

## ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD

*A Symposium in Memory of  
Dr. Oliver Impey (1936-2005)*

May 31st 2006

Over the span of his 40 years' career at the Ashmolean Museum, Oliver Impey (1936-2005) inspired, with his boundless enthusiasm, numerous students and colleagues to pursue their studies of Japanese art. Rather than publishing a *festschrift*, it seemed appropriate to invite a number of his former pupils and collaborators, on the occasion of what would have been his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, to talk about the developments in their field over the past decades. The range of their subjects illustrates the width of Oliver's interests within Japanese art; so often he managed to kindle a spark in areas that were not even his specialty. It is in this spirit that today has been organised; not so much as a series of academic lectures, but as a string of testimonies to a gifted teacher.

The Symposium in Memory of Dr Oliver Impey is supported by The Cohn Memorial Fund.

**Speakers:**

**Dr Clare Pollard - *'Early Meiji Export Ceramics: Marvels or Monstrosities?'***

**Dr Hiroko Nishida - *'From Namban to Export: Developments in the Study of Japanese Export Lacquer Ware'***

**Dr Timothy Clark - *'Perspectives on Japan: New Displays at the British Museum'***

**Dr Timon Screech - *'The First Attempt to Create Western Painting Collections in Japan: The Cargo of the "New Year's Gift", 1617'***

**Dr Hiroko McDermott - *'The Early Years of the Tokyo National Museum and the Imperial Institution'***

**Mr Menno Fitski - *'Sherds of Evidence: Oliver Impey's Collecting of Japanese Porcelain'***

**Dr Rupert Faulkner - *'Japanese Studio Crafts and their Reception in Britain'***

**Dr Yoshie Itani - *'Export Porcelain from Seto in the Meiji Era: Old Noritake Factory'***

## LECTURES:-

### **Dr. Clare Pollard - Early Meiji export ceramics: marvels or monstrosities?**

I met Oliver Impey in 1989, when he had just begun acquiring Meiji works of art for the Ashmolean's Japanese collection. I was finishing my degree in Japanese studies and was planning to go to Japan to do research into J ceramics. I was introduced to ORI who was typically enthusiastic and encouraged me to look at Meiji ceramics, his new interest...

At the time, things Meiji were rather out of fashion in art world - although there were quite a number of private collectors of Meiji art, on the whole the period tended to be condemned as a kind of 'dark age' for the arts in Japan, an age that really delivered the deathblow to centuries-old ceramic traditions. Certainly, the Meiji era was a time of momentous change for the Japanese ceramic industry: the opening of Japan to the West, after two and a half centuries of self-imposed isolation, had enormous repercussions. Almost every aspect of Japanese society was affected, with artistic production no exception. The fall of the ruling Tokugawa shoguns and the establishment of the new constitutional government ruling in the name of the Emperor Meiji (the 'Meiji Restoration' of 1868), led to the collapse of the traditional system of feudal-style patronage and inevitably caused major disruptions to the ceramic industry. At the same time, the Meiji period brought new social freedoms, new commercial opportunities and new technical possibilities – specifically the growth of a new Western export market and the introduction of new Western techniques and styles.

Unfortunately, some unscrupulous Japanese potters took advantage of the craze for Japanese exotica that swept Europe and America after the 'discovery' of Japan, to produce shoddily-made items for the – at least initially – indiscriminating audience. Others, catering to what they understood to be the tastes of their new Western customers, turned out ungainly, over-ornate versions of traditional vessel types. Life was made harder for craftsmen by the need to assimilate new Western concepts of art theory. Uncertainty over the application of unfamiliar Western divisions between 'fine' and

‘decorative’ arts contributed to a severe confusion of purpose and identity in the Japanese ceramic industry.

Until the late 1980s, little attempt had been made to distinguish the low quality items (undoubtedly produced in quantity) from the technical brilliance and sheer exuberance of the best Meiji decorative arts. But Oliver was excited by outstanding quality of the really good examples. From an initial purchase of a cloisonné vase in 1987 from Malcolm Fairley (from the Andō workshop), he began enthusiastically buying top quality cloisonné, metalwork and ceramics. In 1991 the Ashmolean held the exhibition ‘The Dragon King of the Sea’, showing the collection of John R. Young, one of first exhibitions of Meiji decorative art in the West since the Meiji period (mainly metalwork). Oliver followed this up with a further collaboration with Malcolm – the publication of great Meiji collection of Professor David Khalili. This lavish catalogue, with its extensive introductory essays, helped to spark wider interest in the field, and by the mid-’90s much serious research into Meiji arts and crafts was underway both in Japan and elsewhere.

Today, I would like to highlight an aspect of early Meiji export ceramics. Given the time constraints of the program, I’m going to focus on works by one potter, the Yokohama-based Miyagawa Kōzan – who is better known by his art name Makuzu Kozan (1842-1916). Today best known for his colourful porcelains, Kōzan is less famous for the extraordinary high-relief modelled wares that he produced during the 1870s and early 1880s. It’s these modelled or ‘appliquéd’ pieces that I would like to concentrate on this morning. Lauded by some contemporaries as ingenious and inventive, they were condemned by others as monstrous and ugly. Quite apart from their astonishing appearance, they are fascinating for what they show, both about Japanese potters’ approach to ceramic production in the early Meiji period, and about changing Western attitudes to Japanese ceramics.

I should make the point here that Kōzan was just one of many of his contemporaries to produce elaborately modelled and sculpted work – here are a few examples. However,

Kōzan's work is particularly well documented and also a particularly extreme example of the style, so he makes an excellent case study.

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[1] Makuzu Kōzan came from a traditional Kyoto potting family that specialized in the production of tea utensils. But, like many ceramic manufacturers of the time, he found his business struggling after the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

The Meiji government, eager to become a major player on the international stage once Japan was forced out of isolation, was very aware of the need for the modernization and westernization of Japan. And as part of its policies, it actively encouraged manufacturing industries and overseas trade. In the early Meiji period craft wares were a particularly important export item: while Japanese industrial products couldn't compete with their post-Industrial Revolution counterparts in the West, decorative arts such as metalwork and ceramics were of a relatively high technical standard. The most successful of all Japanese export items in this period was the ornately-decorated overglaze enamel stoneware known as Satsuma *nishikide*, or 'brocade' ware. A great hit at the international exposition held in Paris in 1867, Satsuma ware became highly sought-after by collectors across Europe and America. To cater to the new demand, Satsuma-style ceramic workshops soon sprang up all over Japan. Kōzan decided to jump on the bandwagon and in 1870 moved to Yokohama to set up a business exporting Satsuma-style enamelled wares. [2] These seem to have been typical of the elaborate, gilded style currently so popular in the West – like the vase here on the left and the lidded container on the right, which was donated by the Japanese government to the city of Glasgow in 1878.

[3] Then, at some stage in the mid-1870s, Kōzan began combining typical Satsuma decoration (e.g. decorative borders, clouds of gold dots and so on) with intricate high-relief models of birds, insects, plants and animals. These works were known as *saikumono* (which literally means 'handiwork objects'). The earliest reference to Kōzan's *saikumono* seems to be at the international exhibition held in Philadelphia in 1876, where

his exhibits included a pair of Satsuma-style vases with a design of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune and handles in the form of mice playing the *shamisen*.

The Yokohama-based journalist and ceramic collector Frank Brinkley described the new style as follows:

[Makuzu's] conception was to supplement by plastic additions the ordinary style of faience decorated in coloured pigments and enamels. This new variety of ware was... rather bizarre than beautiful. Almost every object in nature, the nude human figure alone excepted, might be found moulded in high-relief on vases, pots, and jars – sages, storks, sparrows, bamboos, reptiles, fishes and flowers' (Brinkley 1902, 405).

Although Brinkley was never very keen, in general these *saikumono* were received in the West with astonishment and admiration. [4] At the Paris international exposition of 1878, for instance, Kōzan was awarded a gold medal for a display of vases decorated with high-relief subjects as diverse as crabs, anchors, waterfalls and grazing deer (Chesneau 1878, 853-4) (...probably in the same vein as the hawk vase on the left, which was acquired by the South Kensington Museum shortly afterward). And, when the English designer Christopher Dresser visited Kōzan's workshop in 1877, he was sufficiently impressed by the vases he saw, 'adorned with modelled flowers', that he began importing them through his company Dresser & Holme.

[5] The use of high relief and appliquéd decoration was of course by no means unprecedented within Japan, and a certain degree of modelling – for example in handles and finials – was common in most varieties of Satsuma ware. Kōzan just took the process one step further than many of his contemporaries. According to his personal history, he began carving and modelling the surfaces of his Satsuma-style ceramics as an economy measure, as a substitute for the solid gold pigment that he had previously used. The same source also suggests that Kōzan found clay decoration more artistically appealing – he

does seem to have had a personal penchant for modelled work and continued to produce occasional sculptural pieces throughout his career (Miyagawa Kōzan c 1899).

However, the decision to turn to relief work would certainly not have been entirely artistically motivated. As the manager of a large-scale workshop, Kōzan was inevitably obliged to take a pragmatic approach to ceramic production. And *saikumono* were ideally suited to the current Western vogue for the curious and the ornate:

[6] This is a poor slide, I'm afraid, but it does give an idea of some European ceramic fashions of the time. It's an illustration by Gustave Doré of a 'wine harvest vase' that was part of the French display at the Paris International Exhibition of 1878.

- Japanese delegations to exhibitions in Europe and America would have become aware of the kinds of exhibits displayed and admired by the Western nations on these occasions – grand ornamental fountains or vases decorated with garlands of flowers or figures like this.

- Japanese visitors were also aware of positive Western reactions to the more elaborate of the Japanese exhibits – the 'singular curiosities' they expected from the recently-opened 'fairyland Japan'.

[7] That Japanese modelled wares were not only popular but also stylistically influential abroad is suggested by the manufacture of similar works in Western potteries in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The two vases here, from an article in *Harpers New Weekly Magazine* in 1880, were decorated by Maria Nichols of the Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati, in a style described as 'Japanese grotesque'.

Since Japanese production and Japanese representation at international exhibitions were considered matters of national prestige, a special Exhibition Bureau was set up in the early Meiji period under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, to try to ensure a high level of quality in Japanese craft exhibits. The Bureau aimed to select and refine works from the best craftsmen in various prefectures; these were then given to other craftsmen and manufacturers as models and grants were awarded to enable the craftsmen

to concentrate on producing work for exhibition. By 1876 an associated Design Bureau had been set up, specifically to provide models for leading craftsmen. Its stated aims were to extend the knowledge and skills of craftsmen, to promote local traditions and to preserve craftsmen's individuality, while also rendering their products suitable for export – it encouraged the use of Western techniques and the accommodation of Western stylistic demands in the hope that they would help to put Japanese craft industries on an equal footing with their Western counterparts.

Over a period of five years until 1881, a selection of designs was published by the Design Bureau in a publication known as the *Onchi zuroku*. This offers a fascinating insight into the stylistic preferences of the early Meiji era.

