

# Puppy Love: The Legacy of Yi Am's Paintings in Edo-Period Japan

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## I. Introduction

Studying the legacy of Korean art in Japan poses a specific set of challenges for the art historian. Within the Japanese context, despite the all-encompassing impact of artistic traditions from the Korean peninsula, the contributions of individual Korean artists to this cultural exchange are relatively poorly understood. The circulation of Korean artworks in Japan throughout the centuries has remained mostly anonymous, with few proper names attached. In the case of painting, this anonymity is owed to the fact that the identities of individual artists in the archipelago have been subsumed under the long shadow of classical Chinese painting. Although large numbers of works by Korean painters circulated in premodern Japan, they were often misattributed to Chinese painters or known only by their seals. From the sixteenth century onward, the prestige of the Ashikaga shogunal collection of

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Chinese painting was so great that a component of its connoisseurial manual, the *Kundaikan sōchōki* 君台觀左右帳記, circulated as an independent “Painter’s List” used widely for authentication. This meant that many anonymous or poorly understood paintings were attributed to Chinese painters from the “Painter’s List” based primarily upon their subject matter.<sup>1</sup> Works by Korean artists typically encountered a similar fate, and it is only in recent decades that their body of work has been excavated from a larger corpus of paintings generically attributed to Chinese masters. As a consequence, the artistic legacy of these painters is only slowly coming into focus.

This essay takes up one example of a Korean artist whose cultural imprint upon Japan has only come to light in recent decades. It focuses on the Joseon court painter Yi Am 李巖 (b. 1499) (Fig. 1) and the lineage of paintings that his body of work appears to have inspired among Japanese artists of the Edo period (1615-1868). Yi Am was a leading painter active during the sixteenth century. As the great grandson of Prince Imyeong 臨瀛 大君 (1420-1469), the fourth son of King Sejong (1397-1450), Yi Am was not only of royal blood, but achieved high repute among scholars of his era. His surviving oeuvre consists almost entirely of falcon and dog paintings, and appears to have circulated in Japan from at least the early seventeenth century. It has only been in the last several decades that his art historical profile began to be clarified.<sup>2</sup> While Yi Am’s falcons are fairly straightforward iterations of the Chinese Song academic tradition of falcon painting, his puppies, which are the focus of this study, are unique



Fig. 1. Yi Am 李巖, *Puppies with Birds and Flowers* 花鳥狗子圖, 16<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, Leeum Samsung Museum, Seoul

<sup>1</sup> The influence of the *Kundaikan* “Painter’s List” on Japanese connoisseurial practice is examined in Yukio Lippit, *Painting of the Realm: The Kano House of Painting in Seventeenth-Century Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 119-132. See also Ide Seinosuke, *Sōgen no butsuga*, vol. 418 in *Nihon no bijutsu* series (Tokyo: Shibundō, 2001), 20-22.

<sup>2</sup> For more on Yi Am, see Soyoung Lee, “Art and Patronage in the Early Joseon,” in Soyoung Lee, *Art of the Korean Renaissance, 1400-1600* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 15-63; and Sunpyo Hong and Chin-Sung Chang, “Peace under Heaven: Confucianism and Painting in Early Joseon Korea,” in Lee, *ibid.*, 65-90. Yi Am is discussed within the context of Joseon-dynasty animal painting in Chung Seyang, “Turning Toward Each Other: Warmth and Intimacy in Chosŏn Dynasty Animal Painting,” *Acta Koreana* 9, no. 1 (Jan 2006): 53-87. The earliest sustained examination of Yi Am in Japan is found in Yoshida Yūji, “Richō no kachōga to Nihon,” in *Richō kaiga-rinkoku no meitō na bi no sekai*, exh. cat. (Nara: Yamato Bunkakan, 1996), 6-11. For the most comprehensive overview of his life, see Itakura Masaaki, “Ri Gan, imeeji no keisei to tenkai-Higashi Ajia kaigashi no kanōsei,” *Kokka* 1481 (March 2019): 34-43.

in their approach. Yi Am's puppy paintings pose a particularly important case study because, as I hope to demonstrate, the specific artistic qualities of these works inspired new interpretive possibilities in Japan entirely unrelated to the tradition of dog paintings in East Asia.

## II. Yi Am and Puppy Painting

Like so much nature imagery in China, dog paintings functioned within a multivalent symbolic system. Not only was the dog (*gou* 狗) one of the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac, but it also played a part in numerous myths and legends, and exotic breeds were favored as pets among the elite status groups. As a painting subject, although not as common as other auspicious animal imagery, dogs generally conveyed ideas of prosperity, family harmony, and fertility; thus they were often portrayed in familial groups or as puppies playing.<sup>3</sup> Eventually specialists in animal paintings emerged at the Song Imperial Academy. The eighteenth volume of the *Painting Manual of the Xuanhe Era* (*Xuanhe huapu* 宣和画譜), which documents the painting collection of the Northern Song Emperor Huizong 徽宗皇帝 (1082-1135), records a scroll depicting a mother dog and her puppies by the court painter Yi Yuanji 易元吉 (ca. 1000-1064).<sup>4</sup> Although Yi Yuanji was more closely associated with monkey painting, it could be that he was also an accomplished painter of dogs. From a somewhat later generation, the painter Mao Yi 毛益 (active 1165-1173) in particular was closely associated with cat and dog painting, and many surviving examples of relatively early vintage have been attributed to Mao Yi, including the well-known *Cats Playing Under Hollyocks* (J. *Shokki yūbyō zu* 蜀葵遊猫図) and *Dogs Playing Under Daylilies* (J. *Kanzō yūku zu* 草遊狗図) (Fig. 2) in the Yamato Bunkakan 大和文華館 in Nara, Japan.<sup>5</sup> Although none of these works can be definitively said to be by Mao Yi, his works were associated in particular with the

