

Understanding the *Guanxi* Culture in Chinese Art Market: Okada Kosho and Shanghai Art World in the Late-nineteenth Century

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Shanghai art market had developed a strong international trade system since China was forced to have her gate ajar in the late-nineteenth century. In 1873, a Nagasaki doctor Okada Kosho (1821-1903) travelled to Shanghai and Suzhou. Thanks to the development of stochastic models for the analysis of social networks in contemporary statistics, the structure of Okada's guanxi (social connections) in Shanghai and Suzhou in the late nineteenth century can be represented by the model, which illustrated that Okada was connected with a few "bridges", including the Japanese artist Yasuda Rozan, Japanese Consulate Shinagawa Tadamichi, an official dispatched at the end of 1860s to Shanghai, Kumashiro Encho, and the prominent art collector of the Guoyun Chamber, and Gu Cheng, all of whom helped Okada Kosho to explore the Shanghai and Suzhou art world. Through the bridging ties spanned by these individuals, Okada interacted closely with a particular cluster of Chinese artists, art collectors and art dealers. This proved that the Chinese art community heavily relied on social connections of the "bridges" in advertising itself and spreading its reputation. This paper first outlines the Shanghai art market in the late nineteenth century based on Okada Kosho's Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou (1890). It then argues for the opportunity and limitation of building guanxi in the context of the Chinese art market. Finally, it suggests research approaches based on viewing the late-nineteenth-century Shanghai art market in this new way.

Keywords: Guanxi, connections, Okada Kosho, artist-diasporas, Shanghai art market

INTRODUCTION

During the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese calligraphy and painting market reached its peak. As the market mechanism for transactions in Chinese calligraphy and paintings became more sophisticated, clear market prices emerged, and fake works of art also appeared along with the booming art market. Many artists, including those among the "Four Monks" (Shi Tao (石濤, 1642-1708), Badashanren (八大山人, 1626-1705), Shi Xi (石溪, 1612-1692), Hong Ren (弘仁, 1610-1664)), the "Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou" (Jin Nong (金農, 1687-1763), Zheng Xie (鄭燮, 1693-1766), Huang Shen (黃慎, 1687-1772), Li Shan (李鱓, 1686-1762), Li Fangying (李方膺, 1695-1755), Wang Shishen (汪士慎, 1686-1759), Luo Pin (羅聘, 1733-1799), Gao Xiang (高翔, 1688-1754)), and the "Shanghai School of Painting", made a living by creating calligraphy and paintings. All participants in the art market at the time consciously saw themselves as art commodity producers.

The art market in the Qing Dynasty had two centers: Beijing and, at first, Yangzhou, which later moved to Shanghai. Yangzhou became China's largest commercial center during the Qianlong period (1736-1796)

due to its special geographical location and economic strength. After the Reign of Jiaqing (1796-1820), Yangzhou declined rapidly, and the opening of Shanghai re-established a center in the economically prosperous southeast region. Late-nineteenth-century Shanghai, being a center of commerce and a broad and deep pool for talents, not only enjoyed a diversified art development but also treated artworks as a commodity. Qing literati Wang Tao (王韜, 1828-1897) aptly described the situation of Shanghai in his *Miscellaneous Records on Shanghai* (瀛滬雜誌) at that time, saying

Shanghai was the center of the North and the South. It was a gathering place of literati. Most of the famous calligraphers and painters assembled therein, living in or near to the West Garden. After the turmoil caused by wars, they lived out of town. All were good at painting, writing and calligraphy in order to attain the fame of the Three Perfections¹ (Wang 1989, 70).

According to statistics published in the late nineteenth century, there were more than six hundred artists living in Shanghai, and more than half of them, including representatives of the Haipai (Shanghai School) artists Ren Xiong (任熊, 1820-1857), Zhao Zhiqian (趙之謙, 1829-1884), Ren Bonian (任伯年, 1839-1895), and Wu Changshuo (吳昌碩, 1842-1927) were from other cities. They utilized the emerging mass media to enhance their fame and participate in painting and calligraphy associations, guilds, letter and fan shops, and private gatherings to strengthen their social connections and promote sales of their artworks.

The art associations, guilds, letter and fan shops, or celebrities of Shanghai, acted as art agencies or art mediators in the art market of Shanghai and Suzhou. The letter and fan shop *Gu Xiangshi* (古香室), for example, established the reputation of Ren Bonian in East Asia by consigning his calligraphy and painting works for sale on commission, transferring customers' orders to him, and sponsoring his residence. These functions as an art dealer and guarantor for protecting the customers and artists exemplified why Chinese artists relied heavily on the referral of intermediaries, kin, and friends. The dialog between Ren Bonian, the shopkeepers of the *Gu Xiangshi*, Dai Yongbo (戴用柏) and Yang Runbo (楊伯潤, 1837-1911) proved these functions:

The shopkeeper of the shop [selling fan] ordered me to give a remuneration to Mr. Ren and ask him for a painting. A few months passed but he never drew anything. The shopkeeper suspected that I had lost the remuneration and so he could not receive the painting. He ordered me to ask Mr. Ren for the painting again. He will scourge me if I cannot complete the mission. Mr. Ren did not give me the painting and so I am crying (Shi 2006, 42-49).²

The story described how Dai and Yang Runbo coerced and bribed Ren to accomplish a commissioned painting. Apart from the above, it illustrated that the letter and fan shop played multiple roles in dealing with the trade of painting and calligraphy between painters and customers. The shop not only acted as an art dealer, but also performed as a guarantor for protecting the customers as well as the artists. This was why Chinese artists relied heavily on the referral of intermediaries, kin and friends.

The Chinese art market in the late-nineteenth century had its unique operating rules, and its mechanism was restricted by the social connections of the artists with the guilds, the art associations, the letter and fan shops, and celebrities of the city. Okada Kosho's (1821-1903) trip to Shanghai and Suzhou in 1873 elucidated the closed social connections of the Shanghai art world. His *Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou* (滬吳遊記, 1890) documented the activities of sixty-eight people with different social status, their relationships with Okada Kosho and their purposes of making friends, revealing a few key figures involved in this trip, such as Tang Yunmei (湯韻梅), Xu Gengyuan (徐耕園) and Yasuda Rozan (1830-1883). These figures all belonged to Chinese artist-diasporas in Japan who helped open up the Shanghai and Suzhou art world to Okada Kosho but also limited the number of Chinese artists he came into contact with.

