

---

# Kawanabe Kyōsai and Émile Guimet: Revisiting Guimet's Role as Kyōsai's Discoverer

Freya Terryn



1.  
Photograph of Émile Guimet (seated on the left), Félix Régamey (seated on the right) and their two interpreters for the trip along the Tōkaidō road, Utahara Jūzaburō (c.1861–1882; standing on the left) and Kondō Tokutarō (1856–1920; standing in the middle), and their cook 'Jirō' (standing on the right).

Bibliothèque nationale de France  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84364056>

The Lyonnais industrialist and art collector Émile Guimet has long been credited for introducing the painter and print designer Kawanabe Kyōsai to the European public during the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, a recently discovered manuscript in French written by the Japanese legal scholar Tomii Masaakira, who was working for Guimet at the time, reveals Tomii to be a source of Guimet's appreciation of Kyōsai.

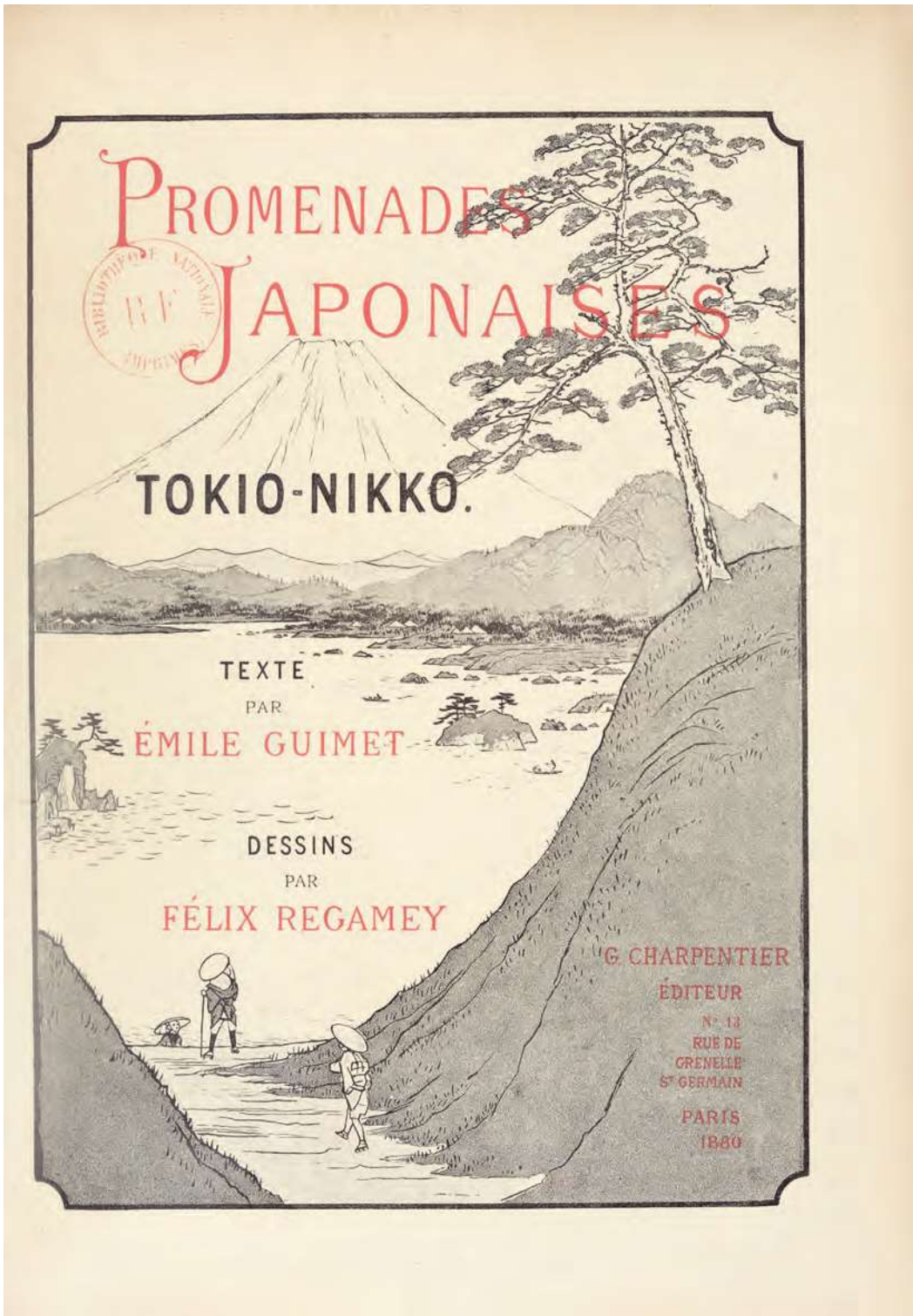
In 1876, Émile Guimet (1836–1918), accompanied by the artist Félix Régamey (1844–1907), embarked on a journey across Asia, stopping in Japan, China, and India, to pursue his long interest in archaic religions and conduct a comparative study between these countries and the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome (fig. 1). On the advice of friends, he requested a diplomatic passport to complete this entirely self-funded survey of Eastern religions under the auspices of the French Ministry of Public Instruction.<sup>1</sup> Following his return, Guimet published *Promenades Japonaises* in 1878 and *Promenades Japonaises: Tokio-Nikko* in 1880, both illustrated by Régamey. The latter publication stands out as its twenty-ninth chapter, entitled *Peintre et Malfaiteur*, introduced the European public to the print artist and painter Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831–1889), whom Guimet visited and ordered works from during his stay in Tokyo. It is also the first publication that introduced Kyōsai to the West and effectively launched the artist to fame in Europe from 1880 onward, particularly in France.

Yet, a manuscript preserved in the Bibliothèque-Archives of the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques Guimet (henceforth Musée Guimet) raises questions about the sole credit attributed to Guimet for introducing Kyōsai to Europe and suggests the potential involvement of another individual: Tomii Masaakira (1858–1935), a renowned scholar of civil law who helped with drafting the Meiji Civil Code (1896). This article, therefore, examines the prevailing narrative surrounding Guimet's role in Kyōsai's introduction and seeks to shed new light on the multi-faceted story behind Kyōsai's recognition in France from 1880 onwards. But before the manuscript is investigated, the paper will assess Guimet's role in and contribution to Kyōsai's European recognition.

