

JAPANESE CERAMICS AND THE EMBLEMS OF JAPAN AT THE FRENCH UNIVERSAL EXHIBITIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF 19TH CENTURY

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Keywords: ceramic, universal exhibition, porcelain, stoneware

Pagrindinės sąvokos: keramika, pasaulinė paroda, porcelianas, keraminiai dirbiniai

Since the 17th century, Japanese porcelains were exported copiously into Europe and greatly influenced European industries. The exotic aestheticism of Japanese porcelain had a considerable impact on European aestheticism and, consequently, a particular image of Japan emerged on the basis of these objects.

In the second half of 19th century, Japan participated in three of the four universal exhibitions held in Paris in 1867, 1878 and 1889. While Japanese porcelains flourished at first, Japanese stoneware then gained notoriety among the French. The shift in interest among the French caused a considerable debate and was perceived to be based on the preconception that the simple and subtle nature of stoneware was more a reflection of Japan for the French than porcelains.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to determine the opinion of the French towards the following: Japanese ceramics, Japanese art and the French viewpoint towards the Japanese culture. The aim is to examine the influence of Japanese ceramics on European art amateurs and collectors, with particular emphasis on the French art society. It is noteworthy that the art of ceramics develops in its shape, ornamentation and usage. In this

paper, it is presented how Occidental collectors conceived the aestheticism of Japan more precisely, and how the ceramics, in addition to other major disciplines, became a reflection of Japan. Therefore, the portrayal of Japan and the Japanese culture, which emerged from the exhibition and importation of Japanese ceramics, will be shown in detail.

1. Exportation of the Imari porcelain

The first Occidentals that reached Japan were Portuguese sailors, who landed on the island of Tanegashima of Kyûshû in 1543. The Portuguese were fierce traders with the Japanese, and amongst their exchanges, they discovered a fascinating object of Japanese art, lacquer. From the era of Azuchi Momoyama (1573-1603), numerous Japanese lacquers were exported by the Portuguese or by the Spanish and the key interest was placed on the Namban style,¹ which remained fashionable until the isolationism of Japan in 1639. At this time, Europeans viewed porcelain as a Chinese export in general, while Japan was valued for its lacquer more. After the isolation of Japan, the Dutch, who were the only Occidentals authorized to trade with Japan, exported another object of art appreciated greatly by the Occidental cultures, the Imari porcelains. Via the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie: VOC), they were exported to Asian countries and also to Europe by the second half of the 17th century. These Imari porcelains were amassed by privileged European amateurs and collectors and were used mainly as ornamental pieces.²

Imari porcelains were created in Japan at the beginning of the 17th century in the province of Hizen, which is located in the north-west of the island of Kyûshû (today known as the prefecture of Saga and of Nagasaki),

¹ The namban style is characterized by the pictorial technique of “maki-e” (interspersed painting), consisting of the seeding of gold powder on a cool decor, with the aid of a small tube ended by a filter, and supplemented by inlaying of pearls. The term “namban” means “barbarians of the South,” and was applied not only to the Portuguese but to all navigators who arrived to Japan from the South (Kopplin 2001: 12, 26). After the isolationism of Japan, the Dutch exported Japanese lacquers to Europe.

² Marie II of England (1662-1694) arranged a porcelain cabinet in her castle of Hampton Court. When residing in the Netherlands for twelve years, following her marriage to William III of England (1650-1702), she may have collected these porcelains to decorate the chimney of her house. All these porcelains, small or large, may have been placed or embedded in the chimney (Nishida 2008: 26-27).

and placed into the kilns of Arita (west of the Saga prefecture). Some Imari porcelains were also produced in neighbouring places. Until the end of the 17th century, the center of Hizen was the sole provider of porcelains within Japan. The porcelains were transported to the port of Imari (giving them their name as Imari porcelains), north-west of the gulf of Imari in the prefecture of Saga and were abundantly exported to other cities of Japan.

