

# The Prosperity and Decline of “Shitaya Literati”:

## A Geographical Approach to the Social Life of Artists in the Early Meiji Period

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### Abstract:

This paper examines the “Shitaya Literati,” a group of Confucian scholars, poets, calligraphers, and painters who lived in Shitaya at the geographically lower area adjacent to the Ueno Highland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Focusing on the phenomenon of their concentrative dwelling, this research adopts a sociological approach to elucidate the meaning of living close and attending social meetings frequently for the artists. The paper offers two case studies of the poet Ōnuma Chinzan (1818-1891) and the painter Okuhara Seiko (1837-1913) to examine the transformation of the group that reached its zenith in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and gradually diminished from the mid-1880s. It also analyses the reasons for its decline. The development of railways, urbanization, and shifting genres promoted by the modern institutions accounted for their disappearance from the center of the art world. It thus uncovers the meaning of the specific place at the awakening time of the modern period in the country. The Ueno area witnessed the establishment process of the modern concepts of “art” creation as individual’s action and “artist” to be defined by the fledging-off institutions.

## 1. Introduction<sup>2)</sup>

This paper examines the “Shitaya Literati”, or *Shitaya bunjin*, a group of Confucian scholars, poets, calligraphers, and painters who lived in Shitaya in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Focusing on the phenomenon of their concentrative dwelling, it adopts a sociological approach to elucidate the meaning of living close by and frequently attending social meetings for the artists. It thus uncovers the meaning of the specific place at the awakening time of the modern period in the country. The Ueno area witnessed the incubation and establishment process of the modern concepts of “art” creation as individual action and “artist” to be

greatly defined by the fledging-off institutions.

This paper first clarifies its theoretical framework. Through adopting theoretical tools from the discipline of sociology of art, it shifts its focus away from the artworks and individuals of the artists, often paid attention to by the discipline of art history, towards the physical environment of their living and social activities. Following the theoretical discussion, it moves to a brief account of the “Shitaya” area and the development of the “Shitaya Literati”. Forming a loose network in the yet suburban area which boasted both natural views and commercial activities flourished in front of the Kan’ei-ji Temple, the literati gathered to share information and knowledge, and created works collaboratively. The paper further offers two case studies of the poet Ōnuma Chinzan (1818-1891) and the *nanga* painter Okuhara Seiko (1837-1913) to see the transformation of the group from its formation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, zenith around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, to a decline from the mid-1880s. Then it analyses the reasons for the diminishing. The development of railways, urbanization, and shifting genres promoted by the modern institutions accounted for their disappearance from the center of the art world. The meaning of the Ueno area also changed with along the robust exhibition projects and constructions of education institutions. Through tracing the historical trajectories of the Shitaya Literati and the Ueno area, it elucidates the relationship between the place and artistic activities and concludes that this specific physical environment provided the ground that nurtured Shitaya Literati and their pre-modern type of art creation closely related to collectivity.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: A Sociological Approach to Art History

This research employs theoretical tools developed in the field of sociology to examine the art scene mainly in the end of the Edo period and early Meiji period in Japan, ca. mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It stems from the perspective of cultural geography, paying attention to the relationship between the specific place and the cultures blossoming on the land. Previous studies in sociology of art and art history focusing on Meiji Japan have shared an understanding that art is a social product and explored the potential of a sociological approach. Progress can be seen that provides new discoveries of facts related to the artworks, involved people, and the politics at play.

This research aims to bridge the two groups of literature and provide empirical evidence. Rather than paying full attention to the institutionalization and legitimization process of art, this research endeavors to zoom out to examine both horizontal and vertical relationships that organized the “art world”. It employs Howard S. Becker’s “art worlds” (1982) as the main theoretical tool and examines the collaborative and collective

actions of the players in the Ueno area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.1 Theoretical Tool: Becker’s “Art Worlds”

First published in 1982, American sociologist Howard S. Becker’s *Art Worlds* has been widely read, translated and circulated. It anticipated French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s “field” theory in the 1990s and his fierce attack that it was enumerating, describing elements, and just a regression (Bourdieu 1996, 204-205). This research, however, focusing on the loose network with unrestricted membership, finds Bourdieu’s emphasis on rules, or *nomos*, and strict structure less relevant and will mainly use Becker’s “world” (1993, 230).