[8] Virtually all of the designs (for ceramics, and also for metalwork and furniture) are highly elaborate, showing detailed painterly decoration and complex shapes. And a very large proportion include elements of modelled and appliquéd decoration – flowers, leaves, fruit, birds, fish, crabs, or imitation basketwork. A wide range of influences can be seen in these designs – from Chinese metalwork to Yixing pottery to Buddhist altar bronzes, to Eur neo-classical styles, to Japanese *sencha* tea taste and more.

[9] Here are 2 designs for modelled works by Kōzan – probably revised versions of designs submitted by Kōzan himself. They are highly sculptural, but you can see that there is no Satsuma influence. Unfortunately, we don't know whether he actually made them or not. In fact, this is the case for most of the designs in the book, nor do we know how closely makers stuck to the original designs, so it's hard to gauge how influential the publication actually was. Whatever the practical influence of the *Onchi zuroku* was, however, the interesting thing is that it negates one of the chief criticisms of the Meiji decorative arts – the accusation from contemporary and subsequent commentators, both in Japan and the West, that Meiji craftsmen totally discarded tradition in an over-zealous effort to adapt to new conditions. Actually, even at this early stage, government and makers were attempting to preserve traditions, at the same time as catering to foreign taste. The resulting export style may have been rather an eclectic jumble of different

elements, but the intention was to enrich the old with the new (in fact the title of the book, *Onchi zuroku*, derives from the expression *onko chishin*, ‘drawing on ancient wisdom and replenishing it with new ideas’).

What is more, *saikumono* were not just admired by foreign customers but also by Japanese themselves.

[10] Kōzan, for instance, exhibited several examples of *saikumono* at the first Japanese National Industrial Exposition of 1877 – these are two of them. Held in Kyoto, this was the first of five national-scale exhibitions organized by the government on the model of the world fairs and intended to act as ‘trial runs’ for the international exhibitions. The vase on the left is in the form of a bamboo basket surrounded by morning glory. The vase on the right, which was decorated with a gourd, spiders’ webs and bees sculpted on in coloured clay, is said particularly to have impressed visitors to the exhibition, with even the Emperor stopping to touch it. It was eventually bought by the Home Minister, Okubo Toshimichi. Again, you see that these vases don’t have any elements of Satsuma export style, such as the decorative borders and use of gilt enamel, although other, less elaborate works shown at the same exhibition did.

[11] Kōzan was still producing *saikumono* four years later at the Second National Industrial Exposition, held in Tokyo in 1881: his grandest exhibits were this large stoneware basin with two realistic crabs crawling up the side; and the three-metre high fountain in the form of four *shojo* (mythical sea-dwellers) supporting a huge ceramic jar on their backs. From the position of this fountain, right in the centre of the exhibition ground, it seems likely that the work was actually commissioned by the exhibition authorities. So, although some exhibition critics did find Kōzan’s *saikumono* ‘excessively intricate’, it was certainly not true that – as Brinkley later claimed – ‘the chefs-d’oeuvre of [Kōzan’s] [Ota] factory were monstrosities never tolerated by Japanese connoisseurs’ (Brinkley 1902, 404).

However, Kōzan seems to have stopped making this kind of work in the mid-1880s. By this stage, the overseas demand for *saikumono* was in decline. During the early part of the Meiji period, Western customers had seemed insatiable and indiscriminating in their thirst for Japanese exotica. Over the next decade, however, they grew more discerning, and tired of styles that had previously appealed (both Satsuma ‘brocaded’ ware and elaborate high-relief work) – and this led to a recession in foreign trade. As Kōzan’s heir, Hanzan, later wrote: ‘Until the early 1880s we produced ceramics decorated with designs of flowers and birds and human figures, in a style closely resembling the Satsuma ware beloved of foreigners, but the foreigners’ taste gradually became more sophisticated and they started to become interested in traditional...refined Japanese taste’ (Miyagawa Hanzan, c 1916).

Like many of the decorative art studios the Makuzu workshop had flourished in the early Meiji period, when ceramics had been one of the few Japanese products suitable for export to the West; but it now found its sales falling dramatically. So – as he had done before and would do again – Kōzan adapted his product in accordance with market tastes. While Kōzan continued to produce occasional elaborate and outsized pieces for major exhibitions...[12]...from around 1882 he seems to have abandoned both Satsuma and *saikumono*. Instead, he turned back to the domestic market and began producing traditional tea wares. At the same time he began experimenting with new ceramic forms and glazes, drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese and Japanese porcelains as well as taking advantage of newly-imported Western glaze techniques.

Kōzan’s high relief works were described by the inimitable Brinkley on the one hand as ‘perfect marvels of patient skill’, and on the other as (and this was a quote that Oliver particularly enjoyed) ‘specimens that disgrace the period of their manufacture and represent probably the worst aberration of Japanese ceramic conception’ (Brinkley 1883, 271 and Brinkley 1902, 415). They were produced for only a short period of Kōzan’s long and prolific career. Yet Kōzan’s ‘*saikumono* phase’ shouldn’t be overlooked, for it demonstrates very well the potter’s adaptability and versatility, both in terms of technique

and of marketing strategy – a versatility that was one of the key characteristics of the Meiji ceramics industry as a whole.

**We are unable to include, at this stage, Dr. Hiroko Nishida's talk**

## **The Reopening of the Japanese Galleries at the British Museum**

October 2006

### ***The Collections***

The collections at the British Museum that relate to Japan are the most comprehensive in Europe. Totalling some 26,000 objects, they comprise fine and decorative arts, antiquities and historical materials dating from ancient pre-history to the present day. The collections embody the dynamic relations between art, artefact and history. Perhaps uniquely outside Japan, they can tell many of the significant stories in the unfolding of that country's past, encouraging us to enjoy a deeper engagement with its present and future.

The British Museum's founding collections of 1753 already included a significant group of objects and manuscripts brought back by Engelbert Kaempfer from Nagasaki in the 1692, subsequently acquired by Sir Hans Sloane. Collecting began again in earnest after the opening of Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century, and has continued ever since. Particular highlights and the collectors who assembled them include: ceramics (Augustus Franks), paintings (William Anderson), archaeological materials (William Gowland), ainu materials (John Anderson, Neil Gordon Munro); ukiyo-e prints (Arthur Morrison), swords (R.W. Lloyd), netsuke (Anne Hull Grundy), illustrated books (Jack Hillier), modern prints (Robert Vergez).

### ***The Japanese Galleries***

The suite of fully air-conditioned galleries (Rooms 92-94) devoted to Japan opened in April 1990, following a highly successful fundraising campaign in UK and Japan. Since that time many major loan exhibitions have been staged, as well as themed and general displays of the British Museum's own collections. All projects have relied on close cooperation with many different groups in Japan.

From September 2005 the galleries for Japan, Prints and Drawings and Asia Temporary Exhibitions have been undergoing a major refurbishment, as part of an ongoing rolling programme of gallery renewal. In addition to a complete renovation of the major air-conditioning system, the opportunity is being taken to renew case linings, carpet and lighting and to redesign the approaches to the Galleries.

### ***'Japan from Prehistory to the Present'***

The reopening of the refurbished Japanese Galleries in October 2006 gives the chance to re-present in a new way the Museum's collections that relate to Japan. *Japan from Prehistory to the Present* is a sequence of significant stories told by fascinating objects. The dynamic relations between the art, artefacts and history within and without the remarkable cultures of Japan are explored from many angles. Particular emphasis is given to continuities. Sometimes, however, the long, often unbroken threads of ancient cultural forms collide with the modern in surprising ways. The displays reconnect the history of Japan with East Asia and, for more recent times, with the wider world.

### ***Entrance area (The Urasenke Gallery)***

Entering the newly refurbished galleries, the visitor is welcomed by the statue of a

Buddhist saviour deity, 'Kudara Kannon', an actual-size replica of the famous eighth century National Treasure, made for the British Museum in the 1930s. A 'Time Line' of Japanese history is signalled by an impressive 'feudal lord's clock' on a lacquer and mother-of-pearl stand. The Urasenke Tea House, used for regular demonstrations of the 'Way of Tea' is complemented with a small display of tea wares.

### ***Sections and Stories***

The displays in the three rooms of the Japanese Galleries are essentially chronological, with modern objects occasionally brought back into the narrative to juxtapose with older works. Broadly themed 'Sections' are subdivided into more specific 'Stories'. Paintings and prints will, as a rule, be rotated every three months.

#### ***Room One: Ancient Japan (Before 1200)***

Ancient Japan: Early Cultures

Palaeolithic; sacred landscapes; Jōmon and Yayoi cultures; tomb culture (Gowland Collection); Haniwa; early Buddhism; sutras; palace elite

#### ***Room One: Medieval Japan (1200-1600)***

Medieval Japan: Religious Traditions

The Buddha; Ritual: Tantric Buddhism; Faith in the Pure Land; *Kami* and Buddhas; Zen and warrior patronage; Christianity

#### ***Room Two: Edo Japan (1600-1868)***

Edo Japan: Samurai, Court and Townspeople

Symbols of authority; Edo Shogunate; arts of the elites; samurai women  
Business and leisure; accessories and fashion; 'The floating world'

Edo Japan: Foreign Exchanges

Korean (Choson) kingdom and Tsushima; Ryūkyū kingdom and Satsuma; Chinese and Dutch trade through Nagasaki; Ainu and Matsumae

#### ***Room Three: Modern Japan (1853 to present)***

Modern Japan: Nation-Building and Empire

Japan opens, Japanese missions abroad; 'Rich Country, Strong Army'; Cultural exchange, national and international exhibitions; International relations, colonisation; Mobilising for war; Defeat and reconstruction

Modern Japan: City and Countryside

Meiji Tokyo; Tokyo, modern city; Kansai, cities of western Japan; Rural idylls; Tokyo, now and future

Modern Japan: The Expressive Self

Intimate portraits; Performance; Images of women; Images of men; Manga; Expressive self

Modern Japan: Significant Artists

'Living National Treasures'; Artists of international reputation

# Japan from prehistory to the present

## The gallery structure

### Sections


### Stories

### Key objects

#### Introduction



Gallery introduction; map  
Japanese time, clock, timeline  
Kudara Kannon  
The tea ceremony

<b>Ancient Japan: early cultures before AD 1200</b>	4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Haniwa Palaeolithic Sacred landscape Jomon Yayoi Tomb culture Early Buddhism Sutras Palace elite		Mt. Fuji
 Haniwa				Tales of Ise (handscroll)
<b>Medieval Japan: religious traditions 1200-1600</b>	13 14 15 16 17 18	The Buddha Ritual: Tantric Buddhism Faith in the Pure Land Association of Kami and Buddhas Zen and warrior patronage Christianity		Daruma portrait
 Fudo Myo O				Genre scenes in the city of Kyoto
<b>Edo Japan: samurai, court and townspeople 1600-1853</b>	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	Tokugawa Shogunate Symbols of authority Arts of elite culture Samurai women Accessories and fashion Business and leisure Floating World		Hokusai Great Wave
 Samurai armour				Kakiemon elephants
<b>Edo Japan: foreign exchanges 1600-1853</b>	26 27 28 29	Choson Korea Ryukyu (Okinawa) China Holland Ainu		Ainu coat
<b>Modern Japan: nation building and empire 1853-1952</b>	30 31 32 33 34 35	Opening Japan Rich country, strong army Cultural exchange International relations and colonisation Mobilizing for war Defeat and reconstruction		Map of Hiroshima
 Yoshitoshi Black ships				Kiyochika, Night snow at Honcho-dori
<b>Modern Japan: city and country 1880 to the present</b>	36 37 38 39 40	Meiji Tokyo Tokyo, modern city Kansai Rural idylls Tokyo now and future		Asakusa prints
<b>Modern Japan: expressive self 1900 - the present</b>	41 42 43 44 45 46 47	Intimate portraits Performance Images of women Images of men Manga Expressive self Significant artists		Astro Boy and Astro Girl
 Imaemon bowl				

## **Dr. Timon Screech - The Cargo of the *New Year's Gift***

The *New Year's Gift* left the Downs, somewhat to the East of where we now sit, 402 years ago almost to the day. Launched at Deptford on New Year's day, 1614, she was the flagship of a flotilla of four vessels that including the *Solomon*, the *Merchant's Hope* and the venerable *Hector*, one of the first ships to take English traders to East Asia. These vessels made up the Second Joint Stock Voyage of the English East India Company. The commander, Robert Downton was commissioned to follow up the expected achievements of the previous Company voyage, led by Thomas Best, not yet returned but assumed to have enjoyed success in establishing trade with Mughal Empire, at Gujarat. Unlike Best, as we shall see, Downton was entrusted to sail on further East, and it is this second leg that will take us, in due course, us to the focus of today's talk - Japan.

