

THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF JAPAN IN THE WEST¹

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Introduction

Cultural studies which have been one of the most flourishing fields in the humanities during their development over the past forty years experienced a number of so-called “turns”: the linguistic turn, for which Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn* (1967) is a representative early work; the interpretive turn, perhaps best represented by Clifford Geertz's *Thick Description* (1973), the postcolonial turn with its two classics, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1984); the performative turn introduced by Victor Turner's *The Anthropology of Performance* (1987); the reflexive turn which is also called literary or rhetorical turn and induced by James Clifford's *Writing Culture* (1986); the translational turn, headed by Susan Bassnett's and Andre Lefebvre's *Constructing Cultures* (1998); as well as the spatial turn brought forward by Mike Crang's and Nigel Thrift's *Thinking Space* (2000).

One of these turns was the visual, iconic or pictorial turn which began with William Mitchell's short but influential essay “The Pictorial Turn”

¹ This is a slightly changed and expanded English version of an essay formerly published in German (Linhart 2003).

(Artforum, March 1992). Ever since the Greek philosopher Plato Western science was hostile against pictures, and pictures were not considered to be academic or worth of academic analysis. But from the 2nd half of the 19th century onwards there occurred a pictorial revolution with the development of photography, with new printing methods, the invention of film and TV, the appearance of computers, videos, fax, and finally the internet, resulting in a flood of pictures which can no longer be neglected.

The pioneer of visual studies, William Mitchell, stated in his mentioned essay: “Until now we have been thinking by means of pictures, but from now on we have to think about pictures”, thus setting the course for a new direction of studies about visual elements. The German arthistorian Gottfried Boehm wrote in his 1994 book *Was ist ein Bild?* (What is a Picture) about the “The return of pictures”. Like linguistics deal with the analysis of texts, visual studies or pictorial studies deal with the analysis of pictures. And in addition to writing culture we now also have to picturing culture.

This new approach had also a heavy influence on the history of arts, and at many universities it was renamed into historic pictorial or visual studies. Furthermore, new fields of study appeared, such as pictorial or visual anthropology, pictorial or visual media studies, as well as transcultural pictorial or visual cultural studies.

What are visual studies, then? It is an interdisciplinary general study of pictures, in which the difference between high culture and mass culture ceases to have any meaning, because “everything which appears before our eyes, can become a picture” (Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie/ Pictorial Anthropology*, 2001) and therefore an object for our study. William Mitchell postulated that we have to ask new questions about pictures, such as: What is the history and pre-history of a picture? What is the relation between a picture and its object? What is the general meaning of a picture? Which meaning is emphasized by the picture? What is the mediality of the picture? What is the reaction to the picture? How is it evaluated? What is its echo? Which effect, which impact has this picture when, where, in which medium? etc.²

This visual turn also changed the contents of imagology, the study of images, which consisted mainly in the study of country images. Up to the 1990s this was a division of comparative literature. Scholars studied country

² This part is summed up from Bachmann-Medick 2006.

images and other images not through the analysis of pictures but rather through the analysis of literary and other written sources, but nowadays it is concerning itself also with real images or pictures, i.e. it is using pictures as a text for analysis.

In this short essay I will try to show the possibilities of this new approach in the analysis of representations of Japan, both self-representations and representations from outside.

Let me start with an example pointed out by John W. Dower in 1998, the dust jacket of the Cambridge History of Japan, issued by the honorable Cambridge University Press from 1988-1993 in six volumes with approximately 800 pages each, in sum more than 5000 pages about the history of Japan. This is the most highly evaluated history of Japan, written by the best authorities of the USA. All six volumes have the same dust jacket with a reproduction of a picture of the Ryōgoku Bridge over the River Sumida in Edo, painted by the ukiyoe artist Utagawa Toyoharu. The only differences between the volumes are slight nuances of colour.