Becker pays particular attention to the human players. He defines “art world” as “the network of people whose *cooperative* activity, organized via their joined knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for” (1982=2008, xxiv). He lists seven kinds of activities, “to develop an idea” about the kind of work and its form, “execute”, “manufacture”, “distribute”, “support”, “respond and appreciate”, and “create and maintain the rationale according to which all these other activities make sense and are worth doing” (Ibid., 2-5). Adopting a symbolic interactionist approach to examine the roles of human actors, Becker categorizes them according to their roles and degree of involvement. The variety of roles and emphasis on the collectiveness can be observed in the case of Shitaya Literati.

## 2.2 Rising Interest in Social Context in Art History

A rising interest in situating artifacts and artists in the social environment in the field of Japanese art history has also occurred since the 1990s. Kitazawa Noriaki and Satō Dōshin are among the representative scholars who have made pioneering endeavors. Kitazawa examines the reception of “art” through an investigation of the exhibitions in the early Meiji period and discerns the purification of the concept, *bijutsu*, or “fine art” in Japanese, via excluding genres such as crafts and calligraphy, and establishing fine art as an embodiment of the Imperial Household (1989=2010). Satō’s work contributes in its delineation of the political environment in which the Japanese term of art was coined (1996).

Another remarkable scholarly trend is a growing awareness of the significance to understand Edo and Meiji more as a continuity rather than sharply bounded periods. Yamashita, Kitazawa and Norota call for scholarship to fill the gap and create dialogues between the separated studies of the Tokugawa and Meiji arts (Yamashita 2013; Kitazawa 2014; Norota 2015). An extraordinary effort has been made by Kinoshita Naoyuki, who has been broadening the conventional scope of art history to analyze the remnant Edo

cultures in the Meiji Period (1993=2010). This paper follows this employment of sociological perspective and recognition to examine the Edo and Meiji more as a continuity.

### **2.3 Place: A Crucial Aspect to Understand the Art Worlds**

The previous studies have made attempts to contextualize the artistic activities in the social environment. Little attention is however paid to the place where art is conceived, generated, and reckoned, or the cooperative links among the players are formed. While Becker focuses on the human players, he fails to explore how they meet, form and strengthen their collaborative relationship. Analyzing the distribution domain of the art world, Hans van Maanen stresses the importance of “space”, referring to “the place where something is performed, or the way in which that space is given form” (2009, 251). He illustrates that the physical location and architectural styles of the distribution space such as theatres and museums create specific visitor expectations and experience and establish the content’s status. The distributing organizations, in his opinion, operate in a social and *geographical* context and sometimes all elements of demand and need may be clustered in one postal code area (Ibid., 260-61). In other words, a small area could self-sustain its art world. In the Japanese context, as revealed by Hashizume Shinya’s study of clubs in Japan (1989) and the anthology, *History of Japan through Studies of Gatherings and Associations* (2006), the place for people to meet and gather has been critical in forming associations for varying purposes, from aesthetic to political activities. The following will focus on the Shitaya area to investigate the cooperative links and artistic activities nurtured on this land.

### **3. Background: Bustling “Shitaya Area” since the Edo Period**

Focusing on one “postal code area”, the following will briefly introduce the Ueno area that sits in the northeastern part in the Edo city, which was renamed as Tokyo in 1868. Hills and valleys, rivers and artificial ditches interweaved with each other in the city. The Ueno area was geographical characterized by the Ueno Hill and Shitaya plain. The name “Shitaya”, literally meaning the valley downside, could be confirmed around the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Noda 1984, 1). It referred to the plain area adjacent to the east of the Ueno Highland where the Kan’ei-ji Temple was located. From a map of Shitaya in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1), we can also see that it was larger than the area of Shitaya Ward, an administrative division that existed between 1878 and 1947.

The Shitaya area developed mainly as a town in front of a grand temple, Kan’ei-ji Temple. Built to the north-east of Edo castle by Tendai Buddhist monk, Tenkai (1536-1643),

who served as a close consultant to the first three Tokugawa shoguns, the Temple was to safeguard the Castle from the evil spirits, which was believed to enter from the north-east. Based on Tenkai’s design, the Ueno Highland was modeled after the Hi’ei-zan Mountain located in the north-east of the Kyoto city. Benten-jima Island in the Shinobazu Pond after the Chikubu-shima Island in Biwa Lake, and Kiyomizu Kannon-dō after Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto, were also constructed in the 1630s, creating a miniature landscape of Kyoto. The feudal lords’ land, among which the major ones included Kaga, Mito, and Akita domains, were also located close by. From Figure 1, we can see that it had also been a dense residential area of the lower-class warriors.