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<sup>3</sup> For a useful summary of the wide-ranging symbology of dogs in Chinese visual culture, see Patricia Bjaaland Welch, *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2008), 118-120. Judging by later Japanese examples, paintings with dogs often formed “puzzle pictures” that functioned as rebuses with auspicious messages. The most well-known example combines dogs with bamboo to constitute the character for “smile” or “laughter” 笑, by combining the bamboo radical with the character for “dog.” For a discussion of this and other examples of puzzle pictures with dogs, some with Zen themes, see Imahashi Riko, *Edo no dōbutsuga-Kinsei bijutsu to bunka no kōkogaku* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> For an English translation see Amy McNair, *Xuanhe Catalogue of Paintings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 388.

<sup>5</sup> A detailed introduction to this pair can be found in Itakura Masaaki, “Den Mōeki hitsu Shokki yūbyō zu Kanzō yūku zu o megutte no shomondai,” *Yamato bunka* 100 (Aug 1998): 28-37. Itakura observes that although the two paintings are currently paired, they bear stylistic differences indicating that they are by different artists.



**Fig. 2.** Attributed to Mao Yi 毛益, *Dogs Playing Under Daylilies*, 13<sup>th</sup> century, album leaf, 25.3×25.8cm, Yamato Bunkakan 大和文華館, Nara



**Fig. 3.** Attributed to Kano Yukinobu 伝狩野之信, *Civet 麝香猫図屏風*, detail, 16<sup>th</sup> century, six-panel folding screen, 154.3×338.4 cm, Suntory Art Museum, Tokyo



**Fig. 4.** Yi Am 李巖, *Falcon 架鷹図*, 16<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 98.1×54.2cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

realistic and exacting depiction of hair in these subjects. In Japan the influence of such Song-period animal paintings is witnessed, among other things, in paintings of civets (J. *jakōneko* 麝香猫) by Kano-school artists of the sixteenth century (Fig. 3).<sup>6</sup>

As a court painter Yi Am appears to have specialized in animal subjects based upon models from the Song Imperial Academy. All of his surviving works render either hawks or dogs.<sup>7</sup> Whereas his hawk paintings (Fig. 4) do not depart dramatically from the norms of Chinese academic painting, however, his dog paintings are another matter. Although their general forms and poses conform, broadly speaking, to those found in earlier Chinese paintings, the bodies of Yi Am's dogs are rendered quite distinctly. Instead of minute, exacting representations of dog fur, they are executed in planar washes of ink, often without outline. A good example of this approach can be found in *Puppies Playing Beneath Flowers* (J. *Kaka yūku zu* 花下游狗図) in the Nihon Mingeikan 日本民藝館 (Tokyo) (Fig. 5). Here the fur of the three puppies, while differing in color, are all rendered with flat washes of ink in a boneless manner. Moreover, this planar use of ink incorporates subtle wash effects, slowly shifting in gradation across its surfaces to generate a soft, appealing visual quality. Similar effects can be found in Yi Am's other dog and puppy paintings, including those in the collections of the Sacheon-ja 泗川子 (a private

<sup>6</sup> This observation is made in Itō Daisuke, "Yosa Buson hitsu kushi zu," *Kokka* 1203 (Feb 1996): 31-35. See also Itakura, "Den Mōeki," *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> For a list of surviving and attributed works to Yi Am, see Itakura, "Ri Gan," *ibid.*



**Fig. 5.** Yi Am 李巖, *Puppies Beneath Flowers* 花下游狗圖, 16<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 106.5×58.5cm, Nihon Mingaikan 日本民藝館, Tokyo



**Fig. 6.** Yi Am 李巖, *Mother Dog and Puppies* 母犬図, 16<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, Seoul National Museum



**Fig. 7.** Kano Einō 狩野永納(1631-97), Entry on Yi Am 李巖, misidentified as the Japanese painter “Kanzan(Seichū)” 完山(静仲), in *Honchō gashi* 本朝画史(1693)

collection in Japan), Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Pyongyang’s Korean Art Gallery, and Seoul National Museum(Fig. 6).

Although there is good reason to believe that Yi Am’s works were circulating in Japan by the early seventeenth century, the painter’s identity was not clearly grasped. In Kano Einō’s *Painting of the Realm*(*Honchō gashi* 本朝画史; 1693), the earliest large-scale compendium of painters’ biographies in Japan, Yi Am is listed as “Kanzan(Seichū)” 完山(静仲)(Fig. 7). At least one of these names derives from his seals, suggesting that the entry was based not upon a preexisting biographical text but rather was compiled from connoisseurial memos and encounters with paintings.<sup>8</sup> The entry goes on to identify him as a Japanese monk-painter of the Muromachi period who modeled his works after the aforementioned Mao Yi.

