

# The ‘Scientific’ Orientation of Japanese Art History in 1930s Japan

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## Introduction

The word ‘science’ (*kagaku*) appears to have gained wide currency in the field of Japanese art history from the 1910s to the 1950s. Researchers worked actively to render Japanese art history a ‘science’, and it went on to be welcomed as such. In 1942, for instance, Yashiro Yukio made the following remark, regarding the thoroughness with which historical sources are scrutinised in the field of art history:

We thus have evidence that art history is finally oriented towards a scientific framework, and away from the vague and subjective art appreciation we have seen up until now; we ought to offer it our very best wishes.[1]

An early example of this movement in favour of what one might call ‘scientification’ is the 1916 essay collection *Kakiemon to Ironabeshima*, by the group of scholars known as the Saikokai. They explained the volume as “a reference book addressing...the scientific gaze that has never before, in our country, been turned towards ceramics...if one can indeed so describe our approach to art appreciation”. [2] Given the use of the term ‘scientific’ in this passage, it would seem that this orientation towards the ‘scientification’ of the field had already begun by the 1910s. The movement’s most conspicuous developments, however, came during the 1930s; works exemplifying this ‘scientific’ orientation were released successively by scholars like Noma Seiroku, Tsuchida Kyōson, and Isobe Masakane. This ‘scientific’ orientation remained, moreover, a consistent feature of Japanese art historical scholarship into the 1950s. In 1950, Akiyama Terukazu commented of contemporaneous Japanese art history that “across all sorts of organisations, fundamental investigative research is growing gradually more scientific”. [3]

Past research in the field of art historiography has centred on the Meiji period, the era in which Japanese art history emerged as a field of academic research. This research has shed light upon the formation, during the Meiji period, of institutions designed to manage cultural assets, such as the Society for the Preservation of Shrines and Temples and the nation’s museums, and these institutions’ surveys and their selection of works, as represented by the *Kōhon nihon teikoku bijutsu ryakushi* (*Histoire de l’art du Japon*)—enabling the assembly of an overview description of Japanese art history. When one looks beyond the Meiji period, however, at events from the 1910s onwards, research remains inchoate. There has been little attention paid to the field’s ‘scientific’ orientation, in particular, though it was visible throughout the long period from the 1910s to the 1950s.

I have gestured elsewhere myself to the orientation towards ‘scientification’ during this period, and briefly alluded to its characteristics.[4] In past scholarship concerning the history of ceramics, as well, the use of the term ‘science’ in *Kakiemon to Ironabeshima* has received attention.[5] I have not before ascertained precisely what meaning was ascribed to ‘science’, nor have I been able to consider the period context from which this orientation towards the ‘scientific’ emerged, or the figures who participated in the movement. Besides the example provided by the Saikokai in the 1910s, however, the ‘scientific’ turn is well-represented in works by Yashiro, Akiyama, and others; as previously mentioned, the movement was spread throughout the field of Japanese art history until the 1950s.

One might, in analysing the particulars of this turn towards the ‘scientific’, therefore describe it as a consistent trend across the art history of the period; one might also conclude that there has been insufficient art historiographical research into the matter, and that a clarification of the field’s condition during the first half of the twentieth century is on its way. It is most difficult, however, to discuss at once every aspect of this movement, which developed across almost half a century, from the 1910s to the 1950s. For that reason, this study takes as its focal point those works exemplifying the trend that were released during the 1930s, and attempts to investigate the movement on this basis. The aim of this study is to investigate fully the meaning and context of, and support for, the turn towards the ‘scientific’ that emerged in Japanese art history—with a focus on the 1930s—thereby clarifying its significance as a matter of intellectual history. In order to address the movement’s long-term scope, though, this study does not look only at the 1930s, but includes materials from both before and after that decade. The first chapter looks at the meaning of the word ‘science’ (*kagaku*), the second chapter addresses the background to this trend, and the third chapter considers the standard-bearers for ‘scientification’. Inverted commas are used to indicate the fact that terms like ‘science’ and ‘scientific’ have, in this context, usages specific to the period.

## I. Defining ‘Science’

We ought first to clarify precisely what meaning was ascribed to the word ‘science’ (*kagaku*). When it was used in the context of this turn towards the ‘scientific’, (1) regardless of whether it was drawn from the natural sciences or the human sciences, the understanding of ‘science’ as it was emphasised in the study of art history involved (2) the pursuit of objectivity, logicity, and empiricism in research, and (3) an escape from subjectivity, illogicality, and sentimentalism.