As one typical pattern of town development, bustling commercial districts and pleasure quarters emerged adjacent to the temples and shrines and along the major roads. Tenkai’ conceived Ueno as a place for the commoners to visit and entertain themselves and planted sakura in the temple’s premise. The Pond had also been known for its lotus flowers in the Edo Period (Suzuki 2018, 35). Along Hirokōji, a north-south broad road also lined up shops since the mid-seventeenth century. This street also served as *onari-michi*, a road for the shoguns to take and visit Kan’ei-ji. Connecting with two major roads in the north, Nikkō Kaidō and Ōshu Kaidō, it boasted heavy traffic.

The magnificent temple, natural scenery with seasonal flowers, and crowds of sightseers and travelers brought great business opportunity. Shops of *nishiki-e* prints, stationery, crafts, and bags and pouches, pharmacists, bookstores, tea houses, and entertainment facilities concentrated near the Pond (Suzuki 2018, 48). Ikenohata-Nakachō,



Figure 1 *Shitaya Ezu in Edo Kiriezu, 1849-1862*, Kageyashi Muneyasu, et al., eds., National Diet Library.

located in the south to the Pond, was among the busiest commercial districts. With the Yushima Tenman-gū Shrine, another popular spot, sitting in the west, unofficial pleasure quarters also developed.

With Asakusa and Kanda located a few kilometers away in the east and south respectively, Shitaya was a suburban area with a good distance from the city center. Receiving strong influence from the political and religious power, it was a blessed commercial center that gathered money from both the commoners and the privileged class (Ozawa 1969, 6). It was this environment charged with religious, political, and commercial energies that attracted the “Shitaya Literati”.

#### 4. The “Shitaya Literati”: Two cases of Ōnuma Chinzan and Okuhara Seiko

The “Shitaya Literati”, who lived concentratedly in Shitaya area became known by the works by writer Nagai Kafū (1879-1959). Through historical research and interviews, Nagai published a serial titled *Shitaya no hanashi* in 1924, and later as the book, *Shitaya Sōwa* in 1926, featuring the unique characters and their exchange at the turn of the Meiji period (Fukui 2004; Maeda 1968=1989).

Two maps, one produced in around the 1850s (Fig. 2), and the other, the 1860s, reveal the great density of the Shitaya Literati’s residence. In the first map, more than sixty Confucian scholars, poets, calligraphers, and painters were penned in by Nagayama Choen



Figure 2 *Shitaya bunjin chizu*, Nagayama Choen, ca.1850s, in Saitō Naoshige, ed., *Edo kiriezu shūsei*, vol. 6, Index, Chūō kōron sha, 1984, 43.

(n.d.), one of the Shitaya Literati. An inscription in the first map explains its use, for the convenience for people to ask for the Literati’s works and visit their houses. The second map, *Shitaya Ezu*, with updates in the 1860s, was owned by scholar of Japanese classics, Inoue Yorikuni (1839-1914), also a Shitaya resident. It is published as an attachment to a 1981 reprint of Ōnuma Chinzan’s poetry anthology, *Tōkei-shi*. This kind of maps may have served as a directory at the time and shared among the residents and their visitors. The following will focus on two cases of the Shitaya Literati, poet Ōnuma Chinzan and female painter Okuhara Seiko.

#### 4.1 Ōnuma Chinzan

Among the Shitaya Literati, Ōnuma Chinzan (1818-1891) was a central figure as an organizer of a *kanshi* society in the area. Born to father Ōnuma Chikukei (1762-1827), a lower-class warrior serving the Edo Bakufu, he lived in the family’s residential land in Okachimachi. After his father’s death, he spent a few years in Owari, today’s Aichi Prefecture, learning with his relatives, the Washizu family. In 1835, he returned to Edo and further pursued *kanshi* studies after Kikuchi Gozan (1769-1849) and joined Yanagawa Seigan (1789-1858)’s Gyokuchi Ginsha, a *kanshi* society near Otamagaiké Pond in Kanda. In 1844, Ōnuma moved to 3-71 Nakaokachimachi, near his childhood house. In 1849, he built a new house at 3-40 Kachimachi, a few blocks away from the previous house. Naming his new house, *Kōshikaku* (Edifice for Studying Poetry), Ōnuma soon established a poetry society Shitaya Ginsha in his house. A poem, likely created by a member of the Society, mentioned that it was a humble little house but visited by many.<sup>3)</sup>

