

# Oriental Taste in Imperial Japan: The Exhibition and Sale of Asian Art and Artifacts by Japanese Department Stores from the 1920s through the Early 1940s

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*From the 1920s to the early 1940s, Japanese department stores provided Japanese urban middle-class households with art and artifacts from China, Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. The department stores not merely sold art and artifacts from Japan's Asian neighbors but also promoted the cultural confidence to appreciate and collect them. At the same time, aspiring middle-class customers satisfied their desire to emulate the historical elite's taste for Chinese and other Asian objects by shopping at the department stores. The aesthetic consumption of Asian art and artifacts formulated a privileged position for Japan in the imperial order and presented the new middle class with the cultural capital vital to the negotiation of its social status. This article examines the ways in which department stores marketed "tōyō shumi" (Oriental taste), which played a significant role in the formation of identity for both the imperial state and the new middle class in 1920s and 1930s Japan.*

**Keywords:** department stores, imperial Japan, *karamono*, new middle class, Oriental art and artifacts, *tōyō shumi*

IN 1921, A LEADING Japanese department store, Mitsukoshi, established a "tōyōhinbu" (Oriental goods section) and began to deal in art and artifacts from China, Korea, Taiwan, Java, and India. In the following year, Mitsukoshi's rival, Takashimaya, opened a "shinabu" (Chinese section), which exhibited and sold primarily, but not exclusively, Chinese art and artifacts.<sup>1</sup> By the 1930s, almost every Japanese department store supplied Asian art and artifacts to its customers.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of this transnational art market has a correlation with the ideological and discursive construction of "tōyō" (the

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<sup>1</sup>Even though Takashimaya did not name its new section "tōyōhinbu," a designation that its competitor Mitsukoshi had already used, Takashimaya's *shinabu* introduced not only Chinese art and artifacts, but also occasionally Korean and Southeast Asian ones as well. Takashimaya employed "shina" as a term that referred to the most representative goods sold in its new section of Asian art and artifacts.

<sup>2</sup>For examples besides Mitsukoshi and Takashimaya, see the following materials: Hankyu (1934, 1936); Matsuzakaya (1933, 1935, 1937); and Shirokiya (1934). Hankyu department store published a monthly magazine, *Hankyu Bijutsu*, from 1937 to 1941. Asian art exhibits held at Hankyu were often introduced in this magazine. Outside the Japanese archipelago, Mitsukoshi in Keijō (colonial Seoul) opened a "Korean Product Showroom" in 1930 and sold Korean art and artifacts to Japanese migrants and tourists.

Orient). Employing an imperialistic claim to Japan's guardianship of Asian cultures, department stores stimulated people's interest in the Orient and created consumer desire for Oriental art and artifacts. On the other hand, the success of the Oriental sections of department stores could also be attributed to the burgeoning urban middle class's craving to partake in an old cultural practice derived from the feudal elite's taste for Chinese and other Asian objects called *karamono* 唐物. This article reveals how Japanese department stores materialized and sustained Japanese imperial consciousness through the marketing of their Oriental sections and how the stores, capitalizing on Japan's imperial dominance, offered the new middle class opportunities to collect and appreciate Asian art and artifacts that had previously been confined to the elite class.

A few pioneering studies have explored the profound connection between Japanese taste for Oriental art and artifacts and the Japanese imperialist enterprise in the early twentieth century. Jordan Sand (2000) examined the Meiji elite's Western-style rooms decorated with Japanese, Chinese, and other Asian antiquities, and claimed that this interior decorating paralleled and reiterated the Japanese nation and empire building, "orientalizing" the rest of Asia, the West, and the past of Japan itself. Kim Brandt (2007) and Yuko Kikuchi (2004) have argued that Japanese intellectuals' celebration and promotion of the folk art of Korea, China, Manchuria, Okinawa, and Southeast Asia mirrored the Japanese state's project to construct a pan-Asian empire. Sand and Brandt also investigated the ways in which Japanese imperial consciousness was commodified as forms of aesthetic objects by Japan's emerging capitalist consumerism. Building on these previous studies, this article examines imperial Japan's Oriental taste by expanding the subjects and objects of this taste. While Sand focused on the aesthetic choices of the Meiji elite during the earlier years of the Japanese empire, when only upper-class Japanese were able to access art and artifacts from Asia, I look at popular interest in Oriental taste during the 1920s and 1930s when Japan achieved enough full-fledged imperial power to offer even its new middle-class households authentic Asian art and artifacts. While the focus of Brandt's and Kikuchi's books were on the *mingei* movement initiated by Yanagi Muneyoshi (1889–1961) and his circle's admiration of Chosŏn period Korean ceramics, my study includes a wider range of Asian art and artifacts, from antique celadon flower vases to modern literati paintings, which were exhibited and sold at Japanese department stores.

The Oriental sections of Japanese department stores have not been studied, despite their importance as a venue where the movement of artistic goods, people, and knowledge between Japan and its Asian neighbors occurred most actively in the early twentieth century. This article pays attention to this neglected topic. Yet it does not aim to simply add a new case study to the well-established research on Japan's "orientalization" of Asia. It tries to complicate imperial Japan's Oriental taste through the expansion of its subject and object. Whereas the Meiji elite decorated their Western-style rooms with Oriental art and artifacts, following the style and taste of the Victorian West, the new middle class collected Asian art and artifacts in order to make their interior décor closer to the historical Japanese elite's reception room decorated with *karamono*. Although the folk art of the Japanese colonies and semicolonies was popular among new middle-class customers, their taste for Oriental art and artifacts was not limited to the folk aesthetic, described as childlike, rustic, and primitive. The various Asian objects the feudal elite had admired were welcomed by new middle-class customers at the Oriental sections of

department stores. The Oriental taste of imperial Japan cannot be reduced solely to its fascination with other Asian art and artifacts as exotica or its nostalgia for the primitive. This article explores the way in which *tōyō shumi* 東洋趣味 (Oriental taste) proliferated during the 1920s and 1930s as Japan's Orientalist attitude toward Asia, imported from the West, was entwined with the legacy of Japan's long-standing enthusiasm for imports from Asia.

### ABOUT *Tōyō Shumi*

Both Mitsukoshi and Takashimaya stated that they decided to begin selling Asian art and artifacts in response to the rising *tōyō shumi* (Mitsukoshi 1921b, 24; Takashimaya 1960, 322). How, then, did the stores define and approach *tōyō shumi* at that time? We can find answers to this question in an article titled “About *Tōyō Shumi*” that Mitsukoshi published in its in-house magazine of October 1922 to introduce its Oriental section (Mitsukoshi 1922b):

What people call “*tōyō*” has various meanings. Originally the term “*tōyō*” was coined by Europeans with Europe as the center. Thus it refers to the entire region from Anatolia to India and China. Japan is also included within it. From the Japanese point of view, it sounds strange to call Anatolia, which is located to the west of Japan, “*tōyō*.” Strictly speaking, it is still an odd translation for India and China. However, it can't be helped if Europeans took the initiative in calling these regions “*tōyō*.”

What is now called “*tōyō*” includes Japan along with India and China. However, the Oriental section of Mitsukoshi is stocking goods from China, Korea, Taiwan, Java, and India, excluding Japan.

Each section of Mitsukoshi is categorized according to the kind and use of its goods. On the other hand, the Oriental section is categorized by the region its goods come from. Consequently, the Oriental section itself seems like a small department store which sells a variety of items, from furniture to table wares, writing implements, and pouches.

Since the goods from the same region are put together, the distinct characteristics of each region, the so-called *local color*, is well brought out, allowing a wide range of goods to be unified. In other words, Chinese goods have a distinctive Chinese character; Indian goods have a unique Indian aspect throughout the wide range of goods.

In terms of *shumi* (taste), the goods embody so-called *tōyō shumi* and make the Oriental section a unified one. Within *tōyō shumi*, however, *shina shumi* (Chinese taste), *chōsen shumi* (Korean taste), *indo shumi* (Indian taste), and *taiwan shumi* (Taiwanese taste) exist respectively. Among them, *shina shumi* is central to *tōyō shumi* and has been in fashion recently in Japan. China is a

nation that developed a culture from ancient times and its taste has something unreachable by others. Various aspects of our taste have been greatly influenced by China for a long time. It is fair to say that today's *nihon shumi* (Japanese taste) also has its origin in China in numerous cases. Even these days when *seiyō shumi* (Occidental taste) is prevalent, *shina shumi* coexists since our ancestors' taste was inherited by us.