This paper first outlines the Shanghai art market in the late nineteenth century based on Okada Kosho's *Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou* (1890). It then argues for the modernization of Shanghai art market by incorporating the modern concept of arts administration in the context of Chinese culture. Finally, it

suggests research approaches based on seeing the late-nineteenth-century Shanghai art market in this new way.

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND PAINTING MARKET IN SHANGHAI

The Shanghai art market developed a strong international trade system after China was forced to open its gates in the late 19th century to foreign powers (Zhang 1988:57). In June 1862, after two centuries of prohibition on intercourse with foreign countries by the Shogun authorities, the merchant ship *Senzaimaru* established a formal trading relationship with China. The trip was primarily aimed at market exploration, with commodity procurement being the next most important purpose (Okita 1943:85). This marked the beginning of Japan's active participation in international trade. The improvement of Sino-Japanese trade also created business opportunities for people in the art-related sector.

Based on information from the diaries, notes, and memoirs of the ship's crew, it appears that they were interested in Chinese antiques and artworks. The ship had a total of sixty-seven people on board: fifty-one Japanese and sixteen foreigners (Yan and Chen 2012). The Japanese crew consisted of officials and merchants from Nagasaki Kaisho (Chamber of Nagasaki), who organized the trip to Shanghai. The merchants included Matsudaya Bankichi, Nagaiya Kiyosuke and Tetuya Risuke. Additionally, a few deputies from different seigniors also joined the trip, including Nodomi Kaijiro (1844-1918) from the domain of Saga, Takasugi Shinsaku (1839-1867) from the domain of Choshu (which occupied the whole of modern-day Yamaguchi Prefecture), Nakura Shyoso (1822-1901) from the domain of Hamamatsu (a city located in western Shizuoka Prefecture), and Godai Tomoatsu from the domain of Satsuma (a province of Japan that is now in the western half of Kagoshima Prefecture on the island of Kyushu).

Apart from the Japanese crew, there were on board fifteen British individuals including the captain Richardson and his wife, who were hired to manage the ship. The Japanese lacked at that time the requisite knowledge to sail an ocean-going vessel (Fogel 2014:11-14).³ The owner of the ship was the only Dutch man present (Feng 2001:307), who Joshua Fogel identified as Theodorus Kroes (1822-1889), a Dutch businessman and vice-consul in Shanghai. Kroes served as an intermediary between the Japanese and the Chinese, as their respective country had not yet established official commercial relations at that time (Fogel 2014:19).

During their two-month stay in Shanghai, the Japanese crewmen engaged in various literary activities such as painting and calligraphy exchanges, chess-playing, writing and replying in poems, and antique trades. Nodomi Kaijiro observed the wide market for the trade of painting and calligraphy between the Japanese and Chinese in Shanghai, which was not found in the Sino-Western circle. He wrote:

Shanghai is an international treaty port for the West, but the calligraphy and painting and the scholar's four jewels (writing brush, ink stick, ink slab and paper) do not interest the Western people. So, Western merchants do not care about these things. Qing people heard that Japanese people treasure calligraphy and painting. [They] bring lots of books, hand scrolled works of paintings and calligraphy, hanging out paintings and calligraphy works and so on. [They] try hard to sell (Nodomi 2001:313).⁴

The broad market of antique trade has induced a problem of authenticity. For instance, in the book *Famous Sites along the Shen River Illustrated and Described*, which contains illustrations of Wu Youru (吳友如, ?-1894), there are some famous scenes of Shanghai related to the Japanese. One of the scenes depicts the Japanese authenticating a Chinese painting (Figure 1). The description of the picture shows that Kishida Ginko (1833-1905) and Yasuda Rozan were among the Japanese experts who excelled in authenticating Chinese artworks.

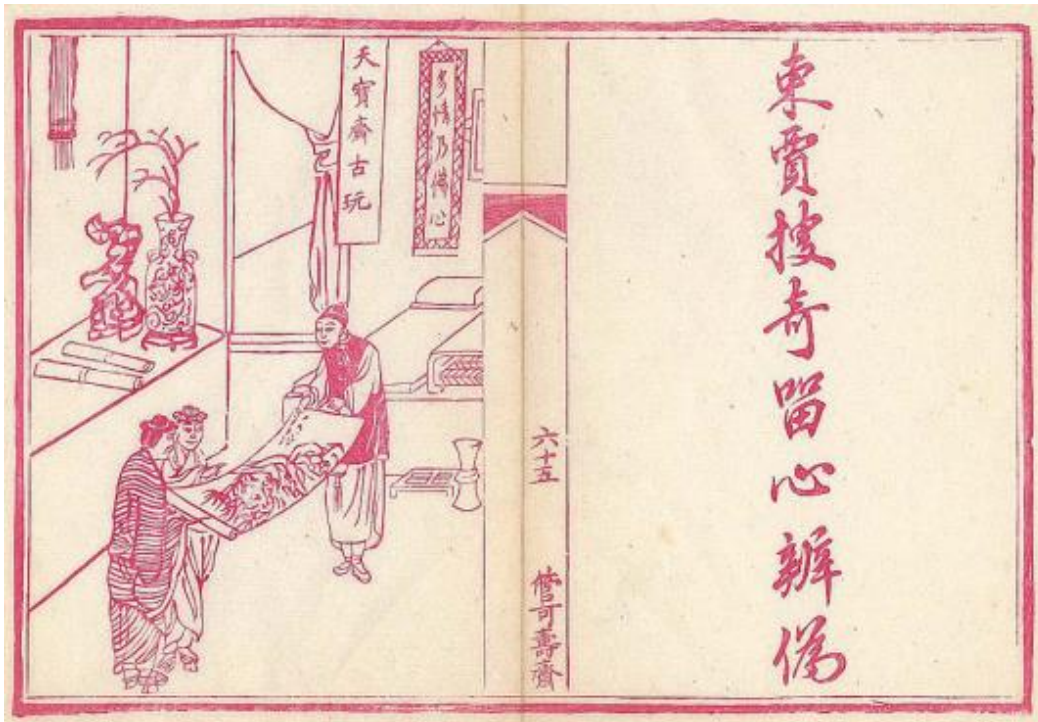


Figure 1. Wu Youru. Japanese authenticating a Chinese painting. Guanke Shouzhai, Shenjiang Mingsheng Tushuo, vol. 2, 64-65.

