

**KITAGAWA TAMIJI'S ART AND ART EDUCATION: TRANSLATING  
CULTURE IN POSTREVOLUTIONARY MEXICO AND MODERN JAPAN**

**By**

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**Submitted to the graduate degree program in Art History and the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

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KITAGAWA TAMIJI'S ART AND ART EDUCATION: TRANSLATING CULTURE IN  
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## **Abstract**

This dissertation investigates the life and career of the Japanese painter, printmaker, and art educator, Kitagawa Tamiji (1894-1989), and his conception of Mexico as cultural Other. Today, Kitagawa is widely recognized in Japan as an artist and educator, whose thought and practices were deeply inspired by his long-term residence in postrevolutionary Mexico (1921-1936). Kitagawa left Japan at the age of twenty to study art in the United States. After engaging in several temporary jobs and briefly being trained at the Art Students League of New York, he went to Mexico in 1921, to eventually spend the next decade and a half working as an artist and art educator. Kitagawa's conception and narrative of Mexican culture—especially that of the Mexican indigenous population—are noteworthy for an early twentieth-century artist/intellectual. Rather than seeing Mexico in terms of its widespread stereotype as a distant tropical country, he regarded the country as a key locus of the emerging anti-colonial notion of culture. Based on his experience in the utopian political/social milieu immediately after the Mexican Revolution (c.1910-1920), after his return to Japan, Kitagawa took Mexico as a crucial reference point in conceiving the future trajectory of post-1945 Japanese modernity.

In this dissertation, Kitagawa's career as an artist and educator will be investigated alongside the notion of "ethnography" as addressed by James Clifford in the late 1980s. Beyond the common understanding of the term within academic anthropology as a professional practice of participant observation and writing, Clifford defines ethnography as an omnipresent experience of displacement and cultural encounter in the contemporary global world shared by a variety of subjects such as immigrants, tourists, and "native"

informants. Clifford emphasizes the experience of travel in ethnography, or a process of moving away from “home” in modern Euro-America, which often leads one to critical meditations on the normative cultural/political values in the West, including those represented by the discourse of nationalism, socio-economic progress and colonial domination over non-Western Other. According to Clifford and others, ethnography is a practice that prompts an alternative understanding of the modern/contemporary global world, in which the conventional boundary between “civilized” Self and “backward” Other has increasingly been blurred.

Keeping Clifford’s notion of “ethnography” in mind, this dissertation argues that Kitagawa’s experience of travel over the Americas and his long-term residence in Mexico equipped him with an ethnographic perspective of modernity. After his return to Japan, expressing such critical standing on modernity, Kitagawa embarked on a difficult task of cultural translation in order to exercise his Mexican-inspired art and pedagogy within a post-1945 Japanese social context. His activities revolved around knowledge of the cultural Other that emphasized an alternative mode of modernity. In negotiating the dominant West-centered narrative of culture, Kitagawa’s art and pedagogy dealt with social ethics and worldviews that were inherently incompatible with the dominant ideologies of Western modernity.

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This dissertation project would never have been possible without insightful advice and generous assistance from a number of individuals. I would first like to express my gratitude to the faculty members of the Department of Art History, University of Kansas, who patiently guided my study prior to and throughout my dissertation writing. My advisor Maki Kaneko is the great mentor whose comments and suggestions were genuinely indispensable to this dissertation. Without her constant advice based on her deep knowledge of scholarly research and writing, my dissertation would have fallen into a desperately endless and fatally unsuccessful attempt. I also thank Sherry Fowler, who encouraged me to start my career as an art historian in my second year at the University of Kansas. For me, as a graduate student without any art history background, Dr. Fowler's words were a truly warm invitation to the field of East Asian art. I would like to acknowledge invaluable support from David Cateforis, Elaine Gerbert and Amy McNair, who kindly joined my comprehensive examination as well as dissertation committee, providing penetrating feedback for my academic endeavor. Their advice on this dissertation will be vital to my future research and publication on Kitagawa Tamiji. In addition to the faculty members, I also thank Kris Ercums and Mark Olson. While I worked as his intern, Kris gave me an exciting opportunity to explore and investigate contemporary art venues in Mexico City. Mark, in addition to the great friendship I enjoyed with him during my time as his GRA, kindly hosted me in his home in Lawrence, Kansas while I defended my dissertation. Finally, I would like to mention my fellow art history graduate students, to

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During my most intensive period of dissertation writing, I lived in Bogotá, Colombia, the city of immense possibilities in terms of contemporary art, literature and cultural exchange. I am grateful to many people for their friendship and inspiring conversations, including my partner Valentina López Castrillón, my friends Carlos Eduardo

Torres, Andres Valencia Rodríguez and so many others. I offer my thanks to Dr. Fowler, Dr. Cateforis and Keith Mercer who spared their precious time to proofread my entire dissertation. I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Katsuyuki Kumagai and Yukiko Kumagai for their continuous support and understanding of my academic endeavor.



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Kitagawa Tamiji as Ethnographer**

This dissertation examines the activities of the Japanese painter, printmaker and art educator, Kitagawa Tamiji (1894-1989), and his conception of Mexico as cultural Other. Today Kitagawa is remembered as a painter of Mexican themes as well as an engaging art educator, whose thought and practices were deeply inspired by his long-term experience in postrevolutionary Mexico (1921-1936). Born in Shizuoka in 1894, Kitagawa left Japan at the age of twenty to study art in the United States. After engaging in dozens of part-time jobs and briefly studying at the Art Students League of New York, he ventured into an open-ended trip in southern United States and Cuba. This trip ultimately took Kitagawa to Mexico in 1921, where he spent the next fifteen years working as an artist, as well as teaching rural Mexican children and adolescents to paint in the *Escuela de Pintura al Aire Libre* (Open-air Painting School, EPAL), one of the official pedagogical programs instituted during the Mexican Revolution. While travelling in the southern United States and Cuba, Kitagawa critically observed the harsh racial discrimination faced by people of African ancestry, and expressed his solidarity with their emerging resistance for cultural/political autonomy. In Mexico, through his pedagogical engagement as well as friendship with various Mexican artists and intellectuals in the midst of the utopian cultural climate of postrevolutionary social reconstruction, Kitagawa became convinced of the emancipatory role of art and education in cultural minorities' struggles to negotiate the reality of social hardship and political cooptation.

Kitagawa's experiences abroad, particularly his time in postrevolutionary Mexico, were crucial to his proposal of new theoretical perspectives of art and pedagogy after his return to Japan in 1936. He aimed to introduce his notion of public art inspired by Mexican Muralism into the post-1945 Japanese context, producing some noteworthy murals and large-format paintings using mural aesthetics and subjects. As an educator, Kitagawa inaugurated his open-air painting school in Nagoya (1949) based on his experience in Mexican EPAL schools as an attempt to release Japanese children's creativity from the inflexible conventions of post-WWII Japanese public education. Kitagawa's emotional and intellectual investment in Mexico as his most fundamental source of inspiration made his art and pedagogy an outstanding effort of cultural translation in mid-to late twentieth-century Japan; Kitagawa was one of the very few Japanese artists/intellectuals who contemplated Mexico as a vital reference point in conceptualizing Japan's modernity, at a time when the majority of Japanese political leaders and artists exclusively looked to Western Europe and the United States in their pursuit of the nation's socio-economic progress.

In this dissertation, I will investigate Kitagawa's conception of Mexico—especially Mexican “indigenous” people—as a notable counternarrative to the legacies of colonialism and Orientalist conceptions of the cultural Other, which continue to be influential in the contemporary global world.<sup>1</sup> In my attempt to read Kitagawa's art and pedagogy as such a

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term “indigenous” as the translation of Spanish *indígena* with reference to the specific social contexts of modern/contemporary Latin America. Due to the history of racial/cultural interbreeding since the arrival of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) in 1492, in modern Latin America, arguing who are “indigenous” people and who are not, both racially and culturally, has

counternarrative, I will focus on the notion of “ethnography,” especially as addressed by James Clifford in the late 1980s. Traditionally, ethnography has almost monolithically been associated with cultural anthropology as the academic practice consisting of an ethnographer’s long-term fieldwork among “native” people and writing about their social organization, worldview, religious practices, etc.<sup>2</sup> This situation gradually changed around the 1970s, thanks to some anthropologists’ effort to redefine ethnography more broadly as an experience of displacement and cultural encounter/translation, shared by not only

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been quite a complex issue. For instance, based on his fieldwork in highland Guatemala, the anthropologist Koizumi Junji reveals the ambiguity in the notion of “indigenous” people as a social category. Tracing the influx of the rural “indigenous” population into the country’s urbanized areas, Koizumi points out that, many of these people, having abandoned traditional clothes and customs, began to recognize themselves as ladino (monolingual Spanish speaking people in southern Mexico and Central America), not *indígena*. In this dissertation, keeping in mind such ambiguity in its definition, I will use the term “indigenous” with my awareness of the emerging activism in rural Latin America after the 1990s, in which groups of people were becoming increasingly conscious of their pre-Columbian cultural heritage and identity as “indigenous” people. Indeed, Kitagawa’s experimental pedagogy in Mexico took place many decades earlier than the rise of today’s “indigenous” activism. But his recognition of rural Mexican children/adolescents’ constructive agency through art encouraged a reflection on their identity in broader society, which somehow anticipated the late twentieth-century “indigenous activism.” See Koizumi Junji, “Kyōkai o bunseki suru: Guatemala no baai,” in *Minzoku no deau katachi*, ed. Kuroda Etsuko (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1994), 61-82. As for today’s “indigenous” movement in Guatemala, see among others Kay Warren, *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Here, for the sake of my argument on Kitagawa Tamiji, I focus on the notion of ethnography having been defined and redefined within cultural anthropology. It must be noted, however, that the term “ethnography” as a qualitative research method is widely used today beyond the confines of humanities and social sciences. For instance, in the corporate world, ethnography refers to research on customers’ activities focused on the context of their quotidian activities, which often involves personal visits to their home or workplace. See for instance, Sam Ladner, *Practical Ethnography: A Guide to Doing Ethnography in the Private Sector* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2014).

academic anthropologists, but also a great range of people such as missionaries, tourists, writers, artists, and “native” informants. As I will discuss further below, Clifford’s writings compiled in *Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (1988), and *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) were groundbreaking in this move.<sup>3</sup> Through these essays, Clifford defines ethnography as an omnipresent experience of encounter in cultural contact zones informed by awareness decentralized from a single culture’s established system of meanings. Clifford suggests that since the early twentieth century, due to the increasing mobility and deterritorialization of culture, it has become common for one to observe his/her own culture from an outsider’s “ironical” viewpoint.<sup>4</sup> Such ubiquitousness of the opportunities of cultural observation should be seen as a critical antecedent to the polemic conditions of contemporary cultural discourse, which began to be recognized by the scholars of humanities and social sciences after the 1980s. The widespread ethnographic awareness shared among colonized subjects was central to their ongoing questioning of Westerners’ monolithic colonial/Orientalist narrative of culture around the globe.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> James Clifford, *Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Clifford often characterizes a detached “ethnographic” attitude shared among the twentieth-century world population as “ironical,” because to a certain group of people the dominant discourse of modernity often appears to be fictitious, due to their ever-frequent experience of physical/psychological estrangement from the major metropolises epitomizing—or influential centers of—modernist thought and practice. See Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 1-17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-17.

Following Clifford's line of argument in this dissertation, I will consider Kitagawa as one of the self-made (unprofessional) ethnographers from the early to mid twentieth century. In *Predicament of Culture*, Clifford illuminates the expansion of ethnographic consciousness—off-centered observation of culture—through tracing the life of several European intellectuals and writers such as Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) and Victor Segalen (1878-1919).<sup>6</sup> Due to their physical/psychological displacement from their homeland that profoundly impacted the formation of their worldview and creative engagement, as well as their extensive writing about non-Western cultural Others, their life and activities epitomize ethnographic encounters and translations ever more frequent in the early twentieth-century world. As Clifford argues, the world lived in by these intellectuals and writers saw the gradual destabilization of the traditional form of identity whose correspondence to single cultural/national territories had been taken for granted.<sup>7</sup> Their strong sense of displacement enabled them to look at their homeland societies in modern Europe through an outsider's ironical perspective, in which the established premises of modernity—nationalism, socio-economic progress, and above all colonial domination over non-Western “native” people—often appeared to be fictitious. Their off-centered consciousness led these writers to an ambivalent perception of people outside Western Civilization; their narratives often deviated from the conventional colonial/Orientalist discourse of domination and exoticism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Keeping my focus on the experience of psychological/physical displacement from culture, I will examine Kitagawa's life and activities as a case comparable to those of the aforementioned European writers and intellectuals. As I will discuss in Chapter One, Kitagawa's psychological alienation from Japan was caused by the miscellaneous factors pertinent to his upbringing and complex family situation. At any rate, his psychological and physical move away from his homeland resulted in the conspicuous off-centeredness of his thought vis-à-vis the project of nationalism and socio-economic modernization in twentieth-century Japan, which was based on the emulation of Western models. To put it differently, Kitagawa's psychological remoteness from early twentieth-century Japan—Japan in the era of modernization and imperial expansion—meant, to a significant degree, his detachment from the ideologies of Western modernity, whose expansionist aspiration entailed the colonial subjugation of the cultural Other.<sup>9</sup> As I will discuss in the following chapters, Kitagawa's life and career in Japan, the United States, Cuba, and Mexico were all marked by a sense of exclusion from twentieth-century “national” space defined by the homogenizing nationalist/imperialist ideologies often oppressive to cultural minorities. Observing these diverse cultural terrains from an ironical ethnographic standpoint, Kitagawa's activities constantly contradicted the normative parameters of Western, and by extension, Japanese modernity/modernization and its imperialist expansion.

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<sup>9</sup> My argument of Western modernity is based on the scholarly discussions developed over the last few decades on the inseparable relationship between Western modernity and colonial/Oriental representation of the cultural Other. For instance, the anthropologist Fernando Coronil insightfully argues that it was the formation of Western modernity itself that led to the “invention” of the cultural Other as its indispensable mirror image. See Fernando Coronil, “Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories,” *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (1996): 51-87.

By examining Kitagawa's thought and practices that meditated multilateral cultural encounter and translation through a broad range of historical/cultural terrains—postrevolutionary Mexico and post-1945 Japan in particular, this dissertation will ultimately argue the necessity of renewing the theoretical framework of Japanese art history, which is still largely predicated on the conventional binary opposition of “Eastern” and “Western” civilizations. As I will discuss later in this Introduction, Japanese art historians' subscription to the East-West dichotomy has been a legacy of the discipline's formation in the context of Cold War politics, during which the United States (and Western Europe) was seen as Japan's only significant cultural/political partner.<sup>10</sup> What is most problematic in Japanese art historians' use of such a binary perspective is that it has largely made them focus on East Asia and the West (mainly the United States and Western Europe) as if the rest of the world's regions—Latin America, Africa and Oceania—had not made any noteworthy contributions to the formation/development of modern/contemporary Japanese art. Kitagawa's activities that contemplated postrevolutionary Mexico as his point of departure in reinventing art and education in post-1945 Japan challenges the conventional understanding of Japanese art along the lines of East-West interaction. Through investigating Kitagawa's artistic and pedagogical activities, this dissertation proposes an alternative framework of Japanese art history more attentive to modern/contemporary

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<sup>10</sup> Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 1-17.

Japanese artists' conception of the cultural Other beyond the perspective confined to East Asia and the West.<sup>11</sup>

### **Redefining Ethnography**

As stated above, in this dissertation, I will center on the notion of ethnography redefined by Clifford as the key to understand Kitagawa's life and activities as a counternarrative to the colonial/Orientalist discourse of the cultural Other. In this section, I will take a brief look at Clifford's revamping of the notion of ethnography in the midst of the severe backlash against the notion in the humanities and social sciences during the 1980s. In *Predicament of Culture*, Clifford finds one of the early manifestations of ethnographic consciousness in a New Jersey suburb of New York City around the 1920s, where the influx of ethnic minorities and immigrants was transforming a then White-dominated urban social milieu.<sup>12</sup> Clifford draws attention to a poem written by William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), a

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<sup>11</sup> In this dissertation, I use the term "West" based on the modern/contemporary Japanese intellectuals' common usage of the word *seiyō*, which mostly refers to Western Europe and the United States. After the mid-nineteenth century through to the present, these regions have been Japan's prominent model for socio-political modernization. Indeed, due to its historical formation, Mexico (and Latin American societies in general) has occasionally been regarded as a part of the modern Western world. As García Canclini illustrates, modern Latin America is a product of the hybrid formation, which is the "sedimentation, juxtaposition, and interweaving of indigenous traditions, of Catholic colonial Hispanism, and modern political, educational and communicational actions." In this dissertation, by focusing on Kitagawa's long-term engagement with the indigenous population of Mexico, I took Mexico as Japan's non-Western cultural Other, or a locus of counternarrative against the monolithic conception of modernity in Europe and the United States . Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, translated by Christopher Chiappari and Silvia Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 46.

<sup>12</sup> Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 1-17.



physician-poet living in that suburb, which epitomizes the modernist artists and intellectuals' loss of their alluring illusions about "authentic" otherness. His poem begins with the striking phrase "pure products of America go crazy" followed by meditations on the fate of "native" people uprooted from their cultural totality and the grimy modern world surrounding them.<sup>13</sup> Williams sees the breakdown of the modernist ideal of lyrical/pastoral otherness in a girl he called Elsie, who worked as a maid in his house. Observing her "great/ungainly hips and flopping breasts," Williams faced something still unnamed, as he apprehended that the notion of authenticity—"pure" culture uncorrupted by modern civilization, with which White Americans tended to associate cultural minorities seemed no longer valid.<sup>14</sup> Toward the end of the poem Williams writes, "It is only in isolated flecks that something is given off."<sup>15</sup> As Clifford points out, Williams did not subscribe to the tempting notion of lyrical otherness. Rather he compares Elsie, the personality driven out of the integrity of her "authentic" cultural roots, to the "isolated flecks" where something new was emerging.<sup>16</sup> Williams' poem is ethnographic according to Clifford, since the poet sees himself decentralized from the conventional discourse of Western modernity and its conception of otherness in terms of the notion of cultural authenticity. In the poem, Williams confronts the lack of proper framework to narrate the cultural Other, which was promoted by his detachment from the normative Eurocentric perspective.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 1-17.

As many postcolonial theorists have argued, a nostalgic longing for “authentic” cultural otherness has been a byproduct of Western modernity, parallel to the West’s imperialist expansion and colonial domination over the “native” people.<sup>17</sup> Up to the 1980s, it was largely taken for granted that modernity and modernization—breaking away from the past and incessant pursuit of innovation—were the Westerners’ privilege, while the “natives” belonged to an imaginary temporality of primitive/backwardness. Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and others have pointed out two seemingly contradictory attitudes toward the colonized people within the West: prejudice and fetishization.<sup>18</sup> While the colonized people are seen to be degenerate and as the subject of civilization through colonial administration, they are also stereotyped as the beholder of “authentic” cultural otherness. In both cases, these people are treated as temporal/geographical outsiders to the modern West, and denied their “coevalness” within contemporary global world.<sup>19</sup> To Westerners’ eyes, the “natives” have two options: to remain “primitive” or lend themselves to being “civilized” according

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<sup>17</sup> The publication regarded by many as having pioneered today’s postcolonial critique is Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). In *Orientalism*, Said identified a set of ethics and narrative strategies frequently used to represent the non-Western cultural Other, particularly those in Middle East, in Western literary and academic discourses. Said argued that the fictitious and often stereotypical account of the “Orient” in the West was inseparable from the latter’s aspiration for imperialist expansion and political domination over non-Western peoples.

<sup>18</sup> See Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: Discrimination, Difference and the Discourse of Colonialism,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston Baker et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 87-106; Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the ‘Other,’” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Thousand Oaks, 1997), 223-290.

<sup>19</sup> As for the discussion about how anthropologists have implicitly denied the “coevalness” of their “field” and its “native” inhabitants, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

to Western cultural norms, in exchange for the loss of their aura of cultural “authenticity.” Probably, the most serious problem in the colonialist/imperialist perspective of modernity/modernization is that, through maintaining that modernity is exclusively a Westerners’ project, it recognizes only a single road to arrive at the desirable future—that of the modern West. The colonial/Orientalist way of thinking denies the multiple routes to modernity among those “colonized,” or people struggling against colonial/neocolonial exploitation, whose cultural ethics and worldview are hardly compatible with the linear narrative of modernization in the West.

One key apparatus in the maintenance of such a colonizer’s perspective of the cultural Other in the West has been anthropology. In Europe, the formation of anthropology as an academic discipline and its evolutionist theory in the mid-nineteenth century was concomitant to the region’s imperialist expansion, as the knowledge gained through ethnographic fieldwork was seen to be vital to efficient colonial rule.<sup>20</sup> Since the first decades of the twentieth century, anthropologists gradually assumed the role as critics of Western culture mainly through the theory of Cultural Relativism.<sup>21</sup> Despite its strikingly liberal agenda, however, the advocates of Cultural Relativism continued to isolate the

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<sup>20</sup> For instance, see Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Cultural Relativism, put forward by the U.S. anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) and his students in the first half of the twentieth century, opposed the evolutionist conception of race and culture by calling for the recognition of each culture’s internal logics. These scholars argued that the relevance of people’s thought and behavior, especially those in non-Western “primitive” societies by principle could not be judged by the standards of another culture, including dominant Western ones. Representative works in Cultural Relativism include Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005 [1934]).

notion of culture from the effect of global modernity; in their ethnographic writing, these scholars often skipped over “impure” elements to their notion of culture such as the state’s political intervention in local communities, the infiltration of mass-produced commodities or the presence of tourists (and most importantly anthropologists themselves), all of which were rapidly “adulterating” the alleged “primitive” “remote” communities. Many anthropologists today agree that, by maintaining the anthropological notion of “field” as a strictly demarcated geographical terrain, Cultural Relativism reinforced the colonial/Orientalist narrative of authenticity rather than opposing it.<sup>22</sup> It was around the mid-1980s that the representation of cultures in a conceptually compartmentalized space was called into question through several key publications, among them, *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986) and Clifford’s aforementioned *Predicament of Culture*.<sup>23</sup> Through these publications epitomizing the so-called postcolonial turn in humanities and social sciences, many anthropologists have drawn attention not only to ethnography’s now dubious claim of scientific objectivity, but also to the global arena of asymmetrical power balance that has facilitated anthropologists’ unilateral investigation

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<sup>22</sup> Many acknowledge Cultural Relativism’s vital contribution to cultural anthropology, as it became one of the discipline’s basic moral principles warning against the unilateral imposition of Western cultural norms in ethnographic research. On the other hand, it has often been criticized after the 1980s for the reasons I just stated. For insightful reflection on the topic, see Clifford Geertz, “Anti Anti-Relativism,” in Clifford Geertz, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 42-67.

<sup>23</sup> Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*; James Clifford and George Marcus eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

and writing about the cultural Other.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the past few decades in cultural anthropology have been characterized by numerous cries for the discipline's "crisis" and both theoretical and practical attempts to reimagine the discipline's future in the midst of the increasing denunciation of the ethnographic authority.

Seen against the backdrop of the pervasively negative assessment of ethnography's role in the contemporary world, Clifford's reinterpretation of the term "ethnography" as an off-centered mode of experiencing culture is remarkable. As suggested earlier, Clifford's redefinition of ethnography was based on his recognition of the role of travel—or displacement—in contemporary ethnographic practices. As many in anthropology have argued, the ethnographer's experience of travel—displacement from his/her home in the West by modern transportation systems and entry into the realm of cultural otherness in Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere—was largely suppressed in ethnographic writing. This is mainly because travel was seen as a "personal" experience insignificant to

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting here, however, that more than a decade before the radical questioning of the ethnographer's authority in the 1980s, the one in anthropology who brought to attention taken-for-granted ethnography's link to academic anthropology was Clifford Geertz. As early as the 1970s, Geertz defined anthropology as an interpretive science in search of meaning rather than an experimental one in search of axioms. Geertz's argument approximated ethnography to literary genres, where the ethnographer was seen as author, rather than objective scientist. From Geertz's point of view, ethnography was not so much the academically coherent documentation of the cultural Other, as an ethnographer's often contingent and inherently incomplete effort of translation, which is comparable to that of writers, missionaries, colonial administrators, tourists and so on—at a specific historical moment. Geertz's essays characterizing ethnography as a translation include: "'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays on Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 2000 [1983]), 55-70.

the discipline's claim to be an objective science in Western academies.<sup>25</sup> However, if we are to look at ethnography as a form of travel, or one's physical movement from home to non-home—from the realm of familiarity to that of otherness—such an experience was by no means a privilege of academic anthropologists in the West. As discussed earlier, Clifford defines ethnography as an open-ended multi-lateral process of displacement and encounter, broadly shared by the twentieth-century world population.<sup>26</sup> By revitalizing the term “ethnography” through underlining the ethnographer's detachment from the conventional social setting in the West or elsewhere, Clifford took the notion not so much as a component of the Western project of modernity and colonialism, but more as a set of practices that frequently deviate from and challenge such normative narratives. Unshackled from the institutional connotations of academic anthropology, in its alternative definition, ethnography encompasses experiences inherently irreducible to the conventional social/political parameters of the modern West.

As I will discuss in the following chapters, Kitagawa's posture decentralized from the ideologies of Western modernity—and the West's unilateral conception of culture—manifested since his time in the southern U.S. and Cuba, and took a concrete form through his pedagogical engagement in postrevolutionary Mexico. Kitagawa's ironical worldview, somewhat similar to that of Williams, for example, can be glimpsed through his portrait of a young indigenous girl with a white-skinned baby on her lap, entitled *Mexican Girl Embracing Baby*, painted in Taxco, a town 170 kilometers south of Mexico City, toward

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<sup>25</sup> Clifford, *Routes*.

<sup>26</sup> Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 1-17.

the end of his time in Mexico (fig. 0.1, 1935). According to Kitagawa, these two children were siblings living near his home, and the girl was taking a very good care of her small brother, whose color of skin, hair, and eyes were entirely different from hers.<sup>27</sup> Although no more detail is available about these siblings, it can be inferred that the boy was a son of an Anglo-American mother or father. This painting implies Kitagawa's strong interest in the pervasive phenomenon of cultural/racial interbreeding in touristic and cosmopolitan 1930s Taxco, where the presence of U.S. tourists was an increasingly conspicuous phenomenon. *Mexican Girl Embracing Baby* attests to the fact that Kitagawa found more interest in what Williams calls "isolated flecks" rather than the totality of the "authentic" cultural Other. Certainly his ironical view on the discourse of Western modernity discussed above led him to depict the indigenous girl in a transcultural rather than traditional—or culturally "authentic"—setting. As I will discuss further in the following chapters, in a way as convincing as Williams' poem, Kitagawa's conception of cultural minorities in the Americas—African American and Mexican indigenous peoples in the era of massive political upheaval and social change—signaled an ethnographic worldview increasingly ubiquitous in the twentieth-century world, which is irreducible into the West-centered perspective of modernity.

### **Narrating/Investigating Kitagawa Tamiji as Artist and Art Educator**

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<sup>27</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, *Kitagawa Tamiji-ten* (Nagoya: Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 1996), 52.

Despite his remarkably transnational career, until the mid 1990s, Kitagawa's art and pedagogy rarely became the subject of in-depth academic research. There are multiple reasons for this, but one point to remember is that in addition to his fame having remained at best nation-wide, Kitagawa was alive until 1989 and the interpretation of his work and practice up to that point was often undertaken by those who belonged to Kitagawa's circles, including the educators Kubo Sadajirō (1909-1996) and Takimoto Masao (dates unknown). As opposed to critically investigating the significance of Kitagawa's art and pedagogy in light of the specific historical context of post-1945 Japan, these educators tended to enshrine Kitagawa as a heroic personality.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, even when Kitagawa's art and pedagogy was featured by art critics and journalists not acquainted with Kitagawa, their writings mostly lacked firsthand investigation, often rephrasing what Kitagawa had previously said in interviews. While many of these articles and essays are a valuable source of information for today's scholars exploring Kitagawa's life and activities, they tend to be impressionistic and repetitive. It was only after Kitagawa's death in 1989 that researchers gained a critical awareness in their studies and writings.

Probably, the most influential figure who promoted the heroic image of Kitagawa was Kubo Sadajirō. Kubo was the single most important advocate of Kitagawa's art and philosophy, and a collector of his artwork. In many of Kubo's writings, Kitagawa was described as a painter profoundly committed to the working-class masses, or as a rebellious outsider to Japanese painting salons, as his "rough" and "anti-lyricist" styles contradicted

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<sup>28</sup> People in Kitagawa's circles who frequently commented on his art and pedagogy include among others the art educators Kubo Sadajirō, Takimoto Masao, and Kitagawa's former disciples such as Andō Mikie (1916-2011).



Japanese painters' unanimous emulation of French-derived "delicate" and "sensitive" aesthetics.<sup>29</sup> Although Kubo's characterizations reveal some crucial aspects of Kitagawa's art and personality, by merely reiterating his heroic posture, Kubo's writing overlooks the complexity and density of the historical contexts in which Kitagawa's "recalcitrant" attitude was nurtured. In addition, one particular problem in Kubo's narrative is that while he underlines Kitagawa's exposure to the leftist intellectual milieu in New York (labor movements and realism in art) as the key backdrop to explain his rebellious posture and devotion to "masses," Kubo hardly looks into Kitagawa's activities in Mexico on his own, beyond citing the painter's sporadic commentaries on his Mexican experience.<sup>30</sup> Kubo's narrative set a standard for later Japanese commentators' frequent emphasis on Kitagawa's New York rather than Mexican period in exalting Kitagawa's stature through their mantra of "art for the oppressed" or "outsider" aesthetics.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, see Kubo Sadajirō, *Kitagawa Tamiji* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> For instance, in his short essay written in 1974, Kubo devotes about four pages to discussing Kitagawa's New York years, including his training under John Sloan and friendship with fellow Japanese painters such as Kuniyoshi Yasuo (1893-1953), and Shimizu Toshi (1887-1945), but he rarely delves into the Mexican period. While many of his essays almost routinely refer to Kitagawa's "Mexican" inspiration, none of them demonstrates Kubo's own analysis about the specific cultural milieu of postrevolutionary Mexico and Kitagawa's activities there. See Kubo Sadajirō, "Kitagawa Tamiji no ayunda michi," originally published in *Kitagawa Tamiji gashū*, in Kubo Sadajirō, *Kitagawa Tamiji* (Tokyo: Sōunsha, 1984), 24-38.

<sup>31</sup> One example of such a narrative is the art critic Muraki Akira's 1975 essay. In his essay, Muraki compares Kitagawa to Kuniyoshi Yasuo, whose painting, according to Muraki, frequently shows concerns with society and people. Muraki argues that Kitagawa and Kuniyoshi, both having lived in the United States as working-class men, conceived their painting as a means to depict lower class everyday reality. While Muraki attributes what he sees as the stylistic proximities between Kitagawa's and Kuniyoshi's painting to their aforementioned common experiences in the United States, his statement about Kitagawa's Mexican years is no more than a passing one. In Muraki's

Among Japanese art educators, on the other hand, Kitagawa was often described as a pedagogue with complex, difficult to grasp philosophical insight. Among those who promoted such a narrative is the educator Takimoto Masao,<sup>32</sup> who was about two decades younger than Kitagawa. Takimoto's writing often narrates how he awakened as a "genuine" educator through Kitagawa's mostly indirect teachings.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Takimoto's essays include some penetrating analysis about Kitagawa's philosophy such as his alternative understanding of the notion of "freedom" as struggles for freedom. However, like Kubo, by treating Kitagawa as a monumental personality, Takimoto often overlooks the historical context, particularly Kitagawa's pedagogical engagement in Mexican EPAL schools, where his pedagogical philosophy was formed.

As mentioned above, after the 1990s, several critical investigations about Kitagawa emerged. Unlike many publications during Kitagawa's lifetime that were just discussed, these studies demonstrate the authors' more academically rigorous perspective in researching Kitagawa's career and artwork. Probably the first substantial study on

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writing, Kitagawa's experience was reduced to a brief statement that his painting has a more Mexican "folkloric" quality compared to Kuniyoshi's. See Muraki Akira "Tamiji geijutsu no zenkōseki: sono shakaiteki hyōgenshugi ni tsuite," *Art Top* 31 (December 1975): 64-76.

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Takimoto Masao, *Kitagawa Tamiji ni manabu mono* (Nagoya: Reimei Shobō, 1983), and essays included in *Taiyō o motomeru himawari*, ed. Shimazaki Kiyomi (Tokyo: Bunkashobō Hakubunsha, 1977).

<sup>33</sup> For instance, Takimoto Masao calls Kitagawa as the greatest teacher of his life, who guided him to become a "genuine" educator. What Takimoto particularly underlines among the lessons he received from Kitagawa is the centrality of humor in art education, which he defines as a capacity that enables one to effectively manage his/her emotions in the face of critical moments in life. Takimoto concludes that with a good sense of humor an art educator is able to put him/herself truly in the standpoint of his/her students. See Takimoto, *Manabu mono*.

Kitagawa to take a critical approach was the one undertaken by Saitō Jō (dates unknown) and others in conjunction with his Saitō Gallery's publication, *Kitagawa Tamiji's Works from Mexican Period* (1994).<sup>34</sup> The Saitō Gallery's catalog is important in bringing together for the first time Kitagawa's works from his Mexican years, including his oil, tempera, ink paintings and prints. The research undertaken by Saitō and others prior to this publication uncovered several new facts about Kitagawa's career. First, Saitō's research in Kitagawa family's home located his passport, which revealed that he arrived in Mexico in 1921, two years earlier than the date Kitagawa's chronology had previously established.<sup>35</sup> What this discovery meant was critical for scholars; up to that point the incorrect chronology calculated Kitagawa's time in the United States as nine years, and thirteen in Mexico. This more than likely explains the phenomenon I mentioned above; Japanese commentators' unanimous emphasis on Kitagawa's U.S. rather than Mexican years—his study with John Sloan (1871-1951) at the Art Students League and friendship with Kuniyoshi Yasuo (1893-1953) etc.—in explaining Kitagawa's advocacy of working-class values or his “outsider” aesthetics.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Saitō Garō, *Kitagawa Tamiji Mekishiko jidai sakuhinshū* (Nagoya: Saitō Garō, 1994).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> While the original source of this incorrect chronology is unknown, it should be pointed out that, throughout his later Japanese period, Kitagawa, either deliberately or not, tended to be vague about the specific dates of his past activities. On some occasions he says that he was in New York for about ten years. For instance see, Kitagawa Tamiji “Amerika, Mekishiko ni manabu” [Learning in the United States and Mexico], originally published in *Bijutsu Techō* 90 (January 1955), in Kitagawa Tamiji, *Roba no tawagoto* (Nagoya: Nichidō Garō, 1983), 14-16. Another and more extreme case is his conversation with the actor Ogata Ken (1937-2008), published in 1978, in which Kitagawa says he was in the United States and Mexico altogether for about forty years. See

Second, in preparation for this publication, Kitagawa's former student Itō Takayoshi (1926-2011) travelled to Mexico and was introduced for the first time to Kitagawa's painting thought to have been produced in Cuba (Fig. 0.2, 1.1).<sup>37</sup> As I will discuss in Chapter One, Kitagawa had almost all of his personal belongings stolen in Cuba, and up until this point none of his works prior to his arrival to Mexico had been identified. Although the painting Itō uncovered is not signed, it is convincing to deem it to have been painted by Kitagawa's hand in view of its style combining Paul Cézanne-like proto-Cubist spatial construction and the use of diverse color surfaces reminiscent of Paul Gauguin. Moreover, apart from the painting's subject that coincides with Kitagawa's description, in his book *Mekishiko no seishun* (My youth in Mexico), of the Havana neighborhood he frequented, the painting once belonged to a person related to the Martínez family, the family by whom Kitagawa was employed as a housekeeper and private tutor during his first years in Mexico City.<sup>38</sup>

The Saitō Gallery's publication was important, as it demonstrated the first well-structured research on Kitagawa's art and career. However, the more influential event that defined the future direction of scholarly research on Kitagawa was the exhibition *Kitagawa*

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Kitagawa Tamiji and Ogata Ken, "Taidan: Batta no tetsugaku: eien no hishō," *Nihon Bijutsu* 147 (July 1978): 32.

<sup>37</sup> Saitō Garō, 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. As I will mention in Chapter One, Kitagawa describes his favorite place for painting in Havana as the place where there were "many colorfully painted houses" and "between the high palm trees the deep blue ocean was seen." Moreover, the houses with triangular roofs in the painting are quite reminiscent of traditional Cuban country houses called *bohío*, while the high palm trees indicate that the site is in tropical lowland. See Kitagawa Tamiji, *Mekishiko no seishun* (Nagoya: FA Shuppan, 1986 [1955]), 94.

*Tamiji Retrospective* held in Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art in 1996, which was the first comprehensive show of Kitagawa's work. In this exhibition, Murata Masahiro, the young curator of Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art took the leading role. Born in 1954, Murata belongs to a generation much younger than the people in Kitagawa's circles, and his personal acquaintance of Kitagawa was no more than a brief one. For this reason, Murata recalls that he faced some skepticism on the part of Kitagawa's former disciples and friends in the Nagoya area regarding his capacity as a young museum professional to undertake such a demanding project.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately in the end, *Kitagawa Tamiji Retrospective* convinced many of them that he was up to the challenge.<sup>40</sup> Murata's "Kitagawa Tamiji's Painting: Mainly from his Mexican Period," written as the introduction to the exhibition catalog, is the first and so-far the only essay giving an overview to Kitagawa's artistic career with close analysis of his stylistic changes and their historical backdrops.<sup>41</sup> Murata's essay is important in two main ways. First, it incorporated the outcome of his on-site investigation in the Art Students League of New York, which brought to light that Kitagawa's study there was much shorter than had been believed; Kitagawa's study in the Art Students League began toward the end of his time in New York and lasted

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<sup>39</sup> Murata Masahiro, personal conversation with the author at Toyota City Museum of Art, August 13, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. The exhibition showed 160 works of Kitagawa produced over fifty years (the early 1920s to 1972), including oil painting, watercolor, ink painting and print. See Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art.

<sup>41</sup> Murata Masahiro, "Kitagawa Tamiji no kaiga: Mekishiko jidai o chūshin ni," in Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 11-20.

intermittently no more than seven months.<sup>42</sup> This point, together with Kitagawa's chronology revised by Saitō Jō two years earlier, brought to light the lack of critical research on Kitagawa's career by Japanese writers prior to the 1990s.

Secondly and more importantly, Murata's essay for the first time thoroughly examined Kitagawa's activities in Mexico in light of his conception of painting as a tool to enhance his students' understanding of the everyday world. In his essay, Murata discusses that Kitagawa gained considerable inspiration from his students in the EPAL schools, which precipitated a drastic change in the style and subject of his painting toward the end of the 1920s.<sup>43</sup> According to Murata, Kitagawa's teaching experience with EPAL students led him to reconceive painting as a means of rendering familiar subjects realistically, utilizing the painter's knowledge and experience of everyday life.<sup>44</sup> Murata's research revealed Kitagawa's admiration of one particular painting by his student in Tlalpan, Fernando Reyes, entitled *Woman*. Kitagawa inscribed on the backside of this painting that "this painting drawn by a Mexican boy Fernando Reyes; I will make it my model for my whole life..."<sup>45</sup> Based on Murata's observation, I will argue that Kitagawa was deeply struck by his students' use of painting as a means of observing and creatively interpreting their immediate social world. Through his frequent dialogue with Mexican children and adolescents, Kitagawa was convinced of the emancipatory role of artistic practices in

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

society, particularly in minority struggle for cultural/political autonomy in the early twentieth-century world.<sup>46</sup>

Today, twenty years after *Kitagawa Tamiji Retrospective*, scholarly attention to Kitagawa remains scarce.<sup>47</sup> However, during the past few years, several important studies on Kitagawa were published in the English language. For instance, in his article “Kitagawa Tamiji: Painting in the Pursuit of Pigmented Knowledge of Self and Other,” Bert Winther-Tamaki focuses on Kitagawa’s international travels through and residence in the United States, Cuba, and Mexico and the first ten years after his return to Japan.<sup>48</sup> Investigating his human motifs painted in these years, Winther-Tamaki draws attention to Kitagawa’s keen awareness of his subjects’ racial features concretized through the deployment of distinctive

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>47</sup> There is one more important study on Kitagawa’s pedagogy, which I cannot detail here due to the space limit. In his 2006 article, Arai Tetsuo traces Kitagawa’s changing views on creative art education from the time of his return to Japan in 1936 up to his last years. Arai reveals the significant difference between Kitagawa’s opinion on art education and that of other Japanese art educators, Kubo Sadajirō in particular. The difference most clearly manifests in their understanding of the notion of freedom in art education. While Kubo’s primary preoccupation rested in securing students enough freedom for their unfettered creativity to flourish, Kitagawa defined freedom as the *struggle for* freedom in each student’s effort to overcome obstacles in social world; Kitagawa highly valued the extraordinary creativity found in Mexican children’s and adolescents’ painting, which he believed developed only after their fight for survival in a chaotic postrevolutionary social setting plagued by political instability and economic deficiency. Arai’s study is crucial to this dissertation as it critically examines Kitagawa’s theoretical standing vis-à-vis Japanese art education, by tracing his thought and practice within the specific historical context of post-1945 Japan. Arai Tetsuo, “Kitagawa Tamiji to sōzō shugi no bijutsu kyōiku; wagakuni ni okeru jidō chūshin shugi no bijutsu kyōiku ni kansuru kenkyū 1,” *Gunma Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* 41(2006): 61-84.

<sup>48</sup> Bert Winther-Tamaki, “Kitagawa Tamiji: Painting in the Pursuit of Pigmented Knowledge of Self and Other,” *Archives of Asian Art* 63, no. 2 (2014): 189-207.

skin colors. Kitagawa's attention to racial phenotype was due to his exposure to the pervasive social reality of the early twentieth-century American Continent in which the skin color was the primary marker of one's cultural identity and social status. Winther-Tamaki brings to light Kitagawa's awareness of his ambivalent position in the United States, which did not fully belong to either side of the Black-White "color line." Such an ambiguity in his identity must have been crucial to his perception of cultural minorities—African Americans, Afro Cubans and Mexican indigenous people—in a manner less constrained by the racist/colonialist way of thinking. In other words, Kitagawa's ambivalent identity Winther-Tamaki discusses was one of the main factors in the formation of Kitagawa's ethnographic awareness.

On the other hand, in her 2014 article, "Minor Transnational Inter-Subjectivity in the People's Art of Kitagawa Tamiji," Kikuchi Yuko, following Francoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih's conception of "minor transnationalism," carefully examines the complexity and cross-cultural dimension of Kitagawa's advocacy of the notion of "art for people."<sup>49</sup> According to Kikuchi, Kitagawa's investment in Mexican culture could be seen as a search for a minor transnational, or "horizontal" alliance between "minor-peripheral" cultures, in this case Mexico and Japan, an alliance not necessarily dependent on the mediation with the major centers in the modern West.<sup>50</sup> Kikuchi convincingly points out that Kitagawa's self-association with "minor" locations (Mexico not Paris, Seto not Tokyo etc.) and distance

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<sup>49</sup> Kikuchi Yuko, "Minor Transnational Inter-Subjectivity in the People's Art of Kitagawa Tamiji," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 26 (December 2014): 266-284.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-267.



from the major cultural centers set the indispensable ground for his engagement with the marginalized working-class public through his art.<sup>51</sup> Kikuchi's article is an important precedent for this dissertation as it highlights Kitagawa's pursuit of an alternative notion of modernity through his knowledge and experience of postrevolutionary Mexico, which is irreducible to the normative West-centered perspective.