Indeed, in Japan Yi Am’s works were consistently misattributed to Chinese or Japanese painters. In the painting manual *Garden of Famous Paintings of China and Japan*(*Wakan meigaen* 和漢名画苑), published by Ōoka Shunboku 大岡春朴(1680-1763), a puppy clearly derived from the Yi Am painting in the Sacheon-ja collection is instead attributed to the Yuan-dynasty painter Wang Mian 王冕(1287-

<sup>8</sup> See Kasai Masaaki et al, eds., *Yakuchū Honchō gashi*(Kyoto: Dōbōsha, 1985), 485. The phenomenon of seal names forming the basis of painters’ biographies is discussed in Lippit, *Painting of the Realm*, *ibid.*



Fig. 8. Ooka Shunboku 大岡春朴(1680-1763),(Right) Dog 犬図, attributed to Mao Yi 毛益, from *Garden of Famous Paintings of China and Japan*(Wakan meigaen 和漢名画苑):(Left) Yi Am 李巖, Puppies 狗図, 16<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 76.0×40.0cm, Sacheon-ja Collection 泗川子, Japan

1359)(Fig. 8). The aforementioned *Puppies Beneath Flowers*(Fig. 5) bears an Edo-period box inscription attributing the work to Mao Yi, an attribution that was reaffirmed in 1904 by the *Nihonga* 日本画 painter Kawabata Gyokushō 川端玉章(1842-1913). Another attribution of the work dating to the same year, by Yamana Yoshiumi 山名義海, corrected this by inscribing it as by “the Korean [painter] Seichū.” It was only in the postwar period that Yanagi Sōetsu 柳宗悦(1889-1961), upon acquiring the work, confirmed its attribution to Yi Am.<sup>9</sup>

### Ⅲ. Sōtatsu’s Puppy Paintings

As the reception history of Yi Am’s puppy paintings suggests, his works were consistently misattributed over the centuries. Their legacy is nevertheless notable, however, because they appear to have circulated widely and inspired similar works by prominent artists of the Edo period. Well-known painters such as Tawaraya Sōtatsu 俵屋宗達(ca. 1600-1640), Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村(1716-1784), and Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲(1716-1800) all rendered similar subjects in ways that can be associated in some manner with the Yi Am corpus. And most remarkably, the visual qualities of his works, as I hope to demonstrate, inspired innovative modes of picture-making as well as complex new forms of cultural meaning.

<sup>9</sup> Itakura Masaaki, “Ri Gan,” *ibid.*, 42.



**Fig. 9.** Tawaraya Sōtatsu 俵屋宗達, *Dog* 犬図, inscribed by Isshi Bunshu 一絲文守, 17<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 87.7×36.7cm, private collection, Japan

the development of Sōtatsu's technique of ink pooling known as *tarashikomi*.<sup>12</sup> It is important to emphasize here the possibility that the unique qualities of Yi Am's painting influenced the genesis of a technique that would go on to become a defining characteristic of the Rinpa school of painting.

Although all of the surviving puppy paintings bear Sōtatsu's signatures and seals, most are believed to be by Tawaraya studio artists somewhat later in the seventeenth century. Among the few that may be attributed directly to Sōtatsu is a painting that was formerly in the collection of the *Nihonga* artist Yasuda Yukihiro 安田鞞彦 (1884-1978) (Fig. 10). Others include works with inscriptions suggesting how such puppy paintings were interpreted in the pictorial culture within which Sōtatsu was active. One of them, which renders a white and black puppy playing, bears a later inscription by the Obaku Zen monk Tangai Musen 丹崖無染 (1693-1763), from the mid eighteenth century (Fig. 11). Because this work is revealing of the development of this subject among Kyoto painters of the mid Edo

Sōtatsu's oeuvre reflects the subtle imprint of Yi Am's puppies upon painters in early modern Japan. As the head of the Tawaraya, one of the most prominent painting shops in Kyoto during the first half of the seventeenth century, and eventually as a court painter, Sōtatsu absorbed and amalgamated numerous pictorial approaches, both traditional and interregional, into an innovative and appealing practice.<sup>10</sup> Among the large and diverse corpus attributed to Sōtatsu and his Tawaraya studio are over ten puppy paintings in monochrome ink (Fig. 9). Most of these works depict one or more puppies against a blank background, while several add minimal background elements, such as bamboo, rocks, and fiddlehead ferns, and one combines a puppy with a young boy.<sup>11</sup> These puppy paintings are characterized by planar wash and shading effects on the bodies of the puppies that closely resemble similar qualities in corresponding works by Yi Am, suggesting that they were catalyzed by direct or indirect encounters with the latter's paintings. If so, then Yi Am played a role in the

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of his work, see Yukio Lippit, "Tawaraya Sōtatsu: Five Perspectives," in *Sōtatsu*, ed. Yukio Lippit and James T. Ulak (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2015), 23-41.