### 1) ‘Scientification’ and the Methodologies of the Human Sciences and the Natural Sciences

Art history’s orientation towards the ‘scientific’ paid no heed to distinctions between the methodologies of the human sciences and the natural sciences, and looked to incorporate the methodologies of both. The term ‘science’ (*kagaku*), in other words, did not refer exclusively to the natural sciences. If one looks at popular usage of the word, as recorded in dictionaries of the period, this becomes quite clear. In the 1913 dictionary *Bungaku shingo shō jiten*, for instance, the entry for *kagaku* provides a description of the ‘normative sciences’ (*kihan kagaku*) in addition to the natural sciences (*shizen kagaku*), explaining this as “the science of enquiry into

the ways of man” in areas of study like logic and moral philosophy.[6] The entry for *kagaku* in the 1940 dictionary *Dai nihon kokugo jiten* also describes the term as extending to fields beyond the natural sciences: “the natural sciences and the moral sciences [*seishin kagaku*; a translation of the German term *Geisteswissenschaften*]...the explanatory sciences and the normative sciences”.[7]

By the 1930s, the term *kagaku* and the concept of science in general had also been institutionalised across academic administration, and in the administration of research funding, referring to both the human sciences and the natural sciences. In 1929, for example, the funding administrators at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture established the ‘Research Stipend for the Moral Sciences’ (*seishin kagaku kenkyū shōrei kin*). In 1943, the ministry’s ‘Grant for Scientific Research’ (*kagaku kenkyū hi kōfukin*; later the *kagaku kenkyū hi hojokin*, or KAKENHI) also began distributing funding to the ‘human sciences’, in addition to the natural sciences. Accordingly, the body responsible for distributing this fund, the ‘Academic Research Committee’ (*gakujutsu kenkyū kaigi*), also established a ‘human sciences’ division in 1943. Across all institutions, the term *kagaku*—and the concept of science in general—was used throughout the humanities.

When it comes to the matter of art history’s ‘scientification’, the ‘science’ yearned after was, again, not exclusively that of the natural sciences. In 1926, for instance, Shimomise Shizuichi critiqued past art historical scholarship thusly:

Japanese art history, an extremely specialised area of research within the field of historical studies, has come to be practiced—to speak prematurely—in accordance with the methodologies of the natural sciences. There has been no attempt at pursuing research as a branch of the cultural sciences.[8]

The term ‘cultural sciences’ (*bunka kagaku*) that appears in this passage seems to be a concept of Heinrich Rickert’s invention, introduced by Tanabe Hajime in 1918; this will be discussed in the following chapter. First, let us simply address Shimomura’s desire to position art history not just as a ‘science’, but as a field of research within the ‘cultural sciences’, as distinct from the natural sciences. We shall look at this humanistic field’s ‘scientific’ orientation below.

## 2) The Pursuit of Objectivity, Logicality, and Empiricism

What precisely was meant by ‘science’, then, in the context of this turn towards the ‘scientific’? Let us clarify what was intended for art historical research by the use of the term ‘science’ by looking at two works from the 1930s that elucidate this very sharply.

First, we have a 1936 book review by Noma Seiroku, “*Kodai butsuzō no jinruigaku teki kenkyū ni tsuite*”. [9] In this review, Noma explains “scientific research” as “research that makes deductions on an empirical basis, and which therefore has logical validity”. In providing such a straightforward explanation of the meaning of the word ‘science’, this review stands out as one of the most representative of the many articles exemplifying this turn towards the ‘scientific’. The critical subject of the review was the monograph *Kodai butsuzō no jinruigaku teki kenkyū*, by the medical scientist Kitamura Naomi and the art researcher Ishizaki Tatsuji.[10] Their

research involved the detailed, quantitative measurement of Buddhist sculptures' every aspect, and the comparison of these measurements to data from the field of biological anthropology. They thereby analysed the anthropological characteristics of Buddhist sculptures, and the people on whom they were modelled, attempting to bring "new scientific significance to research into Buddhist sculpture". One could say that this work, in other words, itself serves as an example of research into ancient art of a 'scientific' orientation.

In his review of the book, however, Noma provides a sustained critique of the scholarly accuracy and the validity of the 'science' in *Kodai butsumō no jinruigaku teki kenkyū*. Besides the "fallacy of applying biological measurements to Buddhist sculpture", he criticises "mistakes in the measurement data": the "unreliability of the measuring decisions" and the "irrationality of the indices". He goes on to criticise the book's "logical fallacies": the "fallacy of analogising from the particular to the general", the "one-sided exposition of data", and so on. The "fallacy of applying biological measurements to Buddhist sculpture" refers to the fact that any analysis of the form of Buddhist sculpture appropriating the methodologies of anthropology—which deals with the human form—is fundamentally problematic because, although it is not an idealised art form, Buddhist sculpture does not demand realistic depiction of the human body. The phrase "mistakes in the measurement data" refers to manifold issues: if a sculpture is clothed, or seated in the lotus position, or its figure is distorted in some way, then however precise one's measuring instruments, is it not the case that any measurement of the sculpture's chest, its full body height, its shoulder width, and so on, would be both exhaustively accurate and wholly objective? Could research based on such measurements ever be valid? The "logical fallacies" to which Noma also refers include, for instance, "deliberately treating the tall stature of the Kudara Kannon...as the representative body type of the Asuka period", which he criticised as an example of the "fallacy of analogising from the particular to the general". On the basis of all these various problems, Noma writes that "scientific precision equipment, after all, merely shows the desire for an objective standpoint...we must not forget that the logical validity of the reasoning that follows is essential". Noma moreover defines the 'scientific' as "research which, standing on an objective footing, is endowed with the logical validity of deductive reasoning". It is thus possible to reduce Noma's definition of the 'scientific' to these three points: the *objectivity* that ought to be guaranteed by the "objective footing" of the measurement data, on which the research is premised; the *empiricism* of that research; finally, the *logicality* that endows it with the "logical validity of deductive reasoning", symbolised by the example of the Kudara Kannon.

