

CHEN, Ying. Tadashi Sekino's "Yünkang and Lungmen" in the Context of Overseas Propaganda: Regarding its Publication in the Magazine *CANTON*

In 1939, the photo and graphic design agency Nihon Kobo established by Japanese photojournalist Yonosuke Natori (1910–1962), received sponsorship from the Japanese South China Expeditionary Force to launch *CANTON*, an English-language propaganda graphic monthly in Canton (now Guangzhou). *CANTON* stood out among wartime periodicals by aiming to provide “guidelines for Chinese studies” while disseminating propaganda. The magazine primarily featured academic articles on Chinese studies written by Japanese scholars from top research institutions. Its target audience was well-educated people, particularly opinion leaders, in Europe and the United States. Despite the scarcity of existing copies and lack of previous research, this paper focuses on just one of *CANTON*'s academic articles, “Yünkang and Lungmen” by the art and architectural historian Tadashi Sekino (1867–1935). This article appeared in the second issue, in May 1939. It discusses two renowned ancient Buddhist sites in China, the grottoes of Yungang and Longmen, and provides a detailed introduction to their geographic conditions, excavation dates, styles of Buddhist statues, etc., accompanied by a variety of visual materials, such as photographs, rubbings, and scale drawings.

This paper analyzes Sekino's article for two significant reasons. Firstly, despite extensive previous research on Sekino's scholarship, his article in *CANTON* has remained unnoticed. However, it serves as a crucial example of how Sekino's research on China was employed in Japan's overseas wartime propaganda efforts. Secondly, while most articles in *CANTON* featured the latest research by active scholars, Sekino died four years before the magazine's launch. Hence, the article's publication cannot have been the author's own intentions. By examining why *CANTON* selected Sekino's article, this paper aims to provide insight into the editorial objectives behind the magazine's publication choices.

This paper approaches Sekino's article through the following steps. Firstly, it compares the content of the *CANTON* version of “Yünkang and Lungmen” with earlier versions published in more academic contexts. It reveals that the *CANTON* version carefully re-edited Sekino's travel notes made during his 1918 survey of China. Additionally, while previous versions lacked illustrations, the *CANTON* version incorporated a significant number of visually powerful images from photographers other than Sekino himself. It further clarifies that these illustrations resemble those of normal academic articles, being structured as “*kumi shashin*” (composite photographs, or photo essays), a common method employed in photojournalism.

Secondly, this paper examines the possible academic and social factors that contributed to the re-publication of Sekino's early article in *CANTON*. One factor is the connection between international academic competitions focused on ancient Chinese Buddhist sites, and the ongoing war. The significance of Sekino's article in *CANTON* lies not only in his academic influence, but also in the progress of the Sino-Japanese War, which allowed Japanese scholars exclusive research opportunities to Chinese archeological sites. Another influential factor is the “Yungang Boom.” The attention garnered by the Chinese Buddhist grottoes, particularly Yungang, which was occupied by Japan soon after the war began, made it an essential destination for Japan's “Imperial Tourism” in the late 1930s. This likely influenced *CANTON*'s decision to re-publish Sekino's article.

Thirdly, this paper examines how Sekino's article functioned within Japan's overseas propaganda. It highlights how *CANTON*, by invoking Sekino's academic legacy, emphasized Japan's preservation of historic sites in its occupied territories. This strategy aimed to reinforce the legitimacy of Japan's invasion of China, asserting Japan as a “civilized” empire that even surpassed Western countries, particularly in the context of China.

Through the aforementioned discussions, this paper concludes that *CANTON* strategically re-published Sekino's academic article by editing and arranging images carefully to maintain its appearance as an academic graphic magazine while also maximizing its propaganda impact. The publication of Sekino's “Yünkang and Lungmen” in *CANTON* can be regarded as a significant case in Japan's wartime cultural diplomacy. Sekino's article showcased Japan's research and preservation of ancient Chinese Buddhist grottoes, presenting a constructed image of Japan to Western countries during the Sino-Japanese War.