<sup>11</sup> See the assortment of Sōtatsu puppy paintings illustrated in Yamane Yūzō, ed., *Sōtatsu-ha ni*, vol. 2 of *Rinpa kaiga zenshū* (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1978), 305-306.

<sup>12</sup> The suggestion that Yi Am's puppies served as a reference for Sōtatsu's *tarashikomi* technique is first made in Tsuji Nobuo, "Sōtatsu-ha no sōka-zu gairon-suibokuga kingindei-e nado no mondai mo fukumete," in Yamane, ed., *Sōtatsu-ha*, *ibid.*, 5-18.

period, it will be discussed further on. For the purposes of examining the early seventeenth century context, important clues can be gleaned from a painting in a private collection bearing an inscription by the Zen monk Isshi Bunshu 一絲文守(1608-1646)(Fig. 9).<sup>13</sup> Isshi's inscription, which his signature suggests can be dated to sometime during the early 1630s, reads as follows:

Instigated by Master Zhao,

they argue yes or no.

Within the monastic community,

this illusory name raises a ruckus.

被張老觸、有無相爭。叢林戸々、喧惹虛名。



**Fig. 10.** Tawaraya Sôtatsu 俵屋宗達, *Dog* 犬図, 17<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 90.3×45.0cm, private collection



**Fig. 11.** Tawaraya Sôtatsu 俵屋宗達, *Dogs* 犬図, inscribed by Tangai Musen 丹崖無染, 17<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 82.5×43.2cm, private collection, Japan

Isshi was a prominent monk who had close ties to Emperor GoMizuno'ô(1596-1680) and his cultural salon. In particular he served as an influential religious advisor to Empress Tôfukumon'in(1607-1678), and Yasumasa Toshinobu has speculated that she may have originally owned the painting.<sup>14</sup> Here the inscription makes an allusion to the Zen koan "A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature"; within an East Asian context, the reference points to a previously unwitnessed association for pictorial representations of dogs. "A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature" is a prime example of the koan genre as it had evolved over the centuries and circulated in early modern Japan; initially such "case studies" were drawn from encounter dialogues attributed to early religious masters. As time went on, they were increasingly abbreviated, enhancing their bizarre and inscrutable nature, while accruing an increasingly extensive commentarial literature. Although there is much debate as to what role

<sup>13</sup> The painting was first introduced in Nakamura Tanio, "Isshi Bunshu san kushi zu," *Kobijutsu* 51(1976): 125-127.

<sup>14</sup> See *Karasumaru Mitsuhiro to Tawaraya Sôtatsu*, exhibition catalogue(Tokyo: Itabashi Ward Museum, 1982), entry to plate 73. Elizabeth Lillehoj suggests that Isshi's embrace of the Merôfu(C: Malangfu) Kannon encouraged Tôfukumon'in to fund the production of *oshi-e* 押絵images; see *Art and Palace Politics in Early Modern Japan 1580s-1680s*(Leiden: Brill, 2011), 151.

these dialogic fragments played in East Asian Zen practice, they are generally understood as providing precedents of enlightened behavior and speech whose illogicality needed to be worked through in order to transcend dualistic thought.<sup>15</sup>

I have argued elsewhere that Sôtatsu's *tarashikomi* technique was closely related to a discursive environment among his patrons that embraced the teachings of Zen Buddhism.<sup>16</sup> In particular, his patron Karasumaru Mitsuhiro 烏丸光広(1579-1638) is said to have achieved enlightenment with the koan "A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature." The idea that the interest in Zen Buddhism among figures such as Mitsuhiro framed the cultural meaning of *tarashikomi* is suggested by works such as Sôtatsu's *Bulls*(Fig. 12), inscribed by Mitsuhiro with allusions to the Zen allegory of "The Ten Stages of Oxherding."

As Kadowaki Mutsumi has pointed, it is likely that Isshi Bunshu was somehow involved in the conception of a painting subject that isolated puppies rendered in monochrome ink against a blank background, and that at the time these pictures evoked associations with the Zen koan among Kyoto elites.<sup>17</sup> Because the pooled or stained ink with which dogs were depicted played a role in encouraging this association, Yi Am's approach to rendering dogs in this manner might be understood as helping to encourage a Zen framework for dog paintings in Japan.



**Fig. 12.** Tawaraya Sôtatsu 俵屋宗達, *Bulls* 牛図, inscribed by Karasumaru Mitsuhiro 烏丸光広, hanging scroll, 17<sup>th</sup> century, 94.8×43.6cm each, Chômyôji Temple 頂妙寺, Kyoto

<sup>15</sup> See the collected essays in *The Koan: Texts and Context in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For "A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature" in particular, see Ishii Shudo, "Kung-an Ch'an and the Tsung-men t'ung yao chi," pp. 110-136 and Morten Schlutter, "'Before the Empty Eon' versus 'A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature': Kung-an Use in the Ts'ao-tung Tradition and Ta'hui's Kung-an Introspection Ch'an," pp. 168-199 in that book. See also Robert H. Sharf, "How to Think with Chan Gong'an," in *Thinking with Cases: Specialized Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*, ed. Charlotte Furth et al(Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 205-243.