The East India Company was founded in 1600, but had initially engaged in single-stock voyages, that is, funds were raised for each separate ship, and profits made according to their several successes. This resulted in internal competition, which was not beneficial, so that after eight such voyages, the Company changed its system, and this also allowed for an increase in ships from three to four.

The *Gift's* four-vessel flotilla sailed via the Cape, Madagascar and the Sokotra Islands to the South of Yemen, before arriving in India. It had an unusually international cast aboard, including one of the first black people to visit England, one Coree, who had been brought to London in 1607, for the pleasure of the earl of Salisbury, but who now disembarked at the Cape, since he had complained so much about the English weather; he clanked off happily into the African sun in a suit of armour given him by the Company. There were also two other men of great importance to us, Cosmo and Christopher, who, despite their names were Japanese, baptised by missionaries there and serving on a Spanish ship, the *Santa Anna*, which had been captured in the lead-up to the Spanish Armada. Cosmo and Christopher can be assumed to have spoken English, since they had been in the country since 1588, over 25 years, which must have been the better part of their lives. We will return to them later, but we can note for now that they arrived back

safely in their home, though not happy, as they proceeded to argue about their wages. The two Japanese men must have been invaluable in leading the English Company to embark on trade with Japan, although there are no records of this.

But more than the passengers, interesting as they are, we are today concerned with the cargo. Most fortunately, and quite exceptionally, the bill of lading on the *New Year's Gift* survives. Of course, it carried what all English merchantmen did: woollens, known as broadcloth, and lead for shot; England did not have a lot to export, but it was with these that they would buy the spices and precious metals that they were sailing to find. It also carried some value-added items, intended as presents for the potentates they would meet, and these which were not usual at all, they were, of course, the paintings. As far as I am aware, these were the first of their kind ever taken out. This was a unique experiment, and I think no ship ever took paintings overseas before or after, during this period.

All voyages took presents, but it is possible that the idea of sending paintings had been put into the mind of the governor of the Company, Sir Thomas Smythe, by a certain John Saris, who had spent four years on Java, in 1608-11, where the Company had already got, and founded its first trading station, or Factory, in 1602, on the extreme Western tip of the island, at Bantam. This Factory, they hoped would be the model for the one they hoped Best had established in Gujarat, and in the future, Japan.

Saris had written a report in 1611, on return from Bantam, on trade possibilities with Japan, which land was a kind of *ultima Thule* for European aspirations, for several reasons. Since Marco Polo's travels, it was thought to be rich in gold, and more recently, to be anti-Catholic (having suffered at the hands of Jesuits during the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century), which appealed to the English. Japan was also known to have severe winters, which could make it a market for wool – as Java and India demonstrably could never be. Japan might also open up a North-East Passage back to Europe. The Iberians were subject to increasing restrictions, and by 1614 were quite harried in Japan. They were to be largely expelled in 1616 and driven out completely soon after. However, the Dutch, those great trading rivals of the English, were in Japan too, having sent their first flotilla there

in 1598; one vessel only, the *Liefde* (or *Charity*) had made it all the way, annoyingly under the command of an Englishman, William Adams, known in Japan as Miura Anjin, or 'the Englishman of Miura', from the land he acquired there.

The Dutch had set up their own East India Company, in 1601, and they proceeded to send out more voyages. The next one to arrive in Japan, however, did not do so until 1609. Adams and his few surviving colleagues had not been idle, and had set up an inter-Asian trade with the Dutch factory on Patani, an independent state (now part of Thailand). The *Liefde* was no longer seaworthy so they could not contemplate returning to Europe.

The English decision to send paintings may have come from Cosmo and Christopher, or from Saris's list of goods 'vendible' (as the term was) in Japan. He had included many items wool and lead, naturally, but also women's velvet gilded leather, women's make-up, tapestries, and paintings. At this point in his list, at precisely the place of most interesting to us, the text is garbled. Saris text exists today only in a transcription published in 1625 in a huge compendium of nautical diaries put together by Samuel Purchas, a London clergyman, as *Purchas His Pilgrims*. According to Purchas, Saris wrote, 'they delight in lascivious stories of warres by sea and land', and that paintings on that topic should be sent. It is hard to imagine a lascivious story of war (though perhaps rape and pillage or, conversely, close male-male fraternisation, is possible). More likely, Purchas has conflated two themes, wars *and* lascivious paintings. He also has Saris note the paintings should be 'the larger the better', and that they would yield in Japan for 'one two or three hundred'; no unit is specified, but he must probably mean taels, that East India Company's accounting unit, valued at 5 shillings, and pegged to the Dutch rixdollar, and to the romantically named Spanish piece-of-eight. So, we can untangle from Purchas that Saris, who had not of course been to Japan, though he may have met Japanese on Java, suggested, in 1611, to send large paintings valued at up to £7, on military or erotic themes, seemingly here as trade items, not just for gifts.

The Company had sat on Saris's document for three years, but now, in 1614, it acted. War painting was not hard to procure in England, indeed, it was a staple: the rout of the

Spanish Armada had become one of the most beloved themes [SLIDE]. As for lasciviousness, in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, this would have meant classical nudes, which were rather harder to find in London, but not impossible.

The *New Year's Gift* and its three accompanying vessels were not destined for Japan, but only for Bantam. But this was to serve as the English entrepôt in the East, just as the Dutch had the nearby town they had named Batavia (now Jakarta), further along the Javanese coast. From Bantam, stockpiled goods could be taken on, as deemed fit. As our flotilla left the Downs, Saris was actually in Japan, having been sent there by the Company on its 7<sup>th</sup> Single Stock voyage, in 1611; he had taken three ships to Bantam, led by the *Clove*, which alone had sailed on to Hirado, in south-west Japan, arriving as the first English ship there in June 1613. Saris had founded a factory, next door to the Dutch one (although Adams had recommended a site closer to the centre of shogunal power in Edo, modern Tokyo); he had left several Englishmen in Japan, under the command of Richard Cocks, and had sailed home the next autumn, docking in Plymouth in September, 1615, eighteen months after the *Gift* party had sailed. The Company was evidently impatient to build up supplies in Batam, and could not wait for news of establishment of the Hirada factory. Home in Plymouth, Saris wrote up a second list of vendibles for Japan, and this time the original document survives; he again suggested sending paintings, and indeed the relevant passage says, 'som lascivious, others stories of warrs by sea and land'. The Company probably felt relieved, as they had indeed sent paintings.

The cargo invoice of the *New Year's Gift* gives two groups of paintings, and from other records we can see there was a third. However, none on war themes, Perhaps the English did not wish to present themselves as violent or aggressive, and by this to contrast themselves with the Portuguese. The first group was overwhelmingly portraits, mostly of English sitters, although Saris had never mentioned this subject; second was 39 classical nudes along with some Old and New Testament narrative themes; the third group were four royal portraits, sent as personal gifts from James I to the emperor Jahangîr, two showing the king and queen of England, and one the Mughal emperor, and one Timur,

known to the English as Tamberlane, from whom the Mughal royal family traced themselves (and popularised in England by Christopher Marlowe's play of 1587).

The immediate reaction for an art historian is to ask what such pictures could have looked like. Early 17<sup>th</sup> century English portraits are not uncommon, for all the destruction of the Civil War a decade after this. Paintings of James I and Queen Anne and other members of members of nobility, are, of course extant [SLIDE]. The second group are referred to as contained in 'seven cases and chests' being 'pictures received from Roane', that is, Rouen. The English had evidently decided to follow Saris's advice and send two types, but substituted the bellicose one for what was most easily obtainable in London, where portraiture was the most flourishing genre. But the lascivious themes might have taxed local artists, and to they turned to Rouen, which was not unnatural as it was the second city of France, and much of its finance fame from London, not Amsterdam or Paris. Rouen was also well known to English merchants as they went there to buy cloth and, also the city's famous product – painted playing cards; the Company may have used contacts from that world to secure these works. Rouen was an artistic town, and it is exciting to think that at precisely this moment the young Nicholas Poussin was studying there, and he would, before long, make a singular impact of the representation of classical nudes. But no painting by him survives from before his eye-opening trip to Rome rather later. Poussin's teacher in Rouen is said to have been Noël Jouvenet, but no painting by him of any theme survives.

There is another item of interest surviving with to the cargo bill. This is a letter, addressed to Martin Pring, master of the *New Year's Gift*, relating to care of the paintings. It makes the sensible point that these are European oils, and not made for very hot climates, and so if they become tacky they should be put on deck in the breeze, and 'you may wash of the linte and paper with a spung and faire watter'. This letter is signed and it offers us with the only name to attach to the three sets of paintings. The letter was penned by Rowland Bucket, perhaps not well-known today, but in 1614 was a rising star of the London painting scene. Bucket was born in London of German parents about 1570. He was widely travelled, because he had been selected to travel to Istanbul in 1599, as part of

an embassy to the Sublime Porte, bearing two fabulous gifts from Elizabeth 1 to Mehemmet III, and his mother, nicely known as the Old Sultana, Safiya. She was received a carriage worth £600, and he an organ, made by the best English builder, Thomas Hallam, and said to be so excellent it would ‘scandalise other nations, especially the Germans’; its price is not recorded, but six years later he would build one for King’s College, Cambridge, for £400. Elizabeth had has it set up it Whitehall before shipping, and had personally praised it. Hallam travelled to repair the organ case if it got damaged en route, which it did, and Bucket was there to touch up the painted casement, which might have been his work to begin with; a splendid, though different, organ case decorated by Bucket survives today [SLIDE]. In Turkey, Bucket had been asked by the Old Sultana to produce a portrait of Elizabeth, which had had apparently done exceedingly satisfactorily. His report of this was surely an added reason for the Company’s decision to send portraits now, and for James to send the four royal likenesses. In 1605, he began to work for the same earl of Salisbury who had briefly hosted Coree, who was Robert Cecil, secretary of state; he had recently swapped his London mansion, Theobald’s Hall for king James’s old place at Hatfield, and having taken a Grand Tour was in the process of constructing the Hatfield House we know today, in the modern taste, to display his Italian paintings. Bucket undertook a lot of work at Hatfield and the chapel there (including the organ case) is regarded as his masterpiece. The first book on English painters, Henry Peachman’s *Art of Drawing* of 1606, commended Salisbury for nurturing English talent, and engaging ‘excellent artistes’ in the project of ‘the beautifying of his houses, especially the chappell at Hatfield.’ The diarist Richard Symons thought Bucket ‘the only man that doth understand perspective [meaning modern Italian style] of all the painters of London. Bucket was the obvious person for the East India Company to turn to. Later, Bucket would rise to be master of the guild of painters in London, the Company of Painter-Stainers, and to have his coat of arms set in their hall’s windows. He is last heard of in 1639, living in London in a house rented from the Salisburys.