These four studies published after Kitagawa's death are unlike the impressionistic accounts of Kitagawa before the 1990s, investigating at length his encounter with cultural minorities in the southern United States, Cuba, and Mexico, or underlining the way his Mexican experience informed his later activities and conception of modernity in mid- to late twentieth-century Japan. Nevertheless, while these studies provide this dissertation with invaluable insights, they often deal with only one side of Kitagawa's activities either as an artist or educator; these studies treat the above two dimensions of Kitagawa's career as if they were separate phenomena, without considerably articulating their interrelatedness. For instance, Murata's essay chronologically traces Kitagawa's career over all time periods, but it emphasizes his artistic activities much more than pedagogical ones. As I will demonstrate throughout the dissertation, Kitagawa's art and pedagogy were mutually linked together, as both activities revolved around his Mexican experience and account of the cultural Other through an ethnographic lens. In this sense, this dissertation is the first comprehensive study of Kitagawa's career both as artist and pedagogue constructed around the notion of ethnography, or Kitagawa's awareness alienated from his homeland and the mainstream discourse of Western modernity.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 280.

## **Reconfiguring Japanese Art History**

Through examining Kitagawa's art and art education profoundly informed by his Mexican experience, this dissertation will shed critical light on the conventional binary opposition of "Eastern" and "Western" civilizations, which is still frequently used as the principal framework of Japanese art history. Until recently, Japanese art historians have tended to exclusively focus on East Asia and the West as their sphere of investigation as if the rest of the world regions—Latin America, Africa, Oceania and so on—had not made any significant contributions to the history of Japanese art. During the last decade and a half, this conventional East-West dichotomy has been challenged by a handful of scholars, some of whom have undertaken substantial research on Japanese artists' interaction with larger cultural regions beyond East Asia, Western Europe, and the United States. As I will mention later in this section, these scholars have revealed the complexity in the scope and practice of Japanese artists active transnationally, whose experience was by nature irreducible into the conventional East-West framework of cultural exchange. This dissertation will contribute to these recent attempts at expanding our understanding of Japanese art, beyond the East-West dichotomy by illuminating Kitagawa's narrative and representation of Mexico from an ethnographic perspective.

In this dissertation, in critically examining the East-West binary framework, I will draw particular attention to the legacies of the Cold War. My approach would be justified by the fact that the broad use of the East-West framework in Japanese art history in U.S. academia was deeply rooted in the discipline's institutionalization during the inception of

the Cold War regime in the early post-WWII period. Since its disciplinary foundation in post-WWII United States, Japanese art history has participated in the discourse of what Christina Klein calls Cold War Orientalism.<sup>52</sup> Drawing attention to the ever-increasing interest in Asian regions among the U.S. public during the first decade and a half of the post-WWII years, Klein argues that the major narratives about Asian culture in this period signaled a new form of Orientalism based on the rhetoric of racial equality and mutual understanding rather than hierarchy and coercion.<sup>53</sup> By emphasizing the friendly partnership and sentimental notion of cultural understanding between the United States and noncommunist Asia, the discourse of Cold War Orientalism bypasses the crude reality of U.S. military and political domination in Asia and the ongoing ideological polarization in the region's culture and politics. As scholars such as Mimi Yiengpruksawan and Warren Cohen demonstrate, Japanese art history as an academic discipline was founded in U.S. universities as a Cold War area studies program, which preserved the markedly asymmetrical relationship between the United States and Japan as the victor and loser of WWII.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Klein, 1-17.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> The founders of the East Asian studies programs in U.S. universities were scholars trained as Asian specialists during WWII who served as military officials in East Asia, among them Sherman Lee (1918-2008). While working for the Arts and Monuments Department of the GHQ/SCAP (General Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers), Lee purchased numerous Japanese cultural artifacts for U.S. museums. Warren Cohen describes how advantageously Sherman Lee and his mentor Howard Hollis advanced their negotiation in Japan in the midst of the postwar social/economic confusion. Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, "Japanese Art History 2001: The

Under such a strong impact of the Cold War on the U.S. public's perception of Asia, D.T. Suzuki appears among those who played the most influential role in the propagation of the East-West dichotomy in postwar U.S. society. Suzuki first emerged as a Zen monk and English language translator of Buddhist literature, and during the 1950s he gave numerous lectures about Zen Buddhism and Japanese culture throughout the United States, serving as a visiting professor at Columbia University between 1952 and 1957. Suzuki's lectures, which were attended by many artists such as John Cage (1912-1992), and his distinction of the "intuitive, aesthetic, and spiritual" East and "technological, rational, and material" West gained wide currency in the post-1945 United States.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, unlike Asian specialists or missionaries in previous generations who used the same dichotomy to assert the East's inferiority to the West, Suzuki reversed this judgment to claim "Eastern" culture's superiority; according to him, the East's "intuitiveness" transcends the West's "logical" thinking.<sup>56</sup> Suzuki's reversal of the West's hierarchical valuation of Asian culture to deny the West's superiority fitted the Cold War rhetoric of racial equality and friendly political partnership between the United States and Japan. In this sense, Japanese art historians' use of the East-West dichotomy could be seen as their implicit endorsement of the perspective of Cold War Orientalism, which, through the rhetoric of mutual friendship,

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State and Stake of Research," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no.1 (March 2001): 105-122. Warren Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 132.

<sup>55</sup> David McMahan, "Buddhist Modernism," in *Buddhism in the Modern World*, ed. David McMahan (New York: Routledge, 2012), 166.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

has somehow exempted them from critically reflecting upon the political realities of the Cold War.

Indeed, many art historians have been much more cautious than the general public toward such an oversimplifying trope of the East-West difference. Nevertheless, the use of the East-West framework without much consideration of its political implications has been shared by a number of scholars. Probably, the most well-known art historical study based on the East-West binary opposition is Michael Sullivan's *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* published in 1973 (with new editions published in 1989 and 1997).<sup>57</sup> In this book, drawing on F.S.C. Northrop's seminal argument about the difference between Eastern and Western civilizations, Sullivan assigns a series of contrasting traits to their respective arts, including "symbolic" versus "precise" representations of reality, "unity" versus "disunity" of form and subject etc.<sup>58</sup> Within this scheme of East-West distinction, Sullivan positions Japan as a "special" case, in which the artists were more responsive to the relentless and dynamic blending of "Eastern" and "Western" elements. While Sullivan underlines Japan's "in-between" position, he grounds his observation on the "unique" quality of Japanese art or what he describes as the Shinto tradition's fondness of nature and craftsmanship.<sup>59</sup> Probably, one consequence of approaches like Sullivan's was the idea that

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<sup>57</sup> Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989 [1973]).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 271-282.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

the understanding of East Asian/Japanese art requires a specialized set of knowledge fundamentally different from the one needed for studies of Euro-American art.<sup>60</sup>

Today many in art history regard the so-called “essentialist” attitudes like Sullivan’s as problematic because they use a set of fixed characterizations to articulate the East-West difference. Indeed, the massive tide of critical research in Japanese art history invested in dismantling the Eurocentric perspective over the last two decades seems to have swept away the discourse of Asian culture’s “uniqueness.”<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, generally speaking, even in these most recent studies of Japanese art history, the East-West dichotomy continues to be present as a common attitude that isolates Japan and the United States/Western Europe as a privileged sphere of investigation. For example, in her 2011 study of the Japanese avant-garde collective Gutai (1954-1972), Ming Tiampo insightfully criticizes the Eurocentric conception of modernism that has relegated the works of twentieth-century Japanese artists to the status of a derivative of Western modern art.<sup>62</sup> In doing so, Tiampo draws attention to Gutai’s stylistic and conceptual innovations, which even preceded those of the New York-based contemporary art venues by a few years, arguing that Gutai’s innovations should be seen as a vital contribution to the history of

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<sup>60</sup> John W. Dower, “Sizing Up (and Breaking Down) Japan,” in *The Postwar Developments of Japanese Studies in the United States*, ed. Helen Hardacre (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 2-3.

<sup>61</sup> For instance, recent studies in Japanese art history challenging the Eurocentric understanding of modernism include Ming Tiampo’s *Gutai: Decentering Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), which I discuss presently, and Alicia Volk’s *In Pursuit of Universalism: Yoroze Tetsugorō and Japanese Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> Tiampo.

international modernism.<sup>63</sup> While Tiampo's reexamination of established premises of modernism through Gutai was a remarkable one, the conventional binary opposition of Japanese versus Euro-American contemporary art is still sustained in her work, which may be regarded as a contemporary variant of the East-West dichotomy grounded on the Cold-War perspective.<sup>64</sup>

Much beyond art historians' current endeavor of criticizing the discourse of Japanese culture's uniqueness or the Eurocentric conception of modernism, what seems to be truly at stake at this moment is their general attitude that compartmentalizes East Asia and the West as the exclusive sphere of investigation. As discussed above, the Cold War framework of cultural interaction downplays Japanese artists' inspiration from art and culture of regions other than the West, including Latin America, Oceania, and Africa. On

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Indeed, as the movement's leader Yoshihara Jirō's activity demonstrates, Gutai's primary aim was to make themselves as visible as possible within the contemporary Euro-American art scenes. In this sense, one might well argue that Tiampo's account of post-1945 Japanese artists with reference to their relationship to Western modernism is a proper and convincing one. What I suggest here, however, is that we should become more aware of the impact of the Cold War on the formation of the post-1945 Japanese avant-garde such as Gutai, and our view on them. As the art critic Sawaragi Noi has observed, under the highly regulative political conditions of the Cold War, many vanguard artists in Japan, in contrast to the optimistic claim of post-1945 Japanese "democracy" and socio-economic development, had in effect very limited expressive options. More concretely, the allegedly "neutral" narrative of "international" contemporary art prevailing in post-1945 Japan has heavily been inclined toward Japanese artists' interaction with the venues of the Cold War's "liberal" camp—Western Europe and the United States; in these accounts, the presence of the cultural Other from non-Western world regions including Latin America and Africa was generally invisible. In this sense, by employing East-West dichotomy in Japanese art history, one might run a risk of unwittingly reproducing such a limited understanding of modern/contemporary Japanese art without critical attention to Japanese artists' inspiration from other, mostly non-Western world cultures. For more discussions on the strong impact of the Cold War on Japanese art, see Sawaragi Noi. *Han ato nyūmon* (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2010), 134-142.

many occasions, the impact of the Cold War limits scholars' intellectual purview by implicitly claiming that a study of Japanese art, no matter whether it is early modern, modern or contemporary, should be based on the following two components: measuring the influence/inspiration originating in Western art; and investigating "traditional" East Asian aesthetics or any contemporary tendencies developed within Japanese/East Asian culture. This binary perspective gives no room for considering Japanese artists' interaction with the broader world regions, and denies the possibility of situating Japanese art in a contemporary global context, in which the main actors in art and culture are by no means limited to those in East Asia and the West. In other words, the East-West dichotomy overlooks the way modern/contemporary Japanese artists have conceived the cultural Other outside the East-West framework and how these experiences informed their identity in a way inherently inexplicable by the perspective exclusively composed of East Asia and the West.

As suggested above, this dissertation aims to contribute to the still sporadic yet emerging critical scholarly effort to extend our understanding of Japanese art history beyond the East-West model. Recently, dozens of scholars such as Toshio Watanabe, Bert Winther-Tamaki, and Yuko Kikuchi have questioned the conventional East-West binary opposition and illuminated the renewed significance of Japanese art in light of the broader transnational arena of cultural encounters.<sup>65</sup> One notable example of these tendencies is the comparative research project led by Toshio Watanabe, entitled *Nation, Identity and Modernity, Visual Culture of India, Japan and Mexico, 1860s-1940* (2001-2004), which

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<sup>65</sup> Winther-Tamaki, "Kitagawa Tamiji" and; Kikuchi, "Minor Transnational."



examined the relationship between modernity and national identity in India, Japan, and Mexico through the art, design and architecture of each country.<sup>66</sup> Although these three countries are quite divergent in their historical and geographic backgrounds, the project emphasized the fact that the artists from these countries generally peripheral to modernism have negotiated their identity in the face of the enormous impact of the “center”—Western art. Following the endeavor of Watanabe and others, this dissertation aims to transcend the East-West model of Japanese artists’ transnational exchange by examining Kitagawa’s art and pedagogy. As I mentioned briefly, upon his return to Japan, Kitagawa attempted to transmit his Mexican experience to the Japanese public by diffusing his Mexican-inspired theories of experimental pedagogy and mural production. Rather than seeing Mexico as a site of exotic or backward cultural otherness, Kitagawa focused on the complexity of his Mexican image inherently incompatible with the mainstream social discourse in post-1945 Japan, maintaining Mexico as the crucial reference point in imagining the future trajectory of Japan’s modernity.

Investigating Kitagawa’s art and pedagogy provides us with an important vantage point to critically revise the still influential East-West dichotomy in Japanese art history, which is one of the critical legacies of the Cold War. Kitagawa’s experience and narrative of Mexico provides us with an outstanding case study, which enables us to reconsider our conventional understanding of Japanese art. Kitagawa’s art and pedagogy urges us to be responsive to the contemporary global world informed by the ever more polemical and

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<sup>66</sup> The summary of this research project is found in the website of TrAIN (Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation, University of the Arts, London): <http://www.transnational.org.uk/projects/18-nation-identity-and-modernity>

contested cultural discourse, where the understanding of culture is an inherently multilateral and inconclusive endeavor of translation.

### **Chapter Organization**

Keeping my focus on Kitagawa's off-centered ethnographic attitude vis-à-vis the cultural Other in the twentieth-century global world, in the following four chapters, I will examine his thought and practice in different cultural terrains and historical moments. Chapter One, "Displacement, Cultural Other and Ethnography" investigates Kitagawa's early career in Japan and the United States as well as his trip in the southern United States and Cuba, which ultimately took him to Mexico in 1921. In this Chapter, I will draw attention to Kitagawa's physical/psychological displacement from his homeland and decentralization of his thought and practice from the mainstream discourses of Western modernity—nationalism, socioeconomic modernization, and colonialism. Kitagawa left Japan for the United States at the age of twenty in search of a less conservative cultural environment to pursue his artistic career. However, by the late 1910s, he gradually began to see hollowness in the ideal of individual freedom and racial equality in U.S. society, especially that of New York. This motivated him to take a long trip toward the southern United States and Cuba, during which he was intrigued by African Americans' and Caribbean islanders' cultural vibrancy and expressed his solidarity with their struggles for racial equality. In this chapter, by tracing his travel from Tokyo to New York and then from New York to Latin America, I will discuss Kitagawa's trajectory as his gradual move away from the magnetic metropolitan centers of Western modernity such as Tokyo and New York. Through

observing these societies from an ironical/off-centered ethnographer's standpoint, Kitagawa's attitude challenged the colonial/Orientalist narrative of the cultural Other.

Chapter Two, "Producing Ethnographic Knowledge: Kitagawa Tamiji in Postrevolutionary Mexico," examines Kitagawa's art and pedagogy in Mexico, especially his perception of EPAL students—many of them indigenous children and adolescents—as constructive subjects, who epitomized the emerging anti-colonial notion of culture. Thanks to the postrevolutionary government's cultural policies in great favor of artists, Kitagawa was allowed to participate in EPAL, one of the pedagogical programs instituted by the Secretariat of Public Education. While teaching painting to indigenous children and adolescents in EPAL, Kitagawa defined painting as a positive means of expanding his students' understanding of their everyday world through observation and interpretation. In this chapter, by examining Kitagawa's pedagogy and artistic production during his time in EPAL, I will argue for his conception of the indigenous people's proactive subjectivity as a production of what James Clifford and others call "ethnographic" knowledge. According to these scholars, ethnographic knowledge is a form of knowledge about the cultural Other that deviates from the established system of meanings in culture, which is in most cases that of the modern West. Kitagawa's production of ethnographic knowledge reflected his keen awareness of the polemical cultural discourse in the early twentieth-century Americas since his time in the southern United States and Cuba, in which "native" people emerged as critical/ironical observers of their own culture. By focusing on his EPAL students' constructive agency through art, Kitagawa challenged the mainstream discourse of socio-

economic modernization and nationalism promoted by the majority of Mexican intellectuals and political leaders.

Chapter Three, “Kitagawa Tamiji as Internal Émigré in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War (1937-1945),” investigates Kitagawa’s activities after his return to Japan in 1936 up to the end of the Asia-Pacific War, drawing particular attention to the formation of his self-image as an internal émigré. In this chapter, I will discuss that after arriving in Japan, his sense of alienation from the Japanese national community continued and was even reinforced. This was due to the wartime government’s restriction on artistic and cultural activities, which barely allowed Kitagawa to undertake his experimental pedagogy and production of public art that he had envisioned in Mexico. Despite these adverse circumstances, as an educator Kitagawa produced several noteworthy illustrated books for children including *Usagi no mimi wa naze nagai* (produced circa 1942 and published in 1962). As a painter, Kitagawa became a member of Nikakai (Nika Society) through the recommendation of Fujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), where he was recognized for his paintings of Mexican subjects. Both in his illustrated books and paintings, Kitagawa used Mexican motifs as a means for his implicit critique of the Japanese government’s war propaganda and mobilization. His effective use of Mexican imagery attests to the fact that in the middle of the war, in which only a limited range of pedagogical/artistic commitment was possible, Kitagawa’s emotional/intellectual investment in Mexico increased as he envisioned it as his alternative homeland. Kitagawa’s activities in wartime Japan reveal his identity as an internal émigré, or that of one who not only took an ironical position toward the narrow-minded patriotism of his/her home country, but also confirmed a strong

connection to somewhere else, in his case, postrevolutionary Mexico. Kitagawa's perception of Mexico as a distant utopia is comparable to what Edward Said and others describe as exile intellectuals' longing for their homeland.

In Chapter Four, "Translating Mexico: Kitagawa Tamiji's Art and Pedagogy in Post-1945 Japan," I investigate Kitagawa's effort of translating his Mexican-inspired experimental pedagogy and mural production into the social context of post-1945 Japan. Kitagawa's activities in post-1945 Japan were an attempt to forge new theories of art and pedagogy through his knowledge and experience of/in postrevolutionary Mexico. In this chapter, based on his Mexican experience I examined in Chapter Two, I argue that Kitagawa's art and pedagogy in Japan could be seen as his use of ethnographic knowledge. Unlike many post-1945 Japanese artists and intellectuals, rather than reducing Mexico to the dominant narrative of exotic otherness, Kitagawa's practice revolved around the incommensurability of the cultural Other, or a set of experiences irreducible into a coherent narrative when transferred into another cultural context, particularly that of the modern West. While Kitagawa faced a series of difficulties in trying to make sense of his Mexican experience within the mainstream public discourse in Japan, his narrative signaled an alternative conception of the cultural Other in post-1945 Japan, which challenged colonial/Orientalist discourse under the impact of the Cold War.

## CHAPTER ONE

### DISPLACEMENT, THE CULTURAL OTHER AND ETHNOGRAPHY

#### Introduction

This chapter investigates Kitagawa Tamiji's early life and activities prior to his arrival in Mexico in 1921. As suggested in the Introduction, Kitagawa's early career involved a succession of physical and psychological displacements. From his adolescence, he saw himself psychologically secluded from his immediate social environment, and disdained the "feudalistic" social norms to which his family members and school teachers uncritically subscribed. Probably, this experience was one of the main factors that motivated Kitagawa to move to the United States at the age of twenty, where he hoped to enjoy a more open-minded cultural milieu to pursue his education and career.<sup>1</sup> In 1916 Kitagawa arrived in New York, where he gradually became a leftist thinker and artist through joining a number of labor strikes and the emerging realist movement of art.<sup>2</sup> His New York years gave the young Kitagawa a rewarding experience of intellectual radicalism, but he ultimately perceived a certain "hollowness" in New York society's purported ideals of "democracy" and "racial equality." Partly due to such disillusionment, in 1920 Kitagawa left New York to venture into an open-ended trip toward the southern United States and Cuba, which eventually brought him to Mexico in 1921.

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<sup>1</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, interview by Kubo Sadajirō and Shimazaki Kiyomi, "Bijutsu kyōiku to yūtopia," originally published in PHP (June 1967), in Kitagawa Tamiji, *Bijutsu kyōiku to yūtopia* (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1969), 210-211.

<sup>2</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, *Mekishiko no yūwaku* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1960), 149-151.

In this chapter, by closely examining Kitagawa's early life and activities marked by the aforementioned experiences of physical/psychological displacement, I discuss his early life as a continuous process of self-estrangement from the dominant ideologies of Western modernity. More concretely, Kitagawa's physical move away from the major metropolises of the early twentieth century such as Tokyo and New York signaled his gradual detachment from the discourse of nationalism, imperialist expansion and colonial domination over the cultural Other, which prevailed in these cities. As I discuss below, Kitagawa's departure from New York for the southern United States and Cuba was probably prompted by his personal longing for travel to an "exotic" tropical region inhabited by "primitive" people. However, due to his ironical ethnographic position, Kitagawa's perception of the cultural Other deviated from the conventional narrative of exoticism and backwardness so common among early twentieth-century Japanese artists/intellectuals. Kitagawa saw modernity as an inherently plural process, in which ethnic minorities—African descendants in the southern United States and Cuba in particular—took a constructive position in their negotiation over the meaning of culture.

I begin this chapter by examining Kitagawa's childhood and adolescence in early twentieth-century Japan. In the first two sections, I draw attention to his aversion toward the monolithic discourse of patriotism promoted by the Japanese Empire as well as his intellectual formation in the middle of the liberal cultural climate of the Taishō era (1912-1926). In the following three sections, I discuss Kitagawa's time in the United States when he first came to Oregon and then moved to New York in 1916. I will argue that despite the importance of Kitagawa's New York years in his self-formation as a leftist intellectual and

an artist, he ultimately became disappointed by the racial/cultural divisions in U.S. society, which he found to be insuperable. Based on my close examination of Kitagawa's motives for departure from New York over these three sections, in the last two sections I will trace Kitagawa's trip in southern United States and Cuba emphasizing his alternative conception of modernity through friendly dialogue with African Americans and Caribbean islanders. Kitagawa's fascination with the vibrant existence of African descendants in the southern United States and Cuba became the crucial prelude to his further engagement with cultural minorities—the indigenous population—in postrevolutionary Mexico.

### **Early Years in Japan**

Kitagawa Tamiji was born to a family known for tea production in Goka village (Present-day Shimada City), in Shizuoka Prefecture in 1894. Kitagawa had a complex family background; his mother, Kiku, was the third wife of his father, Kōjirō, and Tamiji was the youngest of twelve siblings from different mothers.<sup>3</sup> In addition, his family preserved old-fashioned patriarchal customs; for example at each meal, the female family members including his mother would sit aside with the servants.<sup>4</sup> Kitagawa recalled that he was a

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<sup>3</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji. "Hade kamikudaite moratta omoide," originally published in *Asahi Shinbun* (November 1965), in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 98-99.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. According to Asano Tōru, Kitagawa once responded as follows to a question as to why he went to the United States; "my family situation was very complicated and they must have wished to send me away, to the United States or somewhere else similar so that they would feel at ease." See Asano Tōru. "Kitagawa Tamiji: Minshū no seikatsu e no manazashi," in Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, *Shizuoka no bijutsu II: Kitagawa Tamiji-ten* (Shizuoka: Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art, 1989), 9. All the translations from Japanese and Spanish in this dissertation are mine, unless otherwise indicated.



weak and sensitive child. During his childhood Japan experienced two major wars: the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). He remembered that once during the Russo-Japanese War an extra newspaper issue was delivered to his village reporting victory for Japanese troops, which the villagers celebrated by organizing lantern processions. Kitagawa was often shocked by a large number of human deaths that motivated these celebrations, and would hide himself on a nearby mountain until it got dark, in order not to hear people talking about the events.<sup>5</sup> His upbringing in wartime Japan instilled in Kitagawa a strong, almost traumatic fear of death, which constantly haunted himself during his childhood. Later, this fear led him to the conviction that these human conflicts must be solved intellectually through learning and education, not by violence.<sup>6</sup> Thus, as Kitagawa states, in addition to his conservative family situation, his move to the United States at the age of twenty was motivated by his realization that he would need a more liberal cultural environment in order to pursue his intellectual and artistic career.<sup>7</sup>

While in junior-high school, Kitagawa became interested in literature and art, particularly of the Edo period (1615-1867), which included popular literature such as *jōruri*, a form of narrative accompanied by music that dates back to the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, against his desire to learn art and literature his parents forced him to study at a business school near his hometown. Kitagawa recalled that taking classes in accounting

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<sup>5</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 210-211.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-214.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>8</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 24-25.

and other business-related calculations at the Shizuoka Business School, seemed to him entirely meaningless and indicative of the social system that “paints black over his entire life.”<sup>9</sup> One day in the fifth grade, Kitagawa went to see a traditional play called *Onna gidayū* (female gidayū, or a type of *jōruri* performed by women) at a Kabuki theatre. The next day, Kitagawa was called to the teachers’ office and severely punished because these teachers had witnessed Kitagawa watching the play the night before.<sup>10</sup> This experience probably instilled in him a strong aversion to authoritarian hierarchy and abuse of societal position by elders. He thought his experience reflected the exercise of feudalism and militarism by those in powerful positions, which was the same as was happening within wider Japanese society. He graduated from this school with inferior grades compared to his peers.<sup>11</sup>

In 1910, Kitagawa moved to Tokyo to enter the Preparatory School of Waseda University. In Tokyo, Kitagawa further developed his interest in art, theater and literature through several key friendships. He rented a room in a boarding house called Jimbē, near Kishibojin.<sup>12</sup> There Kitagawa met the painter named Miyazaki Shōgo (dates unknown), whom Kitagawa remembered among the people who had the greatest impact on his life.<sup>13</sup> Miyazaki often submitted his works to the Fusain Art Group (Charcoal art group, 1912-

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<sup>9</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji “Wagashi no on,” originally published in *Asahi Shinbun*, March 1961, in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 56-58.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 147-148.

1913), one of the first vanguard art collectives in Japan established by Kishida Ryūsei (1891-1929), then a young oil painter and member of Shirakaba (White Birch) Society. Miyazaki introduced Kitagawa to several contemporary art exhibitions, which ultimately made him decide to become a painter.<sup>14</sup> Later, Miyazaki sent a letter to Kitagawa while he was in Portland, Oregon, stating that Miyazaki had great confidence and hope in Kitagawa's talent as a painter; this letter deeply encouraged Kitagawa in his artistic endeavor.<sup>15</sup> While it is difficult to say what kind of painting attracted Kitagawa during this period, it is worth mentioning that many artists participating in the Fusain Art Group preferred bold colors and semi-abstract aesthetics inspired by Post-Impressionist artists such as Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Henri Matisse (1869-1954), and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). An existing photograph tells us that Kitagawa was familiar with these latest trends in European painting. In the photograph, young Kitagawa appears in a Japanese high school student's stand-up collar jacket holding a cigarette in his fingers. In the background two portrait paintings are hung on the wall: the one on the right is possibly a portrait of Kitagawa rendered in a Cubist style, and the one above Kitagawa's head appears to be in Fauvist style. Although there are no details about these paintings including their authorship, this photograph eloquently informs us about the innovative artistic milieu in which Kitagawa spent his adolescence.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Murata, 11.

During his time in Tokyo, Kitagawa's interest in theatre continued. He became friends with the dramatist and writer Akita Ujaku (1883-1962) and frequently spent time in theaters such as Yūrakuzo, which was the first Western-style theatre in Japan, opened in 1908.<sup>17</sup> The years around Kitagawa's arrival in Tokyo saw a radical turning point in Japanese theatre. The *shingeki* (new theater), the Western style drama was first introduced in Japan by such figures as Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871-1918) and Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928), and a series of the first successful *shingeki* shows, including Henrik Ibsen's (1828-1906) *Lady from the Sea*, took place while Kitagawa was in Tokyo.<sup>18</sup> Kitagawa became acquainted with actors such as Matsui Sumako (1886-1919), who was a famous actress from the theater group Geijutsuza, while working in his role as a part-time theater ticket salesperson.<sup>19</sup> Kitagawa's interest in theater later led him to a job as a producer of theater backdrops in New York, which in turn gave him opportunities to develop skills for large-scale paintings, including murals.

### **Early Twentieth-Century Japan: Colonialism, Exoticism and Longing for the Tropical South**

Kitagawa's exposure to art and literature in Tokyo took place in the era of relative political stability in Japan and growing liberal awareness among the public, today called Taishō

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<sup>17</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji* 25-26

<sup>18</sup> As for the development of *shingeki* plays in Japan, see Kimura Atsuo, "'Taishū' jidai no engeki: Shimamura Hōgetsu to Osanai Kaoru no minshū geijutsukan," *Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Ongaku Gakubu Kiyō* 35 (2009): 43-58.

<sup>19</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 25-26.

Democracy (1910s -1920s). In this period some Japanese intellectuals, especially those affiliated with the Shirakaba (White Birch) group, advocated humanism and individual freedom, repudiating the persistent feudalism and militarism they saw still in existence within the society. In response to the massive Westernization and industrialization of Japanese society in the preceding decades, these intellectuals often turned their eyes to hitherto overlooked aesthetics of the Japanese countryside and the “native” cultures outside Western Civilization, mainly in the Empire’s colonies, such as Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula.<sup>20</sup> Although no further details are available about Kitagawa’s activities in Tokyo, it is possible to imagine that an adolescence spent in a city with such an intellectual climate instilled within him an interest in the non-Western cultural Other, ultimately leading him to travel to the southern United States and Latin America. As I will discuss in the following sections, nearing the end of his time in New York, Kitagawa longed to travel “south,” seeking a more untamed and open-minded human community he was unable to find in the “hygienic” and “boring” New York.

In considering Kitagawa’s desire to travel southward, one interesting phenomenon was the Japanese people’s growing attention toward Southeast Asia in the 1910s, during the so-called *nanyō* boom (southern sea boom). Although this boom had its origin in the

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<sup>20</sup> The most well-known figure to have generated the interest in Japanese countryside among the nation’s public was Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), the author of the famous *Tōno monogatari* (The Legends of Tōno, 1910). Yanagita’s notion of *yamabito* (mountain people) or an imaginary indigenous population living deep in the mountains, whose customs were thought to be greatly different from common Japanese people, appealed to the readers with a timely sense of exoticism. As for the critical analysis of Yanagita’s works and their historical context, see Oguma Eiji. “Shimaguni minzokugaku no tanjō,” in Oguma Eiji, *Tan’itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: “Nihonjin” no jigazō no keifu* (Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 1995), 205-234.

political arguments called *nanshinron* (southern expansion doctrine), which called for the Japanese Empire's southward expansion, it gradually became popularized among the general public through such publications as the historian Takekoshi Yosaburō's *Nangokuki* (Travel journal of southern countries, 1910). Through Takekoshi's vivid description of his trip to southern China and Southeast Asia, *Nangokuki* became a major catalyst for Japanese people's increasing interest in the tropical south.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, the shift in Japanese intellectual attention from the European civilizations to the world's "minor" cultures was tightly linked to the gradual change of Japan's political status within the global world at the turn of the century, especially after its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. In the midst of global attention increasing toward Japan's status as an imperial power within Asia, Japan began to regard itself as a "first-class" nation. While in the process of expanding their territories toward Asia-Pacific regions, the Japanese perceived the regions' inhabitants as "backward natives" or "*dojin*."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> After the Japanese Empire's annexation of the Korean Peninsula and Southern Manchuria, the Empire's northward expansion became a realistic political agenda, but moving further south than Taiwan—South Pacific, Australia and Southeast Asia—remained unlikely, as these regions were already under European colonial rule. In this sense, as Sakai points out, Southeast Asia continued to be a source of popular imagination detached from factual political aspirations. See Sakai Kazuomi. *Kindai Nihon gaikō to Azia Taiheiyō chitsujo* (Kyoto: Shōwado, 2009), 76.

<sup>22</sup> "Dojin" (土人) literally meaning "mud person" in Japanese was originally used to refer to local inhabitants in general. It was after the mid-1850s that the term took on pejorative connotations, as it began to designate Ainu people in Ezo (present-day Hokkaidō), and later more broadly "uncivilized native" people in Japan's colonies and the rest of the world. See Nakamura Jun, "'Dojin' ron: 'dojin' imēji no keisei to tenkai," in *Kindai Nihon no tashazō to jigazō*, ed. Shinohara Tōru (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 2001), 85-128.

In this context of Japan's imperialist expansion, during the first decades of the twentieth century, the Empire's "successful" colonial rule was highlighted. One important official policy during these years in Japan aimed at diffusing the knowledge about its newly acquired territories with people in the mainland. This idea was promoted by a number of government-sponsored exhibitions. The first Colonial Exposition was held in Tokyo and Osaka respectively in 1912 and 1913, which exhibited products and cultural artifacts brought from the Empire's colonies—Korea, Manchuria, Taiwan and those of the Ainu, along with the living people from these regions taken as living ethnographic specimens.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, for the Taishō Exposition held in Tokyo in the following year, in addition to the conventional buildings representing the Empire's colonies, *Nanyō-kan* (Southern Sea Pavilion) was designed to exhibit products from Southeast Asia. Performances were also staged there such as traditional dances by Indian and indigenous Malay people from British Malaya, who were shown together with a recreation of their quotidian life. *Nanyō-kan* attracted many spectators. This series of expositions informs us about Japan's changing self-image from one of the backward countries in Asia to the center of modern civilization in the region that aspired to be politically on par with the Western Empires.<sup>24</sup>

Many scholars have discussed the Japanese intellectuals and common people's curiosity about these "archaic"/"exotic" cultures during the first decades of the twentieth

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<sup>23</sup> Yamaji Katsuhiko, "Takushoku hakurankai to 'teikoku hantonai no shojinshu,'" *Kwansei Gakuin Shakai Gakubu Kiyō* 97 (2004): 25-30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

century as a sort of Orientalism.<sup>25</sup> In the case of early twentieth-century Japan, the majority of intellectuals, scholars, writers and journalists had little doubt in adapting a colonizer's Orientalist perspective, seeing these "natives" as backward/exotic savages or people in need of "civilization" through Western or Japanese hands.<sup>26</sup> The widespread perception of "backward" non-Western natives as inevitable subjects of Western colonial rule could be glimpsed in several Japanese intellectuals' writings at the time. One typical example of such writing is the historian Hara Katsurō's (1871-1924) travelogue, which he made after a four-month trip to Southeast Asia from 1913 to 1914. Writing about the "native" inhabitants in these tropical terrains, Hara states:

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<sup>25</sup> There are a great number of publications on this topic. For instance, see Kikuchi Yūko, "Hybridity and the Oriental Orientalism of 'Mingei' Theory." *Journal of Design History* 10, no. 4 (1997): 343-354, and Matsuda Kyōko, *Teikoku no shisen: Hakurankai to ibunka hyōshō* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> Japanese intellectuals cast their Orientalist gaze not only on the inhabitants of the Empire's colonies, but also on people politically dominated by the West through its colonial rule and enslavement, including African descendants in the United States and elsewhere. As I discuss in this chapter, during his trip through the southern United States, Kitagawa frequently interacted with African Americans and immigrant Caribbean islanders, an experience by which he became critical of the racist/colonial perception of these cultural minorities. Generally speaking, however, investigating the Japanese people's relationship to African Americans requires special caution, given that African Americans were also seen as part of the "civilized" world and their high status within U.S. society was an object of admiration among some Japanese intellectuals, including those who visited the United States joining the Iwakura Mission (1871-1873). These Japanese intellectuals often expressed their solidarity with African Americans, who, just like the Japanese as the "colored" race, were fighting against the "White's" domination of the world politics and economy. As for insightful arguments about the early twentieth-century Japanese people's perception of African Americans, see among others: Satō Hiroko, "Nihonjin no jinshukan to kokujin mondai," *Tokyo Joshi Daigaku Kiyō* 34 (March 1973): 23-36. See also, Koshiro Yukio, "Beyond an Alliance of Color: African American Impact on Modern Japan," *Positions* 11, no.1 (Spring 2003): 183-215.



I do not like the thoughtless expression of sympathy with ruined nations. If there is room to argue that the French destruction of Vietnam and Cambodia was problematic from a moralist viewpoint, I would doubt if these nations' governments were worth their existence. Certainly, common people were not responsible for (their governments') collapse, but current "*dojin*" (savages) did not seem very hopeful in my eyes.<sup>27</sup>

But after traveling around China and other Asian countries and knowing the "*dojin*'s" life conditions, I cannot help discovering that the Westerner's contempt for common Asian people has some reason. And, of course, that they extend that contempt to Japanese people is quite outrageous. But Japanese people still need half century to go in order to totally escape such contempt, and therefore, at least until Japanese people's living conditions in Asian countries reach the same level as those of Westerners, it would be worthless (for us) to complain (about their contempt).<sup>28</sup>

In his book *Nankai ikken* (A glimpse into the southern seas region), Hara reiterates his view that, considering the "degenerate" living conditions of "*dojin*," Western colonial rule over these people was inevitable. As is clear in the above quotation, to Hara, civilizing the "natives" through Western colonial administration was the only road to a desirable future for them. Interestingly, in his evolutionary argument about the "primitive" state of "*dojin*" and their future "civilization"/Westernization, Hara positions Japan in the middle of the road. Hara's ambivalent positioning of Japan and of himself resulted in an awkward double standard. While he openly laments the "degenerate" living standard of "*dojin*" in Southeast Asia and was convinced that their subservience to the colonizer's cultural values was

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<sup>27</sup> Hara Katsurō, *Nankai ikken* (Tokyo: Tōadō Shobō, 1914), 37-38.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

inevitable, he also complains about the discriminatory treatment by Europeans he received as a Japanese person during his trip.<sup>29</sup>

As addressed above, Kitagawa's early artistic/intellectual formation in 1910s Japan characterized by the *nanyō* boom possibly inspired him to go on his future adventures in the tropical south and the world of its "exotic" inhabitants. Indeed, as I will discuss at length in the following sections, through his writing, Kitagawa frequently expressed his curiosity toward African descendants and indigenous people in the southern United States, Cuba, and Mexico. On the other hand, Kitagawa's perception of these cultural minorities after his move to the United States frequently deviated from the predominant colonial/Orientalist perspective, as he constantly focused on these people's constructive position within the early twentieth-century world under the ever more conspicuous influences of the deterritorialization and interbreeding of cultures. In Kitagawa's writings, nothing appears to be more alien than the binary concept of civilized Self and backward Other, or the affirmation of the colonial subjugation of the "native" people.

### **Moving to the United States**

Kitagawa was one of the few Japanese painters to have studied in the United States during the early twentieth century. After the prominent oil painters such as Yamamoto Hōsui (1850-1906) and Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924) departed for Europe after the 1870s, the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 71-72. An incident of discriminatory treatment occurred when Hara was on his way from Singapore to Jakarta on a ferry operated by a Dutch Company. When Hara went to have a meal, he was assigned a seat at the far corner of the restaurant, together with a "mixed blood" babysitter and a radio telegraph worker. Moreover, "what was worse," on his way back from Jakarta to Singapore, he had to sit in front of a "black guy with frizzled hair and ear sticking forward."

number of Japanese artists studying abroad (mainly Western Europe) steadily increased, but few were interested in travelling to the American Continent. In the late nineteenth-century, when Japanese people moved to the United States it was often driven by motives that had little to do with art.<sup>30</sup> Since the 1890s, along with Hawaii, the U.S. mainland became the most important destination of Japanese immigrants, the majority of whom left Japan in order to solve their economic distress. While students seeking better educational opportunities like Kitagawa constantly accounted for a substantial portion of the total flow of the immigrants, the United States was not considered to be a place to pursue artistic training.<sup>31</sup> As instantiated by the case of the painter Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950), who sold his watercolors in the United States in order to finance his travel to Europe, the United States became a steppingstone for Japanese artists rather than a destination in itself. The painters of Kitagawa's generation such as Kuniyoshi Yasuo and Shimizu Toshi (1887-1945) all went to the United States first as immigrant workers.<sup>32</sup> They were in constant need of money, for which they did miscellaneous jobs such as restaurant waiters and theater assistants. In part because of their life experience as foreign laborers and in part because of the emergent influence of realism among artists in New York during the first decades of the

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<sup>30</sup> Ichikawa Masanori, "Kuniyoshi Yasuo o tsūjite mita Amerika-ha no mondaiten," in *Amerika ni mananda Nihon no gaka tachi*, ed. National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (Tokyo: National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1982), 35-42.

<sup>31</sup> According to Spickard, students constantly accounted for 5 to 20 percent of Japanese emigrants to the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. See Paul Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 17.

<sup>32</sup> Ichikawa, 35-42.

twentieth century, Kitagawa and his fellow Japanese painters in New York tended to take their subjects from the common people's everyday life.

Kitagawa arrived in Portland, Oregon in December 1914, by the ship Shūyōmaru. By the mid-1910s, the Japanese population in Portland was reaching over one thousand five hundred: these immigrants engaged in various jobs including the railroad industry, farming and other miscellaneous businesses such as restaurants and hotels.<sup>33</sup> By the time Kitagawa came to Oregon, the U.S. and Japanese governments had signed the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which restricted the latter's issue of passports only to the family members of those already settled in the United States. Hence, many Japanese immigrants in the United States at Kitagawa's time saw themselves as permanent settlers, not as seasonal workers.<sup>34</sup> In Kitagawa's case too, he went to the United States to join his brother Tsukui Ikuhei (date unknown) already in Portland.<sup>35</sup> There Kitagawa stayed at Tsukui's house working in the city's restaurants to earn enough money to move to the East Coast, while studying English.<sup>36</sup> In many U.S. states, especially on the West Coast, since the beginning of the immigration, Japanese communities became the object of discrimination and criticism, largely due to the pre-existing anti-Chinese sentiment.<sup>37</sup> Although anti-Japanese

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<sup>33</sup> William Toll, "Permanent Settlement: Japanese Families in Portland in 1920," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1997): 23-26.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Johnson, "Anti-Japanese Legislation in Oregon, 1917-1923," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (1996): 180.

<sup>35</sup> Kitagawa's passport states his purpose of visit as the "management of Japanese cafeteria in the San Francisco Universal Exposition." See Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 194.

<sup>36</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Spickard, 29-33.

hysteria in Oregon was nothing comparable to that of California, after WWI, several attempts were made to pass anti-Japanese legislation, and the fear of Japanese expansionism developed into the Toledo Incident in July 1925, in which a mob of conservatives forcibly evicted Japanese workers from the town of Toledo, Oregon.<sup>38</sup>

Like the majority of Japanese immigrants in the United States at the time, since his move to the country in 1914, Kitagawa faced a number of unpleasant experiences caused by racial prejudice and discrimination. These experiences instilled within him a strong feeling of inferiority and probably made him well aware of the vulnerability of his identity as an Asian immigrant. In his autobiographical book *My Youth in Mexico*, he narrates:

Since the day I came to the United States, an inferior feeling has stuck to my consciousness. I don't know how much I fought to overcome it... in the Western United States, there were some movie theaters that would not let us enter the orchestra seats. There are restaurants where the waiters threw scrutinizing gazes at us when we entered. These things badly stimulated my inferiority and my gut boiled over as if I were taking poison. After I started to live on the East Coast I less frequently had such horrible experiences but the inferior feeling, once up in my consciousness, tortured me day and night. I tried to suppress these feelings with all my might.<sup>39</sup>

As Kitagawa's statement above demonstrates, he had to spend a long while overcoming a strong sense of inferiority perpetuated by these experiences. Although Kitagawa did not state clearly in what way his confrontation with racial discrimination informed his later artistic thought and practices, such an awareness of his own marginality and exclusion

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, 176-205.

<sup>39</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 32.

probably became a crucial factor in his disillusionment with the purported ideals of “liberty” and “democracy” in U.S. society. At any rate, these experiences of discrimination neither encouraged Kitagawa to go back to Japan, nor confirmed his feeling belonging to a homeland community abroad. Rather, Kitagawa, as a young person with an adventurous spirit, took these conditions as a personal challenge and springboard to strengthen his rebellious attitude against the established social norms both in Japan and the United States. Kitagawa stated:

Long ago when I was broke in Los Angeles, I worked peeling potatoes in a restaurant kitchen, where the chef, who was Japanese, came to me and said hatefully “hey nipper, you must peel potatoes more swiftly. You guys must have looked important everywhere in the (Japanese) mainland, but I will not let you do that here.” These words penetrated me. If you think, you know that he had a reason. My life experiences must make me a person who would not be told such words, or (a person who) has a spirit that would not be upset when he is told these things.<sup>40</sup>

The above quotation demonstrates Kitagawa’s strong determination to dissociate his identity from the ideologies of the Japanese Empire. Unlike the majority of Japanese intellectuals at the time, apart from his alienation from the homeland, Kitagawa formed his self-image and intellectual tenets by the very necessity of negotiating his vulnerable identity in the United States. Probably, Kitagawa’s detachment from the nationalist discourse both in Japan and the United States was one of the factors to have led him to the search for a third possibility—moving further than the United States toward Latin America.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 35.

