

Facing Modern Times
The Revival of Japanese Lacquer Art
1890-1950

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Facing Modern Times
The Revival of Japanese Lacquer Art 1890-1950

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Voor René

Bewerker van bokaalen

Op deze bokaal van zuiver zilver –

die gemaakt is voor Herakleitos' woning,

waar in hoge mate zin voor schoonheid heerst –

zie: sierlijke bloemen, en beken, en wilde tijm,

en in het midden plaatste ik een mooie jonge man,

naakt, en sensueel; in het water heeft hij

nog zijn ene been. -Ik smeekte u, herinnering,

mij zo goed je kunt te helpen om het gezicht

van de jongen die ik liefhad weer te geven als het was.
Groot is de moeilijkheid gebleken, aangezien
al bijna vijftien jaren vergaan zijn sinds de dag
waarop hij, als soldaat, viel in de verloren slag bij Magnesia.
Alexandrië 1921
K.P. Kaváfis (1863-1933)
(vertaling: Prof. dr. G.H. Blanken, 1977)

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Preface

During my visit to Japan in 1983, the MOA Museum of Art in Atami staged the major exhibition 'Japanese Lacquer Art of Recent Times'. It was an overwhelming experience, which at once convinced me that the prevailing opinion in the West of the insignificance of Japanese lacquer art after the mid-19th century was false.

When one or two years later a theme had to be chosen for the 50th anniversary exhibition of the Society for Japanese Arts, I was happy to learn that several other members of the Exhibition Committee were also in favour of 'the art of the Meiji period' (1868-1912). Being in charge of the lacquer section, wonderful opportunities arose to visit private and museum collections throughout Western Europe, among them the great collections of Edward Wrangham in Northern England and the Baur Collection in Geneva. These visits deepened my interest in lacquer art and formed the beginning of an invaluable network of worldwide contacts with knowledgeable collectors, curators, artists, dealers and auctioneers. Particularly fruitful was the acquaintance with the newly appointed keeper of the Baur Collection, Frank Dunand, since this museum houses the most comprehensive collection of early 20th century lacquer outside Japan. Our cooperation resulted in my first publication, on Uzawa Shogetsu, in 1986. Although the Society's 1987 anniversary exhibition in the Municipal Museum of The Hague was entitled 'Meiji, Japanese art in transition', I already smuggled in quite a few objects from the Taisho period (1912-1926).

Having achieved something in the field and able to show a catalogue as a trophy, I felt

confident to contact museums and private collectors on the East Coast of the USA, resulting in visits to famous collections in New York, Boston and Baltimore. At that time the Walters Art Gallery was planning the new East Asian department in the Hackerman House. The curator regretted the fact that the collection included only a single intro by Shibata Zeshin, because the new arrangement was meant to focus on 19th century crafts. I am still a little proud of having identified, with my recently acquired experience, a half dozen of other Zeshin lacquers in their collection during my afternoon visit.

The 1980s were a fabulous time to see lacquer art at dealers and auction houses. Due to the rapidly increasing prices, numerous high quality objects were offered for sale, especially in London. Being a small collector at that time, there were often reasons to travel to London, Cologne, Paris or New York for viewing days or exhibitions. It were mostly medical conventions, which brought me to Chicago, the American West Coast and other places, where always happened to be interesting lacquer collections as well. Every now and then, I had gathered enough data on a certain topic to publish a paper in *Andon*, the journal of the Society for Japanese Arts.

Steeply rising prices also had adverse effects. My partner and I were no longer able to buy what we really liked. Consequently we decided to sell our small collection in 1990, and I thought that my fascinating hobby would soon be gone too.

It turned out otherwise. A few articles were already underway, the research on Ganshosai Shunsui benefited from the archive of Heinz and Else Kress, and the discovery of two objects by Akatsuka Jitoku in Buckingham Palace brought new excitement. After 1998, when professor Mitamura Arisumi came to visit me in Rotterdam, the territory of my investigations increasingly moved to Japan, where my friends at Geidai opened doors to unexplored fields or provided new opportunities for already existing interests, such as in the case of Akatsuka Jitoku.

In 2000 came the invitation to be the guest curator for an exhibition of Meiji and Taisho lacquer art from the Baur Collection in the Museum für Lackkunst in Munster, and to write the catalogue. This formed a challenge to compile my writings on individual artists into a narrative of the period. Although the title *Ferns, Feathers, Flowers* was certainly appropriate for the contents of the exhibition, it was in hindsight not the correct name for the art historical period 1890-1940, because it did not take into account the remarkable movement of Modernism during the 1920s and 1930s. How important this movement had been only occurred to me after the study of the fascinating artist Rokkaku Shisui in the Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.

Already in 2002, the Geidai Museum launched a retrospective show on the crafts in Japan during the 20th century: 'Kogei – A View of a Century of Modern Japanese Crafts'. On this occasion I was invited to present a lecture on Shirayama Shosai, Akatsuka Jitoku and Rokkaku Shisui. Obviously, this was a highlight of my career in lacquer research, in particular because the setting was on the grounds of the former Tokyo Art School, where Shosai and Shisui had been teaching for decades.

Subsequently, two parallel tracks were followed: tradition and modernity. The preparation of the exhibition in Munster had rekindled my interest in lacquered pipe cases, and I got ample opportunities to further study this traditional topic in extensive Japanese and European collections. At the same time a unique chance was provided to investigate Yamazaki Kakutarō, one of the pioneers of Modernism, in Toyama Prefecture.

When the outlines of the period of my interest had become clear, the need for a new

integrated compilation of my studies arose, this time not on the occasion of an exhibition, but as an independent publication. Once Willem van Gulik had proposed to put the results down in a doctoral thesis, it took six months to produce the manuscript for the book which lies in front of you.

Note on names and romanization

In Japan, family names precede given names and this order has been followed throughout the text. Japanese romanization follows the Hepburn system. Macrons to indicate long vowels have been used except in reference to well-known terms and places like shogun and Tokyo.

Introduction

This thesis is a compilation of essays on topics concerning Japanese lacquer art of the period 1890-1950, each based on the study of objects and the literature. The essays are grouped into two clusters: the first one focussing on four leading artists of the period and the second one on the manufacturers of traditional utensils. For a better understanding, the clusters are preceded by an overview on the developments in lacquer art between 1850 and 1950. The closing chapter on storage boxes can be considered a by-product of the previous studies.

1. The period 1890-1950

Until 25 years ago, Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891) was in the West often regarded as the last great lacquer master of Japan. In fact, it was believed that lacquer art had almost vanished with the downfall of the Tokugawa regime in 1868, but Zeshin's talents could not be denied. A few artists, such as Shirayama Shosai and Tokoku Fuzui, might occasionally have produced praiseworthy objects afterwards, but these were considered exceptions. 'Meiji' was a derogatory term. As a solution, many traditional objects of merit from the beginning of the 20th century were, consciously or unconsciously, flatly attributed to the Tokugawa period. In the 1980s, Japan's booming economy resulted in a huge interest in the country's culture and history, a kind of repeat of the 'Japan mania' which had conquered Europe and the United States a century before. Numerous publications on Japanese art found an eager audience, exhibitions attracted large crowds, kabuki plays could be admired all over Europe and North America and Japanese cinema was popular as never before. On the art market, Japanese works of art fetched record prices, lacquer not the least. Of course, people became inquisitive about the origins of Japan's economic miracle, and this curiosity inevitably drew the attention to the astounding modernization of the country during the Meiji period. The increasing interest in the Meiji era concomitantly roused the interest in the arts of the late 19th and early 20th century. The 1980s saw the first extensive exhibitions of Meiji arts and crafts, whereas the first large Nihonga shows were launched in the 1990s. Gradually the idea struck home in the West, that Japanese art is developing as a continuum up to the present-day - like in most countries.

What counted for Japanese art in general also held true for lacquer art. This understanding posed the challenge of describing the history of lacquer art after the Meiji Restoration. In the present study this has led to a focus on the century that followed after the opening of Japan in the 1850s.

The first half of the Meiji period was dominated by the production of lacquer objects for export as part of the Art Industry. Only around mid-Meiji the tide turned. The year 1890 was unmistakably a milestone in the history of lacquer art, because it marked the revitalization of

the indigenous culture, whereas the Art Industry came to an end. The newly founded Tokyo Art School trained a whole generation of students to become individual artists instead of

representatives of the traditional schools. The Japan Lacquer Society brought lacquer artists together to stimulate mutual inspiration and generate interest for lacquer among the public as well.

The period of revival was more or less naturally followed by a struggle for recognition of the crafts in the 1920s, which brought lacquer art into the field of Modernism by shaking off the restraints of sophisticated techniques and the dictates of tradition. Modernism remained the dominant art movement throughout the 1930s.

In the early 1950s Modernism in this form was dying out, and lacquer art entered a new stage again. Rokkaku Shisui, one of the leaders of Modernism, had passed away in 1950. The 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties resulted in a division of lacquer art in two opposing groups: the traditionalists led by Matsuda Gonroku and other 'Living National Treasures' on the one hand, and the lacquer artists who aimed at bringing their discipline into the field of fine art, led by Yamazaki Kakutarō, on the other hand. Although less clear cut than 1890, the year 1950 also marked a watershed, in this case between Modernism and the diversification of lacquer art into various movements.

2. Aims

The objectives of this study are:

- a. to describe the history of lacquer art from 1850 to 1950, and to identify the main forces, both individuals and institutions, which achieved the survival, revival and recognition of lacquer art,
- a. to describe the lives and classify the works of four pioneers in lacquer art of this period: Shirayama Shosai, Akatsuka Jitoku, Rokkaku Shisui and Yamazaki Kakutarō,
- b. to describe the position of traditional lacquer art during the struggle for recognition and during Modernism.

3. Materials and methods

a. Literature

The ample English literature on the history of modern Japan provided the historical background of the period.

In the early 1980s, the first Japanese catalogues of major exhibitions on lacquer art from the Kindai period (1868-1940) were published, recently followed by several books and catalogues about the crafts in the Meiji period, also with respect to the World Fairs. The privately translated Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo (Tokyo meiko kagami) proved particularly useful to obtain deeper insight into the existence of lacquerers during the first decade after the Meiji Restoration. For a better understanding of lacquer art during the first

half of the 20th century, the successive journals of the Japan Lacquer Society and the catalogues of the Noten, Teiten and Shin Bunten exhibitions proved invaluable.

The art-historical literature in English, German and French concerning the period 1890-1950 provided the sketchy outlines of the developments in lacquer art, but no coherent narrative was available, whereas portraits of the protagonists were almost absent.

For my study of the pioneers, two keynote catalogues on Rokkaku Shisui and Yamazaki Kakutarō, respectively, were translated from Japanese into English by Japanese curators, but no catalogues, books or articles on Shirayama Shosai or Akatsuka Jitoku appeared to exist.

Catalogue entries and summaries in books formed the building blocks for reconstructing brief biographies of the latter two artists.

b. Interviews, correspondence, discussions, exhibitions

Over time, a more profound understanding of the period could be obtained by visiting

exhibitions (both in Europe and Japan), by discussions with curators, artists, collectors and dealers (mostly in Japan) and by studying the lives and works of the pioneers of the period. Information about these pioneers was considerably augmented by interviews and correspondence with their relatives, who also generously provided photographic material. Their vivid memories, happily shared with a foreign visitor, contributed much to a better understanding of the artists.

Concerning the traditional lacquer artists, a few biographical data about Ganshosai Shunsui and Uzawa Shogetsu could be deduced from the correspondence between Tomita Kumasaku and Alfred Baur, with additions provided by the late Raymond Bushell

c. objects

The most important part of this study was the examination of art objects by the artists in focus, and therefore illustrations play a major role in this thesis.

In the case of Rokkaku Shisui, many of his most important works could be examined in the Hiroshima Prefectural Museum, whereas most works by Yamazaki Kakutaro were seen in Toyama Prefecture. Such a concentration of works in a single museum or in one prefecture, in particular when assisted by enthusiastic curators, allowed rapid progression of the study within a few years. In the case of Shirayama Shosai and Akatsuka Jitoku, on the other hand, it took as long as fifteen years to see sufficient numbers of their work in order to allow conclusions. The Akatsuka, Rokkaku and Yamazaki families offered opportunities to see numerous design drawings of the objects, which are being kept as family heirlooms. Similarly contrasting conditions were met in the study of traditional utensils. Nearly all known objects by Uzawa Shogetsu are housed in the Baur Collection in Geneva, whereas the works by Ganshosai Shunsui are dispersed over the world. Lacquered pipe cases form an important part of the traditional utensils from the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa periods. The Casal Collection in Osaka, the Baur Collection in Geneva, an extensive private collection and the Tobacco & Salt Museum in Tokyo allowed the study of all their lacquered pipe cases - a total of more than 500.

Professor Mitamura Arisumi enabled the study of an album of charcoal rubbings of pipe cases by Ikeda Taishin, once owned by Takai Tairei, but now kept in his family.

Apart from the objects themselves many interesting details could be derived from the inscriptions on the storage boxes: biographical data, explanations of the subject matter and techniques, provenance, etc. Therefore a separate chapter is devoted to this topic, especially because such storage boxes have been so much neglected in the West.

Furthermore, in the course of the present research several hundreds of objects were seen by lacquer artists who could not be studied individually: Matsuda Gonroku, Uematsu Hobi, Kamisaka Yukichi, Suzuki Hyosaku, Tsuishu Yosei, Funabashi Shumin, Yanagisawa Ippo, Kawanobe Itcho, Koda Shuetsu, Shogo Banura, Uono Jisei, Futagi Seiho, Mae Taiho, Takano Shozan, and many others. Each of them deserves further attention and study.

4. Previous publications

The investigations, on which this study is based, have been conducted over a period of twenty years. The topics discussed in Chapters II-V and VII-X have been published before as articles in various journals and magazines, mostly during the past six years (see bibliography).

However, the present texts are updated and revised versions, comprising more objects and new data. By adding introductions and conclusions, an attempt is made to place the individual artists more precisely in the period concerned.

Chapter I

Japanese lacquer art 1850-1950

-Crisis, survival, revival, recognition

1. Introduction

“The Restoration of 1868 with its series of civil wars, and overwhelming influx of Western ideas was almost fatal to lacquer. [...] Whatever native demand there is nowadays is nothing compared to what it was in former days.”¹ Thus wrote the influential art critic and philosopher Okakura Kakuzo in 1908/1909.² The decade following the Meiji Restoration may indeed have been one of the most serious crises in the history of Japanese lacquer art. The collapse in domestic demand was the immediate result of the abolition of the feudal system, severely aggravated by the ‘Western craze’ and the concomitant depreciation of traditional art works. However, an unexpected course of events secured the survival of lacquer art and, after the Western fever had subsided, a fascinating period of revival was dawning. During the revival, lacquer art became a much more individual art expression than before, which paved the way for its recognition as a major art form and also for Modernism. This chapter provides an introduction to the sequence events from crisis to recognition.

In order to better understand the crisis, it is necessary to look into the demand and supply of lacquer objects during the late Tokugawa period, when Japan was still a secluded country.

2. The late Edo market (1800-1868)

During the Tokugawa era lacquered objects of many kinds were commonly used in all strata of society. Every household, even in the countryside, would own some lacquerware utensils such as a few soup bowls, a rice ladle or a bamboo vase. Sophisticated lacquer objects such as writing boxes, medicine containers or tea caddies, however, were only within reach of the more privileged sections of the population, in particular the ruling samurai class and the affluent townspeople (chonin). In addition, there was demand for lacquer artefacts from the Buddhist temples and to a much lesser degree from foreigners for export.

No doubt, the shogunate or bakufu was the single most important factor in the lacquer market. Not only did the shogun and his court need fancy lacquered objects for daily use (sword scabbards, sword stands, horse saddles with stirrups, palanquins, tableware, medicine containers, etc.), but also for the refined cultural gatherings such as the tea ceremony and the

incense ceremony. On the occasion of important weddings, lavish bridal sets were produced consisting of dozens of items: cosmetic boxes, kimono racks, mirror stands and water basins.

Lacquer was also used for the decoration and restoration of castles and mausoleums.

To meet this enormous demand, the shogunate employed or patronized numerous lacquer artists. In the case of the Koami, Kajikawa, Koma and Yamada Joka families, successive generations of lacquer artists were patronized, but many others were hired on an individual basis.³ Some of them received housing, a salary, tools and materials, whereas others only got commissions regularly.⁴ The shogunate also maintained its own workshops. In the case of large projects, such as the production of bridal trousseaux, subcontractors were deployed. In addition, dealers supplied works of art to the shogunal court.

On a smaller scale, feudal lords (daimyo) supported lacquerers in a similar fashion. Due to the sankin kotai system of compulsory alternate attendance in their domains and in the capital, the feudal lords were compelled to maintain at least two residences of status: the castle in their domain and their mansion in Edo. Both were required to reflect their rank and income, and therefore the feudal lords also needed the services of artisans like lacquerers to decorate

their residences and to produce lacquered utensils. In several domains a regional lacquer culture flourished during the Tokugawa period, so contributing to the prestige of the feudal lord in the capital and also to the domain's income through trade. This was, of course, beneficial for the further development of workshops patronized by the feudal lords. Several of these workshops reached fame. The Yamamoto Shunsho family worked for a branch of the Tokugawa house in Nagoya, the Igarashi lacquerers and their successors for the Maeda daimyo of Kaga and the Toyo family, although based in Edo, for the daimyo of Awa on the island of Shikoku.⁵ Also individual lacquer artists were supported by the domains. In Edo, for example, Hara Yoyusai (1772-1845) received a stipend from the daimyo of Koga, whereas in Takamatsu, Tamakaji Zokoku (1807-1869) was patronized by daimyo Matsudaira of Sanuki and produced 300 lacquer objects for his patron alone.⁶ The fact that both Tamakaji Zokoku and Iizuka Toyo (d.1790) were awarded samurai status, reflects their importance for the daimyo. Several feudal lords collected inro, such as Matsuura Seizan (1760-1841), daimyo of Hirado, who owned over 100 inro sets, which he used as dress accessories rather than as medicine containers.⁷ Another important collection of 100 inro, together forming one set made by Koma Yasutada, was owned and probably commissioned by the daimyo of Mino in the early 19th century.⁸ Such data indicate the popularity of lacquer items among daimyo in the first half of the 19th century - and the same counted for their vassals.

The shogun and the daimyo did not only order lacquer objects for private use, but these items also served as gifts. Gift exchange according to station and prestige was an essential ritual in Tokugawa Japan and happened on all levels of the administration: between daimyo and shogun, between daimyo consorts and shogun consorts, between daimyo senior vassals and their equals in the bakufu, etc. The process was carefully monitored and posed no small burden for the finances of both the feudal lords and the shogunate.⁹

In the course of the Tokugawa period, the position of the merchants substantially improved at the expense of the position of the samurai, who became ever more dependent on them, in particular for cashing in their annual income of rice. So wealthy became merchants

in the big cities Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya and Tokyo, that they behaved as equals of the ruling class. Wearing inro was no longer reserved to upper class samurai, but became also fashionable among affluent merchants and other well-to-do townspeople. Although all merchants together must have formed a formidable factor on the lacquer market, they were individual buyers and not part of a coherent system such as the bakufu and the daimyo. Therefore it is not surprising that no examples are known of lacquerers being employed by merchants. Dealers acted as intermediaries.

Over the centuries, temples and monasteries have been significant customers for lacquer artisans. Lacquer was used in the decoration of buildings and their interiors, such as on wooden sliding doors. Decorated lacquer boxes were made to contain sutras and other religious writings. Temples and monasteries also received art objects as gifts. Furthermore, numerous abbots and priests were in the centre of cultural life. For example, in Kyoto the priest Taiko (1770-1860) of the Daitokuji led a salon that not only included the ceramicist Nishimura Hozen (1795-1854), but also the eccentric lacquer master Sano Chokan (1794-1856).¹⁰ Monks and priest would also own lacquer objects privately, such as writing boxes, document boxes, tea caddies and the like.

Export lacquer has been a segment of lacquer manufacture since the Portuguese took an interest in these products during the late 16th century. The Dutch East India Company VOC and its employees continued the trade from the very beginning of the 17th century onwards.

After the interruption during the Napoleonic Wars, export was resumed in 1816. Apart from card boxes and tobacco boxes with European designs, it mainly consisted of Nagasaki style decorations with flowering plants and butterflies in Japanese style, executed in mother-of-pearl with bright colours underneath on black grounds. The objects varied from Western-style furniture to small boxes.¹¹

Such were the conditions on the lacquer market up to the mid 1850s, when the feudal society became ever more unstable.

3. The crisis (1868-1873)

The disintegration of the feudal system was brought about by the combination of both internal and external strains. Pressure from foreign nations to open the country for trade could no longer be resisted. The demands of the American Commodore Perry in 1853/54 resulted not only in unfavourable trade contracts with several foreign nations (the Unequal Treaties), but also in civil war. Disagreement about the question how to cope with the foreign intrusion caused an armed conflict between a powerful coalition of daimyo led by the Satsuma and Choshu domains on the one hand and the weakened shogun with his allies on the other hand. To legitimize their cause, the daimyo chose the emperor as their figurehead. The slogan of the emperor's party was 'revere the emperor, expel the barbarians' (sonno joi), their true goal the downfall of the Tokugawa regime. This was achieved in the winter of 1867/1868. Yoshinobu, the fifteenth Tokugawa shogun, was forced to abdicate, and the young Meiji emperor was

instated as head of the nation in January 1868. A new era - named Meiji or Enlightened Rule - had begun.¹²

As a result, the shogun's court was dismantled. This meant a tremendous blow for the host of lacquer artisans, who were either employed or supported by the shogunate. The situation grew even worse when the feudal system was abolished in 1871, leaving the daimyo with the generous salaries of prefecture governors (although without the grandeur of the past), but most samurai with meagre pensions. The collapse of the feudal system also caused the downfall of the many vassals and merchants who had heavily depended on it. Most traditional patrons could no longer afford the costly lacquerware, and the extensive system of gift exchange was at once outdated. In fact, the chaotic and unstable situation in the country after 1853 had already caused reduced employ for lacquer artists. Immediately after the opening of the port of Yokohama for foreign trade in 1859, several lacquerers had therefore turned to producing for export dealers, such as Minoda Chojiro in Yokohama and Arai Hanbei in Tokyo. Their number grew steadily, especially when many daimyo left the capital after the relaxation of the sankin-kotai system in 1862. The fundamentals for lacquer art, however, only changed by the Restoration. Within a few years, the domestic demand for lacquer collapsed. A key document in this respect is the 1879 Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo (Tokyo meiko kagami), which reports a survey among 65 well-known lacquer artists. The majority of the 44 artists, who were already independent before 1868, indicated that the Restoration had drastically changed their circumstances. For example, 46% of them had enjoyed the patronage of the bakufu or daimyo before the Restoration, but had lost it immediately afterwards (figure 1). As a result none of the artists produced bridal sets any more (figure 2).¹³

The policy of the early Meiji government to promote Shinto as the state religion caused a nationwide anti-Buddhist outburst giving rise to the destruction of temple buildings, sculptures, picture scrolls and other treasures under the slogan 'abolish the Buddha, destroy Sakyamuni' (haibutsu kishaku). Therefore new commissions for lacquer from Buddhist

institutions could not be expected either.

Probably least affected by the crisis was export lacquer. Soon after the opening of the port of Yokohama, Japanese dealers began to sell lacquerware to foreigners in addition to the continuing trade from Nagasaki: the prelude to a booming export during the 1870s and 1880s.¹⁴

The first decades after the Restoration were characterized by a zeal for reform and innovation. A small group of young men of samurai stock from Satsuma and Choshu formed the so-called Meiji Oligarchy. In order to ward off the danger of being reduced to a semicolonial status as had happened to China after the Opium War a decade earlier, they launched a campaign to unite the people for a policy to pursue ‘a rich country and a strong army’ (fukoku kyohei). The Oligarchy managed to transform the fragmented feudal structure of Tokugawa Japan into a unified nation by a series of reforms. In 1872 the four traditional classes were abolished, reducing the samurai to the state of commoners; the ban on swords followed in 1876. A conscript army was established, capable of suppressing samurai unrest and uprisings. Instead of expelling them, foreigners were invited to work in Japan in order to

introduce modern science and technology, and young Japanese were encouraged to travel abroad to seek knowledge. From 1871 to 1873 the 100 members of the Iwakura Embassy travelled through Europe and the USA to ‘search the nature of the West’. A modern way of life was propagated. Under the slogan ‘civilization and enlightenment’ (bummei kaika), coined by the journalist Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), modernization was carried out at an astonishing pace.¹⁵ Horse trolleys appeared in the streets, railways were constructed and newspapers flourished. For the first time buildings were entirely raised in stone. By the end of the century a brick ‘London-town’ arose in a Mitsubishi-owned area in the centre of Tokyo. Also industrialization got underway, beginning with textile production, silk first. In all sectors the government took the lead in the modernization process. The Deer Cry Pavilion (Rokumeikan) was the place where the Japanese elite and Westerners met. The pavilion had been designed by the British architect Josiah Conder (1852-1920) in 1883. Balls and garden parties were organized; one could play billiards or enjoy European classical music. The sole purpose of this all was, from the government’s point of view, to be regarded as ‘equal’ and ‘civilized’ by the Western countries in order to escape exploitation by the West, and to reverse the Unequal Treaties.¹⁶

This mood of reform and modernization was extremely detrimental for lacquer art. All that was new and Western was considered civilized, whereas traditions were frowned upon as old-fashioned. The nouveaux riches were merely interested in novelties from abroad. The ‘Western craze’ went hand in hand with a depreciation of Japanese culture and traditions. Erwin Bälz (1849-1913), a German doctor who taught medicine in Tokyo from 1876 until 1905 and had witnessed the developments, wrote:

Im Anfang der modernen Ära, in den siebziger Jahren des vorigen Jahrhunderts, machte Japan ein sonderbare Periode der Verachtung alles Einheimischen und Eigenen durch. Die eigene Geschichte, die eigene Religion, die eigene Kunst erschienen nicht der Rede wert, ja man schämte sich ihrer.

...”Ach, es war alles so barbarisch (sic!)” erklärte mir einer ...¹⁷

As a result of the adoption of Western dress by upper class men, inro, the esteemed accessory of traditional men’s dress, became redundant. Thousands were sold abroad. In the Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo of 1879, only four (9%) of the 44 lacquer artists, who were already independent before 1868, reported that they were still producing inro (Shibata Zeshin,

Ikeda Taishin, Yamada Joka and Ishii Ittokusai), whereas thirteen artists (30%) mentioned to have made intro before the Restoration (figure 3).¹⁸

The British journalist John Reddie Black (1827-1880), who worked in Yokohama as newspaper editor and publisher from ca. 1860 until 1876 wrote about gold lacquer:

...But since the changes, there is no longer any demand for these valuable articles, and the trade has sunk into total decay. To such an extent is this the case, that actually some who a few years ago looked forward to a profitable career in this business, are

now drawing jin-riki-shas. [...] There are still a few gold lacquerers in the empire, but they have very little patronage.¹⁹

During the worst years, impoverished families were compelled to sell their heirlooms and it has been reported that lacquer objects were even burned in order to obtain the silver and gold.²⁰ In 1900 Baron Takei Morimasa (1842-1926) told to Taiyo magazine, that, in the early Meiji period, he had bought intro at the price of the containing gold – the start of his huge collection.²¹

Recovery of the domestic demand for lacquer could not be anticipated in the near future. Consequently, many lacquerers must have lost their livelihood.²² For example, the famous lacquer workshops of the Kajikawa, Koma and Koami families seem to have vanished into nothingness; their names are not mentioned in the Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo, except for the Zeshin offshoot of the Koma school. The head of the Yamada Joka workshop, who had been employed by the shogun since 1850 and involved in the production of lacquered sword sheaths and makie objects, lost his status in 1868. After the ban on swords in 1876 his workshop had to cope with another blow due to the lack of commissions for lacquered sword sheaths. Yamada Joka's only way to survive was by manufacturing cheap merchandise, assisted by only one son. According to the same document, several other artists mentioned that they had been thrown into poverty, that they had been almost compelled to close their business or had temporarily worked as a wage labourer after the Restoration. ²³ Other workshops had been considerably reduced in size as well. The actual crisis would last for five to ten years. By 1879 the majority lacquerers had either been driven out of business or they had found new employ in the export industry.

4. Survival by means of export: Art Industry (1873-1890)

Fortunately, new markets opened up. At the World Fairs of London (1862) and Paris (1867) Japanese artefacts had already attracted attention, but the official participation of Japan, as a nation, in the 1873 World Fair of Vienna caused the real breakthrough of Japanese art in Europe, whereas the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition would have the same effect in the United States. The German chemist Gottfried Wagener (1831-1892) had advised the Japanese authorities to send traditional lacquer of good quality to Vienna instead of lacquerware adapted to the supposed Western taste.²⁴ This policy turned out to be highly successful. In both Europe and the United States a market for lacquerware developed. A prominent role was played by the lacquer artist Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891), whose vivid style and idiosyncratic techniques have appealed to the Western public ever since (figure 4). In the wake of the Vienna Fair an export company for the applied arts was founded – Japan's first trading company. The Kiritsu Manufacturing and Trading Company (Kiritsu kosho kaisha or later Kiryu kosho kaisha), founded in 1874 on the initiative of Sano Tsunetami (1822-1902), was a joint venture of private enterprise and government support (figure 5). The company was managed by the tea merchant Matsuo Gisuke (1837-1902) and

the art dealer Wakai Kenzaburo (1834-1908). It produced and traded not only lacquerware, but also ceramics, metalwork, enamels, textiles, and tea. Distinguished lacquerers such as Ogawa Shomin and Shirayama Shosai, and numerous less well-known craftsmen worked for the Kiritsu Company. Some of them lived on the premises of the company, whereas others catered for it from their own workshops, either on a regular basis or occasionally. The lacquerers considered these objects commercial products (hamamono or export articles), different in quality from what they had made before. Most craftsmen manufactured objects designed by painters who were also employed by the company. Many hundreds of such paintings are kept in the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. After a few years of great success the Kiritsu Company opened branches in New York (on the occasion of the 1876 Philadelphia World Fair) and in Paris (on the occasion of the 1878 Paris World Fair). It continued to operate until 1891.²⁵

In 1877 the smaller Seikosha company was founded, which not only produced for export, but also supplied to the Imperial Household. Kawanobe Itcho, who had been trained in the Koami tradition, was its leading lacquerer, but Uematsu Hobi and Funabashi Shumin worked for the Seikosha as well.²⁶

The Onkosha was a company that aimed at producing faithful copies of ancient lacquer.²⁷ However, also individual dealers were involved in the export business. Probably the most important one was Minoda Chojiro in Yokohama, who patronized at least half a dozen of lacquerers and exhibited his merchandise at the World Fairs of Vienna, Paris and Philadelphia.²⁸

The Japanese government energetically stimulated Art Industry as one of its major export products by a number of initiatives: the Industrial Promotion policy (shokusan kogyo – ‘increase in production, promotion of industry’). Craftsmen could send requests for designs to the Exposition Bureau (Hakurankai jimukyoku) or later to the Product Design Sketch Department (Seihin gazu gakari), or ask for correction of their own design drawings. The bureaux hired painters to draw sketches according to the craftsmen’s specifications. Some 2500 design drawings, together constituting the Onchizuroku, are kept in the Tokyo National Museum.²⁹ That the crisis not only hit lacquerers, may be evident from the fact that wellknown painters, such as Suzuki Kason, Yamamoto Koitsu and Suzuki Seiichi, worked as designers for the Kiritsu company and the government bureaux. This system began in 1875 and lasted until circa 1885. The 1879 Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo provides data about the impact of the export industry on the crafts world: ten years after the Restoration some 74% of all well-known lacquer artists in Tokyo were working for one of the companies or dealers catering for export (figure 6).³⁰ Other ways in which the government tried to stimulate Art Industry was the foundation of laboratories for the research of lacquer and lacquer pigments, and of regional schools for the training of craftsmen.³¹

The results in Europe and the United States were overwhelming. Whereas the ‘Western craze’ was raging in Japan, Europe experienced a period of ‘Japan mania’ - a mutual love affair celebrated at the World Fairs, where Europeans gaped in admiration at the Japanese artefacts and large Japanese delegations carefully studied the achievements of modern technology. At the time of the 1878 Paris World Fair, a French newspaper wrote: “Le Japon,

ce n’est plus une mode, c’est de l’engouement, c’est de la folie.”³² Among the earliest Japanese art dealers in Paris were Hayashi Tadamasa (1853-1906), Wakai Kenzaburo (after his retirement from the Kiritsu company in 1882) and Siegfried Bing (1838-1905). The acquaintance with the crafts of Japan gave impetus to the birth of the Art Nouveau movement

(a name derived from Siegfried Bing's shop) and to Japonisme. Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh, but also the American painter John La Farge, were enthusiastic collectors of Japanese woodblock prints. In those years the first large private collections of Japanese lacquer were assembled by W.L. Behrens, Michael Tomkinson, H. Seymour Trower, William Sturgis Bigelow, Henry Walters and others.³³

The success of the applied arts abroad caused renewed appreciation at home. In 1877 the First National Industrial Exposition (Naikoku kangyo hakurankai) was held in Ueno Park. The exhibition was a grand affair which not only showed the new developments in technology, but also the works of artists and craftsmen. Shibata Zeshin exhibited five framed wall panels - a hybrid of fine art and applied art - as the latest fashion in lacquer. During its thirteen weeks run, it attracted 450.000 visitors.³⁴ Four years later the Second National Industrial Exposition was held. In 1882 the art gallery which had been used on this occasion (designed by Josiah Conder) became the main hall of the Museum of the Ministry of Education, which was renamed Imperial Museum in 1889 (precursor of the present-day Tokyo National Museum). The lacquer collection of the Imperial Museum came to include many objects – both old and new - which had been exhibited at the World Fairs. The French packet-boat *Le Nil*, bringing back the exhibits from the Vienna Fair, sank on the eve of her arrival in Yokohama on May 20th 1874.³⁵ When the cargo was salvaged eighteen months later, the antique lacquer objects appeared miraculously unaffected by the seawater. These objects formed the core of the lacquer collection of the Imperial Museum. Also a number of contemporary lacquers shown at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago were added to the museum's collection. Lacquer art was further encouraged by commissions for the interior decoration of the newly built imperial palace during the years 1886-1889. Prominent artists such as Shirayama Shosai, Kawanobe Itcho and Shibata Zeshin were involved in this project, although the latter mainly as designer of the textile decorations for the ceiling and as painter of wooden doors.³⁶ Emperor Mutsuhito took a special interest in lacquer art. Throughout his long reign the imperial family commissioned objects privately, whereas the Imperial Household Ministry (Kunaisho) was a significant buyer at the domestic expositions.

During the period of Art Industry, the crafts constituted a major export commodity and an important source of foreign currency. The crisis itself was over, since many lacquerers were able to earn their livelihood again. From the artistic point of view, however, lacquer art in general was stagnant. The market dictated typically Japanese designs at moderate prices. In the Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo, many artists reported that they mainly manufactured cheap objects, in contrast to the high quality lacquerware of the late Tokugawa period. Their profits were the result of the high volume of the production.³⁷ Most designs for the decorations were drawn by painters, who produced two-dimensional pictures to be applied onto three-dimensional objects without much interconnection. Nevertheless, it is no mean achievement that the Art Industry had realized the survival of lacquer art at a basic

level. Only the school of Shibata Zeshin had managed to remain independent throughout this period and testified to what lacquer art at its best can offer.³⁸

5. Revival (1890-1920)

The year 1890 marks the watershed between the periods of survival and revival. The word revival should here be understood as the strong recovery of the art form as a whole, irrespective of the talents and skills of individual artists.

Already during the 1880s many Japanese began to realize that westernization had gone too far. A reflection on Japan's own identity and code of values was considered necessary. A

protest movement of intellectuals, including the originally liberal-minded Fukuzawa Yukichi, stressed the need for spiritual pride and unity of the nation, instead of popular rights. Therefore it is not surprising that the 1889 Constitution, drawn up by Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909), turned out to be much less modern than initially intended. The Constitution promulgated the so-called National Polity (kokutai), the concept of the state as a family, in which the relationship between the sacred emperor and his subjects is like that between a father and his children. The position of the parliament was weak. State Shinto was the ruling ideology.

Reflecting society as a whole, a conservative trend began to prevail in the arts as well.³⁹ The Dragon Pond Society (Ryuchikai), founded in 1879 by Sano Tsunetami to protect old art objects from destruction and export and to simultaneously promote the art industry, gained influence. Throughout the Meiji period the concept of koko rikon ('appreciating the old, benefiting the new') was a leading principle in government policy concerning the arts. For the preservation of antiquities, extensive surveys were executed by the Imperial Archaeological Commission to trace and make inventories of old art works in temples, monasteries and private collections all over the country. Museums were founded in Nara (1895) and Kyoto (1897) too. This policy was meant to stimulate the interest of the people in their native arts. In this forum Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913; figure 7) and the American professor of philosophy Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) began campaigning for a governmental art school.⁴⁰ They strongly advocated the preservation of traditional Japanese aesthetics, which was being threatened by the Western fever, but did not oppose the incorporation of Western elements in Japanese art.⁴¹

Whereas the World Fair of Vienna can be regarded as the turning point in the survival of lacquer art, the foundation of the Tokyo Art School (Tokyo bijutsu gakko) in 1887 gave – despite its conservative start – the impulse for a strong revival of the crafts in the early 20th century (figure 8). In the beginning, it comprised only the departments of Japanese-style painting, sculpture, and crafts (metalwork and lacquer). Its lacquer division was established in 1890 under Ogawa Shomin (1847-1891; figure 9), a conservative artist whose roots lay in the tradition of Hara Yoyusai and who had been employed by the Kiritsu Company for some time.

The foundation of the Tokyo Art School is considered the beginning of a new painting style, Nihonga, but the school was equally important for lacquer art.⁴² After Shomin's premature death in 1891, Shirayama Shosai and Rokkaku Shisui served as associate professors for brief periods, but in 1897 Kawanobe Ichō was appointed professor to teach lacquer until his death in 1910. By 1900 the institution - located next to the Imperial Museum in Ueno Park to enable the new artists 'appreciating the old' - counted 18 professors and 22 associate professors for all disciplines together.⁴³ Students could enrol when they were between 16 and 26 years of age. All followed a general preparatory course, at the end of which they spread over the various departments. Lacquer students were not only trained in techniques, including applied chemistry, but also in art history, design and composition (figure 10). After the regular four years curriculum, the best pupils were offered the opportunity to follow a master course for a maximum of three years. In the beginning, the number of lacquer students was small: 24 lacquer artists graduated between 1893 and 1899. During the first three decades of the 20th century, the position of the school became much more solid and stable under the lead of the director Masaki Naohiko (1862-1940), who considerably expanded and reorganized the institution during his 31-year tenure to such an

extent that it comprised ten departments with 74 teachers and 552 students in 1923.⁴⁴ Similarly, the lacquer department began to flourish under the professorship of Shirayama Shosai from 1905 until 1923 (as will be discussed in Chapter II).

The Tokyo Art School produced a new generation of artists like Rokkaku Shisui, Matsuda Gonroku, Takano Shozan and Yamazaki Kakutaro, who became the artistic leaders of the lacquer world in the 20th century. An important innovation was the replacement of the master-to-apprentice transfer of knowledge and skills of the private ateliers, which had been the custom for centuries, by a formal training. This training by different teachers and its setting in an art school with multiple disciplines produced an artistic climate in which the lacquer artists became more individually- than school-oriented. In the past, promising young lacquerers had been adopted into well-known schools and had also taken their family names. They continued the tradition of the established school, which inevitably hampered artistic renewal. The students of the Tokyo Art School, however, were trained to become individual artists in a more Western way.

One of the major differences with the past was that students were taught to draw their own designs, whereas in the Tokugawa era designs had often been copied from workshop albums or printed books. The approach also differed from the designs made by painters during the period of Art Industry in that they were not merely flat sketches to be transferred onto threedimensional objects, but from the beginning the decoration was meant to be an integral part of the finished object.

Academies were founded in other cities as well, such as the Kanazawa Technical School in 1887 and the Kyoto Municipal School of Arts and Crafts (Kyoto bijutsu kaiga kogei gakko) in 1894. Many pupils still started their training at a very young age under the master of a traditional workshop, but continued their education at one of the art schools after having reached the age of sixteen.

Another significant factor in the revival of lacquer art was the foundation of the Japan Lacquer Society (Nihon shikkokai) in 1890 by a group of 30 lacquer artists.⁴⁵ Among them were Shibata Zeshin, Ogawa Shomin, Kawanobe Itcho and Shirayama Shosai. The Society organized exhibitions of works by its members and published influential periodicals. The Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society (Nihon shikkokai zasshi) from 1900 to 1927 (figure 11), the Newsletter of the Japan Lacquer Society (Nihon shikkokai kaiho) from 1927 to 1929 and Lacquer and Craft (Urushi to kogei) from 1929 to 1941 brought news about exhibitions and about lacquer artists, but also published technical papers and design drawings. The early issues even included advertisements in English for the acquisition of commissions. By the activities of the Society, lacquerers became better acquainted with each other's work, which resulted in mutual inspiration. In 1902, the Japan Lacquer Society counted some 540 members. Among them were dealers in antiques, lacquerware, pipe cases, bags, lacquer, gold powder and gold leaf, but also metalworkers, painters, ceramicists, tool makers, carvers and joiners. Of course, most members were lacquer artists: some 200 in Tokyo, 33 in Kyoto and 15 in Osaka. Sano Tsunetami was one of the honorary members.⁴⁶ The small number of members in Kyoto may have been the result of an active similar organization there, the Kyoto Lacquer Society (Kyoto shikkokai).

Around the same time the Japanese changed their policy regarding the World Fairs. For the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago craftsmen were required to contribute objects of their own design, so reversing the policy of Art Industry. Fine arts and applied arts were shown without distinction in the same museum building according to the traditional

Japanese perception.⁴⁷ However, the World Fairs gradually lost their significance for Japanese artists, certainly after the unfavourable comments on the Japanese contribution to the 1900 Fair in Paris. The 'Japan mania' had finally subsided, whereas European Art Nouveau was at its peak. The last important World Fair for lacquer artists was the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904, where Funabashi Shumin, Shirayama Shosai and Akatsuka Jitoku carried off medals for their work. From now on, the domestic exhibitions, such as those organized by the Japan Lacquer Society, became the focus of the arts. Their character changed from merely promotional affairs into artistic contests, which were the foremost way to success. Gradually lacquer art was transforming into an individual art form. Although Zeshin's style and techniques left remarkably few traces in the work of the pioneers of 20th century lacquer art, his individuality may well have stood as an important example for them, judged by the number of his works that was discussed in issues of the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society. Also in 1890, the title Imperial Artist (Teishitsu gigeiin) was created by the Imperial Household Ministry. Among the first ten artists who received this title was Shibata Zeshin. In 1896, both Kawanobe Itcho and Ikeda Taishin were appointed Imperial Artist; Shirayama Shosai followed in 1906.⁴⁸ Such titles added lustre to the status of lacquer art in general. The lacquer scene of the early 20th century was a very active one and showed a fresh, renewed spirit. After the victories in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese war and the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese war, a proud nationalism emerged in accordance with the country's new status in the world. No longer deemed necessary, the foreign teachers had been sent home over the previous ten years. It was felt that the Japanese had a mission to conserve their own

unique conception of beauty with its emphasis on the delicate and the exquisite. These were the golden years of Shirayama Shosai, who not only taught at the Tokyo Art School for nearly 20 years, but who also established an independent workshop in the city with private pupils such as the remarkable Uzawa Shogetsu (see Chapters II and IX). The coming man was Akatsuka Jitoku, whose early work was delicate, but who developed a bold luxurious, more modern style in the second decade of the 20th century (see Chapter III). Many of his boxes made official presents from the emperor or the court to heads of state or high-ranking officials. The examples of Shosai and Jitoku show that the private ateliers had not ceased to exist, although their position became less central than before.