Some records of expenditure on Hatfield also exist, and can give an idea of what Saris intended when he recommended paintings of a value of up to £7. Bucket is said to have

received 'large sums' from Salisbury, and for his four apostles for the chapel he received £33, or £8 5s each, just slightly above Saris's suggestion to exports to Japan. Note also that the fine for undertaking painting in London without being a member of the Painter-Stainers was £5, which perhaps represents the value of a good painting. Salisbury paid the German painter George Geldop £30 for a pair of portraits of himself and his wife, but these were extremely large. Most of our information about picture prices comes from the next reign, when Charles I began his famous collecting, and by doing so, also created inflation in the market. Van Dyke received £444 for a set of nine portraits of Charles I and his family, that is, almost £50 each.

The *New Year's Gift* and with *Merchant's Hope*, the *Solomon* and the *Hector* arrived in Swally on the mouth of the River Tipu in October; they sailed up the port of Surat, where Best had established the English factory. Downton was by this time an experienced 53-year old; he had been second in command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Single Stock Voyage, led by the famous Sir Henry Middleton, and had only been in England for six months before heading out again this time. But even he may not have been prepared for what now happened, which was an assault on the flotilla by the Portuguese who also sailed up the river, under the command of their Viceroy of the Indies, much resenting this English intrusion, although Jahangir had given them permission to trade. The discharging of the cargoes had not even begun when the Portuguese 'seeking to interrupt the peaceable and quiet trade of the English', wrote an enraged Downton, sent a fireship towards the largest English vessel, the *New Year's Gift*. It would have been set ablaze if Pring had not acted swiftly, slipped its cables and moved quickly away. The battle lasted ten days, although only eleven English were killed, until, as Downton put it, 'seeing God crossing him in all his injurious attempts' the viceroy took his 'saucy-governed, bragging frigates out, and unloading commenced.

The four English ships remained in Surat until the following March, 1615. The *Merchant's Hope* then returned home, leaving the other three to go to Bantam. Downton died shortly after, and command passed to Thomas Elkington.

Left behind in India were many goods, including, apparently, some of the paintings. Of course the gifts from James stayed, which, as Thomas Keridge, who remained in India, writing home via the *Merchant's Hope*, referred to as 'presents from our King's majesty's own hand for the Mogol and not from the merchants as heretofore'; these caused a stir, and the likeness of James was incorporated into a portrait of Jahangir made by one of his own artists, showing also the English king and Persian emperor before him, with the title *The Great Mughal Prefers the Teaching of a Sufi to that of Foreign Kings*. The 'Tamberlane' is referred to in the chronicle of Jahangir's reign, where it is noted an odd picture purporting to present to him was received, 'in the belief of the Franks...it [showed] Timur' (all Europeans were Franks to the Turks), but of course it did not look at the Mughals imagined Timur. The portrait of Jahangir itself was rejected as looking nothing like him (inevitably), so it was substituted for a *Princess Elizabeth*. Apparently, Jahangir 'esteemed [them] very much. But Keridge also wrote that the larger group of portraits were not much good, as 'they esteem not the ladies pictures according to their value,; but by contrast, he could find enthusiastic recipients for up to eighty paintings, as he put it of 'different fictions of feigned gods'. Downton himself had given out at least three of the non-portrait works, a *Mars and Venus* and a *Judgement of Paris* to the governor of Swally, and a *Moses* to his emissary.

We may close the Indian section of the tale by noting that the next English voyage, under William Keeling, not a trade mission, but bearing an ambassador from the English to the Mughal court, arrived in autumn 1615. The ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe, had a painter on board, Robert Hewes, though seemingly no paintings, but he found paintings in the factory, which must have been left by the *New Year's Gift*; Roe refers to giving Jahangir seven portraits of English worthies, including James I and Queen Anne (again), the countess of Somerset, and of Sir Thomas Smythe, and a *Venus and Satyr* from the other set; Jahangir hung these around his throne for the New Year celebrations, then underway.

The *New Year's Gift*, the *Hector* and the *Solomon* arrived safely in Bantam, in May and June, 1615. There they found two other English ships at anchor, the *Thomas* and the *Advice*. They may have expected this, since the latter had left the Downs two months after

them, as parts of the Third and Fourth Joint Stock voyages. They had not gone to India, hence they arrived sooner, because their destination was Japan. They were to be the third English sailing there, but the first time two ships went; the second sailing had come and gone in 1615, leaving stock worth come £2000, but without paintings, or indeed much at all, beyond wool and lead [Mass168].

The captain of the *Thomas*, Richard Rowe, produced a letter from Smythe stating that goods not deposited in India which seemed vendible in Japan were to be transhipped, and taken onwards. A company representative in Bantam, Robert Youart, wrote back to Smythe that he and Elkington 'well preused' the letter, 'and presently proceeded according to your wishes.' The English portraits and the Rouenese classical nudes were moved across. The *Hector* was abandoned as rotten and the *Gift* and the *Solomon* departed for England, just before Christmas, arriving back in summer 1616. At just the same moment, the *Thomas* and the *Advice* arrived at Hirado, docking in June and July 1616, respectively. The Hirado factory accounts log in a large number of paintings in June of that year, so it must have been the *Thomas* that took *Gift's* paintings on. They refer to many lascivious works, all of which match the *Gift's* cargo bill, but there are no portraits. However, it must be stressed that the Hirado accounts were never properly kept, and Cocks would have been prosecuted for dereliction had he not died en route back to London some decade later.

But the Hirado accounts have more pictures than what we know were in the hold of the *Gift*, and indeed, these other items are more numerous. Firstly, there are military themes, just one work referred to as *A Fight*, but many naval engagements, including some on 'the English and Spanish fleet' and on the 'seafight in a' o '88', both of which refer to the Spanish Armada; there is also one of the *Ark Royal*, the English flagship in that engagement. There are also many landscapes and several views of London; there are also several of the King in Parliament, and a few sundries, including the Five Senses, Four Seasons, and the Planets. It must be that the *Thomas*, and or the *Advice*, carried these extra works out from England, although they too had left before Saris has returned and submitted his second list of 'vendibles', reiterating the desirability of paintings.

The Hirado accounts give prices. None are as much as Saris has recommended, that is, up to £7. Some are in the lower pounds, some even lower, and much lower too little for a painting. It thus seems that the *Thomas* and/or the *Advice* took prints. These would have the virtue of being less of an investment in an uncertain market, and also less likely to be damaged by the heat. The *Ark Royal* picture is valued as just 4 mas, that is, under half a tael, or some 2 shillings. Such a print of this period actually survives [SLIDE]. The *King in Parliament* works range in price, but also seem prints, and again, one such image does exist [SLIDE]. This is true again for the views of London, which is highly interesting as the *Thomas* and *Advice* left England about a year before publication of Claes Visscher's famous view of London from Southwark, nowadays taken as the first great London view [SLIDE].

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**Dr Hiroko T. Mc Dermott - The Early Years of the Tokyo National Museum and the Imperial Institution.**

Ever since the late 18th century throughout the world, the private collections and galleries of kings and monarchs have tended to become public property and to be used for public viewing. The post-war history of Japan's earliest and most prestigious museum, i.e. the present Tokyo National Museum, can easily be understood as one further example of such a broad historical evolution. Yet, for the first three-quarters of Japan's modern era, from its founding in 1871 up to 1947, this museum followed quite a different course.

Started from scratch, without a cabinet of curiosities or special funds, it acquired, within ten years, a modern, permanent museum facility designed by the English architect Josiah Conder (Slide 1). It was a remarkable achievement of the Meiji government which had a mountain of political and financial hardships and yet was anxious to demonstrate its readiness to participate in the civilising process of the modern world. And this achievement took place without any imperial involvement or contribution. Nor was any future role in this museum envisaged, at this time, for the imperial throne, since the museum's founders wanted to see it eventually becoming a non-government organization with its own funds, like the British Museum or V&A Museum which they took as its model.

Yet, this state-founded museum began to follow a course quite the reverse of that taken by most European museums, and ended up belonging to the Imperial Household, an institution constitutionally outside the formal Japanese political framework since the middle of the Meiji era (1868-1912). Only in 1947, was the Museum put back under the administration of the state, as it is today. This was the time when the Imperial Household used the Museum's art holdings to pay 13 per cent of a very heavy property tax imposed by the Occupation government and under the Japanese new constitution. In the history of no other modern museum, either in Asia or the West, do we observe such an institutional evolution. Today I would like to explore how and why these distinctive changes took place in modern Japan's museum history.

Perhaps the easiest way to explain these changes would be to start with a brief account of this Museum's two buildings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. When you enter the main gate today, you will see one straight ahead of you (Slide 2) and the other to your left (Slide 3). This stone building (in Slide 3) of simplified neo-classical elegance was built as an art gallery commemorating the Crown Prince's wedding in 1900. Named as Hyokeikan, meaning the Hall for Expressing Congratulations, it was opened in 1909. Due to the destruction suffered by Condor's building in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the Hyokei-kan gallery was the sole gallery for the next 15 years. Then, in 1938, the central large building, the museum's main gallery, opened in celebration of the coronation of the Showa Emperor, Hirohito. Conceived in 1928 and built at the time of the Japanese empire's overseas expansion, this heavy-looking, imposing, quasi-Japanese style structure was meant to show the fine arts of the East (*tôyô*). (Slide 5)

Remarkably, both of these 20<sup>th</sup>-century constructions were funded entirely or largely by contributions from tens of thousands of ordinary people. Although they were built on the 24-acre site of the Imperial Household Museum, the imperial house or its institution paid nothing for their construction. In 1900, the City of Tokyo had announced that it would present a gallery of fine arts for the felicitating occasion. Contributions were collected from over 23,000 citizens. Then in 1928, upon the coronation of Hirohito, an association of leading citizens was set up, called the Throne Assistance Association for the Restoration of the Imperial Household Museum. A large sum of contributions, 3.5 million yen, was collected over the next 9 years, this time, throughout the Japanese empire, including Taiwan, Sakhalin, Manchuria, and even the South Sea Islands. With further funds from the National Treasury, this building that we see today was completed in 1938. Thus, over the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the origin of the Museum's two surviving buildings, despite the source of their construction costs, came to be closely linked in the public's eyes to the flourishing of the imperial institution.

