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of Anthoropology and Ethnography <Kunstkamera>  
of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St.  
Petersburg

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# The Early Japanese Collections in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg

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The Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE) in St. Petersburg is the inheritor of the Kunstkamera, founded by Emperor Peter the Great (1672–1725) in 1714 as the first Russian state academic museum. The MAE possesses a considerable Japanese collection, numbering about 10,000 items. The most interesting part of the collection dates back to the eighteenth century. These objects are of course the first Japanese things to have been seen in Russia, and they reflect the emergence and early history of the relationship between the two nations.

Rather surprisingly, the history of the early collections has not been as thoroughly explored as it might have been. The reconstruction of this history has been a problem and a challenge for several generations of the museum's professional research staff. The origins of many old items and even large collections have not been (in some cases, perhaps, cannot be) clearly fixed in our museum documents. This situation is attributable to many reasons.

First, the eighteenth-century Kunstkamera was reorganized in the early nineteenth century and divided into several independent academic museums and institutions, among which were the Ethnographic and the Asiatic museums. The original collections were shuffled between them more than once. As a result, many items were lost completely, or their documents were lost, or pieces were occasionally separated from their documents and now are kept in different institutions. One consequence of this is that the Kunstkamera Japanese department includes a vast collection of so-called "no number pieces." At present we lack any information on their origin.

Second, in 1747, the Kunstkamera suffered a great fire which destroyed much of the early collections, and many of the Japanese holdings were devastated.

Third, over the three hundred years of the Kunstkamera's history, the standards for the museum documentation were periodically changed. A more or less regular system of registration of items was not put in place until the mid-nineteenth century. Although special registry books were kept, the origin of the early items was not specified there. Sometimes all available information was reduced to the statement that the item dates back to the original Kunstkamera collections or to the collections passed in 1819 from the Asiatic Museum.<sup>1</sup> We can find some interesting information on the eighteenth-century collections entry history in the records of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences,<sup>2</sup> but this information is not comprehensive and does not cover

the whole spectrum of the early collections. The same must be said about the first *Kunstkamera* documents. Most of the early academic documents are hand-written in French, German, or Latin, and the handwriting sometimes is practically illegible. The early Japanese collections were passed to the museum via a chain of high-ranking academic officials. Many museum documents giving information about items in the collections do not record the name of the actual donor, but instead furnish the name of the final (or the most high-ranking) official who made the presentation of a collection at the formal ceremonial meeting known as the Conference.

Fourth, many early entries into the collections were mixed, comprising not only Japanese items, but also things of Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Aleut, or Siberian origin that had presented difficulties when museum staff tried to make correct ethnic identifications. For instance, many Japanese items were incorrectly recorded as Chinese or Siberian, and sometimes vice versa.

The reconstruction of the history of the *Kunstkamera* Japanese collections was one of the research interests of many MAE researchers. Regina A. Ksenofontova, Yundviga V. Ionova, Alexander M. Reshetov, Tamara K. Shafranovskaya, and Boris P. Polevoy all deserve mention here. Their mutual efforts made it possible for us now to have a (roughly) accurate understanding of the process of formation of the Japanese department; thanks to their work, the main donors were identified and most of the “historic” Japanese items were revealed. Today we know much more about the *Kunstkamera* early collection than we did fifty years ago.

The collection was started by Emperor Peter the Great himself. He had a passion for collecting various rarities and curiosities, and his collection became the basis for the future *Kunstkamera*. And Peter I was the first Russian sovereign to aim at establishing trade relations with Japan, exploring northern routes to the Japanese ports, so far unknown, and promoting study of Japanese language and culture.

The emperor also ordered to collect all Japanese things available in order to understand the state of Japanese crafts, arts, production, Japanese weapons, and items that seemed attractive for trade, if trade relations with Japan could be established. Pieces brought from Japan also struck Peter I as worthy of collection simply because they were very rare in Europe and completely absent in Russia at the time of his enthronement.

It is likely that Peter I’s first acquaintance with items of Japanese origin was made in Holland during his “Great Embassy” to Europe in 1697–1698. At about the same time, the Russian Kazakh pioneers started exploration of Kamchatka and the northern Kuril islands, where the relative proximity of Japan was felt. The existence near Russia’s eastern borders of the mysterious “Apon state”—probably powerful and certainly unpredictable (because of the lack of any definite information about it)—had to be taken into account by Peter and his successors when they considered the world around them.

In 1701, a Kazakh officer named Vladimir Atlasov returned to Moscow from the fortress of Bolshertsky Ostrog, the main base of Russian operations in Kamchatka.

Presented his reports to the Siberian Department, Atlasov mentioned that the Kamchadals had trade with the foreigners (later identified as Japanese) whose vessels brought for exchange various high quality goods that could not have been produced by aborigines: iron, instruments, swords, knives, silk and cotton dress, lacquerware, pottery, etc.<sup>3</sup> Some of the vessels were wrecked by severe storms and their goods were viewed by the Kamchadals as booty, so many Japanese things were spread among the aborigines. Atlasov had collected several Japanese items, in their number a silver coin *gin*, which he attached to his report.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps that *gin* was the first Japanese item confirmed in a documentary source in Russia. Its later fate regrettably is not clear.

Atlasov also met a castaway seaman by the name of Tatekawa Dembei, who had survived among the Kamchadals since his ship wrecked in 1695. According to Dembei's testimony, the Kamchadals ransacked his ship and took many goods, among them two boxes full of Japanese small golden coins (about sixty kilograms of gold in each box). The Kamchadals knew nothing about the true value of these coins (they called them *ichim*) and gave them to their children as toys.<sup>5</sup> Later in the same year as Atlasov met him, Dembei was brought to the Moscow residence of the Russian tsar, where he was received by Peter I.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently Dembei learnt Russian and was offered employment in St. Petersburg as an instructor of the Japanese language.