The pieces of exported Imari porcelains displayed different styles and shapes. During the period from 1659 to 1670, the kilns of Arita fabricated a number of porcelains decorated as follows. Some pieces contained blue and white motifs (called *sometsuke*); pieces ornamented with polychromic styles similar to those seen in the Chinese “*kraak porselein*”³; and other pieces were inspired by the Chinese porcelains of Transition,⁴ which presented flowered motifs, landscapes or pseudo-Chinese caricatures. Therefore, it is understandable that during this period Europeans distinguished the Chinese and Japanese porcelains poorly. In terms of shapes, the Dutch ordered a large number of pieces in a more classical Occidental design; for example, jars, pitchers, vases, pharmacy pots, Schnapps square bottles and apothecary vases. Sometime between 1670 and 1690 the pieces of *kakiemon* style⁵ appeared and were exported in large numbers to Europe. Their shapes were various (including pieces in the form of cups, jars, perfume-burners, etc.), some of them were inspired by Chinese shapes, for example, bottles in the form of flasks. The Europeans appreciated the figurines, including men, children and women dressed in kimonos and animal caricatures. Concerning the adornments, the influence of Chinese style was still dominant, however, certain themes, such as animals, were borrowed from the directory of the Japanese pictorial schools *Kanô* and *Tosa*.⁶ By 1680, the *kakiemon*

³ The *kraak* porcelains (porcelains of Portuguese carrack), called “*fuyôde*” in Japan, are characterized by their underglazed blue pigment, that is organized in a central motif around which it appears as radiant compartments.

⁴ The Chinese porcelains from the beginning of the era of Transition (1621-1683).

⁵ Among the different styles of Imari porcelains, the *kakiemon* style is characterized by motifs using enamels, making the most of the delicately unpainted milky white background. The polychromatic enamels are used to draw natural, sober and elegant motifs. The name “*kakiemon*” originates from the name of the Japanese potter Sakaida *kakiemon* (1596-1666), who is credited with being one of the first in Japan to discover the secret of enamel decoration on porcelain 1647.

⁶ The *Kanô* school of painting was founded around the middle of the 15th century by *Kanô Masanobu* (1434 ?-1530) and existed until the end of the Edo era. The *Kanô* trained artists produced a large amount of paintings (screens, fans, pictorial scrolls, etc.) of diverse genres (*Yamato-e*: a style of classical Japanese painting; a type of wash drawing). The school of painting of *Yamato-e* was founded by *Kasuga Motomitsu* and existed for almost a thousand years since the era of He-

style was modified to include the colour palette of the kakiemon style, such as parma, lively red, orange-yellow and gold over-glazes, together with blue under glazes. The flowered motifs and the landscapes with women in kimonos were derived from the painting of the Hishikawa school⁷ and certain decors emanated of European orders, such as armory, mythological scenes and women with parasols. Many pieces destined for exportation were large (eg., dishes and vases) and sent to palaces or porcelain cabinets primarily for exhibition as luxury pieces. Indeed, the pieces of this kinrande style were in the style of baroque, which coincided with lofty surcharges.

With the growing interest in Japanese porcelain in Europe, there was a drive not only to collect these pieces, but to learn how to fabricate them. The prince-electors Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (1670-1733), also the king of Poland (known under the name of Augustus the Strong), ordered a German chemist Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682-1719) to fabricate hard porcelain.⁸ With the help of his friend physician Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhausen (1651-1708), Johann Friedrich Böttger discovered how to forge porcelain in 1708 in Saxony. In 1709, he discovered deposits of kaolinite in Saxony. This led to the founding of the factory of Meissen in the Albrechtsburg castle, near Dresden in 1710. Considerable interest and funding for this factory were provided by the Duke of Saxony and by Augustus the Strong. Following this discovery, the Imari kakiemon style porcelains were copied in this factory and other European factories, such as the ones of Saint-Cloud, Chantilly, Mennecy and Chelsea.

The exportation of Chinese porcelains from the kilns of Jingdezhen resumed in 1684 and the porcelains of Imari, kinrande style, that were made in China, were commercialized towards the Occident. The considerably high cost of Imari porcelains coupled with the new-found fabrication of these porcelains in Europe (due to the discovery of kaolinite deposits) were all contributing factors to the reduction of European orders. While the

ian (794-1185). The members of this school worked for the imperial court. The fourth successor of the school, Kasuga Takayoshi, is known to have made the most ancient pictorial scroll called *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji).

