri and Yokyoku

Soon after the Taisho period began, emotional themes deriving from joruri (ballad drama usually accompanied by shamisen) and yokyoku (songs for noh) began to appear in Shoen's work. No doubt Shoen was inspired by yokyoku which she began to practice in 1914. More importantly, however, those works reveal Shoen's determination to pioneer a new domain in bijinga through emotionally charged subject matter.

Shoen's Young Woman Miyuki (Figure 35), dated 1914, is based on a joruri story. Miyuki is the heroine in Asagao nikki [The Diary of Morning Glory] who journeys throughout Japan in search of her lover, Asojiro. Shoen's Miyuki is a beautiful young woman before she becomes blind and launches upon the arduous journey. In the scene represented here, our heroine has taken a rest from a koto practice to read a poem inscribed on a fan by Asojiro. But hearing the sound of footsteps Miyuki quickly covers the fan with a sleeve. Her lovely face suggests a subtle sense of alarm and apprehension through her slightly raised eyes and eyebrows, while her diagonally thrusting torso conveys a feeling of tension. She is impeccably feminine in her pose and gesture. Shoen's Miyuki is a vulnerable young woman in love who is full of expectations but aware of neither hardship which awaits in her future nor her own strength with which she will achieve her goal. Dressed in pink kimono,

Miyuki is represented as a woman of fresh beauty as if a spring blossom. The design of playful Chinese children which decorates her stationary box seems symbolic of Miyuki's innocence and purity as she herself is barely out of her childhood years. In this work and as in Oman, Shoen focuses on the emotional characterization of a young woman in love: Miyuki and Oman are expressive of their inner feelings more openly than those in Shoen's earlier paintings in a subtle and restrained way traditionally permitted of Japanese women.

In Shoen's own words, Miyuki and Yodogimi (wife of Toyotomi Hideyoshi) were her two favorite women:

In terms of the personality and character, I like Miyuki of the Asagao nikki and Yodogimi. Shy and gentle Miyuki and strong-minded, competitive Yodogimi are completely opposite characters. I like these different qualities represented by them. . . . Yodogimi, I would like to paint someday.<sup>64</sup>

The choice of these two contrasting characters is an interesting one and reflects two sides of Shoen's personality. Miyuki in her gentle beauty and ability for perseverance epitomizes the feminine ideal of traditional Japan, which Shoen so admired. In contrast, the tough-minded Yodogimi who could stand on equal ground with men in her political ambition had a different appeal to Shoen. In vying to achieve success in the world dominated by men, Shoen acquired, if she had not innately possessed, the strength to fight back and to stand up for herself as Yodogimi had.

For the Bunten of 1915, Shoen painted a yokyoku-derived theme, Flower Basket (Figure 30). Yokyoku is singing accompaniment for noh drama, which Shoen began studying as a hobby under a noted performer,

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<sup>64</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, p. 30.

Kongo Iwao , in 1914. Flower Basket represents a young court lady named Teruhinomae performing a dance of a deranged woman in front of her beloved prince, now an emperor. On the day the prince leaves for the capital to ascend the imperial throne, he has a servant deliver a flower basket with a message to Teruhinomae. Driven by her love for the prince, she is compelled to travel to the capital, where she encounters the imperial excursion for maple-leaf viewing. The emperor orders Teruhinomae to dance like a mad woman in love. So moving is her dance that the emperor summons her again to be with him. In this work, Shoen represents the figure of Teruhinomae in life-size scale as a woman of striking appearance with black hair cascading on her back. One notices, however, a tentative, strange quality about her. In her right arm she carries a flower basket to which is attached an imperial letter. But that arm is carelessly exposed almost to the elbow while her right hand is awkwardly open. The outer garment is slipping off her left shoulder and the fan at her feet is broken. The subtle hints at abnormalcy of the figure culminate in her face, in her oddly empty gaze and slightly distorted shape of her mouth. Unlike the faces of Oman and Miyuki which subtly convey feelings such as anxiety and surprise, Teruhinomae's face is devoid of recognizable expression and represents a person who lives in the different realm of reality. In order to create this face of the deranged, Shoen made sketches of patients at a mental hospital in northern kyoto and studied noh masks.<sup>65</sup> It is this combination of realism based on observation of truly insane people and abstraction of the noh masks that invests this face with strangely beautiful, mysterious

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<sup>65</sup> See Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 139-142.

quality. One critic gave credit to Shoen's effort commenting, "Shoen in this year's work attempts to express the feelings of a real woman."<sup>66</sup> Clearly this remark reflected a general sense of dissatisfaction with the idealized treatment of women in Shoen's earlier works. Kaburaki Kiyokata wrote: "One recognizes a serious effort by Shoen in the depiction of the facial features of the demented heroine. The only weakness in my opinion is that too many pretty colors are used . . . ."<sup>67</sup> As pointed out by Kiyokata, it is a visually satisfying work based on both striking and subtle color combinations. The vermilion of the heroine's skirt is echoed by the falling maple leaves while her white outer garment is decorated with exquisite color combination of pink, light green, and cream. Kiyokata is right, however, that the decorative beauty of the painting interferes with the expression of emotional depth Shoen is trying to achieve. Viewer's eyes are drawn too strongly to the visual beauty of the work to deeply empathize with the heroine depicted in it.

Nevertheless, in its uniqueness of subject, Flower Basket occupies an important place in Shoen's oeuvre. The representations of crazy or demented women in bijinga tradition had appeared earlier than Shoen's Flower Basket, as exemplified by Shimazaki Ryuu's Onatsu by Saikaku, 1907 (figure 91). The theme of deranged women offered bijinga artists a provocative content, a new possibility to produce more telling, dramatic work. However, in order not to violate the traditional concept of bijinga, or to satisfy the criteria of bijinga, i.e., universally recognizable feminine

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<sup>66</sup> Nakagawa Tadanori, "Bunten zatsuwa," Bijutsu shinpo 15, no. 1 (November 1915): 25.

<sup>67</sup> Kaburaki Kiyokata, "Bunten no jinbutsuga," Chuo bijutsu 1, no. 2 (November 1915): 18.

beauty, the subjects were best sought from heroines in plays and novels, distanced from the real world. Particularly for Shoen, this was crucial. Her artistic and moral conviction made her adhere to the idealized images of women and the aesthetically pleasing work. Even in depicting a deranged woman, Shoen kept her principles in operation:

I have seen an image of woman who has gone crazy in the representation of "crazy Onatsu." But Onatsu represents "burning passions" which has transformed her to insanity and does not convey the "graceful and noble state of insanity" conveyed by Teruhinomae in Flower Basket.

There is a clear difference between the images of those two crazy women performed on a stage. Of course, the difference derives partly from the distinct characters of kabuki and noh, but the representation of crazy Teruhinomae is much more difficult for a painter than that of Onatsu. Onatsu is genuinely insane while Teruhinomae pretends to be crazy at the order of her beloved emperor. This difference must emerge in the images.<sup>68</sup>

It is clear that the sense of grace and nobility, quintessential characteristic of Shoen's women, were to be embodied even by a mad woman.

To the contemporary painters' call for modernization of Japanese-style painting, Shoen was not entirely deaf. She too was searching for ways to be more expressive and modern, in the field of bijinga with which she had become identified. She was experimenting within the confine of what she believed bijinga represented. But her adherence to "beauty" made her work increasingly outdated. The limitation Shoen placed upon her art becomes clearer when we look at Deranged Woman (Figure 18) by Tokuoka Shinsen, ca. 1919. In this work, the young painter represents with an uncompromising sense of realism a sobering

<sup>68</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 138-139.

image of insanity. A woman in tattered clothes stares at the viewer in the eye. With her hair flying like demon's and holding a comb in her hand as if an ominous weapon, she bends forward. The painting captures in its frightful image the reality of a fractured mind which no longer distinguishes the real and the unreal. This was a type of work which exemplified the expression of "truth" and "honesty" championed by young Japanese artists. For those who demanded this kind of "honesty" and "sincerity" from a painter, Shoen's work represented nothing but esoragoto [the world of mere imagination], artificial and irrelevant to the real world of humans. One of the outspoken criticisms of Shoen's art was addressed in 1915 in reference to Flower Basket:

Paintings by Shoen keep earning recognition at the Bunten year after year. But her paintings continue to reflect shallowness of an old art standard. Each year, she creates a painting which represents only the surface of old-fashioned women. Her women are given pretty faces and beautiful outfits in conformity to the old-fashioned aesthetic: they convey no sense of real human being with flesh and blood, they barely express emotion and feeling. Shoen confines her talent to depiction of forms, outline brush techniques, and attention to decorative design on kimono. Her art fails to move forward as if still water.<sup>69</sup>

Shoen was becoming too old-fashioned in the rigorous art world of Taisho as the bijinga itself was beginning to be viewed as backward in light of the shifting image of Japanese women.

Shoen did not submit a work to the official salon of 1917, but produced several small-scale paintings, only the titles of which seem to remain today. The comments of the critics are insightful in understanding Shoen's artistic position: "mature technique" (Spring Day).

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<sup>69</sup> Ueda Ichizo, "Bunten no Nihonga godai," Hinode Shinbun, 6 December 1916.

"superb skill as typical of Shoen" (Rumor and Cherry Blossom Viewing), and "nothing but a safe, passable work" (Court Lady of Ancient Times).<sup>70</sup> It is clear that Shoen's works were admired for her consummate technique while that in itself was no longer sufficient to create great art in the Taisho period.

In light of the above discussion, Flame (Figure 32), painted in 1918, represents Shoen's ultimate answer to the demand of the time that a painting must express something beyond technical superiority. The subject of this painting also derives from a yokyoku theme, Lady Aoi (Aoi no ue), in which the ghost of a noble lady Rokujo Miyasunodokoro appears to haunt her lover's new mistress. Shoen's painting represents the ghost tormented by burning jealousy. She stands in the center with her back to viewer turning in space so that her face is revealed in three-quarters view. The complexion of her face and the skin of her right arm are marked by the pale glow of the netherworld. Tormented by her own passion and attachment to this world, she grieves and curses. The expression of distress is clearly recognizable in her frown and down-cast stare through her barely opened eyes. Deep feeling of grudge is conveyed by the gesture of biting a strand of hair in her mouth. Such an unrestrained display of emotion is an anomaly among Shoen's women. Even Miyuki, Oman, and Teruhinomae suggest their emotional state through their poses and gestures more strongly than their facial expressions alone. In spite of the distraught expression, Shoen's ghost is a woman of aristocratic beauty, elegantly dressed in the robe decorated

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<sup>70</sup> See "Tenrankai geppyo" in Chuo bijutsu 3, no. 4 (April 1917): 107; Chuo bijutsu 3, no. 5 (May 1917): 109; and Chuo bijutsu 3, no. 12 (December 1917): 102.

with wisteria blossoms. Woven among the blossoms, however, are spider webs.<sup>71</sup> As the spider sucks blood out of live beings, this design indicates the deadly power and intention possessed by the figure. Furthermore, her long flowing hair and exquisite robe fade away toward the bottom of the painting indicating her unworldly nature. Even the minimum depiction of the setting seen in Miyuki Oman, and Flower Basket are discarded in this painting. The writhing figure simply rises out of and hovers in ominous darkness. Crucial to the making of this haunting image was, according to Shoen, the treatment of the eyes. Shoen painted gold in the eyes from the reverse side of the silk to create the impression of teary eyes. This was based on the advice from her yokyoku teacher who pointed out this technique used in making of noh masks.

The subject of jealous woman makes no other appearance in Shoen's oeuvre. According to the Onna daigaku, jealousy is one of the "five worst infirmities" which afflict women. The choice of such a negative theme is remarkable for Shoen, who usually produces the images of women as embodiment of Confucian doctrine expounded by the Onna daigaku. Clearly, Shoen is moved by the demand of the time to represent a "real human being with flesh and blood," who conveys "emotion and feeling." By depicting a woman torn by jealousy, or by choosing an "ugly" truth of human nature as her theme, Shoen comes close to undermine her own conviction in moral function of art as transmitter of truth, beauty, and goodness. It is significant perhaps, in this regard, that the heroine in Flame is a ghost. One may suggest that Shoen permits a greater freedom in the emotional characterization of the

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<sup>71</sup> Pointed out by Iijima, Uemura Shoen, p. 114.

figure precisely because she is not a living human. Compelled to produce more humanized images of women, Shoen compromises her old-fashioned principle by representing a theme of jealousy through a ghost in the fictionalized world of the past. Seen in the context of Shoen's oeuvre, Flame is the most expressive and emotionally powerful work. Yet Shoen does not entirely breach her allegiance to "beauty," the paramount ingredient of bijinga. For ultimately, the painting impresses upon the viewer as an imagery of haunting beauty more than as a statement of ugly reality of human heart. Shoen herself attributed the appearance of this work to her artistic dilemma:

Later I wondered myself why I had painted such a horrifying image. I was experiencing a severe slump in my art at the time. I think I transmitted my frustration into that particular subject and directed all my feeling to it.<sup>72</sup>

After Flame, as if exhausted of creative energy, Shoen stopped painting large works for public exhibits. Thereafter, however, Shoen became increasingly outspoken both about her art and her assessment of contemporary Nihonga, as we will examine later.

Shoen continued to depict themes from yokyoku throughout her career. But her later works are markedly different in message and expression from her Taisho-period oeuvre. Komachi Washing the Paper (Soshi arai komachi 草紙洗小町) (Figure 94), dated 1937, and Beating Block (Kinuta 砧) (Figure 95), dated 1938, exemplify her later style and stand in clear contrast to her earlier work. Komachi Washing the Paper is a monumental painting in which Shoen represents Ono no Komachi, a ninth-century woman poet, known both for her literary talent and

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<sup>72</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 109-110.

physical beauty. The image in the painting is based on an episode of a poetry match between a male contestant, Otomo no Kuronushi 大伴黒主, and Komachi. Knowing Komachi's excellence, Kuronushi sneaks into her house before the contest and hears Komachi reciting her poem.

Kuronushi writes her poem in the Manyoshu, an anthology of poems. On the day of the contest, upon hearing Komachi's poem, Kuronushi brings out the Manyoshu and accuses her of plagiarism. Although shaken and humiliated, Komachi notices that the poem in controversy is written in different ink. Thereupon, she washes it away proving her innocence and exposing Kuronushi's scheme. Shoen's painting represents the dramatic moment when the truth is revealed. Painted in a monumental scale, Komachi displays a bold, open gesture befitting of the triumphant heroine. A dynamic and solemn composition, it fully conveys both the elated emotion and the dignity of the figure. The serene face of Komachi, which resembles a noh mask, and the austere composition as if reflective of simplicity of a noh stage makes one feel as though this is the illusory image of Komachi created by a noh performer on the actual stage. Shoen wrote:

Komachi Washing the Paper . . . was inspired by the noh performance by master Kongo Iwao. Master Kongo's Komachi is a paragon for all other performers. As I watched him on the stage, the noh mask worn by master Kongo seemed to glow with life transforming itself to the face of living Komachi, a lady of peerless beauty. I was utterly captivated by it as if in a dream when the thought occurred to me, 'what about if I treated that noh mask as if the face of a living beauty. . . .' Right then, with no difficulty at all, I could see in my mind the composition for Komachi Washing the Paper.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

Thus it is a painting which represents the image of historical Komachi embodied in a noh performance. As such, the work has its origin in the art of abstraction. Visually, the painting makes a strong formal statement. The contrasting color areas of off-white and orange enhance the impact and dynamism of the scene. Simplified, crisp lines which describe the figure and the garment reinforce the clarity of the visual image. Komachi's lifted right hand with an open fan is counterbalanced by the single strand of hair which escapes onto her left shoulder and falls to the ground after making one circle. At the same time, its crisp configuration encapsulates physical and psychological tension which permeates the scene. Shoen's virtuoso professionalism displayed in such subtle artfulness led Kaburaki Kiyokata to give the highest praise on this work as a colleague: "Compared to Shoen's painting, my work is still that of an amateur. . . ."74 Shoen wrote in her memoir:

Noh play is abbreviated and simplified yet it involves the subtlety of the utmost degree. In the other words . . . the story is told in a simplified manner while the feelings are most sensitively expressed. Noh has nothing unnecessary. Because it is composed of only the essentials, it conveys the sense of tension within its overall graceful, slow movement . . . . Beauty of simplicity underlines noh play. It can be also found in painting, in the beauty of lines reduced and refined to the very essential.<sup>75</sup>

The "sense of tension within graceful and slow movement" which Shoen talks about above is conveyed in the painting of Komachi.<sup>76</sup> Clearly the

<sup>74</sup> Kaburaki Kiyokata, quoted by Kanzaki Kenichi, "Shoen kenkyu dansho," Kokuga 2, no. 4 (April, 1942): 28.

<sup>75</sup> Shoen, Saibisho, p. 176.

<sup>76</sup> Seki Chiyo points out that the influence of noh manifests in Shoen's late works as simplification in line and composition as well as a sense of tension. See Seki Chiyo,

aesthetics of noh was one of the important factors which influenced Shoen's painting style of late period such as Komachi.

Beating Block (Figure 95) is a painting of an entirely different theme from Komachi. It represents a woman standing behind a kinuta, a wood stand upon which one pounds cloth to soften and give it luster. She has just received a message from her husband who had been away from home for several years to carry on an official duty. Following a Chinese legend in which a Han scholar, Su Wu, hears the sound of a beating block, a message of love from his wife thousands miles away, she also decides to transmit her longing for her husband by pounding on a kinuta. Though the theme is a woman in love, the visual treatment of the subject is noticeably different from Shoen's Taisho-period works such as Oman, Miyuki, Flower basket, and Flame. In this work, the heroine stands with her back erect thinking of her husband in a distant land. Rather than the vulnerability of woman in love, Shoen here represents the moral fortitude of a woman committed in her love to her husband. It is a world different as day and night from the uncertainties of Oman, the adolescent restlessness of Miyuki, "mad" performance of Teruhinomae, and jealous ghost of Lady Aoi. While the twisted pose of Oman and Miyuki, the unfocused gaze of Teruhinomae, and the back-turning stance of Lady Aoi represent the emotionality of women in love, the forthright posture of the heroine in Beating Block conveys a sense of inner strength. Referring to her practice of yokyoku and yokyoku-inspired works, Shoen wrote in her memoir:

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"Shoen banki no sakuhin to noh ni tsuite," Hoshun (January 1963), p. 18; and Seki, "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," p. 175.

Yokyoku embraces moral principles with regard to leading a correct life, nurturing a firm character, and emphasizing the concept of chastity, etc. Themes which are dealt in yokyoku are dignified and noble. It goes without saying that singing such themes sonorously from the bottom of one's tummy, one's body and spirit become purified.

I might even say that all stories of yokyoku offer subjects for painting. Only the lofty themes are sung in yokyoku. Therefore, such themes, when transformed into painting, naturally make paintings noble and dignified.<sup>77</sup>

As explained here, Shoen in her late years identified with moral message embraced by yokyoku. In the heroine of Beating Block, Shoen saw the lofty commitment of a faithful wife. In Komachi Washing the Paper, she saw the victory of uprightness over dishonesty.

In contrast, Shoen's Taisho-period paintings, which deal with noh themes such as Flower Basket and Flame do not propagate moralizing message. Rather, they deal specifically with the theme of love and concentrate on emotional characterization of the figures. Together with Oman and Miyuki, Flower Basket and Flame collectively signify the period in Shoen's career during which her art was most frankly expressive of human emotions, as focused on that of women in love. Taking into consideration the possibility that Shoen was deeply involved in a love affair during the Taisho period, one may suggest that these paintings expressed Shoen's personal feelings in as direct way as possible as Shoen permitted herself as a bijinga artist.<sup>78</sup> Synchronized with the tenor of the

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<sup>77</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, pp. 129-130.

<sup>78</sup> See Miyao Tomiko, Jo no mai ge (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1982), pp. 90-234. In this novel based closely on Shoen's life, Miyao writes about a love affair between the heroine, Shosui (the character based on Shoen), and a student named Keizo, who is seven years younger than Shosui. Their affair begins in 1909 and ends in 1918 when Keizo takes a wife in spite of Shosui's attachment to him. Miyao explains Flame as a work which expresses Shosui's own emotional trauma after this breakup, as she is consumed by a feeling of resentment toward Keizo and jealousy toward his young wife.

time which encouraged truthful expression based on one's personal feelings and human experience, these works consist some of the most emotionally expressive and "honest" works in Shoen's oeuvre.

### 3. Yokihi and the Tradition of Female Nude

After submitting Flame to the Bunten in 1918, Shoen did not participate in a large exhibition until 1926. The only exception to this was 1922 when she sent Yokihi (Figure 37) to the reorganized official salon newly called the Teiten.<sup>79</sup> Shoen's artistic dormancy during this period suggests her continuous struggle to come to terms with the changes occurring in the Taisho-period art world.<sup>80</sup> Yokihi is a two-fold screen in which Shoen depicts the imperial concubine of legendary beauty who lived in the eighth-century Tang China. It is a subject which has been painted for more than one thousand years. What makes this particular work unusual is the nudity of the figure. Set in an opulent palatial environment, bare-breasted Yokihi sits on a chair having her hair groomed by a maid. The Chinese subject itself is not unusual in Shoen's oeuvre but the appearance of a semi-nude figure is a rarity: prior to

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This episode about the painter's love affair is believed to be based on actual letters written by Shoen, to which Miyao had access. Shoen's son, Uemura Shoko protests the fictionalized image of Shoen represented in this novel. Although Shoko admits that a young man frequently visited their house during the early Taisho period, he argues that Shoen was too involved in her artistic career to develop such a serious affair as described in Miyao's novel. See Fukuda Yukihiro and Uemura Shoko, "'Jo no mai,' Uemura Shoko no konwaku," Ushio, no. 301 (1984), pp. 167-176. At this point, I am compelled to treat the love affair discussed by Miyao as merely a "possibility."

<sup>79</sup> The Bunten went through organizational changes in 1919 and transformed to the so-called Teiten. For details, see Kawakita Michiaki and Takashina Shuji, Kindai Nihon kaigashi (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1978), pp. 259-263.

<sup>80</sup> Shoen implicitly attributed her absence from major exhibitions to a need to concentrate her time to fulfill commissions from the past twenty years. "Gaka danso," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 134 (December 1924), p. 18.

Yokichi, only one other example by Shoen is known to this day. Beauty After a Bath (Yokugo bijin 浴後美人) (Figure 96) was painted in ca. 1897, a quarter century earlier than Yokichi. The subject of woman before, during, and after a bath has a tradition going back to the ukiyo-e school. Shoen's work is a hanging scroll which represents a nude young woman seated in front of a mirror. In her right hand, she holds a bottle of lotion and in her left, a small towel. At her feet lies a piece of garment and a portion of an iko (a screen-like furniture used to hang garment) is visible on the left. Shoen avoids the confrontational representation of a nude. First, she distances viewer from the figure by placing the iko between them. Secondly, Shoen imbues the figure with a sense of modesty through the crouching pose. Further, although her face and bare upper torso are visible, her lower back, hips, and a portion of her thighs and legs are covered by the iko, a garment hanging on it, the towel held in her hand, and the cloth on the floor. In such a way, Shoen carefully manipulates the composition to prevent overtly erotic representation of a nude woman. Her intention in this painting lies elsewhere. It is known that Seiho, with whom Shoen was studying at the time, insisted on sketching actual objects in nature including human figures.<sup>81</sup> The nude in Beauty After a Bath demonstrates Shoen's study of human form in its naturalistic proportion, a sense of volume and musculature, and convincing posture. As such, the painting exemplifies the figural representation based on modern anatomical approach and not as a celebration of erotic beauty commonly found in the ukiyo-e tradition. It

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<sup>81</sup> The students who studied with Seiho were given lectures on human anatomy by a doctor as early as ca. 1897. Seki, "Uemura Shoen to sono sakuhin," p. 164.

stands as a testimony to Shoen's awareness as a modern painter at that time and demonstrates her willingness to challenge the traditional theme and create a modern statement. Aside from the intrinsic value of the painting, a nude representation in Nihonga at such an early date is quite remarkable in the context of its period.

The 1890s was certainly the period when the portrayal of nude women became a serious issue in the history of modern Japanese painting.<sup>82</sup> The first controversy over a nude image occurred in 1889, when Watanabe Seitei 渡辺守亭 (1851-1918), a Nihonga artist, depicted a female nude in an illustration for a novel titled Butterfly (Kocho 胡蝶) and written by Yamada Bimyo. Seitei represented an image of Kocho, the young heroine in this historical novel, in complete nude standing in front of an armored soldier (Figure 97). As soon as it was published in a magazine, Kokumin no tomo, lively public discussion began over a representation of a female nudity. The art magazine, Bijutsuen, supported it as a valid artistic expression while articles published in Kaiga soshi denounced it as pornographic.<sup>83</sup> The government enacted Nude Painting Control Law in November, 1889, for the purpose of maintaining public moral order.<sup>84</sup> Six years later, in 1895, Morning Toilette (Chosho 朝妝) (Figure 98) by a yoga artist, Kuroda Seiki, caused a social uproar when it was exhibited at the National Industrial Exposition

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<sup>82</sup> The subject of nude in modern Japanese painting can be expanded into an independent topic of research. For the purpose of this dissertation, I simply present a synthesis of information, although incomplete, which is available to me at this point.

<sup>83</sup> Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed., Nittenshi, vol. 1, Buntenhen 1 (Tokyo: Nitten, 1980), pp. 537-538.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 538.

in Kyoto.<sup>85</sup> Another painting titled Female Nude (Ratai fujinzo 裸体婦人像) (Figure 99), displayed at the 1901 exhibition of White Horse Association (Hakubakai) by Kuroda, had to be covered with a cloth to conceal the lower half at the order of the police.<sup>86</sup> In 1903, Kuroda began to paint semi-nude figure with a drapery covering the lower half of the body, a practice quickly followed by other artists.<sup>87</sup>

When the official salon opened in 1907, yoga painters generally avoided the complete frontal nude and confined themselves to a "nude with an underskirt" (koshimaki rafu) or a "nude viewed from the back" (haimen rafu).<sup>88</sup> Even such tactics did not make their art immune to censorship. As late as in 1916, a painting of nude by Kumaoka Yoshihiko was ordered to be shown separately in a special viewing room.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the police continuously restricted the photographic reproduction of "problem" pieces.<sup>90</sup> In sculpture also, female nude representations were constant objects of censorship. At the official salon of 1908, three sculptures of female nude were confined to a separate room and only those with special invitation and art students were

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<sup>85</sup> It did not cause notable public reaction when it was exhibited in Tokyo earlier. It may be due to the conservative nature of Kyoto.

<sup>86</sup> Nittenshi Hensan linkai, Nittenshi, vol. 1, Buntenhen 1, p. 538.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> See Nittenshi Hensan linkai, Nittenshi, vol. 4, Buntenhen 4 (1981) pp. 627-628.

<sup>90</sup> Through 1915, the photographic reproduction of "problem" pieces were not only forbidden but excluded even in the official catalog; after 1916 the authority simply banned the photographing of "problem" pieces except for the use in the official catalog. See Nittenshi Hensan linkai, Nittenshi, vol. 3, Buntenhen 3 (1980), p. 385; Nittenshi, vol. 4, Buntenhen 4 (1981), pp. 175, 628 and 645; Nittenshi, vol. 5, Buntenhen 5 (1981), pp. 520 and 549; Nittenshi, vol. 6, Teitenhen 1 (1982), pp. 671 and 674.

allowed to view them.<sup>91</sup> Similar censorship of nude representation in sculpture occurred in 1910, and in 1917.<sup>92</sup> As in the case of painting, the National Police Agency banned the photographic reproduction of "problem" pieces. In 1917 and 1918 respectively, their number exceeded twenty.<sup>93</sup> Such censorship of nude painting and sculptures at the salon by National Police Agency continued at least until 1921.<sup>94</sup>

The quick examination of censorship at the official salon indicates that the female nude did not become an accepted theme until the latter half of the Taisho period. The Japanese were culturally biased against it for a representation of a nude, an important category in European art tradition, was non-existent in Japanese art. Only in the art of ukiyo-e school basically associated with the plebeian class had appeared depictions of semi-nude women as objects of erotic and sensual pleasure. Never having become an important subject in the main-stream painting, images of nude women were generally associated with low-class people or prostitutes to be viewed in the private domain. When it began to appear in large paintings in public exhibitions and in magazines, the government considered it detrimental to public morality. The depiction of nude Kocho by Watanabe Seitei in 1889 was an exceptionally early

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<sup>91</sup> See "Rataiga no fuko," quoted by Nittenshi Hensankai, Nittenshi, vol. 1, Buntenhen 1, pp. 337-338. Originally published in Bijutsu shingo (November 1908).

