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Lim, Tai Wei “Re-centering Trade Periphery through Fired Clay: A Historiography of the Global Mapping of Japanese Trade Ceramics in the Premodern Global Trading Space”  
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**Abstract:** A center-periphery system is one that is not static, but is constantly changing. It changes by virtue of technological developments, design innovations, shifting centers of economics and trade, developmental trajectories, and the historical sensitivities of cultural areas involved. To provide an empirical case study, this paper examines the material culture of Arita/Imari 有田/伊万里 trade ceramics in an effort to understand the dynamics of Japan’s regional and global position in the transition from periphery to the core of a global trading system.

## Re-centering Trade Periphery through Fired Clay: A Historiography of the Global Mapping of Japanese Trade Ceramics in the Premodern Global Trading Space<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Premodern global trade was first dominated by overland routes popularly characterized by the Silk Road, and its participants were mainly located in the vast Eurasian space of this global trading area. While there are many definitions of the Eurasian trading space that included the so-called Silk Road, some of the broadest definitions include the furthest ends of the premodern trading world. For example, Konuralp Ercilasun includes Japan in the broadest definition of the silk route at the farthest East Asian end.<sup>2</sup> There are also differing interpretations of the term “Silk Road,” but most interpretations include both the overland as well as the maritime silk route. The maritime route and trading space enjoyed certain advantages that the overland trade routes did not, including non-reliance on oases found in desert routes and caravan animals and their ability to carry higher loads. It also empowered maritime island entities like Japan to participate fully in the global trading system due to the fluidity and reach of the maritime space. The maritime space also facilitated a premodern version of the intra-regional trading network centered on Northeast Asia, but also extending into Southeast Asia.

Intra-regionally, within Northeast Asia, Hugh Clark quotes Li Zhao 李肇 in the eighth century, who argued that southeastern Chinese districts were all accessible by water, and that this coastal route served Korea and Japan as well as the intra-Northeast Asian regional trade. Further, with the expansion of maritime trade during the Song dynasty, Japanese and Korean documentation noted the arrival of merchant ships from Chinese ports.<sup>3</sup> The Song dynasty also saw an expansion of Chinese merchant trade southwards into Southeast Asia.

Other interpretations prefer to conceptualize the maritime and overland route as two parts of a unitary entity with reliance on one when the other met with environmental difficulties. Such views can be found in academic discussions and other settings. Jerry Bentley, for example, has noted that such sedentary empires as the Tang and Carolingian based their trading systems on trans-Mediterranean-East Asia land routes and sea-based maritime routes in the Indian Ocean.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper acknowledges the editing and contributions of Ms. Helen Chan Yim Ting, Research Assistant, Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Japanese Studies Department.

<sup>2</sup> Konuralp Ercilasun, “Silk Road as a Sub-global Region: A Sphere Emerging from the Interaction of Cultural and Economic Fields,” paper presented at an International Seminar on “Reviving the Silk Route: New Initiatives and Engagements for the 21st Century” at the International Centre, Goa, Dona Paula, India (February 9-10, 2007). Online at: [http://www.centralasia-southcaucasus.com/docs/Silk%20Route/Paper\\_Konulrap\\_Ercilasun.doc](http://www.centralasia-southcaucasus.com/docs/Silk%20Route/Paper_Konulrap_Ercilasun.doc).

<sup>3</sup> Hugh Clark, “The Religious Culture of Southern Fujian, 750–1450: Preliminary Reflections on Contacts across a Maritime Frontier,” *Asia Major* 19.1/2 (2006), p. 220.

<sup>4</sup> Jerry H. Bentley, “Hemispheric Integration, 500-1500 C.E.,” *Journal of World History* 9.2 (Fall

John Major notes on the Asia Society website that the maritime route between Japan and Southeast Asia was sometimes considered an alternative trade route when environmental and trading conditions were unfavorable overland.<sup>5</sup> In the overland route, Northeast Asian goods traffic appear to move from Northeast China (Shandong and Liaodong) to the Korean peninsula and then to Japan.<sup>6</sup> During this period, it may be possible that Japan was a recipient of Silk Road goods and comparatively less of an exporter.

Japan's re-centering into the global trading space appears to be associated more with the maritime route, being an island maritime nation, particularly during the Chinese Ming-Qing gap which opened up trading opportunities for Japanese export potters. Therefore, following up on this interpretation, Japan was integrated more comprehensively and fully into the global trading system when the overland caravan route was less practical, and when supplies from continental economies were comparatively weaker due to internal strife. Prior to the seventeenth century, however, given that Japan was located on the far end of the overland Eurasian space, it was geographically distant from the main trading area and often depended on its continental Northeast Asian neighbors for the transmission of ideas, technologies, goods and products. Such transmissions could be channeled through the continental route either directly from China or via Korea, or through pre-seventeenth century regional maritime trading networks centered on East Asia.

With increasing activity in the global maritime trading space and advancements in navigational equipment and knowledge, however, particularly for Japan after the early European entry into East Asia, the global transition towards the maritime route benefited Japan as it was now less peripheral in terms of reach. Moreover, it was slowly extending its trading space to Southeast Asia and finally Europe and, in modern times, the United States within two to three centuries. The global mapping of this re-centering process as Japan shifted from the global trading periphery to an active participant is traceable through industry-specific studies, such as its export industry, and specifically the trade ceramics and porcelain industry. The ceramics/porcelain export trade was a microcosm of this Japanese export trade. First emanating from Hirado 平戸 (in the district of Matsuura 松浦) to China and Southeast Asia, it was shifted to Deshima 出島 (also pronounced Dejima) in 1641, which also saw Dutch participation.<sup>7</sup>

Materially, studying the export ware industry has one advantage. Pottery and porcelain have been among the most durable artifacts that can survive the ravages of weather and external environmental wear and tear (including seawater) and become archeological time capsules for historical studies. They are relatively more durable when compared against perishable artifacts like textiles, paper, leaves, wood-based material, bamboo, and the like. Silk, another major item in the trade routes, is, for example, far more perishable than ceramics. Through the examination of export trade ceramics, archeologists and historians have been able to investigate the distant past and, in some cases, demonstrate its importance for tracing maritime routes and historical trade

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1998), p. 240.

<sup>5</sup> John Major, "Geographical Setting of the Silk Roads," Asia Society (August 18, 2008). Online at: <http://asiasociety.org/countries-history/trade-exchange/geographical-setting-silk-roads?page=0%2C3>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Nagatake Takeshi, *Classic Japanese Porcelain: Imari and Kakiemon* (Tokyo, New York, and London: Kodansha International, 2003), pp. 52-53.

exchanges and patterns. The surviving fragments of porcelain shards have become a potentially important source of information about premodern Japan's trade routes to the rest of the world. It contributes to the accumulation of knowledge about Northeast Asian participation in global trade.

The essay investigates how contemporary scholars within and outside Northeast Asia study center-periphery relations through the idea of cultural transmission by examining discussions of Japanese trade ceramics, using the example of Arita-Imari (有田-伊万里) export wares. Ren Seikichi 連清吉 has argued that the periphery of the core nucleic Sinocentric universe was influenced culturally by China, but that it indigenized these ideas in its own way.<sup>8</sup> Along with the introduction of Westernization and modernization and the influence of empire-building, Ren argues that Japan veered further away from the core-periphery ideas of the Sinocentric world.<sup>9</sup> The idea of a center-periphery system is not static but constantly changes, negotiated by the evolution of technological improvements, design innovations, shifting centers of economics and trade, developmental trajectories, and the historical sensitivities of cultural trends in these areas. To provide an empirical case study, I have adopted the material culture of Arita-Imari trade ceramics to understand the dynamics of Japan's regional and global position in the transition from periphery to the core of the global trading system.

