

## **Eve LOH KAZUHARA Ruptures and Continuity in Pan-Asianism: New Insights into India-Japan Artistic Exchanges in the first half of the Twentieth Century**

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In the first half of the twentieth century, India and Japan embarked on a series of intellectual and artistic exchanges from 1901 to the 1930s. The beginning of these exchanges is often recounted in the meeting of Okakura Kakuzō (1863–1913) and Rabindranath Tagore (1886–1941) and revolves around their successors, namely Yokoyama Taikan, Hishida Shunsō and Abanindranath Tagore. The narrative histories of these personalities overshadow other Japanese artists and their activities in India. In this paper, I propose to consider these other artists and their place in the Japan-Bengal exchanges. The discussion will consider the biographic narratives of these artists and centre on their activities and artworks, primarily in seeing how they differed from the afore-mentioned artists. In my view, the artistic affiliation of these artists pre-India, together with their ideological distance from Okakura's Pan-Asianism, influenced their activities and reception of their work post-India.

One of the motivations behind my paper was trying to situate the artists who went to India, particularly those who have been mentioned albeit briefly in both Japanese and non-Japanese sources. There were also instances of encountering works on India and Indian themes by *nihonga* (Japanese-style painting) artists and that made me wonder if there was a deeper or wider connection to other artists. My initial task was to collate as much information on the Japanese artists' visits as there was no detailed listing anywhere. I was only interested in the pre-war period, from when Okakura first visited India to around the 1930s when I saw that activities had died down. Then I set out to see whom these Japanese artists connected with both in Japan and India. Their activities and itineraries were ways to check their affiliations and the extent of the interactions in India. In analysing the activities of these artists, I had also wanted to know if they continued with Okakura's pursuit of Pan-Asianism and if so, to what extent.

My paper builds on the existing research of Inaga Shigemi (Nichibunken) and also incorporate other Japanese and Indian sources. Inaga was the first to point out the close connection between artists Arai Kanpō (1878–1945) and Nandalal Bose (1883–1966). Part of this research was first presented at an International Symposium on Nandalal in 2008 and re-published as a paper titled "The Interaction of Bengali and Japanese Artistic Milieus in the First Half of the Twentieth Century (1901-1945): Rabindranath Tagore, Arai Kanpō and Nandalal Bose" (Inaga, 2009). This research represents a step towards the consideration of other significant relationships in this dialogue and I would like to add to this my inputs.

## Chronological Listing of Visits

Okakura Tenshin	1902; 1913
Yokoyama Taikan	1903
Hishida Shunsō	1903
Katsuta Shōkin	1906-1907; 1917
Kiriya Senrin	1911-1912; 1929
Imamura Shiko	1914
Arai Kanpō	1916-1917
Katayama Nanpu	1916
Nōsu Kōsetsu	1917; 1932-1936

Table 1: Dates of Visits to India by Japanese Artists

The table above shows the artists who visited India in the time frame previously mentioned. At first glance, the visits seem to be fairly consistent and right after Tagore's visit to Japan (1916), there is just about an increase in activity in 1917. But after studying some of these artists further, it is possible to think of these interactions that fall into two phases of India-Japan interactions, as I will explain further.

## Two Waves of India-Japan Interactions

The India-Japan interactions can be largely divided into two waves, the first of which was with Okakura, Rabindranath and their immediate successors (Yokoyama Taikan, Hishida Shunsō and Abanindranath Tagore). This was kicked-off by Okakura's inaugural visit to India in 1902 to meet Swami Vivekananda and his subsequent encounter with Rabindranath. Okakura passed away in 1913, the same year he made his second and last visit to India. In between those years, the activities of artists Katsuta Shōkin (1879–1963) and Kiriya Senrin (1877–1932) in India are noted. Katsuta was appointed to the Government School of Art in Calcutta (1906–1907) and Senrin was in India from 1911 to 1913. I was unable to find out much on Shōkin due to the inaccessibility of material and lack of available writings. Igarashi Masumi will be presenting on Shōkin in the same conference at the MOSAI 2018, focusing on his role as a Government-appointed tutor. Her research on Shōkin will no doubt help to shed light on this missing gap.

Tagore (Rabindranath Tagore) made his first visit to Japan in 1916 and from then on, another wave of India-Japan interactions intensified. In the following segments I will discuss the artists of the second wave, following first with their biographical details as a starting point in charting their encounters and time in India.

If the first wave of India-Japan interactions seemed as though it was Japan who actively pursued India, the tides turned in the second wave. A series of interactions picked

upwhen Tagore visited Japan in 1916. In fact, Tagore visited a total of five times from the years 1916–1929, his first and last visits marked by longer stays.(Kawai, *Anjali*, 2016). There, he was introduced to Arai Kanpō (1878–1945) who set out to make a copy of a screen painting upon his request. The screen painting was a work titled *Yorobōshi* (1915) by Shimomura Kanzaan (1873–1970). Kanzaan was one of the four artists who had relocated with the Japan Art Institute (Nihon Bijutsu-in) to the remote town of Izura; the rest being Yokoyama Taikan, Hishida Shunsō and Kimura Buzan (1876–1942). Upon Okakura’s departure from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1898, he established the Japan Art Institute and some students left together with him. On the screen painting that Tagore had commissioned, Inaga elaborates on the meaning of the work, asserting that while the work was initially not meant to symbolise spiritual awakening or political ideology, Tagore had interpreted it that way in hopes of inspiring young people in Asia. Upon completion of the copy, Tagore invited Kanpō to India to teach at the Bichitra Art Studio. At the end of Kanpō’s two-year stay, Tagore dedicated a poem to him as follows:

Dear Friend,  
One day you came to my room  
as if you were a guest.  
Today at your departure  
you came into my intimate soul.