No doubt Tokyo was the centre for lacquer art during these years, with other prominent artists such as Kawanobe Itcho (1830-1910), Funabashi Shumin (b.1859) and the traditionalist Uematsu Hobi (1872-1933). However, the situation in Kyoto improved rapidly after the stagnant first half of the Meiji period. Apart from leading lacquer artists like Tomita Koshichi (1854-1910), Koda Shuetsu (1881-1933), Harui Komin (1869- >1936) and Ema Chokan (1881-1940), also designers played a major role.⁴⁹ Whereas lacquer artists in Tokyo now created their own designs, several artists in Kyoto were inspired by the Rimpa tradition of manufacturing art objects in collaboration. The designer Kamisaka Sekka (1866-1942) was the leader of the Rimpa revival as a teacher at the Kyoto Municipal School of Arts and Crafts, and through his active roles in both the Kyoto Art Association (Kyoto bijutsu kyokai) and the Kyoto Lacquer Society. His younger brother Kamisaka Yukichi (1886-1938) executed numerous of his lacquer designs.⁵⁰ Simultaneously, Asai Chu (1856-1907) – inspired by Art Nouveau - stimulated the development of design through the Kyoto Secondary School of Crafts (Kyoto koto kogei gakko). The lacquer artist Sugibayashi Koko (1881-1913) was strongly influenced by both designers.⁵¹ His were among the most modern lacquer objects from the first decades of the 20th century.

6. The struggle for recognition (1920-1930)

After the death of the Meiji emperor in 1912, his son Yoshihito ascended the throne. The period of his reign was named Taisho or Great Righteousness (1912-1926). Japanese democracy benefited from the wave of international liberalism throughout the world after the Great War. Party politicians got their chance: Hara Kei was the first commoner to become Prime Minister, and universal manhood suffrage was introduced in 1925. At a more basic level society became more democratic due to a higher level of education, increased social mobility, and vastly expanded transportation and communication. Taisho was a much younger culture than Meiji. Like anywhere else in the world, all kinds of entertainment were flourishing. Ginza was the favourite place for the 'mobo' and the 'moga' (modern boy and modern girl). In their flashiest Western clothes they might sometimes be seen walking hand in hand.

In spite of the spirit of optimism in the air, the period of Taisho Democracy was basically unstable. Prime Minister Hara Kei was assassinated in 1921, and the entanglement between

political parties and business conglomerates (zaibatsu) became a matter of suspicion and debate.

Literally unstable was the earth. On 1 September 1923, the Tokyo-Yokohama region, the Kanto Plain, was heavily struck by an earthquake, which was followed by catastrophic fires. One hundred and forty thousand people lost their lives and three-quarters of the buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. However, the energetic reconstruction made Tokyo, already by the end of the 1920s, a much more modern metropolis than it had been before. The city's Tokugawa past had been destroyed and the mentality of the public changed within a few years.⁵² The cosmopolitan urban society offered new opportunities to craftsmen, although they had to fight for recognition first.

In 1907 the Ministry of Education had started to sponsor the nationwide art exhibition Bunten (a contraction of Monbusho bijutsu tenrankai).⁵³ The annual exhibitions comprised Japanese-style painting, Western-style painting and sculpture, whereas the applied arts were excluded. Metalwork, lacquerware and ceramics still carried with them the connotation of Art Industry. They were considered 'minor arts'. Protests were in vain, but the lobby to gain a place at these prestigious shows steadily increased. For the time being, craftsmen could only show their works and design drawings at the Noten exhibitions (Noshomusho tenrankai), organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce from 1913 onwards (figure 12).⁵⁴ This continued to be an unsatisfactory situation though.

The exclusion from the Bunten was a remarkable departure from the trail taken in the early 1890s when the distinction between fine arts and applied arts had been dropped. In fact, before the Meiji period such distinction had never existed. The word bijutsu (bi- beauty, jutsu – art) had only been coined after the examples in the West on the occasion of the Vienna World Fair, and the word kogeï (crafts) was probably introduced at the same time.⁵⁵ The Japanese awareness of art as 'art' was mainly the result of the activities of Ernest Fenollosa during the 1880s. Up until then Japanese art had not been perceived as such.⁵⁶ His pupil Okakura Kakuzo had aimed at reversing the division between crafts and fine art in the Japanese contribution for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.⁵⁷ Furthermore, when the Tokyo Art School was founded a crafts department was included alongside departments for painting and sculpture, and also the traditional word gigei in the title Teishitsu gigeiin encompasses all arts and crafts. After all, one of the main reasons for the exclusion may have been that the Bunten was modelled after the French Salons, which did not

exhibit crafts. Therefore the struggle for recognition of the crafts had to be waged twice – this time not by the officials but by the artists themselves.

In 1919 the Bunten exhibitions were replaced by exhibitions organized by the newly founded Imperial Art Academy (Teikoku bijutsuin), and renamed Teiten (Teikoku bijutsuin tenrankai).⁵⁸ Again the applied arts were excluded because they were seen to lack modernity – lacquer in particular. Another reason may have been that priority was given to the control of unrestrained factionalism in the painting world that had caused the end of the Bunten exhibitions. When, in 1923, the Academy once more rejected the proposal for a crafts department at the Teiten, this decision prompted great activity in the world of the applied arts. In 1925 they joined in the Comprehensive Crafts Society (Kogei saisaikai), which held its

first exhibition at Takashimaya department store in Tokyo. As co-founder of the Comprehensive Crafts Society and as director of the Japan Artistic Craft Association (Nihon kogei bijutsu kyokai), Akatsuka Jitoku was one of the champions in the emancipation of the applied arts (see Chapter III). Another important factor in this struggle was the group of young avant-garde craftsmen called Mukei ('Without Form') - among them the lacquer artists Matsuda Gonroku and Yamazaki Kakutaro (see Chapter V). Mukei wanted to shed all conventions, and dispel nostalgia. It aimed at artistic renewal instead of technical perfection.⁵⁹ The rapid developments in the applied arts became obvious at the memorial exhibition in honour of Prince Shotoku Taishi (574-622), promoter of Buddhism and patron of the arts, held in the newly founded Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in May 1926. The art objects, shown together with paintings and sculptures, were favourably received by the public and praised in the press.⁶⁰

In 1927, a crafts section was finally added to the Teiten. The catalogues of the following fifteen years show how dramatically the modernization movements had changed the lacquer world. Because of its energy, excitement and rashness, this period has been referred to as 'the adolescence of the crafts'.⁶¹ Within a few years, established artists completely changed their styles and young artists abandoned the styles of their masters, so mocking the conventional proposition that innovation in lacquer art is difficult to achieve due to the complicated techniques. Once liberated from the dictates of technical perfection, creativity exploded. Because of its anti-traditional attitude favouring originality, this era is referred to as Modernism. For example, Akatsuka Jitoku started producing sober objects with minimal decoration, often executed in the 'dry-lacquer' technique (kanshitsu), whereas Rokkaku Shisui fully exploited his inspiration by Chinese lacquer from the Han period (see Chapter IV). Moriya Shotei and Takano Shozan gave up the delicate style of their master Shirayama Shosai, like Fukushima Taisai and Tsuzuki Kosai abandoned the style of the Zeshin/Taishin school in which they had been trained. Bold and daring designs were ubiquitous, often showing uncommon subjects, such as cormorants, poodles, sun flowers, corncocks, highly stylized plants or geometrical motifs (figure 13). Many objects showed influences by Art Nouveau, Art Deco or Rimpa. Most exhibits were large objects, such as elegant Western-style sideboards or screens. Although Tokyo and Kyoto still dominated the scene, also lacquer artists from Kanazawa, Wajima and Takamatsu were represented at the Teiten exhibitions (figure 14).

Another sign of recognition was the appointment of Akatsuka Jitoku as one of the 30 members of the Imperial Art Academy in 1930. Such honour was comparable with the title of Imperial Artist. The Academy was not only in charge of organizing the annual Teiten exhibition, but it also formed an important advisory body concerning art affairs for the

Minister of Education. Its president and members were appointed by the cabinet under imperial directive.

7. Tradition continued (1920-1940)

Not all lacquer artists took the turn to Modernism. Among traditionally-minded people, a substantial demand for all kinds of small utensils and accessories continued to exist. For example, lacquered hair-combs and pipe cases were still much sought after, and for the tea ceremony a supply of tea caddies and trays was needed. Lacquered pipe cases were enjoying great popularity since the 1880s and had replaced the inro as the most common accessory of men's dress (see Chapters VI and VII). Dozens of lacquerers manufactured these items with surprising creativity. During the Tokugawa period, miniature designs had already appealed the townspeople's taste, but in late-Meiji the unusual vertical designs on the long and slender pipe cases had rekindled the interest in 'the delicate and the exquisite'. Although hardly any biographical data about makers of pipe cases are known, there can be no doubt that masters of inlay techniques, such as the second Tokoku, Seisen Isshu and Toyokawa Yokei, were active in the 1920s and that several pupils of Ikeda Taishin and Shirayama Shosai still worked in this field during the 1920s and 1930s as well.⁶²

Some artists even still focused on the manufacture of inro for a small number of Japanese clients and for dealers, who sold them to collectors in Europe and the United States. Inro by Ganshosai Shunsui and Yamaguchi Shojosai, whose works are pervaded with nostalgia, can be found in more than a few Western collections (see Chapter VIII).⁶³

It was also during the 1920s and 1930s that the Swiss businessman Alfred Baur compiled his large collection of lacquerware with an unprecedented number of contemporary traditional objects. Through his dealer Tomita Kumasaku, Baur acquired most of the oeuvre of Uzawa Shogetsu, who produced dreamlike decorations, delicate as gossamer, in the most refined polish-revealed togidashi technique (see Chapter IX).

A central place in the production of traditional utensils and accessories was taken by Tobe Kofu (1888-1965), who established a workshop for lacquerware, metalwork and other artefacts during the 1910s. He must have sponsored over a dozen artists, since not only Shogetsu and Shojosai found employ in his business, but also the lacquerers Watanabe Shoen, Miura Meiho and Toyohira Suisen. The workshop was finally abolished during World War II. The reason why some lacquerers continued to manufacture traditional objects, whereas others embraced modernity cannot merely be explained by their training. Moriya Shotei and Uzawa Shogetsu were both privately trained by Shirayama Shosai, but the former adapted to the new times, whereas the latter continued the style of his master. Similarly, Ikeda Taishin's pupils Tsuzuki Kosai, Fukushima Taisai and Umezawa Ryushin all participated in the Teiten exhibitions, whereas Ikeda Keishin and Takai Tairei did not. Neither was age a decisive factor. Although the Teiten was flooded by works of the young generation, several of the leading artists were well in their fifties when they turned to Modernism. Personal inclinations and ambitions must have played a major role (see also Chapter III-V).

In several respects traditional artists were children of their time. They drew their own designs and they had their own individual styles, based on late Meiji examples rather than on Tokugawa lacquer. Their traditional works mainly elaborated on the styles of Shirayama Shosai and Shibata Zeshin.

Concomitant with the struggle for recognition of lacquer art, an anti-modern crafts movement emerged. Yanagi Soetsu (1889-1961) – like Kakuzo a philosopher turned art critic

– advocated the preservation of folk art, since it was not the work of a single artist, but the result of the creativity of a whole community over a long period of time. He considered the humble ‘unknown craftsman’ superior to the self-conscious, ‘egotistical’ artist, who depended on ‘their spoiled, aristocratic patrons’. In 1925, Soetsu coined the word *mingei* to distinguish folk crafts from the artistic crafts on the one hand and from industrial designs on the other hand. Apart from ceramics, textiles, woodcarvings and paperwork, also the regional lacquer products from Ishikawa (Wajima-nuri), Aomori (Tsugaru-nuri) and Fukui (Wakasa-nuri) would benefit from the *Mingei* movement, but mostly after World War II. 64

8. Modernism established (1930-1950)

Once recognition had been achieved, an effort was made to interest a new clientele for lacquer art: the young, well-off ‘salary men’ living in the modern suburbs, which had been constructed after the earthquake. Musée Guimet houses a suite of furniture by Matsuda Gonroku, which was exhibited at the 1932 Teiten.⁶⁵ In those years it was popular to include in exhibitions model rooms filled with crafts to demonstrate their application in modern households. In 1937 the newly founded Japan Academy of Lacquer Art exhibited such a room with table and chairs by Yuki Tetsuo, a table lamp by Shoji Hoshin, a smoking set by Kawai Shuho, a hanging tablet for the tokonoma (alcove) by Tsuishu Yosei XX, a flower vase by Takai Hakuyo, an incense set by Tsuzuki Kosai, and six-fold screens by Yoshida Junichiro, Matsuda Gonroku, Moriya Shotei, Kawatsura Tozan, Mitamura Jiho and Fukuzawa Kenichi.⁶⁶ Obviously, lacquer art made efforts to reclaim grounds in society that had been lost in the decades after the Meiji Restoration.

This trend could be noticed in the industrial sector as well. The lacquer artist Rokkaku Shisui became an advisor of the Namiki Manufacturing Company, which produced fountain pens made of laccanite (improved ebonite by adding raw lacquer).⁶⁷ In 1926/1927, Matsuda Gonroku became involved in the decoration of such pens with *makie*, not only for Namiki, but also for Dunhill and Mont Blanc; Takano Shozan and other lacquerers followed suit. Lacquer became popular for other applications as well. Between 1920 and 1940 the interiors of a number of ocean liners were decorated with lacquer, both in Japan and abroad. The interior of the British Queen Mary (1934) was decorated by Sato Takezo, a lacquerer residing in Britain. The Swiss-born Jean Dunand, who had learned the lacquer craft from Sugawara Seizo, made spectacular panels for the smoking room of the famous French Normandie (1932), the smaller decorations being done by Katsu Hamanaka.⁶⁸ In Japan, Matsuda Gonroku decorated the veranda doors of the first-class decks of the twin ships Terukuni-maru and Yasukuni-maru.⁶⁹ In 1932 the lacquer department of the Tokyo Art School was put in charge of the interior decoration of the Imperial Waiting Room of the Diet, and an imperial railway coach was adorned in a similar way (figure 15).⁷⁰

However, in the 1930s political developments began to intrude the art world. Both the international and the home situation deteriorated in the beginning of the reign of the Showa emperor (1926-1989). The 1929 world-wide depression struck Japan with great force. For several years the patriotic movement of the Showa Restoration, which pursued a kind of state socialism under military dictatorship, had already been gaining influence among young officers in the army. Due to their connections with big business, the political parties were losing the confidence of the people. This provided opportunities for the militant radicals. In 1931 armed forces conquered most of Manchuria without the orders of the cabinet. The government’s authority was at stake. Among the people, however, the Manchurian Incident aroused a wave of nationalist emotion. The army founded the new state of Manchukuo with

Emperor Pu Yi as its puppet sovereign. During the early 1930s party cabinets came to an end, resulting in an escalation of events which brought the militarists in power. The first decades of the Showa period would not bring the Illustrious Peace, which its name had seemed to promise.

In a nationalistic effort to bring the entire art world under government control, the Education Minister radically reformed the Imperial Art Academy and the Teiten in 1936. Since this was done without any kind of consultation, his reform incited a great deal of resentment among the artists and threw the art world into chaos. The confusion was finally brought under control by the formation of a new Imperial Art Academy (Teikoku geijutsuin) in 1937. The organization of the annual exhibitions became the responsibility of the Ministry of Education again, and was therefore renamed Shin Bunten.⁷¹

In 1941, the lacquer artist Rokaku Shisui was appointed as one of the Academy's members. He had succeeded Shirayama Shosai as professor of the Tokyo Art School in 1924 and remained the most influential lacquer artist for a period of twenty years. The two coming men were Yamazaki Kakutaro and Matsuda Gonroku, who were going to be opponents in the post-war period.

Of course, the war years were difficult for craftsmen since materials such as raw lacquer, gold and silver were difficult to get. In 1940, legislation restricted the production and sale of luxury articles, which crippled the lacquer industry even more. In May 1943, the Japan Arts and Crafts Regulation Association brought some relief in the supply of materials.

The Shin Bunten continued to be held annually, but the English captions disappeared from the catalogues from 1941 onward. Despite the general loss of individuality in the society as a whole, lacquer art did not show a return to traditional designs and techniques. This is all the more remarkable since such trends can actually be observed after World War II.⁷² In 1940, a particularly important exhibition was organized on the occasion of the 2600th anniversary of the empire.

In the work of several artists nationalistic features can be discerned, such as the inscription on the bottom of Matsuda Gonroku's cabinet with a large heron (1938) commemorating the fact that 'One million Japanese soldiers are attacking Hankow' (figure 16), and also the panel by Rokkaku Shisui depicting a battle scene in China (figure 17).⁷³

Despite the war, work continued under sometimes dangerous conditions, as testifies Matsuda Gonroku's inscription on his Mt Horai cabinet (August 31st, 1944):

...Enemy planes are already flying over our imperial homeland. As sirens wail, those of my art students who have not already volunteered to aid the fighting forces, work with me, using the few materials we have on hand. I am profoundly grateful that, even though a bomb may well kill us all tomorrow, we have been able to finish this work....⁷⁴

After the capitulation, it was one of General MacArthur's priorities to separate the emperor from the ideology of State Shinto, which had become the central justification for Japan's wars and expansions. On New Year's Day of 1946, Emperor Hirohito explicitly denied his divinity (Tenno nengen sengen statement). With the change in the emperor's position numerous institutions were dismantled or reorganized.⁷⁵ Matters affecting the court were no longer looked after by the Imperial Household Ministry (Kunaisho), but reduced to the sub-cabinet level of the Imperial Household Agency (Kunaicho). The title of Imperial Artist was abolished. The imperial family was forced to relinquish much of its art collection, such as the Shosoin treasures and the holdings of the Imperial Household Museums of Tokyo and Nara.⁷⁶

Lacquer art gradually recovered from the war. Several artists made a living by selling small lacquered jewellery to Americans, but soon the exhibitions were resumed. The Imperial Art Academy was renamed Japan Art Academy (Nihon geijutsuin) in 1947, and would be the sponsor of the nationwide, competitive Nitten exhibitions (Nihon bijutsu tenrankai).⁷⁷ In 1949 the Tokyo Art School and the Tokyo Music School merged into the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (Tokyo geijutsu daigaku or contracted: Geidai), the only national art university. Since 1943 Matsuda Gonroku had been professor at the lacquer department of the Tokyo Art School, and he continued to hold this position at Geidai.⁷⁸

9. Parting of the ways (after 1950)

The enactment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (Bunka zai hogo ho) in 1950 - and its revision in 1954 - heralded a new era for the applied arts. Artists designated as Holders of Intangible Cultural Properties, popularly known as 'Living National Treasures', founded the Japan Crafts Society (Nihon kogeikai) in 1955. The purpose of the society was to revive the tradition of Japanese crafts in a renewed way, fitting modern life. Among the 'Living National Treasures' were five lacquer artists for the various techniques. They showed their work at the annual exhibitions of the Japan Traditional Crafts Exhibition (Nihon dento kogeiten), and left the Nitten.⁷⁹ This resulted in a crucial division: one movement focussing on traditional aesthetics and techniques led by Matsuda Gonroku, and the other movement advocating artistic expression of individual artistic ideas led by Yamazaki Kakutarō. These two movements came to dominate the lacquer world during most of the rest of the 20th century.

Notes

1. Okakura Kakuzō, 'The History of Lacquer Art' in: *Collected English Writings* (volume 2). Heibonsha, Tokyo 1984, pp. 179-194 (the quotation from p. 193). Manuscript kept in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
2. Born in Yokohama, Okakura Kakuzō or Tenshin (1862-1913) studied philosophy under Ernest Fenollosa at the newly created Tokyo University. In the 1880s, he and his former teacher started campaigning for the protection and restoration of Japanese art forms. Okakura was one of the founders of the Tokyo Art School (1889) and curator of the Imperial Household Museum. After his resignation from the Tokyo Art School in 1898, he established the Japan Art Institute (Nihon bijutsuin) together with leading Nihonga painters. In 1904, he moved to the United States, where he played an important role in the development of the Chinese and Japanese Department of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Okakura published widely in English, such as *The Book of Tea* (1906), and became a cult figure in certain American art circles.
3. Samonides, William Harris, *The Koami Family of Maki-e Lacquerers*. Harvard University (thesis), Cambridge 1991. The Yamada Joka workshop is discussed in Heinz and Else Kress' *Inro shita-e. Design Drawings from a Japanese Lacquer Workshop*, privately published in Liljendal (2003).
4. Takao Yo, 'Introduction to Toyokawa Yokei', in: *Daruma* 16 (1997) no. 4, pp. 37-43. In a table, Takao shows a classification of orders received by makie-shi from the shogunate.
5. The following publications are dealing with the Shunsho, Igarashi and Toyo workshops in detail: *Makie-shi Shunsho*, an exhibition catalogue of Nagoya City Museum (Nagoya 1992), *Igarashi no makie*, an exhibition catalogue of the Tokyo National Museum (Tokyo 2004), and Beatrix von Ragué's article 'Materialen zu Iizuka Toyo, seinem Werk und seiner Schule' in *Oriens Extremus* (December 1964), pp. 163-235.
6. For Hara Yoyusai see the lavishly illustrated exhibition catalogue *Blossoms in Black and Gold*,

Lacquerware by Yoyusai (Japanese text) of The Gotoh Museum (Tokyo 1999). The data on Tamakaji Zokoku were derived from the entry on this artist in volume II of Tsuda Noritake's untitled text, known as 'The Tsuda Manuscript', Tokyo 1908 (Transcribed from the handwritten original for Heinz Kress, 1986).

7. Pekarik, Andrew J., Japanese Lacquer, 1600-1900. Selections from the Charles A. Greenfield Collection. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1980, pp. 124-126 (Appendix 2).
8. Hutt, Julia, 'The Gifu Inro: a set of one hundred inro by Koma Yasutada' in: Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society 1988-1989 (Vol. 53), pp. 65-86.
9. Jansen, Marius B., The Making of Modern Japan. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge/London 2002, pp. 144-145.
10. Haino Akio, 'Sano Chokan, the Urushi Master, Studied through his Work', in: Urushi. Proceedings of the Urushi Study Group. The Getty Conservation Institute, Marina del Rey 1988, pp. 31-35.
11. Impey, Oliver and Christiaan Jörg, Japanese Export Lacquer 1580-1850. Hotei Publications, Amsterdam 2005, pp. 26-27 and pp. 209-227.
12. The years between 1853 and 1868 have been extensively treated by W.G. Beasley in his study The Meiji Restoration (Stanford University Press, Stanford 1972), but more concisely also in the historical handbooks of W.G. Beasley (1985) and Marius B. Jansen (2002), and in the Cambridge History of Japan (Volume V, 1989).
13. Tokyo meiko kagami (Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo) compiled by the Kangyo-ka. Yurindo, Tokyo 1879. Published again by Uchida Tokugo in Shikkoshi 1983, and translated into German for Heinz & Else Kress by Anita Brockmann in 2003. In this survey the Department for Encouragement of Industry of Tokyo had sent questionnaires to "those who had gained fame by exhibiting their works at the 1877 National Industrial Exposition as well as to equivalent contemporary artisans". The 65 respondents provided information about the characteristics of their work, their careers, the number of pupils, and about their customers and patrons.
14. Impey and Jörg (2005), pp. 26-27.
15. Born in Osaka, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) joined the Tekijuku school for Dutch studies (rangaku) of Ogata Koan (1810-1863) at the age of twenty. Because of his mastery of Dutch and English, he served as an interpreter of the Japanese missions to the United States and Europe in 1860 and 1862. The purpose of his 10-volume work Seiyo jijo or Conditions in the West, embodying all his findings of the journeys, was to educate the Japanese people about Western customs and institutions. Fukuzawa had arrived at the conclusion that the backward Japanese society should be developed after the models of the superior Western civilizations. As the main force behind the Bummei kaika (Civilization and Enlightenment) movement, Fukuzawa also established a newspaper and founded the Keio University. His 1899 autobiography Fukuo jiden has been published in many languages. Although Fukuzawa never accepted a government post, he was revered as one of the founders of the new Japan.
16. Apart from the handbooks by Jansen (2002) and Beasley (1985), interesting historical accounts of the period 1868 and 1890 can be found in Shively (1976), Wray and Conroy (1983), Barr (1988), and in the Cambridge History of Japan (Volume V, 1989).
17. Bälz, Toku (editor), Erwin Bälz. Das Leben eines deutschen Arztes im erwachenden Japan. J. Engelhorn's Nachf., Stuttgart 1930, page 25 and page 66. In English translation: "In the beginning of the modern age, in the seventies of the past century, Japan experienced a strange period of contempt of everything native and her own. Her own history, her own religion, her own art were not considered worth talking about; one even felt ashamed about them." "Oh, it was all so barbaric' (sic!), one of them declared."
18. Tokyo meiko kagami 1879. The reported drop in number of inro makers may underestimate the actual

decline, since the artists who had left the business are, of course, not included in the list. None of the famous Koami, Koma and Kajikawa inro makers of the late Tokugawa era are mentioned as active lacquer artists.

19. Black, John R., *Young Japan. Yokohama and Yedo 1858-1879* (2 volumes). Oxford University Press, Tokyo 1968 (originally published in 1883), pp. 117-118.
20. Tomita Kojiro, 'The Museum Collection of Japanese Gold Lacquer and an Important Recent Acquisition', in: *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin*, XXIV (1926), pp. 40-49.
21. Yoshikawa Hideki, 'The Somada lacquer workshop at Toyama. Part II. Rareness of Somada inro', in: *Andon* 77 (2004), pp. 27-34.
22. Also in other disciplines artists were pushed out of their jobs, temporarily or permanently. For a number of years, the maker of sword accessories Kano Natsuo (1828-1898) was employed by the Osaka Mint, where he designed prototypes for coins in the framework of the introduction of the yen as the universal currency. The painter Hashimoto Gaho (1835-1908) got a position drafting maps at the Naval School, whereas his colleague Kano Hogai (1828-1888) resorted to make a living from drawing sketches in a pottery factory, and even from tending silkworms.
23. *Tokyo meiko kagami 1879*. In the reports of ten artists, their hardships after the Restoration can be perceived.
24. Two catalogues of the *Osterreichisches Museum fur angewandte Kunst in Vienna* discuss the Japanese contribution to the 1873 World Fair: *Japan auf der Weltausstellung in Wien 1873* by Herbert Fux (1973), and *Shogunherrschaft und Kaiserreich. Japanisches Kunsthandwerk im 19. Jahrhundert* by Johannes Wieninger (1985).
25. Hasegawa Sakae published an overview article 'The Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha. The organisation and activities of a group of craftsmen in the early Meiji period' in *Andon* 36 (1991), pp. 121-131, whereas Hida Toyojiro was the editor of the large-size book *Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha. The First Japanese Manufacturing and Trading Co. Kyoto Shoin Inc., Kyoto 1987*.
26. Some data on the Seikosha and its employees were found in *Onchizuroku. A Collection of Craft Design Sketches of the Meiji Era* (Japanese text). Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo 1997, p. 51-52 and in *Tokyo meiko kagami 1879*.
27. Hutt, Julia, 'Japanese lacquerware in the Edo and Meiji periods', in: *Meiji no Takara - Treasures of Imperial Japan* (vol.1). The Kibo Foundation, London 1995, p. 44.
28. *Tokyo meiko kagami 1879*. A half dozen of craftsmen reported that they worked for Minoda Chojiro in Yokohama from 1862 onwards.
29. *Onchizuroku 1997*.
30. *Tokyo meiko kagami, 1879*. At least 48 of the 65 lacquer artists included in the *Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo* were involved in the production of export articles; 16 of them worked for the Kiritsu or Seiko companies.
31. Yoshino Tomio, *Japanese Lacquer Ware*. Japan Travel Bureau, Tokyo 1959, p. 144.
32. *Le livre des expositions universelles*. Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, Paris 1983, pp. 72-73. In English translation: "Japan, it is no longer a fashion, it is zealotry, it is madness."
33. Julia Hutt reported on the early collectors in her book *Japanese Inro*. V&A Publications, London 1997 on page 117, whereas data on the Bigelow Collection were found in Okakura Kakuzo's 'Preface for the *Catalogue of Japanese and Chinese Lacquer*', in: *Collected English Writings* (volume 2). Heibonsha 1984, pp. 177-178 (Manuscript kept in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).
34. Waley, Paul, *Tokyo Now and Then. An Explorer's Guide*. Weatherhill, Tokyo/New York 1984, p. 159.
35. A description of the fate of Le Nil can be found in Yoshino (1959) on page 142, and also in the recent exhibition catalogue *Arts of East and West from the World Expositions. 1855-1900: Paris, Vienna and*

- Chicago (most of the text in Japanese), published by Nihon Keizai Shumbun, Inc. 2004 on the pages 28 and 29.
36. Shibata Zeshin: Draft Sketches for the Meiji Palace Ceiling and Sketchbooks (exhibition catalogue – Japanese text). Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo 2005.
37. Tokyo meiko kagami 1879. Nine artists mentioned the production of inexpensive products, the lower quality or the fall of prices. However, by 1879 most artists had recovered from the economic crisis in lacquer art, and several of them were better off than before the Restoration.
38. Earle, Joe, Meiji no Takara. Treasures from Imperial Japan. Masterpieces by Shibata Zeshin. The Kibo Foundation, London 1996.
39. Shively, Donald H. (editor), Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1976.
40. Born in Salem, Ernest Francesco Fenollosa (1853-1908) studied philosophy at Harvard University. In 1878, he went to Japan in order to teach at Tokyo University. Among his many distinguished pupils was Okakura Kakuzo, with whom he would cooperate for more than a decade in a campaign for the preservation of Japanese art. He amassed an extensive collection of Japanese paintings and sculptures, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and patronized the painters Kano Hogai and Hashimoto Gaho, the founders of the Nihonga style. His major work Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art was published posthumously in 1912.
41. This view was considered too liberal for most members of the Ryuchikai. Therefore Fenollosa left this society and founded the Kanka-kai. The split resulted in two groups of traditional painting which continued to exist well into the 20th century: the Old Faction (Kyuha) - associated with the Ryuchikai, with its successor the Japan Art Association (Nihon bijutsu kyokai), the Japan Painting Association (Nihon kaiga kyokai) and the Imperial Household Ministry - on the one hand, and the New Faction (Shinpa) - associated with Kanka-kai, the Tokyo Art School, the Japan Art Institute (Nihon bijutsu-in) and the Ministry of Education - on the other hand. Such factionalism doesn't seem to have divided lacquer art during the Meiji era though.
42. For the origins of Nihonga see the exhibition catalogue Nihonga. Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968, The Saint Louis ArtMuseum/Weatherhill, Saint Louis/New York/Tokyo 1995.
43. Notices sur l'École des Beaux-Arts de Tokio. Publié par la Commission Imperiale du Japon. Tsoukiji Kwappan Seizokyo, Tokio 1899.
44. Yoshida Chizuko, 'The Tokyo School of Fine Arts', in: Nihonga. Trancending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968. Saint Louis Museum of Art/Weatherhill, Saint Louis/New York/ Tokyo 1995, pp. 86-87.
45. Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces (exhibition catalogue with essays by Okada Jo and Shiraishi Masami). National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1982.
46. Nihon shikkokai zasshi (Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society), Tokyo 1902 , which includes a members list.
47. World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 Revisited. Nineteenth Century Japanese Art Shown in Chicago, USA (exhibition catalogue). Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo 1997.
48. Sato Doshin, 'Imperial Household Artists (Teishitsu gigeiin)', in: Nihonga. Trancending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968. Saint Louis Museum of Art/Weatherhill, Saint Louis/New York/ Tokyo 1995, pp. 92-93.
49. Crafts Reforming in Kyoto (1910-1940). A Struggle between Tradition and Renovation (exhibition catalogue – Japanese text). The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto 1998.
50. Sato Keiji, 'Kamisaka Sekka and Kyoto Lacquer as Modern Rimpa Art', in: Kamisaka Sekka: Rimpa

- Master. The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto 2003, pp. 41-57.
51. Asai Chu (exhibition catalogue – Japanese text). Sakura City Museum of Art, Sakura 2003.
52. Seidensticker, Edward, Tokyo Rising. The City since the Great Earthquake. Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1991.
53. Tanaka Atsushi, “Bunten” and the Government-Sponsored Exhibitions (Kanten), in: Nihonga. Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968. Saint Louis Museum of Art/Weatherhill, Saint Louis/New York/ Tokyo 1995, pp. 96-97.
54. Shiraishi Masami, ‘The Modernization of Japanese Lacquer Art’, in: Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces. National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1982, pp. 15-23.
55. Saeki Junko, ‘Longing for “Beauty”’, in: A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics. University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu 2001, p. 28-29.
56. Karatani Kojin, ‘Japan as Art Museum: Okakura Tenshin and Fenollosa’, in: A History of Modern Japanese Aesthetics. University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu 2001, p. 44.
57. World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 Revisited 1997.
58. Ozaki Masaaki, ‘The Imperial Academy of Fine Arts’, in: Nihonga. Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968. Saint Louis Museum of Art/Weatherhill, Saint Louis/New York/ Tokyo 1995, pp. 98-99.
59. Hida Toyojiro, ‘Craft Movements in Japan around 1930’, in: Modernism and Craftsmen. The 1920s to the 1930s. The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1983, pp. 18-25.
60. Shiraishi Masami 1982, p.19.
61. Hida Toyojiro, ‘The Adolescence of Japanese Crafts – A Chapter from a Fragmented History’, in: Crafts Movements in Japan 1920s-1945. The Japan Association of Art Museums, 1996, pp. 20-23.
62. Dees, Jan, Ferns, Feathers, Flowers. Japanese Lacquer of the Meiji and Taisho periods from the Baur Collection. Museum fur Lackkunst/Collections Baur, Munster /Geneva 2001, Chapter VII.
63. Adachi, Barbara C., ‘Shojosai, Maker of Inro’, in: Journal of the International Netsuke Collectors Society (1976), vol.4, no. 1, pp. 12-16.
64. Moes, Robert, Mingei: Japanese folk art from the Brooklyn Museum collection. Universe Books, New York 1985.
65. Shimizu, Christine, Urushi. Les Laques du Japon. Flammarion, Paris 1988, pp. 263-264.
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72. For example, Moriya Shotei and Terai Naoji produced much more modern works before than after the war.
73. Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces 1982, p. 242, no. 42.
74. Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces 1982, p. 242, no. 41.
75. Jansen 2000, Chapter 18.7 ‘Dismantling the Meiji State,’ pp. 666-674.
76. Between 1886 and 1947 the Imperial Museum, in 1890 renamed the Imperial Household Museum, had been under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Household Ministry. In 1947 it was renamed again into

National Museum and in 1952 into Tokyo National Museum.

77. Okada 1979, pp. 11.

78. Yoshida 1995, p. 87.

79. For the developments after 1950 see Okada 1979 (pp. 11-14) and also Uchiyama Takeo's essay 'The Exhibition of Japanese Traditional Art Crafts – Its History and Spirit' in: Japan's Traditional Art Crafts – A 50-Year Retrospective, published by The Asahi Shimbun 2003, pages 17-21.

Chapter II

Shirayama Shosai (1853-1923)

-Ultimate refinement

1. Introduction

Shirayama Shosai's formative years took place immediately after the Meiji Restoration, when lacquer art was in deep crisis. Many artists only managed to survive by producing objects for export to Europe and the USA. From the artistic point of view, lacquer art was basically stagnant since the foreign markets dictated typically Japanese designs at moderate prices. Although the mood changed by 1890, the Lacquer Department of the Tokyo Art School had a slow start with few students and rapidly changing teachers. Shosai's long second term in office would be decisive for the revitalization of lacquer art in the beginning of the 20th century.

2. Biography

2.1. Childhood, training and the Kiritsu years (1853-1890)

Shosai was born in Edo on 22 September 1853, the year in which Commodore Perry appeared in Edo Bay with the intention to force the opening of Japan for trade after two centuries of seclusion. At birth his name was Hosono Fukumatsu. His father Hosono Jurozaemon Shigemasa was a retainer of the shogun (hatamoto). Fukumatsu and his parents lived in Odenma-cho, the 'Large Post-Horse Quarter' at the starting point of the Tokaido highway, at Nihonbashi. Unfortunately, both Fukumatsu's parents died at an early age, and the boy was adopted, apparently by the Shirayama family.¹

In 1865, at the age of twelve, Fukumatsu started to work as an apprentice in the workshop of the metal artist Notoya Isaburo, where he was trained in the delicate craft of making sword accessories. Prospects were not bright, since the demand for such accessories was already low and would further drop when the samurai were reduced to the state of commoners in 1872 and forbidden to wear swords in 1876.

However, before these reforms came into effect Fukumatsu had already changed to lacquer in 1870. He learned lacquer application (nuri) from Itakura Toyojiro, sprinkled decoration (makie) from Kobayashi Manjiro, shell inlay (raden) from Gamo Morikazu (b. 1832) and

additional techniques from Kiyono Sensai (b. 1822). According to the artist's own curriculum vitae he received training in Shibayama work as well.²⁻⁴

After this sound technical training, which took him nine years, Shirayama Fukumatsu was employed by the Kiritsu Manufacturing and Trading Company in 1880 at the age of twentyseven. Although the manufacture was export-oriented and most designs were not created by the craftsmen themselves but by painters also employed by the Company, there may have been a beginning of a stimulating artistic climate since the various disciplines hardly could have failed to influence each other. Later in life Shosai advocated the acquisition of the corpus of design drawings from the Company by the Tokyo Art School, which suggests a

certain degree of esteem.⁵ At the Kiritsu Company, Fukumatsu not only met two of his former teachers, Gamo Morikazu and Kiyono Sensai, but also such distinguished lacquer artists as Ogawa Shomin, and Uematsu Homin. It was the company that gave him his art name Shosai. He continued to be employed through 1890, although it is not clear whether this was a fulltime post.⁶

From this period very few works by Shosai are left. The dated metal panel with the God of Longevity Fukurokuju (1882) by Toyokawa Mitsunaga (1851-1923) with inlay work by Shibayama Miyagawa and lacquering by Shirayama Shosai must have been a product of the Kiritsu Company (figure 18).⁷ It is likely that Shosai's inro with a decoration simulating an ink painting (sumie-togidashi) in the Boston Museum of Fine Art also dates from this early period, since the American doctor William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926) put most of his huge collection, which he had amassed in Japan between 1882 and 1889, on deposit at the Museum in 1890 (figure 19).⁸

Several years ago, a pair of framed panels by Shosai resurfaced in the USA.⁹ One panel shows three herons among reeds in the morning sun, the other one a crow in a treetop under the moon (figure 20). These scenes in an atmospheric painterly style with a certain degree of spatial illusion can be regarded as early works as well. They may have been made for one of the major exhibitions, where such wall panels were popular, for example those by Shibata Zeshin, Ikeda Taishin and Kawanobe Itcho. After 1890 panels became less fashionable. During his years at the Kiritsu Company, Shosai participated in the Second National Industrial Exposition of 1881, the Third National Industrial Exposition of 1890 and the Paris World Fair of 1890. It is possible that the panels were made for one of such events.¹⁰ At all shows his works gained awards, and he would receive more in the years to come (see table I at the end of this chapter). Three medals are kept in the Eisei Bunko Museum in Tokyo.¹¹ At the Third National Industrial Exposition, Shosai's cosmetic box decorated with a white heron in humid air, after a painting by Kano Tsunenobu (1636-1713), was praised by the jury as follows: "Although he took motifs from an old painting, he didn't just imitate its lines. His way of depicting produced a new painting style. Among the makie objects, this piece belongs to the first rank which turned into a new direction."¹² Such a picture of a white heron on a tree branch can also be seen on a box in the 1925 Imamura auction catalogue, but it concerns a writing box instead of a cosmetic box (figure 21). This box, in its turn, is similar to a small writing box in the Tokyo National Museum, which shows birds perched on a flowering plum

bough, also in a painterly style (figure 22). Both boxes may date from the late 1880s or early 1890s.

Between 1886 and 1889, Shosai contributed to the interior decoration of the newly built Imperial Palace, a highly prestigious project from which, unfortunately, no relics of the artist's work are left.

2.2. An independent course (1890-1905)

The year 1890 marks a turning point in the history of Japanese lacquer art, because of the foundation of the Japan Lacquer Society and the foundation of the Lacquer Department of the Tokyo Art School. During the next thirty years lacquer art would develop from a segment of Art Industry into an individual art form under the inspired guidance of Shirayama Shosai. As one of its founding members Shosai played an active role in the Japan Lacquer Society. The Society published an influential journal and organized competitive exhibitions which stimulated innovation in lacquer art.

When Ogawa Shomin, the first head of the Lacquer Department of the Tokyo Art School,

died a half year after his appointment, Shirayama Shosai was hired as a teacher in March of 1891. In August he was appointed associate professor.¹³

The unsigned writing box with a decoration of Avalokitesvara wrapped in a transparent silver veil may be attributed to Shosai and could be a work from the early 1890s (figure 23). The main reason for this assumption is that the box was obviously inspired by the famous painting Avalokitesvara as a merciful mother by Kano Hogai (1828-1888), recently designated as an Important National Property (figure 24). It concerns Hogai's last work, painted in 1888 and considered the very beginning of the Nihonga style.¹⁴ A faithful copy of Hogai's work in brocade was made by Kawashima Jinbei II (1853-1910), also a professor at the Tokyo Art School, in 1895.¹⁵ It was exhibited at the Fourth National Industrial Exposition and purchased by the Meiji emperor. The painting has been kept in the Tokyo Art School ever since it was made, but it was only exhibited for the first time in 1910.¹⁶ The interior arrangement of the writing box, however, indicates an earlier date of manufacture than 1910. Therefore it would seem that the writing box was produced by a lacquer artist from the Tokyo Art School, who must have had access to the painting at his institution. The box is not in the style or technique of Ogawa Shomin or Kawanobe Itcho or one of the other early instructors of the School. The polished-out technique (togidashi) and the painterly style are certainly compatible with Shosai's work of this period. It is interesting to note that the decoration of the writing box is, in contrast to the brocade wall hanging, not merely a copy of the painting, but that it features a new interpretation of the theme. The meaning becomes obvious from the inside of the box, which shows flowering lotus plants in a pond. The subject can therefore be interpreted as the Compassionate Kannon entering Lotus Paradise Island. The storage box for the writing box bears a gold lacquer inscription 'Sokubutsu Shin'in sama on suzuribako', indicating that the box was made for the high ranking monk Shin'in. For such a client the new theme was, of course, more appropriate than the original mother-goddess with child.^{17,18} However, Shirayama Shosai's first term at the Tokyo Art School was not to last long. For unknown reasons he already resigned after two years in July 1893 at the age of forty.¹³ One

wonders whether he might have been disappointed by the small numbers of students who applied for training in lacquer art. Shosai was succeeded by his student Fujioka Chutaro (later known as Rokkaku Shisui) in September of that year, only two months after his graduation. The next ten years were crucial for Shosai's career. He founded his own independent workshop, which became highly successful and renowned for its subtle style and intricate craftsmanship. According to the 1902 members list of the Japan Lacquer Society, Shosai lived in those years in Kyobashi-ku, not far from the place where he was born.¹⁹ He attracted a number of talented pupils such as Tsujimura Shoka (1867-1929) and Uzawa Shogetsu (ca.1877->1937). From this period a number of objects are left, which enable us to follow the development of his style. The writing box Mt Fuji seen from Tagonoura, which was awarded a bronze medal at the exhibition of the Japan Art Association in 1896, shows a flight of plovers above the clouds around Mt Fuji (figure 25). The interior is decorated with the calm waves of Tagonoura Bay, and, in addition, a water dropper in the shape of two plovers. The intro with a detailed decoration of autumn grasses in the Kress Collection may date from approximately the same time, since it does not yet feature the slightly stylized designs and the stronger pigments of his later work (figure 26). At least it was already in the Behrens collection when this was sold at auction in 1912.²⁰

In 1900 Shosai was awarded an honorary prize for a folding screen with wild geese at the Paris World Fair and in 1904 a silver medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition for a small

gift box with two drawers. The decoration of the gift box with delicate feathers in the polished-out technique (togidashi) would become one of his most famous designs, repeated in numerous variations. According to the accompanying papers, the box had been offered for sale by Tanaka & Co. from Osaka, and was bought by Mr J.C. Schuller (figure 27).²¹ Also shown in Saint Louis was the set of a writing box with table decorated with chrysanthemums and bamboo by a stream, now in the Khalili Collection (figure 28).²² A photograph in a contemporary journal testifies that the set originally also included a paper storage box (and the caption informs us that the set was offered for sale by Sano Kahichi from Tokyo). During this period Shosai received his first imperial commissions, such as for the gold lacquer presentation box Four Noble Plants (Shikunshi) with a decoration of chrysanthemums by a stream on the outside and plum, bamboo and orchid on the inside of the cover (figure 29). The box was presented to the American minister Lloyd Griscom in 1903.²³ Also in those years, Shosai visited the old temples of Nara, where many treasures from the ancient past had been rediscovered by the Imperial Archaeological Commission during the previous 20 years. This inspired him to using motifs from ancient objects in his own art. At the 35th exhibition of the Japan Art Association in 1904, his incense container with lotus design won the gold medal, and was purchased by the Imperial Household Ministry (see below). One year later his Ranjatai incense container was awarded the silver prize at the 7th Lacquer Art Contest (Shikko kyogikai). Obviously, Shosai's star was rising.