⁷ The school Hishikawa was a school of Ukiyo-e (Japanese woodblock prints) created by Hishikawa Moronobu (? - 1694).

⁸ Hard porcelain is resistant to scratching, even with steel, as opposed to soft porcelain that is more fragile. The paste of hard porcelain is composed of kaolin, quartz and feldspar, while its overlay is composed of quartz and feldspar. Soft porcelain was created by the Europeans to imitate the Chinese porcelains. It is much more complex in its composition.

production and commerce of Imari porcelains remained localized within Japan during the mid 18th century, the interest in these porcelains amongst Occidentals was revitalized in the second half of the 19th century.

2. Universal exhibition in 1867 in Paris and the dawn of Imari porcelain in France

For the first time, Japan participated officially in the universal exhibition held in Paris in 1867. Three delegations, the bakufu, the clan of Satsuma and the clan of Saga, accompanied by two merchants represented Japanese creations, such as cloths, papers and ceramics.⁹ Most of the objects presented by the clan of Saga were Imari porcelains. Bottles of sake in porcelain were sold in abundance and the French added iron-work to these porcelains to make lamps. The Japanese etches also attracted the attention of prestigious people, such as Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), a French writer, the author of “Outamaro” and “Hokousai,” and the famous engraver Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914), who discovered the etches of Hokusai before the universal exhibition in 1867 and is considered as one of the founders of “Japonism” (a term expressing the influence of Japanese arts on those of the West). According to the chronicles of Léonce Bénédite (1859-1925), Félix Bracquemond discovered one of the volumes of the Hokusai manga,¹⁰ a book, which served for embedding Japanese porcelains. Therefore, in 1867, the Imari porcelain exhibit instigated a growing infatuation for Japanese art and, hence, Japonism in France.

During the 1867 exhibition, the delegates of Saga were interested in Occidental industrialization of their product, thereby allowing it for improvement in the quality of porcelain production and the exploitation in the European market. Joseph Morris, an English engineer, was invited to Arita to consult on the extraction of kaolin. Gottfried Wagener (1831-1892), a German chemist, was also invited and stayed there for four

⁹ The bakufu principally presented lacquers, ceramics, armors, clothing, paintings and even insects. The objects presented by the clan of Satsuma were essentially lacquers, woods, garden tools, etc. Merchant Shimizu Usaburô exposed armour, sake, tea, dolls and etches (Miyanağa : 67-95).

¹⁰ Hokusai manga (Booklets of drawings by Hokusai) are etches of subjects, including landscapes, flora and fauna, everyday life and the supernatural. Bracquemond produced twenty-eight engravings with strong water for the table service called ‘Service Rousseau,’ whereby the motifs he used were inspired from Hokusai manga (Okuda 2006: 17) (Koyama-Richard 2001: 18).

months. During his stay, Wagener built an experimental kiln for porcelain that could function with charcoal and without wood. Amongst his works, he introduced Western materials, like manganese or chromium to produce coloured enamels. This led to the creation of an original blue colour called the “Blue Wagener,” which consisted of a cobalt and kaolin mix.

In 1873, Japan participated in the universal exhibition in Vienna. At this universal exhibition, the members of the Japanese exhibition office Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922), the nominated president, and Sano Tsunetami (1823-1902), the vice-president, requested that the exhibitors present Imari porcelains of large size; for example, a pair of large vases decorated in Japanese motifs was requested. Despite the Japonism movement that favoured the exportation of Imari porcelains towards the West, the Japanese delegation of the universal exhibition was aware of the delay in efficacy with regards to the European porcelain manufacturers, including those of Minton, Sèvres and Meissen. To remain competitive, the Japanese government sent three men to Bohemia (previously a region of the Habsburg Empire which is a region in the Czech Republic nowadays) to assimilate and bring back new techniques of production to Japan. This team of men included Tanzan Rokurô (1852-1897), Nôtomî Kaijirô (1844-1919) and Kawahara Chûjirô (1849-1889). They learned the techniques of fabrication and then spread this knowledge to other sites of Japanese production.¹¹