There are important debates over the definitions of Imari and Arita ceramics. Five schools of thought are highlighted briefly. The first school of thought attributes Arita and Imari ware geographically to porcelain made near or at Arita (the group of six kilns located at Ichinose 市ノ瀬, Hirose 広瀬, Nangawara 南川原, Ōhe 鷹房, Hokao 外尾, Kuromuta 黒牟田)<sup>10</sup> and shipped out from the port of Arita. Consequently, chronological and stylistic details are less important. The second school of thought defines Ko-Imari 古伊万里 chronologically as export ware made before the 1880s and uses stylistic guides to determine this, while those made after the 1880s are classified as Arita ware. The third school of thought relies on stylistics and, therefore, even porcelain made in the imitation of Arita or Imari styles but whose kilns are not located near the port of Arita are also classified as Arita or Imari. Other stylistic classifications exist. The Idemitsu Museum of Art 出光美術館, for example, notes that the facilities for the production of Hizen 肥前 porcelain were the earliest porcelain makers, and that their output could also be known as Imari or Arita porcelain with two particular representative styles of Nabeshima 鍋島 and Kakiemon 柿右衛門.<sup>11</sup> The fourth school of thought focuses on the definition of porcelain and locates Arita and Imari as porcelain that developed out of Karatsu 唐津 proto-porcelain technology and were made from kaolinite clay found in Tengu-dani 天狗谷 by potters traceable back to the pioneering Korean potter who became a naturalized Japanese, Ri Sanpei 李参平.

The fifth school of thought has orally and imprecisely circulated among the

<sup>8</sup> Ren Seikichi 連清吉, "Higashi Ajia no bunka kankyō no keisei" 東アジアの文化環境の形成 (The formation of a cultural environment in East Asia), in Nagasaki daigaku bunka kankyō kenkyūkai 長崎大学文化環境研究会, ed., *Kankyō to bunka – (Bunka kankyō) no shosō* 環境と文化—(文化環境)の諸相 (Environment and culture, aspects of the cultural environment) (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2000), p. 285.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>10</sup> Irene Stitt, *Japanese Ceramics of the Last 100 Years* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1974), p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> Idemitsu Museum of Art, *Kakiemon to Nabeshima* 柿右衛門と鍋島 (Kakiemon and Nabeshima) (Tokyo: Idemitsu bijutsukan, 2008), p. 5.

collector communities (such as those in Southeast Asia) which classified Ko-Imari as simply old “antique” Imari porcelain ware (usually those made before the late nineteenth century), while Imari can include “antique” porcelain up until nearly the contemporary period. Arita are basically mass-manufactured new kitchenware porcelain recently available in supermarkets and provision shops in the post-1945 period. This last school of thought, based on antique collectors’ classifications, is probably the most imprecise and informally defined. In another interpretation that has circulated among Japanese collectors, the earliest specimens of Arita porcelain products fired at the start of the existence of the kilns are known as “Shoki Imari” 初期伊万里.<sup>12</sup> All these ideas about Imari and Arita are important debates but, because this essay will focus on tracing trade routes and understanding cultural dissemination in a re-centered core-periphery format, it adopts the broadest definitions of Ko-Imari, Imari, and Arita.

The definition of trade ceramics is comparatively less contentious. Barbara Seyock has offered a definition of trade ceramics consisting of celadon, porcelain, and stoneware from East Asia that was exported through trade routes, particularly, in Seyock’s view, the maritime trade route.<sup>13</sup> Much of these trade ceramics came from China, widely regarded as a major ceramics-producing center for the world across many historical periods, and recognized for its material use, production techniques, artistry, and innovations. Furthermore, other originators of trade ceramics were peripheral to this ceramics-producing center before the late premodern period.

### Japan’s Early Trade Ceramics

Even before the late premodern period, however, Japan’s trade ceramics played a minor role in the global export ware trade before the seventeenth century. The Tokyo National Museum notes that, according to some of the oldest records related to Imari, in 1647 Imari export wares were shipped to Cambodia via Chinese vessels.<sup>14</sup> Besides the Chinese, early European arrivals were also among the earliest to trade in Imari export wares. According to Sasaki Tatsuo 佐々木達夫, after Spain annexed the Philippines in 1571, a limited volume of Japanese pottery (along with larger quantities of Chinese ceramics) were exported to America by Spanish ships departing from Manila, marking the beginning of the maritime route in global ceramics trade.<sup>15</sup>

Sasaki based this Pacific trade route argument on the discovery of limited quantities of Japanese ceramics (mixed with Chinese ceramics) in Acapulco beaches, as early evidence of Japanese-American trade that depended on two middlemen, the Spanish (from East Asia to America) and the Chinese (junk transportation from Japan to Manila).<sup>16</sup> Sasaki’s argument is cutting-edge but also potentially controversial as he claims that European ships created a “ceramic road” that reached both the Pacific and

<sup>12</sup> Nagatake Takeshi 永竹威, *Nihon no tōjiki: Sono kamaba o tazunete* 日本の陶磁器: その窯場を訪ねて (Japanese ceramics: Visit to the Kilns) (Tokyo: Shakai shisōsha, 1966), pp. 203-4.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara Seyock, “Trade Ceramics from the Goto Islands (Japan), Circa Sixteenth to Early Seventeenth Century: The Yamami Underwater Site (Ojika) and Related Issues,” *Asian Perspectives* 46.2 (Fall 2007), p. 335.

<sup>14</sup> Tōkyō kokuritsu hakubutsukan 東京国立博物館 (Tokyo National Museum), *Karei naru Imari, miyabi no Kyōyaki* 華麗なる伊万里, 雅の京焼 (Splendid Imari ware and refined Kyoto ware ceramics) (Tokyo: Yomiuri shinbunsha, 2005), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Sasaki Tatsuo, “Ceramic Trade via the Oceans,” *The Archaeological Journal of Kanazawa University* 67 (2010), p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Atlantic Oceans, extending as far as Mexico and Cuba where excavated shards of both Chinese and Japanese ceramics could be found (some of them now showcased in Cuban museums).<sup>17</sup> Whether one agrees or disagrees with this interpretation, in terms of quantity, this was a small start to a process that would take nearly two centuries for Japanese ceramics to become globally traceable, particularly in terms of export ceramics manufactured and shipped worldwide by the Japanese themselves, without the need for middlemen.

An increasing amount of scholarship indicates that formerly peripheral ceramics-producing areas also experienced their own historical trajectories for trade in terms of ceramic wares exportation. In this essay, Japan's empirical example is studied not as a center-periphery study in traditional Sinocentric terms, but as another perspective on mapping trade exportation out of Northeast Asia in the premodern period. This approach highlights the dynamic and fluid nature of moving centers of global trade, particularly on a global scale. Two of the earliest premodern continental sources of influence on Japan likely came from Korea and China. According to Francois-Bernard Hyghe, the ancient territory of Silla in Korea was once a connecting point between China and Japan and, during the seventh to ninth centuries, a strong and unified Silla coincided with a golden age in China (the Tang dynasty) as well as a centripetally-governed Japan (central control over clans)<sup>18</sup> that created stable environmental conditions for a Northeast Asian platform of trade and exchange. Japan's reception of goods from the Silk Road trade may be exemplified by the iconic Shōsōin 正倉院 museum of treasures in Nara where gifts and trade goods from the Silk Road were pristinely conserved for posterity.<sup>19</sup> Such continental arrivals would eventually trigger Japan's indigenous development of a trade/export ceramics industry through the influx of materials, technology, and eventually human talent.