2.3. Influence and fame (1905-1923)

In 1905 Shirayama Shosai returned to the Tokyo Art School, which had meanwhile become an important institution.¹³ In fact, Shosai's pupil Tsujimura Shoka had been appointed professor of lacquer art, but there may have been a problem around his person. He left for Europe two months after his appointment, taught in Genova for some time and only returned to Japan many years later. Possibly Shosai rescued the situation by accepting the post of professor. Until his death he would continue to be the most influential lacquer artist of his time with new eminent pupils both at the Tokyo Art School, such as Takano Shozan (1889-1976), and in his private workshop in the city, such as Moriya Shotei (1890-1972) (figure 30). In addition, he would influence a whole generation of young artists, including Matsuda Gonroku.

In 1906 Shosai was honoured with the title of Imperial Artist (Teishitsu gigeiin). He received more commissions from the court. According to an inscription on the wooden storage boxes by Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922), one of the leading Meiji politicians, the set of a writing box and table with a simple decoration of a few dozen of imperial chrysanthemum crests was made in 1911 (figure 31).²⁴

There can be little doubt that Shosai's organizational skills formed one of the keys to his success. In the Lacquer Department of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, the institution that succeeded the Tokyo Art School, stories are still told that he demanded the best bent woodwork, the best brushes and spatulas, and the finest pigments from his suppliers. Shosai's visits to the gold shop took hours, which were spent in selecting gold powder and flakes. It is said that he selected gold flakes as if they were diamonds. The factory of Shimizu Sataro started to produce gold powder according to the master's wishes.²⁵ The Eisei Bunko Museum keeps a few things from Shosai's workshop: a small bag containing polishing powder, a small weigh (for gold?) and the storage box for a fine brush (fude) made for him in 1893 by Murata Kyodoten in Kyoto. In makie gold sprinkling decoration Shosai's technique

is unsurpassed. Several examples for educating technical details to the students are kept at the University.

In a more elegant way, samples of his technical skills can be observed in two octagonal boxes for sweets (figure 32). The first one was donated by the artist to Tokyo National Museum in 1911, the other box was commissioned by the wealthy businessman Imamura Shigezo in the same year. Imamura Shigezo must have been one of Shosai's principal customers. When his collection was sold at the Tokyo Art Club on 13 April 1925, the catalogue showed no less than nineteen works by Shosai.²⁶ Nine of these were directly or indirectly bought by Tomita Kumasaku for Alfred Baur in Geneva, among them the sweets container with pinks and butterflies in the shape of a large tea caddy (figure 33).

From 1907 onwards Shosai started to serve as a jury member at several exhibitions, amongst others at the Noten shows of 1917 and 1918.

Meanwhile Shirayama Shosai remained active in producing lacquer objects later in life as well. In 1915, the lacquer artist Akatsuka Jitoku wrote in reply to a comment by Uematsu Hobi about Shosai's prize-winning incense container with chrysanthemums: "This object is very elaborate, exquisite and conscientious – indeed in the typical techniques of his. Though

he is a great old master, his energy is enormous and we are simply no match for him." ¹ Only in March 1923, almost 70 years old, did he retire as professor of the Tokyo Art School. On August 7th of that year Shirayama Shosai died, three weeks before the Great Kanto Earthquake would devastate most of the city where he had spent all his life. The Tokyo Art School, built on the solid ground of Ueno Hill, survived. A bronze bust under a tall gingko tree keeps the memory of this great artist and educator alive (figure 34).²⁷

3. Work

3.1. Collections

In Japan, Europe and the USA, 68 works by Shirayama Shosai could be identified and studied (see Appendix I).²⁸ On the art market his objects are as highly valued as the work of the celebrated Shibata Zeshin, but they are much rarer. Among the museums, the Baur Collection in Geneva has 22 objects (nine from the Imamura sale), whereas the MOA Museum of Art in Atami owns 8, mostly large, objects. The now largely dispersed collection of Melvin Jahss in the USA counted 10 objects by Shosai. The recently founded Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum in Kyoto has a rapidly growing number, whereas most private and museum collections are happy to own one or two pieces.

3.2. Objects

Among the 68 works included in this study are 10 inro, 10 pipe cases, 6 tea caddies, 18 incense containers, 7 writing boxes, 3 sets of a writing box with either a table or a paper storage box, 3 sweets containers, 3 trays, 5 miscellaneous boxes, 1 stand, 1 pair of panels and 1 single panel. The objects are elegant and well-proportioned, but conventional in shape. Exceptional is the exuberant gold lacquer box with undulating sides in the MOA Museum of Art (Appendix I, no. 61).

3.3. Grounds

The large objects often have gold flake grounds. All three writing sets are covered with rich pear-skin lacquer (*nashiji*), three other works show grounds or extensive areas of irregular flat gold flakes (*hirame*) (figures 20 and 35). It is tempting to attribute the set of a writing box with paper storage box decorated with fans from the collection of Alexander Moslé to Shosai as well. The shape of the writing box is identical with the writing box showing similar fans in the MOA Museum of Art and it also has a *hirame* ground (and possibly even enamel details

in the metal ribs of the fans).²⁹ Alas, the whereabouts of the set, which was presented to him by the empress in 1906, is unknown and one black and white photograph is not sufficient to sustain such an attribution.

Mirror-black grounds form one of the trademarks of Shosai's workshop. So impeccable and highly polished are these grounds that the eye sinks into their depths. This phenomenon helps create the illusion of space, especially when the black grounds are combined with delicate decorations like feathers or pinks (figures 27 and 36).

Bright red grounds sprinkled with gold powder (*shukin*) – so commonly found in the work of his pupil Uzawa Shogetsu – were only seen in two objects, such as in the incense container with fern leaves (figure 37).

Three decorations are directly lacquered on wood. One of them is a writing box of beautifully grained wood with two rectangular sheets of metal on the lid, made and engraved by the famous metal artist Kano Natsuo (1828-1898), also a professor at the Tokyo Art School, and only a restrained decoration by Shosai inside.

3.4. Subjects

Among the decorations, scattered feathers were found on ten objects (figure 36). Other designs for which Shosai and his pupils are well-known, such as fern leaves and the whirlpool motif, were only seen in two cases each, whereas wild carnations decorate four objects (figure 33). These subjects are rendered without background decoration to enhance their delicate qualities.

Among the other subjects from nature, plovers and herons were the most commonly found birds, and - not surprisingly in imperial Japan - chrysanthemums were the most common flowers. Three almost identical incense containers all show chrysanthemum flowers and leaves, one of which was published in the *Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society* in 1916 and favourably commented on by Jitoku and Hobi (figure 38).

Much less well-known are Shosai's designs derived from antiquity and from classical literature. Two nearly identical incense containers simulate end pieces of roof tiles in the shape of stylized plum blossoms (figure 39). The title *Nagaoka Tenjin* in the Imamura auction catalogue reveals that such roof tiles were remains of the Tenjin shrine in the old capital Nagaoka (782-792).

Two designs were inspired by art objects from the collection of Empress Komyo, who donated some 600 objects owned by her husband Emperor Shomu to the Great Buddha of Nara after his death in the year 756. These objects form the core of the collection of the Shosoin repository. According to an inscription on the storage box of an octagonal incense container, the design of the lotus flower was copied from the nimbus of a Buddhist statue owned by the empress. The decoration is identical with the lotus flower on two circular incense containers (figure 40). Lotus flowers often form the central part of the nimbus. The almost identical inscription on the storage box for a tray with a design of breaking waves against a rock is mysterious, since the relation with a decoration on a nimbus seems unlikely. The auction catalogue of the Imamura collection describes the incense container with a *shishi* and clouds as *Ranjatai* (figure 41). *Ranjatai* is the name of a celebrated log of incense wood kept in the Shosoin since the Nara period. Only Ashikaga Yoshimasa in the 15th century and Oda Nobunaga in the 16th century had been given slivers of the *Ranjatai*, and more recently (in 1877) the Meiji emperor had received a few pieces. The log is kept in a container with a decoration of *shishi*, which may explain the design of Shosai's box. He made at least three of these boxes, the first one in 1905.

The subject of the pipe case Forty-eight gilt-bronze Buddhist halos from the Horyuji suggests a connection with the ancient temple near Nara, although the precise meaning

remained obscure at first (figure 42). However, it was possible to identify the five Buddhist halos among the collection of forty-eight gilt-bronze halos (and statues) in the Gallery of Horyuji Treasures in Tokyo (see figures 223 -225 in Chapter X).

It is interesting to note that none of the objects inspired on ancient works of art are copies, such as those made by Ogawa Shomin in early Meiji or Rokkaku Shisui in the 1920s. In contrast, Shosai borrowed motifs from ancient times; he preferred to choose parts rather than complete designs.

As for literary subjects, a stand in the MOA Museum of Art in Atami is decorated with scenes from the The Safflower (Suetsumuhana), The Flute (Yokobue) and Bamboo River (Takekawa) chapters of the Tale of Genji. Three fans on a writing box in the same museum also seem to allude to literary subjects, although they could not be identified (figure 35). The presentation box Shikunshi with chrysanthemums by a stream has metal inlays of characters taken from a poem by the Buddhist priest Sosei (lay name: Yoshimine no Munesada) in the Kokin wakashu anthology from the late 9th century (figure 29). The jointly produced writing box by Shirayama Shosai and the metal artist Kano Natsuo is based on a poem by Ki no Tsurayuki (872?-945), and the 1907 writing box in the Museum of the Imperial Collection shows two poem papers on the cover, but without inscriptions.

Human figures are only represented in relation to art, such as in the scenes from the Tale of Genji, the kabuki actor Ichikawa Danjuro and in the simulated ink painting of the boy on the back of an ox (figures 19 and 43). Fukurokuju, Avalokitesvara and Okame and are the superhuman beings in this series (figures 18, 23 and 44).

3.5. Decoration techniques

Although Shosai has been particularly praised for his togidashi technique, only eighteen objects are exclusively executed in togidashi on their exterior surfaces. However, a substantial number of other objects are partly decorated in this technique, such as the interiors of the set of a writing box with paper storage box in the Baur Collection, which show all-over decorations in colourful togidashi with bright pigments. He often favoured bright red and green pigments for this technique (figure 45). On the other hand an equally substantial number of objects show no togidashi at all, such as the designs derived from antiquity. In the low relief technique (hiramakie) the most remarkable feature is thin line drawing (jigaki). Not only the whirlpool motif and the feathers, but also the lotus flowers on the three incense containers show Shosai's ability in jigaki. The crossing lines in the lotus flowers betray a stunningly steady hand (figure 40).

Very little has been said about the master's high relief technique (takamakie), which he sometimes applied in an unusually crisp way. This can be observed in the flower petals of the chrysanthemums on the 1903 presentation box, in the flower petals on the three incense containers with lotus flower, but above all in the morning glories on the large paper storage box in the Baur Collection (figures 29, 40 and 46). Although the relief is not very high, it is striking and almost tangible due to the acute angle between the decoration and the ground. This effect can also be observed in the box with two shishi and peonies in the MOA Museum of Art.

Two works show a decoration of exclusively iridescent shell (aogai) in a black ground: the pipe case with the halos from the Horyuji, in which bright pigments have been applied

beneath the shell inlays, and the intro with a variant feather decoration in the Jahss Collection (figure 42). Shosai must have been fond of this colourful shell since aogai inlays are commonly found on other objects as well. In addition, several boxes have black grounds sprinkled with aogai powder such as the rhomboid incense container with plovers above the waves in the MOA Museum of Art (figure 196 in Chapter IX).

According to the inscription on one of the storage boxes, the two incense containers simulating end pieces of roof tiles have been made in the dry lacquer technique (kanshitsu) (figure 39). Simulation of materials was found in several other objects as well. One of the pipe cases has a simulated woven ground in lacquer. Another example of simulation is the small bamboo intro with a spider (figure 47). No part of this remarkable intro is made of natural bamboo, and even the 'metal' spider is done in lacquer. It is likely that Shosai was inspired by the famous bamboo simulations of Hashimoto Ichizo II (1856-1924), his colleague at the Tokyo Art School for many years.

The 1915 catalogue *Japanese Art & Handicraft* shows a highly unusual box with chrysanthemums in the rare mitsudae technique (painting with a mixture of vegetable oil, lead oxide and pigments on lacquer). According to the caption it was made by Shirayama Shosai in 1910 and lent to the exhibition by James Orange.³⁰

Many subtle technical details probably escape our attention. One of such details is disclosed in a note which Shosai left in his workshop for his pupil Moriya Shotei at the time when they were working on the rectangular box with two shishi and peonies (figure 48). The master ordered his pupil to pay particular attention to the polishing of the lower parts of the shishi's eyebrows since he wanted the eyes to resemble 'kabuki eyes'.³¹

3.6. Signatures

Four objects were made in cooperation with other artists: two with his pupils Uzawa Shogetsu and Moriya Shotei, a third one with Kano Natsuo and finally the panel together with Mitsunaga Toyokawa and Shibayama Miyagawa.

Thirty-three objects bear Shosai's signature in written characters (figure 49). Basically, five variants could be distinguished; types 4 and 5 being the most common ones. At first glance it seems unusual that the first character of type 1 differs from the first character of all other types. However, this phenomenon was also occasionally observed in the signatures of Moriya Shotei and Yamaguchi Shojosai (1893-1978). Although it is tempting to see a chronological development in the signatures 1-5, the number of exactly datable objects is too limited to allow such a conclusion.

Fourteen written signatures are followed by Shosai's cursive seal (kao), which only shows slight variations.

Forty-two objects bear a seal, occasionally only on the fitted box (figure 49). Nine basic types could be distinguished, six of them reading Shosai, two Shirayama and one Shirayama Shosai. In types a, c and d the two characters were found both in juxtaposition and in

superposition. The basic types show small variations. Types d and e are the most common seals. Here too, no conclusions can be drawn about a possible chronology.

3.7. Chronology of styles

Since the number of dated and exactly datable objects is small (see Appendix I), the chronology in Shosai's work remains a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless a few trends in the development of his style and technique may be discerned. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, Shosai worked mostly in a painterly style using the traditional colour palette of gold, silver, and black with only limited application of red. The decorations actually make a more

colourful impression as the result of the employment of various shades of gold with red and green hues.

In the late 1890s Shosai developed a traditional and often bolder style, executed with the same technical perfection as observed in his other work. A fine example is the writing box Mt Fuji seen from Tagonoura, completed in 1896. Also the writing box with poem papers (1907) and the presentation box with chrysanthemums (1903) were done in the same style, as are the three sets. All seem to have been produced between 1904 and 1911.

Shosai's first objects in the celebrated refined and detailed style with decorations of feathers, pinks or ferns in togidashi have been produced in the early years of the new century. The first datable feather decoration was made for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. Also around 1900 more colours appeared in his work. Bright reds and greens were often used, as can be observed in the intro with pinks and in the tray showing an insect on a water plant in the University Art Museum in Tokyo (figure 50). The latter is part of a set of ten trays produced by members of the Japan Lacquer Society, which, unfortunately, cannot be exactly dated.

The bold style and the refined style probably overlapped in time, large objects often being decorated with bold designs, small objects mostly with subtle decorations.

Shosai's inspiration by antiquities dates from the first decade of the 20th century: the first incense container with a lotus flower was produced in 1904, the first Ranjatai incense container in 1905.

Both Nagaoka Tenjin incense containers in the kanshitsu technique may represent Shosai's late work, since this technique gained popularity in the 1920s.

4. Conclusion

Shirayama Shosai's career reflects the history of lacquer art during the Meiji period to a large extent. He started at the Kiritsu Company, co-founded the Japan Lacquer Society, was appointed Imperial Craftsman and played a major role in the training of students at the Tokyo Art School.

Design drawing and lacquering techniques were considered the cornerstones of the curriculum at the Tokyo Art School. Under Shosai's guidance lacquer art developed into an

individual art form, and techniques were restored to the level of the late Edo period. This message was instilled into a whole generation of young students.

In his lacquer work Shirayama Shosai developed a style of ultimate refinement, of which the feather designs are exemplary. Basically, his style was a continuation of Edo period lacquer art, which he further developed. This is probably as far as Edo-style makie could go. Shosai's focus on technical perfection would eventually lead to a strong call for modernity in the 1920s.

Table I

List of exhibition awards

1881 Second National Industrial Exhibition

Panel with cormorant fisher

Honorary Certificate

1890 Third National Industrial Exhibition

Tray with landscape

Third Prize

1896 Exhibition of the Japan Art Association

Writing box Mt Fuji seen from Tagonoura

Bronze Medal

1900 Paris World Fair

Folding screen with wild geese

Honorary Prize

1903 Fifth National Industrial Exposition

Small rectangular box with yarn pattern

Third Prize

1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition

Small gift box with feather decoration

Silver Medal

1904 Exhibition of the Japan Art Association

Incense container with lotus design

Gold Medal

1905 Lacquer Art Contest

Incense container Ranjatai

Silver Prize

Notes

1. Kindai Nihon no shikkogei (Japanese Lacquer Art of Recent Times). MOA Museum of Art, Atami 1983, pp. 272-273.
2. Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Master Pieces. National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1982, pp. 283-284.
3. Hida, Toyojiro. Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha. The First Japanese Manufacturing and Trading Company. Kyoto Shoin, Kyoto 1987, pp. 385 and 399 (includes data from Shosai's own curriculum vitae).
4. Yoshino, Tomio. Japanese Lacquer Ware. Japan Travel Bureau, Tokyo 1959, p. 155.
5. Professor Yokomizo Hiroko, personal communication May 2005.
6. According to a contemporary report, Shosai's White Heron cosmetic box was exhibited by the Kiritsu Company at the 1890 Third National Industrial Exposition, whereas a tray with a landscape design was exhibited by the artist himself. This may suggest that Shosai was either only part-time employed by the Company or that he had recently left.
7. Art Dealers' Fair and Exhibition in Tokyo (catalogue). Tokyo Art Dealers Association, Tokyo 1998, pp. 27-28.
8. Ann Nishimura Morse, personal communication 9 June 2001.
9. Personal Communication Shep Brozmann, New York.
10. At several major exhibitions, more than one work by Shosai was shown.
11. The Eisei Bunko Museum owns three medals for Shosai's work: the bronze medal from the Third National Industrial Exhibition, a small gold medal from the Bijutsuten nankai and a gold medal with inscription 'Shirayama Shosai' from the 11th exhibition of the Tokyo chokokai kyogikai.
12. Dai sankai naikoku kangyo hakurankai hokokusho (Report on the Third Domestic Industrial Exhibition), Tokyo 1890.
13. Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku Hyakunen-shi, Tokyo Bijutsu Gakko-en (vols. I-III). Gyosei, Tokyo 1992, pp. 518-519, 854-855 and 1178-1179. After all confusing dates in the literature, this publication finally provides the correct information based on the archives of the Tokyo Art School.
14. Selected Masterpieces from the University Art Museum, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: Grand Opening Exhibition. Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Tokyo 1999, pp. 56-57.
15. Kogei – A View of a Century of Modern Japanese Crafts (exhibition catalogue of the University Art Museum). The Asahi Shimbun Company, Tokyo 2003, pp. 80-81.
16. Nihonga. Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style painting 1868-1968. The Saint Louis Art Museum,

Saint Louis 1995, pp. 301-302.

17. Sotheby's New York 20 September 2001, lot 60.

18. An additional reason for attributing the Avalokitesvara writing box to Shirayama Shosai is the very unusual transparent veil, which can also be observed on the pipe case in figure 44.

19. The 1902 members list of the Japan Lacquer Society mentions Shosai's address at Kyobashi-ku, Kobiki-cho, 1-chome, 11-banchi.

20. Joly, Henri L., W.L. Behrens Collection. Part II. Lacquer and Inro. Paragon Book Reprint Corp., New York 1966 (reprint of the 1912 catalogue), lot 198, Plate XVIII.

21. Photocopies of the papers were provided by Barry Davies Oriental Art in 1998.

22. Harris, Victor, Japanese Imperial Craftsmen. Meiji Art from the Khalili Collection. British Museum Press, London 1994, pp. 84-85.

23. Sotheby's London auction catalogue 17 March 1982, lot 164.

24. Odd Men Out. Unique works by individualist Japanese artists (catalogue). Sydney L. Moss, London 1998, pp. 110-115.

25. Masumura Keiichiro, lecture 'Makers of Tools and Materials' at the symposium 'Urushi Arts from the Perspectives of the East and West', Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, 9 November 2001.

26. Tokyo Art Club auction catalogue of the Imamura collection, 1925.

27. Shosai's last address had been Koishikawa, Sahigaya-cho in Tokyo. His ashes were buried in the graveyard of the Renge-ji temple.

28. Ten other objects by Shirayama Shosai – most from the 1925 Imamura sale – were not included, since they could neither be examined nor studied from good photographs. Three pipe cases and a set of haircomb with pin were excluded because their Shosai signatures clearly indicated another Meiji/Taisho artist. One inro from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York was excluded since the style and signature indicate that it was made by still another artist with the name Shosai. Because of incomplete evidence, four unsigned works which may be attributed to Shirayama Shosai, were not included: the Avalokitesvara writing box, a writing box with imperial crests (Christie's New York auction catalogue 17.09.1997, lot 227), an inro with feathers in the Tokyo National Museum and the set of a writing box with paper storage box with fans from the Moslé collection. In contrast, six unsigned objects were included as convincing evidence existed that they had been produced by Shirayama Shosai.

29. Moslé, Alexander G. Japanese Works of Art: Armour, Weapons, Sword-Fittings, Lacquer, Pictures, Textiles, Colour Prints, Selected from the Moslé Collection. E.A. Seemann, Leipzig 1914, vol. II, no. 1677, pl. CIV. The set was presented to Alexander Moslé by Empress Shoken in 1906 in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the Japanese Red Cross in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War.

30. Joly, Henri and Tomita Kumasaku. Japanese Art & Handicraft. Robert G. Sawers Publishing, London 1976 (reprint of the 1915 Red Cross Catalogue), p. 68, no. 151 and colour plate LXXVI (with wrong number 193).

31. Yoshikawa Hideki, personal communication May 2005.

Chapter III

Akatsuka Jitoku (1871-1936)

-A Western flavour

1. Introduction

By the time Akatsuka Jitoku became an independent artist the crisis in lacquer art was over. The crafts started to flourish again after the decades of neglect during the 'Western craze'.

Individuality and creativity were the keys to success at the competitive exhibitions. Japan was on its way to becoming a world power, and large objects of enamel and lacquer became the fashionable official presents, which expressed the nation's identity. Jitoku received many commissions for such presentation boxes; this must have raised his reputation considerably. Although not connected to the Tokyo Art School he was an influential artist, in particular after Shirayama Shosai's death when he became deeply involved in the movement for the recognition of the crafts by the Imperial Art Academy.

2. Biography

2.1. Childhood, training and early success (1871-1905)

Akatsuka Jitoku was born on 2 March 1871, not far from the Zojoji temple in the Hamamatsu ward of Shiba-ku in Tokyo, as the son of the lacquer artist Akatsuka Heizaemon Hosensai Rinpo (1827-1900).¹ His childhood name was Tsunetaro.

Father Rinpo was from the 6th generation of the Heizaemon family of lacquerers, whose history dates back to the Genroku period (1688-1704). The family still treasures three memorial tablets (ihai) which list the successive generations until Jitoku's son Sadao (figure 51). According to the Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo of 1879 the workshop was mainly working for export from 1861 onwards.² When Rinpo took over the workshop after his father's death in 1869 there were still three pupils and seven artists employed, but by 1879 business had declined and only two pupils assisted the master. In the following decades the workshop must have recovered to some degree, since Rinpo worked partly for the imperial court and was one of the artists involved in the decoration of the newly-built palace.³

When he was sixteen years old, Jitoku started to study painting under Kano Hisanobu and a year later he was given his first lessons in lacquering by his father. Also in those years he began an intermediate course at the government college (kangaku gijuku).

It must have been with Rinpo's death in 1900 that Jitoku became an independent lacquer artist. Success came early. He fetched a second prize at the 1900 Paris World Fair for a cosmetic box with a decoration of autumn fields. His writing box with a flute-playing boy riding an ox was awarded a gold medal at the 1901 exhibition of the Japan Lacquer Society and in 1904 his stationery box with cranes flying over a pine forest gained another gold medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (figures 52 and 53). Obviously he made an outstanding start as a young artist.

His desire to learn English brought Jitoku in contact with a missionary, and subsequently he converted to Christianity, attending church on Sundays in Shiba, often accompanied by his pupils. Therefore Jitoku is mentioned on the ihai by his own name instead of by a posthumous Buddhist name.

It is not known when exactly Jitoku married, but it must have been in the first decade of the 20th century. His wife Takai Kei was the elder sister of the lacquer artist Takai Tairei (1880-1971), a pupil of Ikeda Taishin. Their only son Sadao (born 1913) was not going to succeed Jitoku; he would pursue a career in business.

2.2. Commissions from the court (1905-1920)

During the first decade of the 20th century Jitoku rapidly rose in fame. It is said that he was acquainted with Ito Hirobumi and with Prince Saionji Kinmochi, who were among the more liberally minded politicians of their times. Probably in 1903 or 1907 for the first time, Jitoku made a lacquer box for the imperial court intended as a present to Mary, Princess of Wales (figure 54).⁴ Many commissions from the court would follow during the subsequent 10-15 years. Jitoku's boxes were considered among the most prestigious presents for high ranking

officials, nobility and royalty in a time when Japan had achieved its place among the world powers after the revision of the Unequal Treaties by 1900, the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1902 and after the victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. He made the coronation present for Queen Mary, a set of a writing box with paper storage box for the Dutch Royal Family, a similar set for Count Tanaka Koke, a set of a writing box with table for Katsura Taro, and a number of others.⁵ Several of these boxes and sets were published in the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society, of which Akatsuka Jitoku was an active member.

Apart from the imperial commissions, Jitoku may also have benefited from the economic boom in Japan during World War I. Fortunes were made as the result of the increased demand for iron, steel and textiles by the warring nations and the simultaneously dropping nonmilitary industrial production in Europe. From this period date his most luxurious gold lacquer objects, in tune with the prosperous time. The most opulent example is the cabinet with summer flowers, which was shown at the Taisho Exhibition of 1914 and subsequently presented to Prince Kan'in no Miya (figure 55).⁶

From 1913 onwards he started to exhibit at the Noten, the annual exhibition of designs and crafts sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce.

Akatsuka Jitoku took a wide interest in cultural matters, particularly in the art of painting (figure 56). He continued his study of Japanese-style painting with Terazaki Kogyo (1866

1919), who taught at the Tokyo Art School and whose work shows Western influences.

Highly unusual for a lacquer artist of his time, Jitoku took also lessons in oil painting from the White Horse Society (Hakubakai), an organization founded by 'the father of oil-painting in Japan' Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924), which flourished between 1896 and 1911.⁷ His teacher there was probably Kobayashi Tokusaburo (1884-1949), a graduate of the Tokyo Art School. Since only Japanese-style paintings by Jitoku are left, the lessons at Hakubakai may not have been meant to master the technique himself, but rather to become familiar with its principles. However, Western influences left their marks on Jitoku's lacquer work.

Apart from lacquered objects and paintings, he also made ceramics (figure 57). In addition, he loved theatre and the tea ceremony, and he had a particular interest in chanted no songs (utai).

2.3. Champion for recognition (1920-1936)

The economic boom between 1910 and 1920 was followed by a severe post-war depression and also by political instability during the period of Taisho Democracy. In 1923 the Great Kanto Earthquake destroyed most of Tokyo and Yokohama, including the Akatsuka house and workshop (but without casualties among family or pupils). After the reconstruction the metropolis became a very different environment from what it had been before: more cosmopolitan, more modern and oriented to mass culture.

At first glance it may be surprising that the crafts gained momentum in this unstable era. On the other hand modernization became a prerequisite to secure a place in the rapidly developing urban culture. Another challenge for lacquer art lay ahead: recognition by the Imperial Art Academy.^{8, 9}

In 1919 the Bunten exhibitions had been replaced by exhibitions organized by the Imperial Art Academy, and renamed Teiten. Again the applied arts were excluded because they were considered to lack modernity. When the Imperial Art Academy once more rejected the proposal for a crafts department at the Teiten in 1923, this decision gave impetus to great activity and creativity in the world of the applied arts.

In 1925 a group of prominent metalworkers, ceramicists and lacquerers joined in the Comprehensive Crafts Society (Kogei saisaikai), which held its first exhibition in Takashimaya department store in Tokyo. As co-founder of the Comprehensive Crafts Society and as director of the Japan Artistic Craft Association (Nihon kogei bijutsu kyokai), Akatsuka Jitoku was one of the champions in this emancipation movement. The lobby was intensified by numerous group exhibitions in department stores - the fashionable temples of consumption and entertainment. One of these shows in Takashimaya comprised work by Akatsuka Jitoku, Uematsu Hobi and Koda Shuetsu.

The first major success of the emancipation movement was the large exhibition in honour of Prince Shotoku Taishi (574-622) - ancient patron of the arts - held in May 1926 and including Japanese-style and Western-style painting, sculpture and crafts. This show was very well received, in particular lacquer art, which “was at last moving boldly forward as if it had awakened from a long slumber”.¹⁰

Another important factor in the struggle for recognition was the group of young avantgarde craftsmen called Mukei, set up in June 1926 and including the lacquer artists Matsuda Gonroku and Yamazaki Kakutaro (see Chapter V).

In October of the same year the nationwide Japan Crafts Exhibition was organized in the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in the same building and at the same time as the 7th Teiten exhibition. Press and public responded enthusiastically again. Lacquer artists of from all over the country had started to produce remarkably modern works, very different from what they had made previously. Even artists from schools with dominant styles, such as those established by Shibata Zeshin and Shirayama Shosai, adapted to the new times. Moriya Shotei, Takano Shozan, Tsuzuki Kosai and Umezawa Ryushin all turned to modernity, and so did Akatsuka Jitoku and his pupils.

The pressure built up during the previous years finally resulted in the addition of a crafts department to the 8th Teiten in 1927. As a member of the jury Jitoku was not allowed to participate in the competition, but he exhibited non-competitively a writing box with a bold design of a Chinese lion, illustrated on the first page of the lacquer section in the Teiten catalogue (figure 58).

During the struggle for recognition Jitoku’s work displayed a remarkable development to modernity. He had become a famous artist with many pupils (figure 59). A two-fold screen painted on New Year’s Day of 1929 shows twelve flaming pearls (hoju), the huge one at the top end by the master himself, the eleven ones below by his ten pupils and his son Sadao (figure 60).¹¹ Three pupils were allowed to adopt the character Ji in their names: Mitamura Jiho, Ota Jiteki and Yokogoshi Jinyu. Before long Jiho was to replace Jitoku as participant in the Teiten exhibitions, and he also became his artistic heir.

In 1930 Akatsuka Jitoku was appointed member of the Imperial Art Academy (Teikoku bijutsuin), an honour comparable to the title of Imperial Craftsman (Teishitsu gigeiin) bestowed on such illustrious predecessors as Shibata Zeshin, Ikeda Taishin and Shirayama Shosai (figure 61). This must have felt as the crown on his career.

On February 1st 1936 Akatsuka Jitoku died, not yet 65 years old. A short newspaper report disclosed some details: “Member of the Imperial Art Academy Akatsuka Hizaemon (Jitoku) had a stomach ulcer on the 22nd of last month and was under medical treatment. On the 1st at 0.25 PM he died at his home in Shiba-ku Shinzensha-cho 16” (figure 62). On April 18th and 19th a memorial exhibition was held at the Tokyo Art Club, showing over 30 objects and paintings from various owners. Jiho organized a meeting of all Jitoku’s students and former

students. A year later a gathering took place in Ueno Park to commemorate him. The black booklet published on this occasion was entitled *Smoke Incense* (Ko no kemuri), containing personal memories of the master by his pupils and friends, among them Mitamura Jiho and Matsuda Gonroku. Jitoku's grave is at Tama Reien Cemetery in Fuchu-ku, his house was destroyed during World War II.

3. Work

Virtually all published lacquers by Akatsuka Jitoku are large objects such as writing boxes, writing tables, paper storage boxes and cosmetic boxes. When looking through the illustrations they leave the impression that his work may simply be divided into gold boxes and black boxes. Fortunately, there is more to be said about them, especially as the result of the fact that most of Jitoku's objects are more or less datable. In a number of cases it is exactly known when the object was completed from the inscription on the storage box, in other cases it is known in which year the object was presented as an imperial gift – at least they must have been made at some date before their presentation. In addition, several exhibition catalogues from the 1920s, in which recent work of Jitoku was published, remain today and several boxes were illustrated in the *Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society*.

3.1. Collections

The total number of works by Jitoku seen personally amounts to 36, increased by a further 28 pieces published in the literature. The works are scattered over many museums and private collections.¹² Most of the dozen objects found outside Japan had been official presents.

3.2. The 'Moonlight style' (1900-1905)

As mentioned before, Akatsuka Jitoku most probably became an independent artist after his father's death in 1900. The first datable boxes are the writing box decorated with a fluteplaying boy riding on the back of an ox, and the stationery box with cranes flying over a pine forest (figures 52 and 63). The writing box won a gold medal at the exhibition of the Japan Lacquer Society in 1901, whereas the stationery box won a gold medal at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904, and is now in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

A cosmetic box with pampas grass and quails in the Baur Collection has the same unusual rounded shape as the box in the Walters Art Gallery, and also lacks silver rims (figure 64). In addition, both boxes bear the same octagonal red seal not observed in any other pieces. It is conceivable that the box from the Baur Collection is the 'Autumn field cosmetic box' which, according to the list of the memorial exhibition held after Jitoku's death and according to an article in the *Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society*, was awarded a second prize at the 1900 Paris World Fair.³

All three boxes convey a poetical nocturnal atmosphere, and two of them show the moon. The techniques are similar too: the refined decorations on black grounds are executed in gold and silver low relief (*hiramakie*) and in the polished-out technique (*togidashi*). Neither coloured lacquer nor mother-of-pearl inlays were employed on the exterior surfaces, only the crowns of the cranes are red. All boxes show depictions of animals in their natural surroundings in an unmistakably Japanese style. A recently published set of a writing box with paper storage box showing cherry trees under the full moon is done in the same style and technique, again on black grounds.¹³

3.3. The 'Sunlight style' (1905-1920)

Jitoku is best known for his gold ground boxes and cabinets with large flowering plants,

rendered in a mixture of Japanese and Western representational methods. The botanical decorations have been executed in gold and silver high relief (takamakie), often with the addition of mother-of-pearl inlays with green, purple or pink hues. The gold grounds feature a granular appearance and evoke the impression of warm sunlight. On boxes, the decorations start at one of the sides or corners and continue over the edges onto the other sides and the lid. Often the illusion of space has been created by the contrast of the tangible relief of the overflowing design and the ethereal effect of the granular gold ground (figure 65). The interiors are usually lined with a rich orange-brown pear-skin ground (nashiji), and the boxes have silver rims. These objects make a luxurious impression. Many were made for or acquired by the Imperial Household Ministry and furnished with the chrysanthemum crest.¹⁴

Three designs mark the transition between the 'Moonlight style' to the 'Sunlight style'. A drawing of such a bold design by Jitoku was already published in the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society of 1905, obviously as a novelty (figure 66).¹⁵ The first datable object in this style, but not yet with a granular gold ground, is the Sagittaria box, which was presented to the Princess of Wales in 1907 (according to the catalogue Japanese Art & Handicraft) or 1903 (according to Queen Mary's own notes) (figure 54).⁴ On the other hand, the portable cabinet that fetched a prize at one of the domestic exhibitions in 1907 and was given to Queen Mary as a coronation present in 1911, has the granular gold ground, but shows – still in Japanese style – a pair of peacocks amongst flowering azaleas and rocks (figure 67). It is likely that the 'Sunlight style' was the result of Jitoku's acquaintance with Western style oil-painting at the White Horse Society. The founders Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924) and Kume Keiichiro (1866-1934) had spent years in France to study under Raphael Collin (1850-1916) and Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884), "who created an eclectic style which utilized their academic realism with a degree of plein air expression or external light that was bright and impressionistic in effect".⁷ Since the White Horse Society existed from 1896 until 1911, it may well have influenced Jitoku in developing a style focussing on the atmosphere of sunlight and in the adoption of Western elements.

The fully developed style can be observed in an imperial presentation set of a writing box with paper storage box – now in the MOA Museum of Art -, which was already published in the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society of 1914 (figure 68). The boxes show overflowing designs of dahlias on granular gold grounds, the dahlias being executed in gold relief lacquer with red and green shades, and mother-of-pearl inlays. The same issue of the Journal illustrates a cosmetic box decorated with ferns and a flowering bog bean plant in similar techniques, which had been awarded the second prize at the Society's exhibition (figure 69). Alfred Baur purchased this box in 1927.¹⁶

The most sumptuous of Jitoku's works is the cabinet that was presented to Prince Kan'in no Miya at the Taisho Exhibition in 1914 (figure 55). A departure from his work in this period is the employment of the polished-out technique (togidashi) in parts of the decoration and the application of orange pigment (on the backside). More restrained examples from this period are the Hibiscus set of a writing box with table for Katsura Taro, presented in 1915 in

gratitude for arranging the marriage between Princess Satoko and Prince Hidari Fushimi, and the Peony set of a writing box with paper storage box for the Dutch royal family, probably presented to Queen Wilhelmina during Crown-Prince Hirohito's visit to the Netherlands in 1921 (figures 70 and 71).

How long he continued to work in the 'Sunlight style' is not exactly clear. The Gentian box was presented to the Swedish rear-admiral Sten Ankarcrona in 1923 and the Shakuyaku

box to an unknown beneficiary in 1924 (figure 72).^{17, 18} No firm conclusions can be drawn from these dates, however, since it was not uncommon that the Imperial Household Ministry kept objects in store for some time. Of course, it is equally possible that Jitoku continued to produce such boxes for the court during the period of artistic innovation in the 1920s, since they must have been a considerable source of income for him.

3.4. 'New ways' (1920-1936)

After the fiftieth year of his life, Akatsuka Jitoku started to search for artistic innovation, no doubt prompted by the debate on the lack of modernity in lacquer art and the ambition of craftsmen to participate in the Teiten exhibitions. Gradually the bold designs on gold grounds gave way to a variety of styles with more restrained decorations and even plain objects.

The writing box with cranes flying over water in the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto, completed in 1921, is an interesting and successful early example of such a new style (figure 73). The vivid movements of the waves have been rendered in slow running black lacquer (shibo urushi), the mother-of-pearl inlays for the cranes are largely covered with gold lacquer. Also the shape of the box and its interior are departures from his previous work.

In contrast, the Bamboo Grove set of a writing box with table in the same museum, completed in 1923, seems to recall the work of Jitoku's early years. The refined depiction of windswept bamboo is done in low relief (hiramakie) and in the polished-out technique (togidashi), so creating the illusion of proximity and distance (figure 74). The decoration of the table is limited to the right upper triangle and focuses on the bamboo stalks, whereas the writing box shows their crowns. So far, it is the only work of which the other contributing craftsmen are known: the wooden cores were manufactures by Umetani Ryokichiro and the basic coatings were applied by Uchida Sokan, both in 1920.¹⁹

In 1921, the Nihonbashi Art Club in Tokyo organized an exhibition of lacquerware by Uematsu Hobi, Koda Shuetsu and Akatsuka Jitoku. The small catalogue illustrates the further development of Jitoku's work: a simple table with stylized inlays of small plum blossoms as the only decoration, a box with a design of a Chinese lion (somewhat similar to the one on the writing box he was to exhibit at the 1927 Teiten) and a writing box with a decoration on plain wood.²⁰ In 1926 the three artists exhibited together again at Takashimaya department store in Osaka.

The objects made of lacquered cloth (kanshitsu), which Jitoku started to make in the late 1920s, form a major break with all his previous work. In this ancient technique several layers of lacquered cloth are laid over a mould of wood, clay or plaster. After drying, the mould is usually removed and the object is ready for further treatment. The simulated antique bronze plate with a restrained decoration of stylized cloves is such an example of kanshitsu (figure

75). At the 1928 Teiten, Jitoku showed an ornamental jar with a simple decoration of ribs (figure 76). He must have been captured by this technique since he exhibited similar objects at the Teiten of 1929 and 1930. The former is an ornamental jar with stylized cherry blossoms, now in the Okura Shukokan Museum in Tokyo (figure 77). Although the jar is listed by the museum as a kanshitsu object, it is so heavy that its body is probably made of pottery - one of Jitoku's other skills.

In his late years Akatsuka Jitoku also manufactured furniture such as tables and large cabinets. Two cabinets were shown in Paris at an exhibition of Japanese paintings in 1929.²¹ An interesting table shown at a group exhibition at Mitsukoshi department store in 1930 is covered with layers of black lacquer mixed with some red lacquer (urumi) and only adorned with stylized plum blossoms at the edges.²²

One of the cabinets was unfinished at the time of Jitoku's death. It concerns a beautifully proportioned cabinet coated with brown and dark red lacquer and simple stylized inlays set in metal (figure 78). When the master died only one of the doors had been decorated with a large Chinese lion, the other door was unfinished. With the aid of the design drawings, Mitamura Jiho and Ota Jiteki were able to complete the cabinet (figure 79). The design drawings, now mounted as a painting, are still in the possession of the Akatsuka family. An inscription of Jitoku's adopted brother on the inside of one of the doors is dated 1938, two years after Jitoku's death.²³

3.5. Signatures

Figure 80 suggests that the development of Jitoku's signatures is loosely related with the chronology of styles.

The octagonal seals and the signatures in easily readable kanji seem to be connected with the early period. The cursive signature reflects the period between 1914 and 1921, whereas the modernistic objects from early Showa bear a different type of seal.

The full signature Akatsuka Jitoku is more often found on important objects such as writing sets and cabinets. Of course, the numbers are still too small to allow firm conclusions.

4. Conclusion

Akatsuka Jitoku was one of the prominent figures in lacquer art of the first half of the 20th century, both as an innovative artist and as a leader of the emancipation movement. From the artistic point of view his 'Sunlight style' with a mixture of Japanese and Western elements was his most successful contribution to Japanese lacquer art; their large designs can be considered precursors of Modernism. Although these features are considered the result of Jitoku's lessons in oil-painting, Nihonga also aimed at reconciling Japanese and Western representation. The sense of sunlight in his designs is considered a characteristic of Japanese style painting of the early 20th century as well. Probably the optimistic outlook of society in the first two decades of the new century just crept into the arts.

The turbulent 1920s saw a dramatic revitalization in the art of lacquering during the struggle for recognition by the Imperial Art Academy. In particular lacquer artists became conscious of the fact that they had been too much focused on their technical skills at the expense of the originality of design. Jitoku was one of the champions who guided crafts people to recognition, which was finally achieved at the 8th Teiten exhibition of 1927.