Nodomi Kaijiro, a Japanese art connoisseur, was known for his interest in Chinese art and his expertise in identifying authentic works. His experiences, as recounted in the book *Miscellanies of Shanghai* (上海雜記), illustrated this expertise of his. On one occasion, he engaged in a heated debate with sellers of Chinese artworks who claimed that their pieces were authentic. However, Nodomi was skeptical and accused the sellers of trying to pass off fake goods. He argued that all Japanese had a sharp eye and could easily spot fake artworks. The sellers attempted to persuade him that their pieces were genuine, but Nodomi remained unconvinced. He challenged them with a question, “How is it possible to cheat us?” Eventually, the sellers admitted that the artworks were indeed fake. Nodomi’s shrewdness and discernment in this situation was a testament to his deep knowledge of Chinese art and his ability to distinguish between authentic and fake pieces (Nodomi 200:313).

Moreover, Takasugi Shinsaku, being a Westernizer of the Japanese Enlightenment later on, also collected many Chinese works of art at that time. In his notes, “The Five Extracts on Sojourning in Qing China (游清五錄)”, he mentioned:

[The fifth month of the fourth year of the reign of Bunkyu] On the eighteenth day (June 14 in the Western calendar), rainy, the beginning of the scene of plum rains. In the afternoon, the Qing person Zhang Dixiang from the same accommodation [and I] went to antique stores together, looking for a tripod-like censer. We returned to the accommodation together. Dixiang drank the wine that I gave him. While we were in high spirit, we talked incessantly, [and] felt joyful. Dixiang wrote me the Chushi Biao (Memorial on Going to War) of Kongming (style name of Zhuge Liang) ⁵ (Takasugi 2001:444).

Takasugi’s trip to Shanghai had the goal of investigating how to reconcile and assimilate Western cultures into their own culture. He and his contemporaries considered Shanghai as a learning subject because the Japanese believed that their culture and Chinese culture shared a common origin, i.e. cultures with Chinese character (Kojima 1997:18). As a result, they hoped to successfully handle the conflict between Western cultures and their own by inspecting and learning from Shanghai.

The keynote of Takasugi's trip to Shanghai seemingly went against his act mentioned above - collecting Chinese antiques, paintings and calligraphy, and showing his intimate knowledge of Chinese classics. However, we should not forget that Chinese culture had been embedded in the Japanese traditions, though Chinese performance in the nineteenth century frustrated the Japanese deeply (Li 1996:2).⁶ Takasugi was similar to lots of other samurais who were educated in Confucian thoughts when they were young. Thus, the influence of Confucian thoughts would not be easily erased, even when some of them changed their stances to favor Westernization – “calling to abandon the burden of Japan's Chinese cultural connections” (Li 1996:2). That was why there was ambivalence in Japanese society. They were, on the one hand, trying to promote Western learning. On the other hand, some of the Westernizers like Takasugi were fond of collecting Chinese antiques and artworks.

During the late nineteenth century, the Shanghai art market experienced a significant increase in its activities, largely due to the presence of not only local customers but also international merchants. Art intermediaries or agencies such as letter and fan shops, art associations, guilds, and distinguished families explored these markets, creating a more diverse and dynamic environment for artists and collectors alike. This allowed for a greater exchange of ideas, techniques and styles, as well as new opportunities for artists to showcase their works and gain recognition. Furthermore, the increased accessibility of Chinese art to foreign customers opened up a new avenue for cultural exchange and appreciation. As a result, the late-nineteenth century can be considered a pivotal moment in the development of the Shanghai art market. It witnessed the emergence of new players and the expansion of existing networks. While economic factors certainly influenced the growth of the market, a desire to connect with other cultures and share the beauty and richness of Chinese art with a wider audience also served as a driving force behind it.

BUILDING *GUANXI* (CONNECTIONS) IN THE SHANGHAI ART MARKET

The *guanxi* culture is a concept in Chinese society that refers to the interpersonal relationships and the networks of influence and connections built through and among people (Zhang and Pimpa 2012:23). In Chinese art market, *guanxi* is often used to describe the process of cultivating and maintaining relationships with art business partners, patrons, and artists in order to establish mutual trust and gain advantages in art dealings. It is considered a crucial element in building successful business relationships. The concept of *guanxi* is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and is based on the idea of reciprocity and mutual benefit.

Shanghai's art market was booming, with both local and international art enthusiasts flocking to the city to collect works of calligraphy and painting by Chinese artists. However, due to the competitiveness of the market, it could be a challenging task to purchase an authentic and high-quality artwork. Wu Youru's illustration of Japanese authenticating a Chinese painting (NG 2017:155) reflects the prevalence of fake goods in late-Qing Shanghai. Hiring a ghost painter was a very common practice across the history of Chinese painting. For example, one of the “Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou”, Jin Nong, sent a letter to a friend to apologize for a delayed delivery of the ordered painting with an excuse of the absence of his disciple and ghost painter Luo Pin (Hsu 1990:25-26). Therefore, building connections, or *guanxi*, is crucial for Okada Kosho's trip to Shanghai.

Based on his *Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou* (1891), Okada Kosho met sixty-three people in total. The Sociogram of Okada Kosho's Social Networks in Shanghai and Suzhou (Figure 2) visualized the social connections between and among Okada, Chinese artists, Chinese art collectors, Chinese literati, and other stakeholders. It consists of points (or nodes) to represent actors and lines (or edges) to represent ties or relations. The relationship attributes included father-son, uncle-nephew, brothers, couples, friends, companions of the trip, fellowships, comrades, colleagues, translators, patients, art business and other businesses.