A mainstream interpretation of the origins of ceramics development in Japan focuses on the introduction of Korean potters into Japan after the latter's incursions into its neighboring state between 1592 and 1598.<sup>20</sup> According to Nancy Schiffer, Ri Sanpei 李参[三]平 (one of the Korean porcelain makers transported to Japan by Hideyoshi's forces) first uncovered porcelain clay in Izumiyama 泉山 in Arita (Kyushu) to feed a production system that churned out export wares for the Dutch, who introduced it to the European markets.<sup>21</sup> Nagatake Takeshi's 永竹威 seminal work on Imari and Kakiemon porcelain, however, provides an alternative to this theory, arguing that ceramics-making may have started in 1605. Nagatake postulated that Ienaga Shōemon 家長庄右衛門 and his group were pioneers in making ceramics in Arita a decade or so earlier than Ri's group but was displaced in Tengudani 天狗谷 by the arrival of Korean ceramics-makers from Taku 多久.<sup>22</sup> Nagatake's example of the Shōemon group suggests that Japan's indigenous ceramics/porcelain manufacturing capabilities and history may in fact be more dispersed than centralized, and that there may be several groups (or at least more than one group) involved in the process of

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Francois-Bernard Hyghe, "The Kingdom of Silla and the Treasures of Nara (Ancient Korea Kingdom; Buddhist Temple in Nara, Japan)," *UNESCO Courier* (July 1991), pp. 44-46.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Nogami Takenori, "On Hizen Porcelain and the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade," *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association* 26 (2006), p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> Nancy N. Schiffer, *Japanese Export Ceramics 1860-1920* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2000), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Nagatake, *Classic Japanese Porcelain*, p. 50.

ceramics/porcelain-making, covering different times and spaces.

Even before this influx of foreign-born potters, Japan already had physical samples of export wares which they likely purchased through trade with Korea. Morimoto Asako's 森本朝子 important archeological study of 120 excavations in Hakata 博多, carried out since the beginning of the first subway construction there, is useful in detecting the influence of Korean export wares on the development of Japanese trade ceramics throughout the fifteenth century, before the arrival of Korean potters to Japan in the 1590s.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the Korean potters arrived in a location where there was already an established tradition of admiring, emulating and study of Korean pottery.

## European Interest

With the growth in Japan's indigenous improvements in the techniques that it absorbed from Korean potters, and also from manufacturing developments based on import substitution of quality ceramics from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Japan gradually caught up with Korea. It did this by absorbing Dutch-origin European knowledge and progress in indigenous technological improvements during periods when Korea was less active with foreign trade and exchange.<sup>24</sup> According to Schiffer, Japan exported porcelains (mainly blue underglazed wares) from 1650 to 1700 to Europe, South Asia, and Persia.<sup>25</sup> Around 1700, Japanese as well as Chinese porcelain were being transporting to London and Amsterdam, which were themselves important cities of commerce and the main locations where Asian porcelains (including Japanese ones as a main component) were redecorated by European craftsmen.<sup>26</sup>

While the Europeans were redecorating Japanese wares, back in Asia, Japan was able to study and acquire Dutch knowledge partly through trade which included Japanese porcelains among its items. The Dutch merchants and the Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC) exchanged Chinese silk, European textiles, Indonesian spices, Thai and Taiwanese animal skins, as well as African and Southeast Asian ivory for Japanese porcelain, precious metals, lacquerware, grain, and camphor.<sup>27</sup> The caption for the "Hasami ware 波佐見焼き (Japan): Dish with incised waves and lotus design" displayed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (NSW) noted that the Dutch shipped Japanese porcelain wares to Sulawesi in Indonesia in the 1640s and 1650s, although celadon dishes from Ōmura 大村 located next to Arita was more common than Arita porcelain.<sup>28</sup>

Introduction of expertise and technology from Korea alone may not immediately

<sup>23</sup> Morimoto Asako 森本朝子, "A New Approach to Enigmas from Medieval Hakata: Trade Ceramics as Seen from Archaeological Data," *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishu shi yanjiu jikan* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊 7 (1999), pp. 89, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Lee Hun-Chang 李憲昶, "When and How did Japan Catch Up with Korea?: A Comparative Study of the Pre-industrial Economies of Korea and Japan," *Center for Economic Institutions Working Paper Series* (Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University) 2006-15 (February 2002), pp. 10, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Schiffer, *Japanese Export Ceramics*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Helen Espir, *European Decoration on Oriental Porcelain, 1700-1830* (London: Jorge Welsh Books, 2005), p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Doolan, "The Dutch in Japan," *History Today* (April 2000), pp. 36-42.

<sup>28</sup> The Art Gallery of NSW, "Hasami Ware (Japan): Dish with Incised Waves and Lotus Design" (May 2000). Online at: <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/work/131.2000/>

have translated to the overseas and local consumer demand necessary to jumpstart new industries. Foreign competition, particularly high quality export ceramics from China, depressed demand for indigenously-produced ceramics until China's transition from the Ming dynasty to the Qing, which reduced the supply of Chinese ceramics imports from the middle of the seventeenth century. The resulting gap in supply created a demand for domestic production of Japanese ceramics.<sup>29</sup> This was an important stimulus factor in jumpstarting Japan's export ware industry on a sizable scale. Another interesting factor (cited by Nagatake) that assisted Japanese exports was the fact that, in the seventeenth century, consumption trends in Europe moved from precious metals to glass and ceramics, often with the latter denoting class and prestige for the European imperial and royal nations, such as the Dutch, British, Germans, and French.<sup>30</sup> In fact, in February 2011 the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) blocked the sale and export of Spencer family heirlooms, including the early eighteenth century Imari porcelain, as they reflected "manufacturing techniques, European taste and trade between Japan and Britain in the late 17th and early 18th centuries."<sup>31</sup>

One of Japan's main external customers during this period was the Dutch, who made handsome profits in trading in Japanese export porcelains that made up for the drop in Chinese supply. While the Dutch rapidly imported 200,000 pieces of Chinese porcelain in 1644, the conflicts in the Ming-Qing transition prevented further increase and eventually, from 1654 to 1684, the supply dried up.<sup>32</sup> The shortage in Chinese porcelain caused prices of porcelain wares to rise in Holland, as noted by Christine Moll-Murata. During the Ming-Qing transition, when Japanese Arita substitutes were the available alternatives, the cost of a porcelain plate or bowl was four to nine times more than a majolica equivalent.<sup>33</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, the Japanese production system had become more sophisticated and specialized, as production sites saw the hiring of laborers trained and skilled in throwing, decorating, and modeling.<sup>34</sup>

Schiffer has noted that the Dutch established a porcelain production site (VOC) in Hirado (later Deshima) which managed blue-and-white export wares resembling Kraaks and Chinese Imaris, not available in China due to the Ming-Qing transition and so from 1653 to 1682, Japanese export ceramics became substitutes in this area.<sup>35</sup> Initially emulating Ming designs and features, Nagatake pointed out that the Ko Imari porcelain indigenized and became more uniquely Japanese, with a variety of influences from Muromachi ink paintings, Kanō 加納 and Tosa 土佐 screen art, popular culture, and lacquer art (*maki-e* 蒔繪) during that period.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the shortage in supply continued to drive the demand. Due to proximity, Indochina became a natural market

<sup>29</sup> Nogami, "On Hizen Porcelain," p. 124.

