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Osaka University
The Possibility of the Sublime in SHIGA Shigetaka's
Nihonfukeiron (An Essay on Japanese Landscape)

Masahiro HAMASHITA

Comparing and adopting categories of Western aesthetics, we find the
difficulty of the sublime in Japanese aesthetics, which is generally considered
lacking in terms of the sublime. However, referring to the two characteristics of the
sublime, i.e. (1) objective vastness beyond imaginative comprehension and (2)
cause of excitement to strong passion and self-exaltation, we can suppose the
possibility of the sublime in SHIGA Shigetaka's concept of "TETTO" (跌宕)
and his worship of mountains. In addition, his mind of nationalism also promotes
his evaluation of Japanese landscapes. "TETTO" means irregularity and wilderness
found in natural scenery. Shiga's conception of the mountain is ambivalent in
that he seems to keep the traditional mountain-worship, while suggesting modern
view of mountains from whose summit we can command a fine view like a con-
quero. "TETTO" itself is not necessarily unique in Japan. UCHIMURA Kanzo
criticizes SHIGA's stance of nationalist-biased overestimation of Japanese scen-
ery. Really, Shiga was one of persons who belonged to a generation confronting
against menaces from Western powerful countries. Meanwhile every intellectual
in his generation experienced exaltation of passions caused by rapid changes and
modernization of Japanese society and existential crisis. In Shiga's case, national-
ism fitted to his inclination and he admires landscapes in Japan as exclusively
beautiful far above those of foreign countries from Korea, China to Britain. We
may admit that there suggested a concept of the sublime in Shiga's Nihonfukeiron,
but considering the third point of the sublime that leads to moral integrity, no trait
can be found there.