### **Kitagawa Tamiji in New York**

After a year and few months, Kitagawa left Oregon and moved to New York in early 1916 after a brief stay in Chicago. Kitagawa's time in New York coincided with the later years of the Progressive Era (1890s -1920s), in which, in the midst of the drastic transformation of the urban environment led by giant corporations, every sector of society, especially industrial workers and leftist intellectuals called for a more equitable social system and government.<sup>41</sup> The drastic social reforms and emerging intellectual progressivism in New York provided a positive environment for Kitagawa's self-formation as a leftist thinker and artist, in addition to enabling him to discover the immense potential of children's art education and psychology. While Kitagawa's New York period became an important foundation for his life-long thought and career, it also made him aware of some limiting aspects of contemporary U.S. cultural and intellectual paradigms. As I will demonstrate below, the radical intellectual posture he adopted in New York eventually disillusioned him about the city because of what he perceived as its conservative and racist/classist social norms.

In New York, Kitagawa engaged in several part-time jobs to support himself, among them the production of backdrop paintings for theaters in a Greek-owned studio. Kitagawa's time in New York saw the growing prosperity of the New York theaters. From the early 1900s, a number of musical theaters emerged near Times Square, and the developing subway network transformed the area into an immense center of show business.

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<sup>41</sup> Steven Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 3-13. See also Charles A. Hale "Frank Tannenbaum and the Mexican Revolution," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (1995): 216-222.

Because of his interest in theater since his adolescence, Kitagawa soon stood out among his coworkers. The studio provided backdrop images to the major Broadway theatres such as Shubert and Morosco and the workers were often kept busy and earned a good amount of money.<sup>42</sup> Each theater staged on average fifteen to twenty plays per year, and when a play gained popularity in New York, it went on to tour around the provincial towns, which Kitagawa often accompanied. Kitagawa worked hard during the years of the booming economy after WWI and had saved up about 4000 dollars by the time he decided to leave New York.<sup>43</sup> One notable occurrence for Kitagawa while working in the studio was the development of his close friendship with the Danish painter Torstein Muller (dates unknown), who, according to Kitagawa, was the person who had the most enduring impact on his art and philosophy.<sup>44</sup> Kitagawa commented that Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and other major philosophers' thoughts became truly his own through conversations with Muller. Muller and Kitagawa shared an apartment for several years and left New York together for the South in 1920.

Through his part-time job, Kitagawa also participated in industrial workers' strikes and protests through labor unions. As suggested above, the 1910s marked the pinnacle of labor movements and the leftist affiliation between workers and intellectuals. Kitagawa belonged to the influential labor union called Theatrical Union No. 1, through which he, as the only participant from Asia, occasionally expressed his radical opinions and took part in

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<sup>42</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 28-29.

<sup>43</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 69.

<sup>44</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 146-156.



a labor dispute for six months.<sup>45</sup> As Kitagawa himself suggested, he was well informed of the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, probably thanks to U.S. leftists' increasing attention to Mexico and its revolutionary upheaval that started in the early 1910s.<sup>46</sup> In fact, the revolutionary struggle in Mexico was constantly featured in the leftist periodicals such as *Appeal to Reason*, *The Masses*, and *Mother Earth*, in which the support of the revolt and the opposition to the U.S. intervention were repeatedly expressed.<sup>47</sup> The year Kitagawa went to Mexico (1921) saw the growing number of U.S. political "pilgrims" crossing into Mexico, as Mexican society became stabilized and entered its reconstruction phase. These pilgrims included well-known figures in New York leftist circles such as Frank Tannenbaum (1893-1969).<sup>48</sup>

In such a radical intellectual/cultural environment, toward the end of his time in New York (1918-1920), Kitagawa studied at the Art Students League of New York intermittently for about seven months. Murata Masahiro's research reveals that Kitagawa took night classes from the Realist painter John Sloan (1871-1951), a key member of the

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<sup>45</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji "Amerika, Mekishiko ni manabu," originally published in *Bijutsu Techō* (January 1955), in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, "Yōga e no zōgon," originally published in *E*, May 1972, in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 194-195.

<sup>47</sup> Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 20. Among the intellectuals attracted by the Mexican Revolution was the journalist John Reed (1887-1920), whose report about the revolutionary struggles in Mexico greatly inspired New York intellectual circles.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-30. See also, Hale, 215-246.

Ashcan School and the former editor of the socialist periodical *The Masses*.<sup>49</sup> According to art educator and Kitagawa's later friend Kubo Sadajirō, Kitagawa chose Sloan's class because he offered night classes and was a socialist, in addition to his high reputation in teaching painting composition.<sup>50</sup> Kitagawa learned two important lessons from Sloan; drawing the life of commoners and rendering his subjects realistically. Unfortunately, due to the robbery he suffered in Cuba, none of Kitagawa's works from the New York period survive. Kitagawa commented that he did monochromatic drawings more often than oil painting.<sup>51</sup>

While Kitagawa's writing hardly addresses his interaction with other Japanese expatriates in New York, the period Kitagawa studied at the Art Students League saw two other Japanese painters in the school I mentioned above: Kuniyoshi Yasuo and Shimizu Toshi. Kitagawa did not have the chance to meet Shimizu, but became a good friend of Kuniyoshi and they and their fellow Japanese artists in New York often spent time together discussing philosophy, art, and broader social topics. Kitagawa and Kuniyoshi had entirely different stylistic preferences. While Kitagawa admired Paul Cézanne's rigorous spatial construction, Kuniyoshi preferred Auguste Renoir's (1841-1919) fluid and delicate aesthetics.<sup>52</sup> Like Kitagawa's case, due to the radical intellectual/social climate of early

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<sup>49</sup> Murata, 11-12.

<sup>50</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 27.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 29. As I will discuss through concrete examples in the following chapters, Cézanne-inspired rigorous spatial construction is one of the major characteristics of Kitagawa's painting throughout his career.

twentieth-century New York, many Japanese artists and intellectuals in the city were inspired by working class strikes and protests based on Marxist principles. Particularly the activities of socialist intellectuals such as Katayama Sen (1859-1933) and Ishigaki Eitarō (1893-1958) are noteworthy here as they, while embracing Marxist thought, also stood against racial discrimination by expressing their solidarity with African Americans.<sup>53</sup> Although there is no record that Kitagawa ever met Katayama and Ishigaki, considering his frequent interaction with African Americans and Caribbean islanders in the southern United States, Kitagawa's attention to racial/cultural minorities might have increased through acquaintance with people like Katayama and Ishigaki.

Finally, during his time in New York, Kitagawa was also introduced to the most recent developments of child psychology and education. He recalls that he had been strongly disappointed by the fact that the majority of people in New York were “insensitive to beauty,” and “did not know how to appreciate” art.<sup>54</sup> This seemed to Kitagawa especially lamentable, given the availability of many first-rate collections of Western art at the major museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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<sup>53</sup> Koshiro, 189-191. As suggested in footnote 26, properly discussing Japanese intellectuals' search of solidarity with African Americans requires detailed attentions to the country's political circumstances at the time. Indeed, many Japanese intellectuals expressed such solidarity for specific political reasons, as the rhetoric of the united struggles among the world's “colored” races fitted the Japanese Empire's ideology predicated on the “liberation” of all the Asian nations. On the other hand, as Koshiro suggests, intellectuals such as Katayama and Ishigaki sought Japanese and African Americans' cooperation based on their socialist creed, which was relatively free from the pursuit of such patriotic interest.

<sup>54</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, *Kodomotachi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), 48-49.

Why do people of such a rich, prosperous country not ever understand painting? They have a great place called the Metropolitan Museum of Art that assembles the world's famous paintings. Many people come to see the paintings on Sundays, but how many of them have genuine appreciation? They like to see the painting of George Washington and the Potomac River. They tremble in delight by looking at the painting depicting the war with Indians. They understand history but not art. Their eyes seem to be hallucinating in front of a nude painting. Probably they are remembering the crude chorus girls at the Burlesque theatres on Fourteenth Street.<sup>55</sup>

Kitagawa states that the lamentable disjuncture between art and the masses expressed in the above quotation made him realize the necessity of reviving people's sensibility toward "beauty." The best solution he found to awaken people's aesthetic capacity, was to start educating them about art at an early stage of life, via the use of child psychology.

During Kitagawa's time in New York, applied psychology was gaining broad attention as a new promising science to improve social behavior, and one of the major areas of interest among New York psychologists was the study of children.<sup>56</sup> Around that time, Kitagawa had a friend who was studying children's paintings, and became intrigued by the friend's explanation about the symbolic reading of paintings.<sup>57</sup> According to Kitagawa's friend, the pictorial components in a child's painting represent the relationships between the child him/herself and his/her immediate environment. What particularly intrigued Kitagawa

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 48-49.

<sup>56</sup> Paul M. Dennis, "Press Coverage of the New Psychology by the New York Times during the Progressive Era," *History of Psychology* 14, no. 2 (2011): 122-123.

<sup>57</sup> By the first decades of the twentieth century, the study of children's creative activity was gradually emerging through the effort of such educators as Austrian Franz Cizek (1865-1946), but it by no means had become an area of substantial academic interest.

was his friend's narration about a child who could not adapt him/herself to a classroom environment. One day, while this child was drawing, he/she took a red crayon and drew a cross above the image symbolizing his/her "self" and another cross below it. According to Kitagawa's friend, these crosses represented the child's decision to stop being introverted. Indeed, once he/she drew these crosses, the child threw away the crayon and ran to join his/her classmates to play together.<sup>58</sup> This episode must have convinced Kitagawa that children's painting is not only an object of study for psychoanalysts but also a potential tool for children to free themselves from psychological problems. Kitagawa's life-long interest in art education, which I discuss over the next three chapters, took root in early twentieth-century New York's cultural milieu, in which the efficacy of applying psychological knowledge to broader social phenomena was increasingly being recognized.<sup>59</sup>

### **Disillusionment with New York and Moving Away**

As stated earlier, Kitagawa's decision to leave New York was quite uncommon for a Japanese fortunate enough to have entered the United States. As he states in *My Youth in Mexico*, every Japanese person he met in Mexico asked him why he came to such a "poor" country from the United States, where "even the trash boxes are full of dollar bills."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, many Japanese immigrants who went to Mexico prior to the Gentlemen's

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<sup>58</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 51-52.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>60</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 66.

Agreement of 1907 saw Mexico as a steppingstone to enter the United States.<sup>61</sup> Many testimonies demonstrate that Japanese contract laborers often fled from their group as soon as they stepped onto Mexican soil and ventured into a long and fatiguing trip toward the northern border.<sup>62</sup> Mexico was also a transitory point for Japanese people having immigrated to countries in further south such as Peru and Panama, who likewise aspired to reach the United States eventually. Moreover, in the 1910s, due to the social instability caused by the constant battles among opposing revolutionary factions in Mexico, Japanese immigrants settling there never formed established communities within the country.<sup>63</sup>

Seen against this backdrop, it is tempting to read Kitagawa's travel through the southern United States and Cuba and ultimate arrival in Mexico as a capricious adventure of a Japanese man fortunate to have studied art in New York and earned enough to finance his trip. Indeed, as I discuss below, in many ways Kitagawa's trip was motivated by his personal aversion toward New York's "stoic" and "hygiene" culture, and it is highly probable that his trip lacked any well-defined objective, except for his somewhat vague desire to explore the more "human" tropical regions.<sup>64</sup> However, through analyzing Kitagawa's fragmentary statements about his time in New York, it might be inferred that

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<sup>61</sup> Mexico-Japanese Association, *Nichiboku kōryūshi* (Tokyo: PMC, 1990), 334-352.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 334-352.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>64</sup> Regarding the reason why he ended up in Mexico, Kitagawa states that he just threw himself into destiny. However, he also said that in hindsight, as a young person he was probably possessed by a "blind desire" to move away from a "boring" civilization in pursuit of a more "wild" and "human" place. Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 165-177.

his seemingly personal dislike of New York City and explicitly romantic impulse to go to the South was closely linked to his deep reflection on a displaced identity. In other words, Kitagawa was not only fed up with the “inhuman” air of New York, but also somewhat critically observed the purported ideals of liberty and racial equality in the northern United States from a working-class cultural minority’s perspective. Kitagawa probably discerned that, despite his energetic participation in the massive workers’ strikes and emerging new art movements in late 1910s New York, a far-reaching social change in favor of the culturally/racially marginalized seemed quite unlikely to happen. Kitagawa says:

Long ago, in an especially cold winter, I was walking on the famous Riverside Drive along the Hudson River. I was blown by the wind mixed with snow, and my tears were frozen and stuck in my eyes, so that I could not see anything. I stepped into an underground room of a nearby mansion and saved myself by warming up near a large steam pot just being heated. It was an exceptionally cold day. In addition, the guard invited me to have a cup full of hot coffee. Workers in New York (the guard of the mansion is among them) were generally kind. And I had lived as a member of the working class as well. But New York is not a city composed only of workers. There lived extremely rich people, who appeared to be a race totally different from us. When you see the ladies getting out of a car on the Fifth Avenue (the most well-off area of New York) and Lexington Avenue, they look like a spitz or spaniel...As for men, their partners were of the same kind: they were great consumers, while their character was inappropriate for production. We (workers) could not stand New York’s winter not because of the cold weather, but because we saw these kind of people too often.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, recalling the moment his ship was leaving Manhattan Island behind, he commented as follows:

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<sup>65</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 71-72.

Before going to Mexico, after ten years I was entirely fed up with New York. When I was leaving New York by ship, I stared hard at Manhattan Island blurring in my sight and mumbled through gritting teeth that I would never come back to such a place again. Once one slips into the world's melting pot like New York, it costs him great courage to run away from it. Here an individual turns into a tiny existence like a mustard seed. But it is an intriguing place where a mustard seed too can survive in its own fashion. It is easy to crush himself, but he can also effortlessly survive in the niches of the society for a long time... a lazy person or loser will end up spending all their life as a microscopic existence in this metropolis' melting pot. New York is such a place that I am, at least, still proud of myself at the time, that I was brave enough to have decided to leave New York in search of a more open and warm place that could make me bigger.<sup>66</sup>

Kitagawa's search of a place that would "make him bigger" may refer to Mexico in the midst of the revolutionary battles, about which, as stated above, he was probably well informed through his participation in industrial workers' strikes. More importantly, however, Kitagawa's words demonstrate the fact that, after his active commitment to these working-class movements and being a part of intellectual/artistic radicalism, he continued to find himself to be a "mustard seed," as he grasped that the absolute class and racial division in New York was impossible to negotiate. In other words, if the affiliations between the industrial workers' movements and leftist intellectuals' radical thought could not promote the city's social change that would transcend racial and class lines, Kitagawa could not help looking upon himself as a tiny—even parasitic—"mustard seed" like existence.

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<sup>66</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 167-168.



Kitagawa's metaphorical perception of himself to be a solitary "mustard seed" in New York, and his search of more intimate and "human" cultural terrains in the south resonate with the opinions of some later Latin American intellectuals. For instance, in his 1974 essay, the Mexican writer Octavio Paz (1914-1998) discusses the stark cultural contrast between the United States and Mexico, characterizing their societies in terms of exclusion (purity) and inclusion (communion) respectively.<sup>67</sup> Paz explains this difference by history; long before the arrival of European colonizers, the areas corresponding to the present-day United States and Mexico saw the development of two distinctive modes of social existence: nomadic (hunter) and sedentary (agricultural). Within this preexisting difference was superimposed the contrastive cultural ethics of British and Spanish colonizers, which could be termed as "pure" and "hybrid." Unlike the British who arrived in the sparsely populated North America and maintained their racial and cultural purity by pushing aside the native population into what they named "Indian Reservations," Spaniards came to the densely populated area archaeologically referred to as Mesoamerica, where the native population had developed highly sophisticated social and religious institutions. Paz argues that due to their inherently hybrid religious traditions dating back to the Reconquista (ended in 1492), the Spanish conquistadores converted the native populations into Christians and were not hesitant in embracing, rather than excluding the existing

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<sup>67</sup> Octavio Paz, *Tiempo nublado* (Mexico City: Seix Barral, 1983), 142-150. Although Paz's essay was published in 1974, much later than the time Kitagawa lived in New York, Paz's reflection on the United States as a multiethnic society is based on a broad historical perspective. For this reason, I would argue that Paz's observation is relevant to my analysis of Kitagawa's writings here.

complexity of the “native” religious and cultural systems in the construction of Nueva España society.<sup>68</sup>

If Paz’s argument sounds like an overgeneralization from today’s strict scholarly viewpoint, his essay mirrors his personal reflection on the cultural identity of Mexico, the nation with general incompetence in the modern capitalist economy. Paz sees this to be rooted in the country’s inherently hybrid historical formations. From a slightly different perspective, rather than aiming at an objective of understanding of cultural differences between Mexico and the United States, Paz’s definition of Mexican and U.S. cultures reflects his tactical perspective as a Third World intellectual, whose countrymen are often subject to discrimination in the United States due to their racial/cultural stereotypes and poverty. Paz’s description of the United States as a nomadic-individualist society, where each ethnic group tends to maintain its cohesiveness rather than lending itself to the hybrid process of interracial/intercultural communion, or a society where the individuals’ rational economic decisions hold priority over communal life centered on traditional celebrations and *fiestas*, seems to encapsulate Kitagawa’s sensation of detachment in New York. To put it more firmly, Kitagawa’s characterization of his “mustard seed” like existence in New York reveals his ironical perception of the discourse on racial equality and individual freedom in early twentieth-century U.S. society. Just like Paz, who critically meditated on the modern U.S. society from the perspective of those excluded—or that of so-called “Third-World” immigrants—Kitagawa positioned himself among cultural minorities who

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 142-150.

were for the most part denied participation in the broader cultural and racial dialogue for tangible social change.

### **Southward Trip**

In October 1920, Kitagawa, with his friend Torstein Muller, took a ship to Charleston, South Carolina and then continued to Jacksonville, Florida where they spent four months. In Jacksonville, Kitagawa and Muller often went out of the town to paint in the “woods under the hanging Spanish moss.”<sup>69</sup> Kitagawa was fascinated by the life in the southern United States; he states that the people in the South were more open-minded and their lifestyle was more relaxed than that of the Northerners. To him, this was particularly true of African Americans. Despite the strict official segregation policies and widespread racial hostility, African Americans’ life in U.S. South appeared to be much more vibrant than that of their counterparts in New York, where every racial group allegedly had an equal access to common civil rights.<sup>70</sup> One day in Jacksonville, Kitagawa had a conversation with a local, White primary school teacher. Responding to Kitagawa’s question as to why the African Americans in the South look happier than those in the North, this teacher said the following:

We southerners know the Black people and did not treat them heartlessly like northerners. They are all right if we discriminate and suppress them. In our school, we

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<sup>69</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 153.

<sup>70</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 73-80.

teach as follows: the Black people are decent citizens of the United States, while the Whites are like angels, and this is why it is impossible to educate both of them in the same classroom.<sup>71</sup>

Kitagawa's recollection of the teacher's words seems to reveal his perception that the officially enforced slogan in New York about equal civil rights for all racial groups was no more than a superficial rhetoric to suppress the existing difference and distrust between these groups and their inevitable confrontation. In other words, the explicit manifestation of the interracial incomprehensibility and hatred in the South seemed less desperate to Kitagawa than what he saw as the hypocritical social conformity of the North. In addition, Kitagawa found that the visible racial hostility in the South had made African descendants in the region, who in part were seasonal workers from the Caribbean islands, more united. He may have seen the discourse of racial equality in the North as paradoxically resulting in the atomization of individuals and reducing the possibilities of cultural minorities' unified struggles.

After Muller left for Jamaica, Kitagawa alone went to Yamato Colony in present-day Boca Raton, Florida and stayed with the Kamiya family, who owned a large tomato plantation.<sup>72</sup> Yamato Colony was the first Japanese settlement in the region established by Sakai Jō in 1903. While living in Yamato Colony, Kitagawa worked as a supervisor of African American workers and immersed himself into their nearby community.<sup>73</sup> As

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 80-93.

suggested already, Kitagawa's fascination with the life of African Americans in the South had much to do with his image of an exotic "tropical race." This point is clear by his statement: "When we arrived at Charleston, again we were surprised by the beauty of the Black people. In the midst of exuberant subtropical plants, they were closely adapted and live as if they were nature itself."<sup>74</sup> Moreover, African American people in the South represented to him a "mysterious" sphere yet untouched by modern civilization. In his book *My Youth in Mexico* (1955), Kitagawa remembers the almost dream-like moment in which he encountered an African American woman while working on the Kamiya family's Japanese plantation. He wrote:

On my way home this evening, Clementina whispered to my ear. "Mr. Henry (Kitagawa's nickname), please come to the 'forest' tonight, if you really would like to know Black people. But only if you have genuine bravery." The "forest" was located in the middle of a swamp, about some four kilometers from where I lived. It was a cluster of tropical trees of about three hectares, gloomy and shaded even in daytime, where snakes hung from moist tree branches and countless lizards lay on the ground.<sup>75</sup>

Kitagawa's above description of the "forest" demonstrates his excitement with the mysterious realms represented by African-American culture he was unable to find in "hygiene" and "stoic" New York.

On the other hand, Kitagawa was also aware of the fact that the places like the "forest" were the cradle of African descendants' collective struggles for cultural/political

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

autonomy. As his aforementioned analysis about the difference between African Americans in the South and North in the United States demonstrates, Kitagawa observed the African descendants' severe social conditions, and hoped to share with them his vision against racism and "Caucasian imperialism." While in the Yamato Colony, Kitagawa noticed that around the storage cabin at the margin of the farmland, in which a family of seasonal workers from the Bahamas stayed, African Americans and Caribbean islanders would get together every night to dance and sing. One night, shortly before his departure for Cuba, he went to join their meeting, painting his face and hands all black with oil paint to escape White people's patrolling.<sup>76</sup> After eating and dancing together, they all sat around the fire to take a rest. Then the old man from the Bahamas started to talk.<sup>77</sup>

Mr. Henry will leave for Cuba soon, so we have to say goodbye to you. We respect you. You are an educated man, and you loved us Black people. Japanese people treat Black people very well...Black people do not want to go back to the crackers' (White people in the South) places once they have worked for the Japanese...I come from the Bahamas for seasonal labor every year like now, because we are poor and cannot survive there...if I could, I would never come to such a place like Florida. There (in the Bahamas), now there is a famous story everybody is talking about. People say that we are going to make a Black nation...I don't know if it is in Santo Domingo or Haiti, but there is a big millionaire. He has a plan to buy a military vessel and take all of us to Africa, where we will build a new nation.<sup>78</sup>

Kitagawa recalls he responded the man's words as follows:

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 91.

When I got here (Florida), I was surprised to see that (racial) separation is everywhere, from the long-distance and urban trains to the public bathrooms. Not only that but churches and schools are different, and you all are excluded from the Whites' residential areas too. That is an enormous problem in light of human dignity. There must not be any racial discrimination on earth. Slavery in the United States should have ended centuries ago, but I see that it continues today in the South...I am an Oriental...Orientals are among the colored races. You do not know but we are in a sense, also discriminated against by White people. On earth there live millions of colored people and their number is much greater than that of the Whites. Probably racial discrimination will be solved sometime soon. If it is not solved then, we will take action to get rid of it.<sup>79</sup>

Kitagawa remembers that, hearing these words, African Americans and Caribbean islanders were moved, excited, and screamed "raising their big fists toward the sky."<sup>80</sup> Kitagawa's narrative above reminds us of the increasing search for unity among African descendants across national borders during the 1920s, led above all by the charismatic entrepreneur Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Through his eloquent speeches in various cities throughout the United States during the late 1910s, Garvey convinced many African Americans about his project of massive emigration to Africa by his ship called Black Star Line.<sup>81</sup> Given that

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> There are many studies on Marcus Garvey and his Back-to-Africa Movement. Indeed, Garvey's call for return to Africa is often seen as problematic and unsuccessful by today's scholars. In order to better understand Kitagawa's sense of solidarity with African descendants however, it is also necessary to remember that he was no more than a casual traveler in the southern United States and probably had no more than a rudimentary knowledge about the "Black" movement in the United States. For more details on Garvey's movement, see Mark Christians, "Marcus Garvey and African Unity: Lessons for the Future from the Past." *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 316-331.

challenging racial segregation was a severe social/political taboo in U.S. South at the time, Kitagawa's communion with people of African origin was an audacious transgression of the social norms. In fact, in *My Youth in Mexico*, Kitagawa recalled that when he went home and sobered up, he realized that he had done a horrifying thing and feared that he might have instigated the African descendants' insurgency; if local Whites were informed of his participation in the meeting, he would also have been executed.<sup>82</sup>

Narrated about three decades and a half later, Kitagawa's vivid memoir of his friendship with African descendants in the U.S. South attests to his critical vision of the mainstream discourse of modernity. Probably through his interaction with these people, Kitagawa hoped that his personal reflection on identity as a marginalized Asian working class man since his arrival in the United States would be merged into the broader stream of the struggle among cultural minorities across national borders. In other words, In spite of Kitagawa's fear of breaking the social taboo, as a cultural minority himself, his participation in the African races' future vision—building their modern nation in Africa, must have appealed to him as a promising alternative to the present world dominated by Western imperialism, from which Kitagawa saw himself displaced.

### **Kitagawa Tamiji in Cuba**

After a few months in Florida, Kitagawa took a ferry from Key West and arrived in Havana around August 1921.<sup>83</sup> During Kitagawa's time Cuba was the most popular tourist

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<sup>82</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 92-93.

<sup>83</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 193.



destination in the Caribbean boasting a prosperous sugar industry, which enjoyed significant investment from U.S.-owned companies. In Cuba Kitagawa continued to be aware of his marginalized position as an Asian traveler. For instance, Kitagawa recalls:

There was a small incident that happened in downtown Havana, near the coast. Because of a sudden rain shower, people in the streets were all in a hurry. I also walked fast down the sidewalk turning up my coat collar. Then, two young Americans came to pass by me and the man grabbed my tie and pulled me off the sidewalk. They must have been a couple and should not have been wet like me, given that they went sticking together under the umbrella held by the woman. Moreover, I was walking on the right side following the regulation. Nevertheless the man stuck out his hand and grabbed my tie, pushing me off the sidewalk...my anger arose three seconds afterward. I turned back and glared at them, but it was too late...this accident was all too sudden to give me a chance to avenge, so it remained in my heart permanently as a solid chunk of anger.<sup>84</sup>

Kitagawa's statement reveals his deep resentment toward the racial hierarchy then taken for granted in the Western Hemisphere. Probably this experience further reinforced his conviction about his marginal racial/cultural identity, and in turn, his attention toward the population of African origin, this time to those in Cuba. Apart from the above unpleasant incident, however, Kitagawa's interaction with Afro-Cubans took place in a social atmosphere of a Latin American country Kitagawa found to be more relaxed and flexible in terms of racial coexistence. He observed that, unlike their racial counterparts in the United States, Afro-Cubans enjoyed a happier life in society without suffering much discrimination,

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

and even sometime intermarrying with Whites.<sup>85</sup> Immersing himself into the quotidian world of Afro-Cubans, Kitagawa constantly meditated on their worldview and alternative conception of modernity that would transcend the conventional racial divisions.

Kitagawa's most impressive experience in Havana was his romance with an Afro-Cuban woman, which he narrates in *My Youth in Mexico*. One day, on his way back from sketching near the coast, Kitagawa was spoken to by some middle-class Afro-Cuban sisters who were sitting on the porch of their house.<sup>86</sup> Their father was an educated person conversant in world affairs, who admired Japan's drastic transformation into a modern state after the mid-nineteenth century. The family invited Kitagawa to a dance party at their home and afterwards he would stop by their place every afternoon to have a cup of tea and share dinner with them. After a little while Kitagawa became intimate with one of the sisters, and their relationship soon developed into a passionate romance.<sup>87</sup> Kitagawa's affair with this woman soon became known among some of the Japanese in Havana, who took it to be a scandal. These Japanese warned Kitagawa that there had never been a Japanese man

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<sup>85</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 93-94. One may say that Kitagawa's perception of the interracial "harmony" in Cuba was no more than a casual impression of a passing-by tourist. In Cuba, from during the year of the struggles for independence, due to the White elites' necessity of multiracial coalition, the racial equality has been emphasized, being stated in the first constitution in 1869. Scholars have argued that the denial of racial division among the population worked both in positive and negative directions: While it assured the full social participation of Afro-Cubans, it also discouraged their collective struggle for better social conditions. See Alejandro de la Fuente, "Myth of Racial Democracy: Cuba, 1900-1912," *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 3 (1999): 39-73.

<sup>86</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 94-97.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.

who had a relationship with an Afro-Cuban woman and Kitagawa's behavior would bring "shame" to all the Japanese in Havana.<sup>88</sup> Kitagawa told himself:

That is such a strange idea. In the United States there is a severe rule, but in this country it is so open and even loose regarding these issues, which is the positive side of this country. I already left behind such discriminatory ideas. Gauguin lived with a Tahitian woman, and I am a student of art. I will be able to cross the barrier, which is not allowed for you guys.<sup>89</sup>

Kitagawa continued to visit this family and spend time with the woman, sitting together every night on the porch until late.<sup>90</sup> One night, the woman asked Kitagawa to take her to Marianao the next day, the most high-class beach resort in Havana, where people from all over the world came to spend their vacations. Kitagawa agreed immediately and went back to the hotel barely containing his delight. The happy feeling lasted until the next morning, when he woke up and suddenly realized that taking his girlfriend to Marianao would announce their relationship to the public, including the ambassadors from countries like the United States and Japan. From the moment that thought came to his mind, Kitagawa could not get out of bed. He reproached himself and never visited that family again.<sup>91</sup>

This episode of romance reveals young Kitagawa's alluring encounter with a cultural/sexual Other and desire to audaciously cross into their social realms. In other words,

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

fascinated by the Afro-Cubans' vibrant existence, Kitagawa hoped to challenge racial prejudice and discrimination, or the negative legacies of Western—and by extension Japanese—modernity, which he saw embodied by the customary social norms of so-called “civilized” countries like Japan and the United States. Indeed, as epitomized by the fact that he compared his position to Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), his perception of Afro-Cuban people was overtly romanticized and probably not realistic enough as an effective critique of racial hierarchy and prejudice. Moreover, as a young Japanese man in the early twentieth century, Kitagawa eventually found himself to be helpless to break the social taboo alone. Nevertheless, here we can probably discern his strong, if rather unpractical, awareness of an alternative and plural understanding of modernity that would more properly include cultural minorities' worldviews. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Kitagawa's emotional investment in cultural minorities' points of view became the crucial basis for his later pedagogical/artistic engagement in Mexico.

Another significant episode took place while Kitagawa was sketching in one of the Afro-Cuban districts in Havana. As usual, Kitagawa became surrounded by people who were full of curiosity about his presence in the neighborhood. Suddenly, one in the audience, an Afro-Cuban adolescent, began to scream pointing at Kitagawa's painting. “It is Cubist, a fantastic Cubist!” Some young people approached Kitagawa and shook his hand. Then one of these adolescents dragged Kitagawa to his house. Kitagawa recalls:

I don't know why my painting looked “Cubist” to him, but probably all stylistically novel paintings were Cubist to him. All the family members came out and the boy enthusiastically explained that this was a Cubist painting. They brought a heap of red watermelon and I ate it with Black people. Black people are the race most appropriate

to eat watermelon and they looked really beautiful while eating it. “Black family eating watermelons.” What a wonderful painting subject it would make. After hesitating many times, I finally made the boy comprehend my desire, and next day, I started to paint each of them, one by one, posing in front of me.<sup>92</sup>

It should be noted that the association of watermelon with African Americans had a pejorative racial connotation in the United States, of which Kitagawa may or may not have been aware.<sup>93</sup> But this episode at the same time vividly encapsulates his everyday interaction with friendly Afro-Cuban people. What is probably of interest in this episode is the fact that, generally speaking, Cubism was a term only familiar to artists or people with some knowledge of modern art in the West, but it was the local Afro-Cuban adolescent who pronounced the word Cubist to Kitagawa. In other words, his account here focuses on the “native” Afro-Cuban boy’s own interpretation of the word “Cubism,” rather than its normative usage by Western artists, art critics, and historians. This episode seems to epitomize Kitagawa’s conviction that, like modernity itself, the modernist currents of art were never the monopoly of artists and intellectuals in the West but also subjects of

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>93</sup> The pejorative discourse about the African-American population and its alleged fond of watermelon in the United States dates back to the nineteenth century. For instance, see William H. Wiggins Jr., “Boxing’s Sambo Twins: Racial Stereotypes in Jack Johnson and Joe Louis Newspaper Cartoons.” *Journal of Sport History* 15, no. 3 (1988): 247-248. Having spent seven years in the United States, Kitagawa was perhaps informed of this racial stereotype. If such is the case, in his 1955 text written more than thirty years after his trip and with Japanese readers in mind, Kitagawa probably did not see the necessity to acknowledge the source of his imagination. Unfortunately, while this painting was still in process, Kitagawa had all of his personal belongings stolen. The whereabouts of the painting is unknown.

interpretation by the allegedly voiceless “native” people. Kitagawa’s recognition of these “local people’s” active practice of interpretation probably mirrors his firm conviction of the increasing hybridization and interconnectedness that characterized the early twentieth-century global world.<sup>94</sup>

While Kitagawa’s time in Cuba was full of new encounters, he was not going to remain there for long.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, Kitagawa’s stay on the island ended in an entirely unexpected way to him. While in Havana, he lived/worked in a cozy high-class hotel owned by a woman from the United States, which was located on a hilltop in Vedado, the city’s affluent residential area.<sup>96</sup> One day, a languished, poor-looking Japanese man appeared in the hotel and asked Kitagawa if the man could be hired as an interpreter. This man explained that he had been sick for a long time and just came out of the hospital. Suppressing his sympathy, Kitagawa rejected his proposal, but instead, offered to invite

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<sup>94</sup> As he mentions in the quotation above, Kitagawa denied that the painting he was producing that day would have appeared to be Cubist. Yet, as I briefly addressed in Introduction, the view depicted in his *Landscape with Palms* (fig. 1-1, c. 1921) is reminiscent of Kitagawa’s favorite site of painting near the coast in Havana, which he describes in *Mekishiko no seishun* (1955) as the place where there were “many colorfully painted houses” and “between the high palm trees the deep blue ocean was seen.” Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 94.

<sup>95</sup> Kitagawa remembers that his life in Cuba was fun and exciting, but also lacked a sense of “thickness” and “depth,” leading him to move on to Mexico after several months. Although what Kitagawa meant by “thickness” and “depth” is not readily clear, we must remember that he had been informed of the revolutionary struggles of Mexico and probably thirsted a place more suitable for his radical intellectual thought and desire for active social commitment. See Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 168-169.

<sup>96</sup> In this hotel Kitagawa was allowed to stay for free because of his competence as a waiter and bartender in organizing parties and events, a skill he acquired while working in New York. His presence in the establishment was highly valued by the owner. Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 17-19.

him for lunch in one of the most expensive restaurants in Havana; Kitagawa thought this man needed nutrition. They went together to the restaurant, but strangely as soon as they came to its entrance, the man said he was not hungry and walked away. Left alone, Kitagawa hopped around cabarets in downtown Havana until late, and after buying a ferry ticket to Veracruz, Mexico, he went back to the hotel around 1:00 AM. He found that the man, who had disguised himself as Kitagawa's servant, had stolen his suitcase and driven away in a car. The suitcase contained almost all of Kitagawa's belongings, such as the \$3000 U.S. dollars he earned in New York, paintings, diaries, and photographs. He was left with few hundred dollars and the ferry ticket to Mexico that he had just purchased. This robbery forced him to arrive in Mexico in an economically miserable condition.<sup>97</sup> As I will discuss in the next chapter, this event resulted in a struggle for survival during Kitagawa's first two years in Mexico, meaning that he had to engage in miscellaneous part-time jobs.

## **Conclusion**

Kitagawa's departure from Japan and travel through the United States and Cuba in the first decades of the twentieth century can be seen as a trajectory of his gradual estrangement from his homeland as well as the magnetic centers of Western modernity—Tokyo and New York. During his southward trip from New York, as a cosmopolitan traveler coming from these metropolises, Kitagawa frequently expressed his fascination with tropical landscape and vibrant life scenes. On the other hand, unlike the majority of early twentieth-century Japanese intellectuals, due to his psychological alienation from his "home" in the

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 17-24.

modern/imperial metropolis, Kitagawa's thought and narratives were more open to the multiple realities of modernity lived in by people not properly represented under the dominant discourse of colonialism and racial hierarchy. Through his immersion into the everyday world of ethnic minorities, Kitagawa saw these people as emerging subjects of struggle and contestation over the significance of their culture within the ever more fluid and interconnected global world of the early twentieth century.

As suggested in the Introduction, Kitagawa's time in the United States and Cuba saw the rise of anti-colonial movements among cultural minorities across the Americas. Among what these minorities questioned was U.S. imperialism that aspired to exert its economic/political domination over the Western Hemisphere. In such an emerging collective search of decolonization, African-American intellectuals and activists played a significant role. For instance, to writers and intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, African-American resistance against the "color line" was not merely of domestic interest, but a struggle inherently transnational in scope, as he called for their solidarity with the broader world population oppressed by "White" imperialism including Latin Americans and Asians. As David Luis-Brown insightfully demonstrates, the unified struggles among African Americans and the outbreak of insurgency in Mexico in the 1910s should be seen in a similar context of augmenting anti-colonialist tensions in the American Continent.<sup>98</sup> In the southern United States and Cuba, Kitagawa was no more than an anonymous foreign traveler. Yet his close friendship with African descendants prepared him for his long-term

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<sup>98</sup> David Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).



pedagogical/artistic engagement in postrevolutionary Mexico, which led him to a life-long investment in the anti-colonial notion of culture that was then surfacing in the Western Hemisphere.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PRODUCING ETHNOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE: KITAGAWA TAMIJI IN POSTREVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

#### Introduction

This chapter investigates Kitagawa Tamiji's activities as art educator and painter in postrevolutionary Mexico, paying close attention to his participation in EPAL (*Escuela de Pintura al Aire Libre*, or Open-Air Painting School), one of the major pedagogical programs/movements promoted by the postrevolutionary government. As briefly addressed in the Introduction, Kitagawa's time in Mexico coincided with the reconstruction phase of the Mexican Revolution. From the early 1920s, in the midst of a transitory liberal cultural climate, Mexican political leaders and intellectuals fomented a number of democratizing programs of art and pedagogy in order to forge a new collective identity for the fledging postrevolutionary state. Thanks to the fact that these official policies were in great favor of artists, from 1924 Kitagawa began to attend and participate in Mexico City's art venues, first through studying at the National Academy of San Carlos and then partaking in EPAL. EPAL became the vital base for Kitagawa's anti-academic experimental pedagogy until his definitive departure to Japan in 1936.

In this chapter, through examining Kitagawa's activities as an art educator and painter during his time in the EPAL schools, I will underline his perception/narrative of the indigenous people as subjects of critical observation and interpretation of culture. While teaching indigenous children/adolescents in EPAL, Kitagawa came to perceive painting as

an important political as well as artistic means through which people could expand their worldview. With this conception in his mind, Kitagawa encouraged his students to reflect upon hitherto unnoticed dimensions of their material/social environment through painting, rather than taking painting to be in itself a learning objective.<sup>1</sup> In the sections that follow, I will discuss Kitagawa's discernment of, and effort to develop his students' proactive subjectivity as a production of ethnographic knowledge. Literally, ethnographic knowledge is a knowledge generated as a result of an ethnographer's research based on participant observation of a culture. However, according to Clifford and others, in light of the renewed notion of ethnography discussed in the Introduction, ethnographic knowledge should be defined as a form of knowledge about the cultural Other that deviates from the established system of meanings in culture.<sup>2</sup> The production of ethnographic knowledge takes place in

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<sup>1</sup> As I will discuss below, in his writing on art education after his return to Japan, Kitagawa often criticized the "official-academic" (*kangakuteki*) conventions of art education, both in Mexico and Japan. Although he never clearly defined the "official-academic" art education, generally his critique was targeted at the customary teaching in art institutions and public schools, which pursued students' technical mastery through repetitive training using one specific medium. To Kitagawa, the act of painting had little to do with the acquisition of academic knowledge or skill. Rather it is an activity each child/adolescent develops on their own according to their interests in everyday life. While in EPAL schools, in addition to academic art education, Kitagawa also opposed his fellow instructors' attempt at nurturing students by showing them the works of modernist masters. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, Kitagawa stated that taking his students to a circus would be much more meaningful than taking them to an art museum. See Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 108-109.

<sup>2</sup> James Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 1-17. While Clifford does not discuss at length about ethnographic knowledge, some anthropologists such as Ōta Yoshinobu further elaborate the notion as a form of knowledge about the cultural other by nature decentralized from the dominant Western colonizer's perspective. See for instance, Ōta Yoshinobu, *Minzokushitekikindai e no kainyū: bunka o kataru kenri wa dare ni arunoka* (Kyoto: Jinbun Shoin, 2001), 14-17.

contemporary cultural contact zones, where encounter with the cultural Other and narrative/representation of it have become a phenomenon inherently incommensurable in the dominant social discourse of the modern West, discourse that endorses nationalism, pursuit of socio-economic modernization and colonial domination over the non-Western Other. Ethnographic knowledge participates the broader counternarrative in the contemporary global world against the representation of otherness from a colonizer's perspective.

I will begin this chapter by sketching the larger historical conditions of postrevolutionary Mexico. I will argue that while enjoying the opportunities facilitated by the Mexican government's liberal cultural policies in favor of artists, Kitagawa's attitude toward the indigenous population frequently deviated from the mainstream discourse of nationalism and socio-economic progress in 1920s and 30s Mexico. Keeping in mind Kitagawa's such ambivalent standing in Mexico's art and intellectual venues, in the next three sections, I will discuss his pedagogy in EPAL schools over three different phases, as he moved from one EPAL school to another, from Churubusco (1924-1925), to Tlalpan (1925-1932), and then to Taxco (1932-1936). Kitagawa's moves involved notable changes not only in his position within the movement (from resident artist, to instructor, and finally to school director) but also in his interests and methodologies as educator. In these three sections, I will draw particular attention to the way that after his move to Tlalpan, Kitagawa began to emphasize his students' proactive engagement with their social environment through painting. I will conclude this chapter by surveying Kitagawa's paintings produced during his time in the EPAL movement, in many of which he emulated his students'

approach to painting based on their interpretation and observation of the everyday environment. These paintings further attest to Kitagawa's firm grasp of his students' constructive subjectivity in the liberal cultural setting of early twentieth-century Mexico.

### **Kitagawa Tamiji and Postrevolutionary Cultural Policies**

Kitagawa arrived in the port of Veracruz in late November 1921, and managed to get to Mexico City by train.<sup>3</sup> Due to the unexpected robbery he suffered in Havana, Kitagawa had little money for self-maintenance. Arriving in Mexico City, he visited some Japanese expatriates to ask for help, but none of them obliged him.<sup>4</sup> Over the next two years, renting a room in downtown Mexico City, Kitagawa engaged in miscellaneous temporary jobs as a servant, private tutor, an itinerant vender of Christian painting, etc.<sup>5</sup> During these years, he frequently explored the city's lower-class neighborhoods, and with the money he earned, travelled to rural indigenous villages, being fascinated by the world full of stark contrast and vibrancy.<sup>6</sup> Given his identity as an anonymous foreign part-timer, this period could be

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<sup>3</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-65, 100-120.