In the kilns of Arita, particularly the ones of Kôransha and Seiji kaisha, the industrialization of porcelain was well received. The machines of the Faure Company were imported from Limoges.¹² The Kôransha introduced mechanization in workshops progressively, whereas the Seiji kaisha installed a series of twelve machines that were used from the preparation of the paste to the finished product.¹³ This company sought to develop the production of luxurious tableware in the French style; however, it failed, since the quality of the porcelains was not competitive with those produced by the Western marketplace. The failure was also due to the idea that the Westerners searched for Japanese porcelains as a form of exoticism; therefore, “Euro-

¹¹ Nôtomî and Kawahara from Saga worked six months at the factory of Rudolf and Hidingier Brothers in Elbogen. Tanzan Rokurô stayed two months at the factory of the Count of Thun in Klôsterle (Nagai 2007: 20).

¹² The Faure Company installed machines to limit handling in the workshops. This involved particular machines that were calibrated to mould and others to form oval dishes to obtain different thicknesses. A worker could therefore produce a hundred and fifty products a day on average, while by hand he produced only a hundred a day (Meslin-Perrier 2002: 176-178).

¹³ (Matsumoto 1985 : 160-180) (Nakayama 1980 : 40- 43).

peanized” pieces did not evoke the original beauty of Japan. Consequently, the French became disinterested in Imari porcelain, yet their interest in the Japanese art was rekindled with the discovery of another type of ceramics, stoneware. Stoneware fascinated French “japonists” during the universal exhibition of Paris held in 1878.

3. Stoneware and the tea ceremony at the universal exhibition in 1878 in Paris

In 1878, the universal exhibition held in Paris was during the peak of Japonism in France. Japan participated and published a book in French entitled *Japan at the universal exhibition of 1878*. A chapter was dedicated to pottery, fabrication and materials used for numerous Imari or for Seto porcelains. In this publication, we also find information on the stoneware of Satsuma and of Banko.¹⁴ The Satsuma had already attracted the interest of Occidentals during the universal exhibition of Paris in 1867; however, de Goncourt claimed that he had introduced these objects prior to their demonstration in 1878 to the art historian Philippe Burty (1839-1890).¹⁵ Burty presented his own collection of Japanese ceramics at the exhibition among which some Satsuma can be found, as well as unpolished and monochromatic stoneware, similar to those of Bizen. Numerous pieces of Japanese ancient potteries were exhibited by Wakai Kenzaburô (1834-1908), the vice-president of the Kiritsu kôshô kaisha (the Japanese society for exportation of decorative objects to the West), and by European collectors, such as Siegfried Bing (1838-1905), who also exhibited his collection of Japanese ceramics. The collections of ceramics amassed amateur collectors, including Burty, de Goncourt, Bing, art historian Louis Gonse (1841-1926) and Charles Haviland (1839-1921), one of the founders of porcelain manufacturing company Haviland, comprised of several utensils for the tea ceremony (a tea-bowl, a tea-box and a cold water pitcher) in stoneware. This art cultivated by the tea master Senno Rikyû (1522-1591) is cleansing in Japanese culture and reflects the Japanese spirit, as well as the concept aesthetics “wabi-sabi” (i.e. a taste for the simplicity and the ancient). These

¹⁴ (La direction de la commission impériale Japonaise vol 2 1877 : 32-37, 63).

¹⁵ Showing of a black Satsuma stoneware (Imai 2001: 6) (Prévet 2007: 18).

utensils in stoneware were of simple and unornate forms. As a consequence, Occidentals became more interested in material than in decor.