Surviving the turmoil of the Meiji Restoration, Ōnuma’s Shitaya Ginsha enjoyed great fame and continued until the 1880s. The main activities of Shitaya Ginsha had been correcting, polishing, and publishing the Chinese poems produced by the members. The number of his students exceeded one thousand (Kobayashi 1995, 96). Bureaucrats including Hamao Arata (1849-1925), Isawa Shūji (1851-1917), and Kuki Ryūichi (1852-1931) can also be confirmed in the student list (Ōnuma, 2019). Ishiguro Tadanori (1845-1941), who would become a renowned military surgeon also frequented this school in his teens (Ishiguro 1936, 97).

Living in the drastically changing Ueno area, Ōnuma’s poems often depicted the social transformations in the early Meiji period. The vacant land after the Boshin Battle was designated as a public park in 1873 and gradually transformed into a bustling venue for exhibitions in the following decades. The National Museum would be constructed on the site of the main hall of the Temple and open in 1882. In a collection of poems about famous spots in Edo, he lamented on the previous grandeur of Kan’ei-ji Temple.<sup>4)</sup> In another poem, he depicted the beautiful view of the Shinobazu Pond and referred it as a

little West Lake in Hangzhou, China.<sup>5)</sup> The association of the Shinobazu Pond with the West Lake had been an Edo convention in the *kanshi* world (Kim 1994). *Kanren shōkō* (*A Short Draft of Viewing the Lotus*), a collection of poems published in 1869, also shows the efforts of Ōnuma and the Society to revive the annual lotus viewing banquets, an Edo tradition. Started by poet Yamamoto Hokuzan (1752-1812) in 1792, it received breaks after the Meiji Restoration (Kim 1994, 262). The tradition was revived by Seki Sekkō, a neighbor-friend of Ōnuma. Seki also ran a private school in Shitaya, Sekkō-rō (Snow Scent Edifice), established in 1867. In the summer of 1869, some ten poets gathered at the south side of the Shinobazu Pond. *Kanren shōkō* was exactly a collection of the poems improvised at this banquet. Another Shitaya Literatus, Fukushima Ryūho (1820-1889), also added an illustration of lotus to *Kanren shōkō*.

*Tōkei-shi* is another representative work by Ōnuma that vividly depicts the societal changes in the early Meiji period. Published in 1869 and composed of Ōnuma's thirty pieces of poem with contributions from twenty-two renowned calligraphers and painters at the time, it satirizes the contemporary politics and criticizes the government officials. *Tōkei-shi* was particularly remarkable as a product of collaboration among the Shitaya Literati including Okuhara Seiko, Kawakami Tōgai (1828-1881), Suzuki Gako (1816-1870), and Hattori Hazan (1827-1894), all living in the Shitaya area. Kawakami also opened a private school, Chōkō dokuga kan (Building for Listening to Scent and Reading Pictures), in his house in Okachimachi in 1869.

Ōnuma epitomized the decline of *kanshi*, to be overtaken by Western languages and Japanese national studies (Hino 1999; Ogata 1994). As Shinobu Joken accounted, Ōnuma kept his topknot, visual traits of the Edo past, and preferred befriending with the late ancient people (1918). As *kanshi* researcher Gōyama Rintarō puts, from the 1890s, Chinese poetry in Japan became one of strong archaism and shifted from the mainstream to a minor literary field (2014).

In 1890, a freight-traffic line connecting Ueno with Akihabara was constructed, which covered Ōnuma's home. At the age of seventy-two, Ōnuma moved to 15 Hanasonochō, north to the Shinobazu Pond, a much quieter place. A year after the move, Ōnuma passed away. He became the subject of nostalgic longing and romantic imagination of the novelists Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) and Nagai Kafū. Grandson of Washizu Kidō and remote kin of Ōnuma, Nagai features Ōnuma in his novels as one refused to conform to the new fad and climb the social ladder, also reflecting Nagai's personal aversion to pursuit of social success.