First of all, we can see that the term “*tōyō*” was understood as a translation of the Western word “Orient.” The Chinese-character word “*tōyō*” 東洋 was initially used by Chinese merchants to refer to the sea to the east of China, which is what it literally means, but the definition and domain of “*tōyō*” have changed over time in Japan (S. Tanaka 1993, 4). In Mitsukoshi's article, which had to appeal to the popular imagination of the time, the origin of the word “*tōyō*” was forgotten and “*tōyō*” was conceived as the Orient as defined by Eurocentric cartographic imagery.

The next thing we should note is that the effort to separate Japan from other Asian nations is manifested in the selection of the Oriental section's goods. Japanese department stores most likely modeled their Oriental sections after European and American department stores' Oriental sections, which had emerged due to the huge popularity of Japonisme and Chinoiserie.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly enough, however, whereas Japanese art and artifacts, along with those from China, constituted an essential part of the Oriental sections of English and French department stores, Japanese art and artifacts were completely excluded from Mitsukoshi's Oriental section.<sup>4</sup> As Stefan Tanaka (1993) has pointed out, modernizing Japan internalized the gaze of the West toward the Orient and placed Japan in the position of the Orientalist subject, a position that had been occupied by the West. The consciousness, which considered the rest of Asia as “Japan's Orient,” is well reflected in the organization of the Oriental sections of Japanese department stores.<sup>5</sup>

Within the Mitsukoshi store, only the Oriental section was categorized not by use of the goods but by their geographical origin. In an institutional as well as an epistemological sense, the overall layout of Japanese department stores mirrored that of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century international expositions, which distinguished colonial

<sup>3</sup>Major Japanese department stores, including Mitsukoshi and Takashimaya, evolved from leading *gofukuten* (dry-goods stores), which had started doing business in the Edo period (1603–1868). For their transformation from Edo period dry-goods stores to modern department stores at the turn of the twentieth century, the stores reformed their businesses, modeling them on European and American department stores. They sent their employees to department stores in Europe and the United States to study everything from marketing techniques to window displays. Also, Japanese department stores participated in international expositions that promoted Japonisme in Europe and America. Certainly Japanese department stores were very aware of the success of Oriental sections in European and American department stores earlier on.

<sup>4</sup>On Oriental sections of Western department stores, see Ashmore (2001); Cheang (2007); Leach (1993, 104–11); and Victoria and Albert Museum (1975, 22–33).

<sup>5</sup>Such consciousness had been already realized at the British-Japan Exhibition in 1910. Japan built a pavilion named “Palace of the Orient” and displayed exhibits from Korea, Kwangtung, Manchuria, and Taiwan. Like Mitsukoshi's Oriental section, “Palace of the Orient” did not include any Japanese exhibits at all. “The Orient” exhibited at this pavilion consisted of Japan's colonies and occupied territories.

pavilions from main thematic pavilions. According to Timothy Mitchell (1992, 293), international expositions rendered the Orient as an object on display to be observed and consumed by the dominating European subjects. Just as the colonial displays of the international expositions created the Orient as a spectacle and as a commodity, Japanese department stores presented *tōyō* itself as an object of consumer desire. The Oriental section marketed the Orient, like the kimono section marketed kimono and the furniture section marketed furniture. In turn, each single object displayed and sold in the Oriental section was treated as a metonym for China, Korea, Taiwan, Java, or India respectively. Each nation or region was regarded as a culturally monolithic entity, whose distinctive taste—local color—was considered to be inherent in all its goods.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on the local color of each nation reiterated the cultural essentialism on which Western Orientalist thought was premised.

At the end of the quoted Mitsukoshi article, an interesting twist occurred in the attitude that objectified the rest of Asia as “Japan’s Orient.” Whereas French and English department stores created an exotic fantasy about the Orient through their catalogues, posters, and displays to promote their Oriental goods, Mitsukoshi’s article rarely employed the rhetoric of exoticism to describe *tōyō*. Instead, it praised *shina shumi* as the preeminent source of *tōyō shumi* and stressed that *nihon shumi* originated from *shina shumi*. This statement sounds contradictory to the previously mentioned attempt to separate Japan from its Asian neighbors. Rather, it resonates with the idea of Asianism that claimed a cultural affinity among Asian nations in order to construct a unified entity of Asia countering Western powers. The Mitsukoshi article defined *tōyō shumi* as an inevitable product resulting from the Oriental origin of Japanese cultures. As the last sentence of the quotation sets “inherited” *shina shumi* against “imported” *seiyō shumi*, *tōyō* represented by *shina* was considered as “Japan’s origin” vis-à-vis *seiyō* (the West) as the Other of Japan. The contradiction and paradox of *tōyō*, which was “Japan’s Orient” and simultaneously “Japan’s origin,” complicated the mechanism of *tōyō shumi*.

### *Tōyō Shumi*, Japan’s Orientalism

If Japan is part of a historically and culturally unified Asia, how could Japan designate its Asian neighbors as the objects of its aesthetic consumption? Japanese department stores forged the Japanese position as the subject in *tōyō shumi* by Japanese knowledge and appreciation of other Asian cultures rather than by the aesthetic otherness or the exoticness of them. Since department stores first emerged in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century, the stores not only provided the latest goods but also served as purveyors of advanced knowledge about modern cultured life (Hatsuda 1993; Jinno 1994).

Department stores’ prominence as cultural institutions was achieved through their advisory groups, which consisted of well-known intellectuals. The stores invited prominent artists, scholars, and journalists to proffer their advice and expertise on a variety

<sup>6</sup>The term “local color” (ローカルカラー) was written in *katakana* (the Japanese syllabary reserved for imported terms) in the Mitsukoshi article. It was an expression often employed to highlight the authentic nature of colonial art and culture in the imperialist discourse. Likewise, the Mitsukoshi article uses the term “local color” to emphasize each region’s unique taste “inherent” in its goods.

of topics.<sup>7</sup> By the 1920s, most Japanese department stores were publishing in-house magazines that not only advertised their goods but also included novels and semi-academic articles, and were hosting a variety of events including literary contests, photography contests, lecture series, classical music concerts, and exhibitions. Both the collecting of manuscripts for the magazines and the planning of various cultural events relied on the stores' intellectual advisors. The close relationship of department stores with the most noted intellectuals of the time also played a crucial role in the business of the Oriental sections.

With the opening of their Oriental sections, department stores actively worked with Asian specialists to seek their expert advice. For example, Takashimaya invited Gotō Asatarō (1881–1945), one of the most renowned specialists in Chinese studies at the time, to be a consultant for its Chinese section.<sup>8</sup> In addition to Gotō, Kyoto-based Sinologists such as Nagao Uzan (1864–1942) were directly or indirectly engaged in the projects of the Takashimaya Chinese section.<sup>9</sup> Through the use of catalogues, pamphlets, in-house magazines, and special exhibits, the stores provided their customers with information about the culture and customs of each Asian nation from which their Oriental goods came. It is not hard to find manuscripts written by art historians and curators in the catalogues of exhibitions held at department stores for the sale of Oriental art and artifacts. Masaki Naohiko (principal of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and director of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, 1862–1940); Kobayashi Taichirō (a curator at the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, 1901–63); Hirose Toson (a curator at the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts, ?–?); Tanabe Takatsugu (a faculty member at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, 1890–1945); Kawai Kanjirō (a potter and a key figure in the *mingei* movement, 1890–1966); Okuda Seiichi (founder of the Oriental Ceramic Research Institute, 1883–1955); Asakawa Noritaka (an expert on Korean ceramics, 1884–1964); and others wrote essays for department stores' publications. In order to enhance the market value of Oriental art and artifacts, the stores asked Asian art specialists to write for their catalogues; in turn, the essays informed and educated the public about Asian art history.

In May 1921, a month before the launch of its Oriental section, Mitsukoshi mounted an exhibit titled “Exhibition of Buddhist Art Materials” (see [figure 1](#)). This exhibition displayed photographs, drawings, and rubbings that archaeologist Sekino Tadashi

<sup>7</sup>One of the most famous intellectual groups was Mitsukoshi's Ryūkō Kenkyūkai (Fashion Research Group, known as Ryūkōkai), which was founded in 1905 with the avowed goal of “studying Eastern and Western, ancient and modern fashion for the improvement of contemporary taste” (Jinno 1994, 123–216). Following Mitsukoshi's Ryūkōkai as a preeminent example, this kind of advisory group became common for other department stores during the late Meiji and early Taishō periods: Daimaru's Ishōkenkyūkai (Design Research Group) founded in 1906, Matsuya's Imayōkai (Contemporary Design Group) founded in 1912, Takashimaya's Hyakusenkai (Best Selection Group) founded in 1913, and Shirokiya's Shinishokai (New Trend Group) founded in 1922.