Peter I was impressed by the reports of Atlasov and Dembei. In 1702, in the name of the sovereign, the Siberian Department ordered the Governor of Yakutsk to send a large and well-armed Kazakh detachment to Kamchatka with the special assignment of exploring the route to Japan. The necessity of gathering of any item of Japanese origin was especially stressed, as well. These orders were repeated in 1710 and 1712.<sup>7</sup>

In 1712, Kazakh officer Ivan P. Kozyrevsky (1680–1734), following the sovereign instruction to “investigate the Apon state” collected from the Kamchadals “22 ingots of red gold from the smuggling Apon ships, all with the writings in their [Japanese] language.” The gold ingots must have been *koban*. In 1713 Kozyrevsky's team was sent to explore the islands of Shumsha and Paramushir (the northern Kurils), and there they had a skirmish with the Ainu, whom they called “the Kurils” or “the shaggy Kurilians” due to their abundant hair). Kozyrevsky reported that he had captured two informants as well as various things of Japanese origin, such as silk dresses, swords, and bowls. All these items were sent to Yakutsk and then to Moscow, “to the treasury of the Great Tsar.”<sup>8</sup> The further fate of these items is unknown.

Peter I founded St. Petersburg in 1703, and in 1714 he ordered that his collections be transferred from Moscow to the new capital and the first Russian public museum be organized. This was the *Kunstkamera*. In 1716, the tsar visited Holland again, and this time he bought a large collection from the famous antiquary Albert Seba. Several Japanese items (lacquerware in particular) were acquired in this collection. In 1722, a sword described as a “Japanese saber with handle and scabbards fitted with gold inlays” was sent to the museum from the so-called Salt Department located in Moscow. The Salt Department controlled the salt trade throughout Russia, and it

seems that the Kamchadals, who did not use money, had exchanged this “saber” for salt.<sup>9</sup> Dr. R. A. Ksenofontova has drawn attention to the fact that this item was identified as Japanese from the date of its reception—it means that the origins of the saber were clear to the Salt Department officers, but no additional documentary evidence is available to us now.

In 1724, L. Blumentrost, the first president of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, presented the museum a Japanese metal mirror that we can presume he purchased in Holland in 1717 when, in the name of Peter I, he was negotiating with Leiden University Professor Frederik Ryusch about the purchase of Ryusch’s famous anatomic collections. Peter I died in 1725, but his order to explore Japanese culture was still carried on.

The next episode in the history of the *Kunstkamera*’s Japanese collections was connected with the tragic shipwreck of the *Wakasho-maru* in 1729 in the bay of Avachinskaya Guba, Kamchatka. The wrecked Japanese vessel was attacked by Kamchadals headed by a Kazakh officer, Andrei Shtinnikov. The cargo was plundered, fifteen Japanese sailors were slain, and only two crewmen—the famous Sōza and Gonza (Gozaemon)—were captured alive. Later, in 1733, a special Senate commission (the “Travel Investigation Board”) that was investigating this case compiled an inventory of the robbed items: 29 coats (called by the Russians the “azyam”), 4 shirts, 11 rolls of crepe, 14 rolls of canvas, 40 swords, 2 axes, a lacquer box with a mirror, 9 metal mirrors, 5 wooden and 3 porcelain cups, 11 pairs of “sticks for eating” (i.e., *hashi*), 2 boxes with razors, 2 lacquer boxes, 2 “boxes with feathers,” 2 ink-pots, 5 sea-shells, 3 paintings, 2 manuscripts, 1 sandal plant, about 50 kg of iron and other items. Most of these things have been lost, but at least several of them must have reached *Kunstkamera*. The museum registry for the year 1741–1742 records the presence of a small Japanese collection the origin of which is not specified.<sup>10</sup> That collection consisted of two metal mirrors and a suit wrapped into oiled paper. It is highly possible that these items belonged to the ship wrecked in 1729.<sup>11</sup> In the present-day collection there are two metal mirrors “from the old collections.”<sup>12</sup> There was no description of the mirrors from Sōza’s and Gonza’s ship, but we can suppose that the mirrors mentioned in the registry for 1741–1742 survived the fire of 1747, and are the mirrors that we currently hold as inventory numbers 677–40 and 677–41.

In 1736, Sōza and Gonza started to teach at the school of Japanese language that was subordinate to the Academy of Sciences.<sup>13</sup> Understanding that the Russian government had a special interest of concerning Japan, they reported that there had been Japanese books on their ship. The Senate immediately ordered the Irkutsk governor to organize a search for the books:

Hereby it is ordered to find as soon as possible the Japanese ship which brought them [the books], and to investigate who of the Russians had taken the books or writings and how many of them; and all the documents in the Japanese language that would be found must

be sent to the Senate at once.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, in spite of this instruction, the books have been never found.

Sōza and Gonza died in Russia. Images of their faces were cast in plaster, but were lost in the 1747 fire. Museum folklore connects the lost plaster masks with two wax heads artistically made in the eighteenth century. Dr. Ksenofontova made a special (unpublished) research of the wax images and found that there is no documentary support of the hypothesis that they are portraits of Sōza and Gonza; indeed in some publications the wax images are called “heads from the late eighteenth-century manikins representing the Chinese and the Ostyak (north-west Siberia ethnic group), made by master M. P. Pavlov.”<sup>15</sup> The arguments on this issue have yet to be resolved.

The next entries of Japanese pieces were recorded in 1742. Items from Martin



Fig. 1. Wax Images—“the Heads” of Sōza and Gonza?