## Guimet & Kyōsai

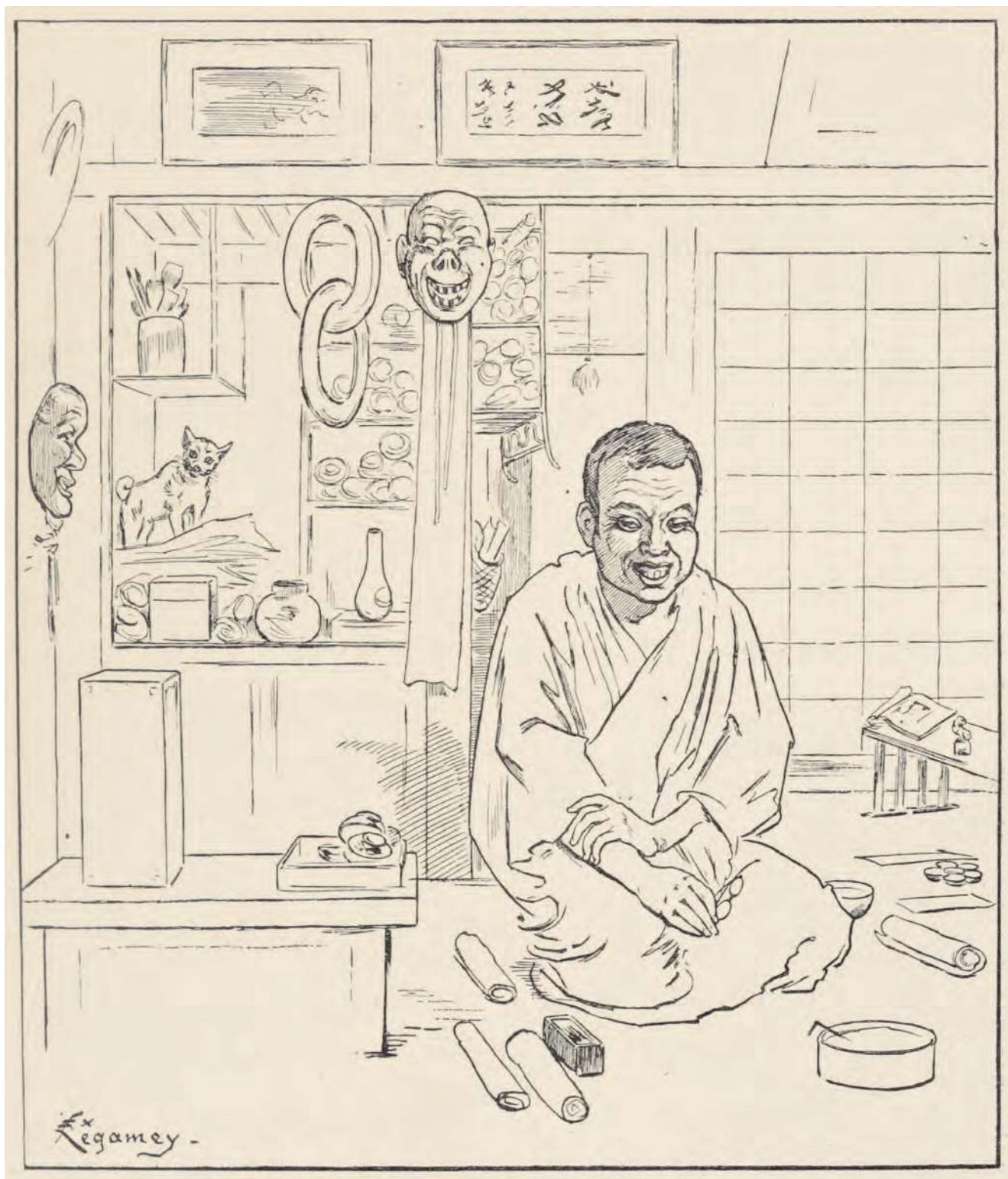
It remains undisputed that Guimet wrote and published the first account of Kyōsai in the West.<sup>2</sup> This is supported by, for instance, the title page that lists Guimet as the sole author of the text (*texte par Émile Guimet*) and the lack of acknowledgements (fig. 2). In addition, Guimet describes the difficulties he faced in order to uncover the identity of Kyōsai as apparently no one was willing to identify him as the artist of the series of humoristic images he found in Tokyo and Yokohama.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, when Guimet did succeed in meeting up with Kyōsai, he established the authority of his account by suggesting that it was Kyōsai himself who had entrusted him with his life story.<sup>4</sup>

This life story is recounted in the twenty-ninth chapter, in which Guimet introduces Kyōsai through a discussion of his training, dedication to satirical and humoristic art, attitudes towards authorities, and two prints from the series *Kyōsai hyakuzu* (One Hundred Pictures by Kyōsai, 1863–1866).<sup>5</sup> This is followed by the thirtieth chapter, entitled *Un Duel*, that describes Guimet and Régamey's visit to Kyōsai's house and the spirited 'sketching duel' that took place between Kyōsai and Régamey (fig. 3). Régamey's request to capture Kyōsai's likeness resulted in both artists posing for each other's portrait. Régamey portrayed Kyōsai's bust in a three-quarters view, modelling his face using a variation of grey tones and revealing his overbite, whereas Kyōsai depicted Régamey seated upright with his legs extended before him, bent at the knees, capturing the French artist in the act of drawing his portrait.<sup>6</sup> After the publication of Guimet's book, his authority as the discoverer of Kyōsai to the European public was immediately established in France as Eugène Véron (1825–1889) repeated parts of Guimet's account verbatim in 1880 and Louis Gonse (1846–1921) also credited Guimet with Kyōsai's introduction in 1883.<sup>7</sup>



2.  
Title page of *Promenades japonaises: Tokio-Nikko* that identifies Guimet as the sole author of the book.

Bibliothèque nationale de France  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6581625t>



3.  
Illustration by Régamey that depicts Kyōsai in his house,  
included in *Promenades japonaises: Tokio-Nikko*.

Bibliothèque nationale de France  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6581625t>

Enoshima.<sup>9</sup> When in Tokyo, and thus for his visit to Kyōsai's house, and for his trip to Nikko, Guimet relied on the interpretative skills of Kondō Tokutarō (1856–1920), a student of Léon Dury (1822–1891), the old director of the French School in Kyoto and a professor of French in Tokyo at the time. Another student of Dury, Utahara Jūzaburō 歌原十三郎 (c.1861–1882), later joined Guimet's group when they travelled along the Tōkaidō road to Kyoto.

The scholar Oikawa Shigeru has attempted to uncover Guimet's source material for the chapter on Kyōsai and identified the discrepancies between Guimet's account and biographies and documents of Kyōsai published after *Promenades Japonaises: Tokio-Nikko*. To explain the discrepancies between Guimet's account and Kyōsai's biographical details, such as Kyōsai being imprisoned twice and the content of the painting that got him incarcerated in 1870, Oikawa concludes that: "The honour of being the first to discover and tell Europe about an unknown painter may have been made even more dramatic by fabricating such a story."<sup>10</sup>

They explain the source material of other parts of Guimet's account, which do not contradict Kyōsai's biographical details, Oikawa asserts that Guimet was able to introduce Kyōsai and his work in such detail after having seen the paintings collected by Wirgman.<sup>11</sup> The art historian Yamaguchi Sei-ichi, in contrast, assumes that Guimet's account on Kyōsai is what Guimet heard directly from the artist.<sup>12</sup> Based on this understanding, he attributes the faulty transliteration of Kyōsai's signature 'Shoofoo-Kiosai' as Guimet having misheard or misremembered the signature 'Shōjō Kyōsai'.

However, there is no concrete evidence for either Oikawa or Yamaguchi's claims. Nor has the possibility been considered that Guimet might have enlisted the help of individuals upon his return to France – which



would not come as a surprise since the book was published four years after the encounter and because he received help when he was in Japan. Indeed, there is a manuscript preserved at Musée Guimet, enlisted as 'Notes sur la peinture japonaise' in the National Museum Library Collective Catalogue, and its content suggests that Guimet relied heavily on this manuscript to introduce Kyōsai to the European public.<sup>13</sup> According to Musée Guimet, the author of this manuscript is Tomii Masaakira.

4.  
Tomii Masaakira.  
Wikimedia Commons.



5.  
Monochrome reproduction  
of Kyōsai's print, *Amida  
no hikari mo zenishidai*,  
included in *Promenades  
japonaises: Tokio-Nikko*.

Bibliothèque nationale de France  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6581625t>

## Guimet & Tomii

Tomii Masaakira is remembered today as one of the most important jurists of the Meiji period (1868–1912) who served on the drafting committee of the Meiji Civil Code of 1896 (fig. 4). As such, Tomii is known as one of the ‘Three Civil Law Doctors’ (*minpō sanhakase*) with Hozumi Nobushige (1855–1926) and Ume Kenjirō (1860–1910). But otherwise, little is known about Tomii, his further biography, or his studies abroad in France between 1877 and 1883. It is known that Tomii pursued a law degree at the Faculty of Law in Lyon and obtained his doctorate in 1883 with the support of Guimet.<sup>14</sup> With the sizeable collection that Guimet had amassed in Japan – around 300 religious paintings and 600 statues of deities and Buddhas, as well as 1,000 Japanese and Chinese books – he

needed help with cataloguing his collection and also wanted to establish a Japanese language school in Lyon. For these ambitious plans Guimet relied on young and enthusiastic Japanese men who wanted to pursue a degree of their choice at a French university, and, as a result, Tomii arrived in Lyon in July 1877 together with Imaizumi Yūsaku (1850–1931).<sup>15</sup>

Tomii ended up doing a high number of different tasks for Guimet while he was in France, working about six hours a day and receiving 80 francs a month.<sup>16</sup> For Guimet’s collection he wrote descriptions in French and translated texts from Japanese to French. As such, Tomii contributed directly to the opening of Guimet’s museum in Lyon, which was officially inaugurated in September 1879, and he also assisted with publications for the museum including the first, second, and third volumes of the *Annales du Musée Guimet* and

the museum's first catalogue published in 1880.<sup>17</sup> Guimet also involved Tomii in his other activities such as his ambition to establish a Japanese language school in Lyon catering to people involved in foreign trade.<sup>18</sup> Guimet envisioned this school going beyond a traditional language school as he wanted to create a dedicated space where people could discuss religious matters and that would allow him to publish French translations of the unpublished documents he had brought back from his travels.<sup>19</sup> The language school was officially established on 3 February 1879, and Tomii was teaching Japanese thrice weekly until July and then twice a week from October onwards.

Tomii also conducted research for Guimet which he presented at conferences or had published in the *Annales du Musée Guimet*.<sup>20</sup> At the *Congrès provincial des orientalistes* organised by Guimet in Lyon from 31 August to 7 September 1878, Tomii presented his own research on domestic products from Hokkaido, as well as translated and presented three papers on Imaizumi's behalf.<sup>21</sup> Tomii also gave lectures on other occasions, for example, one on Japan's economic development at the *Société d'économie politique de Lyon* on 5 December 1879.<sup>22</sup>

### Tomii's *Notes sur la peinture japonaise*

While the content of the abovementioned jobs has been acknowledged by previous literature, Tomii's manuscript *Notes sur la peinture japonaise* has never been mentioned.<sup>23</sup> This is probably due to previous research in the field of Japanese legal history having prioritised Tomii's private correspondence to Guimet that is also housed in the Bibliothèque-Archives of Musée Guimet.<sup>24</sup> In addition, an inscription on the cover of the manuscript attributes the notebook to Tomii, as Tomii did not sign the manuscript himself. Thus, it is first necessary to establish which of the essays included in the

manuscript, summarised in table 1, were truly written by Tomii.

By comparing the handwriting of the manuscript with Tomii's private correspondence, I was able to determine that Tomii wrote the essays 'Notes sur la peinture japonaise', 'Kioo-sai', 'Explication d'un dessin de Kioosai: origine des Amida, Kouannon et Seishi, honorés dans le temple Zénkooji à Sinano', and the final part of the manuscript that explains several Japanese motifs. The only part of the manuscript that is difficult to attribute to Tomii, is the essay 'historiette de la fondation du temple Genkooji (sic)'. The handwriting is characterised by smooth, flowing lines, rounded shapes, and small flourishes, and, above all, contrasts with Tomii's slanted, more angular handwriting. Unfortunately, the identity of the second author is difficult to determine as this essay is also unsigned, although it can be surmised that it is by someone who was closely involved in Guimet's activities.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, not the entire manuscript is by the hand of Tomii – however, this particular essay is in essence an abbreviated version of Tomii's that explains one print of the series *One Hundred Pictures by Kyōsai*. This is perhaps why Guimet did not employ this particular part of the manuscript to write the twenty-ninth chapter of his book but relied on Tomii's essays instead, particularly 'Kioo-sai' and 'explication d'un dessin de Kioosai: origine des Amida, Kouannon et Seishi, honorés dans le temple Zénkooji à Sinano'.<sup>26</sup> Effectively, Guimet depended on Tomii's assessment of the artist and interpretation of the print to write the chapter that was so crucial to Kyōsai's introduction to Europe. In order to establish the degree to which Guimet engaged with Tomii's essays, I will outline the content of each essay and assess the impact they had on Guimet's final version.

**Table 1: Overview of the content of the manuscript *Notes sur la peinture japonaise*.**

Essay	English translation	Author
Notes sur la peinture japonaise	Notes on Japanese painting	Tomii
Kioo-saï	Kyōsai	Tomii
Explication d'un dessin de Kioosaï: Origine des Amida, Kouannon et Seishi, honorés dans le temple Zénkooji à Sinano	Explanation of a drawing by Kyōsai: Origin of Amida, Kannon and Seishi, honoured in the Zenkō-ji temple in Shinano	Tomii
Historiette de la fondation du temple Ginkooji (sic)	History of the founding of the Zenkō-ji temple	Unknown
Quelques symboles (pin-bambou-prunier, pin- grue, prunier-ougouissou, une fleur de lotus blanc, kaya, kaki, grande orange, chauve- souris, cerf, Djussai ou Hokousokoujiu)	Some symbols (pine-bamboo-plum, pine- crane, plum-small nightingale, a white lotus flower, kaya, kaki, large orange, bat, deer, and Fukurokuju (?))	Tomii

**Table 2: Changes in the content of Tomii's first and second composition on Kyōsai. What is written in cursive in brackets is the original wording in Tomii's manuscript.**

First composition	Second composition
No information is given where Kyōsai was born.	Kyōsai is born in Edo ( <i>Yedo</i> ).
Kyōsai studied with Kano, a painter employed by the shogun.	Kyōsai studied with Karino, a painter employed by the shogun.
Kyōsai rebelled against the traditional ways of learning of his master, such as imitating the works of grand masters. As a result, his master expelled him and Kyōsai indulged himself in making 'crazy drawings' ( <i>dessins insensés</i> ), often even inappropriate ones.	Kyōsai found his master's style lacking in liveliness and boldness. He quit and devoted himself solely to the art of caricature.
Everyone agrees that Kyōsai is the best artist when it comes to caricatures.	Kyōsai is considered one of the country's most skilful painters, especially when it comes to caricatures.
Kyōsai drinks a lot of wine (not sake!). This is mentioned in the last paragraph of the composition.	Kyōsai drinks a lot of sake and drinks to excess. This is mentioned in the first paragraph of the composition.
Because of his caricatures, Kyōsai was imprisoned a total of seven times.	Because of his caricatures, Kyōsai was imprisoned four times. He was incarcerated additional times, but the number is left to the reader's imagination.



<p>The work that resulted in Kyōsai’s first imprisonment was a picture of the shogun’s head to demonstrate that sooner or later he would be dethroned by the emperor’s supporters.</p>	<p>The work that resulted in Kyōsai’s first imprisonment was a picture that depicted the continuous retreat of shogunal forces as a chess game and in a state of being threatened in every way (perhaps caricaturising the Boshin War (1868-1869)?).</p>
<p>Another work that got Kyōsai into trouble, was a picture of women (read: prostitutes) who were chasing each other with their tongues on their bellies, to show that they were laughing at the ineffective measures taken by the government to punish their immoral behaviour.</p>	<p>Two more works that Kyosai into trouble are introduced. First, he portrayed dissatisfied warriors on the head of ministers of the shogun (perhaps also a caricature of the Boshin War?). Second, he drew the vain efforts of the shogunate to stop indecent women (read: prostitutes).</p>
<p>Kyōsai’s art names are not introduced.</p>	<p>Two art names of Kyōsai are introduced. He signed his works ‘Kio-sai’, meaning ‘a madman’ (<i>un fou</i>). His contemporaries called him ‘shōjō’, a name for a fictitious animal who, according to ancient fables, drank a lot of sake without ever getting drunk. Kyōsai gladly accepted this nickname and from then on called himself ‘shōjō Kyōsai’ (<i>Shoojoo Kiosai</i>) and continued to use it only for his caricatures.</p>
<p>No anecdote of a painting he did while drunk.</p>	<p>Tomii introduces an anecdote of a painting Kyōsai did while drunk, two or three years before the book was published. Tomii tells the story of someone who had plastered white paper against the walls of his house and asked Kyōsai to paint something on it. Kyōsai, who was drunk at the time, immediately took out his brush and, said “Look at my talent”, and drew a large horizontal line in black ink. The line, despite its extreme length, was drawn with remarkable accuracy. To complete the painting, Kyōsai represented all sorts of people – men and women, old and young, nobles and commoners, rich and poor – walking on the previously painted line, which came to represent a rope. Some were walking with the support of others or their walking sticks; others were holding each other’s hands; there were the blind and the sick; there were the warriors and the civil servants. Some of them walked with their head held high, others sluggishly; some would fall, and others were holding on the rope with their hands; and finally, some were happy and smiling, whereas others were crying. Tomii concludes the story by narrating that Kyōsai’s commented to his own painting that each of us in the world leads his existence in this way, that some live in great wealth, while others are always looking for the means of existence.</p>

Discussion of the 1870 shogakai that resulted in Kyōsai's arrest:

One day after the reform, there was a conference of illustrators in Tokyo. All the great illustrators from the provinces gathered in the capital. Several thousand people attended. Kyōsai also took part in the conference. He was asked to draw the general appearance of the country at that time. Kyōsai immediately took up his brush and drew a couple of foreigners openly breaking wind in front of a number of people portrayed in a state of misery and begging them to stop. Kyōsai was asked who these people were and replied that they were the emperor, the shogun and his ministers. At this point, the police immediately rushed to him and put him in cuffs. Some of his friends who were there begged the police officers to pardon him as a drunkard. Kyōsai, in contrast, claimed he was not a drunkard and asked them to bring him to justice.

Discussion of the 1870 shogakai that resulted in Kyōsai's arrest:

About eleven years ago, when the imperial government regained its power, a congress of painters and scholars was held in Tokyo. All the country's great scholars, poets and illustrators, numbering several thousand, gathered in the new capital. Kyōsai was also a member of the congress. He was asked to draw something. The painter immediately took up his brush and drew a number of people decently dressed but each holding their nose with their hands in front of foreigners who were openly farting in front of them. When asked who these characters were, Kyōsai referred to each of them by the name of a minister of the time and declared that the government was entirely under the yoke of foreign thieves. From then on, despite the apologies of all those present, the police put him in cuffs.

## Peintre et Malfaiteur: Tomii on the Legend of the Zenkō-ji Temple

In the twenty-ninth chapter 'Peintre et Malfaiteur', Guimet inserted two woodblock prints from the series *One Hundred Pictures by Kyōsai*. This series is one of Kyōsai's earliest independent works in the genre known as *kyōga* (crazy pictures) and consists of mostly comic renditions of common proverbs or illustrations of riotous or absurd behaviour.<sup>27</sup> Considering Guimet's primary interest in the religions of Japan, the two selected prints explain Buddhist-related content.

The first print featured in Guimet's book (fig. 5) is a monochrome reproduction of the top part of figure 6, entitled *Amida no hikari mo zenishidai*, and is dedicated to the proverb of the same name. The proverb states that the Buddha's blessings depend on the amount of money he receives, implying that all things can be managed by the power of money.

Kyōsai's print illustrates what happens when you meet and do not meet these conditions: on the left, we see a young couple offering an abundant amount of money to the Buddha, who, in return, greets the couple with beneficent rays that will surely bless them greatly; but on the right, we see an elderly couple sacrificing only small trinkets that the Buddha refuses to accept.<sup>28</sup> This interpretation of the proverb is not included in Tomii's manuscript and therefore Tomii did not help with this interpretation.

The second image (fig. 7) is a monochrome reproduction of figure 8, which is one of Kyōsai's prints known by the title *Suna no naka no ōgon*. Guimet even accompanied this illustration with a short comment: 'One of the best-known legends is that of lake Hori-e in Osaka'. It is exactly to this topic to which Tomii dedicated his essay 'Explication d'un dessin de Kioosai: origine des Amida, Kouannon et Seishi, honorés dans

6.

Kyōsai, *Amida no hikari mo zenishidai*, c.1863–1866.

National Diet Library Digital Collections  
<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2574928/1/21>



あみ陀の  
光心金決分  
当利光如本

ちやちやの  
正直、  
上かみやい  
神住

摩迦マラ

惺々在齋戲盡

le temple Zénkooji à Sinano'. In this essay, Tomii discusses in fact three specific legends.

Tomii's essay opens with a reiteration of how the king of Paekche (Jp. Kudara) presented Emperor Kinmei (509–571, reign 539–571) in 552 CE with a large number of Buddhist statues and sacred books, as well as a dozen of priests. The arrival of a foreign religion resulted in a heavy debate on whether Buddhism should be officially recognised, to which Mononobe no Okoshi (dates unknown) and Ōtomo no Kanamura (dates unknown) strongly opposed.<sup>29</sup> The emperor entrusted Soga no Iname (c. 506–580) with these gifts, who erected a temple to contain the statues and to give the priests a dedicated space to perform ceremonies. But that same year measles spread throughout Japan, and it was thought that the Japanese gods were displeased with foreign deities being revered. As a result, Mononobe and Ōtomo destroyed the temple, forced the priests to become civilians, and threw all Buddhist imagery in the Hori-e Pond in Osaka. Among the discarded images was the Amida Triad, or Amida flanked by the bodhisattvas Kannon and Seishi.

Tomii then moves on to discuss how these statues came to be forged. He tells the story of a wealthy man named Gakkai who lived in ancient India and absolutely despised Buddhism. He had a daughter who was remarkably beautiful but suddenly suffered from active congestion (fluxion) on her face which made her unattractive. Desperate to save his daughter, Gakkai turned to the Buddha who instructed him to travel to the world of the dragons and retrieve a certain quantity of gold in order to sculpt a statue of Amida – as Gakkai was told that if he venerated the statue, his daughter would be cured in no time. Ultimately, Amida, accompanied by Kannon and Seishi, descended on a cloud of five colours in the daughter's room and cast divine light on the gold, which melted and transformed into three statues of Amida, Kannon, and Seishi. From

7.  
Monochrome reproduction  
of *Kyōsai's print, Suna no  
naka no ōgon*, included in  
*Promenades japonaises:*  
*Tokio-Nikko*.

gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque  
nationale de France  
<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6581625t>

8.  
*Kyōsai, Suna no naka no  
ōgon*, c.1863–1866.

National Diet Library Digital  
Collection  
<https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2574927/1/23>





then on, the daughter's health was restored.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, Tomii reveals that this Amida Triad is, in fact, the same triad that was discarded in the Hori-e Pond and that it was saved by a man named Honda Yoshimitsu (also known as Honda Zenkō, dates unknown). Honda brought the Triad to Shinano (contemporary Nagano prefecture) and enshrined it in a newly built temple: the Zenkō-ji.

It is presumably from this source that Guimet wrote his explanation of 'the legend of the lake of Hori-e'. In fact, Guimet reduced Tomii's 862-word essay to one of 153 words by condensing the story of how the statues came to be discarded in the lake and later rescued by Honda, and by omitting the legend of how the statues were forged. Otherwise, from the downsizing, no significant alterations can be found, except for awkward changes in the transcription of some words.<sup>31</sup> The abbreviation comes as no surprise considering that Guimet still needed to interpret Kyōsai's illustration, which is lacking in Tomii's essay. The print bears the proverb '*suna no naka no ōgon*', which is a metaphor saying that there are rare and valuable things mixed in the mundane, just as there is gold dust in the sand. Kyōsai illustrated Honda's astonishment when the Amida Triad called for help from the pond, which is followed by a lively image of the deities indulging in the food and sake offered by Honda and his family.

### Peintre et Malfaiteur: Tomii on Kyōsai

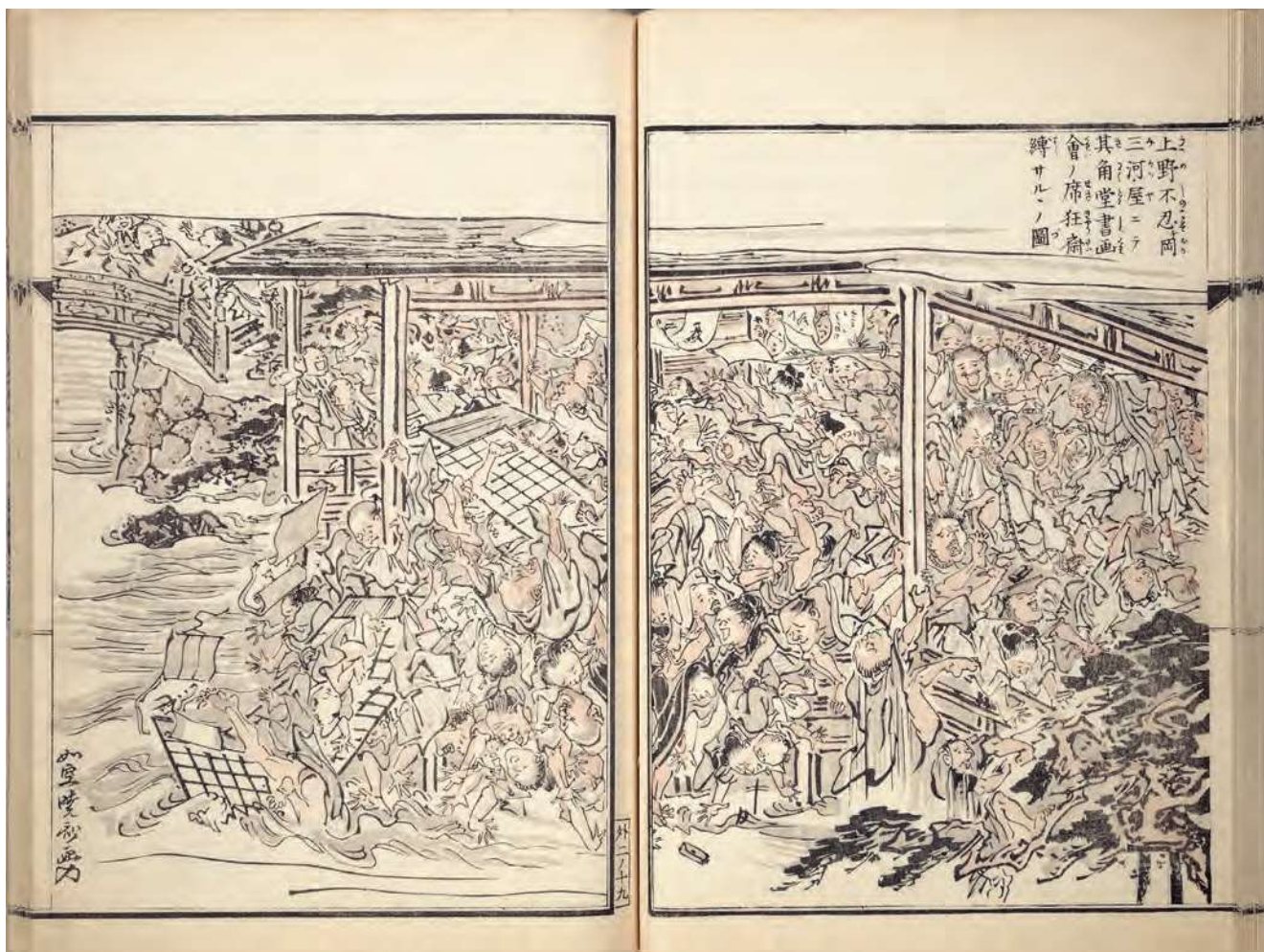
The second essay that was indispensable to Guimet's discussion of Kyōsai is the one titled 'Kioo-sai.' This essay is divided into two parts. The first, 493 words in length, addresses the artist, his training, his vices, his dedication to satirical art, and his encounters with authorities. The second emphasises in 749

words different aspects of the artist's personality and career. Why Tomii redirected the narrative of his discussion of the 'demon of painting' – a nickname that Kyōsai was given by his first Kanō teacher Maemura Tōwa (d.1853) – remains unclear. It is possible that Guimet, or someone else closely involved in the writing process of the book, read the first version, and gave him a few pointers on how to improve the narrative – or perhaps Tomii decided to start anew.<sup>32</sup>

Guimet's account of Kyōsai seems to be based on the second version, while no link between Tomii's first version and Guimet's discussion can be established. Yet, a comparison of both versions reveals how the narrative on Kyōsai was changed (table 2). The result is that a particular persona of Kyōsai was created: one with three strong and intertwined characteristics.

First, Tomii stresses that Kyōsai is an artist who, after leaving the Kanō studio, devoted his life and work to the genre of caricatures and continued to solely apply himself to this genre.<sup>33</sup> This is a much stronger statement than what was given in the first version, which narrates that Kyōsai began to draw all kinds of unique species, caricatures, and fantasy drawings during his training, and after his master had expelled him, he engaged more and more in crazy drawings – most likely Tomii refers here to *kyōga*. Both versions do find common ground in the claim that Kyōsai is the most able artist when it comes to caricatures – but a subtle difference is noticed in the second as it introduces Kyōsai as one of the most skilful painters in the country, especially when it comes to caricatures.

Second, Tomii emphasises Kyōsai's taste for alcohol whilst painting. The second part introduces this a lot earlier in the discussion, highlighting that he enjoys drinking to excess and replaces his penchant for wine with sake – perhaps an honest mistake of Tomii after having spent much time in France or a



deliberate effort to make the text easier for French readers unfamiliar with Japanese alcoholic beverages. Tomii also introduces two new anecdotes to further demonstrate Kyōsai's inordinate love of sake. The first anecdote concerns Tomii's discussion of Kyōsai's nickname 'Shōjō Kyōsai' – spelt in the manuscript as 'Shoojoo Kiosai'. Tomii explains that he received this nickname, which refers to a mythological creature that drinks a lot of sake without getting drunk after his contemporaries witnessed his excessive drinking.<sup>34</sup> The second anecdote tells the story of how Kyōsai was asked to paint something on white paper that had been pinned on the walls of someone's house. Kyōsai, who was drunk at the time, took out his brush and was able to draw a long horizontal line with

remarkable accuracy while adding people from all walks of life, facing all kinds of difficulties or none, which is said to have symbolised that everyone leads their existence in this way, having found or still looking for a means to survive.

The third and final characteristic that becomes much more pronounced in the second version, is that Kyōsai is an artist whose art frequently got him into trouble. The second version introduces four examples of artworks – in contrast to only two in the first one – that resulted in Kyōsai's imprisonment and alludes to additional charges but leaves the final number vague. Based on the information present in the first version, we ought to believe that Kyōsai was incarcerated seven times. Three of these works seem to

9. Kyōsai, Kyōsai being arrested at a calligraphy and painting party at Mikawa-ya in Shinobazu-ga-oka, Ueno, in *Kyōsai's Account of Painting (Kyōsai gadan)*, vol. 2 of part 2, 1887.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013.764a–d.



date before the Meiji period and based on the description, it is plausible that one of them is a work that satirises the Boshin War (1868–1869), considering that it is said to depict the continuous retreat of shogunal forces as a chess game (table 2).<sup>35</sup> Only one work dates from the Meiji period and it concerns Tomii’s version of the famous *hikka jiken* (incident occasioned by a serious slip of the pen – or, in this case, the brush) or the incident at a *shogakai* (calligraphy and painting party) in 1870, where the drunken Kyōsai was arrested and subsequently imprisoned for painting images that allegedly insulted high-ranking government officials.<sup>36</sup>

Contemporary accounts that discuss this incident are extremely rare and date from 1882 and 1887. Only the latter is by Kyōsai himself

and is included in *Kyōsai’s Account of Painting* (*Kyōsai gadan*) which illustrates his arrest at the *shogakai*, while attendees run around in a panic and some even fall into the pond (fig. 9). This comic rendition is followed by the pitiful conditions of the artist’s imprisonment where we see him in the upper right corner, held down by government officials and about to be tied up (fig. 10).

Much has been debated about the content of the paintings that got Kyōsai arrested. According to his own account of 1887, Kyōsai, albeit too drunk to remember the topic of all the works, recalls that he painted two men putting shoes on a man from the island of long-legged (*Ashinaga*) people and another person from the island of long-armed (*Tenaga*) people pulling the nostrils hairs of

10.

Kyōsai, Kyōsai being tied up at a prison in Tokyo during the tenth month of the third year of Meiji (1870), in *Kyōsai’s account of Painting* (*Kyōsai gadan*), vol. 2 of part 2, 1887.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013.764a–d.



the Buddha.<sup>37</sup> As images of *Ashinaga* and *Tenaga* signify people from foreign lands, these works have been interpreted as satirising the Meiji government indulging foreigners in various ways. The 1882 account, in contrast, claims that Kyōsai painted a Japanese dignitary being penetrated sexually by a foreigner.<sup>38</sup> As Brenda G. Jordan points out, it does not matter whether Kyōsai intended to criticise the government with these works, but it was how the paintings were perceived by the authorities.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, Tomii's essay hints at another subject: Kyōsai supposedly painted a group of foreigners openly breaking wind in front of a group of Japanese dignitaries. According to Tomii, this particular painting was the result of Kyōsai being asked to represent the current state of the country, but there is a small difference in interpretation between Tomii's first and second versions. In his first one, Tomii reveals that the Japanese dignitaries were the emperor, the shogun, and his ministers, whereas in the second, these were Japanese ministers and Kyōsai further explained that the Meiji government was entirely under the yoke of foreigners.

Just as crucial facts about this 1870 incident are missing and most likely will never be known, it remains a mystery as to what kind of sources Tomii used to write this essay. It is therefore impossible to determine whether this story of Kyōsai creating a painting of foreigners openly farting in front of a group of Japanese dignitaries is truthful, semi-truthful, or a complete fable. Considering that Kyōsai did dedicate two scroll paintings to the topic of 'fart battles' (*hōhi gassen*), first in 1867 and again in 1876, it might not be too farfetched to imagine that Kyōsai painted such a topic at the 1870 *shogakai*.<sup>40</sup> Or, could it be, as the scholar Sadamura Koto suggests, that Guimet saw fart battle pictures by Kyōsai or other artists during his visit to Japan?<sup>41</sup> Following her

theory, that would mean that Guimet dictated to Tomii or that Tomii was composing his text with notes already written by Guimet. As the contents of Guimet's conversation with Kyōsai in 1876, or any conversation between Guimet and Tomii, are not known, it remains difficult to conclude who determined the topic of the painting that got Kyōsai imprisoned in 1870.

### *Promenades Japonaises: Tokio-Nikko Revisited*

With Tomii's manuscript at his disposal, Guimet wrote his famous introduction to Kyōsai. On occasion, Tomii is quoted verbatim, or his expressions have been embellished and paraphrased, whereas other parts of Tomii's account are completely left out – such as the anecdote of Kyōsai painting on the wall while being drunk – or extremely abbreviated. For instance, Guimet only refers to three examples of Kyōsai being imprisoned and only describes two in detail: the work that represented the continuous retreat of shogunal forces as a chess game and the 1870 *shogakai* incident. When it comes to the 1870 incident, Guimet either added his own or someone else's interpretation by identifying the foreigners as British, Americans, and French, whereas later Guimet mentions that the Japanese government is under the yoke of Europeans – instead of foreigners as Tomii suggests.<sup>42</sup>

From the above, it becomes clear that Guimet would not have been able to introduce Kyōsai to the European public without Tomii's essays. Yet, many questions remain unfortunately unanswered. Considering the lack of biographical sources on Kyōsai that were published during the 1870s, it will most likely remain unclear how Tomii, a student of law who worked as a translator and language teacher with no formal art historical training, was able to suggest that Kyōsai was

imprisoned seven times and to identify four works. It is plausible that Tomii based some topics of these works on rumours still going around in the capital, as he was living in Tokyo from 1874 onwards. The 1870 *shogakai* incident did make Kyōsai instantly famous and resulted in a great many customers coming to him to request paintings.<sup>43</sup> As such, it would not be difficult to imagine contemporaries spreading rumours on how many times Kyōsai had been imprisoned and for what kind of works. Yet, it must also be considered that Guimet, or someone else, might have determined the subject of these works before Tomii started to write his essay.

In the end, both Tomii and Guimet carefully curated a story in order to introduce Kyōsai that was amplified and embellished and to ultimately benefit the image of Kyōsai that Guimet wanted to project. Guimet had taken on an important task, namely introducing a contemporary artist of impeccable skill whose name almost no one dared to pronounce – at least allegedly – despite being extremely popular at the time. Perhaps the reason why Guimet did not acknowledge Tomii’s help in writing this particular chapter is because he felt he had ‘discovered’ Kyōsai, an artist whose work was reminiscent of the renowned Hokusai, and wanted to ascertain that he *alone* was to be called the authority on Kyōsai, his life, and art.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Ono Hiroshi for his unwavering support in my research on Tomii Masaakira. I am also very grateful to Dr. Monika Hinkel and Dr. Sadamura Koto for their insightful comments.



## NOTES

- 1 Ting, Chang, *Travel, Collecting, and Museums of Asian Art in Nineteenth-Century Paris*, Ashgate, Burlington, p. 75.
- 2 Scholars who accredit Guimet with Kyōsai’s introduction (non-exhaustive): Oikawa Shigeru, ‘Meiji no eshi Kawanabe Kyōsai no chi’i’, in: *Hikaku Bungaku Kenkyū*, no. 50, 1986, pp. 40–57; Shimizu, Christine, ‘Diversités de l’art de Kawanabe Kyōsai, peintre japonais du XIXe siècle’, in: *Le Revue Du Louvre*, no. 1986, 1986, pp. 67–77; Clark, T., *Demon of Painting: The Art of Kawanabe Kyōsai*, Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by the British Museum Press, London, 1993; Kawanabe Kyōsai Kinen Bijutsukan and Tōkyō-to Edo Tōkyō Hakubutsukan, eds., *Kawanabe Kyōsai to Edo Tōkyō*, Kawanabe Kyōsai Kinen Bijutsukan, Warabi, 1994; Yamaguchi Sei-ichi, *Japonisumu no naka no Kyōsai*, in: *Society for the Study of Japonisme*, no. 14, 1994, pp. 29–50; Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, ed., *Kaiga no bōkensha Kyōsai: kindai e kakeru hashi: tokubetsu tenrankai botsugo 120-nen kinen*, Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, Kyoto, 2008; Sadamura Koto, ‘Jūkyū seiki kōhan no Yōroppa ni okeru Kawanabe Kyōsai no juyō to Hokusai hyōka no kakawari’, in: *Ukiyo-e Geijutsu*, no. 159, 2010, pp. 34–47; Kawanabe Kusumi, *Kawanabe Kyōsai – Kyōsui den*, Kadokawa, Tokyo, 2018; Sadamura Koto, *Kyōsai: The Israel Goldman Collection*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2022.
- 3 Guimet, É., *Promenades japonaises: Tokio-Nikko*, G. Charpentier, Paris, 1880, pp. 177–184.
- 4 Original text: “Et voici son histoire que j’ai bien promis de ne raconter à personne...au Japon du moins.” Guimet, op. cit. (1880), p. 184.
- 5 Although not clearly stated by Guimet himself, this series is most likely the series of prints that caught his attention in Yokohama and Tokyo. The prints are reproduced on pp.180–181, and the duel occupies pp. 187–192.
- 6 Guimet included the portraits in his 1880 book.
- 7 Véron, E., ‘Notre Bibliothèque’, in: *L’art*, no. CCVIII, 1880, pp. 137–141; Gonse, L., *L’art Japonais*, vol. 2, A. Quantin, Paris, 1883, p. 298.
- 8 Ting, Chang, ‘Emile Guimet’s Network for Research and Collecting Asian Objects (ca. 1877–1918),’ in: *Acquiring Cultures. Histories of World Art on Western Markets*, edited by Guichard, Charlotte, Howald, Christine, and Savoy, Bénédicte, De Gruyter, Boston, 2018, pp. 209–222: pp. 210–211.
- 9 Guimet, É., *Promenades japonaises*, G. Charpentier, Paris, 1878, p. 57; Oikawa, op. cit., p. 49.
- 10 Oikawa, op. cit., p. 49.
- 11 Oikawa, op. cit., p.49.
- 12 Yamaguchi, op. cit., p. 32.
- 13 The online catalogue is known in French as *Catalogue collectif des bibliothèques des musées nationaux*.
- 14 The discovery of this manuscript results from an ongoing research project the author is conducting on Tomii Masaakira after having found

unpublished materials that shed light on Tomii's formative years in France from 1877 to 1883. The author presented preliminary findings at the General Meeting of the Japan Legal History Association in June 2023 and at the EAJS conference in Ghent in August 2023. A more comprehensive introduction to Tomii, the unpublished sources, and what they reveal about this study abroad is the subject of an upcoming publication.

15 Imaizumi Yūsaku is remembered today for working for the Tokyo Fine Arts School (current Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music) and Tokyo National Museum, aiding in the art administration together with Okakura Tenshin (1863–1913). A detailed discussion of how Tomii ended up working for Guimet in Lyon is beyond the scope of this paper and the subject of an upcoming publication. But, to summarise, Tomii was most likely introduced to Guimet via Dury, as Tomii was also one of his students, while Guimet was still in Tokyo. When Guimet travelled to Kyoto and met with Makimura Masanao (1832–1891), the assistant governor of Kyoto who made appeals to shrines and monasteries in every part of the country to accommodate Guimet's investigation, a contract was created between Guimet and Makimura which would allow them to send four students to Lyon to help Guimet with establishing a French-Japanese language school and with the upkeep of his new collection. The contract stipulated that Guimet would cover the living costs of the students and the Japanese government the costs of the return trip. Although the Japanese government did not approve the contract in April 1877, Tomii left Japan the following month, paying for the boat trip himself, and started working for Guimet upon his arrival in July 1877.

16 Sugiyama Naojirō, 'Tomii sensei no koto nisan', in: *Daigaku Oyobi Daigakusei*, no. 8, 1918: pp. 93–100: p. 94.

17 Musée Guimet, *Musée Guimet: catalogue des objets exposés précédé d'un aperçu des religions de l'Inde, de la Chine et du Japon*, Imprimerie Pitrat Ainé, Lyon, 1880.

18 Guimet, É., 'Rapport au Ministre de l'Instruction publique et des beaux-arts sur la mission scientifique de M. Émile Guimet dans l'Extrême-Orient', in: *Annales Du Musée Guimet*, vol. 1, 1880, pp. 5–12: p. 11. At the time, Paris was the only place that offered French to opportunity to study Japanese.

19 Original text: "Cette École sera en relation constante avec les correspondants spéciaux que j'ai établis dans l'Inde, la Chine, le Japon, et toute personne qui s'intéresse aux questions religieuses pourra y trouver des informations sûres et immédiates. C'est grâce à cette organisation que je pourrai successivement publier en français, avec le texte original en regard, les traductions des documents inédits que j'ai rapportés." Guimet, op. cit., p. 11.

20 See, for instance, Tomii Massa Akira [Tomii Masaakira], 'Le Shintoïsme, sa mythologie et sa morale', in: *Annales Du Musée Guimet*, vol. 10, Ernest Leroux, Paris, 1887, pp. 309–20.

21 Ymaizoumi [Imaizumi Yūsaku], 'De la religion Shintoïste', in: *Congrès Provincial des Orientalistes compte rendu de la Troisième Session, Lyon – 1878*, vol. 2, Imprimerie Pitrat Ainé, Lyon, 1880, pp. 115–19; Ymaizoumi, 'Des croyances et des superstitions des Chinois avant Confucius', in: *Congrès Provincial des Orientalistes compte rendu de la Troisième Session, Lyon – 1878*, vol. 2 Imprimerie Pitrat Ainé, Lyon, 1880, pp. 56–61; Ymaizoumi, 'Du culte des ancêtres en Chine sous la dynastie de Tcheou', in: *Congrès Provincial des Orientalistes compte rendu de la Troisième Session, Lyon – 1878*, vol. 2, Imprimerie Pitrat Ainé, Lyon, 1880, pp. 68–79.

22 Société d'économie politique et d'économie sociale de Lyon, *Compte rendu analytique des séances*, Imprimerie Mougand-Rusand, Lyon, 1880, pp. 42–45.

23 Sugiyama, op. cit.; Omoto Keiko and Macouin F., *Nihon no kaikoku: Emiru Gime aru Furansujin no mita Meiji*, Sōgensha, Tokyo, 1996; Tomii Masahide, 'Sofu Tomii Masa-akira no omoide', in: *Ritsumeikan Hyakunenshi Kiyō*, no.12, 2004, pp. 55–62; Jaluzot, B., 'Tomii et Ume, quand la Faculté de Droit de Lyon forme les rédacteurs du Code Civil japonais', in: *Droit Japonais, Droit Français. Quel Dialogue?*, edited by Jaluzot, B., Schulthess, Genève, Lyon, 2014, pp. 5–19.

24 Jaluzot, op. cit.; Ōmura Atsushi, *Fushigi no kuni no Tomii Masa-Akira: Ushinawareta "genkei" o mimomete*, Tōkyō Daigaku Hōgakubu Ōmura Atsushi Kenkyūshitsu, Tokyo, 2017. The correspondence, its transcription, and translation will be the subject of an upcoming publication.

25 A comparison with Guimet's handwriting suggests that the author of this essay was not Guimet.

26 Guimet also relied on Tomii's essay 'Notes sur la peinture japonaise' for the twenty-eight chapter 'Le Genre Gai'. Due to space constraints, this will be the subject of an upcoming publication.

27 Clark, op. cit., p. 20.

28 In the end, Kyōsai's rendition should not be interpreted as criticism directed at Buddhism itself, but at the temple as an institution or at the monks who make money in the name of the Buddha's blessings. See Sadamura, op. cit. (2015), p. 170.

29 Instead of Mononobe and Ōtomo, Tomii refers to a certain 'Moriya' and 'Katsoumi'.

30 Tomii's version slightly differs from the most commonly known version in which the daughter dies and is resurrected thanks to the intercession of Amida. Out of gratitude, Gakkai sculpted an image representing the Amida Triad and venerated it. See Hur, N., 'Invitation to the Secret Buddha of Zenkōji Kaichō and Religious Culture in Early Modern Japan', in: *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, no. 36 (1), 2009: pp. 45–63: p.52.

31 For instance, Osaka was changed to Ozaka, Kouannon to Quanon, Seishi to Seissi, Honda Zénkoo to Houda Zenkoo, and Zénkooji to Zenkoo-dji.

32 It seems more likely that someone gave Tomii notes on how to improve or correct his essay. For reasons unknown, Tomii changed his introduction of Kyōsai's master from 'Kano' in the first version to 'Karino' in the second one. It is difficult to imagine that a Japanese person of the time would have misread the characters '狩野' as 'Karino'.

33 Original text: "[il] se livra aussitôt à l'art calicaturiste (sic)" and "il continua à s'appliquer uniquement à ses calicatures (sic)".

34 Although the manuscript is written in French, Tomii was most likely referring to 'Shōjō' with the characters 猩々. Kyōsai did use these characters to sign some of his work, although extremely rare, and in the past, this signature has been confused with his signature 'Seisei Kyōsai' 惺々 暁齋. For an in-depth discussion see Clark, op. cit., p. 18; Sadamura, op. cit. (2022), pp. 134–135; but especially Jordan, B. G., 'Strange Fancies and Fresh Conceptions: Kyōsai in an Age of Conflict', doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, Kansas, 1993, pp. 245–251.

35 For a discussion of the Boshin War in ukiyo-e, see, for instance, Terryn, F., 'Playful Pictures as Satire: Utagawa Hiroshige III Capitalizing on the Shift in Political Power during the Boshin War', in: *Voiced and Voiceless in Asia*, edited by Zawiszová, H. & Lavička, M., Palacký University Olomouc, Olomouc, 2023, pp. 265–292.

36 This incident has been discussed in-depth in previous literature. See, for instance, Clark, op. cit., p. 22; Jordan, op. cit. (1993), pp. 102–114; Sadamura, op. cit. (2015); Sadamura, op. cit. (2022), pp. 28–29.

37 Clark, op. cit., p. 22; Jordan, op. cit. (1993), p. 105; Sadamura, op. cit. (2022), p. 28.

38 Clark, op. cit., p. 22; Jordan, op. cit. (1993), p. 114; Sadamura, op. cit. (2022), p. 29.

39 Jordan, B. G., 'Potentially Disruptive: Censorship and the Painter Kawanabe Kyōsai', in: *Inexorable Modernity: Japan's Grappling with Modernity in the Arts*, edited by Hiroshi Nara, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2007, pp. 17–47; p. 31.

40 For a colour reproduction of both painting scrolls – the *Hōhi gassen emaki* (2 scrolls, 28.2 x 897.0 cm, twelfth month of 1867, collection of Kyōsai Memorial Museum) and the *Kaika hōhi gassen emaki* (1 scroll, 28.0 x 790.6, November 1876, private collection) see Sadamura, op. cit. (2022), pp. 140–149.

41 Sadamura, op. cit. (2015), p. 166.

42 Guimet, op. cit. (1880), p. 185.

43 Jordan, op. cit. (1993), p. 115.