<sup>16</sup> Yukio Lippit, "Tawaraya Sôtatsu and the Watery Poetics of Japanese Ink Painting," *Res* 51(Spring 2007): 57-76.

<sup>17</sup> Kadowaki Mutsumi, "Esshû kushi wa to kaiga-soshi zu, shôzôga, Sotatsu, Jakuchû," *Jôsai kokusai daigaku Nihon kenkyû sentaa kiyô* 4(2009): 37-49.

## IV. Yosa Buson and Puppy Painting

Although Sōtatsu's puppy paintings constituted a distinct body of imagery, the heyday of this painting subject in the Edo period can be located among Kyoto painters of the mid to late eighteenth century. The second case study taken up here examines this period, and more specifically a set of sliding-door panels by the poet-painter Yosa Buson (Fig. 13). Far fewer puppy paintings are found in the oeuvre of Buson. The discovery of a set of small sliding-door panels painted by him in a private collection was notable, therefore, because at least one of his renderings of puppies closely resembles the Yi Am painting now in the Mingeikan (Fig. 14).<sup>18</sup> As a comparison demonstrates, the pose and details of rendering are highly similar. Buson, however, almost certainly located his model in the aforementioned *A Garden of Celebrated Japanese and Chinese Paintings* (*Wakan meigaen* 和漢名画苑). It is likely that Buson understood his model to be Chinese; the image in the Shunboku manual is attributed to the Yuan literati painter Wang Mian, whereas the Mingeikan work was formerly attributed to Mao Yi. But we now know that the etiology of this specific lineage of puppy painting derives from Yi Am.



**Fig. 13.** Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村, *Puppies* 狗子図, 18<sup>th</sup> century, set of sliding-door panels, 23.8×27.8cm each, private collection, Japan

<sup>18</sup> Itō Daisuke, “Yosa Buson,” *ibid.*

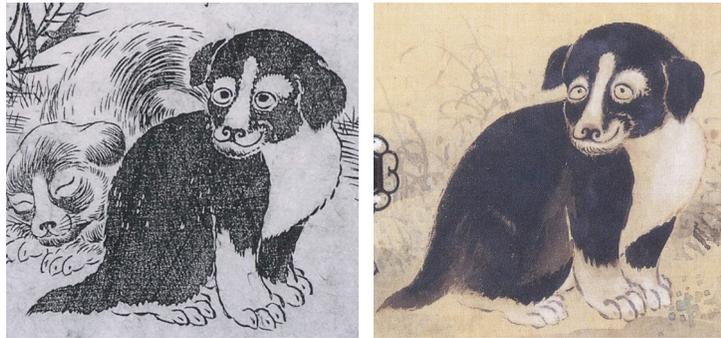


Fig. 14.(Right) Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村, *Puppies* 狗子図, detail, by:(Left) Ōoka Shunboku 大岡春朴(1680-1763), *Dog* 犬図, attributed to Mao Yi 毛益, from *Garden of Famous Paintings of China and Japan*(*Wakan meigaen* 和漢名画苑)

Here I would like to ponder further the meaning of Buson's puppy paintings. Although they may be straightforwardly auspicious, it is also possible that they were imbued with poetic meaning. This is because Buson was a master *haikai* poet, whose fame rested as much with his activities as a linked-verse teacher and practitioner as with his painting. His status suggests that many of his works, even of more traditional subject matter, may have been framed by what Haruo Shirane has termed the "*haikai* imagination," in which observations of the contemporary world were always situated dialectically with tropes of classical knowledge and versification.<sup>19</sup> Shirane discusses the *haikai* imagination in the context of the early Edo poet Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉(1644-1694), but it became ever more complex in the era of Buson who dynamically incorporated a wide range of metaphorical meanings into his imagery while sharpening its focus in ways that resonated with his visual output.<sup>20</sup>

In this regard, another surviving puppy painting offers an intriguing context for understanding Buson's approach to this subject. It is a simple painting by Maruyama Ōkyo 円山応挙(1733-1795) of a puppy in monochrome ink, without outline, inscribed with a poem by Buson(Fig. 15). The inscription states that Ōkyo made the painting and requested a poetic verse from Buson, who obliged with the following *hokku* 発句:

<sup>19</sup> Haruo Shirane, *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō*(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1-29.

<sup>20</sup> On Buson's poetics see Makoto Ueda, *The Path of Flowering Thorn: The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson*(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), and Cheryl A. Crowley, *Haikai Poet Yosa Buson and the Bashō Revival*(Leiden: Brill, 2007).

From his very soul, There in the darkness he barks-

Midnight in autumn

*ono gami no / yami yori hoete / yowa no aki*

おのが身の闇より吼て夜半の秋

While following certain conventions of *haikai* practice, including the weaving in of a seasonal word or phrase (*kigo* 季語), in this case “midnight in autumn” (*yowa no aki* 夜半の秋), the verse personalizes the image of the puppy. The word “midnight” (*yowa*) also refers to Buson’s own *haikai* lineage, the “Midnight Pavilion” (Yahantei 夜半亭), of which Buson was the second-generation head. In

doing so, Buson implicitly likens the puppy to himself, and by extension its barking from the depths of its being to Buson’s own acts of versification. The verse wonderfully resonates with the inky image by linking the monochrome silhouette of the puppy to the darkness in which Buson metaphorically and metaphysically positions his own status as a poet. And importantly it is the precedent established by Yi Am to approach this subject with planar washes instead of meticulous brushwork that enabled this poetic framing of the subject in one of the most memorable collaborative works of Japanese painting.