<sup>6</sup> Kitagawa recalls his impression of Mexico as follows: "People longing for a peace of mind always sigh thinking that, if there were no occasional storms of political upheaval, what a comfortable, beautiful and amusing country Mexico would be. There blossom tropical fruits with exotic smells and flowers of bizarre shape, and the city encompasses gorgeous baroque and rococo buildings alongside the architecture of the newest style, in addition to the modest, yet world's newest intellectual trends. Nevertheless, if you travel only a few miles, you will see hamlets reminiscent of the ancient hunt and gather, or agricultural society, where people left behind by the civilization dwell as if nothing had happened. In short, (here), the newest cultural life and the ancient life from thousands years ago coexist closely without any conflict. It is a country of eternal summer. The passion transmitted in Latino blood manifests not only in bullfighting and intense romance, but also

seen as a continuation of his travel through the southern United States and Cuba, which was discussed in Chapter One.

After about two years of engaging in temporary jobs and travelling through Mexican countryside, Kitagawa restarted activity as an artist in late 1923. He did so by organizing his first solo exhibition in the Japanese-owned department store Nuevo Japón.<sup>7</sup> Although little detail is available about this exhibition, it attracted a small audience as he was still an unrecognized young artist. Kitagawa remembers that when he went to the Japanese embassy to hand over the letter of invitation, he was rudely spoken to and rejected by an embassy clerk.<sup>8</sup> What was especially disappointing to Kitagawa was none of the many Japanese expatriates in the city visited the show. However, on this occasion, he became acquainted with a few Mexican artists, who consoled him by saying that in Mexico City an individual art show had never been successful due to the lack of an art-savvy population. These Mexican artists also told Kitagawa that Mexico would see the emergence of a great new art movement sometime soon.<sup>9</sup> Although it is uncertain whether Kitagawa had been informed or not, by the time of his exhibition in Nuevo Japón, the postrevolutionary art

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in every human enterprise, including politics, culture and business. (They are) passionate, romantic and tend to be fierce.” Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Nuevo Japón was the largest Japanese-owned department store in Mexico City during the prewar period. Opened in 1910 after the exposition commemorating the one hundred year anniversary of Mexico’s independence, Nuevo Japón existed until 1941, when it was confiscated by the Mexican government. The confiscation was due to Japan’s hostile relationship with the United States and its allies during WWII, including Mexico. See Mexico-Japanese Association, 558-559.

<sup>8</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 123-126.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

movement, Mexican Muralism in particular, had taken off under the auspices of the newly created Secretariat of Public Education. It was only a few months after the exhibition that Kitagawa began to benefit from the Mexican government's generous cultural policies supportive of painters and muralists; in 1924, Kitagawa was admitted to the prestigious National Academy of San Carlos, where students were waived tuition fees and all the materials such as canvas and paint were provided for free.<sup>10</sup>

As just mentioned, Kitagawa's participation in postrevolutionary Mexican art venues owed much to the liberal cultural policies put forward by the Secretariat of Public Education. During the 1920s, Mexico saw one of the most dynamic periods of revolutionary social change in Latin American history, which marked a key moment among anti-colonial movements in the early twentieth-century Western Hemisphere.<sup>11</sup> In Mexico, the postrevolutionary government took the initiative in fomenting a series of programs designed for the propagation of creative practices and pedagogical opportunities among the broader national population beyond the confines of the metropolitan social sectors. For instance, during Alvaro Obregon's (1880-1928) presidency from 1920 to 1924, one thousand rural schools and two thousand public libraries were constructed throughout the nation, and the annual federal expense for education increased from around five million to

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<sup>10</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, based on W.E.B. Du Bois' writings, David Luis-Brown argues that the Mexican Revolution considerably undermined the U.S. government's self-confidence in its imperialist diplomacy consolidated after the victory of the Spanish-American War (1898). See Luis-Brown, 104.

fifty-four million U.S. dollars.<sup>12</sup> Obregon appointed José Vasconcelos, a self-taught thinker and liberal educator to head the Secretariat of Public Education.<sup>13</sup> Vasconcelos played the key role in the redirection of art and education in early 1920s Mexico; he established several programs and departments within the Secretariat that became the central apparatus to support artists, including the National Fine Arts Program sponsoring Mexican Muralism, and the nation-wide drawing program.<sup>14</sup> Under the government auspices, many intellectuals and artists worked energetically and called for the democratization of art and education, celebrating Mexico's renewed self-image focused on the country's pre-Columbian cultural

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<sup>12</sup> David Craven, *Art and Revolution in Latin America, 1910-1990* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 34.

<sup>13</sup> Vasconcelos is the personality of particular importance in investigating the utopian cultural climate of postrevolutionary Mexico. In his passionate discussion about the birth of the "cosmic" race, Vasconcelos, inspired by Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) Law of Three Stages, delineated the evolution of humanity from material/warlike to intellectual/political and then to spiritual/aesthetic stages. In his view, future human society will be driven more by love and beauty, rather than rational thought and materialistic interests. In the future world envisioned by Vasconcelos, the mixed-blood Latin American race, which he named "cosmic," or the fifth race born out of unbounded racial mixing, will play the leading role. Vasconcelos' idealistic vision of racial mixing and Hispanophile/Eurocentric paternalism, particularly his intention to "civilize" uneducated rural masses by promoting European literary classics has been an object of many scholars' critique. On the other hand, if, as Francisco Reyes Palma says, Mexico is one of the first countries in the world that "proposed the critical affiliation between art and workers/peasants' movements," this owed much to Vasconcelos' leadership. Moreover, as Desmond Rochfort rightly observes, Vasconcelos' strong creed about individual freedom in artistic expressions gave birth to the mural paintings in support of the collective revolutionary ideologies, which were at once patriotic, modernist and transnational. See: José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica: misión de la raza iberoamericana* (México: Espasa Calpe Mexicana, 1976 [1925]), 37-46; Francisco Reyes Palma, *Historia social de la educación artística en México, (notas y documentos): Un proyecto cultural para la integración nacional, periodo de Calles y el Maximato (1924-1934)* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1984), 5 and; Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros* (London: L.King, 1993), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Craven, 34.



heritage. They hoped that such an emerging collective “national” awareness would transcend the effect of colonialism/imperialism as well as racial/cultural divisions that still prevailed in Mexican society.<sup>15</sup>

Despite their ideals of democratization and decolonization, however, the goal of implementing a new democratic and participatory culture on the part of Mexican artists and intellectuals, many of whom served in official institutions, was often compromised by their almost taken-for-granted paternalism toward the rural indigenous population. Generally speaking, while these intellectuals valued the indigenous people’s ancient cultural heritage and aesthetic/folkloric traditions, they largely ignored the living indigenous people’s subjectivity and the positive role these people would play in the process of social change, deeming them as “backward savages” in need of “civilization.” One manifestation of such Mexican intellectuals’ ambivalent attitudes toward the indigenous population was the drawing program, led by Adolfo Best Maugard (1891-1965) who was a painter and the head of the Drawing Department in the Secretariat of Public Education, which aimed to diffuse “national” art.<sup>16</sup> Through his decade-long study of over two thousand pre-Hispanic motifs, research that originated in his project commissioned by the U.S. anthropologist Franz Boas in 1910, Best Maugard established the “essentially Mexican” method of drawing. His method extracted the “seven lines” commonly found in pre-Colombian

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<sup>15</sup> For the utopian cultural milieu of postrevolutionary Mexico, see *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> For more on Best Maugard method, see *ibid.* and Laura González Matute, “A New Spirit in Postrevolutionary Art: The Open-Air Painting Schools and the Best Maugard Drawing Method, 1920-1930,” in *Mexican Modern Art, 1900-1950*, ed. Luis Martín Lozano (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1999), 37-41.

decorative art, including straight lines, undulating lines, zigzag lines, circles, half-circles, spirals and s-shaped lines. Best Maugard fomented the use of these seven lines with a hope that it would facilitate the public's consolidation of Mexican identity through painting. During Obregon's presidency, Best Maugard trained around 150 art teachers. His method was published in the form of a manual, which was then distributed to the elementary schools throughout the country.<sup>17</sup> Best Maugard's program epitomized an attitude quite common among Mexican intellectuals at the time—passionate advocacy of Mexico's new identity grounded on the country's ancient heritage, which unwittingly left out contemporary indigenous people's agency. In other words, what primarily defined Best Maugard's method and its exaltation of the "essence" of the "national" art, was his academic perspective that bypassed the living reality of the existing national population, rural indigenous communities in particular.

In addition to the Mexican intellectuals' passionate yet largely unilateral interest in the nation's indigenous heritage, paternalism also manifested in their pragmatic discourse of socio-economic modernization. This discourse emphasized the necessity of swift assimilation of the rural indigenous population into the modern Mexican state. One of the representative arguments in this vein was *indigenismo*, which was put forward among others by the anthropologist Manuel Gamio (1883-1960). Like Best Maugard, Gamio valued the ancient indigenous cultural heritage and aesthetics embodied by contemporary "native" folk arts, and led the first restoration project of Teotihuacan, the ancient Mesoamerican city north of Mexico City. Yet, at the same time, Gamio saw contemporary

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. See also Craven, 34.

indigenous people's lives and their socio-economic conditions as degenerate, and in need of "civilizing" intervention for the sake of assimilating them into the modern Mexican nation based on Western socio-cultural norms.<sup>18</sup> Gamio says:

The extension and intensity that folk-lore life exhibits in the great majority of the population, eloquently demonstrates the cultural backwardness in which that population vegetates. This archaic life, which moves from artifice to illusion and superstition, is curious, attractive and original. However in all sense it would be preferable for the population to be incorporated into contemporary civilization of advanced and modern ideas, which would involve them ceasing to wear non-practical traditional clothing. This would contribute in a positive manner to the conquest of the material and intellectual well being to which all humanity ceaselessly aspires.<sup>19</sup>

As the above quotation demonstrates, while Gamio recognized the "originality" and attractiveness of the indigenous cultures, his thoughts were firmly anchored in what many postrevolutionary political leaders conceived as their mission: the project of "civilizing" the indigenous population. As he explains with the examples of Japan, Germany and France, to Gamio the racial homogeneity within a nation's population was fundamental to

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<sup>18</sup> See among others, Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1992 [1916]). For insightful analysis of Gamio's *indigenismo*, see David A. Brading, "Manuel Gamio and Official *Indigenismo* in Mexico," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 7, no. 1 (1988): 75-89. Without doubt, the previously discussed Mexican intellectuals such as José Vasconcelos and Moisés Sáenz shared the view of Gamio regarding the necessity of assimilating the indigenous communities. For more discussions on the limit of these Mexican intellectuals' perspective, see Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México profundo: Una civilización negada* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> Brading, 84. The original text was quoted by Brading from Manuel Gamio, *La Población del Valle de Teotihuacán*, facsimile edition, vol. I (Mexico City, 1979), xxvii.

constructing a powerful state.<sup>20</sup> As Bonfil Batalla rightly points out, no matter how much Gamio and his contemporary intellectuals recognized the aesthetic value of the ancient civilization and contemporary folk arts, it was those intellectuals who judged the “positive” or “negative” values of the indigenous cultures, not “*indios*” themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Quite contrary to the case of the Mexican intellectuals discussed above, who saw themselves committed to the diffusion of a new collective national identity, Kitagawa was no more than a foreign artist who almost accidentally stumbled into the artistic/cultural scenes of 1920s Mexico. Like his time in Japan and the United States, Kitagawa’s attitude was rather ironical toward the search for socio-economic modernization and development. Unlike these Mexican leaders, what intrigued Kitagawa, in addition to the indigenous population’s ancient or aesthetic heritage, was the social reality faced by contemporary rural indigenous communities, which he saw as overlooked in the shadow of the utopian discourse of nationalism and modernization. Recalling his time in EPAL schools, Kitagawa says,

When I was in the EPAL movement, I pursued a thought process absolutely different from my (Mexican) colleagues. They were quite diligent and, apart from their studies of art, they were also quite astute in politics. On the other hand, I was totally negligent in these issues and would always lose the game enviously watching others being promoted. The reason for this is because I had another, very different interest, which was rather difficult to explain. I wanted to enrich myself... While my colleagues were engrossed in politics and absorbing new knowledge of painting, I would go to indigenous villages

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>21</sup> Bonfil Batalla, 170-176.

sharing time with the primitives (*dojin*) and slipping into the beds of prostitutes listening to their nonsense stories, or walk into rocky mountains outside the city and roam with rattlesnakes and lizards. You might ask what I could learn from these activities. However to me, they were studies that would offer enrichment and enhance me. I cannot tell for sure what I got from them, but I wonder that in what we restlessly pursue as “study” and call “effort” today has some defect. I cannot explain it by words, but I alone stuck to the idea that there is something missing in there, from which I could learn a lot.<sup>22</sup>

Kitagawa’s above memoir of his time in the EPAL schools convincingly illustrates his ironical, detached view not only on his Mexican colleagues vying for higher institutional positions, but also on the mainstream social thought of postrevolutionary Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

Kitagawa deemed that, in its pursuit of social progress and modernization, the public discourse of Mexico left out the contemporary social reality lived by the marginalized—mostly indigenous—national population. It is imaginable that, while wondering through these indigenous villages and rocky mountains, Kitagawa’s thoughts meditated on the subjectivity of the “forgotten” indigenous people. As I will discuss in the following sections, Kitagawa’s experimental pedagogy in EPAL aimed to nurture indigenous

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<sup>22</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*, 176-177.

<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that Kitagawa’s Mexican colleagues in the EPAL movement were not necessarily as enthusiastic about eliciting children/adolescents’ creative ability as Kitagawa was, and they were more attracted by the official positions that yielded a substantial income. According to Kitagawa, Francisco Díaz de León, the director of the school at Tlalpan rarely appeared in the school, and was reluctant to respond when Kitagawa tried to argue about the school’s pedagogical methodologies with him. Kitagawa says “Director Díaz de León receives ten pesos each day. He lives a good life in his beautiful house in Coyoacán and bought a brand-new car, which annoyed me. He rarely shows up in the school and is going on dates with his girlfriend Ms. Carmen every day.” See Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 2-3, 65, 81.

children/adolescents' proactive spirit within the immediate social context of postrevolutionary national reconstruction, which challenged the paternalistic/unilateral agenda of assimilation and socio-economic development promoted by Mexican intellectual and political leaders.

### **Kitagawa Tamiji's Introduction to the EPAL Movement in Churubusco: 1924-1925**

Thanks to the aforementioned postrevolutionary government's generous cultural policies in favor of artists, Kitagawa was allowed to join the EPAL movement. EPAL, founded by the painter Alfredo Ramos Martínez (1871-1946), originated in the 1911 confrontation between the director of the Academy of San Carlos Antonio Rivas Mercado (1853-1927) and its students protesting against the institution's old-fashioned curriculum.<sup>24</sup> Ramos Martínez's initial idea was to provide these young art students with an alternative by introducing the practice of painting *en plein air* (open air) of mid-nineteenth-century French Barbizon School.<sup>25</sup> This initial attempt lasted only for a year, but EPAL reopened in 1920 under the auspices of the Secretariat of Public Education at Chimalistac, a small village a few

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<sup>24</sup> The key members of the EPAL movement were the generation of artists much younger and less privileged than the acclaimed muralists such as Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974), who made Mexican art internationally renowned in the early 1920s. The major participants of EPAL include, Francisco Díaz de León (1897-1975), Fermín Revueltas (1901-1935), Rafael Vera de Córdoba (1893-1947), Gabriel Fernández Ledesma (1900-1983), and Fernando Leal (1896-1964). All these artists were students of Alfredo Ramos Martínez and joined the *Sindicato de Obreros Técnicos and Plásticos* (Syndicate of technical and art workers), the organization that at the inception of the Mexican Renaissance, united artists who collaborated with working and peasant classes. See Laura González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 52-53.

kilometers south of Mexico City. Unlike the EPAL schools established after 1925, which are to be discussed in the next section and were oriented for the peasants/indigenous population, the school in Chimalistac focused on the education of middle-class art students. The teaching in Chimalistac encouraged the appreciation of “natural beauty,” the original agenda of the Barbizon School.<sup>26</sup> The school was later moved to Coyoacán (1921), and then to the Convent of Churubusco (1924), where Kitagawa was accepted as a resident artist upon his graduation from the Academy of San Carlos.

In 1924, Kitagawa graduated from the Academy of San Carlos in three months and moved to the Convent of Churubusco in the southern outskirts of Mexico City as a resident artist.<sup>27</sup> In the Convent, Kitagawa was given his own room and enjoyed cohabitation with dozens of young Mexican painters. He describes his life in the Convent stating that, although he was never affluent, he made many friends, with whom he often drank, and concentrated on painting like he never had before in his life.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Alfred Ramos Martínez, the director of the EPAL movement visited the Convent each week in order to provide constructive critique of works done by the student and resident artists, even purchasing them occasionally.<sup>29</sup> Recalling his outstanding ability to discover “genius” in

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>27</sup> There is no detailed information available as to the reason why Kitagawa moved from the Academy of San Carlos to the Convent of Churubusco at this specific point. Murata speculates that Kitagawa’s possible non-conformity with conservative teaching in the Academy prompted his move. Although Ramos Martínez served as the director of the Academy since 1913, the traditional curriculum remained effective in the school. See Murata, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 127; *Kodomotachi*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 4.

each one of the students, Kitagawa admires Ramos Martínez as a paragon of art educators.<sup>30</sup> Interested in art education during his study in Europe from 1900 to 1910, Ramos Martínez's pedagogy inherited the romantic and liberal current of art education, which emphasized the unfettered expression of personal subjectivity in art and was represented by such figures as John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Herbert Read (1893-1968).<sup>31</sup> Back in Mexico, and in the midst of revolutionary social change, Ramos Martínez embarked on his liberal pedagogy, questioning the rigid and old-fashioned "academic" teachings exercised by the professors at San Carlos. Indeed, Ramos Martínez's works as a painter have been classified by many as conservative in relation to the new movements of postrevolutionary Mexican art promoting the country's cultural heritage.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, his open-minded leadership as an educator led many to acclaim Ramos Martínez as the "true founder" of modern Mexican art.<sup>33</sup> Kitagawa recalls:

Maestro Ramos was a painter of the previous generation and his style was as old-fashioned as Poussin's (Nicolas Poussin, 1594-1665) painting. However, what he expected of us young painters was not such an outdated method. He always

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>31</sup> Laura González Matute and Renata González Blaisten, *Las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre: Tlalpan* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2011), 35.

<sup>32</sup> Karen Cordero, "Alfredo Ramos Martínez: Un pintor de mujeres y de flores ante el ámbito estético posrevolucionario, 1920-1929," in *Alfredo Ramos Martínez: Una visión retrospectiva*, eds. Alfredo Ramos Martínez et al (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1992), 63-67.

<sup>33</sup> For example, according the painter Ramón Alva de la Canal's words in 1978, "while nobody pronounced this opinion, the real promoter of Mexican painting was Ramos Martínez, not Diego Rivera." See González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 91.



discovered a new creativity among those much younger than himself and praised it... Maestro Ramos had an eye for discovering genius, and was a teacher who proved to me that genius is hidden in each one of us. He knew how to make even a dull person enjoy his talent. He was a magician who could detect the outstanding (talent) within the mediocre (person) and make it work.<sup>34</sup>

Kitagawa's admiration reveals that his encounter with Ramos Martínez at the early stage of his life in Mexico was essential to his later career. While Kitagawa's interest in art education dates back to his time in New York, it was probably Ramos Martínez and his influential direction of the EPAL movement that ultimately introduced Kitagawa to the profession of liberal art education. Keeping in line with Ramos Martínez's methodology in opposition to all kinds of compulsory official-academic instruction, Kitagawa pursued his experimentations in Tlalpan and Taxco, which revolved around an open-minded dialogue with his students—many of whom were indigenous children and adolescents.

In discussing Ramos Martínez's impact on Kitagawa, it is important to note that Martínez's approach, and that of EPAL under his influence in general, was often disparaged by Mexican artists and scholars at the time. These critiques centered on EPAL schools' lack of well-defined curriculum and its "romantic" conception of the indigenous race's "innate genius," which allegedly idealized "*indios*" as "primitives" untainted by the degenerate effect of modern civilization.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, in speaking about his anti-academic

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<sup>34</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Although there is no space to discuss this topic at length, since its foundation, EPAL has been a controversial movement. Despite its long existence and the fame it achieved nationally and internationally, EPAL became entirely forgotten by scholars after its closure in the mid-1930s. Up to the retrospective exhibition organized by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1965, the legacies of EPAL had largely been downplayed in art history publication, and when mentioned, it

pedagogy discussed above, Ramos Martínez tended to associate EPAL students' creativity with the "purity" of indigenous blood; his remarks on EPAL students included such words as "the purer their race, the more power in their (artistic) production... I have been able to observe that, as they get mix-blooded, these qualities disappear."<sup>36</sup> As a leading artist and educator of 1920s Mexico, Ramos Martínez's notion of the indigenous population did not escape the paternalism of Mexican intellectuals and political leaders discussed earlier. Nevertheless, I would argue that Ramos Martínez's face-to-face engagement with indigenous children/adolescents and effort to bolster their creative abilities had a consequence much broader than the optimistic acclaim of the indigenous races' "purity." Probably, one of the most important contributions of Ramos Martínez was to have convinced EPAL instructors, including Kitagawa, of the importance of attending to indigenous children/adolescents' positive agency in creative expressions. Kitagawa's

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was treated as a worthless enterprise that did not make any significant contribution to modern Mexican art. For instance, for the art historian Raquel Tibol (1923-2015), EPAL was "improvised workshop without program or discipline, contaminated by spontaneity and autodidacticism." Just like Kitagawa's experimental pedagogy, the EPAL movement itself was seen deviant from the mainstream discourse of the Mexican Revolution. González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 9-11. Tibol's statement above was quoted by González Matute from Raquel Tibol, *Historia general del arte mexicano* (Mexico City: Editorial Hermes, 1969), 243-244.

<sup>36</sup> Secretaria de Educación Pública, *Monografía de las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre* (Mexico City: Editorial Cultura, 1926), 9. One outstanding critique of Ramos Martínez's attitude was posed by Oliver Debroise, who states; "[t]his (teaching) system (of EPAL), even more liberal than that of Best Maugard, presupposes the innate genius of a child and that of indigenous people oddly confused one another by a romantic ideology of a good savage, which can also be linked to certain exaltation of the primitive spirit characteristic of Western painters... In relegating an indigenous person to the field of art, his inutility as a producer of economic commonwealth is affirmed, and his marginality is underscored. See Oliver Debroise, *Figuras en el trópico, plástica mexicana 1920-1940* (Barcelona: Océano, 1984), 31-34.

inspiration from Ramos Martínez's liberal pedagogy in Churubusco set the crucial basis for his later activities as an EPAL instructor in Tlalpan and Taxco, which, as I will discuss presently, ultimately opened his eyes to his students' capacity of observation and interpretation of their familiar environment through painting.

### **Kitagawa Tamiji at the EPAL School in Tlalpan: 1925-1932**

A year after his residence in the Convent of Churubusco, Kitagawa was called upon to join the EPAL school in Tlalpan to be an assistant for his friend, the painter Francisco Díaz de León (1897-1975).<sup>37</sup> The EPAL in Tlalpan was one of the three EPAL locations inaugurated after the drastic redirection of the official pedagogical policies along more popular lines, which was undertaken by the successors of Vasconcelos in the Secretariat of Public Education after his leave in 1924. Unlike Vasconcelos, whose somewhat idealized notion of Mexican identity tended to highlight its spiritual and aesthetic dimensions, the successive Minister of Education Manuel Puig Casauranc (1888-1939) and his undersecretary Moisés Sáenz (1888-1941) focused more on the practical pedagogical project—democratic implementation of public education among the broader peasant-laborer classes.<sup>38</sup> Under these new policies, in 1925, EPAL expanded to have three

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<sup>37</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Particularly, Sáenz, a former student of the U.S. philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) at Columbia University in New York, conceived the newly founded Mexican public schools as the core of cultural development in local communities, an idea that had a crucial impact on the progressive educational programs promoted by the government. Sáenz was deeply inspired by Dewey's famous thesis of "learning through doing." In his view, the new postrevolutionary public schools in rural areas must function as the center of community, where the students learn, in addition to writing and reading, various everyday tasks such as taking care of domestic animals and

additional locations in the outskirts of Mexico City, Xochimilco, Tlalpan, and Guadalupe Hidalgo. While the preexisting school in Churubusco continued education of middle-class, mainly female students, these three new schools aimed at teaching the peasant /indigenous population.<sup>39</sup> Like the previous EPAL schools, these new schools did not have any strict curriculum, and were characterized by the instructors' anti-academic/institutional posture, which underlined the students' complete freedom and unfettered creativity in painting. Along the Secretariat's new policies, EPAL's initial agenda, which emanated from the Barbizon notion of "painting in the middle of natural beauty," saw gradual modification as it began to be exercised among the lower-class rural population of Mexico.

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maintaining botanical gardens. Mirroring the dominant *indigenismo* ideology, the objective of these schools rested in the integration of the indigenous population into the national culture while helping them fully maintain their traditional ways of life. Saenz comments that if John Dewey came to Mexico, he would see his ideas flourishing in Mexican rural schools. "Motivation, respect to personality (of each student), self-expression... learning through doing, the democracy in education. Everything from Dewey is here." See Moisés Sáenz, *Antología de Moisés Sáenz* (Mexico City: Oasis, 1970), 17; Craven, 31-32 and; Cordero, 71.

<sup>39</sup> These schools opened the door to the broader local population; in the schools of Xochimilco, Tlalpan and Guadalupe Hidalgo, many of students were children and adolescents, although there were several adults as well. In Tlalpan, Kitagawa constantly had some female students, but he admits that his pedagogy could not have much success with them. Kitagawa says that he was not good at dealing with female students as his somewhat rough teaching policies—exposing students to social spaces—were often too harsh for girls, and the social customs of rural Mexico gave less freedom of activities to female children/adolescents. As for his later EPAL school in Taxco, Amador Lugo recalls that Kitagawa's students there were solely male. For more on these new EPAL schools, see González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 87-98, Cordero, 71. For the gender of Kitagawa's students in Tlalpan and Taxco, see Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 126-127 and; Amador Lugo, "Oshiego Amador Lugo-shi ni kiku," interviewed by Itō Takayoshi and Takeda Shinzaburō, in *Kitagawa Tamiji shidō Mekishiko jidōgashū*, ed. Kubo Sadajirō (Tokyo: Gendaibijutsusha, 1978), 86.

Generally speaking, while in Tlalpan, Kitagawa's pedagogy followed Ramos Martínez's student-centered methodology. In his teaching, Kitagawa limited his role as advisor, avoiding any direct intervention in the students' act of painting.<sup>40</sup> As briefly suggested, what is of particular interest in Kitagawa's pedagogy was its emphasis on exposing students to their everyday environment. His interest originated in the aforementioned EPAL's Barbizon-school inspired notion of painting *en plein air*. Yet in Tlalpan, these basic principles of EPAL gained a new meaning as it was put into practice among the peasant population of rural Mexico, whose conception of painting was quite different from that of nineteenth-century European artists. In Tlalpan, a small Mexican village where people's everyday thought had hardly been influenced by any institutional-academic notion of art, painting outdoors was by no means a novel or romantic undertaking.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, due to the specific social conditions of postrevolutionary

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<sup>40</sup> It must be noted however that, in his experimental pedagogy in Tlalpan, Kitagawa tended to be even more radical than Ramos Martínez. One fortunate event for Kitagawa was that, despite his informal position as an assistant, he gained a considerable degree of freedom to experiment on his own; Kitagawa recalls that, while his school was visited each day by an auditor from the Secretariat of Public Education, the director Díaz de León was generally indifferent to Kitagawa's view of teaching, which allowed him to make a series of independent decisions in regards to his instruction. Fully enjoying this freedom, Kitagawa's student-centered policy became more exhaustive than Ramos Martínez's. For instance, Kitagawa tried to abolish the conventional instructor-student hierarchy as much as possible, proposing his students to address him "*compañero*" (buddy), not "*profesor*" (professor). Kitagawa's other crucial decision was to limit his students to those over ten years old. This was because of his strong interest in dealing with puberty, as I will discuss in footnote 56. See Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 2-3, 65, 81.

<sup>41</sup> As Kitagawa states elsewhere, his teaching strategies mirrored his perception of EPAL students as subjects "unspoiled" by the conventions of official-academic art education prevalent in "civilized" countries. In some ways, Kitagawa's view might intersect with Ramos Martínez's romantic conception of indigenous children as "innate" geniuses. However, unlike Ramos Martínez, Kitagawa's interest lay more in what he deemed to be the positive social conditions of Tlalpan,

Mexican countryside, encouraging children/adolescents to paint outdoors was generally an undemanding task. As Kitagawa comments elsewhere, having grown up in a politically/economically chaotic milieu, his students in EPAL generally had an independent spirit and would rarely hesitate to step into the adult-dominated social world.<sup>42</sup> As Kitagawa and his fellow anti-academic instructors in EPAL let their students paint outdoors in complete freedom, these students unwittingly transformed the romantic notion of painting *en plain air* that originated in Barbizon school into that of using painting as a means of visualizing everyday objects and spaces. Their subjects included domestic animals, houses, factories, busy markets, and people in their surroundings, which, while assuming the practice of painting in the open-air, were not necessarily compatible with the romantic contemplation of natural beauty.<sup>43</sup> Kitagawa often acclaimed his students' works as an outstanding outcome of their confrontation with everyday reality, which demonstrate a quality at once "gloomy" and "beautiful" in a single piece of work."<sup>44</sup> By "beautiful"

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where the villagers' conception of creative activities was not confined by the institutional norms of academic art education. For instance, see "Mekishiko Tasuko ni okeru jidō bijutsu kyōiku no jikken," originally published in *Kyōiku Bijutsu* (November-December 1937), in Kitagawa Tamiji, *Yūtopia*, 10-11.

<sup>42</sup> Kitagawa often states that Mexican children had an independent spirit, particularly compared with their counterparts in Japan. Kitagawa associates their attitude with their exposure to chaotic/fluid social milieu from early age. For instance, see Kitagawa Tamiji, "E o kaku Mekishiko to Nippon no kodomo," originally published in *Kaizō* (September 1953), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 123-133.

<sup>43</sup> For more on EPAL students' painting produced through Kitagawa's instruction, see Kubo ed., *Kitagawa Tamiji shidō*.

<sup>44</sup> Kitagawa associated these paintings' "gloomy" styles with the French painter Henri Rousseau's style. See for instance, Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 97.

Kitagawa probably meant the way these paintings impacted the viewer through an overwhelming “power” (*hakuryoku*). On the other hand, to him, the gloominess was a testimony to his students’ mental struggles in the middle of social instability, in the wake of the Revolution. Kitagawa says;

It’s true that children’s paintings in Mexico have a gloomy expression. Yet they are beautiful. (It is) a beauty that looks puzzling to us. It in no way is a euphoric beauty, nor a delight of freedom. What is bewildering, this beauty dwells with gloominess, or rather it is the gloominess itself...In such a case, what should I do? Should my task be to eliminate the mysterious melancholiness or dark sinister mood that appear in their paintings?...My job is not such a thing. My job is to let them produce good paintings, and a good painting must reveal strongly and acutely their (cultural/social) traits.<sup>45</sup>

The above quotation demonstrates Kitagawa’s conviction that creative practice should not be divorced from its specific social/cultural contexts. Impressed by the “puzzling” beauty of their painting, Kitagawa further encouraged Mexican children and adolescents to observe their everyday social environments. In Tlalpan, while he walked around to oversee his students’ activities, he often said to them things like, “Oh, there are horses over there. It seems to be fun,” “there are many people in the market today,” “Alberto’s family got a new cow.”<sup>46</sup> Although Kitagawa pretended that his words would sound like part of a mundane conversation, his intention was to stimulate, as unobtrusively as possible, his students’ curiosity and make them even more responsive to everyday spaces and occurrences.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 97-98

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 103.

In addition to directing his students' attention to the everyday world of Tlalpan, Kitagawa adopted two main strategies to develop his students' capacity of observation and interpretation. First, he allowed each of his students to use wide-ranging media, including oil, from the first day of his class.<sup>47</sup> The school initially planned to introduce students to gouache only in order to let them acquire some basic skills before proceeding to more "advanced" media. But Kitagawa insisted on giving them oil from the beginning, because he saw that oil is much handier to express a subject's color and volume than more "basic" media such as monochromatic pencil drawing.<sup>48</sup> Kitagawa opposed the institutional (official-academic) conventions of art education based on the premise of students' step-by-step progress from the most rudimentary material to the more advanced ones, from pencil drawing to oil painting for instance. Kitagawa saw these conventions to be a serious impediment to the development of students' sensibilities toward environment.<sup>49</sup> Kitagawa states that "beauty" is a living and constantly changing phenomenon that must be captured while the impression still endures; current institutional art education based on the acquisition of a technique through repetitive training would end up only with the reinforcement of the standardized notion of beauty.<sup>50</sup> By getting rid of the customary academic requirements for beginners, Kitagawa's radical redefinition of art education

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<sup>47</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 60-61.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



facilitated a smooth introduction to the world of painting for his students, which might otherwise have overwhelmed them.

Secondly, while Kitagawa gave his students the maximum degree of freedom to choose the medium of their preference, he constantly guided them to switch between different media, so as to impede them of becoming overly skillful in a single technique. To do this, Kitagawa employed as wide-ranging media as possible, including oil, several kinds of tempera, watercolor, wood-block printing, etching, lithography and so on, all produced within the school by his and his students' own hands.<sup>51</sup> Through encouraging his students to try many different media, Kitagawa sought to slow down their technical mastery. Kitagawa says;

For instance, if I let a student keep using oil on rough-textured canvas, soon that student becomes used to that rough-textured canvas, and as he/she improves his/her skill, he/she started only to concentrate on technical issues. His/her technique gets better, but he/she begins to downplay the act of seeing and representing things, which means that he/she camouflages (his/her lack of effort in seeing and representing things) by using the technical skills...So, as soon as I see (the students') painting becoming superficial, I give them another, a more fine-textured canvas or make them use a tempera. In that way, (my practice of) giving different materials as needed was convenient to prevent the students from being drugged by superficial techniques or pursuing manual deftness, and make them confront the object with fresh attitude and produce technically poor yet powerful painting.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, "Watashi no bijutsu kyōiku," originally published in *Kyōiku Bijutsu* (March 1938), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 43.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

As expressed in the above quotation, through using a diversity of media, Kitagawa aimed to give his students an appropriate amount of technical difficulty in transferring what they observed onto the canvas/paper to make them more astute in their act of observation and translation. By constantly switching expressive media, Kitagawa encouraged his students to deepen their grasp of the everyday environment and face the complexity of seeing and visualizing things and spaces.

Kitagawa recalls one key episode from his time in Tlalpan, in which, through an unconventional use of painting, one of his students sharpened his ability of critical observation of the environment and its creative interpretation. One day in Tlalpan, twelve-year-old Agustin, who had just begun to attend Kitagawa's class, came to him requesting white paint three times a day.<sup>53</sup> Answering Kitagawa's question why he needed so much white paint, Agustin said, "The house I am painting has a white wall of almost one meter thickness. It is a fantastic house and I am doing a fantastic painting too."<sup>54</sup> Kitagawa continues:

When I went to where he was painting, I found he was doing indeed a fantastic painting. The white wall was shining. But, alas, (on his canvas) there was already a chunk of paint of almost one centimeter high, which still had not satisfied him. He knew how thick the wall was and thought that doing a plasterer's job was the most faithful attitude to paint it realistically. I thought this child has talent. Later he gained the respect of his friends for his brilliant paintings, but by that time he had stopped using a large amount of white paint. Now he had discovered (on his own, not through

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<sup>53</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 61-62.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

institutional learning) the skill to render the thickness of objects, or a more economical way of painting.<sup>55</sup>

Kitagawa's above memoir proves the fact that in Kitagawa's class, the act of painting was taken as an opportunity for students to contemplate and analyze familiar things and spaces. As epitomized by the case of Agustin, Kitagawa thought that painting skill should not be taught by instructors, but be developed by students themselves in response to their unrestrained expressive impulse. To Kitagawa, students' confrontation with the difficulties of rendering the subject forced them to observe it much more closely than usual, which had an effect quite similar to a deep meditation on a mundane reality. Without any knowledge or skill about art, Agustin used oil painting as a springboard to explore a new dimension of his material environment, enriching his connection with everyday objects and spaces.

In Kitagawa's class, painting activities were seen as a process of awakening to a larger social world. On one occasion, Kitagawa describes the objective of his experimental pedagogy as "deepening their (students') belief in the existence of things," or "occult existence" behind the materials.<sup>56</sup> Kitagawa does not elaborate further on the larger

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>56</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 15. Although there is no space here to discuss it at length, Kitagawa's one important goal in his experimental pedagogy was to help his students overcome puberty. Through his engagement with indigenous children/adolescents, Kitagawa challenged one of the major polemics of art education at the time—maintaining students' creativity beyond puberty into adulthood. To Kitagawa, the key to overcoming puberty was students' active engagement in social milieu. For example, Delfino García, one of Kitagawa's students in Taxco, seemed to remain creative toward his late teens, but at the age of seventeen, his art fell into a brief stagnation, because he began to date a girl for the first time in life. Faced with Delfino's state of distress due to puberty, Kitagawa told him as if nothing had happened. "Do you remember the era of the (revolutionary) civil war? I guess you have seen the villages being burned down and people being killed. What about making a painting of murder? I believe that it will be a wonderful painting." Kitagawa recalls

significance of indigenous children/adolescents' process of seeing and representing familiar objects and spaces. However, given his awareness of the cultural minorities' struggles for decolonization in the Western hemisphere, which I addressed in Chapter One, it could be inferred that Kitagawa's encouragement of witnessing and representing, or "deepening their (students') belief in the existence of things" was closely linked to his anti-colonial stance. In other words, Kitagawa's pedagogy embodied his ethnographic knowledge, or acute recognition of the transforming conditions of culture in the early twentieth-century world, in which passive object of the West's unilateral project of modernization/colonization—"native" people—began to act as an ironical observer of their own culture. As briefly discussed earlier, Kitagawa was sympathetic to the indigenous population's marginal position in postrevolutionary Mexican society and critical of the fact that the discourse of national identity and social democratization hardly promoted these people's proactive social participation. In this sense, much more than just being pedagogical experimentations with "primitive *indios*," Kitagawa's pedagogical activities in EPAL were strongly influenced by his awareness of the emerging anti-colonial conception of culture, in which indigenous children and adolescents were seen as the potential future agents of active social engagement.

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that Delfino's *Murder* became in fact a "fantastic" painting. After painting *Murder*, Delfino recovered his creativity and became an open-minded adolescent. Contrary to what was believed by the majority of art educators at the time, Delfino overcome agonies common in puberty and became an adult without losing his innate creativity. Kitagawa's experience with indigenous children/adolescents in Taxco convinced him that painting activities as a means of confronting social realities was a possible answer to the polemics of puberty in art education. See Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 189-190.

Although very few known works of Kitagawa's students from Tlalpan are extant today, some paintings by Manuel Echaury (1914-2001) eloquently demonstrate the fruit of Kitagawa's teaching and Echaury's renewed attention to everyday things and spaces. Like other works of Kitagawa's students, Echaury's paintings were predominantly of dark tone, demonstrating a degree of the aforementioned "gloominess"; Kitagawa associated such gloominess with his students' exposure to fluid and chaotic social reality, as well as the style represented by works of the French painter Henri Rousseau (1844-1910). One of Kitagawa's talented students, Echaury later became an acclaimed painter and art educator in Mexico. His *Farmer's House* (fig. 2.1), painted at the age of thirteen, depicts a thatched rural house backed by green mountains, where a farmer was taking care of his donkey. While the painting's melancholic atmosphere would remind us of postrevolutionary Mexican painting of folkloric representations, or Henri Rousseau's works, what draws the viewer's attention most would be Echaury's close examination of the material environment—form and texture of the thatched roof, shaded mountains, and above all the black stones of uneven shape and size piled up beside the house's entrance. In addition to his attention to these details, through adding a man's figure who was devoting himself to the animal's well-being, Echaury crystallized a firm sense of the human-animal communion in the specific social context of rural Mexico.

On the other hand, another extant piece *Housewife at the Kitchen* (fig. 2.2), which Echaury made at age thirteen, is comparable to the painting by another of Kitagawa's students from Tlalpan, Fernando Reyes, entitled *Woman*, which I discussed in the Introduction. As in *Woman*, what captivated Kitagawa most was probably Echaury's

contemplation and rendering of the subject based on his everyday experience with a keen attention to the woman's facial/bodily gesture. In light of the conservative academic teaching still advocated by Mexican art educators—professors in the Academy of San Carlos in particular—Echauri's approach strikingly deviated from such pedagogical conventions.

Despite its polemical existence from the outset mentioned above, due to its students' paintings showing an outstanding creativity, EPAL gathered attention from a number of artists and educators in Mexico and abroad. EPAL's first large-scale exhibition in 1925 at the Palacio de Minería (Palace of Mining) in Mexico City drew broader media coverage and, despite several critiques, many renowned artists and intellectuals admired the exhibited paintings.<sup>57</sup> For instance, Gerardo Murillo (1875-1964), whom many credit as the precursor of the new current of modernism in postrevolutionary Mexican art, evaluated the works of EPAL students from Tlalpan, Xochimilco and Guadalupe Hidalgo as being "in the plane of the genuine works of art."<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately, Kitagawa could not attend this exhibition, because he was injured the day before it started, when he fell off a ladder while working on the installation and then had to spent the entire exhibition period in bed.<sup>59</sup> Stimulated by the success of this exhibition, in 1926, Ramos Martínez and other important

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<sup>57</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 100-103. The exhibition is documented in Secretaria de Educación Pública, *Monografía de las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre*, mentioned in footnote 36.

<sup>58</sup> Universidad Nacional de México, *Primera exposición de las Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre del 22 al 31 de agosto* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional de México, 1925).

<sup>59</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 85-86.

government officials agreed to bring the exhibition to Europe.<sup>60</sup> The exhibition travelled to Berlin, Paris, and Madrid, and in each of these cities attracted a broad audience. The paintings by EPAL students largely subverted the stereotypical image of Latin American art in Europe at that time, which saw it as predominantly under the impact of contemporary European art.<sup>61</sup> Artists who extolled the exhibition include Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Fujita Tsuguharu, and Raoul Dufy (1887-1953).<sup>62</sup> Fujita, the acclaimed Japanese painter in Paris, first heard Kitagawa's name on this occasion, which later resulted in him visiting Kitagawa in Taxco in 1931.<sup>63</sup>

Despite all its success just mentioned, around the late 1920s, EPAL started to lose its momentum due to the growing criticism of its spontaneous methodology, and in a broader context, the institutionalization of the postrevolutionary artistic/cultural movements. In fact, by this time, the government's policies saw the drastic shift of weight from the reconstitution of national subjectivity through art and education to the pursuit of the country's industrial development and social modernization. This redirection of the official policies was strongly felt in art institutions, and the conservative members of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA, National Institute of Fine Arts) sought the dismissal of

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<sup>60</sup> González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura de Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 110.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 115-116. The positive reception of these exhibitions led to an anonymous commentary pointing out that if these children really did not learn anything about painting, it means that the academic teaching of art means literally nothing.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>63</sup> Fujita Tsuguharu, "Mekishiko to Kitagawa-kun," originally published in *Kyōiku Bijutsu* (March 1938), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 336-342.

Alfredo Ramos Martínez from his position as the director of the Academy of San Carlos.<sup>64</sup>As a reaction to this conservatism, the participants of EPAL organized a vanguard art movement that they named ¡30-30!<sup>65</sup> In December 1928, after Ramos Martínez was ousted and Manuel Toussaint was appointed as the Academy's director, ¡30-30! members manifested their opposition and requested the independence of EPAL from INBA. Despite these protests, all the EPAL branches were eventually closed down, excluding the one under Kitagawa's direction founded in Taxco in 1932.