Another representative work from the 1930s is Tsuchida Kyōson's 1933 essay, "Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō".[11] The importance of this article rests in its description of the 'scientification' that Tsuchida wished to see implemented in the field of art history as being contingent on the methods of enquiry found in practical research. Tsuchida is still thought of as a philosopher, but when it came to art history he was the sort of scholar to place a great deal of import on empirical research into the history of painting. It was the research methods of this incarnation of Tsuchida, and "Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō", that Kiyatake Moriya referred to as "empirical art history", implying that Tsuchida was influenced by the methodologies of the natural sciences.[12] As Kiyatake observes, in "Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō" Tsuchida uses the term 'science' directly, and the fact that he was obviously oriented towards the pursuit of

'scientific' research should certainly be emphasised. This essay, moreover, was not an isolated accomplishment on the part of Tsuchida, but rather was situated at the centre of a broad contemporaneous turn towards the 'scientific'; we should treat it as a representative example of this trend.

"Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō" begins with the sentence, "every area of research in Japanese art history has, for the most part, been done to death, and I am not infrequently drawn to think that what will now follow is a genuinely scientific organisation [of said research]". One ought surely to identify an essay that so directly expresses a wish for Japanese art historical research to be organised in a 'scientific' manner as epitomising the trend towards 'scientification'. Tsuchida, moreover, offers up "the methodologies [he] would particularly like to emphasise" as the ideal research protocol for the purposes of 'scientific' research:

Taking as one's foundation, first of all, matters like the exact year in which a work was produced, or just who painted it...one conducts a precise, empirical study of the various facets of its style...once one clearly knows the character of these works we take to be normative ...one goes on to speculate about works without a precise date.

With regards to the "character of these works", Tsuchida writes:

If it uses textured strokes, or the manner of its composition, or if the method of applying dots and drawing lines is sharp and blurry—all these minute details are included.

Tsuchida goes on to ask:

How is one to conduct scientific research, without applying such principles?

What Tsuchida here establishes as a principle requirement for 'scientific research' is the actual, 'empirical' study of the discrete, experiential facts of a work: its "textured strokes", its "composition", or the "method of applying dots and drawing lines"; that is to say, the *empiricism* of the research. Tsuchida then demands of us a logical procedure without leaps in judgment; he writes that only after "taking as one's foundation...matters like the exact year in which a work was produced, or just who painted it", and treating these works as normative, are we to enquire into those works "without a precise date". One might fairly refer to this as the research's *logicality*. Taking the above into consideration, one might conclude that Tsuchida regards empiricism and logicality as the requirements of 'scientific research'.

This methodology itself might today be described as a pragmatic theory of *yōshiki* (mode); it involves the empirical consideration of those works that form the subject of one's enquiry, in comparison with reference works that can be ascribed clear dates and creators. In 1933, however, when "Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō" was published, it does not seem that an understanding of such procedures as natural was necessarily shared across the world of art history. In 1926, for example, the introduction to the Archaeological Society of Japan's (*Kōko Gakkai*) publication *Zōzō meiki* set out, in very simple terms, the importance of having a tangible point of reference

when enquiring into the history of sculpture, and the importance of making any assumptions on the definite basis of that reference work's year of creation. Here in *Zōzō meiki*, at least seven years before Tsuchida's "Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō", it appears to have been necessary to enlighten the world of Japanese art history to these facts.

We have now taken a cursory look at representative examples of this turn towards 'scientification', by Noma Seiroku and Tsuchida Kyōson. If one were to search for the principle common factors in the definitions these works proffer for the 'scientific' research they advocate, one might point to the pursuit of objectivity, logicity, and empiricism. And though it is not possible to critique their other works here, Tsuchida, for instance, put these principles into practice in his own research when addressing artwork in *Chishaku-in shōhekiga no hissha wo ronzu* (*Tōyō bijutsu* 7, 1930), and other works.