Notes

1. Most biographical data were obtained from Mrs Akatsuka Hisako, Sadao's widow and Jitoku's daughter-in-law, and from Professor Mitamura Arisumi, grandson of Jitoku's first pupil Mitamura Jiho.
2. Tokyo meiko kagami (Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo) compiled by the Kangyo-ka. Yurindo, Tokyo 1879. Published again by Uchida Tokugo in Shikkoshi 1983, and translated into German for Heinz & Else Kress by Anita Brockmann in 2003.
3. Nihon shikkokai zasshi, Meiji 34 (1900), no. 12.
4. According to the catalogue Japanese Art & Handicrafts (1915) the Sagittaria box was presented to Princess Mary in 1907, but according to her own catalogue this happened already in 1903 (personal communication Julia Harland, assistant to The Surveyor of The Queen's Works of Art, 8 March 1988).
5. The set for Katsura Taro was examined at Wakayama Antiques in 1988.
6. The cabinet was examined at Chikuryudo Gallery in 1999.
7. Takana, Atsushi, 'The Life and Arts of Kuroda Seiki' at the website of Kuroda Memorial Hall (www.tobunken.go.jp/kuroda/gallery/english/life).

8. Shiraishi, Masami, 'The Modernization of Japanese Lacquer Art', in: Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Master Pieces. Weatherhill/Tankosha, New York/Tokyo/Kyoto 1982, pp. 15-23.
9. Shiraishi, Masami, 'Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Art', in: Rainbows and Shimmering Bridges. Contemporary Japanese Lacquerware. Japan Society Inc., New York 1996, pp. 13-19.
10. Shiraishi 1982, p. 19.
11. The names of the pupils are: Mitamura Jiho, Ota Jiteki, Yokogoshi Jinyu, Seki Yonematsu, Yoshioka Ikuzo, Okamoto Shozo, Kuji Katsuto, Minami Tadashi, Ozawa Tetsuji and Yamaura Hitoshi.
12. Works seen personally:
 - a. Baur Collection, Geneva: Bogbean tebako and Autumn Field tebako
 - b. Buckingham Palace, London: imperial Sagittaria tebako (unsigned) and imperial portable cabinet Peacocks and Azaleas
 - c. Christie's New York: imperial Sagittaria tebako and imperial Shakuyaku tebako
 - d. Khalili Collection, London: imperial Clematis tebako (unsigned)
 - e. Noordeinde Palace, The Hague: imperial Peony set of suzuribako with ryoshibako
 - f. Eskenazi, London: imperial Gentian tebako (unsigned)
 - g. Spinks, London: Wisteria portable cabinet
 - h. Drouot, Paris: imperial Rhododendron tebako (unsigned)
 - i. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore: Pine Forest ryoshibako
 - j. MOA Museum of Art, Atami: imperial Dahlia set of suzuribako with ryoshibako, Herd Boy suzuribako and tray with plovers and waves
 - k. Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art: Bamboo Grove set of suzuribako with bundai and Flying Cranes suzuribako.
 - l. Ishikawa Wajima Urushi Art Museum: circular kogo
 - m. Geidai Museum, Tokyo: Cock's combs suzuribako
 - n. Okura Shukokan Museum, Tokyo: kanshitsu jar
 - o. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum: Peony-Butterfly tebako, Peony tray for an incense burner and Phoenix kogo.
 - p. Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum: Azalea set of suzuribako with ryoshibako, Flowering Cherry set of suzuribako with ryoshibako, Flowering Cherry set of suzuribako with bundai and Shochikubai set of suzuribako with ryoshibako.
 - q. Chikuryudo Gallery, Tokyo: urumi table, Summer Flower cabinet, kanshitsu plate and 'Pinechewing Cranes' set of suzuribako with bundai.
 - r. Wakayama Antiques: imperial Hibiscus set of suzuribako and bundai
 - s. Mino Bijutsu, Tokyo: Shishi cabinet
 - t. Fujitorii Antiques, Tokyo: small box with waves
 - u. Takeda Antiques, Kyoto: small box with blossom branch
 - v. Odawara Antiques, Tokyo: Wisteria suzuribako
13. Arts of East and West from World Expositions (exhibition catalogue). Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo 2004, p. 136, figure I-378.
14. Dees, Jan, 'Japanese Imperial Presentation Boxes 1900-1930', in: Oriental Art 1997, vol. XLIII (no.1), pp. 2-9.
15. Nihon shikkokai zasshi, Meiji 38 (1905), no. 57.
16. Nihon shikkokai zasshi, Taisho 3 (1914), no. 155.
17. Japanese intro and lacquer-ware from a private Swedish collection (exhibition catalogue). Eskenazi, London 1996, no. 79.
18. Christie's New York, auction catalogue 17.09.1997, lot 229.

19. These data were found in a text concerning this set from an exhibition in the Osaka Municipal Museum held in 1935, owned by professor Mitamura Arisumi.
20. This exhibition included eight objects by Jitoku.
21. According to the papers concerning this exhibition, which are kept by the Akatsuka family, Jitoku was involved in the organization of this event and received for his efforts 'les Palmes d'officier d'Académie' from the French government. It seems that two of his cabinets and one cigar box were shown at this exhibition.
22. This table was examined at Chikuryudo Gallery in Tokyo in 2002.
23. This cabinet was examined at Mino Art Gallery in Tokyo in 2002.

Chapter IV

Rokkaku Shisui (1867-1950)

-Inspiration from ancient China

1. Introduction

Although born a few years before Akatsuka Jitoku and despite an interesting early career, Rokkaku Shisui's artistic breakthrough came only in the 1920s when Japanese lacquer art entered a period of unprecedented modernization. Unconventional and innovative designs were considered of paramount interest for a work of art, rather than sophisticated techniques. Whereas most artists absorbed influences from contemporary European art movements, selfwilled Rokkaku Shisui found inspiration for renewal in ancient Chinese lacquerware excavated in Korea.

2. Biography

2.1. Childhood, training and early career (1867-1898)

On 20 March 1867 Shisui was born in the village of Oharamura on Nomishima Island in the Seto Inland Sea.¹ His childhood name was Chutaro. The eldest son of the farmer Fujioka Han'emon, Chutaro was expected to succeed his father. However, he had an inclination for learning. After his training as a primary school teacher in nearby Hiroshima, Chutaro wanted to widen his horizon and moved to Tokyo at the age of seventeen. While making a living by opening a small tutoring school and by teaching mathematic to candidates of the military academy, Fujioka Chutaro took lessons himself in English and Chinese.

In 1886 he was obliged to return to Hiroshima prefecture in order to undergo physical examination for conscription and also to fulfill his one year teaching duty at primary schools. One day, Chutaro read in the newspaper about the planned opening of the Tokyo Art School, and he became possessed by the idea of entering this institution.

Back in Tokyo, he studied Japanese and Chinese literature, English and mathematics to prepare for his entrance examination. In addition, he got painting lessons from Yuki Masaaki (1834-1904), who was also the teacher of Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958), one of the future celebrities of Nihonga.

On 1 February 1889, Chutaro - and also Taikan - was admitted to the Tokyo Art School in the first group of students. After a year and a half of general education from eminent men

such as the school founders Ernest Fenollosa (aesthetics) and Okakura Kakuzo (art history), the students had to make their choice for a training in one of the three departments: painting, sculpture or crafts (lacquer and metalwork). The newly appointed head of the lacquer section, Ogawa Shomin, seems to have persuaded Chutaro into joining his class as its only pupil. This choice was surprising, since the young man from Hiroshima didn't have any experience in

lacquer, nor had he been born into a family of lacquerers. He would certainly have preferred painting, but it is likely that his choice was urged by the feeling of obligation to serve his country in the patriotic mood of the late 1880s: at least one of the students had to do lacquer. Since Ogawa Shomin already died after a half year, Chutarō received his technical training mainly from Shirayama Shosai, whereas design was taught by Imaizumi Yusaku. In July 1893, he was in the first group of 11 students who graduated from the Tokyo Art School. After graduation he was employed by the school, and in December of the same year he was appointed associate professor, filling the gap after the untimely resignation of Shirayama Shosai.² Also in 1893 he married Rokkaku Ko, and was adopted into her family of low nobility. Since then he is known as Rokkaku Chutarō, who took the art name Shisui. Already during the 1890s, Shisui's inquisitive nature became apparent. As a student he discovered a method of manufacturing charcoal for sketching - a welcome supplement to his income. After graduation, Shisui developed new ways of producing silver and gold powder, and, most importantly, he made new lacquer pigments. So far the palette of lacquer had been limited to five colours: black, brown, yellow, red and green. Shisui considered this limitation a serious drawback for the development of lacquer art. Shortly before his graduation he had seen a lacquer object in unusual colours by Tawara Sakae - also from Hiroshima prefecture -, and this confrontation prompted his wish to make new lacquers.³ In 1897, after five years of experimentation, he managed to produce a series of new pigments based on bismuth chloride: white, blue, violet and orange. With Dr. Yoshida Hikojiro from the chemistry department of the Tokyo Art School as an advisor, he established the Nisshin lacquer factory, in which also Isoya Kanzan was involved.⁴ Shisui omitted to patent his findings and even to publish them. Later in life he regretted this neglect when Miyama Kisaburo was credited with the invention of new pigments in his laboratory seven years later. However, the lacquer paintings on silk and paper, which Shisui produced for several years and which were shown at the exhibitions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, testify that he had been the first to produce and apply the new pigments, although these works remained unnoticed at the time (figure 81). Another achievement was his winning design in the contest for a bookcase for the emperor in 1893. It took him a full year to elaborate the precise drawing for the all-over decoration with chrysanthemums before it could be executed. A team of fine craftsmen worked for three years to produce the bookshelf in the workshop of the Imperial Household Ministry. The team was directed by Kawanobe Itcho (lacquer) and Unno Shomin (metal) - both professors of the Tokyo Art School (figure 82).⁵

Already at an early age Shisui was entrusted with official tasks. During the late 1890s and early 1900s, he made numerous research trips throughout the country in the process of designating national treasures. He was also in charge of the restoration of the Golden Pavilion

in the Chusonji in Hiraizumi. In 1898, he traveled to China by order of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce to investigate the production of lacquer in that country.

In 1901-1902 he published *Meeting of Motifs: New Choices* (Myō no shiori: shinsen), a selection of traditional design drawings for artists.⁶

2.2. To America and the lacquer artist as businessman (1898-1920)

1898 must have been a significant year in Rokkaku Shisui's life. Both political and personal factors caused increasing tensions at the Tokyo Art School, which resulted in the forced abdication of its head Okakura Kakuzō. Numerous faculty members followed Okakura, including the painters Hashimoto Gaho (1835-1908), Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunso (1874-1911), to found the Japan Art Institute (Nihon bijutsu-in). Shisui resigned in sympathy.

While making a living by teaching lacquer in Fukushima prefecture (1900), he was planning to further widen his horizon - one of the themes of his life. After having studied the lacquerware from China and Indochina, he wanted to investigate the lacquer art of the West and explore the possibilities for export of Japanese lacquerware.

The opportunity came in 1904, when Okakura Kakuzo was invited by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to take a post as advisor in the Department of Chinese and Japanese Art. Okakura asked Rokkaku Shisui to assist him in the classification and restoration of lacquerware, and Okabe Kakuya (1872-1918) to do a similar job for metalwork. Also Yokoyama Taikan and Hishida Shunso joined the party, not to be employed by the museum, but to sell their paintings in the United States. The group left Japan on 10 February 1904, the very day that the country declared war on Russia. Nevertheless their ship arrived safely in Seattle from where they traveled to New York. Here Rokkaku Shisui made one of his well-known works: the round plaque Wagtail on rocks (figure 83). "This is a memento I made when in April of the same year I felt a bit of inspiration and scraped together materials that were in short supply at the apartment where I was staying in New York", he wrote later.⁷

After two months they started their work in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which had assembled the vast collections of Ernest Fenollosa, William Sturgis Bigelow and Edward Sylvester Morse (1838-1925). The stay of the Japanese party was sponsored by Ms Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), a central figure of the social and artistic life at her residence Fenway Court.⁸ Their traditional clothes must have attracted attention in the streets of Boston (figure 84). During four years - interrupted by one visit back home - Shisui worked in the museum. The inventory cards testify to his classification of the lacquer objects: for example, the intro with a boy riding an ox by Shirayama Shosai from the Bigelow collection is labeled as 'third class', a copy of a Heian period cosmetic box by Ogawa Shomin as 'fourth class'. In the year of their arrival in the USA, Shisui accompanied Okakura Kakuzo to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, where the latter held his famous lecture on painting.⁹ At the end of the four years term, Shisui worked in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art on the restoration of lacquerware for two months. A two and a half months trip through Europe, Russia and China brought him back to Japan in 1908. The lasting result of his study of Western lacquerware was that Shisui became convinced of the superior qualities of Oriental lacquer.

On his return he published the article 'Impressions of lacquer-ware in America', in which he stressed the importance of studying the climate and customs of a country in order to make export successful. In his opinion technical research was necessary to make the corpus more elastic. Apparently his call found a response, albeit with some delay. Ten years later his protégé Matsuda Gonroku produced a cosmetic box as his graduation work for the Tokyo Art School, the base of which was formed from a brass wire net covered with cloth and lacquer, and subsequently baked at a temperature of 120 degrees Celsius for 24 hours to make the box weather resistant (figure 85).¹⁰

The years between 1910 and 1920 passed comparatively uneventful. Shisui lived with his wife, two daughters and one son in the Koishikawa ward of Tokyo, at least since 1902.¹¹ In 1914 Matsuda Gonroku, the promising young lacquer artist from Kanazawa, came to live with them to continue his training at the Tokyo Art School. Three years later Shisui got a part-time employment at the institution he had left in 1898 to instruct the students in lacquer carving techniques, lacquer manufacture and design.

The rest of his time he was active in his own workshop, but he also conducted research for

the coating of railway carriages and received commissions from the Imperial Household Ministry. Apart from having an inquisitive nature, Shisui was also an enterprising person. In an essay published after Shisui's death, Matsuda expands on these two aspects of his personality. He mentions that Shisui invented so many things that he would have deserved the title Doctor of Engineering.¹² He owned many patents, and he tried to cash in several of his inventions, such as the methods of producing charcoal and new pigments. In addition, he imported raw lacquer from abroad, which aroused criticism from the established dealers, he designed the logo for Kirin beer and was involved, as an advisor, in Namiki Ryosuke's production of fancy lacquered fountain pens from 1925 onwards. No doubt his most surprising invention was the recipe for producing urushi coffee from the seeds of the lacquer tree.¹³ In this respect Shisui's idea of an artist, as reported on by Matsuda Gonroku, is highly revealing:

It is due to master Shisui's own view of art: an art object must not be an artist's livelihood. The person is not an artist if he sells his works for a living. He therefore must gain his daily bread from other sources. Master Shisui did not mind if his work could not be sold; he used gold powder without calculating loss and gain whenever he was contracted. His idea was that, once an object was sold, it becomes a commodity and is no longer a work of art. He therefore gained his livelihood as an entrepreneur.¹² On the other hand Rokkaku Shisui served the public office of professor in the Lacquer Department of the Tokyo Art School for nearly 20 years (figure 86). In 1924, like in 1893, he again succeeded Shirayama Shosai, who had fulfilled this position since 1904, but who had died in 1923.

2.3. The roaring twenties (1920-1935)

The 1920s saw much upheaval in the world of the applied arts, and Shisui was at the centre of it due to a serious conflict. As a result of the refusal of the Imperial Art Academy to exhibit the crafts (lacquer, metalwork and ceramics) at their prestigious national exhibitions, an emancipation movement emerged. Lacquer art gained momentum, not only by the organization of artists in societies and pressure groups (Shisui was one of the founding members of the Comprehensive Crafts Society in 1925), but also in a fascinating artistic modernization.¹⁴ Foreign influences such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco were incorporated in the new styles. Within a few years, traditional artists started to produce avant-garde works, which excelled in innovative designs instead of focusing on sophisticated techniques. Their efforts were not in vain, since the applied arts were finally admitted to the 8th annual exhibition of the Imperial Academy (Teiten) in 1927 - in a special Crafts Division. Rokkaku Shisui contributed two trays with the inscription 'ho Rakuro shikki no i', indicating that the works were made in the style of the lacquerware that had been excavated in Lolang (figure 87). These two square trays would be the cause of a serious conflict with heated debates over a period of a year and a half, as described below.¹⁵

In the autumn of 1925, a team of Japanese archaeologists excavated the tomb of a Chinese official named Wang Hsü in the province Lolang (Japanese: Rakuro) in Korea - at that time part of the Japanese empire.¹⁶ Lolang had been an ancient colony of China, and had developed into a significant centre of culture during the Han dynasty (206 BC - 220 AD). The artifacts in the grave were of high quality and in surprisingly good condition. Among them was a number of lacquer boxes.¹⁷ Since Shisui had enthusiastically studied Chinese lacquer objects in Korea a few years before, he was asked to classify the newly discovered objects. He was immediately captured by the unusual decorations of the boxes, executed in flowing lines and

engravings (figures 88 and 89). The freedom and directness of expression of these drawings were very different from the meticulously planned decorations of Japanese lacquer. Such paintings in lacquer must have been extremely exciting for the lacquer master, who initially had wanted to be a painter. He took ample time to investigate the objects as a member of the official committee (until 1943), and he was also involved in their restoration. Lolang lacquerware became an important source of inspiration for his own work, which took a new direction as a result of the acquaintance.

The two trays exhibited at the Teiten were among the first successful trials in his new style, but he wished to give full credit to the source of his inspiration, hence the inscription. However, the meaning of this credit line was not grasped by his colleagues. They could not understand the sudden change of his style, and suspected that the trays were actually designed and made by other artists. A group of artists named Shitsugei Seifukai expressed their accusations in the newspapers and demanded that the trays be withdrawn from the Teiten exhibition.¹⁸ Graduates from the lacquer department of the Tokyo Art School formed the group Shitsuyukai in support of Shisui, and by their investigations all accusations could be refuted. In May 1928, Shisui organized a two-day exhibition of his recent works together with some of the excavated pieces in order to explain the source of his inspiration. His anger must have been deep-seated, since he decided to sue Seifukai for libel. But in February 1929, the

director of the Tokyo Art School, Masaki Naohiko, summoned the members of Seifukai, the jury members of the Teiten, journalists, lawyers and witnesses for a conciliatory meeting. All accusations were dropped, Seifukai offered their apologies, and a detailed report of the meeting, including a group photograph, was published in *Lacquer and Craft*, the new journal of the Japan Lacquer Society (figure 90).¹⁹

This incident seems to have had more than one cause. Tensions among artists had risen during the selection process for the 8th Teiten: only 104 out of 1008 entries could be exhibited in the crafts division. Also Shisui's personality and his reputation as a contractor may have stirred resentment. And, last but not least, his inspiration by the lacquerware from Lolang was entirely misunderstood. For Rokkaku Shisui the incident did not have any long-term adverse effects. The next ten years can be regarded as the heyday of his artistic life. Many of his works from these years bear the inscription 'Rakuro kenkyu no uchi' (Lolang study object), even when the relation with the Lolang objects is not very clear to modern eyes.

From 1929 onwards, Shisui became a jury-member of the Teiten, and in 1930 his magnificent box *Shishi barking towards heaven at daybreak* was awarded the Imperial Art Academy Prize (figure 91). One might speculate that the shishi represents the artist roaring in triumph. In his early sixties, the man from Oharamura was at the peak of his fame.

Throughout his life, Shisui cherished a profound interest in the history of lacquer art. In the beginning of his career, he was involved in the designation and restoration of national treasures, and during the early 1920s he produced a series of copies of ancient treasures from temples and shrines in order to gain in-depth knowledge. As mentioned above, lacquerware from China and Indochina were also subjects of his study. All his knowledge was compiled in the book *A History of Far Eastern Lacquer Work* (Toyo shikkoshi) in 1932, which is still in use as a reference work.

2.4. Wartime (1935-1950)

In 1939 Shisui suffered the loss of his wife Ko. His only son had already passed away in 1921. Two years before, the talented new graduate of the Tokyo Art School, Tanaka Hideo, had been adopted into the family. He became known as Rokkaku Daijo (1913-1973), was

appointed assistant professor at the Tokyo Art University in 1947, and professor in 1973.²⁰ Meanwhile the international situation was deteriorating rapidly. Japan had occupied Manchuria, the economy was in poor shape and frantic nationalism was in the air. In 1940, the 2600th anniversary of the empire was celebrated. On this occasion a large exhibition was held, and all leading artists contributed their works. Rokkaku Shisui exhibited a panel showing a picture from the battlefield in China with tanks and airplanes. Wartime nationalism had not left his personality unaffected (see figure 17 in Chapter I). In 1941 Shisui was honoured with the membership of the Imperial Art Academy. Two years later he resigned as professor of the Tokyo Art School at the age of 76 years. A farewell exhibition was held where all his major Teiten and Shin Bunten pieces were shown, and a large size catalogue was published. He was succeeded by Matsuda Gonroku and Yamazaki Kakutarō.

The American Langdon Warner (1881-1955) - once a pupil of Okakura Kakuzō, but now a member of the Roberts commission which was charged with the protection of monuments in war areas - alarmed Japanese artists to leave Tokyo in view of the imminent bombardments.²¹ As a result, Shisui was evacuated to Aizu Wakamatsu, where he stayed between 1944 and 1947 - certainly a much safer place to survive the war than Tokyo. Despite his advanced age Shisui continued to participate in the national exhibitions, now called Nitten, after the war. On 15 April 1950 he died in his home in the Suginami ward of Tokyo, aged 83, after a productive and adventurous life.

3. Work

3.1. Collections

None of the great private and museum lacquer collections in Europe and North America seem to include any objects by Rokkaku Shisui - not even the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The explanation can be found in the fact that the museum collections outside Japan were compiled in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, when interest in contemporary avant-garde art was virtually non-existent. Several museums are now beginning to fill the gap. Private collectors, on the other hand, still focus on artifacts from the Edo and early Meiji periods - in particular on inro. An additional factor may be that Shisui's work is less accessible than most other Japanese lacquer.

In Japan, no less than 23 works by Shisui are being kept in the Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum. Several other museums house one or two works by the artist, whereas other objects are scattered over private collections.

For the study of Shisui's oeuvre, data about 81 works could be assembled: 35 could be examined, whereas photographs and descriptions of another 47 works were found in the literature.²² Surprisingly, only 5 works dating from before 1920 could be identified. Although the remaining 76 works are not all dated, they seem to have been produced after 1920, when the artist was over 50 years old.

3.2. Works before 1920

Only two objects from the Meiji period could be identified: a tiered box with tall trees in black, red and grey on a silver ground dating from the 1890s, once owned by Prince Saionji Kinmochi, and the round wooden panel Wagtail on Rocks, made in New York in 1904 (figures 92 and 83). Both works look modern for their time of manufacture. In addition, there is the lacquer painting of iris flowers dating from 1901 (figure 81).

Also only two Taishō works are known to date from before 1920, although they comprise hundreds of objects. A set of ten small trays decorated with plants and butterflies in traditional

style was made in 1911 (figure 93). An extensive dinner set for thirty persons is dated 1919, and comprises small tables in various sizes, cups, trays, etc. - some 350 pieces in total. The traditional decorations show flowers, blossoms, birds, butterflies and attractive border scrolls. The set was commissioned by a wealthy businessman from Shimonoseki. It is likely that

Shisui manufactured such a work as a contractor of high quality products rather than as an artist.

The five works dating from before 1920 do not allow conclusions about the nature of his work from those years.

Why so few objects dating from before 1920 are known, remains a mystery. Was his artistic output low as the result of his teaching obligations and his commercial activities? Or was much of his early work perhaps destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake?

3.3. Works after 1920

3.3.1. Copies

Between 1920 and 1925 Shisui produced a series of copies of famous ancient objects. Such exercises to gain in-depth knowledge of lacquer art from the past were not unusual. Especially Ogawa Shomin had made numerous copies like these, small and large.²³ Like Shomin, Shisui concentrated on objects from the Heian period, the first golden era of lacquer art. It is said that the artist was not satisfied by merely making faithfully looking copies, but that he tried to reproduce the works in original techniques with original tools. Copies were made of the sutra box of Kobo Daishi from the Ninna temple in Kyoto (919 AD), a pair of small chests from the Itsukushima shrine in Hiroshima (1183 AD) (figure 94) and a sutra box with an image of the god Fudo from Oku-no-in in Nara (ca.1100 AD).

A total of 10 copies were found, including several sample boards with ancient designs for students, which are kept in the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.

3.3.2. The linear style

The acquaintance with Chinese lacquerware from the Han period, as found in Lolang, had a profound effect on the artist's work. Although the first objects inspired by Han period lacquer were made in 1924/1925 after Shisui's first visit to Korea, they only developed into a style after his involvement in the Lolang excavations. Considering the number of works this influence must have persisted for some time. Twenty-five objects could be identified. This highly interesting group is very characteristic of Shisui's oeuvre. The style focuses on decorations in flowing thin lines; the techniques are lacquer painting (urushi-ga), engraving (kebori) and gold engraving (chinkinbori).²⁴ The subjects evolve from pictures derived from Lolang lacquers to more general Chinese and Japanese subjects such as blossoms, trees and birds, but also to modern designs.

All but one object in this group are trays, which the artist may have considered very suitable in size and shape, not only for the delicate painterly decorations, but also for the large variety of border designs following the Lolang style (figure 95). A mark exactly in the middle of the circular trays reveals that the artist used a compass to make the circles for the borders. The decoration Deva of Arts of the square tray, which was exhibited at the 1927 Teiten, may have been inspired by a detail on one of the Lolang excavation pieces (figures 87 and 88). He executed the seated figure in gold engraving (chinkinbori); the border with hoo birds was painted in lacquer with a very thin brush, which enhances the impression of movement; other borders were done in gold engraving. In addition to the inscription on the tray itself 'ho

Rakuro shikki no i' (freely translated: 'I hope this tray will be considered a copy of Lolang

lacquer') there is an inscription on the fitted box 'toshitsu no yukikayoi' ('knife and brush go and come back'), which emphasizes that the free movements of the tools in producing the decoration had been the revelation of Lolang lacquer for Shisui.

In several other trays, motifs from the excavated boxes can be recognized, such as the tiny figures in the centre of the tray in figure 96 (compare with the mirror box in figure 97), and the inner border of the tray in figure 98 (compare with figure 99).

The tray with a modern design of two sailing boats in figure 100 seems to be a later development in this style. The relation with the Lolang works has become tenuous.

3.3.3. Metal plaques Hyomon is an inlay technique of metal in a lacquer ground. The artist had seen large flat inlays of silver and gold in ancient lacquer objects dating from the 8th century, which are being kept in the Shosoin in Nara, and also in Chinese lacquer from the Han era. The unusual feature in Shisui's hyomon is the relief work in the metal sheet. According to his grandson Rokkaku Kijo, Shisui used dentist's equipment for embossing the decorations.²⁵ Eighteen objects with large metal plaques as their main decorations could be identified, nearly all boxes and not a single tray.

The first dated object with a large hyomon decoration is the ornamental box Deva of Arts from 1928, which was exhibited at the 9th Teiten. The oval silver sheet shows five Deva of Arts with musical instruments in linear relief (figure 101). Both sides have pairs of hoo birds in silver sheet, whereas the rims are in mother-of-pearl with gold lacquer scrolls.

Also the hyomon inlay of the circular incense container in figure 102 is made of silver, as is disclosed by an inscription on the fitted box. It shows two dragonflies and ears of rice.

One of the most unusual works in this group is the tiered box Woman with flowers, consisting of two writing boxes (figure 103). The lower writing box has the conventional ink stone, water container and brushes in Japanese style, whereas the upper writing box contains two Pilot fountain pens, a blotter and a small sponge. The lid is decorated with a large rectangular sheet of metal, in which an Indian (?) lady and a tree have been worked in repoussé. Although the metal obviously has gold and dark grey coatings, a chip near the lower rim reveals that the underlying metal is probably aluminium. The sides show trees, squirrels and birds in gold, silver sheet and mother-of-pearl. An inscription on the fitted box tells us that the work is a writing box for ladies and that it concerns a Lolang study object. The box was exhibited at the 13th Teiten in 1932 and it may have been an answer to Moriya Shotei's double writing box, which was exhibited at the 11th Teiten two years before (see figure 13 in Chapter I). Shotei's tiered box also contains one writing set in Japanese style and one in Western style, but the latter consists of two dip pens with a double ink pot and a paper knife. This double writing box may represent Shisui's first object with a decoration in so-called alumite, an expression so often used in discussions of the artist's work. Alumite seems to be a typically Japanese term for anodized aluminium, of which the porous surface has been sealed with another layer in order to improve corrosion resistance.²⁶ Shisui must have used lacquer for the sealing of the porous surface.

3.3.4. The rough style

Several of Shisui's masterpieces were made in a combination of the aforementioned techniques together with sabi, which is pulverized clay or grindstone mixed with lacquer and which produces a rusty, irregular surface. Shisui made use of this technique to produce rough surfaces, often in high relief. A total of 13 objects in this style were found. The first dated object in sabi in combination with gold engraving was the large box Shishi barking towards heaven at daybreak, which received the main award at the 1930 Teiten (figure 91).

A different combination can be seen in the elegant rectangular tray Kasugano with a tranquil scene of the Kasuga shrine in Nara (figure 104). The inscription on the fitted box says that it is a Lolang study work. Both deer and a rock are in lacquered hyomon and seem to have an age-old patina; the tall trees and the birds are executed in gold engraving. The tray was exhibited at the 1931 Teiten.

At the 1933 Teiten, Shisui exhibited the standing screen Seashore and lakeshore showing the seashore with thundering breakers on one side and the bank of a clam lake on the reverse (figure 105). Much of the seashore has been reproduced in coarse sabi, but the high relief of the six biplanes in the air and the rocks in the sea are made of hyomon inlays. The lake bank on the reverse is executed in much finer sabi in combination with engravings and application of very thin gold and silver leaf for the fishes and water plants. An inscription mentions that it again concerns a Lolang study object.

A year after the standing screen, Shisui showed the striking box Spectacle of sky and sea with a dramatic depiction of a Zeppelin on the cover - another Lolang study object - at the 15th Teiten (figure 106). Over two sides a warship amid boisterous waves can be seen, which has caught the Zeppelin in its floodlights. On examination, we expected to find that the Zeppelin had been made of alumite, but the metal detector only recognized its cabin as made of metal; the lacquer finish provides it with a bronze patina. The Zeppelin itself is modeled in high relief lacquer (takamakie). In addition, sabi in combination with engraving was applied to produce the tumultuous sea.

The framed panel with the golden eagle in figure 107 probably dates from the 1940s, since a similar panel was exhibited in 1944. In this case the metal, probably aluminium, is not lacquered but electroplated (tokin).

Several objects were made in sabi lacquer only, such as the framed panel with a white flowering plum branch (figure 108). A special feature of this panel is the decoration of the backside: a winter landscape with a river.

3.3.5. Remaining works After 1920, Shisui only manufactured a few objects in makie. One of these is the large box Ideal World, which was exhibited at the 1929 Teiten (figure 109).

The circular plate with a decoration of flowers, made in 1935, takes a special place in Shisui's oeuvre, since it is the only work on a metal base (kintai) (figure 110). This seems to have been a logical next step after the use of alumite in the hyomon decoration technique, but the makie lacquer coatings of this plate are obviously much more sophisticated than the plain

coatings of the hyomon inlays. The kintai technique would be further developed by Terai Naoji (1912-1998) after World War II.²⁷

3.3.6. Appraisal

It is fascinating to see that the objects produced after 1920 together form an innovative and coherent oeuvre. No doubt, Shisui's outburst of creativity was launched by his acquaintance with Chinese lacquer from the Han period. The initially negative reactions from colleagues did not keep him from further developing the linear style. On the contrary, his combative nature may have stimulated Shisui to prove the expressive possibilities of line drawing. Of course the spirit of the time was to his advantage, since new artistry was required from craftsmen in order to be admitted to the Teiten exhibitions.

Both extant lacquer works made between 1910 and 1920 are traditional in style and technique, but two Meiji objects look rather modern for the time of their manufacture. Therefore one would wish to see more early works by Shisui to enable a more accurate appraisal of the impact of ancient Chinese lacquerware on the development of his work. Did it

cause a complete turnabout in his artistic life, or were the seeds of his later work already present before 1920? One of these seeds was undoubtedly Shisui's inclination to painting, which made him susceptible for the painted lacquer decorations of the Lolang objects. Furthermore, the panel Wagtail on Rock (1904) was already executed in a 'rough style', although the reason for that may simply have been the lack of tools in his New York apartment.

Shisui experienced the peak of his creativity between 1925 and 1935. In the years immediately after the first objects inspired by Lolang lacquer, he developed an innovative hyomon technique and subsequently a rough style using sabi, often in combination with hyomon, engraving and other techniques.

Rokkaku Shisui's artistry holds a special position in the rapidly changing lacquer world of the first half of the 20th century. Except for the Zeppelin and a few airplanes, his subject matter is rather conventional, although full of character: his shishi is roaring, the kirin galloping, the sea boisterous, the deer tranquil. On the other hand he loved scrolls: in corners, on borders and on rims – derived from antiquity. But most significantly, he used lacquer as if it were an entirely new medium. Sprinkled decorations in gold and silver powder (makie) are subordinate to other techniques: embossed metal inlays and plaques with a mysterious patina, fluent lines and engravings, sabi rougher than that of his contemporaries. All results of his inquisitive nature.

4. Conclusion

Rokkaku Shisui's most important contribution to Japanese lacquer art was his innovative work launched by the acquaintance with the Han period lacquerware from Lolang. The conflict about questions of originality regarding the pair of trays exhibited at the 8th Teiten

resulted in the contradictory effect that he continued to exploit the source of his inspiration exhaustively. This happened when he was already 60 years old.

To a certain extent Shisui was involved in the struggle for recognition of the crafts in the mid-1920s, although he cannot be considered one of the champions since he was occupied with the excavations in Lolang in those years. By coincidence, his career was boosted as a result of the emancipation movement. His remarkably innovative work attracted so much attention that the further development of lacquer as a recognized art-form greatly benefited from it. As a professor of the Tokyo Art School he had the opportunity of infusing a whole generation of new artists with the new views and attitudes over a period of twenty years.

Notes

1. Most biographical data were obtained from Harada Yoshiko's article 'Rokkaku Shisui – hito to geijutsu' (Rokkaku Shisui – his person and art) with a detailed biographical table, published in the exhibition catalogue *Kindai nihon kogeï no kyôsho. Shisui to Nanzan ten. Rokkaku Shisui* (Great masters of modern Japanese arts and crafts. Exhibition of Shisui and Nanzan. Rokkaku Shisui) Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum 1986, pp. 55-68.
2. *Tokyo geijutsu daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tokyo bijutsu gakkô-en* (A hundred years Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, former Tokyo Art School) (vols. I-III). Gyosei, Tokyo 1992, pp. 518-519, 854-855, and 1178-1179.
3. Yoshino, Tomio, *Japanese Lacquer Ware*. Japan Travel Bureau, Tokyo 1959, p. 145.
4. *Japanese Lacquer Art, Modern Masterpieces*. Weatherhill/Tankosha, New York. Tokyo. Kyoto 1982, p. 276.
5. *Interior Decoration of the Imperial Court. Cabinets and their Decor* (exhibition catalogue).

- Sannomaru Shozokan, Tokyo 2001, p. 35-36.
6. Shimizu, Christine, Urushi. Les Laques du Japon. Flammarion, Paris 1988, pp. 259-260.
7. Selected Masterpieces from the University Museum of Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music: Grand Opening Exhibition. Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Inc./NHK, Tokyo 1999, pp. 236-237.
8. Rosenfield, John M., 'Western Style Painting in the Early Meiji Period and Its Critics', in: Shively, Donald H. (editor), Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1976, p. 206.
9. Okakura Kakuzo, 'Modern Problems in Painting', in: Collected English Writings (volume 2). Heibonsha, Tokyo 1984, pp. 60-81. Lecture held at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in July 1904.
10. Selected Masterpieces 1999, pp. 240-241.
11. Members List of the Nihon shikkokai, as published in the Nihon shikkokai zasshi (Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society) in 1902.
12. Matsuda Gonroku, 'Shisui sensei o omo' ('Recollections of Master Shisui'), in: Kindai nihon ... Rokkaku Shisui 1986, p. 54.
13. Personal communication professor Rokkaku Kijo, April 2002.
14. Dees, Jan, Ferns, Flowers and Feathers. Japanese Lacquer of the Meiji and Taisho periods from the Baur Collection. Museum fur Lackkunst/Collections Baur, Munster/Geneva 2001, Chapter II 'From Crisis to Recognition' pp. 27-41.
15. The storage box of the tray contains a booklet with detailed information about the Teiten incident. The booklet is entitled Rokkaku Shisui sensei Rakuro shikki taisei keika (Accomplishment process of Lolang lacquer works by Master Rokkaku Shisui), and has the following chapters:
- I. Introduction by Masaki Naohiko
 - II. Essay on the influence of Lolang lacquer on Shisui's work by Koba Kokichi, member of the research committee of the ancient tombs in Korea
 - III. Introduction to the two-day exhibition of Shisui's lacquer in 1928 by Tanabe Koji
 - IV. Comments by Rokkaku Shisui about his Lolang-inspired works
 - V. Report of the conciliatory meeting 1929.
- The superfluous space in the storage box suggests that the second tray may have been lost.
16. Harada, Yoshito, Lo-Lang, a report on the excavation of Wang Hsu's tomb in the Lo-Lang province, an ancient Chinese colony in Korea. The Toko-Shoin, Tokyo 1930.
17. The lacquer objects excavated in Lolang are nowadays kept in the University Museum of Tokyo University.
18. The members of Shitsugei Seifukai were:
- Takano Shigeto (Shozan)
Nakamura Zuiko
Yuki Tetsuo

Mitamura Jiho
Fukuda Komakichi
Konishi Shigetaro
Sato Youn
Tsuiko Hassui
Shoji Hoshun
Kawai Shuho
Fukushima Taisai
Iwataki Shobi
Takemori Sanji

Tabata Sosai
Takai Tairei
Horii Masakichi
Tsuishu Yosei
Umezawa Ryushin.

This list is part of the aforementioned booklet concerning the Teiten incident (see note 15).

19. 'Rokkaku kyoju junan mondai no rakuchaku' ('Settlement of the issue concerning Professor Rokkaku's ordeals') in: *Urushi to kogei* (no. 324), February 1929.

20. *Selected Masterpieces 1999*, pp. 242-243.

21. *Encyclopedia of Japan*. Kodansha, Tokyo 1999.

22. The catalogue *Kindai nihon ... Rokkaku Shisui 1986* and the catalogue *Teikoku geijutsuin kainin*, Tokyo bijutsu gakko kyoju, Rokkaku Shisui kenkyu sakuhin zuroku (Catalogue of study works by Rokkaku Shisui, member of the Imperial Art Academy, professor at the Tokyo Art School) published in conjunction with the 1943 farewell exhibition were the main sources for illustrations of works by Shisui.

All 23 works in the Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum could be examined, and in addition 12 other works were seen:

a. The Golden Eagle panel, the Plum Branch panel and the dinner set at Chikuryudo Gallery, Tokyo

b. The Wagtail on Rocks panel and two Horaisan plates in the Geidai Museum, Tokyo

c. The plate in kintai technique in the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

d. The Chrysanthemum cabinet in the Museum of the Imperial Collections, Tokyo

e. The Shishi box from the National Museum of Korea at an exhibition in Kyoto

f. The Deep Pond sweets tray at Imai, Kyoto

g. A writing box with an engraved tree in a private collection, Tokyo.

h. A tray showing a boisterous sea at Chikuryudo Gallery, Tokyo.

23. Dees, Jan, 'Chrysanthemums under the eastern hedge. Ogawa Shomin's taste for ancient lacquers', in: *Andon 32* (1988), pp. 160-167.

24. Although Shisui applied the gold engraving technique in his Lolang work, the earliest Chinese examples in this technique (qiangjing) don't seem to date from the Han era, but only from the third century. Needle engraving in itself was a Han invention. Lolang lacquerware shows precursors of gold engraving, in which the engravings are filled with pigments (Hu Shih-chang in: *2000 Years of Chinese Lacquer*. Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong and Art Gallery, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong 1993, pp. 14-25).

25. Personal communication by Professor Rokkaku Kijo in April 2002.

26. The term alumite could not be found in dictionaries and encyclopedias, but the website of Japan Administrative Labels Co., Ltd. www.Aimjal.co.jp/english/products/061.htm provides a detailed definition: "On the surface of aluminium or aluminium alloy, a porous layer is created by anodizing treatment, and then a chemically stable surface layer is obtained by plugging or sealing that porous layer. This metallic surface treatment process and/or the product produced by this process are both called alumite. This sealing process is done by high pressure steam and/or by boiling water added with

small special chemicals in order to seal and/or plug the porous surface to improve corrosion resistance."

27. *Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces 1982*, p. 105, plate 99, and pp. 249-250.

Chapter V

Yamazaki Kakutaro (1899-1984)

-Untamed artistry

1. Introduction

When Yamazaki Kakutaro graduated from the Tokyo Art School, the struggle for recognition of the crafts by the Imperial Art Academy had just begun. He wholeheartedly joined the movement as a member of the avant-garde group Mukei. In later years Kakutaro pushed hard to bring lacquer art on par with painting by producing lacquered wall panels. By successfully pursuing a career in the official institutions, he became a powerful figure in the art world in general.

2. Biography

2.1. Childhood and education (1899-1925)

Yamazaki Kakutaro was born in Higashi-Iwase, a small town on the Japan Sea in Toyama prefecture, on 26 June 1899.¹⁻⁵ During the Tokugawa era, Iwase had been a staple place for rice in the domain of the wealthy Maeda daimyo. The Yamazaki family used to have a shop for rice balls (dango) named Dangoya Kozaemon, but father Seijiro did not carry on the business.⁶ Kakutaro lost his mother Chiyo when he was three years old. His father remarried, but was forced to look for secretarial work in the distant prefecture of Ibaragi. Kakutaro was brought up by his stepmother in poor circumstances. During elementary school (jinjo shogakko) and higher elementary school (koto shogakko), Kakutaro had to supplement the family's income by delivering newspapers in the early morning and selling eggs in the afternoon. Nonetheless, he was an eager and ambitious pupil, who dreamed of becoming a journalist. He passed the entrance examination for the teacher training college (shihan gakko), but was denied admission due to his poor physical condition. His dream fell to pieces. As an alternative he started his education in the lacquer department of the Toyama Prefecture Crafts School in Takaoka at the age of sixteen. Again he turned out to be a committed student who won several prizes and was honourably given a watch by Marquis Maeda Toshitame. Following his graduation Kakutaro wanted to continue his training, but a study in the capital Tokyo was far beyond the family's means. Fortunately, the help of sponsors enabled him to enter the Tokyo Art School in 1919. It was here that he came in

touch with the great masters of his time and with their work. Shirayama Shosai was still head of the lacquer department, and his other teachers were Rokkaku Shisui and Tsujimura Shoka. In particular Shoka, who had returned from Europe and was appointed assistant-professor in 1917, encouraged Kakutaro's artistic development. In 1924 he graduated on an accessory box with a bold design of the Buddhist god Fudo (figure 111).

After graduation he stayed at the Tokyo Art School, first as an assistant and later as a teacher. He married Sonoda Shigeru; from this marriage one son and two daughters were born.

At the 12th Noten of 1924, Kakutaro was awarded an honorific certificate for a writing box with a decoration of pomegranate. The box was bought by the government and shown at L'Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels of 1925 in Paris, the name-giving event of Art Deco.

2.2. Mukei and the journey to Europe (1925-1950)

Yamazaki Kakutaro felt entirely unhappy with the state of affairs at the Tokyo Art School, where students were thoroughly trained in technical skills for producing sophisticated objects in makie at the expense of the development of their creative powers. Frustration made him

join the avant-garde group Mukei.

The group originated from meetings of metal artists, where Tsuda Shinobu (1875-1946), professor of the Tokyo Art School and just returned from studying in Europe and the United States, taught young artists about the new trends in the applied arts such as Art Deco. In June 1926 this resulted in the foundation of Mukei or 'Without Form', a group that would exert considerable influence on the modernization of the crafts during the beginning of the Showa period up to its dissolution in 1933. Apart from metal, glass and textile artists, also the lacquer artists Yamazaki Kakutaro, Matsuda Gonroku, Ota Jiteki (dates unknown), Yoshida Genjuro (1896-1958), Sato Youn (1894-1966), Suzuki Soko (dates unknown), Kato Kyozan (dates unknown) and later Isoya Akira (1904-1987) joined the group.⁷ Kakutaro was one of the most prominent members. Mukei held annual exhibitions at Mitsukoshi department store, distributed pamphlets, organized lectures, published a periodical with the same name, and so on.

