**UEA Sainsbury Institute workshop: "Tôyô shumi in Imperial Japan', 13-14 June 2013**

**‘Tōyō shumi’ of household products designed in Imperial Japan of Manchukuo and Taiwan’ (Fig. 1)**

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**The Context of ‘Tōyō shumi’ in three way positioning of Occident-Japan-Orient**

Since the 19th century, craft design has been modern Japan’s national obsession, not only supporting its trade and economy, but also establishing its national cultural identity while developing the notion of ‘Japaneseness’. This national consciousness and identity formation developed primarily through the encounter with the Euroamerican gaze on Japanese crafts through export trade. Japan’s discourse of ‘modernity’ in crafts was constructed on the binary identity formation of ‘Occident’ vs. ‘Orient’, and Japanese modernity was sought in the direction of western-style Oriental modern as demonstrated by foreign advisors such as Bruno Taut. **(Fig. 2)** However, this binary design discourse was complicated as Japan gradually acquired its empire in Asia. In the late 1930s until 1945, as the Japanese empire – which already included Taiwan since 1895 – expanded into North East China, the development of ‘daily life folk products for export’ for the market of Asia and the Japanese empire became an important intensive national agenda. Japanese designers were assigned to lead development of Japanese products that had universal and modern values as well as shared Orientalness, and they encountered multiple and different shades of Orients within the empire. During the course of this, the notion of ‘Japaneseness’ was contested by different Orients, and was complicated by its effort to redefine itself as part of ‘Orientalness’ and the location of its identity within the three way positioning of Occident-Japan-Orient. It is in this climate of uneasiness brought about by an identity crisis, that one can also identify a certain ‘creativity in hybridity’, which is the issue that I would like to focus on in my ongoing, ‘work-in-progress’ research presentation today, essentially the discourse of ‘Oriental style’ or this workshop’s theme ‘Oriental taste’ that has emerged in everyday crafts, and as object examples, I have identified some aspects of the crafts produced in Manchukuo (specifically, pottery and furniture) and Taiwan (hats).

**Contested ‘Japaneseness’ and design discourses: national identity surrounding daily household products in the Japanese empire**

The new Japanese empire was a space with a complex mixture of the exotic, the alien, but also a sense of sharing a common history. (**Fig. 3**) The North East of China comprises a multi-racial international culture of Manchus, Han Chinese, Mongolians, Koreans and Russians while it is also close to Beijing, the capital of the Oriental traditional culture that is also Japan’s revered cultural root. At the same time, the countryside of Manchukuo is strongly characterised by simple uncomplicated peasant culture. Meanwhile Taiwan presents a primitive ‘Other’ culture of aboriginals alongside Han Chinese in the exotic tropical South that is symbolised by bananas and pineapples. In encountering other Asia within the Japanese empire, a complex design discursive formation emerged creating many shades and subtleties beyond the binary set, and the idea of ‘Japaneseness’ was further complicated.

We can get a sense of this complex situation in the discussions of ‘Japaneseness’, through the 1938 round table discussions on export crafts, broadcast on radio in mainland Japan. The six panelists included: key people related to design, export and industry.[[1]](#endnote-1) The central topic of this discussion was how to break off the current stagnant and declining situation of export craft after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, and what necessary radical innovation and strategy should be considered. The panelists discussed ‘Japaneseness’ as a crucial issue, and how to modernize and universalize the idea of ‘Japaneseness’ under Japan’s ‘New Order’ and how they might rebrand it to fit the ‘demands and taste of the people of different cultures and lifestyles’. Designers’ roles were highly expected to contribute to changing the design identity.

By acutely understanding this situation, designers were also actively responding to these requests, and during this period we can find many reports and design ideas by Japanese designers, in particular those who had been dispatched for official research to Japan’s newly expanded territories. For example, Nishikawa Tomotake, a senior designer who was sent by the national institute of design, Kōgei Shidōsho (Industrial Arts Research Institute: IARI) to Japan occupied Manchuria in 1939, and his colleague Koike Shinji, a design critic who was sent to other parts of China in 1942, present interesting case studies. (**Fig. 4**) They discovered distinctive ‘Chineseness’ that is characterised with ‘sturdiness’, ‘universality’ and ‘pragmatism’. Nishikawa stated these qualities could be learned to improve the perceived Japanese ‘weakness’ in design, and were important in connecting Japan to this ‘Chineseness’ as part of Japan’s historical roots.[[2]](#endnote-2) Koike noted that the great thing about the standard of Chinese design is that it was based on the functionality of *nichiyō zakki/nichiyō hin* (miscellaneous daily utilitarian household craft product),[[3]](#endnote-3) and that idea is in line with the European Modernist ideal whereby ‘form follows function’ and design for the mass consumers. This idea of standardisation was regarded as useful for the national agenda for designing daily products for the 520,000 Japanese residents[[4]](#endnote-4) in Manchukuo as well as designing products for the nation at war.

Toyoguchi was also fascinated by new crafts produced by Japanese-led craft industries in Taiwan, that included hats, bags, wood crafts and lacquer products. **(Fig. 5)** InIARI’s view, in the creation of these new crafts the ‘Japaneseness’ was revealed as a unique quality that emerged from Japan’s leadership. Director Kunii Kitarō talks of this demonstrating model products that not only replace things imported from Euroamerica, but also construct the East Asian standard for daily household products (*seikatsu yōhin*)with ‘function and beauty’ informed by a ‘profound aesthetic and excellent modern scientific knowledge’.[[5]](#endnote-5)

**Example 1: Ceramic Industry in Manchukuo: Manchuria Ceramic Company, Modern standardized Oriental tablewares for the Japanese residents**