<sup>30</sup> Nagatake, *Classic Japanese Porcelain*, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), "Last Chance to Keep 'World Class' Japanese Porcelain from Princess Diana's Childhood Home," (February 2011). Online at: [http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/news\\_stories/7779.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/news_stories/7779.aspx)

<sup>32</sup> Christine Moll-Murata, "Guilds and Apprenticeship in China and Europe: The Ceramics Industries of Jingdezhen and Delft," paper presented to the S. R. Epstein Memorial Conference: "Technology and Human Capital Formation in the East and West" (June 18-21, 2008), p. 6. Online at:

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/economicHistory/Conferences/Epstein%20Memorial%20Conference/PAPER-MollMurata.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> Nagatake, *Classic Japanese Porcelain*, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> Schiffer, *Japanese Export Ceramics*, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Nagatake, *Classic Japanese Porcelain*, p. 54.



for Japanese porcelain (for example, Hizen porcelain originating from Nagasaki in the 1600s).<sup>37</sup> This was near the time when the Vietnamese displaced Chinese as the main silk supplier and a Japanese trading node was set up in Đà Nẵng in the late sixteenth century. This operated till the Tokugawa policy on seclusion went into effect in 1635.<sup>38</sup>

The Japanese were also active in other parts of Southeast Asia. An article by Nogami Takenori 野上建紀 notes that, from the late 1640s, export wares were exported from Nagasaki to Cambodia transiting through Thailand.<sup>39</sup> During the Ming-Qing transition's reduction in Chinese export pottery, Hizen shards and artifacts can be found further beyond Indochina to the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, while Nogami's own groundbreaking research in 2004 extended the perimeter of Hizen ware exports to the Philippines.<sup>40</sup> Thi Ha Thanh Nguyen's research provides an interesting glimpse into this trade from the Vietnamese perspective. Between 1600 and 1800, Viet Nam was divided into two kingdoms, including the northern Kingdom (Đàng Ngoài or Tonkin in European languages), which was ruled by the Lê dynasty and Trịnh lords.<sup>41</sup> The Trịnh emulated the success of its rivals in the South in trading with the Europeans and invited the Dutch to participate in northern Viet Nam's trade. The Dutch quickly spotted the market need for trade ceramics caused by the dip in Chinese export wares supply due to the *haijin* 海禁 law in the Ming-Qing transition, and became a distributor of Japanese porcelain wares in Viet Nam.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, the Dutch became an arbitrator of Japanese porcelain products between Japan and Southeast Asian consumers.

The geographical area of consumer markets for Japanese export ceramics gradually expanded from nearby (Southeast Asia) to non-Asian locations (for example Western Europe). Schiffer argues that the Industrial Revolution generated surplus productive resources like time and purchasing power, which allowed European consumers to spend more on higher grade consumer items like intricately-designed porcelain export wares.<sup>43</sup> Because of the drop in Chinese porcelain supplies, Japanese ceramics makers were quick to pick up Chinese ceramics art stylistics and sell Chinese-style porcelain to the Dutch. The numbers started off small (according to Moll-Murata: 11,500 in 1611, 48,000 in 1663, 65,000 in 1665) because of the higher prices of Japanese export wares (two to three times higher).<sup>44</sup> Moll-Murata pointed out an important caveat, however, that, as Christiaan Jorg noted, unofficial trade in Japanese porcelain meant that the numbers were much higher than what was officially recorded.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the Korean potters and artists who found themselves in Arita in the early seventeenth century started decorating porcelain in the commonly favored colors of blue, gold, and red with cobalt, coated with a layer of glaze, before they were exported through the Dutch middlemen who were waiting in the ships berthed at Nagasaki harbor.<sup>46</sup> Two

<sup>37</sup> Nogami, "On Hizen Porcelain," p. 124.

<sup>38</sup> John S. Guy, *Oriental Trade Ceramics in South-East Asia, Ninth to Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Nogami, "On Hizen Porcelain," p. 124.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> Thi Ha Thanh Nguyen, "European Trade on the Far East and the Mercantile Relationship with Vietnam from the 16th to 19th Century," *Higashi Ajia bunka kōshō kenkyū* 東アジア文化交渉研究 2 (March 2009), p. 356. Online at: [http://www.icis.kansai-u.ac.jp/data/journal02-v1/24\\_nguen.pdf](http://www.icis.kansai-u.ac.jp/data/journal02-v1/24_nguen.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>43</sup> Schiffer, *Japanese Export Ceramics*, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Moll-Murata, "Guilds and Apprenticeship in China and Europe," p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Uchida Hoshimi, *Short History of the Japanese Technology* (Mitaka: The History of

genres of Japanese export porcelains appear to stand out during this period: the blue-and-white as well as the polychromes. Besides blue-and-white porcelain, the Ming-Qing transition supply gap created consumer demand for Imari polychrome wares (the gold and red items mentioned above) in Europe.<sup>47</sup> From a Chinese perspective, the quality and results of Imari production at Arita was not ideal between the 1630s and 1640s, but the pressure of high orders and mass manufacturing eventually made the quality comparable to those found in China.<sup>48</sup> If this was the case, it may have been reflected in the large orders from Europe. In 1659, for example, the East India Company of Holland (VOC) requested that 56,700 pieces of ceramics be made at Hizen, and such acquisitions, Sasaki argues, eventually influenced Japanese ceramics design and manufacture.<sup>49</sup>

Archeological and textual evidence appear to corroborate and confirm this period of high Imari export ware activity in Europe. According to Oliver Impey, the oldest shard of Japanese ware (probably Shoki-Imari) discovered in the West was found in Amsterdam in 1973, attributable to the early 1650s, and which may have been from a batch of cargo to a commercial site.<sup>50</sup> According to Sakuraba Miki, the first officially recorded trade of porcelain goods exported from Japan to Holland in 1659 consisted of tea cups and, thereafter, about 10,000 of them went from Japan to Holland annually.<sup>51</sup> Sakuraba has found Japanese Ko-Imari porcelain cups that were hand-painted and accompanied by saucers datable to the 1670s to 1690s. In terms of official documentation, the Dutch East India Company referred to them as “thee pierings” or tea saucers from 1659.<sup>52</sup> For an example of the Japanese trade wares that were exported from Japan to the West during this period, a late seventeenth century big Imari hard-paste plate made in the port of Arita decorated with underglazed cobalt blue and overglazed enamels in red and gold colors can be found in the Seattle Art Museum and, according to the Museum, once used to adorn the walls of European porcelain rooms as displays.<sup>53</sup>

### Influencing Some Chinese Ceramics

John Ayers, Oliver Impey, and J. V. G. Mallet argue that because Japanese ceramics (in particular the uniquely designed and drawn ones in the 1670s) had grown so popular within Europe (including the Netherlands), the Europeans started purchasing them from southern Chinese sources, as evidenced by collections found in the UK,

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Technology Library, 1995), p. 28. Online at: <http://www.ied.co.jp/isan/sangyo-isan/uchida.PDF>.

<sup>47</sup> Moll-Murata, “Guilds and Apprenticeship in China and Europe,” p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Shi Yong'an 施永安, *Riben gu taoci* 日本古陶瓷 (Ancient Japanese porcelains) (Changchun: Jilin meishu chubanshe, 1992), p. 61.

<sup>49</sup> Sasaki, “Ceramic Trade via the Oceans,” p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Oliver Impey, *The Early Porcelain Kilns of Japan: Arita in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 81.

<sup>51</sup> Sakuraba Miki, “Evolution of Porcelain Tea Ware in Europe From Hizen Porcelain Tea Ware to European Porcelain Tea Service,” trans. Jenine Heaton, in Nishimura Masanari et al., eds., *Cultural Reproduction on Its Interface: From the Perspectives of Text, Diplomacy, Otherness, and Tea in East Asia*, The International Academic Forum for the Next Generation Series (Suita: Institute for Cultural Interaction Studies, Kansai University, 2010), vol. 1, p. 228. Online at: [http://kuir.jm.kansai-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10112/3387/1/4-2\\_SAKURABA.pdf](http://kuir.jm.kansai-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10112/3387/1/4-2_SAKURABA.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Seattle Art Museum, *Guide to the Porcelain Room: Seattle Art Museum* (Medford, Oregon: CDS Publications, 2007), unpaginated.