But, in the early Meiji, the museum had been very different, not only in its facility. At its initiation, the museum was not located in Uyeno, then just outside of the old town of Edo. Its office in the Education Ministry was located in Yushima Confucian Hall, near Ochanomizu, where its exhibitions called *hakurankai* were also

held. (Slide 6) Two years later, in 1873, it moved to the area around today's Imperial Hotel, into a former daimyo estate. Here, regular exhibitions started, in a group of provisional wooden barracks. (Slide 7) Books and scrolls were stored separately in a safer place, a converted granary along a river in downtown Asakusa. (Slide 8).

The museum then moved into Ueno Park in 1877. An art gallery was built for the first National Industrial Exposition and became available for the museum at the close of this exposition. A fire-proof structure of brick, this gallery was like a small English house (Slide 9), with one storey and a 260 square-meter floor space (2,880 square feet). Immediately after this Exposition, the Home Minister received the go-ahead for his proposal to construct a much larger and sturdier Museum building (Slide 1). Condor's impressive facility, nine times larger than its English-house predecessor, first served as an art gallery in the Second Industrial Exposition in 1881, and opened as the Museum in spring 1882.

With a proper facility acquired a decade after its start from literally nothing, the Museum's officials and advocates must have thought that the Museum was finally on the right track. But the Museum yet suffered serious problems: its holdings were embarrassingly slim, and its budget skimpy. Unlike most early European museums, Japan's first museum drew on no core collection, either private or otherwise, that had already been formed and made ready for public display. Donations were encouraged, but with little success. It was not because there had been no collections of art in Japan. Rather, the traditional practice of collecting and holding such objects had always been a private activity. There had been little if any concept or practice of exhibiting them publicly or of sharing the knowledge and appreciation of the collection with a wider audience.

Also, people had little idea of what to display in a museum: there had been neither a term or concept for the museum in pre-modern Japan. The early Meiji museum exhibited an extensive assortment of things old and new, Japanese as well as foreign; natural science specimens, agricultural, zoological, horticultural, chemical, industrial, historical, anthropological, archaeological and even military specimens, as well as art and antiquities. Even the zoo in the Ueno Park became attached to the Museum. Thus, the Japanese term for museum *hakubutsukan* or the Hall of a wide range of things, captures

well the encyclopaedic character of the early exhibitions. In fact, what we today call art works accounted for only 1.5% of the total number of “museum objects” in about 1880.

The chief official of the Museum, Machida Hisanari (1839-97), tried various means to improve the Museum’s finance, particularly its acquisition funds. He first received government permission to use the income from admission fees for acquisitions, contending that the income from the visitors should be used for their benefit. But such revenues remained tiny. He also thought that if the emperor became an important patron of the Museum and made contributions to it, people would imitate his public philanthropy. Having travelled in Europe, Machida like some other supporters of the museum knew that “royal possessions” were exhibited in European museums. With the support of the Home and Finance Ministers, Machida arranged that a large group of objects from an ancient Nara temple, the Horyuji, be purchased by the imperial house so as to be deposited at the Museum for display. This “royal collection,” Machida hoped, would serve as the center of attraction when Museum’s new building opened in 1882.

Nonetheless, around this time the Museum underwent key changes, some of them never adequately explained in documents. It opened in the presence of the emperor, but without the Horyuji objects which remained yet in Nara. More oddly, six months later Machida resigned from the headship of the Museum. Just 45 years old and far from the normal retirement age, this most influential and dedicated advocate of the museum was not ill. But he abruptly left his office, to be replaced by four other officials for 3 to 6 months in turn.

Then, when the government’s new cabinet system started in 1886, the Museum was placed under the Imperial Household Ministry, itself outside of this new constitutional government framework. So started the museum’s 60 years as an imperial institution. The following year, the 24-acre site for the museum, roughly the same site it has today, was registered as imperial land. In 1889, the year when the first Constitution of the country was promulgated, the museum was re-named the Imperial Museum. The next year, just before the first Imperial Diet was convened in November, this site for the Museum was designated as imperial, non-alienable hereditary property, along with 22 other sites throughout the country. Then in 1900, the rest of Uyeno park (160 acres) was

also attached to the Imperial Household. Thus, the entire Uyeno park had become imperial land by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Re-named in 1900 the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum, the Museum nonetheless exhibited only a small number of objects loaned by the imperial household. By this time the imperial household had acquired quite a large collection of traditional art, but this collection was neither exhibited nor housed in the Museum. Special displays were organized, including objects loaned from the imperial house, but each of such shows was small, and lasted less than a month. It was during the 1930s that both the quantity and quality of the Museum's art holdings improved greatly, thanks mainly to the arrival of objects as well as funds donated by the Japanese public.

Given the fact that the Museum site and the entire Park became imperial land by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one would then ask if the buildings and the holdings of the Museum become Imperial property as well. No documents I know answer this question specifically. But the Hyokeikan and the present main hall must have belonged to the Imperial Household, since both of them were gifts to it from the people. As for the Museum's holdings, the museum's catalogue of its 1938 re-opening exhibition kept silence about the ownership of the objects held by the Museum, while it specified the owner of each loaned object. Also, some documents reveal that 2,200 out of its total holdings of 80,000 items had, by 1941, been designated and registered as important, not ordinary, imperial objects, although nothing is clear about which objects were thus designated. Then, the imperial household's eventual use of the Museum's entire holdings, at the end of the World War II, to pay part of its property signals the imperial ownership of them all, at latest by 1947. It seems that the imperial ownership of the Museum's holdings in general became increasingly de-facto during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when not only its administration but its real property became all "imperial."

This change, however, was not visible. Visitors to the museum during the pre-war days saw no sign in the museum exhibitions of a state-to-imperial shift. Not just ordinary Japanese but even respected figures in art and art history circles seem not to have known that the museum, and at least some of its contents, actually belonged to the Imperial Household.

Why then did the Museum fall into the hands of the Imperial institution, rather than stay within the state's government system? The series of changes in its early Meiji administration may have been explained on grounds of efficiency. Also, the government was keen to promote, both at home and abroad, the image of a modern emperorship. The monarch's acting as a patron of art demonstrated to the West Japan's high level of culture, and to the Japanese people their emperor's sagely and benevolent rule. Far more than any previous Japanese ruler or his own successors, the Meiji Emperor played a public role in the promotion of the arts and art industry, visiting many exhibitions throughout the country from the very early Meiji.

Yet, such goals could have been achieved, if the Museum had not been administered by the Imperial institution. And, even if the Museum was in need of support and patronage from the Imperial House, there is no obvious reason why it had to be administered by its Ministry or belong to its Household. Moreover, why did the imperial household need to own the entire museum, that is, the land, building, and its holdings?

The only answer I have so far found to these questions revolves around a fact of the market that Japanese discovered about their art works through their encounter with the West. Their art works began to be highly valued not just at home. And, in a country where art works had long been considered important family assets, it was probably thought that art works might sometime prove useful for the imperial house's finances, not only for its image. Little did the founders of this imperial collection realise that such a purpose would be achieved when the collection itself would be surrendered to the state to pay the emperor's own taxes both in 1947, and then again in 1989.

**Mr. Menno Fitski. - Sherds of Evidence: Oliver Impey's Collecting of Japanese Porcelain**

(pl. 1)

*"It is a salutary thought for me that I have been studying Japanese export porcelain for more than thirty years. Of course, I have been studying other things too (I deeply resent being typecast as only interested in one thing), but nevertheless, the main thrust of my work has been the export art of Japan, and in particular the porcelains of Arita during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was export art that got me into the pre-export art, not the other way round."*

Fundamental to the academic life and studies of Oliver Impey (1936-2005), is the wide range of his interests. *I deeply resent being typecast as only interested in one thing.* Nevertheless, his main research was into Japanese export porcelain, since his appointment as curator (and later senior curator) of Japanese art at the Ashmolean Museum in 1968.

Having dominated the field in the last decennia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Oliver was a link to the great names of Oriental porcelain in the first half of the century, with whom he was to become friends after an introduction by Billy Winkworth: Richard de la Mare, Gerald Reitlinger, John Pope and Soame Jenyns. Jenyns well-known *Japanese porcelain*, first published in 1965, was to be the starting point for his studies and the many marginalia in his personal copy show the profound impact of this work on his early ideas. In typical Oliver style, the comments are frank and sometimes very direct (pl. 2), but even in his disagreement show the level of his careful examination of Jenyns' work, which represented the most up-to-date overview of the subject at the time.

Shortly after having been appointed at the museum, he set out to study the source in the production centre of Arita porcelain in Japan. He spent three months studying with the potters, Morota, Eguchi and Kakiemon, then the XIIIth generation and befriended the maker of Nabeshima porcelain, Imaemon XII. It is around this time that we see him

collecting shards at the kiln site of Yamagoya (pl. 2), showing his type of approach to the subject: examining evidence. Evidence, facts; Oliver never missed an opportunity to emphasize the importance thereof, exclaiming *it may well be true, but what are the facts?!* Coming from an era where established theories were often based on tradition and commonly accepted stories, he spent a considerable part of his working life sorting fact from fiction and stripping back to a core statement that could be backed up by hard fact. In the field of Japanese porcelain, he was the first anywhere to set up a reference collection of sherds. He published a long-awaited book on the sherd material in 1996, *The Early Porcelain Kilns of Japan: Arita in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century*. In this book, he provides a detailed overview of the subject on the basis of what he called *the evidence on the ground*.

Whenever Oliver's criteria were not met, he would say so in no uncertain terms, even when the occasion was inconvenient. A well-known example is in the highly influential Great Japan Exhibition catalogue of 1981. Oliver wrote in the entry about a rather famous piece of Nabeshima porcelain that it *shows every sign of being a revival piece*, thereby causing considerable commotion with the owner. *Necks are for sticking out*.

Well aware of his limitations as a curator not speaking the language, he sought from early on in his career to cooperate with Japanese colleagues. It is no coincidence that his first Doctoral student was Japanese; Hiroko Nishida wrote an important thesis about the trade in porcelain, making use of both Japanese and Dutch sources. Oliver too studied the Dutch archives, checking the various documents of the Dutch orders and bills of lading of the ships of the Dutch East India Company in the archives in The Hague. His work on porcelain and the trade culminated in the 1990 British Museum exhibition *Porcelain for Palaces*, and the concise introductory essays in the catalogue are a testimony to his talent of condensing extensive knowledge into a brief essay. The complex issue of the Kakiemon style was dealt with in only two pages, demonstrating the evident authority of a leading scholar, comfortable in his field after twenty years of study. His writing here is extremely dense and almost brutal, cutting down on anything not strictly relevant.