Against these newly emerging discussions on design discourse of ‘Japaneseness’, I would like to offer my first case study on the ceramic industry in Manchukuo. In the occupied territory of Manchuria under the Japanese Guandong army and officially founded Manchukuo, the dominant industry was agriculture, which produced the basic staple products soybeans and sorghum. 70-80% of Japan’s investment was devoted to the construction of railways, therefore little industrialisation was carried out. Daily household products (*seikatsu yōhin*) were mostly imported from Japan, and Manchukuo was described as ‘flooded with goods “made in Japan”’ [[6]](#endnote-6). However, due to Japan’s loss of international trade and lack of raw materials in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War through the Second World War, it experienced a shortage of necessary products and everything had to be manufactured locally and self-supplied within Japan and Japan’s empire. The government implemented a tight control on materials and fuels, and invested on manufacturing nationally and locally standardised tableware and substitute materials. Under this tight control, for example, the tableware used by the Japanese residents had to be manufactured locally as imports from mainland Japan ceased. The Manchuria Ceramic Company (満州陶磁器株式会社) in Dalian was established in 1939 fully backed by the government to manufacture tablewares mainly for the Japanese residents. This company was a commercial development from the Manchurian Railway Company’s Central Research Institute’s Ceramic Division which was established in 1908. Komori Shinobu was the head of the section until 1921, and set up his commercial pottery within this research institute’s premises backed by Manchurina Railway Company, and sold imitation Chinese antique pots.[[7]](#endnote-7) Before he went to Dalian, he was working at the Kyoto Ceramic Research Institute where he taught Kawai Kanjirō and Hamada Shōji who later became well-known Mingei-style potters. This picture shows Komori at the centre, Hamada on the left with a Chinese mingei basket and Kawai on the right with a Chinese mingei bamboo fan at the time of their visit to Komori in Dalian in 1919. (**Fig. 6)** Komori’s research interest is focused on how to scientifically recreate old Chinese ceramic glazes such as celadon, Tang tricolor and *shinsha* (copper red glaze) in particular from the Yuan and Song period.[[8]](#endnote-8) Given the situation in which there was an urgent need for development of modern tableware, this research was applied to the project of ‘orientalisation of western tablewares’, and in fact it became Komori’s life-long work even after the war. The research was characterized by this ‘Orientalisation’ which was achieved by discovering Asian tradition through scientific methods and technology in order to create modern Oriental ceramic wares that were affordable for everyone. ‘Oriental taste’ is supported by the systematic thought and scientific research. According to Katō Akiko’s study, experienced Japanese ceramic engineers who were engaged in making export tablewares to the USA in established ceramic manufacturers in Seto were sent to Manchukuo, and trained Chinese locally hired workers. The Manchuria Ceramic Company made use of the existing traditional Xinglongshan（兴隆山）pottery (famous for bowls) and gangyao (缸窑) pottery (famous for jars) in Jilin (吉林) province both of which had existed as traditional potteries for over 300 years.[[9]](#endnote-9) **(Fig. 7)** They made use of this existing facility and the local ceramic materials but introduced a mechanized production system by bringing machines from Seto that enabled quantity production. It was the knowledge transfer from Seto’s manufacturing technology and traditional pottery making skills.

This national venture was also helped by the involvement of the Mingei movement. The Mingei movement which had matured in mainland Japan by the mid 1930s also branched out into North-China and Manchukuo. It was mainly developed by Yoshida Shōya (吉田璋也) who was a medical doctor and trusted friend of Yanagi Sōetsu. **(Fig. 8)** Yoshida was initially drafted to the North China Dispatch Army as an army surgeon in 1938, and continued to live as an elite Japanese in Beijing until 1945.[[10]](#endnote-10) He actively led establishment of various colonial organisations and projects related to crafts and craft-design. He was also drawing a blueprint for Manshū Mingei Kyōkai (満州民芸協会Manchurian Folkcrafts Association) and Manshū Mingeikan (満州民芸館Manchurian Folkcrafts Museum), and organised a series of exhibitions of his collection of antique and currently used Chinese Mingei. He also initiated and directed a number of ‘self-sufficiency’ schemes for making crafts in villages and newly designed crafts produced from these projects included furniture, pottery, embroidered accessories, clothes and woven textiles. These were sold at the ‘Kahoku Seikatsu Kōgei Ten’ (華北生活工芸店North China Household Crafts Shop).[[11]](#endnote-11) The customers were mostly Japanese residents in Manchukuo, and his motto and message to them was to ‘cultivate Japanese life using and surrounded by local Chinese folkcrafts’, but he also told them what to select and how to make use of the cultivated Japanese knowledge of letters and the arts,[[12]](#endnote-12) and emphasized that it is the ‘Japanese mission to preserve’ the disappearing ‘handicrafts created by the Chinese tradition and blood on the land of China.’[[13]](#endnote-13)

His idea of Japanese cultivated life in Chinese style is also presented through an example of his home life. **(Fig. 9)** According to Yoshida’s own description of the tablewares he used at home, it included folk pottery of Cizhou ware-type ‘from Pengcheng (彭城鎮) in Hebei province, Lihe (李河) in Henan province, Jingxing (井陉) Nanhengkou (南横口) in Hebei province, Boshan (博山) in Shandong province and Tangshan’s (唐山) country stuff, as well as the non-top-grade, left over *akae* overglazed ware, and the low-grade blue-and white everyday ware from Jiangxi province. Large items included three-colour Tang style high-fired pots which ‘one can find everywhere in North China’. The most dominating taste was in line with the Song ceramic tradition, and the colours were mostly black and white. Patterns were simply drawn on the white glazed background. These are Chinese pots but in his words the taste for ‘shibusa’ penetrated into our Japanese traditional tea taste’[[14]](#endnote-14) Reflected in his taste is typical of Japanese Mingei specialists —natural, rough, simple colour and design. Yoshida was also attracted to the dynamic curvy forms which were organic and in his view often nonchalantly made.[[15]](#endnote-15) A new idea of ‘Orientalness’ for them seems to be the Japanese selective appropriation and translation of Chinese dynamic Mingei tradition, in line with the aesthetic of Japanese tea.

This taste also claims to comprise pure uncontaminated ‘Chineseness’. Yoshida says ‘potteries in the Northeast of China are still in a sound state…unaffected by western invasion, they still remain pure and are genuinely making household products for peasants and lower class people’.[[16]](#endnote-16) Yoshida’s basic argument is that the ‘Chineseness’ of Chinese tradition was polluted and destroyed by Euroamerican imperialism, and Japan’s role was to restore it. The great ‘Chineseness’ is also often argued as representing an Oriental superiority over his ideas of Euroamerican-ness, and is illustrated by his frying pan argument, in which ‘a [western] frying pan has no place if you see a [Chinese] iron wok which has a beautiful round shape while the ladle also has a beautiful shape given the lovely grip at the handle.’[[17]](#endnote-17)

Apart from Yoshida’s local Mingei projects in North China, six Japanese Mingei activists selected by Yanagi Sōetsu including Hamada Shōji, Shikiba Ryūzaburō, Ueno Kunji, Kawai Takeichi, Ueda Kōji led by Tonomura Kichinosuke textile artist who was later director of the Kurashiki Mingei Museum, were also sent to Manchukuo in 1943, sponsored by Manchurian Light Industry Association. They were also joined by Yoshida Shōya and Muraoka Kageo in China.[[18]](#endnote-18) Their mission was three-fold: (1) to conduct six-month research on and collect Manchurian and Mongolian folkcrafts; (2) to establish the Manchurian Folkcrafts Museum; and (3) to develop household products for the emigrated Japanese residents in Manchukuo. Within this mission, potters Kawai Takeichi and Ueda Kōji who were Kawai Kanjirō’s nephew and disciple respectively, stayed at Xinglongshan pottery and developed approximately 500 types of tableware including teapots, yunomi cups, milk pitcher, coffee cups and saucers **(Fig. 10)**, ash trays, cake plates, seasoning containers for standard tableware for the nation (*kokumin shokki*). They also developed various jars and containers and charcoal hibachi at the Ganyao pottery. Although produced in large quantities using mass production techniques such as moulds in automation, the Xinlongshan pottery retained its original folk pottery style that is characterised by hand painted flowers and plants, in cobalt. In this way they satisfied the Mingei activists’ taste. Tonomura called that pattern *nazunate* - a very Japanised term[[19]](#endnote-19), while Yoshida Shōya saw these bowls used by street food vendors selling food to coolies and said flower patterns are ‘…excellent - if they are drawn in nice cobalt blue on a good base, that would make them even better.’[[20]](#endnote-20) Like the archetype mingei - Mashiko’s *sansui dobin* production, they approved this bowl’s quality as being true Mingei, but also suggesting slight modifications. These bowls that were used by the Manchurian Railway Company and are collected in their museum in Dalian appear to be these new products by the Manchuria Ceramic Company which are restyled products of original Xinlongshan bowls with improved underglazed flower patterns in blue, as suggested by the Mingei promoters. A Similar blue-and-white jar, which is ultra modern with a simple stripe, can be found in the utensils used in the Lushun prison in Dalian.

The ‘Oriental taste’ in the case of ceramic tableware was created jointly by Japan’s imperial administration together with semi-official industrialists such as the Manchurian Railway Company as well as designers and design activists. It was closely associated with Japanese imperialism and its policy in the North China/Manchuria region. But it is important that this was created within the area of ‘seikatsu yōhin’ (daily functional household products), which is the space that is influential and far-reaching in that its links with daily life position it within the grass roots of society. ‘Seikatsu Yōhin’ is also an area of ultimate experimentation that realize the modern design ideal of democracy and standardised functional beauty that can combine with the Mingei aesthetic. As Tonomura Kichinosuke states, ‘the future will be determined by the trust and joy from the foundation of life that is *nichiyō kōgeihin* (daily household crafts) rooted in reality of life’ and that delivers ‘healthiness and simplicity’. [[21]](#endnote-21) Mingei taste for simple and healthy beauty has been emphasized repeatedly in Manchukuo as well as throughout imperial Japan. It combined Japanese imperial slogan with modern universal design idea, and was expressed through local design elements such as monochrome Cizhou-wear in relation to the Japanese tea aesthetic, or blue-and-white in relation to Seto wear.

**2. Chinese inspired ‘modernity’ and the ‘Japaneseness’ is a digest of the ‘Oriental taste’**

**Example 2: Chairs**

Japanese designers who encountered China and Taiwan under Japan’s empire, developed a discourse of ‘Japaneseness’. In the sense of ‘Japaneseness’ as a digest of the Orient, not only revealed through its appropriation and hybridisation of Oriental designs, but also through its capacity to be modern and innovative. This discourse also became an inspiration for designers to create hybrid design. I would like to draw upon some other examples (chairs and hats) to illustrate this.

Chairs were introduced in modern Japan as a symbol of western modernity, and had been the focal point for the Japanese adoption of western culture and lifestyle since the Meiji Restoration. In the 1920s in the context of the socialistic ideal design movement of the seikatsu kaizen undō (Daily Life Improvement movement), the progressive designer Kogure Joichi presented his idea of ‘Japanization of Western-style furniture’. **(Fig. 11)** Japanese chairs were designed to improve the public’s standard healthy domestic life, combining efficiency, affordability, collapsibility, conducive to use in small space, and the ability to be adaptable to the *tatami* room while fitting ‘Japanese bodies’.[[22]](#endnote-22) Japanisation of chairs became one of the continuing interests of designers.

Toyoguchi Kappei, chief designer of furniture at IARI who was sent to Taiwan in 1943 and promoted the Modernist design aesthetic found in Taiwanese crafts, praised Charlotte Perriand’s excellent use of Taiwanese bamboo stools in her exhibition in Japan.[[23]](#endnote-23) **(Fig. 12)** Perriand’s bamboo chairs became a long-lasting benchmark for the Japanese designers thinking about Japanisation of chairs in the imperial context. When the Japanese freshly discovered the Chinese tradition of chairs during the 1930s this changed the Japanese idea of modern chairs. Unlike Japan or Korea, China did have a tradition of chairs within the Orient. Thus, Chinese furniture was highly inspirational for Japanese designers. Firstly, its idea of ‘standardisation’ that the Japanese first learned as a German modernist concept was discovered to be also a Chinese idea. It was a revelation that the Orient could also lay claim to this advanced modernity. Secondly, they realised that there was much to learn about technical aspects from Chinese design. As in the case of Nishikawa’s observation, almost all Japanese designers proposed that the ‘sturdiness’, ‘universality’, ‘long sightedness’ and ‘healthiness’ of Chinese and Taiwanese design should be set as guiding principles for improving Japanese design. By introducing design drawings and comments sent by his close designer colleague ‘Mr K’,[[24]](#endnote-24) Nishikawa comments on the typically Chinese technique −a piece of wood and bamboo is seamlessly connecting bodies and legs in both Chinese wooden chairs and bamboo chairs without using nails.[[25]](#endnote-25) Nishikawa also comments that the chaise longue, like this, typically exists in the households of every commoner in China, as if to imply a discrediting of the chaise longue as the iconic example of the high modernist. He is also obviously conscious of Charlotte Perriand’s bamboo chaise longue made one year before the publication of Nishikawa’s report. The material bamboo, which is the main material for furniture in Taiwan, but didn’t exist in Manchuria and northeast China, was identified as the key material that could combine ‘Orientalness’ under the gaze of Euroamericans and ‘modernity’ and thus many bamboo chairs were designed. Kawai Kanjirō’s experiment with bamboo furniture is a typical example which realises this idea. **(Fig. 13)** This set of furniture was made by Taiwanese craftsmen in Kyoto, using Kyoto saga bamboo to improve the weakness of Japanese bamboo craft in which Kawai had noted a neglect of the intrinsic nature of bamboo and an overmanipulation of material.[[26]](#endnote-26) Kawai described the work as having both ‘the skills coming out of the bodies of the Taiwanese craftsmen’ and ‘vernacularity’ which has ‘a distinct flavour of mainland Japan’.[[27]](#endnote-27)

The creation of ‘Oriental’ or ‘Greater-Asian’ or ‘Japanese’ style chairs are powerful examples that present ambiguity in design identity and hybrid design that cannot fit comfortably with interpretations provided by design studies based on the binary axis of the Occident and Orient. Nishikawa curiously observed the hybridity of the lifestyle of Japanese residents in Manchuria where one could find a *tatami* mat room in one part of the household, with direct seating centred around *hibachi* (Japanese-style heater/hand-warmer), and a room with Chinese tables and chairs in the other. **(Fig. 14)** Thus the case of Chinese furniture in the Japanese Manchurian residents’ hybrid space, presented a modern alternative to the totally coordinated western-style space with western furniture. There may be a Russian-style stove *pechka* at the corner of the room, but also they may be *hibachi* and *kotatsu* (foot warmer under the table). Akita Mokkō, a furniture manufacturer who started the Thonet chairs in 1920 in Japan had a branch in Dalian[[28]](#endnote-28) manufacturing obviously luxury western-style chairs for the wealthy residents in Manchukuo, but they were also making Thonet *kotatsu* in 1938 probably to support the needs of Japanese residents who had a hybrid lifestyle. We can see an emergent of hybridity and a sense of Orinetalisation in the way they appropriated and modified western modernist masterpieces. Yoshida Shōya designed this chair which was thought to be inspired by a Chinese chair, but it also is reminiscent of the more famous Bauhaus aluminium tubular chair (**Fig. 15**) and Alvar Aalto’s adaptation of that in wood, as well as Toyoguchi’s adaptation of that in bamboo (Toyoguchi and Kurata founded ‘Keiji Kōbō’ – Japanese Bauhaus). In these cases of a Japanisation of western chairs, we find they became even further hybridised with elements found in Chinese chairs.

The most articulate ‘Oriental’ and ‘Greater-Asian’ chairs were designed by Kenmochi Isamu. Kenmochi was Nishikawa’s colleague at IARI who was also inspired by Chinese and other Oriental chairs within the Japanese empire and further developed the idea of newly created ‘Oriental-style chairs’. **(Fig. 16)** Interestingly he classified western chairs as ‘kairaku gata’ (pleasure-type) which, because of their flexible back design, created comfort and offered pleasure in seating that ultimately makes people lazy, while, Oriental chairs (i.e. Chinese chairs) were classified as ‘kugyōgata’ (ascetic-type) and were designed ‘to restrict comfortable pleasure seating to the point of just one step before pain.’[[29]](#endnote-29) His project aimed to create the latter type of Oriental chairs with something like this design from 1950 and his 1964 example manufactured by Akita Mokkō which was awarded the good design prize. Yoshida Shōya also designed an Oriental-style chair inspired by the Ming-style chair. These Oriental-style chairs, which evolved into Japanese-style or ‘Japanese modern’ chairs in the 1950s-60s, are typically of low height and were intended for putting onto a *tatami* mat. **(Fig. 17)** This can be seen in Sakakura Junzō’s ‘bamboo basket furniture’ (*takekagoza*), which has a bamboo woven seat cushion fixed on to a low height wooden frame, regarded as suitable for Japanese people,[[30]](#endnote-30) as well as in the chairs of Chō Daisaku, Sakakura’s disciple - the ‘Teiza chairs’ (low height seating chairs).

The idea of chairs which symbolise the west changed when Japanese encountered Chinese chairs. It was led to an Orientalisation of western chairs, in particular through the use of materials and forms, and many creative ideas for ‘Oriental-style’ chairs were produced along with design discourse backed by the political ‘Greater East Asianness’.

**Example 3: Taiwan/Oriental Panama hats (Fig. 18)**

Similar to the trajectory of the evolution of chairs, hats were icons of modern Western fashion, especially as hats were introduced into Japan at the end of the feudal Edo period. The chonmage-style top knotted hair of the Samurai was abolished following the Hair Cut Law (Danpatsu Rei) in 1871 and western-style short hair became the norm. At first, imported top hats started to be worn by elite politicians and civil servants and dress hats by noble ladies at formal occasions, while hats also became popularised through military, school and professional uniforms. Since Viscount Shibusawa Eiichi[[31]](#endnote-31) established the first hats manufacturer *Nihon Seibō Kaisha* in 1889, to make felt hats, the numbers of domestic manufacturers increased. Hats were enthusiastically welcomed in Japanese male culture, and during the 1920s, right through to the outbreak of the war, the hats industry in Japan went through a ‘golden period’. By the late 1930s male adult residents in Tokyo owned on average six kinds of hats.[[32]](#endnote-32) In winter felt hats and in summer straw boater or panama hats became necessary accessories for men.

Similarly in China, the pig tale hair was abolished as part of modernisation after the Revolution (Shingai Kakumei) in 1911, and both winter hats and summer hats increasingly became popular items. However, Japan’s Ministry of Commerce Export Bureau’s report paints a slightly different picture of taste and patterns of consumption. It suggests that straw boaters were not popular among Chinese people as they didn’t match with their Chinese-style clothes. But if Japanese manufactured wide-brimmed straw hats, they could sell these to the Northern Chinese people ‘who are less civilised’, but not to the Chinese people in the Tianjin and Shanghai area who would prefer the imported and most fashionable Italian-made wide-brimmed straw hats. The report also observed that they have good quality examples locally manufactured with high technology and locally available straw and equipment. Moreover, the report was clever enough to note, they consciously refrain from buying Japanese products, reflecting the anti-Japanese movement.[[33]](#endnote-33) Therefore, although materials would have to be imported mainly from the Shandong province in order to manufacture straw hats in Japan, they couldn’t sell these products to the fashion conscious sophisticated customers in Tianjin and Shanghai. Nevertheless, the market could be explored in respect of the unsophisticated customers in the North. This interesting observation points to the differences in the taste in straw hats between urban port cities and the country-side North, where Japan’s Manchukuo had been built.

While mainland China couldn’t be connected with Japan’s interest in the hats industry, the most remarkable development was made in Taiwan, in particular, panama hats. **(Fig. 19)** Panama hats became dominant summer hats replacing boaters in mainland Japan around 1892.[[34]](#endnote-34) ‘Genuine’ panamas from Ecuador and Colombia were luxurious, expensive products, therefore, Taiwanese-made panamas became popular cheaper alternatives. Taiwan panama made of Taiwan’s native Taikō Sankaku ran rush (Dajia Scripus triqueter) or natural wild pineapple-like plant leaves called Rintō(*pandanus tector*), became known to western countries after they were exhibited at an international exhibition in 1903. They were subsequently exported widely to western countries in addition to a strong domestic consumption. At first naturally brown Taiwan panamas made of Taikō rush were manufactured, then bleached whitish Rintō Taiwan panamas were popularized. However, the technically difficult bleaching processes required by the Rintō Taiwan panamas turned out to be costly, therefore, the idea of panamas being made of paper was introduced in 1915. The manufacturing process consisted of paper material produced in mainland Japan using imported hemp from Manila, and twisted and, applied collodion or cellulose, was shipped from Kobe to Taiwan and woven by Taiwanese women and children and made into panama and shipped back to Kobe. These paper panama were called ‘Oriental Panama’ and completely replaced the natural plant panamas by 1930 and were exported in great numbers[[35]](#endnote-35) to the USA and Europe from Kobe until Japanese imports to the US were sanctioned at the outbreak of war in 1941, but continued to export to the Japan’s newly expanded empire in the Southeast Asia during the War.[[36]](#endnote-36) There is some confusion over the naming of similar panamas – the ‘Oriental Bangkok’ which were also a Japanese invention and manufacture began in the 1920s. Its production became the main industry in Okinawa and it competed in the marketplace with the ‘Oriental Panama’ both products marketed under Japan’s empire.[[37]](#endnote-37)

The ‘Oriental Panama’ was proudly presented to the international world as a successful business of Japan’s empire. In 1939, *Commerce Japan,* a propaganda magazine of the Japanese Empire, describes ‘the fine appearance of the Oriental panama, due to its even quality and to the lustre given to it by special colouring processes, together with its affordable price, is responsible for large and increasing sales abroad.’[[38]](#endnote-38) Hats promoted western-style modern fashion, and its cultural discourse in Taiwan was often connected with the rhetoric of enlightenment of primitive Taiwan, but also they were displayed as Japanese empire’s proud claim of technological innovation in bleaching techniques and in design creativity for its use of alternative materials such as paper for popular good design. Hats also came to symbolise not only young and modern Taiwan, but also the progressive modern Japanese empire as it moved towards the South. **(Fig. 20)** These political propaganda posters show the images of the Oriental panama and battleship advancing on the South, and the Oriental panama protecting the Asian cultures and races endorsed by multiculturalism within the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

Thus, in a similar manner to chairs, ‘panama hats’ that I have focused on in this case study, symbolise western modernity. The adoption of hats, is adoption of unmodified western fashion and lifestyle in East Asia including Japan, but Orientalness was added by the invention of ‘Oriental Panama’ and ‘Oriental Bangkok’. Eventually, they came to symbolise Japan’s modernity and Japan’s empire through its technical innovation, success in global economy and local identities of local materials.

**Conclusion (Fig. 21)**

Although the three case studies are limited, they present some strong elements that formed ‘Oriental taste’ in Japan’s empire.

Firstly, the ‘Oriental taste’ is articulated through the area of ‘Seikatsu Yōhin’ (daily household products). This area was targeted due to the reality facing the shortage of supply and demand for self-sufficiency during the wartime, but also a place where the western Modernist design ideal of standardisation, function, innovation and affordability could be explored.

Secondly, the ‘Oriental taste’ was a new creation which was very much inspired by the great Chinese tradition, but also was selectively appropriated and hybridised by the Japanese. Its Japanese design discourses emphasised the pure Chineseness uncontaminated by Euroamericans, but also Japanese advancement of knowledge and modern technology.

Thirdly, during the formation of the ‘Oriental taste’, various modern Oriental styles were also created. The examples we saw in these three cases show in ceramic tablewares, chairs and panama hats, we see a great deal of creativity that Japanese designers and design activists demonstrated. We can read their fascination in their writing, sketches and their products. Japan’s empire had provided fascinating opportunities to create ‘Oriental taste’ under politically and materially tight conditions.

**Illustrations:**

**1. Cover**

**2.** Foreign advisor –Bruno Taut’s design

-Bruno Taut, Bamboo lamp, 54.5x44, 1934, Gunma Prefectural Museum of History.

15.

-Bruno Taut, Umbrella Handles, Bamboo, 2.2x15.2x7.7, 1934, Gunma Prefectural Museum of History. (Miratis Exhibition 1935)

-Bruno Taut, Napkin stands, Bamboo, 4.2x5.7/4.9x5.6/15.7x5.2, 1934, Gunma Prefectural Museum of History. (Miratis Exhibition 1935)

**3. Multicultural Japanese Empire**

-Itō Junzō design, South Manchurian Railway Co’s poster.

-Okada Saburōsuke, ‘Harmony of Five Races’ (国務院壁画) and also postcards based on that. 1936. (Manchurian five colours: 赤は大和民族と情熱、青は漢民族と青春、白はモンゴル民族と純真、黒は朝鮮民族、黄は満州族。)

-Taiwan advert posters

Takasago Beer with bananas and Takuran Bussan Co.’s pineapples.

-Illustration of Taiwanese aboriginal groups by an artist who appropriated Inō Kanori’s photograph. This illustration was made for the Paris Universal Exposition in 1900.

**4.**

-Koike Shinji’s collection of a straw fan from Suzhou, source: Koike Shinji, “Chūgoku Ryokō Nisshi” (1942) in *Hanbi Keikaku* (1943).

-Koike Shinji’s collection, *Kōgei Nyūsu* 11-5 (1942).

**5.**

-*Kōgei Nyūsu* 12-5 (1943), special issue on Taiwan.

-‘Hōrainuri’ (*penglaitu*) jars with a pattern of aboriginal people in orchard painted in polychrome lacquer, 16.5x4.5 (Large), 13.2x7 (Small) cm, private collection.

**6**.

-Hamada Shōji, Komori Shinobu and Kawai Kanjirō in Dalian, 1919. From *Ekkyō suru Nihonjin: Kōgeika ga yume mita Ajia 1910s-1945* (Japanese Crossing Borders – Asia as Dreamed by Craftspeople 1910s-1945), MOMA, Tokyo, 2012, p. 95.

-Komori Shinobu, Earthenware teapot with scraped chrysanthemum motifs, Tang-style tricolor glaze, c. 1928-34. From *Ibid*., p. 99.

-Komori Shinobu, celadon carafe with with fish motifs, c. 1921-28. From *Ibid*. p. 97

-Kawai Kanjirō, *Shinsha* (copper red) bowl, 11.5x17cm, 1922, From *Kawai Kanjirō Sakuhin Shū -Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan Zō Kawakatsu Korekushon*, MOMA Kyoto, 2005, p. 32.

-Kawai Kanjirō, Cizhou style vase, 15x11cm, c.1924, From *Kawai Kanjirō Sakuhin Shū -Kyoto Kokuritsu Kindai Bijutsukan Zō Kawakatsu Korekushon*, MOMA Kyoto, 2005, p. 54.

**7.**

-Ganyao kiln, Tonomura Kichinosuke, *Manshū Pekin Mingei Kikō*, Tokyo: Kayōsha, 1983, p. 121.

-Xinglongshan blue and white pottery (source: 沈継光、高萍著『老物件』2004)

**8.**

-Yoshida Shōya

-華北生活工芸店、北京に開店１９４３　(source: １９４０　『月刊民藝』３－１・２　吉田璋也「厚民工芸の提唱」)

**9.**

-Yoshida’s house, from Yoshida Shōya, ‘Hokushi no Atarashiki Tōki’ (1942), in Tottori Mingei Kyōkai ed., Yoshida Shōy: Mingei no Prodūsā (Yoshida Shōya: A Producer of Mingei), Tokyo: Makino Shoten, 1998.

-Shikiba Jingxing pottery １９４０　『月刊民藝』３－１・２　（source: 式場隆三郎「戦闘地区の工芸運動」）

**10.**

-Tablewares probably manufactured by the Manchurian Railway Companies, the Manchurian Railway Companies Museum in Dalian.

-Xinglongshan blue and white pottery (source: 沈継光、高萍著『老物件』2004)

-Xinlongshan blue and white, mould shaped bowl with ‘nazuna’ pattern, Tonomura Kichinosuke, *Manshū Pekin Mingei Kikō*, Tokyo: Kayōsha, 1983, p. 152.

**-**A tea cup and saucer manufactured in Jingxingpottery, *Gekkan Mingei* 1-1 (1942): 24.

-Utensil used in Lushun prison in Dalian.

**11.**

-Kogure Joichi’s chair in Kodomobeya, 1924.

-Toyoguchi Kappei’s set of chairs, 1934.

**12.**

- Bamboo Chaise Longue. Bamboo version of the steel pipe chaise longue designed by Perriand, Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, 1940.

-Chinese bamboo chairs, sketches by Mr K (Koide Yūzō?) of IARI, c1940-43. Source: Nishikawa Tomotake *Gongyizhan* (1942).

**13.**

-Kawai Kanjirō, bamboo lounge set, 1941, collection of Kawai Kanjirō Memorial Museum, Kyoto.

**14. Japanese residents’ lifestyle in the North-East China and Manchukuo**

-Nishikawa Tomotake’s sketches. Source: Nishikawa Tomotake *Gongyizhan* (1942).

-Yoshida family’s lifestyle in Beijing, ‘Genchi Nihonjin no Sumaikata’, *Kahoku*, 1-6. From *Ekkyō suru Nihonjin: Kōgeika ga yume mita Ajia 1910s-1945* (Japanese Crossing Borders – Asia as Dreamed by Craftspeople 1910s-1945), MOMA, Tokyo, 2012, p. 110.

**15.**

-Marcel Breuer, Model No. B32 and Model No B64, 1928, chrome-plated tubular steel frames with stained bentwood and woven cane seats and backs in a cantilevered structure. Source: Charlotte and Peter Fiell eds., *1000 Chairs*, Köln, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2000, p. 167.

-Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Model No. MR10, 1927, chrome-plated bent tubular steel frame and steel stretcher with ‘Eisengam’ textile seat and back, Source: Charlotte and Peter Fiell eds., *1000 Chairs*, Köln, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2000, p. 171.

-Alvar Aalto, Model No. 31, 1931-32, bent laminated and solid birch frame with lacquered bent plywood seat section in cantilevered structure (this was a revolutionary technology). Source: Charlotte and Peter Fiell eds., *1000 Chairs*, Köln, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 2000, p. 219.

-Yoshida Shōya design, Rocking chair, c. 1940-45. From *Ekkyō suru Nihonjin: Kōgeika ga yume mita Ajia 1910s-1945* (Japanese Crossing Borders – Asia as Dreamed by Craftspeople 1910s-1945), MOMA, Tokyo, 2012, p. 109.

**16.**

-Kenmochi Isamu, Ming-style chair, 1950.

-Yoshida Shōya, Tottori *Mingei*-style furniture, Tatsumi Mokkō, Collection of Tottori Mingei Kyōkai. The craft guild *Tottori Mingei Kyōdan* (Tottori Folkcrafts Cooperative) with a group of local craftsmen, and in 1932 opened a retail shop called Takumi

-Kenmochi and Akita Mokkō, Ming-style chair, 1964. Source: Nihon Sangyō Dezain Shinkōkai, *Supercollection: 40 years of the G-mark* (1996), p. 18.

**17.**

-Sakakura Junzō, Bamboo basket chair designed by, bamboo, wood, w42.5xD63xH64xSH22.5, 1948, Miho Kenchiku Kōgei. Sakakura Yuri Collection. Photo credit: Utsunomiya: Utsunomiya Museum of Art. Sakakura Junzō is a modernist architect, trained in Le Corbusier’s office during 1931-39 and with a colleague of Charlotte Perriand.

-Chō Daisaku,Teizaisu (low height chair), 1961. 1964 G-mark, made by Tendō Mokkō. Chō Daisaku worked in Sakakura Junzō’s architect office for 24 years since 1947 as a designer of architecture and furniture.

**18. Hats**

-chonmage, from *Tōkyō no Bōshi Hyaku Nijūnen Shi* (120 year History of Hats in Tokyo), Tokyo: Tokyō Bōshi Kyōkai, 2005,

-benpatsu, *Ibid.,* p. 86

-bus girls uniform (1920), *Ibid.,* p. 92.

-Army senior officers in summer kimono and borders/panama hats, (1916), *Ibid.,* p. 82.

-Danshui police assistants in uniform, Year not known, From Yang Menze ed., *Taiwan Lishi Yinshang* (The Historical Images of Taiwan), Taipei: Artist, 1997, p. 107.

**19.**

-Women and children making “Taiwan Hats”. (source: Taichūshū, *Hontō ni okeru Bōshi* (Hats in Taiwan), Taichūshū, 1930).

-Hats, Bianzhi Bowuguan (The Weaving and Textile Museum) in Fengyuan.

-‘Hats’, *Commerce Japan*, 5, 1939, published by The Japan Foreign Trade Federation, Tokyo

**20.**

-Posters of “Oriental Panama/Taiwan Hat”. (source: *Shisei 40 shūnen Kinen Taiwan Hakurankai Shi* (A Record of Taiwan Exhibitions in Commemoration of 40 Years of Japanese Rule), Taipei: Taiwan Hakurankai and Koike Kinnosuke, *Taiwan Bōshi no Hanashi*, 1939.

**21. Conclusion**

1. The panel included the Director of IARI Kunii Kitarō (**国井喜太郎）**, the Managing Director of Japan Ceramic Co. Iino Ippei (**飯野逸平）**, the Managing Director of international art dealer Yamanaka Co. Okada Tomoji (**岡田友次)** and three professors of Tokyo School of Fine Art - painter Wada Sanzō (**和田三造)**, Metal craft artists Takamura Toyochika (**高村豊周）**, and lacquer artist Yamazaki Kakutarō (**山崎覚太郎**). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Nishikawa 1939. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Koike 1942. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. According to Miyagawa Zenzō’s sensus in 1940. In Kishi Toshihiko, *Manshūkoku no Bijuaru Media* (Manchuria’s Graphic Media Empire), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2010, p.19. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Kunii 1942. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Imports from Japan increased from 77 million yen in 1931 to 403 million yen in 1934, an increase of more than five times. A. J. Grajdanzev, *The External Trade of Manchuria 1928-1935: An Analysis*. Reprinted from Nankai Social and Economic Quarterly Vol. VIII, No. 4, January 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Some critics argue that it was a disguised commercial activity inspired by the Chinese antique ceramic collection boom, but the real aim was fund-raising for the Guandong army.Hōten Kotōji no Gizō (Production of Fake Hōtem Chinese Antique Pottery), <http://kishu-bunka.org/saeki/houten5.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. For further information about Komori, and his relation with Kawai and Hamada, see Hattori Fumitaka ‘Komori Shinobu no Chūgoku Tōji Kenkyū’, *Ekkyō suru Nihonjin: Kōgeika ga Yume mita Ajia 1910s-1945* (Japanese Crossing Borders: Asia as Dreamed by Craftspeople, 1910s-1945), Tokyo: The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1912; ‘Kawai tono 50 nen’ (Fifty years with Kawai), in Hamada Shōji, *Mijinzō* (Unlimited), Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1974. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Katō Akiko, ‘Senjiki, Tōjiki Kigyō no Manshū Shinshutsu nit suite: Manshū Tōjiki Kabushiki Kaisha no Baai’ (Migration of Ceramic Industries to Manchuria during the War Period: Manchuria Ceramic Company’s Case), *Aichi Kenritsu Daigaku Daigakuin Kokusai Bunka Kenkyūka Ronbun*, No. 10, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Yoshida is described by the IARI designer Koike Shinji who visited him in Beijing in 1942 as the only activist of the craft movement in China. Shinji Koike, ‘Shina Kōgei Bunka no Genjō – zoku’, 330. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. They were exhibited at the 1st and 2nd ‘Pekin Shinsaku Mingei Ten’ (Beijing Newly Produced Folkcrafts Exhibition) in 1940 and 1942. They are followed by ‘Gendai Kahoku Minyō Ten’ (Contemporary North-east Folk Pottery Exhibition) in 1942 and ‘Kahoku no Ryūki Ten’ (Willow Crafts of the North-east) in 1943. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. ‘Pekin Seikatsu to Shokki’, In Shōya Yoshida andTottori Mingei Kyōkai, *Yoshida Shōya: Mingei no Prodyūsā*, 130-131. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. ‘Hokushi no Mingei’ (1938), in Shōya Yoshida andTottori Mingei Kyōkai, *Yoshida Shōya: Mingei no Prodyūsā*, 96-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. ‘Pekin Seikatsu to Shokki’, in Shōya Yoshida andTottori Mingei Kyōkai, *Yoshida Shōya: Mingei no Prodyūsā*, 130. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Echoing Yoshida’s tone, Yanagi also stressed that ‘Chineseness’ suggested ‘strong, sharp, big, sturdy’ characteristics which are the reflection of that nation’s ‘dynamic and severe natural climate’ and ‘vastly long history’. Sōetsu Yanagi, ‘Hokushi no *Mingei*’ (1941), in *Yanagi Sōetsu Zenshū*, 15, 569-574. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. # Yoshida Shōya, ‘Hokushi no Atarashiki Tōki’ (1942), in Tottori Mingei Kyōkai ed., Yoshida Shōy: Mingei no Prodūsā (Yoshida Shōya: A Producer of Mingei), Tokyo: Makino Shoten, 1998, p. 123.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. For further detail about this mission, see Tonomura Kichinosuke, *Manshū Pekin Mingei Kikō*, Tokyo: Kayōsha, 1983. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Tonomura Kichinosuke, *Manshū Pekin Mingei Kikō*, Tokyo: Kayōsha, 1983. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Yoshida Shōya, ‘Hokushi no Mingei’ (1938), Yoshida Shōya, ‘Hokushi no Atarashiki Tōki’ (1942), in Tottori Mingei Kyōkai ed., Yoshida Shōy: Mingei no Prodūsā (Yoshida Shōya: A Producer of Mingei), Tokyo: Makino Shoten, 1998, p. 99. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Tonomura 1983, p. 232. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Sara Teaseley, ‘Architecture and Furniture Design in odern Japan: The Case of Kogure Joichi’, *Design History* (The Journal of the Design History Workshop Japan), 2 (2004): 86-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Toyoguchi 1943. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Mr K is quite likely to be Koide Yūzō from war zones in Northeast China where he had been drafted and eventually lost his life. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Nishikawa 194?: 200. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. (Kawai 1941; Kawai, Yanagi & Shikiba 1941). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. (Kawai, Yanagi & Shikiba 1941). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. advert in Mannichi 1938, add in fig.? [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Kenmochi 1942. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Miho Kenchiku 1949; Chō 1979. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Shibusawa Eiichi founded the first bank in Japan and introduced western capitalism. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. *Tōkyō no Bōshi Hyaku Nijūnen Shi* (120 year History of Hats in Tokyo), Tokyo: Tokyō Bōshi Kyōkai, 2005, pp. 116-117. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Shōkō Shō Bōeki Kyoku, *Kaigai Shijō ni okeru Honpō Yushutsu Bōshi oyobi Dōzairyō no Jukyū narabi Gaikokuhin tono Kyōsō Jōkyō* (The Situations of Competitions between Hats exported from Japan and Foreign Countries in Overseas Markets, and Demand and Supply of Materials???), Tokyo: Shōkō Shō Bōeki Kyoku, 1931, pp. 1-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. *Tōkyō no Bōshi Hyaku Nijūnen Shi* 2005, p. 33, p. 298. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Add statistics of trade. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. *Tōkyō no Bōshi Hyaku Nijūnen Shi* 2005; Koike Kinnosuke, *Taiwan Bōshi no Hanashi*, Taipei: Taiwan Bōshi Dōgyō Kumiai Rengōkai, 1943. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. ‘Oriental Bangkok’ was nothing to do with Bangkok in Thailand. It is purely Japanese products, but the name is derived from the similarity in the weaving methods of hats in Thailand and the Philippines. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. ‘Hats’, *Commerce Japan*, No. 5, 1939, pp. 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)