Germany, and France as well as Holland.<sup>54</sup> This argument is taken further by other scholars who attribute Chinese stylistics to emulating Japanese templates. After the Ming-Qing transitional period, Chu Lung-hsing' 朱龍興 important essay makes an innovative argument about the important Japanese influence concerning images of Dutch people on Chinese porcelain. Chu argues that Chinese representations of Westerners, such as those of the *Huangqing zhigong tu* 皇清職貢圖 (Illustrations of tributaries of the Qing empire) for the sixteenth year of the Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1736-96), derived their pictorial understanding of Dutch people from Japanese representations of the Dutch detectable through, for example, the poses struck by the figures in the pictures.<sup>55</sup>

Chu Lung-hsing speculates that some of these Japanese pictorial representations may have been in the form of Edo prints brought over by the Dutch East India Company from Japan to China, while others take the form of porcelain wares.<sup>56</sup> Chu cites a pair of Chinese ceramic bottles dating back to the Kangxi 康熙 era (1654-1722) that displayed representations of Dutch people, which bear certain resemblances to Japanese Edo prints.<sup>57</sup> This creates an interesting situation in which Northeast Asian design centers started influencing each other in cultural representations of Westerners and the West. Perhaps equally as interesting as the influence of Japanese designs on Chinese portrayals of Europeans is the influence of Japan on Western depictions of East Asians. Chu cites the example of Amsterdam-based ceramics artist Cornick's adaptation of a Japanese plate design which replaced the featured Japanese (and Chinese) women under an umbrella in the original design with a Dutch person.<sup>58</sup> This is a curious case of a Western cultural adaptation of a Japanese image based on a Western-inspired design seen through the gaze of the Japanese.

More importantly, by influencing both Chinese portrayals of Westerners and Western depictions of East Asians, Japan had effectively become an arbitrator of East-West interactions and an intermediary of fusion styles, a role that would be highly accentuated in the modern era, and perpetuated and brought to new heights in the contemporary period. Positive Western reception to Japanese cultural products was detectable in the early modern period in mid-nineteenth century when artists like Vincent Van Gogh picked up Japanese popular cultural products and design items.<sup>59</sup>

Japan's historical role in the East-West fusion of styles and images in export porcelain design was now transformed into something much larger and broader in scope. It covered a wide expanse of popular cultural items, and the designs dating back to this East-West exchange appears to have inspired a unique identity that has endured until the contemporary era and, at the same time, remained an object of emulation both in the West and in the East.

<sup>54</sup> John Ayers, Oliver Impey, and J. V. G. Mallet (with contributions by Anthony du Boulay and Lawrence Smith), *Porcelain for Palaces: The Fashion for Japan in Europe, 1650-1750* (London: Oriental Ceramic Society, 1990), p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> Chu Lung-hsing 朱龍興, "The Meeting of China, Japan and Holland: Dutchmen in Japanese Prints during the Edo Period," paper presented in Design History Society Annual Conference, University College Falmouth, U.K. (September 3-6, 2008), pp. 18-19. Online at: [http://rd.cycu.edu.tw/RD2008/H2500/rtd/project6/97%5C26%E6%9C%B1%E9%BE%8D%E8%88%88ok%5CPaper003\\_The%20meeting%20of%20China%20Japan%20and%20Holland.pdf](http://rd.cycu.edu.tw/RD2008/H2500/rtd/project6/97%5C26%E6%9C%B1%E9%BE%8D%E8%88%88ok%5CPaper003_The%20meeting%20of%20China%20Japan%20and%20Holland.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Gisela Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics: The Art of Japanese Export Porcelain and Satsuma Ware, 1868-1912*, trans. and ed. Michael Foster (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 2004), p. 49.

## Japan as Consumer

Like the case of permeable cultural influences, ceramics trade between Japan and the rest of the world was certainly not unidirectional. Japan represented a major consumer market for foreign porcelains in many periods. From near to far, evidence of porcelains from other regions of the world to Japan have been often found in Japanese excavations. In 2005, Sakai Takashi 坂井隆 produced a report which described the discovery of Turkish Iznik enamel shards in Japan, representing the golden period of the Ottoman empire corresponding to the early Edo period (seventeenth century), located in the Maeda 前田 Residence.<sup>60</sup> John Stevenson and John Guy noted that, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, artefacts among the possessions of daimyō and traders' families passed down through generations indicating that Vietnamese ceramics were in fashionable use by practitioners of the Japanese tea ceremony (*chanoyu* 茶の湯).<sup>61</sup>

Historically, Japan was a major consuming market for Chinese ceramics. According to Evelyn and Thomas Rawski, before the European influx of Chinese porcelain from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, global distribution of Chinese porcelain and stoneware (white wares, *qingbaici* 青白瓷 [white with bluish tinge] and blue-and-white porcelains or *qinghuaci* 青花瓷) were distributed by Chinese, Southeast Asians, and Arabs to the major consumer markets of Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.<sup>62</sup> This might be an earlier form of premodern maritime trade of export porcelains to Japan which saw Japan in the receptor role as an absorber of cosmopolitan goods. According to Evelyn and Thomas Rawski, Japanese documentation indicates the importation of 371,000 Chinese porcelain items annually between 1635 and 1645.<sup>63</sup> Sub-regionally within China, Japan was also an important consumer market for south Chinese porcelains. Lin Renchuan has highlighted an example from 1609 of private trade whereby a Chinese group consisting of Lin Jing (from Fujing), Captain Wang Hou (from Zhangluo), Zheng Song and Wang Yi (helmsmen), Zheng Ji, Lin Zheng and others (sailors), Li Ming (pilot), and Chen Hua (Japanese translator) led a group of traders to Japan and sold products that included porcelain to the Japanese, in exchange for Japanese silver that was melted in the ship's in-built oven and bellows by the on-board silversmiths, Jin Shishan and Huang Zhengxian.<sup>64</sup>

Besides direct sales like the example above, in the private trade between Fujian

<sup>60</sup> Sakai Takashi 坂井隆, "Indoyō no tōji bōeki: Toruko to Higashi Ajia no kōryū o megutte" インド洋の陶磁貿易:トルコと東アジアの交流をめぐって (The ceramic trade of the Indian Ocean: Concerning exchange between Turkey and East Asia), *Jōchi Ajiagaku* 上智アジア学 23 (2005), p. 261.

<sup>61</sup> John Stevenson and John Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics: A Separate Tradition* (Chicago: Art Media Resources with Avery Press, 1997), p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Evelyn S. Rawski and Thomas G. Rawski, "China's Economic Development and Global Interactions in the Long Run," paper prepared for the Harvard-Hitotsubashi-Warwick Conference: "Economic Change Around the Indian Ocean in the Very Long Run," Venice, July 22-24, 2008, p. 4. Online at: [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/news/forums/conferences/econchange/programme/rawski\\_-\\_venice.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/news/forums/conferences/econchange/programme/rawski_-_venice.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>64</sup> Lin Ren-chuan, "Fukien's Private Sea Trade in the 16th and 17th Centuries," in Eduard B. Vermeer, ed., *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), p. 192.

and Japan, there were also participating intermediaries such as the Taiwanese. The Dutch East India Company utilized Taiwan to access the Chinese market with the aim of setting up a Japan (Nagasaki)—Indonesia (Batavia)—China (south China) trade triangle to keep out European competition, particularly from early arrivals like the Portuguese and the Spaniards.<sup>65</sup> When Taiwan ousted the Dutch, Zheng Jing 鄭經, the son of Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (Koxinga), sold pottery from continental China to the Japanese (among other consumer markets) in exchange for metals and other necessities for the Taiwanese community and economy, as well as the perpetuation of the Zheng clan's power.<sup>66</sup>

Like Taiwan, Manila also became an important intermediary center of trade for Japanese ceramics buyers and pottery acquisitions. In the late sixteenth century, in avoidance of the monsoon storms, Japanese traders from southern Japan traveled to Manila in the months of October and March/May annually to procure Chinese earthenware from the Tang and Song eras buried under the mud of the waters off the northern Philippine coast, as well as other ceramics and porcelains, in exchange for the silks, cotton, wool, copper, gold, iron, tin, and pottery goods that they could offer.<sup>67</sup> According to Stevenson and Guy, Japanese consumers liked tea jars made in Viet Nam and traded in the Philippines with Japanese sea-going vessels active in Manila. This reached new heights in the volume of bilateral trade between 1615 and 1625.<sup>68</sup>