The sociogram illustrated that the social networks of Okada Kosho had been spatialized into three Small-Worlds, including the Green-World, Orange-World, and Blue-World. In the Green-World, there were Yasuda Rozan, Yasuda's wife Lady Red Maple, the Japanese Consulate Shinagawa Tadamichi (1840-1891), and an official dispatched at the end of 1860s to Shanghai, Kumashiro Encho, the prominent Chinese artists Hu Gongshou (胡公壽) also known as Hu Yuan (胡遠, 1823-1886), Zhang Zixiang (張子祥) also known as

Zhang Xiong (張熊, 1803-1886), Ren Xiong, Ren Bonian, and Qing Yi (錢懌) also known as Qian Ziqin (錢子琴, ?-1881). Yasuda, Shinagawa and Kumashiro acted as the bridges. They linked artists, art collectors, and art dealers with Okada in the network of Shanghai art world that would not otherwise be lined together.

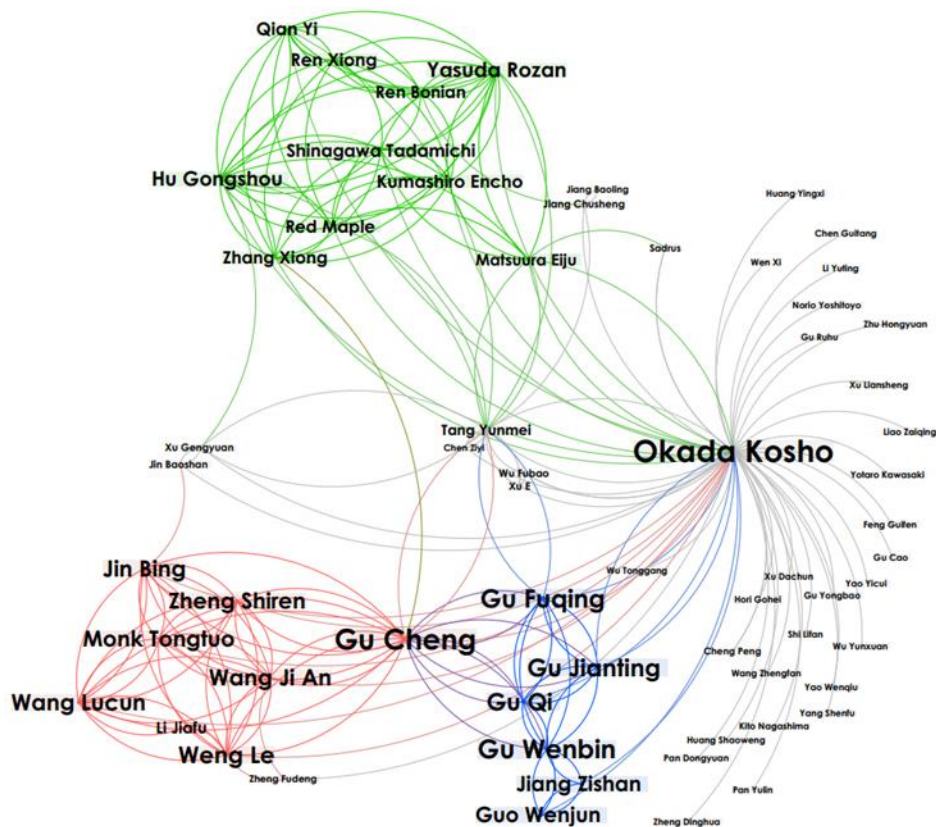


Figure 2. The Sociogram of Okada Kosho's Social Networks in Shanghai and Suzhou based on Okada's Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou (1891). NG Ni Na Camellia (Author) (2023). Okada's social networks have been classified into three Small-Worlds, including Green-World, Orange-World, and Blue-World.

Okada Kosho and his companion Matsuura Eiju visited Shinagawa Tadamichi and Kumashiro Encho on the morning of the next day of their arrival (the sixteenth day of the second month of the Meiji reign) (Okada 1891:3). Okada, Shinagawa and Kumashiro were old friends in Japan. During the visit, Kumashiro showed Okada and Matsuura his collection of calligraphy and painting, and Okada documented these Chinese artists' names and nicknames, and ranked them in accordance with the subject matter. Okada wrote that Zhu Menglu (朱夢廬), Wu Zishu (吳子書), Ren Bonian, and Wang Yemei (王冶梅, *c.a.* 1831-1900) were good at flower painting; Chen Rong (陳榮), Hu Gongshou, Zhang Zixiang, Xie Liesheng (謝烈聲) and Chen Yunsheng (陳允升) excelled at landscape painting; Yu Xiang (兩香) was famous for his figure painting; lastly, Ma Fushuo (馬複鑠), Wu Jutan (吳鞠潭), Xiang Jinzhuang (項謹莊) and Pan Yunqing (潘韻卿) were well known for their calligraphy in Shanghai.

Yasuda Rozan, Lady Red Maple and Matsuura Eiju, a notable art dealer and companion of Okada Kosho's Shanghai trip, studied with the celebrated master of Nanga painting, Tetsuo Uebito (1791-1872). On the afternoon of the second day of their arrival (the seventeenth day of the second month of the Meiji reign), Okada and Matsuura visited the Yasudas (Okada 1891: 3). In 1867, Yasuda Rozan immigrated to Shanghai, and his wife, Lady Maple, joined him three years later (The East Asia Common Culture Association 1968:12-13). He had a wide social connection with Chinese artists in Shanghai and a particularly close relationship with the prestigious artist Hu Gongshou, who was a prominent figure in the Shanghai School of Painting during the reigns of Tongzhi (1861-1875) and Guangxu (1875-1908). During

this time, there were three well-known individuals in Shanghai with the surname Hu: Hu Xueyan (胡雪巖, 1823-1885), who was both an official and a businessman; Hu Gongshou, a representative of the Shanghai School of Painting; and Hu Baoyu (胡寶玉), a famous Shanghai prostitute. The *Yingru Magazine* referred to them as the “Three Hus of Shanghai”. Hu Gongshou’s leadership in the Shanghai art world was irreplaceable. In the 1870s, the *Shenbao* commented on his paintings, stating that his opening of the brushstroke was neat and refreshing, which attracted numerous art enthusiasts who begged for his works (Wang 2015:92). For example, Ren Bonian was not famous when he came to Shanghai in early 1868, and his paintings were not sold well. He initially chose the letter and fan shop, Guxiang Shi, which had a high reputation in the society at that time and was introduced by Hu Gongshou to draw paintings in the Guxiang Shi for a living (Lu 2002:315).