During the universal exhibition of Paris in 1867, the Japanese merchant Shimizu Usaburô (1829-1910) opened a tea shop, in which tea was served by three geishas.¹⁶ This was the first time that the ceremony was open to the public and principally to foreigners. The opportunity to observe the tea ceremony attracted the curiosity of many people. During the universal exhibition held in 1878, another tea ceremony was organized in the Japanese pavilion at the Trocadéro garden for the participants to observe how the utensils were intended for use. The preparation of green tea powder, matcha, was presented with utensils: waste water bowls of the “Tchadjinns” (expert tea ceremonies) and small bottles.¹⁷ This culture of tea was already known by some Occidentals, such as missionaries or dealers, who arrived to Japan at the beginning of the 16th century and knew that the Japanese of high descendants dealt with their utensils with tremendous care. Before the peak of Japonism, the German doctor of the Dutch East India Company Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716) described the tea ceremony in his book entitled *The History of Japan* published in 1727 in London. This work was translated and republished in France in 1729 under the title *Histoire naturelle, civile, et ecclésiastique de l'empire du Japon*. Doctor Philippe Franz Balthasar von Siebold (1796-1866) arrived to Japan in the service of the Dutch East India Company and collected objects of Japanese art, including ceramics. He exhibited them to the public in Holland. The work, which contributed most to the study of Japanese ceramics, is without doubt the ‘*kankô zusetsu*’ by Ninagawa Noritane (1835-1882), a historical and descriptive manual of Japanese arts and industries. A civil servant and an amateur of ancient art objects, Ninagawa published his work in seven volumes from 1876 to 1879. These works were concurrently translated and published in France during 1876-1878 as a collection of five volumes. In this work he presented his own collections of Japanese ancient ceramics (which consisted mainly of stoneware and pottery fabricated until the era of Edo). Several collectors referred to this work, for example, Burty who introduced this work as a primordial document in his conference held in 1884, while Bing wrote an article on

¹⁶ The three geishas were named Kane, Sumi and Sato respectively in the house of tea of Yanagibashi d’Edo. They were dressed in traditional kimonos and served sake or tea (Takahashi 1979: 94-96).

¹⁷ (Burty 1884: 22).

Japanese ceramics, basing much of the data on Ninagawa's work.¹⁸ Additionally, Ninagawa sold pieces presented in his works to foreign collectors and bestowed about twenty pieces to the museum of Sèvres.¹⁹

This infatuation continued and large quantities of Japanese stoneware were collected in France by merchants of Japanese art objects, like Bing and Hayashi Tadamasu (1853-1906). It is also reported that individual buyers travelled to Japan for these exotic pieces. Henri Cernuschi (1821-1896), a banker and an economist, visited Japan in 1871 prior to the universal exhibition of 1878 together with an art critic Théodore Duret (1832-1927). Emile Guimet (1836-1918), an industrialist from Lyon, travelled to Japan and purchased numerous pieces of stoneware. Also during his journey in Japan, Bing met Ninagawa, allowing him to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of Japanese ceramics from primitive periods. Altogether, these European travellers admired the Japanese stoneware and the culture, related to the tea ceremony. Their appreciation for sumptuous Japanese ceramics, especially from the Imari porcelain, the style of *kinrande*, changed. During this time, a heightened interest of the French ceramists for stoneware was observed. For example, among others, Ernest Chaplet (1835-1909), August Delaherche (1867-1940) and Alexandre Bigot (1862-1927) were interested in materials, glazes and in the shape of the Japanese stoneware. At a more fundamental level, these travellers attempted to acquire *wabi-sabi* state of mind. At the universal exhibition of Paris in 1889, the appreciation for the stoneware did not cease, notably "in the aspect of enameling."²⁰ "However, in 1878 Japan chose to imitate certain shapes and motifs that were exhibited at the previous universal exhibition. By imitating previous pieces Japan was perceived to have compromised its originality considered as elegant and graceful."²¹ We can suppose that at the time this was the criticism towards the Japanese porcelain.

With the free trade reestablishment in Japan during the second half of the 19th century, different families of ceramics, along with the discovery and appreciation of stoneware and for the Japanese tea ceremony, were increasingly exported to Europe. This ceramics art and the art of the tea ceremony were shown to the Western world. However, it is not sure whether the Japanese stoneware were used to serve tea (the intended use), or if they

¹⁸ (Burty 1884: 22) (Bing 1884: 245-334).

¹⁹ (Imai 2003: 45-47).

²⁰ (Ministère du commerce, de l'industrie et des colonies 1889: 77).