<sup>92</sup> See Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 2, Buntenhen 2 (1980), p. 166; and Nittenshi, vol. 5, Buntenhen 5, p. 520.

<sup>93</sup> See Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 5, Buntenhen 5, pp. 520 and 549.

<sup>94</sup> Hosono Masanobu, "Bijinga zakkai," in Josei no bi: kindai bijinga meisakuten, ed. Amagazakishi Sogo Bunka Sentō and Kobe Shinbunsha (Amagasaki, 1986), no pagination. What appears to be the last major exercise of censorship by National Police Agency at the official salon during the Taisho period is recorded as in 1920 when they banned photographing of seven yoga and eleven sculpture entries. Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed., Nittenshi, vol. 6, Teitenhen 1, p. 674.

example and it may reflect the fact that he had been exposed to European art as the first Nihonga artist to visit the West. After the controversy of Seitei's nude, it took three decades before female nudity was accepted as a valid artistic subject in Japanese painting. It was one facet of cultural and artistic modernization process in which foreign ideas and values were gradually assimilated into the indigenous tradition.

In Japanese culture, unclothed figure simply means "nakedness." Women in particular are taught the virtue of modesty, the importance of concealing their body. Tanizaki Junichiro 谷崎潤一郎(1886-1965), renowned modern writer, sheds light about his perception of Japanese women in his essay, In Praise of Shadows:

In those days - it was around 1890 - the Tokyo townsman still lived in a dusky house, and my mother, my aunts, my relatives, most women of their age, still blackened their teeth. . . .

My mother was remarkably slight, under five feet I should say, and I do not think that she was unusual for her time. I can put the matter strongly: women in those days had almost no flesh. I remember my mother's face and hands, I can clearly remember her feet, but I can remember nothing about her body. . . . For a woman who lived in the dark it was enough if she had a faint, white face - a full body was unnecessary.<sup>95</sup>

In such cultural ambience, slightly visible flesh could leave a strong impression. It is in this context of Japanese tradition that paintings such as Hair (Figure 33) by Tsuchida Bakusen, dated 1911, and After a Bath (Yokugo 浴後 ) (Figure 100), 1912, by Kitano Tsunetomi (1880-1947), mildly provocative from the contemporary point of view, were viewed as stunningly and boldly expressive of female sensuality.

<sup>95</sup> Tanizaki Junichiro, In Praise of Shadows, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1977), p. 29.

The small portion of torso visible under the arm in Bakusen's painting and the almost exposed shoulders in Tsunetomi's work were quite sufficient to suggest the erotic power of women. The realistic approach to human figure as evidenced in the correct proportion and three-dimensional form of those figures further heightened their impact. One might also add First Time to Pose for Painting (E ni naru saisho 絵にたつ最初) (Figure 101), 1913, by Takeuchi Seiho as an image vividly and cleverly suggestive of eroticism.

The prominence of the nude genre in yoga eventually stimulated the Nihonga painters to work with this subject but it was not until the Taisho period that semi-nude and nude figures began to appear frequently in Nihonga. Even then the nudity of the figure was often tempered by a narrative which contextualized and validated it within the accepted social more of the time. Goddess (Ameno uzume no mikoto 天宇受売命) (Figure 102), by Kajita Hanko, datable to 1900s, is an early example of this. Hanko utilizes the mythological context to justify the nudity of the figure. Enticing Mermaid (Yogyo 妖魚) (Figure 103) by Kaburaki Kiyokata, dated 1920, is generally considered unusual in his oeuvre in its strongly sensual expression. But he also presents a female nude in the form of a fantastic being in the imaginary world. Other times, Nihonga painters moderate the potential eroticism of the nude by modifying the manner of representation. Tsuchida Bakusen, influenced by Post-Impressionist style during the early Taisho period, produced a series of works using semi-nude female images such as Island Women (Shima no onna 島の女) (Figure 104), dated 1912, and Women Divers (Ama 海女) (Figure 34), 1913. In both of these works, Bakusen

chooses "primitive" themes. Accordingly he simplifies the treatment of figures in line and form in order to achieve purposefully crude and expressive effect. Reduced to mere pictorial forms, the nudity of the figures becomes nearly irrelevant except for its thematic significance. Such conscious or unconscious restraint practiced by Nihonga painters in dealing with nude is also demonstrated by Murakami Kagaku who painted a monumental Female Nude (Rafu 裸婦) (Figure 105) in 1920. Clearly influenced by Indian painting at Ajanta, it represents Kagaku's feminine ideal as an embodiment of spiritual and physical beauty. The monumentality and stylized treatment imbues the figure with a super-human quality taking her above the realm of human sexuality. Kobayashi Kokei 小林古徑 produced Bath (Ideyu いでゆ) (Figure 106) in 1918 taking on the traditional theme. In this case, the impact of the figures' nudity is considerably softened by their modest angles and poses as by the steamy air which gently veils them.

Among the generally restrained representation of nude by Nihonga painters during the Taisho period, probably the most provocative and confrontational is Female Nude (Rafu 裸婦) (Figure 107) by Kainosho Tadaoto 甲斐庄楠音, dated ca. 1920.<sup>96</sup> A depiction of an ordinary-looking woman whose voluptuous body fills up the entire space of picture, the painting confounds us with a palpable sense of flesh. Physicality and sensuality of the figure is made compelling by visual realism achieved as if in oil painting. Lacking the literary context to justify, the nudity of the figure seems simply nakedness. The enigmatic expression on the face of

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<sup>96</sup> For the provocative discussion of his life and work, see Kurita Isamu, "Kitanai e dewa ikannoka: Kainosho Tadaoto no eiko," Geijutsu shincho 35, no. 8 (August 1984): 70-94.

the figure further puzzles the viewer, preventing us from reading this painting as a straightforward celebration of female beauty. Tadaoto's nude is an extreme example and does not fit in the generally conservative standard which characterizes the nude representation in Nihonga. However, even such an image, a product of uniquely individualistic conception, could not have appeared without the gradual assimilation of nude genre into Nihonga, or without the liberalizing climate of the Taisho period which allowed the artists to treat the reality of human sexuality more openly.

Thus, by the time Shoen painted Yokihi in 1922, the nude had become an accepted vocabulary of Nihonga. Yet the appearance of this subject matter at this particular point of Shoen's career indicates her determination to challenge this relatively new theme on the occasion of her return to the salon after a three-year absence. Even more important in understanding the significance of this work is her treatment of this theme. For Shoen clearly refrains from bringing excessive attention to the nudity of the figure. This, Shoen achieves by placing the figure in a luxurious environment full of rich details. Yokihi is seated on a chair in the center: she keeps her back straight while her young maid arranges her coiffure in the back. By placing a transparent screen in the left in front of the maid, Shoen makes the viewer focus on Yokihi. She is dressed in a transparent blue gown and a white skirt of luxurious design. The Tang-style make-up is visible on her forehead and she wears exquisite accessory and delicately beautiful jewelry. The fixtures and furniture in the room are of equally luxurious quality. The lacquer chair upon which Yokihi sits is decorated with shell inlay and covered with

beautifully embroidered tapestry. The spatial treatment of this painting is uncharacteristically complex for Shoen. The floor of the room is covered with tiles which diminish in size following the law of perspective and the successive overlapping of the screen on the left, figures, bamboo shades, the banister, and the bamboo bush beyond establish steady recession in space.

Yokichi is an ambitious painting which displays not only the meticulous attention to the figures as customary in Shoen's style but also to the surrounding setting to an extent unknown in her earlier works. In the series of her literature-inspired paintings of the early Taisho period, Shoen concentrated to bring out the emotionality of the figures with almost total exclusion of the background setting. In Yokichi, we see a complete turn toward the opposite direction: Shoen seems to compensate for the absence of emotional content with the density of the background depiction. If the figure were represented by itself, the impact of her nudity with potential eroticism would be more provocative for the Taisho viewer. It is precisely for this reason that Shoen surrounds the figure with the assiduously depicted setting. The nudity of the figure is simply one of the factors in this richly detailed painting. Her intention is to express the nobility and dignity of the famous beauty by preventing her erotic beauty from becoming the central focus of the painting.

Although Kiyokata represents the imaginary creature in Enticing Mermaid (Figure 103), the theme in this painting is clearly the bewitching, sensual power of a woman. Tadaoto's provocative image in Female Nude (Figure 107) seems to convey the agony of a woman tormented by her own sexuality or the desire of flesh. As exemplified by

such works, the cultural climate of the Taisho period encouraged artists to confront all aspects of human condition and nature, including female sexuality. Shoen's Yokihi is her challenge to the subject of nude but her moralistic view on feminine ideal restrains her. Even in dealing with a nude, Shoen idealizes the figure according to her personal conviction in bijinga and refuses to focus on the erotic potential of the subject as the important attribute of femininity. In this, Shoen remains consistent both in Beauty After a Bath and Yokihi, separated by twenty-five years. Although Shoen demonstrates technical virtuosity in detailed rendering of figures and surrounding, Yokihi is noticeably overworked in composition and lacks the emotional depth. The minute description of the background surrounding imbues the painting with a sense of realism creating disharmony with the timeless ideal of beauty Shoen attempts to achieve in the figure of Yokihi. In short, Yokihi is a work which demonstrates both Shoen's ambition and uncertainties facing the changes occurring in the Taisho art world.

#### 4. Shoen's Defense of Tradition

As an orthodox bijinga painter, the challenges which confronted Shoen were enormous, for traditional bijinga was on the verge of becoming obsolete in the latter half of the Taisho period. Kitano Tsunetomi, an Osaka painter who specialized in bijinga, argued in 1924:

The so-called "bijinga" is faced today with an important turning point. Traditionally, bijinga has represented an image of woman beautiful in face and figure. But it is a stereotyped image of a bijin, as if a sugar confetti painted in pretty colors, and not a representation of a real person full of life.

In the minds of modern people, "bijinga" is no longer valid or necessary. Modern Japanese do not seek such artificial beauty. The term "bijinga" itself is misleading: we should replace it with new terms such as "painting of woman" (onna no e) or "woman depicted in painting" . . . .

In fact, people are tired of bijinga today. Modern people demand a new type of bijin who express lively spirit through their healthy bodies . . . . Bijinga does not have to adhere to beautiful facial features, figures, and beautiful lines and colors. Painting fulfills the artistic requirement if it has a certain sense of integrity as a painting of a woman subject, expresses fully the individuality of the painter, and conveys liveliness of both the painter and the subject. Rather than stiff, idealized, and intellectualized images, we ought to produce images of women who convey flexibility of human qualities.<sup>97</sup>

Tsunetomi's opinion mirrored the changing images of women during the time when women were beginning to make social advancements and demand acceptance as full human beings. Clearly, the definition of a bijin was no longer confined to the external physical beauty. Rather, what made a woman beautiful was her inner quality or "lively spirit" in Tsunetomi's words. This was in full concordance with the mood of the time which championed Saikaku's bold women. "Stiff, idealized, and intellectualized images" denounced by Tsunetomi in his essay may well have been in reference to Shoen's art.

For the three years following Yokihi, Shoen refrained from submitting her work to the salon. During this period she produced several smaller works including Carrying the Sea Water (Shiokumi 汐汲), 1923, based on a dance in kabuki play, which ultimately derives from a noh song known as Matsukaze. The painting signals Shoen's return to orthodox bijinga after working with the emotional themes and

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<sup>97</sup> Kitano Tsunetomi, "Bijinga' to iu shoko," Daimai bijutsu, no. 16 (January 1924), pp. 34-35.

experimenting with nude. Carrying the Sea Water represents a story of a young woman diver named Matsukaze in Suma (present Kobe area) with whom Ariwara no Yukihiro (a ninth-century poet) has a liaison during the time of his expulsion to Suma. After Yukihiro is pardoned and returns to Kyoto, Matsukaze consoles herself by carrying the sea water every evening. The kabuki dance based on this story is known particularly for the graceful movement and the beauty of the costume, and Shoen was deeply fond of this theme.<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately nothing remains of this work except for a very small black-and-white reproduction published in a magazine at the time.<sup>99</sup> In it, Matsukaze is represented in the center ready to carry two buckets hung from the end of a pole. She stands gracefully showing a full three-quarters view. What is important here is Shoen's comment in 1923 referring to this painting:

Carrying the Sea Water required a great deal of work and effort on my part. In particular, I was concerned about the color scheme. . . .

It is not a very large painting, but as a whole I am satisfied that it is a work which expresses my ideas and techniques successfully. . . . This kind of old-fashioned painting is at disadvantage in today's art world because it does not belong to the "new style" of painting. In fact, it represents the "old style."

Everyone is obsessed with the idea of new-style painting today. I

<sup>98</sup> Yomiuri Shinbunsha, ed., Bi no nagare sandai: Uemura Shoen, Shoko, Atsushi-ten (Osaka: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1989), p. 176. There are at least three other paintings of the same subject by Shoen, dating to ca. 1930, ca. 1935, and 1941. These three works are similar in the pose of the figure. For the ca. 1930 version, see a black-and-white reproduction in Asahi Shinbunsha, ed., Kindai Nihonga no jossibi-ten (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1977), plate 8. The catalogue dates the painting as 1915, but judging from the style and signature, I believe the work is datable to early Showa. For the ca. 1935 version, see Yomiuri Shinbunsha, Bi no nagare sandai, plate 12; and for the 1941 version, Iijima, Uemura Shoen, plate 30.

<sup>99</sup> Mori Ayako, "E no soko' nite," Daimai bijutsu, no. 16 (January 1924), p. 51.

feel that if someone like myself doesn't preserve the old style. . . bijinga will eventually disappear.

Critics have various opinions about the artistic value of the traditional bijinga but I cannot bear to let go this very special, pure Japanese-style painting. It is inevitable that the style of bijinga, or paintings of women subjects, keeps changing reflecting the current of the times. But I don't want to see the complete disappearance of the traditional bijinga in Japanese style. On the contrary, I would like to request the renowned painters and the younger painters alike to recognize the significance of bijinga, to study and continue its tradition.<sup>100</sup>

As articulated here for the first time in public, Shoen emerged as an advocate of the traditional bijinga at the end of the Taisho period. She now had a clear understanding and strong conviction about mission as a preserver of the "old style" in the Nihonga world. Only ten years earlier, in 1913, Shoen had submitted her Firefly to First Section. Now she was vocally defending the "traditional" way. This change in Shoen reflected not so much of Shoen's change as the quickness of new concepts and styles which were affecting the Nihonga world in Taisho Japan.

Shoen became increasingly articulate of her opinion. In 1924, three months after Tsunetomi published his criticism of traditional bijinga, Shoen condemned the new trend in painting:

There are many elements I can't really accept in the depiction of women subjects popular among young people these days. I don't believe that one has to always depict a bijin in a painting of woman subject. But painting is a form of art. It is detrimental to its artistic mission if a painting gives an ugly or an unpleasant impression to viewer. . . . In the paintings of women popular today, I see grotesquely fat faces and limbs as if they are women wrestlers. . . .

A painter may feel compelled to depict a beggar. Even in such a case, the painting should not show only the distasteful

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<sup>100</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, pp. 23-24.

aspect of the subject and convey unpleasant feeling to viewer. Even a beggar must have some quality which can be transmitted into art and it is the artist's mission to find out and represent that very quality. Whether be it the ugliness of an ugly woman or the dreadfulness of a ghost that a painter tries to represent . . . the true art should never give an unpleasant influence upon viewer.<sup>101</sup>

"Grotesquely fat faces and limbs" may apply to the women depicted by Kainosho Tadaoto, who are characteristically obese as exemplified by Female Nude (Figure 107), ca. 1920. Nothing can be more remote from Shoen's elegant and graceful women than Tadaoto's, who provoke and confound viewer by their unrestrained physicality and sexuality. For their decadent expression, Tadaoto's works were branded in 1926 by Tsuchida Bakusen as "filthy paintings" (kitanai e). Enraged, Tadaoto thereafter resolved himself to challenge paintings which seemed to him nothing but pretty "like Kyoto higashi (dried cakes) or yuzen design."<sup>102</sup> Works such as Deranged Woman (Figure 18), ca. 1919, by Tokuoka Shinsen and Old Clothes Fair (Figure 64) by Kajiwara Hisako, dated 1920, demonstrate artists' willingness to depict the dark reality of human condition. For Shoen, such paintings were most likely among of the works which showed "only the distasteful aspect of the subject and convey unpleasant feeling." Shoen flatly rejected the new trend appearing in the paintings of woman subject. Not only was it irreconcilable with what Shoen believed to be the moral obligation of art but it desecrated the highest ideal of women she held dear to her heart.

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>102</sup> Kurita, "Kitanai e dewa ikannoka," p. 83. Bakusen's criticism was directed not only to Tadaoto's choice of subject and style in painting but also to the unorthodox lifestyle Tadaoto led as a confirmed homosexual. See Kurita, pp. 83-88.

Individual motivation may differ among the artists mentioned above but clearly there was a strong undercurrent in the Japanese art world of the Taisho period which stimulated the artists to free themselves both from the notion of beauty as a quintessential component of art and from a one-dimensional definition of beauty. Tokuoka Shinsen looked back later:

"Beauty exists in ugliness" were Rodin's words which deeply moved me at the time. And I specifically chose such motifs for my sketches and paintings. They included, for example, an imbecile woman or a beggar covered with filth sleeping on a street. It is not that I was drawn to the ugly for its own sake. Rather, I wanted to express the compelling power of the "repulsive world."<sup>103</sup>

The humanistic tenor of the Taisho period glorified subjectivity. It demanded artists to paint as truthfully possible as to one's own feelings, be it the desire to convey "the compelling power of the 'repulsive world,'" or an undeniable reality of female sexuality.

In contrast, fundamental to Shoen's art was idealization and adherence to beauty in the most orthodox sense of the word. She strove to produce "bijinga which fulfilled the ultimate of truth, goodness, and beauty."<sup>104</sup> Her pictorial creation ultimately embodied "good taste" and "refined aesthetic sensitivity" which was the basis of the Kyoto culture. What younger artists sought to do was to break free from just such "beauty" and "taste" which had been woven into the fabric of tradition and had governed Japanese art for generations. Instead, they listened to the inner voice within themselves and turned their eyes to whatever

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<sup>103</sup> Quoted by Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 324. Originally published in "Henreki no sokoni," Genjutsu shincho (August 1960).

<sup>104</sup> Shoen, Seibisho, p. 93.

natural and human phenomenon that moved them. The basis for their art, they believed, was to be truthful to themselves. However, what younger artists considered honest and truthful, Shoen thought detrimental to "true art." For Shoen, to be honest to oneself meant to be honest to one's ideal. Truth in her art was what she held to be the highest ideal and not the unscreened depiction of the real world or the expression of one's unfiltered feeling. In this, Shoen was clearly out of time with the dominant current of the Taisho art. Perhaps Kawaji Ryuko gave in 1924 the most clear-sighted comment on Shoen capturing the essence of her art:

As far as the technical skills are concerned, Shoen is beyond the reach of male painters. . . . She has an extraordinary talent not only in creating beautiful lines but also gorgeous color scheme without falling into vulgarity. . . . She is not interested in ideological element of painting or what is popular at the time. She is faithful to her belief keeping the sense of nobility and elegance about her painting. One cannot expect more than that from her work. Her paintings are always appealing, full of sensitive observation and feelings from a woman's point of view.<sup>105</sup>

Such criticism, Shoen may have accepted as a true and fair assessment of her art.

Shoen returned to the salon in 1926 with a painting titled Waiting For the Moon (Taigetsu 待月) (Figure 108). It represents a back view of a woman who looks toward the sky leaning against the railing of a balcony. She holds a fan in her right hand, wears a transparent green summer kimono through which red-and-white geometric patterns of the undergarment are seen. Although the woman's face is not visible to us,

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<sup>105</sup> Kawaji Ryuko, "Gendai Nihon no bijutsukai, 3," Chuo bijutsu 10, no. 7 (July 1924): 90.

her beautiful and elegant physical appearance is suggested by her delicate white hand, slender neck, silky black hair, and graceful posture. Beauty, furthermore, is inherent in the very act of communing with nature as practiced by this figure. The evocation of a rich mood and poetic beauty through the juxtaposition of a figure and natural elements is a common scheme in traditional bijinga. The most noticeably unusual aspect of this painting is the placement of a pillar in the foreground which dissects the figure in half. As a compositional element it functions as a vertical divider to create an exquisite balance between the left and right half. It also gives a sense of depth in the picture and enhances the soft, organic form of the figure through its plain, geometric shape. At the same time, however, the positioning of the pillar over the figure in such a forceful and conspicuous manner is psychologically disturbing. Whether or not consciously, Shoen denies this bijin to project her beauty in full and at the same time limits her accessibility to viewer. It is symbolic of Shoen's struggle during the time when celebration of ideal beauty was looked upon as obsolete in art. On a conscious level, it is the indication of her lingering desire to qualify bijinga as a modern form of expression. On an unconscious level, wholehearted expression of beauty is tempered by the artist's own sense of restraint.

Even more orthodox than Waiting For the Moon was Young Ladies (Musume 女) (Figure 109), also dated 1926. It is a two-fold screen which represents two young women of the late Edo period. Both figures are impeccably dressed and meticulously represented as typical of Shoen's bijin. With one figure standing and the other crouching on the ground, the composition emanates a sense of balance and harmony. Small

butterflies fly around the figures as the spring time is symbolic of their youth. Shoen painted this work for the exhibit which was held to commemorate Prince Shotoku, the revered historical figure of the sixth century. The conservatism of this work may derive from Shoen's concern to create an appropriate image for the occasion. Nevertheless, Shoen's women were viewed as beings out of touch with the contemporary reality:

It has been a while since Shoen showed her work at a large exhibit. Clearly, she is in her decline. She hasn't lost her technical skill but her painting lacks strength now. . . . It is indeed a beautiful image but this kind of beauty is anachronistic and old-fashioned. Passive, fragile sense of beauty does not seem to reflect the true impression of women today.<sup>106</sup>

What Shoen tries to create here is not so much of "passive, fragile sense of beauty" as what she believes to be the traditional feminine ideal. To her it is embodied by the refined upper-class women who find complete self-fulfillment in their roles as wife and mother, accept their social position, and enact their responsibility with dignity. Women in Young Ladies represent this ideal. Modest and reticent, yet they are fortified with inner strength. However, it was inevitable that in light of social advance made by women and changes in fuzoku triggered by the spread of Western fashion during the Taisho period, such traditional image seemed "anachronistic and old-fashioned."

Yet Shoen was determined now to represent only women who were symbolic of the traditional womanhood and feminine virtue. In her adoration of old-fashioned women, an aesthetic consideration of fuzoku

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<sup>106</sup> Kawaji Ryuko, "Taishiten no kaiga ichijun," Chuo bijutsu 12, no. 6 (June 1926): 76-77.

played a crucial role. To Shoen, Western-influenced fashions were decisively unappealing:

Each period reflects its aesthetics through the fuzoku. The Momoyama period has its specific characteristics and the Genroku fuzoku has its own beauty. I must say, however, the contemporary fuzoku of our times is most lacking in aesthetic sensibility. The haikara (Western style) fashion of modern times, I dislike more than anything else. . . . Why does the today's fuzoku appear unartistic to me? Because women blindly follow the quickly changing fashion regardless of what may look best on themselves. . . . Whether fashionable or not, women should have enough sense to adopt whatever enhances their appearance best. In my opinion, the traditional Japanese hair style is most complimentary to Japanese women.<sup>107</sup>

Shoen rejected the contemporary fashion for both aesthetic and moralistic reasons. On one hand, she genuinely believed the superiority of traditional style as suitable to the physical appearance of Japanese women. On the other hand, the enthusiastic acceptance of Western fashion by Japanese women struck Shoen as superficial infatuation with Western culture. What she demanded women was to maintain a sense of self-integrity. Thus, Shoen's appreciation of the traditional fuzoku underlined her defense of orthodox bijinga, and ultimately her admiration of women with traditional virtue.

Not finding her ideal of feminine beauty in the contemporary fuzoku of women, Shoen sought her subject in the past. This "distance in time," Shoen came to recognize, was an important element in her art:

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<sup>107</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, pp. 29-30. This is from an essay originally published in 1924. Eight years later, however, she thought someday she would like to depict the "modern fuzoku of contemporary time" (gendai no modan fuzoku), implying an image of a woman dressed in Western fashion. Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, p. 100. However, Shoen never painted such an image. The term haikara comes from "high collar" of a Western-style shirt.

I have continued to paint Japanese women's fuzoku of the past times. Some people may criticize me for having an exclusive interest in the old times. I don't want to particularly limit myself to the past but I believe the distance in time gives certain depth in artistic expression. Everybody can see what is happening at the present. . . .

But one gets an entirely different feeling when one imagines about the Tokugawa period, or even Meiji, because the distance in time has put a veil over the past. We can see all too clearly what is going on now, but the span of fifty years or seventy years puts a fine veil of mist. I would like to see the past through this beautiful mist.

Modern way is to depict realistically what one observes, whether be it nakedness or frankness. I cannot help but feel that it is shallow and superficial.<sup>108</sup>

After Waiting For the Moon, Shoen did not participate the official salon until 1934. During this time, however, she kept herself busy completing several important commissions, sending works to exhibitions abroad and participating in smaller exhibitions in Japan. Unlike the latter half of the Taisho period when she seemed unable to produce, Shoen was full of her creative energy. Absence from salon was her choice based on her artistic principle. With a growing sense of self-affirmation, Shoen became increasingly bold about expressing her opinions, even criticizing openly the works of other artists. She wrote in 1929:

I went to Tokyo confidentially to see the Teiten exhibit. I must confess that I don't feel at home any longer among the paintings at the Teiten. . . . Their garish and gaudy expressions repulse me. I was appalled to see that the exhibition hall was filled with paintings simply covered with thick colors as if it gave them artistic depth.

Such a style may be regarded appropriate to stand out at a large-scale exhibition or necessary to attract viewer's attention. But in my opinion it only degrades the tradition of Nihonga. Where

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<sup>108</sup> Shoen, Seibisho sonogo, pp. 97-98.

is the spiritual quality or sense of refinement? I could only find shallow, garish, and vulgar paintings. Is that modernity? Is that the only way to achieve modern expression? . . .

Fine Autumn Day by Ito Shinsui attracted much attention, but honestly speaking, I was not at all impressed. I think it still lacks deep quality. As for the Lady Autumn Lover by Ito Shoha, I like her last year's work better. Because this work showed an enlarged figure, too many elements became visible [working against the painting]. . . .

I think I have become old and left out from this modern period. But I don't feel compelled to strain myself to ride the tide of modernity. I am resolved to pursue in future the exact same path I have always walked in the past.<sup>109</sup>

As expressed in her criticism above, Shoen felt alienated by what she saw at the Teiten. However, Shoen was financially and socially secure in her position,<sup>110</sup> and could afford to be herself and pursue "the exact same path" she had always walked.

From the end of the Taisho period, Shoen began to confirm the conservative direction of her painting accepting the fact that she was not able to take part in the newest movement of art which engulfed Taisho Japan. Rather she took pride in her position as one of the old-school artists and articulated very strongly her anti-avant-garde stand. By the time she returned to the official salon in 1934 with Mother and Child (Figure 38), she had fully regained confidence and affirmation in her art. Painted in memory of her mother who passed away that year, Mother and Child was a celebration of motherhood and affirmation of traditional role of woman. Represented in Shoen's favorite fuzoku of the Tokugawa period, it stood for everything Shoen believed to be true and beautiful.

<sup>109</sup> Uemura Shoen, Seibisho/Seibisho shui, ed. Kawakita Michiaki and Baba Kyocho (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1976), pp. 184-185.

<sup>110</sup> Shoen was regarded as one of the wealthiest painters in Kyoto in 1928. "Bijutsukai kanwa," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 183 (November 1928), p. 32.

At the same time, in the simplicity of composition, clarity of line, and gentle beauty of color, this painting marked a new stage in Shoen's art. Kaburaki Kiyokata, who remained an understanding supporter and admirer of Shoen's art throughout her life, paid the highest compliment to Shoen as an artist in 1937:

In the past several years, Shoen has regained the creative energy of her earlier times. Many years of earnest training on top of her innate talent is making her art shine. Her art has acquired the quality which is shared by all superior paintings of the past, the quality which makes painting live transcending the test of the time. Shoen lives confidently and solidly in the higher realm no longer affectable by fashions or whims of the time. . . . Most of us cannot reach this realm. Even for those who can, it is difficult to pursue one's art with such conviction and determination as Shoen does.<sup>111</sup>

Shoen was a specialist whose name was practically synonymous with bijinga. She did pursue her art with "conviction and determination," with total commitment to the field of bijinga, which made her an increasingly conservative artist during the Taisho period. Her conservatism often leads modern scholars to regard her and her art as "difficult to understand in a modern context."<sup>112</sup> However, she was not oblivious to or ignorant of the dynamic forces of modernization which shaped the Japanese culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Like any other sensitive artist, she was swayed by the contemporary demand to be human, humane, individualistic, and forward-looking. Shoen's Taisho-period oeuvre include examples which subtly but clearly mirror her concerns to be modern and testify to the undeniable influence

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<sup>111</sup> Kiyokata, quoted by Kanzaki, "Shoen kenkyu dansho," p. 28.

<sup>112</sup> Tanaka Hisao and Kuwano Hirotohi, "Kyoto gadan no hyakunen," Geijutsu shincho 30, no. 7 (July 1979): 45.

of the time upon her mind and art. At the same time, they reveal with constancy the foundation of Shoen's art, her belief in beauty, truth, and goodness, which remains unchanged throughout her career. Ultimately it is her commitment to be truthful to herself, even going against the tide of time, which makes her art uniquely her own and transcend the test of time.

## Chapter V. New Images of Women: Paintings by Hisako and Shoha

### 1. Portrayal of "New Women"

Shoen codified in her paintings the beauty associated with traditional women. Even during the Taisho period when women began to protest the old norms and roles imposed upon them, Shoen steadfastly defended the virtue of traditional women by extolling their images in her work. While Shoen represented the conservative school in her adherence to the traditional view, there were other painters who dared to challenge the standard of the established feminine ideal. Foremost among them was Kajiwara Hisako who was only sixteen when the Taisho period began. Unlike Shoen, whose early years were spent in the authoritarian climate of the Meiji period, young Hisako grew up fully exposed to the liberal trends of the Taisho period during which the intellectuals rigorously challenged the accepted conventions and traditional values. Thus, what came to form the underlying principle of Hisako's art was radically different from Shoen's. Ito Shoha, although a contemporary of Shoen in age, also was stimulated by the Taisho emphasis on individualistic interpretations of life. She produced some of her most interesting works during this period, enlivening the tradition of bijinga. Furthermore, Shoha and Hisako's penchant for modernity is unequivocally illustrated by their involvement to produce self-portraits, which cannot be fully understood without relating it to the modern awakening of ego. Of the two, Hisako was far more "radical" in her disengagement from the traditional concept of feminine ideal, ultimately focusing on the paintings with social messages which had nothing to do with bijinga. Moderate in

her approach, Shoha nevertheless produced memorable portrayals of middle-class women, capturing the shifting social reality of Japanese women during the Taisho period. In the following pages, we will examine the paintings by Hisako and Shoha, which represent the new images of women in the context of Taisho society.

Well-educated and talented, Kajiwara Hisako was definitely a qualified candidate for "new woman" and perhaps the most anti-traditional young woman painter during the Taisho period. Hisako's inclination toward unorthodoxy is confirmed by her admiration of Yosano Akiko (1878-1942), a woman poet from Osaka. No other woman writer in the Japanese literary world was more admired or criticized than Akiko at the end of the Meiji period. Akiko was one of the original members of the New Poetry Group of Tokyo (Tokyo Shinshi-sha), established by Yosano Tekkan (1873-1935) in 1899 for the goal of modernizing the traditional tanka poetry. The group launched a literary magazine, Myojo [Venus] in 1900 which soon became synonymous with modern-style poetry.<sup>1</sup> The first book of Akiko's work Tangled Hair (Midaregami) was published in 1901 and caused sensation in the literary world of Japan. The modernistic design on the cover created by a yoga painter

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<sup>1</sup> The modern orientation of this magazine is also demonstrated by the fact that its November 1900 issue was banned for including two line drawings of female nudes. The incident is mentioned in Sanford Goldstein and Seishi Shinoda, trans., Tangled Hair: Selected Tanka from Midaregami by Akiko Yosano (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Studies, 1971), p. 16. It is discussed in more detail in Jay Rubin, Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), pp. 43-44.

Fujishima Takeji (1867-1943) was befitting of the bold romanticism which characterized the content of the book it adorned.<sup>2</sup>

Akiko's poems defy old literary rules both in subject matter and expressive style: they are personal, passionate, and often openly sensual. Without inhibition she glorifies herself in her poems:

In my bath -  
Submerged like some graceful lily  
At the bottom of a spring,  
How beautiful  
This body of twenty summers.<sup>3</sup>

This is a poem of rebellion against the traditional Japanese virtue of modesty especially expected of women. It is also a rebellion against a conventionally held view that to sing openly about female body is indecent.<sup>4</sup> At times, her poems are openly erotic:

Softly I pushed open  
That door  
We call a mystery,  
These full breasts  
Held in both my hands<sup>5</sup>

To mention breasts is shocking enough but Akiko breaks the taboo of referring to one's sexual experience in this celebration of the ecstasy of love.<sup>6</sup> She also challenges male dominance through her poems:

To punish  
Men for their endless sin,  
God gave me

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<sup>2</sup> See a black-and-white reproduction in Itsumi Kumi, *Midaregami zenshaku* (Tokyo: Ofusha, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> The translation is from Goldstein and Shinoda, *Tangled Hair*, no. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

This fair skin,  
This long black hair!<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Akiko's poetry is "of protest, of love, of emancipation for women, and of the glorification of the flesh."<sup>8</sup> Throughout the 1900s Akiko continued to publish books of poetry, and by the time Hisako entered a jogakko [women's high school] in 1911, Akiko had become the most celebrated woman poet of Japan representing the Romanticist movement. In private life also, Akiko attracted a considerable attention by consummating her love for a fellow-poet, Tekkan, in spite of serious social obstacles.

It is crucial that Kajiwara Hisako's period of education at jogakko, 1911-1914, coincided with the beginning of the women's movement in Japan. When the first women's literary group launched the Seito [Blue stocking] in 1911, Yosano Akiko contributed a long poem in which she referred to women as "mountains which have been asleep." Hiratsuka Raicho, the leader of the Seito group, published her now famous declaration of self-discovery: "Once women were truly the sun . . . . Now women are the moon with pale, sickly face who live by relying on others and who shine by reflecting other's light." Raicho urged women to develop self-awareness and established the Seito as a vehicle for women writers and poets to express themselves freely. It was to provide a place exclusively to women where they could develop themselves and explore their creative potential toward the goal of self-emancipation. Raicho was the first woman writer of a "thinker and philosopher type" who could

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., no. 152.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

analyze herself with detached and profound objectivity.<sup>9</sup> She encouraged women to challenge the old social mores which were the product of feudalistic, patriarchal society. She emboldened them to create their own personal living codes to abide by and live their lives as they saw best fit.

An admirer of Akiko, Hisako must have strongly identified with the self-emancipatory, anti-establishment tone of her poetry, and by extension, with the philosophy of women's liberation advocated by the Seito. Hisako's painting career began soon after the Seito ended its activity in 1916. By this time, the woman's movement was in full force in the social and political arena, and the validity of "new woman" had become the target of heated discussion in Japanese society. It is easily discernible that Hisako's perception of her own gender, broadened by self-awareness as a modern woman, resulted in anti-traditional representations of women in her paintings.

Among the early works by Hisako is Woman on a Certain Day (Figure 62), ca. 1916, believed to be a self-portrait.<sup>10</sup> A young woman is seated on a chair in front of a flower-patterned curtain facing the viewer. Typical of the Taisho period, she is dressed in kimono but wears her hair in Western style. Somewhat slouched on a chair, she casts a weary, questioning look at the viewer. Her gaze neither controls the viewer nor communicates any strong emotion. Through her cryptic look, the sitter seems to convey more than anything else the presence of a complex personality and probing mind. Her hands casually rest on her lap and her

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<sup>9</sup> Koyasu Michiko, "'Seito' undo no tenkai to shusoku," in Taisho bungaku no hikakuteki kenkyu, ed. Naruse Masakatsu (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1968), p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Uchiyama Takeo, ed., Kajiwara Hisako-ten (Osaka: Sankei Shinbunsha, 1979), no pagination.

knees are slightly apart. She keeps only one foot in a slipper with the other resting on top of the other pair. Rejecting respectful formality and idealization, the painter achieves an image of herself, truthful and honest to her self-perception. Through this self-portrait, Hisako reveals herself as a young woman who is not confined by the traditional norm of feminine deportment and behavior expected of Japanese women. The newspaper, carelessly thrown on the corner of the floor, reinforces a feeling of informality, as does the off-centered composition, also. Moreover, the presence of newspaper suggests the woman's literacy, her intellectual capacity, and her knowledge of the outside world.

There is a clear parallel between self-awareness advocated by the women's movement and the image Hisako represents in this work. The painting demonstrates, in its lack of idealization, a budding sense of critical detachment, strongly self-analytical attitude, and willingness to capture the psychological state of mind. Shoen's women in the Night of Lunar Eclipse (Figure 31) exist in the pre-modern world. They are unaware of tethers imposed upon them by Confucian philosophy and the feudalistic system. No matter how dignified they are, they lack the ability to self-examine and question the meaning of their existence. They are incapable of breaking out of the mold to which they have been confined. Shoen's women stand as icons of ideal beauty. As such, they are eternal and timeless; they seal their personal feelings within themselves. In contrast, Hisako's woman conveys a sense of the here and now. She is as real as us and fully conscious of the world outside. Self-awakened, she is not afraid to reveal freely her psychic state.

Women writers who published their works through the Seito were in part encouraged by the strong tenet of naturalism in the contemporary literary world.<sup>11</sup> They wrote novels and poems based on their own experiences in everyday life faithful to their feelings, and by such means brought open the reality of their socially repressed existence as woman.<sup>12</sup> Concentrating on their personal experiences in the realm of mundane everyday life, they identified and shed light to the true conditions of women's lives. Hisako's depiction of woman shares the same attitude to grasp the reality through individualistic perception. Even the title, Woman on a Certain Day, reinforces a matter-of-fact attitude conveyed by Hisako's representation of the figure in the painting. It is clear that from early on Hisako rejected conventional, idealized portrayals of women.

Another work datable to the early period, between 1916 and 1918, is Woman Singing (Utau onna 唄う女) (Figure 110).<sup>13</sup> Similar in a vertical format to the work previously discussed, it is a portrayal of a young woman singing in the snow, in front of steps leading to a lattice door. She wears a simple kimono decorated with large checkered patterns and a haori [half-coat] of a dark color. Her front is covered with a long apron and she holds with her both hands a towel wrapped around her neck. She wears tall clogs on her bare feet. Her casual appearance inappropriate for the snowy weather suggests spontaneity of the

<sup>11</sup> Ide Fumiko, "Seito" no Onnatachi (Tokyo: Kaien Shobo, 1975), p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>13</sup> The only visual reference of this work is a black-and-white reproduction in Yoshikawa Kanpo, ed., Gendai santo shoga bijingashu (Kyoto: Aotani Bunseido, 1920), no. 17.

occasion. Perhaps, inspired and excited by the sudden snow, this young woman came dashing outside. She sings joyously and loudly as indicated by her wide open mouth. Her feet are wide apart and solidly planted in the ground. She pays no attention to her disheveled hair or whether her impromptu performance might appear childish and silly to some people. The off-centered placement of the figure heightens the feeling of unorthodoxy imparted by the figure. What type of woman is she who has no inhibition and can sing with such abandoned intensity? Her vigor and aggressiveness are utterly unfeminine from the traditional point of view which holds women to be meek, modest, and submissive. Again, Hisako breaks the conventional mode of female representation.

In order to recognize fully the uniqueness of Hisako's presentation, one simply needs to look at another example of the same theme. An image of a singing woman was seen earlier at the Buntens of 1914. Autumn Song (Aki no uta 秋のうた) (Figure 111) by Okamoto Koen (1894-?), a woman painter from Osaka, portrays a young woman seated on a window veranda and singing.<sup>14</sup> She clasps her hands in front of her chest and her mouth is only slightly opened. The figure portrayed in this painting is suggested to be a popular actress, Matsui Sumako.<sup>15</sup> In 1911, the year the first issue of the Seito was published, Sumako performed the role of Nora in Doll's House by Ibsen and contributed to fuel the attention to the emerging women's movement. Woman of fiery personality,

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<sup>14</sup> Only a small black and white reproduction of this work is available. Nittenshi Hensaninkai, ed. Nitten shi, vol. 3: Buntenshen 3 (Tokyo: Nitten, 1980), p. 296, plate 33.

<sup>15</sup> Naito Konan, "Daihakkai Buntens no Nihonga," Kyoto hijutsu, no. 34 (1915), p. 2. In his commentary, Naito criticizes that this type of work achieved success and popularity among the masses because of the special appeal inherent in the subject of celebrity.

Sumako was regarded as a "new woman" not only because of her professional career but also for her determined love for Shimamura Hogetsu (1871-1918), a renowned scholar of literature and Sumako's mentor. Koen's Sumako is an idealized and tame representation of the popular actress only identifiable through her act of singing. She is confined to the secure, interior space and displays a gentle, modest feminine pose which is the norm for traditional bijinga. Thus the real woman, Sumako, is de-individualized and transformed into a docile, meek woman who conforms to the traditional notion of feminine virtue. The painting in its timid, idealized representation of a very dynamic individual reveals the force of patriarchal ideology which continued to shape the artist's view on how a woman should be depicted. Thus, Koen's "Sumako" makes more remarkable Hisako's image of singing woman. This anonymous woman, so thoroughly engaged in the act of self-expression and unafraid to sing to the outside world, conveys a sense of untraditionality through her vigor, frankness, and spontaneity.

The anti-traditional representation of women can be seen also in another early work by Hisako titled Intoxicated (Yoi 酔) (Figure 112), datable to 1916 - 1918.<sup>16</sup> A young woman is slouched over a table in a state of drunkenness. With her head propped up by her hands, she looks at viewer with a coquettish smile. Taking over the almost entire surface of the picture, she conveys a powerful sense of physical presence.<sup>17</sup> We are made to feel the warmth of her body. Drunkenness can signify the

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<sup>16</sup> The only reproduction available of this work is a black-and-white illustration in Geien 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 32.

<sup>17</sup> There is a possibility that the painting is cropped in the reproduction.

state of temporary self-liberation for it loosens up one's senses through both physical and mental intoxication. In Tangled Hair, Yosano Akiko uses the theme of drunkenness from wine as a metaphor for self-intoxication in love. Whether or not as a direct challenge to the Onna daigaku, which virtually forbade women from drinking tea and wine, the members of the Seito sometimes held drinking parties celebrating their youth and giving cheers to their goal of liberation.<sup>18</sup> Driven by curiosity, some of them even tried then famous "five-colored wine" (goshiki no sake) and visited the gay quarters in Yoshiwara for the purpose of social studies. Ultimately, these relatively innocuous incidents were magnified and warped by newspaper reporters and caused the "new women" to incur the label of the "delinquent and immoral." Hisako's image of intoxicated woman, then, carries a double meaning: she stands for rebellion against established moral or a challenge to the externally posed social code and at the same time symbolizes the emancipation of woman from within herself.

From 1919 come two small works both titled Woman (Figures 113 and 114). One frontal and another almost in profile, they represent only the faces of women in approximately life-size. The context for these works are unknown but they are striking in two aspects: strongly individualized treatment of the subjects and loose, expressive style to accompany it. Hisako concentrates on the heads of women without a hint of the surrounding and captures the psychological state of their mind. Neither of the women depicted is "beautiful" in a conventional sense. In

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<sup>18</sup> These activities were often reported in the editorial notes of the Seito. Koyasu, "Seito' undo no tenkai to shusoku," pp. 182-183.

the woman in profile, her wide forehead and protruding mouth with heavy lips are clearly visible indicating that it is a portrayal of a specific individual. Looking into distance, she seems introspective and contemplative, oblivious to the gaze of the viewer. The detached air and relative formality of this woman is further signified by the title of the painting which is written in a Chinese character. In contrast, the woman in frontal image carries the title written in hiragana, originally associated with woman's style of writing. Curvilinear in form, it projects a "softer," more private and personal feeling. Correspondingly, the other woman is more expressive of her emotion: she returns the gaze of viewer by looking directly in the eye and she solicits a response. Her hair is in disarray, loose strands of hair crossing her face. Long, black hair is symbolic of feminine beauty as it appears in a poem by Yosano Akiko quoted earlier. Meticulously kept hair was regarded as part of feminine virtue and beauty. But it was also a means for class distinction as the different style of hair directly signaled the woman's age and social status. Shoen saw the essence of feminine beauty in traditional hair styles and made it her personal mission to record them. Her idealized women, moralistic and dignified, always display immaculate hair. In contrast, hair in disorder traditionally connoted loose and immoral conduct, evoking feelings of eroticism.<sup>19</sup> Yosano Akiko, through her poems in Tangled Hair intervened the traditional connotation of hair in disarray with more positive meaning relating it to the "emancipation of women and sexual freedom."<sup>20</sup> Hisako's woman with her hair in disorder

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<sup>19</sup> Goldstein and Shinoda, Tangled Hair, p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

conveys a sense of unrestrained passion and sensuality. One might suggest that the painting is a visual counterpart of Akiko's emancipatory message in Tangled Hair.

The expressiveness of these images are heightened by Hisako's loose treatment of brush particularly evident in the woman in frontal view. Even though one can study the images only in small black-and-white reproductions in a catalog, the freedom of brushwork as if in oil painting is clearly recognizable. Unorthodox technique adopted by Hisako is befitting of her women who defy the traditionally defined representation of women in bijinga. Small in scale, and unsigned, these may have been Hisako's experimental private works. The profound influence of yoga technique on Hisako's painting, as demonstrated in these paintings, will be examined to a greater extent later.

In all five paintings discussed above, the women Hisako represents convey the sense of "real" human beings with blood, flesh, and emotions. As such, Hisako's women present a direct contrast to the idealized images of women depicted by Shoen. Shoen through the early half of the Taisho period, challenges a series of literature-inspired subjects, to express human feelings in her paintings. But in all those works, Miyuki, 1914, Oman, 1915, Flower Basket, 1915, Flame, 1918, she chooses to represent fictional heroines. Even in Flame, her most emotionally charged work, Shoen does not abandon her respect for beauty. Immaculate appearances, gentle, womanly manners, and assiduously depicted clothes comprise important elements in Shoen's works. Furthermore, Shoen's women, who refuse to be objectified or sexualized by men by transcending their sexuality through nobility and dignity, signify the

artist's silent resistance against male dominance. In contrast, Hisako's paintings reveal an entirely different set of concerns by the artist. Maturing during the period when women were given voice, Hisako is not strictly bound by the traditional concept of femininity or beauty. Women depicted by Hisako are ordinary people from the real world, who collectively convey a sense of diversity and complexity, spontaneity and unpredictability. Hisako represents them as highly provocative individuals with psychological depth, who are accepting of their human nature including their own sexuality. In short, Hisako achieves humanized images of women.

## 2. Self-Portrait

Reflecting the tenet of individualism, one of the genres which flourished during the Taisho period was self-portrait. Self-portraits by yoga artists abound varying in style and expression. Kuroda Seiki produced a stunningly candid portrait of himself in 1915 (Figure 115). Directly confronting viewer, his self-representation is as immediate and revealing as his brush touch which builds the image. The self-portrait by Yorozu Tetsugoro (1885-1927) (Figure 116), dated 1912, is characterized by aggressive expressiveness. He exaggerates and distorts the visual reality in order to convey the invisible truth about himself. He relies on an expressionist language to describe the emotionality of his character. In contrast, Kono Michisei (1895-1950) created in 1917 a self-idolizing portrait (Figure 117) of photographic accuracy. It is a super-realistic, narcissistic version filled with personal symbolism. Though their styles

differ greatly, each one of these three painters is capable of projecting their self-image faithful to their own perception and understanding of themselves.

Self-portrait in a modern sense requires a detached and uncompromising attitude of self-examination based on one's acceptance of self as an independent entity worthy of artistic dialogue. It is easy to understand the difficulty Japanese women painters faced in creating self-portraits in the society which traditionally had denigrated them to accept the position of second-class citizens stripped of their independence and identity as individual. Women painters were faced with the force of social and ideological tradition which had given birth to and sustained the idealized portrayal of women in bijinga as an important genre. Bijin in traditional bijinga is an icon, visual representation of idealized and universalized womanhood, therefore, she transcends human individuality and humanity. During the Taisho period, the humanistic dynamics of Japanese society opened the door for women's liberation and began to temper the ideological foundation of bijinga. It made it possible, for the first time in Japanese history, for women to break away from the framework of bijinga towards new self-evaluation. The sudden appearance of self-portraits by women artists during the Taisho period is provocative, considering the fact that the tradition of self-portraiture was virtually lacking in Japanese indigenous art. Those examples, although small in number, reveal the enormity of challenge posed upon the women painters, in their achievements and shortcomings.

Both Kajiwara Hisako and Ito Shoha worked with self-portraits during the Taisho period. Woman on a Certain Day (Figure 62) by Hisako

has been already discussed in the previous pages. If portraiture is definable as the representation of an individual "by a rendering of his physical or moral traits, or both,"<sup>21</sup> surely Hisako's painting qualifies as a self-portrait. The facial features are distinctly individualized unlike the uniformly idealized treatment of Shoen's women. The oval shape of the face and the stubborn-looking mouth which seems to turn downward at both corners are some of her physical traits which can be recognized in a photograph taken during the late 1920s (Figure 69). Moreover, the large scale in which Hisako represents the figure in the picture space with little interference from narrative elements demonstrates her intention to focus on her self-image. The gaze of the figure, which engages the viewer without overwhelming him/her, is in reality the channel through which she analyzes and scrutinizes herself in a mirror. Then, the enigma of her look, which seems devoid of strong emotion, can be interpreted as an expression of uncertainties felt by the young painter involved in the task of self-investigation. It is most likely that there is no precedence for a self-portrait by woman artist with such psychological candidness, prior to this example.

Roughly contemporary to Hisako's self-portrait are two works produced by Ito Shoha: Preparing to Paint (Figure 48), dated 1915, and Summer (figure 51), 1920. Although the two works share the basic scheme of portraying the painter in her studio, they contrast dramatically in the treatment of the figure. Preparing to Paint, the earlier work,

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<sup>21</sup> Encyclopedia of World Art, XI (London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 469.

represents Shoha in her studio<sup>22</sup> gathering thought for her new work. In the center is seated the painter wearing dark blue kimono with piles of books in front. The one held in her hands shows combs and a mirror. Surrounding the figure, one sees various painting equipment: a large piece of paper on a board, painting brushes, a ruler, paint dishes, and a water container with morning glories. As the whereabouts of the original painting is unknown, an objective comment by Kaburaki Kiyokata who actually saw the work is helpful in understanding the general style of this painting:

Preparing to Paint by Ito Shoha is a type of theme I always thought some woman painter would come up with. Her style is not fastidious but pleasantly relaxed. My only complaint is the slight sloppiness of brushwork which needs to be more controlled. But over all, it is a work of inner coherency.<sup>23</sup>

"Relaxed" style mentioned by Kiyokata may refer to the easy brushwork on the verge of sloppiness in his opinion as well as the seeming indifference to detailed, meticulous depiction of costume, which characterize the traditional bijinga. Kiyokata's comment also reveals the newness of the subject represented in Shoha's work, i.e., a self-portrait of a woman painter.

Seen as a self-portrait, however, Shoha's work is not as revealing of her physical traits or personality as Hisako's self-portrayal. Although difficult to clearly discern from the small reproduction available today,

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<sup>22</sup> Sawagata Hisataka, "Shoha-shi no 'seisaku no mae' o mite, I," Sangu Shingo, 16 December 1915. Shoha is said to have painted this image studying her reflection on a mirror. "Seisaku no mae to Hazakura," Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Kyoto Shiga Furoku, 18 October 1915.

<sup>23</sup> Kaburaki Kiyokata, "Bunten no jinbutsuga," Chuo bijutsu 1, no. 2 (November 1915): 16.

the figure's face is not strongly individualized with specific physical features recognizable as Shoha. Furthermore, unlike Hisako's representation, in which the figure exists in a shallow space, forcing the viewer to confront and focus on her immediately, the figure in Preparing to Paint occupies the middle ground surrounded by numerous objects. Thus, distanced from the viewer, Shoha's image fails to give a strong psychological impact and engage the viewer in conversation. In short, in Preparing to Paint, the narrative context is given just as much emphasis as the presence of the figure.

Examined in the context of bijinga tradition, however, this modest representation of a woman painter at work offers a surprisingly refreshing quality. Compared to the iconized, idealized images of women epitomized by Shoen's work, Shoha's painting reveals her interest in greater realism. It is an unpretentious depiction of a moment from a young woman painter's daily life. The figure is represented in her untidy studio, in a very specific, private space of her own working environment. Rather than domesticity traditionally associated with women, she is shown as a "professional woman" who is involved in one of the most respected profession of "creating."

Shoha was clearly aware of the significance of the theme. In a letter to an acquaintance, Shoha described her work in progress as "haikara" or "fashionably modern."<sup>24</sup> Shoha's description was quite apt for it was symbolic of modernity in its very theme of a woman involved in intellectual activity. In the society currently embroiled in the process of changes entailing women's status, timeliness of Shoha's painting could

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<sup>24</sup> Ito Shoha, "Tamazuki to sono nushi," Osaka Asahi Shinbun, 22 May 1916.

not have been more desirable. Yet Shoha's "professional woman" appears also quite traditional in her modest, gentle pose. Her mannerism, in spite of her status as a modern painter, is in complete harmony with traditionally expected feminine deportment. Two blossoms of morning glory, modestly placed in the water container behind the painter, seems symbolic of Shoha's attachment to the aesthetic of traditional bijinga. By representing a very contemporary image of woman without violating the fundamental framework of traditional bijinga, Shoha successfully answers the demand for modernity without antagonizing the public with excessive radicalness. In this, the image precisely mirrors Shoha herself who was viewed as an ideal woman painter patiently balancing her professional career and domestic role as wife and mother.

Examined in the particular context of the ninth Bunten, in which Shoha's work received the third prize, Preparing to Paint was bound to captivate its audience with its uniqueness. The Bunten held in 1915 accepted an exceptionally large number of bijinga.<sup>25</sup> As they decided to organize the exhibition according to the subject matter, Shoha's work was displayed in the area called bijinga-shitsu or "bijinga hall" with all the other works of female subject such as Shoen's Flower Basket. Takeuchi Seiho discussed the conspicuous number of bijinga as follows:

The popularity of bijinga seems to have reached a peak this year, as demonstrated by the appearance of a large number of bijinga [at the Bunten]. There are various reasons for this popularity: many

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<sup>25</sup> Compared to twenty-five in the previous year, almost fifty paintings identifiable as bijinga were accepted in 1915, and the popularity of bijinga was to continue into the next year. This is based on my tabulation using the information (titles and reproductions) given in Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, ed., Nittenshi, vol. 4, Buntenhen 4 (Tokyo: Nitten, 1981) pp. 34-161.

works by Osaka painters, who are good at bijinga, were accepted [this year]; a number of women painters made their marks; and pretty works are easily noticed. . . . There are some people who believe that a bijinga is innately vulgar without paying attention to the painter's idea or effort.<sup>26</sup>

As described in Seiho's words as "pretty works," visually pleasing, decorative nature is intrinsic to traditional bijinga which is to represent and celebrate feminine ideal embodied in the fuzoku of the time. From the end of Meiji period on, female motifs pertinent to bijinga were also utilized in commercial realm in advertisement of department stores and promotion of various products.<sup>27</sup> In the eyes of some intellectuals, bijinga was "innately vulgar" because it traced its ultimate origin to the ukiyo-e tradition, the mass-produced art for the common populace. The great popularity of Takehisa Yumeji whose bijinga achieved nation-wide popularity among the young women in Japan was also outside the sphere of "high" art. Thus, the association of bijinga with the popular masses, with young women painters, and with commercialism, led many critics to look down upon bijinga. They ridiculed the "bijinga hall" as "the room of lewdness" or "the room of perfume and cosmetics," and its content as "childish expressions by young women" or as "only for those stupid women who consider kimono shopping the ultimate pleasure."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> "Bunten wa teika shiteyuku," Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Kyoto Shiga Furoku, 18 October 1915. As pointed out by Seiho, the number of women Nihonga artists - nine altogether - whose works were accepted by the Bunten in 1915 was by far the greatest since the Bunten's initiation in 1907. All nine of those artists worked in the bijinga category. Shoen was the oldest at the age of forty, followed by Shoha at thirty-eight, and Kawasaki Ranko, a Tokyo artist, at thirty-three; the other six painters were all in their twenties. The new generation of women artists were emerging.

<sup>27</sup> For examples, see "Bijinga poster," Haru no onna, Taiyo bijinga sirizu, I. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1982), pp. 131-137.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 4, Buntenhen 4, p. 609. The first two comments are by Uchida Roan in Taiyo (November 1915), the third by editors in

Placed in the context of the 1915 "bijinga hall," Shoha's Preparing to Paint stood out in one observer's eye for its "unpretentious imagery based on realist attitude" among "decorative and gaudy paintings."<sup>29</sup> One critic regarded it "the most sincere and somber"<sup>30</sup> among the works in the bijinga hall. Another wrote:

The woman in this painting is full of life. There are so many paintings of women subjects at the salon this year. But almost all of them represent women as if stuffed dolls. Shoha is the only painter who captures an image of a live human being. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately, the absence of readily identifiable physical likeness makes it difficult to accept Preparing to Paint as a full-fledged self-portrait. But quite clearly, with this work, Shoha opened up a new direction in the field of bijinga. The artist was characteristically modest about her success explaining that she painted Preparing "haphazardly" without guidance from her teacher, Kokyo, who was seriously ill at the time.<sup>32</sup> This lack of help from Kokyo may have been fortuitous in hindsight, for Shoha could freely follow her own artistic instinct.<sup>33</sup> Her husband, Rojo, gave an approval that with this painting, Shoha finally established her own individualistic style.<sup>34</sup>

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Kaiga shoshi (November 1915) and the fourth by Yano ryukei in Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun, 25 October 1915.

<sup>29</sup> Comment by Kuromegane, quoted in Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 4, Buntenhen 4, p. 162. Originally published in Nihon oyobi Nihonjin (October 1915).

<sup>30</sup> Kyuha, et. al., "Dai Kyukai Bunten gohyo," Biijutsu shinpo 15, no. 1 (November 1915): 45.

<sup>31</sup> Ueda Yoshizo, "Bunten no Nihonga godai," Hinode Shinbun, 7 December 1915.

<sup>32</sup> "Bunten nyusen no Iio Shoha-shi," Asahi Shinbun Kyoto Furoku, 14 October 1915.

<sup>33</sup> "Saikin no Shoha joshi: Seisaku no mae, Yuku sue, and Sugikoshi kata," Shin Kyoto 5, no. 10 (October 1915): 6.

<sup>34</sup> Sawagata Hisataka, "Shoha shi no 'Seisaku no mae' o mite, 2" Sangu Shinpo, 17 December 1915.

In 1920, Shoha produced another self-portrait titled Summer (Figure 51) for the second Teiten. It is in a sense an updated version of her Preparing to Paint of 1915. Five years later, however, the painting reveals a noticeable change in Shoha's attitude. The narrative elements which identify the sitter's occupation are familiar: books on customs and manners, scrolls, sketchbooks, ruler, and a paper stretched on a board. Now the painter is dressed in a free-flowing, casual white dress indicating the popularity of Western-style fashion. Her hair is also in Western style. More important than a superficial change in appearance, however, is the manner in which Shoha represents herself. The physical description of the painter, including the hair style parted at one side and the mouth with fleshy lower lip, seems more individualized and more readily identifiable as Shoha. Furthermore, in Preparing to Paint, the sitter is represented in a modest scale in the middle ground. In contrast, the figure in Summer is depicted in the foreground in a prominent scale with narrative objects being relegated to only peripheral importance. Thus, viewer is invited to a more immediate and direct encounter with the sitter. Leaning against the window, she seems relaxed physically but absorbed in her thought. Somber color scheme based on white, gray, and beige enhances the serious, melancholic expression conveyed by the figure. Fine lines which describe her gown move sluggishly, break, and bend awkwardly representing the folds and wrinkles. They are truthful to her observation of nature and are free from the aesthetic principle of the brush line technique in traditional Japanese painting. Shoha also applies subtle shading to the areas such as under the figure's right arm and left knee to create a sense of volume. The presence of a specific

individual is made more convincing by the realistic style utilized by Shoha.

The sitter herself, as if symbolized by her loose-fitting Western dress, seems more open and freer in her self-projection than her earlier image. In Preparing to Paint, viewer's observation of the sitter is focused on her concrete, physical activity of looking. In this sense, the painting represents the artist as an ingredient of a concept which Shoha describes as "fashionably modern." But in Summer, Shoha is more willing to portray herself as a specific individual and makes an effort to communicate the invisible state of her mind. Thus, the second portrait indicates a much stronger attitude of self-investigation demonstrating a growing sense of self-awareness within Shoha.

Shoha wrote this year:

There is no other way for a painter but to follow the idea of individualism and follow her own path. . . . For me, it is not that I am consciously pursuing realism. I seek themes for painting from within myself rather than from outside world. In other words, I observe everyday life without embellishment. Through depicting my own life, I believe, I can represent the truth in my painting.<sup>35</sup>

Shoha's "realism" as demonstrated in Preparing to Paint and Summer was in her choice of unidealized subject matter taken from her personal environment in contrast to the traditional images of bijinga. In the case of Summer, her realistic attitude is further reinforced by her use of descriptive linear and shading technique. Determined to depict "everyday life without embellishment," Shoha focused on her own life as

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<sup>35</sup> Ito Shoha, "Gukan" from "Gendai joryu sakka ikkagon," Geien 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 30.

painter and produced "fashionably modern" images of women, including the more successful self-portrait in Summer.

In order to emphasize the importance of self-portraiture during the Taisho period, the works of one other woman painter should be mentioned. Shima Seien 島成園 (1892-1970) produced a curious self-portrait titled Woman in a Studio (Gashitsu no onna 画室の女) (Figure 118), dated 1919.<sup>36</sup> The painter is seated in an informal posture in front of an unfinished screen and stares at the viewer. The facial features are individualized enough to be identified with Seien. However, the painter adds a conspicuous birthmark under her right eye in order to make the painting "more interesting."<sup>37</sup> By deliberately rejecting beauty, Seien clearly indicates her conscious effort to separate her portrait from bijinga tradition. The unfinished screen behind the sitter reveals its "raw" state and parallels Seien's choice to represent herself in unbeautified fashion.

In another work, Seien is willing to go further to the direction of more rigorous and uncompromising self-portrayal. Perhaps the most telling self-portrait by a woman Nihonga painter during the Taisho period, it is a small work titled Self-Portrait (Figure 119), datable to mid to late Taisho period. The painter represents herself above chest against the background of an ukiyo-e actor print. The basic facial features of the painter, characterized by a mouth with thick lips, prominent eyebrows, heavy eyelids, and slightly pointed chin are recognizable in both Woman

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<sup>36</sup> Shima Seien (1892-1970) was a woman painter in Osaka, trained under Kitano Tsunetomi. During the Taisho period, she produced some of the very interesting portrayals of women, including her self-portraits.

<sup>37</sup> From an interview with Ms. Morimoto Mitsuko (1907-), on December 8, 1986, who studied under Seien during the Taisho and Showa periods.

in a Studio and Self-Portrait. But in the Self-Portrait, the artist pays more stringent attention to the topography of her face, as evidenced in the articulation of the musculature around her eyes, nose, and mouth. Thus, the degree of three dimensionality and individualization is more exacting than her other self-portrait, as revealed in the treatment of her distinctly shaped eyebrows, puffy eyes with bags under them, and protruding mouth with prominent lips. Clearly, the painter reproduces her physical appearance with fidelity to nature in Self-Portrait, while her face in the other portrait only evidences more generalized likeness. In the image in Self-portrait, Seien reveals herself as a woman lacking in conventional prettiness but as an interesting individual with an inquiring mind. In her determination to capture her physical reality truthfully, she pursues the task of self-investigation farther than any other woman painter. Such an unrestrained self-portrayal by a woman painter is unique in the context of its time and could not have appeared without the self-liberating awareness encouraged of Japanese women.

In a comment referring to a bijinga by a Tokyo painter, a critic wrote in 1920:

The only way to break through the stifled bijinga is to abandon the established bijinga formula and create freer paintings of women, fujinga [paintings of women].<sup>38</sup>

Self-portraiture, characterized by its basic nature of transcribing the reality of a particular individual, stood at the opposite polarity from bijinga in function. It was one of the most expedient means to break free from the traditional bijinga and at the same time the most difficult to

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<sup>38</sup> Kuromegane, quoted in Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 6, Teitenhen 1 (1982), p. 525. Originally published in Nihon oyobi Nihonjin (November 1920).

achieve. In both what they accomplish and do not, Shoha, Hisako, and Seien's self-portraits manifest the social and cultural position of women in the midst of dynamic changes. The fact that none of the works, except for the small piece by Seien, are titled "self-portrait" seems to suggest the hesitation of women painters to truly perceive and accept themselves as independent entity worthwhile for the subject of their paintings. The traditional Japanese society dictated women to identify themselves essentially within the context of their subservient relationship to men. Only with the self-emancipatory movement during the Taisho period, serious investigation of themselves as an autonomous individual became available to Japanese women. Even then, as demonstrated by the works discussed above, the modern attitude of critical detachment was not always easy for them to attain. Their effort was made doubly difficult by the established tradition of bijinga in which women were embellished, idealized, and de-individualized. Nevertheless, Shoha, Hisako, and Seien's self-portraits represented a new step forward branching off from the category of bijinga in concordance with the changing self-perception of Japanese women.

### 3. Women of the Emerging Middle Class

Besides the two self-portraits, examined in the previous section, Ito Shoha produced several other interesting works during the Taisho period. Newspaper Serial, dated 1916, is one of the most memorable works in her entire oeuvre and captures vividly in its image one facet of the Taisho society which gives its period a particular character. The painting

portrays a young housewife reading a newspaper in the kitchen in one early morning. Modest but neat and tidy, it is a kitchen typical of a middle-class household during the Taisho period. A traditional wood stove, an old-fashioned iron rice cooker, and a bamboo pole with towels hanging are juxtaposed with a gas burner symbolic of modernity. The woman wears a blue cotton kimono and her hair is little adorned. With a towel and a toothbrush resting beside her, she eagerly reads the newest portion of the serialized novel in the morning newspaper. Seemingly mundane and simple in theme, social implications of this painting are nevertheless multiple.

Newspapers had appeared in Japan in early Meiji but it was not until the Taisho period that it truly became a mass medium with a large audience. As the result of spreading education during the Meiji period, a greater number of common Japanese became literate. With this increase of potential readers, newspapers which had been initially oriented toward a small group of well-educated elites gradually transformed in style and format into a more commercially motivated media with greater appeal to the masses.<sup>39</sup> Among the many means which were adopted to make a newspaper more populist was inclusion of novels published in daily instalments over a period of time. Thus, Newspaper Serial encapsulates contemporary middle-class culture not only in its depiction of the interior of the kitchen but also in the figure's very act of reading. Shoha's middle-class housewife is different both from the aristocratic women represented by Shoen and from rebellious women depicted by

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<sup>39</sup> See James L. Huffman, "Freedom and the Press in Meiji-Taisho Japan," The Translations of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Third Series, vol. 19 (1984): 143-144.

Hisako. It was precisely the type of image which the common citizens who visited the Bunten could easily identify with. In the monumental representation - approximately life-size - of their own class, they saw an affirmation of their own life-style.

Specifically pertinent to the context of Shoha's painting is the appearance of serialized novels, the heroine of which are anti-traditional women with their own independent mind. One of the early examples of such is Roughneck (Arakure) by Tokuda Shusei (1871-1943) which was published in the Yomiuri Newspaper between January and July in 1915. The story tells a life of a woman named Oshima who refuses to be subservient to men she becomes involved, pursues a professional career, and eventually decides to establish herself as an independent entrepreneur. Thus Oshima is a woman with an awakened ego who "paid little attention to feelings of duty and social obligations."<sup>40</sup> The title of the novel suggests that Oshima's untraditional, assertive life-style makes her automatically "rough" and "unfeminine." Coinciding with the period of the first women's movement in Japan, the novel captivated the Taisho readers. In Shoha's painting, the title of the serialized fiction reads as Woman of Vanity (Kyohei no onna) indicating that it also deals with a female subject. Suggested by negativism inherent in the word "vanity," it implies that the heroine is most likely an anti-traditional woman like Oshima.

Shoha's housewife is seated in the kitchen, her "work" place, signifying her traditionality and domesticity. However, the sense of

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Rolf, "Shusei, Hakucho, and the Age of Literary Naturalism, 1907-1911" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii, 1975), p. 56.

intensity with which she reads the serialized novel indicates her interest in and fascination with the story of a woman with a more radical outlook on life. Her literacy can help her become aware of the events of the outside world and can lead her to self-awareness and self-emancipation. Then, this is an image of an average middle-class Taisho housewife whose life is characterized by polarizing factors of domesticity traditionally required of them and the opened possibility for self-discovery as a liberated individual. The mixture of old and modern elements seen in the kitchen is echoed by the woman who embodies in herself both traditional value and potential for rebellion against it. Through its unpretentious depiction of ordinary everyday routine, Newspaper Serial eloquently speaks of the changing social reality of woman's life during the Taisho period.

In the context of bijinga, Shoha's work has a refreshing appeal. The figure is not embellished with beautiful costume and projects a sense of human warmth through her commonness. Shoha neither idealizes nor radicalizes but simply documents. Following the naturalist direction demonstrated by Preparing to Paint in the previous year, she chooses a contemporary theme which derives from her personal experience.<sup>41</sup> The details of the objects around the figure are factually and carefully depicted as exemplified by the meticulous rendering of the newspaper. But Shoha's brushwork used on the figure is not fastidious: the lines which outline the kimono are relaxed and easy while details of facial features and hair are rendered with unconstrained brushwork. While

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<sup>41</sup> Although Shoha used a model for this painting, the idea for this theme came from her own everyday routine of reading a paper in the kitchen. Mrs. Ito Masako, quoted by Akutagawa Kiko, "Tszukimono," Yomiuri Shinbun, 9 May 1982.

Shoen's Night of Lunar Eclipse in the same year demonstrates her technical perfection and stands for the beauty of bijinga in its traditional essence both in style and subject, Shoha's Newspaper Serial offers an artistic and social counterpart.

The success of Shoha's work must have left a considerable influence on the other artists, for Yoshioka Chigusa was recorded to have said in 1917 that she was determined to produce a painting which "represented aspects of real life based on one's experience."<sup>42</sup> Only two years earlier, she, with other Osaka women painters, had represented the heroines from the Five Women by Ihara Saikaku.

Shoha's work from 1918 Buntan is Sprouts (Figure 50), which represents mother and daughter planting sprouts in flower pots in a garden. Like Newspaper Serial (Figure 49), it describes an ordinary domestic scene, based on Shoha's own personal experience. The image of the mother, dressed in dark blue kimono, echoes the modest appearance of the housewife figure in Newspaper Serial and enhances the liveliness of the little girl dressed in bright red kimono and white apron.<sup>43</sup> The figure of the youngster who wears adult clogs and holds a sprout in her hand was modeled on Shoha's youngest daughter.<sup>44</sup> Scattered in front of the mother are numerous flower pots, a hand shovel, and some plants still wrapped in paper. The theme of this painting is clearly the intimate

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<sup>42</sup> "Goshippu," Chuo bijutsu 3, no. 12 (December 1917): 89.

<sup>43</sup> I have been unable to find out about the identity of this figure. Although the facial features of this woman resemble Shoha's own image in Summer (Figure 51), 1920, there are some dissimilarities: the face of this mother figure is narrower, and the eyebrows, farther apart. At this point, it seems safe to suggest that she represents a general type, and not a specific individual.

<sup>44</sup> From an interview with Mrs. Ito Masako, April 29, 1985.

exchange between mother and child engaged in a family leisure activity. The ordinary activity of planting, which appears insignificant at first glance, is quite apt for this theme. The meaning of motherhood as nurturing of life is symbolically reinforced by the mother's action of working with young plants, while a sprout, which is held up by the child, mirrors her own immature state and potential growth in future. Enclosed within the wall which protects them from the outside world, the two figures enjoy peaceful, domestic existence. A feeling of everyday reality conveyed by the scene is further enhanced by the details such as a small garden broom casually placed against the back wall and the worn-out condition of the clogs on the girl's feet.

Shoha's painting does not simply represent the universally recognizable mother-and-child theme but specifically relates to the image of a modern middle-class family which had begun to emerge since the end of the Meiji period. The urban middle-class population increased rapidly during the early half of the Taisho period, among whom a new concept of family began to take hold. The traditional notion of *ie* [family, household] reflected an institution in which the multi-generational family lived under the absolute authority of male leadership. Within this patriarchal family structure, a strict hierarchical relationship, based on age and gender, was maintained among the members. In contrast, a middle-class family in Taisho society emulated the Western model which was characterized by a more democratic relationship among the family members with a husband and a wife occupying the central position as a

team.<sup>45</sup> It was a concept of a modern family, first described as "home, sweet home" during the mid-Meiji period, in which family members could interact with one another as more or less equals.<sup>46</sup> Within this new type of family, a woman occupied a much more active and assertive role than her Meiji-period predecessor. With increasing modernization which affected Japanese life-style in all basic aspects of clothing, food, and housing, a modern housewife had to educate herself with the most recent information on the practical techniques of domestic management varying in areas from health, finance, to hobbies and entertainment for her family.<sup>47</sup> The new image of housewife, however, ultimately mirrored the conservative view on women which prevailed in Taisho society in spite of the appearances of "new women." Although more assertive in her role, a Taisho-period housewife still reflected the old concept of "good wife and wise mother" based on the definition of femininity as domestic and maternal. One might say that women's role was simply elevated from that of a domestic servant to a domestic leader during this period. The image in Sprouts reflects the contemporary notion of family in the affectionate bond which unites the parent and the child, while the mother figure represents the new image of a housewife in her hands-on involvement in the daily affairs of her family. Through the seemingly unidealized depiction of the commonplace scene, Sprouts exudes a feeling of familiarity to the viewer. In its very ordinariness and lack of drama,

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<sup>45</sup> Nagahara Kazuko, "Ryosai kenbo shugi kyoiku ni okeru 'ie' to shokugyo" in Nihon joseishi, vol. 4, Kindai, ed. Joseishi Sogo Kenkyu-kai (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1985), pp. 177-178.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 176-177.

Shoha's painting seems symbolic of what we associate with modern middle-class values.

Comparison between Mother and Child by Shoen (Figure 38) and Sprouts by Shoha is instructive to understand the difference in the representations of motherhood by these two artists. Shoen's work, dated 1934, was created as a tribute to her own mother who had passed away early that year. Using the late Edo-period fuzoku, which she considered most aesthetically pleasing, Shoen represents the theme of motherly love elevated to an ideal realm. Placed in an unspecified, abstract space, only defined by the hanging shade, Shoen's mother and child stand as an eternal and universal icon of motherhood. The crisp profile of the woman with her gaze focused on her child is symbolic of motherly love as absolute truth which transcends time and space. The exquisite beauty of imagery based on austere composition and delicate color scheme heightens the sense of nobility Shoen intends to convey in this work. In contrast, Shoha's image is firmly anchored in a contemporary world of daily experience. Motherhood is represented in terms of concrete, plain reality, characterized by disorderliness and messiness as symbolized by the woman's contact with soil and the scattered objects in front of her. Thus, Shoha's image of mother and child seems as momentary and transitory as Shoen's is eternal and timeless.

Ultimately, the contrasting images achieved by Shoen and Shoha reveal a difference in their experiences in personal lives. As a single parent, Shoen was unable to enjoy a day-to-day experience of childrearing, not only because she felt compelled to concentrate on her career but because the illegitimacy of her son's birth prevented her from

publicly taking pleasure in her own motherhood. Thus, Shoen represents motherhood in a conceptualized and idealized image characterized by nobility and elegance. Furthermore, Shoen's notion of ideal motherhood relates to the traditional notion of *ie*, a patriarchal family system. Holding a son in her arms, it is an image of a woman who has satisfactorily fulfilled her primary obligation of producing a male heir for the family. In contrast, Shoha's legitimate status as a mother and wife contributed to her popularity as a woman artist during the Taisho period and allowed her to freely draw subjects for her paintings from her domestic life. Shoha presents her personal experience without elevating it into high ideal but not without emphasizing blissful domesticity. In doing so, Shoha's work embodies the value of the Taisho middle class family, expressed as "home, sweet home."

It was a widely accepted notion during the Taisho period that domestic themes were most appropriately feminine. One critic wrote in 1914:

I believe that in the field of *fuzokuga*, female subjects, especially those which involve domestic situations are best suited for women painters. Family, children, little girls, amusements, mother and daughter, children's story, family gathering, family affair, party, visiting people, visit to a shrine, flower viewing, boating, outing, etc. All subjects which derive from family . . . are most familiar to women. Moreover, as women hold the most dominant role [in family affairs], their observations are complete and understandings are deep. Therefore, it goes without saying that they can naturally represent those themes with ease.<sup>48</sup>

The association of women painters with family themes was a recurring comment in Japanese art world during the late Meiji and Taisho periods.

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<sup>48</sup> Sakai Saisui, "Toto no keishu fuzoku gaka jo," *Bijutsu shingoo* 13, no. 6 (April 1914): 6.

Ultimately it derives from the traditional view on the feminine role as defined within domestic and family life. However, themes of children and family life do not necessarily designate a feminine style characteristic. There are many male painters who depicted such themes.<sup>49</sup> If women painters during the Taisho period dealt with such themes more frequently than their male counterparts, it was because the society expected and encouraged them to do so.

During the Taisho period, Shoha enjoyed notable popularity as a woman artist who successfully managed both family life and career. Themes represented in Newspaper Serial and Sprouts imply her attention to domesticity and endorse the public perception of Shoha as a wife-mother-artist. In her decision to turn to her personal experience and depict scenes from her daily life, Shoha was in keeping with the tenor of the time. By relying on her own individualistic perception of reality, she achieved uniquely contemporary representations of women and established herself as a successful "modern" artist during the Taisho era.

#### 4. Images of Working Women

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<sup>49</sup> For the paintings of children by male artists, see Punishment (Batsu) and Spring Song (Haru no uta) by Tsuchida Bakusen, reproduced in Kato Kazuo and Uchiyama Takeo, Murakami Kagaku/Tsuchida Bakusen, Gendai Nihon bijutsu zenshu, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1972), plates 36 and 37; Girls (Shojo) by Kikuchi Keigetsu, reproduced in Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, ed., Kyoto no Nihonga, 1910-1930: Taisho no kokoro, kakushin to sozo (Kyoto: Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1986), plate 22; and Girls Wearing Long Coats by Nonagase Banka (Figure 90) discussed in this dissertation. Keigetsu also depicted a mother-and-child theme in Evening (Yube), reproduced in Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, ed., Kikuchi Keigetsu-ten (Kyoto: Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1982), plate 10.

Train Station in Early Evening:  
Painting with Social Consciousness and Its Lineage

As we saw earlier, based on self-awareness as a woman, Hisako created during the mid Taisho period less idealized and more humanized images of women. During the latter half of the Taisho period, Hisako's humanist orientation led her to focus on the lives of the downtrodden women. Train Station in Early Evening (Figure 63), dated 1918, is one of the best-known works by Hisako. In Hisako's own words, the painting is based on a scene she witnessed at the Chushojima station of the Keihan Railway in Kyoto, then the location of a gay quarter, and represents an itinerant waitress. She is a floater who keeps traveling from one brothel to another or from one restaurant to the next in search of an employment. Around thirty years in age, her youthful years are gone. Seated on a bench, she rests her head on an umbrella, with her body sharply bent in L shape. Her eyes are open but unfocused. Her lips are slightly parted and their strangely dark color emphasizes the sickly paleness of her complexion. A strand of loose hair runs across her cheek but she seems not to care. Through her posture and facial expression she emanates a sense of complete mental and physical exhaustion. The use of beautiful colors and richly detailed depiction of costume customary in traditional bijinga are entirely lacking. Also absent is an elegant setting which visually and symbolically enhances the beauty of the figure. The architectural background in which Hisako's woman is set is inorganic, public, and urban. It does not offer a refuge to the human heart as nature does. In fact, the comforting world of nature remains inaccessible to Hisako's waitress. The cherry blossoms, often juxtaposed with a

woman in traditional bijinga to vie for beauty, are available only as a design in a poster here. It is symbolic of the life of this woman who is alienated from the realm of such beauty. Placed in this unfeeling, public space, the sense of loneliness and anonymity felt by the figure becomes even more acute. The painting is remarkable in its choice of theme and its truthful representation.

The message of Hisako's painting is made clearer when it is compared to a work by Takehisa Yumeji titled Autumn Rest (Aki no ikoi 秋のいこい) (Figure 120), datable to ca. 1920.<sup>50</sup> In this painting Yumeji deals with a subject almost identical to Hisako's: a woman is seated on a bench probably at a train station.<sup>51</sup> She rests her chin upon a Western-style umbrella and next to her is a large cloth pouch suggesting that she has just arrived in a big city to start a new life. Although strikingly similar in the subject, Yumeji's presentation is markedly softened resulting in a work of thoroughly different imagery and mood from Hisako's. Yumeji uses vivid colors for decorative effect as exemplified by the bright purple and orange of the figure's clothes and the striking blue of her umbrella. Unlike the figure in Hisako's painting, Yumeji's woman is accompanied by the beauty of nature. The ochre leaves of the tree frame and embrace the figure; even the ground beneath her is carpeted with the warm color of fallen leaves. She looks at the viewer with innocent but expressive large black eyes as if to solicit our sympathy: she is vulnerable and helpless.

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<sup>50</sup> It is not known who gave this title to the painting. Kimura Shigekazu, Takehisa Yumeji, Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), p. 115.

<sup>51</sup> It is suggested that the woman is at the Ueno station in Tokyo. Kimura, Takehisa Yumeji, p. 115.

Traveling to distant places symbolizes an adventurous spirit, one's independence from home and freedom to pursue one's individual dreams. Yumeji's young woman personifies the sentimental and romantic idea of freedom and independence, liberation from family and social obligations. It is precisely the type of image which mirrored the yearning of the youth in Taisho Japan. Yumeji's phenomenal popularity derived in part from his ability to translate the restless romanticism of the youth into bittersweet visual images marked by uniquely individualistic style. Sentimentality lifts Yumeji's work out of the real world of suffering and pain. Hisako's figure in Train Station may as well be Yumeji's woman ten years later, defeated and no longer capable of dreaming. Through somber colors and sobering image, Hisako's work speaks of the plight of a woman who struggles with the day-to-day living. Neither sentimentalized as Yumeji's figure nor idealized as Shoen's woman, Hisako's waitress, through her real sense of human frailty, transmits the sense of sympathy by its creator. The theme of Hisako's painting is not glorification of feminine beauty but the miserable reality of socially underprivileged working woman. Thus, Train Station clearly resists being categorized as bijinga and exemplifies the humanist awareness of the Taisho-period painters who felt compelled to depict all aspects of human life including unpleasant reality.

In order to understand the historical significance of Hisako's Train Station, it is necessary here to examine the lineage of paintings with social messages in modern Nihonga. A quick survey traces its origin to the latter half of the Meiji period. Widow and Orphan (Kafu to koji 寡婦と孤児) (Figure 121) by Hishida Shunso, dated 1895, represents a

woman with a child grieving over the loss of her husband killed in a battle, the only remains of whom being the armour in front of her. The painting is believed to be a social criticism on misery and tragedy resulting from the Sino-Japanese war. But Shunso refrains from expressing his opinion in the context of the contemporary world, disguises his theme as a historical painting, and invests his message with a more universal and timeless meaning. More directly expressive of the contemporary social phenomenon was Orphanage (Kojiin 孤児院) (Figure 122) painted by Kaburaki Kiyokata in 1902, which represented a scene at the newly appearing welfare institution. Kiyokata's intention may have been simply to depict a "modern" subject matter to expand the horizon of the Meiji-period fuzokuga but he inadvertently produced a troubling image of class distinction. The elegant young woman accompanied by a servant gives out gifts to the orphans. Her haughty look and gesture fail to convey a true sense of compassion, while the strongly individualized faces of children express their mean, servile characters irreversibly scarred by the hardship of their life. Late Night (Yofuke よふけ) (Figure 123) by Ochi Shokan 大曾 常雄 (1882-1958), also dated 1902, represents a lonely image of a blind man and his daughter. Poverty and misfortune of this pair becomes even more heart-breaking when one notices the warehouse of an obviously a wealthy family looming tall behind the figures.<sup>52</sup>

It was not until the Taisho period, however, that a strong undercurrent of humanism stimulated many Nihonga artists in Kyoto to

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<sup>52</sup> Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan, ed., Kindai Nihonga ni okeru fuzokuga (Kyoto: Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan, 1984), p. 33.

consciously produce paintings with social overtone.<sup>53</sup> According to Ono Chikkyo, there were artists in Kyoto called "Humanists" (Jinseiha 人生派):

From the end of the Meiji to early Taisho period, there was a group of artists who were called "Jinseiha" at the time. They believed that they could produce the most humanistic and meaningful work only when they depicted with love and sympathy the aspects of the human life at the bottom of the society. They believed such was the most sincere and serious attitude.<sup>54</sup>

It is not clearly understood at this point exactly who were involved in this group of Humanists. At least one can suggest with relative confidence the names of several artists: Hata Teruo, Nonagase Banka, and Chigusa Soun.

Among the Humanists, Hata Teruo can be considered one of the most unique and avant-garde painters of the Taisho period. He graduated from the Kyoto City Art School in 1904, and attended the progressive art gatherings such as the Heigokai and Kuronekokai at the end of the Meiji period. During the Taisho period, he led a life of a vagabond often living among the low-class prostitutes of red-light districts.<sup>55</sup> His work of 1911, titled Two Aspects of Contemporary

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<sup>53</sup> Why this phenomenon occurred in Kyoto and not in Tokyo is a worthwhile issue to investigate. For the purpose of this dissertation, I simply transmit the generally accepted theory that Tokyo Nihonga was from early times dominated by the idealist principle set out by Okakura Tenshin. Kyoto Nihonga, lacking in such a strong ideological base and artistic direction, was probably more susceptible to the new concepts of humanism. One individual who gave a strong impetus in humanistic direction in art was Nakai Sotaro who taught art history at the Kyoto Painting School. A respected mentor to many students who studied there, he constantly talked about the importance of humanist principles in painting. See Tanaka Hisao, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu (Tokyo: Bijutsu Koronsha, 1983), pp. 88-92, 103, 119-120, 140-142.

<sup>54</sup> Ono Chikkyo quoted by Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 116.

<sup>55</sup> His vagabond life seems to have begun in 1911, if not earlier. In the pamphlet for his exhibit in 1911, he already calls himself a "drifter." See Hata Teruo no sekai (Kyoto: 1977), p. 6. In 1920, he fathered a child and settled down. Thereafter his painting began to take on strongly religious overtones. Information on his life and art

Fuzoku: Construction Site and Nightwatch (Tosei fuzoku nidai: Kojiba and yakei 当世風俗二題, 工事場夜警) evidences his interest at the early stage of his career in the theme of laborers and workers.<sup>56</sup> He began showing his work at small private exhibitions in 1912 and was never to participate in the official salon. In fact, Teruo was openly contemptuous and defiant of the salon. In 1913, together with Nonagase Banka, Teruo held a two-men exhibition in Kyoto, the so-called "Cafe Tower" exhibit, by setting up a tent and other temporary structure directly across from the site of the official salon.<sup>57</sup> It was a public declaration of their anti-establishment stance. At this exhibit of audacity and defiance, Teruo showed works with shocking, offensive titles: Fatherless Child (Shiseiji), Song of Flesh (Niku no uta), Poison Tea (Dokucha), Panting of a Cursed Woman (Norowareta onna no aegi), Illness and Death (Yamai to shi), and so on.<sup>58</sup> Teruo wrote:

Inspired by Christianity, I painted still life and landscape. Around 1907, I was awakened with religious-social consciousness and began painting scenes of laborers, slums, and beggars. Later, I began to question Christianity . . . and indulged myself in women and wine to barely escape from going mad and dying. I wondered

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is limited: Hata Teruo no sekai; and Sakai Tetsuro, "Senkyuhyakujunen-dai Kyoto Nihonga no shindoko," in Senkyuhyakujunen-dai ni okeru Kyoto Nihonga no shindoko, ed. Wakayama Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan (Wakayama: Wakayama Kenritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1976); and Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, pp. 136-139.

<sup>56</sup> Reproduced in Kyoto-shi Bijutsukan, Kindai Nihonga ni okeru fuzokuga, p. 37.

<sup>57</sup> The annual exhibit of the official salon was originally held only in Tokyo. Starting in 1910, they showed the exhibit also in Kyoto. "Cafe Tower" was a name of a coffee shop which occupied the tent put up by Teruo and Banka. As audacious and rebellious as the concept of their exhibition might have been, it had a precedent in the exhibition by Takehisa Yumeji held in 1912 in an open challenge to the official salon. Yumeji occupies a unique and important place in the lineage of anti-establishment tradition during the Taisho period. See Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, pp. 137-139.

<sup>58</sup> Listed in "Teruo's words," from the pamphlet for an exhibit, quoted in Hata Teruo no sekai, p. 7.

around Osaka, Kobe, and Tokyo, witnessing the dreary social condition of fallen women. I resolved myself to become and live as the painter of the evil which haunts the city tormented by the burden of living and the desire of flesh.<sup>59</sup>

In his resolution to "become and live as the painter of the evil which haunts the city," Teruo exemplified the stand of the Humanists. During the Taisho period, he produced some of the most haunting depictions of women based on his first-hand experience with the "dreary social condition of the fallen women."

A valuable example of his early oeuvre is Prostitutes Playing Flower Cards (Joro 女郎) (Figure 19), 1913. By this time he was living among the prostitutes and had closed off his interest from the domain of ordinary people both in his private life and his painting. In this work, Teruo gives a glimpse of a distasteful, sordid life of fallen women. The women appear physically ugly by a conventional standard, lacking in grace and refinement. They show the body language of prostitutes when they are not on display. The reality of their soiled existence is conveyed by a crowded, messy composition, and their physical ugliness, enhanced by a use of blunt outlines and uneven application of color. Teruo completely rejects classicizing views of women typified in bijinga, and furthermore, abandons the beauty of technique and medium associated with the tradition of Nihonga.

The radical style displayed in Women Playing Flower Cards evolves even further in a work titled Women (Figure 124), dated ca. 1919. Teruo represents an image of victimization, a group of pregnant prostitutes. The painting has no single focus of attention or climax except for the

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Hata Teruo no sekai, p. 16.

slightest emphasis on the central figure with green hair and red skirt. The women are lumped together with no sense of individual identity. Darkness permeates the painting punctuated by flickering white light which seems to come from the world unreachable by these women. It is symbolic of their existence in a shadowed part of the society which ordinary people pretend not to see. The expressive style of this painting - so thoroughly anti-traditional - clearly suggests an influence from Munch. By resorting to an unconventionally expressive means, Teruo imbues the painting with an emotional power. In his total commitment to ugliness, one senses his sympathy for the dehumanized existence of his subjects and his determination to expose their tragedy.

Nonagase Banka who joined Teruo in the "Cafe Tower" exhibit in 1913 was also a Humanist. After making a debut with his stunningly avant-garde Girls Wearing Long Coats in 1911 (Figure 90), he produced colorful works in a style heavily influenced by Gauguin during the Taisho period (Figure 17). It is known that he also painted numerous images of prostitutes during this time.<sup>60</sup> On a Way to a Charity Hospital (Seyakuin e mukau michi), dated 1916, is a work which exemplifies his Humanist stand as described articulately by an art historian, Nakai Sotaro:

An old woman with a cane is holding a medicine bottle. Her hip is bent and her steps seem unsteady. Her face is deformed from swelling. Her complexion is pale and yellowish showing exhaustion and wretchedness. . . . The smoky city in the background is capped with a dark, muddy sky.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 149.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 148. Originally published in "Kokuga sosaku kyokai no hitobito to Kansai gadan," Bijutsu gaho (March 1918) and quoted by Wadaka Shinji, Nonagase Banka, ed. Wakayama Kenritsu Kindai Bijitsukan

Clearly, Banka was dealing with the subject of the impoverished and displaced in an urban environment.

Teruo and Banka introduced above demonstrate a much more personal and consistent involvement with social themes than any other Nihonga painter of earlier generations.<sup>62</sup> Although the actualities of the Humanists at the end of the Meiji period is yet to be ascertained, Chigusa Soun, who was Kajiwara Hisako's first art teacher, most likely shared a similar spirit at that time. It is recorded that Soun painted a work titled Return Road (Modorimichi) in 1907, representing a laborer and a saloon hostess. Moreover, he was closely acquainted with Hata Teruo in 1910 through the activities of the Heigokai and the Nameless Society. Inspired by the work of the Humanists and stimulated by the general tenet of Taisho humanism, as well, the latter half of the Taisho period witnessed a flowering of paintings with social consciousness in Kyoto. Although the "Humanists" may be the term specifically used to designate certain artists such as Teruo and Banka during the period bridging the end of Meiji and early Taisho, their spirit underscored the humanist stance of numerous artists who followed them.<sup>63</sup>

Examples abound in Kyoto Nihonga of the latter half of the Taisho period in which artists turn their eyes to the downtrodden, the outcast, and the victimized in the society. Criminal (Hanzaisha 犯罪者) (Figure 125) by Nishimura Koka 西村更華, 1918, was probably the first painting

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(Wakayama: Chikano Shinkokai, 1975), pp. 71-72. For a small reproduction of this work, see Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 149.

<sup>62</sup> Certainly Teruo does. As for Banka, I hope to find in future more examples of his depiction of fallen women.

<sup>63</sup> Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 117.

of such a subject by a modern Nihonga artist. Deranged Woman by Tokuoka Shinsen, ca. 1919, has been discussed in another context already. Ikeda Yoson 池田遼部 (1895-), painted Aftermath of a Calamity (Saika no ato 災禍の跡) (Figure 126), in 1924, recording his soul-shaking impression of the aftermath of the great earthquake which devastated the Tokyo area in 1923. In all these paintings mentioned above, the artists expand their horizon to include the themes of human tragedy, which were traditionally shunned by most Japanese artists.

Even in dealing with a familiar theme such as a courtesan, some Taisho artists manifests in their manner of representation a strongly humanistic attitude. One of the artists inspired by Teruo's work was Kainosho Tadaoto.<sup>64</sup> Comb (Yokogushi 横櫛) (Figure 127) by Tadaoto, dated 1918, represents a courtesan, a traditional subject in ukiyo-e. But Tadaoto's representation is striking in its rejection of idealization: this is not an icon for feminine beauty but an image of a real human being offered for sale. Her very ordinary, individualized face is realistically shown: thickly applied white powder on her face makes the whites of her eyes look yellowish and her real skin color is visible along the hairline of her forehead. Rather than the sense of beauty, the figure emanates an unhealthy feeling of sensuality. The realism of her face is enhanced by the gaudy, stylized faces of kabuki actors which adorn her undergarment. She has just opened the blue outer garment to expose this flashy design to entertain the eyes of her client. The woman stares at the viewer, disrupting the voyeuristic relationship between the figure and the spectator customary in the traditional depiction of courtesan. Though

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

the painter may not have meant it as such, it is tempting to read this painting as a comment on exploitation of women.

Even among the artists of the older generation, works seemingly stimulated by the social awareness appeared. Takeuchi Seiho painted an image of a woman worker in Laborer (Hikasegi 日稼 ) (Figure 128) in 1917. Going Home in the Evening (Yusari 夕至 ) (Figure 129), 1918, by Kikuchi Keigetsu, represented two women from Ohara looking tired and melancholic after a day's work. Difficulty in Traveling (Koronan 行路難) (Figure 130) by Konoshima Okoku, dated 1922, dealt with the plight of the displaced family. These paintings collectively demonstrate the degree to which the spirit of humanism permeated and affected the Kyoto Nihonga world.

Finally, one must also note the contribution made by the Association of Creative National Painting established in Kyoto in 1918 in a direct challenge to what seemed to them the anachronistic conservatism of the salon. More than any other organization at the time, the group encouraged the artists to create modern painting based on individualism and subjectivity, as clearly expressed in their declaration statement:

Art is to be born. It is not something formulated by an institution. Preserved in the depth of one's soul, it demonstrates the truth of humanity. Concealed in the core of the senses, it brings forth the flow of life. . . . We establish the Association of Creative National Painting . . . in order to contribute to the development of Nihonga.

The life of an art work is the individual creativity. We jointly exhibit our works through this organization but it by no means imposes rules or limits on individual artists with respect to the techniques and themes selected by them . . . . We declare the freedom of expression as the lifeline of the artistic activity.

To cultivate our individuality, we rely on the immortal spirituality; to enrich eternity, we depend on the unlimited flow of individuality. . . . We respect objectivity in pursuing the reality of an object if it is based upon the guidance of one's senses. However, we deny such callous realism in which a painter only copies the external phenomenon of the object without demonstrating his deep experience within. We emphasize objectivity based upon one's impression and honest expression based upon one's inner experience.<sup>65</sup>

From its inception, the group was united by the spirit of freedom rather than stylistic consensus allowing a diversity of expressions. Nonagase Banka, one of the Humanists, was its original member. The fact that among the fifteen pieces selected from the 381 entires for their first exhibit in 1918 were Train Station by Hisako, Comb by Tadaoto, and Criminal by Koka, demonstrate their earnestness to promote truly individualistic, anti-traditional expressions. In fact, in their effort to embrace unique, unconventional style of paintings, they opened up a new venue for humanity-oriented artists, whose forerunners such as Hata Teruo and Nonagase Banka - in particular the former - had remained virtually isolated from the art organizations of both official and private nature. The Association of Creative National Painting gave a political impetus to steer toward the mainstream - at least in Kyoto - the paintings with ideological and social message.

The two artists who carried the tradition of the late Meiji Humanists in the field of female subjects were Kainosho Tadaoto and Kajiwara Hisako. Tadaoto's Courtesan Kisaragi (Kisaragi dayu 如月太夫 ) (Figure 131), dated 1926, echoes the message projected by his earlier

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<sup>65</sup> The entire declaration, written by Tsuchida Kyoson, Bakusen's brother, is published in Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, pp. 362-363.

work, Comb (Figure 127). It is a portrait of a real courtesan who worked in the gay quarters of Shimabara in Kyoto during the Taisho period.<sup>66</sup> Thoroughly passive and belittled by the pompous costume and hair adornments, she seems to hold within the irrepressible feeling of sadness and resignation. It is a beautiful visual image achieved with delicate, sensitive color scheme, yet psychologically unsettling because of the fragility and frailty of the figure. In its poignant beauty, the painting seems to capture the truthful image of a woman dehumanized as a commodity for sexual desire. At other times, however, Tadaoto's message is equivocal as exemplified by the strange imagery of Dancing (Mau 舞) (Figure 132), 1924. We are not certain whether to interpret this dancer as an enchantress or someone symbolic of the sordid side of the entertainment business. At least, his paintings seem to confront us with one facet of the human truth as he saw, that is the human existence as the entity of flesh.<sup>67</sup> Specifically, his paintings reveal his fascination with the mystery of female sexuality through the images of women who seem imprisoned by it.

On the other hand, Kajiwara Hisako remained more direct and straightforward in her humanistic stand. She carried on single-handedly among women painters Teruo's legacy to depict "the dreary social condition of fallen women." Not limiting her subjects to prostitutes, Hisako consistently turned her sympathetic eyes to the wide variety of

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<sup>66</sup> Baba Kyoko, Meisakusen II, Gendai Nihon bijinga zenshu, vol. 10, (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1979), p. 106.

<sup>67</sup> Kurita, "Kitanai e dewa ikanaoka: Kainosho Tadaoto no eiko," Geijutsu shincho 35, no. 8 (August 1984) p. 82.

working women at the bottom sector of the society during the Taisho period. She wrote in 1920:

Only when I completely let myself go, my painting becomes truthful. . . . I only face the real world. . . . I want to depict those women who bloom only in darkness.<sup>68</sup>

There is no question that self-awareness as woman led Hisako to embrace the real lives of downtrodden women in her painting. At the same time, Hisako was profoundly influenced by Teruo's work as the latter was one of her revered artists.<sup>69</sup>

During the latter half of the Taisho period following her Train Station, Hisako continued to work with the themes of working women. Her subjects were never well-educated, modern "professional women." Rather, Hisako consistently sought her heroines among those with less fortunate and less glorious life-style who existed in the shadowed part of the society. Old Clothes Fair (Figure 64), 1920, represents a middle-aged woman who earns living by selling used kimono on the street. Second-hand objects carry strong negativism in Japan as things dirtied by others. Those who purchase them are compelled to do so by severe poverty. And those who deal in such a trade as this woman are the lowest of the poor. Her existence is as precarious as that of the vagrant waitress in Train Station.

Many women Hisako depicts lead rootless life without security and comfort of home and family. Even in the realm of the theater, women Hisako chooses to depict are those deprived of potential for fame and

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<sup>68</sup> Kajiwara Hisako, "Hitorigoto" from "Gendai joryu gaka ikkagon," Geien 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 32.

<sup>69</sup> Kanzaki Kenichi, "Nanakusakai hakkai shukugen sonota," Toshi to geijutsu, no. 230 (May 1933), p. 30.

riches. The actress in Dressing Room of a Traveling Troupe (Figure 65), 1921, studies her lines in the depressingly cluttered backstage. The space is suffocatingly filled with objects both for the stage and for everyday life such as wigs, umbrella, suitcase, etc. Dressed in an undergarment and leaning against what appears to be stacked luggages, her existence is belittled as if one of the objects in the room. As described as "successful representation of the face of an actress hardened from living a fast life,"<sup>70</sup> Hisako's intention is not to glorify falsely but to convey the true condition of such a working woman.

Women in Hisako's paintings are often strongly individualized. Young Woman Singer (Figure 67), 1925, represents a singer resting or waiting for her turn in the dressing room. A candle, musics, shamisen, and podium fill the room. Women singers such as her were once popular during the Meiji period. Dressed in a flashy costume and wearing a prominent hair ornament, they sang aloud stretching and coiling their bodies at the climax. At the sight of their hair falling on their faces and hair accessories flying in the air, men listeners found strange eroticism in them and were sexually aroused.<sup>71</sup> Hisako's depiction of a young singer, however, is remote from such a stage image. Her representation is unidealized and direct capturing the real face of the singer only shown in her private moments. By representing the singer with clearly individualized features which convey melancholy and pathos, Hisako demonstrates her intention to reveal the human quality of the woman.

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<sup>70</sup> Ogawa Jihei, "Nihonga o shikkei (Mangaka no mita Teiten)", Chuo bijutsu 7, no. 11 (November 1921): 123.

<sup>71</sup> Kaburaki Kiyokata, ed., Gendai sakka bijinga zenshu: Nihonga-hen, chukan (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1932), no. 76.

The geisha Hisako depicts are anonymous women of the lowest bracket in the entertainment business. The subject represented in Woman of the Yamashiro Hot Spring (Yamashiro Onsen no onna 山城温泉女) (Figure 133), ca. 1923, is a young geisha of a resort town, who reveals through her askew expression and defensive posture a street-wise, tough personality. Devoid of refinement and elegance, she stares at the viewer challengingly. Equally, Night of Omizutori (Figure 66), 1924, represents a "country geisha" who has come from a small town to Nara for the famous winter ceremony at the Todaiji Temple.<sup>72</sup> Dressed in "a muddy purple coat and a black velour shawl,"<sup>73</sup> she sits pensively in a tea house smoking a long pipe. A tall lamp illuminates the room from the corner but the figure is represented against the light, enhancing the melancholic, brooding mood. It is not a glorified image of a geisha as embodiment of feminine beauty but a truthful representation of a real woman withdrawn to her inner thoughts on a cold winter night.

Hisako's woman can be ruthlessly plain and homely in physical appearance. Archery Game Room (Figure 68), 1926, depicts a woman attendant seated with an arrow in her hand. Obvious lack of beauty has relegated her to the lowest in the hierarchy of entertainment business. Not bound by the old standard of feminine representation, Hisako neither idolizes nor idealizes. She presents women as human individuals and not as bijin. Hisako's complete disengagement from the traditional notion of feminine beauty is also suggested by a report that in 1922, Hisako

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 57.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

produced an image of "old geisha" (rogi) of the Gion entertainment district to send to the salon.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the works mentioned above, Hisako is known to have painted a work titled At a Station (Ekinite), around 1921, a representation of two prostitutes suffering from severe trachoma,<sup>75</sup> contagious eye disease which is characterized by inflammation of the inner eyelids. Suggestive of the unwholesome life-style of the prostitutes whose bodies decay in an unhygienic living condition, one can only imagine the magnitude of impact such a painting must have had upon the viewer. Many of Hisako's Taisho-period works have become lost and they are available - if available at all - only in small black and white reproductions. Nevertheless they collectively demonstrate Hisako's deep commitment to depict the "women who only bloom in darkness." Hisako's oeuvre of the Taisho period signify not only her rebellion against the tradition of bijinga in which physical beauty is accepted as a salient feature of femininity but her deep concerns for the plight of the dispossessed women.

The uniqueness of Hisako's paintings did not go unnoticed:

Not satisfied with doll-like depiction of women, the painter often chooses subjects among the women of the brothel or those who lead unfortunate life. . . . Her paintings which represent the [real] life of woman should exert a positive influence on other women painters.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Kyoto Nichinichi Shinbun, 2 October 1922. It is not certain whether she actually sent the work to the salon, although another article suggests that "a painting of an old geisha, probably of the Gion" by Hisako was rejected at the salon during the Taisho period. See Aizaka Gesshi, "Moderu no shi," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 9 (September 1924): 32.

<sup>75</sup> From Mrs. Goda Toyoko, on December 13, 1986.

<sup>76</sup> Shogyodon Taigyoro Shujin, "Efude motsu onna: Teiten shuppin o mae ni seru Kyoto gadan no keishu sakka," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 9 (September 1924): 51.

Hisako's paintings were described as the work of "different mood and style from the rest"<sup>77</sup> (Night of Omizutori) and as expressive of "decadent"<sup>78</sup> feeling and taste (Dressing Room of a Traveling Troupe), or criticized as an example of "vulgar realism."<sup>79</sup> The last comment will be examined in the following section in the context of Hisako's unorthodox style.

Old Clothes Fair and Woman of the Yamashiro Hot Spring:  
Rejection of the Traditional Nihonga Style

Most of Hisako's works from the later half of the Taisho period have become lost.<sup>80</sup> Under such circumstances, Old Clothes Fair (Figure 64), already discussed, is a valuable example. A woman who sells second-hand kimono sits on steps where she has set up her temporary display of merchandise. Her unelegant physical appearance mirrors her low-class life-style. Working outdoors, her complexion has darkened as if a construction laborer. Leading an impoverished life, she has no time to be concerned with tidying her hair. Hers is a strange face, not pretty in a conventional sense, but it is a face of a real woman toughened by the life on street. Shading applied to her face is not particularly successful in achieving the sense of volume, but it imbues the figure with peculiar, expressive quality. Her posture is blatantly unfeminine with arms exposed from her kimono sleeves and one leg folded under the other. In

<sup>77</sup> "Teiten o miru," Daimai bijutsu 4 no. 1 (January 1925): 42.

<sup>78</sup> Ishikawa Saisaburo, "Teiten Nihonga no shokeiko to sono kisu," Chuo bijutsu 7, no. 11 (November 1921): 37; and Ogawa, "Nihonga o shikkei," p. 123.

<sup>79</sup> Ishii Hakutei, "Teiten no Nihonga," Chuo bijutsu 11, no. 11 (November 1925): 89.

<sup>80</sup> It has been presumed that they were burned during World War II.

her hands she holds a white kimono waiting for someone to make an offer. In the back numerous garments are hung in cluster.

Unconventional subject is represented by means of anti-traditional technique. Hisako rejects the beauty of pristine line so important in the tradition of Nihonga. Awkward, choppy lines which describe the folds and wrinkles of the figure's kimono strictly derive from observation and are stripped of refinement. In their lack of grace, they echo the vulgarity of the figure. Furthermore, Hisako shows no concern for leaving empty space to achieve poetic resonance as typically seen in traditional Japanese painting. The space is oppressively shallow and packed with the figure and objects as if symbolic of repressed life of this woman. Equally, Hisako rejects the beauty of color possible in the Nihonga media. The colors in Old Clothes Fair are muddy and murky: they fuse the figure and the surrounding into one somber mass as if to symbolize the predicament of the woman who cannot escape from the dreary condition of life.

More than fifty years later, Hisako reminisced about this work:

This was my first piece that I submitted to the [national] exhibit. Still very much a novice in painting, I only painted what I wanted to paint. This painting was based on an actual person I saw.

I had no intention of painting a pretty woman in a traditional bijinga style. I wanted to break away from it. There was a morning fair at a temple near my house. I saw this middle-aged woman selling old clothes and based this image on her. I was attracted to the life of such a woman, particularly to the sorrow and sadness in it. This painting I finished very quickly, still unsure of the basic techniques of Nihonga painting.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Kajiwara Hisako, "Omoide no arubamu," Nihon bijutsu, no. 107 (1974).

What the painter described as the "unsureness of the basic technique of Nihonga painting" half a century later was in fact a conscious rebellion against the aestheticism inherent in the tradition of Nihonga. In Train Station, Hisako still adheres to the orthodox technique of Nihonga respecting the clarity of line and color. However, in Old Clothes Fair, two years later, she adopts more realistic method as evidenced in her application of shading to the face of the figure and in her use of broken lines on the garment so thoroughly allied to descriptive goal. In this, Hisako was clearly influenced by the technique of oil painting.

When one examines Woman of the Yamashiro Hot Spring (Figure 133), Hisako's realist style is much more accomplished and effective. It represents a young country geisha, named Katsumi, who used to model for Hisako.<sup>82</sup> A young woman dressed in kimono is seated on what appears to be a cushion holding a long smoking pipe in her hand. In her back is a multipanel screen painted with the motif of Chinese women in landscape. She is a heavy-set woman with a short neck and thick wrists. Through her ample hair and voluptuous physique, she emanates a peculiar sense of sexual appeal. With her head slightly tilted forward, she stares at the viewer from the side of her eyes. It is a facial expression which conveys mistrust, defiance, and self-defense. Clearly she is someone who has known plenty of betrayals and broken promises.

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<sup>82</sup> This painting is a relatively recent discovery. The woman represented, I believe, is "Katsumi" discussed in Aizaka, "Moderu no shi," p. 33; and Kajiwara Hisako, "Katsumi no shamisen," Daimai bijutsu 3, no. 10 (October 1924): 43. The painting is dated ca. 1921 in Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, Kyoto no Nihonga, 1910-1930: Taisha no kokoro kakushin to sozo, no. 127, but I believe it is at least several years later judging from the style.

Nothing can be more distant from Katsumi's life than the elegant life-style symbolized by the Chinese images on the screen behind her.

In order to convey the texture of her life and personality, Hisako utilizes Nihonga media both in realistic and expressive manner. By describing the folds and creases of the figure's garment in detail through a combination of linear and shading technique, Hisako successfully conveys the volume of the garment and the sense of three-dimensional form underneath it. The lines are not imbued with independent quality of beauty but are given purely descriptive function to record what Hisako observes. The figure's face, neck, and hands are also rendered with a combination of line and shading to achieve a sense of roundness. In particular, Hisako attempts to represent the complex structure of human face by modeling through a combination of strong shading and highlighting with *gofun*. It does not create a "pretty" face but imbues the figure with a strong, lifelike quality. The free brushwork seen in the description of the woman's hair enhances a sense of passion about the figure without losing its descriptive function. The painting demonstrates more developed technical facility than Old Clothes Fair.

What invests this image, furthermore, with a haunting quality is the loose application of color in broad brush strokes visible around the contour of her head, body, and the pipe. The streak of pale white echoes the contour of the back of the figure and the back side of her head, while pale gold is applied along the contour of her chin, right shoulder, and hand, imbuing the figure with restless, unsettling feeling. Its overall somber color scheme based on brown and beige; red, black, and gold visible in the figure's hair, clothes, cushion, and the pipe takes on a

strongly expressive quality. The figure is cut off by the frame in all four sides and the space is compressed with the screen acting as a wall immediately behind the figure. The image of Katsumi enclosed in this oppressive pictorial space symbolizes the wretched quality of her life from which she cannot easily flee. Katsumi committed a double suicide with her lover at the hot spring in the spring of 1924.<sup>83</sup> The tragic life of this young woman who succumbed to her passion is foretellingly encapsulated in this powerful image achieved by Hisako.

Unlike Shoen's elegant upper-class women or Shoha's quiet middle-class wives, Hisako's women are those who pitted their bodies against the society to survive. In Shoen's paintings, the orthodox Nihonga technique based on beauty of flawless brush line and unadulterated sense of color is an essential component of her images of graceful and refined women. It is a reflection of Shoen's moral commitment to what she believed painting should be. In contrast, Hisako rejects such orthodoxy and resorts to realistic style as if working with oil medium in order to convey most effectively the truth about the lives of her subjects. In her assimilation of yoga-derived technique, Hisako follows the tradition of unorthodoxy established earlier by artists such as Hata Teruo and Nonagase Banka. Hisako was not alone in this. Influence of the realistic style of yoga was ubiquitous in the Nihonga world during the later half of the Taisho period, during which young painters - particularly in Kyoto - began to concentrate on themes which had been neglected in Nihonga in the past. Tokuoka Shinsen in Deranged Woman, ca. 1919, (Figure 18) almost entirely abandons the linear definition and builds up his image with loose

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<sup>83</sup> Hisako, "Katsumi no shamisen," p. 43.

brushwork as if in oil. Kainosho Tadaoto, achieves a realistic image based on extensive application of chiaroscuro in his Female Nude of 1920 (Figure 107), while in Dancing, 1924 (Figure 132), he utilizes a freer technique leaving some areas undefined for an expressive effect. The use of the realist style was particularly widespread among the young artists who participated in the Association of Creative National Painting.<sup>84</sup> The general trend to explore unorthodox themes through the realist means was denounced as "vulgar realism" ("aku shajitsu") by critics, who saw in it a total rejection of the aesthetic principle fundamental to Nihonga as a continuation of the native tradition. The phenomenon and significance of "vulgar realism" in the context of Taisho-period Nihonga is an important issue which merits a serious study in future.

It is certain that Hisako was among the most radical Taisho artists who challenged the traditional value through their "vulgar realism" to represent in their paintings what they believed was the urgent truth about humanity. No longer bound by the notion of absolute truth or beauty, they painted all facets of human condition including misery and ugliness. In order to present their individualistic perception of reality most convincingly, they abandoned the orthodox Nihonga style and relied on the realistic style of oil painting. Moreover, Hisako's Taisho-period oeuvre, exemplified by Old Clothes Fair and Woman of the Yamashiro Hot Spring, manifestly deviate from the notion of the "feminine style" prevalent at that time. Reflecting the traditional association of femininity

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<sup>84</sup> See Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, pp. 302-305; Ozaki Masaaki, "Kokuga Sosaku Kyokai no sakkatachi," in Shajitsu no keifu II: Taisho-ki no saimitsu byosha, ed. Tokyo Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan (Tokyo: Tokyo Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan, 1986), pp. 176-179.

with beauty and gentleness, the feminine style was defined as expressive of "modest, reserved, tender, and delicate" feelings.<sup>85</sup> None of these adjectives can adequately describe Hisako's powerful images, refuting the assumption of the feminine style with which the critics evaluated and automatically circumscribed art created by women. Thus, during the Taisho period, Hisako was one of the most outspoken painters, as demonstrated by her unfailing commitment to present the low-class subjects; she was also a truly unique woman painter in her refusal to conform to the external expectation of feminine mode of art.

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted from Sakakida Emiko, "Nihon kindai josei yōgaka ni yoru jigazo o megutte," in *Jōseigaka: Onna no shiki o utau*, ed. Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan (Tokyo: Itabashi Kuritsu Bijutsukan, 1986), p. 72.

## Conclusion

During the Taisho period, the modern conception of individualism and democracy challenged the supremacy of the state, and a liberal trend seemingly prevailed over conservative forces, triggering many changes within Japanese society. One noteworthy change was with regard to the role and social position of Japanese women, who had been relegated to second-class citizens during the feudalistic period. Although the conservative concept of the Onna daigaku continued to predominate, Taisho society witnessed the appearance of "professional women" who utilized the advantage of modern education to develop their careers, gradually establishing a new role for themselves beyond the traditionally prescribed domestic responsibilities. Taisho society was also enlivened by the spirited appearance of "new women," who openly defied traditional morals as the vestiges of feudalistic society and criticized the oppressive and constraining role of Japanese women as defined by the long-established patriarchal social order.

Reflecting the social tenor of the time, the images of women in art began to change. Bijinga, which traditionally represented the feminine ideal as basically constructed by the dominant male view, came to be criticized as an old-fashioned tradition out of touch with the contemporary social reality. Moreover, the modern emphasis on the individualistic view in art made it difficult to achieve the notion of universally recognizable feminine beauty, which characterized traditional bijinga. Many women artists, who specialized in female subjects, appeared during the Taisho period. Their presence, made conspicuous

by the media publicity, partly caused bijinga to achieve an unprecedented popularity. The society scrutinized their lives and art, circumscribing them from the controlling male point of view and defining "feminine style" based on the traditional notion of femininity entangled with beauty and domesticity.

The diverse images of women represented in the Taisho-period oeuvre of Shoen, Shoha, and Hisako reveal how the art of the three painters were influenced and shaped to varying extents by the dynamic social and cultural forces of the time. Their paintings, which range in style and subject from respectful orthodoxy to radicalism in the specific field of bijinga, mirror the vigorous character of the time when traditional values were contested by the modern attitude that views human life in terms of complex and variable reality rather than fixed truth.

Uemura Shoen was the earliest female artist to establish a national reputation as an accomplished painter in bijinga. While she opened the door for other women to enter the modern art world, her success in bijinga led them to concentrate on this theme as if it were the only valid field for women artists. Although Shoen made a very unorthodox decision in her personal life to become a painter and single parent, it was not a conscious rebellion on her part against the established social code. Thoroughly traditional-minded, she accepted the values of the patriarchal society without ever questioning the discriminatory and confining position it imposed on women. As if to mollify the unorthodoxy of her personal life, Shoen extolled in her work the idealized images of women, achieved by the mastery of orthodox Nihonga techniques, who embodied the precepts of the Onna daigaku. Some of her Taisho paintings, as

exemplified by Night of Lunar Eclipse (Figure 31), represent the traditional concept of femininity inseparable from physical beauty, docility, and domesticity. Her women are often characterized with impeccable moral sense and self-discipline, fully endorsing the conservative Confucian doctrine. Although dignified and proper, they lack individuality, suppress emotions, and conform to the expected social role without protesting. While Shoen resisted the representation of women as objects of erotic pleasure, she did not object to the feudalistic definition of feminine role or beauty. Yet as an artist, Shoen was not unaware of the liberal trend of the time. Yokichi (Figure 37) is her challenge to the theme of female nudity which was not fully accepted in Nihonga until the Taisho period. Shoen's other Taisho paintings, as most strikingly represented by Flame (Figure 32), depict fictional heroines in love and differ from her other works in a more open display of emotions. Those examples reveal Shoen's sensitivity to the demand of the time to be more expressive of human feelings and, at the same time, illustrate the limitation and difficulty she faced as a conservative bijinga artist.

Ito Shoha, also an accomplished artist in bijinga, was at her most original during the Taisho period. Less dogmatic than Shoen in her representations of female subjects, Shoha was more attuned to the modern trend in her decision to depict the ordinary aspects of her life with seemingly little moralizing or embellishment. Taking the themes for her paintings from her personal experiences in real life, she created the images of middle-class women, less idealized and more emotionally approachable than Shoen's bijin. Newspaper Serial (Figure 49) represents a Taisho housewife who is at the same time traditional and modern and

inadvertently captures in its mundane scene one facet of the Taisho society which gives it a particular flavor. Moreover, Shoha's two self-portraits (Figures 48 and 51), one more generalized and the other more revealing, demonstrate the budding sense of self-awareness in her willingness to choose and investigate herself as a subject of her painting. Shoha was married to a fellow painter and was a mother of three daughters. Her considerable popularity as a woman artist during the Taisho period derived not only from the appealing and refreshing images of her paintings but also from the fact that she dutifully carried on her family responsibilities. Taisho society, which was marked by the tenacity of conservative thought beneath the tide of liberalism, approved Shoha as an ideal modern woman who managed her professional career without violating the teaching of the Onna daigaku.

Kajiwara Hisako, much younger than the other two artists was by far the most radical in her outlook on life and art during the Taisho period. She was a "new woman" in the fact that she intentionally shunned the marriage as a hindrance to her artistic career. In her paintings, Hisako not only rejected the conservative concept of femininity epitomized by Shoen's bijin but thoroughly disengaged herself from the tradition of bijinga in which women were often represented as doll-like objects of beauty. On one hand, her works such as a self-portrait (Figure 62) and the two works titled Woman (Figures 113 and 114) represent new images of women who are intellectually competent and emotionally complex individuals. On the other hand, Hisako's images of working-class women, as exemplified by Old Clothes Fair (Figure 64), demonstrate her social awareness as well as her determination to seek beauty in real

human terms rather than in ideals. They illustrate the artist's refusal to transform her subjects into falsified images through idealization and reveal her respect and sympathy towards her subjects as unique human individuals. In order to represent most tellingly what she believed was the truth, Hisako adopted the realistic style of oil painting, incurring the criticism that her art was "vulgar" both in subject and style. Because Hisako clearly belonged to the most outspoken sector of the Kyoto Nihonga world during the Taisho period, one cannot help but ponder about the dramatic transformation which occurred in her art during the following years.

What happens in Nihonga immediately after the Taisho period is an important issue which requires a far more rigorous investigation than possible here. It is often pointed out that the democratic mood of the Taisho-period ended with the great Kanto earthquake of 1923 which destroyed the Tokyo area, killing 90,000 people. The earthquake hurt the already ailing Japanese economy and many regarded it as "a form of punishment for excessive individualism"<sup>1</sup> of the preceding years. As if to signal the final dissipation of the Taisho liberalism in art, the Association of Creative National Painting, which invigorated the Kyoto Nihonga world by promoting individualism and freedom of expression since its inception in 1918, ceased its activity in 1928. Among the many reasons for the termination of the group was a financial one. Their exhibitions had been supported by wealthy patrons who amassed riches during the post-World War I economic boom, but the group could no longer find the financial

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 231.

resources to continue their activities at the beginning of the Showa period.

During the 1930s, the rise of the military-backed government, which ultimately led to the Japanese involvement in World War II, deeply influenced the cultural and artistic ambience of the time. The government stepped up its effort to control the freedom of thought and expression by expanding the use of the Peace Preservation Law, which had been originally promulgated in 1925 to control leftist political activities. Although the main targets were still communists, leftist groups, and labor movements, the government repressed cultural and artistic organizations considered detrimental to the goal of national unity and harmony. Thus, the Japanese Proletarian Cultural Federation was suppressed in 1932, four hundred of whose members were arrested within the period of six months.<sup>2</sup> In 1934, the government banned The League of Japanese Proletarian Artists. In 1935, they began to reorganize the official art salon for the goal of establishing in the art world total national unity in order to face the "rapidly developing condition of the time,"<sup>3</sup> in other words, anticipation of national involvement in war.

What prevailed in the Nihonga field during this time was "neo-classicism" (shin-kotenshugi), which had appeared first among the Tokyo artists during the Taisho period. It can be described in general as a refined style of Nihonga with an emphasis on pristine line and color,

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Kawakita Michiaki and Takashina Shuji, *Kindai Nihon kaigashi* (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1978), p. 316. From the speech given by the Minister of Education at that time.

reflecting the native sensitivity to design. Kawakita Michiaki defines it as a modern expression based on the individualistic interpretation of all the native traditions of the past, including not only yamato-e but also kanga (Chinese-style Japanese painting), Rimpa school, and bunjinga (literati-style painting).<sup>4</sup> What is meant by neo-classicism in a more specific and concrete visual term must be clarified by examining the works of many individual artists. It is certain, however, that as a general phenomenon dominant during the early Showa period, neo-classicism was inseparable from the conservative climate of the time during which the individualism of the Taisho period was criticized as self-indulgent and the government discouraged the citizens from excessively identifying with Western culture.

With respect to the three women painters discussed in this dissertation, Shoha's assimilation of yamato-e tradition as evidenced in Hallway, 1925, Court Ladies and Autumn Grasses, 1928, and Lady Autumn Lover, 1929 (Figures 56, 57, 58), demonstrates her keen sensitivity to the changing tenor of the time. Furthermore, Shoen's regaining of self-confidence during the late 1920s and early 1930s was not possible without the political and social mood of the period, which was increasingly conducive to the anti-Western, conservative values in art. Finally the transformation which occurred in Hisako's art during the 1930s, from unorthodoxy to orthodoxy, must be also viewed as a response to the social and political pressure to produce art which expressed the "uncorrupted national spirit." For example, both Duet

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<sup>4</sup> Kawakita Michiaki, Kindai no Nihonga, Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu, vol. 26 (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1972), p. 212.

(Figure 74), dated 1937, and Quietude (Figure 75), 1938, which exemplify the antithesis of Hisako's Taisho-period painting style, can be described as "neo-classicistic" in the polished imagery based on an austere, orderly composition and the use of smooth, refined line. These two works both in style and subject fully comply to the government policy, shortly before Japan's full-scale involvement in the war, to express "Japaneseness" or "Japanese spirit" through art. Moreover, the serenity of the young women who perform traditional music and art is symbolic of the spiritual concentration and harmony expected of the Japanese citizens in order to achieve national unity in a wartime emergency.

It is significant that among the many painters who produced paintings with social awareness, some, like Hisako, abandoned their humanist concerns soon after the Taisho period, while others simply ceased to be artists.<sup>5</sup> Ikeda Yoson, who painted Aftermath of a Calamity (Figure 126), in 1924, also turned away from such a theme within several years. Yoson reminisced that his decision was as result of the following words addressed to him by his teacher, Takeuchi Seiho:

You seem to think only tragic and dark themes can qualify for great and serious art. That is a big mistake. Even when you depict one blossom of camelia, you should be able to create great art.<sup>6</sup>

The disappearance of social messages in Nihonga followed by the prevalence of neo-classicism may be described as the victory of Japanese

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<sup>5</sup> Most young artists who made their debut through the exhibitions of the Association of Creative National Painting completely disappeared from the art world after its termination. See Tanaka Hisao, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu (Tokyo: Bijutsu Koronsha, 1983), pp. 317-322.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, p. 322. Originally published in Hori Shozo, ed., Ikeda Yoson-shi no kitigaki essei (Kyoto: Kyoto Shoin, 1982), pp. 58-59.

native allegiance to beauty over modern humanist sentiment.<sup>7</sup> And, neo-classicism may be rightly regarded by some as the culminating point in modern Nihonga, as maturation of modernization process which Nihonga underwent during the Meiji and Taisho periods.<sup>8</sup> However, precisely because of the unifying direction which seems to have followed, the multifarious character of Taisho-period Nihonga, as exemplified in the field of bijinga and women subjects by the paintings of Shoen, Shoha, Hisako, and others, becomes particularly satisfying. It is a testimony to the richness of the period, when the affairs of human life, even those which are "tragic and dark," moved the artists just as deeply as the beauty of flowers.

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<sup>7</sup> In the opinion of Tanaka Hisao, Nihonga artists since then have steadily focused on beauty, to the point of stifling Nihonga tradition. Tanaka, Nihonga ryoran no kisetsu, pp. 327-340.

<sup>8</sup> Kawakita, Kindai no Nihonga, p. 210; and Uchiyama Takeo, Kyoto gadan, Genshoku gendai Nihon no bijutsu, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1978), p. 204.

## Figures



Figure 1. "Procession of a young lady who 'studies' painting."  
An illustration in *Chuo bijutsu* 2, no. 5 (May 1917): 69.



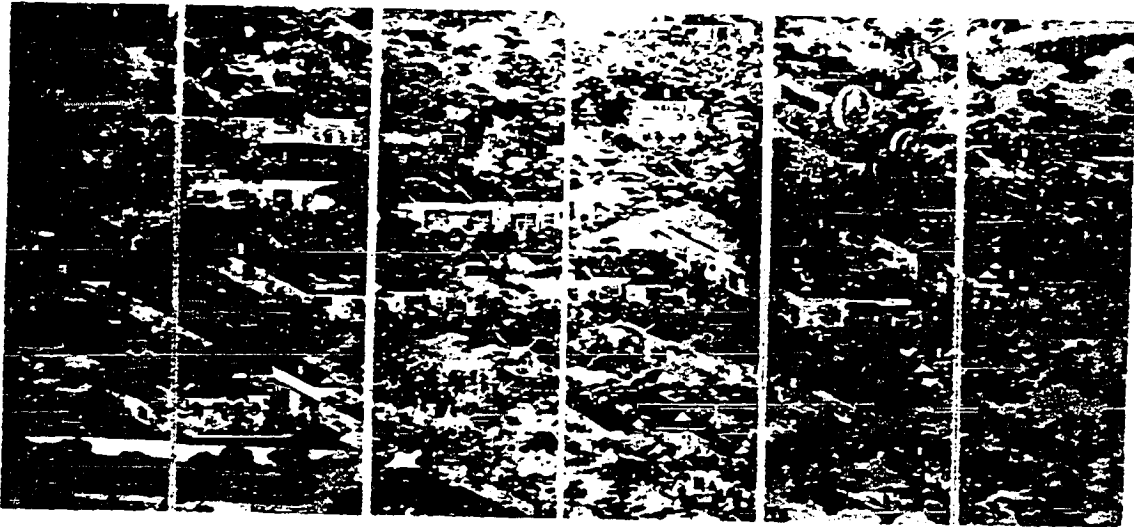


Figure 3. Anonymous. Views In and Out of Kyoto. 17th century.  
Left half, pair of six-fold screens. Ink and colors on gold.  
Each 163 x 341 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum.



Figure 4. Anonymous. Bathhouse Women. 17th century.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper. 71 x 79 cm.  
Atami Museum.

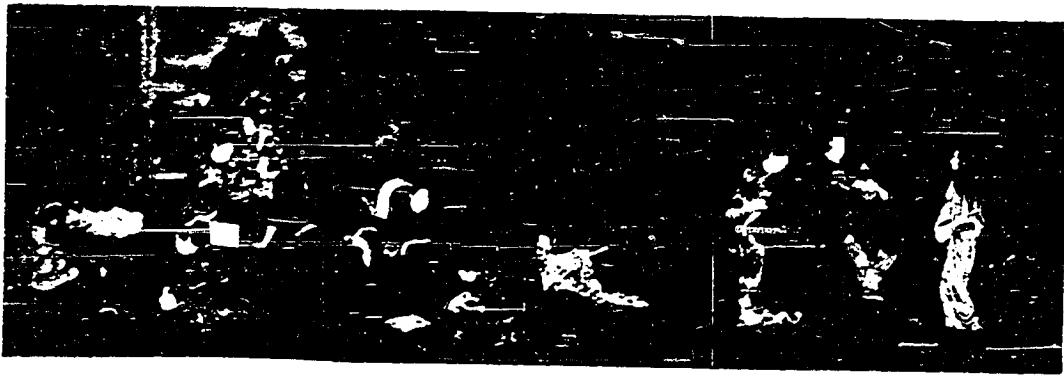


Figure 5. Anonymous. Men and Women Amusing Themselves. 17th c.  
Six panels. Ink and colors on gold.  
Kyoto National Museum.



**Figure 6. Anonymous. Beauty on Veranda. 17th century. Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper. Tokyo National Museum.**



Figure 7. Suzuki Harunobu. Lady on Veranda after Bath. 18th c.  
Full-color woodblock print. 27 x 19 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 8. Kitagawa Utamaro. Melancholy Love. 18th century.  
Full-color woodblock print. 36 x 24 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 9. Torii Kiyonaga. Going to a Picnic. 1783.  
Full-color woodblock print. 38 x 25 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 10. Maruyama Okyo. Courtesan Eguchi. 1794.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 108 x 44 cm.  
Seika-do Bunko Foundation, Tokyo.

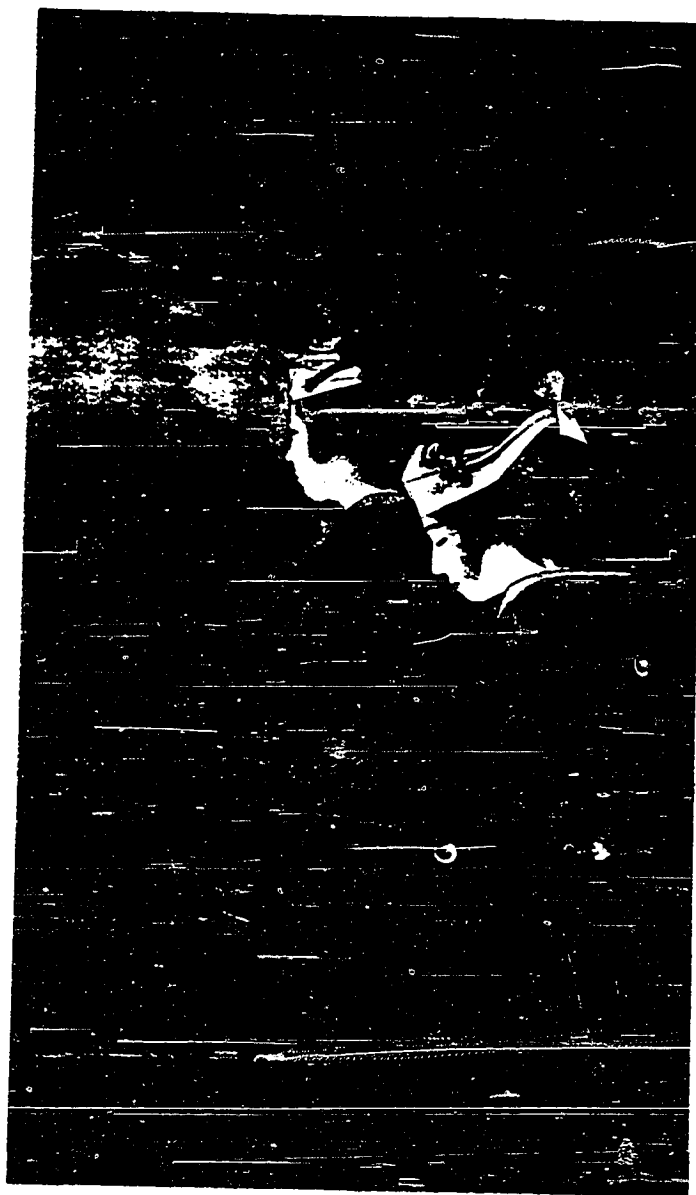


Figure 11. Uemura Shoen. Blossoming. 1899.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 176 x 101 cm.  
Ichida Company.



Figure 12. Terasaki Kogyo. Autumn Garden. 1899.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 171 x. 101 cm.  
Private collection. Figure 12. Terasaki Kogyo. Autumn Garden. 1899.



Figure 13. Kajita Hanko. Melancholy of Spring Evening. 1902.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 166 x 84 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum.



Figure 14. Kaburaki Kiyokata. Grave of Ichijo. 1902.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 129 x 71 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 15. Takehisa Yumeji. House of the Black Ship. Ca. 1920.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 130 x 51 cm.  
Private collection.

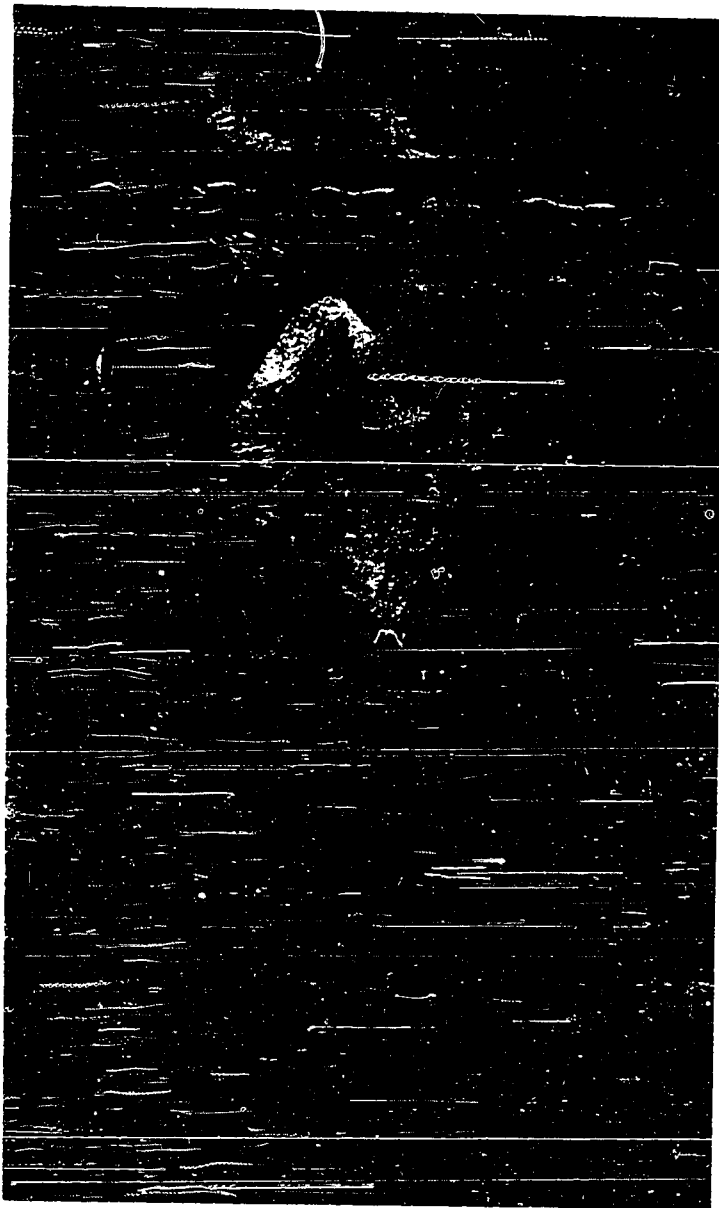


Figure 16. Yorozu Tetsugoro. Female Nude. 1912.  
Framed. Oil on canvas. 161 x 96 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 17. Nonagase Banka. Island Women. 1916.  
Hanging scroll. Colors on paper. 145 x 52 cm.  
Wakayama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 18. Tokuoka Shinsen. Deranged Woman. Ca. 1919.  
Framed. Colors on silk. 96 x 57 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 19. Hata Teruo. Prostitutes Playing Flower Cards. 1913.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 43 x 116 cm.  
Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 20. Saito Saishu. Portrait of Uemura Shoen. Ca. 1888.  
Ink and colors on paper. Private collection.



Figure 21. Uemura Shoen. Women of the Four Seasons. Ca. 1892.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 132 x 57 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 22. Uemura Shoen. Family Gathering. 1897.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk.  
Private collection.



Figure 23. Uemura Shoen. Courtesan Kiyu. 1904.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 140 x 73 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 24. Uemura Shoen. Tenpo-Period Geisha Woman. 1935.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 143 x 56 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 25. Uemura Shoen. Long Evening. 1907.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 138 x 99 cm.  
Eisei Bunko Foundation.



Figure 26. Nishikawa Sukenobu. Beauty Standing by a Clock. 18th c. Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 88 x 31 cm.



Figure 27. Uemura Shoen. Moonlight Shadow. 1908.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 174 x 100 cm.  
Eisei Bunko Foundation.



Figure 28. Uemura Shoen. *Firefly*. 1913.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 175 x 98 cm.  
Yamatane Art Museum.



Figure 29. Uemura Shoen. Preparing to Dance. 1914.  
Pair of panels. Ink and colors on silk. Each 170 x 100 cm.  
Private collection.



**Figure 30. Uemura Shoen. Flower Basket. 1915.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 208 x 128 cm.  
Private collection.**



Figure 31. Uemura Shoen. Night of Lunar Eclipse. 1916.  
Pair of two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. Each 158 x 187 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 32. Uemura Shoen. Flame. 1918.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 189 x 90 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum.



**Figure 33. Tsuchida Bakusen. Hair. 1911.**  
**Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 80 x 86 cm.**  
**Kyoto City University of Fine Arts.**

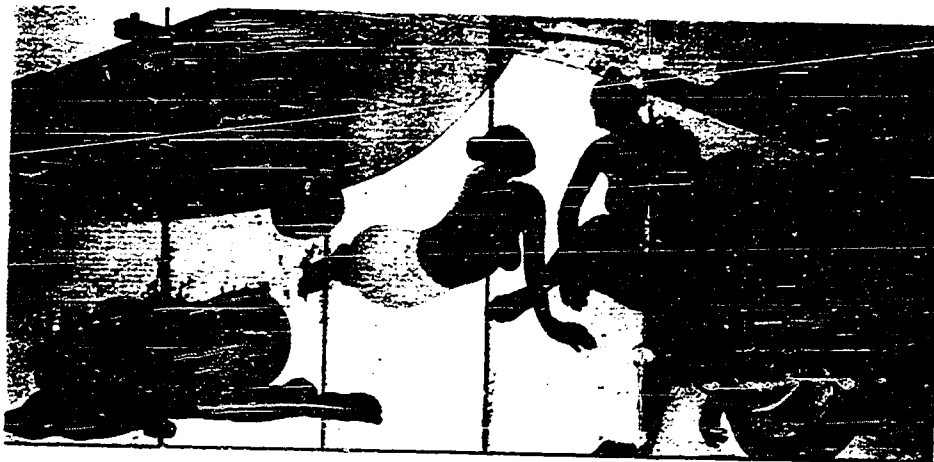


Figure 34. Tsuchida Bakusen. Women Divers. 1913.  
Pair of six-fold screens. Ink and colors on silk. Each 170 x 366 cm.  
Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art.



**Figure 35. Uemura Sho'en. Young Woman Miyuki. 1914.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 153 x 84 cm.  
Private collection.**



Figure 36. Uemura Shoen. Oman. 1915.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 116 x 42 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 37. Uemura Shoen. Yokibi. 1922.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 161 x 189 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 38. Uemura Shoen. Mother and Child. 1934.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 169 x 116 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 39. Uemura Shoen. Opening Dance. 1936.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 233 x 141 cm.  
Tokyo University of Fine Arts.

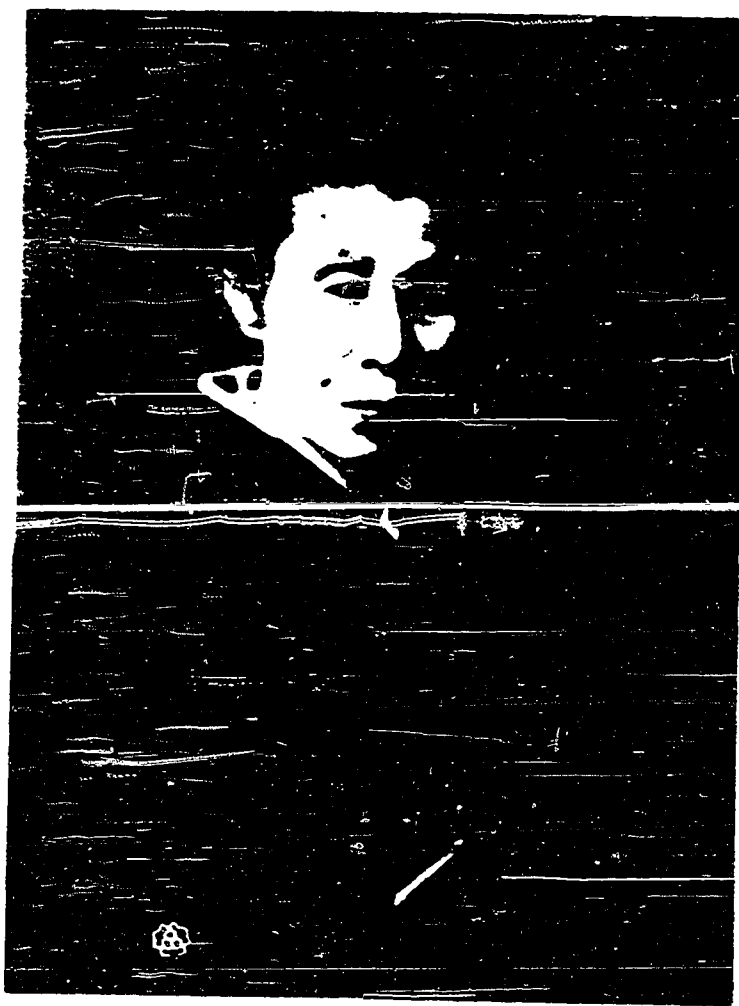


Figure 40. Photograph of Uemura Shoen. 1940s.  
From Nishinomiya-shi Otani Kinen Bijutsukan, Uemura Shoen-ten.

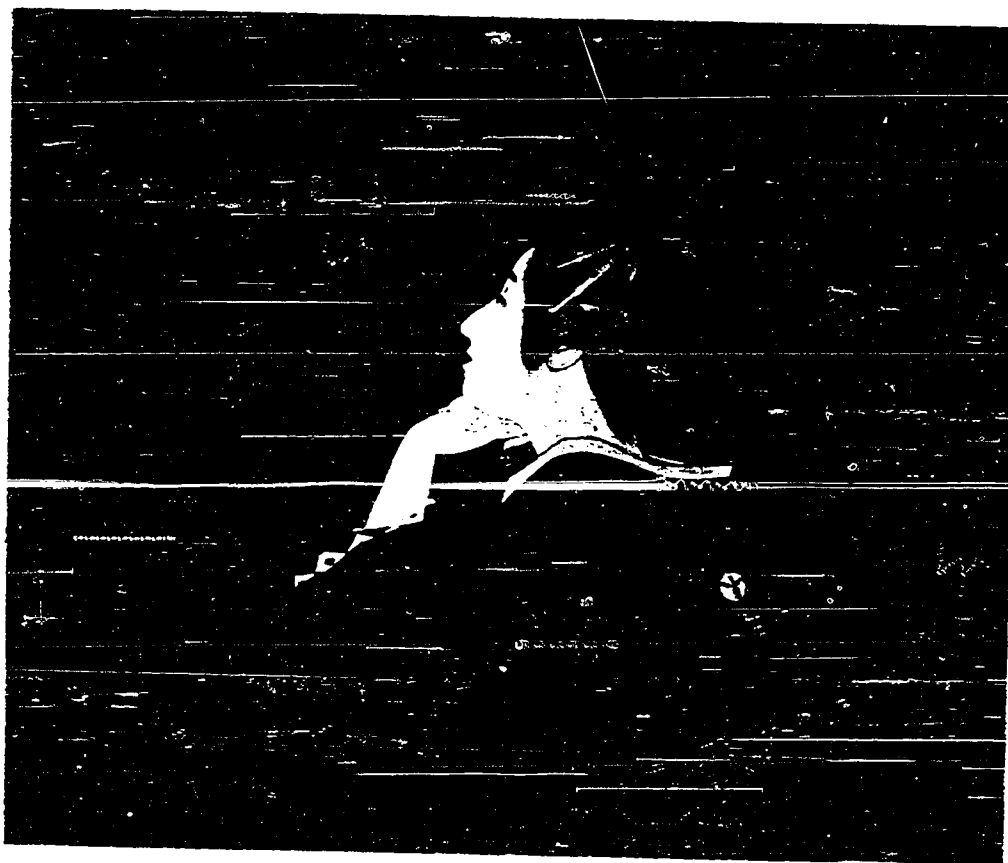


Figure 41. Uemura Shoen. Waiting For the Moon. 1944.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 71 x 86 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 42. Uemura Shoen. Snow Flakes. 1944.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 71 x 86 cm.  
Yamatane Art Museum.



Figure 43. Uemura Shoen. Dusk. 1941.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 215 x 100 cm.  
Ogin High School, Kyoto.



**Figure 44. Uemura Shoen. Late Edo. 1943.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 183 x 86 cm.  
Osaka City Art Museum.**



Figure 45. Ito Shoha. Immortal Child. Ca. 1899.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 114 x 49 cm.  
Sarutahiko Shrine, Ise.



Figure 46. Ito Shoha. Women Defending the Fortress. Ca. 1902.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 148 x 165 cm.  
Sarutahiko Shrine, Ise.



Figure 47. Ito Shoha. Escape of the Heike Clan to Dazaifu. 1906.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 65 x 174 cm.  
Sarutahiko Shrine, Ise.



Figure 48. Ito Shoha. Preparing to Paint. 1915.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. Whereabouts unknown.  
Reproduction by courtesy of Mrs. Ito Masako.



Figure 49. Ito Shoha. Newspaper Serial. 1916.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 201 x 113 cm.  
Fukutomi Taro Collection.

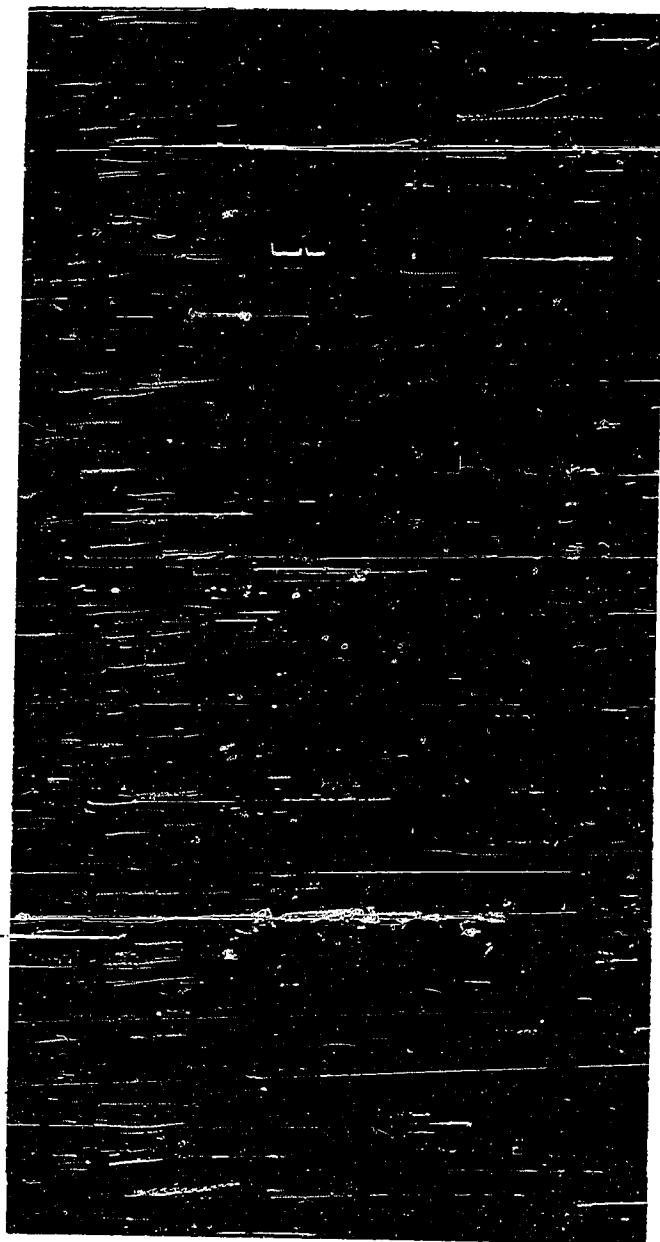


Figure 50. Ito Shoha. *Sprouts*. 1918.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 190 x 101 cm.  
Mie Prefectural Museum of Modern Art.

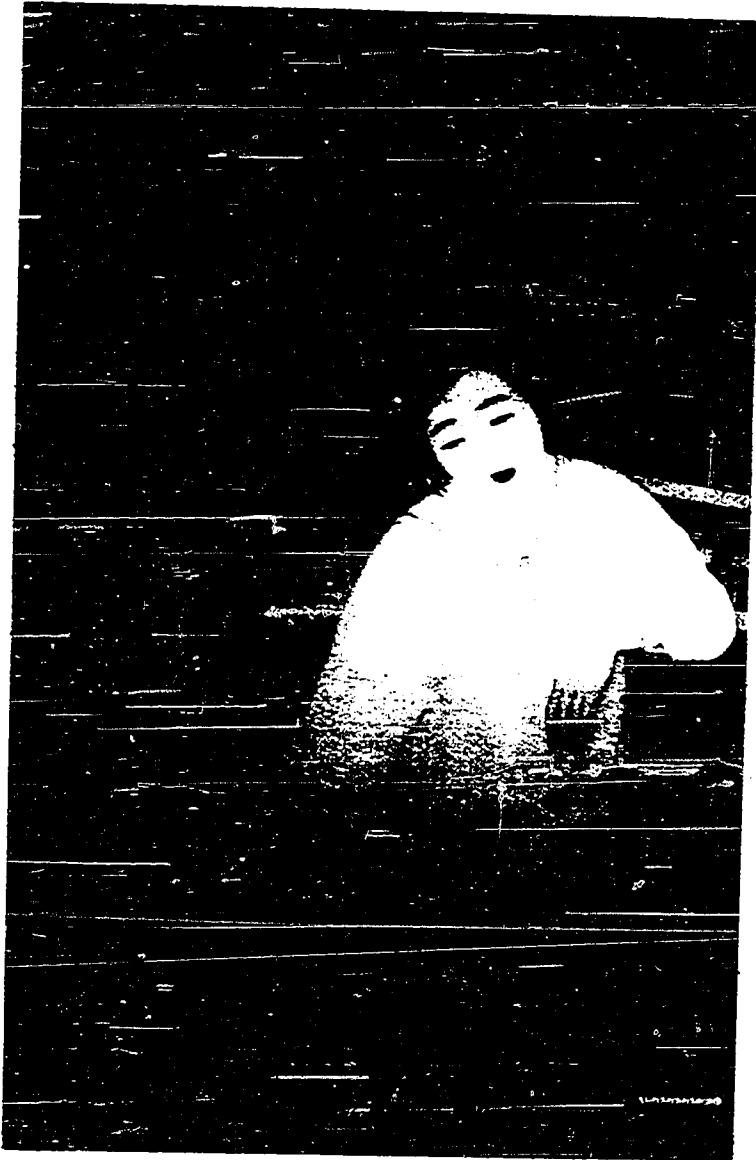


Figure 51. Ito Shoha. Summer. 1920.  
Framed. Ink and colors on paper. 136 x 88 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 52. Ito Shoha. Story of Biwa. 1921.  
Ink and colors on silk. Whereabouts unknown.  
Reproduction by courtesy of Mrs. Ito Masako.



Figure 53. Ito Shoha. Hating the Mirror. 1922.  
Ink and colors on silk. Whereabouts unknown.  
Reproduction by courtesy of Mrs. Ito Masako.



Figure 54. Ito Shoha. Milking a Goat. 1922.  
Ink and colors on silk. Whereabouts unknown.  
Reproduction by courtesy of Mrs. Ito Masako.



**Figure 55. Photograph of Ito Shoha. 1920s.  
Courtesy of Mrs. Ito Masako.**



Figure 56. Ito Shoha. Hallway. 1925.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Nittenshi Hensan linkai, Nitten, vol. 7, p. 221.



Figure 57. Ito Shoha. Court Ladies and Autumn Grasses. 1928.  
One-panel screen. Ink and colors on silk. 115 x 166 cm.  
Sarutahiko Shrine, Ise.



Figure 58. Ito Shoha. Lady Autumn Lover. 1929.  
One-panel screen. Ink and colors on silk. 159 x 181 cm.  
Sarutahiko Shrine, Ise.



Figure 59. Ito Shoha. Lady Iga. 1930.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 262 x 145 cm.  
Sarutahiko Shrine, Ise.



**Figure 60. Ito Shoha. Evening. 1932.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
Reproduction by courtesy of Mrs. Ito Masako.**



Figure 61. Ito Shoha. Temple Visit on the Thirteenth Year. 1936.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 170 x 168 cm.  
Kinoshita Art Museum.



Figure 62. Kajiwara Hisako. Woman on a Certain Day. 1916.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 174 x 69 cm.  
Private collection. Figure 62.



Figure 63. Kajiwara Hisako. Train Station in Early Evening. 1918.  
Framed. Ink and colors on paper. 189 x 83 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



**Figure 64. Kajiwara Hisako. Old Clothes Fair. 1920.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper. 130 x 88 cm.  
Private collection.**



Figure 65. Kajiwarara Hisako. Dressing Room of a Traveling Troup. 1921  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Fujita and Baba, Kajiwarara Hisako/Hirota Tazu/Kitazawa Eigetsu,  
p. 77.



Figure 66. Kajiwara Hisako. Night of Omizutori. 1924.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Kaburaki, Gendai sakka bijinga zenshu, Nihonga-hen, chukan,  
57.



Figure 67. Kajiwara Hisako. Young Woman Singer. 1925.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Kaburaki, Gendai sakka bijinga zenshu, Nihonga-hen, chukan,  
76.



Figure 68. Kajiwaru Hisako. Archery Room. 1926.  
Whereabouts unknown  
From Fujita and Baba, Kajiwaru Hisako/Hirota Tazu/Kitazawa Eigetsu,  
p. 77.



Figure 69. Photograph of Kajiwara Hisako. Ca. 1930.  
From Uchiyama, Gagyo rokuju-nen: Kajiwara Hisako-ten.



Figure 70. Hot Spring in a Mountain. 1930.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 9, p. 319.



Figure 71. Kajiwara Hisako. Rain at a Hot Spring. 1931.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 179 x 181 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 72. Kajiwara Hisako. Weaving. 1933.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 159 x 200 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 73. Kikuchi Keigetsu. Girl. 1932.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 119 x 146 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 74. Kajiwara Hisako. Duet. 1937.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 161 x 278 cm.  
Private collection.

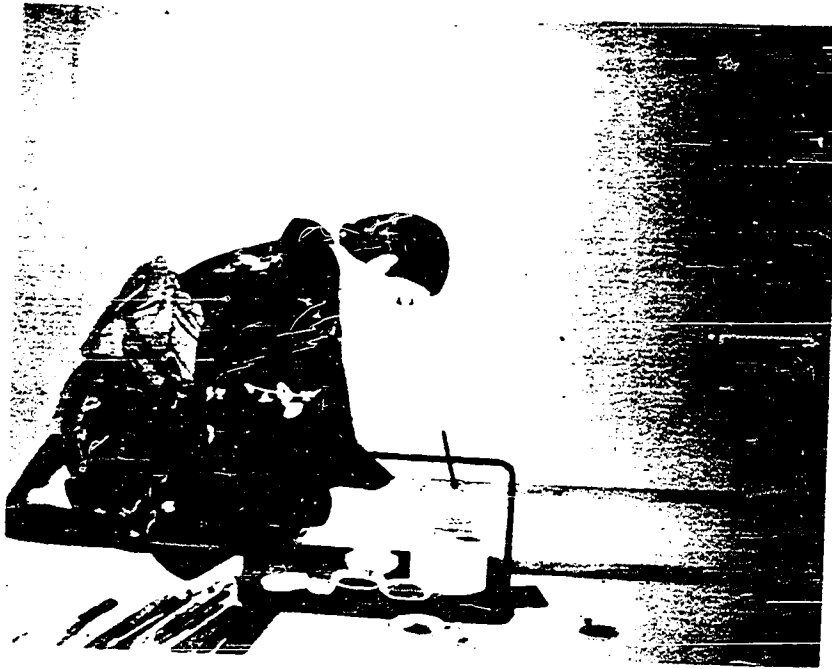


Figure 75. Kajiwara Hisako. Quietude. 1938.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 161 x 205 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 76. Kajiwara Hisako. Evening Coolness. 1947. ---  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 194 x 106 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 77. Kajiwara Hisako. Flowers. 1951.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 182 x 116 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 78. Kajiwara Hisako. Camera. 1953.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 224 x 125 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 79. Kajiwara Hisako. Dance. 1968.  
Framed. Ink and colors on paper. 164 x 100 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 80. Kajiwara Hisako. Standing Woman. 1970.  
Framed. Ink and colors on paper. 177 x 92 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 81. Kajiwarra Hisako. Shower. 1967.  
Framed. Ink and colors on paper. 183 x 109 cm.  
Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.



Figure 82. Kitagawa Utamaro. Komurasaki and Gonpachi. Ca. 1798.  
Full-color woodblock print. 33 x 23 cm.



Figure 83. Utagawa Toyohiro. Woman Hanging a Mosquito Net.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on paper. 90 x 27 cm.  
Ota Kinen Bijutsukan.

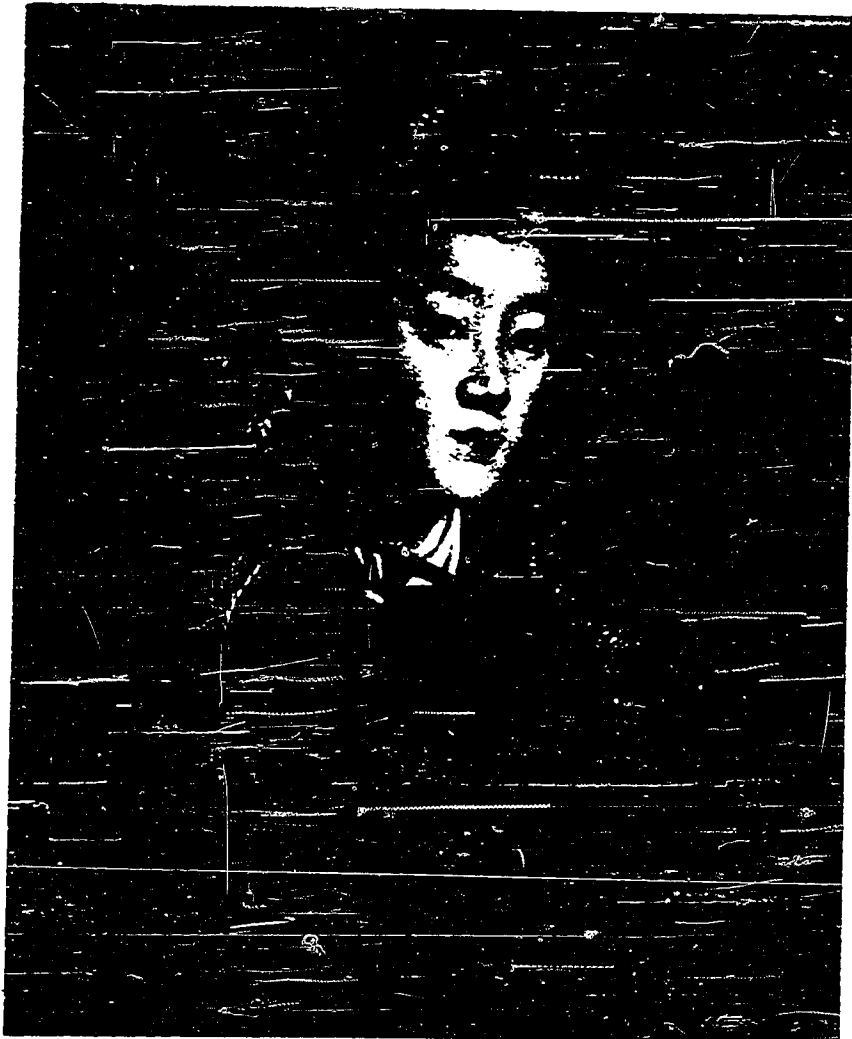


Figure 84. Okada Saburosuke. Portrait of a Lady. 1907.  
Framed. Oil on canvas. 76 x 61 cm.  
Bridgestone Art Museum.

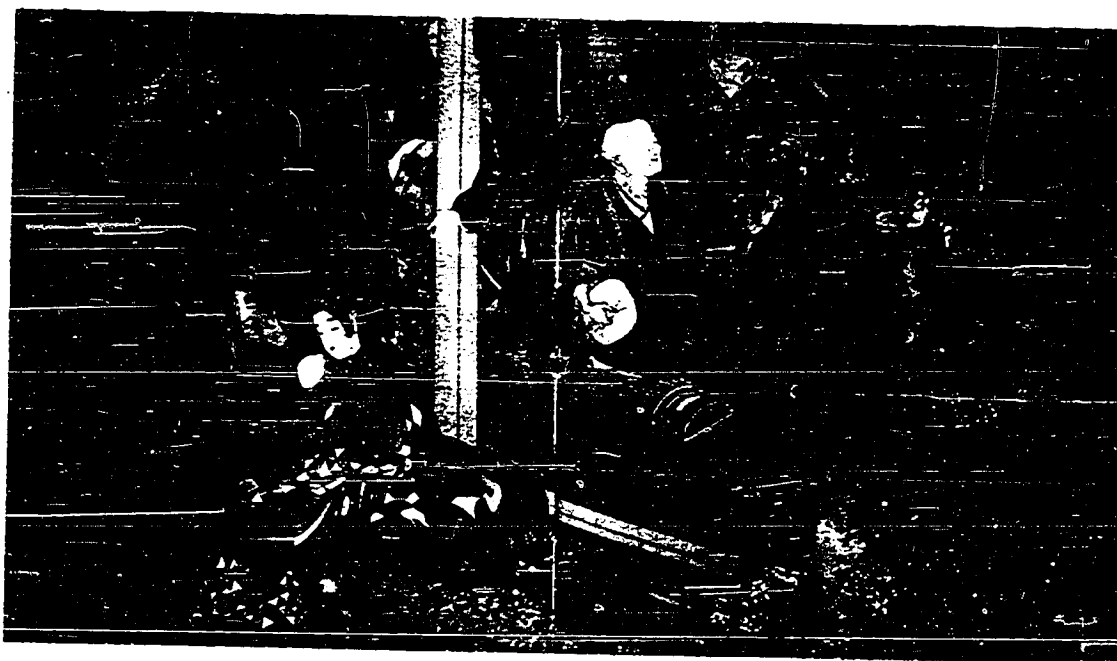


Figure 85. Uemura Shoen. Sound of Crickets. 1909.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 85 x 162 cm.  
Private collection.

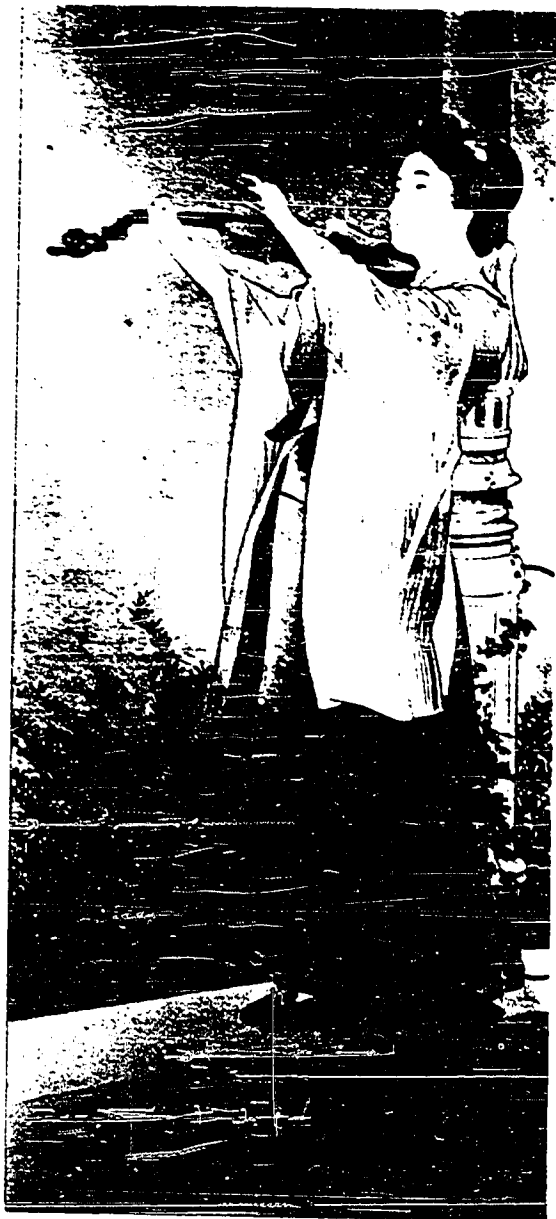


Figure 86. Kaburaki Kiyokata. *Autumn Evening*. 1903.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 155 x 71 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 87. Kaburaki Kiyokata. Bride-to-be. 1907.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 184 x 117 cm.  
Private collection.

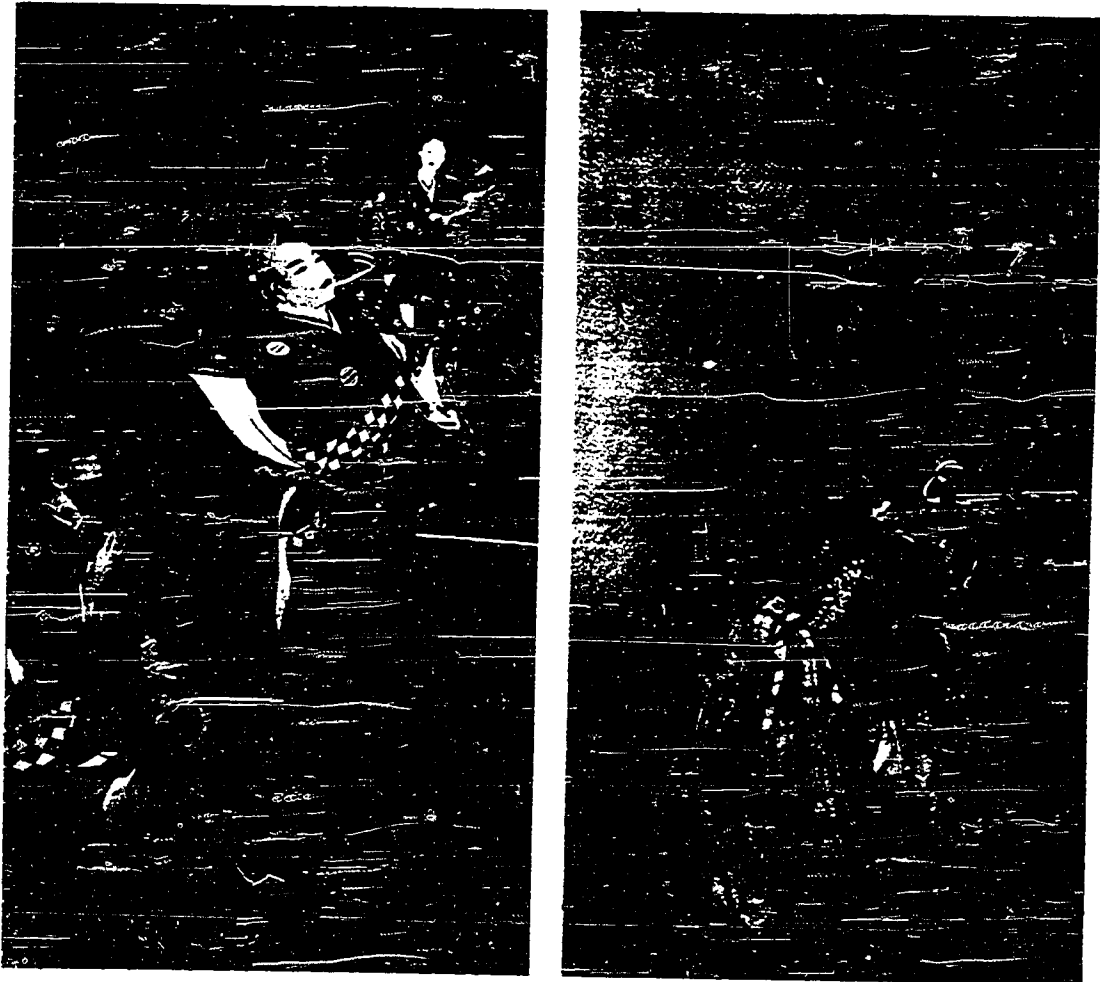


Figure 88. Uemura Shoen. Puppeteer. 1910.  
Pair of hanging scrolls. Ink and colors on silk. Each 152 x 84 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 89. Uemura shoen. Cherry Blossom Viewing. 1910.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 162 x 52 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 90. Nonagase Banka. Young Girls Wearing Long Coats. 1911.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 114 x 135 cm.  
Wakayama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 91. Shimazaki Ryuu. Onatsu by Saikaku. 1907.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 1, p. 58.



Figure 92. Ikeda Terukata. Deranged Onatsu. Mid-1910s.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 135 x 134 cm.  
Fukutomi Taro Collection.



Figure 93. Ikeda Terukata. Oshichi. 1912.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 174 x 86 cm.  
Fukutomi Taro Collection.



Figure 94. Uemura Shoen. Komachi Washing the Paper. 1937.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 215 x 133 cm.  
Tokyo University of Fine Arts.



Figure 95. Uemura Shoen. Beating Block. 1938.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 217 x 113 cm.  
Yamatane Art Museum.



Figure 96. Uemura Shoen. Beauty After a Bath. Ca. 1897.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 116 x 42 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 97. Watanabe Seitei. An illustration for a novel Butterfly written by Yamada Bimyo. 1889.  
From Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 1, p. 537.



Figure 98. Kuroda Seiki. Morning Toilette. 1895.  
From Geijutsu shincho 35, no. 8 (August 1984): 40.



Figure 99. Kuroda Seiki. Female Nude. 1901.  
Framed. Oil on canvas. 116 x 89 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 100. Kitano Tsunetomi. After a Bath. 1912.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 161 x 86 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 101. Takeuchi Seiho. First Time to Pose for Painting. 1913.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 183 x 56 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 102. Kajita Hanko. Goddess. 1900s.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 117 x 48 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 103. Kaburaki Kiyokata. Enticing Mermaid. 1920.  
Six-fold screen. Ink and color on silk. 173 x 374 cm.  
Fukutomi Taro Collection.



Figure 104. Tsuchida Bakusen. Island Women. 1912.  
Pair of two-fold screens. Ink and color on silk. Each 166 x 185 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 105. Murakami Kagaku. Female Nude. 1920.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 162 x 108 cm.  
Yamatane Art Museum.

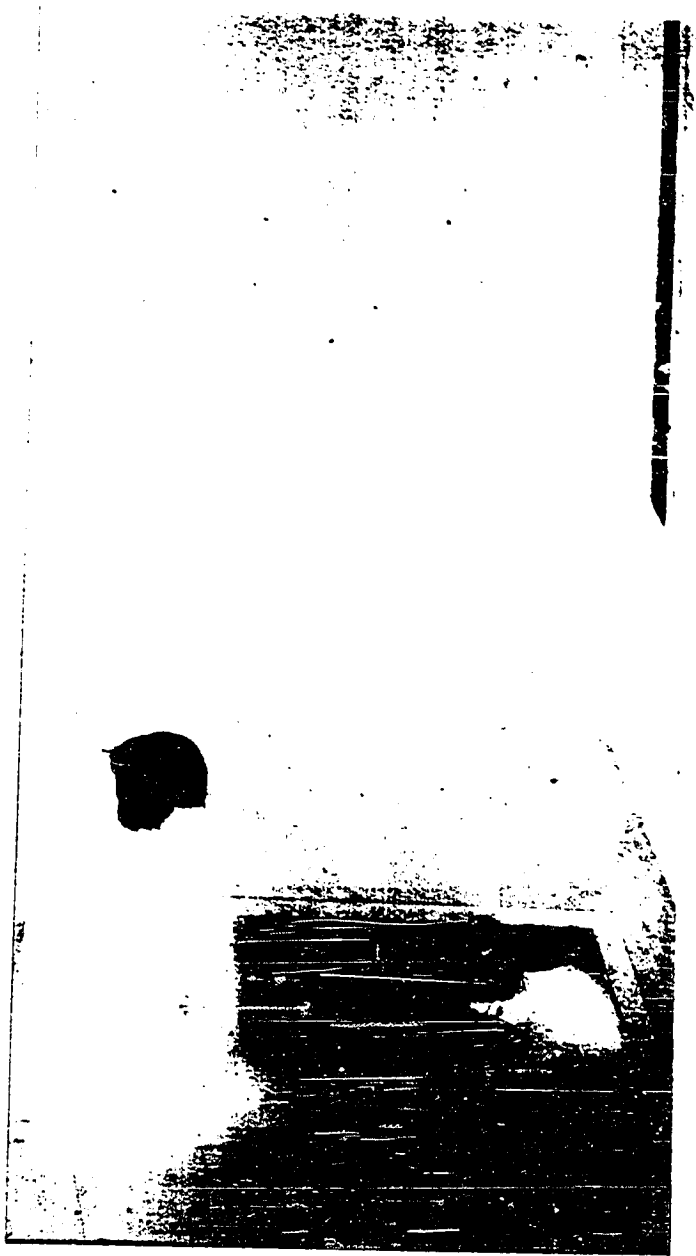


Figure 106. Kobayashi Kokei. Bath. 1918.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 185 x 100 cm.  
Tokyo National Museum.



Figure 107. Kainosho Tadaoto. Female Nude. Ca. 1921.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 65 x 39 cm.  
Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 108. Uemura Shoen. Waiting for the Moon. 1926.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 193 x 93 cm.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 109. Uemura Shoen. Young Ladies. 1926.  
Two-panel screen. Ink and colors on silk. 160 x 187 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 110. Kajiwara Hisako. Woman Singing. Ca. 1916.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Yoshikawa, Gendai santo shoga bijinga zenshu, p. 17.



Figure 111. Okamoto Koen. Autumn Song. 1914.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Nittenshi Hensan Iinkai, Nittenshi, vol. 3, p. 296.



Figure 112. Kajiwara Hisako. Intoxicated. Ca. 1916.  
Whereabouts unknown.  
From Geien 1, no. 9 (February 1920): 32.



Figure 113. Kajiwara Hisako. Woman. 1919.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 56 x 42 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 114. Kajiwara Hisako. Woman. 1919.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 48 x 40 cm.  
Private collection.



**Figure 115. Kuroda Seiki. Self-Portrait. 1915.  
Framed. Oil on canvas. 39 x 32 cm.  
Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties.**

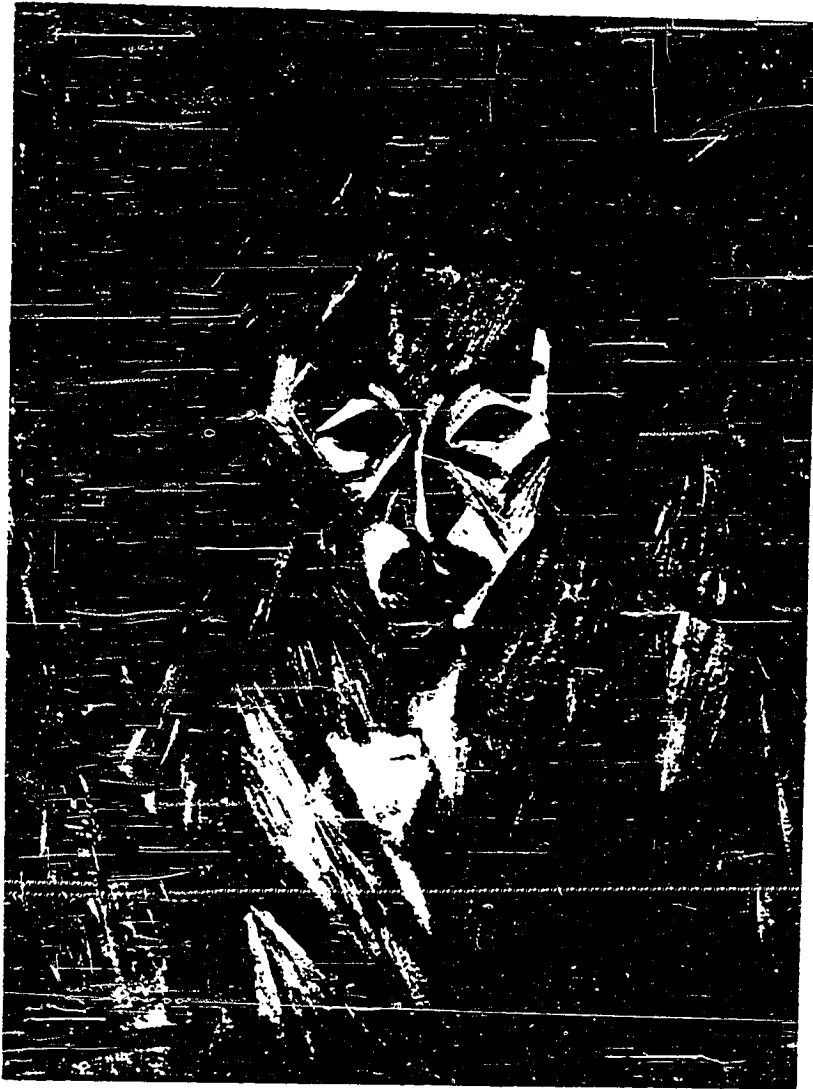


Figure 116. Yorozu Tetsugoro. Self-Portrait with Red Eyes. 1912.  
Framed. Oil on canvas. 60 x 45 cm.  
Private collection.

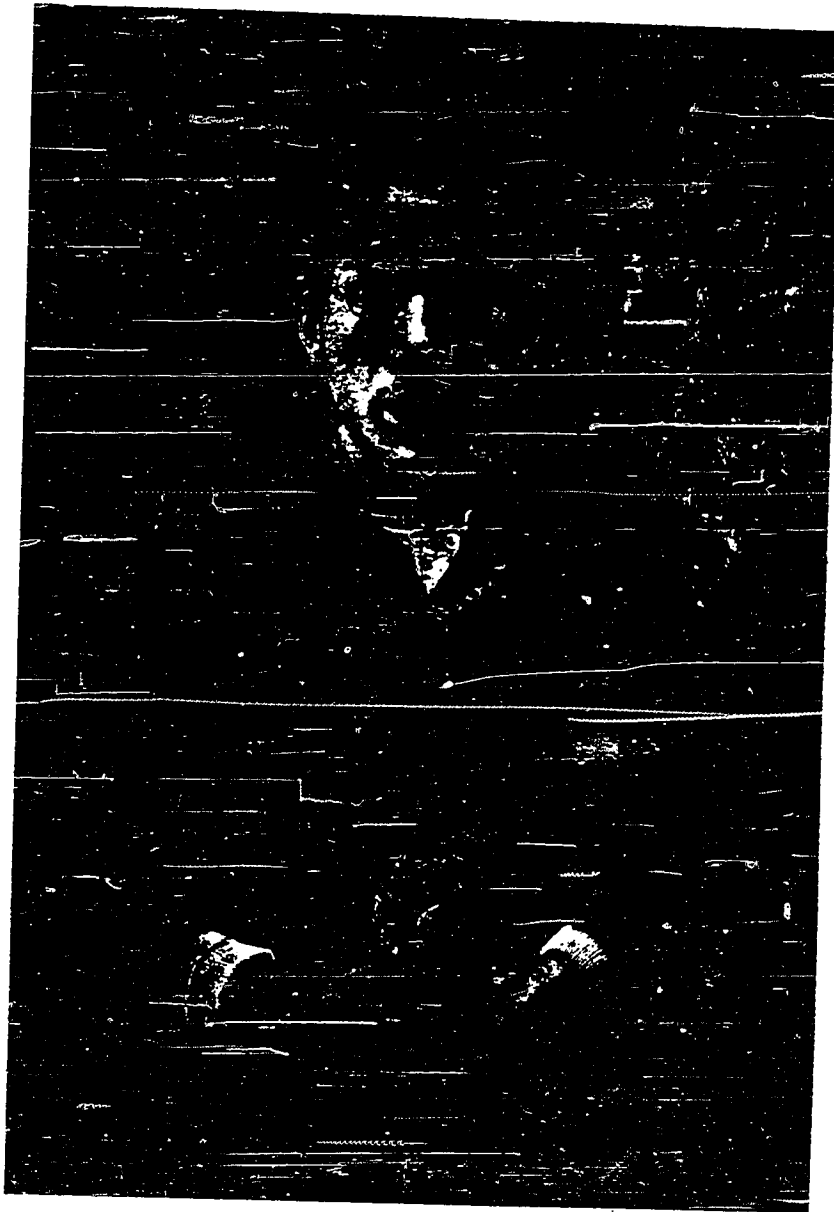


Figure 117. Kono Michisei. Self-Portrait. 1917.  
Framed. Oil on canvas.  
Private collection.



Figure 118. Shima Seien. Woman in a Studio. 1919.  
One-panel screen. Ink and colors on silk. 85 x 108 cm.  
Osaka City Art Museum.



Figure 119. Shima Seien. Self-Portrait. Ca. 1920.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 42 x 35 cm.  
Osaka City Art Museum.



Figure 120. Takehisa Yumeji. Autumn Rest. Ca. 1920.  
Two-fold screen. Ink and colors on paper. 151 x 163 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 121. Hishida Shunso. Widow and Orphan. 1895.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 136 x 84 cm.  
Tokyo University of Fine Arts.



Figure 122. Kaburaki Kiyokata. Orphanage. 1902.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 189 x 117 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 123. Ochi Shokan. Late Night. 1902.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 125 x 85 cm.  
Tokyo University of Fine Arts.

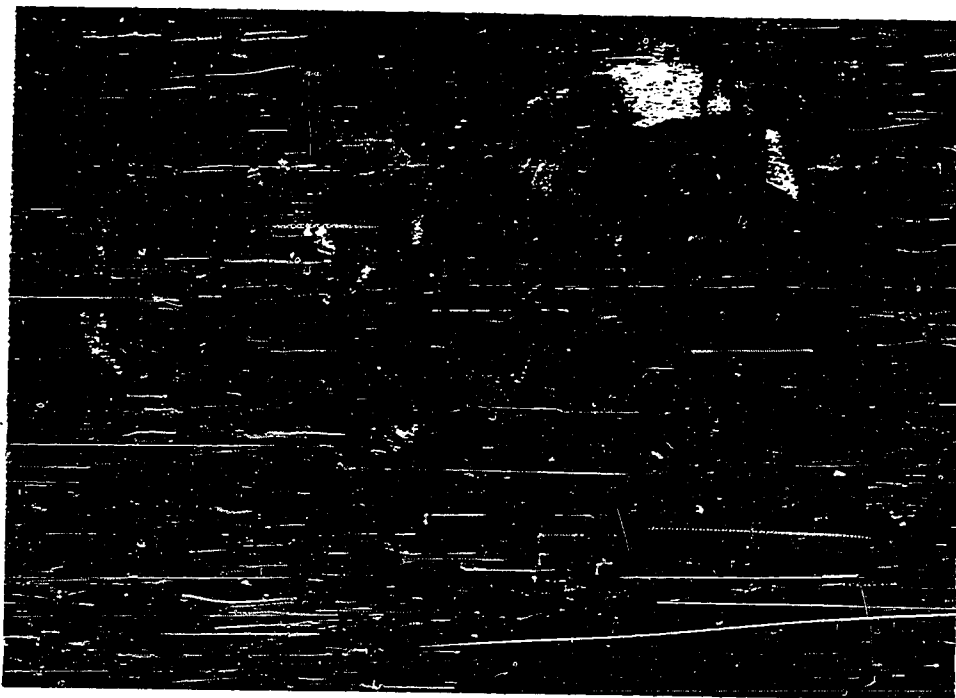


Figure 124. Hata Teruo. Women. Ca. 1919.  
Framed. Colors on linen. 73 x 100 cm.  
Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art.



**Figure 125. Nishimura Koka. Criminal. 1918.  
Whereabouts unknown  
From Geijutsu shincho 35, no. 2 (February 1984): 14.**

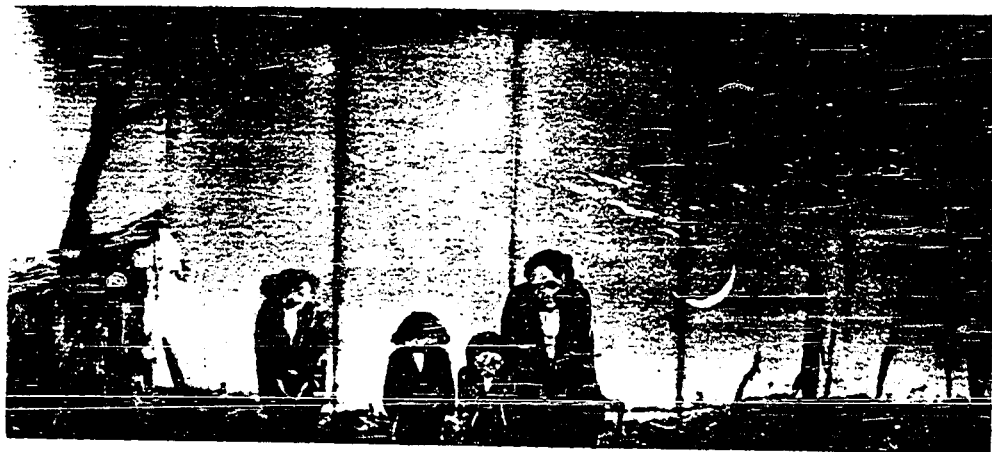


Figure 126. Ikeda Yoson. Aftermath of a Calamity. 1924.  
Six-fold screen. Ink and colors on silk. 167 x 375 cm.  
Kurashiki City Art Museum.



Figure 127. Kainosho Tadaoto. Comb. 1918.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 165 x 71 cm.  
Hiroshima Prefectural Museum of Art.



Figure 128. Takeuchi Seiho. Laborer. 1917.  
Kyoto City Art Museum.



Figure 129. Kikuchi Keigetsu. Going Home in the Evening. 1918.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 216 x. 102 cm.  
Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art.



Figure 130. Konishima Okoku. Difficulty in Traveling. 1922.  
Pair of two-fold screens. Ink and colors on silk. Each 170 x 185 cm.  
Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art.

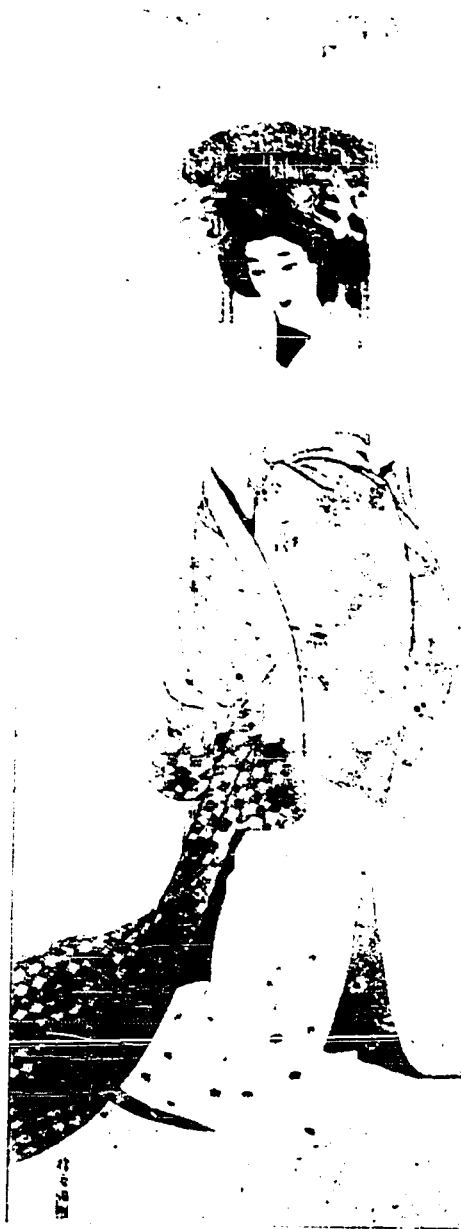


Figure 131. Kainosho Tadaoto. Courtesan Kisaragi. 1926.  
Hanging scroll. Ink and colors on silk. 142 x 41 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 132. Kainosho Tadaoto. Dancing. 1924.  
Framed. Ink and colors on silk. 131 x 89 cm.  
Private collection.



Figure 133. Kajiwara Hisako. Woman of the Yamashiro Hot Spring.  
Ca. 1923. Framed. Ink and colors on paper. 129 x 83 cm.  
Fukutomi Taro Collection.

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