Besides Manila, Japan was also involved in the trade of Martaban jars from other Southeast Asian sources. These were sold commercially in the maritime space between the Indian Ocean and East Asian maritime waters between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of these ceramics that originated from Myanmar (Burma) were uncovered in Japan.<sup>69</sup> Nan Kyi Kyi Khai 南チーチー海 studied a white glazed dish and other white wares originally from Myanmar that were uncovered in Japan (Osaka and Hirado) as well as black-glazed Martaban jars excavated in Japan (Ōita 大分, Fukuoka 福岡, Nagasaki, and Okinawa) that came from the ports of Martaban or Mottama.<sup>70</sup> According to Nan, intermediaries were involved in this trade as Myanmarese wares travelled from the Martaban harbor to likely ports in Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia before arriving in Japan.<sup>71</sup> Besides Manila and Burmese interests, Tonkin (Viet Nam) at times was a trading center for Japanese ceramics in the seventeenth century, but also for Vietnamese pottery for Japanese consumption in the latter half of the same century. Indeed, a surviving record dating to 1678 indicates that a thousand rice bowls were shipped to meet Japanese demand.<sup>72</sup>

Archeological excavations in Japan have continued to yield evidence of trade

<sup>65</sup> Lin Wei-sheng, "The VOC Trade in Taiwan," *IIAS Newsletter: Research and Report* 31 (July 2003), p. 30.

<sup>66</sup> Lin, "Fukien's Private Sea Trade," p. 200.

<sup>67</sup> Ubaldo Iaccarino, "Manila as an International Entrepôt: Chinese and Japanese Trade with the Spanish Philippines at the Close of the 16th Century," *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies* 16 (2008), p. 78.

<sup>68</sup> Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, p. 52.

<sup>69</sup> Nan Kyi Kyi Khai 南チーチー海, "Myanmaa bōeki tōjiki no kenkyū: Marutaban tsubo to hakuyūzara o chūshin ni" ミャンマー貿易陶磁器の研究: マルタバン壺と白釉皿を中心に (A study of Myanmar trade ware: A Martaban jar and white dish), *Kanazawa daigaku kōkogaku kiyō* 金沢大学考古学紀要 30 (March 2009), p. 101.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 101, 102.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Stevenson and Guy, *Vietnamese Ceramics*, p. 52.

cosmopolitanism in terms of the foreign export ceramics trade to Japan. The archeological dig at Ōtomofunaimachi 大友府内町 location in Ōita Prefecture by the Oita Prefectural Board of Education between 1996 and 1997 unearthed pottery artifacts from such Southeast Asian countries as Viet Nam and Thailand, as well as Korea, and shards originating in such Northeast Asian countries as China and Korea.<sup>73</sup> While the porcelain trade was bilateral in nature as foreign export ceramics entered Japan and Japanese export ceramics left Japan for other destinations in different quantities as different times, this process also made Japan both the receptor and innovator of design and artistic traditions and influences. As bilateral trade took place between Japan and the rest of the world, Japan began to establish itself as an originator of indigenous design stylistics and techniques.

Sasaki argues that Japanese and Chinese ceramics influenced their European counterparts in vessel shape, design, and form through the global maritime trade in ceramics.<sup>74</sup> The volume *Tōji no tōzai kōryū ten: Arita, Derufuto, Chūgoku no sōgo eikyō* 陶磁の東西交流展 有田・デルフト・中国の相互影響 (Exhibit of east-west exchange on ceramics: Mutual influences among Arita, Delft, and China) is interesting in the sense that it presents materials evidence visually to indicate the mutual cultural influences among Dutch Delft, Japanese Arita, and Chinese porcelain. It does this through a comparison of the porcelains from these three sources, although detailed textual information on this subject matter in the volume is light.<sup>75</sup>

Other scholars have also tried to find evidence within the area of stylistics. Moll-Murata has pointed out that, between 1680 and 1725, the Dutch Delft ceramic manufacturing system began to emulate Japanese decorative techniques and incorporate them into the technical and aesthetic aspects of production.<sup>76</sup> Moll-Murata attributes the imitation of Japanese Imari stylistics in trade ceramics to a widowed business owner in Het Moriaenshoof, Madam Jannetje van Straeten, and her ceramics series De Grieksche A (the Greek A factory).<sup>77</sup> This marks the gradual centering of Japan within the trade ceramics industry in the production and aesthetics aspect. It would take another 150 years for Japan to acquire a leading position in the design aspect of this industry. Japanese adaptations of Western styles in export porcelain and Western emulation of these Japanese adaptations eventually became a major force of design influence in itself, with its own consumer following and process of continual innovation. Training centers at manufacturing sites sanctioned by artisan initiatives and the private sector contributed to quality enhancements and design standards in the 1880s.<sup>78</sup>

The renaissance in porcelain trade and innovation between Northeast Asia and Western Europe did experience a period of political disequilibrium and disturbance. While the Dutch East India Company profited handsomely from the Japanese and Chinese (via the Taiwan trade), its revenues were cut when a politically re-energized government in the early Qing era ousted the Dutch from Fort Zeelandia, and Japan's ruler,

<sup>73</sup> Nan, "Myanmaa bōeki tōjiki no kenkyū," p. 105.

<sup>74</sup> Sasaki, "Ceramic Trade via the Oceans," p. 29.

<sup>75</sup> For further reference, please see: Arita VOC 有田ヴィーオーシー, The Hague City Art Museum ハーグ市立美術館, and Nishi Nippon shinbunsha 西日本新聞社, *Tōji no tōzai kōryū ten: Arita, Derufuto, Chūgoku no sōgo eikyō* 陶磁の東西交流展 有田・デルフト・中国の相互影響 (Arita-machi: Arita Vii Ō Shii, 1993).

<sup>76</sup> Moll-Murata, "Guilds and Apprenticeship in China and Europe," p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>78</sup> Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics*, p. 69.

the shogun, restricted Dutch trade as part of the isolation policy.<sup>79</sup> Chinese reassertion of the export porcelain trade was especially strong in the context of Japan's isolation policy. This closed it to the rest of the world with the exception of only the Dutch and the Chinese traders. Geoffrey A. Godden has dramatized the reemergence of Chinese export ware presence with the consolidation of the Qing dynasty at the end of the eighteenth century when Europe had more imported porcelain from China than those made by all European porcelain makers taken together.<sup>80</sup>

## Modernization

China's revived competitiveness with Japanese export wares and superiority in figures remained until Commodore Perry arrived in Japan and, with a show of modernized might, opened Japan up to the rest of the world and prompted the modernization of Meiji Japan from 1868. This process of modernization re-introduced modern techniques, science, and management knowhow in addition to Western cultural influence to Japan, a process that would eventually globalize Japan's ceramics trade in the modern world. The combination of absorption of Western learning, the constant quest for improvements in productivity, and knowledge channelled back from the West by Japanese who spent time overseas and understood aspects of Japanese art that Westerners admired enabled Japan to position its export ceramic industry as a top-ranking entity in the world.<sup>81</sup> Japan also modernized the management of its distribution and retail supply chain. In this era, the Japanese ceramics traders engaged in economic exchanges and trade with Southeast Asia and Northern Europe through what Nagatake has dubbed a "wholesaling system." This involved distributional stakeholders like the Hizen wholesaler based in Edo, the Saga Merchants Association in Nagasaki, Tashiro Monzaemon 田代紋左衛門 of Honkōbira 本幸平, Hisatomi Yojibee 久富与次兵衛 of Nakanohara 中ノ原 (under the auspices of the Nabeshima authorities) whereby these dealers could directly retail to local shops as well as foreign customers.<sup>82</sup> Some examples of utilitarian wares from Arita are included below.