- Rabindranath Tagore to Arai Kanpō, 1918 (Inaga, 2009, p.164)



Fig. 1. Monument of Tagore’s Poem to Arai. Image source: <http://sakaking.cocolog-nifty.com/>

Fig. 2. Close-up of monument showing poem in Bengali. Image source: <http://sakaking.cocolog-nifty.com/>

This was such a moving tribute that it has been inscribed onto a monument displaying the poem in Bengali and Japanese at the Kanpō Tagore Peace Park in Japan (see Fig. 1, Fig. 2). Given the emotional depth of these words, what was Tagore’s relationship with Kanpō, particularly in the post-Okakura period? While there remains no doubt how the figures of Okakura and Tagore were central to the India-Japan discourse, it may be that Tagore and the post-Okakura generation was able to connect more profoundly. Rustom Bharucha in *Another Asia* (2006) addresses this, noting that in fact Okakura and Tagore had only met twice and

spoke about each other, rather than to each other. They also did not seem to have corresponded to each other, nor read and quoted from each other's literary works. Kanpō, on the other hand, spent more time with Tagore, staying at his home and from the entries in his diaries, records eating together with them, and also assisting him with his public lectures on Swadeshi. It was mentioned that the image of *Bharat Mata* (1905), the icon for the Swadeshi movement was enlarged into a banner by a Japanese artist (Mitter, 1994, p.295). Inaga also described how relieved Kanpō felt upon seeing the safe return of Tagore after one of his campaigns. The Japanese artist who had painted the banner might have been Kanpō, given the timing and the description of events that took place. If it was indeed him, there is a possibility that Kanpō was more involved with the Swadeshi movement than is written. In trying to understand the Kanpō-Tagore relationship in this dialogue, I turn to his background and activities in Japan and India, extending the discussion led by Inaga.

### **The Second Wave: Arai Kanpō (1878–1945) and Nandalal Bose (1883–1966)**

The Japan Art Institute had a research branch, a preservation arm (located in Kyoto) and also published a journal, *Kokka* (translated to mean national glory) that is still in publication today. Kanpō was employed in the editorial and research arm of *Kokka* and worked there for 44 years. The journal produced high quality prints, often reproductions of works featured in the articles and he was in charge of copying ancient paintings and Buddhist works.



Fig. 3. Arai Kanpō, *Under the Bodhi Tree*, 1907, Collection of Sakura City Museum, Arai Kanpō Memorial Museum.

*Under the Bodhi Tree* (Fig.3) shows his submission to the first Bunten (a government-sponsored juried exhibition modeled after the French Salon) in 1907 although all that remains is just this preliminary sketch. This is the scene where Mara battles with Buddha and the style in which the demons of Mara and the depiction of the three daughters in their dress resemble those of Gandharan sculptures. However, the faces of the women remain Japanese. Inaga makes an observation that Kanpō was interested in the same subject matter as Taikan and Shunsō and through his paintings, evoked the presence of Buddha without actually depicting him (as with the case in *Under the Bodhi Tree*). Kanpō likely gained a lot of firsthand knowledge about Taikan and Shunsō's time in India and from the discussions on Indian art that were trending in *Kokka*. The work could be seen as a possible response to the trend at the time; as well as a display of his technical and research skills. As such, Kanpō was very much influenced by both the subject matter, its treatment in adhering to styles and conventions he had learnt through his role as a copyist.

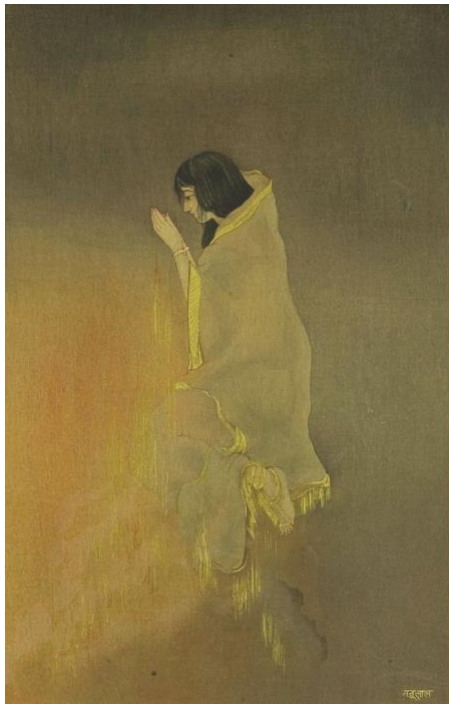


Fig. 4. Nandalal Bose, *Sati*, 1907. Collection of National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

While Taikan and Shunsō's artistic counterpart was Aban, Nandalal Bose and Arai Kanpō are often mentioned together. Bose was a student of Aban and became heavily influenced by the adapted wash technique the Japanese artists had introduced, for a significant period in his career. In 1909, Bose and Aban was introduced in *Kokka* (vol. 226, 1908), following a full colour reproduction of Aban's *Moonlight Music Party* (1905). So it seemed that even before Kanpō had reached India, he was already familiar with Bose's work. On the other hand, Bose was already making study trips to Ajanta to study and copy the wall frescoes. He had also grown quite close to the Tagores and was a frequent visitor, eventually staying at their Jorasanko home in 1909–1910. Kanpō took up the same activities years later

upon his arrival in India and from these shared experiences and activities, we can see how Kanpō and Bose could have formed a close relationship based on similar influences and their shared connection. They were also not far-off in age and thus could be at a similar point in their respective careers.