**Fig. 15.** Maruyama Ōkyo 円山応挙(1733-1795), *Puppy* 狗子図, with inscription by Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村, 18<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 19.5×26.8cm, private collection, Japan

## V. Itō Jakuchū and Puppy Painting

The final case study taken up here in relation to the Japanese reception of Yi Am’s puppy paintings is that of the Kyoto painter Itō Jakuchū. Famous as an urban commoner who retired from his family business at age forty to pursue painting and the practice of Zen Buddhism, Jakuchū developed a unique and visually distinctive corpus of works that has attracted intense interest in recent years. Among his diverse and wide-ranging output are five puppy paintings that can also be linked both directly and indirectly to the legacy of Yi Am.

To understand why this is so, it is helpful to return to the era of Sōtatsu and examine another puppy painting by the artist that bears an inscription (Fig. 11). This one, previously mentioned briefly, includes a later inscription by the Ōbaku Zen monk Tangai Musen 丹崖無染(1693-1764), administered sometime before his death in 1764, and reads as follows:

Karma and the Buddha Nature,  
 Skillfully drawn in black and white.  
 Master Zhaozhou must be summoned,  
 To explain aloud whether [the answer is] yes or no.  
 業識并佛性  
 黑白巧描模  
 可喚趙州老  
 任口說有無

As with the earlier inscription by Bunshu, Musen explicitly links the painting to the Zen koan “A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature.” Here, however, Musen allegorizes the contrastive color scheme of the two puppies, which intertwine their black and white bodies much like a yin-yang symbol, as a key element in his invocation of Zhaozhou’s famous query.

The painting also provides a crucial link between the cultural circle of Sôtatsu and that of Jakuchū more than a century later. That is because Musen appears to have been a close acquaintance of Jakuchū, and left more inscriptions on his paintings than any other Zen monk. This is not surprising, as Jakuchū was known to have a particular interest in Ōbaku Zen, fraternizing with monks from this lineage such as Baisaō 壳茶翁(1675-1763), and eventually became an ordained Ōbaku monk in his later years. Furthermore, Musen had close relations with Jakuchū’s religious master Daiten 大典(1719-1801), apparently hailing from the same county of Kanzaki 神崎 in Ōmi Province, and interacted with him from the Kanpō 寛保 era(1741-44) onward.<sup>21</sup>

In 2007, a relatively early Jakuchū painting was discovered in Rokuonji 鹿苑寺 monastery bearing an inscription by Musen(Fig. 16).<sup>22</sup> The painting combines the depiction of a puppy with its back to the viewer, facing upward, and a large broom in front of it. The inscription by Musen reads as follows:



**Fig. 16.** Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲 (1716-1800), Puppy with Broom 厩児帚戯図, inscribed by Tangai Musen 丹崖無染, 18<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 102.0×40.1cm, Rokuonji 鹿苑寺, Kyoto

<sup>21</sup> Kadowaki, “Esshū kushi wa,” *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> The work was introduced in *Jakuchūten*(Kyoto: Jōtenkaku Bijutsukan, 2007).

A small puppy from outside of Zhaozhou's monastery  
Has come to play with Hanshan's reed broom.  
The Buddha Nature, does it have it or not?  
From this arises both the mundane and the meditative.

趙州門外小廬兒  
來倚寒山苕帚戲  
佛性不須問有無  
諸塵三昧從斯起

This work is believed to be based on a now-lost work by the medieval monk-painter Tōshun 等春 (d. 1520), and not necessarily on a work associated with Yi Am.<sup>23</sup> However, the inscription by Musen suggests that the painting circulated within the same discursive environment as earlier puppy paintings derived from Yi Am's models. Although Jakuchū's painting has given rise to a number of different interpretations, as discussed by Kadowaki Mutsumi, the inscription is predicated upon an imaginary historical encounter between two famous Zen practitioners, the monk Zhaozhou (778-897) and the eccentric poet Hanshan (active late 8<sup>th</sup>-early 9<sup>th</sup> century), signified here by the puppy and the broom, respectively.<sup>24</sup> As such, it required an insider knowledge of Zen teachings, and owes its origins to an erudite circle of Zen practitioners that in this case consisted of Musen, Jakuchū, and by extension Daiten and Baisaō. It continues the association within Sōtatsu's circle of puppies with the famous koan querying the Buddha Nature; at the same time, it amplifies this association to imagine a dialogue between two legendary figures in the mythistory of Zen.