<sup>8</sup>During the 1920s and 1930s, Gotō Asatarō published a large number of books about Chinese culture and customs (e.g., Gotō 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1933, 1935, 1936, 1937).

<sup>9</sup>The head of the Takashimaya Chinese section, Tanigami Ryūsuke, studied under top Japanese literati painter Tomioka Tessai (1837–1924) at the Kyoto School of Art and Crafts (Kyōtōshi Bijutsu Kōgei Gakkō). Through Tomioka, Tanigami made the acquaintance of scholars of Sinology in Kyoto, including Naitō Konan (1866–1934), Kano Naoki (1868–1947), and Nagao Uzan. For various exhibitions he held at Takashimaya, Tanigami relied on his personal connections with them (Matsumura 2005, 40–42).



**Figure 1.** Installation view of “Exhibition of Buddhist Art Materials” (*Mitsukoshi 1921a*).

(1868–1935), Buddhologist Tokiwa Daijō (1870–1945), Sinologist Gotō Asatarō, poet and art historian Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885–1945), and artist Kimura Shōhachi (1893–1958) produced during their then recent trips to Buddhist historic remains in China, including the Yungang, Longmen, and Tianlongshan grottoes (*Mitsukoshi 1921a*). Most of the materials displayed in this exhibition were valuable research resources that had never before been introduced in Japan.<sup>10</sup>

Japanese intellectuals’ interest in Chinese cave temples was sparked by European archaeologists’ research on them. In the early twentieth century, European scholars went to study Chinese grottoes located on the Silk Road and brought precious relics from the sites back to their countries. This encouraged Japanese scholars to visit historic sites in China and undertake investigations into them in the name of protection of Chinese arts and cultures abandoned for a long time as a result of China’s indifference and threatened recently by Western imperialist ambitions.<sup>11</sup> Given the fact that China had served as a cultural mentor for Japan over many centuries, the Japan-driven archaeological excavations and investigations of remains and relics in China were an effective way for Japan to take cultural hegemony away from China and reverse the cultural hierarchy in Asia.

Mitsukoshi’s exhibition, which introduced prominent Japanese intellectuals’ scientific studies and aesthetic appreciation of Buddhist relics in China, not only stimulated public interest in Chinese arts and cultures but also inculcated cultural confidence in the Japanese public by propagating the idea that Japan, as the only modern nation in Asia on par with the West, had exclusive authority to study, collect, appreciate, and preserve Asia’s

<sup>10</sup>In the following year, Kinoshita Mokutarō and Kimura Shōhachi published a book titled *Daidō Seikibutsuji* (Datong Cave Temples) based on the visual materials they showed in the exhibition. Sekino Tadashi and Tokiwa Daijō’s *Shina Bukkyō Shiseki* (Chinese Buddhist Historical Sites) series’ first volume was published in 1925.

<sup>11</sup>According to Fujihara (2006), a rivalry emerged between Japan and the West for the study of Asian art history in the early twentieth century. On the development of Japanese studies on Chinese cave temples, see Okada (1999) and Wong (2004).

artistic achievements. Japanese department stores endeavored to convert such newly acquired intellectual and cultural confidence into a desire to consume artistic objects from other Asian nations. This is why Mitsukoshi, despite being a profit-oriented institution, held such a seemingly purely academic exhibition that did not bring immediate commercial benefits.

The claim for Japan's credentials as the guardian of Asian arts and cultures was not new. In 1903, Okakura Kakuzō (1862–1913) had already asserted Japan's special role in the preservation and appreciation of the once-great and unified Asiatic civilization in his book *The Ideals of the East*. However, this book was initially published in English in London and took almost twenty years to be translated into Japanese. The idea of "Japan as a museum of Asiatic civilization" had existed only in a few elite nationalists' minds, and had not been prevalent in the popular imagination in Meiji Japan.<sup>12</sup>

It is noteworthy that a series of cultural movements demonstrating various Japanese subjects' interest in Chinese and Korean arts and cultures occurred simultaneously around the time when Mitsukoshi and Takashimaya opened their Oriental sections. In the year 1922, the general-interest magazine *Chūō Kōron* published a special issue on "research on *shina shumi*," the art journal *Kokka's* February issue included an article titled "Our People's Interest in Chinese Studies," the literary magazine *Shirakaba* devoted a special issue to "*Richō* ceramics" (Yi dynasty Korean ceramics), the monthly art magazine *Shina Bijutsu* (Chinese Art) was first issued, and Japanese art dealers in colonial Seoul founded a "*Keijo bijutsu kurabu*" (Seoul art club).<sup>13</sup> Only around then was Okakura's ideal implemented by the Japanese public.

The explosion of Japanese popular understanding of and interest in Asian arts in the early 1920s was inseparable from a transition in the Japanese state's strategy to gain ascendancy over other Asian nations. After the end of World War I, anti-Japanese nationalism arose in Asia. The March First Movement of Korea and the May Fourth Movement of China in 1919 triggered a major turn in Japan's foreign and colonial policy. In Korea, the Japanese colonial government replaced "*budan seiji*" (military rule) with "*bunka seiji*" (cultural rule), promising increased educational opportunity for Koreans, permission for the publication of Korean-language newspapers, and general respect for Korean culture. For example, Yanagi's plan for the construction of the Korean Art Museum (Chōsen

<sup>12</sup>Kuki Ryūichi (1852–1931), the director of the Imperial Museum, also articulated the idea of "Japan as a treasure house of *tōyō*" in the preface of *Histoire de l'Art du Japon* (1900). This book of Japanese art history was published in French to be distributed at the Paris international exposition in 1900. In other words, this book was also addressed to European readers rather than Japanese. Meiji elites' ambitious vision had not yet led to popular interest in and mass consumption of Asian arts and cultures within Japan at that time.

<sup>13</sup>In January 1922, *Chūō Kōron's* special issue explored *shina shumi* through five essays written by painter Kosugi Hōan (1881–1964), architect Satō Kōichi (1878–1941), architect and architectural historian Itō Chūta (1867–1954), Gotō Asatarō, and writer Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965). The September 1922 issue of *Shirakaba* included Asakawa Noritaka's "Richō Tōki no Kachi Oyobi Henzō ni Tsuite" [On the Value and Change of Yi Dynasty Ceramics], Tomimoto Kenkichi's "Richō no Suiteki" [Yi Dynasty Water Droppers], Yanagi Muneoyoshi's "Richō Tōjiki no Tokushitsu" [Special Characteristics of Yi Dynasty Porcelain], and Asakawa Noritaka's "Tsubo" [Jar]. On the *Shirakaba* members' shift from *seiyō shumi* to *tōyō shumi* in the late 1910s and 1920s, see Umezawa (2011). *Shina Bijutsu* published its first issue in August 1922. *Keijo bijutsu kurabu* was established in September 1922.



Minzoku Bijutsukan) was able to be realized with the support of the colonial government as part of *bunka seiji* (Brandt 2007, 26). For China, the Japanese foreign ministry undertook “Taishi Bunka Jigyō” (Japanese Cultural Project toward China) with the plan of founding research institutions in both China and Japan, inviting Chinese students to Japan, and supporting cultural exchange programs between the two countries. Chinese painting exhibitions such as “Exhibition of Masterpieces from Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties” (1928) were held in Japan with the sponsorship of this project (Kuze 2014). Art was an important apparatus taken by the new colonial and foreign policies to show Japanese respect for Korean and Chinese cultures. Among the specialists who wrote for department stores’ Oriental art exhibitions, Masaki Naohiko, Tanabe Takatsugu, and Kobayashi Taichirō were also engaged in the Taishi Bunka Jigyō or the projects carried out under *bunka seiji*.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the same scholars worked for both the imperial state’s cultural projects toward Asia and the department stores’ marketing of Asian art and artifacts, popularizing their expertise on Asian arts and cultures. The aesthetic respect for other Asian cultures was, in fact, the most colonialistic attitude that Japan could take toward Asia. Karatani Kōjin (1997, 48) argued that aesthetic appreciation was possible only in the consciousness that people who made the works were or could be colonized at any time. According to his theory, the Japanese were able to express aesthetic respect for other Asian cultures only after Japan had established political and economic domination as well as intellectual and ethical superiority over other Asian nations. It was the 1920s when the Japanese acquired enough confidence, built on Japan’s imperial power, to aesthetically acknowledge and embrace other Asian cultures.