Spanberg (a Danish captain in the Russian service) were registered in that year. Two years earlier, while taking part in the Second (or the Great) Kamchatka expedition (1733–1743), Spanberg had headed the first Russian expedition to Japan. His squadron of ships approached the coast of northern Honshu (the provinces of Mutsu and Awa), and several Russians landed in a boat not far from the village of Amatsu-mura to take fresh water. They made contact with men of the village and exchanged some things. The Russian ships were visited by local officials (Chiba Kanshichirō 千葉勘七郎, a retainer of the Sendai domain) with his subordinates, and later by a village headman (*nanushi* 名主) named Zenbee 善兵衛 and a fisherman named Heizaburō 平三郎.<sup>16</sup> Some more things were exchanged. The Russians took a raincoat made of oiled paper and two cotton *obi*, one blue and white, the other red with embroidered

flowers. The description of the collection also mentions two Japanese gold coins in the form of oblong bars and one copper coin that was round with a hole in the center.<sup>17</sup> Another Russian participant in the Second Kamchatka expedition was Stepan P. Krasheninnikov (1711–1755), a renowned researcher of Kamchatka. Krasheninnikov presented his Japanese collection to the Kunstkamera in 1743. In it were the items gathered in Kamchatka and the Kuril islands (the latter collected by his deputies S. Plyshkin and M. Lepyohin in 1738 at Kunashir), including twenty-three copper coins, a compass, a sword, a wooden tray, and a wooden cup. This collection was evidence of the existence of trade between the Kamchadals, the Kuril Ainu, and the Japanese. Both the Spanberg and the Krasheninnikov collections were mentioned in hand-written addenda to the “technical” copy of the first Kunstkamera catalogue, *Musei Imperialis Petropolitani*, which had been published in 1742.<sup>18</sup> The Spanberg and Krasheninnikov collections are also documented in the academic archive records.<sup>19</sup>

After the fire of 1747, the first entry of Japanese items was the donation by Peter Shenanykin and Andrey Fenev, who had studied at the Japanese language school under Sōza and Gonza. The first graduates of that school, they were sent to Kamchatka to deal with the survivors (*hyōryūmin*) of the wreck of the *Taga-maru* in 1745 in the northern Kuril islands. In 1753, Shenanykin and Fenev brought five of the survivors to St. Petersburg to serve as instructors in the Japanese language school, and they donated a *shamisen* and wooden foot-gear called *bokkuri*—probably from the wrecked *Taga-maru*—to the Academic Museum. This entry of 1753 was the last in the records of the first stage of gathering of the Japanese collection of Kunstkamera. The fate of most of these earliest pieces is now unknown. They must have been destroyed by the fire of 1747 or lost in the early nineteenth century in the process of reorganization of the old Academic Museum. The quest for these lost items is a challenge for current and future researchers at the MAE.

It is also necessary to say a few words about drawings that appeared in the first Kunstkamera catalogue, *Musei Imperialis Petropolitani*, issued in Latin in 1740s. Among the illustrations in that catalogue were fourteen drawings of the Japanese items. The Kunstkamera had a special subdivision called the Engraving Chamber with a team of anonymous but skilled artists who made drawings of the early Kunstkamera items, and it was they who executed the illustrations for the first catalogue. Their drawings make it possible for researchers today to have a vivid idea of what the early items looked like; they are a great aid in our research on the early pieces and our search for lost items. The Catalogue had a very limited edition, and the drawings were not printed but hand-made; among 2,300 drawings (existing now), only fourteen represented Japanese items.<sup>20</sup> Among them are a sword with gold fittings (N 90, from the Salt Department), a mirror (N 93, perhaps from L. Blumentrost), a small whip (N 162), several *zushi* (N 104), *zōri* (N 243), lacquer boxes (N 141 and N 144, both incorrectly called Chinese), and other pieces. A non-Japanese textile foot gear (N 328) was misattributed as of Japanese origin.

From 1754 until 1792 there were no Japanese entries to the Academic Museum.

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Perhaps this the energy generated by Peter I, with his desire to establish contact with the extreme eastern neighbor of the Russian empire, had been exhausted.

The next period of interest in Japan occurred in the 1790s, the last decade of the reign of Empress Catherine II. This time was also marked by the new order of the registration of the Japanese collections: they were recorded in the Protocols of the Conferences of the Academy of Sciences. The first entry of this period is dated September 1791. The Protocols inform us that Princess Ekaterina R. Dashkova passed to the Academic Museum a collection of twenty-two Japanese items, along with an inventory. All these pieces were presented to the empress (although the name of the presenter was not mentioned), and she ordered to send them to the Academy of Sciences. The Academy's journal *Nova Acta Academiae Scientiarum Imperialis* for the year 1791<sup>21</sup> gives the list of the collection: 10 hand-written books, 2 "sets for writing," a small bell, a fan, a rosary, a cup, a banknote and 5 coins—golden, silver and copper. The books were sent to the Academic Library, the coins to a subdivision of *Kunstkamera* called the Muntz cabinet, and the other items to the museum collection proper.<sup>22</sup> Six pieces were registered in the museum archive known as the "Catalogue of various artistic and rare things kept in the emperor's *Kunstkamera*."<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Regina A. Ksenofontova gave careful scrutiny to this registry note and called attention to a peculiarity: every item was provided with its Japanese term written in a Cyrillic transcription with syllabic divisions clearly marked (each syllable of a word was divided by a hyphen from the preceding and following syllables). In 1791 there was only one person in St. Petersburg who understood the syllabic structure of the Japanese language, and that was the notorious *Daikokuya Kōdayū*. Captain of a cargo ship that had wrecked in the Aleutians, he had been honored with an audience with the empress that year and had presented her a collection of his personal belongings with an inventory list. In the 1960s, Dr. Ksenofontova identified the six pieces mentioned above as belonging to the *Daikokuya Kōdayū* collection. She discovered them in the MAE collection and saw that they were placed back in their proper historical context.

