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YAMADA, Maria. Study of *The Skeleton Meditating On Waves (Hajō Hakkotsu Zazen-zu)* by Maruyama Ōkyo

Daijō-ji in Kasumi, Hyogo prefecture, has been called “Ōkyo temple” because it owns many works by Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795) and his pupils. Daijō-ji was in ruins from the Muromachi to the Momoyama period, but in the Edo period Mitsuzō (1716–1786), the chief priest of Daijō-ji, planned the reconstruction of his temple. After his death, Mitsuei (1753–1802), Mitsuzō’s pupil, followed his wish and accomplished the reconstruction. It is thought that either Mitsuzō or Mitsuei supported Ōkyo when he was young.

Maruyama Ōkyo’s *The Skeleton Meditating On Waves*, owned by Daijō-ji, was considered to be unusual among his works. It was thought that it had Buddhist meaning, but this has never been examined in detail. Further, although the work was thought to be influenced by anatomical studies, it includes many mistakes in its depiction of a human body. There are too many mistakes compared with anatomical books in the Edo period to justify the influence of anatomy. Rather than seeking reality, we suggest, Ōkyo produced the work intending to represent something different.

Takaaki Miyama has already suggested that the pose of the skeleton was affected by *Kusōshi genkai* and *Kusōshi eshō*, printed books of the Edo period. The present essay asserts that *The Skeleton Meditating On Waves* was depicted as “Fu jō kansō-zu”, that is, a picture for meditating on decaying bodies or skeletons with the goal of renouncing sexual desire. Moreover, the strange combination of the work—waves and a skeleton in meditation—uses *Gomonzenkyōyōyōhō* as its source. *Gomonzenkyōyōyōhō* is one of the scriptures, called *Zenkan-kyōten*.

The title on the cover of the work is remarkable. The word *Shinjō* in the title is another name for Mitsuei. This essay affirms that this title was written by Mitsuei as its calligraphy is similar to other examples by him. Considering the word *ware* (“me” or “I”) in the title, the skeleton may be understood to be Mitsuei himself.

Moreover, the skeleton turns its body toward its right and is meditating. This posture resembles portraits of Buddhist priests. The empty space of the upper part of the work is left blank for the painting of text, and the composition resembles the form of portraits. This essay concludes that Mitsuei asked Ōkyo to produce the work, and that the skeleton is Mitsuei himself, who is in training using the *Gomonzenkyōyōyōhō* text. Furthermore, the skeleton’s missing teeth express a feeling of yearning for the late Mitsuzō.

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