²¹ (Ministère du commerce, de l'industrie et des colonies 1889: 74).

remained as objects of decoration, or even as subjects of study among the Occidentals.²²

As for the Imari porcelain, at the beginning of the era of Meiji, the imagery was drawn on pieces destined for the interior market. Motifs of steam-boats, locomotives and of Japanese school books may be found. These porcelains played one of the biggest roles in the communication of information within Japan, even if it was not immediate. It is plausible that these porcelains attracted the attention of foreign amateurs that visited Japan and brought them back to the West. Our subsequent interests lay in tracking these objects and understanding their role in shaping Japonism in the West.

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Abstract

Since the seventeenth century, Japanese ceramics were exported to Europe, yet only few privileged collectors could own them. While the objects proved to intrigue European collectors, the connoisseurs had little information about these objects and their country of origin.

Four universal exhibitions were held in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1867, during the period of interest in Japanese arts in France, Japan participated there for the first time and its numerous porcelains were exhibited. The Westerners were greatly interested in the Japanese culture, art and in particular its porcelain, as its exotic characteristics were becoming reputable.

During the second exhibition, held in 1878, French amateurs and critics renewed their interest in the Japanese stoneware. In fact, the simplicity and sobriety of Japanese stoneware were preferred to porcelain, as it was considered a reflection of Japanese ceramic culture. This aestheticism, more exotic and refined, strongly influenced the specialists of Japanese art in France.

In 1889, Japanese porcelain was severely criticized for its lack of originality and for its imitation of European models in shape and décor. However, French ceramicists drew inspiration from Japanese stoneware quickly, as it was considered a pure representation of the Japanese ceramic art much more than porcelain.

This report aims at investigating what Japanese ceramics represented for the French in the second half of 19th century. We are particularly interested in identifying how the French viewed and interpreted Japanese culture, art, motifs, colours and emblems by understanding how these objects were used in France. The use of these objects will be primarily examined at the time of universal exhibitions in Paris when Japonism peaked.

Japonų keramika bei Japonijos įvaizdis pasaulinėse parodose Prancūzijoje XIX a. antroje pusėje

Santrauka

Japonų keramikos dirbiniai nuo septyniolikto amžiaus buvo gabenami į Europą, tačiau tik keletas privilegijuotų kolekcionierių galėjo juos įsigyti. Nors Europos kolekcionieriai šiais dirbiniais labai domėjosi, žinovai turėjo labai mažai informacijos apie pačius daiktus ir jų kilmės šalį.

Antroje devyniolikto amžiaus pusėje Paryžiuje surengtos keturios pasaulinės parodos. 1867-aisiais, kai prancūzai itin domėjosi Japonijos menais, Japonija pirmą kartą dalyvavo parodoje ir eksponavo daugybę porcelianinių dirbinių. Vakariečius nepaprastai sudomino Japonijos kultūra, menas ir ypač porcelianas, kurio egzotinės savybės buvo vis labiau vertinamos.

Per antrąją parodą, surengtą 1878-aisiais, prancūzų mėgėjai ir kritikai susidomėjo Japonijos keramika. Iš tiesų japoniškų molinių indų paprastumas ir saikingumas pradėti vertinti labiau už porcelianą, kadangi manyta, jog jis atspindi japonų keramikų kultūrą. Toks egzotiškesnis ir rafinuotesnis estetiškumas smarkiai paveikė japonų meno specialistus Prancūzijoje.

1889-aisiais japoniškas porcelianas buvo griežtai kritikuojamas už originalumo stoką ir europietišką formų bei dekoru kopijavimą. Prancūzų keramikai sėmėsi įkvėpimo iš japoniškos keramikos, nes pastarasis buvo laikomas netgi geresniu Japonijos pasididžiavimu nei porcelianas.

Šio darbo tikslas – ištirti, ką japonų keramikai pristatė prancūzams antroje XIX a. pusėje. Labiausiai rūpi sužinoti, kaip prancūzai vertino ir suvokė japonų kultūrą, meną, pagrindinius motyvus, spalvas ir emblemas, stengiamasi suprasti, kaip šie daiktai panaudoti Prancūzijoje. Jų naudojimas pirmiausia bus ištirtas pasaulinių parodų Paryžiuje laikotarpiu, kai suklestėjo japonizmas.