It also should be mentioned that in 1965, a group of Japanese scholars (Prof. Kamei Takayoshi, Prof. Murayama Shichirō, and Prof. Nakamura Yoshikazu) visited the Leningrad Division of the Institute of the Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences (the former Asiatic Museum, the present-day Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences). The Japanese researchers examined the books that had been logged into the catalogue in 1791, paying especial attention to the marginal notes, presumably made by *Daikokuya Kōdayū*. The original inventory list of the gifts to Catherine II in Cyrillic transcription was also shown to the three Japanese scholars.<sup>24</sup> Over the years, this transcription with the syllabic division of the Japanese words has been copied several times by the Academic calligraphers. MAE inventory list # 677 (the mixed collection of the early items transferred in 1827–1837 from the Asiatic Museum) reflects *Daikokuya Kōdayū*'s style, but mistakes were made in the copying of the original text. The inventory list # 677 has six items from





Fig. 2. *Ryo* and *juzu*.

his collection: # 677-1, a *wa-ang* (lacquered tea-cup); # 677-2, a *ju-zu* (rosary); # 677-3, an *oo-gi* (folding fan); a *su-so-ri-ba-ko* (set for ink-writing); # 677-5, an *a-da-chi* (traveling ink-pot; the brush is missing); # 677-62, a *ryo* (prayer bell).<sup>25</sup> Most of these items are currently on exhibit in the MAE Japanese room, where they are displayed next to pieces from the Laxman collection.

Adam E. Laxman (1766–1796) is known as the first official Russian envoy to Japan. His father, Erich Cyril Laxman, a famous Russian scholar of the Finnish origin, was a close friend of Daikokuya Kōdayū. Their relationship and their mutual projects (making a map of Japan and compilation of descriptions of the Japanese nature, population, and customs; planning an expedition to Japan; composing letters to the leading Japanese scientists, Katsuragawa Hoshū and Nakagawa Jun’an in particular) are treated in scores or even hundreds of publications. The same is true of the official mission of A. Laxman to Japan in 1792–1793. It is well known that the desire of the Russian mission to establish trade with Japan had run up against the obstacle of the bakufu policy of excluding all foreigners but a few Chinese and Dutch (and occasionally, Koreans). Hardening its position against the *akahito*, as the Russians were called, the bakufu gave credence to letters that had been written by an escapee from a Russian prison whose name they rendered “Vanbengorofu,”<sup>26</sup> who had accused Russia of planning an invasion of Japan.

Laxman’s negotiations with bakufu officials headed by Ishikawa Shogen Tadafusa and Murakami Daigaku Yoshiari in Nemuro and then in Hakodate were very hard. Several negotiators from both sides died during the process. When the bakufu granted an official pass permitting one Russian ship to visit Nagasaki for further negotiations, it was regarded as enough to call the mission a relative success. This issue has already attracted many researchers, and our attention here will be focused on a much less studied topic: the items brought by Laxman from Japan and their destiny.

During the negotiations the parties had exchanged some “diplomatic” gifts. The Japanese representatives persistently refused to accept official gifts, but occasionally they permitted exchange of non-official or personal presents. Thus in the name of the bakufu, Laxman was presented 100 bags of rice, 100 bags of wheat, some other food supplies, and three long swords.<sup>27</sup> Laxman collected several other items during his stay in Japan and in the Kuril islands on his way back. In early 1794, he sent the collection to his father in Petersburg, and later that year Erich Cyril Laxman presented it to Catherine II. The empress passed it to the Academy of Sciences. The Protocols of

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the Conference of the Academy of Sciences for June 1794<sup>28</sup> and the records in *Nova Acta Academiae*<sup>29</sup> give a list of the Laxmans' contribution: 16 seashells, 18 animals and insects in liquor, a herbarium, 65 field plants, some rarities from Japan, the Kurils, and the Aleutian islands (a model of a boat, a ski in the form of a shoe, a candle of plant wax, and some other items). The botanical part of the collection was described professionally, with Latin and Japanese names for every plant. The ethnographic part, however, was described cursorily and not at all clearly.<sup>30</sup>

Fortunately the records in the archive of the Academy provide a more detailed description of the collection, specifying three items of the Japanese origin: the above-mentioned plant-wax candle and two lacquer trays, "one decorated with some plant, another with a figure resembling a vessel."<sup>31</sup> A description of the Kuril items is also given, but most of them were erroneously attributed as Aleutian and were passed to the *Kunstkamera's* American department. However this issue is beyond the topic of the present report.

Dr. Ksenofontova noted that the MAE inventory #677 (the mixed collection of the early items passed from the Asiatic Museum in 1819–1820s) provides descriptions of the items numbered 677–6 and 677–7: two round lacquered Japanese trays, one painted with a golden plant, the other with a figure of a ship.<sup>32</sup> The items identified with those inventory numbers were recovered from storage in the 1960s; #677–7 was an *obon* decorated with an egg-plant motif, and #677–8, an *obon* decorated with a stylized wave motif (which had been mistaken for "a figure of a vessel"). The plant wax candle mentioned in the archive records still has not been found, nor is there any reference in the old MAE inventories.

It was mentioned that Adam Laxman was awarded with three long swords in the



Fig. 3. Obon trays from the Laxmans Collection

name of the *bakufu*. His father presented the swords to Catherine II as official gifts of the Japanese emperor to the Russian empress.<sup>33</sup> Pleased by this, the empress awarded all the participants of the mission with honors—prizes, money, higher ranks, etc. Among the awards received by the Laxmans was a new crest for their family. It was

decorated with three swords, reminiscent of the bakufu gift.

Marine officer Ermolay E. Levenshtern, a participant in the Resanoff-Krushenstern mission to Japan in 1804–1805, recorded in his diary a very curious dialogue concerning Laxman's swords:

Krushenstern said [referring to Rezanoff]: "It is unthinkable that the Japanese would not make any gift to Your Excellency. For the Japanese had presented Laxman several swords!" Rezanoff replied: "Oh, those were very bad, very ordinary swords!"<sup>34</sup>

By the time I joined the staff of the MAE, the destiny of the swords brought by Laxman from Japan was a big mystery. I entertained a faint hope that these swords existed somewhere in the MAE collections; I speculated that perhaps their original museum labels were lost and the pieces were mixed with the "no number" items of the MAE. It was a great surprise to me when in 2006 the researchers of the Artillery Museum in St. Petersburg (the former Memorial Hall museum) Lyudmila V. Glazunova, Lyudmila P. Rudakova, and Maria A. Anisimova identified them in their institution's storages after a thorough study of the old museum records and collections.<sup>35</sup> Surprisingly, these "swords" happened to be neither *tachi* nor *katana*, but *naginata* with temporary wooden mountings!<sup>36</sup> The blades are long, wide and very heavy, with long *nakago*, one signed by Kunimasa, an early Edo period swordsmith whose name is not of wide renown. These two *naginata* differ a great deal from "conventional" richly decorated *kazari-tachi*, the kind of swords produced as diplomatic gifts. Lacking any decoration, the Laxman "swords" seem to be real combat weapons. As a bakufu gift, this seems very strange.