How different then is the essay that he wrote fifteen years later for his complete catalogue of the Ashmolean's collection of the 450 pieces of Japanese export porcelain that he accumulated over nearly 40 years (pl. 3). Here he devotes four pages in much smaller font to the same category of Kakiemon and we see him outline a much more subtle picture, not only of the subject, but also of himself. With the confident gentility of an expert with great depth of knowledge, he accompanies the reader on a journey along the particularities of the Kakiemon style, explaining what is fact and what remains to be done, dissecting the subject with the infallible precision of one with a lifetime of experience. There is no longer a need to convince, but a wish to share and an invitation to investigate the areas that remain to be explored.

He has invited many over the years and was a very gifted teacher, whose enthusiasm will be remembered by his numerous pupils. Invariably, he would at some point during a discussion of an object clench his fists and exclaim, *isn't it wonderful!* Perhaps it is his passionate love for objects that made him somehow a quintessential museum curator.

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## **Dr. Rupert Faulkner – Japanese Studio Crafts and Their Reception in Britain**

**[Note: No slides can be reproduced here, although they are referred to in the text]**

Thank you ... Joyce and Menno for organising this very special occasion in memory of Oliver.

I was officially Oliver's student from 1980 to 1983, and unofficially - if that is the right term - from 1978, when I started my research into the history of Seto and Mino ceramics at Nagoya University (which was through the kind agency of Hiroko Nishida), until 1988, when I finally received my D.Phil. Of course, though, as I think all of us who have been speaking today feel, once an Impey student, always an Impey student, even after he is, sadly, no longer with us.

As soon I started preparing this talk, I realised I wouldn't be able to address the topic I had set myself except in the most cursory way. A better title than 'Japanese Studio Crafts and their Reception in Britain' would have been 'What has the V&A been doing about Japanese studio crafts, with the occasional reference to other initiatives in the UK and Japan'. So I must begin by apologising for a rather V&A-centric take on the subject.

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This first slide is of a ceramic sculpture by the Seto-based artist Kato Kiyoyuki. It was made in 1965 and stands a little over 120 centimetres high, which is roughly the same height as the larger known examples of Yayoi period bronze *dotaku* bells to which its shape alludes.

Kiyoyuki's work is a contemporary rendering of a potent signifier of Japan's prehistoric past - or, looked at in another way, an exploration of the findings of modern archaeology to address issues of cultural autochthony ... an exercise in *Nihonjinron* - a foray into the essence of Japanese uniqueness.

The reference to archaeology, the growth of which has paralleled Japan's economic expansion in the post-Second-World-War period and has been an important spur for national self-definition expressed in terms that include notions of Yayoi and Jomon archetypes, is further evident in the network of rooms and passages that burrow away below the sculpture's surface. It is made of dark iron-bearing clay from Echizen, an area in Fukui Prefecture now famous, also as a result of modern archaeology, as a centre for the production of medieval stoneware storage jars. The most sought after of these jars are beautifully splashed with natural ash glaze deriving from the wood used to fuel the large single-chambered tunnel kilns in which they were fired.

The ash glaze and oxide colouration on Kiyoyuki's work are, despite their apparent artlessness, far from 'natural'. On the contrary, they were carefully applied by air-gun with the same sort of calculation employed by potters making tea ceremony wares during the heyday of the Momoyama period (1573-1615).

The employment of artifice in pursuit of the spontaneous is perhaps Japan's greatest contribution to world ceramic culture. When it succeeds, the results are extraordinary. But when it fails, the results can be truly gruesome. As Oliver liked to say, taking his cue from Captain Brinkley and invariably accompanied by a resounding guffaw, they are excrescences of a canine variety - 'dog turds' was his precise phrase - that have nothing to do with true 'ceramic' art! And it was always, of course, the archaic Audsley-and-Bowesian 'keramik' rather than 'ceramic'!

Kiyoyuki's work is now in the collection of the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo. When I first encountered it, it was in the reception room of his house ...

... which I used to visit regularly to draw and photograph the medieval potshards that he and his brothers used to hunt for in the Seto hills. The low table I worked at, here replaced by preparations for lunch, was right in front of the sculpture, which over time assumed for me a strange but comforting presence. My interest in contemporary Japanese

ceramics - as opposed to the historical material I was studying - owes much to this one piece of work, just as it does to the time I spent with Kiyoyuki and his populous family.

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When I joined the V&A in September 1984, ostensibly to work on the Japanese print collection, it came as a pleasant surprise to find that an arrangement had just been entered into with Madame Tomo Kikuchi, part of whose collection had been shown at the V&A the previous year in an exhibition called 'Japanese Ceramics Today'. The deal set up with Madame Kikuchi resulted in our being able to buy some ten or so major pieces of contemporary Japanese ceramics over the following five years.

The V&A's collection of 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese ceramics was still, at that time, a rather modest one. It consisted largely of works by Kawai Kanjiro, Tomimoto Kenkichi, Hamada Shoji, as in this slide ...

- and also Hamada's leading disciple, Shimaoka Tatsuzo. We had what was effectively a snapshot of modern Japanese ceramics viewed through the eyes of Bernard Leach - eyes that were either never exposed to, or refused to acknowledge, the much broader diversity of ceramic practice that was the reality of 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan.

It should be said, though, that John Ayers, who was Keeper of the V&A's Far Eastern Department from its establishment in 1970 until he retired in 1983, had purchased a small number of modern works in ceramics and other media, so the collection was not completely unilateral in emphasis. We also had a substantial group of industrial designer tablewares bought at the time of the 1980 'Japan Style' exhibition curated by Joe Earle, John Ayers' successor as Keeper of the Far Eastern Department.

The two most important pieces of ceramics bought by John Ayers were a Red Shino dish by Kitaoji Rosanjin dating from the 1950s ...

... and an octagonal dish in Nabeshima style by the late 13<sup>th</sup> generation Imaizumi Imaemon, ...

... who was a very good friend, as it happens, of Oliver's, though I don't know whether John Ayers knew that or not.

Of the items we acquired through Madame Kikuchi, one of the star pieces is a work made in 1987 by Kuriki Tatsusuke, Professor of Ceramics at Kyoto Geidai / Kyoto City University of Arts:

Kuriki spent a sabbatical year in Britain in 1990-1991. The translation of the catalogue he prepared for distribution to the people he would meet here was done, coincidentally, by a British student enrolled at Kyoto Geidai - none other, indeed, than (our very own) Clare Pollard!

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The V&A's collecting activities notched up a gear following the appointment of Elizabeth Esteve-Coll - now Dame Elizabeth - as Director of the V&A in 1987. With 'Visions of Japan' being planned as the flagship exhibition of the 1991 Japan Festival and the series of exhibitions the V&A sent to Japan during her directorship, Elizabeth travelled to Japan on numerous occasions and became an ardent Japanophile as a result - a passion currently reflected in the role she plays as a Trustee of SISJAC, the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Culture.

Knowing of Elizabeth's growing interest in Japan, and also of her love for studio ceramics - which she collected and often had on display in her office - I was moderately hopeful when I approached her about ring-fencing an annual sum from the museum's purchase grant for a period of five years, with a view to staging an exhibition at the end of it. Much to my delight she agreed and - impossible even to contemplate today - she gave me what was effectively a personal budget of about £30,000 per year.

The next few slides I shall show you are of works in various media acquired between 1989 and 1994 with these ring-fenced funds.

Starting with **ceramics**, this ...

is a piece from Koie Ryoji's 'Returning to Earth' series, which consists of a sequence of gradually disintegrating masks cast from the artist's face. It was made in 1990, the year before Koie came to Britain to demonstrate at the Third International Potters' Festival. This was held in Aberystwyth in conjunction with a touring exhibition of contemporary Japanese ceramics that formed part of the Japan Festival 1991. Koie stayed on in the UK, where he spent two months as resident potter at Farnham - in what is now the Surrey Institute of Art and Design - where he made a series of pots that were subsequently exhibited at the Besson Gallery in London.

The next slide is of a work by Takauchi Shugo, ...

**... who works in Mashiko, the pottery-making centre made famous by Hamada Shoji and now host to the biennial Mashiko International Ceramics Competition. Its heavily sculpted form is based on a traditional wooden bucket while its glaze echoes the green found on early seventeenth century Oribe wares from Mino, home of the triennial International Ceramics Competition Mino.**

Oribe wares, along with Shino wares ...

... were among the greatest achievements of the Momoyama period and there are many contemporary potters for whom they are compelling source of inspiration. This tea ceremony fresh-water is by the Living National Treasure Suzuki Osamu, who is generally regarded as the most talented exponent of modern Shino wares.

The next slide is of a rather more irreverent work by Yoshikawa Masamichi ...

... which is also for tea, if only one can work which spout to use!

Yoshikawa is relatively well-known in this country, his work having been stocked by Contemporary Applied Arts in London throughout the 1980s and 1990s (- I'm not sure about now). He had a solo exhibition at the Daiwa Foundation Japan House in October 1998 and was more recently represented in an exhibition at the Flow Gallery earlier this year.

Looking now at **woodwork**, ...

... this is a work by Toko Chihiro, the last disciple of the late Kuroda Tatsuaki (d.1982), a renowned woodworker and lacquer artist who was closely associated with the Mingei or Japanese Folk Craft movement in the 1920s and 30s.

We have little by way of **bamboowork**, but the vase in this next slide ...

... is a classic work from the 1960s by the late Shono Shounsai, an artist who did much to raise the profile of the bamboo-working traditions of Oita Prefecture in western Japan.

**Basketry** ...

... is another area where we still need to much more work. What we have in this slide are three works by Sekijima Hisako bought from a solo exhibition she held in Tokyo in 1992. Sekijima is important as the person who brought the North American conceptual basket-making scene to Japan in the early 1980s. The work of some of her students and contemporaries have been shown by the London-based dealer Katie Jones at events such as COLLECT, the Crafts Council's high-end craft fair that has been held at the V&A each January or February since 2004.

**Studio glass** ...

..., like experimental basketry, is a relatively new field that Japan has embraced enthusiastically and in which it is now a world leader. This is a work made in 1990 by Takeuchi Denji, an important figure who has been an active contributor to the Japanese studio glass movement since its establishment in the 1970s.

### **Metalwork ...**

This bottle by Osumi Yukie is made of hammered silver with *nunomezogan* inlaid lead and gold decoration. It was bought from her 1992 solo exhibition in Tokyo not long after her return to Japan from a sabbatical year in London. Osumi, who also makes jewellery, has had exhibitions at the Electrum Gallery in South Molton Street and at the Brian Harkins Gallery in Mayfair.

In contrast to Osumi's relative conservatism, this next work, a 'dish-that-is-not-a-dish' ...

... and entitled 'Disintegration', is a more radical exploration of the materiality of the cast iron from which it is made.

Experimentation and improvisation are also a feature of this neckpiece ...

... made of cypress wood and steel wire by the late Ito Kazuhiro. It was bought from the Electrum Gallery which, along with the Lesley Craze Gallery in Clerkenwell, have been active promoters of contemporary Japanese jewellery / bodyware in this country.

The **kimono** in the next side is entitled 'Green Waves'. ...

It was made in 1973 by the Kyoto-based Moriguchi Kunihiro. Prior to coming to the V&A, it had been shown in an exhibition organised by Oliver here at the Ashmolean in 1991, and for which he published a catalogue entitled 'The Yuzen Kimono of Moriguchi Kunihiro'.