When Kanpō arrived in India, he travelled around with Tagore before settling in to teach at the Bichitra club where he met Bose. The *Bichitra Club* was founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1916 to bind together attempts of exploring new styles of painting and printmaking in one organisation. The meetings were often held at the south veranda of the Jorasanko residence. The club's agenda and programmes were later transitioned into Visva-bharati at Santiniketan (Critical Collective). The comment that Kanpō was the hope Tagore had for "accelerating the interest of members" at the club, showed the extent of Tagore's influence in the "golden years" of 1917-1918 and more importantly, his confidence and belief in him. What exactly did Kanpō teach at Bichitra club? At the time of writing, I was unable to find detailed records of his activities and interactions but looking at his background, we know that he trained under Mizuno Toshikata (1866–1908) who was active as an *ukiyo-e* and *nihonga* artist. This training was one that put him in good standing when he entered *Kokka* to do copying and printmaking work. His background in printing was also picked up by Tagore making his employment at Bichitra even more poignant. By then, Kanpō was exhibiting both at the Bunten and the Inten (juried exhibitions held by the government and Japan Art Institute respectively), thus it was likely that he prepared and executed large-scale works that were *de rigueur* at such exhibitions. Artists doing large-scale paintings were still a relatively novel concept in India then, and Tagore was known to have asked Aban and the Bengal school to move away from referencing miniature painting. Kanpō's close contact with Bose during the Bichitra years might have warmed him up to the idea of doing large-scale painting. This perhaps helps to elaborate why Inaga (2009) posed the possibility that Kanpō's commissioned copy of Kanzan's screen painting could have seeded the ideas behind Bose's mural frescoes of the 1930s.

Several watercolour paintings, sketches and ink drawings featuring seaside scenes appear among Kanpō and Bose's works. Kowshik (1983) wrote that Bose after the passing of his father, was invited by Tagore to Puri together with Kanpō, to get his spirits up. There, the two artists spent leisurely days travelling together, sketching and painting. The opportunity to be alone at Puri was almost like a holiday workshop, describes Dinkar, where Bose could focus on his brushwork with Kanpō close by. In return, Kanpō was able to observe firsthand, Bose's works of rich colour and vitality.



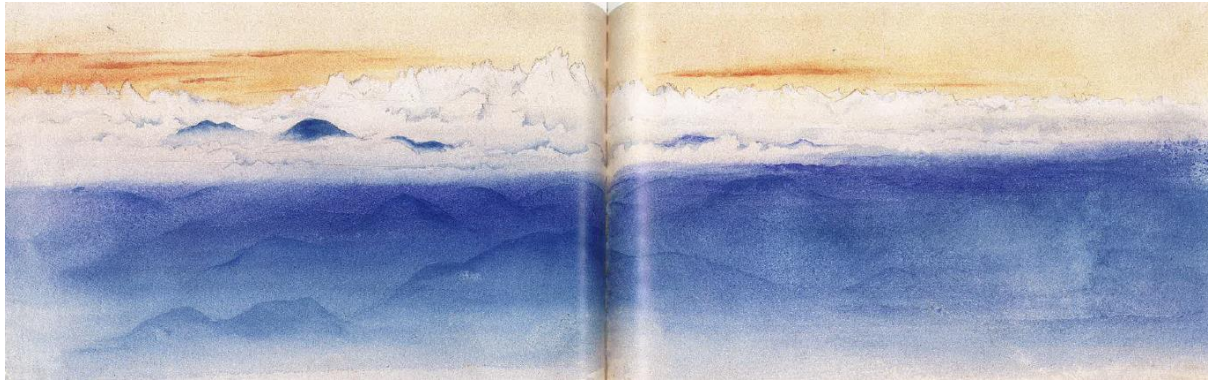


Fig. 5. Arai Kanpō, *Journey with Tagore to Darjeeling Himalaya Mountain Ranges*, 1917. Collection of Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Arts.

*Journey with Tagore to Darjeeling Himalaya Mountain Ranges* (Fig. 5) is a rare work of Kanpō's, unlike the conventional, monochrome background paintings he was painting before. Here, colour becomes the focus and he expresses this in an unreserved manner together with the undulating forms of the ranges in a soft atmospheric wash. The date of the work is recorded as the same year when he took a trip to Darjeeling after Puri although it was not clear if Bose had continued onto Darjeeling with them. Rather than a stylistic shift, Kanpō might have just been trying to depict how he felt when he was at Darjeeling, as a commemoration.

Undoubtedly, Kanpō's time in India was as if they were also lessons in colour; his post-India works werenoticeablyvivid (see for instance, Fig 6). Perhaps *Journey with Tagore to Darjeeling Himalaya Mountain Ranges* was the work that started him off with suchapplication of bold colours.