Furthermore, once established, this painting subject seems to have been embraced by members of this circle, as suggested by a number of other Jakuchū paintings of the same theme. One of them, a painting now in Kyoto's Hosomi Art Museum (Fig. 17), bears almost the same Musen inscription, this time in the hand of the later monk Ryūmon Shōken 龍門承猷 (1734-1800). In this version, the dog is white instead of black, and is situated in front of the broom. Another example by Jakuchū of the same subject (Fig. 18), however, indicates that at times this combination of motifs could be interpreted

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<sup>23</sup> Fukushi Yūya, "Chōsen kaiga to kinsei Nihon kaiga," in *Chōsen ōchō no kaiga to Nihon*, exh. cat. (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbun, 2008), 214-217.

<sup>24</sup> The most common alternative interpretation reads the broom as a device for sweeping away desire, which in a generic sense accords with the Buddhist framework of the subject matter. See, for example, Murata Takashi's entry in *Jakuchū ten*, *ibid*, 192.

differently. This example bears an inscription by a certain Rikkatei Bokutan 栗柯亭木端(1710-73), the second-generation head of the Osaka Ritsu school of *kyōka* 狂歌(crazy verse) poetry. Instead of associating the twinned motifs with Zhaozhou and Hanshan, the poet here emphasizes the theme of maternal love:

Brushed with a broom,  
 But not afraid in the least,  
 Puppy, puppy,  
 How well you sleep!  
 そへさする ははきなるかや おそはれす  
 いぬの子いぬの子 よくねいたり

Here the poet plays with the overlap between the word “broom”(hōki or hahaki) and “mother”(haha), and thus the first line “brushed with a broom”(soesasuru) can be doubly read as “caressed by your mother.”<sup>25</sup> Here the ever-transmogrifying interpretative history of puppy paintings takes a new turn, as a Zen allegory is transposed into a playful verse that makes a nod to the subject’s original meaning, as an auspicious work reflective of familial harmony.

Even the theme of maternal love, however, could be allegorized within a Zen discursive context. Such is the case with a work by Jakuchū titled *Mother Dog and Puppy*(Oyaimu koinu zu 親犬子犬図)(Fig. 19). Sketched very simply in outline against a blank background, this work resembles a *haiga*, or painting accompanying a *haikai* poem, in its simplicity. The inscription is by the monk Monchū Jōfuku



Fig. 17. Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲(1716-1800), *Puppy with Broom* 扈兒帚戯図, inscription by Ryūmon Shōken 龍門承猷(1734-1800), 18<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 99.5×27.8cm, Hosomi Art Museum 細見美術館, Kyoto



Fig. 18. Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲(1716-1800), *Puppy with Broom* 扈兒帚戯図, inscription by Rikkatei Bokutan 栗柯亭木端(1710-73), 18<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 106.2×29.4cm, private collection, Japan

<sup>25</sup> See the discussion in *Seitan sanbyakunen onaitoshi no tensai eshi Jakuchū to Buson*, exhibition catalogue(Shiga: Miho Museum, 2015), 323.

聞中淨復(1739-1829), a disciple of Daiten who went on to become an Ōbaku monk and left numerous inscriptions on Jakuchū's works.<sup>26</sup> His participation indicates that the painting originated in the same erudite Zen circles as *Puppy and Broom*, discussed earlier. Sure enough, this erudition is reflected in Monchū's inscription:

Their love resembles that of the ox and child,  
 Its barking effectively guards the barrier.  
 The story of Zhaozhou's "No!"  
 Knowledge of karma, who would debate this?  
 舐犢均其愛  
 吠形能守門  
 趙州無字話  
 業識有誰論

Here the image of the mother dog and her child is likened to the love of an ox for her child as indicated in the classical Chinese term *shidu* (J. *shitoku* 舐犢). This parental love, however, rather than indicating an attachment that must be overcome to achieve awakening, is instead itself associated with spiritual advancement. Thus the dogs here are understood as exemplars of Zen, enlightened creatures effectively guarding the "barrier" of Zen. The reference to Zhaozhou in the latter half of the verse reinforces this association.<sup>27</sup>

No account of Jakuchū's puppy painting would be complete, however, without mention of *One Hundred Dogs* (*Hyakken zu* 百犬図) (Fig. 20), a very late work of the artist now in a private collection. The delightful work depicts a variety of puppies with different fur patterns engaged in playful activity in groups of two, three, and four. While the painting only depicts



Fig. 19. Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲(1716-1800), Mother Dog and Puppy (*Oyainu koinu zu* 親犬子犬図), inscription by Monchū Jōfuku 聞中淨復 (1739-1829), 18<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 104.6×29.0cm, private collection, Japan

<sup>26</sup> See *Itō Jakuchū-anazaa waarudo*, exhibition catalogue (Shizuoka and Chiba: Shizuoka Kenritsu Bijutsukan and Chiba Shiritsu Bijutsukan, 2010), 158.

<sup>27</sup> *Mother Dog and Puppy* was first introduced in Kyoto National Museum, ed., *Jakuchū Daizen* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2002), pl. 86. See the discussion of the inscription in Kadowaki, "Esshū kushi wa," *ibid.*, 46.

fifty-eight creatures in all, the multitude of puppies suggests an auspicious function wishing for plentiful offspring similar to “One Hundred Children,” as reflected in the title.<sup>28</sup> Although inscribed by the artist as painted at “age eighty-six,” as argued by Kano Hiroyuki 狩野博幸 and others, this manner of counting his age, in which one year was added with every change in era name, meant that it was actually painted when Jakuchū was eighty-four, in the year 1799 or 1800.<sup>29</sup> Whatever the case may be, the work is considered a showcase of Jakuchū’s virtuosic approach to his craft, and upon close inspection reveals a meticulous use of mineral and vegetal pigments to render details of the puppies’ bodies and fur. Although this manner of polychrome rendering departs from the tradition of inky puppy paintings traced back to Yi Am, the forms are strikingly similar to the Yi Am lineage. Here again the meaning of the subject is layered. Although undoubtedly auspicious in nature, one detail that easily escapes casual observation suggests once again a reference to Zen teachings. As observed by Kadowaki, toward the center of the painting is one puppy that looks directly at the viewer and holds a green reed-like object in its mouth (Fig. 21). This object is likely a piece of a reed broom, thus making reference to the same encounter between Zhaozhou and Hanshan suggested by the Rokuonji painting discussed earlier.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 20. Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲(1716-1800), One Hundred Dogs 百犬図, 18<sup>th</sup> century, hanging scroll, 142.7×84.2cm, private collection, Japan



Fig. 21. Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲(1716-1800), One Hundred Dogs 百犬図, detail

<sup>28</sup> The interpretation of *One Hundred Dogs* in relation to the “One Hundred Children” theme is found in Imahashi Riko, *Edo no dōbutsuga-kinsei bijutsu to bunka no kōkōgaku* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2004), 316-319.

<sup>29</sup> See Kano Hiroyuki, “Jakuchū ni tsuite,” in *Botsugonihyakumen Jakuchū*, exh. cat. (Kyoto: Kyoto National Museum, 2002), 9-44.

<sup>30</sup> Kadowaki, “Esshū kushi wa,” *ibid.*, 44.

## VI. Conclusion

Jakuchū's surviving works underscore the degree to which puppy paintings in Japan were interpreted within a Zen discursive framework. This essay has attempted to establish the idea that Yi Am's wash-based approach to the pictorial rendering of dogs played a role in the genesis of this interpretive tradition. In this regard, the legacy of Yi Am's works in Japan is subtle and has yet to be fully understood; it was his penchant to use inkwork instead of brushwork to render his puppies that opened this painting subject up to a horizon of Zen Buddhist interpretations that held strong interest for viewers during the Edo period. And this is one reason why, I would propose, Yi Am merits special attention for his artistic legacy in Japan, and for his unique position in the history of East Asian ink painting.

\* 주제어(key words)\_Yi Am, Zen, puppies, ink painting

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## Abstract

# Puppy Love: The Legacy of Yi Am's Paintings in Edo-Period Japan

Yukio Lippit\*

This essay examines the Japanese reception of the Korean painter Yi Am 李巖 (b. 1499), and by extension considers the relationship between ink painting technique and pictorial meaning. In particular, it examines how Yi Am's unique approach to the painting of puppies with blended washes of ink opened up new interpretive possibilities among Japanese viewers.

Although Yi Am's puppy paintings appear to have been circulating in Japan as early as the seventeenth century, they were misattributed to Chinese painters such as Mao Yi, and Yi Am's seal was mistaken as belonging to a Japanese monk-painter of the Muromachi period. The monochrome ink puppy paintings of the Kyoto artist Tawaraya Sōtatsu 俵屋宗達 (ca. 1600-1640), however, depict the bodies of their canine protagonists with the same wash-based approach found in Yi Am's works, and appear to have been catalyzed in some way by an encounter with the Korean artist's paintings. In the case of Sōtatsu, this approach eventually came to be known as *tarashikomi*, a signature technique of the Rinpa School, and therefore it is no exaggeration to state that Yi Am's works played a role in inspiring one of the most recognizable techniques of early modern Japanese painting.

Although dog and puppy paintings are traditionally linked to auspicious meanings, Sōtatsu's puppy paintings appear to have been associated within a Zen Buddhist themes, in particular the koan "A Dog Has No Buddha-Nature." This Zen Buddhist framework of meaning can be gleaned from inscriptions on his paintings by Zen monks such as Isshi Bunshu 一絲文守 (1608-1646) and

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Tangai Musen 丹崖無染(1693-1763). I would propose that the particular wash-based approach of Yi Am and Sôtatsu to this subject was particularly significant in generating this association.

The eighteenth-century painter-poet Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村(1716-1784) also based his puppy paintings upon models derived from Yi Am. In the case of Buson, however, the cultural meaning of these works can be gleaned from his *haikai* poetry, in particular a poem accompanying a Maruyama Okyo 円山応挙(1733-1795) painting of a puppy that associates its inky body with the interiority of a poetic subject.

The final case study examined in this essay is Itô Jakuchû 伊藤若冲(1716-1800). Jakuchû left a number of puppy paintings that embody Zen Buddhist themes in highly sophisticated ways. Because he was close to Tangai Musen, it is likely that he was aware of Sôtatsu's puppy paintings, and indirectly familiar with those of Yi Am. Thus the case could be made that Yi Am's wash-based technique opened up a new horizon of interpretive possibility among Japanese painters extending from Sôtatsu to Jakuchû.