### 3) An Escape from Subjectivity, Illogicality, and Sentimentalism

The significance of this orientation towards the 'scientific' did not lie simply in the pursuit of objectivity, logic, and empiricism, but also in the clear insistence on escaping subjectivity, illogicality, and sentimentalism. As these matters are connected to the issue of who the standard-bearers for this turn towards 'scientification' were—discussed in chapter three of this study—here just one item shall be provided to serve as an example of this. The most representative such example is, once again, Tsuchida's "Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō". Tsuchida's essay outlines the concrete principles behind 'scientific research'; prior to this, however, he asserts that "to begin with, we shall put to rest this notion of the art history of connoisseurial judgment, or intuition". What he must here "put to rest", or escape from, is the kind of artistic analysis founded in "subjective categories that one has already decided...simply by observing a painting's general 'elegance' or 'refinement', and saying that works of such grandeur belong to the Keichō era, or that works so elaborate belong only to the Kanbun era". As a tangible example of this sort of analysis, he offers the following:

Their arguments proceed from the idea that the Eitoku era surely produced the grandest, most ambitious works; they are then able to allow as works of the Eitoku era those demonstrating sufficient grandeur and ambition, wherever they appear—whether on sliding-door, or folding-screen.

It is this traditional method of analysis that Tsuchida refers to as the "art history of connoisseurial judgment, or intuition". He suggests, as a new means by which to correct this, 'scientific research'.

It is possible to isolate the following three elements of the "art history of connoisseurial judgment, or intuition" that Tsuchida perceives so negatively, as something from which to escape. First, *sentimentalism*. Such research is based on description and a sentimental understanding of a work's 'grandeur' and 'ambition'; it lacks the empiricism provided by the specific individual facts of 'textured strokes' and 'lines'. Second, *subjectivity*. As suggested by Tsuchida's comments about "subjective categories that one has already decided", such research is deficient in the empiricism provided by empirical fact, and is not objectively falsifiable by any third party; one

could describe it, for these reasons, as subjective. Third, *illogicality*. When research does not start from tangible, objective, and empirical truths, but from categories “one has already decided”, it lacks the logical validity of a proper method of enquiry; one could describe it, for these reasons, as illogical. It is thus that Tsuchida criticises the sentimentalism, subjectivity, and illogicality of the “art history of connoisseurial judgment, or intuition”.

Only Tsuchida's case is featured as an example above, but there were plenty of contemporaneous works belonging to this turn towards 'scientification' that had the same gist. For example, Yashiro Yukio's language in 1942—mentioned earlier in this essay—also made reference to the “scientific framework” that came to art history after it escaped 'subjective' art appreciation. One could argue that the field's 'scientification' was a reform movement aimed at escaping the subjectivity, illogicality, and sentimentalism of existing art history.

## II. Background

What exactly was the background to this turn towards 'scientification' that occurred between the 1910s and the 1950s—in the 1930s particularly? Below, four issues are emphasised: (1) the 'scientific' stance of academic history, (2) the Neo-Kantian theory of science, (3) Ōtsuka Yasuji's theory of “aesthetics as a science”, and (4) the Shunpōan Affair of 1934.

### 1) The 'Scientific' Stance of Academic History

First, we should address the 'scientific' stance of the study of history, focusing on statements made slightly after the 1930s (in 1941) by Nishida Masaaki, a researcher in the field of artistic anatomy who also had interests relating to Japanese art history. Nishida delivered, in answer to a survey entitled “Bijutsushigaku no hōkō”, his “reflections on the direction, or method, being adopted by contemporary art history”. We are able to discern quite plainly, in Nishida's rhetoric—which takes as its starting point the 'scientific' stance of academic history—a desire for the 'scientification' of art historical research. Though it is somewhat long, it is useful to quote the passage in full:

Reading Bernheim's *Einleitung in die Geschichtswissenschaft* [translated into Japanese as *Rekishi to wa nanzoya*], Imai Toshiki's “Rekishigaku kenkyūhō”, and other such works, even I, as a layman, have come to understand how the study of history must continue on towards cool-headed, scientific foundations—or preparations. Depending on the circumstances, it does appear necessary to investigate and make decisions in the manner of a judge. Furthermore, when one reads conventional discourses relating to the history of art, one finds again and again that the writer's tastes and preferences and antiquarian subjectivity are mingled together. We ought to distinguish very clearly between the approaches of the arts (i.e. poetry and novels) and literature (i.e. philology and history). Whether one has no interest whatsoever in sharing these, or whether one appreciates both approaches, as a scholar of history one must avoid presenting a mixture in one's research and opinions. However artistically rich a scholar's feelings, one would hope, when it comes to the study of history, that his attitude is scientific to the last. Aside from brief essays and

impressionistic reviews, I hope that the path towards an art history of rigorous, scientific discourse will continue to be revealed.[13]

One ought first to note that this passage is a classic example of the orientation towards the ‘scientific’ currently under discussion. Here, Nishida shuns the subjectivity of past art history, dependent on “tastes and preferences and antiquarian subjectivity”, and the sentimentalism of the “scholar’s feelings”; what he desires is for art history to become ‘scientific’. Significantly, Nishida’s turn towards ‘scientification’ started from concrete sources explicating historical methodologies: Bernheim’s *Einleitung in die Geschichtswissenschaft* and Imai Toshiki’s “Rekishigaku kenkyūhō”, which were published together during the 1920s and 1930s. Bernheim’s *Einleitung in die Geschichtswissenschaft* was published by Iwanami Shoten in 1922, as one volume in the series *Shigaku sōsho*; it was reprinted by Iwanami Bunko in 1935. Imai’s “Rekishigaku kenkyūhō” also went on sale in 1935. These historical studies were published, therefore, during the same period in which art history was developing its ‘scientific’ orientation.