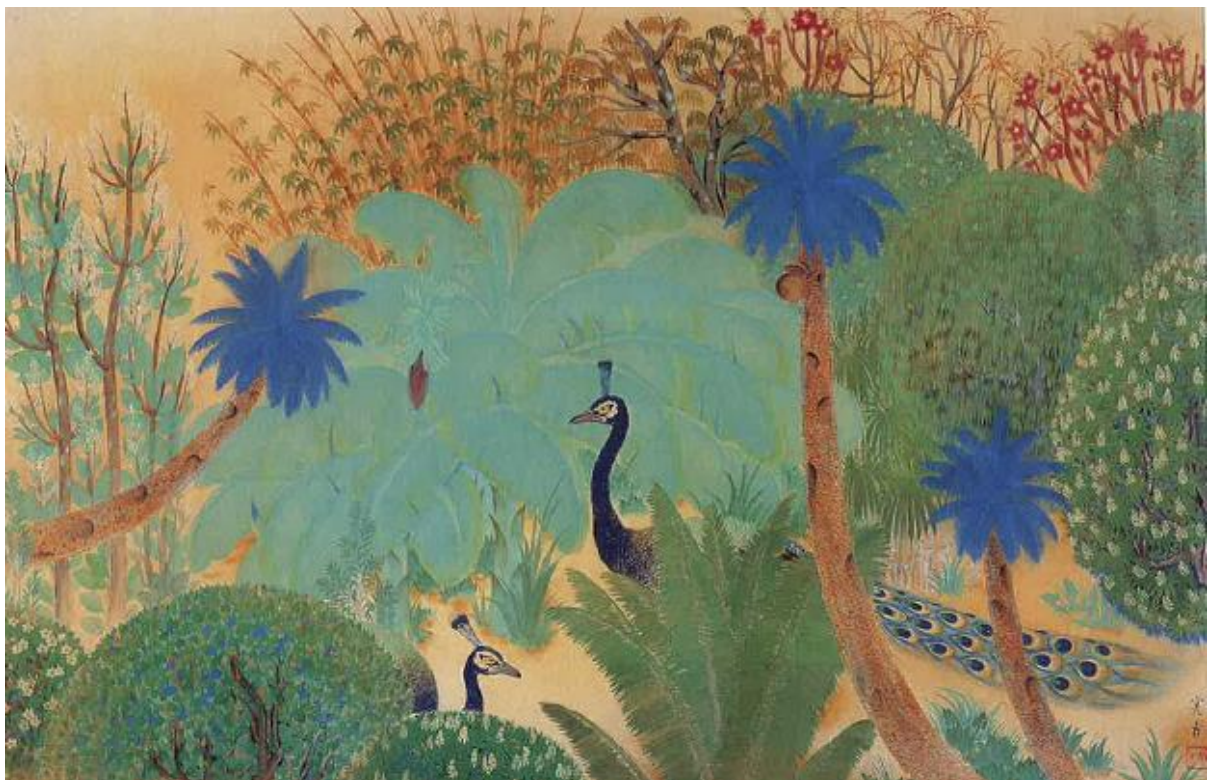


Fig. 6. Arai Kanpō, *Summer Breeze*, 1919. Collection of Meguro Gajōen Museum of Art.

Kanpō continued producing works with this virtuosity, using the motifs and styles he had seen during the two years at Ajanta, and his intimate knowledge of India—its people, the land and nature that he encountered. Even when he presented Buddhist-themed paintings, the references were very distinctly Indian, including Indian flora such as these from the Ashoka tree (Fig. 7) which were exotic and novel in Japan. Further analysis on Kanpō on his post-India activities of Kanpō will be addressed later in the conclusion.



Fig. 7. Arai Kanpō, *Maya*, 1918. Collection of Meguro Gajōen Museum of Art.



### Southern Orientation: Katayama Nanpu (1887-1980) and Imamura Shiko (1880-1916)

When I started putting together the list of artists who had travelled to India, it was easier to group some artists together by way of whom they had journeyed with but for others, there appears at first very little to suggest any relation other than their time in India. So the question then was what to make out of these artists? In the following section, I examine two artists, Katayama Nanpu and Imamura Shiko.

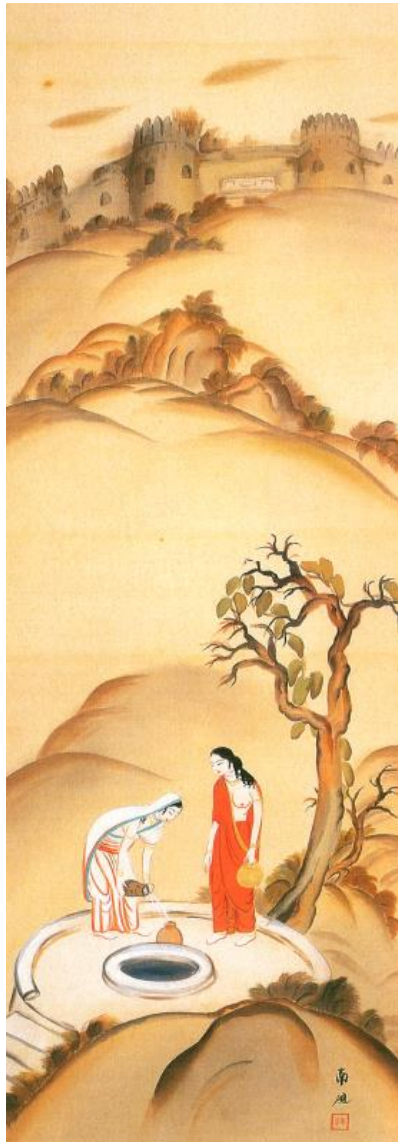


Fig. 8. Katayama Nanpu, *Tropical Country Nostalgia*, 1916. Collection of Sakura City Museum, Arai Kanpō Memorial Museum.

Kanpō's visit to Calcutta was accompanied by a fellow artist, Katayama Nanpu who had gone to India in the hopes of getting out of a slump in his career. In his youth, Nanpu joined the Tatsumi Gakkai (Tatsumi Art Society), an association of young artists of whom were mentored and encouraged to experiment. Amongst the society's exhibition jury and mentors, were artists Imamura Shiko and Tsuchida Bakusen (1887–1936). It was at Tatsumi that he was said to be influenced by Shiko. Prior to his India sojourn, Nanpu's early

career seemed promising as his inaugural attempt at the 7th Buntens won him the second best prize and glowing praises from the jury. In the following years, he joined the re-established Japan Art Institute under Taikan's leadership but received harsh criticism from Taikan on his submitted work to the Inten (the institute's annual exhibition). Nanpu followed Kanpō's tour to Calcutta and stayed at the Tagore's residence together with Kanpō. He spent his days sketching with Kanpō and over a three-month period, travelled to Agra, Delhi, Varanasi, Darjeeling and also to Bodhgaya, and the Elephanta caves. Fig. 8 shows an idyllic scene in a muted palette, reminiscent of Shiko's paintings on the same theme in Fig. 9. When he returned from India, Nanpu produced a large, eight-panel screen painting titled *Tropical Country Evening* (熱国の夕べ) (1917). The work was submitted at the 4<sup>th</sup> Inten but much to his dismay, was criticised for being "colour-blind" due to the vivid use of green and red. (Sekiyōkai, 1993, p. 149). Unfortunately for this paper, I was unable to access images of the painting by Nanpu but the purported controversial use of colours brings to mind the experimental work of Shiko's *Sceneries in the Tropical Land* (1914) (see Fig. 11 and 12) noted for its brilliant warm colours (second scroll).