Utilitarian wares. Ceramics bottles that were used as medicinal bottles and may be dated possibly to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century that the author came across in field work in Kagoshima, July 1-3, 2011. According to VOC records, from 1652 the earliest shipment of 1265 big and compact-sized medicinal vessels were exported to Dutch-controlled Batavia from Arita for use in the Surgeon's Ship, a

<sup>79</sup> Jan de Vries, "The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World," *The Semi-Daily Journal of Economist J. Bradford DeLong* (October 17, 2007).

<sup>80</sup> Geoffrey A. Godden, *Oriental Export Market Porcelain and Its Influence on European Wares* (London: Granada, 1979), p. 15.

<sup>81</sup> Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics*, p. 53.

<sup>82</sup> Nagatake, *Classic Japanese Porcelain*, p. 58.

health and medical supply depot for the Dutch.<sup>83</sup>



Arita Choko cups possibly dating to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century that the author came across in field work in Kagoshima, July 1-3, 2011.



Arita enameled wares possibly dating back to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century that the author came across in field work in Kagoshima July 1-3, 2011.

After Japan rejoined the modern world trading community, evidence of Japanese export wares dating back to Japan's early modernity could once again be found. Nan's aforementioned essay examining trade ceramics in Myanmar notes that imported trade ceramics shards were uncovered at the Mandalay division of Bagan and that they included a shard of Japanese Hizen ware datable to the Meiji and Taisho periods (1868-1912), something rarely found in the vicinity.<sup>84</sup> The shard, along with others, was determined by Nan to be evidence of maritime trade that found its way to the bank of the Twante canal, which was utilized as a trading center from the fourteenth to early twentieth centuries. This accounted for Japanese, Chinese and European wares found here. The Japanese shard was dated through comparison with similar samples unearthed in Southeast Asia (e.g., at the site of the Wolio castle excavation location of Indonesia), UAE, and Japan.<sup>85</sup> According to Nan, Myanmar trade in Japanese export ceramics boomed economically between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Twante port<sup>86</sup> and the artifact serves as a reminder of this.

<sup>83</sup> Christiaan J. A. Jorg, *Fine and Curious Japanese Export Porcelain in Dutch Collections* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2003), p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Nan, "Myanmaa bōeki tōjiki no kenkyū," p. 31.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 31, 42.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 46.



## Conclusion

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Japan's ceramics were re-centered from the periphery and became a defining style, design movement, and trend known as *Japonisme*.<sup>87</sup> The internationalization of Japanese trade ceramics and stylistics was aided by international treaties. For example, after the Treaty of Commerce between Japan and France was signed in 1858, more goods travelled by the maritime route from Japan to French consumers than before and, from the latter half of the nineteenth century, much of this trade was conducted by Japanese, instead of going through intermediaries or through Western merchants.<sup>88</sup>

In 1862, London's International Exhibition showcased Japanese-style aesthetics to Europe, and the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition saw the Japanese booth as the most eye-catching space visited by millions.<sup>89</sup> Japanese ceramics were also showcased in international exhibitions of Paris, Vienna, and Philadelphia and sold to avid Western collectors, while the Meiji government created exposure for Japanese ceramics by organizing local exhibitions for information dissemination and awareness purposes (for example, *Naikoku kangyō hakurankai jimukyoku* 内国勧業博覧会事務局, Exhibition bureau for domestic industry)<sup>90</sup> and *Kyōshinkai* 共進会) under the umbrella of the *shokusan kōgyō* 殖産興業 (promotion of industry and manufacturing) policy.<sup>91</sup> This was perhaps an early modern example of Japan's famous state-led system of development and industrialization.

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<sup>87</sup> Imakiire Kana 今給黎佳菜, "Japonisme in the 19th Century and Western Tableware Made in Japan," *Daisankai Kokusai Nihongaku Consortium* (Ochanomizu University, 2008), p. 195.

<sup>88</sup> Imai Yūko, "Changes in French Tastes for Japanese Ceramics," *Japan Review* 16 (2004), p. 102.

<sup>89</sup> Schiffer, *Japanese Export Ceramics*, p. 11.

<sup>90</sup> Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics*, p. 18.

<sup>91</sup> Imakiire, "Japonisme in the 19th Century," p. 195.

**Table 3. Production Figures for Arita Export Porcelain**

NUMBER OF PRODUCTION FACILITIES FOR 1896				
Year 1896	Manufacturing facilities	Hongama or Main Kilns	Kingama or Brocade Kilns	Other Kilns
	34 facilities	18sites	100sites	168sites
PRODUCTION FIGURES FOR 1931				
Year 1931	Dining ware	Artistic products	Industrial wares	Electrical-related items
	1,420,000 yen	670,000 yen	56,000 yen	170,000 yen
	Toys	Others	Total	
	15,000 yen	62,000 yen	2,390,000 yen	
PRODUCTION FIGURES FOR 1946-1947				
	Utilitarian wares Kitchen wares	Industrial wares	Artistic wares	Others
Year 1946	11,000,000 yen	8,190,000 yen	2,190,000 yen	1,490,000 yen
Year 1947	14,950,000 yen	13,280,000 yen	5,270,000 yen	2,100,000 yen
Years 1946-47	85 workshops	15 workshops	23 workshops	5 workshops
PRODUCTION FIGURES FOR 1958				
Year 1958	Total	Electronics-related products	Industrial products	Utilitarian wares/kitchen wares
Total (USD)	18,776	4,014	6,024	4,939
%	100	21.4	32.2	26.3
Year 1958	Toys	Tiles	Health products	Others
Total (USD)	231	2,291	30	1,229
%	1.2	12.2	0.2	6.5

Source: Nagatake Takeshi 永竹威, *Arita yakimono no dokuhon* 有田やきもの読本 (Publication on Arita Pottery) (Japan: Aritatōji Bijutsukan, 1961), pp. 41, 52, 60, 63.

As Japanese-style ceramics gained popularity and a foothold in Western markets, Japan started producing Western-style export ceramics by the early twentieth century. Reminiscent of the Iwakura 岩倉 Mission, Japan dispatched talent men to the West conditional upon their bringing back skills learned and information gathered for the domestic audience, and it also invited Western experts to Japan.<sup>92</sup> The latter was important in two areas: providing new technologies (including the use of more efficient fuels) and introducing Western stylistics into ceramics manufacturing.

Examples of export Arita porcelain during this period include the following:

<sup>92</sup> Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics*, p. 23.



Large Arita export porcelain plates (probably late nineteenth to early twentieth century) that the author came across while conducting field work in Kagoshima, July 1-3, 2011. The author has come across similar plates in the antique markets of Southeast Asia.



Large Arita export porcelain plate (probably late nineteenth to early twentieth century) that the author came across in the suburbs of the city of Fukuoka in August 2011. The author has come across similar plates in the antique markets of Southeast Asia.

In terms of technological progress, Japanese ceramics manufacturing facilities and industries started off using traditional wood-fired technologies to produce their porcelain. In classifying what is traditional and innovative, it may be important to understand that the evolution of kiln technologies and fuel use is relative in nature. While timber-fired kilns are inefficient and difficult to control compared to oil, gas, and electric ones, the timber-fired Chinese dragon kilns were, in fact, considered hi-tech in their time, and Lisa Rotondo-McCord and her colleagues have argued that they can keep a “high, accurate and evenly distributed temperature” better than older kiln designs.<sup>93</sup> Prior to using dragon kilns, Japanese kilns were typically minor cottage industries in the form of *noborigama* 登り窯 or climbing kilns located and built into the slopes of hills that could manipulate wind input and operate at various heat intensities for making porcelain.<sup>94</sup> According to Koyama Fujio 小山富士夫, there may have been 136 such facilities in Ri

<sup>93</sup> Lisa Rotondo-McCord et al., *Imari: Japanese Porcelain for European Palaces: From the Freda and Ralph Lupin Collection* (New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 1999), p. 9.