One more facet of this story should be mentioned. The mission of Adam Laxman troubled European politicians who were apprehensive of the Russian "penetration" to Japan. Several items in the European press evidence this—some annoyed, some merely curious about the whole story.<sup>37</sup> Empress Catherine II found it necessary to make her personal commentary. In a letter to a F. M. Grimm<sup>38</sup> dated August 29, 1794, she wrote:

So, you ask what was the story with this shipwrecked Japanese? His had suffered a shipwreck, and then he was sent home. So the whole story is short, as it seems. The son of Laxman accompanied him and then returned back. He brought some trinkets [things of little value] with him, which were exhibited for us this year in Tsarskoe Selo [Catherine's residence not far from St. Petersburg]; I would not give 10 sou for all them. So I do not object if anybody who wants it make trade there [in Japan], but I have no such intention.<sup>39</sup>

The Russian activity in Japan attracted the attention of Dr. Johan August Stutzer, physician at the service of the Dutch East-Indian company. Stutzer visited Japan in

1788 and 1793—at the same time as Laxman was negotiating with the bakufu envoys at Hokkaido. In Japan Stutzer assembled a very special collection. It seems that originally he intended to present his pieces to various European sovereigns, but the French Revolution and a series of wars between the leading European states must have changed his plans. In 1794, he presented about sixty pieces of his collection to Catherine II. Perhaps Stutzer was aware that the Russian empress spent huge amounts of money sponsoring European scholars (for example, her correspondent Grimm received about half a million rubles in total). We have no data to tell us what honor Stutzer might have been awarded for his contribution; the Russian academic records provide almost no information about him, other than his family name and his degree of Doctor. Even his nationality is unclear. The museum tradition is inclined to consider him Swedish, though his surname looks more German.

On 12 January 1795, Chief Librarian Johan Heinrich Busse made a presentation of the Stutzer collection to the Academic Conference.<sup>40</sup> The pieces were then moved to the Museum, and the extracts of Stutzer's diary were placed in the Library. These unpublished extracts of the Stutzer's diary, which today are kept in the St. Petersburg Academic Archive, are a matter of special consideration. He donated two extracts, both in French. One is about medical treatment using moxibustion (*mogusa*) and acupuncture needles. Being a physician, Stutzer could not but appreciate unusual (for Europeans) methods of healing, and he gave a short description of them. Another extract describes a terrible fire in Kyoto witnessed by Stutzer in March 1793 on his way to the Edo court. The fire destroyed more than 200,000 buildings, including the Dairi, the emperor's palace, and it forced the emperor to flee in an oxcart. Stutzer did not specify the name of the emperor (he calls him "le Dairi"), but 1793 was during the reign of the 119<sup>th</sup> emperor, Kōkaku tennō. The fire spread so rapidly that the emperor had to leave the slow cart and escape on his own feet, violating tradition. He sought refuge in several temples, Stutzer recounts, but all of them were ablaze, and he finally found safety only in the hills on the outskirts of the city. Stutzer also witnessed the heart-rending sight of crowds of suffering people who had lost their houses, or children, or parents, or the whole family.<sup>41</sup>

Dr. Stutzer provided a detailed catalogue of his collection (in French), so his donation was well-documented from the date of its registration, and there have been few problems in determining which items once belonged to him. The Conference appreciated all the items of his collection as "curiosities" and "pieces made with great skill." Indeed, many pieces are really very curious and can be considered true masterpieces. The collection can be divided into several categories: late-eighteenth-century *nanban* pieces; "ethnographic" items, representing some traditional Japanese applied arts; implements used in traditional healing; and a collection of figurines of Japanese insects and arthropods. Some of the items were lost.

The *nanban* pieces are really very extraordinary; this part of the collection consists of 7 telescopes (one was badly broken) and 5 brass plaquettes decorated with black and golden lacquer in the *makie* technique. All these pieces were specially or-

dered by Stutzer in Japan, perhaps in Kyoto, perhaps in Nagasaki and Hirado.

The telescopes are made of *washi* paper, lacquered wood, bronze, and—a material rather rare in Tokugawa Japan—glass. Every telescope is a glass tube on the outside; a wooden tube rolled in paper is inserted into it. The metal details are attached to the wooden core. The glass tubes of each telescope are richly decorated with the *nanban* ornamental motives, carved or painted, and four tubes have inscriptions with golden lacquer. Latin letters are used, and the languages are French, German, and Swedish, with very funny mistakes. Almost certainly the Japanese artisan did not understand the inscriptions and was just copying the unfamiliar Western letters. The inscriptions are as follows:

1. *Guillaume le cinqueme Restaurateur de la liberte. Fait a Japonlan 1788*—“William V, the Restorer of Liberty. Made in Japan in 1788.” This must be dedicated to William V (1748–1806), the ruler of the Netherlands and father of King William I.
2. *Louis Seize Bienfeuteur De sa Patrie. Fait a Japonlan 1788*—“Louis the sixteenth, Benefactor of his Fatherland. Made in Japan in 1788.”
3. *Gustaf Hdolpe Sweriges. Eopp Japan No. 1788*— Here Gustav Adolph, the future king of Sweden (r. 1792–1809), must be meant. There are mistakes in this inscription.
4. *Gustaf den Fredie Faderneslandels Fader Japan No. 1788*—This is a dedication to Gustav III, the king of Sweden (d. 1792), called here “the Father of his Fatherland.”

One telescope is decorated with a two-headed spread eagle. We can guess that



Fig. 4. Telescopes.