Mukei no. 1, January 1927, published a declaration, said to be written by Kakutaro's lifelong friend Takamura Toyochika (1890-1972), which provides - in the high-flown language of the time - some hints about what the group aimed for and what it despised: Mukei means 'no form'...[...] We must have a blazing passion, a serious enthusiasm, unflinching patience and a beautiful yearning for the future. Yearning for the old days, retrogression, withering, rest, extinction, emptiness, silence, the maintenance of the status quo and prudence – these are what Mukei has to expel most.

Freshness, vividness, liveliness, driving ahead, lively motion, fullness, destruction of the status quo, the future and a shout of joy – Mukei raises the flag toward the distance where there is always light. [...] Those who yearn for the era when court nobles used to walk holding cherry blossoms over their heads should die first.⁸

Artists started to incorporate geometrical forms into their designs, which led in metalwork to the style of Constructivism (Kosei-ha).⁹ Mukei aimed especially at the relatively well-to-do salary men, who had moved into the suburbs after the Great Kanto Earthquake and adopted a modern lifestyle. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the capital all kinds of new trends were welcomed, such as Western-style housing along the recently constructed private railways, cafés with jazz music, and department stores which could be entered without removing one's shoes.¹⁰ In this exciting urban culture Modernist art began to flourish. In those years it was popular to include in art exhibitions model rooms filled with crafts to demonstrate their application in modern households (figures 112 - 114).

Mukei turned out to be very successful at the first Teiten shows which were open to the crafts. At the memorable 8th Teiten of 1927, Yamazaki Kakutaro exhibited a Western style toilet set with bunches of grapes. As an invited exhibitor (suisen), the metal artist Tsuda Shinobu, the spiritual father of Mukei, was not allowed to participate in the competition for his own craft. Therefore he provocatively made and showed a striking lacquer box with a sea lion on ice floes, so mocking the overemphasis of techniques in the training of lacquer artists (figure 115).¹¹

In 1928 Kakutaro was appointed assistant professor at the Tokyo Art School, a clear sign of the rapidly increasing influence of the avant-garde. At the Teiten shows he was awarded several prizes. In 1930 he showed a spectacular panel with cormorants amid waves at the 11th Teiten (figure 116). Later Kakutaro would declare that it had been at the time when he was working on the Cormorant panel that the idea broke through that colours should play a decisive role in his future work. During the subsequent years he continued to exhibit his work,

acted as a juror, went on a lecture tour for Mukei together with his friend Takamura Toyochika, and was involved in the decoration of the Imperial Waiting Room of the National Diet Building.

In September 1936, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry sent Kakutaro to Europe and the United States to investigate the possibilities for promotion of the crafts. This journey brought him to fourteen countries. Once in Europe, the Ministry of Education ordered him to stay in France to study the arts and crafts in that country. During his stay from March until September 1937 he acted as a jury member at a Paris exhibition and studied with Art Deco designer Jean Dunand (1877-1942) for several months. This acquaintance seems to have influenced Kakutaro's work as evinced in his two-panel screen with an elegant design of monkeys in graceful lines and autumn colours (figure 117). The screen was bought by the government and is now in the collection of the Geidai Museum in Tokyo. After his journey to so many countries, he all the more recognized the necessity for new criteria in the assessment of Japanese crafts, shifting from technical excellence to originality and expression.

Back in Japan Kakutaro was confronted with a drastically changed art world. In a time of rising nationalism and militarism, Education Minister Matsuda Genji had tried to organize artists in a patriotic fashion and reorganized the Imperial Art Academy for that purpose, resulting in several years of upheaval. Finally, the Teiten had been renamed Shin Bunten in 1937 and was organized by the Ministry of Education again.¹² The first work Kakutaro

exhibited at the Shin Bunten, in 1938, was a screen with three rearing horses, entitled Untamed, in the strong colours which would become his trademark.

At the Tokyo Art School the new generation was about to succeed the old one. Around the time of Rokkaku Shisui's resignation, Matsuda Gonroku and Yamazaki Kakutaro were both appointed as professors in 1943.¹³ In 1940 Kakutaro had also been appointed assistant professor at the School of Craft Techniques (Kogei gijutsu koshu-sho) attached to the Tokyo Art School, and in 1943 he became professor at this institution. However, in 1944 he was suspended from the Tokyo Art School and in 1946 he gave up all his positions as the result of a complicated conflict about the future direction of the School (either to develop the crafts for the sake of export or to stimulate the crafts as applied arts).

Of course, circumstances for lacquer artists were difficult during the war years. Gold, silver and raw lacquer became difficult to obtain, but still artists continued to produce a modest output. Also Kakutaro's private life suffered badly from the war. When his house in the Tabata ward of Tokyo burned down during one of the disastrous air raids on 10 March 1945, the Yamazaki family was evacuated to Nagano prefecture.

2.3. Official career (1950-1984)

After the defeat in World War II, Japan declared that it was going to turn itself into a nation respected for its culture instead of for its power.¹⁴ However, the social and economic conditions were poor and the traditional heritage was in danger. The destruction by fire of the wall paintings in the Main Hall of the Horyuji in 1949 made the public opinion acutely aware of the need for better protection of cultural properties. As a result the 1950 Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was established, which not only concerned the care for buildings and works of art, but also the support of intangible assets such as theatre, music and craft techniques. One clause in the Law reads: "Of the intangible cultural properties, those that are especially valuable and in danger of dying out without the government's protection are to be helped by ensuring that the holder of the property receive subsidy, supplies, or other forms of support."¹⁵ Traditional lacquer art would benefit from this legislation, but

modernistic artists like Yamazaki Kakutaro had to find their own ways to recovery. As a result, the 1950s would witness a dramatic division in the lacquer world with lasting consequences for the rest of the 20th century. One movement, led by Matsuda Gonroku, focussed on traditional aesthetics and techniques, whereas the movement, led by Yamazaki Kakutaro, advocated aesthetic expression of individual artistic ideas.^{16, 17} After the 1954 revision of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, Matsuda Gonroku and Takano Shozan were appointed Holders of Intangible Cultural Property for makie, followed by the designation of Otamaru Kodo for carved lacquer (choshitsu), Mae Taiho for gold engraving (chinkin) and Isoi Joshin for fine-line decoration (kimma). They founded the Japan Crafts Society (Nihon kogei kai) in 1955 and organized the annual Japan Traditional Crafts Exhibition (Nihon dento kogei-ten). They withdrew from the crafts section of the Nitten (successor to the Shin Bunten), where Matsuda Gonroku had been the chairman of the jury for crafts and where Yamazaki Kakutaro continued to be a member of the jury. Their ways

parted, and they became opponents for the rest of their lives (although “later in life they shook hands again”, says Kakutaro’s son Ichizo).¹⁸

After the war’s end, Kakutaro had energetically resumed his activities with the same passion as before. In 1951, during the post-war reconstruction, he had a 150 years old drugstore from the Katamachi ward in Kanazawa demolished and rebuilt in the Setagaya ward of Tokyo. This would serve as his dwelling until his death. The workshop was situated on the upper floor. Kakutaro employed several assistants and pupils who did the arduous work of applying the ground layers of his panels, and also the grinding and polishing. When several panels were completed, he ordered a craftsman from Tochigi prefecture to have them framed. His goal was to prove that by making use of urushi, pictures could be created which were at least as appealing to the general public as ink paintings or oil paintings.

Animals, often non-indigenous species, were his favourite subjects. He must have been able to observe and sketch monkeys, mandarin ducks and cranes in Japan. In Tabata, he kept ducks and a dog. He did not travel abroad to study the tigers, antelopes, reindeer, zebras or camels, which feature in his work; most designs were the results of visits to the Ueno Zoo or based on photographs in illustrated magazines.

Even more than before the war, Kakutaro was put in charge of official duties. He often served as a member of the jury of the Nitten and other exhibitions, and as a board member of various organizations. For example, he was chairman of the newly founded Association of Contemporary Handicraft Artists (Gendai kogei bijutsu ka kyokai). In 1956 he was sent to the Melbourne Olympics as a member of the Sports and Art Committee, and in 1964 he joined a similar committee for the Tokyo Olympic Games. At the time of that symbolic event the world had embraced Japan again as a member of the international community after its remarkable recovery from the disastrous wartime.

The 1960s and 1970s would bring the apotheosis of his career as an official. In 1957 he had been appointed member of the Japan Art Academy (Nihon geijutsuin), which organized the Nitten - the largest annual art show in Japan including painting, sculpture and crafts. When the Nitten was transformed into the independent Nitten Corporation one year later, Kakutaro became its secretary-general, and in 1974 its president. On the latter occasion he was presented a bronze bust of himself made by Koga Tadao. One casting of the bust has been placed in Iwase, within a stone’s throw from his elementary school (figure 118). Yamazaki Kakutaro had become an influential and even powerful man in the art world, whose opinion counted. According to his son, he was as much ‘a politician’ as an artist in his

later years, and most of his time was spent to official business. No wonder that some journalists called him 'Emperor Yamazaki' (figure 119). In 1978, however, he stepped down as president of the Nitten Corporation after allegations of tax evasion.

Yamazaki Kakutaro was a passionate and talkative man, who liked the company of other people. He often went with friends to a restaurant to spend the evening and perform narrative chanting (gidayu), his favourite pastime. In the last years of his life he suffered from Parkinson's disease and was confined to a wheelchair. Still during his lifetime he was honoured with two retrospective exhibitions: the first one held in his home province Toyama in 1981 and the second one a year later at Ginza Matsuya department store in Tokyo. The

two-volume book of his collective works Yamazaki Kakutaro sakuhin shusei was published in 1982.¹⁹ Kakutaro passed away on the 1st of March of 1984 at the age of 84. In 1995 another overview exhibition was organized at the Takaoka Art Museum.

3. Work

3.1. Collections

Most of Kakutaro's works can be found in his home province Toyama. The Suiboku Art Museum in Toyama owns 13 pieces, the Takaoka Art Museum 8 pieces, the Takaoka Kogei High School 3 pieces, the Toyama Municipal Folk Museum 2 pieces, the Sato Memorial Museum in Toyama 1 piece and Toyama Prefecture 1 piece. The artist's work can also be seen in public places such as the Iwase Community Hall, the Iwase Elementary School and the Toyama City Municipal Library. A private collector in Iwase owns 8 objects by Kakutaro. In addition, the University Art Museum in Tokyo, the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, the Kyoto Municipal Museum and the Masutani Shuji Memorial Hall in Noto have works of art by Kakutaro in their collections. Remarkably, so far not a single object was found outside Japan.

3.2. Objects

Before 1950 Yamazaki Kakutaro made all kinds of objects: writing boxes, bowls, trays, incense containers and screens, but only six wall panels. After 1950 the wall panels began to dominate his work and after 1968 he hardly made anything else than framed panels. The book Yamazaki Kakutaro sakuhin shusei includes photographs and data of 189 works. Fifty-one works date from before 1950, of which 16% are screens and 12% panels. The remaining 138 works date from after 1950, of which 9% are screens and 77% panels. This clearly shows that Kakutaro was predominantly an artist of flat surfaces, even if we take into account that not all works are included in the books and perhaps relatively more exhibition pieces than small utensils. Most panels are framed, the later ones behind glass.

It may well have been his acquaintance with Jean Dunand, which prompted Kakutaro to produce large folding screens; the first example was the screen Untamed, made in 1938. During the years after the war he was unable to do so, due to the limited space in his temporary workshop. Once he had rebuilt the wooden drugstore from Kanazawa as his new dwelling in 1951, he could resume the production of large size screens. Since nearly all Kakutaro's works are dated or datable, the chronological development in his oeuvre can be easily examined and determined.

3.3. Subjects

Although the subject matter was varied up to 1937, from that time onward Yamazaki Kakutaro concentrated on animals. Of the indigenous species he favoured monkeys, horses, mandarin-ducks, octopuses, deer, roosters, herons, hares, but more than anything else: cranes. His son Yamazaki Ichizo keeps many design drawings and those of cranes fill one large

separate box . A striking example is the 1980 panel *Moving Clouds* (figure 120). A number of designs were done several times in variations, such as the rearing horses, swimming mandarin-ducks and cranes flying in the clouds. Images of non-indigenous animals had always been rare in lacquer art, with the exceptions of elephants and tigers. Kakutaro depicted tigers too, but also many other species such as camels, zebras, reindeers, bulls and giraffes. Again he produced variations on the same theme, such as reclining tigers and standing bulls. Only a few other subjects can be observed in his work: Mt Fuji, heavenly maidens and Fudo. The only commonly depicted non-animal subject are plum blossoms, and this was repeated numerous times.

3.4. Techniques

The most innovative aspect of Kakutaro's work is the use of colours. During the Meiji era new pigments had been developed by Tawara Sakae, later by Rokkaku Shisui and Isoya Kanzan, and finally by Miyama Kisaburo, but so far no artists had fully exploited the new inventions in their work.

Another innovative feature is the application of techniques normally not used in art, but in mass produced lacquerware: *nunome-nuri* and *tataki-nuri*.^{20, 21}

In *nunome-nuri* (cloth structure) the surface is covered with lacquer-soaked cloth and then coated with additional layers of lacquer, or, alternatively, cloth is laid on the still wet lacquer surface and then removed. Both methods result in a mesh pattern in the lacquer surface, so softening the impact of the strong colours (see the margins of the orange fields in figure 121). The tool for making *tataki-nuri* (beaten lacquer) is the so-called *tanpo* (figure 122), a piece of hemp cloth or linen filled with elastic material (for instance plastic) and tied like a small bag. The *tanpo* or pad is used to beat the sticky *shibo urushi* (*urushi* mixed with egg white or tofu) in the chosen colour to make the surface irregular. After hardening, this irregular surface is subsequently covered with a layer of *suki urushi* (clear lacquer, which has a caramel colour), the surplus of which is wiped off. Again after hardening, another layer of the same colour *urushi* as the first layer is applied. After a third time of hardening in the drying cabinet (*furo*) the surface is sanded thoroughly down, whereupon a mottled pattern appears consisting of two hues of the same colour, separated by the transparent caramel colour of the *suki urushi*. The difference hues of the same colour is only the result of the layer of clear lacquer in-between (see the white colours of the birds in figure 121).²²

Close examination of his work suggests that, apart from the two aforementioned techniques, Kakutaro must have employed other uncommon methods as well. In some backgrounds he seems to have used the spatula for the application of scores in the lacquer surface. Like any other lacquer artist he also extensively used the *tsutsu* (sprinkling tube), the flat brush and the fine brush (*fude*) as can be seen in figure 123.

3.4.1 Sprinkled designs

In the first fifteen years after his graduation, Kakutaro made numerous objects with *makie* decorations, sometimes in conventional style using gold and silver powder, but also for innovative designs using *kanshitsu* powder of unusual pigments.

An example of conventional *makie* is the writing box with bush clover sprigs in low relief (*hiramakie*) and inlaid metal characters on the cover, and an interior decoration with boats, a bridge and more bush clover sprigs (all in *togidashi*). The scene depicts his home town Iwase (figure 124). The Bank of Iwase had commissioned twelve writing boxes on the occasion of its anniversary, and Kakutaro chose as subject a poem, situated in Iwase, by Otomo no

Yakamochi (718?-785), the reputed compiler of the Manyoshu and also connected with the Yamazakis according to a family legend (see note 6).²³

Around 1924, he made a scroll box for the Imperial Rescript on Education of his former elementary school in Iwase. The imperial crest forms the only decoration (figure 125). The box is signed: 'Hokudo Yamazaki Kakutaro kinsei' ('respectfully made'). Hokudo is the art name he often used up to 1950 (figure 126). According to one of his pupils the name was meant to indicate the artist's origin from the North.²¹ On examination the box appeared to be empty, since all copies of the Rescript had been removed from all schools in Japan by order of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the supreme commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in the process of dismantling the Meiji State - held responsible for the military escalation - after World War II.

A more unconventional form of sprinkled design can be observed in Kakutaro's graduation piece, an accessory box with the fierce Buddhist god Fudo seated on rocks amid flames with the sword in his right hand, made in 1924 (figure 111). The decoration is executed in raised lacquer (takamakie).

Also in this category falls one of his masterpieces, the wall panel with cormorants (figure 116). This may have been Kakutaro's first framed panel; many more would follow after World War II. The two striking cormorants are perched on pieces of rock and depicted against a background of majestic green waves. The raised black lacquer in which the birds are rendered remarkably emphasizes their sculptural appearance. The currents in the water are accentuated by the inlay of many reflecting silver flakes, whereas the use of a white pigment highlights the crests of the waves. The panel was exhibited at the 1930 Teiten.

Another major piece, the small screen with monkeys made soon after his return from Europe, is mainly executed in rather coarse kanshitsu powder with added gold powder for the accentuation of the expressive faces and for the softening of the black bodies (figure 117).

With a magnifying glass the dry lacquer splinters are clearly visible. The three monkeys sit or move on the branch of an oak tree, obviously in autumn. Apart from the vividly curved lines, also the employed pigments are unusual. Kakutaro must have been one of the first to use the beige pigment made of titanium, which became so fashionable around 1940. The signature reads 'Hokudo saku'. The screen was exhibited at the 3rd Shin Bunten of 1939.

Up to one of his last works Mid Autumn of 1981, Kakutaro would continue to use the sprinkling method in numerous works, mostly in combination with more innovative techniques.

3.4.2 Plain colours

Between 1925 and 1952 Yamazaki Kakutaro made objects in strong colours without softening them by imprinting textile patterns.

The first group consists of modern-style utensils, such as a mirror, a tobacco set and a jewellery box, which he made as a member of the avant-garde group Mukei between 1926 and 1933. The motifs are strongly simplified and include geometrical elements (figures 113 and 114). These works can be considered Art Deco objects. Another good example is the circular mirror with a symmetrical decoration of blackberries, depicted in red, two shades of green and brown on a light green ground, made in 1929 (figure 127). The plants are outlined with gold. Again the signature reads 'Hokudo saku'.

The second group are screens and panels dating from the period 1940 -1952 and includes several of his best works. The two-fold screen Resting Wings was made in 1941, and shows two large black eagles, whose feathers, beaks and claws are detailed with gold and silver

powder (figure 128). The birds are perched on a cliff top of purple lacquer. The background is divided into three glossy areas of bright red, plain red and purple lacquer in slightly decreasing levels; the birds themselves are rendered in high relief. Resting Wings has been interpreted as filled with presentiment and foreboding of the imminent war and is certainly remote from the delicate designs of the first decades of the 20th century. Nobody would fancy accusing Yamazaki Kakutaro of yearning for nostalgia. The work was exhibited at the 4th Shin Bunten.

One of Kakutaro's most remarkable creations is the small two-fold screen Sky made in 1950, and probably his last major work to include the art name Hokudo in the signature: 'Hokudo Yamazaki Kakutaro tsukuru kore' ('made this'). The screen depicts two telegraph poles, put at a striking angle to each other, with their connecting wires (figure 129). The poles are done in glossy black lacquer with subtle ton sur ton detailing. They stand out against ivory clouds which have been polished back to the level of the cobalt sky at the edges. The left part of the screen carries the mass of the design, whereas the right part shows the empty sky with a single bird. According to his son, Kakutaro was lying on the veranda floor of his house one day, looked up and saw the clouded blue sky with the telegraph poles. This was the reason for making the screen with such an utterly new design. Surprisingly, the artist continued to focus on animals and did not try his hand on other subjects from urban life again. The screen was shown at the 6th Nitten exhibition.

At the 8th Nitten of 1952 Kakutaro contributed the standing screen Kanzan and Jittoku (figure 130). The legendary mad sages from China are depicted with their attributes: the scroll and the broom. They are standing under a tall pine tree and bamboo by a stream, in which three herons are wading. The backside shows Mount Horai with the Three Friends (shochikubai): bamboo, pine and plum. The colours in the front scene are stronger than those on the backside. Interestingly, the artist made a second version of the Kanzan and Jittoku theme in 1973, very similar to the original version, but without the herons. It concerns a wall panel in strong colours, but in this case the flat colours are mitigated by the addition of gold particles and shades in darker pigments.

3.4.3 Cashew

However, according to Ito Hiroshi, who was an intern at Kakutaro's workshop between 1953 and 1957, the 1952 standing screen Kanzan and Jittoku was not executed in urushi but in cashew – an urushi substitute.²⁴

After the Second World War the lacquer supply was very scarce, whereas the demand was high due to the reconstruction of the country. Prices soared. In 1948 the import from Vietnam could be continued, but only when the import from China was resumed after the 1952 peace treaty the market became temporarily less tight. However, the 1958 Nagasaki Flag Incident (the Chinese flag was burned by a Japanese nationalist), triggered a Chinese lacquer boycott for two years.²⁵

These circumstances greatly accelerated the development of urushi substitutes, in particular for industrial production of cars, electrical appliances, cameras, microscopes, etc. Cashew, an oil made from the nutshells, became a popular alternative, especially for plastic bodies. It was patented in 1950.

Yamazaki Kakutaro, who needed large amounts of lacquer for his large-size objects and who was interested in exploring new grounds, applied cashew for two years. According to Ito Hiroshi also the 1953 screen Monkeys (figure 131) was partly executed in cashew.

3.4.4 Textile patterns

The first work Kakutaro exhibited at the Shin Bunten after his return from Europe was the screen *Untamed* of 1938. The work depicted three rearing horses in red, light green and white, respectively. The area immediately around the horses was coloured mauve, the background brown. The present whereabouts of the screen are unknown, but one of his pupils reported that the strong colours of the bodies were somewhat softened by the application of textile normally used for *kanshitsu*. This seems to have been the first time the artist employed the *nunome* technique in one of his major works. He would use this technique from popular lacquer production more often from 1953 onward.

In that year Yamazaki Kakutaro made two large triptych screens featuring *nunome* grounds. The screen *Monkeys* was exhibited at the 9th Nitten (figure 131). It shows nine monkeys in different positions surrounded by autumn leaves. The white outlines of the bodies provide the composition with a dynamic character, whereas the red fields partition the extensive background and 'frame' the animals. The *nunome* ground is highlighted by the use of two colours beige. The same effect can be observed in the two-fold screen *Twin Tigers* of 1958. According to Ito Hiroshi the monkeys and the red areas were executed in cashew, whereas the surroundings were done in *urushi*.

In later years Kakutaro would continue to employ this technique occasionally, but in a less prominent manner. For example, the ornamental tray (*kazaribon*) *Hérons* of 1967 shows three herons surrounded by bamboo (figure 132). The orange ground has been imprinted with textile, which can be clearly seen at the margins, probably by making use of the *tanpo*.

3.4.5 Rough textures

In the early 1960s, Kakutaro made several objects in unusually coarse textures. The best known among them is the two-fold screen *Evening Glow*, exhibited at the 1963 Nitten (figure 133). The large screen shows a desert scene of three camels in the evening glow, surrounded by the encroaching black night. Extensive areas in the background show diagonal hatching and have been coated with a second layer of lacquer in a different colour, which was subsequently polished back. The fur of the animals, in particular on their hunches, is realistically rendered by the thick layers of lacquer. Several areas are obviously padded, which is consistent with Hyakuzuka Shoya's statement that his teacher employed the *tatakinuri* technique on this screen, but according to another pupil, Katsu Masahiro, Kakutaro also made use of a rough brush in this screen. The application of earth colours is a striking departure from the bright lacquers used in most of his other work.

3.4.6 Mottled pictures

It is not so easy to decide when exactly the artist started to make mottled pictures, which constitute such a significant part of his later work. The first examples seem to date back from the pre-war period, but these were exceptions. The standing screen *Horse*, exhibited at the 13th Nitten of 1957, may be considered the starting point for this series of works (figure 134). On one side it shows a red horse in gallop on a black ground, the reverse a rearing black horse on a red ground. Both vibrant animals have coarsely mottled bodies, and the yellow surroundings have been worked in a mixture with brown. According to his pupil Katsu Masahiro, who took part in the manufacture, it took about one month to produce the standing screen.

To the 1962 Nitten, he contributed the large two-fold screen *Refreshing Autumn* featuring two giraffes (figure 135). The animals, their surroundings and the background are all worked to produce a mottled effect with separated, harmonious tones. The yellows and greens suggest warm sunlight and succulent pastures, so producing a refreshing atmosphere.

From that time onward Kakutaro would apply this effect abundantly, for example on the kazaribon Herons, but also in a very delicate manner in the crane on the tea caddy Moving Clouds of 1979 (figure 136). According to the signature and inscription inside, the tea caddy itself had been made by another lacquer craftsman, Uchida Sokan, when he was eighty years old.²⁶ Yamazaki Kakutaro added the decoration: the crane in delicate tataki-nuri in various whites, silver grey, natural lacquer and gold, with the addition of green, brown and gold in the dark parts of the neck and the wings. It is difficult to imagine that the tanpo was used on such small areas; possibly the irregular effect was here created by padding with a brush. Judging the refined decoration of the tea caddy, Kakutaro must have become a master in the technique. That he did not ignore the importance of technical skills can be gathered from his article in Kogei News: 'Warning on the Depreciation of Technique'.

Tataki-nuri on a much larger scale can be observed on the 1980 framed panel Monkey (figure 137). The monkey itself is worked in relief: the body in two tints of blue, the face in two tints of red with the addition of some gold powder to enhance the reflection, the hands

and feet in dark green and dark grey. Similarly, the three large ovals and the background are each worked in two tints of green.

3.5 Stylistic features

Kakutaro had the habit of drawing the outlines of his subjects. In most cases it concerns black lines, but occasionally he drew inconspicuous outlines in natural lacquer such as on the screen Refreshing Autumn or, on the contrary, heavy lines such as on the screen Evening Glow in order to bring the camels to the fore (figures 130, 135 and 133). In both triptych screens with nunome grounds of 1953 the lines do not exactly follow the outlines of the animals' bodies, which results in a particularly vibrant or even nervous effect (figure 131). Only in the last years of his life the outlines were sometimes abandoned as can be observed in the panel Mid Autumn (figure 138).

The coloured fields around the figures, which usually faintly reflect their outlines, are another stylistic feature in Kakutaro's oeuvre (figures 128, 130 and 131). These fields may look like a sort of auras of the portrayed animals, but in fact such partitions of the background often work out as substitutes for background decoration. As a result the beholder will be even more focussed on the subject. Kakutaro would continue to apply such partitions of the background in strong colours up to 1970.

A subtle characteristic of his style is the angularity in the depiction of the animal figures, which he regularly employed throughout his life. This can already be observed in the large panel with cormorants of 1930, in the eagles of the screen Resting Wings of 1941, but also in several of his crane and tiger figures (figures 116, 128, 136 and 139). Even the greyhounds in Mid Autumn of 1981 have slightly angulated outlines (figure 138). The dogs are rendered in light brown kanshitsu powder, the one in the foreground in a lighter tone than the one in the background. The ground is worked in tataki-nuri consisting of two colours of green and black with the addition of gold flakes to simulate the light of autumn.

4. Conclusion

Yamazaki Kakutaro showed the refreshing effect of colours in lacquer designs. In addition he helped liberate lacquer artists from the habit of being primarily focussed on technique. By the adoption of methods for mass production, he demonstrated that techniques are subordinate to the creative concept. In doing so in a time when special techniques became to be considered as intangible cultural properties, he forced the division of lacquer art into a traditional craft movement and a contemporary craft movement, each with their own organizations and annual

exhibitions. By the production of lacquered panels in his later life the distinction between applied arts and fine arts faded. This might have been one of the reasons for his appointment as president of the Nitten Corporation, which organizes the biggest annual art exhibition in Japan up to the present day.

His panels in bright plain colours and those in tataki-nuri, mostly portraying animals, are counted as his most significant material contributions to lacquer art.

Notes

1. 'Ryaku-nenpu' ('Biography'), in: Yamazaki Kakutaro Retrospective Exhibition. Takaoka Art Museum, Takaoka 1995, pp. 73-76.
2. Kenzo Tazuka, 'Yamazaki Kakutaro-shi no hito to geijutsu' ('Yamazaki Kakutaro, his character and work'), in: Yamazaki Kakutaro sakuhin-shu. Korinsha Shuppan Kabushiki Kaisha, Kyoto 1971 (pages not numbered).
3. Hyakuzuka Shoya, 'Yamazaki-sensei no hito to sakuhin ni tsuite' ('Work and personality of master Yamazaki'), in: Yamazaki Kakutaro Retrospective Exhibition. Takaoka Art Museum, Takaoka 1995, pp. 10-11.
4. Hisaizumi Michio, 'Gendai kogei wo soshi shita shitsugei-kai no kyosei, Yamazaki Kakutaro' ('Yamazaki Kakutaro, a great man in the field of lacquer, who originated Japanese modern craft'), in: Etchu-jin-tan. Tulip TV Inc., Takaoka 2004, pp. 11-14.
5. Additional biographical data were obtained from personal interviews with his son Yamazaki Ichizo and his pupil Hyakuzuka Shoya, both in May 2005.
6. According to a legend in the Yamazaki family its history dates back to the Nara period. One day, the poet Otomo no Yakamochi (718?-785), who had been sent to govern Etchu province (present-day Toyama prefecture), came to hunt in Iwase and gave a rice cake to one of Yamazaki's ancestors.
7. Hida Toyojiro, 'Crafts Movements in Japan around 1930', in: Modernism and Craftsmen. The 1920s to the 1930s (exhibition catalogue). The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1983, pp. 18-25.
8. Hida 1983, p. 22.
9. Hida Toyojiro, 'The Adolescence of Japanese Crafts - A Chapter from a Fragmented History', in: Craft Movements in Japan 1920s-1945 (exhibition catalogue). The Japan Association of Art Museums/The Yomiura Shimbun, 1996, pp. 12-15.
10. Tipton, Elise K. and John Clark (editors), Being Modern in Japan. Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2000.
11. Hida 1983, p. 77 (illustration)
12. Shiraishi Masami, 'The Modernization of Japanese Lacquer Art', in: Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces. Weatherhill/Tankosha, New York/Tokyo/Kyoto 1982, pp. 15-23.
13. Tokyo geijutsu daigaku hyakunen-shi, Tokyo bijutsu gakko-en (A hundred years Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, former Tokyo Art School) (vols. I-III). Gyosei, Tokyo 1992, pp. 518-519, 854-855, and 1178-1179.
14. Uchiyama Takeo, 'The Exhibition of Traditional Art Crafts – Its History and Spirit', in: Japan's Traditional Art Crafts – A 50-Year Retrospective. The Asahi Shimbun 2003, pp. 17-21.
15. Uchiyama 2003, p. 17.
16. Okada Jo, 'Introduction', in: Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces. Weatherhill/Tankosha, New York/Tokyo/Kyoto 1982, pp. 9-14.
17. Okada Jo, 'The Art of Matsuda Gonroku', in: Lacquer Works of Matsuda Gonroku. Asahi Shinbun-sha 1979.
18. Personal Communication Yamazaki Ichizo, May 2005.
19. Yamazaki Kakutaro sakuhin shusei (2 volumes). Kyuryudo, Tokyo 1982.

20. Hyakuzuka 1995, p. 11.
21. Hyakuzuka Shoya, personal interview May 2005.
22. The tatakinuri technique was explained to me by Hyakuzuka Shoya in May 2005 and by Katsu Masahiro in May 2006.
23. The poem from the Manyoshu (book XIX, no. 4249) reads: Iwase-no ni / aki hagi shinogi / uma namete / hatsutogari dani sezuya wakaremu, roughly translated: 'Without having practised the autumn falconry in Iwase Meadows, I must leave, without having advanced through the bush clover fields – the horses side by side'. The poem may also be considered as an expression of Kakutaro's attachment to his home town.
24. Ito Hiroshi, personal communication May 2006.
25. Gendai Nihon shikko soran, p. 313.
26. A note in the storage box of the tea caddy reveals that Uchida Sokan died at the age of 100 years in 1984. This would imply that he must have made the tea caddy in 1964, fifteen years before Yamazaki Kakutaro added the decoration. Surprisingly, Uchida Sokan is the same craftsman who applied the ground coatings of Akatsuka Jitoku's set of a writing box with table decorated with bamboo as far back as 1920!

Chapter VI

Lacquered pipe cases

-The new dress accessory

1. Introduction

In contrast to their counterparts made out of bone, ivory and wood, lacquered pipe cases (kiseruzutsu) were particularly a phenomenon of the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa periods, covering the years between 1868 and 1940 – in Japan referred to as the Kindai period. The Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo doesn't mention any artists who had produced kiseruzutsu before the Restoration.¹

2. Early examples

Of course there is the occasional early lacquered pipe case from the Tokugawa period. The De Belder and the Rigozzi collections each included a bamboo pipe case signed Chohei with decorations in relief lacquer in combination with gold engraving (chinkinbori).^{2, 3} Both are of the so-called otoshizutsu type (single piece with open end). They must have been the work of Nomura Chohei, since this artist applied similar techniques on a number of inro with chinkin risers.⁴ As Chohei's name is already mentioned in the Bukan (an Edo-period list of artists) published in 1760, it can be concluded that he was working in the second half of the 18th century.⁵

Also of Tokugawa-period origin is the design drawing for a pipe case by Kansai with a decoration of bamboo after a painting by Tani Buncho (1763-1840) (figure 140). It was published in a 1916 issue of the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society, and probably dates from the late 18th century or first half of the 19th century when the three successive Koma Kansais were active.

The pipe case in the Casal collection featuring an elephant with Chinese boys in carved lacquer, made by Tamakaji Zokoku (1806-1869), is certainly a pre-Meiji example (figure 141).⁶

3. Kiseruzutsu versus inro

The vogue of lacquered pipe cases set in when the interest in inro was declining. It seems

logical to assume that these trends may have been connected with each-other, since both were accessories of men's traditional dress. Conventional thought has it, that lacquerers started making kiseruzutsu when inro became more difficult to sell. From the Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo it is known that very few lacquer artists (4 out of 65) were still producing inro by 1879.⁷ The discard of traditional dress and the adoption of Western dress in the beginning of the Meiji period has been widely accepted as the explanation for the decline of inro. In that case, lacquered pipe cases cannot have acted as replacements for inro. All accessories worn from the sash (sagemono – 'hanging things') would have been abandoned if the change of dress had been universally adopted. In reality it mainly concerned upper class businessmen, government officials and civil servants, who were required to wear formal suits or uniforms. After work most of them probably changed to the more loosely fitting Japanese dress with a cotton or silk sash (obi). Therefore a market for sagemono must have continued to exist, although much smaller than before. Why fewer inro and more lacquered kiseruzutsu remains a matter of conjecture.

One factor may have been that inro had been generally worn by men of higher social standing than those who used pipe cases. Particularly the higher classes in the big cities became fascinated by novelties from the West and discarded such old-fashioned items as sagemono altogether. In contrast, the elegant lacquered pipe cases with their pretty tobacco pouches may have appealed to the more traditionally-minded middle classes.

A second reason why inro became less popular and kiseruzutsu more sought-after must have been the price difference, since medicine containers were much more laborious to make than pipe cases. Although comparable figures from the Meiji period don't seem to be available, data from the Baur Collection indicate that – in the mid 1930s – inro were roughly five times more expensive than kiseruzutsu by the same contemporary artist, most likely reflecting the difference in working hours spent. Certainly in the economically difficult time of the early Meiji period inro would not have been affordable for most people.

Thirdly, one might assume that Western medicine began to replace the traditional pills, pastes and powders in the upper strata of society.⁸ Such a development would have made inro as utensils obsolete and as accessories all the more old-fashioned. In contrast, smoking was more popular than ever before. Up to 1920 three quarter of the total tobacco sales was still consumed as the finely shredded tobacco for traditional pipes.⁹ By the general use of matches, outside smoking became more widespread, and may have increased the demand for smoking sets worn from the sash. A postcard from around 1910 shows young peasants with traditional smoking sets, but probably examples of the more commonly used simple types (figure 142). Those are the plausible explanations for the decline of the inro and the rise of the kiseruzutsu in an altogether shrinking market. However, as will be pointed out in the next paragraph, there are reasons to doubt whether both developments were really concomitant and connected. Be this as it may, there can be little doubt that, already in early Meiji, the heydays of the inro as a utensil and fashionable dress accessory were over (see Chapter I).

When did the fashion for lacquered pipe cases really start? Facts are hard to find, but not entirely non-existent. In 1879, the 65 well-known lacquerers, who had filled out the questionnaires of the Department for Encouragement of Industry (Kangyo-ka), responded that they produced medicine containers, incense boxes, cosmetic boxes, standing screens, namecard holders, tea utensils, vases, small cabinets, book shelves, tables, chairs, dials for wall clocks, trays, cigar cases, letter boxes, sweets containers, sake cups, combs and hairpins, writing boxes, sewing boxes, glove boxes, dollar containers, match boxes, brush pots, paperknives,

etc., but none of them reported the manufacture of pipe cases – except Taishin.¹⁰ This strongly suggests that lacquered pipe cases had not yet gained real popularity by 1880. The craze for novelties from the West was obviously still prevailing; some craftsmen tried to take advantage of the new fashions by the manufacture of modern items such as cigar cases, match boxes and ‘dollar containers’. Overall, the crafts were still suffering from the crisis due to the collapsed domestic demand, which one tried to compensate by the production of export articles.

Thus, it is likely that lacquered pipe cases only came into general use from mid-Meiji onwards at the time when Japan began to rediscover its own culture and traditions. Therefore, it is certainly possible that the declining demand for inro and the increasing popularity of lacquered kiseruzutsu were not communicating vessels, but that they were in fact largely independent developments. It seems likely that, whereas inro may have been discarded around the time of the Meiji Restoration, lacquered pipe cases only became fashionable around mid-Meiji, and not necessarily among men of the same social class. They may have been among the first items for the domestic market that picked up by the end of the period of Art Industry. The real fashion of lacquered pipe cases spanned the period of 50 years between the mid-1880s and the mid-1930s.

Apart from the viewpoint of the manufacturer of lacquered items, it may be also worthwhile to imagine the viewpoint of the consumer, who must have considered lacquered pipe cases just as one option in the assortment of this utensil. Throughout the 19th century pipe cases were produced out of ivory, bone, deer horn, wood, metal etc. Why became lacquered pipe cases so attractive for the consumer by the end of the century? Could it have been because of their more colourful decorations?

4. Schools and individual artists

A major reason why lacquered kiseruzutsu became so popular by the end of the 19th century may have been that many of them were manufactured by the innovative workshop of Shibata Zeshin, and more in particular by his most important pupil Ikeda Taishin. Since the opening of his own business in 1856, Taishin reported that he had produced many inro for the dealer in kimono accessories Maruri (probably a contraction of the name Maruya Rihei), but by 1879 he was already manufacturing kiseruzutsu.¹¹ Despite the vulnerability of lacquer, which can endure moderately high temperatures but not the heat of a pipe bowl immediately after smoking, their vivid designs must have been so appealing that lacquered pipe cases became as

fashionable as those made of more heat-resistant materials. Well into the first half of the 20th century, kiseruzutsu by Taishin and his pupils continued to be sought after – and there is proof that they were actually used (see below). An impression of the variety of their decorations is provided in Chapter VII.

About the same time another group of artists was active, working in carved lacquer. The key figure was Matsuki Hokei with several pupils and followers around him, but also unrelated artists such as the eccentric Shuzan produced carved lacquer items (figure 143).¹² In the beginning of the 20th century, artists from the school of Shirayama Shosai manufactured the most desirable lacquered kiseruzutsu.¹³ Most were not used as smoking utensils, but served as expensive fashion accessories. The majority of the surviving pipe cases from this school, however, were bought by collectors, who valued their delicate decorations and sophisticated techniques (see Chapters II and IX).

Also in the early 20th century, a group of artists emerged – among them Seisen Isshu and the two Tokokus -, who produced a special kind of pipe cases with decorations made of

multiple minute inlays of various materials, such as ivory, stained bone, coral, shell, metal and all sorts of wood (figure 144).¹⁴ The bodies of the objects consisted of woven rattan, strips of lacquered paper or bamboo, or were made of lacquered wood. Their work can be compared with the flashy 19th century products of the Shibayama school with their glossy inlays on shining gold grounds, but it is certainly more subtle and subdued.

Equally subtle are the works by the group of teppitsubori engraving masters Bokko, Bokkoku and Bokuboku, who used their steel stylus as a painting brush and therefore incorporated the word boku or ink in their art names (figure 145).¹⁵ Bokko may have been trained by Kano Tessai (1842-1925), who produced netsuke and kiseruzutsu with decorations of ancient masks and has been credited as the inventor of the teppitsu technique.

Apart from these five schools and groups of artists, many individual artists produced lacquered pipe cases during the late 19th and early 20th century. Some of them were able to work in a variety of styles and techniques, such as the versatile Kawakami Kangetsu, who made examples in delicate togidashi or in lacquer on bamboo, but also in the Rimpa-style or with decorations of combed waves (seigai-ha) after Shibata Zeshin (figure 146).¹⁶ Other artists produced numerous variations and copies of a single theme, such as Hashimoto Ichizo II (1856-1924), instructor at the Tokyo Art School, with his popular bamboo simulations (figure 147).¹⁷

Almost without exception, pipe cases from the Kindai period are of the muso-zutsu type, consisting of an inner sheath and an outer sheath (which is sometimes called saya or scabbard). One of their attractions must have been that makers of kiseruzutsu experimented with new techniques in an inventive and playful manner, much in the same way as makers of inro had done during the Tokugawa period. In addition, the narrow and vertical shape of the objects formed a challenge for creating appealing designs. What only seemed to be a traditional clothing accessory became a focus of innovation and creativity at the same time. A striking example is the pipe case by Shusai – an artist of no mean merit –, made out of a piece of driftwood, possibly found on the beach, and provided with an appropriate decoration of a flight of plovers skimming the waves (figure 148). Although little modernity can be observed

in these charming objects, their manufacturers were surely children of their times in that they made the artefacts after their own designs - but they only tried to serve their customers instead of seeking recognition in the prestigious national exhibitions.

Around 1940, the production of lacquered pipe cases came to an end. The smoking set by Toyoaki comprising a kiseruzutsu with an incised decoration of a fighting cock rooster, dated 1946, and a lacquer tonkotsu (tobacco container) with an owl, dated 1947, seems to mark the end of the tradition (figure 149). Interestingly, this set has been used, which must have been rather exceptional at that time, judging William and Betty Parker's memories:

We recall that when we first came to Japan in 1945, the dignified, kimono-clad mother of a Japanese friend would sit by the hibachi (charcoal brazier), smoking cigarette butts one after the other in her Japanese pipe (kiseru). By then that was all that remained of the traditional kiseru custom, which soon succumbed to the onslaught of cigarette smoking as the economy improved and permitted tobacco imports.¹⁸

5. Utensils or collector's items?

In fact, lacquered pipe cases were not very suitable to accommodate metal pipes, certainly not when still hot after smoking. Therefore protective measures were required. In numerous pipe cases wooden cores can be observed inside, but many others only seem to have thin cores of lacquered paper, probably because it is considered the most durable material (figures 151 and

152). Occasionally, there is an additional textile lining inside to prevent mechanical and thermal damage (figure 150). According to Bushell, woven pipe cases were modelled over a wooden form, and had a core of lacquered paper, wood shavings or cat skin to conserve their shapes.¹⁹ These materials obviously also had protective qualities. Furthermore, a number of thickly carved lacquer kiseruzutsu have woven bodies inside: the enforcement seems to result from the outer layers, whereas the woven material provided protection against high temperatures (figure 153).

So far not mentioned in the literature are the so-called 'bumpers': tufts of cotton wool firmly pressed onto the bottom of the outer sheaths to absorb the hit by the metal pipe bowl (figure 154). By making use of a wire light, clean or used bumpers could be detected in 65% of the pipe cases in an extensive private collection comprising some 170 lacquered pipe cases. The presence of such bumpers indicates that the lacquered case was made to contain a pipe, whether to be used or not. However, many bumpers show signs of actual use by brown discoloration and/or by the smell of tobacco. In nearly half of the pipe cases in this collection such proof of actual use was found.