### **Kitagawa Tamiji at the EPAL School in Taxco: 1932-1936**

In 1929, Kitagawa married Ninomiya Tetsuno, a woman who worked as a home tutor for the Japanese ambassador, and the next year, their first daughter Tamiko was born.<sup>66</sup> By the late 1920s, due to the redirection of postrevolutionary politics, many of the government

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<sup>64</sup> González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 161-165.

<sup>65</sup> This name was taken from the carbines used by the revolutionary armies and the fact that the group was composed of thirty members. Existing from July 1928 to April 1930, the ¡30-30! members emphasized the direct engagement with the public and, for this sake, use of prints as the primary medium. As expressed in their first manifest, ¡30-30! called for the revival of the original agenda of the Mexican Revolution declared in the early 1920s. Unfortunately, there is not much information about Kitagawa's contributions to this movement, except the fact that he showed some prints in four of the eight ¡30-30! exhibitions. As Murata points out, Kitagawa's name hardly appears in the group's manifest, and he himself did not address his participation in ¡30-30! at all on any later occasions. For this reason, as a foreign artist, Kitagawa's involvement in this highly politicized group was probably a limited one. *Ibid.*, 145 and Murata, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Kitagawa states that, through his new role as a husband and father, he learned the virtue of forming a decent family, leaving behind mostly his previous adventurous life as a young artist. See Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 165-176. As I will discuss in the next chapter, this family situation became a main motive for his return to Japan in 1936.



officials were no longer eager to maintain EPAL schools. Nevertheless, through his personal connections, Kitagawa gained an exceptional authorization to continue his teaching within EPAL's institutional framework, which made him move to Taxco. Taxco is a small town in the state of Guerrero, located about 170 kilometers south of Mexico City and known for its silver mining and production of silver ornaments. Despite its remoteness from the large metropolises, its picturesque scenery had made it a popular tourist destination by the 1920s, imbuing it with a degree of cosmopolitan air. In Taxco, Kitagawa's pedagogy was closely linked to students' quotidian activity, but in a social setting much more transcultural than Tlalpan. Through his constant dialogue with both Mexican and foreign artists as well as U.S. expatriates in the town, Kitagawa gradually recognized the broader significance of the experimental pedagogy he had developed in Tlalpan, particularly the possibility of applying it to more "civilized" countries, including his native Japan.

Kitagawa's move to Taxco was not by his own choice. In 1932, there was a couple from the United States living in Taxco, Stephan Hirsch (1899-1964), the painter and professor of Princeton University, and his wife, the artist/educator Elza Logo (1901-1966). During their short-term stay in Taxco, Logo had taught local children to paint, and her school became famous among the town residents.<sup>67</sup> Upon concluding their stay in Taxco, Logo tried to get in touch with Kitagawa through the Secretariat of Public Education inquiring about a possibility that he would succeed to her school. Leopold Mendez (1902-1969), the renowned printmaker and Kitagawa's friend, who at the time served as the head

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<sup>67</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 167.

of the Art Education Department in the Secretariat, agreed that Kitagawa alone should run the school in Taxco as the only surviving location of EPAL.<sup>68</sup> Kitagawa, with his wife Tetsuno and daughter Tamiko, moved to Taxco in October 1932, and after Hirsch and Logo left the town, he immediately initiated his class, taking charge of some sixty students. Kitagawa recalls that the painting by Logo's students mirrored her good taste and somewhat philanthropic approach, that is, giving "miserable Indian" children whatever they wished and embracing them with affection.<sup>69</sup> While Kitagawa did not deny the centrality of affection in education, he was aware that he had to take a different path—reinforcing students' abilities of observation and interpretation through painting rather than merely protecting them from their social environment.<sup>70</sup> While Logo taught her students to paint idealized landscapes and still life, Kitagawa encouraged them to choose their immediate life scenes as subjects.<sup>71</sup>

As mentioned above, immersed in Taxco's cosmopolitan cultural scenes, Kitagawa had opportunities to contemplate the significance of his experimental pedagogy from a broader transcultural perspective. In Taxco, Kitagawa made his home a short-term

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 169-172.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 170-177.

<sup>71</sup> Kitagawa recalls that after he assumed Logo's painting school, the number of its students gradually increased, but one third of the original students abandoned the school. Kitagawa speculates that while Logo's school was open to all children/adolescents in the town, her "sophisticated" approach kept children from working class families at bay. Probably it was due to his casual appearance and frank attitude that the school gained a larger number of students after Kitagawa's succession. See Ibid., 169-174.

guesthouse named *Casa Kitagawa* and hosted many Mexican and foreign artists, including David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896-1974), Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), among many others. In addition to these friendships, Kitagawa had frequent dialogue with U.S. expatriates in the town.<sup>72</sup> Their interaction usually took place in the bar Doña Berta, a popular hangout for foreigners at the town's central square, where after a day of work Kitagawa would stop by for a drink. The topic of their conversation often went to local children/adolescents, including Kitagawa's students, who earned coins by working in the street.<sup>73</sup> While North American visitors had varying opinions about the treatment of children in society, many of them insisted that they should be saved from what they saw as menial labor. Faced with these U.S. visitors and residents' criticisms, Kitagawa tried to convince them that local children in Taxco, unprotected by parents and local authorities, would learn from their early life to wrestle with their "severe" social environment to develop a valuable independent spirit. As stated earlier, to Kitagawa, his students' upbringing in such a challenging milieu was the key to their extraordinary creativity in

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<sup>72</sup> Kitagawa's presence in Taxco was widely recognized by foreign visitors. His name appears in *Mexican Odyssey*, a well-known travelogue by two U.S. writers, Heath Bowman and Stirling Dickinson. These two authors stayed at Casa Kitagawa while in Taxco and their experience and conversation about Kitagawa's pedagogy, the current state of Mexican and American art etc., were well documented. See Heath Bowman and Stirling Dickinson, *Mexican Odyssey* (Chicago: Willet Clark, 1935), 85-121. Kitagawa's name is also in one of the popular tourist guides at the time. See Thomas Philip Terry, *Terry's Guide to Mexico The New Standard Guide Book to the Mexican Republic with Chapters on the Railways, Airways, Automobile Roads and the Ocean Routes to Mexico* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935), 460. According to Kitagawa's disciple Amador Lugo's opinion, together with the U.S. silver designer William Spratling (1900-1967), who founded Taxco's silver industry, Kitagawa was the one who made Taxco an internationally famous tourist destination. See Murata, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 274.

painting. Kitagawa's goal was never easily understood, which constantly frustrated him.<sup>74</sup> Thus, it could be inferred that, through his interaction with both foreign and Mexican artists and U.S. expatriates in cosmopolitan Taxco, Kitagawa gradually recognized the necessity of proving the validity of his experimental pedagogy beyond Mexico, especially in so-called "civilized" countries such as the United States and Japan. Moreover, toward the end of his days in Taxco, following Isamu Noguchi's recommendation Kitagawa applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship to finance his pedagogy. While acknowledging the merit of Kitagawa's pedagogy, the Guggenheim Foundation responded that Mexican "Indians" were a "special kind" of race and therefore his methodology should be tested in the context of "civilized" society. The application for the Guggenheim Foundation became one of the main motives for Kitagawa's move back to Japan.<sup>75</sup>

Some details of Kitagawa's pedagogy in Taxco can be glimpsed in the artist Amador Lugo's memoir, who was one of Kitagawa's most promising students there. Describing Kitagawa as an open-minded and interesting personality, Lugo remembers the moment in which he first ran into Kitagawa. One day, on his way back home from the elementary school, as he and his friend passed by Kitagawa's studio, he approached them, asking if they liked painting.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 174-178.

<sup>75</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji. "*Jidō no bijutsu kyōiku ni tsuite*," conversation with Akaza Norihisa, originally broadcast by NHK Radio (June 1967), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 245-246. Unfortunately Kitagawa's application was not approved by the Guggenheim Foundation after his return to Japan.

But at the time, we even didn't know what it meant to paint! And he (Kitagawa) continued, "If you like painting, I will give you materials for that," and gave us a paper of about that size (indicating by hand gesture a paper of more or less 20 x 30 cm) and a brush...Imagine that we all became fascinated with painting, because we saw color paint for the first time! I was strongly interested and excited.<sup>76</sup>

Lugo's statement vividly encapsulates the positive effect of Kitagawa's anti-academic pedagogy discussed so far, which provided Lugo and his friend an unthreatening and amusing introduction to the world of art. As Lugo states, due to the relative isolation of 1930s Taxco from the cultural influences of Mexico City, Kitagawa's students there hardly had had opportunity to appreciate art and therefore were "virgins" to it.<sup>77</sup> As was the case in Tlalpan, this relative isolation worked positively in Taxco for Kitagawa's encouragement of his students' use of painting in order to deepen their understanding of the everyday world. According to Lugo, Kitagawa valued individual students' spontaneity and freedom and tried to minimize his stylistic influence on his students in order that each of them might explore and choose their subjects and styles on their own.<sup>78</sup> Lugo also remembers that Kitagawa encouraged students to paint quotidian subjects given that his pedagogy was based on his belief in a "strong sense of factuality" or "intense immediacy."<sup>79</sup> Although there were practically no art venues in 1930s Taxco, through Kitagawa's mediation, his students' works were occasionally purchased by foreign, mainly U.S. visitors to the town.

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<sup>76</sup> Lugo, 79-81.

<sup>77</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 102-103.

<sup>78</sup> Lugo, 89-90.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

Moreover, Kitagawa organized an exhibition for their works in May 1934 in the Sala de Arte gallery in Mexico City.<sup>80</sup>

Lugo states that many paintings and prints produced in Kitagawa's EPAL school in Taxco were lost.<sup>81</sup> However, some of these were brought to Japan in the mid-1930s by Fujita Tsuguharu and Kitagawa himself.<sup>82</sup> Like Manuel Echauri's works discussed in the previous section, these works show a "gloomy" quality and a somber color range, and attest to the EPAL students' strong curiosity and attention toward the things and spaces in their everyday milieu. For example, Ignacio Castero's *Kitchen* (fig. 2.3) that he painted at the age of eleven depicts a typical kitchen in a Mexican rural household through his close observation of the shape and feel of kitchen utensils and facilities—pans, oven and the red-bricked floor. I would argue that in this painting, the result of Castero's close observation of his material environment manifests through a visual resonance generated by the round-shaped pan, oven, pot and the woman's head. The painter's concentration on the details and the distorted spatial construction seems to transform the typical everyday scene of Mexican countryside into a dynamic space full of mobility and open-ended exploration.

EPAL students' attention was also given to more dynamic social subjects.

According to Kubo Sadajirō, Kitagawa claimed Amador Lugo's *Market* (fig. 2.4) to be a

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 95-101.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>82</sup> For instance, see Kubo Sadajirō, "Maegaki: watashi to Mekishiko jidōga," in Kubo ed., *Kitagawa Tamiji shidō*, 2.

“representative” piece of Mexican juvenile painting.<sup>83</sup> Painted at the age of fifteen, Lugo’s *Market* is seemingly a straightforward rendering of a crowd—men and women selling and buying—in a local open-air market. However, a close look at the painting would reveal that, in addition to the detailed examination of the material environment—the fruits and vegetables—Lugo meticulously captures each person’s individual facial expression and bodily gesture. Lugo’s attention to the details and unconventional demarcation of the pictorial space, which most clearly manifests by his insertion of human and animal feet in the upper area of the composition, gives the picture an extraordinary sense of movement and spatial infinity.

Many students also chose the silver mine, the town’s main industry, as their subject of painting. Amador Lugo’s other painting *Silver Mine* (fig. 2.5) produced at age fifteen, is such an example. The painting seems to be based on an approach similar to the one found in *Market*—close attention to the material environment and individual human figures. However, in *Silver Mine*, rather than transmitting vibrancy, the image appears to be static and seems to focus on the miners’ inner personality. By depicting these men’s diverse postures and gestures, *Silver Mine* encourages the viewer to meditate on their divergent individual thoughts and worldviews, which are irreducible into their anonymous and categorical identity as miners. Finally, as many of Kitagawa’s students in Taxco were from farming families, domestic animals became one of their favorite subjects. *Horse Barn* (fig. 2.6) by an anonymous thirteen-year-old boy, depicts two horses of different colors inside a

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<sup>83</sup> Kubo Sadajirō, “Kitagawa Tamiji, Mekishiko jidōga no shidōsha,” in Kubo ed., *Kitagawa Tamiji shidō*, 61.

stable. In addition to his firm and voluminous depiction of the horses' bodies, the white horse's facial expression might prove the painter's strong sense of communion with these animals.

In Taxco, while Kitagawa's tenet about the importance of undertaking his pedagogy in the immediate social milieu was reinforced, he also became interested in applying it to other cultures. As I will discuss thoroughly in Chapter Three, Kitagawa's renewed aspiration to use his pedagogy outside Mexico coincided with the political circumstance that made the maintenance of Kitagawa's EPAL school in Taxco increasingly difficult. Kitagawa and his family closed their school in Taxco in May 1936 and returned to Japan at the end of July. Anticipating his departure from Mexico, Kitagawa hoped that his experimental pedagogy would be succeeded, and planned to establish a new school with a friend in Tlaxcala, a town about 250 kilometers northeast of Taxco. According to Amador Lugo, Kitagawa sent Lugo to study in Tlaxcala, but as the school management faced some antagonism among the town's population, Lugo returned to Taxco after six months.<sup>84</sup> Although two more art educators came to Taxco to teach, they were never as enthusiastic as Kitagawa and moved back to Mexico City a few months later.<sup>85</sup> Although lasting for less than four years, Kitagawa's presence in Taxco left a permanent mark on the town. One outstanding proof of this was Amador Lugo's success as a renowned artist there.

### **Unlearning Modernism: Kitagawa Tamiji's Painting in Mexico**

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<sup>84</sup> Lugo, 92-93.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 94-95.



In this section, in order to further illuminate Kitagawa's acute perception of indigenous children/adolescents as critical observers and creative interpreters of the environment, I will discuss his paintings produced during his time in EPAL. Kitagawa's fascination with EPAL students' work and their close attention to everyday world is substantiated by the drastic change of style and subjects in his painting around 1927.<sup>86</sup> Through a close study of EPAL students' paintings, Kitagawa attempted to undo his artistic training in European modernism up to that point, deliberately getting rid of the influence of Postimpressionism in his art. In fact, Kitagawa states that while a series of notable works produced by his students captivated him, it was also a source of trouble; these works often undermined his self-confidence as an artist and made him feel unable to paint anymore.<sup>87</sup> From around 1927, Kitagawa tried to learn from his students' approach of painting that had convinced him that close understanding of everyday life is a key to their extraordinary creativity.

Compared to his pedagogical engagement, the details of Kitagawa's artistic endeavor in Mexico have attracted much less scholarly attention, as he did not write extensively about the latter. Indeed, largely due to his aforementioned lack of avid promotion of himself in the Mexican art world, Kitagawa never occupied a dominant position in the postrevolutionary art movements. Nevertheless, as the only Japanese artist resident in the country, Kitagawa's works gradually became more visible to the Mexican

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<sup>86</sup> Murata, 15-16. Kitagawa's move in style and subject coincided with the renewed interest in realism in Western art, whose one clear manifestation was the rise of New Objectivity in Germany during the 1920s.

<sup>87</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 111.

public toward the late 1920s. One crucial event epitomizing Kitagawa's growing fame was his second solo exhibition in Mexico held at the Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Palace of Fine Arts) in 1929. Unlike his first exhibition, the second exhibition was attended by some prominent figures such as the Minister of Education and Japanese ambassador, which reveals the broad recognition of Kitagawa's artistic achievement in Mexico City.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, prior to this exhibition, in 1928, Kitagawa was featured with seven reproductions of his paintings in *Forma*, an art periodical inaugurated by Gabriel Fernández Ledesma (1900-1983), a key member of the EPAL movement. The accompanying article was written by Francisco Díaz de León, who highly valued Kitagawa's presence in Mexico. Díaz de León argues that, despite his foreign origin, Kitagawa comprehended Mexican culture in depth, and that his opposition to academicism never allowed him to make art from a tourist's viewpoint.<sup>89</sup> In addition to his fame in Mexico, Kitagawa also sent his works to New York for his first solo exhibition there. The show was held in Hackett Gallery, which was mentioned in the mainstream newspapers there, including *The Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times*.<sup>90</sup>

As stated above, Kitagawa's paintings in Mexico before the late 1920s reveal his strong inspiration from Postimpressionism, particularly the works of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and Paul Gauguin. The paintings such as *Landscape in Mexico: The Road to Tlalpan*

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<sup>88</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 199-200.

<sup>89</sup> Francisco Díaz de León, "Un pintor japonés en México," *Forma* 7 (1928): 2-5.

<sup>90</sup> See Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 197. According to Murata, apart from the gallery's name, no further details are verifiable about this exhibition. Based on Murata Masahiro, personal conversation with the author at Toyota City Museum of Art, August 13, 2015.

(fig. 2.7, 1926) and *At Tlalpan* (fig. 2.8, 1928) bespeak Kitagawa's effort to render Mexican landscape through the styles reminiscent of Cézanne and Gauguin respectively. *Landscape in Mexico* depicts a country road leading to a mountain with a mother and her daughter, both wearing *rebozo* Mexican shawls. Here, Kitagawa's interest lies in crystallizing Cézanne-derived proto-Cubist aesthetics through the voluminous rendering of the objects such as the mountain, plants, trees and the house. On the other hand, in *At Tlalpan*, the pictorial space appears to be flatter, as Kitagawa depicted a pastoral view of the Mexican countryside through the distribution of divergent color surfaces reminiscent of Gauguin. Despite the stylistic differences in these paintings, both prove Kitagawa's effort to visualize Mexican scenery through the aesthetic lens of European modernism.

From the late 1920s, Kitagawa gradually distanced himself from Postimpressionism and began to experiment with several new styles, one of which was emulating his students' approach to painting. Murata deems *Donkeys* (fig. 2.9, 1928) to be one of the earliest paintings that signal such a stylistic transformation.<sup>91</sup> Compared to his somewhat detached depictions of the Mexican landscape through Postimpressionism in preceding years, this painting shows Kitagawa's close attention to the specific subject—a donkey, its body parts and almost human-like expression. Instead of rendering the subject with modernist spatial constructions, *Donkey* illuminates the animal's friendly gesture, which is framed in an everyday rustic Mexican countryside setting by his inclusion of the cobbled street and wooden fence. In painting *Donkey*, Kitagawa was probably inspired by his students' works,

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<sup>91</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 38.

especially, *Horse Barn* discussed above. Obviously, compared to *Horse Barn*, Kitagawa's piece is much more sophisticated in the use of brush and paint, but these two works share a similar way of representing domestic animals as a subject familiar to the painters' everyday activity. As mentioned briefly, many of his students in EPAL were sons of agricultural households, and domestic animals frequently became the object of their interest, affection, and theme of painting. Thus, Kitagawa's choice of the donkey as a subject should be seen in light of his constant dialogue with the EPAL students within the specific social context of the countryside in Mexico.

Kitagawa's other paintings demonstrate his more direct inspiration from—or even emulation of—his students' works. *A Portrait of a Japanese Lady* (fig. 2.10) depicts a woman sitting in the chair resting her arm on the table, whose model probably is Kitagawa's wife Ninomiya Tetsuno, shortly before their marriage in November 1929. In addition to his enduring interest in Paul Gauguin's flat color surfaces, the painting demonstrates Kitagawa's study of his students' works, among them, Manuel Echaury's *Housewife in the Kitchen* (fig. 2.2) examined above. In *A Portrait of a Japanese Lady*, Kitagawa's eagerness to enrich his expression based on Echaury's piece is clear, as he copied many parts of Echaury's composition, including the model's posture and expression of anxiety, together with the distortion of perspective.

Kitagawa's *Mountains in Taxco B* (fig. 2.11) is also reminiscent of his students' painting, this time, Delfino Garcia's linocut *Suburb of Taxco* (fig. 2.12). In this painting, while studying Garcia, Kitagawa rendered the larger panorama, including the mountain masses of different colors and surface textures and the cloudy sky. However, instead of

making it an orthodox landscape painting, following Garcia, Kitagawa inserted an image of an automobile moving on the unpaved highway. By adding the running vehicle, Kitagawa tried to illuminate Garcia's innate curiosity toward a vibrant quotidian phenomenon—a travelling vehicle. By drawing on Garcia's observation and interpretation, Kitagawa called into question the abstract notion of "natural beauty" or "sublime" representation of natural landscape originating in the Romanticist current of painting of late eighteenth-century Europe.

As the paintings discussed above reveal, Kitagawa was profoundly stimulated by his students' works, and tried to "unlearn" painting through emulating their representation of everyday subjects through eyes "unspoiled" by the influence of European modernism. I conclude this section by briefly discussing another important dimension of Kitagawa's artistic endeavor while he tried to undo his previous training in modernism, that is, his reflection on his ambivalent identity as a Japanese painter living in Mexico. After the early 1930s, in addition to his strong interest in EPAL students' works, Kitagawa employed a broad range of Japanese aesthetics, including elements from *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints and *nihonga* (Japanese-style painting invented and promoted after the Meiji Restoration in 1868).<sup>92</sup> Probably, there were two major factors that turned Kitagawa's attention toward Japanese aesthetics; the exhibition of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints in Mexico City organized

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<sup>92</sup> *Nihonga*, which literary means "Japanese painting," art historically refers to the tradition originated in the 1870s, when several prominent scholars such as Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913) and Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) called for the revival of "authentic" Japanese aesthetics, in the face of the massive introduction of Western art in Japan. While using traditional East Asian pigments and techniques, *nihonga* is a relatively new tradition in history, which has closely been tied to growing Japanese nationalism after the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

around 1931 by Francisco Díaz de León and others; and Fujita Tsuguharu's visit to Mexico from November 1932 to June 1933, whose exhibition opened in the capital as early as one month after his arrival.<sup>93</sup> Kitagawa's *Mexican Indian and her Younger Brother* (fig. 2.13, 1931) is a noteworthy example to measure the degree of Fujita's impact on Kitagawa. Whereas his thin and delicate outlining as well as translucent strokes points to Kitagawa's experimentation with Fujita's style, Kitagawa maintained his approach learned from EPAL students as well. Compared to Fujita's pursuit of sophistication and delicacy in his portraits, Kitagawa's *Mexican Indian* demonstrates his EPAL-inspired bolder depiction of people in their familiar environments. Moreover, by confronting the viewers with their wide-open eyes, these two indigenous children illuminate Kitagawa's emphasis on the indigenous people's constructive agency in the era of postrevolutionary social change. Kitagawa's exploration of Japanese aesthetics after the early 1930s was closely linked to his relatively marginal position as a foreign artist within the largely nationalist art venues of postrevolutionary Mexico. Definitely, such awareness was one of the key factors that led him to a long-term dialogue with indigenous children/adolescents, or those underrepresented in contemporary Mexican society.

Kitagawa's encounter with indigenous children/adolescents in Mexican EPAL schools led him to a deep meditation on their emerging subjectivity in the era of radical social transition. As mentioned above, Kitagawa hardly wrote about his activities as an

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<sup>93</sup> Fujita achieved a considerable fame in Paris by his style combining the aesthetics of *nihonga*, *ukiyo-e* and Western oil painting, which was characterized by thin lines and translucent strokes. As discussed above, Fujita was fascinated by the paintings of Kitagawa's students in Paris, which led him to visit Kitagawa in Taxco in 1933.

artist in Mexico. Probably this is because his primary career aspiration rested in education, not in the production of his own artwork. However, his effort of undoing his formal training as painter in late 1920s Mexico had a permanent impact on his artistic endeavor for the rest of his life. Kitagawa's oeuvre from 1920s and 30s Mexico was a testimony to his strong preoccupation with EPAL students' worldview and their proactive engagement in the immediate social milieu through art.

## **Conclusion**

Kitagawa's pedagogy in EPAL as well as his production of painting from the corresponding years demonstrates his grasp of indigenous children/adolescents as a critical observer and interpreter of culture. Kitagawa's perception of his students mirrored his identity as alienated from the early twentieth-century metropolitan centers such as Tokyo and New York, as well as his response to the growing anti-colonial consciousness among cultural minorities over the Western Hemisphere. Rather than merely seeing "*indios*" as "backward savages" or voiceless subjects to be assimilated into the modern Mexican state by the imposition of Western social parameters, Kitagawa looked into their worldview by closely working with individual children and adolescents in his painting class. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Kitagawa's conception of EPAL students' proactive agency could be seen as a production of ethnographic knowledge, or knowledge whose coherent understanding is often difficult when it is narrated in another cultural setting, especially that of the modern West. Kitagawa's thoughts and practices decentered from the normative social premises of his homeland—and by extension, modern societies

in the West in general—signaled new narratives about cultural minorities in the context of 1920s and 30s Mexico.

As suggested above, Kitagawa's pedagogy in Mexico took place in the era of massive cultural changes, which came after the turbulent years of armed struggles among the opposing revolutionary factions. It was largely thanks to the Mexican government's liberal cultural policies supportive of artists that Kitagawa joined EPAL and concentrated on his experimental pedagogy. On the other hand, Kitagawa's pedagogical effort to elicit indigenous children's/adolescents' creativity was often incompatible with the mainstream agenda of the Mexican Revolution that deemed the indigenous population as "backward savages." Thus, while fully benefiting from the postrevolutionary government's liberal policies, Kitagawa's thought based on ethnographic knowledge was not confined by the discourse of national reconstruction, socio-economic modernization and the assimilation of "uncivilized *indios*." In the midst of drastic social transition, Kitagawa's pedagogy as well as his artistic production in postrevolutionary Mexico embodied an alternative understanding of the cultural Other, whose scope was sharply responsive to the emerging anti-colonial notion of culture.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **KITAGAWA TAMIJI AS INTERNAL ÉMIGRÉ IN JAPAN DURING THE ASIA-PACIFIC WAR (1937-1945)**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter investigates Kitagawa Tamiji's activities in Japan during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-) and the Pacific War (1941-), known collectively as the Asia-Pacific War (1937-1945). As suggested in the previous chapter, Kitagawa returned to Japan in 1936 with an aspiration to exercise his Mexican-inspired art and pedagogy on his native soil. Unfortunately for Kitagawa, his arrival in Japan coincided with the years in which Japanese artists and intellectuals had little freedom of expression. This was due to the Japanese government's increasing regulation of artistic and cultural activities after the outbreak of the Asia-Pacific War, which focused on productions along the approved patriotic lines. Faced with such lack of freedom, Kitagawa had to give up, at least temporarily, his plans for art and pedagogy. During the war, Kitagawa's activities as an educator were limited to the publication of a few essays on education and the production of two illustrated books for children. As an artist, while Kitagawa was active through his participation in Nikakai, one of the major painting salons in Japan, he was continually frustrated by the fact that Japanese social circumstances hardly offered the opportunity of direct social-political commitment through his Mexican-derived art and pedagogy.

In this chapter, by investigating Kitagawa's art and pedagogy in wartime Japan, I will explore his perception of Mexico as a distant utopia comparable to what Edward Said

and others describe as an exile's longing for his/her homeland.<sup>1</sup> In his book *The Representation of the Intellectual*, Said defined an exile not so much by his/her complete detachment from place of origin, but by a median position in which the reminder of the "old" place—somewhere else but here—constantly haunts his/her thoughts. To cite his own words, an exile is somebody who is "neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another."<sup>2</sup> Said took such an in-between state of being an exile as an advantage for intellectuals as it prevents them from subscribing the narrow-minded discourse of patriotism and imperialism.<sup>3</sup> As I have discussed in Chapters One and Two, Kitagawa's life and career were informed by an ethnographic awareness, or a constant sense of estrangement from his homeland culture and its mainstream social discourse—or the discourse that both implicitly and explicitly promoted nationalism and imperialist expansion. His self-portrayed image as an outsider to his home society continued after his return to Japan, and was even reinforced by the aforementioned adverse socio-political conditions during the war. In the midst of the war in which only a limited range of pedagogical/artistic commitments were possible, Kitagawa's emotional/intellectual investment in Mexico increased, as he envisioned it as

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, see Edward Said, "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals," in Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), 47-64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

his alternative homeland. Kitagawa's activity and writing during these years reveal his identity as an internal émigré.

I will begin this chapter by briefly sketching the overall social conditions of the Asia-Pacific War, in which artists and intellectuals had limited channels to express their opinions. Keeping these unfavorable social conditions in mind, in the next three sections, I will examine Kitagawa's activities as educator and artist, paying particular attention to his textual and visual representations of Mexico. In the second section, I will mainly discuss Kitagawa's production of two important illustrated books for children, *Mahō no tsubo* (Magic vase, 1942) and *Usagi no mimi wa naze nagai* (Astute rabbit, written and illustrated around 1942 and published later in 1962). In the third section, I will trace Kitagawa's activities as a painter by taking a close look at the formation of his identity as an internal émigré, especially while he resided in the bohemian "Ikebukuro Montparnasse" area in central Tokyo between 1937 and 1943. Finally, the fourth section will survey Kitagawa's paintings produced during the Asia-Pacific War with special focus on his use of Mexican-inspired pictorial components for the sake of implicit critique of Japanese patriotism.

### **Arriving at Wartime Japan**

At the end of July 1936, Kitagawa Tamiji, with his wife Tetsuno and daughter Tamiko, arrived at the port of Yokohama. In his book *Art Education and Utopia*, Kitagawa recalls the moment in which his ship from San Francisco was approaching the port of Yokohama. He says:

By the time my ship was entering the Tokyo Bay, I was full of regret thinking that I had made a mistake. When Fujiyama (Mt. Fuji) came into my sight across the sea, my heart was alarmed. It was a beautiful mountain. Since the time I lived in Mexico, I have thought of the Fujiyama as a phenomenon on a global scale, which does not have the slightest difference from (the existence of) Popocatepetl and Iztaccíhuatl.<sup>4</sup> However, I suddenly felt that I was forced to think of Mt. Fuji as “Japanese” Mt. Fuji. It is as if the Japanese nation came first, and Mt. Fuji were created for its sake. Such a ridiculous thought might be found in other ethnic groups too. But I never thought in that way during my prolonged stay abroad... However, when we saw Mt. Fuji, Japanese passengers immediately acclaimed it with *banzai*. I perceived in their voices not only the straightforward delight of looking at the mountain of their home country, but also the connotation that it was “our Mt. Fuji, our Mt. Fuji whose beauty could not be shared by Americans nor Mexicans.” And when the ship arrived at Yokohama and I stepped foot on Japanese soil, I shivered as if I were squeezed into the mud. I thought that I had made a big mistake.<sup>5</sup>

Kitagawa’s above words tell us that his first impression of Japan after twenty-two years abroad was by no means a pleasing one. His aversion to the nationalistic overtone in the voices of the Japanese passengers praising Mt. Fuji not only reveals his psychological alienation from the Japanese national community; perhaps it also seemed like a flashback to his childhood in the nationalistic social milieu during the Russo-Japanese War, which I addressed in Chapter One. At any rate, Kitagawa’s perception that “he made a big mistake”

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<sup>4</sup> Popocatepetl (5500 m) and Iztaccíhuatl (5220 m) are the first and third of the three highest mountains of Mexico. These mountains’ symbolic significance to Mexican culture today can be traced back to the indigenous Tlaxcaltec people’s oral tradition that originated in the pre-conquest period.

<sup>5</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, “*Bijutsu kyōikuka no michi wa kewashikute tōi*,” originally published in *Bungaku* (March 1959), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 195-196.

in returning to Japan seems to have been somewhat premonitory. Toward the late 1930s the escalation of Japan's involvement in the war resulted in a series of restrictions on artistic and cultural activities within the country. This impeded Kitagawa from exercising the experimental art and pedagogy he had envisioned prior to his arrival in Japan. In fact, it was only a year after Kitagawa returned that the military clash in Lugouquiao ignited the Second Sino-Japanese War, prompting the Japanese government to mobilize an exhaustive range of human and material resources for its war effort.

As is widely known, the 1930s in Japan was an era intersected by the heyday of mass consumerism and the ascendancy of wartime militarism.<sup>6</sup> After Tokyo was damaged by the devastating Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923, official and corporate efforts to restore the metropolis had drastically transformed it with an up-to-date modern infrastructure. During the 1930s, central Tokyo boasted the ever-growing accessibility to a new urban culture among common people, such as western-style cafes, department stores and movie theaters. Lured by the sophisticated city life transmitted in the expanding mass media—cinema in particular—many of the young rural population moved to the big cities, expanding Tokyo's population from 5.4 to 7.4 million between 1930 and 1940.<sup>7</sup> The era of a booming mass consumer society in Japan, however, also saw the nation's increasing military aggression on the Asian continent. In 1931, in the midst of a nationwide economic

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<sup>6</sup> There is a large amount of literature on art and culture in 1930s Japan. See, for instance John Dower, "Modernism and Militarism," in Dower et al., *Brittle Decade: Visualizing Japan in the 1930s* (Boston: MFA Publications), 12-23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

depression, the Japanese military revolted against the modest diplomacy of Shidehara Kijūrō (1872-1951), and invaded northern China to establish the puppet nation called Manchuko. Major world countries condemned Japan's military aggression, to which it reacted antagonistically by withdrawing from the League of Nations. Although the Japanese economy recovered from the depression by the early 1930s, Japan's militarism and political isolation continued to escalate toward the end of the decade.

Less than a year after Kitagawa's return, Japan plunged into full-scale war with China. The intensive mobilization for patriotic causes during the war gained a legal background when the National Mobilization Law was enacted in 1938, which endorsed national authority to use all sorts of human and social resources for the sake of the war. There was a lessening degree of independence in artistic and cultural activities after the late 1930s as the government embarked on a strict surveillance over the society through neighborhood associations *tonarigumi* and military police *kenpeitai*. As I will discuss in the following sections, quite a few Japanese artists responded proactively to these restrictive circumstances by engaging with the government-oriented production of war propaganda in order to enhance their artistic capacities. On the other hand, education—another realm of Kitagawa's devotion—came more directly under official control compared to art. Especially after Araki Sadao (1877-1966) became the Minister of Education in 1938, public education was redirected along patriotic ideologies expressed in the official 1937 pamphlet *Kokutai no hongī* (Cardinal principles of the national entity of Japan), which emphasized the Japanese people's spiritual unity with the Emperor and stipulated to the public a total

devotion to the “holy” war.<sup>8</sup> There was no room for educators’ experimental attempts that were incompatible with patriotism, such as what Kitagawa had envisioned.

Together with the social climate discouraging to his professional activities, Kitagawa also faced hardship at a personal level. Upon his return, he was informed that his parents had already passed away, and his nephew took over the family’s house. When Kitagawa asked his nephew if he could spend a year or so in his house while trying to establish himself as painter, his nephew’s reply was negative, although he said he would host Kitagawa for one or two months.<sup>9</sup> Kitagawa commented that he was entirely disappointed by the “hollowness” of the so-called “virtue” of the Japanese family.<sup>10</sup> From 1936 to 1937, Kitagawa, his wife Tetsuno and daughter Tamiko moved back and forth between his brother’s house in Shizuoka and his wife’s home in Seto; Tetsuno’s family previously engaged in ceramic production, but after the death of her father, her mother and sister managed the household with limited economic resources. Despite their humble existence, Tetsuno’s family warmly welcomed Kitagawa saying that he could stay as long as he needed.<sup>11</sup> Although Kitagawa, Tetsuno, and Tamiko moved to Tokyo by August of 1937 for the sake of Kitagawa’s career, his settlement in Seto at this point was crucial, as

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<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Culture, Japan, ed., *Kokutai no Hongi: Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*, translated by John Owen Gauntlett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949).

<sup>9</sup> Kitagawa, *Roba*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

he returned there in 1943 evacuating from the air raids in Tokyo eventually to spend the rest of his life in Seto and its neighboring town Owariasahi.<sup>12</sup>

### **Kitagawa's Motives for Return**

In view of the series of frustrations Kitagawa had to go through in wartime Japan, especially in regard to his aspiration for experimental art education, it is worth asking why he decided to come home at this specific point of his career. As already discussed in Chapter Two, Kitagawa repeatedly explains that his decision to return was mainly because of the Guggenheim Fellowship to which he applied, submitting a proposal of a comparative study of art education directed at Mexican and Japanese children/adolescents. Nevertheless, based on his writings and political circumstances at the time, it could be inferred that there were probably some other and more prominent motives. First, Kitagawa would have experienced a deep psychological transformation after his marriage with Ninomiya Tetsuno in 1929, and the birth of his daughter Tamiko in 1930. Kitagawa states that through these events, he learned the virtue of becoming a decent husband and father.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, by 1937 Tamiko had reached six years old, which is the regular age to start elementary school for

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<sup>12</sup> Kitagawa's legacy including his former studio, public murals and paintings, has been recognized as part of Seto's cultural patrimony. Seto City Museum has organized a number of Kitagawa's posthumous exhibitions, and in 1994 *Kitagawa Tamiji no atorie o mamorukai* (Association for the maintenance of Kitagawa Tamiji's atelier) was launched by Kitagawa's former friends and acquaintances in Seto area. In addition to taking care of Kitagawa's atelier in Yasudo district, where he lived until 1968, the group issues an annual pamphlet and opens the atelier to the public twice a year.

<sup>13</sup> Kitagawa, *Seishun*, 174-176.



Japanese children. Given these factors, it is highly probable that Kitagawa and Tetsuno had intentions that Tamiko should start her education in Japan. In January 1937, they entered Tamiko into a kindergarden as preparation for elementary school education. Kitagawa's decision to return to Japan in 1936 had much to do with his family situation.

Secondly, as mentioned in Chapter Two, through his interaction with people of cosmopolitan orientation during his time in Taxco (1932-1936)—Mexican/international artists and U.S. expatriates, Kitagawa became eager to exercise his experimental art education in another social context, including so-called “industrialized” countries like Japan. Kitagawa's interest coincided with his gradual reevaluation of his own roots as a Japanese artist. Despite his prolonged commitment to EPAL and privileged position of heading his own school in Taxco, Kitagawa's approach to art education was much more innovative and less constrained by the mainstream ideologies of the postrevolutionary state than those of his fellow Mexican artists in EPAL. This possibly made Kitagawa's full identification with the Mexican social milieu and art venues difficult. In fact, Kitagawa stated that while in Mexico, he slowly came to embrace his Japanese identity.<sup>14</sup> His renewed decision to test himself in Japan was expressed in his 1938 lecture in Yokohama, in which he commented that art education “has its patria,” and his methodologies should be recognized for their merit only after they succeeded in his home country.<sup>15</sup>

The third factor that may have influenced Kitagawa's decision to return is related to the specific historical conditions of late 1920s to early 1930s Mexico. In Mexico during

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<sup>14</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 249.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

these years, the utopian impulse in postrevolutionary art and pedagogical movements was losing its momentum. The shift of priority in the official policies from consolidating the basis for the nation's cultural identity to accelerating its economic growth led to the institutionalization of education that no longer allowed experimental activities like those undertaken by Kitagawa.<sup>16</sup> These changes brought enduring stability to Mexican politics lasting up to the 1990s under the Institutional Revolutionary Party's (PRI) monolithic rule. Given these social/political circumstances, it was not merely a coincidence that the closure of Kitagawa's school in Taxco in 1936 marked the end of all the EPAL activities and other progressive attempts at art education in postrevolutionary Mexico.

In sum, it could be assumed that in the circumstances discussed so far surrounding his family, Mexican politics, and his aspiration as artist and educator, moving back to Japan must have appeared the most reasonable option to Kitagawa. Thus, while Kitagawa regretted his decision upon his arrival in Japan, remaining in Mexico instead might not have been a realistic choice for his life and career. Significantly, as soon as Japan was defeated in the Asia-Pacific War in August 1945, Kitagawa and his family made up their mind to again depart for Mexico accompanied by his disciple Andō Mikie and his wife. This was because Kitagawa was "entirely disappointed" with Japanese society under the wartime regime.<sup>17</sup> This decision led Kitagawa's and Ando's family to live together

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<sup>16</sup> Laura González Matute, *Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre y Centros Populares de Pintura*, 161-165.

<sup>17</sup> Andō Mikie, "Maesutoro to watashi," in Kitagawa Tamiji, *Kitagawa Tamiji bijutsu kyōiku ronshū* (Tokyo: Sōfūsha, 2003), 340-341.

temporarily in Kitagawa's home.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately for Kitagawa and Andō, their plan turned out to be unachievable because of the strict control of Japanese emigration by the GHQ/SCAP during the occupation. The year 1936 marked the beginning of Kitagawa's five-decade-long career as an artist and educator resident in Japan.<sup>19</sup>

### **Kitagawa Tamiji as Art Educator during the Asia-Pacific War**

Due to the aforementioned wartime restrictions and mobilization, Kitagawa's plan to put into practice his experimental art education did not bear fruit immediately. However, during the first few years in Japan, Kitagawa shared his experience in the Mexican EPAL schools through several lectures and publications. In his public lecture "My Art Education" held in the Yokohama City Hall of Education in 1938, in addition to explaining his initial motives to travel to Mexico and his activities there, Kitagawa expressed his renewed determination to work as an art educator on his native soil. Concluding the lecture, Kitagawa says:

Finally, as for my motives for returning to Japan, what I felt deeply after having lived abroad and taught my students from that country was that art has its patria. Indeed, art itself crosses national borders, but it does have a patria. Because I am a painter, (I hoped) somehow to go back to Japan and make a living as a painter in reality, and I came to believe that if I have some talent to exercise, I will be able (to use it) on Japanese soil. At the same time, art education has its patria. Even though art education in itself is an international and universal thing, if I practice it, it should be more effective in my home country. It would be wrong that I do this sort of work in Mexico. I returned to Japan believing that since I am a Japanese person, I must try my art

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

education in Japan, so the validity of my theory and methodology would be recognized. For this reason, I by no means believe that my Mexican experience could be practicable in Japan, a country where the state of affairs, race and environment are different (to Mexico). Therefore, I would like to stay in Tokyo for a while to study Japan's various aspects and hear the opinions of those who engage in art education in Japan.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of his determination to test his ability as an art educator in Japan, his plans remained generally unrealized for years to come due to the nationalist indoctrination of public education after 1938. However, one of the most meaningful events to Kitagawa in the wartime years was his acquaintance of the art educator Kubo Sadajirō in 1938, who became not only the most prolific admirer of Kitagawa's artwork and philosophy, but also the greatest collector of his works. Kubo first heard Kitagawa's name when he went to the exhibition of the paintings of Kitagawa's students brought from Taxco by Fujita Tsuguharu, which was held at the Shirakiya Department store in the spring of 1936.<sup>21</sup> In 1938, Kubo decided to make a trip to the United States and Europe in order to undertake comparative research between the state of children's art education in these countries and Japan. His friend and the painter Eikyū (1911-1960) and poet Oguma Hideo (1901-1940) encouraged Kubo to meet Kitagawa, then the Japanese person most informed about children's art education overseas.<sup>22</sup> Upon his visit to Kitagawa's studio, Kubo was stunned by Kitagawa's

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<sup>20</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, "Watashi no bijutsu kyōiku," in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 49-50.

<sup>21</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1974), 137.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

frankness and friendliness, which he interpreted as Kitagawa's cosmopolitan and "democratic" personality.<sup>23</sup>

In 1939, Kitagawa and Kubo agreed to open a center for children's painting in Tokyo and located an ideal building near Ōmori. Although they liked the site, Kubo and Kitagawa ultimately gave up their project due to the high price of the building and increasing coercion of the nationalistic doctrine in public education at the time.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, Kitagawa sought alternative lines of pedagogical activities, among them the publication of illustrated books for children. In summer 1941, Kitagawa appeared in Kubo's cottage in Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture, and lamented the poor quality of mass-produced illustrated books for children in wartime Japan. Kitagawa proposed that they make a more sophisticated book, whose quality would be on par with children's books in Europe and the United States. In the fall of the same year, Kitagawa and Kubo launched a small publishing company, Kodomo Bunkasha, having Kitagawa's home in Tokyo as its headquarters.<sup>25</sup> Their effort resulted in the productions of several illustrated books, including Kitagawa's *Mahō no tsubo* (Magic vase, 1942) and *Usagi no mimi wa naze nagai* (Astute rabbit, fig. 3.1).