This visit was the first and only visit to India and it was not until in his eighties that Nanpu visited Tahiti and produced an exhibition of works showing his sketches of both countries.

Nanpu was part of a phenomenon of Japanese artists who "went South" in the early 1900s. These artists, encouraged by growing artistic individualism (*kojinshugi*) in the Taishō years (1912–1926) looked for ways to express themselves creatively be it in subject matter, stylistic depiction or a renewed colour palette. They included artists like Tsuchida Bakusen and Ono Chikkyō (1889–1979) who produced works in the years 1912–1913 with themes of the Southern islands. The idea of the South for the Japanese artists often meant travelling southwards to the islands of Kyūshū, Shikoku or even Okinawa. But some went as far as the islands in the Southern Seas (*nanyang*) in search of their subject matter. The latter was more prevalent in the 1930s, following the expansion of the Japanese empire and the establishment of colonies in Taiwan, Yap island (Micronesia) and Saipan. Most of the artists were young, and had known about Gauguin's search for a paradise in Tahiti. In a way, Gauguin's story encouraged them to travel but it was also a way for some to heal (Kinjō, 2011, p. 27). Like Nanpu who had gone over to India to re-charge, Imamura Shiko made the journey two years earlier, in 1914.



Fig. 9, 10.(set of two) Imamura Shiko, *Girl retrieving water, Cowherd boy*, 1914. Collection of The Hiratsuka Museum of Art.



Fig. 11. Imamura Shiko, Detail of *Tropical Country Evening*, (Scroll 1) 1917. Collection of Tokyo National Museum.

Fig. 12. Imamura Shiko, Detail of *Tropical Country Evening*, (Scroll 2) 1917. Collection of Tokyo National Museum.

Shiko embarked on a long journey South, passing through Singapore, Penang, Rangoon and finally to India. Although he was not part of the Japan Art Institute, he was invited by its members to Izura where the Institute was relocated to. The vision of the Institute at Izura was to create a community where its members could make use of its isolated, rural location to focus on their artistic development. Prior to leaving for India, Shiko was hospitalized for liver issues and while convalescing in the hospital bed, repeatedly agonised over a lull in his work on the use of colour in his paintings. Ignoring his doctor's advice, Shiko pressed on with his trip and it is said that India was the turning point in his career. Upon his return, Shiko's post-India works generated heated debates on the application of bold colour.

Both Nanpu and Shiko, I posit, can be considered in the group or movement of artists who "went South", for inspiration and to heal. Although Nanpu had joined the re-organised Japan Art Institute under Taikan, the latter was already moving away from Okakura's style of Pan-Asianism in the years following the Institute's move to Izura. Shiko, who stirred the scene with his bold tropical colours, contributed to the rising new style of Japanese painting. He was noted for saying to his followers and students that he would destroy [the conventions of] *nihonga* in order to create a new movement. (Sekiyokai, 1993, p.149). Having laid that foundation down, his passing just two years after his trip to India, ended his ambition prematurely.

Nanpu and Shiko's time in India was short as with their interactions with Indian artists. Their primary motivation in going to India was to travel for inspiration, each in their own process of overcoming a slump in their respective career. In 1914, the Japan Art Institute was re-organised under the leadership of Taikan after Okakura had passed away. Under Taikan's leadership, it can be said that the already weakening ideals of Okakura's Pan-Asianism shifted to a Japan-centric ideology in the years of the Japanese empire expansion.



Thus for Nanpu who later joined the re-organised Japan Art Institute, there was already a distance from Okakura's Pan-Asian ideology. Post-India, he returned to painting *kachōga* (bird-and-flower paintings) after a series of three-year rejections that began with his "colour-blind" work. Slowly, he returned to the art scene, even joining Taikan at the 1930 *Roma Exhibition of Japanese Art (Esposizione d'Arte Giapponese)*, eventually joining the Japan Art Institute in 1939, sitting on the board of directors.

**Studying the Ajanta Caves: Kiriya Senrin (1877-1932), Katsuta Shōkin (1879-1963) and Nōsu Kōsetsu (1885-1973).**

Assisted by funding from *Kokka*, Kanpō was tasked to copy the frescoes at the Ajanta caves and work began in December of 1917. A young assistant, Asai Kampa (1897–1985) was sent to assist him. Months later, they were joined by Nōsu Kōsetsu (1885-1973), Kiriya Senrin (1877-1932) and Katsuta Shōkin (1879-1963). Shōkin and Nōsu worked together with Kanpō, while Senrin was there on a separate research activity. The Ajanta caves to the Japanese, were one of the many Buddhist pilgrimage sites of interest, and a rich source in discovering the roots of Buddhist painting. In particular, Okakura had identified the murals here as a possible influence on the Kondō Hall paintings at Horyūji Temple (Nara).