It was via the social connection of Hu Gongshou that Yasuda Rozan entered the Shanghai art world. From the thirteenth day of the second month to the tenth day of the fourth month of the fifth year of the Meiji reign (1872), Yasuda introduced Okada and Matsuura to many celebrated Shanghai artists and art dealers. For example, on the twenty-ninth day of the second month of the fifth year of the Meiji reign, Yasuda and his wife made a special trip to call on Hu Gongshou with Okada and Matsuura. Okada recalled his visit to Yasuda with Matsuura as follows:

In the morning, [I] visited Rozan with Eiju. Eiju carried a basket, and boiled tea for savoring together. Lady Red Maple cooked kottou Meshi (rice mixed with vegetables and meat in hot stone pot) and catered for us. Rozan showed us models of epistolary art and poetry sent from people in Ningbo. Rozan said, “In Shanghai at present, the famous calligraphers and painters include Zhu Menglu, Yang Liugu, Yang Peifu, Zhao Jiasheng, Deng Tiexian, Hu Gongshou, Ren Bonian, Zhang Zixiang, Lu Jingtao, Wang Dao, Guan Qinfang, and [Wang Yin]. The above twelve persons have all gone to Shanghai and lived on painting and calligraphy (Ng 2017, 164).⁷

The trip of Okada Kosho and Matsuura Eiju to Shanghai proved to be fruitful. With the recommendation letters from Yasuda Rozan and Hu Gongshou, they were able to visit numerous artists and art dealers. From the fourth day of their arrival in Shanghai (i.e., the seventeenth day of the second month of the fifth year of Meiji reign) until the day they departed from Shanghai to Suzhou (i.e., the seventh day of the third month of the same year), they visited many Shanghai artists, art dealers, and art collectors, including Hu Yuan, Zhang Xiong, Weng Le (翁樂), Xu Gengyuan, and Gu Cheng (顧承, 1833-1882). Under the referral of Yasuda, Shinagawa, and Kumashiro, Okada successfully entered the Shanghai art market and found that the Shanghai artists, art collectors, and art dealers had a high network cohesion. As a result, they spanned a sub-cluster within the social networks of Okada Kosho.

Later, Okada and Matsuura were able to explore the Suzhou art world through the social connections of art collector Gu Cheng⁸, who was originally named Tinglie (廷烈), styled Chengzhi (承之), nicknamed Junshu (駿叔), and also known as Lequan (樂全) and Lequan (樂泉). The bridging ties shown in Figure 2 demonstrate that Gu Cheng played an key role in linking Okada, the Gu Family (the Blue-World), and artists, art collectors and art dealers in Suzhou (the Orange-World).

In the Blue-World, Gu Fuqing (顧美卿), Gu Jianting (顧鑒亭), Gu Qi (顧淇), also known as Zuoquan (左泉, 1848-1872), and Gu Wenbin (顧文彬, 1811-1889), Jiang Zishan (江子山), and Guo Wenjun (郭文俊) were closely linked together. Gu Cheng was originated from Suzhou and was living in Shanghai at that time. He was the third son of Gu Wenbin and the younger brother of Gu Tingxun (顧廷薰) and Gu Tingxi (顧廷熙). He was also a cousin of Gu Fuqing (who was the son of Gu Jianting), and a nephew of Gu Qi. The copper merchant Jiang Zishan and the acupuncturist Guo Wenjun were friends of Gu Wenbin.

Gu Cheng’s father Gu Wenbin was influential in the Shanghai and Suzhou art circle. He passed the *jinshi* exam (the Metropolitan Examination in Beijing) in the twenty-first year of the Daoguang reign (1841) and became the head of the Ministry of Punishment. He was later promoted to the head of the Fujian Division of the Ministry of Punishment and became a vice director of the Shaanxi Division in the third year

of Xianfeng (1853). Gu Wenbin was then promoted to a *langzhong* (the emperor's chamberlain) of the Fujian Division. The following year, he achieved the first position of *jingcha* (the best grade in the assessment of middle and lower Beijing officials in the Qing Dynasty). After the Taiping Army occupied Suzhou, he and his family relocated to Shanghai in the tenth year of the Daoguang reign (1860) (Li 2019:336). Apart from being an official, Gu Cheng was the owner of the Guoyun Chamber, collecting a large number of books, antiques, epigraphies, calligraphies and paintings. Gu Wenbin published a book called *A Record of Calligraphic Works and Paintings at the Guoyun Chamber* (過雲樓書畫記), which included four volumes of calligraphy and six volumes of painting. Each volume was followed by the author's comments, which carefully reviewed the material, size, seal, inscription and other important details. This collection of calligraphic works and paintings was displayed to Okada and Matsuura by Gu Wenbin's brother, Gu Jianting, in Suzhou, which enriched Okada and Matsuura's knowledge of Chinese calligraphy and painting.