It is not unrelated as well to Japanese imperial confidence that *nanga* (southern painting), which had originated from Chinese *bunjinga* (literati painting), came to be reappraised from the late 1910s in Japan. Chiba Kei (2003) argued convincingly that a change in the evaluation of *nanga* reflects a transition in Japanese political interest from nationalism to imperialism. During the 1880s and 1890s, *nanga* had been completely devalued and rejected by Okakura Kakuzō and Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) in the course of constructing the tradition of *nihonga* (Japanese painting) around the ideological axis of nationalism. Contradictory to his arguments in *The Ideals of the East* about a decade later, Okakura had criticized *nanga* as a “Sinophile” and excluded it from the two most important projects that he participated in to institutionalize the “national art” of Japan: the establishment of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the publication of the art journal *Kokka*. *Nanga* was neither included in the curriculum of the *nihonga* department of the school when it opened in 1889 nor covered in *Kokka* when

<sup>14</sup>Masaki Naohiko participated in many art exhibitions, introducing Chinese art to Japan and Japanese art to China, sponsored by Taishi Bunka Jigyō. He was also appointed as a standing member of a judging committee for the Chōsen Bijutsu Tenmaki (Chosŏn Art Exhibition), which was a representative product of *bunka seiji*. Tanabe Takatsugu served as a judge for the craft and sculpture section of the Chōsen Bijutsu Tenmaki, which was newly established in 1932. Kobayashi Taichirō worked as a researcher at Tōhō Bunka Gakuin (Academy of Oriental Culture), which was established as part of Taishi Bunka Jigyō to function as a significant center of knowledge on China and East Asia.

it was first issued in the same year.<sup>15</sup> While *nanga* was rejected during the 1880s and 1890s owing to its Chinese origin, it was revived and reappraised as a key element of *tōyō bijutsu* (Oriental art) during the 1910s and 1920s.

The resurgent popularity of *nanga* not only recuperated the tradition of *nanga* within Japanese art history but also aroused interest in contemporary Chinese *bunjinga*. Mitsukoshi and Takashimaya regularly held exhibitions of contemporary Chinese *bunjinga* painters including Wu Changshou (1844–1927), Wang Yiting (1866–1938), and Qi Baishi (1864–1957), whose works were highly regarded and enjoyed great commercial success in 1920s and 1930s Japan (Matsumura 2005; Wong 2006, 95). Other department stores did not overlook the marketability of contemporary Chinese *bunjinga* either. Ueno Matsuzakaya held “Exhibition of Wang Mengbai’s Paintings” in 1929 and “Exhibition of Shanghai’s New Famous Painters” in 1930. Osaka Hankyu held “Exhibition of Qi Baishi and Wang Yiting’s Recent Works” in 1936 and “Exhibition of Qi Baishi’s Recent Works” in 1938. The exhibitions of contemporary Chinese *bunjinga* painters were handled by both Oriental sections and art sections of the stores. Occasionally *bunjinga* paintings were exhibited together with other Chinese artifacts, as in Mitsukoshi’s “Contemporary Chinese Painting and Ceramic Exhibition” in March 1922 (see figure 2).

Department stores propagated Japan’s authority over Asian arts and cultures not only through special exhibitions like the “Exhibition of Buddhist Art Materials” but also through regular sales in their Oriental sections. The stores endeavored to provide scholarly information about Oriental art in order to help their customers acquire the cultural pride and confidence to collect and appreciate Oriental art and artifacts. The catalogues of the Oriental sections not merely featured the objects for sale with their images and descriptions but often offered art historical knowledge about the objects. Takashimaya’s Chinese section held an “Exhibition of Chinese Ceramic Flower Vases” in July 1924, displaying about one hundred antique ceramics produced during the period of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. All works on display were destined for sale. Takashimaya published a tabloid-size pamphlet for the exhibition with images of selected works and a price list for all of the works (Takashimaya 1924c; see figure 3). On the first page of the pamphlet, a brief history of Chinese ceramics was included, giving a lesson in their origins, techniques, and styles by region and kilns. With the success of this exhibition, which sold out, Takashimaya organized another Chinese ceramic flower vase exhibition, which focused on Ming and Qing ceramics, in November of the same year. A promotional pamphlet was also published (Takashimaya 1924a; see figure 4). The highlights of the exhibition were introduced first and art historical information followed, this time providing a more in-depth lesson on Chinese celadons. Since these pamphlets did not name their authors, it is difficult to determine who actually wrote them. Given the fact that Takashimaya invited China specialists to be consultants for its Chinese section, an expert adviser might have been involved in creating the content. At the “Exhibition of Chinese Antique Ink Stones” held in March 1925, Takashimaya exhibited pieces of old ink stones that Gotō Asatarō had selected among its new collection of ink stones imported from China. The Chinese section also produced a pamphlet that provided various

<sup>15</sup>It was not until the 1910s that *Kokka* started to deal with *nanga*. Tanaka Toyozō’s serialized essay “Nanga Shinron” (A New Theory of *Nanga*) appeared in *Kokka* from March 1912 to October 1913.



Figure 2. “Contemporary Chinese Painting and Ceramic Exhibition” (Mitsukoshi 1922a).

kinds of information, from how to discern a good ink stone to how to use it appropriately (Takashimaya 1925).

Ultimately the exhibits and publications that department stores produced for the marketing of Oriental art and artifacts contributed to the distribution of Japan’s colonial knowledge about *tōyō*. An “Exhibition of Historical Materials of Korean Antique

**支那陶磁花瓶陳列會**

七月十日より  
七月十六日まで

七木金土日月火水  
一〇二二三三四五六  
七日間

**高島屋支那部 (六階)**

支那の陶器

その中、朝鮮、秘色、磁器等は、現代に於いて古く有りません。現に我らに古く有りません。

(一) 青磁 (二) 白磁 (三) 秘色 (四) 磁器 (五) 磁器 (六) 磁器

支那の陶器は、その歴史が古く、その文化が豊かである。その中でも、朝鮮の陶器は、その美しさと堅固さで知られている。この展示では、朝鮮の陶器の歴史と文化を紹介する。また、秘色の磁器や、磁器の技術についても詳しく説明する。

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製年 瓶花 五 (三)



製年 化 瓶花 室 定 仿 (二)



瓶花 砂 同 (20)

Figure 3. Takashimaya pamphlet for the “Chinese Ceramic Flower Vase Exhibition” held in July 1924 (Takashimaya 1924c).

Ceramics” was held in Tokyo Shirokiya in July 1934 and then in Osaka Takashimaya in October of the same year. This exhibition introduced the results of Asakawa Noritaka’s twenty years of research on Korean ceramics. Asakawa Noritaka is well known as a pioneer in the study of Korean ceramics along with his brother Takumi (1891–1931), and he is also famous for introducing Chosŏn ceramics to Yanagi Muneyoshi. At the exhibition, ten thousand ceramic sherds collected by Asakawa from four hundred old kiln sites throughout the Korean peninsula were displayed chronologically, geographically, according to shape, and according to technique. On the wall, information panels were installed to help the audience to understand the content of the exhibition, and the

**十月五日同五百マテ**

**第二回支那陶磁花瓶陳列會**



**種高野家愛花瓶 (左圖)**

今月の陳列品は、高野家から送られたものである。この花瓶は、高野家の名作として知られており、その造りから推して、高野家の名手によるものであると推定される。この花瓶は、高野家の名作として知られており、その造りから推して、高野家の名手によるものであると推定される。



**萬母式物持花瓶 (右圖)**

この花瓶は、萬母式の名作として知られており、その造りから推して、萬母式の名手によるものであると推定される。この花瓶は、萬母式の名作として知られており、その造りから推して、萬母式の名手によるものであると推定される。

**高野家の事**

高野家は、支那の陶磁器の名産地である。その造りから推して、高野家の名手によるものであると推定される。高野家は、支那の陶磁器の名産地である。その造りから推して、高野家の名手によるものであると推定される。

**青磁の事**

青磁は、支那の陶磁器の名産地である。その造りから推して、青磁の名手によるものであると推定される。青磁は、支那の陶磁器の名産地である。その造りから推して、青磁の名手によるものであると推定される。

**本邦に於ける青磁の名稱と種類**

本邦に於ける青磁の名稱と種類は、支那の青磁の造りから推して、本邦の名手によるものであると推定される。本邦に於ける青磁の名稱と種類は、支那の青磁の造りから推して、本邦の名手によるものであると推定される。