<sup>94</sup> City Art Museum of Saint Louis, *200 years of Japanese Porcelain* (Saint Louis: City Art Museum of Saint Louis, 1970), p. 9.

Sanpei's time at the start of Arita porcelain-making history.<sup>95</sup>

But German chemist Gottfried Wagner (1831-92) transformed the industry when he introduced coal-fired technology to the ceramics industry, and it revolutionized the industry so much that he became known as the creator of the modern ceramics industry in Japan, according to some interpretations.<sup>96</sup> According to the work of Yao Chun 姚春, Japan's lead in porcelain was due to continuing innovation in new types of kiln technology, a feature which Japan has pursued from the start of modernity.<sup>97</sup> The next stage of modernity was signified by the energy transition from the use of timber-fired dragon kilns to coal-fired kilns.<sup>98</sup> This Arita energy transition forms the foundation of the modern concept of increases in productivity. From 1897 to 1906, the Meiji state aided ceramics-making regions with the transition to coal-fired kilns, including the first such contraption built in the Seto Ceramics School in 1902.<sup>99</sup> Coal-fired kilns revolutionized the ceramics industry as previously small scale industries making folk wares were now able to produce highly standardized Western-style dinner tableware as well as other industrial ceramic applications such as construction tiles.<sup>100</sup>

This energy transition came at an opportune time because the Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art, the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park 滋賀県立陶芸の森 argued, in their edited volume *Japonisme for the Western World: Pottery of the Meiji Era* 明治のやきもの: 文明開化のやきもの欧米を風靡したジャポニズムへ, that the fall of the bakufu, the-late Tokugawa clan system, and the modernization process of the Meiji era brought about social dislocations wherein porcelain and ceramics artisans were compelled to be financially autonomous, thereby making utilitarian wares that were highly usable to feed a consumer market by appealing to their tastes.<sup>101</sup> This coincided in a timely fashion with the advent of Western consumer markets and stylistics influence.

Yao's argument is that continuing innovation in Japanese kiln technologies was the strength of its ceramics manufacturing system, which persisted into the contemporary period. In the process of continuing Westernization, Japan was able to adapt German technology for its own use and embarked on a natural gas revolution in porcelain manufacturing by the 1970s.<sup>102</sup> If the characterization for coal is affordability and abundance, then the discourse on gas energy is one of long-term commitment and supply,

<sup>95</sup> Koyama Fujio 小山富士夫, *Nihon tōji no dentō* 日本陶磁の伝統 (Kyoto: Tankō shinsha, 1967), p. 185.

<sup>96</sup> Yamashita Eiichi, "Ceramics: The Seto Ceramics School," in Toshio Toyoda, ed., *Vocational Education in the Industrialization of Japan* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1987), p. 100.

<sup>97</sup> Yao Chun 姚春, "Tanjiu Riben taoci yaolu jishu" 探究日本陶磁窯爐技術 (Investigating Japan's kiln techniques), *Zhongguo taoci* 中国陶瓷 143 (February 23, 2011). Online at: [http://enewspaper.ju51.com/xbcy/XBTC/data/20110223/html/30/contentpage\\_1\\_0.html](http://enewspaper.ju51.com/xbcy/XBTC/data/20110223/html/30/contentpage_1_0.html).

<sup>98</sup> According to Yao Chun's interpretation, such coal-fired kilns were adapted from north China's *mantouyao* 饅頭窯 (Bun-shaped kilns). See Yao, "Tanjiu Riben taoci yaolu jishu."

<sup>99</sup> Yamashita, "Ceramics," p. 104.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> The Foundation of the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park 財団法人滋賀県陶芸の森, ed., *Meiji no yakimono: bunmei kaika no yakimono, Ō-bei o fūbishita japonizumu e* 明治のやきもの: 文明開化のやきもの、欧米を風靡したジャポニズムへ (Japonisme for the Western world: Pottery of the Meiji era) (Kyoto: The Foundation of the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park, 1996), p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Yao, "Tanjiu Riben taoci yaolu jishu."

with the imagery of a cleaner form of fossil fuel for future utilization and development.<sup>103</sup> Coal appears to be inefficient, polluting, and dangerous compared to cleaner fuels like oil and gas, although gas has at present displaced oil as an even cleaner source.<sup>104</sup> According to Yamashita Eiichi, the ceramic manufacturing town of Seto 瀬戸 used so much coal for firing porcelain that even sparrows flying over the town turned black from the soot.<sup>105</sup>

Besides learning and absorbing Western technologies in the use of energy, Japan's exchanges with the West also facilitated a better understanding of its consumer markets in the West to cater to their needs. According to Itani Yoshie 井谷善恵, many such export ceramics originated from Japan's Seto region and were exported to a large new market across the Pacific in the United States.<sup>106</sup> Early modern trading companies specializing in high quality crafts soon sprouted up, such as the Kiritsu kōshō kaisha 起立工商会社 (Kiritsu Industrial and Commercial Company). This was an example of an early modern state-led and supported firm which had an influential say over stylistic trends, distribution, and also management of the inventory of Japanese product outputs from world fairs.<sup>107</sup> They became important intermediaries in dealing with Western firms and consumers. In the West, Japanese export wares were soon available in such American companies as A.A. Vantine & Co. located at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Ninth Street in New York City. It sold Imari, Banko 万古, Sumida 隅田, and other Japanese porcelain export wares (both decorative and utilitarian) to American consumers.<sup>108</sup> Descriptions of Japanese tea sets started appearing in American mail order catalogues, as, for example, the 1927 Sears & Roebuck Catalogue. This contained items like a "23 Piece China Tea Set" with the product description: "the decoration consists of a blue lustre band with a black line"; or a August 1929 Butler Brothers catalogue containing the itemized description of "Jap China 23 Pc. Tea Set" with "Double lustre 3 decorations (tan with blue bands, blue with tan bands, and iris with mother-of-pearl bands). Black inner line."<sup>109</sup>

By this time, the re-centering of the Japanese export ceramics was complete, as it not only exported, exhibited, showcased, and marketed traditional Japanese export wares globally, but also produced Western-style wares for export to destinations that had created those cultural styles. Through the ceramics export trade, this Japanese industry was no longer in the periphery of global trade, but very much at the center of a modern, globalized, international trade network that corresponded with Japan's emergence into modernity. Interestingly, growing confidence of its capabilities and industrial output and quality may have persuaded the Japanese to store their most valuable works (including copies of those produced for international expositions) in their own country—in what would become the Tokyo National Museum in Ueno.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>103</sup> This point was argued in by Justin Dargin and Lim Tai Wei, "Energy, Trade and Finance in Asia: A Political and Economic Analysis," unpublished paper.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Yamashita, "Ceramics," p. 93.

<sup>106</sup> Itani Yoshie 井谷善恵, "Meiji ki ni okeru Nihonjin no shokuseikatsu no hensen to yushutsu jiki ni tsuite" 明治期における日本人の食生活の変遷と輸出磁器について (Export porcelain and the transformation of Japanese food culture in the Meiji era), *Yūgō bunka kenkyū* 融合文化研究 6 (October 2005), pp. 73, 76.

<sup>107</sup> Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics*, p. 31.

<sup>108</sup> Schiffer, *Japanese Export Ceramics*, p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> Itani, "Meiji ki ni okeru Nihonjin," p. 76.

<sup>110</sup> Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics*, p. 25.

### Examples of contemporary Arita porcelain wares:



Contemporary Showa-era Arita porcelain plates in traditional styles that the author came across in the suburbs of Fukuoka in August 2011.

### Continuing contemporary interest in Arita porcelain:



Stamps commemorating Arita export porcelains that the author collected at the stamp museum in Mejiro, Tokyo between June 18 and July 17, 2011.