On the other hand, we know that many pipe cases were not made for use, but for collectors - both in Japan and abroad. In Japan, the collections of businessmen Imamura Shigezo and Hiraoka Ginshuo, containing numerous lacquered pipe cases, were sold at auction during the Taisho era, but several other collections remained intact (see below).²⁰ In Switzerland, Alfred Baur bought numerous kiseruzutsu of contemporary artists in the second quarter of the 20th

century.²¹ This resulted in a collection of 140 lacquered pipe cases, unequalled in sophisticated styles and techniques. The collection in Geneva includes only one example of a lacquer decoration on a woven body, all others have lacquered grounds. Only 29 of them (21%) contain cotton-wool bumpers (23 used and 6 clean), which is compatible with the assumption that Tomita Kumasaku bought for his client many new pipe cases, and not seldom directly from the artist. For example, none of the 23 pipe cases by the contemporary artist Uzawa Shogetsu contain bumpers, whereas six out of the nine pipe cases by Ikeda Taishin, who had died several decades before, do contain used bumpers.

U.A. Casal (1888-1964), another Swiss businessman, assembled some 250 pipe cases made of all kinds of materials, when he was residing in Japan from 1901 onwards.²² Many of the lacquered decorations are applied on woven bodies. Ten years after his death the collection was sold by his daughters to the Osaka Municipal Museum of Art.

Another extensive and varied collection can be found in the Tobacco & Salt Museum in Tokyo. It includes several dozens of complete sets of pipe cases with their sliding beads (ojime) and pouches (tabakoire) from the collection of the famous raconteur Katsura Bunraku VIII (1892-1971) - most of them tastefully assembled by himself.²³

Smaller, but also interesting, are the well-documented collection in the Yatsushiro City Museum and the Seijiro Maruyama Collection in the Tsubame Municipal Museum of Industry.^{24, 25}

The recently formed private collection, already mentioned above, seems to be the largest and most comprehensive one (some 350 pieces, half of which are lacquered), and includes most objects from the former collections of William and Betty Parker, Americans residing in Japan, and of Jean Verwilghen, the former Belgian ambassador to Japan.²⁶⁻²⁸

Notes

1. Tokyo meiko kagami (Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo) compiled by the Kangyo-ka. Yurindo,

- Tokyo 1879. Published again by Uchida Tokugo in Shikkoshi 1983, and translated into German for Heinz & Else Kress by Anita Brockmann in 2003.
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 3. Klefisch, Japanese Art (auction catalogue no. 50), 12.09.1992, lot 273.
 4. Hutt, Julia, Japanese Inro. V&A Publications, London 1997, pp. 65-66.
 5. Takao Yo: 'A commentary on the Inro Master Craftsmen of the Soken Kisho', in: *Sleeping Beauties*. Sagemonoya, Tokyo 2004, pp. 56-77.
 6. Casal Collection. Inro, Pipe Sheath, Comb (Japanese text). Museum of Art, Osaka 1984, p. 76, no. 682.
 7. Tokyo meiko kagami 1879.
 8. Huard, Pierre, Zensetsu Ohya and Ming Wong, *La Médecine japonaise. Des origines à nos jours*. Les Éditions Roger Dacosta, Paris 1974.
 9. Tobacco & Salt Museum. Museum Guide. Tobacco & Salt Museum, Tokyo 1985, p. 42, diagram.
 10. Tokyo meiko kagami 1879.
 11. Tokyo meiko kagami 1879.
 12. Dees, Jan, Ferns, Feathers and Flowers. Japanese Lacquer of the Meiji and Taisho periods from the Baur Collection. The Baur Collection/Museum für Lackkunst, Genève/Munster 2001, pp. 220 and 241.
 13. Dees 2001, pp. 105 and 107.
 14. Dees 2001, pp. 224-235.
 15. Moss, Paul: 'Bokko Bokkoku Bokuboku', in: *International Netsuke Society Journal* (2002) vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 18-44.
 16. Dees 2001, pp. 222, 261 and 263.
 17. Atchley, Virginia G: 'Hashi-ichi. The Artist and the Man', in: *Netsuke Kenkyukai Journal* (1991), vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 14-22.
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 19. Bushell, Raymond: 'Kiseruzutsu. The Japanese Pipe Case', in: *Arts of Asia* November/December 1980, pp. 86-95.
 20. Auction catalogues of the Tokyo Art Club 1919, 1922 and 1925.
 21. Dees 2001, Chapters III, IV and VII.
 22. Casal Collection 1999, pp. 58-61.
 23. *Tabako-ire* (museum catalogue – Japanese text). Tobacco & Salt Museum, Tokyo 1986.
 24. Catalogue of the Yatsushiro City Museum (Japanese text), Yatsushiro
 25. The Seiji Maruyama Collection (museum catalogue – Japanese text). Tsubame Municipal Museum of Industry, Tsubame.
 26. Parker, William and Betty: 'A Compilation of Pipe Case Artists', in *Netsuke Kenkyukai* vol.4/2, 1984, pp. 8-20.
 27. Verwilghen, Jean: 'Kiseruzutsu, Pipe cases of ivory and stag antler', in *Daruma* 6, 1995, pp. 36-44.
 28. Verwilghen, Jean: 'Kiseruzutsu (Pipe Cases) – Pipe cases made of wood en woven materials', in *Daruma* 10, vol.3/2, 1996, pp. 22-28.

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Chapter VII

Pipe cases by Ikeda Taishin

-An album of charcoal rubbings

1. Introduction

Pipe cases comprise a significant part of the oeuvre of the lacquer artist Ikeda Taishin, but not much is known about the variety of their designs and techniques. The chance discovery of an album with charcoal rubbings of pipe cases by Taishin, previously owned by his pupil Takai Tairei, provides a unique insight into his designs and reveals the true scale on which these objects were produced.

2. Taishin and his pupils

Ikeda Taishin (1825-1903) (figure 155) was the first and best pupil of Shibata Zeshin.¹ At the age of eleven he entered Zeshin's 'dwelling opposite the willows' (Tairyukyo) in the Asakusa ward of Edo. Taishin accompanied his master on his many journeys, such as the pilgrimage in the footsteps of the poet Basho along the Narrow Road to the Deep North and the climb of Mt Fuji. No doubt, Taishin must have learned much from Zeshin's sketching skills during these prolonged wanderings away from the hectic atmosphere of Edo. Zeshin's youngest son Umezawa Ryushin mentioned in the biography of his father that Taishin continued to stay with his master for 25 years until he became independent around 1870, but according to the Tokyo meiko kagami Taishin opened his own business already in 1856.^{2, 3} At the 1873 Vienna World Fair, the Japanese Exhibition Committee offered their hosts a panel made by Taishin, which is still kept in the Osterreichisches Museum fur angewandte Kunst.⁴ His workshop - located at Ryogoku - must have been quite successful, since Taishin had several pupils during the early Meiji era.⁵ This was all the more remarkable during the critical period of dropping domestic demand. Many leading artists could only survive these decades by producing artefacts for export as employees of the Kiritsu Manufacturing and Trading Company. Taishin, however, managed to remain independent. Part of his success may have resulted from the production of pipe cases. During the first half of the Meiji period nearly all tobacco was still smoked in the form of finely-shredded pipe tobacco, and lacquered pipe cases were becoming fashionable.

Taishin must have been more versatile, however, since he was appointed Imperial Artist in 1896, when the critical years were over. According to an inscription on a fitted box for trays and also according to the members list of the Japan Lacquer Society (1902), Taishin's workshop had in the meantime moved to Yakkenbori in the Nihonbashi ward of Tokyo.⁶ Among his pupils were Zeshin's sons Shinsai and Ryushin. Although exact data are lacking, it is likely that also Taisai, Kosai, Keishin, and possibly Koshin and Sensai can be counted among Ikeda Taishin's pupils. Certainly Tairei was trained in his workshop.

Takai Tairei (1880-1971) (figure 156), the original owner of the album of charcoal rubbings, lived in the Aoyama ward of Tokyo.⁷ Tairei's personal name was Shigeharu. In his young years he made inro and pipe cases in the Zeshin/Taishin style. Later on, he produced boxes and trays with lacquer decorations directly applied on the wooden objects (kiji makie). After World War II, Tairei made his living by manufacturing lacquered jewellery, such as obi pins, brooches and rings, in addition to his kiji makie objects. Since he had no pupils, Tairei's workshop papers were left to the pupils of his brother-in-law, the famous lacquer artist Akatsuka Jitoku, who was married with Tairei's elder sister Takai Kei (1877-1946). As Jitoku's first pupil, Mitamura Jiho inherited Tairei's papers. In this way, the album of charcoal rubbings was passed down to the Mitamura family.

3. The album of charcoal rubbings

3.1. Akazuri

Charcoal rubbings are direct impressions of objects on paper. A sheet of thin paper is laid on the object and subsequently rubbed by a piece of charcoal. Elevations appear as lines or areas

darker than the background, depressions remain blank. We all know how to make such rubbings of coins by using pencil and paper, but in the case of rubbings of lacquered objects a bell-shaped piece of charcoal (tsurigane-zumi) was used. The rubbings are called akazuri or 'dirt rubbings'.⁸ Akazuri differ from design drawings (shita-e) (figures 157 and 158) in that they are direct impressions of existing objects instead of drawings for intended objects, which in reality may have turned out slightly different or which may not have been produced at all.

3.2. The album

The album is stitched in the Japanese fashion and measures roughly 26 cm by 19 cm. It has two covers of thick brownish paper with spots of black and brown lacquer, which indicate that the album was kept in the workshop. On the left lower corner of the front cover is written in kanji: 'Tairei shoju' ('owned by'), and in addition the name 'Takai' in roman script. The capital letter T was written repeatedly in different ways as a sort of practice.

The inside consists of 50 sheets, which are folded to produce 100 pages. Three sheets were left unbound, but kept in the album. The other 47 sheets of thin paper have been folded around a half-size of much stiffer paper, glued together at the four corners and stitched into the spine. The finger marks at the lower corners of the pages indicate that the album was frequently consulted.

3.3. The contents

Virtually all rubbings in the album represent pipe cases. The typical page shows the decorations of two pipe cases, whereas the undecorated parts of the bodies are depicted incompletely, but often with extensions towards the place of the signature. The decorations have been followed over the sides and, where necessary, to the backs. Occasionally, details were rubbed twice to obtain a better result. Only to a single picture, notes on the lacquering techniques were added (figure 159). Two rubbings show lacquer tracings along the outlines of the decoration on the back of the transparent paper; obviously these have been transferred to other objects.

Apart from the seven rubbings of other objects - such as small trays, sake cups and oblong boxes - the album contains 184 akazuri of pipe cases.

3.4. Signatures

In 140 cases (76%) the signature of Taishin could be deciphered on the lower part of the pipe case, usually located near the edge (figure 160). The signatures appear both with and without cartouches, the former ones especially on woven pipe cases. Why no signatures could be found in the remaining 44 akazuri can be explained by the fact that the rubbings were not always extended to the lower part of the bodies and never to the bottom (where signatures are also often located). Furthermore, some charcoal rubbings may not have been detailed enough to show the small signatures. Anyhow, the absence of any other signatures strongly indicates that all depicted pipe cases were produced by Taishin.

3.5. The bodies

It is obvious that 104 pipe cases (57%) had bodies of woven material. Occasionally, the tiny patterns reveal that the material must have been twisted lacquered paper (figures 161 - 163), but in the majority of cases the nature of the material cannot be distinguished. From other sources it is known that woven pipe cases were made of strips of bamboo, rattan, cane, wood or even whalebone.^{9, 10} From the album no clues can be derived as to which materials were favoured by Taishin. Several upper ends of outer sheaths show woven rims, which suggests that the rubbings were made before the attachment of the metal rims.

The other 80 pipe cases (43%) had smooth bodies, indicating either wood or a lacquered

surface (since no bone and ivory pipe cases by Taishin are known to exist). In a few cases the texture of bamboo or wood can be discerned (figure 164).

3.6. Subjects

Of course, the extensive number of rubbings provides us with a unique opportunity to obtain an overview of the subjects which Taishin depicted on pipe cases.

Botanical subjects dominate the designs of 147 pipe cases (80%). Apart from autumn grasses and chrysanthemums, ferns, vines, Adonis flowers, arrowheads, taro plants, wood sorrel, bamboo and fuki (*Petasites japonis*) are the most commonly portrayed plants. In

addition, there are many depictions of fruits and vegetables, such as pumpkins, gourds, eggplants, and radish.

The majority of the remaining 20% of the pipe cases are decorated with animal designs, mostly birds, dragon flies, butterflies, lobsters and a dressed fox with a mousetrap. Not a single human being is depicted. Finally, one can find roof-tiles, origami birds, bells, tassels, feathers, the hagoromo theme, a faggot-laden boat, a few stylized streams in the Rimpa style and one design with so-called 'combed waves' (*seigai-ha*).

3.7. Techniques

Since charcoal rubbings depend on variations in relief, it is not possible to register the level togidashi technique, but only the high relief of takamakie, the discrete relief of hiramakie, and inlays. As Taishin hardly used the togidashi technique, probably no major elements of the decoration will have been lost in the charcoal rubbings.

In a single case the typical surface of shell inlay can be recognized (figure 165), but otherwise it is not possible to distinguish between the various relief techniques.

4. Discussion

The charcoal rubbings were taken from 184 different pipe cases. Several subjects were repeated two, three, four or five times, but none of them are identical. For example, the lobsters in figures 163 and 166 are slightly different and also the pumpkins in figures 167, 168 and 169 show variations. The same goes for the designs of bamboo, the taro plant, wood sorrel, Adonis flower, etc. Obviously, Taishin had a certain repertoire of themes, which he applied repeatedly in many variations. These themes do not only appear on his pipe cases, but on other objects such as trays, inro and boxes as well.

Taishin's work has often been considered merely a continuation of Zeshin's style.

However, the album clearly shows that Taishin's repertoire of subject matter overlaps, but is not identical with that of his master, and that his style focuses on a tranquil aestheticism compared with Zeshin's inventive versatility. Obviously, Taishin favoured botanical subjects, which were seen in 80% of the rubbings. Half of his pipe cases had woven bodies.

The 184 designs in the album could be compared with the photographs of 33 existing pipe cases by Taishin (such as the ones shown in figures 170 - 173).¹¹ Many subjects on the pipe cases could also be found in the album, but in variations. For example, the tobacco leaves on the pipe case which is illustrated in figure 173 can also be observed in figure 174. However, not only the decoration shows differences, but the bodies are different as well. The pipe case in figure 173 is made of fig-wood, whereas the rubbing clearly shows a woven body. The ears on the pipe case in figure 175 are similar to the ears in the rubbing of figure 161, but not identical. In contrast to the woven body of the illustrated pipe case, the pipe case in the rubbing has a smooth surface - either wood or lacquer. Similar differences could be found in other pairs of existing pipe cases and rubbings. Obviously, Taishin made a new design drawing for each pipe case, instead of using it repeatedly. An interesting example is the pipe

case with a morning glory design (figure 176), which can also be observed in the design drawing in figure 157 and the akazuri in figure 177.

Surprisingly, only in a single case an existing pipe case exactly matched one of the rubbings (figures 178 and 164). The other 32 objects were not found, which proves that many more pipe cases were produced than the ones illustrated in the album. This provides us with an indication of the output of pipe cases from Taishin's workshop. At least 216 (184 + 33 - 1) must have been manufactured, but, since only one existing pipe case could be found in the album, it is more likely that the figure would have been in the range of 500 - 1000. The sheer numbers in which they were produced and the fact that new designs were made for each piece may explain the vivid and elegant style of Taishin's pipe cases, whereas his other work sometimes suffers from a certain degree of stiffness.

It is unknown what purpose akazuri served. At first, the most likely explanation seemed to be that the rubbings were made as a memory of the finished objects, much in the same way as the present-day lacquer artist makes a photograph of a completed work. But who was going to keep the akazuri? The artist himself would have kept the original design drawing. In contrast to a colour photograph, a charcoal rubbing does not carry a better image of the object than the design drawing. Therefore there was no point for the artist to keep the rubbing. Of course, such an artistic memory would have been much more meaningful for the apprentice who had made the object or contributed to it. The akazuri could serve as a reminder of what he had learned during the manufacturing process, and in later years they could be a source of inspiration for his own work as an independent artist. Although evidence is lacking, it is even conceivable that inherited charcoal rubbings were a significant factor in the perpetuation of a school's style. The fact that not so many akazuri are left may be attributed to them being considered as personal memories rather than as heirlooms of the school.

Although we do not know who actually made the rubbings in this album, it seems doubtful whether it was Takai Tairei. At the time of Taishin's death Tairei was only 23 years old. It is difficult (although not entirely impossible) to believe that he had already witnessed the manufacture of 184 pipe cases in the Taishin workshop at this age. It must have taken a considerable period of time to assemble such a collection of akazuri. Therefore the question can be raised whether Tairei may have inherited either the album or the loose akazuri. Unfortunately, such questions cannot be answered yet, since so little is known about the function and the spread of charcoal rubbings in the artistic life of the Meiji period.

Notes

1. Dees, Jan: *Ferns, Feathers, Flowers, Japanese lacquer of the Meiji and Taisho periods from the Baur Collection*. Museum für Lackkunst und Collections Baur, Munster/Geneva, 2000 (Chapter III).
2. Earle, Joe, *Meiji no Takara. Treasures of Imperial Japan. Masterpieces by Shibata Zeshin*. The Kibo Foundation, London 1996, pp. 36-62.
3. *Tokyo meiko kagami* (Directory of Master Artisans in Tokyo) compiled by the Kangyo-ka. Yurindo, Tokyo 1879. Published again by Uchida Tokugo in Shikkoshi 1983, and translated into German for Heinz & Else Kress by Anita Brockmann in 2003.
4. Dees 2000, p. 29, figure 7.
5. *Tokyo meiko kagami* 1879, heading 'Ikeda Taishin'.
6. Mr Imai Tokuji from Kyoto found the inscription on the tomobako of a set of trays. It indicates that Taishin's place was at Yakkenbori number 6, whereas the members list of the Japan Lacquer Society mentions number 14 (workshop and home respectively?).

7. Biographical data about Takai Tairei were obtained from his grandson Mr Takai Nobuo and from Mrs Akatsuka Hisako in October 2000.
8. The kanji for akazuri are ...
9. Bushell, Raymond: 'Kiseruzutsu, the Japanese pipe case', in: Arts of Asia November/December 1980, pp. 86-95.
10. Rokusho 28, 1998 - special issue on pipe cases.
11. Apart from the fourteen pipe cases illustrated in my article 'Pipe cases by Ikeda Taishin. The discovery of an album of charcoal rubbings' in Andon 69 (2001, pp. 5-18), the akazuri were compared with three more Taishin pipe cases from the Baur Collection (PC 59, PC 98, PC 148), two other pipe cases in the Tobacco & Salt Museum (nos. 99 and 119), six in private collections in Europe, three other Taishin pipe cases illustrated in Rokusho 28 (figure 18 on p.12, figure 22 on p. 46, figure 52 on p. 58), two other ones illustrated in Arts of Asia November/December 1980 (figures. 19 and 27), one illustrated in Netsuke, Inro u.a. Sagemono, Cologne 1983 (no. N11), one in Kindai Nihon no shikkogei, Atami 1983 (1983, no. 21), and another one in Christie's New York auction catalogue of March 1997 (no. 84).

Chapter VIII

Ganshosai Shunsui

-Nostalgia for court ladies and samurai

1. Introduction

The study of Ganshosai Shunsui posed entirely different problems than the study of the lacquer art pioneers of the early 20th century, since hard facts about this artist were entirely lacking. Until the 1995 publication of my article 'Ganshosai Shunsui, and early 20th century lacquer artist' in Andon, he had generally been regarded as an artist from the beginning of the 19th century.¹ A letter from Tomita Kumasaku to Alfred Baur, however, indicated that Shunsui was still alive in 1928. The study of his work was essential to test the new dating.

2. Work

2.1. Collections

Finding lacquerware by Ganshosai Shunsui was not easy. Between 1984, when the letter was found, and 1993 I had only seen 9 pieces. Another 8 objects were found in the literature, but the quality of the illustrations was often not sufficient to allow any conclusions.

However, during the spring of 1993, Else and Heinz Kress provided the opportunity to consult their Inro Data Base, which comprises data and photographs of (at that time) 22.000 inro. The Inro Data Base, nowadays called the Kress Archive, added 17 lacquers by Shunsui to the series, and provided more information about the already known objects.

Surprisingly, 8 more objects could be added after another visit to the Baur Collection in Geneva. Apart from the 4 objects known to be in this museum, the inventory cards revealed no less than 8 pipe cases. After the publication of my article in Andon, another 7 objects were found, mainly in Japan.

Forty-three objects could be fully studied since either adequate colour photographs with detailed descriptions were available or the objects themselves had been seen and handled. Of the remaining 6 objects only single black and white illustrations were present with often incomplete descriptions.

2.2. Objects

The total group of 49 objects is listed in Appendix II and comprises 36 inro, 9 pipe cases, 2 sets of combs with hairpins, a small box with tray and a large stationery box.² Twenty-one

objects are kept in museums, the other ones in private collections.

2.3. Subjects

Human figures predominate in Shunsui's work, certainly when compared with other artists of his time. Out of 49 objects, 28 feature one or more human beings, mostly historical figures. The subjects have been classified into four categories, which are also summarized in Appendix II.

2.3.1. Warriors (nos. 1 - 6)

Six inro show warriors, sometimes in battle and sometimes in a peaceful setting.

An inro in the Jahss collection features Takatsune and Kagesue on horseback crossing Uji River (in 1184). An inro in the Baur Collection shows Kagekiyo, famous for his strength, seizing Minoya no Juro by the neckpiece of his helmet at the port of Yashima in 1185 (figure 179). Both designs illustrate episodes from the Tale of the Heike (book 9/chapter II and book 11/chapter V, respectively).³

Another inro in the Baur Collection has an idyllic decoration of Minamoto Yoshimitsu (1056-1127) teaching Toyohara Tokiaki a secret tune on the sho at Mt. Ashigara. The American Museum of Natural History has an inro with an unidentified subject of a warrior kneeling in front of stairs.

Apart from these four themes from the late Heian era, two nearly identical inro (in the Baur Collection and in the Brozman collection) show the spectacular design of Kato Kiyomasa's visit to the ruins Hideyoshi's newly built palace at Fushimi after the 1596 earthquake (figure 180). Kiyomasa, here shown with the Kato mon on his chest, was one of Hideyoshi's generals and a hardliner in the Korean campaign.

2.3.2. Court ladies (nos. 7 - 14)

Court ladies, both Chinese and Japanese, were another favourite subject.

An inro in the Swedlow collection shows the young Chu Lien Hsiang, who lived in Beijing during the reign of emperor Huan Tsang (713-755) (figure 181). Whenever she went out a flock of butterflies followed her, attracted by the perfume of her breath. The same subject is depicted on one of the pipe cases in the Baur Collection.

Another inro, from the Pabst collection, features a standing Chinese lady in court dress on one side, with peonies and rocks on the reverse. General J.C. Pabst, Dutch minister to Japan, bought this inro in 1936 from K. Yamamoto at the then substantial price of 260 yen (figure 182).

The most imposing of the depicted court ladies is the celebrated 9th century poetess Ono no Komachi, who appears four times in this series. A sheath-inro in the Jahss collection shows a beautiful Soshi-arai Komachi (Komachi washing a manuscript in a water basin) (figure 183). During a poetry contest at court, Komachi had been falsely accused of having copied her poem from the Manyoshu. As proof a copy of the book was produced, including the poem. Ono no Komachi lucidly put the book in the water whereupon the poem soon

disappeared by washing out the fresh ink. Incidentally, I came across a colour illustration of a painting by Ogata Korin (1658-1716), which must have stood model for the inro design (figure 184). The illustration was published in one of the early issues of Kokka ('National Essence'), Japan's first art magazine co-founded by Okakura Kakuzo in 1889.⁴ Therefore it is possible that Shunsui took the design from either the original painting which he may have seen in a museum or from the detailed colour illustration in Kokka. Only slight adaptations were made, such as the position of Komachi's left hand. Komachi in identical posture can be observed on an inro from the Kroch collection. In this case the left hand is exactly in the same

position as on Korin's painting. The patterns of her dress, however, are different and the water basin has been replaced by a writing box. Shunsui must have been captured by this depiction of Komachi, since he used it on a third intro as the central figure of the Six Famous Poets (Rokkasen) (figure 185). A touching picture of Ono no Komachi in grief is shown on a small box in the Baur Collection. Komachi, again in rich court gown, seems to foresee her desolate fate as conveyed in the poem from the Kokinshu on the interior tray:

Sad and alone Wabi nureba

I am a floating grass mi wo ukikusa no

With its roots severed ne wo taete

If a current carries me sasou mizu araba

I think I will follow 5 inamu to zo omou

The walking lady on another intro from the Swedlow collection must be a court lady as well, judging from her very long hair and the luxury of her outdoor dress (figure 186). The autumn plants and the cobweb on the reverse seem to indicate her tragic circumstances. She might be the former empress Kenreimon-in fleeing to Yoshida, as portrayed in the Epilogue of the Tale of the Heike.

2.3.3. Related subjects (nos. 15 - 21)

Although the designs of warriors and court ladies represent the core of Shunsui's oeuvre, a number of other subjects are closely related to them and provide additional evidence of the nostalgic character of his work. Of course, the intro featuring three tsuba in the Weston collection is related to the samurai subjects, whereas an intro with two ink-cakes in the Wrangham collection can be linked with both literature and Chinese antiques. An intro in the Kress collection, and an identical one in a private German collection, show a cobweb with a spider dangling from a single tread in combination with autumn plants (figure 187). This design is very similar to the reverse of the Swedlow intro in figure 186. In addition, the design of a man's head on a burning wheel - entitled Buddhist Hell - might also be related to the Tale of the Heike.⁶

The intro with two ink-cakes bears the inscription 'after a design by Haritsu'. It is tempting to believe that the ink-cake showing an owl perched on a tree branch was derived from a similar ink-cake on a box for poem papers by Ogawa Haritsu in the Tokyo National Museum.⁷

The Baur Collection houses a pipe case with a moonlit scene of a woman beating her clothes in front of a country house (figure 188). This design is based on a poem by Fujiwara Masatsune (1170-1221). Uzawa Shogetsu produced a pipe case with similar decoration (see figure 204 in Chapter IX).

A sheath-intro from a private Swiss collection shows two courtiers on horseback from ancient times.

2.3.4. Unrelated subjects (nos. 22 - 49)

Among the other objects featuring human beings (22 - 33) are two intro with a courtier (although not from ancient times), and two intro and one pipe case with beautiful ladies in ukiyoe style.

Three other intro also include human figures in their decorations: a party under flowering trees, a stage performance and the popular subject of the monkey trainer.

At least two pieces refer to fairy tales: the birth of Momotaro and the tale of the woodcutter, the latter being an example of filial piety and the former somewhat related to it. Other subjects, such as the boy sleeping on his desk and the reclining figure, are more difficult to

interpret.

Themes from nature (34 - 48) are relatively rare, except on pipe cases. The shishi playing with a brocade ball are related to mythology rather than to nature. Two inro have an identical decoration of a snake coiling around the object, of which the ground is made to resemble a snake skin. This design was certainly not Shunsui's own invention, since similar snake inro exist with the signatures of Kajikawa and Gyokuzan. The same holds for the woodcutter design, of which inro exist with the signatures of Toyo and Kansai.

Not only Shosai and Shogetsu, but also Shunsui made inro with scattered feathers on mirror black grounds, as evinced by nos. 44 - 46 (figure 189).

Seven pipe cases show themes from nature, although at least one of them should be interpreted as the illustration of a poem (figure 188). Three of them are attractive night scenes, two of them feature large iris flowers (figure 190).

Both sets of a comb with a hairpin are decorated with botanical motifs: a branch of a maple tree and ears of rice (figure 191).

The only stationery box in this group (no. 49) is decorated with scattered Ju (kotobuki) seals, symbols of long life, over both the exterior and the interior.

In summary, almost half of Shunsui's lacquer objects in this group show historical or legendary subjects, whereas the other half has a variety of unrelated decorations.

2.4. Style and technique

The objects with decorations of warriors, court ladies and related subjects, which are here considered as the core of Shunsui's oeuvre, are mostly executed in similar styles and techniques. Not all objects share all characteristics though. In most cases the subject justifies the classification, whereas occasionally stylistic or technical aspects were decisive to include objects into this subgroup.

The designs are bold and often continue over the top or the bottom of the object. A lot of work has been done on the intricate armour of the warriors and the patterns of the court ladies' gowns. Several textile patterns, and other small motifs as well, have been repeated on various objects. Most decorations are predominantly done in highly detailed low relief hiramakie, often in combination of abundant kirigane. In a few designs togidashi or takamakie prevail (the former in Soshi-arai Komachi and Rokkasen, the latter on the ink-cake inro), again with a great eye for detail. However, nowhere do the meticulously intricate details of armour or dress disturb the overall effect. Several inro in this subgroup have decorated risers, usually just with some flakes of kirigane, but in the case of Ono no Komachi with the writing box the interior has been beautifully adorned with hare-foot ferns.

Highly characteristic of Shunsui's style is the inlay of long strips of shell, found in 15 objects. Of course, mother-of-pearl inlays are not rare in lacquerware, and Shunsui's work is no exception. However, inlay of these long strips to outline a dress or to render a cobweb is very unusual. This technique was found on ten pieces of his core oeuvre and in five objects with unrelated designs.

Much less cohesion was found in the rest of his work, neither in subject matter nor in style and technique. Objects with scattered feathers in togidashi on shining black grounds were also made by Shirayama Shosai and Uzawa Shogetsu, but the designs by Shunsui are not necessarily copies. The ukiyoe-style lady composing a letter, probably after a print or painting, was also found on an inro by Yamaguchi Shojosai (1900-1978) (figure 192).⁸ At least two designs were not his own: the snake design and the woodcutter design had already been done by other inro makers in the late Edo period. Apparently such inro sold well.

In this respect one wonders whether the three pipe cases with moonlit night-scenes, each with a different colour of the ground, could have been commissioned by Alfred Baur. Such subjects were rare and desirable, and we know from Tomita's letter that Shunsui asked for commissions (see below).

A few decorations are rather crowded and too much detailed, such as 'stage dancing', 'birth of Momotaro' and 'party under flowering cherries'. All are done in togidashi.

The group includes four sheath-intro. In all cases the intro itself is executed in togidashi. Three sheaths are open, one is closed. The latter remarkable intro features two shishi playing with a brocade ball, worked in takamakie and metal-wire inlay on a gold ground, on one side and a single shishi, incised in a dark-brown ishime ground to simulate metal, on the reverse (figure 193). Finally the intro itself shows large peonies in coloured togidashi.

In summary, Shunsui mastered a wide range of techniques which particularly provides character to his core oeuvre. Many other decorations do not indicate the identity of the maker and could have been produced by any other skilled lacquerer.

2.5. Signatures

In 43 pieces the exact signature could be found (figure 194). In the remaining 6 objects, it was not clear whether the artist name mentioned in the description represented the actual signature, neither was the seal or kao (cursive seal) reproduced.

In 17 cases the signature reads Ganshosai Shunsui, in 25 cases simply Shunsui and in one case Ohara Shuko. Most signatures are written in clear kanji characters, but 9 are in the cursive shoso script. In the literature this cursive signature has sometimes been misread as Jusui, Kisho or Kyonen 9-11 It was only found on objects with sophisticated decorations, but not on his works featuring warriors or court ladies.

As shown in Appendix II, 42 signatures are followed by a kao and 2 by a seal. Thirty-nine kao are identical. The two variant kao were found on one of the snake intro and on the intro featuring the ukiyoe-style lady composing a letter. In one case the type of kao is unknown. Only one seal could be traced.

The name Ohara Shuko poses an interesting problem. According to Wrangham, the signature should be considered as an honorific reference to the Zen monk Murata Shuko (Juko, 1422-1502) whose father was the abbot of the Shomyoji temple at Hara.¹² Shuko was not only a pioneer of the tea ceremony, but also a noted painter and lacquerer. The honorific 'signature' is followed by Shunsui's standard kao. However, two findings seem to question this interpretation. Firstly, what could be the connection between the tea master and the design of the Six Famous Poets? Shuko is associated with linked verse poetry, but not the rokkasen. The central figure of Ono no Komachi was derived from a painting by Ogata Korin (see above), who lived two centuries after Murata Shuko. The second reason for doubt is that the name Ohara was also found in the inscription on the storage box for the set of a hair-comb and hair-pin decorated with ears of rice: 'Ohara Shunsui makie'. Apparently, Ohara was Shunsui's family name, which he didn't use for signing his works; it was not meant as a reference to the place where Shuko had grown up. The name Ganshosai is most probably not a family name, but may have been the name of his workshop; Shuko could have been an art name he only used occasionally. Obviously, additional biographical data are required to entirely solve the mystery.

Two inscriptions refer to other artists. An inscription next to the signature on the ink-cake intro reads ho Haritsu saku ('after a design by Haritsu'). The tsuba intro shows a separate text on one of the cord runners: Sotetsu tsukuru ('made by Sotetsu'). Both Ogawa Haritsu and

Sotetsu were famous Edo-period lacquer artists.

3. Dating

Data in the literature about Ganshosai Shunsui are scant and of obscure origin. In the Catalogue of Japanese Lacquer of the Victoria and Albert Museum (published in 1924), Edward Strange placed Shunsui in the early 19th century.¹³ In *Das Buch der Ostasiatische Lackkunst* by Kurt Herberts (1959), W. Speiser listed Ganshosai as 19th century, but Shunsui as beginning of the 19th century.¹⁴ In the latter case he referred to F.M. Jonas book *Netsuke* (1928).¹⁵ Raymond Bushell referred in *The Inro Handbook* (1979) to Melvin and Betty Jahss' *Inro and other miniature forms of Japanese Lacquer Art* (1971), in which Shunsui is mentioned as a talented inro artist and situated in the early 19th century.^{16, 17} Lazarnick (1981) in his turn quotes Herberts and Jahss.¹⁸ Neither Beatrix von Ragué nor W. Speiser mentioned

Shunsui in their books. Only Murakata placed Jusui (misreading of the cursive signature Shunsui) in the Showa period (1926-1989).¹⁹

From the above can be concluded that Western sources generally placed the artist in the beginning of the 19th century. Most authors, however, just quoted their predecessors and never provided an original source. Probably the dating had only been a connoisseur's guess, as no reliable data were available.

Therefore it was highly interesting to find in the Baur Collection a letter by Tomita Kumasaku to Alfred Baur, in which Shunsui was mentioned. The letter was written in Kyoto and dated 10 May 1928. The literal text of the relevant passage reads as follows:

This may be interesting news to you, that Mr. Shunsui, first class lacquerer (you got one with warriors in Messrs. Nakata of Miyanoshita)(also one I got for you at their recent sale), ask me, through my friend, if I can give him commission to work somethings. I have consequently ask him to execute two inro and a box at my design, which I made.

However, it would be some time before I may be able to submit these to you.

Since the Baur Collection doesn't own any other lacquer objects by an artist named Shunsui than the twelve listed in Appendix II, and since no other lacquerers of that name appear in the literature, the 'first class lacquerer' must be Ganshosai Shunsui. Of course, one would like to know which of the three warrior inro were bought from Nakata of Miyanoshita, but unfortunately the inventory cards of the Baur Collection do not provide us with their accession dates. Even more intriguing is the question whether Tomita may have made the design for the small box with tray featuring Ono no Komachi. This, however, does not seem to be the case since its inventory card reports that the box had entered the collection already in 1924.

Also the objects themselves disclose the period of their manufacture to a certain degree.

The shape of the pipe cases is not consistent with an early 19th century origin, as lacquered pipe cases of the musozutsu type were a typically Meiji and Taisho phenomenon. The employment of red-gold (shukin) lacquer on several objects, such as the grounds of both the pipe case and the inro showing Chu Lien Hsiang, also indicates to the early 20th century. This colour and technique was equally favoured by Shirayama Shosai and Uzawa Shogetsu (see Chapters II and IX).

All facts point to the first decades of the 20th century as Shunsui's active period. Of course, it is important to check whether other information could contradict such dating.

Therefore the pedigrees of the 49 objects in this group were checked, and also their earliest reference in the literature, in catalogues or museum archives (see Appendix II). The earliest references appear to date back to 1913. In that year the Metropolitan Museum of Art

purchased two Shunsui inro, which had previously been in the J.H. Webster collection.²⁰ Also in 1913 the ink-cake inro was published in the catalogue of the Seymour Trower collection.²¹ From the above two significant dates emerge: 1913 and 1928. The first references to Shunsui's work date back to 1913, whereas Tomita's letter reveals that the artist was still active in 1928. These dates almost coincide with the Taisho era (1912-1926). Of course,

Shunsui must have worked sometime before 1913, although it is not known for how long the inro had been in the Webster and Seymour Trower collections, and probably also sometime after 1928, since the eight pipe cases in the Baur Collection were not yet mentioned in Tomita's letter. We can therefore conclude that Ganshosai Shunsui must have been active as a lacquer artist from the late Meiji to the early Showa period, and that his work was produced in the first four decades of the 20th century.

4. Conclusion

Ganshosai Shunsui was one of the lacquer artists in the beginning of the 20th century, whose work can be called anachronistic in more than one way. Most of his extant works are inro, which were made in a time when these utensils were hardly worn any longer. In this respect he resembled Yamaguchi Shojosai.²² Probably Shunsui and Shojosai both catered partly for the foreign market. For example, it is likely that the eight pipe cases in the Baur Collection were made on commission.

In addition to the manufacture of outdated inro, the subject matter of his oeuvre conveys an nostalgic mood. Many designs were inspired by classical literature or by legendary or historical figures, although the subjects were rendered in his own characteristic vocabulary from which an individual style emerges. In contrast with the predominating botanical subjects in lacquer art of this period, Shunsui favoured warriors, courtiers and court ladies, *bijin* and an occasional peasant.

The technical standards of Shunsui's work are high. He was skilled in the three main *makie* techniques: *hiramakie*, *takamakie* and *togidashi*, which he applied in a detailed and refined manner without disturbing the overall effect of the mostly bold designs. In some pieces he made abundant use of *kirigane*. A number of Shunsui's works are easy to recognize by the long strips of *aogai* in combination with nostalgic subjects.

In several respects Shunsui was well in tune with his time: he developed an individual style and displayed advanced technical skills. In other ways he was old-fashioned: he produced mainly inro and chose historical, nostalgic subjects. It may therefore be concluded that Shunsui was a modern lacquerer of the old school.

Notes

1. Dees, Jan, 'Ganshosai Shunsui, an early 20th century lacquer artist.', in: *Andon* 51 (1995), pp. 12-26.
2. References of the 49 objects:
 1. Jahss, Melvin and Betty, *Inro and other miniature forms of Japanese lacquer art*. Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co., London 1971, figures 112 and 113.
 2. Baur Collection inv. no. I 280
 3. Baur Collection inv. no. I 372
 4. American Museum of Natural History inv. no. 70.3/2218
 5. Baur Collection inv. no. I 334, probably identical with Tokyo Auction lot 111, April 1929
 6. Lawrence, Louis and Shep Brozman, *Japanese Inro from the Brozman Collection*. Genlux Holdings Ltd., London 1992, no. 98
 7. Sotheby's London, *The Swedlow Collection (sale catalogue)*, March 1993, lot 49

8. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 166
9. Klefisch, Japanische Lacke (30 Auktion). Cologne, November 1985, lot 1048
10. Jahss 1971, figure 7
11. Christie's New York, Magnificent Inro from the Collection of Karl A. Kroch (sale catalogue). December 1986, lot 104
12. American Museum of Natural history inv. no. 70.3/2221
13. Baur Collection inv. no. B 40
14. Sotheby's 1993, lot 48
15. Christie's London (sale catalogue). June 1991, lot 389
16. Personal communication Gunther Heckmann, November 1997
17. Christie's New York, Fine and Important Japanese Prints and Works of Art (sale catalogue), April 1988, lot 57
18. Joly, Henri L., The Seymour Trower Collection. London 1913, no. 1055
19. Victoria & Albert Museum inv. no. W113-1922
20. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 170
21. Christie's London (sale catalogue), June 2000, lot 165
22. Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. no. 13.67.52
23. Tokyo Auction, April 1929, lot 118c
24. Sotheby's London, Fine Japanese Works of Art (sale catalogue), November 1986, lot 19
25. Sotheby's London (sale catalogue), October 1969, lot 1368
26. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 161
27. Tokyo Auction, April 1929, lot 113
28. British Museum inv. no. 1981.0203.023
29. Bushell, Raymond, The Inro Handbook. Weatherhill, New York/Tokyo 1979, no. 39
30. Christie's London (sale catalogue), March 1971, lot 183
31. Christie's London, Fine Inro (sale catalogue), March 1977, lot 15
32. Idemitsu Art Museum inv. no. 106
33. Tokyo Auction, April 1929, lot 109c
34. Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. no. 13.67.100
35. Joly, Henri L. and Tomita Kumasaku, Japanese Art & Handicraft, London 1916, no. 152
36. Tokyo Auction, April 1929, lot 109b
37. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 163
38. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 168
39. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 154
40. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 160
41. Tabakoire, Tobacco & Salt Museum, Tokyo 1986, no. 181
42. Baur Collection inv. no. PC 164

43. Tokyo Auction, April 1929, lot 118b
44. Sotheby's London (sale catalogue), 1972, lot 93
45. Personal Communication Sharen Chappell, 23 May 1995
46. Kress Archive no. 19963.0014
47. Murakata Akiko, Combs, Ornamental Hairpins and Bodkins: selected from the collection of Miss Chiyo Okazaki. Shikosha Publishing Co., Kyoto 1989, no. 402
48. Edo-Tokyo Museum inv. no. 91210646
49. Rokusho no. 15 (1995), p. 26
3. Kitagawa Hiroshi and Bruce T. Tsuchida (translators), The Tale of the Heike. University of Tokyo

Press, Tokyo 1975.

4. Kokka 1890.

5. Rodd, L.R., Kokunshu. A Collection of poems ancient and modern. Princeton University Press 1984, no. 938.

6. Kitagawa 1975, book 6, chapter VII. The subject of 'Buddhist Hell' may be related to Nii-dono's nightmare about her husband Kiyomori's death.

7. Illustrated Catalogues of the Tokyo National Museum. Lacquered Furniture: Stationery. Tokyo 1985, p. 182, no. 247. This box had been presented to the museum by the American collector Quincy Shaw in 1907.

8. Also the variant kao of Shunsui's bijin intro somewhat resembles the kao of Yamaguchi Shojosai.

9. In Murakata 1989, p. 12, no. 402 the signature was read as Jusui.

10. Bushell 1979, p. 189, no. 94 read the cursive signature also as Jusui.

11. The signature on the Iris pipe case in the Tobacco & Salt Museum had been read as Kisho.

12. Wrangham, E.A., The Index of Inro Artists. Harehope Publications, Alnwick 1995, pp. 265-266.

13. Strange, Edward F., Catalogue of Japanese Lacquer. Victoria & Albert Museum, London 1925, p. 146, no. 1658.

14. Herberts, Kurt, Das Buch der Ostasiatischen Lackkunst. Econ-Verlag GMBH, Dusseldorf 1959, p. 444 and p. 509.

15. Jonas F.M., Netsuke. Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland/Tokyo 1960, p. 164

16. Bushell 1979, p. 62, figure 39.

17. Jahss 1971, p. 436.

18. Lazarnick, George, Netsuke and Inro Artists, and How to Read Their Signatures (2 vols.). Reed Publishers, Honolulu 1981, p. 1004-1005.

19. Murakata 1989, p. 12, no. 402.

20. Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. nos. 13.67.52 and 13.67.100.

21. Joly 1913, no. 1055 (illustrated).

22. There may have been some kind of connection between Shunsui and Shojosai, since some of their designs are similar. Babara C. Adachi published an article in the Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal (1976, vol. 4/no. 1, pp. 12-16) in which the artist has been quoted to say: "My specialty, when I was younger, was historical figures. I did lots of scenes from the Heike-Genji wars". Ms. Adachi continues: "The man rifled through his drawings to bring out some remarkably complicated ones of battling warlords attired in full armor – every cord, every helmet-knob, every scabbard was beautifully articulated". It sounds as if designs by Shunsui are being described.

