

Report on the International Symposium/Workshop in Japanese Literary and Visual Studies
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My presentation at the Japanese Literary and Visual Studies conference, jointly held by Columbia and Waseda universities, was titled “*A Reconsideration on The Bodhisattva Fugen and Attendants in the Freer Gallery of Art.*” In this presentation, I attempted to provide my own explanations to some of the peculiarities of the Freer’s painting, which belongs to the category of *Fugen jūrasetsunyo* paintings. My presentation argued that the context of the Kegon tradition, as well as the Hokke tradition, which has been employed to interpret this type of paintings, could provide us with a clue to a richer understanding of the picture’s peculiar features.

Even though I tried to be fully prepared for my argument, I have to confess that I was quite nervous before the presentation because it was the first time for me to present in front of professors and fellow graduate students from various institutions. It was also tricky to elaborate my point adequately in fifteen minutes of presentation. However, the comments from the professors after the presentation helped me further expand and deepen my understanding of the topic. Especially, one of the comments, locating the painting on which I presented in the context of the salvation of women in the Kamakura period, provided me with a different perspective to think about the *Fugen jūrasetsunyo* painting. The comment was also related to my interest in the women sponsorship and art production as well as their relationship in the ritualistic context.

The conference not only directly helped me to refine my research subject, but also provided me with an opportunity to access various research interest currently being conducted in the field of Japanese studies. The sophisticated and up-to-date presentation of professors at the symposium broadened my limited understanding of the field. For example, Professor Komine’s keynote speech comprehensively explained the richness of Kegon iconography by examining the diversity of Zenmyō images in the East Asian context and their correlation. The presentations of graduate students from the United States and Japan, who were in similar academic stage with me, allowed me to grasp their various interests in the Japanese studies and the different approaches to the subjects.

To sum up, I can say that participating in the overall process of the conference was very productive and educative for me as a Ph.D. student: while preparing for the presentation, I could learn how to convey my argument elaborately and clearly in a limited time; on the day of the conference, I was able to understand the latest research trends in Japanese studies as well as the research interests of fellow graduate students; finally, during and after the conference, I could have a conversation with the senior and junior scholars and interacted with them in a more informal atmosphere. I am grateful that the Columbia-Waseda Conference in Japanese Literary and Visual Studies provided me with this wonderful opportunity.