In the Orange-World, there were dense connections between Gu Cheng's friends and a cluster was thus formed. Gu Cheng introduced this group of good friends to Okada and Matsuura while they traveled in Suzhou. These friends included Jin Bing (金邠, also known as Jiasui 嘉穗), Weng Le (also known as Junru 均儒 and Dongxi 東谿), Li Jiafu (李嘉福, 1829-1894), Wang Ji An (王濟安), Wang Lucun (王魯存), Zheng Shiren (鄭師仁), and Monk Tongtuo (桶脫和尚). Jin Bing was a sinologist and one of Gu Cheng's closest friends, helping edit Gu Cheng's four books of coins and epigraphy, namely *Huayu An Guquan Spectrum* (畫余庵古泉譜). He was also a well-respected figure in the art world, with connections to many renowned artists and scholars. Weng Le, on the other hand, was a talented artist from Wujiang, Jiangsu Province. He was the son of a renowned seal carver Wen Danian (翁大年, 1811-1890), who was a close friend of Gu Wenbin, the famous artist Li Jiafu, and the art dealer Xu Gengyuan. Weng Le's social networks made it easier for Okada and Matsuura to enter the Suzhou art world. Li Jiafu (also known as Shengyu 笙漁) was a multi-talented artist excelling in poetry, prose, calligraphy, and painting. He was the father-in-law of Wu Zheng (吳徵, also known as Daiqiu 待秋, 1878-1949), a famous scholar of the Shanghai School, and had founded, in 1904, the Xiling Seal Art Society with Ding Fuzhi (丁輔之, 1879-1949), Wu Yin (吳隱, 1867-1922) and others. Moreover, Wang Ji An, Wang Lucun, Zheng Shiren, and Monk Tongtuo were also part of the group of friends that Gu Cheng introduced to Okada and Matsuura. Their connections and expertise in various fields made them valuable assets in the Orange-World. Overall, Gu Cheng's introduction to these friends played a crucial role in Okada and Matsuura's entrance into the Suzhou art world.

Gu Cheng was a key figure in the art scene, acting as a bridge between multiple communities. Specifically, he linked Okada, the Gu Family, and Suzhou scholars and artists together. By doing so, he was able to span two clusters of art collectors and artists who possessed specialized knowledge in art and business. Such a connection allowed for the provision of new knowledge to other clusters, which was a crucial mechanism for the growth and advancement of the art scene. And these mechanisms were reflected in ties between sub-groups, known as bridging ties. Overall, Gu Cheng's ability to connect and bring people together was a significant factor in the success of the art scene in his time.

LIMITING THE CHOICES OF CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY AND PAINTING

According to Okada Kosho's *Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou*, the Sociogram of Okada Kosho's social networks in Shanghai and Suzhou (Figure 2) showed that an outsider like Okada could enter the art circles of Shanghai and Suzhou by connecting with a few "bridges". In Okada's case, he contacted Shinagawa Tadamichi, Kumashiro Encho and Yasuda Rozan to enter the Shanghai art world. Additionally, he contacted Gu Cheng to enter the Suzhou art world. It is not to say that Okada could not have entered these art worlds without the help of these people. Foreign art collectors themselves could find emerging art intermediaries or agencies such as bookstores and letter and fan shops, which provided customers with a more open market. For instance, Okada visited some antique stores in the New North Gate in Shanghai (Okada 1891: 7). But, without the ability to authenticate objects like Kishida Ginko (1833-1905) and Yasuda Rozan, there would be a high risk of purchasing low-quality or even fake calligraphic works, paintings and other antiques.

The ability to acquire paintings by famous artists depended on one's social identity, connections, and search methods. Purchasing Ren Bonian's paintings was particularly challenging. Chen Manshou (陳曼壽, 1825-1883) had an extensive social network in Shanghai's art circle due to his brotherhood with Hu Gongshou.⁹ He also used his mutual connections, such as with the renowned scholar Ge Qilong (葛其龍) and the eminent painter Yang Borun, to request that Ren Bonian paint a picture for him and his daughter Chen Huijuan (陳慧娟). On January 8, 1879, he published the poem "Begging Ren Bonian to Paint a Picture of Transmitting Poetry" in Shenbao. He began by providing a brief autobiography: "I come to sell my calligraphy by Shenjiang [in Shanghai] after the Taiping Rebellion (Shenbao 1879)." He then explained the concept of the painting: Fu Sheng's daughter passes on knowledge of the classics to posterity. She memorizes the knowledge in her heart and continuously writes down the details of the classics by hand (Shenbao 1879). The poem includes instructions for drawing the work. Chen referenced a previous case of using a poem to trade for a painting, specifically Ren's figure painting for Ge Qilong after Ge had written a poem for him. Thus, Chen sent a half-range of silver paper. The father was to be the teacher like Fu Sheng, and the daughter was to be her father's student. It would become a story on everybody's lips (Shenbao 1879).¹⁰



Figure 3. Ren Bonian. Shoushi Tu (Painting Of Transmitting Poetry), hand scroll, dated 1879, Tianjin People's Art Publishers

In Ren Bonian's *Shoushi Tu* (授詩圖, Painting of Transmitting Poetry), he depicted Chen instructing his daughter in poetry (Figure 3). He complied with the previous premise designated in Chen's poem that the portraits of Chen and his daughter would be modeled on the prestigious scholar of the Han Dynasty, Fu Sheng (伏勝, 268-178 BC), and his daughter. Fu passed on his knowledge of the classics to his daughter, who translated her father's inarticulate dialect to his pupils. The precedent set by Chen aroused a series of responses including published poems and inscriptions. A month later, Chen's daughter, Chen Huijuan, published a poem entitled "Thanking Mr. Bonian for Painting the *Shoushi Tu*" in Shenbao (Chen 1879:4). Chen's friend, Yang Borun, also published an inscription to the *Shoushi Tu* called "Inscribing Manshou Mingjin and his Daughter's *Shoushi Tu*" in the newspaper (Yang 1879:4). The story demonstrated that acquiring works by established Chinese artists relied heavily on social connections and interpersonal networks with intellectuals in Shanghai.

However, the limited number of "bridges" - Shinagawa Tadamichi, Kumashiro Encho, and Yasuda Rozan - hindered access to a diverse range of artists, art styles, and to other relevant information from the Shanghai and Suzhou art markets. It is important to note that the 1840's Taiping Rebellion triggered conflicts and devastated cities, forcing artists to flee, with many ending up in Shanghai, an open city with

numerous European powers. Together, they crafted a new culture influenced by the West, which brought innovative creativity and freedom to art. The artists aimed to abandon traditional and conservative styles in favor of trendy and ostentatiously colorful art, resulting in a wide range of styles in Chinese calligraphy and painting. For instance, the realism of Ren Bonian incorporated Western elements, Wu Changshuo's visual language was immediately attractive, and Qian Hui An's (錢慧安, 1833-1911) creativity had a down-to-earth and folk dimension. All of these revived the visual vocabulary of traditional ink painting itself (Clark 2000:2-3). Unfortunately, they had never been mentioned by Shinagawa Tadamichi, Kumashiro Encho, and Yasuda Rozan in Okada's *Diaries of Shanghai and Suzhou* except Ren Bonian.