Chapter IX

Uzawa Shogetsu

-The ethereal world

1. Introduction

In the beginning of the 20th century, lacquer artists from the school of Shirayama Shosai produced artefacts which are considered among the most refined and sophisticated ones ever made in Japan. The Baur Collection houses almost one hundred of these objects made by Shirayama Shosai, Watanabe Shoen and Uzawa Shogetsu.¹

This exceptional selection owes its existence to the close relationship between the Swiss collector Alfred Baur (1865-1951) and Tomita Kumasaku (1872-1954), a Japanese art dealer.² Baur had taken a fancy to refined lacquer by both old and contemporary artists. From the beginning he was very enthusiastic about the boxes by Shogetsu, which Tomita sent him. The unique group of 56 objects acquired by the Swiss businessman probably represents the main

part of the artist's oeuvre. This is also the reason why Shogetsu is practically unknown in Japan.

2. Biography

Most of the scant biographical data about Shogetsu are derived from the correspondence between Tomita Kumasaku and Alfred Baur. Despite his broken English, Tomita was able to express himself clearly, and in his letters no artist was more often discussed than Shogetsu. Some additional data about the artist were provided by the American connoisseur Raymond Bushell (1910 -1998), who arrived in Japan in 1945 and initially worked in Kyoto as a legal assistant to the Occupation Forces. He had met Tomita, and bought artefacts from him and also from his son after Tomita's death.³

In three letters, Tomita provides indications as to Shogetsu's age. On 10 April 1927 he wrote: "I understand about the same age of mine". Tomita was 55 at that time. However, the letters from 1934 may be more reliable, since he had then been in regular contact with the artist for a number of years. The letter of 9 March 1934 mentions: "...he is still young (57?)...". And two months later, on 4 May: "...he is either 57 or 58 ...". It can therefore be safely concluded that Shogetsu was probably born in 1877, or possibly 1876.

Shogetsu lived "a humble life" in Tokyo. He was married and the father of four children. In fact, the family name Uzawa was never mentioned by Tomita in his letters, but it is only known from a single seal on a storage box (tomobako) in the Bushell collection (figure 195).⁴ It is possible that Raymond Bushell had also learned the name from Tomita when they met in Japan a few years after World War II.⁵

The correspondence reveals little about Shogetsu's character. In 1927 Tomita wrote: "Why he was overlooked from public is this - so far I heard - he is very irregular man & drunkard as usual artist". Between 1932 and 1934 the slow progress of the work on the commissioned Spring-Autumn writing box was blamed on the artist's unreliable character too (see below).

According to Tomita, Shogetsu was the pupil of Shirayama Shosai, the leading lacquer artist during the first quarter of the 20th century. In 1927 he describes him as the "only direct pupil of Shosai". This was repeated in several other letters to such an extent that Tomita mixed up their names more than once.

In his letter of 12 November 1931 Tomita imparts some very interesting information: "Mr Shogetsu told me that his works has been signed as his master's works, I quite believe it, for his present works are quite good, if not better to his master." In June 1933, he repeated that Shogetsu "... produce most of his master's piece and the master signed only."

Therefore it is not surprising that Tomita consulted Shogetsu when a Shosai lacquer box from the famous collection of a Japanese baron came up for sale in 1933: "My recent visit to Tokio were failure, I expected to see a lacquer box, described made by Shosai - the lacquer artist unrivalled - as I enclosed picture, but in minute examination and Mr Shogetsu's judge, I found the piece is faked one ...".

The statement that Shogetsu's work was signed by his master, suggests that he probably only became an independent artist after Shosai's death in 1923, and that he only started using his own art name, with the first character of his master's name incorporated, at that time. Also two other pupils, Takano Shozan (1889-1976) and Moriya Shotei (1890-1972), adopted their art names around the time of Shosai's death.⁶⁻⁸ In any case, no objects with Shogetsu's signature are known to exist in the large collections compiled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and neither is his name found in the 1902 members list of the Japan Lacquer

Society, which includes some 200 lacquer artists in Tokyo. It would appear that Tomita's letter from 1927 is the first report on Shogetsu.

Additional evidence of the relationship between Shosai and Shogetsu is provided by a rhombic incense container in the MOA Museum of Art in Atami. This small box bears the seals of both artists (figure 196). The outside, decorated with a flight of plovers above the waves against the background of crushed aogai (thin iridescent shell particles), was executed by Shosai. The inside, with tiny shells on the beach, was done by Shogetsu. It must have been either a joint work by the two artists or an unfinished box when Shosai died, which was subsequently completed by Shogetsu. Several unfinished lacquer objects by Shosai were completed by other pupils, such as Moriya Shotei, sometimes many years later.⁹

Shirayama Shosai had two kinds of pupils (see Chapter II).¹⁰ A professor of the Tokyo Art School, he trained numerous students, and some of them took master classes with him after

completing the formal curriculum of four years. Thus, Tsujimura Shoka (1867-1929) and Takano Shozan were to continue his style of lacquer art, and both eventually became professors at their alma mater. Several other pupils were not trained at the Tokyo Art School, but in Shosai's private workshop in the Kyobashi ward of Tokyo. They probably entered the workshop at an early age without any experience of working with lacquer. For example, Moriya Shotei came from Kyoto when he was seventeen, and stayed with Shosai as an intern. It is not known when the other apprentices Watanabe Shoen (dates unknown) and Shogetsu entered the workshop. If Shogetsu had indeed arrived without any previous training, he must have been one of Shosai's earliest pupils in the 1890s.

Altogether it can be taken as fact that Shogetsu was one of the pupils of the celebrated Shirayama Shosai. It is likely that he only became an independent artist after his master's death in 1923 - at the age of 46!

What happened to Uzawa Shogetsu after 1923 is equally obscure. According to Raymond Bushell, he was employed by the Tobe workshop. It is thought that the lacquer artist Tobe Kofu (1888-1965) founded his school and workshop in the Shiba ward of Tokyo during the 1910s. He employed over a dozen of artisans, not only for the manufacture of lacquerware, but for metalwork and other art objects as well. Apart from Shogetsu, the lacquer artists Miura Meiho (b. 1900), Toyohira Suisen (1901-1967), Yamaguchi Shojosai (1900-1978) and Watanabe Shoen were catering for or employed by Tobe for some time. In the case of Shojosai it is known that he entered the school as a student in 1919. After the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, he continued his study in Kyoto for one year, but in the course of 1924 he returned to Tobe Kofu's workshop. After four years Shojosai became an independent artist, but continued to accept work from Tobe until his own business became viable. Recently, a photograph of members of the Tobe workshop was found. As Shojosai is not in the group and Toyohira Suisen appears to be in his early thirties and Tobe in his early forties, this picture was probably taken in the early 1930s (figure 197). One wonders which of the employees could have been Shogetsu, but no clues are available apart from his age. It has been reported that the workshop was discontinued during World War II.¹¹⁻¹⁴

This period coincides with Tomita Kumasaku's acquisition of the 56 objects by Uzawa Shogetsu which are now in the Baur Collection. The Swiss collector met Tomita the first time during his only visit to Japan in January 1924 – the start of their long cooperation. Tomita would search for Chinese and Japanese works of art in China, Korea and in Japan. Shipments arrived in Geneva via Marseille, often two or three times a month. The new acquisitions were announced in Tomita's letters, and photographs were sometimes sent to obtain approval in

advance. Tomita and Baur were both extremely fond of Shogetsu's work. They managed to acquire all lacquer objects by the artist on an exclusive basis. In April 1927 Tomita reported: "I have made an arrangement to secure - through a friend in Tokyo - all works done by Mr Shogetsu". He goes on to say that the few pieces by the artist in the next shipment were already made "some time ago".

Although dealer and artist had obviously met several times, it becomes clear from the correspondence that there was an intermediary ('friend' or 'agent') in Tokyo, who assisted Tomita in supervising the acquisitions and commissions. One wonders whether Tobe could

have been this intermediary. This would also explain why the Baur Collection owns no less than 20 objects by one of Tobe's other employees: Watanabe Shoen.

The letters and the inventory cards of the Baur Collection, which are based on Tomita's information, show that the last of Shogetsu's lacquer objects entered the collection in April 1937. After that the artist's name is neither mentioned again in Tomita's letters nor in the inventory of Tomita's acquisitions for Baur between 1939 and 1945. The latter was compiled for export after World War II by R Stunzi, a Swiss businessman residing in Japan. This was the first export to be approved by General McArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, and it received extensive publicity in the media, including Stars and Stripes, the newspaper of the Occupation Forces.¹⁵

There may be a specific reason why no objects after 1937 are known: Shogetsu's eyesight was deteriorating. After the completion of the Spring-Autumn writing box Tomita had written on 4 May 1934: "I do not bit surprise if he cannot produce, as he declared otherday, similar work again since his sight could not be same as before". For that same reason Shunsho Tosaburo (b. 1919) had been compelled to abandon his work just before World War II, thus bringing to an end the activities of the famous Shunsho workshop after 300 years.¹⁶

It can therefore be concluded that all 56 objects date from the period between 1923 and 1937, and that they represent virtually all that Shogetsu made during these years.

Nothing is known about Shogetsu after that time. His name is not mentioned in the literature, and my inquiries to curators of major Japanese museums drew blank. He is hardly known in Japan. In fact, three objects with the artist's seal, which I came across in Japan, had been erroneously attributed to Moriya Shotei (two objects in museums and a third one in a gallery).

Since only 12 lacquer objects by Shogetsu are known to exist outside the Baur Collection, it is unlikely that the artist was very productive before or after the period 1923-1937. It is more likely that the dozen other objects were manufactured after 1937 than before 1923, if we accept that Shogetsu's artefacts were signed by Shirayama Shosai until his death in August 1923. This last point raises an interesting question about the authenticity of Shosai's works: which lacquer objects were really made by the famous master himself, which were by Shogetsu or his other pupils? This question will be addressed in the last part of this chapter.

3. Works

3.1. Collections

Altogether 68 objects by Uzawa Shogetsu are known to exist: 56 in the Baur Collection, 3 in the former Bushell collection, 3 in private European collections, 1 in a European museum, 3 in Japanese museums, and 2 in private Japanese collections.¹⁷

3.2. Objects

All but two objects are small items: 25 incense containers, 24 pipe cases, 14 tea caddies, 2

medicine containers and a small tray. The two larger objects are a flat box, possibly for holding for poem cards, and a magnificent writing box.

3.3. Grounds

Shogetsu took great pains to produce splendid lacquer grounds and he often applied contrasting tones on the interiors, and sometimes on the bases as well. His flawless black grounds are admirable in their own right, irrespective of the decoration, and so are the bright red grounds sprinkled with gold particles. Red gold or shukin grounds come in two variants.¹⁸ In one, which is fairly characteristic of the Shosai school, a layer of bright red lacquer is densely sprinkled with coarse gold powder and subsequently coated with additional layers of bright red lacquer to cover the gold particles. After sanding, the gold grains reappear as tiny glittering sequins. It is therefore a kind of togidashi technique (figure 198). In the other variant, a changeable gold-red ground has been produced by covering a gold ground with a layer of bright red lacquer, which is then polished down until the red layer becomes very filmy, like a transparent membrane (figure 199 - middle).

In two sets of objects from the Baur Collection the colours of the grounds themselves are part of the subject matter. There is a pair of tea caddies with feather decorations, one on a gold ground representing 'day', the other one on a black ground representing 'night'. Similarly, there is a pair of circular incense containers with autumn grasses: one on a red gold ground representing the sun and the other one on a green gold ground representing the moon.

3.4. Subjects

Shogetsu was predominantly an artist of botanical subjects. Nearly half of the objects made by him have depictions of trees, plants and flowers, whereas a number of other works combine such subjects with animals or landscapes.

Apart from chrysanthemums and autumn grasses, which are ubiquitous in lacquer art, Shogetsu had a particular fondness for ferns, pinks and for the cocks-comb plant (hageito figure 200), which he rendered with similar finesse as his feathers. Sunflowers, which are found on two tea caddies, are rarely depicted in lacquer art, since they were not indigenous in Japan.

In Japanese iconography animals and plants are usually shown in fixed combinations: quails amongst pampas grass, a badger under bamboo, and sparrows with a large peony. Sometimes unconventional combinations are found, such as a monkey in a flowering wisteria and a cat staring at a butterfly, but refraining from catching it since the butterfly is hovering over a thistle.

The landscapes include a series of four pipe cases representing the seasons. It is likely that the set was ordered by Tomita and Baur.

Shogetsu's feather designs are highly esteemed. Surprisingly, they appear more like botanical motifs than as an animal subject. A total of nine objects with feathers are known in various collections all over the world. All are done on impeccable mirror black grounds on

which the feathers seem to float. So finely executed are the fine line drawings that it seems possible to blow these weightless feathers off the lacquer surfaces. In my view the flat box in figure 201 is the very best of all the objects with the feather motifs, and among the most wonderful of what Japanese lacquer art has to offer.

Shogetsu not only borrowed the feathers, the ferns and the pinks from Shosai's repertoire, but also the geometrical whirlpool motif on the exterior of the incense container in figure 202. Among the 68 objects are 4 pipe cases with attractive decorations in ukiyoe style. According to an inscription on the pipe case, the design of Daruma reading a letter together

with a geisha is done after Katsukawa Shunsho (1726-1792) (figure 199 - right). The lady behind the bamboo blind could have been borrowed from the same artist, although no painter's name is inscribed in this case (figure 199 - left). Another 6 designs are derived from other styles of painting: 2 from painters of the Kano school [Tan'yu (1602-1674) and Tsunenobu], another 3 from painters of the Shijo school [Yamaguchi Soken (1759-1818), Yamamoto Baiitsu (1783-1856) and Kikuchi Hobun (1862-1918)], and finally one from the Nihonga painter Hashimoto Gaho (1835-1908). In two instances Shogetsu mentioned that the decorations had been copied from other lacquer artists: feathers from his master Shosai and a crane from Nakayama Komin (1808-1870). However, in the latter case there is the possibility that Shogetsu added an exterior decoration to an existing incense container by Komin, which had originally been embellished only on the inside, since several of such Komin incense containers with undecorated exteriors exist.

The pipe case in figure 203 was inspired by Matsuo Basho's (1644-1694) most famous haiku:

The old pond: furuike ya

A frog jumps in, - kawazu tobikomu

The sound of the water.19 mizu no oto

Literary themes are uncommon in lacquer art, although this can be deceptive since they are often shown in an abbreviated form - less obvious than in prints or paintings. In the example of Basho's poem, there can be no doubt since the poem is written in lacquer on the inner sheath of the pipe case. However, in the case of the pipe case in figure 204, showing a woman beating her cloth in the moonlit night, the literary content only becomes evident once one gets to know the poem by Fujiwara Masatsune (1170-1221) about the woman fulling silk under the autumn moon while waiting for her husband to return. In poetry, the sound she produces at the block became synonymous with the beat of her languishing heart:

From Mount Yoshino miyoshino no

Blows a chill, autumnal wind yama no akikaze

In the deepening night sayo fukete

The ancient village shivers: furusato samuku

Sounds of beating cloth I hear.20 koromo utsu nari

3.5. Decoration techniques

Shogetsu excelled in the polish-revealed togidashi ('brought out by polishing') technique, which is undoubtedly one of the marvels of his artistry. The decorations are sunk into and therefore flush with the grounds, which produces a transparent, dreamlike effect (figure 199). Half the objects are entirely executed in this technique, whereas another quarter features the combination of togidashi with low relief hiramakie (flat sprinkled design). Hiramakie alone was found in the remaining quarter of the objects, but only a single box shows high relief takamakie (relief sprinkled design) in parts of the decoration.

Shogetsu's work features the peak of jigaki fine line drawing. This is not only obvious in the feather designs, but equally in the detailed decorations of incense containers and pipe cases (figure 199). The detail of a pipe case in figure 205 showing rakan Handaka riding on his dragon clearly illustrates his mastery of the technique. The design has been taken from a painting by Kano Tsunenobu (1636-1713). A refined effect is produced by the combination of fine line drawing with an extremely thin brush, as seen in the Saint's face, and a meticulous skill in the grading of metal powder (bokashi) with the sprinkling rod (tsutsu), as seen in his robe.

Inlay techniques are restricted to thin iridescent shell particles (aogai) and thin geometrical gold or silver foil particles (kirigane). In a quarter of the boxes, the decorations have been enlivened by the incrustation of aogai. Usually, the tiny fragments are applied to accentuate certain details or outlines, but occasionally some aogai sparks are randomly embedded into the ground to heighten its reflection and in one case the entire interior of an incense container, including the risers, is covered with square pieces (figure 202). Kirigane is sometimes applied abundantly to suggest clouds, but the technique is mostly used in a restrained manner to accentuate details. The variety in the shapes of the gold and silver foil is unusual: apart from the normal squares, there are triangles, rectangles and lozenges (figure 208).

As for the pigments, Shogetsu used the traditional spectrum of gold, silver, and, to a lesser degree, black, green and red. Occasionally one finds a peculiar yellow, for example in the rendering of a sun flower (figure 206). He had a special liking for orange-red (aria shu) and bright-red (akarui shu) colours, which were also applied as grounds in several cases (figure 198).

From the technical point of view, Shogetsu applied a limited number of methods, but he aimed at pushing them to perfection.

3.6. Signatures

All objects bear the artist's seal, but only half of them have been signed. The signatures and seals are remarkably small (figure 207a); the square seals measure only 5 x 5 millimetres. Two slight departures from the normal seal have been found: one reported by Bushell on an incense container, and the other one observed on a pipe case in the Baur Collection (figure 207b).

3.7. The Spring-Autumn writing box

Apparently, Tomita tried to guide Shogetsu by suggesting subjects for his work and even by ordering boxes. The commission of the Spring-Autumn writing box was the most striking example of Tomita's involvement. The laborious work started late in 1930 or early in 1931, and was supervised by the aforementioned agent in Tokyo, since Tomita himself lived in Kyoto. From the beginning of 1932, Tomita started to complain about the slow progress of the work. He felt it difficult to deal with "such unreliable characters like artists". Tomita had expected the box to be finished before the summer of 1932, but in one letter after the other he had to apologize to Alfred Baur for the delays.

In September 1933 he reported: "...I found insides of writing box nearly finish and part of outside under working. He promised me that he would try to finish the same before the end of the year." Also this deadline was not met.

More problems were imminent. As the work neared completion, Shogetsu became increasingly reluctant to see his major work leaving the country for Switzerland. In February 1934 Tomita wrote: "The lacquerer wishes me to detain his soon coming out work in this country. I have already explained to him that this work would be kept in a place where climatically better and no-earthquake country." No doubt, he must have had in mind the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake.

March 9th 1934: "I saw him as well as the box, he is nearly working for finish touch. ... I am sure the piece would appeal to you as a fine specimen of the lacquer works. He once more declared that he could not produce similar work again. [...] I must make him encourage to work further. I do not think such an artist would ever come to this world again"

April 27th 1934: "I was informed that Mr Shogetsu had finished the work, except the

contents – writing utensils [...] I would photo it and send you at an early opportune”

June 6th 1934: “Although it has been finish the work to the box, the contents – ink stone and brushes – has not come to my hand ...”

June 28th 1934: “I thank you for your kind admiration for his works. [...] I am so pleased you have approved the design on the box, after you see the photos, this relieves me my duty greatly. [...] During my absence, contents of the box was delivered ...”

The writing box was transported, as part of a shipment of four cases, by the packet-boat Yasukuni-maru which left Kobe on July 26th and arrived in Marseille on August 30th.

On 12th September 1934 Alfred Baur wrote to Tomita:

This morning I have opened and unpacked the [...] 4 cases [...] and as you may imagine it has been an immense joy to see unrolled before my eyes one treasure after another. [...] I think the palm must go the Mr Shogetsu’s writing box, which is a wonderful piece of craftsmanship. It certainly has surpassed my expectations, and I don’t suppose that it will ever be excelled again. I don’t know whether you can realise the inner proudness and satisfaction, which a collector feels, when he stands before an object, which may be classed as being probably the most outstanding piece of art in its line. [...] I feel very grateful to you ...

The cost far exceeded the original estimate, but Baur was very understanding. Initially, Shogetsu received 150 yen per month, but, as this proved insufficient to live on, Tomita paid additional small amounts from time to time and, after the box was completed, a bonus of 1000 yen. The agent accepted 500 yen for his services, but refused to do such a job ever again. The total costs amounted to a sum of 8600 yen – an extremely high price in those days. By comparison, Alfred Baur paid 160-250 yen for pipe cases and 600 yen for tea caddies by Shogetsu in the early 1930s. Because of the high costs Tomita would not charge any commission.

The writing box is an impressive luxurious box with gold rims. On the cover of the black lacquered storage box the title is written: Haru aki suzuribako (Spring Autumn writing box). The exterior of the box is decorated with a variety of autumn plants, whereas the contrasting interior shows a couple of mandarin ducks under a blooming wisteria (figure 208). The utensils are delicately adorned with slender wisteria blossoms in togidashi.

4. Conclusion

Shogetsu was certainly not at the centre of the art world of his age - the second quarter of the 20th century. The remarkable artistic developments during these years, in which modern designs were favoured above sophisticated techniques, broke away from the traditional lacquer scene of the previous quarter century, in which Shirayama Shosai had set the tone (Chapter II).

Between 1905 and 1923 Shosai was the foremost professor of lacquer art at the Tokyo Art School. He managed to even further refine the sophisticated makie gold sprinkling techniques of the late Edo period. These technical achievements in combination with a special feeling for delicate designs resulted in his style of ultimate refinement.¹⁰ If Shogetsu indeed had entered the workshop in the 1890s, he must have been witness to, and perhaps even partner in, the development of Shosai’s new style around the turn of the century.

As pointed out before, their artistic identities cannot entirely be distinguished since Shosai signed his pupil’s works, or, conversely, since a number of objects with Shosai’s signature were actually made by Shogetsu. Whether the latter can be partly credited for the creation of the detailed and sophisticated style in Shosai’s oeuvre remains doubtful though. Shosai was a

versatile artist with a strong personality, whose work shows a significant development, which finally resulted in the style of ultimate refinement. The fact that Shogetsu continued Shosai's style and technique virtually without change over a period of at least fourteen years after his master's death suggests that he was a faithful pupil, but not the creative force behind this style. Not without reason he inscribed one of his feather pipe cases with: 'Idea of Shosai'. Nonetheless, it is easy to understand Tomita's view: "From my opinion his work is quite good as his master", and even "... his present works are quite good, if not better to his master." In a number of objects, one gets the impression that Shogetsu wanted to surpass Shosai. For example in the case of the tea caddy in figure 209 the whirlpool design is applied on the hollow, not easily accessible interior and in figure 198 ferns can be found not only on

the exterior, but also on the interior of a tea caddy. In other cases, Shogetsu playfully added details to otherwise well-known designs, such as the silver reflection of the moon on the water that can be partially seen at the top end edge of the incense container from the Bushell collection in figure 202 or a few scattered feathers on the base of a tea caddy with a decoration of cock's combs in the Baur Collection. The aim to surpass Shosai can also be perceived in a number of the pipe cases with delicate decorations in superior togidashi (figures 201 and 205). These decorations, sunk into the flawless gold or black grounds, become almost transparent. This dreamlike quality is probably the most irresistible characteristic of the ethereal world of Uzawa Shogetsu.

Notes

1. Dees, Jan: Ferns, Feathers and Flowers. Japanese lacquer of the Meiji and Taisho periods from the Baur Collection. Museum fur Lackkunst and Collections Baur, Munster/Geneva 2001. In chapter IV some seventy-five objects by Shosai, Shoen and Shogetsu are illustrated.
2. Schneeberger, Pierre-Francis and Olivier Reverdin: Alfred Baur. Pioneer and Collector. Collections Baur, Geneva 1989.
3. Personal communication Raymond Bushell, San Francisco 1996
4. The Raymond and Frances Bushell Collection of Inro and Lacquer (auction catalogue). Sotheby's London 18.06.1997, lot 127.
5. Personal communication Raymond Bushell 1986: "Shogetsu's family name is Uzawa. It is written ..".
6. Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces. The National Museum of Modern Art, Weatherhill/Tankosha, New York/Tokyo/Kyoto 1982, p. 286.
7. Yoshikawa Hideki, 'Biographical data about Suisen Toyohira and Shotei Moriya', in: Bulletin of the Urasoe Art Museum 2003, pp. 79-92 (Japanese text).
8. Personal communication Yoshikawa Hideki 2004.
9. Dees 2001, pp. 85-85, figure 28.
10. Dees, Jan, 'Shirayama Shosai, Japanese Lacquer Artist 1853-1923', in: Arts of Asia vol. 32 no. 2 March/April 2002, pp. 92-105.
11. Bushell, Raymond: The Inro Handbook. Studies of Netsuke, Inro and Lacquer. Weatherhill, New York/Tokyo 1979, p. 67.
12. Personal Communication Yoshikawa Hideki 2004.
13. Wrangham, Edward: The Index of Inro Artists. Harehope Publications 1995, p. 135. The estimated age of Mr Tobe on the photograph, made in the early 1930s, suggests that the artist Tobe Kofu listed by Wrangham must have been the owner of the studio. The dates 1888-1965 are incompatible with the age of his eldest son, who is depicted at the far left on the photograph.

14. The data about Shojosai are derived from a detailed letter of March 2000 about his father from Yamaguchi Ryusen to Heinz and Else Kress.
15. Personal communication Raymond Bushell 1986: "About that time Tomita received extensive publicity in the media including Stars and Stripes the newspaper of the Occupation Forces. His was the first export to be approved by General McArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. The shipment was to Mr. Baur at Geneva ..."
16. Dees, Jan, 'Shells on Sumiyoshi's Shore', in: Andon 43 (1993), pp. 88-91.
17. An incense container in the British Museum, London, a tea caddy in the Wajima Ishikawa Urushi Art Museum, Wajima, an incense container in the MOA Museum of Art, Atami, an incense container in the Nikko Urushi Art Museum, Nikko, an incense container in a Tokyo private collection, an incense container at Kanegae Oriental Antiques in Kyoto, a pipe case in a German private collection, a small tray in the Khalili Collection of Japanese Art, London, and an incense container in a Dutch private collection.
18. Bushell 1979, pp. 159-160.
19. Blyth, R.H., Haiku (vol. II Spring). Hokuseido, Tokyo 1974, p. 253.
20. Kamisaka Sekka: Rimpa Master – Pioneer of Modern Design (exhibition catalogue.). The National Museum of Modern Art/Birmingham Museum of Art/The Asahi Shimbun, Kyoto/Alabama 2003, p. 67.

Chapter X

Storage boxes for lacquer objects

-Carriers of art-historical data

1. Introduction

Japanese works of art are usually kept in wooden boxes. Since such boxes protect their contents against mechanical trauma, daylight, dust, insects, and changes of temperature and humidity, they greatly contribute to the conservation of the art objects, in particular of vulnerable lacquerware.

In Europe and the United States, however, these boxes have often been discarded as if they were only temporary packing material. With the exception of paintings, most Japanese artworks in the West nowadays lack the protection of the wooden boxes which had been especially ordered for them by the artists.

One can only speculate about the reasons. The most likely factor seems to have been the ignorance of collectors about the protective qualities of storage boxes. In addition, boxes may have been found unattractive, especially since they were made of soft wood. Such 'cheapish' material did not seem to match the precious works of art inside. Most Western collectors must have been unaware that it is exactly the physical qualities of soft types of wood like paulownia or cryptomeria which enable them to delay climatic changes outside the box for as long as two months.¹

The most dramatic example of lost storage boxes seems to be the Baur Collection in Geneva. In this museum, which is otherwise so exemplary for the conservation of its collection, virtually no original storage boxes of the lacquer objects have survived. They have all been replaced by luxurious, made-to-measure boxes similar to those for jewellery or watches. This may have happened already during Alfred Baur's life.

What the collectors discarded was not only packing material with superior properties for conservation, but in many instances also valuable art historical information, as will be pointed out below. Many of the presented examples were found during the research for the previous chapters of this thesis.

2. Terminology

The diverse terminology for storage boxes may be confusing. Since the most commonly used wood for the boxes is *Paulownia imperialis* or *kiri*, the word *kiribako* is often used. *Sotobako* or ‘outer box’ seems to be the most neutral word. When it concerns the original *sotobako* of an art object, it is called *tomobako* or ‘companion box’ (a contraction of the words *tomo* – ‘friend’ or ‘companion’ and *hako* – ‘box’). *Tomobako* usually bear *hakogaki* or ‘box inscriptions’, such as the signature of the artist and a description of the contents. These inscriptions by the artist himself mark the completion of the work (*rakuseikanshi*) and turn the *sotobako* into a *tomobako*. Since this article will focus on the value of the inscriptions for the history and appreciation of lacquer art, we depend mainly on original storage boxes.

Therefore the word *tomobako* will be frequently used in this paper.²⁻⁴

Most *tomobako* for lacquer objects were made of plain *kiri* wood, often with an exterior coating of wax to enhance the protective qualities against changes of temperature and humidity.

Inscriptions in black ink can be found on both sides of the lid and sometimes on the bottom. Occasionally, *tomobako* are coated with black or brown lacquer, which gives them a more luxurious appearance; in such cases the inscriptions are done in red or gold lacquer. Not only the inscriptions by the artist, but also labels, stickers and later inscriptions can provide information about the work of art itself, the artist or the successive owners. It goes without saying that *hakogaki* and other inscriptions can equally be pitfalls, deceptions or outright forgeries. As with all art historical information, the context should be taken into account and confirmation from other sources is often required.

Some lacquer objects have two or three fitted boxes. This may be an expression of appreciation for the object by successive collectors or a necessity to protect the worn or damaged original storage box. *Kiribako* made long after the completion of the objects are called *atobako* or ‘later boxes’.

In the West, most *tomobako* date from the Meiji period or later. Unfortunately, few original storage boxes from the Edo period have survived. *Tomobako* of inro are rarities.

3. Inscriptions

3.1. Title of the art object

Numerous lacquer objects have titles, especially those made from the middle of the Meiji period onwards, when individuality became a more explicit phenomenon in lacquer art. The title can usually be found in the centre of the *tomobako*’s lid. Often it is just a description of the subject matter such as in the case of Shogetsu’s famous writing box in the Baur Collection in Geneva (see figure 208 in Chapter IX), which has an exterior decoration of autumn grasses, whereas the inside is decorated with a pair of mandarin ducks under a flowering wisteria. The cover of the black lacquered *tomobako* – one of the few that have

survived – has an inscription in gold lacquer *Haru aki suzuribako* or ‘Spring-Autumn writing box’ (figure 210).

Apart from being a description, the title can also explain the subject of the design. The meaning of Shirayama Shosai’s small incense container in figure 39 (Chapter II) cannot be understood until learning its title *Nagaoka Tenjin* – which we know in this case only from the 1925 auction catalogue of the Tokyo Art Club, since the *tomobako* was lost afterwards. The cover imitates the circular end piece of a roof tile from the Tenjin shrine in the ancient capital Nagaoka (782-792). Shosai made this box in the beginning of the 20th century when he

studied all kinds of ancient artefacts, especially those from the Shosoin and the Horyuji. The title Tokonatsu of the tea caddy by Shosai's pupil Tsujimura Shoka sounds mysterious at first (figure 211). The gold lacquer natsume, made for the 1927 exhibition of the Imperial Art Academy, is decorated with pinks or nadeshiko (figure 212). This was a popular subject among Shosai and his pupils. It is only the use of the old word tokonatsu instead of nadeshiko that provides us with the clue that Shoka not only wanted to depict pinks or wild carnations, but that he was also alluding to the 26th chapter of the Genji monogatari entitled Tokonatsu. Once that is understood, we recognize the small flower rack on which the wild carnations rest. In this manner the flowers are usually illustrated in the relevant chapter of the Genji tale. In other cases the title is poetic and sometimes even touching, such as the title Mono no ne or 'The sound of things' of a writing box made in Kyoto for the Meiji emperor in 1909 (figures 213 - 215). It shows the blind poet Semimaru in exile holding his lute and listening to the sound of the wind in the fields under a moonlit sky. The title emphasizes the fact that Semimaru can hear the sounds around him, but that he is unable to see his environment - not even the autumn moon. "The moon and I are strangers", he says in a play.

3.2. Signatures and seals

It is not uncommon for a lacquer object to be unsigned, but that only its tomobako reveals the name of the maker - normally written on the inside of the lid. The signature is called rakkan - an abbreviation of the word rakuseikanshi (completion of the art work) -, whereas the seal is called insho.

Such is the case with the Toro or 'Mantis' writing box with a design of a praying mantis sitting on top of an aubergine. Although the suzuribako itself is not signed, the tomobako shows the signature Furosai, which is the art name Uematsu Hobi used early in his career (figures 216 - 218). Since the design of small plants on the interior of the writing box was published in the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society in 1905, obviously as a novelty, it can also be concluded that Hobi still used the art name Furosai at that time.

It is a well-known fact that Harui Komin rarely signed his works. Out of the ten boxes by this artist in the Baur Collection, only two are signed. For evidence about the identity of the maker we therefore often depend on other sources. A fascinating example is the letter found in the Victoria & Albert Museum concerning the sumptuous book cabinet (unsigned), which had been presented by Crown-Prince Hirohito to Edward, Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit to the British Royal Family in 1921. The letter discloses that Harui Komin had been the lacquer artist, and that it had taken four years to complete the decoration. A set of a

writing box with paper storage box 'Eight Views of Lake Biwa' in the New Orleans Museum of Art is executed in similar style, and it is also unsigned. Fortunately, in this case the storage boxes have survived and both of them bear the signatures and seals of Harui Komin (figures 219 and 220).

In contrast, Uzawa Shogetsu always signed his lacquer objects, of which 68 pieces are presently known to exist.⁵ However, nothing has been published about the artist in the Japanese literature, due to the fact that nearly all his works were bought by Alfred Baur as soon as they had been completed. The sole source of Shogetsu's family name is the red seal Uzawa on the tomobako of an incense container from the Raymond Bushell collection (see figure 195 in Chapter IX).

3.3. Co-workers

In the case of Harui Komin's book cabinet for the Prince of Wales, the letter found in the V&A Museum informs us that it had actually been manufactured by a team of craftsmen,

including carpenters, metalworkers and lacquerers for the ground layers. Such information rarely appears on tomobako, but exceptions exist. Matsuda Gonroku mentioned on several storage boxes for tea caddies that the wooden cores had been made by Kawakita Ryozo, whereas the ground layers had been applied by Okude Jusen.⁶

3.4. Techniques

Sometimes tomobako provide information about the techniques which were applied in the decoration. However, in most instances it concerns unsurprising terms such as makie, tsuishu or raden, which are among the techniques most familiar to lacquer connoisseurs.

Occasionally, unexpected techniques are mentioned. An interesting example is the Nagaoka Tenjin incense container by Shirayama Shosai (see figure 39 in Chapter II). Apart from the box in the Baur Collection, an identical incense container is kept in a private Belgian collection. The inscription on the cover of its tomobako reads: kogo kanshitsu uchi nashiji, which means that the incense container was made in the 'dry lacquer' technique, whereas the inside is done in nashiji (figure 221). No indications exist that Shosai ever used the kanshitsu technique in any other objects than in these two incense containers. Therefore the inscription adds new information about his artistry.

The early 20th century artist Rokkaku Shisui invented and adapted a number of lacquering techniques. One of them is the application of large inlays of the cheap metal 'alumite', which he embossed by making use of dentist's equipment. The Hiroshima Prefectural Museum of Art has an incense container with such an embossed inlay, but in this case the metal is not alumite but silver, according to the inscription kin hyomon kogo on its storage box - again a small piece of information not known from the art historical literature (see figure 102 in Chapter IV).

3.5. Sources of inspiration

Rokkaku Shisui derived the inspiration for his new styles and techniques from his acquaintance with the ancient Chinese lacquer objects excavated near the Korean town of

Lolang (in Japanese: Rakuro). So excited was he about the painterly decorations from the Han era, that numerous inscriptions on his tomobako mention that the art object was a 'Lolang study object' (Rakuro kenkyu no uchi) (figure 222).

Also the title of the work can explain the source of inspiration. As already mentioned, Shirayama Shosai studied a number of artefacts from the Nara period in the first decade of the 20th century, which inspired him to borrow elements from ancient designs for application in his own work. Without the inscription of the title Ranjatai kogo on the tomobako, one would not have known that the idea for the shishi decoration on the incense box was derived from the container of a log of incense wood of Indian provenance named Ranjatai, stored in the Shosoin (see figure 41 in Chapter II).

With a stroke of luck, the exact source of the design of a pipe case by Shosai could be recognised. Having read the title Horyuji kondo yonjuhachi taibutsu kohai or '48 gilt-bronze Buddhist halos from the Horyuji' on the storage box, it was possible - during a chance visit to the Gallery of Horyuji Treasures in Tokyo - to identify the 7th century gilt bronze halos that stood model for the decoration of the pipe case (figures 223 - 225).

3.6. Year of manufacture

Artists like Akatsuka Jitoku, Rokkaku Shisui and Yamazaki Kakutaro often wrote the year or even the date of manufacture of the lacquer object on their tomobako. This helps perceive a certain chronology in their oeuvres.⁷⁻⁹

A rare example is the inro entitled Kanko makie inro from the Sekido collection (figure

226). The title is written on the outside of the tomobako's cover and refers to the subject of the cockerel on a war drum (kankodori; kanko = drum) as a symbol of prolonged peace (figure 227). The inside of the lid not only shows the artist's signature and seal, but also the date of manufacture: Kansei 12th, monkey year, December – the equivalent of the year 1800 (figure 228). The name of the artist is Koami Choshu, the sixteenth generation of the Koami workshop that worked for the shogunate. However, this tomobako has even more surprises in store. It contains the original design drawing for the intro, which was presented to the client (possibly Shogun Iesada) for approval, together with a receipt for the payment of five ryo (figures 229 and 230). The tomobako and papers together form a unique documentation of this intro.

3.7. Name of the customer

In rare cases the name of the patron or customer was written on the tomobako. An unsigned writing box with a design of Avalokitesvara, inspired on the famous painting 'Avalokitesvara as a merciful mother' by Kano Hogai, has a tomobako of plain paulownia wood with a gold lacquer inscription Sokubutsu Shin-in sama on suzuribako (figure 231; see also figure 23 in Chapter II). The inscription indicates that the writing box was made for the high-ranking monk Sokubutsu Shin-in. Probably for that reason the artist inscribed his customer's name in gold lacquer. The fact that it concerned a high-ranking person may have held the artist back from signing the suzuribako, such as also often happened in lacquer boxes made for the emperor - for example in the Mono no ne writing box.

3.8. Name of the benefactor/beneficiary

Inscriptions on tomobako of imperial presentation boxes or on paper slips inside the storage boxes sometimes testify to the persons who presented or received the gifts. In such cases the word gohairyo (presented) was often used in conjunction with the date of presentation.¹⁰ The inscription on the lid of a wooden storage box for a suzuribako decorated with chrysanthemum crests tells that it was presented by Emperor Meiji to Count Hisamoto Hijikata on January 4th 1911.¹¹

A label inside the tomobako of the cosmetic box with clematis by Funabashi Shumin in the Khalili Collection reads: kin makie tebako onshi Shoken Kotaigo yonjuninen taikan no sai senko ('Gold makie cosmetic box presented to my late father by the Empress Mother Shoken on his retirement from forty-two years in office').¹² Since Shoken (1850-1914) was the posthumous name of the Meiji emperor's consort, it can be inferred that this note was not written at the time of presentation, but at some time after her death.

An inscription on the tomobako of the writing box 'The sound of things' informs us that it had been made for the Meiji Emperor in Meiji 42 (1909). It also mentions that the box was left to Hirata Miei gommei-fu after the emperor's death in 1912 (figures 213 - 215). Hirata Miei may well have been one of his concubines (gon no tenji); the term gommei-fu was probably a court title. The inscription was written by Watanabe Chiaki, minister of the Imperial Household. The name of Hirata Miei is also written (by the Meiji emperor himself?) on a paper label inside the fitted box. In this case we cannot be sure that the storage box was the original one, since the inscriptions were made several years after the completion of the artwork. Nevertheless, it is obvious that this atobako or 'later box' carries valuable information.

3.9. Name of the collector

The names of successive owners are normally not inscribed on the box itself, but on stickers. The tomobako of Sano Chokan's bowl E Korai mo futamono or 'Bowl with cover in

'Korean style' contains a slip of paper on which is written: Hayashi Shinsuke shizo (owned by) together with the title of the bowl and 'Kyoto' (figures 232 - 234). Hayashi Shinsuke was an important collector in the Meiji and Taisho eras, and he regularly contributed objects to exhibitions in the newly founded museums, such as for the first lacquerware exhibition dedicated to a single artist ever held in the Kyoto National Museum. It concerned the 1925 exhibition 'The Work of Sano Chokan, the Urushi Master', held in commemoration of the 70th year of his death.¹³ The slip of paper may have been an exhibition text for this show.

3.10. Exhibition data

Occasionally one comes across labels that explicitly mention where the object was exhibited. Rokkaku Shisui wrote on his tomobako of major exhibition pieces for which particular exhibition the object had been made. It usually concerned exhibitions of the Imperial Art Academy (Teiten).

3.11. Auction and collection numbers

Auction numbers were sometimes written directly on the wooden surface of the storage boxes with pencil or ballpoint, or otherwise printed or written on paper labels. The same holds for collection numbers. The tomobako in figure 231 shows several of such numbers.

3.12. Authentications

Inscriptions occasionally include authentications of the art object by experts in the field or by pupils of the artist or family members.

For example, the dating of an Azuchi-Momoyama period tea caddy was certified by Matsuda Gonroku, and a small signed box by Akatsuka Jitoku was guaranteed genuine by his brother-in-law Takai Tairei.^{14, 15} Authentications of Shibata Zeshin's work are more common than those of any other lacquer artist, many of them written and signed by his pupil Shoji Chikushin.

The value of such authentications is limited, however, as commercial considerations may have been the reason for the inscription.

3.13. Other inscriptions

All kinds of other texts can be found on storage boxes. Some provide interesting bits of art historical information, whereas others really give an extra dimension to the art object. Several years ago a Kyoto art dealer showed me a set of five trays by Ikeda Taishin in their original box. The lid of the tomobako not only showed Taishin's signature, but also his address: Yakkenbori no. 6 in Nihonbashi.

Sano Chokan often wrote poems by his own hand on the bottoms of the tomobako - one of them on the storage box of the 'Bowl with cover in Korean style' (figure 233). These poems testify to the fact that the artist participated in the literary circles of Kyoto during the early 19th century.

One of the two storage boxes for a wooden tea caddy with a subdued decoration of waves by Matsuda Gonroku bears the following inscription:

During repairs on the five-storey pagoda of the Horyuji, it became necessary to cut away a small part of the central post. I obtained some of the wood and made this tea container from it. In a diameter of two sun five bu, there were seventy growth rings, each representing five years. This gives an idea of the vastness of the tree from which the post was made. A fortunate day in February 1960.¹⁶

One can perceive the excitement and awe the artist must have felt while working the piece of wood which had been part of the celebrated 7th century Horyuji, and which had been already 350 year old when it was used in the construction of the temple.