Let us focus on how these historical studies elucidated the connection between the ‘scientific’ nature of historical research, and the empiricism of said research—alongside its logicity and objectivity. In reference to empiricism, for instance, Imai’s “Rekishigaku kenkyūhō” explains that “history is an empirical science: a field of study in which empirical conclusions are arrived at on the basis of empirical evidence”. [14] The first chapter of this study analysed art history’s turn towards ‘scientification’ as the pursuit of objectivity, logicity, and empiricism; one could argue that the attitude of “Rekishigaku kenkyūhō” is very similar. Considering the proximity of these ideas to Nishida’s survey response, one might assume that the ‘scientific’ stance of academic history helped form the context to art history’s ‘scientification’.

## 2) The Neo-Kantian Theory of Science

After the Meiji period and prior to the war, Neo-Kantianism maintained a degree of influence in the Japanese philosophy world that one might call hegemonic. Within this school there were many distinct intellectual tendencies, but, for the purposes of this enquiry, the most significant of these is the theory of science advanced by Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert. Windelband and Rickert confronted the onward rush of the natural sciences, beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and developed a theory of science rooted in the methodologies of the science of history and the cultural sciences, and these fields’ autonomy. Aside from a general explanation of this theory of science in Tanabe Hajime’s 1918 bestseller *Kagaku gairon*, it was introduced properly to Japan in the 1927 translation of Windelband’s *Geschichte und Naturwissenschaft* (published by Iwanami Shoten as “Rekishu to shizen kagaku”, and featured in the final volume of the series *Purerūdien: jokyoku*), and in the 1920 translation of Rickert’s *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft* (published by Ōmura Shoten as *Bunka kagaku to shizen kagaku*). Both works were also reprinted, in 1929 and 1939 respectively, by Iwanami Bunko. Other works on the subject include Tanabe Hajime’s 1915 essay “Shizen kagaku tai seishin kagaku/bunka kagaku”, Ōtsuka Yasuji’s “Rikkeruto no rekishi kagaku setsu no hiyō”, and Yazaki Yoshimori’s 1923 work “Rekishu kagaku no ninshiki ron”.

As this theory of science became known to scholars of art history in Japan, it is thought to

have helped to form the context to their turn towards the 'scientific'. In particular, Shimomise Shizuichi's 1926 work "Kimagure na zuihitsu (bijutsushi no hōhō ni okeru ichikōsatsu, sonota)", mentioned in the first chapter of this study, claims that art history "has come to be practiced—to speak prematurely—in accordance with the methodologies of the natural sciences. There has been no attempt at pursuing research as a branch of the cultural sciences". The term 'cultural sciences' (*bunka kagaku*) that is used here is just how Tanabe Hajime introduced Rickert's concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* in 1918's *Kagaku gairon*.<sup>[15]</sup> One might fairly assume that Shimomise's wish for art history to become a branch of the 'cultural sciences' bears the influence of Neo-Kantianism.

The link between the Neo-Kantian theory of science and art historical scholarship in Japan was Itagaki Takao. Itagaki taught Western art history at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (*Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō*) from 1921; he was engaged in the study of Western art history from its earliest days in Japan, as evidenced by the publication of *Seiyō bijutsushi gaisetsu* the following year. Itagaki also released *Shin kanto gakuha no rekishi tetsugaku* in 1922, participating himself in the importation of Neo-Kantian thought to Japan. In the 1927 work "Bijutsushi ni okeru kachi hyōka no mondai" too, and the 1930 volume *Bijutsushi no konpon mondai* in which this same essay appeared, and other works rooted theoretically in the objectives and methodologies of art history, Itagaki's enquiries develop in accordance with Neo-Kantian theory. In the introduction to this latter work, in particular, he acknowledges the influence of "Rickert, who has unravelled the problems of the science of history". Thanks to the contributions of Itagaki and others, the Neo-Kantian theory of science became tied to the methodologies of art history in Japan, surely helping to form the background to its 'scientific' orientation.

### 3) Ōtsuka Yasuji's Theory of "Aesthetics as a Science"

Third, we ought to address Ōtsuka Yasuji's theory of "aesthetics as a science". Ōtsuka, an aesthetician, in the Meiji period made "a transition from the aesthetics of 'criticism' to a new aesthetics as a 'science'", which he had already gestured to in past research.<sup>[16]</sup> Into the Taishō era—in the years 1921, 1924, and 1926—Ōtsuka delivered lectures at Tokyo Imperial University (*Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku*; now the University of Tokyo) entitled 'An Introduction to Aesthetics' ("Bigaku gairon"). The section concerning "the matter of, and methods behind, aesthetics as a science" ought to be considered, in particular, as a factor behind art history's 'scientific' turn.<sup>[17]</sup>