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the Russian state symbol was meant here. Perhaps this piece was originally made as a present to Catherine II. It is decorated also with two *nanban-e* miniatures inserted beneath the glass tube. They are: (1) a small view of a Dutch colony in Dejima (or Hirado) with the Dutch flag and three figures of the Dutch residents; and (2) a portrait of a European lady in red. There is a suggestion that it could be an image of Catherine II.

As far as the plaquettes are concerned, all of them are more or less accurate

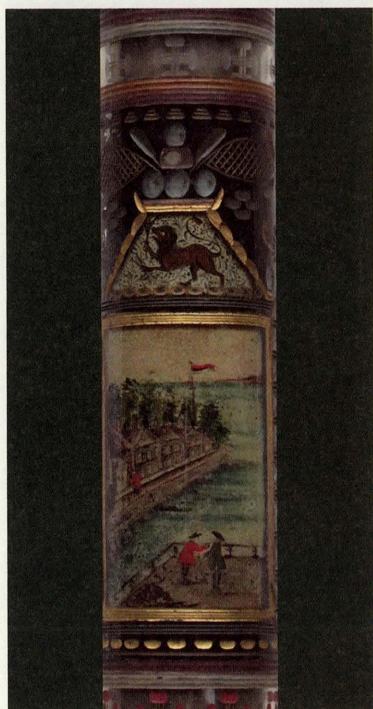


Fig. 5. A view of Hirado.

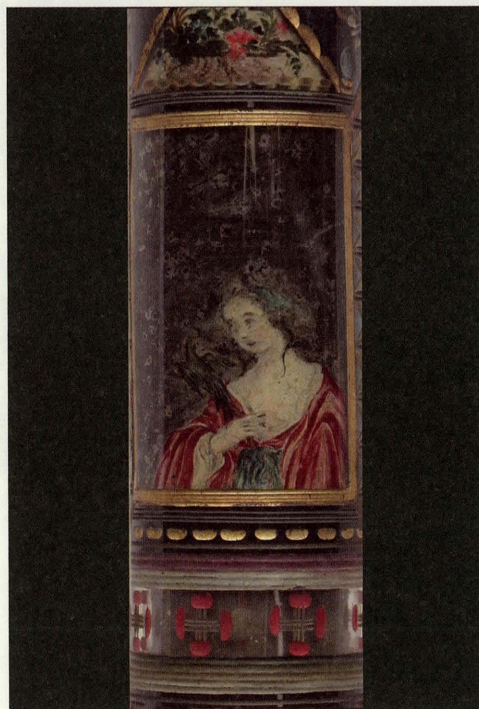


Fig. 6. A lady in red.

*maki-e* copies of European engravings. Three of them depict European monarchs. The largest is an equestrian portrait of Louis XV, with an inscription in French on the opposite side: “*Louis Quinze Le Bien Aimé.*” There are also portraits of Swedish King Gustav III Adolph (inscription in French with mistakes: “*Tué á la Bataille de Lutzen le 16.9. bre 1692 agé de 39 ans*”—“killed in the [victorious] battle at Lutzen . . . at the age of 39 years”) and Frederick the Great of Prussia (“*Roi de Prusse et Electeur de Brandenburg: Né le 24 Janoier 1712*”). There is also a small portrait of Martin Luther, in poor condition, and a rectangular *maki-e* plaquette with a view of mid-eighteenth-century St. Petersburg. The latter is a copy of an engraving by the famous eighteenth-century Russian artist Ivan Makhayev, “A Perspective of the Neva between Her Majesty’s Winter House and the Academy of Sciences.” The Winter House was the emperor’s residence before 1754, when the Winter Palace was built in

the same place to replace it. The Academy of Sciences is the *Kunstkamera* building. In the plaquette picture we can see the upper levels of the *Kunstkamera* central tower, destroyed in the fire of 1747 and fully restored only after World War II.

One more *nanban* item is a small stick of ink, gilt, with an inscription in Latin

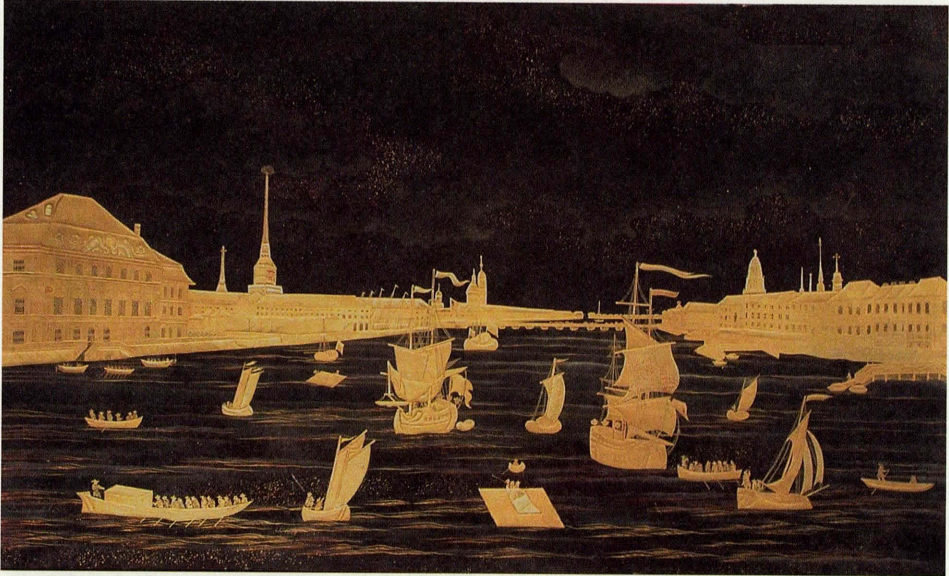


Fig. 7. Lacquer plaquette. A view of eighteenth-century St. Petersburg.

letters—perhaps the initials of Johan August Stutzer (J. A.). Originally there were three sticks of ink, but two of them were lost.