4. Unwrapping the work of art

Unpacking a lacquer object is a ritual which should take some time to enable judgement of the age of the wrappings and to find clues about the artwork and its maker. While removing the various layers, one often encounters parts of the provenance before arriving at the object itself. In the case of the 'Bowl with cover in Korean style' (figure 234), the outer layer is an old and worn furoshiki or wrapping cloth. The off-white cotton cloth with blue and red stripes has an inscription at one of its corners, which reads Sugimoto shi or 'Mr Sugimoto' (the name of a previous owner?). Two of its opposing tips are tied into a knot. After removal, the black lacquered tomobako appears, which has turned slightly brownish as the result of aging. Unlike most other tomobako the lid sits loose onto the box, without being kept in place by silk ribbons. The bottom of the storage box is left plain and parts of the rims are insect eaten. Here we find the title of the bowl E korai mo futamono with the addition sakura koi eyo, referring to the cherry blossoms and carp as elements in the decoration. Next to the title comes a poem on the likeness of cherry blossoms in depictions, followed by the comment "my cherries are poor". In the left lower corner one finds the signature urushi sho Chokan with the red seal 'Chokan'. On two of the sides a total of three inscribed paper labels are glued onto the lacquered surfaces. One isolated label has the inscription '230', possibly an inventory number. On another side we find two adjacent labels: a large one with the artist's name and a description of the bowl and a smaller one with the inscription 'number two' (possibly indicating that this is the second bowl out of a set). The whole makes the impression of an original storage box, which could well be 150 or 200 years old. When the lid is taken off, we find another old silk cloth with checked pattern and on top of it the slip of paper with the name of the collector Hayashi Shinsuke, the name of Kyoto and the title of the bowl (possibly an exhibition text from 1925). Subsequently, the wrapped object can be taken out, and after removal of the cloth the bowl finally appears. The whole ritual is an aesthetical experience in serene expectation of the hidden artwork inside.¹⁷ During the removal of the shells, bits and pieces of valuable information can be acquired from which the understanding of the artist and his work can benefit considerably.

Notes

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2. Piert-Borgers, Barbara, 'Protecting and storing lacquer-ware in Japan: the tradition of the Shoso-in', in: *Japanese and European lacquerware. Adoption. Adaptation. Conservation.* Bayrisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, München 2000, pp. 102-199.
3. Berry, Paul and Michiyo Morioka, 'Concerning boxes for storing scroll paintings', in: *Modern Masters of Kyoto.* The Seattle Art Museum, Seattle 1999, pp. 296-297.
4. Imai Jun, 'Box inscriptions or hakogaki"', in : *Modern Masters of Kyoto.* The Seattle Art Museum, Seattle 1999, pp. 298-301.
5. Dees, Jan, 'The ethereal world of Uzawa Shogetsu', in: *Oriental Art* vol. 36 no. 4 (2005), pp. 45-54.
6. *Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces.* (edited by the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo). Weatherhill/Tankosha, New York. Tokyo. Kyoto 1982, pp. 250-251.
7. Dees, Jan, 'The life and work of Akatsuka Jitoku, Japanese lacquer artist (1871-1936)', in: *Oriental Art* vol. XLVI, no. 2 (2000), pp. 57-67.
8. Dees, Jan, 'Rokkaku Shisui, Japanese lacquer artist (1867-1950)', in: *Arts of Asia* vol. 34, no. 1 (2004), pp. 58-71.

9. Dees, Jan, 'The Life and Work of the Japanese Lacquer Artist Yamazaki Kakutaro (1899-1984)', in: *Arts of Asia* vol. 36 no. 4 (2006), pp. 84-97.
10. *Japanese Works of Art* (auction catalogue), Christie's New York 17.09.1997, nos. 229 and 230.
11. *Japanese Works of Art* (auction catalogue), Christie's New York 17.09.1997, no. 227.
12. Dees, Jan, 'Japanese Imperial Presentation Boxes 1900-1930', in: *Oriental Art* vol. XLIII, no. 1 (1997), p. 4.
13. Haino Akio, 'Sano Chokan, the urushi master, studied through his work', in: *Urushi*. The Getty Conservation Institute, Marina del Rey 1988, pp. 31-35.
14. Kin makie kogeï ippensën. Sales exhibition by Chikuryudo Gallery at Matsuya Ginza, Tokyo 1999, no. 48.
15. This box by Akatsuka Jitoku and its storage box were seen at Fujitorii, Tokyo, in 2000.
16. *Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces* 1982, pp. 250-251, nos. 110-113.
17. Ludecke, Elisabeth, 'Zwei chaire und ihr Zubehör im Berliner Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst', in: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst* no. 17 (1996), pp. 13-22.

Conclusion

The crisis in lacquer art, which had already set in during the five years preceding the Meiji Restoration, suddenly deepened after the downfall of the bakufu and the feudal system, and was severely aggravated by the 'Western fever' with its concomitant depreciation of indigenous culture. The effects were serious. Although figures are lacking, there are indications that many leading lacquerer artist were driven out of their businesses, whereas others had to look for new patrons, which were mostly found in the export sector after the Vienna World Fair of 1873.

The export market miraculously secured the survival of lacquer art in the 1870s. Thanks to the 'Japan craze' in the West, the existential crisis was limited to a period of about five years, but the artistic developments remained generally stagnant for at least another decade.

During the 1880s, the reflection on Japan's own identity brought renewed appreciation of traditional culture. This countermovement resulted in the foundation of the Tokyo Art School and the Japan Lacquer Society, which marked the beginning of the revival of lacquer art from 1890 onwards. In Kyoto, similar institutions and organizations were founded, although these did not have the same national appeal as the Tokyo-based ones.

The answer to the question whether lacquer art would have survived without the emergence of the export markets is necessarily speculative. Would the gap between 1868 and 1890 have been bridged by the small number of lacquer artists who managed to continue their business on their own? Shibata Zeshin and his pupil Ikeda Taishin may have been able to do so, since - although the domestic and international exhibitions were beneficial to them - they don't seem to have depended on export. In this respect it is important to note that the domestic demand for lacquer had dropped dramatically, yet was not entirely non-existent. The foundation of the Dragon Pond Society in 1879 proves that, also during the period of Art Industry, traditional arts were favoured in conservative circles. On the other hand, one wonders whether the renewed domestic appreciation would already have set in during the 1880s if not the 'Japan craze' in the West had stimulated self-reflection in Japan. Probably the main reason to believe that lacquer art would eventually have survived the crisis without export industry is the fact that lacquer has been deeply rooted in Japanese culture for over a thousand years, which makes extinction within a few decades unlikely. Altogether the speculative conclusion seems justified that lacquer art probably would have overcome the

crisis without the export markets, but that in such a case the crisis would have been more protracted and lacquer art would perhaps not have got through unharmed. Nonetheless, whatever deliberations might be advanced to explain the fortunate outcome in hindsight, the crisis must have felt only threatening and unpredictable for the artists involved.

During his nearly 20-years tenure as professor at the Tokyo Art School, Shirayama Shosai - the Master of Refinement - was the single most important factor in developing techniques to unprecedented levels and to transform lacquer into an individual art form. One of the key

issues was that lacquerers were trained to draw their own designs. Due to his focus on techniques, however, Shosai may have hampered the further modernization in lacquer art later in life when he was revered as the *éminence grise*.

Meanwhile the artistic climate in Kyoto was dominated by the Rimpa revival led by Kamisaka Sekka and Asai Chu, which resulted in the manufacture of sometimes strikingly modern lacquerware around the turn of the century.

In contrast to Shosai, Akatsuka Jitoku - the Master of Light - already had an inclination towards artistic renewal in the first decades of the 20th century. His bold floral designs in gold lacquer may be considered as precursors of Modernism. Therefore he was the natural leader in the struggle for recognition of lacquer art by the Imperial Art Academy in the 1920s, after Shosai's death.

Recognition was achieved by a remarkable Modernist movement, which not only comprised the avant-garde movement Mukei, but also mobilized artists of traditional breed. The astonishing fact that the modernization was realized within a period of five to ten years supports the view that the preoccupation with sophisticated techniques had indeed restrained creative energy before. Bold decorations were favoured, often executed in a variety of pigments and avoiding gaudy gold lacquer. Although one might have expected a major influence from the fashionable Nihonga style of painting during the struggle for recognition, this did in fact not occur. The emancipation process was a distinct crafts movement, showing not only mutual influences between the various disciplines, but also influences from foreign craft styles such as Art Nouveau and Art Deco, influences from traditional craft styles such as Rimpa, and even influences from ancient China.

Rokkaku Shisui - Master of Lines - was one of the intriguing figures in this period. Due to his participation in the excavations in Korea, he had not played a prominent role in the struggle for recognition, but his eccentric and innovative work, based on his acquaintance with lacquer of ancient China, considerably boosted the Modernist movement.

As a young man, Yamazaki Kakutaro was the most prominent lacquer artist of Mukei. He was the first to fully exploit the range of new pigments, which had been recently invented, and can therefore be credited as the Master of Colours. In order to prove that artistic designs did not rely on sophisticated techniques, he employed techniques from industrial and folk art. From 1950 onwards Kakutaro aimed successfully at entering the realm of fine art by mainly producing screens and wall panels.

Hardly influenced by the institutions, organizations and exhibitions, makers of traditional utensils worked for those people who continued to value such refinements as the tea ceremony and the incense ceremony. The workshop of Tobe Kofu was a striking example of a business that produced tea caddies, incense containers and pipe cases between the 1910s and 1940s. He employed a half dozen lacquerers with outstanding technical skills and catered for both domestic and foreign customers. A special employee was Uzawa Shogetsu, whose extremely refined togidashi work in the style of his master Shosai was mainly sold to Alfred

Baur in Geneva. Shogetsu often borrowed motifs from painters of the Tokugawa and Meiji eras.

Ganshosai Shunsui even still made inro in a time when these accessories were rarely worn any longer, and he decorated them preferably with subjects such as samurai and court ladies in a time when the members of Mukeyi renounced nostalgia as the most contemptuous source of inspiration.

By the end of the period of Art Industry, lacquered pipe cases had possibly been the utensils for the domestic market which recovered first. Traditionally dressed men, who had not been entirely captured by the 'Western craze' or who had returned to traditional values, appreciated such utensils, which enabled them to express their good taste by assembling sets of pipe cases with en-suite tobacco pouches adorned with a matching metal clasp. Such smoking sets were the equivalents of the Tokugawa-period ensembles of inro, ojime and netsuke. Both inro and kiseruzutusu celebrated intricate and refined workmanship, but – due to their elongated shapes – pipe cases required entirely new designs. It was probably Ikeda Taishin, who made lacquered pipe cases popular in the mid-1880s; they remained popular as long as into the 1930s. By 1950, however, the lacquered pipe case had become outdated. Around that time the Modernist movement was also dying out. The 1950 Law on the Protection of Cultural Properties focussed on the preservation of techniques, thereby favouring the development of traditions. So came to an end the heroic struggle of lacquer art from the time of deep crisis to its revival as an individual art form and its recognition by an outburst of Modernist creativity.

Facing Modern Times has been the main challenge for lacquer artists between 1850 and 1950.

Samenvatting

De geschiedenis van de Japanse lakkunst beslaat tenminste 1400 jaar. Hoewel lak (urushi) als materiaal voor de versiering van gebruiksvoorwerpen al enkele duizenden jaren wordt toegepast, werd het pas in de kunst gebruikt na de introductie van het Buddhisme in de 6e eeuw.

Gedurende de Tokugawa periode (1600-1868) nam de productie van lakwerk tot ongekende omvang toe doordat, behalve de regerende elite en de geestelijkheid, ook de opkomende burgerij zich voor deze kunstuiting ging interesseren. De shogun, de daimyo en hun vazallen vormden evenwel de grootste samenhangende factor in de markt voor lakwerk; de burgers waren individuele klanten. De voornaamste scholen van lakkunstenaars waren in hun bestaan afhankelijk van de shogun of een daimyo als mecenas. Daarom is het niet verwonderlijk, dat tijdens de desintegratie van het feodale systeem na de geforceerde opening van het land door commodore Perry in 1853/4 de vraag naar lakwerk vrijwel onmiddellijk afnam. Deze teruggang nam de vorm van een crisis aan door de val van de shogun in 1867, en de daadwerkelijke afschaffing van het feodale systeem kort daarna. De vraag naar lakwerk daalde dramatisch, en de meeste traditionele scholen van lakkunstenaars vonden omstreeks deze tijd hun einde. De situatie werd nog slechter doordat de nieuwe generatie van machthebbers in de Meiji periode (1868-1912) zich met veel energie richtte op de omvorming van het land tot een eenheidsnatie naar Westers model, die zich een plaats zou kunnen veroveren in de internationale gemeenschap. Onder de Japanse bevolking onstond een rage voor alles wat nieuw en Westers was, hetgeen onvermijdelijk ten koste ging van de traditionele kunst.

Deze existentiële crisis nam evenwel een opmerkelijke wending toen bleek dat er in Europa

en de Verenigde Staten grote belangstelling bleek te bestaan voor het pas ontsloten Japan en haar kunstuitingen. De wereldtentoonstellingen in de tweede helft van de 19e eeuw brachten grote bevolkingsgroepen in contact met de wonderlijk mooie producten van dat mysterieuze land. Al snel ontstond er in het Westen een aanzienlijke vraag naar kunstvoorwerpen zoals lakwerk. In Japan stortten zich verschillende ondernemingen - met name de Kiritsu Kosho Kaisha - op de productie en export van kunstvoorwerpen. In de grote steden van Europa en de VS deden kunsthandelaars goede zaken met een groeiende groep van verzamelaars. Tegen 1878 hadden vele lakkunstenaars weer een bestaansbasis gevonden in de exportnijverheid, die door de Japanse overheid werd ondersteund en gestimuleerd.

In de loop van de tachtiger jaren van de 19e eeuw ontstond in Japan evenwel het besef dat door het overnemen van de Westerse levensstijl veel eigen waarden verloren dreigden te gaan. Deze omslag in het denken gold ook de eigen kunst, die een herwaardering beleefde. In 1889 opende de Kunstacademie van Tokio, met een lakafdeling, haar deuren. De multidisciplinaire opleiding bracht een generatie lakkunstenaars voort met een veel sterkere individuele inslag dan hun voorgangers uit de Tokugawa periode. De kunstobjecten werden voortaan

geëxposeerd op tentoonstellingen met een competitief karakter in plaats van op exportshows. De binnenlandse vraag naar Japanse kunstvoorwerpen trok aan. Het jaar 1890 kan worden aangemerkt als het omslagpunt in de opleving van de lakkunst (hoofdstuk I).

Een voortrekkersrol in de opleving van de Japanse lakkunst in de eerste decennia van de 20e eeuw werd vervuld door Shirayama Shosai (1853-1923), die gedurende bijna 20 jaar professor is geweest aan de Kunstacademie van Tokio (hoofdstuk II). Hij was de leermeester van een generatie van individuele lakkunstenaars, die hun decoraties niet meer ontleenden aan de tradities van een school, maar die getraind waren om zelf hun ontwerptekeningen te maken. Opmerkelijk is het feit dat over zijn leven en werk in geen enkele taal een artikel, boek of catalogus was verschenen. In totaal konden gegevens over 67 werken van zijn hand worden bijeengebracht; de meeste voorwerpen konden ook met eigen ogen worden bekeken. De meest pregnante ontwikkeling die in zijn werk kon worden waargenomen was de verdere verfijning van de laktechnieken uit de late Tokugawa periode, gepaard aan een delicate stijl. Misschien bereikte Shosai wel de ultieme verfijning tot waar het lakwerk in de stijl van de Tokugawa periode zich zou kunnen ontwikkelen. Shosai geldt als een van de grootste specialisten in de togidashi techniek. Zijn decoraties met vogelveertjes zijn beroemd; veel minder bekend zijn de onderwerpen, die hij ontleende aan oudheden, antiquiteiten en de klassieke literatuur. Door de bestudering van zijn werk kon een zekere chronologische rangschikking ervan plaatsvinden.

In het eerste decennium van de 20e eeuw had Japan zich een plaats binnen de internationale gemeenschap verworven, zelfs met de nodige prestige na de overwinningen in de Chinees-Japanse oorlog (1894-1895) en de Russisch-Japanse oorlog (1904-1905). Het minderwaardigheidsgevoel van de vroege Meiji tijd had plaatsgemaakt voor trots zelfbewustzijn. Prestigieuze kunstvoorwerpen van lak en cloisonné vormden de officiële relatiegeschenken in het internationale verkeer.

Een baanbrekend kunstenaar, die hier beslist van geprofiteerd heeft, was Akatsuka Jitoku (1871-1936) (hoofdstuk III). Ook over diens leven en werk waren nog geen publicaties verschenen. Uit tijdschriften en tentoonstellingscatalogi van die periode konden gegevens over hem worden verzameld, terwijl het contact met zijn nazaten interessante aanvullende informatie opleverde. Enkele tientallen, meestal grote, objecten konden zelf worden bekeken, waaronder een dozijn keizerlijke geschenkdozen. Ook in zijn werk kon een chronologische

rangschikking worden aangebracht. Jitoku's werk is duidelijk beïnvloed door de wijze waarop de Franse plein-air schilders daglicht in hun werk weergaven. De karakteristieke korrelige gouden ondergrond, waarvan hij zijn dozen en kastjes voorzag, voorzien de (in relief uitgevoerde) bloemdecoraties van een zomers zonlicht. Hij trad hiermee buiten de geijkte paden van de traditionele Japanse esthetiek.

Ook in het werk van andere lakkunstenaars maakte de traditionele stijl en iconografie nu plaats voor persoonlijke kunstuitingen. Steeds meer deed zich de behoefte gelden tot expliciete erkenning van lakwerk, ceramiek en metaalwerk als vormen van toegepaste kunst. Op de grote nationale exposities van die tijd werden - naar het model van de Franse Salons -

uitsluitend schilderkunst en sculptuur getoond. Daarom ontstond er in het begin van de twintiger jaren een emancipatiestroming om de toegepaste kunst toegang te laten verkrijgen tot de jaarlijkse tentoonstellingen van de Keizerlijke Kunstacademie (Teiten). Akatsuka Jitoku speelde in deze emancipatiestrijd een leidende rol. In zijn werk van die jaren is een drastische verandering te zien van de luxueuze 'zonlichtstijl' naar een sobere, moderne stijl, waarin goud slechts spaarzaam werd toegepast.

Door activiteit van pressiegroepen en door de sterke vernieuwing in het werk van vele lak-, ceramiek- en metaalkunstenaars werd de Teiten uiteindelijk in 1927 opengesteld voor deze disciplines. In het daarop volgende decennium kregen allerlei nieuwe stijlen in de lakkunst zodoende hun kans om een breed publiek te bereiken. Invloeden van Art Nouveau en Art Deco deden zich gelden, maar eveneens was er een opleving van de 17e eeuwse Japanse Rimpa stijl te bespeuren.

In de emancipatiebeweging had Rokkaku Shisui (1867-1950) geen rol van betekenis gespeeld, waarschijnlijk door zijn betrokkenheid bij de opgravingen van een belangrijk Chinees graf uit de Han periode (206 V.C. -220 N.C.) bij de Koreaanse stad Lolang (hoofdstuk IV). Daarin werd lakwerk aangetroffen met decoraties in een opvallende liniaire stijl, die Shisui – die oorspronkelijk schilder had willen worden – ertoe brachten om zijn stijl radicaal te veranderen. Zijn nieuwe werk werd getoond op de eerste Teiten, die voor lakwerk open was gesteld. Vanwege het geheel andere karakter en de ongewone techniek werden beschuldigingen geuit dat het werk niet door Shisui zelf gemaakt zou zijn. Er volgde een anderhalf jaar durend conflict, dat in kranten en tijdschriften werd uitgevochten. Uiteindelijk kon Shisui aantonen waar de inspiratie van zijn werk vandaan kwam. Pas na deze enerverende episode in zijn leven lijkt zijn creativiteit volledig tot ontplooiing te zijn gekomen. Meer dan twintig stukken van zijn belangrijkste werk konden worden bestudeerd in het Kunstmuseum van de Prefectuur Hiroshima. Deze groep, gevoegd bij een vijftiental andere objecten die zelf bekeken konden worden en daarbij het gepubliceerde werk, gaf een goed overzicht over de chronologische ontwikkeling van de ongewone stijlen en technieken, waarin Shisui gewerkt heeft. Interviews met zijn kleinzoon brachten interessante aanvullingen op de Japanse literatuur over deze kunstenaar aan het licht.

Als exponent van de meest vooruitstrevende vooroorlogse kunstgroepering Mukei ('Zonder Vorm') worden het leven en het werk besproken van Yamazaki Kakutaro (1899-1984), hoewel een groot deel van zijn leven al buiten de periode van deze studie valt (hoofdstuk V). Mukei stelde zich ten doel om alle conventies van zich af te schudden en zich te richten op de moderne stadsmens. Na de verwoestende aardbeving, die Tokio en Yokohama in 1923 grotendeels van de kaart had geveegd, waren de laatste resten van het oude Edo verdwenen. Binnen een periode van tien jaar ontstond tijdens de herbouw van de hoofdstad een cosmopolitische sfeer, waarin moderniteit alle kansen kreeg. Modernistische kunstenaars als

Yamazaki Kakutaro kregen de wind in de zeilen.

Het belang van zijn werk ligt met name in het opvallende gebruik van nieuwe kleurpigmenten, die al enkele tientallen jaren tevoren waren uitgevonden, maar die nog nooit

uitputtend waren toegepast. Bovendien maakte Kakutaro gebruik van technieken uit het meer volkse lakwerk, zoals afdrukken van textiel in lak (nunomenuri) en het bekloppen van nog niet helemaal droge lak met een bolletje textiel (tatakinuri). Omdat hij lakwerk wilde laten wedijveren met de schilderkunst, maakte Kakutaro zijn meeste werk op het platte vlak: panelen en kamerschermen. In de prefectuur Toyama, waaruit Kakutaro afkomstig was, konden tientallen van zijn werken worden bestudeerd, terwijl ontmoetingen met zijn zoon en drie van zijn leerlingen het inzicht in zijn persoon en werk hebben verdiept. Het werk kon in een aantal categorieën worden gerubriceerd.

Buiten Japan werd niet eerder over het leven en werk van Yamazaki Kakutaro en Rokkaku Shisui gerapporteerd.

Hoewel vernieuwing en moderniteit kernbegrippen waren in de eerste vier decennia van de 20e eeuw, bleef er een groep lakkunstenaars doorborduren op de traditionele stijlen. Het betrof veelal makers van gebruiksvoorwerpen van klein formaat. Een fascinerende ontwikkeling vond plaats in de gelakte pijphouders, die tegen het einde van de 19e eeuw populair waren geworden (hoofdstuk VI). De langgerekte, smalle oppervlakken daagden de kunstenaars uit tot ongewone decoraties. Net als medicijndoosjes (inro) tijdens de Tokugawa periode, werden deze gebruiksvoorwerpen al snel gewilde kledingaccessoires voor de man. Makers van pijphouders wedijverden met elkaar in inventiviteit en technische perfectie. Hoewel vele van deze kleinoden in de literatuur te boek staan als 19e eeuws, zijn zij toch merendeels aantoonbaar in het begin van de 20e eeuw vervaardigd.

De ontdekking van een album met houtskoolwrijfsels van een honderdtal pijphouders van de kunstenaar Ikeda Taishin (1825-1903) werpt een interessant licht op de aantallen waarin deze kunstvoorwerpjes werden geproduceerd, en bovendien geeft het een ongekennde indruk van Taishin's stijl (hoofdstuk VII).

Twee traditionele kunstenaars werden voor het eerst individueel belicht: Ganshosai Shunsui (hoofdstuk VIII) en Uzawa Shogetsu (hoofdstuk IX). Opmerkelijk is de bevinding dat beide traditionele kunstenaars wel degelijk herkenbare, persoonlijke stijlen hebben ontwikkeld.

Anders dan de 'kleine kunstenaars' uit de Tokugawa tijd, maakten zij ongetwijfeld zelf hun ontwerpen. Hun technisch kunnen stond op bijzonder hoog peil.

Het werk van Shunsui, met zijn hofdames en samurai, wordt gekenmerkt door een nostalgisch karakter. Hij produceerde nog veel inro in een tijd waarin deze doosjes nauwelijks meer gedragen werden. Met behulp van de pedigree van de bestudeerde objecten kon worden vastgesteld dat Shunsui niet werkzaam was in de 19e eeuw (zoals algemeen in de literatuur wordt opgegeven), maar in het begin van de 20e eeuw.

Uzawa Shogetsu, van wie in de Baur Collectie te Genève 56 stukken aanwezig zijn, was een leerling van Shirayama Shosai (hoofdstuk IX). Deze kunstenaar is in Japan zo goed als onbekend, omdat het werk dat hij onder eigen naam vervaardigde vrijwel allemaal werd aangekocht door de Zwitserse verzamelaar Alfred Baur (1865-1951) via diens Japanse handelaar Tomita Kumasaku (1872-1954). Aan de hand van hun briefwisseling kon worden vastgesteld dat Shogetsu omstreeks 1877 geboren moet zijn, en dat hij in 1936 voor het laatst

een object voor Baur heeft afgeleverd. Zijn ragfijne togidashi decoraties roepen een droomwereld op.

Het onderzoek naar de onderwerpen, die in de voorgaande hoofdstukken zijn beschreven, leverde als bijproduct gegevens op over de houten verpakkingendozen, waarin lakvoorwerpen door de eeuwen heen werden bewaard. Hoewel dergelijke dozen in het Westen veelal door onachtzaamheid verloren zijn gegaan, wordt in hoofdstuk X aangegeven dat de inscripties op en in de deksels belangwekkende kunsthistorische informatie kunnen bevatten.

Het realistisch onder ogen zien van de moderne tijd (Facing Modern Times) vormde de belangrijkste uitdaging voor de lakkunst in de periode tussen 1850 en 1950. Na het uiteenvallen van het feodale stelsel moesten lakkunstenaars zich eerst - voor zover mogelijk - aanpassen aan het wegvallen van de traditionale klantenkring en het mecenaat. Niet lang daarna bleken er kansen te ontstaan in de export van kunstvoorwerpen, hetgeen niet alleen nieuwe eisen stelde aan de (kosten-effectieve) productie, maar ook aan het soort objecten en hun decoraties. In de periode van herbezinning op authentieke waarden tegen het einde van de 19e eeuw, moest opnieuw vorm worden gegeven aan het begrip kunstenaar. Individualiteit, al dan niet gestimuleerd door een multidisciplinaire opleiding, werd een voorwaarde tot succes. Het succes bleek vooralsnog slechts van betrekkelijke aard te zijn, omdat de erkenning van de toegepaste kunst in officiële kunstkringen uitbleef. Dit leidde tot een emancipatiestrijd, die op zichzelf weer moderniserend uitwerkte op de lakkunst, en die tenslotte het beoogde succes opleverde door de toelating tot de exposities in de Keizerlijke Kunstacademie in 1927.

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*

On the fitted box only

AA - Asahi Art, Tokyo

BD - Barry Davies Oriental Art, London

BC - The Baur Collection, Geneva

BMFA - Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Bushell - Collection of Raymond Bushell, USA

Eisei Bunko Museum, Tokyo

GC - Gallery Chikuryudo, Tokyo

HPMA - Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum, Hiroshima

Jahss - Collection of Melvin Jahss, USA

KC - Collection of David Nasser Khalili, UK

KNM - Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto

Kress - Collection of Heinz and Else Kress, Finland

KSM -Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum, Kyoto

MOA - Museum of Art, Atami

Parker - Collection of William and Betty Parker, Japan

PCB - Private collection Belgium

PCJ - Private collection Japan, in: Japanese Lacquer Art. Modern Masterpieces p.131

PCG – Private collection Germany

RCC - Red Cross Catalogue, London 1915

SL - Sotheby's London auction catalogue 17.3.1982 lot 164

SS - Sannomaru Shozokan, Tokyo

UAM - University Art Museum, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, Tokyo

Wrangham - Collection of E.A.Wrangham, UK

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Scattered Ju characters

Signatures

S = Shunsui

GS = Ganshosai Shunsui

Collections

AC = Atchley collection, USA

AMNH = American Museum of Natural History, New York

ATBCBM

BrCBuC

ChChr

ETM

EskFujiGC

JC

KCKrCIAMMMA

OCPC

PCG

PrCSC

Soth

STCT&SV&A

WC

= Auction Tokyo

= Baur Collection, Geneva

= British Museum, London

= Brozman collection, USA

= Bushell collection, USA

= Champoud collection, Switzerland

= Chappell, North St. Paul

= Christie's, London

= Edo Tokyo Museum, Tokyo

= Eskenazi, London

= Fujitorii, Tokyo

= Gaskell collection, UK

= Jahss collection, USA

= Kress collection, Finland

- = Kroch collection, USA
- = Idemitsu Art Museum, Tokyo
- = Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- = Okazaki collection, Japan
- = Pabst collection, The Netherlands
- = Private collection Germany
- = Private collection
- = Swedlow collection, USA
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99. Reproduction of a border from an object excavated in Lolang. Illustration from Harada 1930.
100. Tray showing sailing boats. Photograph from the catalogue of Rokkaku Shisui's farewell exhibition in 1943.
101. Large box Deva of Arts with an embossed oval plaque showing five goddesses of music. (HD-006), 10,2 x 15,2 x 27,2 cm. Exhibited at the 1928 Teiten. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.
102. Small box with a silver plaque embossed with dragonflies and ears of rice. (HD-051), 1,8 x 7,0 cm. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.
103. Tiered double writing box Woman with flowers. On the lid an embossed metal plaque showing a dancing lady under a tree. (HD-010), 8,1 x 14,5 x 22,2 cm. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.

104. Oblong tray Kasugano. (HD-009), 2,1 x 15,9 x 34,0 cm. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.
105. Standing screen Seashore and Lakeshore – the seashore side with five biplanes in the air. (HD-011), 82,2 x 69,5 cm. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.
106. Box Spectacle of Sky and Sea. (HD-012), 15,3 x 23,3 x 30,2 cm. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.
107. Framed panel of an eagle. 48 x 36,3 cm. Chikuryudo Gallery, Tokyo.
108. Framed panel showing a flowering plum branch with white blossoms. 28 x 71 cm. Chikuryudo Gallery, Tokyo.
109. Large box Ideal World showing a winged goddess amid flowers. (HD-007), 9,5 x 15,9 x 34,0 cm. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum.
110. Metal plate with a lacquer decoration of flowers. Diameter 26,5 cm. National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

Chapter V: Yamazaki Kakutaro

111. Cosmetic box with the Buddhist god Fudo (1924). 9,5 x 27 x 39,4 cm. University Art Museum, Tokyo.
112. Cabinet showing a fox amid ferns (ca. 1930). 55 x 74 x 30 cm. Private collection, Japan
113. Jewellery box with snail motif (1934). 17.0 x 25.5 x 10.5 cm. Kyoto Municipal Museum.
114. Cigarette set on a tray (ca. 1930). 17.0 x 25.5 x 10.5 cm. Toyama Prefecture.
115. Box with a sea lion on ice floes by Tsuda Shinobu (1875-1946) exhibited at the 8th Teiten (1927). 21,0 x 24,6 x 31,0 cm. Chiba Prefectural Museum of Art, Japan.
116. Large wall panel showing cormorants amid waves (1930). 184 x 127 cm. The Sato Memorial Museum, Toyama.
117. Screen Monkeys (1939). 179,5 x 65 cm. University Art Museum, Tokyo.
118. Bronze bust of Yamazaki Kakutaro by Koga Tadao. Iwase town.
119. Yamazaki Kakutaro. Courtesy Yamazaki Ichizo, Tokyo.
120. Panel Moving Clouds (1980). 38 x 45 cm. The Suiboku Museum, Toyama.
121. Detail of the ornamental tray Herons, showing the cloth structure in the orange lacquer and the mottled effect produced by the tatakiniuri technique in the herons. The Suiboku Art Museum, Toyama.
122. Tanpo, the tool for producing tatakiniuri.
123. Yamazaki Kakutaro in his workshop. Courtesy Yamazaki Ichizo, Tokyo.
124. Writing box with sprigs of bush clover and a poem on the cover, and the shore at Iwase inside (1920s). 4,0 x 18,0 x 23,0 cm. Hyakuzuka Collection, Japan.
125. Box for the Imperial Rescript on Education (ca. 1924). 7,0 x 10,5 x 52 cm. Iwase Municipal Elementary School.
126. Signature 'Hokudo Yamazaki Kakutaro saku' on the backside of the panel with cormorants.
127. Mirror decorated with blackberry scrolls (1929). Diameter 37,5 cm. Toyama Municipal Folk Museum.
128. Screen Resting Wings (1941). 150 x 150,5 cm. Private collection, Japan.
129. Screen Sky (1950). 175 x 55 cm. The Suiboku Art Museum, Toyama.
130. Standing screen Kanzan and Jittoku (1952). 130 x 82,2 cm. Chikuryudo Gallery, Tokyo.
131. Screen Monkeys (1953). 154 x 105 cm. Masutani Shuji Memorial Hall, Noto.
132. Ornamental tray Herons (1967). Diameter 30,3 cm. The Suiboku Art Museum, Toyama.
133. Screen Evening Glow (1963). 182 x 182 cm. Takaoka Art Museum
134. Standing screen Horse (1957). 130 x 82,2 cm. Private collection, Japan.
135. Screen Refreshing Autumn (1962). 182 x 182 cm. Private collection, Japan.
136. Tea caddy Moving Clouds (1979). 8,0 x 8,0 cm. The Suiboku Art Museum, Toyama.
137. Wall panel Monkey (1980). 45 x 53 cm. The Suiboku Art Museum, Toyama.
138. Wall panel Mid Autumn (1981). 68 x 106 cm. The Suiboku Art Museum, Toyama.
139. Part of the design drawing Twin tigers, Yamazaki Collection, Tokyo.

Chapter VI: Lacquered pipe cases

140. Design drawing for a pipe case by Koma Kansai after a painting by Tani Buncho. Published in the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society (1916).
141. Pipe case with insects on fruits by Tamakaji Zokoku (1806-1869). (682). Length 24 cm. Casal Collection, Osaka Municipal Museum of Art.
142. Postcard of two peasant boys holding smoking sets in their hands.
143. Pipe case with Chinese landscape by Shuzan (dates unknown). Private collection.
144. Pipe case with bat by Tokoku Fuzui (dates unknown). Private collection.
145. Pipe case with a stag in a moonlit landscape by Bokko (dates unknown). Private collection.
146. Smoking set with a pipe case featuring Matsushima in Rimpa style by Kawakami Kangetsu (dates unknown). Length 21,5 cm. Private collection.
147. Pipe case simulating bamboo by Hashimito Ichizo II (1856-1924). Private collection.
148. Pipe case featuring a flight of plovers above the waves by Shusai (dates unknown). Private collection.
149. Smoking set by Toyoaki (dates unknown), consisting of a pipe case with a fighting cock and a tobacco container with an owl. Private collection.
150. Pipe case with textile lining.
151. Pipe case with wooden core.
152. Pipe case with core of lacquered paper.
153. Pipe case with woven core.
154. Discoloured cotton-wool bumper from the bottom of the pipe case.

Chapter VII: Pipe cases by Ikeda Taishin

155. Portrait of Ikeda Taishin as published in the Journal of the Japan Lacquer Society (1909), no. 100.
156. Takai Tairei. Courtesy Takai Nobuo, Tokyo.
157. Design drawing for a pipe case with morning glory by Ikeda Taishin. Length of the outer sheath 18,0 cm. Collection Alain Ducros, Paris.
158. Design drawing for a pipe case with fuki by Ikeda Taishin. Length of the outer sheath 18,0 cm. Collection Alain Ducros, Paris.
159. Charcoal rubbing of a pipe case with notes on the applied techniques.
160. Charcoal rubbing with Taishin's signature at the bottom end.
- 161-169. Charcoal rubbings from the album once owned by Takai Tairei. Mitamura Collection, Musashino.
170. Woven pipe case decorated with vine. Length 21,0 cm. Private collection.
171. Pipe case with maiden's flower and a butterfly by a woven fence. Length 23,5 cm. Private collection.
172. Pipe case with chrysanthemums. (PC 13), length 21,8 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.
173. Smoking set consisting of a wooden pipe case with tobacco leaves and a pouch adorned with a clasp in the shape of a smoking South Sea islander. Length 21,7 cm. Tobacco & Salt Museum, Tokyo.
174. Charcoal rubbing of a pipe case with tobacco leaves hanging to dry on the line.
175. Woven pipe case with ears of millet, wheat, rye and oat. (820), length 21,2 cm. Casal Collection, Osaka Municipal Museum.
176. Wooden pipe case with a morning glory. Chappell Oriental Art, North St. Paul.
177. Charcoal rubbing of a woven pipe case with a morning glory.
178. Bamboo pipe case with dragonfly, by Kanzan and Taishin. Identical with the rubbing in figure 164. Sydney L. Moss, London.

Chapter VIII: Ganshosai Shunsui

179. Inro showing the fight between Kagekiyo and Minoya no Yuro at Yushima. (I 280), h. 8,2 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.
180. Inro showing Kato Kiyomasa's visit to the ruins of Hideyoshi's palace at Fushimi after the 1596

earthquake. (I 334), h. 10,7 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

181. Inro with the Chinese court lady Chu Lien Hsiang amid butterflies. H. 9,2 cm. Swedlow Collection, Sotheby's London.

182. Inro with a Chinese court lady. H. 8,5 cm. Klefisch, Cologne.

183. Sheath inro Soshi-arai Komachi. H. 7,2 cm. Jahss Collection, New York.

184. Ogata Korin's painting Soshi-arai Komachi as published in Kokka magazine (1890).

185. Inro Rokkasen. (70.3/2221), h. 8,9 cm. American Museum of Natural History, New York.

186. Inro of a court lady and autumn plants with a cobweb. H. 9,8 cm. Swedlow Collection, Sotheby's London.

187. Inro showing autumn plants and a cobweb with a spider. H. 7,5 cm. Kress Collection, Finland.

188. Pipe case with a moonlit scene of a woman beating her cloth. (PC 170), length 22,2 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

189. Inro with feathers. Chappell Oriental Art, North St. Paul

190. Pipe case with a moonlit mountain landscape. (PC 163), length 21,8 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

191. Set of a hair-comb with hair-pin decorated with the ears of rice. (91210646). Edo-Tokyo Museum, Tokyo.

192. Similar designs on inro by Ganshosai Shunsui and Yamaguchi Shojosai.

193. Inro with shishi and a brocade ball. (13.67.100), h. 7,5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

194. Signatures, seal and kao of Ganshosai Shunsui.

Chapter IX: Uzawa Shogetsu

195. Signature Shogetsu and seal Uzawa Shogetsu on a storage box for an incense container. Private collection, Switzerland.

196. Four views of a rhombic incense container of which the outside is decorated by Shirayama Shosai and the inside by Uzawa Shogetsu. 1,3 x 10,4 x 5,5 cm. MOA Museum of Art, Atami.

197. Photograph of the Tobe workshop, the Tobe family in the front row and the employees behind. Courtesy Yoshikawa Hideki, Tokyo.

198. Tea caddy with fern leaves. (B 111), h. 5,9 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

199. Three pipe cases: standing lady behind a bamboo blind (left – PC 185), length 22,0 cm.; young beauty with a girl (middle – PC 54), length 22,5 cm.; and Daruma with geisha (right – PC 182), length 22,0 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

200. Tea caddy with cock's combs. (334), h. 6,0 cm. Ishikawa Wajima Urushi Art Museum, Wajima.

201. Flat box with feathers. (B 131), 3,3 x 13,9 x 16,3 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

202. Incense container with whirlpool motif. Diameter 7,5 cm. Bushell Collection, Sotheby's London.

203. Pipe case showing a frog jumping into a pond. (PC 188), Length 22,5 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

204. Detail of a pipe case showing a woman beating her cloth. (PC 217). The Baur Collection, Geneva.

205. Detail of a pipe case showing Handaka riding his dragon. (PC 183). The Baur Collection, Geneva.

206. Tea caddy decorated with a multitude of flowers. (B 132), h. 7,3 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

207. Shogetsu's signature and seals.

208. The Spring-Autumn writing box. (B 129), 4,6 x 21,3 x 25,7 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

209. Plain black tea caddy with interior decoration of the whirlpool motif. (B 123), h. 5,8 cm. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

Chapter X: Storage boxes

210. Inscriptions in gold lacquer on a black lacquered storage box: the title Haru aki suzuribako ('Spring-Autumn writing box') with the signature and seal Shogetsu. The Baur Collection, Geneva.

211. The title Tokonatsu or 'Wild carnations' on the inside of the lid of the storage box refers to the 26th chapter of The Tale of Genji. In addition, the artist's signature and seal.
212. Tea caddy with a decoration of wild carnations and a small flower rack by Tsujimura Shoka (1867-1929). H. 7,5 cm. Exhibited at the 8th Teiten. Private collection, the Netherlands.
213. Unsigned writing box showing the blind poet Semimaru listening to the sound of the wind in the fields under the moonlit sky. 5,1 x 19,2 x 28,4 cm. Private collection, the Netherlands.
214. The outside of the lid of the storage box shows the title Mono no ne or 'The sound of things' and mentions that the box was commissioned by the Kyoto bijutsu kai in the 7th month of Meiji 42 (1909).
215. The inscription on the inside of the lid by minister of the Imperial Household Watanabe Chiaki explains that the box was bequeathed by the Meiji Emperor to Harata Mieji on 29 December 1912.
216. Unsigned writing box with a praying mantis on top of an aubergine; inside stylized plants. 4,3 x 18,3 x 21,6 cm. Private collection, the Netherlands.
217. On the lid of storage box the title Toro or 'Mantis'.
218. The inside of the lid shows the signature Furosai with the seal Uematsu, indicating that the box was made by Uematsu Hobi (1872-1933).
219. Unsigned set of a writing box with stationery box Eight views of Lake Biwa. (79.346 and 79.347), h. 5,7 cm and h. 15,2 cm. New Orleans Museum of Art.
220. The inscriptions on the bottoms of both storage boxes show the signature makie-shi Harui Komin and the seal Komin.
221. The inscription on the storage box for another Nagaoka Tenjin incense container indicates that it was made in the 'dry lacquer' kanshitsu technique. Private collection, Belgium.
222. Incised inscription 'Rakuro kenkyu no uchi' ('Lolang study object') on one of Rokkaku Shisui's objects.
223. Pipe case by Shirayama Shosai with mother-of-pearl inlays and bright pigments underneath. Length 21,4 cm. Private collection.
224. The inscription on the storage box shows the title 'Forty-eight gilt-bronze Buddhist halos from the Horyuji'.
225. The two gilt-bronze halos, which had stood model for this side of the pipe case. Gallery of the Horyuji Treasures, Tokyo.
226. Inro featuring a cockerel on a war drum. H. 9,5 cm. Sekido Collection, Japan.
227. Inscription of the title on the outside of the lid: Kanko makie inro.
228. Inscription on the inside of the lid: 'Made in December of the monkey year Kansei 12th', and the signature Koami Choshu with seal.
229. Design drawing for the inro.
230. Receipt for the payment of 5 ryo.
231. Gold lacquer inscription on the storage box for the Avalokitesvara writing box, indicating that the box was probably made for the high-ranking monk Sokubutsu Shin'in.
232. Bowl with cover by Sano Chokan (1794-1856). The bowl shows stylized floral motifs, whereas the cover is decorated with black maple leaves on a black ground. H. 12,2 cm, diameter 19,6 cm. Private collection, the Netherlands.
233. The bottom of the storage box shows the title 'Bowl with cover in Korean style', a poem by the artist and the signature Sano Chokan with seal.
234. Inside view of the bowl and the cover together with its black lacquered storage box, the wrapping cloths and the paper slip mentioning the title, the name of the artist and the name of the Kyoto collector Hayashi Shinsuke.

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Curriculum vitae

Jan Dees werd geboren in Oostburg op 21 november 1946. Na het behalen van het diploma HBS-B aan de Rijks Hogere Burger School te Breda in 1964 studeerde hij geneeskunde aan de Rijks Universiteit te Utrecht en behaalde het doctoraalexamen in 1969. Vervolgens verhuisde hij naar Rotterdam, waar de studie aan de Medische Faculteit in 1971 werd afgerond met het artsexamen. Aansluitend volgde de specialisatie tot internist in het St. Franciscus Gasthuis en in het Academisch Ziekenhuis te Rotterdam (1971-1976). Sinds 1976 is hij als stafid verbonden aan het Academisch Ziekenhuis/Erasmus Medisch Centrum te Rotterdam, eerst in de hoedanigheid van internist en later als gastroenteroloog. In 1975 vatte hij een belangstelling op voor Japanse kunst. Van 1982 tot 1992 was hij bestuurslid van de Vereniging voor Japanse Kunst, in 1990/1991 hoofdredacteur ad interim van het verenigingschrift Andon, en van 1992 tot 2003 voorzitter van het Heinz Kaempfer Fonds. Sinds 32 jaar woont hij samen met René van der Star.

Illustrations