'Flight', as this next kimono by the Tokyo-based Matsubara Yoshichi is called, ...

... was exhibited at the 1990 Traditional Crafts Exhibition. It was made by the *katazome* stencil-resist-dyeing technique involving repeated dippings in indigo dye following the application of rice-paste resist using a series of 30 stencils of gradually increasing size.

In **lacquer**, we have a fair representation of work ranging from this classic but unmistakably modern ...

... '*kanshitsu*' or dry-lacquer faceted bowl by Masumura Kiichiro, now Head of the Lacquer Department at Tokyo University, to the more overtly experimental work of the Kyoto-based Suzuki Masaya, ...

... whose search for alternative modes of expression resulted in his introduction of non-traditional materials – acrylic in this case – into a discipline usually, though wrongly, considered to be a doggedly conservative one.

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All the pieces I have shown you were included - going back to that conversation with Elizabeth Esteve-Coll - in the exhibition, 'Japanese Studio Crafts: Tradition and the Avant-Garde', which we held at the V&A in 1995.

The exhibition was divided into three main sections: 'Dento Kogei' / Traditional Crafts; 'Kurafuto' / Craft Design; and 'Zen'ei Kogei' / Avant-Garde Crafts.

The Traditional Crafts section, which opened with a fanfare of kimono, ...

... included objects in various media of the sort that will feature in the 'Waza no Bi' exhibition that Tim Clark is planning to bring to the British Museum next year.

The Craft Design section ...

... included work by makers, many of them affiliated with the Japan Craft Design Association, whose aim is to produce sensitively crafted, practical items suited to modern-day styles of living.

The third section, Avant-Garde Crafts, consisted of medium- to often large-scale sculptural works in various media ...

This slide shows some of the ceramics and glass shown in the space immediately beyond the Craft Design section. Also displayed, but not visible here, were examples of metalwork, basketry and lacquer.

We then had a second gallery devoted, with the exception of two pieces of metalwork and one lacquer sculpture, to fibre art ...

Japan has been a major player in the world of fibre art since the 1970s, but as far as I know, the first exhibition in this country to deal with the subject in any depth was the 'Restless Shadows' exhibition curated by Michael Brennand-Wood as part of the 1991 Japan Festival. Since 'Restless Shadows' and then 'Japanese Studio Crafts', interest has grown considerably, culminating most recently in the 'Textural Space' exhibition of 2001 curated by Lesley Millar of the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, and its successor,

‘Through the Surface’, which was an ambitious and fascinating exercise in getting British and Japanese fibre artists to work together on a series of collaborative projects.

My own experience from 1995 was that the collaborative, person-to-person aspects of the programme we put together were, even if demanding and hard work to realise, the most fulfilling ones. We commissioned, for example, a site-specific installation ...

... that was made in Japan and installed over the entrance into the exhibition by the artist, Shoji Satoru, assisted by teams of British art college students. Shoji then gave a series of classes and workshops that formed part of a programme of demonstrations, masterclasses and workshops held in two-week blocks in a purpose-built demonstration and video area:

The areas covered were fibre art (Shoji Satoru), woodwork, basketry (Sekijima Hisako), and *maki-e* lacquer decoration. We also had a last-minute addition in the form of a three-day series of demonstrations by the young Kofushiwaki Tsukasa, ...

... a lacquer artist who uses the ‘*kanshitsu*’ or dry-lacquer technique to produce abstract, often large-scale sculptural forms. Here we see him making a miniature version of his ‘Unfolded Form, 94-03’, ...

... which was on display among the fibre works in the second exhibition gallery.

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I have referred a number of times to Japan 2001, which was a nationwide cultural festival that ran from May 2001 to March 2002. The V&A staged quite an ambitious programme of events, some of them straightforward exhibitions, but many of them involving artists and practitioners of various kinds working and demonstrating in the V&A. One project in which I was involved was the installation of a large ceramic sculpture in the lobby

outside the public restaurant. The artist was Hoshino Satoru, an example of whose work ...

... we had on display in the Toshiba Gallery. To coincide with the showing of his ceramic installation, we asked Hoshino to revisit a ceramic 'happening' that he and his wife had enacted on a beach in Japan in the late 1980s and to orchestrate a performance to take place on the evening of the last Friday in June as part of our Friday Late View programme.

The result was a 'Fire, Clay and Water' performance ...

... involving five men, one of them Hoshino himself, and five women, who were symbolically reborn in a slurry of pristine white kaolin (this would have appealed to Oliver and his passion for porcelain ...) and then walked in silence in a large figure-of-eight around the Pirelli Garden and through the Medieval Treasury, stopping in between at braziers full of burning wood. The body heat of the performers and the fire of the braziers caused the clay to dry and crack so that they seemed to wrinkle and age in front of one's eyes. The performance was both a metaphorical enactment of the cycle of birth, life and death, and a propitiation of the forces of nature, which once, in the form of a landslide, had destroyed the artist's studio and had come within inches of engulfing his two young sons ...

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Looking back over the last 25 years, I think one can say that the 1991 Japan Festival marked the beginning of the healthy level of interchange we see today, and that the 1980s, when money flowed freely from an economically buoyant Japan, was an essential period of gestation that saw the establishment of the infrastructure that has enabled subsequent developments to take place.

If we think about **funding bodies**, for example, there was the establishment of the Great-Britain Sasakawa Foundation in 1985, followed by that of the Anglo-Japanese Daiwa Foundation in 1988. With their remit of supporting artistic and cultural activity, these two organisations have become essential partners in a field where previously the Japan Foundation and the British Council had been the only major players. Other foundations that also play a role include the Toshiba International Foundation (TIFO), The Pola Foundation, The Sato Artcraft Foundation and the Gotoh Foundation, all of which are based in Japan.

In the **museum sector**, the Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art opened at the V&A in 1986 with a space dedicated to modern Japanese crafts. This was followed in 1990 by the opening of British Museum's Japanese Galleries and its subsequent initiatives in the contemporary field. The Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh has been another important champion of modern Japanese crafts, while the Ashmolean and the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge have also played their parts.

There has also been a proliferation of **residencies, studentships and fellowships** in addition to those administered by the funding bodies I have mentioned.

In 1989 the INAX Design Prize was established together with an associated system of residencies. This was followed in 1990 by the opening of the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park and the start of its artist-in-residence scheme.

In this country there has been an exchange scheme running between the Royal College of Art and Kyoto City University of Arts since the 1980s. The Surrey Institute of Art and Design has an artist-in-residence scheme that has enabled a number of Japanese artists to spend time in the UK. There have also been initiatives like that of the Ann Sutton Foundation, which offers fellowships to young textile designers, including those from Japan.

An important Japanese scheme is the one operated by the Ministry of Education / Agency for Cultural Affairs that has allowed a steady stream of artists, lecturers and curators to spend up to a year each studying abroad. Many of these are craft practitioners, and many of them come to the UK.

Finally there are the huge numbers of Japanese students enrolled in UK art colleges. The number working in craft disciplines is relatively small, but some very impressive makers have come to the fore in recent years. Mukaide Keiko in glass, Suzuki Hiroshi in silver-smithing, and Junko Mori, who works in both silver and steel, are the names that immediately spring to mind. (413 words)

So, in conclusion, I think one can say that there is a great deal happening now, firstly in terms of the work of Japanese makers being exhibited and made available in the UK, and secondly in terms of increasing interaction between the Japanese and British craft communities. I would like to think that the V&A can take some credit for this growth of activity, but the really important thing is that the ball is not just rolling but seems to be gathering momentum all the time.

Thank you.

**Dr. Yoshie Itani** – Considering Design Grades in the Morimura “Design Books”

I would like to begin today with a word of deep gratitude to the late Dr. Oliver Impey. Dr. Impey served as my doctoral thesis supervisor, and his sudden passing was a great and unexpected shock. His passing was truly regrettable, a great loss to us all. Unfortunately it came just one month before I was to submit the final draft of my doctoral thesis to him, but I dare say I would not have been able to submit the thesis I eventually did without his devoted and excellent mentorship. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him from the bottom of my heart for all his efforts and support on my behalf.

My presentation today deals with the topic of the “design grades” that appear in the “Design Books” of the company called Morimura-kumi. (“Morimura-kumi,” by the way, is the original name of the company, originally founded in 1876, that we know today as Noritake Company. Since I am discussing historical evidence from so early in that company’s history, I will generally refer to it by the older name.) But to continue my introduction of the subject.... Specifically, I would like to focus on how these design grades can be interpreted to indicate a hierarchy among the porcelain painting factories subcontracted to decorate the company’s porcelain wares. I will also consider some of the important factors that seem to have influenced design and production decisions within Morimura-kumi, and by extension among industrialized export porcelain manufacturers in the Meiji era in general.

*The “Design Books”*

The ceramic craftsmen of Seto and Nagoya, where most of Morimura-kumi’s wares were produced, did not usually keep design books. Amazingly, however, about eighty volumes, spanning the period 1908 through 1910, have been discovered in the archives of the Noritake Company. I call this discovery “amazing” not only because such records are

rare to begin with, but also because they happen to have survived the near total destruction of the surrounding city of Nagoya during the air raids of World War II. Known as “*Gajō*” in Japanese, these Design Books, or at least the ones we’ve found, were created by the Design & Pattern Department of Morimura Brothers, a trading house set up by Morimura-kumi in New York City to handle sales in the massive U.S. market. American sales staff calling on their customers throughout the United States would show these design collections to their customers and take orders for products based on them, a situation that supported the company’s “make to-order” sales system. Customers would indicate the designs they wanted, and the salesmen would then place orders for the relevant designs to be painted by the company’s porcelain painters back in Japan. As I said, about eighty volumes of these Design Books, containing about two thousand pictures of Meiji-era porcelain designs, still reside in the Noritake company archives, and I have selected photo reproductions of about 972 of the finest, most detailed dating from the period 1906 to 1908 as material for this presentation.

### *Design Grades*

Most pages in the Design Books contain alphabetical characters marked in rubber stamp or written by hand. These, we have discovered, seem to indicate the “grade” of each design, that is to say how fine (or how ordinary) it was considered. These grades include: SXA, EXA, OXA, AA, A, B, C, and D. The first three—SXA, EXA, and OXA—seem to be shorthand for “Special-Excellent-A”, “Excellent-A”, and “Ordinary-Excellent-A”, respectively. In the absence of any Noritake records explaining these grades clearly, however, I’ve had to conjecture (and I think I’m safe in assuming with some confidence) that they compare the finish quality associated with each design. Those containing an “X” (which I call the “X grades”) are higher than those simply marked A, with the rest arranged in descending alphabetical order. Besides these, there are a few examples of OOX, B上 (best), and CC. OOX indicates a grade similar to other X grades, B上 literally indicates the “best of B,” and CC is almost the same as C. Of interest here is the fact that while these grades are listed on most pages, only about half of such grade-

marked pages contain the names of specific porcelain painters. My theory about the reason for this is that some designs listed in the Design Books never actually went to the painting factory; that is to say, if a design is not attributed to any particular painter, I think it means that it was created as a possible design, but never saw production. I can think of two plausible reasons why this would have happened:

The first would have to do with cost. Namely, in some cases, the design itself may have been excellent, but the cost performance was so low that no profit would result after labour, expenses, and materials costs associated with the painting and gold gilding were figured in. If this were the case, then the company likely would have abandon the design in favour of more profitable ones.