Senrin, who was researching the reproduction of Buddhist painting in Kyoto and Nara, set out to India to research this personally. It was not clear how he obtained the funds to do so although family interviews revealed that he was well-connected and thus the trip might have been possible through the backing of patrons. (Kissei, 2008). The expedition at Ajanta was physically demanding and Senrin spoke about a near escape from a tiger, highlighting the perils in undertaking such a task in these remote locations. The work at Ajanta finished in March of 1918, some four months after they began. The Ajanta caves brought together many like-minded artists—be it the Indian artists looking back at their heritage to Buddhist art, artists like Senrin who was tracing the roots of Buddhism to Kanpō and Nōsu, who were tasked to carry out the copying of the murals.

When the expedition ended, Kanpō was moved to tears at having to leave the site and wrote in his diary—"During the execution of the copy I was honoured by the chance to converse continuously with the souls of the artists of two thousand years ago. I myself also give thanks for the Buddha virtue" (Inaga, 2010, p.62). Inaga picks up on the attitude of Kanpō, stressing how his "pious and devoted" approach contrasted with that of historian and critic, Taki Seiichi's attitude towards Indian art and insistence on Japanese cultural superiority. It would seem that Seiichi was closer to Okakura in his ideals but Kanpō veered away from that, choosing to focus on Buddhist virtues, with more of an interest in spirituality. A few days after the Japanese team left Ajanta, they held an exhibition showing their mural drawings at the Japanese Association in Bombay. Senrin and Nōsu returned to Japan in May the same year and the former was involved with an exhibition in Asakusa (Tokyo) showing their work at Ajanta. Besides coming to Ajanta to seek and clarify the

interrelations with India and Horyūji, it was also an attempt in following Okakura's recognition of India as the source for Japanese art.

Prior to his work in Kyoto and Nara, Senrin enrolled at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and graduated from its nihonga course in 1908. Deeply influenced by Taikan's paintings of India, in particular, his 1909 work titled *Ryūtō (Floating Lanterns)* (Fig. 13), Senrin made his first visit to India in 1911.



Fig. 13. Yokoyama Taikan, *Ryūtō (Floating Lanterns)*, 1909. Collection of Museum of Modern Art, Ibaraki.

Senrin stayed in India from 1911 to 1913 to research Indian art and was very knowledgeable in the subject, even holding an exhibition on Indian art in Chiba. On his first trip to India, he met Okakura (likely in 1912) and Tagore, establishing a relationship and deepening his ties with them. While staying at the Tagore's house, his memoirs mentioned how Abanindranath had asked to see him paint, specifically to demonstrate nihonga for him

and his students (Shino, 2001). In 1916, he produced a work based on the same theme and title as Taikan's 1909 *Ryūtō* (Fig. 13), depicting a solitary woman performing an evening prayer offering (see Fig. 14). One wonders if the lone figure was a projection of Senrin himself. In the following year, his accepted works at the Bunten still showed influences from India as seen in Fig. 15 but this work could also be considered in the category of "Southern Orientation" paintings that typically tend to depict local women in idyllic lush nature. Senrin's second visit was in 1917 to study the ancient Buddhist wall paintings in the Ajanta Caves, following Okakura's comment on the link with Horyūji. Senrin's third visit to India was planned for by invitation of the Mahabodhi Society of India to discuss preparatory sketches for wall frescoes to be painted at a temple but it never materialised as he passed away abruptly.



Fig. 14. Kiriya Senrin, *Ryūtō (Floating Lanterns)*, 1916. Collection unknown. Image source: *Indo to Arai Kanpō exhibition catalogue*.



Fig. 15, 16. Kiriya Senrin, (Detail of ) *Cool Country*(two screens) , 1917. Collection unknown. Image source: *Indo to Arai Kanpō exhibition catalogue*.

### **Nōsu Kōsetsu (1885-1973) and the Mulagandha Kuti Vihar Temple (Sarnath)**

Nōsu Kōsetsu arrived in Calcutta at the Bichitra Studio in 1917 where he met Kanpō before departing for the expedition at Ajanta. Ironically, as the artist whose time in India was the longest amongst the artists discussed, he remains relatively unknown and unwritten about. As there is hardly any literature on Nōsu available in the English language, what I have gathered were from exhibition catalogues to an essay Nōsu had written on his memoirs in India (Nōsu, 2014). Putting together this with the archival information from the the Mukul



Dey archives (Ukil), I will briefly discuss his background and how he came into this discourse of India-Japan exchanges.

Nōsu enrolled at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, studying nihonga under the tutelage of Shimomura Kanza. His graduation work titled, *The Road to Yellow Springs* (see Fig. 17) depicts the subject of Yellow Springs or *Yomi* in Japanese, another term for the underworld in Chinese mythology. The deep springs was the place where people live in death and here, Nōsu has depicted a lady with her eyes closed and hands in *gassho* (palms pressed together in prayer or meditation), being rowed on a boat. Notice that the manner of depiction of both figures is shown to be Indian subjects. Nōsu's influence here could be traced to his interactions with Senrin, Taikan and Kanza who at the time were still researching and producing themes on Indian art. In fact, Senrin, although much older than Nōsu, was enrolled at the school in a year above him. In my view, this painting could be considered a form of *mitate*, a Japanese pictorial device where historical figures or legends were switched with contemporary subjects. Here, Nōsu has situated a contemporary preoccupation (India) within a legend (the notion of yellow springs), balancing the darkness of the underworld and light from the yellow river, in a display of stillness and spiritual peace. He continued to produce themes inspired by Indian subjects after his first visit. In the mid Taishō years (1918–1919), *Bathing in the Ganges* (Fig. 18) shows a scene of people by the Ganges river and the woman in the foreground closest to the viewer bears a striking resemblance to the manner of depiction in Indian miniature painting. The steps of the ghat here also draw some resemblance from the background of Taikan's 1909 *Ryūto*.



Fig.17.Nōsu Kōsetsu, *The Road to Yellow Springs*, 1908. Collection: Unknown. Image source: *Indo to Arai Kanpō exhibition catalogue*.