The famous Philipp von Siebold was not unique among the doctors of the Dutch factory at Nagasaki in having a profound interest in Japanese flora and fauna. Many of his predecessors did also, and Dr. Stutzer was one of their number. His collection includes three boxes of artistically made tiny figurines that are the images of various Japanese arthropods, insects, bugs, spiders, worms, etc. These figurines were not provided with any description—or maybe the description has been lost. This marvelous part of the collection still remains unstudied. Many figurines are in poor condition and need conservation.

The Stutzer collection comprises some medical items, also: a small lacquer box for acupuncture needles (only one needle remains), several *mogusa* (two small boxes were presented, but one of them was lost) and a fine *inro* box decorated with lacquer and gold in the *makie* technique, with a motif of *shishi* and peonies. Among other items, two small *tanto* daggers are worthy of special mentioning. Both are mounted in the *aikuchi* style, with *hanashi-menuki* and non-curved *hira-zukuri* blades. *Hamon* is *sugu-ha* and is almost grinded out. The polishing is rough, but it seems original. One of the blades is signed Kanetomo, the other, Mitsuyo (perhaps a fourteenth-century representative of the renowned Mitsuyo family of Chikugo founded by Tenta Mitsuyo

in the eleventh century). Stutzer collected some “ethnographic” items, for example, a fine model of a *norimono*, decorated with golden lacquer with a *kamon* ornament in the form of two crossed hawk feathers in a circle (it reminds me of the Asano family crest), two *kazarimono* trays inlaid with mother-pearl, and seven presses for scrolls of finely carved stone. And a very special item is the one catalogued as # 677–30. In the inventory it was specified as a “picture—a view of the suburbs of Foezimii.”<sup>42</sup> Stutzer’s list (in French), now kept in the academic archives,<sup>43</sup> describes this as a painting of the temple where the doctor and his companions lodged for a couple of days while staying in Kyoto (“Miaco”) during their journey to and from Edo for required attendance upon the shogun (“*Edo sampu*,” in Stutzer’s mispronunciation). The doctor had appreciated the tea that was served at this temple, and noted many elegant buildings and a very beautiful garden surrounding them. He also mentions that an “idol” called “Tazcan Gangami” was found at this place.

This picture—perhaps the first recorded Japanese traditional painting in Rus-



Fig. 8. An eighteenth-century view of Kiyomizudera.

sia—piqued my interest, and I decided to search for it in the museum vaults. I was very disappointed when I found out that according to our storage documents, the piece was considered lost. A special quest was undertaken to find the piece. Finally in spring 2006, the painting was rediscovered. It is a traditional Japanese painting, a *fukinuki-yatai* perspective view of Kiyomizudera temple in Kyoto—as it had been seen by an anonymous eighteenth-century artist. The strange name of the “idol”—“Tazcan Gangami”—must be a distorted pronunciation of *Kannon-bosatsu* (or *Juichimen-*



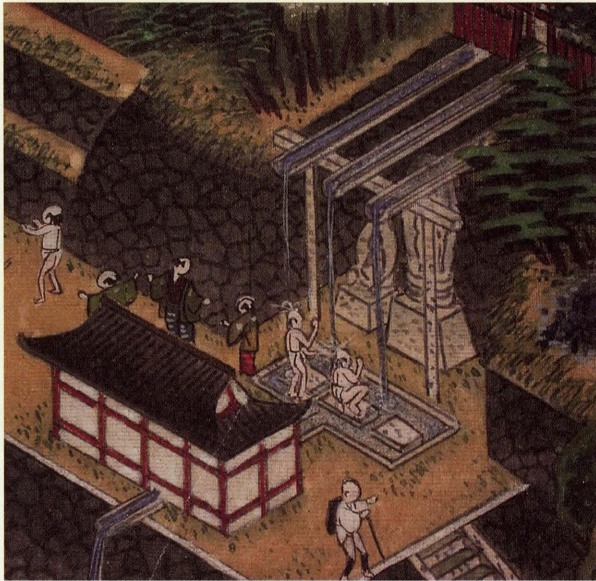


Fig. 9. The notorious springs of Kiyomizudera (detail).



Fig. 10. Dutch officers at Kiyomizudera (detail).

*Kannon*); such distortions are met from time to time in the records of the Dutch residents.

The painting is not large (55 x 39.5 cm), mounted into a *passé-partout* and rectangular wooden frame. That it is Kiyomizudera is clear from the specific features of the high wooden structure of the *kondo* (in the central part of the painting) and three sacred springs in the right bottom corner. And there is one more very special detail: in the same right bottom corner several human figures are painted—pilgrims, samurai, and three Europeans. It seems that the image of a tall European painted full face is Dr. Stutzer himself—it was he who had ordered the painting, and the artist must have stressed his image. The season is also marked by the blossoming sakura trees. It must be early April, when the Dutch officers were on their way back from Edo to Nagasaki.

The Stutzer collection was the last eighteenth-century entry to the Academic Museum. Some scholars (E. Y. Fainberg in particular) are inclined to think that there were donations from Carl Thunberg, too,<sup>44</sup> but academic archives and museum records do not provide any information about this. The next entry of Japanese items took place only in 1810. In that year, the collections of the so-called “Khvostov-Davydov expedition” were acquired. These were the trophies brought back to Russia after two vessels of the Russian-American Company, *Yunona* and *Avos*, commanded by Nikolai A. Khvostov and Gavriil I. Davydoff, respectively, attacked the Japanese fortresses and settlements at the Kuril islands and Sakhalin in 1805–1807, following the orders of Nikolay P. Rezanov. But issues of the Khvostov-Davydov collection and

later acquisitions are beyond the scope of this essay.

In the early nineteenth century, after the reorganization of Kunstkamera, the Japanese collections were passed to the newly organized Asiatic Museum. Some years later they were transferred to the Ethnographic Museum (the future MAE). The items donated by Daikokuya Kodayu, the Laxmans, and Johan August Stutzer were mixed with the items of the Khvostov-Davydov collection. In the 1840s, most of these items were registered as a “mixed anonymous collection” (inventory #677). Some other items were registered in inventory #681. Today, some of the pieces are included in our permanent exposition and can be seen by all visitors to the MAE, while others are preserved in special storage or in the storage of the Far East collections.