John Dower, the well-known historian of Japan from MIT, says about this dust-jacket:

“The dust jacket tells a great deal about popular Western perceptions of Japan. It is aesthetically tasteful. It is exotic – a frozen image of late-feudal culture, replete with fans and paper umbrellas, kimono and lanterns, graceful wooden bridges and archaic, man-powered boats. And it conveys the clear impression of a fundamentally unchanging society. The same visual image covers every period of Japanese history, from Jōmon and Yayoi right up to the present day...The message implicit in this all-too-typical wrapping is that a unique, unchanging cultural essence pervades the entire history of Japan...The fact that such a distinguished publishing house chose to wrap twentieth-century Japan with an exotic scene from the Tokugawa period can be seen as emblematic of Euro-American ‘Orientalist’ attitudes in general.” As Edward Said said in his mentioned book in 1978, Westerners at all levels of society have tended to exoticize and caricature non-Westeners and to emphasize how their values and experiences differ fundamentally from those of the West. From this perspective, the repetitive dust jacket for the Cambridge History of Japan is splendidly orientalist, for it conveys the impression of a society that is (1) unchanging in essence, and (2) fundamentally divergent from the European and Euro-American experience. Needless to say, by wrapping Japan’s modern century with Toyoharu’s depiction of late-eighteenth-century Edo, the impression also is conveyed that modern and even contemporary Japan remains backward and even feudalistic.

This is an astonishing stereotype, when we consider the vigor of Japanese capitalism in the late 1980s, when the Cambridge volumes began appearing, and the advanced technological and technocratic competence on which these economic accomplishments rested.” (Dower 1998: 1-3)

“A comparable stereotyped ‚Orientalist‘ impression is conveyed by the dust jacket of The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Japan, edited by Richard Bowring and Peter Kornicki (1993). The front of the jacket displays a large photograph of Mt. Fuji, the spine features a geisha, and four photographs appear on the back: a masked kendō swordsman, mothers and children in festive New Year’s kimono, a pagoda, and a McDonald’s fast-food restaurant. It is doubtful that even a contest to produce the most banal clichés possible could have surpassed this.” (Dower 1998:3)

Mount Fuji

On the following pages I would like to concentrate on one of the most representative pictorial symbols of Japan, also to be found on the dust jacket of the The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Japan, namely Mt. Fuji.

A hundred years ago, the Austro-Hungarian colonel Theodor von Lerch came to Japan to get information about the military strength of Japan. Up to now he is well remembered in Japan as the European who introduced alpine skiing to the Japanese army.

When he arrived in Yokohama by ship he wrote into his diary:

“The city of Yokohama and the countryside were still covered by morning fog. ...

I wanted to retreat from this first glance on Japan, when I saw something unforgettable: Above the fog in the sky there shone a light spot – a white pyramid. The Fujiyama gleamed already in sunlight, while in the lowlands everything was still dark. This view was so unnaturally beautiful that for quite some time I thought a cloud would feign the snow mountain. I could not have got a more beautiful welcome in the country of the rising sun! For a long time I stood there, admiring this view of nature. The peak of Mount Fuji protrudes 3800 meters into the sky – **as the symbol of Japan, known everywhere in the world.**” (Lerch n. d.: 21-22)

Lerch later tried to climb Mount Fuji in the winter and rush down on his skis, but he had to cancel the ascent a few hundred meters below the peak. General Nogi, the so-called hero of Port Arthur, gave him a poem and a drawing of Mount Fuji for this courageous deed (Lerch 1932: 78).

What we can see from Lerch’s remarks is the fact that one hundred years ago Mount Fuji was already established as the symbol of Japan, both outside and inside of Japan. But we can find the use of Mt. Fuji as a symbol of Japan already earlier.

In 1869 Michael Moser, a 16 years old apprentice of the famous photographer Burger, was left in Japan after the first Austro-Hungarian

expedition to Japan was dissolved there. In spite of his youth, he became an oyatoi gaikokujin, a foreign employee of the Japanese government, as which he served until 1877. When he returned to Austria, he opened his own photo studio in the countryside. On the backside of his photographs he used a logo with Mount Fuji, a torii and the rising sun. (Fig. 1)

Just to show how popular Mt. Fuji was at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century I would like to insert here some picture postcards of that time, all showing Mt. Fuji as a symbol of Japan.

On the picture postcard by R. Hochberg, *The Austrian warship Empress Elisabeth in Japanese waters*, Mt. Fuji functions definitely as a code for Japan. If Mt. Fuji were not presented one could not see that the ship was cruising in “the waters of Japan”. (Fig. 2)

Another picture postcard with the title *Japan*, which was published in



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Chemnitz in the Eastern part of Germany about hundred years ago, shows the imperial chrysanthemum and several other symbols of Japan: iris flowers, chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms, and as background in the middle Mt. Fuji. If we interpret the flowers as Japanese women or geisha, as is often done, think of Mascagni's opera *Iris* and of Pierre Loti's novel *Madame Chrysanthème*, on this card we have the three most famous symbols of Japan: Fujiyama, geisha, and cherry blossoms (*sakura*). (Fig. 3)

There exist several picture postcards of the Italian opera *Iris*. A card from a famous series by the well-known music publisher

Ricordi, designed by the graphic artist Giovanni Mario Mataloni (1869-1944) in art nouveau style, shows again Mt. Fuji, but it is a Fuji very similar in shape to Mt. Vesuvio, rather. (Fig. 4)

On a French picture postcard from 1904 one can grasp only from



Fig. 4

the text of a poem that Mt. Fuji is meant, because the poem speaks of grand Fushiyama. The artist probably did never see a proper picture of the famous mountain, otherwise he could not have drawn it so misshaped. (Fig. 5)

A French trading card for biscuits (Fig. 6) contains also a strange-shaped Mt. Fuji, as does an Italian art deco picture postcard from around 1930 with a geisha and a pierrot. (Fig. 7) All these artists thought it necessary to add a picture of Mt. Fuji to make it clear once and for all that the scenery is in Japan, and nowhere else.

If we go through travel reports about Japan from the late 19th and early 20th century, we see that every traveler speaks about Mt. Fuji, and that every illustrated book contains a beautiful picture of this mountain.

Already the diary of Henry Heusken, the Dutch interpreter of the first American consul in Japan, Townsend Harris, who lived in Shimoda from



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

August 21, 1856 until his tragic murder on January 15, 1861, we find a note about Mt. Fuji:

“24. November 1857

. . . Rounding a mountain, I sight through the foliage of a few pine trees a white peak that gleams in the sun. In an instant I realize that I am looking at Fujiyama. Never in my life will I forget the sight of that mountain as I saw it today for the first time, and I don't think anything in the world will ever equal its beauty.

There are mountains three times higher than Fuji; the glaciers of Switzerland are no doubt, impressive and magnificent; the summit of the Himalayas, the sublime Dawalaquiri, raises its venerable brow to immeasurable heights, but one cannot see it until one has climbed other mountains that hide it from sight in the

plains; one sees but ice and glaciers; snows surround you wherever you may turn your eyes. But here, in the midst of a smiling countryside covered with abundant crops – with pine groves and giant camphor trees that seem to vie in longevity with the very soil where they were born, making shade with their majestic foliage for some miya, or chapel, dedicated to the ancient Gods of the Empire, and as a backdrop for this theatre of plenty and serenity – the pure outline of the unique Fujiyama rises like two symmetrical lines toward the sky, whose pale blue seemed dark, compared to the immaculate snows of the mountain that reflected, like another Kohinoor, the rays of the setting sun.

In spite of myself I pulled the reins of my horse and, carried away by an outburst of enthusiasm, I took off my hat and cried: “Great glorious Fujiyama!” Glory forever to the mountain of mountains of the Pacific Sea, which alone raises its venerable brow covered with eternal snow amidst the verdant countryside of Nippon! Jealous of its beauty, it will not suffer a rival which might lessen its splendour. Its crown of snow stands out alone above the highest mountains of Nippon, and Amagi, which we have just passed after a most difficult day, seems only a small hill, hardly worth mentioning.

Ah! Why don't I have about twenty of the friends of my younger days around me! The surrounding hills would soon repeat the echo of a thrice repeated hip, hip, hurrah in honour of the sublime Fujiyama.

Never, anywhere, have I seen that mountain as beautiful as it appears from here. . .”
(Heusken 1964: 124-125).

Heusken mentions an important theme of Mt. Fuji in his diary: Mt. Fuji in all his beauty is incomparable to any mountain in this world. It is unique, and Heusken explains us why: it is not located in a remote, unreachable region, but protrudes from the most fruitful plain of Japan, visible for everyone. His beauty is created by the two symmetric lines of his silhouette and the virginal snow on his peak. Heusken lived for three years relatively isolated in Shimoda. When he arrived there he did not speak Japanese at all. Therefore we can assume that he developed his view of Mt. Fuji relatively uninfluenced from Japanese and foreigners.

The uniqueness of Mt. Fuji

This uniqueness of Mt. Fuji was instrumental for those who tried to construct this mountain as the national symbol of Japan. This process started as a reaction against the planned opening of the country at the time of great chancellor Tanuma Okitsugu at the end of the 18th century. When Matsudaira Sadanobu in 1786 succeeded Tanuma, the possibility of an opening of Japan came to a sudden end. One of the personalities who stressed the uniqueness of Mt. Fuji in an international context was an intellectual in the circumference of Okitsugu, the eccentric Hiraga Gennai (1728-1779). Gennai's biographer, a certain Ekisai, left us a report about Gennai's ascent of Mt. Fuji in 1788 and the emotions which he set free.

When Gennai had climbed the highest peak, he looked in all four directions, clapped his hands and said:

“That in the E Nanji from China is stated that Japan is a noble country, how true is this! If one looks from the highest peak in the four directions, all eight parts of the world are filled with morning fog, and one does not know where East and where West is. It is like diving into the heavenly fields.” (Kano 1994: 45-46)

For Gennai Mt. Fuji was “the highest mountain of the three countries” (somosomo Fuji wa jitsu ni sangoku ichi no kōsan nari) (Kano 1994: 46), which represented the Japanese world view at that time: India (Tenjiku), China (Morokoshi) und Japan (Nippon).

This statement is very similar to the one of the leader of the Fuji cult, Jikigyō Miroku (1671-1733), for whom Mt. Fuji was “the mountain among

the mountains of the three countries” (sangoku daiissan), and at the same time also the “cornerstone of the three countries” (sangoku no kanameishi) (Formanek 2003:174).

“Within East, West, South and North, the East is the origin of sun and moon, and this is where Japan is. Mount Fuji is the origin of the three countries. It is the origin of everything and the body of sun and moon.” (Kano 1994: 49)

The painter in Western style, Shiba Kōkan (1747-1818), made a similar remark: “Mount Fuji is a mountain which cannot be found in other countries”. (Kano 1994: 57) With such remarks Mt. Fuji gained a new meaning for the nation. Mt. Fuji is unique in Japan, and Japan is unique in the world, i.e. Mt. Fuji is unique in the world and therefore apt to symbolize Japan in the world.

Mount Fuji in school songs

After the Meiji Restoration several people elaborated the myth of the uniqueness of Mt. Fuji. In November 1881 the first collection of songs for school use, *Shōgaku shōka shū*, was published. The famous musical pedagogue Izawa Shūji was responsible for it. Song No. 27 bears the simple title *Fuji no yama* (Mount Fuji) and is sung to a tune by Joseph Haydn.

Fuji no yama
(1)

Fumoto ni yuki zo. Kakarikeru.
Takane ni yuki zo. Tsumoritaru.
Hadae wa yuki. Koromo wa kumo.

Sono yuki kumo o. Yosoitaru.
Fuji to yū yama no. Miwatashi ni.
Shiku mono mo nashi. Niru mo nashi.

(2)

Gaikokujin mo. Aogu nari.
Wagakuni hito mo. Hokoru nari.
Teru hi no kage. Sora yuku tsuki.

Mount Fuji

His foot is covered by clouds
His high peak is snow/capped
His skin is snow, his garment the clouds
With snow and clouds he is vested
To this view of Mt. Fuji
Nothing can be equaled, nothing compared

Even foreigners adore him
And we Japanese are proud of him
In the light of the shining sun and moon travelling over heaven

<i>Tsuki hito tomo ni. Kagayakite.</i>	With moon and sun he is gleaming
<i>Fuji to yū yama no. Miwatashi ni.</i>	To this view of Mt. Fuji
<i>Shiku mono mo nashi. Niru mo nashi.</i>	Nothing can be equaled, nothing compared

(Kaigo 1965:16).

One can assume that the last two lines of each verse “To this view of Mt. Fuji nothing can be equaled, nothing compared” were remembered by most children through their whole lives. The verses are simple, as should be the case with a school song. Izawa himself tells us in his book *Yōgaku kotohajime* (Beginnings of Western Music in Japan) about his patriotic motivation in choosing this song. Since Mt. Fuji was a mountain, which is treated in literature as a mirror of Japan, as a god or as a treasure, and since it was also highly evaluated in foreign countries because of its beauty, he hoped that this song would create patriotism among the listeners (Maruyama 1992: 327). In a period, in which the Japanese were ready to replace their whole culture by Western culture, and even forget their language, in this period the hint, that even foreigners liked Mt. Fuji, was of great importance, from which the whole nation could create new self-consciousness.

This song from 1881 was not the only primary school song, which praised Mt. Fuji. The third collection *Shōgaku shōka shū* from 1884 contains as no. 63 the song *Fuji Tsukuba*, in which one verse each is devoted to one of the two holy mountains.

Fuji Tsukuba

(1)

*Suruga naru. Fuji no takane o.
Aogite mo. Ugokanu miyo wa.
Shirarekeri.*

(2)

Tsukuba-ne no. Kono mo kano men mo.

*Terasu naru. Miyo no hikari yo.
glory
Arigataki.*

Fuji Tsukuba

High peak of Mt. Fuji from Suruga
If one adores thee, one can feel:
The eternity of our rulers

Peak of Mt. Tsukuba! Whether this side

Or the other one shines in the
of our rulers:
Gratefulness

(Kaigo 1965: 32).

In this song, which can be even called a hymn, the poet seems to have run out of ideas and words because of the magnificence and the dignity of the two holy mountains. Although the traditional metrics of 5-7-5-7-5 syllables leaves only space for very few words, the poet used the word *miyo* for the rule of the emperor in every verse. Thus this song corresponds very well to the *tennō* myth which was just beginning to be created at that time. It is difficult to imagine, that the young pupils really loved this song.

In 1904 the *Kyōiku shōka shū* Nr. 8 appeared which for the first time contains a song about climbing Mount Fuji.

<i>Fuji tozan</i>	Climbing Mt. Fuji
<i>Kamiyo nagara no Fuji no takane,</i>	The high peak of Mt. Fuji from the age of the gods
<i>Kumo ni sobiete natsu mo samushi.</i>	Covered by clouds, cool even in summer
<i>Kumo ni sobiete natsu mo samushi.</i>	Covered by clouds, cool even in summer
<i>Aosora o irodoru shirotae no sono hada e.</i>	Heaven's blue is contrasting the white of his skin
<i>Sakasa ni egaku ōgi no omote,</i>	Like the front side of a fan, painted vice versa
<i>Hirakete niou hasu no hana ka.</i>	Or even a fragrant, opened lotus flower?
<i>Nobore yo, tomo yo, hi no moto no Mihashira to naru kono yama ni,</i>	Friends, climb him, this mountain This holy pillar of Japan.
<i>Iza, iza, tomo yo. Kumoji o wakete.</i>	Come, come, friends! Let's blaze a trail through the clouds!

(Kaigo 1965: 239)

It seems as if the contents of this song were already influenced by the ideas of Shiga Shigetaka, who will be introduced in the next part of this essay. Linguistically this song stands again on the ground of reality. It is not too difficult, but not without a certain pathos.

In the collection for elementary schools from July 1910, *Jinjō shōgaku shōka*, the volume for the second classes again contains a song about Mt. Fuji.

<i>Fuji-san</i>	Mt. Fuji
(1)	
<i>Atama o kumo no ue ni dashi,</i>	Your head protrudes from the clouds
<i>Yomo no yama o mioroshite,</i>	You look down at the mountains in all directions

*Kaminarisama o shita ni kiku,
Fuji wa Nihon-ichi no yama.*

Hear the God of Thunder beneath yourself
Fuji, Thou first among Japan's mountains

(2)

*Aosora takaku sobietachi,
Karada ni kumo no kimono kite,
Kasumi no suso o tōku hiku,
Fuji wa Nihon-ichi no yama.*

High into the blue sky you rise
Wearing a garment of clouds on your body
The misty hem of which spreads far away
Fuji, Thou first among Japan's mountains

(Kaigo 1965: 300).

This song is still known by many elderly Japanese, at least by those who visited school before 1945. Similar to the first song, it has an understandable text and one gets the impression that the emotions for the tennō are under control again. The last line, which stresses the uniqueness of Mt. Fuji seems to have been selected very carefully. We can assume that all Fuji-songs had the aim to create patriotism among the young pupils.

The reasoning of Shiga Shigetaka

With his book *Nihon fūkei ron* (About Japanese Landscape, 1894) Shiga Shigetaka (1863-1927) secured himself an eternal place in Japan's modern history of thought³. Like several other giants of Meiji-period Japan he also got his academic education at the Agricultural College in Sapporo, which later became Hokkaidō University. There he got under the influence of some Western teachers. That he was able to make use of this education by foreigners can be seen from the fact, that much of his bestseller – between 1894 and 1903 fifteen editions of *Nihon fūkei ron* were published – was taken from Western sources. Even the descriptions of the Japanese mountains follow essentially those in B.H. Chamberlains and W. B. Masons Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Japan* from 1891 (Manzenreiter 2000: 64-66).

Shiga had a great talent in interpreting Japanese landscape in a political sense and in using Japanese scenery for the creation and strengthening of a Japanese national consciousness. It goes without saying that Japan's mountain no. 1 in this process gets a very special role. Already in a Shiga

³ On Shiga Shigetaka see the monograph by Gavin (2001), and Neuss (1974). Especially about *Nihon fūkei ron* see Gavin (2000).

essay from 1888 ‘What is the Real Meaning of the Expression Japanese?’ he reflects programmatically about landscape and national consciousness or patriotism:

“From the conic form of the volcano of Mount Fuji which protrudes majestically into the sky and is covered by snow through the whole year, the many mountains and islands covered with green and the lakes, rivers and other physical characteristics have contributed to forming a national consciousness among the Japanese people. We have to learn from the Western culture, but we have to preserve our national spirit which emerged in and through the admiration of the characteristic qualities of Japanese nature.” (Takeuchi 1988: 38)

In his main publication Shiga has this to say about Mount Fuji:

“The most famous mountain among all famous mountains that is Mount Fuji. We need not praise this mountain, let us just listen, how the whole world is singing about it.” (Maruyama 1992: 337)

Although Shigetaka himself was no great mountain climber, he recommends everybody to climb the volcanic mountains of Japan, especially Mount Fuji, “in order to know the most grandiose panorama of the world” (Formanek 2000: 6). For him the Fuji is the most beautiful example of a mountain which can be thought of, when he says: To sum up, everybody agrees that Mount Fuji should be the norm (of a beautiful mountain)” (Maruyama 1992: 338).

Such a perfect mountain, which is at the same time the most well-known symbol of Japan, therefore had to become the first Japanese national park. This idea first appeared in the Japanese parliament as early as 1911, but it took another 25 years until the first national parks – Fuji-Hakone, Towada, Yoshino-Kumano, and Ōyama – were realized. Time and again the many discussions which eventually led to the formation of the Law on National Parks focused on Mount Fuji, like in 1922, when a motion for a law started with the words:

“Mount Fuji is known all over the world as a pronoun for our empire...” (Maruyama 1992: 358).

Already in 1922 and probably much earlier, Mount Fuji is a pronoun for Japan, a word which one might use instead of Japan, if one deems Japan, a real symbol of Japan.

The use of Mt. Fuji as nationalistic symbol in the arts

Some of the best examples for the instrumentalization of Mt. Fuji for nationalistic purposes were created by the famous Japanese painter Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958). The founder of the Nihon Bijutsu In, an institution that aimed to preserve traditional Japanese painting, Nihonga, in contrast to painting in Western style, Yōga, is famous, among others, as the painter of Mt. Fuji. In the course of his life he is said to have painted this imposing mountain more than 1000 times, beginning in 1905 (Hosono 1993:1). This is probably many more than the many views of Mt. Fuji created by Hokusai. Hokusai and Taikan painted or drew the Fuji with different motivations. For Hokusai the many different views of Mt. Fuji were of interest, the changes during a year, but for him the mountain was nothing else than scenery or landscape. Taikan on the other hand, whose whole work can be said to be symbolist, took the Fuji always as a symbol for the Japanese nation and his concept of Japan is represented through different depictions of Mount Fuji (Noma 1956: Plate 31).

In 1927 Taikan was asked by the Imperial Household Office to make a pair of screens on the occasion of Emperor Hirohito's accession to the throne. The theme was Mount Fuji in the rising sun (Chōyō reihō), one of the favorite themes of Taikan. While the surrounding mountains are still buried in clouds, Mount Fuji alone protrudes imposingly. Some years later, Yokoyama was appointed 'Artist of the Imperial Court', Teishitsu Gigei'in, and 1935 he became Member of the Imperial Academy of Arts. In 1937 he received as first Japanese the cultural order, bunka kunshō, from the Emperor, and after that he was several times nominated as official representative of the arts of Japan. He never tired to stress the spiritual component of Japanese arts, as e.g. in a lecture which he gave to a delegation of the Hitler Youth in Tokyo in 1938.

At the time of the war, Taikan showed his patriotic attitude by giving the enormous sum of half a million Yen, which he had received for the sale of ten paintings of the Fuji and ten of the sea, to the army for the purchase of airplanes (Rosenfield 2001: 174). In exchange for this he became president of the Patriotic Society for Arts of Japan, Nihon Bijutusu Hōkokukai. This society gave the military in 1944 6000 votive pictures (ema), which were attached inside airplanes and tanks. Taikan painted on his votive pictures only Mount Fujis and cherry blossoms.

One of his paintings, which is now in the Marine Museum Etajima,

and which was shown in 1942 at the 29th exhibition of the Nihon Bijutsu In, has the title *The True Spirit Dispatches the Light*, *Seiki hōkō*. It depicts Mt. Fuji from above like from an airplane, which is surrounded on all sides by a turbulent sea and by stormy clouds. John Rosenfield compared the many Fuji-pictures by Yokoyama Taikan during the war with reciting patriotic mantras.

Immediately after the war Taikan was afraid of being put before court because of this collaboration with the military regime, but three years later, when this danger was over, he said:

“In the course of this conflict I fulfilled various different functions, but I did not participate directly in the war. I did nothing else but painting Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms, and I think that this is not a crime” (Tan.o 1998: 28).

The combination of Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms was used for many posters during the war, which tried to promote the Japanese spirit, *Yamato damashii*.

At the time of coming into effect of the Peace Treaty of San Francisco with the US, 84 years old Yokoyama Taikan again concerned himself with his favorite theme, Mt. Fuji. On the picture with the title *The Pacific on a Certain Day*, *Aru hi no Taiheiyō*, Mt. Fuji protrudes majestically from the water, which disconnects Japan from America. The dragon in the ocean, a goddess of water, is surrounded by golden thunderbolts. It is said that Taikan made 16 preparatory pictures in full scale, before he was satisfied with his work (Clark 2001:24).

Epilogue

Even though Mt. Fuji is unique, it is not the only symbol of Japan. By and again it is stated that three things symbolize Japan: Fujiyama, geisha and cherry blossoms⁴. Let us leave aside the cherry blossoms, because they are a symbol also for the vanity of human life, especially for that of the warrior. We can simply create a warrior by changing the *nigori* from ぶし to bushi 富士, and interestingly today we use to write Fuji with Chinese characters meaning rich in warriors 富士, while the traditional characters for it had the meaning ‘unique, unequalled’ 不二, and thus fitted my theme much better.

⁴ On the use of these three symbols in Japanese advertising see Moeran and Skov 1997.

For me the relation between geisha and Fujiyama is of greater interest than that to warriors. The Fuji is often compared by the Japanese to an upside down folding fan, as is also sung in one of the Fuji school songs mentioned. Such fans are a *sine qua non* for every geisha.

Although we tend to see Mt. Fuji as male, it has a lot to do with femininity, even though women were not allowed to climb it for a long period. The main goddess of Mt. Fuji is Konohanasakuyahime, the daughter of the mountain god Ōyamazumi and at the same time wife of Ninigi no mikoto (Formanek 2003: 7). Jikigyō Miroku, the founder of the Fuji-cult, therefore logically made analogies between the shape of Mt. Fuji and a female body (Kano 1994: 34-35).

That geisha and Fuji-san until the present time are often used from official Japanese side for the representation of Japan could be seen at the closing ceremony of the Soccer World Cup 2002 in Yokohama: suddenly hundreds of young Japanese females poured onto the soccer field, all with yellow kimonos and green obis. Although they were just young Japanese females who had applied for this function, for foreign eyes they were without doubt 'geishas'. And then, in the middle of the field, all of a sudden, a Mt. Fuji was erected.

Another relation between geisha and Fujiyama can be seen on an old American picture postcard with a Japanese woman in kimono. The writer of the card wrote about it as explanation in 1909: "This is Miss Fujiyama". Fujiyama is representing Japan and therefore a Japanese woman becomes Miss Fujiyama. (Fig. 8)

A very good amalgamation of the most popular symbols for Japan occurred in the entertainment park Revere Beach in Massachusetts near New York. On a picture postcard from 1907 we can see, that this park offered



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

then a 15-minutes-ride through the flowerful Japan with Mt. Geisha. As can be easily seen on the card, Mt. Geisha is nothing else but a small copy of Mt. Fuji. (Fig. 9)

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 1990ies visual studies or Bildwissenschaft in German became an important new realm within cultural studies as a whole, but its methods are still far from established and well grounded, as is its theory. One consequence of the growth of visual studies

is that imagology, the study of images of countries, is now no longer restricted to the field of comparative literature and the analysis of texts, as it once was, but is also concerning itself with real images or pictures, i.e. using pictures as text.

In this short paper I try to show the possibilities of this new approach in the analysis of representations of Japan, both self-representations and representations from outside. I concentrate myself on one of the most important and strongest images of Japan, Mt Fuji, and as a sub-theme I try to connect Mt Fuji with another very influential image of Japan, the 'geisha'. By introducing several examples for both images from various visual media, I try to show how these images held in Japan and outside Japan influence each other, and how they are only slowly modified by new developments, so that in the case of Mt Fuji and the 'geisha' we can even speak of archetypes of visual representations of Japan.

Santrauka

Nuo 1990-ųjų pradžios vizualumo studijos (vok. k. Bildwissenschaft) tapo nauja svarbia kultūros studijų sritimi, tačiau šios srities metodologija, kaip ir teorija, dar nėra iki galo įsitvirtinusi ir pagrįsta. Viena iš vizualumo studijų plėtros pasekmių yra tai, kad imagologija, mokslas apie valstybių įvaizdžius, šiandien neapsiriboja vien tik lyginamąja literatūra ir teksto analize, bet tyrinėja ir realius vaizdus ar nuotraukas: naudoja nuotraukas kaip tekstą. Šiame trumpame straipsnyje bandoma atskleisti minėtos naujos prieigos galimybes tiriant Japonijos vaizdavimą ir šalies viduje, ir užsienyje. Čia aptariamas vienas iš svarbiausių ir stipriausių Japonijos įvaizdžių – Fudži kalnas. Taip pat bandoma sieti Fudži kalną su kitu labai reikšmingu Japonijos įvaizdžiu – geiša. Straipsnyje pristatomi abiejų įvaizdžių įvairios vaizdinės priemonės, stengiamasi atskleisti, kaip šie Japonijoje bei už Japonijos ribų paplitę įvaizdžiai veikia vienas kitą ir kokią nedidelę įtaką jiems turi nauji ir nauji modernūs procesai. Todėl kalbant Fudži kalno ir geišos atvejį galima kalbėti netgi apie vizualinio Japonijos vaizdavimo archetipus.