**粘青磁**

粘青磁は、支那の陶磁器の名産地である。その造りから推して、粘青磁の名手によるものであると推定される。粘青磁は、支那の陶磁器の名産地である。その造りから推して、粘青磁の名手によるものであると推定される。

**大朝青磁物持花瓶 (右圖)**

この花瓶は、大朝青磁の名作として知られており、その造りから推して、大朝青磁の名手によるものであると推定される。この花瓶は、大朝青磁の名作として知られており、その造りから推して、大朝青磁の名手によるものであると推定される。

**高島屋支那部 (六階)**

**支那陶磁花瓶陳列會 第二回**

Figure 4. Takashimaya pamphlet for “The Second Chinese Ceramic Flower Vase Exhibition” held in November 1924 (Takashimaya 1924a).

illustrated panels among them showing the production process and the structure of Korean kilns were reproduced in the exhibition catalogue (Shirokiya 1934). During the period of the exhibition in Shirokiya, Asakawa gave public lectures over the course of three days on “periodic changes in Korean ceramics,” “ceramics made in Yi dynasty’s official kilns,” and “Korean tea bowls in our country” respectively.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>The manuscripts of Asakawa’s Shirokiya lectures were published in *Zaidanhōjin Keimeikai Kōenshū* 55 (The 55th Lecture of Keimeikai Corporation) by Keimeikai (1934). Keimeikai was the first Japanese academic foundation, established in August 1918. Keimeikai also sponsored this Exhibition of Historical Materials of Korean Antique Ceramics. The other sponsor of the

Regarding this exhibition, there is an interesting photo published in the Takashimaya catalogue (see figures 5 and 6).<sup>17</sup> The photo depicts Yi Eun (1897–1970), King of Korea and his wife Bangja (Masako Nashimoto, 1901–89), who were viewing the Korean ceramics on display while listening to Asakawa's explanations.<sup>18</sup> Certainly this picture was very useful in advertising the exhibition as authoritative enough that the king of Korea came to see it in person. More importantly, the photo clearly demonstrates who is the subject of this art historical research and who is the object of this educative exhibition. Here the king of Korea was being taught about the artistic objects of "his" country, which were collected, studied, and exhibited by the Japanese. The organizer of this exhibition was the Korean Ceramic Research Group (Chōsen Tōki Kenkyūkai), which was formed in 1929 to support Asakawa Noritaka's research.<sup>19</sup> On the first page of the exhibition catalogue, the prospectus of the research group was reprinted. Not surprisingly, the main point of the prospectus was to convey that only Japanese could conduct scientific research on the sites of old and new kilns on the Korean peninsula and save the tradition of Korean ceramics from the threat of extinction. The content of the exhibition was seemingly academic and educational. However, it is undeniable that the exhibition contributed to the production of Japan's intellectual ascendancy over Korea and the justification of Japan's colonization of Korea. Japan's identity as the "civilized" nation, which was the basis for its right to represent, protect, and even rule other Asian nations, could not have existed prior to its domination of them, but rather was being constructed through the very process of investigating, collecting, and consuming Asian arts and cultures. Department stores' exhibits and sales of Asian art and artifacts played a significant role in the process.

Japanese access to Asian artworks was facilitated by Japan's imperial power in East Asia. Not only local art dealers but also Japanese consulate offices or colonial governments sometimes engaged in the supply of Oriental art and artifacts to be sold in department stores. In a pamphlet published for an exhibition of famous products from Fuzhou in July 1924, Takashimaya (1924b) stressed the rarity of its Chinese goods by saying, "It is very difficult even for Chinese high officials to get colored lacquerware made in Fuzhou,

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exhibition was Chūō Chōsen Kyōkai, which consisted of Japanese high officials who had worked for the Government General of Korea.

<sup>17</sup>Takashimaya published a catalogue that included the photos taken at the same exhibition held in Shirokiya three months earlier (Takashimaya 1934).

<sup>18</sup>Yi Eun was born as the seventh son of Gojong (the twenty-sixth king of the Chosŏn dynasty and the first emperor of the Korean Empire, 1852–1919) and the younger brother of Sunjong (the second and final emperor of Korea, 1874–1926). Yi Eun was a symbolic figure whom Japan strategically used to propagate its role as guardian of Korea. In 1907, the year when he became the crown prince of Korea, he was taken to Japan and educated at Gakushūin Peers School and the Imperial Japanese Army Academy. With the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan degraded the Korean sovereign's title and demoted the Imperial Family of the Korean Empire to become the Yi Royal Family under the Japanese Emperor. Upon the death of Sunjong in 1926, Yi Eun became "Yi King" 李王.

<sup>19</sup>The Korean Ceramic Research Group evolved from a project titled "Korean Ceramic Research," which was initiated in 1928 with the support of 3,000 yen from Keimeikai. With this fund, Asakawa Noritaka, Asakawa Takumi, Kurahashi Tōjiro (1884–1946), and Yanagi Muneyoshi conducted research on Korean ceramics from the late Koryŏ to the Chosŏn periods.



**Figure 5.** Catalogue of “Exhibition of Historical Materials of Korean Antique Ceramics” held in the Osaka Takashimaya in October 1934 (Takashimaya 1934).

but it is possible for us to procure them by a favor of the Japanese Consulate General in Fuzhou.” As for the works from Korea, the involvement of the colonial government appeared in a more formal and extensive way. A good example was the “Korean Old



會覽展京東會本下殿兩妃同王李  
取聽御明說の氏兩川淺 .橋倉 .臨台御

**Figure 6.** Yi Eun and his wife at “Exhibition of Historical Materials of Korean Antique Ceramics” held in the Tokyo Shirokiya in July 1934 (Takashimaya 1934).

Art and Craft Exhibition,” which was held in Tokyo and Osaka from 1934 to 1941. Among a total of seven exhibitions, the fourth to seventh took place under the auspices of the Government-General of Korea (GGK, Chōsen Sōtokufu) (see figure 7). For this series of Korean art and crafts exhibitions, a Korean art dealer, Lee Heeseop, supplied works he gathered from every corner of Korea, and Japanese department stores provided exhibition venues and potential consumers.<sup>20</sup> In 1932 in Seoul, Lee Heeseop met Tanabe Takatsugu, who came to serve as a judge of the Chōsen Bijutsu Tenraki, and expressed his desire to hold a Korean craft exhibition in Japan (Park 2015, 452). At the recommendation of Tanabe, Masaki Naohiko, then the director of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, viewed first in Seoul the works Lee collected and helped bring them to exhibit in Japan (*Asahi Shinbun* 1934). The Korean Craft Research Group (Chōsen Kōgei Kenkyūkai) was founded with renowned Japanese artists to serve as the organizer of the exhibitions.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the GGK officially supported the exhibitions from the fourth on.

<sup>20</sup>Except for the first exhibition held at Nihon Bijutsu Kyōkai Chinretsukan in Ueno, all of the following exhibitions were held at department stores: the second one at Matsuzakaya and the third to the seventh at Takashimaya. Lee Heeseop ran an art shop called Mummyōngsanghoe in colonial Seoul. To expand his business and access customers in Japan, he cooperated with Japanese department stores. Ultimately he opened his own shops in Tokyo and Osaka in the 1940s.





**Figure 7.** Advertisement for “Korean Old Art and Craft Exhibition” (*Asahi Shinbun* 1939).

For every exhibition, one to three thousand pieces of Korean art and artifacts were brought to Japan. The exhibitions showed a comprehensive selection of Korean art in terms of genre, from ceramics, metalwork, lacquerware, Buddhist sculpture, and stone-work to furniture, and in terms of period from Nakrang relics to Chosŏn products. The quality of the works was also high. Not a few works displayed and sold at the exhibitions had been introduced in the *Album of Korean Antiquities* (Chōsen Koseki Zūfu), published by the GGK. The GGK hired Japanese scholars including Sekino Tadashi to investigate and document ancient sites and relics across the Korean peninsula and published the results as the fifteen-volume series entitled *Album of Korean Antiquities* between 1915 and 1935 (Pai 2000, 32). The artworks included in the album came to be established as the representative works of Korean art through this institutional validation. It would

<sup>21</sup>The Korean Craft Research Group was formed under the Kokumin Bijutsu Kyōkai (People’s Art Society). Masaki Naohiko served as an advisor to the group and Tanabe Takatsugu, Ishi Hakutei (a painter and a judge of the Chosŏn Art Exhibition), Okada Saburōsuke (a painter), and others served as its members. Masaki wrote an introduction for every catalogue of the seven exhibitions. Tanabe Takatsugu was intimately involved in the exhibitions, from the selection and display of the works to the production of the catalogues. A facsimile edition of *Chōsen Kōgei Tenrankai Zuroku 1–7* was published in 1992 (Tanabe 1992).

have been virtually impossible for the “Korean Old Art and Craft Exhibition” to exhibit and export such a large volume of superb Korean arts and crafts over a period of many years without the support of the GGK.<sup>22</sup>

Japanese department stores developed their Oriental sections against the background of Japan’s imperial expansion. They not merely appropriated the discourse of *tōyō*, which was politically and academically constituted by state officials and intellectuals, but also materialized this ideological construct through their exhibitions and sales of Oriental objects. The Oriental sections of the stores had a particularly strong influence in shaping the general public’s attitudes toward and images of *tōyō*. As is well illustrated in Tony Bennett’s (1988) article on the exhibitionary complex, department stores were one of the modern institutions that through the display of objects articulated power relations and inculcated them in the general public. Shopping for Oriental art and artifacts at department stores offered Japanese people an opportunity to envision the imagined space of *tōyō* as well as Japan’s privileged position in *tōyō*. The aesthetic and intellectual consumption of Oriental art and artifacts was promoted as a way to demonstrate Japan’s superiority over the other parts of Asia, ultimately consolidating Japan’s cultural hegemony in Asia.

### THE ORIENTAL SECTION, THE LEGACY OF *KARAMONOYA*

In addition to Japan’s growing confidence as the guardian of Asian arts and cultures, an increase in the number of consumers who had an interest in and the ability to purchase Asian art and artifacts was a prerequisite for the establishment of Oriental sections in department stores. The Oriental sections came into being as part of the department stores’ expansion of their business in the 1920s. The 1920s was an era colored by the explosive growth of urban mass consumer culture in Japan. During World War I, Japanese industry expanded rapidly as Japan served as a wartime supplier to the Allies and increased its trade with other Asian nations by supplying goods that could no longer be imported from Europe. This unprecedented industrial expansion reordered the social and economic structure of Japan. Large numbers of rural dwellers migrated to urban areas and constituted the white-collar workers referred to as the “new middle class,” distinguishing them from the “old middle class” of shopkeepers and small landowners.<sup>23</sup> By the 1920s, about 10 percent of the nation’s households belonged to the new middle class, and this percentage was doubled in urban areas.<sup>24</sup> The primary customer of department stores was from this rising urban middle class that consisted of civil servants, office workers, schoolteachers, and other professional workers (Oh 2014, 353–54). Due to a combination of increased prosperity and greater purchasing power,

<sup>22</sup>Most of works displayed at the exhibitions remained in Japan, and some of them finally entered the collections of the Tokyo National Museum and the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, via private collectors.

<sup>23</sup>In 1920, 18.1 percent of the Japanese populace lived in cities. This figure rose to 21.7 percent five years later and to 24.1 percent by 1930 (Minami and Shakai Shinri Kenkyūjo 1987, 19).

<sup>24</sup>On the social, economic, and cultural formation of the new middle class, see Minami (1965, 183–95); Sonoda (1999); and Sand (2013).

consumption and leisure in everyday life expanded, particularly in the big cities. Mitsukoshi opened its Oriental section with other new sections dealing with medicine, musical instruments, sports equipment, and books when it enlarged its premises in 1921. Takashimaya inaugurated its Chinese section with the completion of the new building for its main store in Osaka in 1922.

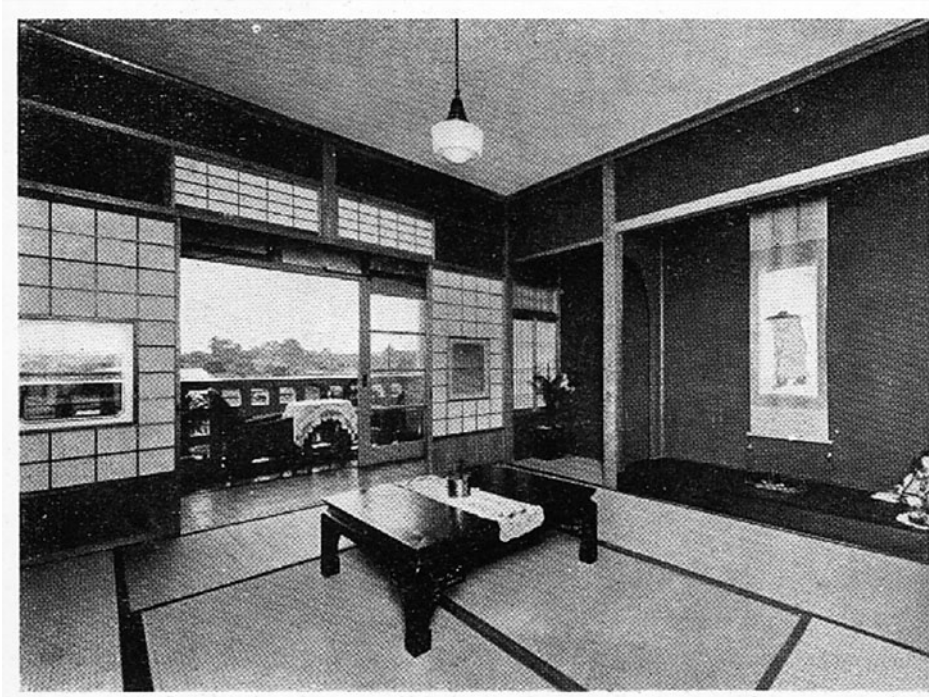
As Louise Young (1999) argued, department stores played a crucial role in creating the norms and behaviors of the new middle class in Japan. Department stores attracted customers from the new middle class by providing them with the latest goods required to enjoy a modern, cultured lifestyle. In addition, the stores offered their customers lessons on the novel forms of social relationships and practices related to these modern goods, often Western imports, through in-house magazines and various cultural events. By associating themselves with the cultured life, white-collar workers placed themselves in a different social category from factory laborers, although their salaries might not be higher than the wages of a skilled manual laborer (Gordon 2002, 115). After education and occupation, taste played a significant role in defining membership in the new middle class and the appeal of belonging to it (Oh 2014, 354–55). In particular, the taste revealed in the interior décor of a household not only served to mark the social status of the household but also came to determine it within the fluid social conditions of modern Japan. Accordingly, goods associated with the decoration of domestic interiors were one of the core businesses of department stores.<sup>25</sup>

In general, the ideal lifestyle that the new middle class sought was a Westernized one. Interestingly enough, however, the new middle class shared the common dream to reside in a house that was furnished with *tokonoma* 床の間 (decorative alcoves) (Mori 2007, 296). Historically *tokonoma* had been a symbol and prerogative of the elite houses to which commoners had not been entitled.<sup>26</sup> As the old restrictions on the use of *tokonoma* were lifted with the Meiji Restoration (1868), *tokonoma* proliferated so extensively in the houses of the new middle class that regardless of architectural style, either Japanese-style or combined Japanese-Western style, most houses had *tokonoma* in the study or reception room. In an architectural pattern book published in 1913, ninety-nine out of one hundred house plans had *tokonoma*.<sup>27</sup> The only one without *tokonoma* was for a one-room house. *Tokonoma* were prevalent even in modern, Western-style apartments that Dōjunkai built after the Great Kantō Earthquake (1923) to provide collective housing in the Tokyo area (see figure 8). The liberation of *tokonoma* from feudal restrictions abolished the exclusive right of elite households not just to have *tokonoma* per se but also to partake in cultural practices around that space. *Tokonoma* decorating became *de rigueur* among new middle-class households.

<sup>25</sup>Jordan Sand (2003, 95–131) and Jinno Yuki (1999) have produced substantial research on the acquisition and display of new goods for home décor by the new middle class and department stores' integral role as a major provider of those goods and the knowledge needed to purchase and appreciate them.

<sup>26</sup>On the history of *tokonoma* and its social meaning, see Ōta (1987). During the Edo period, among the rich commoners there were those who purchased the right to construct *tokonoma* in their houses from the clans in whose area they lived. However, in principle, commoners were not allowed to grace their houses with *tokonoma*. On the Tokugawa shogunate's sumptuary rules for architecture, see Itoh (1972, 125–26).

<sup>27</sup>Kaneko Seikichi's *Nihon Jūtaku Kenchiku Zuan Hyakushu* (1913), as cited in Sand (2003, 123).



**Figure 8.** Interior of a room for the householder, Edogawa apartment (*Architectural Japan* 1936).

The expansion of *tokonoma* into the homes of the new middle class led to a significant increase in demand for artistic objects that could be used for this interior space. Even before opening their Oriental sections, department stores had already supplied works of art needed for *tokonoma* decorating through “*bijutsubu*” (art sections), which displayed and sold works of contemporary Japanese artists (Jinno 2015, 89–114; Oh 2014). In 1907, Mitsukoshi was the first to establish an art section, and other department stores followed suit. To help customers imagine how their houses would look when they were decorated with the works of art on sale, department stores occasionally built a Japanese-style model room furnished with *tatami* (woven straw mats), *tokonoma*, and *chigaidana* (staggered shelves) for the display of art (see figure 9). To the new middle-class customers who had been alienated from *tokonoma* decorating, the formalities of this elite cultural practice were as foreign as the recently imported Western customs and goods. The stores provided their customers with lessons on the proper placement of artistic objects and the meanings of this cultural practice through their model rooms and in-house magazines. Takashimaya serialized “The Way of Reception Room Decoration” (Ozashiki no Kazarikata) in the 1921 issues of *Takashimaya Bijutsu Gahō* (Takashimaya Art Pictorial Magazine), giving detailed instructions on which theme of painting should be displayed in *tokonoma* according to the season, and how flower vases and other decorative objects should be arranged in *tokonoma* and *chigaidana* (*Takashimaya Bijutsu Gahō* 1921a, 1921b).

The emergence of the Oriental sections in Japanese department stores was related to their new middle-class customers’ desire to adopt the feudal elite class’s *zashiki*



**Figure 9.** *Tokonoma* decoration for spring (Mitsukoshi 1916).

(reception room) decorated with *karamono* in their homes. The term “*karamono*” literally means “things of Tang China.” However, it was used more broadly to refer to objects that were imported into Japan from Korea and South and Southeast Asia as well as China during the medieval and early modern periods. Japanese taste for Asian objects had existed well before the rise of Japan’s imperialistic ambitions. The Japanese royal court had already sent missions called *kentōshi* to Tang China to learn from Chinese culture and institutions during the seventh to ninth centuries. The interest in *karamono* increased considerably in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) when Japan’s trade with the Asian continent developed and Chinese Zen Buddhist monks entered Japan. The taste for *karamono*, called “*karamono suki*,” exploded during the Muromachi period (1333–1573) with the Ashikaga shoguns’ adoration for imported objects. *Karamono* served as a cultural signifier of the Ashikaga shogunate’s power and authority as well as a political apparatus with which it both competed with and cultivated relationships with the imperial court and court nobles.<sup>28</sup> The formal reception room in the medieval elite’s residence was decorated with *karamono* such as Song and Yuan dynasty paintings, flower vases, candleholders, incense burners and containers, trays, tables, and writing implements. Distinctive spaces in Japanese architecture such as *tokonoma*, *chigaidana*, and *tsukeshoin* (built-in desks) were first designed to display these imported objects. In other words, the desire to show off *karamono* created new forms of architecture to accommodate these new modes in social behavior and cultural life.<sup>29</sup> It is safe to say

<sup>28</sup>On the history and cultural meaning of *karamono* in Japan, see Kawazoe (2014).

<sup>29</sup>On the relationship between the architectural design of the reception room and *karamono* display, see Ōta (1987, 85–121) and Kawai (2002).

that in Japan the cultural practice of collecting and displaying artistic objects evolved from the taste for *karamono*. On the other hand, the establishment of the *chanoyu* (tea ceremony) as an essential part of elite social intercourse in the late fifteenth century contributed to the prevalence of *karamono suki* as well. *Karamono* were often collected with the intention of using or displaying them during tea gatherings. Despite the Tokugawa shogunate's seclusion policy, the phenomenon of *karamono suki* continued with a supply of *karamono* imported via Nagasaki during the Edo period (1603–1868). The Tokugawa shogunate's promotion of Confucianism as a means of keeping social order and norms stimulated interest in Chinese literati culture. Scholarly avocations including studying poetry, calligraphy, and painting; collecting antiquities and writing implements; and enjoying tea (*sencha*) became essential accomplishments for the samurai class (Graham 2003).

Since knowledge of the Chinese language and classics and the wealth to afford luxury imports were available only to a privileged few such as imperial aristocrats, Buddhist priests, and high-ranking samurai, ownership of *karamono* played a significant part in differentiating elites from commoners and creating social distinctions. As a consequence, “*kara*” of *karamono* indicated not only the “foreign-ness” of its producers but also the “elite-ness” of its consumers. The continued strong desire for *karamono* in Japanese history grew out of an admiration for good taste and the education of the native elite class as well as out of curiosity about advanced material and cultural products from other parts of Asia. In particular, a rising class that newly acquired political or economic power strove to gain respect and prestige within Japanese society by involving itself in cultural practices associated with *karamono*. With the rise of the Kamakura shogunate, the samurai class deployed its taste for *karamono* to legitimize and preserve its social position vis-à-vis the imperial court and the old aristocracy. By the sixteenth century, new clientele for *karamono* emerged among wealthy urban merchants (*machishū*) who aspired to attain social parity with the elite members of society by participating in the practice of *chanoyu* and collecting *karamono*. Eventually, the growing demand for *karamono* gave birth to *karamonoya* (traders or shops specializing in *karamono*) in urban centers in the Edo period.<sup>30</sup> The proliferation of *karamonoya* made it possible for an increasing number of aspiring *chōnin* (townsmen) to take up the cultural practices that had previously been confined to the elite class.

*Karamonoya* supplied a wide variety of imports including teaware, incense burners, bronze vessels, flower vases, lacquerware, ceramics, Chinese paintings, writing implements, gold and silver objects, silks, brocades, *sarasa* (South Asian woodblock-printed cotton textiles), rugs, and furnishings. Interestingly enough, the items sold at *karamonoya* overlapped considerably with those sold in the Oriental sections of department stores in the 1920s and 1930s. The items that Mitsukoshi sold in its Oriental section included the following:

Items from China: ink stones; ink sticks; brushes; gems for seals; ceramics (celadon, *namakote*-style wares, blue and white porcelains) used as flower vases, incense burners, water jars, and stools; rosewood products; silks and satins; Tianjin carpets; bamboo works; fans; and rugs colored in red, white, and yellow

<sup>30</sup>On the origin and development of *karamonoya*, see Oka (2006) and Yamamoto (2010, 1–61).

Items from Korea: products of the Yi Royal Household Art Workshop (*Riōke Bijutsu Seisakujo*) including ceramics, mother-of-pearl works, and bronze vessels; antiques

Items from Taiwan: rush mats, Carludovica tobacco pouches, insoles of *geta* sandals, bamboo mats, rattan products, works made of camphor wood, and camphor

Items from India: *sarasa*, wooden toys, glassworks, terracotta pottery

Items from Java: *sarasa*. (*Mitsukoshi* 1921b)

Although Takashimaya focused on Chinese objects, the items it was dealing with were not much different from those of Mitsukoshi. Takashimaya had its local office on Kunzan Street in Shanghai and imported ink stones, ink sticks, brushes, paper, and *hōjō* (copy-books printed with reproductions of the works of old masters of calligraphy). It also sold ceramics, rosewood products, lacquerware, Chinese braziers, and textiles (Takashimaya 1960, 322). Most of the items sold in department store Oriental sections were objects used primarily for reception room decorating (*zashiki kazari*), which centered around the display of artistic objects in *tokonoma*.

With the establishment of their Oriental sections, department stores supplemented the repertoire of the art section, which was limited to the sale of Japanese arts and crafts, with art and artifacts imported from China, Korea, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. Given the fact that *tokonoma* were initially installed in reception rooms to display *karamono*, the Oriental sections not only added variety to the artistic objects displayed in the new middle class's *tokonoma*, but also made their *tokonoma* decoration more "authentic." The new Japanese middle class decorated their *tokonoma* on the model of the feudal elite's, just as the European bourgeoisie emulated aristocratic taste for the interior decorating of their houses. Most interior decorating advice manuals, including the above-mentioned Takashimaya's "The Way of Reception Room Decoration," which the new middle class referred to, were modeled on *Kundaikan Sōchōki* written in the Muromachi period (see, e.g., Inoue 1909; Kondō 1910; Sugimoto 1910, 1911, 1912a, 1912b, 1912c). *Kundaikan Sōchōki* was compiled by art stewards Nōami (1397–1471) and Sōami (1465–1523), who were caring for the art collection assembled by successive generations of Ashikaga shoguns. This book not only recorded the appraisal of paintings and crafts in its collection but also codified with illustrations the appropriate selection and placement of those artistic objects in a reception room for a variety of seasons and particular occasions. *Kundaikan Sōchōki* had served as a means of disseminating the rules of formal reception room decorating and continued to be the principal reference work even for modern interior decorating manuals. The more conservative and the closer to the feudal elite's *zashiki kazari* an interior decorating style was, the more authentic and the more authoritative the style was considered to be.

Discerning this cultural trend, department stores emphasized the historical authenticity of the Asian art and artifacts that they exhibited and sold. For example, when Takashimaya held an exhibition of antique ceramics imported from the Malay Archipelago and New Guinea in 1941, it was highlighted that the southern ceramics had been admired

enthusiastically by tea masters since the Ashikaga period and were proudly displayed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–98) when he invited daimyos to an exhibit he held at the Osaka castle (Takashimaya 1941). In 1937, Takashimaya held an “Exhibition of *Nanban* Old Pottery” and called pottery of southern islands on display “*nanban yaki*” (Takashimaya 1937). “*Nanban yaki*” is a term that refers to pottery that had been imported from southern China, the South Sea islands, the Philippines, Vietnam, and so on via the *Nanban* trade (Japan’s trade with Spain and Portugal) from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Thus, strictly speaking, the pottery imported into Japan in the twentieth century is not *nanban yaki*, although it came from the same region. However, Takashimaya deliberately called it *nanban yaki* and included a short article titled “About *Nanban Yaki*” in the catalogue of the exhibition, providing information about its kinds and origins. Such emphasis on *nanban yaki* by Takashimaya demonstrates how important the historicity of the objects was in the marketing of department stores’ exhibits and sales of Asian art and artifacts. The ownership of historical *nanban yaki* had apparently been available only to a narrow segment of elite society. The Takashimaya article praised the Japanese aesthetic discernment that had discovered the beauty of *nanban yaki* as much as it praised the beauty of *nanban yaki* itself.

It was Japan’s imperial dominance in Asia that enabled the new middle class to participate in the practice of collecting *karamono*, which had previously been limited to the social elite who had the economic means to afford these objects and the cultural capacity to appreciate them. The disparity of political and economic power between the metropole and colonies or occupied territories allowed an unprecedented volume of artistic objects from other parts of Asia to flood Japan. Greater quantities of antiquities that had belonged to the Chinese royal court and aristocratic families were dispersed in the social disarray following the Boxer Rebellion in 1901 and the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912. Many burial objects surfaced while the Chinese Eastern Railway and South Manchurian Railway were being constructed across northeastern China by Russia and Japan. In the Korean peninsula, since the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) legal and illegal excavations and robberies abounded in order to unearth ancient artistic objects (Chŏng 2009; Yi 1996). As the pressure of the imperial powers deconstructed the old, long-standing order within East Asia, artworks that had previously been out of circulation poured into the market in the midst of this turmoil. Under the deteriorating political and economic conditions of China and Korea, a large number of Japanese art dealers entered those countries and swept through their art markets, where good-quality objects could be acquired for reasonable prices.<sup>31</sup> The surge in imported art and artifacts from Asia shaped the new Japanese art market, targeting new middle-class households whose desire for cultural consumption was increasing.

Department stores decided to open Oriental sections with the assurance that Asian art and artifacts would become a popular commodity desired not just by a small number of art collectors and experts but even by those who had never before bought from antique shops or art dealers. At the above-mentioned “Exhibition of Chinese Ceramic Flower Vases” held at Takashimaya in 1924, the price range of the antique ceramics on display

<sup>31</sup>On Japanese art dealers’ trade in Chinese and Korean art and artifacts, see Kuchiki (2011, 165–89); Hong (2013); and Kim (2014).



was wide, from 3 yen to 500 yen. Yet more than half of the pieces were priced under 50 yen. Given that the starting salary for a bank employee at that time was between 50 yen and 70 yen per month, the prices of Chinese antique ceramics sold at Takashimaya still represented substantial sums of money for new middle-class households.<sup>32</sup> However, the price was not so high that they could not even consider a purchase. After 1868, the great art collections amassed over the centuries by daimyo, aristocrats, and temples were dispersed with the social reordering of the Restoration. New Meiji elite such as entrepreneurial capitalists and high-ranking government officials competitively collected *meibutsu* (famous objects) that had once belonged to renowned feudal elites (Guth 1993). Considering the fact that tens of thousands of yen were bid at auctions for *meibutsu*, the majority of which were *karamono*, it is understandable why department stores' offerings of Oriental art and artifacts were so popular that they often sold out in an instant.

Capitalizing on the asymmetrical power relations between Japan and its colonies or semi-colonies, department stores provided the new middle class with both affordable Asian art and artifacts and the cultural confidence to appreciate them. As discussed earlier, department stores popularized knowledge of Asian arts through their exhibitions and catalogues produced in cooperation with intellectuals of the time. This allowed the new middle class access to knowledge and aesthetic discrimination that had been monopolized by the elite. Through the collection of Asian art and artifacts, a modern version of *karamono*, the new middle class assumed the social prestige associated with the historical Japanese elite. Japan's colonial opportunities in Asia made it possible for its new middle-class households to amass cultural capital, which determined their social position.

## CONCLUSION

The identity of modern Japan was constructed in the constant oscillation between “*datsu-a*” (leaving Asia) and “*kō-a*” (raising Asia). The dilemma that Japan faced in needing to separate itself from Asia to hold hegemony over its Asian neighbors but at the same time needing to return to Asia to counter the encroachment of the West formulated the imagined geo-cultural entity “*tōyō*,” which was both “Japan's Orient” and “Japan's origin.” This ambivalence of *tōyō* allowed *tōyō shumi* to work as a kind of Orientalism and simultaneously to inherit the long-standing reverence for *karamono*.

It might sound contradictory to interpret *tōyō shumi* as both Japan's Orientalism and the legacy of the penchant for *karamono* because the former was premised on Japan's sense of superiority over its Asian neighbors but the latter was based on Japan's sense of respect for them. Interestingly enough, however, imperial Japan's desire for cultural power, which was articulated by internalizing the West's Orientalist attitude toward Asia, and the new Japanese middle class's desire for cultural capital, which was manifested by emulating the historical elite's taste for *karamono*, simultaneously provided the main impetus for department stores' sales of Asian art and artifacts. These two desires were thus less contradictory than complicit. The imperial state sought to acquire cultural power, which was required to justify Japan's colonization of Asia, by the aesthetic and intellectual consumption of other Asian art and culture. The new

<sup>32</sup>For the average salary of white-collar workers at that time, see Shūkan Asahi (1988).

middle class was a key agent in this consumption, and its households' interiors became a major venue to display the cultural power of imperial Japan. On the other hand, the new middle class tried to accumulate cultural capital, which was necessary to secure its social status, by participating in the collecting and display of *karamono*. Imperial Japan's political and economic predominance over the rest of Asia offered new middle-class households the means to access this elite cultural practice and enabled them to acquire their desired position within the domestic social and cultural hierarchies. In 1920s and 1930s Japan, the construction of the imperial state and the formation of the new middle class were interwoven through *tōyō shumi*.

*Tōyō shumi* was neither a simple copy of Western Orientalism nor a seamless continuation of *karamono suki*, but rather a hybrid of the two. *Tōyō shumi* could not operate the same way as did the Orientalism based on the dichotomy between the West as "Self" and the Orient as "Other," since within the framework of *tōyō shumi* there existed the West as "the Other" of Japan as well as Japan as "Self" and the rest of Asia as "Other." In addition, the social meaning of Asian art and artifacts, which had been historically called *karamono*, remained elite objects rather than exotica in Japanese people's imagination. On the other hand, the practice of collecting and appreciating *karamono* was refracted by the new regional order in Asia that was reconfigured by Japan's imperial dominance. *Karamono* shifted from objects of admiration to objects of protection, which should be under Japan's guardianship. The new middle class's taste for Asian art and artifacts derived more directly from an esteem for the historical Japanese elite's aesthetic discrimination that appreciated *karamono* than from veneration for the cultural sophistication of *kara* that produced *karamono*.

### Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2015S1A5B5A01015340).

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