## 4.2 Okuhara Seiko

With the growing enthusiasm for Western languages and Japanese national studies, the



age of *kanshi* gradually closed its curtain. Another representative figure of the Shitaya Literati that symbolized the changes in Ueno and decline of *nanga*, is a female painter Okuhara Seiko (1837-1913). *Nanga*, or Southern painting, is a school of Japanese painting that revealed strong admiration of the literati painting in China and reached its pinnacle in the late Edo and early Meiji periods.

Born into a warrior family in Koga, today's Ibaraki Prefecture, Okuhara moved to Edo to pursue her career as a painter in 1865. According to the biography by Inamura Ryōhei, she first stayed at the second floor of a bookstore in Ikenohata-Nakachō, Okamura-ya Shōsuke, whose owner also from Koga (1929=1995). In 1866, with the help of the owner of Gyokuhōdō, an ink and brush shop next to Okamura-ya, she found a little house in this area (Ibid.). Opened in 1778, Gyokuhōdō boasted long history and sophisticated taste (Nihon meissho annai sha 1919). In the Meiji period, it had been popular among patrons of high social status and produced medals for the Meiji Government (Ozawa 1959, 8). Friendship with Gyokuhōdō continued in her life.

During her life in this area between the mid-1860s and 1880s, Okuhara made her debut in the art world and developed a social network critical for her career. In 1865, Okuhara's father bought her a more spacious house in Marishiten-Yokochō near the previous temporary residence and she named it Bokutoen unrō (Edifice of Ink and Smoke) (Inamura 1929=1995). In 1866, Okuhara organized a meeting participated by twenty-five prominent painters and literati at the time including Ōnuma, Seki, Suzuki and Hattori at a little restaurant, Yoshida-tei (later renamed as Chōdatei) on the Benten-jima Island (1929=1995, 30-35). This restaurant had been a famous spot for *kanshi* meetings, for example, Kyūu-sha, Old Rain Society, hosted by Fujino Masahira (1826-1888), and *shogakai*, gatherings for painting and calligraphy improvisations and selling on the spot, often accompanied by drinks and food (Mori 1877; Tatsumichi 1999; Ibi 2009). Inamura's father helped at this banquet, offered detailed account of this gathering (Inamura 1929=1995, 30-35). The participants all came on foot. While enjoying sake drinks, the participants took turns to add their strokes (Ibid., 31-32). Figure 3 shows this collaborative work, titled as “Gathering at Shinobazu”. After this Shinobazu gathering, Okuhara made her presence in the art worlds. The Meiji political leaders, Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877) and Yamauchi Yōdō (1848-1872) whom she met over other gatherings became her close patrons.

The Shitaya Literati in this neighborhood were important teachers, friends, and rivals of hers. She learnt Chinese poetry after Ōnuma who also taught at her hometown in Koga. Ōnuma also presented her a poem praising her devotion to landscape paintings rather than the conventional activities of females such as embroidery.<sup>6)</sup> In 1872, Okuhara established a private school, Shunyō Kajuku (Spring Sun School), in her house. The



Figure 3 *Shinobazu-ike atsumari*, collaborative work by twenty calligraphers and painters in 1868. Inamura 1929=1995, 31.

number of students reached more than three hundred including pharmacist Morita Hōtan and geisha entertainers in the district (Inamura 1929=1995, 30-35; McClintock 2000, 20). Between 1876 and 1877, Okakura Tenshin (1863-1913), a later influential art theorist and educator, also studied after her. Correspondence between Okakura and Okuhara continued through her life (McClintock 2000, 20). Okakura became familiar with Sinophile's cultures through learning after the Shitaya Literati. In 1878, Okakura also joined the monthly meetings of Mari Ginsha, a *kanshi* Society in Shitaya hosted by Mori Shuntō (1819-1889), an old friend and relative of Ōnuma. Another *nanga* master who rivaled Okuhara was Yasuda Rōzan (1830-1883). Yasuda also settled down in Shitaya in 1873 and both were the central figures of the *nanga* world in the Kantō area (Hosono 1973, 101).

Okuhara's social life in the area could also be seen in a small group, Hankan-sha (Half-day Leisure Society). This Society claimed its purpose as providing opportunities of art appreciation for developing theories and creations (Inamura 1929=1995, 21). Organized by Washizu Kidō, the members included Okuhara, Kawakami Tōgai, Ichikawa Ban'an (1838-1907), and Onagai Shōshū (1829-1888), all living in Shitaya. The members took turns to host their monthly gatherings. At the meetings, they appraised works by the old masters, improvised new works at the spot, and ended with humble dinners, sake, and tea (Ibid., 72-73).