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NOTES

1 The Asiatic Museum founded in the early nineteenth century later was reorganized into the Institute of Oriental Studies, which in 2007 was renamed the Institute of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

2 Now most of the eighteenth-century academic records are kept in the St. Petersburg Filial of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (PFA RAN).

3 Ogloblin 1891a, vol. 3, p. 16.

4 Ogloblin 1891b, pp. 14, 24.

5 Fainberg 1959, p. 227.

6 Ogloblin 1891a, p. 16.

7 Fainberg 1960, p. 22.

8 *Pamyatniki sibirskoy istorii XVIII veka* 1869, vol. 3, pp. 114–116.

9 Ksenofontova 1969, pp. 281, 288, 289.

10 A special list of the most valuable Kunstkamera items, the so-called “Catalogue of Golden, Silver and Jewel Pieces” (*Katalog zolotykh i serebryanykh veschey i dorogih kamenyev*), now in the possession of the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences. See Stanyukovich 1969, pp. 17–18.

11 Ksenofontova 1969, p. 289.

12 The items belong to the collective inventory # 677, which combines the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Kunstkamera items passed to the MAE from the Asiatic Museum in 1819.

13 The Academy of Sciences, the Academic Museum (Kunstkamera) and the Academic library were located in the same building (today the MAE). The school of the Japanese language must have been located in a small wooden extension in the yard, no longer extant.

14 *Materialy dlya istorii Imperatorskoy Akademii nauk*, vol.3 (1736–1738), pp. 76–77.

15 Yurneva 2003, p. 190.

16 Pozdneev 1909, vol. 2., pp. 18–19.

17 *Materialy dlya istorii Imperatorskoy Akademii nauk*, vol. 5 (1742–1743), p. 859. Also Ksenofontova 1969, p. 290.

18 Ksenofontova 1969, pp. 289–290.

19 *Materialy dlya istorii Imperatorskoy Akademii nauk*, vol. 5 (1742–1743), p. 859.

20 Ksenofontova 1969, p. 281. Also Chistov et al. 2004, pp. 282–284.

21 *Nova Acta Academiae scientiarum imperialis petropolitanae*, vol. 9 (1791), p. 27.

22 Ksenofontova 1969, p. 291.

23 St. Petersburg Filial of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences 1791. Foundation 3, File 1, No. 2245, List 3, note for 27 September 1791.

24 This fact was mentioned by Prof. Nakamura Yoshikazu in his lecture in St. Petersburg in 2003 (Nakamura 2003). Also please refer to Ksenofontova 1969, p. 292, and Petrova and Goreglyad 1963, pp. 55, 60.

25 MAE RAS, Inventory # 677, pp. 4–5

26 Vanbengorofu, or Moris August Benyovsky, an adventurer of Polish origin, had been imprisoned at the Bolsheretskiy Ostrog prison (Kamchatka). In 1771, he managed to outwit the prison warden and set free all the imprisoned criminals. They killed all the guards, captured the vessel *St. Peter*, and fled into the open sea, intending to reach France. The same year Benyovsky reached Japan and wrote several letters that were transmitted to the bakufu by the

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- V.O.C. captains Daniel Armenault and Arend Willem Feith in Dejima. Benyovsky gave a false warning about Russian military preparations against Japan. See Pozdneev 1909, pp. 26–33.
- 27 Pozdneev 1909, p. 60.
- 28 Protokoly 1911, vol. 4, p.382.
- 29 *Nova Acta Academiae scientiarum imperialis petropolitanae*, vol. 12 (1794), p. 32.
- 30 Ksenofontova 1969, p. 293.
- 31 I.e., the “Catalogue of Various Artistic and Rare Things Kept in the Emperor’s Kunstkamera,” St. Petersburg Filial of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences 1791.
- 32 MAE RAS, Inventory # 677, p 5.
- 33 Either neither Laxman was aware of the difference between the tennō and the shogun and shogun’s bakufu, or—as seems more probable—they played a little “cunning trick” and deliberately “upgraded” the status of the gift to make it more appealing to the eyes of the empress.
- 34 Levenstern 2003, p. 305).
- 35 Glazunova 2006, vol. 1, pp. 29–31.
- 36 Rudakova and Anisimova 2006, vol. 1, pp. 32–36.
- 37 Fainberg 1960, p. 66.
- 38 Baron Grimm Friedrich Melchior (1723–1807), a public figure of the European enlightenment; a foreign correspondent and protégé of Catherine II; in 1792—the Russian resident (consul) in Gotha.
- 39 Lagus 1890, p. 283.
- 40 Protokoly 1911, vol. 4, pp. 409–410.
- 41 Stutzer 1793.
- 42 Professor A.N. Mescheryakov and Professor G.J. P. Campagnolo kindly recommended to interpret “Foezimii” as “Fushimi.”
- 43 Protokoly 1911, vol. 4, pp. 409–410.
- 44 Fainberg 1960, p. 66.

### ABBREVIATIONS

Cyrillic <u>Transcription</u>	Latin <u>Transcription</u>	Full name <u>Cyrillic</u>	Full name <u>Latin</u>	English <u>translation</u>
МАЭ РАН	MAE RAN	Музей антропологии и этнографии (Кунсткамера) им. Петра Великого Российской академии наук	Muzei antropologii i etnografii (Kunstkamera) imeni Petra Velikogo Rossiyskoy akademii nauk	Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences

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Cyrillic	Latin	Full name		English
<u>Transcription</u>	<u>Transcription</u>	<u>Cyrillic</u>	<u>Full name Latin</u>	<u>translation</u>
ПФА РАН	PFA RAN	Петербургский филиал архива Российской академии наук	Peterburgskiy filial arkhiva Rossiyskoy akademii nauk	St. Petersburg Filial of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences