Navigating the "Traditional/Modern" Divide

Politics and Culture in Interwar Japan

2016 FACDIS International Studies Summer Institute

Dr. Julie Christ Oakes, UMBC

Japanese Historical Periods

- Meiji (1868-1912)
  - 1868-ca. 1900: "trying on" the west
  - ca. 1890-1912: conservative resurgence

Collision of Foreign (L) and Domestic (R) Policy

1876: *Treaty of Kangwha* (Korea)

1868+: Decade of "*bunmei kaika*"

Collision of Foreign (L) and Domestic (R) Policy

1876: *Treaty of Kangwha* (Korea)

1894-95: Sino-Japanese War

1904-1905: Russo-Japanese War

1910: Colonization of Korea

1868+: Decade of "*bunmei kaika*"

1890: "Imperial Rescript on Education"

1898: Meiji Civil Code

"Imperial Rescript on Education" (1890)

"Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourself in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all…Always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne, coeval with heaven and earth."

The (Old vs.) New "Home"

- Meiji Civil Code (1898)
- 家

- *ie*
- patriarchy
- *ryôsai kenbo* ("good wife, wise mother")

Japanese Historical Periods

- Meiji (1868-1912)
  - 1868-ca. 1900: "trying on" the west
  - ca. 1890-1912: conservative resurgence
- Taishô (1912-1926)
- Shôwa (1926-1989)

Politics in East Asia, Early 20th Century

- 1915: Japan's "21 Demands" on China
- 1919: anti-Japanese riots in Korea
- 1919: "May 4th" movement in China to protest the Versailles Treaty
- 1923: Great Kantô earthquake in Japan; 7K-20K Koreans killed in Japan over rumors

Interwar New Activities: Shopping

Mitsukoshi Department Store (1910)

"Today the Imperial Theater, tomorrow, Mitsokoshi"

Takashimaya Department Store Window (1929)

The (Old vs.) New "Home"

- Meiji Civil Code (1898)
- 家

- *ie*
- patriarchy
- *ryôsai kenbo* ("good wife, wise mother")

- 1920s *Modanizumu*
- ホム

- *homu* ("home")
- family
- wife as rational consumer

Yet…New Interwar Activities for Women: Dancing and Swimming

And New Interwar Employment for Women: Café Waitress

Kuroda Seiki, *Maiko* (1893)
Important Cultural Property

To What Extent Does Art Reflect the "Traditional" vs. "Modern" Divide?

Nihonga (Japanese-Style Painting):

Hashimoto Gahô, *Bishamonten Pursuing an Oni*, c. 1885, 49" x 24")

- New approach to traditional painting
- Use western techniques
- Appeals to the Japanese "heart"

Nihonga: Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958), *Kutsugen*, 1898, hanging scroll on silk, 52" x 114"

What is the Difference in the Two Styles?

Yôga (Western-Painting Style)

- 1855: Bureau of Western Studies
- Foreign instructors
- Foreign methods and materials

Yôga: Western Style Painting

Takahashi Yuichi, *Oiran (courtesan)*, 1872

Contrast: Edo Woodblock Prints and Yôga

Kitagawa Utamaro, *Three Beauties of the Present Day*, ca. 1793 and Oiran, 1872

Yôga Controversy: *Too* Modern?

Kuroda Seiki, *Morning Toilet*, 1893 and *Flowering Field*, 1907

Yôga Artist Yorozu Tetsugorô

Reclining Woman, 1912 and *Rural Landscape*, 1912 (both oil on canvas)

Dancing? (L) Kimura Shohachi, *Caricature of a Dance Hall* (1930); (R) Kobakayawa Kiyoshi, *The Dancer* (c. 1920)

Swimming?

Shopping? Paintings as Advertising (1920s and 1930s)

New Activities for Women: Café Waitress and…(Right: Kobakawaya Kiyoshi, *Tipsy*, 1931)