The second reason for non-production would have been that the design was simply not of an acceptable level in terms of quality, detail, or other aspects of marketability, and therefore was considered not worth the effort to produce.

The former conjecture—that the design was excellent but too costly—is evidenced by the fact that the majority of such designs bear grade stamps above X, SXA, and EXA. The elaborate designs I have selected for consideration here include a total of eighty-seven pages marked with SXA and EXA designs bearing no painter name. On the other hand, thirty-nine pages marked with SXA and EXA do list such names. This means that only about half of the designs went to porcelain painters for actual production, however excellent they may have been.

Regarding the latter reason, the vast majority of the designs that lack marketability are marked with C or D, indicating design grades too low for Morimura-kumi to sell them. Indeed, most C and D designs are graphically simplistic and have little in the way of value-adding gold gilding or other decoration, at least when compared to those bearing X grades.

Many of the products with grades higher than A and bearing painter names happen to be plates, followed in number by cups and saucers, then vases, and then pots. Among products with high grades but without painter names, vases are the most numerous, followed by plates and jugs. Vases bearing very high quality designs could have been produced, but typically they were avoided because of the relatively high cost involved. But since design plays a particularly vital role for plates, the company may have decided

to sell even those designs for which cost was more of an issue. This is likely to have made plates the most numerous items among those products bearing the names of painters. The excellence of many vase designs is also readily apparent, even if these are not accompanied by painter names or X-level grade stamps as an X. For the remainder of this discussion, I will consider those designs associated with painter names, leaving those without painter names as a subject for future study.

### *Relationships between Porcelain Painters and Design Grades*

Let me now consider the relationship between designs bearing painter names and the design quality grades just introduced. The names of painters associated with particular grades, ordered according to greatest number of listings, are as follows: Kawahara Noritatsu from Tokyo; Ishida Satarō from Kyoto; Sugimura Sakutarō from Tokyo; Iguchi Shōzan from Tokyo; Saigō Hisakichi from Nagoya; Adachi Seiichi from Tokyo; Ōta from Tokyo. Out of 132 pages, Kawahara has 27 entries, Ishida 27, Saigō 22, and Sugimura 19, with these four painters accounting for about seventy-five percent of the listings.

Painters with designs graded higher than A (that is to say, SXA, EXA, AA and A) include Kawahara (17 designs), Ishida (17), Saigō (20), and Sugimura (17). As far as these figures are concerned, Saigō (20) exceeds other painters in number, but Kawahara (17 pages) ranks first for the number of SXA and EXA grade designs, followed by Ishida (11), Saigō (9) and Sugimura (10, including 1 SXA).

Thus, my comparison of designs by painters associated with grade markers shows that Kawahara and Ishida are equal, with 27 entries each. In terms of the number of grades above A, Saigō (20) surpasses Ishida (17), but when evaluated with importance attached to those having higher grades like SXA and EXA, the painters contracted to do the highest-graded designs were, in order, Kawahara, Ishida, Saigō and Sugimura. In other words, painters receiving the greatest number of orders also received contracts for the highest-grade designs in the greatest numbers. This can be clearly seen from the fact that

designs produced by Ōno, Ōtatsu or Hirabayashi, who seldom appear on high-grade pages, are marked with C or D together with their names.

My investigation so far of the relationship between grades and painters, as found in the Design Books, substantiates the existence of a hierarchy among the porcelain painting factories subcontracted by Morimura-kumi, at least during the period 1906 through 1908 when these books were compiled. It is also clear that even excellent designs were not necessarily sent immediately to the painting factory, but rather were scrutinized to assess their cost, which was regarded as the most important factor to consider in deciding whether or not to commercialize any given design.

Now, regardless of whether or not the designs were ever actually manufactured, the high-quality designs pictured in the Design Books have remained unchanged since they were drawn, so if nothing else they are certainly useful as a reference for anyone studying the history of Japanese design.

### *Comparing Designs with Actual Products*

Morimura-kumi had been focusing on exportable Westernized designs ever since the founder, Morimura Ichizaemon, and his business partner, Ōkura Magobei, first returned from a 1895 visit to the West bearing a large load of sample plates and other wares. One does wonder, however, in what ways the images of Western design built in the minds of the Morimura designers changed—in the process of making, overglazing, and inspecting the pottery—by the time the final products reached customers abroad. Although considering this question based on a limited number of designs and actual pieces risks narrowing our view too much (especially since the total number of both designs and produced pieces is not recorded) we can still discern some important clues. If designs and the actual products resulting from them can be found to be largely similar, then we know there must have been some degree of aesthetic consensus between the Morimura-kumi designers and their customers. On the other hand, if the designs and final products seem rather different, then we can ask: who made the changes? why did they make these changes? and in what ways did those changes affect the fundamental design. Three

different scenarios may be suggested to account for changes made to designs and reflected in final products:

- The first is that potters could not produce the piece in question if they followed the original shapes depicted in the Design Books . Or, similarly, the shapes may have been considered too difficult to produce.
- In other cases, the overglazing painters may have regarded the original design unfit for application to porcelain for some reason.
- Or, the sales department or the management may have ordered changes to be made in order to meet exportation needs of some kind or another.

Western designs were first being co-opted into the Japanese decorative arts right about the same time that Morimura-kumi's Design Books were being compiled, so it would not be unreasonable to suggest that if there are gaps between the original designs and the final resulting pieces, it was probably because the Morimura-kumi designers did not fully understand the types of products that Ichizaemon and Magobei were hoping to export. On the other hand, if most of the final products do match their original designs, then it means that the designers did in fact understand the company's intentions and produced results accordingly.

### *Examples in Which Original Designs Are Compared with Finished Products*

Let us now examine some actual examples of designs and their corresponding finished products.

#### *Examples showing accordance between design and finished product*

##### *Nearly Identical*

This example shows a cabinet plate with large chrysanthemum depicted on a cobalt ground. The large chrysanthemum overglazing, the gilded cloud pattern, and the cobalt ground can all be considered nearly identical in both the design and the actual plate. The

design has richer gilding over the ground colour near the rim, and the plate is also shown in yellow, but clearly the piece was produced in close accordance with the original design. Apart from the orientation of the chrysanthemum, the design and actual plate match well, especially in terms of the rest of the flowers and the gliding on the rim.

#### *Nearly Identical*

This gilded pot with a large rose used as ground shows agreement between the design and the actual product in terms of shape, but while the overglazing and design seem the same at first glance, there are in fact some differences. The roses near the handles, for example. The design shows a half-bloomed rose, but no rose is shown in that position on the actual pot; instead, more roses have been added near the bottom. The most important difference, however, is in the gilding. The design shows the gilding on the upper and lower areas of the pot to be nearly the same in terms of space usage, but on the actual pot the bottom has considerably less gilding than the neck. The replacement of this gilding with dark green pigment may have been done to economize on the use of gold. The design also shows the gilding on the neck painted in a smaller curve, whereas the actual pot uses a large curve (again, probably to conserve gold). The lid of the pot has been lost, unfortunately, so it is impossible to compare it with that shown in the design.

#### *Identical*

Here we see nut bowl sets with acuminate leaves and beading on green ground, including a design for the piece, the piece itself, and a similar design for a vase. The large nut bowl is the same as in the design. Looking only at the irregularly curved shape of the bowl, it might be difficult to determine the purpose of this piece, but other small bowls of similar shape and design make it easier to understand that it must have been part of a set of nut bowls (from which one or more other small bowls have been lost). There is also a vase with a similar design. There is no evidence that the vase was actually ever produced, and even if it had been, its handles would have been too complicated for practical use. The design is nonetheless rather interesting.

#### *Identical*

Here we have a gilded jug with a large white rose, The product photo comes from the book *Masterpieces of Noritake*, or *Noritake Meihinshū* in Japanese.<sup>1</sup> Variations are also shown in another picture.

Here we see a good example of a basic design that has been adapted to various shapes. The design consists of two main large white roses in a yellow ground cartouche, with green ground all around and arabesque gilding. This same design has been found in twenty-eight variations to date, including those for vases, jugs, plates, bowls, cups and saucers, pots, and milk jars. However, some of these shapes probably would have been too complicated to manufacture, however, so it seems unlikely that all of them were ever actually produced. The existing jug has a relatively easy shape and would have been amongst the most likely to have seen actual production.

#### *Example of non-accordance between design and finished product*

For this jug, the design shows overglazed orchids, but the actual piece renders one of these in prominent moriage situated at the centre, with some of the leaves coming from the bottom also done in moriage. To date, no such jug with all three orchids rendered in overglazing—that is, true to the original design—has been found (though it's possible one may have been produced). It seems likely that this all-overglazed version, shown in the Design Books, was the original, from which the moriage types were subsequently developed.

#### *Conclusion*

As we can see from these examples, comparing designs with pieces of Old Noritake that were actually manufactured allows us to identify changes in overglazing design (often the number of flowers), shapes (typically simpler), amount of gilding (usually less), as well as the addition of techniques like moriage. Although the number of comparisons of designs versus finished pieces considered in my research is admittedly quite limited,

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<sup>1</sup> Morikawa Takahiro. *Noritake Meihinshū*. Kyoto: Maria Shobō. 2003, p 106.

the clear implication is that basic designs were made first and subsequently developed into variations. This phenomenon is common throughout the decorative arts (including porcelain), be they artisanal or mass-produced. The fact that most of these changes represent simplifications is somewhat predictable given that Old Noritake wares were being produced mainly for everyday use—in other words, for situations where overly complicated designs would be overly delicate, too expensive, or generally less usable. Even among pieces intended more for decoration—vases, for example—simplifying more complicated elements like handles for the sake of easier production was a logical step whenever a more complicated version would not necessarily increase value or quality. And as we have seen, simplifications of overglazed designs typically involved minor changes that usually did not sacrifice overall balance.

Also, beyond such intentional changes, it often seems to have happened that several of Morimura-kumi's subcontracted painting factories simultaneously receiving orders for the same design simply ended up producing pieces with slightly different overglazing. How this happened, and the nature of the resulting differences, is more of a topic for future study, so I won't go into it further today.

In any case, cost and perceived value were among the most important factors influencing design changes. Expensive gold gilding, for example, was often reduced if the cost was estimated to be too high; but measures to increase perceived value were also sometimes introduced, for example by adding moriage to a design (as in the case of the orchid jug discussed earlier), even though using overglazing alone would have saved cost and effort during production. Such changes suggest that simply lowering cost was not the only important consideration in arriving at final design decisions, and that there were other mitigating factors.

The variation of shapes to accommodate a basic design (such as a large white rose) shows a willing flexibility in matching designs to various shapes. These changes and variations are easy enough to imagine and predict, but my concrete comparison of designs in the Design Books with the actual finished pieces of Old Noritake that resulted from them offers concrete proof that such factors did indeed come into play in the production of export porcelain during the Meiji era.