Although art historian Kobayashi Junko mentions Okuhara's disinterest in national exhibitions, her name can be confirmed in the catalogue of the Second National Industrial Exhibition held in Ueno in 1881 (1995, 104).<sup>7)</sup> It was a collaborative painting on an

auspicious subject matter with two other painters named Matsuoka and Yamamoto who lived in the same neighborhood as Okuhara. Inamura quoted the words of Western style painter Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958), grandson of Suzuki Gako, “this area had been a nest of literati at the time,” and speculated that Okuhara should have found Shitaya a great place to start her career through socializing with these people (1929=1995, 34).

Okuhara’s life in Shitaya did not last forever. Not unlike Ōnuma, in 1889, her home and land were purchased by the Japan Railway Company for the freight-traffic line between Ueno and Akihabara. After briefly staying at a smaller house in the same neighborhood for a year, she moved to Kumagaya, Saitama where the railway line also connected with Ueno since 1883. She continued her artistic activities in Kumagaya until her demise in 1913.

## 5. The Diminishing “Shitaya Literati” and Shifting Meaning of the Ueno Area

The cases of Ōnuma and Okuhara symbolized the decline of the genres of *kanshi* and *nanga*. With more direct exchange with Qing officials and scholars who visited Japan, through travels, and *kanshi* columns in the newspapers, Chinese studies and Chinese poetry saw their boom in the early Meiji period (Buckland 2013, 90-91). As art historian Ōmura Seigai (1868-1927) recalls, in the early 1880s, Chinese studies remained its high status in the literature world and *nanga*, supported by the government officials, won wide popularity even in the countryside (1921, 1-2). The time when Sinophile culture and arts dominated the art world exactly cohered with the peak time of the Shitaya Literati.

A turning point of the status of *kanshi* and *nanga* is often credited to a speech given by an American philosopher Ernest Fenollosa at the Education Museum in Ueno in 1882. Hired by the Meiji Government, Fenollosa (1853-1908) taught at the University of Tokyo and worked closely with Okakura Tenshin in promoting modernization of Japanese arts. Fenollosa delivered *Bijutsu shinsetsu*, a Lecture on Art, organized by Ryūchi-kai, one of the earliest art groups in Japan, in front of government officials and social elites. Advocating the superiority of Japanese art, *Bijutsu shinsetsu* was later published as a pamphlet and created huge impact in the art world in Japan (Murakata 1983).

Another significant event was the opening of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, today’s Tokyo University of the Arts, in 1889. Reflecting the visions of Okakura and Fenollosa, the School was established at the site of the Education Museum and close to the National Museum in Ueno. Aiming at reviving particular genres of Japanese paintings, its curriculum excluded *nanga*.

Concerning the urban infrastructure, the Ueno area transformed into a terminal

station town adjacent to a museum park. This area witnessed the earliest investment in railway projects from the private companies. In 1882, horse-drawn trams started its running between Ueno and Shimbashi. In 1883, the Ueno railway station was constructed downhill area of Ueno, which used to be sub-temples of Kan'ei-ji in the Edo period and connected Ueno with Kumagaya in the north (Noda 1984, 1). The railway, exhibition projects, and modern institutions' influence on the area was tremendous. According to an article in *Yubin Hōchi* newspaper in 1883, the price of the adjacent land raised up twice (Ya'nesen kōbō 1990, 6). In 1890, the freight line between Ueno and Akihabara, crossing the previous houses of Ōnuma and Okuhara, was put into use. The Ueno station, functioning as the terminal connecting with the northeastern areas in Japan, became one of the most important stations in the Tokyo city and fueled the urbanization of the area.

These projects also went parallel with the governmental agenda to visualize the power of the Imperial Household. The Meiji Emperor had visited the Park thirty-six times between the first time in 1876 and 1907, strengthening the association among the park, modernity, and the Imperial Household (Fujimoto 1939, 920). The imagination of the Shinobazu Pond as the little West Lake also vanished as the Sino-Japanese relationship deteriorated. In 1894, the Tokyo government also used the Ueno Park and Shinobazu Pond for a celebration event of Japan's triumph over Qing China in 1894 (Kim 1994; Kinoshita 2013).