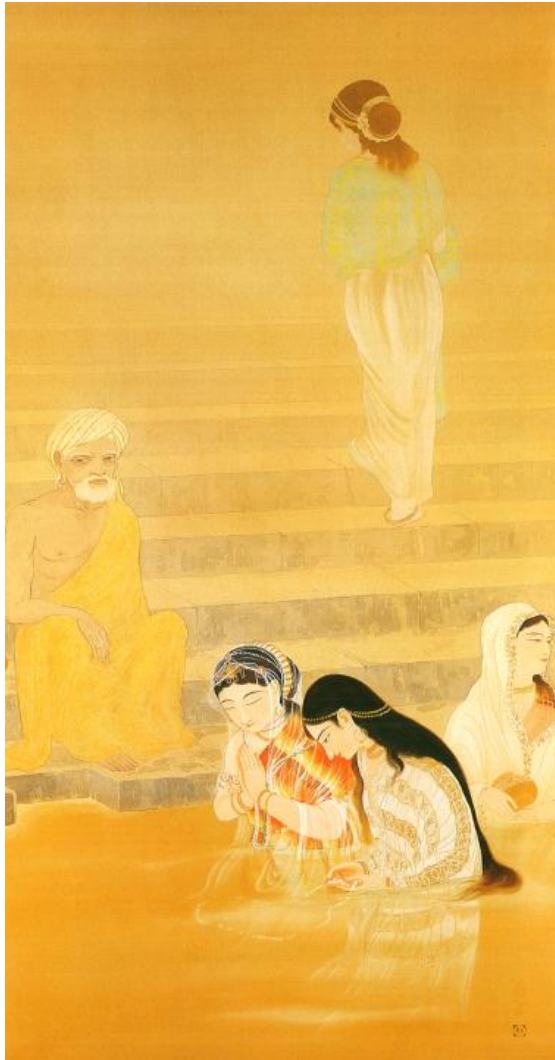


Fig. 18. Nōsu Kōsetsu, *Bathing in the Ganges*, Mid Taishō period (1918-1919). Collection: Unknown. Image source: *Indo to Arai Kanpō exhibition catalogue*.

When Senrin passed away abruptly, the commission of the frescoes landed in Nōsu's care. In his memoirs on the completion of the wall frescoes at Sarnath, he described the emotional meeting with Buddhist revivalist and founder of the Mahabodhi Society of India, Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) where they spoke from his bedside as Dharmapala lay severely ill and weakened (Nōsu, 2014, p.238). Upon seeing Nōsu, his spirits picked up and he remarked that it was fate that Buddhist art (in India) would be enriched by [the touch of] Japanese art. Encouraged by this, Nōsu went on to Santineketan where he was given a welcome party by Tagore and the Japan-India association. After Santiniketan, he visited an old friend, Mukul Dey (1895–1989) who had also interacted with Aban, Taikan and Kanzan in Japan. In fact, Mukul Dey and Nōsu met in 1917 at the Ajanta caves so this meeting was a reunion after a decade. Initially, Nōsu wrote that Mukul Dey had objected to a foreigner being tasked to work on the frescoes but later his doubts cleared and he was welcomed, whole-heartedly.

The Mulgandha Kuti Vihar temple was completed in 1931 under the supervision of the Mahabodhi Society and Nōsu began work on the frescoes, encouraged by the many who had placed their confidence and aspirations in him. The work stretched over four years, and there were many hurdles that Nōsu encountered. Amongst them, he details the problem of the temple's interior wall and how its surface interacted with the pigments that he used, changing its colours in the process. On top of this, heat and moisture from the rain also affected his compositions. After many trials and in consultation with a professor friend at the Tohoku Teikoku Daigaku (now Tohoku University), they solved this problem by using an underlay similar to that in Ajanta (a mixture of dung and clay), utilising only pigments derived from plants and minerals.

Sarnath was an important stop along the Buddhist pilgrimage sites and was visited by Buddhist followers of different Buddhist traditions, for instance, the Mahayana and Theravada schools. In recognition of this, Nōsu sought to reconcile Northern and Southern influences of Buddhist art, through his frescoes. An example of this is the inclusion and depiction of Aṅgulimāla (see Fig. 19) in one of the frescoes. Aṅgulimāla was a mass murderer who took to killing in order to accumulate 100 fingers as part of a tragic setup. The story was that he encountered Buddha, repented and became a convert. An important saint in the Theravada tradition, Aṅgulimāla is the protector for fertility and women in childbirth.

Originally planned for 30 scenes, funds soon ran out and through his own initiative, Nōsu took to opening a solo exhibition in Bombay to raise funds personally in order to continue the project. Besides technical and financial difficulties, Nōsu also had to overcome personal difficulties such as the passing away of a supporter and Buddhist intellectual, Watanabe Kaigyoku (1872–1933), the distance away from his family in Japan as well as his responsibility of providing for them. Despite these myriad of difficulties, Tagore's encouraging words, "Dedicate yourself to Buddha" kept Nōsu going. Finally, in 1936, the frescoes at Sarnath were completed. For further information on Nōsu and his activities in India, Ukil provides a good account including rare photographs and collaterals of his time in India.



Fig. 19. Nōsu Kōsetsu. (detail of) Anṅulimāla at Mulgandha Kuti Vihar, Sarnath. Photo credit: Stephen Jenkins, Humboldt State University.