*Mahō no tsubo* is noteworthy as the story tells of Kitagawa's psychological detachment from the wartime social atmosphere. For example, writing in 1999, the author of children's literature, Yamanaka Hisashi (b. 1931), does not hide his surprise about *Mahō*

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>24</sup> Kubo Sadajirō, *Kubo Sadajirō bijutsu kyōiku ronshū*, vol.2 (Sōfūsha, 2007), 236.

<sup>25</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 162-169.

*no tsubo*; unlike other children's illustrated books from the wartime period, its color images are of exceptionally high quality; moreover, *Mahō no tsubo*'s narrative does not contain any war-related themes, despite the government's exhaustive censorship of juvenile literature during the Asia-Pacific War.<sup>26</sup> The story unfolds around two brothers, Yoshio and Mitchan, living in a small village known for its ceramic production. One day, they came across Hiroshi, a boy who just arrived from a big city. Hiroshi was crying because he shattered the "magic vase" in his home, after which an unknown old man appeared and told him that he could find another vase for Hiroshi and show him some magic. Hiroshi followed the old man to where he stumbled into Yoshio and Mitchan, but the man suddenly disappeared. They together began to ask around ceramic factories about the "magic vase" Hiroshi had mentioned. Finally, they met the old man again, who explained to them that by the "magic vase" he had meant the large kiln. In conclusion, the readers are told that there is no "magic vase" as such but "magic" here refers to the process through which the collaboration between anonymous ceramic workers transforms chunks of mud into beautiful ceramic objects.

Kitagawa took great care of the book's more than twenty pieces of multicolored illustrations, printing them one by one himself through offset technique.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the publication of *Mahō no tsubo* was generally met by silence. Kubo recalls that probably the Japanese public was so depressed by the coercive wartime social atmosphere that they

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<sup>26</sup> Yamanaka Hisashi, "Tsurezure ehon dangi 20: Kitagawa Tamiji no ehon," *Haha no tomo* (November 1999): 55-56.

<sup>27</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 163-164.

had no room in their minds to value such a book.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, because of the government's control over the paper supply, Kitagawa and Kubo had to set a price much lower than the actual cost of the publication, which made them unable to recoup any of their investment. Nevertheless, Kubo recalled that they were quite satisfied with and proud of their publication, whose narrative and illustrations demonstrated unprecedented high quality as an illustrated book for children in Japan at the time.<sup>29</sup>

After the publication of *Mahō no tsubo*, Kitagawa immediately wrote and illustrated another story for children entitled *Usagi no mimi wa naze nagai*, which, due to the lack of paper supply remained unpublished until 1962 (fig. 3.1).<sup>30</sup> Despite its belated publication, *Usagi no mimi* is even more relevant than *Mahō no tsubo* to my argument regarding Kitagawa's status as an internal émigré. If *Mahō no tsubo* reveals Kitagawa's detachment from the mainstream social discourse of wartime Japan, *Usagi no mimi* attests to his embrace of Mexico as his alternative homeland. Although Kitagawa's source of inspiration is not clear, *Usagi no mimi* develops around a rabbit living in the ancient Nahua nation, Mexico. The rabbit fully employs his intelligence to defeat other animals physically much larger and stronger than him, including a tiger, a crocodile, and a monkey. One day, the rabbit went to a god in order to complain that he had only a small and poor body and that he

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji. *Usagi no mimi wa naze nagai: Mekishiko no minwa* (Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten, 1989 [1962]).

was always being bullied by his fellow animals. To the rabbit's request for a more capable body the god answered that for his wish to come true, the rabbit should kill a tiger, a crocodile, and a monkey and bring their skins to the god. The rabbit was initially hesitant, but by using different clever tactics, he eventually killed these three animals and took their skins to the god.

In *Usagi no mimi*, Kitagawa narrates how the small and physically inferior can overcome the bigger and stronger through cleverness. Probably in this story, Kitagawa took the rabbit as metaphor of the politically oppressed, who through using intelligence, could fight against the powerful and abusive authorities. Kitagawa emphasized the importance of intelligence rather than violence in the human struggle so as to question the Japanese government's war efforts and nationalistic propaganda. Through dynamic illustration of the animals living in the tropical jungles of Mexico, *Usagi no mimi* epitomizes Kitagawa's perception of Mexico as a site where human existence was governed by intelligence, not violence. In this book, Mexico was taken as a contrasting mirror image of Japanese society, which he saw being manipulated by official propaganda for the sake of massive human mobilization for the war.

According to Kubo, in addition to Kitagawa, Kodomo Bunkasha was also joined by Terada Takeo (1908-1993) and Akamatsu Toshiko (1912-2000), who authored the children's books *Watashi no ningyō* (My doll) and *Yuki no kodomo* (Snow children) respectively through the publisher. Unfortunately like *Usagi no mimi*, these books remained unpublished due to the paper shortage.<sup>31</sup> By the early 1940s, due to the war, engaging in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



book-related projects became increasingly difficult. For this reason, in 1943, Kitagawa rented a studio near his house and called for meetings in order to organize alternative pedagogical activities. The first meeting was held in March 1943, in which Kitagawa auctioned his paintings to raise the money to cover the rent and miscellaneous expenses for their activities.<sup>32</sup> According to Kubo's memoir, the participants in the meetings at that stage included among others physicist Takeya Mitsuo (1911-2000), sculptor Kinoshita Shigeru (1908-1988) and historian Okonogi Shinzaburō (1912-1994).<sup>33</sup> One of their outstanding activities included a Guignol puppet performance for children. In the midst of material shortage, Kitagawa obtained pieces of a paulownia tree from which he sculpted the protagonists for the puppet show. Although they enthusiastically rehearsed the show, their presentation was ultimately rejected by the theater. Their meetings and projects halted shortly afterwards, as Kitagawa and his family moved to Seto in the fall of 1943 to evacuate due to the air raids.<sup>34</sup>

### **Kitagawa Tamiji as Painter in Wartime Tokyo**

As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, Kitagawa's position in wartime Japan could be best described as an internal émigré, who maintained an ironical distance from his homeland society and culture. His psychological detachment was reinforced by the impossibility of undertaking his experimental art education. However, in contrast to the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 169.

obstacles he faced in education, Kitagawa's debut as a *yōga* (Western-style) painter in Japan was a surprisingly smooth one. Kitagawa was fortunate enough to have built a friendship with the famous Fujita Tsuguharu in Taxco, who at the time was taking an active leadership of Nikakai, one of the mainstream salons for Japanese *yōga* painters.<sup>35</sup> Fujita invited Kitagawa to the 24<sup>th</sup> Nikakai exhibition, where he submitted five tempera/oil paintings, including *Festival in Taxco* (fig. 3.2) and *Three Mexican Girls* (fig. 3.3). In this exhibition, Fujita pushed through an exceptional measure in order for Kitagawa to be given an official membership in Nikakai as a first-time participant.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Fujita found a studio for Kitagawa in Tokyo, to which he moved with his wife, and daughter in order to concentrate on his artistic endeavors.<sup>37</sup> As already mentioned, 1930s Japan was far from being a propitious place for people like Kitagawa who envisioned alternative creative and educational commitments. In so far as the art world is concerned, however, the productivity of Japanese painters by no means diminished, given that many of them collaborated with the wartime regime to support its war propaganda.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Regarding Fujita's leadership in Nikakai, see *Nikakai 70-nenshi Henshū Iinkai, Nikakai 70-nenshi* vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nikakai, 1985), 192-193. As previously discussed, upon his return to Japan in 1933, Fujita brought fifty to sixty paintings of Kitagawa's students from Taxco, which were exhibited in the Shirakiya Department Store in Tokyo in the spring of 1936, slightly before Kitagawa's arrival. Fujita encouraged Kitagawa's debut in Japan through his short talk in 1938 entitled "Kitagawa in Mexico." See Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 336-342.

<sup>36</sup> At the time, Nikakai's terms established that an artist needed to be recommended at least twice before being admitted as a full member. See *Nikakai*, vol.2, 194.

<sup>37</sup> Kitagawa, *Roba*, 190-191.

<sup>38</sup> Kawata Akihisa, "Sakusenkirokuga shōshi," in Sawaragi Noi, Kawata Akihisa et al., *Sensō to bijutsu: 1937-1945* (Tokyo: Kokushokankōkai, 2008), 153-162.

Despite the severe effect of the economic depression and growing militarism, consumer culture boomed in early- and mid-1930s Japan. During these years the art world went through great diversification: by the mid 1930s, along with the official art exhibitions organized by Teikoku Bijutsuin (Japan Imperial Art Academy, 1919-1937), many prominent art organizations had been established and the number of artists and art students were rapidly increasing. On the other hand, alarmed by the massive tide of consumerism and what they saw as the relegation of art to the status of mass entertainment, many Japanese artists questioned the lack of a well-defined role for art in larger society.<sup>39</sup> It was in this context that the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) provided artists with an invaluable opportunity to recuperate art's legitimacy. Thus, as the art historian Kawata Akihisa illustrates, in the era in which top-down enforcements pervaded society, many Japanese painters voluntarily joined the military missions to produce what came to be known as *sakusenkirokuga* (officially commissioned war-campaign painting) or painted patriotic subjects such as Mt. Fuji. While the war campaign painting depicted heroic Japanese victories in the battlefields, through patriotic motifs, artists also promoted the Japanese public's spiritual and material support for the soldiers on the home front. After 1937, the number of painters engaging in war-campaign paintings gradually increased reaching 200 in 1939. But their choice of war-related subjects was not usually compulsory and it was not until the autumn of 1941 that the government began to recruit them on the basis of the National Mobilization Law.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 153.

While many artists engaged with some form of patriotic activity, there were also a small number of artists who belonged to independent groups that implicitly manifested their defiance against the official intervention in art.<sup>41</sup> The most well-researched group in this vein is Shinjingakai (New People's Painting Association) joined by Matsumoto Shunsuke (1912-1948), Asō Saburō (1913-2000), and Inoue Chōzaburō (1906-1995) among others. Although the mounting wartime pressure by no means allowed them open resistance to the war, Shinjingakai artists organized three shows before late 1944, when the exhibition possibilities became absolutely nil unless dealing with war-related/patriotic themes.<sup>42</sup> It was probable that, as a painter belonging to the major Nikakai salon, whose pro-government posture was repeatedly expressed, Kitagawa had a diminished degree of freedom in opposing the government compared to the Shinjingakai painters.<sup>43</sup> However,

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<sup>41</sup> Bert Winther-Tamaki classifies painting activity in WWII Japan into three principal categories: 1) war campaign paintings or *sensōga*, many of which were executed by Western style *yōga* painters; 2) Japanese style painting or *nihonga*; and 3) *yōga* by artists refusing to paint war propaganda. While *nihonga* painters such as Yokoyama Taikan often depicted traditional Japanese subjects as a patriotic statement or homage to the government's war effort, the painters in the third category—*yōga* painters in independent groups avoided the use of war themes—are noteworthy here as their position was somewhat close to Kitagawa's. See Bert Winther-Tamaki, "Embodiment and Disembodiment: Japanese Painting during the Fifteen Year War," *Monumenta Nipponica* 52, no.2 (July 1997): 146-147.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Sandler "The Living Artist: Matsumoto Shunsuke's Reply to the State," *Art Journal* 55 no.3 (October 1996): 81. These artists' pursuit of artistic independence was eloquently expressed by *Ikiteiru gaka* (Living artist), an essay by a Shinjingakai member Matsumoto Shunsuke published in 1941.

<sup>43</sup> In the 24th and 25th annual exhibitions (1937 and 1938) Nikakai put on sale its members' sketches and small paintings etc. in order to raise money, which they donated to the army. From 1938, there appeared many paintings of war-related themes in the Nikakai exhibitions. See Nikakai, *Nikakai 70 Nen-shi Henshū Iinkai, Nikakai 70-nenshi* vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nikakai, 1985), 194-195.

one interesting fact is that, while he was in Tokyo between 1937 and 1943, he lived in the artists' enclave known as "Ikebukuro Montparnasse," which provided the major base for the aforementioned independent artists, including those in Shinjinkakai.

From 1937 to 1943, Kitagawa lived in Nagasaki, Toshima Ward near Ikebukuro railway terminal, the area the poet Oguma Hideo once called "Ikebukuro Montparnasse" after Montparnasse in Paris. In Ikebukuro Montparnasse bohemian communities consisting of painters, poets, and musicians existed from the mid 1920s through to the end of the war.<sup>44</sup> The area constantly grew through the 1920s and '30s, and by Kitagawa's time, its five artist villages boasted one-hundred studio buildings and the total number of artists reached well over five hundred.<sup>45</sup> Kitagawa settled in an area called Sakuragaoka Parutenon (Sakuragaoka Parthenon), where about sixty artists' ateliers were concentrated.

Kitagawa recalled that in his Ikebukuro years he hardly sold any paintings, but he felt at ease due to the fact that all the artists living in the area were generally not well off either.<sup>46</sup> According to the non-fiction writer Usami Shō, the bohemian and rebellious air shared among the residents of Ikebukuro Montparnasse was a world apart from the rest of Tokyo, where the degree of official control over people's thoughts and activities was becoming higher like never before.<sup>47</sup> Usami writes,

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<sup>44</sup> For further details about Ikebukuro Monparunasu, see Usami Shō, *Ikebukuro Monparunasu: Taishō Demokurashī no gakatachi* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1990) and; Itabashi Art Museum, *Ikebukuro Monparunasu ten* (Tokyo: Itabashi Art Museum, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Itabashi Art Museum, 4-7.

<sup>46</sup> Kitagawa, *Roba*, 84.

<sup>47</sup> Usami, 511-515.

After the dance halls were closed down for alleged moral disorder, Nagasawa (Nagasawa Setsu 1917-1999) polished the floor of his studio and launched a dance party. In the evening, after there was no light due to the official blackout, painters and models would get together in Nagasawa's studio and without anyone taking a lead, they would start dancing... At first, they were using a portable phonograph, but in the course of time people appeared to be bringing instruments such as ukuleles and guitars. They played live Saint Louis Blues and Aloha 'Oe etc. and the dance continued forever. The lack of light made them dance cheek to cheek, and some of them slept all night on the floor afterwards... In the era in which a (young) man and woman walking together were reproached, a dance party playing "enemy" music was entirely out of the question and everybody knew that they would not get away with it if discovered (by the authorities). But strangely, it never became a big topic of conversation in the atelier village. Kitagawa Tamiji, a returnee from Mexico, wearing a native costume there, appeared in Parutenon Fudōyu public bath with his daughter, whose breasts were starting to grow. They lay together in a hot bath in the men's section without washing their bodies, which surprised the (local) painters much more than the dance party.<sup>48</sup>

Although it is difficult to ascertain that Kitagawa, a married man in his mid-forties was ever-present at these parties, the cosmopolitan ambiance of Ikebukuro Montparnasse would have provided his dissident identity with a vital refuge. One noteworthy episode of Kitagawa's Ikebukuro years is his friendship with the painters Noda Hideo (1908-1939) and Terada Takeo (1908-1993). The painter Imai Shigezaburō (1910-2002) wrote that Kitagawa often stopped by Noda's studio to meet him and Takeda, both of whom studied in the United States. They talked about memories of their old days abroad until late, and their

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 511-512.

conversation was often interrupted by obscene jokes.<sup>49</sup> Kitagawa's impression that Noda was possibly an espionage agent sent to Japan by the U.S. Communist Party did not prevent their friendship at all.<sup>50</sup> As I will discuss below, both Noda and Takeda painted murals in the United States, an experience that must have been of deep interest to Kitagawa.

In the period beginning in 1937, the annual Nikakai shows became the staple venue of exhibition for Kitagawa's paintings, in which he was often acclaimed for his mastery of Mexican style and subjects. The reviews of Nikakai shows in Japanese newspaper articles from 1939 to 1941 generally describe Kitagawa as one of the outstanding new hopes in the salon and reveal that his sudden appearance as a "made in Mexico" painter in Nikakai was received positively.<sup>51</sup> An *Asahi Newspaper* article from August 1937 goes so far as to introduce Kitagawa as an important new face in Nikakai, who figured among the five major artists in Mexico with Diego Rivera (1886-1957).<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, it is somewhat difficult to affirm that Kitagawa's swift debut in Nikakai was compatible with what he originally had in mind upon his return to Japan. One important point to remember is that Kitagawa's hope was an active social/political engagement through art education and mural production rather than confining his activities to conventional painting salons. In fact,

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<sup>49</sup> Kuboshima Seiichirō, *Hyōhaku: Nikkei gaka Noda Hideo no shōgai* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1990), 194-195.

<sup>50</sup> Usami, 521.

<sup>51</sup> My observation is based on *Asahi Newspaper* articles published between 1939 and 1941. For example a review of the Nikakai exhibition published in 1941 names Kitagawa and Okamoto Tarō as the two most noteworthy painters who were pursuing their "original" expressions. "Nikatenpyō 2: Ariawase no shuhō," *Asahi Shinbun*, September 14, 1941.

<sup>52</sup> "Nikaten," *Asahi Shinbun*, August 31, 1937.

Kitagawa states that when he returned to Japan, he “never dreamed of being admitted to Nikakai” and was “full of desire to carry on his project of children’s painting, in which he had engaged in Mexico.”<sup>53</sup> Probably it was for this reason that Kitagawa brought to Japan about 135 paintings and prints made by his students in Taxco, but none of his own works done in Mexico.<sup>54</sup> At any rate, even in Nikakai, whose posture was overly conservative compared to Kitagawa, he produced a series of paintings of Mexican style and subject, and perhaps thereby reconfirmed his strong emotional/intellectual connection with Mexico.

In addition to Kitagawa’s position as a painter critical of Japan’s war involvement, it is worth mentioning his aspiration to produce Mexican-inspired murals. This exemplifies his search for alternative art venues in the officially regulated wartime artistic/cultural milieu, further proving his standing as an internal émigré. Apart from his passion for art education, what captivated Kitagawa’s mind since his Mexican years was the production of public murals. As discussed in Chapter Two, Kitagawa did not participate in the mural movement in Mexico, but after his return to Japan, he continually stressed the centrality of mural production in his artistic endeavor, claiming that his easel paintings were all preliminary sketches for his future murals.<sup>55</sup> Although much earlier than Kitagawa’s return, after the mid-1920s, there was a growing interest in mural production among Japanese artists, particularly those affiliated with the proletarian art movement inspired by the

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<sup>53</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, “Boku to Nikakai,” originally published in *Sankei Shinbun*, October 1970, in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 190-193.

<sup>54</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 189.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.



Russian Revolution, such as Okamoto Tōki (1903-1986).<sup>56</sup> Later, in the 1930s, mural production was occasionally undertaken by artists who had made it abroad, including the aforementioned Noda Hideo, Terada Takeo and Fujita Tsuguharu.<sup>57</sup> Noda and Terada collaborated to create a mural at the Cotton Club bar in the Ginza district in Tokyo, whereas Fujita made a large number of murals, which included panels in *Brazil Coffee* in Ginza (1934), and *Festival in Akita* (fig. 3.4, 1937), commissioned by the merchant Hirano Masakichi (1895-1989). However, faced with the increasing restriction on cultural activities unrelated to the patriotic themes after 1938, the mural production halted. Thus, unfortunately for Kitagawa, by the time he returned to Japan, the mural boom was already in decline, meaning he had no opportunity to produce murals.

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<sup>56</sup> Although Okamoto and his fellow artists painted dozens of images in large-scale format, they eventually failed to produce public murals due to their lack of training in historical/mythological subjects suitable for the medium as well as the scarcity of a stable wall surface in traditional Japanese residential architecture. Due to their ideological proximity to USSR revolutionary art and close association with Japanese Communist Party, the proletarian movement came to an end in 1934 under the official crackdown on Communism. Tsuruya Mayu, “Social Realism in the War Art of Imperial Japan,” in Ikeda et al., *Art and War in Japan and its Empire: 1931-1960* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 62-63.

<sup>57</sup> Although I cannot discuss it fully here, like paintings of patriotic subjects, the increasing recognition of public murals in Japan was also tied to mounting nationalistic sentiment around the late 1930s. In 1940, the restoration of Asuka period temple Hōryūji’s ancient murals was launched, and there emerged a number of scholarly discussions calling for the reappraisal of murals as the unique artistic expression of Japanese history. For instance, in art historian Taki Seiichi’s (1875-1945) view, the glorious tradition of mural painting in Japan declined due to the dominance of personal subjectivity in artistic expression, but should be revived today in “ancient” *nihonga* style. See Nagashima Keiya, “Nihon hekiga no kotenka o megutte: Hōryūji Kondō hekiga to kindai nihonga,” in Omuka Toshiharu and Kawata Akihisa, *Kurashikku modan: 1930 nendai no Nihonbijutsu* (Tokyo: Serika Shobō, 2004), 93-109. See also Hayashi Yōko, *Fujita Tsuguharu: sakuhiin o hiraku* (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2008), 376-377.

According to Kubo's recollections, in 1941, Kitagawa communicated with him that he intended to paint a mural in a lecture hall at an elementary school in Mōka, designed by Endō Arata (1889-1951). Kitagawa showed Kubo a preliminary sketch for the hall's two walls of 1.8 x 18 meters each, which depicted a boy and girl, seated facing each other in front of a melon tree. Kubo remembers that he did not pay much attention to Kitagawa's proposal at that time because he was still "blind" to the value of Kitagawa's murals.<sup>58</sup> Kitagawa's mural production remained suspended until the end of the war. Although it belongs to the post-1945 era, here I briefly include a summary of Kitagawa's mural production in 1947 based on Kubo Sadajirō's memories, which are so far the only source of information.<sup>59</sup> In 1947, Kitagawa painted four murals in Nagoya, none of which survive today. The largest in scale of these was the mural for the ceiling wall of Maruei Department Store in Nagoya of about 10 x 10 meters, which depicted the flying goddess of beauty and music. Kubo was deeply impressed by the mural and realized for the first time the power that only a mural can convey to viewers.<sup>60</sup> In the same year, Kitagawa painted three smaller murals, two for a restaurant and café in Nagoya and one for a café in Seto. According to Kubo, the two murals in Nagoya respectively visualized dancing girls in Spanish style dress and an enlarged erotic female lip. On the other hand, the mural in Seto's café showed five

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<sup>58</sup> Mōka is Kubo's hometown and it was also where he organized the series of child painting competitions since 1938 mentioned earlier. According to Kubo, if he had paid more attention to Kitagawa's words, there was enough possibility that his proposal would have been accepted. See Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 73-74.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* The mural for Maruei was destroyed a few years later in the renovation of the department store.

to six nude figures dancing in a circle.<sup>61</sup> While there are no more details available about these works, Kitagawa's mural productions probably epitomized the transitory social atmosphere in the immediate postwar years, in which the city was still full of makeshift constructions and artists' intervention in public spaces was much more frequent than it is today.<sup>62</sup> Although Kitagawa could not paint any murals during the Asia-Pacific War, his aspiration to do so led him to produce several Mexican-inspired murals in the late 1950s, in addition to the four works just mentioned above.

### **Visualizing Displacement: Kitagawa Tamiji's Painting during the Asia-Pacific War**

As discussed so far, Kitagawa's self-image as an internal émigré in wartime Japan was inseparable from his emotional/intellectual investment in the Mexican experience.

Kitagawa's oeuvre of Mexican subjects during the Asia-Pacific War initially demonstrated his straightforward depiction of Mexican people and landscape in a melancholic style reminiscent of postrevolutionary Mexican artists, such as Manuel Rodríguez Lozano (1896-1971) and María Izquierdo (1902-1955). Yet, as a negative gesture toward the increasing official intervention in art, Kitagawa began to use his representation of Mexican images as a means of defiance against the monolithic social discourse of patriotism and imperialism.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> During the last half of the 1940s, a pervasive sense of vacuum in the physical environment, or an aftermath of the exhaustive air-bombings by the United States, paradoxically stimulated Japanese artists' creativity, making them more aware about a need for social commitment. This was particularly true in the case of architects. For instance, see Jonathan Reynolds' monograph of Maekawa Kunio. Jonathan Reynolds, *Maekawa Kunio and the Emergence of Japanese Modernist Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Kitagawa did not bring any of the works he produced in Mexico to Japan. For this reason, after he obtained a membership to Nikakai, Kitagawa set out to create several large-scale oil as well as tempera paintings in Mexican themes, which were to be unveiled in the 24<sup>th</sup> Nikakai exhibition in 1937. While he lived in his wife's home in Seto, Kitagawa finished some large paintings including *Festival in Taxco* (fig. 3.2, 1937) and *Silver Mine* (1937). Kitagawa recalled that he did not have enough money to buy canvas and paint, so he put together several pieces of unbleached cotton cloth to create a full-scale canvas and used paint for ceramics to make tempera. Kitagawa made these paintings in his small six *tatami* room (approximately 2.7 x 3.6 meters), extending his canvas as much as possible.<sup>63</sup>

*Festival in Taxco* is one of the first paintings Kitagawa produced after his return to Japan, and is among the largest of his existing works. Despite its folkloric subject, its overwhelming size reveals his renewed determination to work on public murals in his native land. Rather than depicting specific celebrations of the festival, the painting centers on groups of people, particularly the indigenous women wearing *rebozo* shawls and musicians in a circle seemingly preparing their show. The overall gloominess, and somewhat Surrealist rendering of the women and men backed by the disproportionate pictorial elements—villagers and withered trees—seem to attest to Kitagawa's inspiration from early twentieth-century Mexican painters of melancholic inclination. Kitagawa's use of these Mexican artists' style might be explained by the fact that it fits his perception of Mexico as a "tragic" country, which will be discussed in the next chapter; his

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<sup>63</sup> Kitagawa, *Roba*, 83-84.

understanding of Mexico after a decade-and-a-half residence in the country made him oppose the common stereotype shared among the Japanese public, which took Mexico as a bright and colorful tropical country.<sup>64</sup> Although these paintings encapsulate Kitagawa's "tragic" Mexico, he later became critical of his own portrayal of Mexican culture from his foreign perspective. Kitagawa commented in 1956 that in hindsight, he felt ashamed to see that *Festival in Taxco* explicitly revealed his superficial postcard-like tourist's viewpoint.<sup>65</sup> Based on these statements, it could be inferred that the crouching man on the left is Kitagawa himself, who is participating in the festival from a slightly detached position. Kitagawa emblematically left his signature on the man's bag.

From around his second year in Nikakai (1938), Kitagawa began to use Mexican motifs as a means of implicitly questioning wartime patriotic propaganda. One of Kitagawa's first wartime works demonstrating this critical stance is *Rancho's Song* (fig. 3.5, 1938). Like his paintings from the previous years such as *Festival in Taxco* (fig. 3.2) and *Three Mexican Girls* (fig. 3.3), *Rancho's Song* is manifestly "Mexican" in subject and style; it depicts two revolutionary soldiers, who, having left their guns on the ground, play guitar while several indigenous couples are dancing to traditional *Rancho* music. However, unlike the two paintings just mentioned, *Rancho's Song* signaled Kitagawa's unspoken critique of Japanese society under the wartime regime; it may be assumed that the dancing couples represent Japanese people being manipulated like puppets by the

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<sup>64</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, *Kodomo no e to kyōiku: oya kyōshi, gaka, shinrigakusha tonō taidan* (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1970), 71.

<sup>65</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 57.

government's patriotic propaganda, which was as inebriating as the *Ranchera* music.<sup>66</sup>

What justifies such an interpretation is the inscription "Asno de Oro" (Golden ass) Kitagawa made at the top of the painting in order to reference *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*), the Latin-language writer Lucius Apuleius's novel from second century C.E. Describing human behavior in European society at the time from a satirical perspective through the eyes of Lucius, a man converted into a donkey, this novel caught Kitagawa's attention probably because of his ironical perception of social conformity in wartime Japan. More concretely, this novel inspired Kitagawa to draw a parallel between himself and Lucius; in *Ranchero's Song*, like Lucius to whom human society appeared to be irrational and full of blind beliefs, Kitagawa observed the Japanese public's uniform advocacy of the government's war effort from an ironic outsider's viewpoint.<sup>67</sup>

Another painting revealing Kitagawa's examination of the wartime ideologies is *Mexico after the War* (fig. 3.6). Depicting a view of an arid Mexican highland after the crushing of revolutionary factions, the painting includes the symbolic snow-covered mountain Popocatepetl in the far center. Submitted to the 25<sup>th</sup> Nikakai exhibition in 1938, this painting caused a small scandal after Popocatepetl's appearance quite similar to Mt. Fuji and the cannon aimed toward the mountain came to the authorities' attention.<sup>68</sup> The scandal came about because of the aforementioned fact that Mt. Fuji was often celebrated as Japan's nationalistic icon, particularly during the Asia-Pacific War. Painters such as

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>67</sup> Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, translated by P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 74.

Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) repeatedly visualized this mountain as an homage to Japan's "divine" war in the name of the Emperor (fig. 3.7).<sup>69</sup> Although Kitagawa himself denied any intention to question the regime, in view of his frequent critique of the official war mobilization in other paintings from the corresponding period, the possibility of Kitagawa's deliberate depiction of Mt. Popocatepetl for the sake of such a statement cannot be discarded.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps, by situating the symbolic mountain within the range of the overwhelming cannon, Kitagawa's aim was to predict the future impasse of the Japanese Empire in its war involvement, a possibility that the government sought strongly to deny and conceal from the general public.

Toward the end of the 1930s, the official interventions in artists' activities became increasingly conspicuous. In 1939, the Army Art Association was inaugurated organizing the first Holy War Art Exhibition under the sponsorship of Asahi Newspaper Company. Slightly later, under the auspices of the Ministry of Communications, Japan Aviation Art Association was established in 1941, which Kitagawa joined with Fujita Tsuguharu, Shimizu Toshi and others. Under these circumstances, Kitagawa continued to use Mexican motifs in an implicit manner. In 1939, Kitagawa submitted *Lead Soldiers: Girl in the Home Front* (fig. 3.8) to the Holy War Art Exhibition. Like *Girl Writing Composition* from the same year, this painting also took his daughter Tamiko as the model (fig. 3.9).

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<sup>69</sup> For an insightful interpretation of Taikan's Mt. Fuji as the manifestation of patriotic collectivism, see Winther-Tamaki, *Embodiment*, 158- 163.

<sup>70</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 74.

Although *Lead Soldiers* has often been cited by art historians as Kitagawa's representative painting for war propaganda, close observation of the painting reveals his disapproval of Japanese militarism.<sup>71</sup> In the painting, the girl mindlessly contemplates the battlefield of the Second Sino-Japanese War replicated on the table—miniature tanks and soldiers, one of whom proudly raises the Japanese flag proclaiming the country's victory. The blue-eyed doll behind the girl was same as the one originally given to Japanese elementary schools and kindergardens in 1927 through the leadership of U.S missionary Sidney Lewis Gulick (1860-1945) with the hope of attenuating the tensions in U.S.-Japan political relations. The symbolic presence of the blue-eyed doll here may represent the United States quietly and fixedly gazing at Japan's military actions in China, which to them were an apparent violation of the Nine-Power Treaty signed in 1922. After having lived in the United States for seven years, Kitagawa was aware that the United States' industrial and military power was far superior to Japan's.<sup>72</sup> The doll's off-focused yet penetrating gaze seems to imply Kitagawa's realization of the United States' hegemony within the world order, against which Japan unthinkingly elected a road of isolation. Although at first glance the subject of this painting is not directly related to Mexico, the disproportionate depiction of the soldiers' figures in the replicated battlefield and its Surrealist effect reminds us of

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<sup>71</sup> For instance, this painting was recently shown as one of Kitagawa's core pieces from his wartime period in *Japanese Painters under the World War II: How Did They Survive the War?*, the exhibition held in Nagoya City Museum of Art from July 18 to September 23, 2015.

<sup>72</sup> Andō Mikie testifies that Kitagawa was fully convinced of the United States' economic and military superiority to Japan, which made him and his family decide to evacuate from Tokyo as early as the fall of 1943. See Andō Mikie, *Andō Mikie gashū* (Nagoya: Chūbu Nika Andō Mikie no Beiju o Iwaukai, 2003).



postrevolutionary Mexican painting. Moreover, elongated clouds above the vast green field on the background possibly references the Mexican landscape, as they also appear in his painting of more explicit Mexican subjects, such as in *The Earth* (fig. 3.10) done in the same year.

From January to March 1939, Kitagawa accompanied an official trip of the training ship *Kaiōmaru* to Ryūkyū (present-day Okinawa Prefecture), Saipan, and the Track islands, which were then being Japan's mandated territories in the Southern Pacific.<sup>73</sup> After his return, inspired by the tropical landscape he saw during this trip, Kitagawa painted *Tropical Flowers* (fig. 3.11), a work shown in the 27<sup>th</sup> Nikakai Exhibition in 1939. Appearing at first glance to be a conventional still life, this painting depicts a large vase filled with multicolored flowers. A close look at the painting, however, reveals again Kitagawa's use of disproportion typical of postrevolutionary Mexican painting: the flower vase is placed on an arid Mexican rocky mountain, and on its summit, towards the edge of a steep cliff, a Japanese girl in a white dress is raising her net to catch a butterfly. Here Kitagawa's application of dark hues gains a contrasting effect against the bright tropical flowers. The dark cloudy sky overshadows the flowers and butterflies as well as the innocently playing Japanese girl, impregnating the picture with a vaguely apocalyptic air, the effect that may imply Kitagawa's preoccupation with the fate of Japan's involvement in an unwinnable war.

Kitagawa also painted a Japanese female subject. In his rendering of Japanese women in *Geisha* (fig. 3.12, 1941), his approach significantly deviates from the idealized

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<sup>73</sup> Although there is no space to discuss them in detail here, onboard the ship, Kitagawa produced more than thirty watercolors, in which he depicted the ship from a variety of viewpoints. Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 63.

depiction of women by his contemporaries, particularly those working in the *bijinga* (picture of female beauty) tradition such as Uemura Shōen (1875-1949), who was probably the most renowned female painter in wartime Japan. Despite Kitagawa's soft and semi-Impressionist strokes, unlike Shōen's *Evening* (fig. 3.13, 1941), the *geisha* women here appear caricatured and even comical, which, according to Kubo Sadajirō, was quite bewildering to average Japanese viewers at the time.<sup>74</sup> Kubo also remembers that, in spite of the Japanese audience's reluctance to appreciate *Geisha*, Kitagawa insisted that the painting would be recognized as one of his representative works in the future.<sup>75</sup> Unlike his paintings from the wartime years discussed so far, *Geisha* contains no reference to Mexico. On the other hand, here Kitagawa was clearly inspired by his EPAL students' approach discussed in Chapter Two, which revolved around the painter's personal examination of a subject in a way unconfined by the conventional notion of "beauty" in art. According to Murata, Kitagawa later stated that no matter how "beautiful" a person looks, the human mind is often not without ugliness, an idea which he probably crystallized in this work.<sup>76</sup> In *Geisha* he draws upon his students' paintings in order to criticize the idealization of *geisha* women for the sake of the glorification of Japan's national identity as a part of its war effort.

Finally, in order to fully explicate Kitagawa's use of Mexican motifs in his oil painting discussed so far, it must be noted that during the first few years of his return, Kitagawa also frequently painted Japanese rural and urban landscapes, mainly in watercolor.

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<sup>74</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 260.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 182.

While his move back to Japan after twenty-two years was hardly a pleasant one, due to his long absence from his native soil, Japanese landscapes would have appeared deeply inspiring and even “exotic” in Kitagawa’s eyes. These watercolors demonstrate his reappraisal of the aesthetics of Western modernism that he had learned throughout his career but almost entirely abandoned after the late 1920s while he was working in EPAL.<sup>77</sup> *Scenery of Ikebukuro* (fig. 3.14), painted in 1937, is one such example. It shows a panoramic view of Ikebukuro, Tokyo’s thriving urban center since the early 1930s, dense with clustered Japanese-style apartments, factories and train tracks leading to the terminal, in addition to the newly opened Shirakiya department store on the left.<sup>78</sup> Like Kitagawa’s several other watercolors from this period, this painting proves his embrace of John Marin’s aesthetics, seen in the translucent strokes creating abstract patterns in the top and bottom registers of the composition. Compared to Marin’s abbreviated semiabstract works such as *Red Sun, Brooklyn Bridge* (fig. 3.15, 1922), however, Kitagawa’s painting captures the cityscape with much more detail. Certainly, this difference is due to Kitagawa’s life-long negation of pure abstraction and emphasis on the rigorous spatial construction as well as close attention to the details of everyday life.<sup>79</sup> Kitagawa’s prolific rendering of Japanese

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<sup>77</sup> As already stated in Chapter Two, after the late 1920s, Kitagawa started to experiment with a style with somewhat Primitivist inclination inspired by his Mexican students. Following his students’ approach to painting, Kitagawa often depicted things and scenes familiar to his everyday life, as if liberating his artistic sensibility from the influences of European modernism. See Murata, 15-16.

<sup>78</sup> I owe the identification of Shirakiya here to the suggestion by Ms. Kobayashi Mioko from Toshima Historical Museum. Kobayashi Mioko, email message to the author, July 20, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> As I will detail in Chapter Four, Kitagawa was generally skeptical of the significance of abstract painting and, as far as my research shows, he himself never painted pure abstraction throughout his

landscapes, expressing his straightforward delight at his homeland's vistas, did not last long as he began to dedicate himself to the production of oil painting with Mexican motifs for Nikakai shows. Probably, after the first two years in Japan he found himself still unable to fill the gap between his posture and the mainstream thought of wartime Japanese society. For this reason he saw these Mexican-themed paintings to be more relevant in expressing his marginal position within society, which was comparable to that of an internal émigré.

### **Conclusion**

Kitagawa's activities in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War were charged by his constant sense of estrangement as an internal émigré, who took a critical position toward the wartime patriotism in his home country. As an educator, he produced two illustrated books for children, whose stories deviated from the patriotic/nationalistic way of thinking. As a painter, Kitagawa established himself as a prestigious Nikakai member, within which he came to be recognized widely as a Mexican-trained painter. While being active in Nikakai, Kitagawa used Mexican motifs as a means of implicitly criticizing social conformity during the Asia-Pacific War. Through his activities as an educator and artist, Kitagawa expressed his tacit defiance of official war propaganda, as well as his longing for postrevolutionary Mexico as a locus associated with values opposite to the ones championed in wartime Japan—democracy, freedom of artistic expression, and above all the superiority of intelligence over violence. As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, Kitagawa's

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career. For Kitagawa's perception of abstract painting, see Kitagawa, *Roba*, 64-69 and; Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 116-124.

posture in wartime Japan could be characterized as that of an “exile” intellectual in Edward Said’s phrase. Kitagawa’s Mexican experience and his regretful decision to have left the country made him further emphasize his psychological connection to postrevolutionary Mexico, which consistently kept his mind in an in-between state. Kitagawa’s consistent reference to his Mexican memories throughout the period of the Asia-Pacific War provided the basis for his further attempts of cultural translation between Mexico and Japan after 1945, which will be my main topic of discussion in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **TRANSLATING MEXICO: KITAGAWA TAMIJI'S ART AND PEDAGOGY IN POST-1945 JAPAN**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter investigates Kitagawa Tamiji's art and pedagogy in post-1945 Japan as an effort of cultural translation based on his knowledge of and experience in postrevolutionary Mexico. After the end of the Asia-Pacific War, Kitagawa reoriented his artistic and pedagogical practices with a renewed awareness of artists' proactive roles in society and politics, which responded to the fall of Japan's wartime regime and the end of its restrictions on artistic and cultural activities. In the much more liberal "democratic" cultural atmosphere of postwar-Japanese society, Kitagawa pursued new theories of art and pedagogy, which were based on his long-term experience in postrevolutionary Mexico. While Kitagawa's proposals were met by a number of obstacles due to the stark difference of political and cultural conditions in Mexico and Japan, his art and pedagogy are worth studying at length here as they signal an alternative conception of the cultural Other in post-1945 Japan. Rather than reducing Mexico to the prevailing narrative of "exotic" cultural otherness, Kitagawa's activity revolved around his conception of Mexico as a crucial reference point in reimagining Japanese society's present and future through art and education.

In this chapter, in examining Kitagawa's art and pedagogy as cultural translation, I will draw particular attention to his use of ethnographic knowledge, a form of knowledge

about the Other discussed in Chapter Two, which is generated through an experience of decentralizing oneself from the established system of meanings in his or her own culture. The production of ethnographic knowledge tends to happen in contemporary cultural contact zones, where one's perception of culture frequently deviates from the dominant colonial/Orientalist perspective. Kitagawa's physical and psychological estrangement from his homeland—early to mid-twentieth-century Japan—led him to a critical reflection on the normative premises of modernity, particularly the West's colonial subjugation of “native” people. Due to such a critical stance on modernity, Kitagawa's experience in postrevolutionary Mexico as well as his later account of it, could be seen as the production and use of ethnographic knowledge. To put it more clearly, after his decade-and-a-half immersion in the utopian postrevolutionary social milieu of Mexico, Kitagawa's conception of the country was inseparable from the emerging anti-colonial notion of culture. His knowledge of Mexican culture was profoundly linked to its mobile/complex process of transformation that resists any unilateral characterization from the dominant West-centered viewpoint.

Kitagawa's narration of Mexico through his ethnographic knowledge radically challenged the dominant conception of the cultural Other in post-1945 Japan. As closely examined in Chapter One, in Japan, ever since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, political leaders and intellectuals have pursued the nation's modernization taking the contemporary West as their almost exclusive reference point. After the fall of the Japanese Empire in 1945, this situation continued under the Cold War regime, as Japan sought economic growth and industrialization as one of the major political/military allies of the United

States in East Asia. Due to these circumstances, throughout the twentieth century, the Japanese public rarely had a chance to obtain a viable framework of understanding/representing the non-European cultural Other, aside from that of a colonizer's mentality, which is embodied by the use of the word "*dojin*," to refer to "primitive" or "uncivilized" "native" people. Kitagawa's understanding of Mexico through his ethnographic knowledge was fundamentally irreducible into such a normative discourse of Orientalism in post-1945 Japan. His art and pedagogy radically challenged the pivotal division of modern Self and backward/exotic Other, or those who narrate and those who are narrated, the premise firmly maintained by the majority of Japanese intellectuals and political leaders to legitimize the nation's positive self-image in the twentieth-century global world. Unlike his contemporary Japanese intellectuals, through drawing on his ethnographic knowledge, Kitagawa took Mexico as the invariable point of departure in reimagining Japanese modernity's future.

I will begin this chapter by briefly outlining the larger political/social context of post-1945 Japan under the impact of the Cold War. In the three sections that follow, I will examine Kitagawa's two major activities, his experimental open-air painting class with Japanese children/adolescents in Higashiyama Zoo, Nagoya and his production of Mexican-inspired murals and paintings. In both of his endeavors, Kitagawa's anti-colonial conception of postrevolutionary Mexican culture incommensurable with the normative narrative of modernity played the central role. I will conclude this chapter by comparing Kitagawa's narrative of Mexico with that of other post-WWII Japanese artists intrigued by Mexican culture, including Okamoto Tarō (1911-1996) and Toneyama Kōjin (1921-



1994) in order to further underline the significance of Kitagawa's negotiation of cultural difference based on his Mexican experience.

### **Narrating the Cultural Other under the Impact of the Cold War**

In the course of Japan's development as a modern state after the mid-nineteenth century, Japanese intellectuals and political leaders tended to focus exclusively on the country's relationship to the West in search of modernity. Due to Japan's self-image as a modern empire on par with those in the West, during the first half of the twentieth century, the Japanese public's representation of the non-Western cultural Other, including Mexico, was often informed by pejorative stereotypes or exoticism. The Japanese Empire collapsed and its imperial rule over Asia-Pacific regions ended in 1945. But, generally speaking, the colonial/Orientalist conception of non-Western cultures was maintained among the Japanese population into the postwar period, while the nation achieved economic prosperity and industrial development through its close political/economic ties with the United States.

After its defeat in the Asia-Pacific War, Japan came under the occupation of the United States, which lasted from 1945 until the Treaty of San Francisco took effect in April 1952 (with the exception of present-day Okinawa prefecture, which remained under U.S. rule until 1972). During the U.S. occupation, the GHQ/SCAP (General Headquarters, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) initially aimed at demilitarizing and "democratizing" Japan by eradicating what they saw as the "feudalistic" legacies of prewar Japanese culture. The series of sweeping "democratic" reforms in the multiple

social sectors gave great relief to Japanese artists and intellectuals, many of whom proclaimed the advent of a new “democratic” age after the demise of the restrictive wartime regime.<sup>1</sup> This emancipatory social atmosphere, however, did not last long and saw a considerable setback by the late 1940s, during the era of so-called Reverse Course. Toward the late 1940s, in response to the intensification of the Cold War confrontation in East Asia, the GHQ/SCAP turned their policy objective from disarming Japan to using it as the pivotal bulwark against Communist expansion in the region. One highly visible consequence of this change was the exhaustive anti-Communist campaign called the Red Purge (1949-1952), which resulted in the dismissal of more than ten-thousand Japanese from their jobs for their alleged connections to Communism, including public school teachers.<sup>2</sup> The Red Purge was a landmark incident that revealed the limited scope of the “democratic” reforms undertaken by the GHQ/SCAP. After the Red Purge, the possibility of the Japanese public’s political participation came be reduced due to the nation’s increasing political subordination to U.S. Cold War hegemony in East Asia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the cultural and intellectual climate of early post-1945 Japan, see John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). Kitagawa’s experimental pedagogy in Higashiyama Zoo I will discuss in the next section should be seen in the context of the GHQ/SCAP’s strategies to liberalize Japanese society during the latter half of the 1940s.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Ōtsuki Takeshi, *Sengo minkan kyōiku undōshi* (Tokyo: Ayumi Shuppan, 1982), 163-166.

<sup>3</sup> According to the educator Takimoto Masao, in his neighborhood in Nagoya, one day in the late 1940s, public school principals were called on by the authorities to receive the list of teachers they had to lay off. Petitions by parents and teachers against these decisions were all omitted. By 1954, for the sake of the purported political neutrality, the Japanese government passed legislation that prohibited public school teachers’ reference to political ideologies in classroom activities. See Takimoto Masao, *Boku wa mondai no kyōshi data: kyōshi no ikikata o tou* (Nagoya: Reimei

As several scholars have pointed out, Japan's affiliation with the United States under the politically asymmetrical Cold War regime led to the suppression of collective memories among the country's population, particularly in regard to their experience before and during the Asia Pacific War.<sup>4</sup> According to the historian Igarashi Yoshikuni, in early postwar Japan, a political stipulation of the Cold War established a highly regulated discursive space, where narratives undermining the premises of Japan's positive political/cultural partnership with the United States tended to be silenced.<sup>5</sup> Igarashi argues that during the Occupation, then the most common account of Japan's wartime experience—the Japanese Empire's victorious colonial rule over Asia-Pacific regions and its explicit hostility against the United States—was substituted by the trope of Japan's "conversion" from an "aggressive" wartime empire into the "peaceful" "democratic" state through the "benevolent" guidance of the United States.<sup>6</sup> Such an instilment of the U.S.-centered worldview took place under the social circumstances the historian John Dower calls U.S. "neocolonial revolution," during which, due to the exhaustive information

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Shōbō, 1989), 148-157. For the broader political context of the GHQ/SCAP's intervention in Japanese public education, see Yamazumi Masami, *Nihon kyōiku shōshi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> There are several insightful publications on this theme. Among them, see Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narrative of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) and; Tessa Morris-Suzuki and Yoshimi Shun'ya, *Tennō to Amerika* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Igarashi, 19-46.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Igarashi analyzes the trope of Japan's conversion in terms of the gendered relationship between the United States and Japan, defining these two countries' relationship as that of a powerful man and desperate woman respectively.

control, the Japanese public virtually had no means of questioning the GHQ/SCAP's authority.<sup>7</sup> In this political climate, many Japanese came to regard the United States nearly as Japan's only significant partner of cultural exchange and political alliance.<sup>8</sup>

The temporary loss of prewar/wartime collective memories and the influential view of the global world centered on the U.S.-Japan relationship after the Red Purge affected the Japanese public's conception of the non-Western cultural Other. As many scholars have pointed out, during the post-1945 years, the Japanese population was largely ignorant of the politics and society in so-called Third World countries, particularly the emerging movement for decolonization, or ongoing struggles for national independence in the former Western/Japanese colonies in Asia and Africa.<sup>9</sup> The Japanese public's ignorance about Asia and Africa, or unawareness of decolonization meant that,

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<sup>7</sup> Dower, *Embracing*, 203-224.

<sup>8</sup> Igarashi, 19-46.

<sup>9</sup> There are many studies on this topic. See for instance, Ōta Yoshinobu, *Jinruigaku to datsushokuminchika* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003), 237-241. Importantly, the Japanese public's ignorance of decolonization originated in the aforementioned suppression of collective memories, which John Dower compares to a "time-warp." Dower argues that due to the regulative discursive space set up by the GHQ/SCAP, the Japanese public was hardly informed of the emergent new post-1945 world order—collapse of the former empires and emergent process of decolonization, and the ascendancy of two Cold War political superpowers. Describing Japanese society under the occupation, Dower says "[t]his mystique of the immaculate Allies contributed to the fashioning of a public world that was not merely unreal, but sometimes almost surreal. Isolated from the rest of the world, the defeated Japanese were supposed to ignore the collapse of the victorious wartime alliance, the breakup of national unity in China, the renewed struggles against Western imperialism and colonialism in Asia, the decisive emergence of Cold War tensions, and the beginnings of a nuclear arm race. They were placed, as it were, in a small time warp, where the World War II propaganda of the winning side had to be reiterated as the erstwhile victors engaged in new struggles and polemics." See Dower, *Embracing*, 425.

they, as the former nationals of the Japanese Empire, were virtually exempted from the task of renegotiating their relationship vis-à-vis the cultural Other, especially those from the Empire's former colonies such as Korea and Taiwan.<sup>10</sup> During the Cold War, especially after the mid-1950s, while mainstream social discourse celebrated the country's economic development and its "democratic" political system, like the first half of the twentieth century, the Japanese public hardly had a viable framework of narrating the cultural Other; they continually subscribed to the colonial/Orientalist perception of the people outside the West (Western Europe and the United States particularly), while such a conventional notion of the cultural Other was being harshly negotiated outside Japan's national borders.

In discussing the post-1945 Japanese public's perception of the cultural Other, Mexico can be used as an insightful case. Needless to say, Mexico had never been under the Japanese Empire's colonial rule. Rather, since the late 1890s, and well into the first decades of the post-WWII era, it was one of the Japanese people's important destinations for immigration in search of better economic opportunities. However, the majority of people in post-1945 Japan without any particular connection to Mexico saw the country in terms of a set of exoticized stereotypes. This is probably an outcome of their implicit identification of Japan with the political and cultural standards of the modern West as well as a pervasive ignorance of non-Western cultures. For instance, in his statement about the *Exhibition of Mexican Art* held in the Tokyo National Museum in 1955, the artist Ikeda Tatsuo (b. 1928) says; "I know nearly nothing about the so-called 'country of the sun.' I

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

have only some superficial knowledge about bullfighting, cactus, sharp and black-eyed Hispanic faces and some bloody *coup d'état*.”<sup>11</sup>

It is quite a difficult task to trace the formation of post-1945 Japanese people's stereotypes of Mexico as the “country of the sun” just mentioned. However, one possibility is that the image of Mexico shared by the Japanese originated in the portrayal of Mexico in U.S. Western movies, which had been introduced in the Taishō era (1912-1926) and greatly popularized during the U.S. occupation.<sup>12</sup> Some of these movies' stories develop in Mexico, a country represented as the United States' exotic “Third World” cultural Other. As Richard Slotkin discusses, in U.S. movies produced in the early to mid-twentieth century, Mexico often appears as a “mythic” place, often associated with ethics in contrast with those of the average U.S. middle-class population.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the abundant

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<sup>11</sup> As I will address later in this chapter, the *Exhibition of Mexican Art* was the crucial turning point in Japanese artists' changing perception of Mexican art and culture in the post-1945 era. The exhibition commemorated the cultural agreement signed between the two nations in 1951 within the framework of the Treaty of San Francisco, and encompassed more than one thousand pieces of archaeological artifacts, works of modern and folk arts. It continued the shows previously held in several European cities including Paris, Stockholm and London. See Tokyo National Museum et al. eds., *Mekishiko Bijutsu-ten* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1955). Impressed by the *Exhibition of Mexican Art*, several Japanese artists travelled to Mexico and/or created Mexican-inspired artwork. The degree of reverberation of this exhibition in Japanese art venues could be substantiated by the October 1955 issue of *Bijutsu Hihyō*, in which many young artists expressed their enthusiasm with Mexican art as an art entirely new to their conception of modernism. Ikeda's comment cited here appears in the interview with 27 young Japanese artists entitled “Ankēto: Mekishiko Bijutsu-ten o mite,” *Bijutsu Hihyō* (October 1955): 27-40.

<sup>12</sup> Suzuki Noriko, “Seibu furontia to Nihon: Sengo Nihon ni okeru Seibu gensetsu no ‘dochakuka’ to Nihon no jikosaisei o meguru bunkaseijigaku,” *Ōtsuna Joshi Daigaku Kiyō* 45 (March 2013), 61-71.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, in 1948 film, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, Mexico functions as a site of daring adventure for four U.S. men craving gold. In the end of the film, after their dream of becoming millionaires turned out to be an illusion, they gradually awakened to more human moral values

references to Mexico in U.S. Western movies possibly set the foundation of the Japanese public's common views of Mexico. These clichéd images of Mexico as a country of cacti and bright sunny conditions came to be perpetuated in post-1945 Japan, mainly because of the public's indifference to Mexico, a country that they generally perceived as a geographically/psychologically remote place. In addition, I would argue that these stereotypes became popular also because of the aforementioned Japanese people's implicit self-image as a "modern" industrialized state during the Cold War, whose future prototype was derived from the West, especially the United States. Due to the dominant U.S.-centered understanding of the global world order under the Cold War regime, the necessity of valuing non-Western cultures was generally downplayed for these cultures' alleged backwardness.

Seen against the backdrop of such an overall lack of interest in the non-Western cultural Other in post-1945 Japan, Kitagawa's perception of Mexico as a crucial locus of anti-colonial struggle was outstanding. As I will discuss at length in the following three sections, based on his ethnographic knowledge of Mexico, Kitagawa's experimental pedagogy as well as effort to produce public murals radically challenged the prevailing discourse of the cultural Other in post-1945 Japan. By focusing on his conception of Mexico as a site of an emerging alternative anti-colonial notion of culture, Kitagawa's thought and practice served as a vital critique of the Japanese public's lack of awareness about their changing relationship to peoples from the so-called Third World countries

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such as comradeship and frugality appealing to the U.S. middle-class public. For more on this topic, see Richard Slotkin, *Gunfire Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 411-418.

within the post WWII world order.

### **Theorizing Mexican Experience: Kitagawa Tamiji's Pedagogy in Post-1945 Japan**

This section examines Kitagawa's efforts to translate his Mexican-inspired pedagogical theories onto post-1945 Japanese soil by paying close attention to his use of ethnographic knowledge, or an alternative conception of postrevolutionary Mexican culture. Although Kitagawa was active as one of the leading figures of Japanese art education well into the 1960s, here I will specifically discuss his first pedagogical project in Japan: the open-air painting school in Higashiyama Zoo, Nagoya (1949-1951). The school was inaugurated in August 1949, after being sponsored and advertised by the local newspaper company *Nagoya Times*.<sup>14</sup> Except for its 500-yen monthly tuition, the school faithfully modeled Mexican EPAL schools; for example, all materials, including gouache (watercolor made of gum arabic) and simple hand-made wooden palettes were provided to each student for no extra charge. Although the 500-yen tuition was hardly an affordable price to many Japanese in the late 1940s, thanks to *Nagoya Times*' advertisement, Kitagawa's school had as many as thirty-four students in the first year, many of whom were from educated families, ranging between seven and fifteen-years old.<sup>15</sup> Among Kitagawa's students was

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<sup>14</sup> For more details on Kitagawa's open-air painting school in Higashiyama Zoo, see the following essays: "Atarashii jidō bijutsu no jikken: Nagoya dōbutsuen jidō bijutsu gakkō ni tsuite," originally published in *Mizue* (March 1950), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 72; "Nagoya jidō bijutsu gakkō sonogo no hōkoku," originally published in *Bijutsu Hihyō*, April 1952, in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 92-99. See also: Takimoto, *Manabu mono*, 224-252, and; Andō Mikie "Maesutro to watashi," in Kitagawa, *Kitagawa Tamiji bijutsu kyōiku ronshū*, 336-351.

<sup>15</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 69.



Arakawa Shūsaku (1936-2010), who later became a recognized vanguard artist.<sup>16</sup> In Higashiyama Zoo, with the help of three assistants, his disciples Andō Mikie (1916-2011), Suzuki Sachio (dates unknown), and the art educator Takimoto Masao (dates unknown), Kitagawa put into practice his Mexican-inspired student-centered methodology, which had considerable success in eliciting Japanese children/adolescents' creativity and spontaneity.

In their classes at Higashiyama Zoo, Kitagawa and other instructors served as open-minded mentors, who encouraged students' creative expressions by letting them paint whatever they wished and avoiding the imposition of any technical skill or knowledge. In addition, like his time in Mexico, Kitagawa tried to abolish the traditional instructor-student hierarchy as much as possible, asking his students to address him "Kitagawa *kun*" not "Kitagawa *sensei*" in the first day of the class (*kun* is a Japanese expression used among friends, while the term *sensei*, or "teacher," is used for someone older and respected).<sup>17</sup> Although Kitagawa's unconventional attitude initially bewildered the students and parents, they soon got used to it.<sup>18</sup> Probably, this was because many of them were from educated families, who were strongly invested in the aforementioned new "democratic" spirit believed to permeate Japanese society after the fall of the oppressive wartime regime.

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<sup>16</sup> Takimoto, *Manabu mono*, 224-252.

<sup>17</sup> As for Kitagawa's attempt at abolishing the instructor-student hierarchy in Mexico, see footnote 40 for Chapter Two.

<sup>18</sup> See Kitagawa Tamiji, *Kodomotachi*, 199-202.

In order to facilitate his student-centered pedagogy, Kitagawa's selection of the zoo environment had an important meaning. As discussed thoroughly in Chapter Two, Kitagawa's art education in postrevolutionary Mexico revolved around his tenet of bolstering his students' creativity by using painting as a critical tool for observation and interpretation of the quotidian world.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in transplanting his Mexican-inspired pedagogy into Japan, Kitagawa deemed that such a project of taking students to actual social spaces would be too ambitious to undertake. His experience in Japan since his return in 1937 had made him speculate that Japanese children and adolescents tended to lose their innate impulse for creative expression in painting when they lived in a "stressful" everyday environment under their parents and schoolteachers' strict control.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in Japan, in order to undertake his Mexican-inspired pedagogy, Kitagawa began with setting up an amusing and relaxed zoo environment as a privileged site for his experimentation, which enabled him to separate, albeit temporarily, his students from their "controlled" social environments.

Kitagawa's experimental pedagogy in Higashiyama Zoo was largely successful, even though he faced some unexpected problems at the start. For instance, on the first day of class, Kitagawa was disappointed to see that none of his students showed interest in animals and as soon as they were given paint, all rushed to a fountain tower near the zoo entrance to paint it.<sup>21</sup> By this experience, Kitagawa reconfirmed his previous impression

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<sup>19</sup> For instance, see Kitagawa Tamiji, "Watashi no bijutsu kyōiku," in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 41-42.

<sup>20</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 72.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

that unlike his students in Mexican EPAL schools, Japanese children/adolescents were instilled with the official-academic (*kangakuteki*) notions of art through public school education: technical mastery, pictorial precision and above all the conventional notion of beauty based on the use of allegedly “appropriate” painting subjects, including the monumental fountain tower at the zoo entrance.<sup>22</sup> Faced with the students’ disinterest in animals, Kitagawa and his assistants never forced them to return to the animal cages. Instead, they attempted to broaden the students’ horizons by diverting their attention away from the structured norms that they were accustomed to, talking to them with such phrases as “Hey, don’t just keep painting so hard, let’s go to see some animals over there.”<sup>23</sup> The students first made strange faces, but soon began to follow Kitagawa and his assistants to see lions and elephants.<sup>24</sup> In Higashiyama Zoo, Kitagawa and other instructors were much more preoccupied with making their students’ relationships to environments less restrained and more flexible, than with improving their painting skills.

As suggested above, Kitagawa’s teaching was based on his Mexican-inspired approach that stimulated students’ innate curiosity toward their material environment. Kitagawa’s tenet of art education is well encapsulated in his memoir about his time in Tlalpan.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

I too, once took some twenty of my students to the San Carlos Art Museum... which was a part of the National University. I did not spend much time in explanation, but at least I indicated the famous artworks to my students. They looked around enthusiastically and I was quite satisfied when we left the museum. However, the next day, my students told me the following: “*Compañero*, our visit to the museum was of lots of fun, but why didn’t you take us to the circus too? Please let us do it next time.” The circus was on in a vacant lot next to the museum, but I never thought about taking them there. I was so ashamed. “Yes, let’s see a circus next time, not paintings.”<sup>25</sup>

As expressed in the above quotation, Kitagawa’s art education aimed at bolstering his students’ vivid interest in everyday spaces and objects, without confining their creative possibilities to the aesthetic conventions of modern art in the West. In Higashiyama Zoo, during their class, Kitagawa and his assistants hardly gave students any concrete instructions. For this reason, they often felt unsettled and came to Kitagawa and his assistants to ask what they should do. On these occasions, the instructors took them back to where they were painting and tell them stories having little to do with painting skills in order to draw their attention to the larger environment, in this case animals. Kitagawa states that the students’ questions about how to paint came about because, unlike their Mexican counterparts, Japanese children and adolescents were not accustomed to the amount of freedom allowed in Kitagawa’s class, as they were always taught to follow adults’ guidance. As Kitagawa states, “they want to be told something.”<sup>26</sup> In fact, at the

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<sup>25</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 108.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 203

end of the instructors' stories, and as they opened their eyes to their immediate space, many students unwittingly would start painting and finish quickly.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to acute attention to their environment, Kitagawa emphasized students' creative interpretation of what they observed. For instance, Kitagawa and other instructors constantly found that, while many students chose animals as their subjects, some of them lacked creativity and imagination in their interpretation, as they were obsessed by the public school's official-academic approach to art education. For instance, one day Kitagawa and his assistants saw that some students were depicting animals including the fence based on their observation. In these cases, the instructors would make students leave the painting aside and play together until they were newly motivated to paint.<sup>28</sup> After a few days without touching any painting tools and materials, the students were given a lavish amount of paint and told such words as "Look, giraffes and elephants must feel cramped in such a small pound. They might be having a hard time remembering when they were still in a natural big savanna. Wouldn't it be fun if you paint such a feeling for them?"<sup>29</sup> Kitagawa recalls that thanks to these instructors' efforts, after a few weeks the students gradually began to demonstrate their creative interpretation of what they observed, which was revealed by some works of Kitagawa's students from these years (fig. 4.1).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Andō, 344-345.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> To say clearly what kind of painting Kitagawa considered to be "good" is not an easy task given that there are not enough extant works of Kitagawa's Japanese students. Generally speaking,

Kitagawa and his assistants' strategy to open the students' eyes afresh to their surroundings produced some notable outcomes during the first month. His method allowed students to make many works full of creativity, and the parents reported some noteworthy improvements in their sons and daughters' behavior at home.<sup>31</sup> Although the school was initially planned to be open only in August, because of the positive reception among the parents, Kitagawa decided to continue it into the Japanese public school's second (fall) semester, with a 300-yen monthly tuition, meeting on Sundays.<sup>32</sup> The positive results produced by Higashiyama Zoo school during its first month must have given Kitagawa and his assistants a great degree of confidence about their Mexican-based pedagogical approach that underlined the connection between creative activities and everyday life.

Nevertheless, to Kitagawa, his success in an isolated zoo environment was only a first step toward his larger objective of translating Mexican-inspired pedagogy onto Japanese soil. As Kitagawa states, after his productive experimentation at Higashiyama Zoo, "genuine" education was hoped to begin by exposing the students to actual social

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Kitagawa's evaluation of art had two distinctive criteria. First, Kitagawa insisted that a genuinely creative expression was achieved by children/adolescents' engagement in everyday world and struggles to overcome obstacles generated by the environment. He encouraged students to closely observe objects and spaces and denied abstract elements in their painting. Second, he thought that a good painting must show certain harmonious formal characters explainable by mathematical notions such as the so-called "golden ratio." See for instance, Kitagawa Tamiji, "Jiyū e no kikyū no seishin," originally published in *6-3 kyōshitsu*, in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 59-67.

<sup>31</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 88.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Andō, 347.

spaces through art.<sup>33</sup> More concretely, in spite of his significant steps forward in Higashiyama Zoo, some of Kitagawa's commentaries prove that by the school's third year, he had begun to be aware of the difficulty of undertaking his experimental pedagogy in Japan beyond the zoo walls. This was because he realized the stark difference of cultural/political climate between Mexico and Japan. The difference included not only children/adolescents' attitude toward painting in each country, or Japanese students' obsession with an institutional-academic notion of painting, which was relatively correctable through his efforts. But it was also linked to the broader social conditions in which Kitagawa's pedagogical activities were inevitably embedded. As discussed in Chapter Two, while in Mexico, Kitagawa's thought and practice were guided by the significant re-conceptualization of education as an integral project of raising a new generation of Mexicans, who were seen as prospective agents of social change for the sake of decolonization and democratization of Mexican society. On the other hand, in Japan, Kitagawa observed that educators lacked such a long-term social vision, as they were subscribed to the pragmatic conception of education that served the nation's socio-economic development.<sup>34</sup> Probably, at some point, Kitagawa realized that no matter how

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<sup>33</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 217-218.

<sup>34</sup> Throughout his career, Kitagawa firmly stood against the pragmatic understanding of art education. For instance, he criticizes Rafael Vera de Cordova, the director of the EPAL school in Xochimilco, who publicly commented that art education is a kind of recreation and a way to "refresh the students' mind." Vera de Cordova also said that "in addition, art is a kind of supplementary education...it helps in their (students') study of mathematics, geography and history, because art brings them the ability to capture the forms of objects" In Japan, as the nation entered the era of massive economic development during the 1950s, the public education's liberal curriculum set forth by the GHQ/SCAP's "democratizing" policies was disparaged by many as

he endeavored to “liberate” his students’ minds in his classes, they lasted only a few hours a week so it was nearly impossible to influence and transform a society unsupportive of his alternative conception of art and education. In 1953 Kitagawa said:

What I was disappointed with most in my children’s art institute in Japan was that the students would not continue for a long periods of time. They quit halfway and did not show up when their talents were finally taking off. They made various excuses saying that their parents did not allow them, or they were busy with their study in junior high school, but the truth is that they could not maintain the mental strength for painting. They became incapable of keeping up their spirits to seek freedom. In other words, they were defeated by the pressure of the conventional moral notions and gave up developing their own personalities.<sup>35</sup>

This comment reveals that despite achieving a degree of success in liberating Japanese children/adolescents’ minds in the Higashiyama Zoo painting class, upon trying to move forward with his agenda beyond the confines of the zoo walls, Kitagawa faced the fundamental difference of cultural/political conditions.

Furthermore, as discussed in the previous section, in Japan, after the massive tide of social conservatism brought by the shift of GHQ/SCAP policies, taking a politically explicit stance as an educator became increasingly difficult. In fact, Kitagawa’s realization of the insuperable cultural/political difference between Mexico and Japan coincided with

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reducing Japanese children’s academic competence by propagating “foreign” idealism. See Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 78-80 and Yamazumi, 186-221.

<sup>35</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, “E o kaku Mekishiko to Nippon no kodomo,” originally published in *Kaizō* (September 1953), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 133.



the GHQ/SCAP's accelerating regulation of the Japanese public's political ideologies following the Red Purge. Kitagawa recalled in 1952:

I experimented in children's art in Mexico with a methodology then considered to be new, and after my return to Japan, my hope to apply this methodology came true in a Nagoya zoo. It was right after Japan's defeat (in the Asia-Pacific War). At the outset it more or less went well and my successors continued the school with enthusiasm. However, we had to abandon it after a few years, due to the Ministry of Culture's policies as well as social circumstances rapidly falling into regression. What appeared to be democratic was denied one after another. It became an era where the education in tandem with corrupt politics and society seized power, a false realism came to the fore, and idealism was laughed at. I was totally disappointed. Mexico was not like this. Although there were terrible reactionary moves there too, my comrades and I could fight against them. But in this country, one cannot even stand up to fight.<sup>36</sup>

As expressed in these words, what Kitagawa perceived as his most pressing obstacle was the decreasing channels for the Japanese public's political participation precipitated by the Reverse Course, and subsequently perpetuated by the nation's pursuit of economic growth and industrialization in line with U.S. Cold War geopolitics. Kitagawa's statement that he felt unable "even to stand up to fight" encapsulates the degree of his disillusionment faced with the difficult-to-resist socio-economic processes under the Cold War regime, whose purported prosperity he saw was achieved at the cost of the Japanese public's capacity for political/social intervention.

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<sup>36</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomotachi*, 226.

In response to these adverse circumstances, by the third year of his experimental pedagogy in Japan, Kitagawa began to distance himself from the school, although his assistants energetically continued their activities. It is important to note that Kitagawa's abandonment of his experimental pedagogy coincided with his school's crucial turning point, in which his initial hope—putting his students in touch with immediate social environment—was about to come true. In May 1951, Kitagawa's school was housed in a new building in Yagoto, district in the southern suburbs of Nagoya. Apart from his initial plan to expose Japanese children/adolescents to society, Kitagawa and his assistants' decision to move his school was motivated by several other factors. For instance, as Japanese society gradually recuperated from war damage, Higashiyama Zoo had become too crowded with visitors for the students to practice open-air painting comfortably every Sunday.<sup>37</sup> Andō recalls that many parents helped Kitagawa and his assistants with the construction fee for the new building by paying tuition in advance, and Andō made several portraits for prominent personalities in the financial world in order to cover miscellaneous costs.<sup>38</sup> However, Kitagawa rarely showed up at the school's new location.<sup>39</sup> As stated above, his departure from the school may have been prompted by a realization that achieving his ultimate pedagogical goal in Japan—undertaking an experimental art education for the sake of a tangible social change along the lines of the Mexican-derived anti-colonial conception of culture—was nearly impossible.

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<sup>37</sup> Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 93-94. Andō, 347-348.

<sup>38</sup> Andō, 347-348.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. According to Andō, in spite of Kitagawa's absence, Andō, helped by Takimoto continued the school over the next five years. Ibid., 348-349.

Toward the end (1951) of the Higashiyama Zoo school, Kitagawa was deeply disappointed by the ultimate impracticability of his experimental art education in Japan. From this period on, his activities as an educator came to be limited to writing and giving lectures, mainly through Sōzo Biiku Kyōkai (Association for creative art education), a major nation-wide movement for creative art education, which he joined as a founding member in 1952.<sup>40</sup> In these writings and lectures, Kitagawa continued to assert his same Mexican-inspired tenet of art education, that is, bringing children and adolescents to open social spaces. Although several Japanese art educators such as Kubo Sadajirō showed a degree of comprehension of Kitagawa's reiteration that creative activities should be linked with students' everyday routines, his argument hardly gained currency in the mainstream discourse of post-1945 Japanese art education.<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding all the obstacles Kitagawa faced, and his deep disappointment, Kitagawa's painting school was definitely a noteworthy attempt, which revolved around an alternative conception of Mexico in post-1945 Japan. By focusing on his ethnographic knowledge of Mexico tightly linked to his ideal of decolonization and democratization of culture, Kitagawa

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<sup>40</sup> Although, as a global pioneer of creative art education, Kitagawa was often seen as the symbolic leader of Sōbi movement, his participation was never a proactive one. For instance, Andō recalls that Kitagawa said "our mission is to undertake experimentation of art education, while Sōbi members are school teachers who got together to propagate their belief of art education." Takimoto states that although Kitagawa contributed many writings to Sōbi, all of them were made because he had no choice (not to do so) in response to the petition of his friends and acquaintances. See Andō, 349 and Takimoto Masao, *Ningenkaihō no bijutsu kyōiku* (Nagoya: Reimei Shobō, 1976), 231.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, Takimoto highly values Kitagawa's conception of freedom as a *struggle for* freedom, which was closely linked to his assertion of exposing students to "real" social environments. See Takimoto, *Manabu mono*, 38-50.

challenged the dominant stereotypes of Mexico in Japan perpetuated under the constant political impact of the Cold War.

### **Translating Mexican Murals**

Kitagawa's view of Mexico as a crucial site of anti-colonial contestation can also be substantiated by his artistic activities, particularly his effort of producing Mexican style public murals. As mentioned in Chapter Three, after his return to Japan, Kitagawa aspired to create murals, often claiming that all his oil paintings were only preliminary drawings for his future murals.<sup>42</sup> Based on his Mexican experience, Kitagawa deemed murals to be an art form that, by occupying public spaces, guides the society's collective consciousness toward the broad goal of decolonization and democratization of culture. According to Kubo Sadajirō, Kitagawa commented as follows:

(In Japan) painting is regarded only as something aesthetically pleasing, which gently touches the human mind, but we (Kitagawa and his fellow painters) think that painting should be one of the central forces that provokes and redirects human spirit towards the right path. In the near future, there will be times when the masses begin to demand murals that demonstrate how we should live better lives, or how we should build righteous human lives.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Kubo Sadajirō, "Kitagawa Tamiji no hekiga no shigoto: hekiga no tameni kabe o!," originally published in *Mizue* (February 1970), in Kubo Sadajirō, *Kitagawa Tamiji* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1984), 73.

<sup>43</sup> Kubo Sadajirō, "hekiga no shigoto," in Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 76. This quotation is taken from Kubo's recollection of Kitagawa's words.

Kitagawa's statement reminds us of the positive role played by artists in 1920s Mexico. In the process of postrevolutionary national reconstruction, Mexican muralists led emerging artistic movements celebrating the nation's renewed national identity, which aimed at challenging the past legacies of colonialism and existing racial/cultural difference. Many major artists, including Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, took an explicit political position often in support of communist/socialist ideologies, which were well reflected in their works. Their politically assertive stance occasionally caused controversy on the part of the patron and viewer, especially when these artists worked outside Mexico.<sup>44</sup> Kitagawa's artistic activities in post-1945 Japan constantly revolved around his desire to produce public art whose political/social statements were as visible as the major works of these postrevolutionary Mexican artists.

Apart from the series of small-scale murals painted during the early post-WWII years (circa 1947), Kitagawa undertook four major mural projects in Nagoya/Seto area between 1959 and 1970. These projects include *Peace and Art* (fig. 4.2; CBC, or Chūbu Broadcasting Company, Nagoya, 1959); *Ceramic Wall and Potters* (fig. 4.3; Seto City Ceramic Museum, 1959); *The Origin of the Tomato* (Kagome Sauce Company, Nagoya, 1962) and a set of three murals at Seto City Public Library, including *Ignorance and Wisdom* (1970), *The Victory of Wisdom* (1970) and *Study* (1970). As I will discuss at length below, to Kitagawa, these murals were only a small step forward toward his goal of

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<sup>44</sup> See for instance, Desmond Rochfort, *Mexican Muralists: Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros* (London: L. King, 1993). Probably the most well-known of these provocative murals was Diego Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads* to be painted in the Rockefeller Center, New York City in 1934. In this mural Rivera included the portrait of Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924). Ultimately, Rivera was forced to stop working and the mural was destroyed on the order of Nelson Rockefeller (1908-1979).

producing public art comparable to Mexican murals, as he saw that these works were overly decorative and would not fully convey his political/social message. Despite their rather neutral and apolitical subjects, these murals are worth examining here as their style and massive scale crystallized Kitagawa's determination to promote Mexican-inspired public art in post-1945 Japanese urban spaces. Here, due to space limitations, I will only discuss the first two murals produced in 1959, *Peace and Art* and *Ceramic Wall and Potters*, whose opposing subjects and aesthetics well encapsulate the range of Kitagawa's expressions as a muralist.

Kitagawa's first post-1945 large-scale mural is *Peace and Art*, commissioned by Chūbu-Nippon Broadcasting Company (CBC) to be installed in the company's headquarters in central Nagoya. Made in marble mosaic, the mural was completed through the collaboration of many artists, among them Yabashi Rokurō (1905-1988), an artist experienced in the material, and the art critic Imaizumi Atsuo (1902-1984), acting as the director.<sup>45</sup> The mural depicts eight deified nude female figures inspired by the notion of "seven arts," six of whom holding symbolic objects: a lute, a lyre, a brush, a compass, a pigeon, and a hammer, harmoniously compressed into the rectangular space set in the outer concrete wall of the CBC building.<sup>46</sup> Kitagawa recalled that while he tried to come

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<sup>45</sup> For more details on Kitagawa's first two murals in Nagoya and Seto, see Kitagawa Tamiji and Yabashi Rokurō "Hekiga seisakusha no tachiba kara," in *Mizue* (February 1960): 58-65.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 58. The source of Kitagawa's definition of "seven arts" is not clear. However, the most widespread use of the term probably was established by the Italian film theoretician Ricciotto Canudo (1877-1923) in his 1911 manifesto. In this manifesto, Canudo defined cinema as the "seventh art," in addition to the already recognized media, including painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, dance and music.

up with a more elaborate theme relevant to the social significance of the company's business, broadcasting, the deadline for the preliminary sketch quickly approached.<sup>47</sup> According to Kitagawa, from the time of his return to Japan, he wished to paint murals in fresco, but his revisit to Mexico in the mid 1950s changed his mind. As I will discuss in the next section, in January 1955, Kitagawa made an eleven-month trip to Mexico for the first time after his return to Japan in 1936. One important event in this visit was his reconnection with Mexican friends, including the major muralists such as Siqueiros and Rivera.<sup>48</sup> Kitagawa's reencounter with these artists made him aware that fresco was now seen as outdated there, as the muralists had experimented with new materials such as a mosaic in Diego Rivera's case and piroxylin in Siqueiros.<sup>49</sup> Because of Kitagawa's awareness of these new developments in Mexico, all of his four major mural projects in Nagoya and Seto, including *Peace and Art*, used marble or ceramic mosaic.

As suggested above, Kitagawa was never fully satisfied with his public murals due to their lack of political content in comparison with their postrevolutionary Mexican counterparts. In regards to *Peace and Art*, he admitted that its theme was rather mediocre, and "too decorative" in style and representation.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, in *Peace and Art*, Kitagawa was not very positive about the use of marble mosaic since its luxurious appearance might

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> For more details on Kitagawa's activities during his second visit to Mexico, see Kitagawa, *Yūwaku*.

<sup>49</sup> Kitagawa and Yabashi, "Hekiga seisakusha," 58.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

obscure his Mexican-inspired tenet of public art in support of the socially oppressed.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, *Peace and Art* in its scale and aesthetics demonstrate Kitagawa's resolution to concretize his Mexican-based vision of public art in Japan: in addition to his reference to Fernand Léger's (1881-1955) tubular forms, Kitagawa's bold Cubist/Constructivist representation and a sense of dynamic movement could be seen as the manifestation of his high regard of Siqueiros' murals from the same decade, such as *The People to the University and the University to the People* (fig. 4.4, 1952-1956). Indeed, compared to Siqueiros' piece, Kitagawa's *Peace and Art* lacks the Mexican artist's clear political/social commentary, which probably made him consider this work to be just a first step in his activity as a muralist in Japan. Although Kitagawa was skeptical of Japanese audiences' positive evaluation of *Peace and Art*, which he attributed to its use of expensive materials, he also expressed his straightforward delight about the fact that *Peace and Art* was completed as a result of many artist and masons working together for as long as a month.<sup>52</sup>

Kitagawa's second major mural, *Ceramic Walls and Potters* was inaugurated in September of the same year in the outer wall of Seto Civic Hall (fig. 4.3). It is the largest of Kitagawa's murals, and was commissioned by the City of Seto as part of the Civic Hall's architecture then under construction.<sup>53</sup> Unlike his previous *Peace and Art*, Kitagawa used ceramic tiles manufactured in his friend Kato Kasen's factory, in Seto's

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 58.



Akazu district, in which the pigments were mixed with raw ceramic clay rather than painted over the tiles' surface afterwards.<sup>54</sup> The mural consists of three sequential panels illustrating the working process of the potters from the extraction of clay to designing objects. Like many of Kitagawa's large-format paintings I discuss in the next section, *Ceramic Walls and Potters* shows a degree of ambiguity in regards to the image's regional identity as it combines components representing both Mexican and Japanese cultures. The mural depicts eight figures of Seto's ceramic workers rendered as muscular and dark-skinned Mexicans, who are all set against an arid landscape, reminiscent at once of the Central Mexican Highland and Seto region: while the withered trees refer to Mexico, his insertion of Japanese ceramic pieces, kilns and chimneys links the image to Seto.

Compared to *Peace and Art*'s "decorative" subject, in *Ceramic Walls and Potters*, Kitagawa's approach more clearly visualized his Mexican-derived conception of public art for the sake of the decolonization and democratization of culture; in the mural, the artisans appear as the positive subjects of social transformation with a pronounced thematic connection to its site of installation, Seto. Like *Peace and Art*, Kitagawa's Cubist rendering of the boldly outlined workers demonstrates his embrace of Fernand Léger's innovative use of Cubism. At the same time, the mural also reveals Kitagawa's inspiration from Siqueiros, especially, the artist's dynamic rendering of industrial motifs evident in such works as *Complete Security for All Mexicans at Work* (fig. 4.5, 1952-1954) in Hospital La Raza, Mexico City, which was produced about five years prior to Kitagawa's

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

*Ceramic Wall and Potters*. In addition, the group of human figures painted only through the outlines in the mural, which are transparent against the background, is in fact an element found in some of Siqueiros's murals; Siqueiros often inserted these human images giving his picture a sense of mobility and tension between figuration and abstraction.

Answering an interview by Kubo Sadajirō about these two murals discussed above, Kitagawa stated that compared to the “excessively decorative” *Peace and Art*, *Ceramic Walls and Potters* transmits more of his thinking, but he hardly admitted that the latter fully manifested his position as an artist determined in his social/political engagement.<sup>55</sup> Although Kitagawa did not further elaborate on his dissatisfaction with *Ceramic Walls and Potters*, probably to Kitagawa, the mural's rather harmonious theme—its positive representation of ceramic artisans and their constructive participation in society—was too optimistic. Upon his return to Japan from an overseas trip in 1956, he expressed his critical and even pessimistic opinion questioning the validity of the “democratic” regime in mid-1950s Japan. In fact, as I will discuss in the next section, compared to his large-format oil paintings from around the same years that are much more politically explicit, *Ceramic Wall and Potters* is quite moderate in subject. Another reason for this modesty might be attributed to his unspoken comparison of his work to Siqueiros'.

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<sup>55</sup> Kubo Sadajirō and Kitagawa Tamiji “Taidan: hekiga ni tsuite,” originally published in Sōzō Biiku Kyōkai ed., *Kitagawa Tamiji no hekiga* (1969), in Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 83.

Kitagawa mentions Siqueiros as the most impressive person he met in Mexico and in front of his works, he feels “inexplicably inferior.”<sup>56</sup>

As suggested so far, Kitagawa saw his four mural projects in Nagoya and Seto as only a small initial move toward his goal of producing Mexican-inspired public art in Japan, which was defined as a means for artists’ direct social/political commitments. Like his experimental pedagogy in Higashiyama Zoo, Kitagawa’s efforts for mural production in post-1945 Japan could be seen as his use of ethnographic knowledge, knowledge that reveals his perception of Mexico as the site of the emerging anti-colonial struggles. Nevertheless, in his attempt to translate Mexican-inspired public art in Japan, Kitagawa found that general tendencies in post-1945 Japanese art and society, especially after the Red Purge were a world apart from 1920s Mexico. In the middle of the social conservatism during the Cold War examined earlier in this chapter, Japanese artists’ partaking in political/social movements decreased, which coincided with their subscription to the ethics of what Greg Barnhisel called “Cold War modernism.”<sup>57</sup> After

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<sup>56</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, “Ōinaru Shikeirosu,” originally published in *Ohararyū sōka* (September 1972), in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 205.

<sup>57</sup> For discussions of the emerging apolitical notion of modernism during the Cold War, see Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). Speaking of Kitagawa’s lack of opportunities of mural production in post-1945 Japan, it is also important to remember that the general demand for public art in Japan tended to emphasize its decorative function, the notion Kitagawa was hardly ready to accept. As Katō Kaoru argues, the public art boom in the 1980s that resulted in the proliferation of murals and outdoor sculptures in the Japanese urban environment was often accompanied by the optimistic perception of Japan’s advanced technology and political status quo. In these works of public art, the reference to Mexican muralism was limited to its material and technical dimensions. See Katō Kaoru, “Acercamiento a la influencia del movimiento muralista mexicano en el arte contemporáneo de Japón,” *Crónicas* (December 2008), 236-255.

the mid-1950s, many vanguard artists in Japan eagerly followed the latest currents of “international” contemporary art in Europe and the United States, represented by abstraction, conceptualism, and performance, which mirrored the emerging apolitical notion of modernism flourishing in post-WWII Western Europe, the United States and Japan.

In the face of these circumstances unfavorable to his artistic agenda, Kitagawa stated that, compared to Mexico, where both artists and common people were expected to play a positive role for the ultimate objective of building a new democratic society, the Japanese public was still insufficiently mature to embrace such an objective. Kitagawa says:

I think this (Kitagawa’s view on murals as a means of human liberation) should be the most important element in the spirit of painting in general. The reason why that element is conspicuous in Mexican murals was because, I think, they (Mexican people) had a consistent revolutionary ideology to liberate humanity. On the other hand, in today’s Japan, such a concrete objective is still immature ... I regret that Japanese people like to compromise. Since a long time ago we have always been compromising, and came to think of it as our virtue. I am against such an attitude of life.<sup>58</sup>

Kitagawa’s words attest to his attribution of Japanese art venues’ decreasing link to politics to the “immature” state of post-1945 Japanese modernity. Published in 1969, Kitagawa’s statement reveals his ethnographic knowledge of Mexico, as well as radical

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<sup>58</sup> Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 86.

questioning of the mainstream agenda of modernity/modernization advocated by contemporary Japanese intellectuals and political leaders. As stated earlier, to the majority of these intellectuals and political leaders, the only reference point to define Japan's identity was the contemporary West (Western Europe and the United States). In this context, Kitagawa's Mexican-inspired mural production conceived as the cornerstone for reimagining Japanese society's future starkly contradicted these Japanese leaders' vision of modernity. Instead of taking Western Europe and the United States as the exclusive reference point of Japan's modernization, by theorizing his Mexican experience through mural production, Kitagawa brought forward an alternative vision of Japan's future. Due to the political and artistic circumstances of post-1945 Japan—Cold War political conservatism and the depoliticization of the avant-garde—after his last mural project in Seto City Public Library in 1970, Kitagawa did not have a chance to create any other murals. Kitagawa's four mural projects after the late 1950s, including *Peace and Art* and *Ceramic Walls and Potters*, were outcomes of his negotiation, through which he tried to concretize his notion of postrevolutionary Mexican public art within the Japanese social milieu in the midst of Cold War social conservatism. As I will discuss in the next section, Kitagawa expressed his goal of translating Mexican murals in Japan through large-scale oil painting, which I call “muralist” painting.<sup>59</sup> In his production of murals and “muralist”

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<sup>59</sup> In this dissertation, I use the term “muralist” painting to refer to a group of Kitagawa's post-1945 paintings, whose theme and style are quite reminiscent of public murals produced in Latin America and the United States throughout the twentieth century. More concretely, here the term is employed to categorize a set of Kitagawa's paintings depicting the collective human motifs in reference to specific social/political contexts, which are generally characterized by “mural” aesthetics including bold outlining and flat, non-textured color surface. In some ways, Kitagawa's “muralist” painting as well as murals could be seen as a ramification of the transnational mural

painting, Kitagawa hoped to bring forward his conception of Mexico as a cradle of the transnational anti-colonial fight in post-1945 Japan.