Along the development of the public transportation and cultural institutions in the area, the Shitaya Literati gradually faded out. Nakane Kōtei (1839-1913), one of the Shitaya Literati, lamented in his 1886 *Kōtei gadan*. After listing the masters in this neighborhood, Nakane expressed his sorrow over their demise one after another. The residents shifted, atmosphere changed, and Ōnuma was the only one who still lived here (Nakane 1886). Their gatherings were criticized as rough and their works, resembling just *tsukune-imo* yam and lacking spiritual depth (Hosono 1973, 107). Neither Ōnuma nor Okuhara obtained positions at the fledging-off academy, i.e. the University of Tokyo and Tokyo School of Fine Arts. The Shitaya area vividly reflected the societal changes and modernization of the urban space and definition of "art".

## 6. Conclusion

The Shitaya Literati lived concentratedly in Shitaya in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Inheriting the Edo tradition, they prospered through robust social gatherings where ideas and information exchange occurred and collaborative works were created. The collective activities and varying roles as Becker identifies and categorizes can be observed. Ōnuma and Okuhara were mainly on the production side who "developed ideas", "executed", and

"manufactured". There were also distributors and supporters including their teachers, friends from the same hometown, neighbor creators and business owners, and patrons. At the gatherings, they "responded to", "appreciated", "created and maintained the rationale" of their works. The collaborative works served as strong evidence of their rapport. Their frequent gatherings strengthened the distribution and support system and rationale of particular genres including *kanshi*, *nanga*, and calligraphy. Their *cooperative* activities and network were further cultivated at the place of Shitaya where the economy flourished with the religious and political power. This geographical and social environment paved foundation for the cultural and artistic activities.

The railway development, exclusion of their genres by the modern institutions, and new enthusiasms for Western and national studies led to the decline of Shitaya Literati. The specific place of Shitaya witnessed the temporary prosperity of Shitaya Literati and incubation process of the modern concepts of "art" creation as individual action and "artist" defined by the new institutions. Another question concerning the difference in the meaning of gathering and social life between the Shitaya Literati and the artist villages developed in Yanaka, Tabata, Ikebukuro, and Magome in the following decades, remains. This will be explored in another research project.

### Notes

- 1) Part-time Lecturer, College of Intercultural Communication, Rikkyo University.
- 2) Japanese names in this paper follow the natural order with the given names coming after the family names.
- 3) "賀 枕山先生暖室落成 Congratulating on the completion of sensei's warm room  
雲孫競賀落成新, 占暖開筵一室春。狹小何妨容七衆, 不唯八萬四千人 All the students are congratulating on the completion. A warm banquet is held at the room of spring. It is small but does not matter at all for the large number of visitors." (Ônuma, 1875).
- 4) "江戸名勝詩 Edo Famous Scenes  
文珠楼内瑠璃殿。金碧辉煌庄画図。昔時取信紅毛語。如此奇觀万国無 Ruri-den in Monjurō. Grand and picturesque. Foreigners were amazed in the past. They said this could not be compared with elsewhere." (Ônuma, 1878).
- 5) "小西湖晚况 Little West Lake at Night  
池邊垂柳舞威風, 金碧閃波天女宮。吟盡石橋斜照后, 櫻花如睡月朦朧 Weeping willow at the pondside is dancing. The waves shine upon the shrine of heavenly maiden. After the sunset, when my singing of poetry finished at the stone bridge, sakura looks like sleeping in the moonlight." (Ônuma, 1875).
- 6) "贈晴湖女史 To Lady Seiko  
刺繡生涯換畫禪, 山光水影寄華箋。鴛鴦手裡織纖華, 不写相思句一聯 Embroidery is replaced by zen paintings. Beautiful landscape is given to paper. Slender flowers in the

mandarin duck-like hands. There is no lines dedicated to romance.” (Ōnuma 1875)

- 7) “画額(一) 絹 玉堂富貴ノ図彩画合作 画工下谷御徒町三丁目松岡光訓、画工同町一丁目山本尚親、画工中御徒町三丁目奥原晴湖 Painting (one piece) Silk, a collaborative painting on a grand hall and auspicious picture of colors, by painters Matsuoka Mitsukuni from 3-chōmei Okachimachi Shitaya, and Yamamoto Naochika from the same neighborhood, and Okuhara Seiko from 3-chōmei Naka-Okachimachi” (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, 1996).

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