We should focus our attention on Ōtsuka's argument, in this section, that "as a matter of methodological merit, when the subject of enquiry is art, rather than beauty, it is appropriate to conduct scientific research in the subject of aesthetics". Ōtsuka also says that "art...exists in a tangible, objective manner", whilst 'beauty', on the other hand, is "exceedingly vague" and "a very abstract concept". From these statements, one is able to see the importance to Ōtsuka's methodology of aesthetics as a 'science', of working with a tangible, 'objective' subject—the importance, one might say, of honouring the objectivity of the research process, and of stressing the empiricism that comes of dealing with concrete fact. The great importance attached to objectivity and empiricism when advocating for a 'scientific' approach bears a close resemblance to the characteristics of art history's 'scientification'.

Ōtsuka's theory of 'aesthetics as a science' was made known to scholars who studied art

history at Tokyo Imperial University, at the very least, due to his lectures at the same institution. It is quite possible that Tanaka Ichimatsu, Matsumoto Ei'ichi, and Kumagai Nobuo, and other leading figures in the field of Japanese art history from the 1930s onwards were enrolled in the university's aesthetics and art history department in the years 1921, 1924, and 1926, when Ōtsuka's lectures took place.[18] Ōtsuka's lectures were also collected in the 1933 volume *Ōtsuka hakase kōgi shū*, thereby becoming more widely-known during the 1930s. Ōtsuka's theory of 'aesthetics as a science' surely came into contact thus with art historical scholarship, and helped to form the background to the field's turn into 'scientification', which inclined towards the same ideas.

#### 4) The Shunpōan Affair

It is necessary to address the ukiyo-e forgery incident that occurred in 1934, known as the Shunpōan Affair, which might also be considered one of the factors that determined the progress of the trend towards 'scientification'. Though the concrete details of the affair will not be repeated in full, the Shunpōan Affair is significant for the fact that it became a public incident, extensively covered by those organs of the mass media—newspapers, radio, etc—that were growing in power at the time. The media reported, sensationally, on the responsibility of the novelist and historian Sasagawa Rinpū for judging the forgeries authentic, in his role as an ukiyo-e expert, and on his mistakes as a researcher. After the incident, Sasagawa found himself effectively ousted from the world of ukiyo-e scholarship. Just before the affair itself came to light, the Shunpōan prints' official recognition by the accrediting authorities had also been reported; the authorities themselves, not having seen through the forgeries, were looked on with doubt and mistrust by the public. Although the Shunpōan Affair became a matter of public interest, the world of ukiyo-e research—indeed, the world of art history—generally avoided confronting the incident head-on, and essentially refused to mention it.

Only Isobe Masakane's 1934 study "Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai: kantei, kanshō ni tsuite" keenly captures the significance of the affair for the study of art history, and provides a far-reaching discussion of it (unfortunately, it is impossible to find sources that discuss Isobe Masakane's career, and it remains unclear who he actually was; it is possible that this was a *nom de plume*).[19] In this essay, Isobe asserts that "recently, the affair of the Shunpōan auction, which has become a topic much loved by the media...has surely exposed the meagreness of Japanese art historical scholarship". He continues: "I ought to add that this 'crisis of art history' is an opportunity for a great deal of scholarly reflection and honest enquiry". Isobe describes the Shunpōan Affair as a problem of "Japanese art historical scholarship"; he goes so far as to describe it as a "crisis of art history", in contrast to the many scholars who were reluctant to mention the incident. "Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai" discusses the necessity of 'scientific' art historical research as a counter-measure to the 'crisis of art history' represented by the Shunpōan Affair. The essay first says, of the present state of art historical appraisal, that "we have not moved away from mere intuition—the discernment nurtured by viewing large quantities of art". Isobe then writes that "we are overly dependent on instincts that are divinatory and superstitious...there are many occasions when our subjective self-confidence is really nothing more—objectively—than blind faith". He goes on to insist that in the context of these

kinds of judgment, out of which were born the failures of the Shunpōan Affair, “art appraisers, so full of confidence...must try appealing to the scientific method”, and improve by those means.

One might say that what Isobe problematizes, here, is the subjectivity demonstrated by art appraisers of the past—their “subjective self-confidence”—alongside their ‘divinatory’ illogicality, and the sentimentalism of ‘intuition’. In the first chapter of this essay, it was argued that the trend towards ‘scientification’ constituted an escape from subjectivity, illogicality, and sentimentalism; this is also insisted upon in “Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai”. What is, moreover, necessary is the use of the ‘scientific method’ in art historical research. “Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai” aspired to the ‘scientification’ of the art history that informed the practice of art appraisal, and may thus be deemed representative of the trend towards ‘scientification’. Isobe’s argument follows out of a discussion of the Shunpōan Affair, which he describes as a ‘crisis of art history’, into a call for the ‘scientification’ of research as a form of counter-measure. It is truly difficult, however, to find works other than “Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai” that emphasise ‘scientification’ as a response to the problem of the Shunpōan Affair. Though, on the one hand, the essay was alone in addressing the incident using this framework, it was quite ordinary by the standards of the discourse around ‘scientification’; in its emphasis on escaping subjectivity, illogicality, and sentimentalism, it demonstrates one of the movement’s universal traits. Considering the scale of the Shunpōan Affair’s impact, together with the universality of Isobe’s argument, one might assume that the idea of emphasising ‘scientification’ when reflecting upon the incident was shared, to a certain extent, across the art history world during that period. Not only did the Shunpōan Affair serve as the starting point of the case made by “Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai”, but it arguably helped to form the context around the field’s ‘scientification’.