The limited social connections of the Japanese often resulted in limited information about the art world in Shanghai and Suzhou. For instance, in a letter from the famous Japanese businessman Kishida Ginko to the Japanese painter Kawakami Togai (1827-1881), the former introduced several artists he believed were famous in late-nineteenth-century Shanghai, including Song Xiaopo (宋小坡) and Sun Renpu (孫仁圃), who were known for their calligraphy. He also mentioned that many people admired the paintings of Hu Gongshou, Yu Qianyu (余倩雲), Ling Ziyu (凌子與), and Chen Shimei (陳嗜梅). However, no mention was made of Ren Bonian, Wu Changshuo, Qian Hui An, Zhao Zhiqian, Wu Dacheng (吳大澂, 1835-1902), He Shaoji (何紹基, 1799-1873) and other renowned local artists. Most of the so-called "noted" Chinese artists for the Japanese had a conservative literati style in painting¹¹ such as Hu Gongshou, Zhang Zixiang, and Wang Yemei. Ironically, the Japanese Sinologist Ono Kozan (1814-1910) wondered why Wang Yemei gained great success in Japan as he criticized that "[Wang] Yemei's painting is quite good, but his poetry is bad"¹² (Koseki 1881, 14). It is implied that Japanese buyers were limited to a particular cluster of Chinese artists.

In addition to the lack of information about Chinese artists, Japanese art buyers also faced the problem of price differences in Chinese artworks and antiques. The successful Japanese entrepreneur Kishida Ginko was dissatisfied with the price gap between Chinese artworks and antiques in China and Japan. Due to inadequate knowledge, the market price of Chinese works of art and antiques in Japan was higher than in Shanghai. He said:

Coinciding with the adverse economic circumstances of silk and tea business in Shanghai, the remunerations for painters and calligraphers were not good. Therefore, everybody expresses their desire to go to Japan. And the culprit all lies in the ignorance of the Japanese. ...Recently, [I] have heard from the branch temple of the local Honganji: whenever the Japanese want to buy paintings and calligraphy in Shanghai, the remunerations offered by them are particularly high. They are decided by the painters and calligraphers returning from Japan. The old prices have been changed in accordance with their remunerations set in Japan....All calligraphy, painting and antique shops are specially decorated for the Japanese¹³ (Chen 2011: 444-445).

Japanese merchants had to pay particularly high prices when they wanted to buy paintings and calligraphy in Shanghai due to their limited information on the market prices of the works of Chinese artists (Chen 2011:444-445). Those Chinese artists set their prices with reference to those set in Japan. Due to restricted information and significant price differences between Japan and Shanghai, Japanese buyers would consequently pay higher prices than local art buyers.

CONCLUSION

Entering into the late nineteenth century, the Shanghai art market underwent significant changes. One of the most crucial was that Chinese artists and art intermediaries would publicly tag prices on Chinese calligraphies and paintings, but prestigious Chinese artists hardly published their remunerations on the mass media. Instead, art intermediaries graciously bid in the press. Taking the Taowu Painting and Calligraphy Association's advertisement in the *Shenbao* on 22 October 1880 as an example, it confessed,

It is our honour that famous calligraphers and painters help sponsor the Society. This has been reported in the newspaper. We have also received twenty to thirty pieces of calligraphy and painting from Wu Qingyu, Wu Xiaopu, Shi Junxiu, Lin Shuyin, Ma Zijin, Yao Lumei, and Wu Xiaoxiang. The price varies from one dollar to two dollar. Today, it is reduced according to our association's remunerations, and the ratio is doubled, and each fan costs three hundred wen, which can be deduced by analogy. And Mr. Sa Lian is good at landscape painting, and we have sent him a letter to ask for ten to twenty of his works. If you want to buy [the works], the Taowu [Painting and Calligraphy Association] will collect and deliver the funds (Taowu Shuhuashe 1880:3).¹⁴

The Chinese art market was a one with a strong cultural atmosphere. This confession indicated that the Taowu Painting and Calligraphy Association acted as an art agency for the Chinese artists including Wu Qingyu (吳慶餘), Wu Xiaopu (吳小圃), Shi Junxiu (石君秀), Lin Shuyin (林叔殷), Ma Zijin (馬子晉), Yao Lumei (姚侶梅), Wu Xiaoxiang (吳小薌), and Sa Lian (薩廉 · 1844-?).

Although the commercialization of Chinese calligraphy and painting had become increasingly popular since the late seventeenth century, many Chinese artists avoided direct involvement in the art business, including advertising, customer acquisition, and negotiating customer requirements, which was perhaps due to the fear of lowering their social status, as the concept of “art is not for sale” was deeply ingrained in the mind of Chinese artists. Chen Manshou, for instance, moved to Jixiang Street (the present South Jiangxi Road), which was outside the French Concession, on 13 December 1879, and wrote a poem of “Moving to the Outside of the Downtown at the Jixiang Street”,

The years are dignified, and the old pen is plowing. Selling literature and writing for the rest of my life. Such behaviour may make others laugh and I want to escape the hustle and bustle and go out of the town again (Chen 1879:3).¹⁵

The two lines of poetry, “Selling literature and calligraphy for the rest of my life. Such behaviour may make others laugh and I want to escape the hustle and bustle and go out of the town again”, implied that Chen Manshou felt a little ashamed of selling his paintings by himself. Therefore, these tasks would usually be handed over to art intermediaries, and the prices would be negotiated privately.

Chinese artists not only required art agencies or intermediaries to help expand their customer base, but also to relieve themselves of their guilt from producing “improper art” for the service of something outside the painting and beyond the artists' talents (Joyce 2023). In this case, social networks bridged by art agencies or intermediaries were particularly important in the Chinese art world. An art intermediary or art agency would provide a dual-protection mechanism for both Chinese artists and art buyers. By working with the former, artists could protect their self-image from being classified as artisans. Additionally, these intermediaries could shield art buyers from unreasonable prices, as it required certain abilities and strengths to enter the Chinese calligraphy and painting art market.

In conclusion, building *guanxi* (social connections) to enter the Chinese art world was a double-edged sword. On one hand, having a network of trustworthy contacts and partners could make an otherwise challenging process less difficult. Chinese artists, art collectors, art dealers, and art agencies were well-connected within the art community and could provide valuable insights and introductions to other key players in the late-Qing Chinese art market, just as is the case nowadays. By reaching out to them, outsiders like Okada could easily engage in Shanghai's thriving art market. On the other hand, building *guanxi* could cause the Japanese to miss opportunities of reaching out to other artists and artistic styles, or to result in higher costs due to the limitations of social connections. In addition, a lack of links to important or influential figures in the Chinese art market could also be a barrier needing to be specially addressed.

ENDNOTES

1. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “滬上近當南北要衝，為文人淵藪。書畫名家，多星聚於此間。間向或下榻西園，兵燹後僦居城外，並皆渲染丹青，刻畫金石，以爭長於三絕”。
2. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “店中先生命送畫資任先生家，請其作畫，數月未就。先生謂我幹沒潤資，故不得畫。今日又命我來取，雲如不得，必將撻我。今任先生仍不見付，故泣耳。”
3. The predecessor of the *Senzaimaru* was a British vessel named the *Armistice*. So, a simple way for the Japanese to manage the ship was through hiring the British captain and sailors.
4. Translated by the Author. The original citation in Chinese is: “上海是各國洋人通商貿易的口岸城市，不過只有書畫和文房洋人不感興趣，所以他們對這類商賈漠不關心。清國人聽說皇邦的人很珍視書畫，每天帶來很多書籍、軸畫、掛幅、古器等，一個勁地推銷。”
5. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “(五月) 十八日 (西曆六月十四)，雨降，始為梅雨之景。午後與同館清人張棣香到古玩店，求鼎樣香爐，共歸館。棣香飲予于美酒，乘興豪談，頗覺愉快。棣香為予書孔明 (諸葛亮) 《出師表》云。”
6. There was a debate of the East - West cultural heritage aroused in nineteenth-century Japan. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) called to abandon the burden of Japan's Chinese cultural connections. Yet this call was contrasted by the renewed search for a Japanese identity in the 1890s which emphasized its indigenous heritage. One of the representatives, who saw the China factor as an integral part and promoted a Confucian revival, was Motoda Eifu (1818-1891).
7. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “朝與永壽同訪老山(安田老山)，永壽攜提籃煮茶共品，紅楓(安田老山之妻)作古董飯供我輩。老山出示寧波諸人尺牘詩賦，老山曰：‘上海現今書畫有名者，朱夢廬、楊柳谷、楊佩甫、趙嘉生、鄧鐵仙、胡公壽、任伯年、張子祥、陸靜濤、王道、管琴舫、[王寅]。以上十二名，俱往上海，以書畫為業者。’”
8. Translated by the Author. Wu Changshuo (1844-1927) drew a portrait of Gu Cheng that is collected by the Shanghai Museum currently.
9. In commemoration of their friendship, Chen Manshou published a poem in response to and alongside a poem written by Hu Gongshou in *Shenbao* on February 7, 1877. “I am writing to state my current life situation. I have shut myself away from the world for many years. We all suddenly move to Shanghai and meet with each other on a snowing day. A new poem is composed after disorder and calamity the Taiping Rebellion, and the old stories seem to be visible before the eyes. I feel confused about my life; I pass a wakeful night. Heng's poetry is more diverse, [and your recent nickname is Mr. Heng], while I am weak in composing poems. My will and spirit are just as before, but my confidence and manliness are not like before. [You] always write[s] [to me] the ‘Begging for rice’ letter; and supports me to buy a mountain [for a secluded life]? I am also living in seclusion now; and my hair has turned gray.” Translation by the author. The original citation in Chinese is: “書來述近況，閉戶輒經年。忽鼓吳淞棹，相逢小雪天。新詩喪亂後，舊事酒樽前。身世茫茫感，挑燈共不眠。乃亨詩更富 (君近號亨翁)，三複有餘思。意氣猶前度，鬚眉異昔時。常書乞米帖，誰送買山貲？我亦菰蘆老，垂垂兩鬢絲。”
10. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “以詩易畫例可援，特寄銀光紙半幅。父作經師女做徒，要傳佳話便江湖。” Fu Sheng 伏勝 was a master of the classics in West Han Dynasty,
11. Literati painting was originally conceived as a means by which the Confucian junzi (noble person) could express their ethical personality. It was much less concerned with technical showiness; instead, literati painters specialized in plain ink paintings, sometimes with minimal color. While the artistic features of a literati painting may look exactly the same as literati painting, the social identity of the artist makes a distinction between the two. A literati painting was typically done by an official, whereas the literati style of painting can be done by anyone.
12. Translated by the Author. The original citation in Chinese is: ‘冷梅畫稍可觀，詩則甚拙。’
13. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “恰逢上海近日絲茶葉生意不景氣，書畫潤筆不如人意，故人人爭言欲往日本。然此事之罪皆在日本人之無見識也。...近日於本地本願寺別院聞言，凡日本人於上海所求字畫，其潤筆均開特別高價。此皆自日本歸來之書畫先生所商定，照其在日本所收潤筆改訂舊格...凡書畫古董店鋪皆專為東洋人裝飾置也。”

14. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “敝社仰承書畫名家助社濟賑早經列報,茲又蒙吳慶餘、吳小圃、石君秀、林叔殷、馬子晉、姚侶梅、吳小薌諸先生賜助書畫各二三十件,謹查諸君原收潤格扇子兩元、一元不等,今均減照敝社潤格,加半倍例,每扇一柄取潤三百文餘可類推。又同里薩廉夫先生雅善山水,現已函求酌助小品一二十件。如承惠顧,先惠滬,資交由桃塢賑寓代為收送可也謹啟。”
15. Translated by the Author. The original citation is: “歲月堂堂老筆耕,賣文賣字樂餘生,此行恐惹旁人笑,欲避煩囂又出城。”

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