### **Kitagawa's Post-1945 "Muralist" Painting**

A few years after the end of the WWII, Kitagawa began to work on large-format paintings, many of which measure approximately 162 x 130 centimeters. Frequently characterized by robust spatial construction and outlining, these paintings are reminiscent of public murals produced in Mexico and elsewhere in the twentieth-century American Continent under the strong impact of Mexican Muralism.<sup>60</sup> Like these murals in the Americas oriented for the broader public, Kitagawa's large-format paintings often portray a collective human experience in a specific social context—in this case post-1945 Japan. I

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movements in the modern/contemporary Americas inspired by the legacies of the Mexican Muralism. The artists participating in later mural movements in Latin America and the United States, such as Chicano artist Judith Baca (1946-) and many international artists supporting the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua (1979-1990) either directly or indirectly learned from Mexican Muralism, especially David Alfaro Siqueiros' styles and methodologies. Regarding the influence of Siqueiros on the later mural movements in the Americas, see Craven. I have already discussed elsewhere Kitagawa's "muralist" paintings as murals that remained unrealized due to the disadvantageous cultural climate of post-1945 Japanese society. On these occasions, I pointed out that in Kitagawa's words his paintings were all a preparatory sketch for his future murals; these words seem to have a degree of truth as many of his paintings produced in post-1945 Japan demonstrate mural-based didactic subjects and aesthetics. Kumagai Takaaki, "Kitagawa Tamiji's Painting as Unrealized Murals" (paper presented at Simposio internacional: Sano Seki y Kitagawa Tamiji, artistas japoneses de las décadas de 1920 a 1960, El Colegio de México and Teatro Coyoacán, November 11-14, 2011); and "Kitagawa Tamiji: Ramificación transnacional del arte latinoamericano del siglo XX en Japón" (paper presented at IV *Simposio historia del arte: aquí, allá y en el medio: encuentros transnacionales en el arte latinoamericano*) Departamento de Arte, Universidad de los Andes, August 20-22, 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Craven.

will call these Kitagawa's paintings of mural aesthetics "muralist" paintings; having remained in the state of preliminary drawings for unrealized murals, these paintings embody his negotiation of the expressive media in post-1945 Japan, where both artistic and social venues were generally unsupportive of his aspiration for Mexican-based mural production. As discussed in the previous section, Kitagawa stated that all his easel paintings should be considered to be preliminary drawings for his future murals, although he could produce only a few public murals in Japan. In this sense, Kitagawa's muralist painting crystallized his unrewarded desire for translating Mexican public art capable of a far-reaching social/political critique in post-1945 Japan.

One of the first examples of Kitagawa's muralist painting is a series that consists of three paintings *Like Weeds* (I, II and III, fig. 4.6-4.8, 1947-1949). Probably, the title *Like Weeds* indicates Kitagawa's sympathy and identification with the people "like weeds"—anonymous workers and peasants underrepresented in society and subject to economic exploitation and political cooptation. During the latter half of the 1940s, Kitagawa made several paintings that clearly manifested his solidarity with the marginalized population. As briefly suggested earlier, in the middle of the sweeping reforms undertaken by the GHQ/SCAP, a great number of artists and intellectuals envisioned the advent of a new "democratic" era, in which peasants and lower-class industrial workers were to become the principal catalysts of social change.<sup>61</sup> In one of his paintings of working-class subjects called *A Miner* (fig. 4.9, 1947), Kitagawa

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<sup>61</sup> For instance, see Dower, *Embracing*, 233-251.

symbolically inscribed a phrase in Latin *VAE VICTIS*, which translates as “woe to the conquered,” in order to express his commitment to the marginalized people.

*Like Weeds I* (fig. 4.6) is one of the first paintings in which Kitagawa visualized his mural-inspired aesthetics based on allegorical representation of social/political themes in a large format. What first captures the viewer’s eyes in this painting are the monumental three brown-skinned women in Mexican indigenous dress, set against the distant view of Seto’s houses and factories. Although the image of these women has been interpreted as a symbolic image of Japanese people’s postwar misery,<sup>62</sup> I argue that their sculptural appearance could be seen as Kitagawa’s reference to the famous *San-en* or Three Monkeys associated with the saying “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” which became popular in Japan by the Edo period (1615-1868). The Three Monkeys’ most representative sculptural manifestation in Japan is found in the architectural adornment of Tōshōgū Shrine in Nikkō (fig. 4.10).

The teachings conveyed by the Three Monkeys in Japan, that is, see, say and speak no evil, are considered to represent some moral principles found in *Analects*, the collection of Confucius’ words and ideas compiled around the third century B.C.E.). On the other hand, in *Like Weeds I* Kitagawa seems to have taken the motif critically as an emblem of the social conformity in wartime Japan, during which artists and intellectuals had virtually no freedom of expression. The woman of the far right could be seen as obstinately covering up her eyes rather than weeping, while another two have taken their hands off their mouths and ears, ready to listen/speak to the man in the upper-left corner

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<sup>62</sup> Murata Masahiro’s catalog entry in Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 95.



of the composition, who is seemingly taking an oath to announce his commitment to the new “democratic” age. The three women thereby can be interpreted as referring to the Japanese people’s process of awakening to the new “democracy.” If this interpretation is plausible, such a sequential depiction of human bodies in *Like Weeds I* may shed light on Kitagawa’s inspiration from Jose Clemente Orozco’s (1883-1949) famous mural *The Trench* (fig. 4.11, 1926) painted in the National Preparatory School in Mexico City, which shows three soldiers of different physical/psychological strength in the midst of the revolutionary battles. Overall, *Like Weed I* manifests Kitagawa’s hope for a new democratic age, but the line of women holding babies in the background also implies an irreparable wartime loss—the deaths of their spouses. The two trails of smoke of uneven length and strength arising from the chimneys further accentuate such an ambivalence of the early postwar period of Japan, in which the wartime devastation was still a vivid collective memory.

Around 1950, Kitagawa moved away from his realism epitomized by the aforementioned Latin phrase *Vae victis* to experiment with a more expressive approach reminiscent of Rufino Tamayo’s (1899-1991) combination of the surreal and the crude, characterized by deformed human motifs and the flatness of the pictorial space. Although Tamayo was known for his aversion toward artists’ use of explicit political/social elements, Kitagawa drew on Tamayo’s style to enrich his expressions of “art for people” in his muralist painting. *Kiln* (fig. 4.12, 1950) is one such example. In *Kiln*, the flat pictorial space from the center to the right, including the wall of the kiln and deformed workers’ figures attest to Kitagawa’s embrace of Tamayo’s aesthetics. In addition to his

interest in Tamayo, Kitagawa's reference here goes further back to ancient Mesoamerican archaeological objects. In postrevolutionary Mexico, with the renewed awareness of Mexican national identity based on the indigenous cultural heritage, pre-Columbian motifs became one of the staple sources of inspiration for painters and muralists like Diego Rivera.

In *Kiln*, while the human figures working in front of the kiln are reminiscent of pre-Columbian figurines, Kitagawa also looks at contemporary social contexts. As I will discuss later in this chapter, unlike the human motifs appearing in archaeological ruins in Mexico and Central America, Kitagawa's figures in *Kiln* hardly are an alluring object of contemplation, but grotesquely depicted in order to create a visual link to workers in contemporary ceramic factories. Moreover, in view of Kitagawa's symbolic rendering of the kiln, this painting could be seen as a visualization of *Mahō no tsubo* (Magic vase, 1942), Kitagawa's illustrated book I discussed in Chapter Three. In *Mahō no tsubo*, he asserts that the genuine magic rests in the earnest collaboration of many anonymous workers using the kilns. By focusing on the kiln as a powerful metaphor of the virtue of working-class culture, Kitagawa expanded the scope of his social critique beyond cultural borders, which referenced both contemporary Japan and ancient Mexico.

After the mid 1950s, Kitagawa's social critique in painting gained a severer and even poignant tone, which manifested his deep disappointment about contemporary Japanese society. In January 1955, Kitagawa travelled to Mexico and spent about eleven months there. During his visit, his fresh impression of the Mexican landscape after a long time away stimulated him to produce a number of paintings with revived interest in

Postimpressionism such as *Outskirts of Jalapa, Mexico* (fig. 4.13, 1955).<sup>63</sup> In addition, on his way back to Japan, Kitagawa travelled through the United States, Europe (France, Spain, and Italy), Egypt, Iran, and India, arriving back in Japan as late as May 1956. One noteworthy event during Kitagawa's visits to these countries was his strong impression of Fernand Léger (1881-1955) in Paris. Kitagawa applauded Léger's works as a vigorous statement about the tragic fate of contemporary human civilization. His appraisal of Léger was in great contrast to the common opinion among Japanese art venues where there was a relative disinterest in Léger's work during the 1950s.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, what probably affected Kitagawa's thought even more profoundly on his trip than his "discovery" of Léger was the observation of how ordinary people lived in the countries he visited, especially those in Europe, and the conviction that in these societies "democratic" culture had taken root in a much firmer way than in Japan's case.<sup>65</sup> Probably Kitagawa found these countries to be mirror images of the post-1945 Japanese "democratic" regime and reinforced his long-held concern about the precariousness of Japan's "democracy." One striking painting in which Kitagawa expressed his disillusionment about contemporary Japan is *Sand Factory*, painted in 1959

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<sup>63</sup> Because these paintings encapsulate Kitagawa's renewed encounter with a geographical environment left many years ago, they might be compared to his watercolors from the late 1930s made immediately after his return to Japan, which I discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>64</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji and Kubo Sadajirō, "Sengo kokusaishakai to bijutsu no dōkō ni tsuite," originally published in *Bijutsu Techō* (July 1956), in Kubo, *Kitagawa Tamiji*, 112-113.

<sup>65</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, "Atarashii bijutsu kyōiku e no kitai," originally published in *Atarashii jidōga kōza* vol. 3, ed. Kokusai Jidō Bijutsu Kenkyūkai (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1957), in Kitagawa, *Yūtopia*, 166-167.

(fig. 4.14). The painting depicts the interior view of Seto's ceramic factory and its workers through his interpretation of Léger's "tragic" machine aesthetics, which is most evident in the use of tubular forms and their geometric adaptation into pictorial space. Submitted to the Fifth Japan International Art Exhibition (Tokyo Biennale) in 1959, *Sand Factory* evidences Kitagawa's eagerness to experiment with Léger's "tragic" style. However, what is more important, in *Sand Factory*, Kitagawa depicted Seto's ceramic workers in an unprecedentedly inexpressive and robotic way; they appear as if they were trapped inside the factory's imposing structure.<sup>66</sup> Kitagawa's dehumanized representation of Seto's ceramic artisans becomes clear when *Sand Factory* is compared to his previous paintings already discussed, such as the *Like Weeds* series (fig. 4.6-4.8); in these paintings, the workers are portrayed as the proactive subject of resistance and social engagement. In other words, while Kitagawa's paintings before the 1950s often express hope for the workers' active commitment to a forthcoming "democratic" social change, those produced after that point are often charged with strong disillusionment with post-1945 Japanese social reality.

Kitagawa's critique of the Japanese public's political apathy conveyed by *Sand Factory*'s mechanical factory operators appears to be even more palpable if we return to

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<sup>66</sup> In addition to depicting the Japanese public's political apathy, Kitagawa's denunciation of the "dehumanization" of Japanese society in *Sand Factory* anticipated his other series of paintings produced in the early 1960s, such as *Flowers and Chimneys*, which draw attention to the destruction of the ecological environment increasingly perceptible during these years. Toward the end of the 1950s, diseases caused by the emission of toxic chemicals in the air or water in newly industrialized areas such as Yokkaichi and Minamata drew public attention as the negative consequences of Japan's rapid economic growth. These diseases are known in Japan as the four big pollution diseases.

his mural *Ceramic Walls and Potters* discussed in the previous section, painted in the same year for Seto's Civic Hall (fig. 4.3, 1959). Installed in a public space, *Ceramic Walls and Potters* demonstrates Kitagawa's utopian portrayal of working-class people through the insertion of Mexican bodies. His rendering of Seto's ceramic workers in two utterly different manners at the same point of his career requires some explanation. I would argue that the dissimilarity between *Sand Factory* and *Ceramic Walls and Potters* testifies to the difficulty Kitagawa faced in producing politically explicit Mexican-style murals in post-1945 Japanese urban spaces. Indeed, considering his negative commentaries on Japanese people's lack of "democratic" spirit after his Mexican trip, the images crystallized in *Ceramic Walls and Potters* are overly harmonious and optimistic. Perhaps, as *Ceramic Walls and Potters* was one of his long-sought chances for mural production, Kitagawa opted for emphasizing his personal affection toward Seto's landscape and residents rather than critical observation of the Japanese people's conservative mentality. As suggested earlier, Kitagawa saw murals as a vehicle for a painter's ideological vision put in a dynamic dialogue with the viewers, yet such politically assertive expressions were hardly accepted in post-1945 Japan, much less in the form of public murals. Faced with the predominantly apolitical conception of modernism in Japanese art during the Cold War, Kitagawa's straightforward social critique was crystallized only in *Sand Factory*, a muralist painting whose message reached a range of audiences much narrower than the case of public murals.

During the 1960s, Kitagawa began to work more frequently on concrete social/political themes in his muralist painting. *The White and Black* (fig. 4.15, 1960) was

painted after he was informed of the confrontation between the police force and student protesters rallying against the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. The largest civil protest in Japanese history, the Anti-Security Treaty Movement was triggered after the Liberal Democratic Party's forceful maneuver to pass the bill in May 1960. The movement involved university students and ordinary citizens wary of Japan's future involvement in war catastrophes through the actions of U.S. military forces stationed in Japan. In this heated political climate, *The White and Black* was reproduced in the front cover of the October twenty-third edition of *Asahi Journal* weekly. In his commentaries on the painting in *Asahi Journal*, Kitagawa states that he was excited to see these students' active participation in political protests and immediately sat down to paint *The White and Black* without much planning or attention to formal aesthetic matters.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike the violent confrontations that took place in front of the National Diet Building and many university campuses in Tokyo from 1959 to 1960, the scene illustrated in *The White and Black* is rather static. This overall sense of silence, coupled with the human figures filling up the composition, evokes Diego Rivera's postrevolutionary murals, for instance, *The Arsenal* (fig. 4.16), painted in the Secretariat of Public Education in 1928. Probably one striking element in *The White and Black* is the young protesters' off-focused gaze; it seems that their minds belong anywhere but here. Unlike human motifs in many postrevolutionary Mexican murals including the aforementioned Diego Rivera piece, what the protesters in *The White and Black* are captivated by does not seem

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<sup>67</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji. "Konshū no hyōshi: Shiro to kuro," *Asahi Journal* (October 23 1960): page unknown.

so much to be the immediate scene of political confrontation as their own imagination projected on some far-off utopia.

As just mentioned, Kitagawa was delighted to see the Japanese people's active participation in the Anti-Security Treaty movement. Perhaps, in the face of the massive political protest in Tokyo, Kitagawa recalled his good old days in Mexico, where the concretization of his ideals—democracy and human liberation—did not seem too far off. As suggested earlier, Kitagawa's frustration with the Japanese public's lack of democratic mindset was reinforced after his overseas trip from 1955 to 1956. While Kitagawa expresses renewed hope in the face of the collective protest in 1960, the adolescents' distant gaze in *White and Black* seems to affirm that his delight was never unconditional; Kitagawa's ambivalence about the fate of post-1945 Japanese democracy was so persistent that even in making a positive portrayal of the political manifestation in his native soil, he saw no options but to make reference to his Mexican memories.

Kitagawa further employed Mexican motifs as a means of questioning the social conservatism and political apathy among the Japanese public into the 1960s. *The Twentieth Saddest Night* (fig. 4.17), painted in 1965, is an outstanding example of these paintings. While Kitagawa had done several funeral scenes throughout his career, this painting is noteworthy as it associates the funeral theme with contemporary social contexts. Moreover, painted in 1965, which was the twentieth anniversary of the end of the Asia-Pacific War, it could be inferred that Kitagawa entitled this painting as such in

order to mourn the “death” of Japanese democracy.<sup>68</sup> If this interpretation is viable, the dead young boy laid out on the altar, smiling and covered by flowers, may represent the Japanese nation, where the postwar democracy “failed” to take root before its maturity.

While *The Twentieth Saddest Night* poses a severe critique of Japanese democracy, the sense of despair might be softened when the viewer captures the painting’s other layer of reference, being the Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*), which is a vital celebration in contemporary Mexican culture. Kitagawa’s allusion to this celebration is substantiated by his insertion of the large Calla lily and other multi-colored flowers in the center of the composition, which links the image to the altars called *ofrenda* decorated by food, the cross, flowers, etc. The Day of the Dead celebration is said to have originated in Aztec indigenous rituals over hundreds of years ago, but was given an emblematic importance as one of the nation-wide festivities in the middle of emerging nationalism during the postrevolutionary reconstruction era.<sup>69</sup> After the 1920s, The Day of the Dead became one of the key symbols of Mexican culture, particularly among foreign visitors to the country, as it came to epitomize the Mexican public’s “unique” conception of death that is not only sorrowful and desperate but also lively and humorous. Indeed, the celebration is accompanied by traditional music and colorful decorations including the amusing representation of *calavera* (skeleton) in the forms of dolls and traditional sweets. In

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<sup>68</sup> My argument here is based on the catalog entry for *The Twentieth Saddest Night* in Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, 129.

<sup>69</sup> For a recent study on the Day of the Dead celebration and its changing significance and interpretation, see Stanley Brandes, *Skulls to the Living, Bread to the Dead: The Day of the Dead in Mexico and Beyond* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2007).



summary, due to the ambivalent treatment of “death,” the Day of the Dead in Mexico was often linked to the unusual conception of death more in terms of regeneration than extinction, which is allegedly deemed “unique” in Mexican popular life. Probably, in *The Twentieth Saddest Night*, in addition to Mexican pastors and indigenous women showing their grief over the man’s death, Kitagawa inserted the multicolored flowers in order to offset the tragic and hopeless sense of the funeral.

Kitagawa’s muralist paintings illuminate his conceptions of murals as a vehicle for the artist’s social critique and political commitment, probably in a way much clearer than his completed public murals. Compared to his murals discussed in the previous section, Kitagawa’s muralist painting is not only more direct in its critique, but also visualizes his perception of Mexico in terms of the emerging anti-colonial notion of culture more directly. In this sense, Kitagawa’s muralist painting is a notable outcome of his complex process of negotiation in order to translate his ethnographic knowledge of Mexico into post-1945 Japanese social/art venues.

### **Post-1945 Japanese Artists and Mexico as Cultural Other**

In this section, I will highlight the significance of Kitagawa’s narrative of Mexico by comparing it with that of some other post-1945 Japanese artists. Kitagawa was not the only Japanese artist attracted to Mexico. Through the first large scale Mexican art show, the *Exhibition of Mexican Art* (Tokyo National Museum, 1955), many Japanese artists were introduced for the first time to the major artwork from Mexico, ancient, modern and

contemporary.<sup>70</sup> Deeply impressed by Mexican art's "vitality" or "primordial" powers tightly associated with the country's ancient and indigenous heritage, or its radical challenge to the normative conceptions of modernism in Europe, dozens of Japanese artists not only made Mexican-inspired artwork, but also travelled to Mexico in search of inspiration. While this "Mexico boom" in the Japanese art world faded out rather quickly, two figures are outstanding for their relatively long-term and influential engagement with Mexican culture: Toneyama Kōjin and Okamoto Tarō.

Toneyama Kōjin was born in Ibaraki prefecture and emerged in the early 1950s as one of the Reportage painters, a group of Japanese artists who sought art's link to peasants' and workers' social struggles with a pronounced interest in realistic documentation.<sup>71</sup>

Toneyama was first introduced to Mexican art at the *Exhibition of Mexican Art*, in which he was captivated by the ancient and folkloric pieces brought in great quantities from the country. Toneyama went to Mexico in 1959 and repeated his visit there over six times before his death in 1992, producing a large amount of writing and artwork on Mexican themes. As one of the most active artists in the Reportage movement, Toneyama advocated artists' direct and constructive contribution to society, but his fascination with Mexican ancient/folkloric objects in the *Exhibition* somehow seems to have changed his

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<sup>70</sup> As I mentioned in footnote 11, the *Exhibition of Mexican Art* marked the crucial turning point in Japanese artists' understanding of Mexican art. For instance, see Takiguchi Shūzō et al. "Mekishiko Bijutsu-ten o megutte," "Ware ware wa Mexico bijutsu o kōmiru," *Bijutsu Hihyō* (October 1955): 7-26.

<sup>71</sup> Reportage painter's interest in the peasants' and workers' struggle was closely linked to the political circumstances in early 1950s Japan often oppressive to the nation's marginalized population. For a recent study of Reportage Painting, See Toba Kōji, *1950 nendai: kiroku no jidai* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2010), 47-76.

posture. More concretely, in his narrative of Mexico, Toneyama's emphasis goes more often to the alluring notion of the cultural Other as an idealistic means of denouncing the "corrupt" state of the West-centered industrialized world than the necessity of artists' confrontation with specific social problems. In the epilogue to his essay on his Mexican trip entitled *Chakku no warai: mikai no kuni, bunmei no kuni* (Chaac's Smile: Country of Primitiveness and Civilization. Chaac is the Maya rain deity), Toneyama says that his trip was a sort of pilgrimage.

(I was) strongly attracted by a place where the crush of the primitiveness and civilization sharply reverberates. This (book) is a record of my pilgrimage, of my travel experience that reflected on from what standpoint (we should) contemplate the shock on the modern civilization at an impasse and in which manner we can attack it. This is the reason why I chose Mexico as my first destination.<sup>72</sup>

Probably Toneyama's sense of crisis about the state of "modern civilization" was his response to the negative effect of Japan's rapid industrialization, which was becoming palpable by the 1960s, as the public became increasingly aware of ongoing environmental deterioration and the human "alienation" in industrialized society.

At any rate, as implied in the last sentence of his above statement, Mexico was not the only destination for Toneyama's "pilgrimage." After the 1960s, he also visited other non-Western countries, such as India, to admire the vestiges of ancient civilization in these countries and the vibrancy he found in ordinary people's everyday lives. To

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<sup>72</sup> Toneyama Kōjin, *Chakku no warai: mikai no kuni, bunmei no kuni* (Tokyo: Sansaisha, 1961), 165.

Toneyama, Mexico was probably one of the world's destinations that fulfilled his longing for the cultural Other and an alternative and less destructive mode of human existence untouched by "modern civilization at an impasse." In narrating Mexican culture, what Toneyama emphasized was its "vitality," which he saw most substantially embodied by the country's ancient and folklore traditions. He wrote the following about the *Exhibition of Mexican Art*:

The appeal of Mexican art rests in its strong vitality that overwhelms (the viewer), which was filled with a flame-like folkloric smell deeply rooted in Mexican climate...my expectation about the Mexican exhibition this time is directed toward local and folkloric objects, which were said to be sent (to Japan) in a large number apart from (modern/contemporary) paintings. I want to see how Mexican life and climate breathes in the intense folkloric smell, which is greasy and more than just odious, and how different it is from Japan.<sup>73</sup>

Toneyama's abiding fascination with Mexico's "vitality" or "flame-like folkloric smell" expressed above is recurrent in his artworks after the 1960s, as well as in his essays and travelogues written during the decade including the aforementioned *Chakku no warai*.

One of Toneyama's works that eloquently embodies his fascination with Mexican culture's "vitality" is *Eagle* (fig. 4.18, 1960), a painting that depicts the symbolic icon of an eagle about to devour a human heart found in the stone reliefs from the major Mayan ruins in Southeastern Mexico, including Chichén Itzá. It is possible to assume that *Eagle*

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<sup>73</sup> Toneyama Kōjin, "Kyōryoku na baitarī," *Bijutsu Techō* (October 1955): 86-87.

was painted based on Toneyama's sketches made at some of these archaeological sites, as he visited Mexico for the first time in 1959, a year prior to the production of this painting. Compared to the serene and ornamental figure of the eagle carved into Chichén Itzá's stone relief, Toneyama's *Eagle* underlines the animal's fierceness, which seems to resonate with his strong investment in Mexico's ancient/folkloric traditions' "vitality." Toneyama also expressed his perception of "vitality" through a series of multicolored Surrealist compositions including *Carnival* (fig. 4.19, 1966), which depicts a village festival in Mexico adorned by traditional masks and dolls. All these festival attractions are in turn submerged under his expressive strokes of vivid colors that conjure up a flame-like dynamic explosion. These works by Toneyama, which resonate with his aforementioned narrative of "vitality," seem to reveal his effort to conceive Mexican culture as a cornerstone of his critique of "modern civilization." Nevertheless, by tightly associating the notion of "vitality" with a specific set of ancient and folkloric aesthetics in Mexico, Toneyama's artwork and writing idealize Mexican culture as a utopia unaffected by the "negative" consequences of the pursuit of industrialization and material progress in the "modern" societies. In other words, while Toneyama emphasizes his critical stance toward "modern civilization," his interest in Mexican culture was largely limited to its archaic and premodern dimensions that fit his nostalgic search for the cultural Other. In this sense, Toneyama's prolific writing and artwork about Mexico reinforced, rather than questioned the prevailing perceptions of Mexico in post-1945 Japan as the distant and bright tropical country.

Another influential Japanese artist intrigued by Mexican culture is Okamoto Tarō. Although Okamoto's awareness of Mexico dates back to his youth in Paris during the 1930s, his first visit to the country was as late as 1963 when, recommended by Toneyama, he stopped there on his way back from Europe to Japan. Okamoto's connection to Mexico strengthened after 1967, when he visited Latin America several times as the reporter of the Japanese television program *The New World: Okamoto Tarō Explores Latin America*.<sup>74</sup> Overall, Okamoto's perception of Mexico is quite parallel to Toneyama's in that Okamoto was strongly drawn to the country's ancient folkloric tradition's "primordial" (*kongenteki*) aesthetics and human "vigor."<sup>75</sup> One of the notable dimensions of Okamoto's narrative of Mexico, however, is his apprehension of the so-called "unique" notion of death in popular Mexican life discussed earlier. In the period 1968 to 1969, commissioned by the Mexican entrepreneur Manuel Suarez, Okamoto energetically worked on the mural *Myth of Tomorrow* (fig. 4.20) in Mexico City, which took a nuclear catastrophe as its theme. The largest of Okamoto's works, *Myth of Tomorrow* demonstrates his inspiration from Surrealism, Picassoid deformation of pictorial elements as well as Primitivist inclination, but what captures the viewer's attention most is the standing skeleton, which is his reference to Mexican *calavera*. Okamoto was excited to observe that, while painting *Myth of Tomorrow* in Mexico City, the image of the skeleton in the mural, which could

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<sup>74</sup> Noya, Fumiaki, "Kōen: Isamu Noguchi, Okamoto Tarō to Mekishiko," *Rikkyō Daigaku Raten Amerika Kenkyūjohō* 34 (2005): 61.

<sup>75</sup> Okamoto Tarō, interview by Haryū Ichirō, "Banpaku no shisō," in *Taidanshū: Okamoto Tarō hatsugen!*, eds. Okamoto Tarō and Kawasaki Okamoto Tarō Bijutsukan (Tokyo: Nigensha, 2004), 165-167.

have been interpreted scandalously as a symbol of evil and bad luck in Japan or Europe, never received any unfavorable response.<sup>76</sup>

Probably, as Noya Fumiaki points out, Okamoto's interest in the alleged ambivalence to the notion of death in Mexican culture, which he took as its remarkable capacity of converting the negative into positive, was the central motive for his inclusion of *calavera* in *Myth of Tomorrow*.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of Okamoto's notable integration of *calavera* into his work, rather than further meditating on the "uniquely" Mexican notion of death, the mural's explosive color and sense of dynamic movement seem to emphasize what he calls the "primordial" force comparable to Toneyama's notion of "vitality." Like Toneyama, Okamoto often argued that modern Western thought and society were "at an impasse."<sup>78</sup> In this context, the conception of Mexico in terms of the "naturally overflowing sense of life and aesthetics" rooted in "primordial earth" must have seemed to him a potential remedy to the "deadlock" of modernity in the Western world.<sup>79</sup> Thus, like the case of Toneyama, in Okamoto's narrative, Mexican culture is defined primarily by the characteristics oppositional to those of the "modern" world, that is, the palpable sense of being rooted in "primordial earth" and unrestrained human "vigor" he saw having been lost in the "civilized" countries like Japan and France.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Okamoto Tarō, "Uchū o tobu me," in Okamoto Tarō, *Uchū o tobu me, Okamoto Tarō no hon* vol. 5 (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō, 2000), 130.

<sup>77</sup> Noya, 61.

<sup>78</sup> See for instance, Okamoto Tarō interviewed by Haryū Ichirō, 164-167.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, Okamoto enthusiastically commented on his Mexican trips, which also inspired his other representative project the *Tower of the Sun*, a gigantic outdoor sculpture that served as the symbolic monument for the Universal Exposition in Osaka that was inaugurated in 1970 (fig. 4.21).<sup>81</sup> In his 1972 essay, Okamoto describes Mexico as follows:

Mexico—I go there often for my work, but every time it (appears to me to be) a dazzling world. Everything flourishes in this climate. I feel that life balloons and pulses without hesitation. It is poor, but spiritually noble and rich. I perceive human charm (in Mexico) much more than in so-called developed countries. In contrast to such vividness in the popular class, modern painting in Mexico is rather dark and heavy. It can be said rustic. I suppose there is an influence of nineteenth-century Western art, but might there be a shade of revolution?<sup>82</sup>

Okamoto's comment not only reveals his perception of Mexico as a "poor" undeveloped country or more human utopia but also implies his general disinterest in the history of modern Mexican art.<sup>83</sup> At any rate, Okamoto's narrative of Mexico coupled with his

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<sup>81</sup> As for Okamoto's Mexican inspiration in his production of the *Tower of the Sun*, see Bert Winther-Tamaki, "To Put on a Big Face: The Globalist Stance of Okamoto Tarō's *Tower of the Sun* for the Japan World Exposition, 1970," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 23 (December 2011): 81-101.

<sup>82</sup> Okamoto Tarō, "Shikeirosu to gendai bijutsu hihan," *Mizue* 811 (August 1972): pages unknown. Available at [http://www.promo-arte.com/jpn/press/taro\\_text.html](http://www.promo-arte.com/jpn/press/taro_text.html)

<sup>83</sup> Generally speaking, the "dark" tendencies in Mexican painting appearing after the Revolution were the artists' response to the drastic postrevolutionary social change and their search for the country's "native" motifs. These artists deliberately detached themselves from the legacies of European academicism that dominated Mexican art institutions during the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship. Considering these predominant tendencies in postrevolutionary Mexican art,



nostalgic reflection on “primordial” human existence lacks the critical recognition that these “premodern” human communities were in effect a subordinate component of the “modern” world following the West’s colonial expansion over these people’s cultural terrains. Like Toneyama, by defining Mexican culture as an entity essentially divorced from the realities of modern/contemporary “developed” countries, Okamoto’s purported critique of “modern civilization” remained at a rudimentary level; his narrative discards the possibility of using Mexican experience as a means of far-reaching and effective critique of the asymmetrical political and economic power relationship in the contemporary West-dominated global world.

During the 1960s, while Toneyama and Okamoto were fascinated by Mexican culture’s “vitality” or “primordial” human energy through their frequent visits there, Kitagawa, as discussed in the previous section, continued to produce his muralist paintings that embodied his anti-colonial inspiration. In *Kiln* (fig. 4.12), just like Toneyama’s *Eagle* (fig. 4.18), Kitagawa incorporated Mesoamerican archaeological motifs, which was mediated by his knowledge of Rufino Tamayo’s use of pre-Columbian aesthetics. In this muralist painting, however, the human motifs derived from the ancient Mesoamerican iconography were put in motion as a metaphor of living indigenous people or industrial workers in contemporary Japan, Seto’s ceramic factories in particular. In contrast to Toneyama’s admiration of Mexico’s “vitality” paradoxically dissociated from the immediacy of the contemporary global politics, Kitagawa’s use of Mexican

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Okamoto’s statement about the “influence of...Western art” and “shade of the Revolution” lacks clarity and precision.

archaeological elements aimed at a more concrete social critique; it takes the multiple historical/geographical terrains—ancient and postrevolutionary Mexico and contemporary Japan in particular—as mutually interconnected realities within global modernity. By betraying the Japanese people’s common expectations of seeing exotic/curious cultural otherness in these archaeological motifs, Kitagawa here aims at an alternative representation of Mexico; *Kiln* is more responsive to the politically asymmetrical conditions of culture within the mid-twentieth-century world, in which the Japanese people’s narrative of cultural otherness was deeply embedded.

Like Okamoto, on the other hand, Kitagawa was well aware of the ambivalent notion of death in popular Mexican life, which was already mentioned in my analysis of *The Twentieth Saddest Night* (fig. 4.17). However, probably in a way more profoundly than Okamoto, Kitagawa meditated on Mexican culture’s embrace of the darker side of human reality, including death. In fact, as suggested in Chapter Three, arguing against the widespread stereotype of Mexico in Japan as a bright tropical country, Kitagawa often said that Mexico is a “grey-colored,” somewhat “religious,” and “tragic” country.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, on another occasion Kitagawa stated that the Mexicans are “philosophical” people “much more mature as humans” than the contemporary Japanese.<sup>85</sup> Kitagawa’s statements resonate with his perception of EPAL students as critical agents capable of acute reflections on their harsh social reality, or his view of Mexico as a site of human

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<sup>84</sup> Kitagawa, *Kodomo no e to kyōiku*, 71.

<sup>85</sup> Kitagawa Tamiji, “Seto no oka de,” originally published in *Asahi Shinbun*, July 1960, in Kitagawa, *Roba*, 43-44.

intelligence expressed in his illustrated book *Astute Rabbit*.<sup>86</sup> *The Twentieth Saddest Night* is the painting that most clearly demonstrates Kitagawa's deep meditation on the common metaphor of death in Mexican society. As already discussed, the main theme of this muralist painting is the "death" of the democratic ideal in Japan after twenty years had passed since the end of the Asia-Pacific War. In this painting, rather than confining his interest to Mexico's folkloric traditions, Kitagawa uses the alleged subtlety and complexity in the "Mexican" perception of death in order to crystallize his hope and despair about post-1945 Japanese society. Unlike Okamoto, by defining the postrevolutionary Mexicans as people "mature" or more "advanced" in their formulation of modernity and democracy, Kitagawa took Mexican culture as a case that would provide critical lessons to the post-1945 Japanese.

In the midst of the social conservatism and depoliticization of the artistic avant-garde in post-1945 Japan, the images expressed in both *Kiln* and *Twentieth Saddest Night* eventually were not realized as murals and thus their audience was largely limited to those who viewed Nikakai shows, including people in Kitagawa's circle of associates. Unlike Toneyama's and Okamoto's depiction/narrative of Mexico as an idealized utopia full of human "vitality," Kitagawa's muralist painting generally deviates from the Japanese public's common understanding of Mexico as an exotic cultural Other. To be sure, Toneyama's and Okamoto's artistic investments in Mexico were enormous and worth substantial art historical scholarship. However, by dealing with the specific range of "native" aesthetics, Toneyama's and Okamoto's artworks and texts fitted in with the

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<sup>86</sup> Kitagawa, *Usagi no mimi*.

Japanese public's nostalgic conception of Mexican culture, rather than focusing on the Mexican public's struggle for decolonization and democratization of culture and the possible lessons Japanese society could learn from it. Their perception of Mexico in terms of human "vitality" reinforced, rather than questioned their taken-for-granted self-image as artists from the "civilized" First World Japan, values which Kitagawa's art and pedagogy pretended to relativize.

### **Translating Culture through Ethnographic Knowledge**

Kitagawa's experimental pedagogy and production of murals and muralist painting were both based on his use of ethnographic knowledge, or his perception of postrevolutionary Mexico in terms of the emerging anti-colonial notion of culture inherently incommensurable with the mainstream social discourse of post-1945 Japan. In his pedagogy, by taking painting as a fundamental tool of observation and interpretation of the quotidian world, Kitagawa insisted on exposing his students to the immediate environment in order to elicit their unfettered creativity. As an artist, Kitagawa conceived murals as an outstanding art form capable of guiding the public's consciousness toward the ideal of a new participatory democratic society. In both cases, Kitagawa's assertions championed art's close link to the broader society, the link that was taken for granted in 1920s Mexico. By embracing his Mexican experience, Kitagawa's effort not only questioned widespread political apathy, but also signaled an alternative and more positive account of the non-Western cultural Other in post-1945 Japan.

In examining Kitagawa's attempt at translating his Mexican experience through his art and pedagogy, it is worth mentioning that in both of his activities he used unconventional strategies to make his cultural translation less conflictive. In his Higashiyama Zoo school, Kitagawa chose an isolated zoo environment for his classes rather than taking his students to the immediate social spaces from the outset. As a painter, faced with the lack of opportunities to paint murals, Kitagawa crystallized mural aesthetics and subjects in large-format painting suitable for exhibition in conventional art venues—galleries and museums. Kitagawa's strategies encapsulate the complexity inherent in the negotiation of cultural difference in the twentieth-century world, in which a narrative of the cultural Other was still constrained by the conventional colonizer's perspective. As discussed throughout this chapter, Kitagawa's dilemma in the face of the incommensurability of his Mexican experience was concomitant to his critical position toward the ideologies of Western modernity. His act of translation in post-1945 Japan showcases the widespread tension between emerging ethnographic awareness and the unilateral discourse of Western/Japanese modernity predicated upon the demarcation of boundaries between "modern" Self and "premodern/backward" cultural Other.

Eventually, Kitagawa could not fully achieve his initial goal of theorizing and putting into practice his Mexican experience in Japan through art and pedagogy, but his projects were a valuable and inspiring challenge to the conservative social parameters of post-1945 Japanese society. Rather than drawing on any fixed stereotypes or static notion of the cultural Other in terms of backwardness or exoticism, Kitagawa saw in Mexico a crucial reference point in relativizing the taken-for-granted premises of post-1945

Japanese modernity. Kitagawa's activities posed a significant critique toward the Japanese public's limited purview of the global world in the latter half of the twentieth century under the persistent the impact of the Cold War.

## CONCLUSION

Kitagawa Tamiji's thought and practices were strongly charged by his sense of estrangement from the mainstream ideologies of Western modernity that informed the political and social institutions of the early twentieth-century metropolises, including Tokyo and New York. His physical and psychological move away from these "centers" of modernity and modernization led him to a critical meditation on the unilateral Eurocentric perspective of nationalism, socio-economic progress and imperialist expansion. Due to his ironical position, Kitagawa valued the experience of cultural minorities. As pointed out in Chapters Two and Four, Kitagawa's art and pedagogy in postrevolutionary Mexico and post-1945 Japan could be understood as the production and use of ethnographic knowledge. According to the normative anthropological usage of the term ethnography, ethnographic knowledge means knowledge generated as a result of an ethnographer's participant observation and writing. However, based on the definition of the term put forward by James Clifford and his contemporary anthropologists, ethnographic knowledge deals with the experiences of the Other that are inherently incompatible with the normative West-centered discourse of modernity. Kitagawa's thought and practices constantly undermined the conventional stereotypes of the non-Western cultural Other in the United States, Mexico and Japan.

Kitagawa's life and career corresponded to the era in which the basic premises of modernity in the West gradually fell apart, as they were being increasingly questioned among underrepresented "native" people. As discussed throughout this dissertation, Kitagawa saw two significant waves in the movement for decolonization around the globe

during his lifetime. First, the search for cultural autonomy among African Americans and postrevolutionary Mexicans in the first decades of the twentieth century were part of massive anti-colonial resistance throughout the Western hemisphere. Travelling and living in the United States, Cuba, and Mexico from the 1920s to 1930s, Kitagawa was captivated by minorities' struggles, as they illuminated a new way of conceiving the early twentieth-century modern world. Second, Kitagawa's time in post-1945 Japan witnessed the sweeping movements for national independence among the people in former European/Japanese colonies in Asia and Africa. Indeed, due to the conservative social atmosphere in Japan during the Cold War, Kitagawa's effort of translating his Mexican-inspired anti-colonial notion of culture through art and pedagogy hardly met its initial goal. Nevertheless, from a broader transnational viewpoint, his thought and activities quite faithfully embodied the aforementioned waves of anti-colonialism, in a way that resonated with the current scholarly discussions of Postcolonialism that originated in the seminal works of Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Edward Said, and others.<sup>1</sup>

Kitagawa's use of ethnographic knowledge based on his Mexican experience was outstanding against the backdrop of the dominant agenda of modernity in post-1945 Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> As briefly addressed in Chapter Three, the publication that pioneered postcolonial critique in the humanities and social sciences was Said's *Orientalism*. On the other hand, another key historical figure in today's postcolonial studies is the Afro-Caribbean philosopher Frantz Fanon (1925-1961). Born in Martinique under the French colonial rule, or a society starkly marked by racial inequality and discrimination, Fanon critically observed the psychological ambivalence faced by African descendants as a racial minority within the West-dominated modern world. His works such as *Black Skin, White Masks* have had a permanent impact on today's scholars. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1968 [1952]).



As discussed in Chapter Four, due to the highly regulative discursive space under the impact of the Cold War, the post-1945 Japanese public rarely valued the experiences of the cultural Other in the contemporary so-called “Third World”—struggles for national independence and growing anti-colonial awareness. As many scholars have pointed out, today, even two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Japan still seems to be politically awkward in dealing with people outside the West, particularly those in the former colonies of the Japanese Empire within the Asian Continent. This is mainly because the legacies of the Cold War continue to cast a shadow on the Japanese public’s global purview.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Kitagawa’s art and pedagogy during the first three decades of post-1945 Japan are worth remembering today as they signaled an alternative view of non-Western otherness in Japan. Indeed, the anti-colonial notion of culture Kitagawa tried to put forward through his constant reference to Mexico was not really understood in the way he originally envisioned. But his Mexican-inspired pedagogy and effort of mural production demonstrate that he was one of the few Japanese intellectuals who thought and acted with a broad transnational agenda beyond the political/social parameters perpetuated under the Cold War regime.

Finally, as I described in Chapter Three, Kitagawa’s position in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War could be characterized as that of an internal émigré, who took a detached position toward his/her home country’s nationalistic enterprise. However, in addition to his

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<sup>2</sup> As suggested in Chapter Four, over the post-1945 decades the political impact of the Cold War considerably restricted the Japanese public’s perception of the global world. As scholars have revealed, Japan’s awkwardness in dealing with the non-Western cultural Other continues today, due to the enduring legacies of the Cold War and U.S. political hegemony in East Asia. See for instance, Morris-Suzuki and Yoshimi.

ironical ethnographic standing, Kitagawa devoted himself to an active intervention, or a difficult task of cultural translation negotiating the disadvantageous social/political conditions of his home country. Rather than simply pursuing his self-image as a cosmopolitan intellectual, Kitagawa actively worked together with the public— in particular children and adolescents in postrevolutionary Mexico and post-1945 Japan. Importantly, his art and education revolved around people within specific social-historical realities, whose ethics and worldview often resisted generalization and are difficult to translate within the dominant West-centered discourse of modernization and progress. As discussed in Chapter Four, Kitagawa's attempt of exercising his Mexican-based artistic/pedagogical projects in post-1945 Japan epitomized the complexity of cultural translation characteristic of the early to late twentieth-century world. If Kitagawa's art and pedagogy merit contemporary scholarly investigation, it is because of his earnest confrontation and negotiation with the difficulty of translation—or inherent incommensurability of the cultural Other's existence when narrated in another social context.

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