### III. The Standard-Bearers for ‘Scientification’

Finally, it is worth looking at the sort of talent that is thought to have driven forward the ‘scientific’ research at the heart of the field’s ‘scientification’. There are actually rather more references, in the discourse around ‘scientification’, to those personages unqualified to lead the movement, than to the standard-bearers for ‘scientific’ research.

Isobe Masakane’s wrote in his 1934 work “Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai”, for example, that ‘dilettantes’ were unqualified to conduct ‘scientific’ research. Isobe, after saying that “in order to make art history scientific, it is first necessary that researchers themselves are sufficiently rational”, writes that “the problem is that dilettantes are free to assert, quite dogmatically, their likes and dislikes, and what constitutes good and bad art; academic researchers ought nevertheless to take a rational, archaeological position”. Here, those who “assert...their likes and dislikes, and what constitutes good and bad art” are, in other words, making sentimental judgments and subjective criticisms. These dabblers, advancing criticism of such an impressionistic nature, were not qualified to conduct ‘scientific’ research. Even beyond the 1930s—in 1952—Hasumi Shigeyasu declared that such ‘dilettantes’ were unqualified. Regarding art history that emphasises the empirical examination of literary sources, Hasumi argued:

So-called aestheticians and dilettantish scholars of art do not in any sense investigate art objects, but merely string together beautiful prose that is nothing but instinctual, admiring, or otherwise amateurish. In comparison with this approach to art history (which I too once practiced), whose exponents rarely trouble with the scientific, we can approve these efforts to strengthen the subject's scientific foundations on a purely empirical basis.[20]

Here, Hasumi indicates that the illogical, sentimental and 'amateurish' art appreciation of those dilettantes who do not "in any sense investigate" art, is wholly alien to 'scientific' research.

The turn towards 'scientification' exposed the fact that many such dilettantes were unqualified to bear the responsibility of conducting 'scientific' research. Their impressionistic criticism and amateurish art appreciation accorded with the subjectivity, illogicality, and sentimentalism that the 'scientification' trend was aiming to escape; it was considered unsuitable for the purposes of 'scientific' research. Between the 1910s and the 1950s (and especially during the 1930s), there was an emerging awareness of the divisions between these dilettantes and dabblers, and the standard-bearers for 'scientific' research; it is arguably for this reason that the latter, talented individuals possessed of attributes that clearly distinguished them from their peers, made their entrance into the mainstream of art historical research. One could also describe these new talents as professional researchers: they studied art history on university-level art history curricula and, after graduating, pursued art history as professional scholars in research institutions, periodically announcing their research results in specialist journals, over time. These up-and-coming scholars rose up through academic art history courses, like the aesthetics and art history course established at Tokyo Imperial University in 1917, which regularly turned out talent from the 1930s onwards; research institutes such as the Institute of Art Research (*Bijutsu kenkyūjo*); and academic journals like *Bijutsu kenkyū* (*Journal of Art Studies*), *Bukkyō geijutsu* (*Buddhist Art*), *Bijutsushi* (*Journal of the Japan Art History Society*), and *Myūjiamu* (*The Bimonthly Magazine of the Tokyo National Museum*).[21]

What distinguished these professional research specialists from the dilettantes and dabblers was the specialist knowledge they possessed, necessary for 'scientific' research, and the resources they had. The examination methods needed for empirical, 'scientific' research, for instance, and the techniques needed in order to present objective and logical theses, are necessarily acquired from university art history curricula. The luxury of time is also necessary for the amount of investigation required to make research empirical, and in order to have that luxury, it is necessary for researchers to devote themselves wholly to research activities, as professionals. In addition, the man-power necessary to engage in collaborative research, and to receive advice from other scholars during the research process, was concentrated at art institutes and the imperial universities. In order to access this man-power consistently, it must surely have been necessary to practice as a professional researcher at one of these research institutions, in day-to-day contact with one's fellow specialists.

The dilettantes and dabblers were thus excluded from positions of responsibility in the move towards 'scientific' research; the movement drew art historical research away from impressionistic criticism and hobbyist art appreciation, and transfigured it into a field of

specialist, academic research executed by professional scholars. The example of Tsuchida, who illuminated the possibilities of 'scientification' whilst pursuing a secondary career as a philosopher, is arguably anomalous; it belonged to the period of transition to a 'scientification' that was then nascent, and of a transition to professionalised, specialist research.

## Conclusion

To summarise: the historical significance of this trend towards 'scientification', which developed especially during the 1930s, lies in the research's objectivity, logicity, and empiricism. These were elevated by factors like the scientific approach in academic history, the Shunpōan Affair, and the academic and social context of the period; as a result of this, art history drew back from impressionistic criticism and hobbyist art appreciation, and attempted to persist as a specialist academic field.

Having established the occurrence of this turn towards the 'scientific'—during the 1930s, in particular—there are three aspects of this period's art history that can be looked at afresh. First, Japanese art history of the twentieth century, heretofore a lacuna within art historiographical research, was driven forward by the 'scientification' process. Second, the Japanese art history of this period drew on academic influences beyond Western art history, including Neo-Kantian theory and the methodologies of history. Third, though it may seem that art history of the pre-war and wartime periods was under the influence of nationalist ideology, the discipline steadily nurtured a 'scientific' ideal as well. These factors seem to have formed the premises for Japanese art history from the 1960s to the present, but this must now be verified. A consideration of the 'scientific' in Marxist art history and the 'scientific' in the natural sciences, both of which were excluded from this study, will hopefully be the subject of future discussion.

## Notes

- [1] Yashiro Yukio, introduction to *Jōdai yamato-e nenpyō*, by Ienaga Saburō (Zauhō Kankōkai, 1942), p. 2.
- [2] Saikokai, ed., *Kakiemon to Ironabeshima* (Gendai no Kagakusha, 1916), title page.
- [3] Akiyama Terukazu, "Nihon bijutsushi kenkyū no kinkyō: Hōryūji mondai wo chūshin ni", *Shigaku zasshi* 59-6 (1950), p. 63.
- [4] Ota Tomoki, "1910-50 nendai Nihon ni okeru bijutsushigaku no tenkai: gakujutsu infura, gakumonteki aidentiti, kenkyūhi jukyū taisei", *Karisuta* 18 (2011), p. 10-13.
- [5] Research concerning the Saikokai has appeared in, amongst other works, "Ōkouchi Masatoshi to Okuda Sei'ichi: tōjiki kenkyūkai, Saikokai, tōyō tōji kenkyūjo", by Kida Takuya, in *Tōyō Tōji Gakkai*, ed., *Tōyō tōji gakkai dai 39 kai taikai kenkyū happyō yōshi* (Tōyō Tōji Gakkai, 2011), p.1.
- [6] Ikuta Chōkō, ed., *Bungaku shingo shō jiten* (Shinchōsha, 1913), p. 49.
- [7] *Dai nihon kokugo jiten*, revised ed., vol. II (Fuzanbō, 1940), p. 379.
- [8] Shimomise Shizuichi, "Kimagure na zuihitsu (bijutsushi no hōhō ni okeru ichikōsatsu, sonota)", *Shūkyō to geijutsu* 7-1 (1926), p. 19.
- [9] Noma Seiroku, "Kodai butsumō no Jinruigaku teki kenkyū ni tsuite", *Kōkogaku zasshi* 26-4 (1936).
- [10] Kitamura Naomi & Ishizaki Tatsuji, *Kodai butsumō no jinruigaku teki kenkyū* (Iwanami Shoten, 1935).

- [11] Tsuchida Kyōson, “Shoki ukiyo-e kenkyū no hōhō”, *Ukiyo-e geijutsu* 2-1 (1933).
- [12] Kiyatake Moriya, “Tsuchida Kyōson to bunmei hiyō”, in Kanbayashi Tsunemichi, ed., *Kyō no bigakusha tachi* (Kōyō Shobō, 2006).
- [13] “Bijutsushigaku no hōkō”, *Gasetsu* 51 (1941), p. 205.
- [14] Imai Toshiki, “Rekishigaku kenkyūhō”, in Kokushi kenkyū-kai, ed., *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi*, vol. I (Iwanami Shoten, 1935), p. 10.
- [15] Tanabe Hajime, *Kagaku gairon* (Iwanami Shoten, 1918), p. 203-204.
- [16] Katō Tetsuhiro, “Ōtsuka Yasuji to kindai nihon ni okeru geijutsu kenkyū”, *Jinbun ronkyū* 51-1 (2001).
- [17] Ōtsuka Yasuji, “Bigaku gairon”, in *Ōtsuka hakase kōgi shū*, vol. I, by Ōtsuka Yasuji (Iwanami Shoten, 1933).
- [18] Ota, p. 30.
- [19] Isobe Masakane, “Bijutsushigaku no senketsu mondai: kantei, kanshō ni tsuite”, *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 2-4 (1934).
- [20] Hasumi Shigeyasu, “Naze ka no bijutsushi: Ienaga Saburō shi no ‘bijutshushi no hōhō’ no hihan ni yosete”, *Bigaku* 2-3 (1952), p. 14.
- [21] Ota, “1910-50 nendai ni okeru akademikku komyuniti no keisei”, *Bijutsufōramu* 21 28 (2013), etc.

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