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The Kansai Eccentric

Ever since the serial publication of the Tsuji Nobuo's *Lineage of Eccentrics* (*Kiso no keifu*) in 1968, there has been a cottage industry in the attributions of eccentric artists. Japanese artists of the past and present – in ever increasing numbers – have been declared as being “eccentric,” in their lives and works, in a strategy that has proved to be popular with museum visitors and book sales. Aspects which might have been explained as stylistic variations of an artist, have been taken out of contexts, magnified, and even distorted in order to argue the point that these are the results of eccentric personalities.

The post-war receptions of Rosetsu and his contemporary colleagues, such as Itō Jakuchū and Soga Shōhaku, follow these patterns. Tracing post-war publications, we see that these artists has become ever more eccentric in public understanding.

An alternate strategy in understanding such artists would be to see them, not through postmodern standards, but to place them back to the contexts of the time and the places in which they lived. In other words, we would need go back to the eighteenth century and see how they were understood in their own time. Through the use of techniques from various disciplines, including history, religion, and economy, the presenter will attempt to examine 18th century Kansai artists within their contemporary contexts.