## Conclusion

With Taikan, Shunsō and Aban, there was the romantic Pan-Asian aesthetic that they tried to pursue together. In their context, the looming Western hegemony and dominance was much also stronger then as Japan was still building up its economic and military strength. Okakura's personawas also an enigmatic, strong driving force, his cosmopolitan connections giving the Pan-Asian discourse much prominence. Additionally, Japan's victory at the Russo-Japanese war gave a boost and a greater self-confidence in "leading the Asian unification" via Pan-Asianism emerged. But the personal events of Okakura, his extended absence in Japan and the closure of the Japan Art Institute in Izura, followed eventually by his passing weakened the Pan-Asian discourse. The Japan Art Institute artists did not as a cohesive unit follow-up on Okakura's Pan-Asian ideology as they re-calibrated their objectives inwards towards Japan in producing works for the Bunten. Taikan, the strongest student of Okakura's and longest-living remaining member of this legacy re-founded the Japan Art Institute in 1914. With him, it can be said that the already weakening ideals of Pan-Asiansim shifted to a Japan-centric ideology in the years of the Japanese empire expansion. It was during these years that Tagore, who was known not to support these mass demonstrations of nationalism, denounced Japan's imperial and military activities through his public lectures.

When it came to Kanpō and Bose, there did not seem to be this cohesive, urgent effort like that of the first interaction. Tagore had placed much hopes in Kanpō to reinvigorate the Bengali artists (at Bichitra) and this became particularly successful in the friendship with Bose. It seemed as though they were each other's sparks in the development of their



individual artistic practice. Kanpō went back to Japan producing Indian themed works and paintings of vivid colour and energy associated with tropical countries. For a while, he was noticed for these novel expressions but in his later career, weaned his compositions off Indian imagery. Bose on the other hand, worked on his calligraphic, expressive line paintings, eventually developing his “touch work” technique and in his late career, switched to sumi-e paintings. Touch work is essentially the expressionist use of line in colour, as explained by Bose —“In touch work there is a calligraphic quality too but this has to emerge from the feeling: like a wheel-track following a cart-wheel, or a shadow following a moving man or animal, the brush should follow the mind” (Subramanyan, 1999, p.194). It is not a stretch to say that these calligraphic lines tutored by Kanpō can be traced in the murals and frescoes of his later career.

It is interesting to note how Kanpō came into the picture, really as a dispatched technical copyist sent by *Kokka* rather than an immediate disciple of Okakura like Taikan and Shunsō. But his influence on another artist’s practice is also equally significant. Also, for the “Southern Orientation” artists, although their time passing through India was not enough for them to engage their Indian counterparts in a significant manner, India engaged them in ways that gave them renewed energy and altered their practice, such as the case of Shiko and Nanpu. Last but not least, the stories of independent Buddhist and Indian art researcher-artist like Senrin, and dispatched artist, Nōsu are also beginning to surface as I have attempted in my paper, as well as Igarashi’s research on Shōkin. One common thread with Senrin, Nōsu and Kanpō, is that they largely remained artists who were religious in practice and association and were sought to produce Buddhist religious and related works. Kanpō for instance, had a successful career working post-India. He worked on high profile commissioned projects that included portraits for the emperor’s silver wedding anniversary, ceiling paintings for Meguro Gajōen (tangible cultural property), copying and restoration works for Hōryūji Temple (Nara). He and Nanpu were also involved in the 1930 *Esposizione D’arte Giapponese in Roma* (Exhibition of Japanese Art) and Kanpō was later employed as an Imperial household artist.

The second wave of interactions, at least from the Japanese side, receives less attention as the iconic Okakura-Taikan- Shunsō narrative. But while Kanpō-Bose as a pair, might have not been as written about in their contributions towards the making of a national art, their relationship was still as important. They connected on a deeper and spiritual level, one referenced to by Tagore in his departure poem. What I have tried to achieve in this paper was firstly to collate disparate information on Japanese artists in India into a meaningful narrative. The discussions here that I presented are updated insights and also in linking the activities of the second period back to the overall discussion of Pan-Asianism. However, there remains more work to be done. I would appreciate further advice on relevant sources, particularly on the Indian side in filling out the gaps of this India-Japan exchange. I also acknowledge that there could be more research looking at Indian artists Gagendranath Tagore and Bose’s son Biswaraup who had spent time studying in Japan. There is definitely much potential in expanding the Kanpō-Bose connection to include more artists, for a start.

In conclusion, this period allows us to gain insights into a larger discussion—the development of modern art and the trajectory of exchanges in both countries. Although art historians now, more so than ever, are engaging in dialogues on global art histories, where is the relevance of a “Pan-Asia” in this and why does it even matter? Firstly, as the historian Carol Gluck famously said “The task of ideology is never finished”, there might be future versions of continuity or rupture to Okakura’s Pan-Asianism. Secondly, I think that an important answer lies in the connections, in connected art histories. The India-Japan exchanges, had they not taken place, would have resulted in a different visual language in the development of modern art in the respective countries; all these wonderful works that we have discussed might not have existed. Sometimes, these transcultural influences are not that straightforward in that we can immediately discern the result in styles or subject matter in the artworks that these artists produced. These connections can go deeper, as Rustom Bharucha has explored through the ideas of friendship, intimacy and cross-cultural solidarities in looking at Okakura and Tagore. Modernity accorded ease of travel though in their times, it was still an arduous feat to travel for weeks by sea and land to get to their destinations. This speaks volumes about the desire of modern artists to see and learn about others, not to mention the dedication like those of Kanpō who spent months in treacherous conditions making copies of the Ajanta murals. The existence of the Pan-Asian ideology also allowed artists to look confidently back into their indigenous traditions for inspiration. While pursuing a Pan-Asian aesthetic, the artists had to, in the words of Tagore, break down their “narrow domestic walls” and “awakened” to interact, understand and think of the other before one can even begin to paint “the other”.

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## **Annex**

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
By narrow domestic walls

Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way  
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

- Prarthana by Rabindranath Tagore in Naibedya, 1901.